

RECOMMENDATION No. 58
TO THE MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION
concerning
LITERACY AND ADULT EDUCATION
(1965)

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 twelfth of July, nineteen hundred and sixty-five for its twenty-eighth session, adopts on the twenty-second of July, nineteen hundred and sixty-five, the following recommendation:

The Conference,

Considering that an intensive effort to provide literacy and adult education finds its justification in

- a)* the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,
- b)* the respect due to every human being, which requires that measures should be available to everyone to attain culture and to accomplish fully, efficiently and conscientiously the duty and functions of a member of a democratic society,
- c)* the fact that functional literacy and adult education constitute one of the essential factors in the economic, social, political and cultural progress of individuals as well as of communities,

Considering that in addition to these reasons founded on human rights, respect, human dignity and progress there are others such as that:

- a)* in present-day conditions, when scientific and technical progress requires more and more that all citizens shall be fully educated

and cultured, those men and women who have remained illiterate have to face insurmountable difficulties;

b) the increase in the number of literate citizens influences social and economic development and brings about a corresponding increase in production capacity and the level of consumption,

Considering that illiteracy must be eliminated at its source if it is to be completely abolished, and that all children must therefore be enrolled at school as soon as possible,

Considering that literacy and adult education constitute an important element in promoting better understanding between the generations and in increasing the educational influence which parents exert on their children,

Considering that, allowance being made for the traditions and characters of the various nations, the success of literacy programmes depends on the consideration given to human factors as well as on the use of financial resources, the illiterate adults' will to make the necessary effort, the importance of the example set by the most enthusiastic groups of illiterates and the determination of leaders to end the scourge of ignorance,

Considering that, after the various recommendations which have hitherto been drawn up and the progress achieved in various countries, the time has come to move forward to the stage of effective implementation,

Considering that the development of continuing education for adults corresponds, in all countries, to a need of the present era which is characterized by the increasing rate of historical change and the rapidity of technical progress, to a thirst for justice and to the imperative needs of economic and social development, which demand an ever-increasing number of educated and qualified workers and leaders,

Considering that our era demands that the content of education be scientifically related to life, and that it should contribute, in a spirit of humanism, to the training of modern man and to the mutual knowledge and esteem of peoples and their cultural values and to the strengthening of peace and mutual understanding throughout the world,

Considering that the cultural and social advancement of adults which is necessary in the interests of the individual as well as in those of the nation as a whole, concerns not only those responsible for

education but also, in a very special way, those responsible for enterprises which are conducted in the various sectors of human activity,

Considering the work done by various governmental and non-governmental organizations, both national and international,

Considering the appeal which, in its declaration of 19th November, 1964, the General Conference of Unesco at its thirteenth session addressed to the Governments and peoples of all Member States, to social, cultural and political organizations, to trade unions and voluntary organizations, to men and women of goodwill everywhere, to aid, assist and support a world-wide movement for the eradication of mass illiteracy,

Considering that in spite of similar aspirations, different solutions to the problems of education for literacy and adult education must be found, to suit the conditions, opportunities, traditions and structures of each country,

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

A. Action to Promote Literacy among Adults

1. Bases of preventive and recuperative activity

1) In order to eliminate one of the most regrettable and most striking aspects of inequality in regard to education, two kinds of action are necessary:

- a)* preventive action, which is the only way of ensuring that illiteracy does not perpetuate itself and go on increasing in certain regions;
- b)* parallel recuperative action to make illiterate adults literate.

2) Preventive action, the aim of which is to increase the opportunities of receiving primary education, will have the effect of gradually eliminating the primary cause of illiteracy; it is therefore important to create progressively all the economic, social and legal conditions necessary for the provision and improvement of universal compulsory primary education, for girls as well as for boys, with complete facilities for handicapped and maladjusted children, and for those living in remote areas.

3) Recuperative action must be primarily a responsibility of governments, with all appropriate assistance from non-governmental

organizations, and must take account of differing social, political, economic and linguistic situations, and the particular needs of each country.

II. Preliminary studies and planning

4) All action to combat illiteracy should be preceded by thorough study and objective assessment of present and future needs for the economic, social and cultural development of society; it should relate to such matters as:

a) the number of children to be given schooling at present and in the foreseeable future in order to achieve universal primary education;

b) the present number as well as the age, sex and vocation of the adults who are unable to read and write;

c) the ratio which these illiterates bear to the adult population as a whole;

d) their distribution in the various administrative or geographical districts of the country (with rural and urban population clearly distinguished);

e) the quantitative comparison of the present situation with that which existed at different periods in the past when literacy campaigns were organized;

f) the results already obtained in this field thanks to the literacy work being carried out.

5) These various studies should be supplemented by other research more closely connected with economic, social and educational planning, and showing:

a) the national plan for economic and social development at present in force and those which exist in draft form;

b) the general education plan;

c) the national network of information and communication;

d) the broad outlines of the plan to promote adult literacy;

e) the period contemplated for implementing this plan;

f) the number, nature and scope of the different stages;

g) precise estimates of the funds and staff required;

h) the estimated amount and the sources of internal and external resources available.

6) A well-defined plan for adult literacy should establish closer links than have existed in the past between literacy, continuing education for adults, and plans for economic and social development, with its priorities, and should also be an integral part of the general education plan; even where no formal plan exists, every literacy programme must be based on the general principles of planning (systematic provision for the measures to be taken, economy of time and energy, coordination of activities, etc.).

7) As regards the strategy to be applied in the literacy programme, a country may have to choose between a general mass literacy campaign affecting all types of illiterate persons in the country, and selective and intensive plans linked up with high-priority economic and social development; these latter should provide both education for literacy and elementary vocational and civic training for those illiterate persons who are most highly motivated to learn, while, at the same time, arrangements should be made for the progressive elimination of illiteracy throughout the country as a whole.

8) In countries where a number of different languages are spoken by the population, the government, before launching or extending a literacy programme, may have to decide what language or languages are to be used for literacy in the country as a whole or in particular areas or groups of the population; furthermore, where it is decided to use an unwritten language or a language with a deficient orthography, or lacking written texts, the important task of studying and transcribing the language and preparing basic word lists, grammar and literacy texts must be entrusted to specialized linguists and educators, who must be given sufficient time to carry out this task before the teaching can begin.

9) It must be borne in mind that the success of a literacy programme depends, to a large degree, on the economic and social situation of the adults to whom it is addressed, as well as on the nature and strength of motivation of all kinds: individual, family and social, civic and political, economic and material, emotional, religious and cultural; the conditions which operate on the work and home life of men and women should have a strong influence on functional literacy; therefore literacy programmes should be based on a progressive study of the environment and of factors which determine motivation, in order

to make every citizen conscious of

- a) problems posed by the development of his country,
- b) solutions appropriate to these problems and
- c) his responsibility in regard to national development.

10) Since the proportion of illiterates is higher among women, an important place should be allotted to their literacy education and consequently the necessary conditions should be created to ensure that education for women shall, as soon as possible, be the same and be given under the same conditions as education for men, and to enable women to receive all the knowledge and information needed for their effective cooperation in the life of the community and the nation, as well as for improving the conditions in the home, raising the family's standard of living, and achieving individual and social education.

11) The methods of research and experimentation should be applied also to problems affecting the organization and administration of literacy; for this reason it is desirable, at both the national and the international level, before any action to promote literacy is given general effect, either that it has been tested in pilot projects or that experiments already conducted be taken into account.

III. Organization and financing of literacy

Organization

12) Choice of the authorities to be responsible for organizing literacy should receive special attention and be made in relation not only to the centralized, federal or decentralized type of government prevailing in the country concerned but also to the respective roles played by the various central, regional, provincial or district, and local authorities.

13) While the main responsibility for planning and coordinating the literacy programme may rest with the education authorities, it is necessary that other competent authorities such as ministries responsible for finance, planning, industry, agriculture, health, youth, labour, social affairs, information and communications, as well as political and social organizations, trade unions, etc. should be associated with the work.

14) There must be coordination between the various authorities engaged in providing literacy education for adults; for this purpose

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it may be desirable to consider setting up a special body (a general directorate, committee or council).

15) It will be desirable to create also services, institutes or other establishments which might be responsible as appropriate for:

- a)* the special training and further training of teachers;
- b)* preparation, testing, publication and distribution of teaching aids and reading material;
- c)* education by radio and television;
- d)* study of, and research into, methods and materials and the evaluation of results;
- e)* the production, distribution and utilization of educational films and other audio-visual aids;
- f)* preparation of publications for educators;
- g)* organization of a system of libraries for the newly literate;
- h)* information and documents;
- i)* provision of necessary premises;
- j)* supervision and inspection of courses;
- k)* any other technical or administrative aspect of literacy education.

16) The collaboration of non-governmental organizations is indispensable for adult literacy programmes, whether in organization, implementing or finance.

Financing

17) In view of the magnitude and intensity of the effort required and account being taken of each country's particular characteristics, the financial resources might consist of the following:

- a)* funds allocated to literacy education and adult education in the budgets of the various education authorities (central, regional, provincial or district, and local);
- b)* funds allocated for the same purpose in the budgets of other authorities;
- c)* contributions from economic bodies (public or private enterprises, cooperatives, etc.);

d) the proceeds of functions or activities, whether occasional or regular, organized in favour of the literacy campaign (taxes, special stamps, lotteries, entertainments, etc.);

e) donations;

f) financial assistance furnished from abroad.

18) Careful planning of expenditure is particularly necessary for literacy; every effort should be made

a) to find solutions which will be at the same time effective and economical,

b) to ensure, on the one hand, that there is adequate coordination between various kinds of official action and, on the other hand, that there is no duplication between public and private bodies of various types.

IV. Staff engaged in literacy

19) In view of the special nature of adult literacy work, of the demand for functional literacy, and of the methods and techniques required, the staff engaged must be many and varied; it is increasingly desirable that there should be full-time specialist staff to promote adult literacy; it is also desirable that ordinary teachers be engaged in literacy education, provided that such participation does not render them less effective in their normal teaching duties in the schools; their services may be particularly useful to guide and direct persons not possessing professional qualifications, who may on occasion be responsible for teaching; teachers may do this work voluntarily or they may receive extra pay for it; in certain regions which are less well provided for, it is particularly desirable that women should be specially encouraged to work for literacy.

20) Whenever it seems necessary for people other than school teachers to be engaged, a careful choice should be made without however, discouraging qualified people of goodwill whose help is indispensable; young people, and especially secondary school and other capable students, may be given the chance to participate as volunteer teachers under guidance and after suitable training.

21) Initial and in-service training should be provided for all concerned, whether they be professional or non-professional teachers, men or women; provision must also be made for supervision and for the supply of teaching media.

V. Educational aspects

22) Literacy work with adults must take into account the fact that the adult, unlike the child, is a being already committed to life, with his own opinions, his experience and his knowledge, and his family and social responsibilities; he should therefore be encouraged to share in his own education, and to become an active partner with his teacher; thus conceived, education should, to a great extent, emancipate the adult from the limitations of an unfavourable environment and inadequate development, and enable him to adapt himself to life in the modern world and particularly to the rapid changes taking place in all fields.

23) It is particularly important to devise and apply educational methods which are adapted to adult psychology, to the aims of functional literacy, to the basic knowledge to be acquired, and to various social environments.

24) An effective method of teaching reading and writing to adults should be devised, incorporating the best features of various approaches, suitably based on the structure of the language and vocabulary in common use, and above all aiming to teach them to read from the start with understanding and enjoyment, while acquiring skill in recognizing words and letters, in writing and in simple arithmetic.

25) The method selected must be incorporated in suitable teaching material which may be put together into a literacy kit; this should include well-graded primers and supplementary readers for the students; it should be accompanied by a guide for the teacher and simple visual aids. Indeed no literacy programme can succeed unless steps are taken from the outset to provide various types of teaching material adapted to the needs and interests of particular groups of illiterates.

26) The content of reading, writing, and arithmetic lessons should be focussed on topics which are of immediate concern to the adults: preparation for more productive and better paid work, the improvement of living conditions within the community (health, diet, leisure), personal and social education, as well as topics of importance to the country's development.

27) Literacy programmes should aim to eliminate as rapidly as possible the differences between the newly literate and the individual who has had a primary education; for this purpose all means should be employed to consolidate the achievement of literacy, to prevent

the newly literate adult from reverting to illiteracy or remaining at level at which his ability to communicate remains superficial and prevents any true emancipation; the necessary follow-up action must include the provision of all kinds of reading matter — books, newspapers, periodicals, etc. — appropriate to the new literate's interests and needs, and catering for different levels of skill in reading; it must also include the setting up of reading circles, school and public libraries, and travelling library services, naturally the supply of reading matter which is designed to maintain and develop the new literate's interest and ability in reading must be related to a wide range of activities in continuing education and training which are the subject of the second part of this recommendation.

B. Continuing Education for Adults

VI. Social, cultural and vocational advancement for adults

28) In view of the rapidity of technological, social and political change in the various parts of the world, whatever their degree of development and the state of their economic structure — and the corresponding evolution of ideas and knowledge — a system of continuing education must be developed; it should give to an increasing number of adults, both those who have had the advantage of normal schooling and those whose education is insufficient, the opportunity to fill the gaps in their knowledge, to prepare themselves for the many new tasks which are continually arising, to become actively aware of the characteristics of contemporary life, and to adapt themselves with flexibility and inventiveness to the new values, ideals and ways of living which are associated with a constantly changing society.

29) In order to link adult education with national development plans and to provide for the necessary man-power training, an organization of voluntary further education, beyond the compulsory educational system, should be developed, wherever possible, as an integral part of the general education plan of the country.

30) This adult education should take place both within and outside the formal educational system and should occupy an increasingly important place in the general education plan and in the development plans of every country.

31) The education and social advancement of adults must not be limited to the level of primary education; indeed a movement in favour of equal opportunity for all must give due consideration to the growing need for programmes at the secondary and higher levels;

these will be given in schools and in other institutions as well as in universities and institutes; opportunities must be available in rural areas as well as in towns, and adults should, wherever possible, be able to avail themselves of them while continuing their usual work.

32) Courses for adults may be given in special institutions or evening classes, in schools or in places of work; in areas where appropriate schools or institutions do not exist it may be desirable to make provision for correspondence courses, in certain cases combined with teaching by radio and television so as to make an effective contribution to the cultural and vocational advancement of adults.

33) In addition to activities within the school system, continuing education of adults must also include measures of wider and more general scope, designed to provide an increasing range of educational activities for adults, and to open up opportunities for the acquisition of useful knowledge and practical skills, as well as civic, cultural and moral development; many of these additional opportunities will be provided by agencies other than the national and local educational authorities; they will include measures known under a variety of names in different countries such as mass education fundamental education, social education, popular education, health education, agricultural extension, community development, workers' education etc.; in addition, there should be an extensive range of technical and vocational training as well as adult education through the media of mass communication, radio, television, film, and the press.

VII. Administration and finance

34) Special machinery for administering and executing action in the field of continuing education for adults should be set up whenever necessary; in view of the multiplicity of agencies, official and non-governmental, generally involved in such programmes, this machinery should also include an organization for coordination and promotion to harmonize and streamline the programme and to enlist the efforts of the different agencies, such as voluntary bodies, industrial enterprises and trade unions, teachers' associations, cooperative movements, students', youth and women's organizations; the development of continuing education should be supported by technical services similar to, or the same as, those proposed for literacy.

35) In addition to more formal adult schools established within the educational system, continuing education is likely to require a wide range of programmes and institutions for the out-of-school education of adults, such as popular and workers' universities, adult

education centres, courses provided by voluntary bodies or industrial enterprises, radio forums, film clubs, tele-clubs, public libraries, educational exhibitions and museums.

36) The effective financing of continuing education programmes should draw upon the same resources as are indicated for the financing of literacy, to which may be added, in certain cases, a contribution from the participants.

VIII. Courses, methods, examinations and opportunities

37) Programmes for adults should emphasize the needs and interests of the adult as well as the needs and interests of society; since these programmes deal with the concrete and practical problems of daily life they should generally have recourse to the means of mass education, to modern methods appealing to creative activity; programmes should be conceived so as to establish a relationship between the teaching and the vocational activity of the adult, both present and future, in order to contribute more effectively to his economic and social progress.

38) Since most adults do not have time to spend a large number of years in completing their formal education, an effort should be made to condense the content of the courses of study so that adults can complete the whole programme in a shorter period than in regular schooling, without omitting any essential elements and without prejudicing the attainment of the necessary level of education.

39) Primary education for adults, which may follow or include literacy teaching, should serve for the acquisition of general knowledge necessary for adult life, and for subsequent education and vocational training.

40) In secondary education for adults, either general or vocational and technical, it seems desirable in some instances to condense certain subjects, and to expand others when appropriate or necessary to the needs of maturer adults.

41) Higher education, which should have an important role in adult education, should achieve its purpose first by opening its regular programmes more widely to adult students, and secondly by providing special courses for adults in particular subjects.

42) The broad and varying fields of education for adults and the qualities of its essentially voluntary participants call for the use of the boldest methods and most modern means of communicating

knowledge; to promote adult education effectively, the most competent staff should be employed to the best possible advantage, methods should be enriched, word and picture used harmoniously together with traditional media and new technical media; all experiments of this kind should lead to an assessment of the results obtained; after every new experiment a critical study should be made widely available.

43) Methods used in teaching adults should take into consideration a number of factors, unfavourable as well as favourable: for example

a) the resistance sometimes felt by the adult to the disciplines essential to his education,

b) his unawareness of his own educational needs,

c) extra fatigue and shortage of free time,

d) loss of visual or auditory acuity, and on the other hand *e)* greater maturity and experience of life,

f) more direct motivation for learning where it is immediately related to the improvement of his living conditions,

g) increasing leisure, available as a consequence of social legislation and technical progress.

44) Textbooks and audio-visual materials for adults at the primary school level should be specially prepared taking account of the adults' age and experience and of the knowledge which they need to acquire; for those at the secondary school level it may be necessary for reasons of economy to make use of educational material employed in ordinary classes, though, where possible, consideration should be given to the preparation of special materials for adult students; reading materials and audio-visual media should be developed for various types of adult education and extension programmes.

45) Programmed instruction materials, which can be used with or without teaching machines, are particularly suitable for adults; in this new field important experiments have been carried out with positive results; the high cost of producing programmed materials calls for co-ordinated effort; information and critical studies should be exchanged so as to facilitate research in different countries and an international index of available materials should be established.

46) In order to provide the fullest possible opportunities for adults

in areas remote from educational facilities, secondary and higher education establishments should conduct correspondence courses; these may make use of programmed materials and may, where appropriate, be reinforced by radio and television broadcasts and by travelling lecturers and tutors, as well as by periods of full-time study in residential centres or in the institution which organizes the course.

47) The design of courses and preparation of material must be preceded by systematic inquiry leading to objective knowledge of the environment and needs of the adults concerned; methods also must be based on research successfully applied in other countries; books and other materials for mass education should especially be based on research designed to discover the interests and existing knowledge of the readers, and experimental studies to determine the suitability of content and style.

48) Whatever the nature of examinations or tests, provision should be made for adults who attend various types of schools (general or technical) to obtain certificates or diplomas identical with, or equivalent to, those granted in ordinary primary or secondary schools; provided the adult courses permit the attainment of equivalent standards, these certificates should confer on the students the right to continue their studies; adult students who do not complete their courses should be encouraged to resume their studies and obtain their diplomas, even after an interruption; and those who do not eventually obtain diplomas should be given certificates of attendance.

49) The competent authorities in each country should adopt the following measures, in the public and private sectors, to facilitate the access of adults to education:

- a)* elimination of enrolment, tuition and examination fees;
- b)* establishment of time-tables compatible with hours of work and family activities;
- c)* adaptation or reduction of working hours;
- d)* paid leave during studying and examination periods for adults employed in public or private enterprises;
- e)* free or cheap travel on public transport to study and examination centres;
- f)* free issue or loan of textbooks and other necessary supplies;
- g)* award of scholarships or grants;

h) prizes and scholarships offered to those who improve their qualifications by study and training;

i) protective or encouraging provisions in the labour laws, for example to guarantee the right of attendance at courses in centres of instruction without risk of dismissal or of forfeiting promotion.

IX. Teaching staff

50) In general, the following types of teachers may be engaged in adult education:

a) specialist full-time adult education teachers, as an ideal to be pursued;

b) for adult courses at primary and secondary levels, certificated teachers engaged in the ordinary school system;

c) a variety of specialists, such as engineers, agronomists, doctors social workers, and students, who are particularly useful in making adult education broader and more functional;

d) volunteers with the necessary level of education and experience.

51) All types of teachers employed should receive special training to give them an awareness of the psychology and social, professional and educational needs of adults; full-time adult educators should be given special training in appropriate centres and institutions at secondary and higher levels; regular school teachers should receive pre-service and in-service training; teacher-training establishments should include adult education theory and practice, as appropriate, in their programmes; for specialists and volunteers, arrangements must be made to give them sufficient knowledge of the psychology of adults and of the teaching methods suited to them.

52) It is necessary to give proper status, promotion and remuneration to full-time adult educators; where circumstances permit, regular teachers and specialists engaged on a part-time basis should receive appropriate rewards or remuneration; the participation of volunteers should be specially encouraged by appropriate recognition of their services.

53) Provision must be made for the supervision of adult education classes, which should provide helpful advice and guidance on techniques and methods to be used and lead to the evaluation of results.

C. International Collaboration

54) Countries should use all their efforts to mobilize local and national resources in order to fight more effectively against illiteracy and to develop adult education- the magnitude and the urgency of the task, however, demand that international cooperation be broadened on the intellectual, financial and technical planes.

55) This ever-increasing international collaboration should take the form of exchanges of experience and documentation, comparison of studies made and results obtained, exchanges of experts, in particular between countries which speak the same language and have common problems, and, where necessary, the setting up of regional funds.

56) The total effort required in the field of literacy and adult education may considerably exceed the resources of some countries, so that international cooperation is indispensable. This cooperation should take the form of increased participation by the United Nations, its specialized agencies, and international financing organizations, by the conclusion of bilateral or multilateral agreements, and by action undertaken on a regional or world-wide basis.

57) International assistance may include:

a) material and equipment, such as paper, printing equipment, books, audio-visual aids, radio and television equipment, and transport,

b) scholarships, fellowships, and travel grants for training abroad,

c) experts capable of working in close collaboration with national specialists in such tasks as organizing literacy and adult education programmes, preparing educational materials and audio-visual aids and training specialists, inspectors and teachers, and

d) the printing of textbooks for adults, at the request of the State concerned.

D. Implementation of the Present Recommendation

58) In anticipation of the World Campaign against Illiteracy envisaged by the United Nations, States should organize from now on, and for as long as necessary, their struggle against illiteracy and should develop appropriate adult education programmes, following the principles set out in the first part of this recommendation.

59) It is important that the text of this recommendation be given wide publicity by Ministries of Education and other competent ministries, educational authorities, educational documentation centres, national and international associations concerned, etc.; the educational press, both official and private, should play a large part in bringing the recommendation to the notice of all interested services, the administrative and teaching staff, the trade unions, cooperatives, and other professional organizations, and the general public.

60) Unesco regional centres, with the cooperation 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 each region.

61) International, educational, cultural and social organizations interested in literacy and adult education are also invited to take account of this recommendation.

62) All interested States are invited to set up national committees, under the highest possible authority, to study the present recommendation, in order to facilitate its application to their particular needs and to plan its implementation.

63) In countries where it seems necessary, the Ministries concerned 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 desirable, 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.