

RECOMMENDATION No. 52
TO THE MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION
concerning the
ORGANIZATION OF
ONE-TEACHER PRIMARY SCHOOLS
(1961)

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 third of July, nineteen hundred and sixty-one, for its twenty-fourth session, adopts on the thirteenth of July, nineteen hundred and sixty-one, the following recommendation:

The Conference,

Considering Recommendation No. 47 to the Ministries of Education on facilities for education in rural areas, adopted on the sixteenth of July, nineteen hundred and fifty-eight by the International Conference on Public Education at its twenty-first session,

Considering Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims that free compulsory elementary education should be provided for all,

Considering that obstacles of many kinds must be overcome if children in small communities, without being separated from their families, are to enjoy educational facilities equivalent to those provided for children in larger centres,

Considering that in many countries the creation of one-teacher schools has made the development of compulsory education easier,

Considering that, in spite of the changes that have come about in some countries in the living conditions of small places and of the resulting decrease in the number of one-teacher schools, there are still millions of children attending one-teacher primary schools,

Considering that, in order to enable pupils to transfer, if necessary, to another primary school and to continue their education at post-primary level, the one-teacher school should be "complete", that is it should comprise as many years' instruction as an ordinary primary school,

Considering that it is urgently necessary to convert incomplete one-teacher schools into complete one-teacher schools,

Considering that the complete one-teacher school still has great services to render, particularly in countries which are at present concerned with organizing their own system of compulsory primary education when the means of transport and communication at their disposal in some areas are still inadequate,

Considering that slight attention has generally been given hitherto to the study of problems of all kinds connected with the efficient operation of one-teacher primary schools,

Considering that, despite similar aspirations, countries in very different positions must reach varied solutions of the problems of the organization of one-teacher primary schools,

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

Existence of One-Teacher Schools

1) Whatever the nature of his place of origin or his domicile, urban or rural, any child attending a primary school, whether this school has several teachers or one teacher, should receive the minimum of instruction necessary either to continue his studies beyond the primary stage or to enable him to receive additional training which will prepare him to fulfil his obligations as a human being and as a citizen.

2) When plans are drawn up for the extension of primary education or for the general introduction of compulsory schooling, very special attention should be given to the contribution which the complete one-teacher school system can make to the implementation of such plans.

3) When one-teacher primary schools are "incomplete" in that the number of years' instruction provided is lower than that prescribed for other primary schools, it is important to provide other facilities for pupils in such schools to pursue their schooling without difficulty, taking into account local conditions.

4) In places where it is still thought that a school run by one teacher cannot provide more than a part of primary education, very intensive action should be undertaken to convince the education authorities and teachers that:

a) illiteracy has virtually disappeared in countries where a system of complete one-teacher schools has enabled the provision of instruction for all children;

b) countries in the forefront of educational development on a world-wide scale continue to use this system when transport or financial difficulties do not allow them to regroup pupils from small places in central schools, with or without boarding facilities;

c) in spite of its shortcomings, the complete one-teacher school offers undeniable advantages in three spheres: the educational (study of the local environment, group work, individual work, etc.), the human (family atmosphere, human relations and cooperation) and the social (extension of the school's influence and its contribution to adult education).

5) In newly developing countries and in insufficiently developed areas of other countries, where the provision of a one-teacher school is necessary, this school should serve as a centre not only for teaching children but also for adult education and for the implementation of plans for economic and social development.

6) It is desirable that incomplete one-teacher schools at present in existence, as well as those which may be newly opened, should be converted as soon as possible, in accordance with plans drawn up in advance, into complete one-teacher schools, or even into schools with two or more teachers if the circumstances require it.

7) Complete schools in which two or three school years are grouped under each of the teachers facilitate transition to ordinary primary schools.

8) If incomplete one-teacher schools have to be retained owing to local conditions it is important that their pupils should be enabled to complete their primary education in a central school.

9) In countries where the tendency is to abolish one-teacher primary schools owing to population trends or in order to achieve a more efficient distribution of schools, it is desirable that before the intended rearrangement is undertaken the wishes of the local inhabitants concerned, particularly the parents, should be taken

into account, as these people may be anxious to retain their school which is often their only centre of cultural and social life.

Administrative Measures

10) In countries where the population situation and the way of life of small communities are changing rapidly, it would be advisable to revise periodically the regulations governing the one-teacher school in order to adapt them to the changing circumstances.

11) Although the conditions required for the opening of a one-teacher school vary considerably from country to country (number of inhabitants, too great a distance from another school, etc.) the authorities should be guided by two basic principles:

a) the opening of a school in any place should not be delayed until the number of pupils requires the presence of several teachers;

b) the regulations governing the opening of a one-teacher school should be flexible enough to facilitate the attendance of the greatest possible number of children throughout the country.

12) Every possible means should be employed to counteract the isolation of the one-teacher school, both for the teacher (special help from inspectors and advisers, professional literature, study groups, continuous contact with larger educational establishments etc.) and for the pupils (visits from school doctors, correspondence with other schools, school cooperatives, excursions, pupil exchanges, external examinations, etc.).

13) It is strongly recommended that a travelling library service be made available as widely as possible to one-teacher schools in order to provide for the needs of the teacher and the community as well as of the pupils; these schools should be helped, moreover, to acquire permanently a few essential books of reference.

14) It is desirable to set up, as part of the senior authority for primary education, an advisory body, whose task, in collaboration with other ministries or departments and with representatives of the teachers concerned, would be to study in all their aspects the problems involved in the operation of one-teacher primary schools.

15) The functions of this advisory and research body should comprise in particular:

a) an objective and impartial examination of the advantages and disadvantages of the one-teacher school;

b) an investigation of means of remedying their disadvantages and of increasing their efficiency when their existence proves necessary;

c) a study of the financial, social, cultural, pedagogical, etc. aspects of the retention of these schools or of their conversion into schools with several teachers;

d) the preparation of action to encourage the teachers and facilitate their task.

Educational Measures

16) As a teacher in a one-teacher school has to deal with children of widely differing ages and with several classes, the number of pupils in this type of school should not exceed the number of pupils normally taught by a teacher in a primary school with several teachers; in fact, it should be lower.

17) Since it is impossible for the teacher in a one-teacher school to deal with all the pupils at the same time, the formation of groups as homogeneous as possible is essential, taking into account the children's ages, abilities and level of attainment.

18) Although the part played by the pupil-monitor in giving instruction has decreased in importance, the teacher and the pupils themselves may still benefit from the direct assistance of the more advanced pupils, which, in addition to the incentive it provides, also facilitates general class organization, lesson drill and the supervision of practical work, games, sports and open-air activities.

19) In a one-teacher primary school, the content of the curricula and syllabuses, like the number of years' schooling, should not be inferior to that provided in schools with several teachers, so that pupils from both types of school may have the same opportunity of undertaking further studies at post-primary level.

20) As the difference between one-teacher schools and schools with several teachers lies not in syllabus requirements but in the internal organization of school work, it is desirable to give particular emphasis, in instructions and suggestions for one-teacher schools, to the fact that these schools offer greater opportunities than other types of school for the application of certain principles of educational psychology, such as individual work and group work.

21) The preparation of teachers' handbooks for the teaching staff of one-teacher schools is fully justified; it is also advantageous

to encourage educational reviews to make suggestions of direct interest to teachers in one-teacher schools.

22) Although there are material difficulties in the way of producing special textbooks for one-teacher schools, it is, however, desirable to place at the disposal of these schools audio-visual aids, sets of graded exercises, individual work cards and other instructional material suitable for group teaching.

23) The building provided for a one-teacher school should be designed in relation to the particular needs of this type of school; in order to facilitate simultaneous activities by different groups, it is desirable to provide additional work spaces or rooms so arranged that the teacher may keep all the pupils under his constant supervision; whenever feasible, land should be provided for gardening and rearing small animals.

24) The education authorities should concern themselves with the special requirements of one-teacher schools as regards furniture and equipment (desks, tables and chairs adaptable for children of different ages, the larger number of blackboards required by the teacher, etc.).

25) Problems concerning the one-teacher school should be the subject of educational research, the corresponding experimental studies being such as to advance the knowledge of learning techniques in general.

Teaching Staff

26) In whatever type of establishment future teachers in one-teacher schools are trained, the length and standard of their studies should be the same as for those who are to work in a school with several teachers; this will furthermore enable teachers to be transferred without legal obstacle from a one-teacher school to a school with several teachers, rural or urban, and vice versa.

27) The study of problems arising in a one-teacher school can be helpful to all teachers preparing for primary education and should, whenever possible, be included in general primary teacher training.

28) Of equal importance to a theoretical knowledge of the organization of teaching in one-teacher schools is the provision, as part of teacher training, of opportunities for teaching practice in a school of this type; such experience will be of great value for future primary teachers in general.

29) The establishment of one-teacher pilot schools adapted to different areas may prove useful for certain countries; it would be an advantage for these schools to be attached to a teacher training establishment, so that they might serve both as demonstration schools for student teachers and as further training centres for teachers in service.

30) In view of the isolation of teachers in one-teacher schools, in-service training is even more necessary for them than for the staff of schools with several teachers; it is desirable to give them the opportunity of taking vacation courses, correspondence courses and courses by radio, of attending area conferences for teachers and of using travelling libraries.

31) In countries where teachers in one-teacher schools have received training of a lower level than teachers in other primary schools, action to promote the further training of teachers in one-teacher schools should aim at placing them on an equal footing with their colleagues in order to remove the differences which may exist as regards conditions of appointment, remuneration transfer, etc.

32) In view of the difficulties of their task and of the extra responsibilities borne by teachers in one-teacher schools, it is desirable to improve their working conditions to the fullest possible extent; every reasonable assistance should be given to them as regards housing, medical supplies and necessary travelling expenses; it is also important to consider the possibility of granting them a head teacher's allowance, as is already the case in some countries.

International cooperation

33) It is highly desirable that specialists or teachers of wide experience in the organization of complete one-teacher schools should be invited to assist countries where this system is still imperfectly known and where it could help to solve the problem of the general provision of compulsory education.

34) Scholarship programmes should include awards for educators wishing to go abroad to become acquainted with the complete one-teacher school system or to improve their knowledge of its operation.

35) Unesco, the International Bureau of Education and regional educational bodies, as well as professional associations of teachers, should promote and encourage the exchange of documents of all kinds (official regulations, reports, individual studies, films, text-

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books, etc.) and the organization of professional meetings and seminars devoted to the study of questions concerning one-teacher schools (their establishment and operation, teacher training, timetable arrangements, appropriate methods, teaching material, audio-visual aids, etc.).

Implementation

36) It is important that the text of this recommendation should be widely diffused by Ministries of Education, the school authorities for the level of education most directly concerned, national and international teachers' associations, etc.; the educational press whether official or private, should play a large part in the diffusion of the recommendation.

37) Unesco regional centres, with the collaboration of the ministries concerned, are invited to facilitate the study of this recommendation at the regional level with a view to its adaptation to the special characteristics of the region concerned.

38) In countries where it seems necessary, Ministries of Education are invited to request the competent bodies to undertake certain activities, such as, for example:

a) to examine the present recommendation and to compare it with the *de jure* and *de facto* situation in their respective countries;

b) to consider the advantages and disadvantages of implementing each of the clauses not yet in force;

c) to adapt each clause, should its implementation be considered useful, to the requirements of the individual country; and

d) to suggest the regulations and practical measures which should be taken to ensure the implementation of each clause examined.