

RECOMMENDATION No. 47
TO THE MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION
concerning
FACILITIES FOR EDUCATION IN RURAL AREAS
(1958)

The International Conference on Public Education,

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

The Conference,

Considering Recommendation No. 8 on the organization of rural education, adopted on the thirteenth day of July, nineteen hundred and thirty-six by the International Conference on Public Education at its fifth session,

Considering that ignorance among a large part of the rural population of the world, representing more than half mankind, is a major cause of disequilibrium and inevitably retards the progress of the nations,

Considering that the position of rural children in some countries is in open contradiction with the principle of free and compulsory primary schooling for all, laid down in article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

Considering that the inequality of educational opportunity of which many country children are in fact the victims constitutes an injustice which urgently calls for a remedy,

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Considering that the increasing similarity of the country to the urban way of life, especially where improved transport methods and communication techniques have been introduced, makes it imperative to give rural children educational opportunities equal to those provided for urban children,

Considering that the rapid cultural, economic and social development of mankind requires a continuous process of readjustment on the part of all people, in rural as well as urban areas,

Considering that the interdependence of cultural, economic and social factors is particularly evident in under-developed rural areas, and that consequently efforts to raise the standard of living require an over-all plan for these areas,

Considering that a constant awareness of the need for the conservation and wise use of natural resources is essential to the welfare of mankind, and that country dwellers have a primary concern and responsibility in this matter,

Considering that the rural school, as also the urban school, should be a centre of culture and of social and economic progress for the whole community,

Considering that in some places rural school courses have been introduced which are as effective as those in urban areas, and that in some countries with extreme rural education problems, noteworthy progress has been made,

Considering that in regions where there is a drift to the towns the education of country children raises special problems arising from the need to retain capable teachers in rural areas,

Considering that international cooperation should help to provide facilities for rural education in all countries, and for this purpose will require positive assistance from national and international organizations

Considering that, in spite of similar aspirations, countries in very different positions must reach varied solutions of the problem of facilities for education in rural areas,

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

Administration

1) Authorities responsible for school administration should organize for all children in rural areas education of the same standard as that provided for children in urban areas. To this end, their duties should include in particular:

a) drawing up an inventory of the educational requirements of rural areas;

b) determining the particular nature of educational organization, curricula and methods to be adopted in rural areas;

c) launching plans of action (courses, school buildings, teaching staff, equipment, school social services, etc.);

d) ensuring that there are sufficient funds available for education and that they are apportioned between rural and urban areas in accordance with the needs as ascertained;

e) providing children in rural areas with equal opportunities of access to special education services and post-primary studies. In this work, it is desirable that the authorities should inform the community including parent groups and teachers' organizations, of their intentions, and when appropriate involve them in the development of plans.

2) Authorities responsible for school administration should organize campaigns for the speedy elimination of factors which contribute to inequality between rural and urban areas (incomplete schooling, lack of premises, shortage of qualified staff, etc.) and for creating an awareness of the harm done to the cultural and economic development of the country by this state of affairs. They should also organize campaigns to interest rural communities in working for the development of their own schools, and in mobilizing for this purpose their material and moral resources.

3) In countries where educational administration is centralized, and where also the problem of providing education in rural areas is particularly difficult, it may be useful to set up administrative bodies specially responsible for promoting education in these areas, provided that this temporary separation of duties does not lead to a perpetuation of existing forms of educational inequality.

4) In order to ensure that the education of rural children is in harmony with general educational policy, the above-mentioned administrative bodies should be subordinate to the public education authorities; they should also cooperate closely with other ministries or departments aiming at the rapid social and economic development of rural areas.

5) These administrative bodies should have as their main object the progressive introduction of rural primary education of the same standard as that provided for children in urban areas, but should also aim at giving country children equal opportunities of access to post-primary studies.

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6) In opportune circumstances, it is desirable to call upon the resources of private initiative of every kind, placed, however, under the control of the public education authorities.

7) It would be useful to establish special local or regional funds for financing the construction of schools in rural areas.

8) The inspectorate should take into account the special characteristics of rural schools and recognize their particular type of organization; when there is a special inspection service for rural education, it is important that it should not lead to the reinforcement of any discrimination, however unintentional, against rural schools.

9) The usefulness of special administrative bodies may seem less obvious in decentralized countries where local education authorities play a direct part in the administration and organization of education. Even so, it is desirable that these authorities base their work on the principles set out above.

10) It is desirable to interest local authorities in rural education and to encourage them to take positive steps in its favour; however, higher authorities should always have a controlling power, which may even extend to complete responsibility in the least favoured areas.

Organization

11) Once the principle that rural education should not be inferior in quality or extent to that enjoyed by children in urban areas is accepted, this education should be organized with reference to the advantages and drawbacks of rural areas; it is therefore essential to adapt time-tables and holidays in rural schools to local conditions.

12) Every child has a right to the entire course of compulsory education. To achieve this ideal, in small communities the system of the complete one-teacher primary school may profitably be used, as in many highly developed countries; under this system, with the cooperation of the pupils themselves, the teacher may provide the full course for all the classes covered by this stage of education.

13) The use of this system requires that the prospective teacher be initiated into its methods while in training; if he draws on the principles of educational psychology, his school may become as lively and effective as one where the pupils are grouped according to their age and standard.

14) Another useful method in some rural areas is the system of central schools which have a similar organization and equipment to those of urban schools and can provide the entire course of education for all the pupils in their area.

15) Where lines of communication permit, central school pupils should enjoy free or cheap transport to enable them to return home every day; this system combines the advantages of life in the family and at school.

16) The provision at central schools of free boarding facilities with specially trained staff may also be contemplated; in this case, it is desirable that steps be taken to maintain regular contact between boarders and their families.

17) When circumstances permit (enough pupils, easy communications), a system combining a one-teacher school for the youngest children and the transport of older children to central schools may be used.

18) School attendance in rural areas may be greatly facilitated by the provision of school canteens and clothing services; these services can also be beneficial to pupils' health and make a useful contribution to the spread of the principles of hygiene among the people.

19) If parents are sufficiently well educated to supervise their children's studies, correspondence teaching is a suitable method of providing a complete education for isolated children.

20) Teaching by radio or television may be a valuable means of providing education for children who cannot attend school, and an effective way of supplementing class teaching for others.

21) Education by correspondence and by radio should be supplemented by provision for periodic group activities and studies under the supervision of the teacher, for at least a week once a term.

Curricula, syllabuses and methods

22) Every possible means should be employed to ensure that rural school curricula and syllabuses are not inferior in quality or in scope to those of urban schools, and that they enable primary pupils to acquire the skills, knowledge and processes of thinking which are essential for proceeding to secondary education without a break in continuity, in the same way as urban schoolchildren.

23) Nevertheless, teaching in rural schools, without being vocational in character, should draw its inspiration from the life and work of the countryside and should contribute to the development of a practical outlook, the improvement of life in the rural community and an awareness of the relationship between this improvement and a wise use of natural resources.

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24) Societies for practical activities (scouting, young farmers' clubs, groups for local studies, etc.) are a valuable means of continuing the educational action of rural schools.

25) The use of textbooks and teaching material specially designed for rural schools may be useful in countries where the necessary means are available.

26) Conditions in rural areas, no less than in urban areas, are well suited to the use of activity methods in teaching.

27) The further training of in-service teachers in rural areas may be promoted by educational broadcasting and television; in this way the standard of teaching may be improved and the teacher's isolation diminished.

Facilities for post-primary education

28) Educational facilities in rural areas are not only required at primary level, but general and technical education at secondary level should also be developed wherever this is feasible.

29) When it is not possible to set up suitable schools for post-primary education in each rural community, the necessary services should be established in easily accessible centres serving several communities.

Adult education

30) Young people who take up work on the land after the end of compulsory education should be given the opportunity to follow part-time continuation courses aimed both at continuing the general education begun at school and at improving the pupils' vocational training.

31) For the improvement of living conditions in rural areas, it is important that the education authorities, in conjunction with agricultural authorities and agricultural workers' organizations, should concern themselves with adult education.

32) Local communities should possess rural education centres which would group together in special premises all the necessary sources of information (cinema, radio, television, libraries, etc.).

33) In advanced areas, adult education on a continuing basis should be available to all in order to impart further vocational information and training, to advance general culture and to extend knowledge of the important problems of modern life.

34) In under-developed areas, adult education will take the form of literacy and basic education campaigns.

35) In all areas, adult education should not neglect the better utilization of leisure time, which is an important factor in the struggle to prevent the exodus from rural areas.

36) Particular attention should be given to the training of as many adult education specialists as possible, by means of lectures, textbooks, special courses, etc.

Teaching staff

37) In countries where rural primary teachers are trained separately, the course for future rural teachers should not be shorter or of a lower standard than that for urban teachers.

38) In countries where primary teachers all receive exactly the same training they should be acquainted with the particular problems of rural education and with methods of teaching in one-teacher schools.

39) An equivalent or identical training should mean that all primary school teachers have the same professional status (conditions of appointment, salary, transfer, etc.).

40) In countries where rural primary teachers have received training at a lower level than urban primary teachers, steps should be taken to remedy this (vacation courses, weekly refresher courses, correspondence courses, etc.).

41) Suitable steps should be taken to protect the rural teacher from any feeling of isolation (sufficiently frequent visits from inspectors, teachers' meetings and refresher courses, library and audio-visual aid services, further training courses, correspondence courses, etc.).

42) Since living conditions in rural areas may be less favourable and the rural teacher's task more arduous, including as it may both school work and participation in literacy and basic education campaigns and taking into account also the resulting difficulty of recruiting rural teachers, it is desirable to offer them particular advantages (accommodation, special allowances, facilities for their children's education and for their own general and professional culture, etc.) and give them, when equally qualified, the same opportunities as their urban colleagues of rising in the profession.

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43) In the recruitment of primary teaching staff, efforts should be made to attract prospective teachers from rural areas; in order to secure a supply of properly qualified candidates from these areas, complementary or secondary classes should be opened wherever necessary.

44) Given the importance and the special nature in rural areas of literacy campaigns and basic education, and also of post-secondary and adult education, it is desirable to train for this work special staff who, in addition to the usual educational qualifications, have an adequate knowledge of social psychology and rural sociology.

International cooperation

45) In view of the importance of the problem of providing educational facilities in rural areas it is highly desirable that regional conferences should be held on this question with the aim of adapting to each large region the principles set out in the present recommendation.

46) The attention of international organizations and their member nations interested in the extension of education should be drawn to the desirability of including in their projects the question of continuing and increasing their aid to under-developed countries, so enabling these countries to provide material and technical facilities for the education of children in rural areas.

47) In places where the complete one-teacher school system is unknown, and where conditions make this a necessary or desirable means of extending primary education facilities, it is advisable to arrange study groups on this subject and to make available the assistance of experts if the system is to be introduced.