

**RECOMMENDATION No. 65**  
**TO THE MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION**  
**concerning**  
**THE STUDY OF ENVIRONMENT IN SCHOOL**  
(1968)

The International Conference on Public Education,

Convened in Geneva by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and by the International Bureau of Education, having assembled on the first of July, nineteen hundred and sixty-eight for its thirty-first session, adopts on the tenth of July nineteen hundred and sixty-eight, the following Recommendation.

The Conference,

Considering that children and adolescents grow up and develop in a specific geographical area, during a given historical period and within communities which have their own characteristics, and that these factors cannot fail to influence their up-bringing, their education and their social behaviour,

Considering, further, that at the present time the multiplicity and power of information media together with the ease and frequency with which journeys and exchanges can be made, extend the environment well beyond the child's immediate surroundings and that this awakens his interest and makes him aware of prospects unknown to previous generations,

Considering that one of the essential aims of education is to develop scientific methods of observation and experiment, that the analytic spirit is the outstanding feature of modern culture and that an active attitude promotes understanding of the realities of life in the world of today,

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Considering that the study of environment should inspire respect for and love of nature, its variety and its splendour, of regional traditions, legends and beliefs, historical monuments and the entire heritage of the past,

Considering that the study of environment is becoming an increasingly important factor among efforts to adjust education to the needs of society and the pupils' interests,

Considering the obstacles, such as lack of documentation, as well as of ability and initiative on the teachers' part, which hamper the study of environment at every level,

Considering the wide scope of the research activities related to the knowledge of environment and ecology provided for in Unesco's draft programme and budget for 1969-1970, and particularly the launching of a programme entitled "Man and his Environment,"

Considering that some children are still deprived by natural phenomena, various forms of oppression contrary to the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration of Human Rights, or by other circumstances of a fair chance to obtain a modern education,

Taking into account the relationship which exists between the aims of the present Recommendation and those of recommendations previously adopted by International Conferences on Public Education especially Recommendation No. 18 concerning the teaching of geography in secondary schools, adopted in 1939, Recommendation No. 26 concerning the teaching of geography and international understanding, adopted in 1949, Recommendation No. 27 concerning the introduction to natural science in primary schools, adopted in 1949, Recommendation No. 35 concerning the teaching of natural science in secondary schools, adopted in 1952, and Recommendation No. 63 concerning health education in primary schools, adopted in 1967,

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

### **Conception and Aim of the Study of Environment**

1) Environment should be understood as all that is external to the human being, the more or less immediate surroundings—all the activities and influences which affect him and to which he reacts (the forces and activities of nature and of the climate, of life in urban in rural areas, the family, school, moral and social backgrounds, the

circumstances and events) and which are brought to his knowledge through the various means of information available to him.

2) Environment also includes the heritage of the past: usages, customs and traditions; literature and history; law; scientific discoveries and their applications, the material and intellectual works of the forbears who have enriched the heritage of mankind by creating lasting cultural wealth: The religious and ethical heritage constitutes an environmental factor of the first importance.

3) Today, environment is no longer confined to personal experience and everyday life. The variety, multiplicity and speed of the various means of communication have widened human environment until it includes the whole world.

4) The concept of environment also encompasses the aims of society, the evolution of which man is attempting to direct.

5) It thus becomes apparent that knowledge of environment is an important, necessary and complex subject; going beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge, it becomes one of the essential factors in general upbringing as well as of education for international understanding.

6) The study of environment cannot be limited to one particular subject, nor to a group of educational practices. It is rather a continuing method of approach, intended to prepare young people to adjust themselves to the conditions which life holds in store for them and to incite them to do their utmost to improve them. -Consequently, the modern objective of the study of environment should be the understanding of this environment and its various constituents through the active and gradual acquisition of the relevant knowledge and ideas according to the intellectual capacity and interests of the various ages and by the use of suitable methods and means.

7) From the educational standpoint, the study of environment should provide:

*a)* a concrete basis for the various phases of learning;

*b)* elementary scientific training through practice in objective observation, in the analytic mode of thought, in the discovery method, in reflexion and judgment;

*c)* active participation in the acquisition of elementary knowledge, then of the specialized subjects which will later be dealt with at school;

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*d)* a better knowledge of man's habitat, and the interaction between man and his physical environment.

8) Having regard to the rapid growth in population and ever-increasing industrialization, the study of environment should awaken and strengthen a love of nature, a desire to help to preserve it and protect its resources to increase these resources by means of work and to use them wisely with a view to making them meet requirements and improve living conditions.

9) From the standpoint of education, the study of environment should help to: a) inspire respect for and love of nature; b) reinforce the link between intellectual and manual work;

*c)* prepare the young people for their future responsibilities through a better understanding of the conditions and possibilities of existence in a rapidly changing world;

*d)* bring the school environment and the family and social background closer together;

*e)* integrate the child—whether normal or handicapped—into his immediate surroundings and the adolescent into a broader cultural and economic environment;

*f)* improve the spirit of the class by establishing closer relationships between teacher and pupils, based on co-operation and comradeship;

*g)* mould future vocations by the discovery of bent and aptitudes revealed in the course of various activities;

*h)* lead youth to a better understanding of the ideal of international solidarity and of the serious problems of today's world, and thus contribute to a recognition by individuals and groups of their responsibilities towards these problems.

10) It is desirable that the study of the environment should:

*a)* pay special attention to the problems of urban environments in order to protect their inhabitants against the dangers which threaten them, for example: pollution of water and the atmosphere;

*b)* make the rural child aware of the possibilities and the difficulties of the in the countryside and of the need for its inhabitants to make a positive contribution towards improving their standard of living.

### **Syllabuses, Methods and Teaching Aids**

11) A sound knowledge of the environment and of the relationship of man to it should be the basic consideration in the establishment of syllabuses. These should be drawn up with due regard to the need to facilitate a smooth transition from attitudes based on tradition to those demanded by science and technology, while respecting the specific conditions of different communities.

12) Study and knowledge of the environment should be approached through active methods, taking full advantage of the abilities of pupils and the teacher and of the conditions in which they are used within the framework of the curriculum for their classes. They should result in interdisciplinary activities in order to permit a wide range of accomplishments.

13) Exercises in observation carried out by teams or by individual children, by themselves or under guidance, awaken their desire to know and to understand.

14) Drawing and music, painting and games, the "living corner" in the classroom, are all activities suitable for arousing schoolchildren's interest in their surroundings and making them want to know more about them.

15) The study of the district or the village, guided visits to museums public buildings, farms, factories, etc. will be promoted as far as possible.

16) Sufficient time should be set aside for educational walks and excursions and schoolchildren of various ages should even be given the possibility of living for a certain time in another natural and social environment: classes in the snow, by the sea and in the mountains, pupil's camps, attended by children and adolescents from different areas or countries, where they can study the environment directly and systematically.

17) Inter-school correspondence, loans of books, exchanges of documents, school magazines, and local products with classes in other regions of other countries should be encouraged as a contribution to the knowledge of a different environment and to the development of international understanding.

18) In general, semi- and extra-scholastic activities which can give rise to the study and knowledge of the environment should be exploited for this purpose by the teachers who supervise them.

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19) Audio-visual aids, including radio and television broadcasts, are particularly useful supplements to the study of the immediate or more distant environment. Sufficient funds should be allotted to enable them to be developed and to make them more widely available to schools.

20) Encouragement should be given to the production of textbooks and readers dealing with, and likely to develop interest in and knowledge of the environment.

21) Independently of such local resources as the teacher may find or create on his own initiative, it is essential that teachers and pupils should be provided with the necessary material, documentation and instruments for their information, observations and experiments. The regional and central education authorities, in collaboration with teachers' associations, should encourage the creation of centres for educational information and for the distribution of technical material adequate for requirements.

22) It is desirable that school co-operatives and clubs (Unesco clubs) should be developed and that closer relations should be established between the schools and youth movements, experience gained there and the activities in which the children take part help to develop the pupils' civic and community spirit in the widest sense of the term. In this connexion, young people should be encouraged to take part in social service programmes, in practical work and community development, as well as in endeavours to beautify the environment.

### **Teaching Staff**

23) The value and efficiency of the study and knowledge of environment depend, in the first place, on the teachers' ability, their information, their interest in this teaching and their preparation for it. In the course of their professional training, they should be informed of the objectives which are proposed to them and introduced to the active methods which the study of environment demands.

24) Such training should include for all teachers a knowledge of the rudiments of ecology and the methodology of teaching about environment during lessons on various subjects. Teachers should also be informed of the psychological and sociological problems with which their pupils may be faced in adjusting to a rapidly changing environment.

25) Education authorities should make every provision for further teacher training: organization of courses, conferences, practical work

days, information camps; easy access to libraries, museums, exhibitions, etc. Study tours or visits to other parts of the country or abroad, by means of grants or possibly on an exchange basis, allow for specialization in the different fields of knowledge of the environment.

### **Implementation of the Present Recommendation**

26) It is important that the text of the present Recommendation be given wide publicity by Ministries of Education and educational authorities in teacher training centres, centres for educational information and teaching material, by international and national teachers' federations, parent-teacher associations, etc. The educational press, both official and private, should play a large part in making the Recommendation known among the services concerned, the administrative and teaching staff, and the general public.

27) Unesco and other competent international organizations are invited to facilitate, with the collaboration of the Ministries of Education of the countries concerned, the examination of the present Recommendation on a national or regional basis with a view to its implementation in accordance with the characteristics of each region.

28) Ministries of Education and other competent authorities are invited to examine forthwith the present Recommendation in relation to the de jure and de facto situations and the ethnic and cultural conditions of their respective countries, for the purpose of implementing in a creative manner its provisions where they are not yet in force, and to adapt them as far as necessary to the various national situations.