

RECOMMENDATION No. 67
TO THE MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION
concerning
THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF STUDENTS AND THEIR
CHANCE OF SUCCESS AT SCHOOL

(1971)

Preamble

The International Conference on Education, convened in Geneva by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, having assembled for its thirty-third session, adopts the following Recommendation:

The Conference,

Considering the objectives of Unesco as contained in Article X/ 2b of its Constitution with reference to equality of opportunity for education,

Considering Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948),

Considering the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959),

Considering the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education, adopted by the General Conference of Unesco at its eleventh session (1960),

Considering the Recommendation concerning Technical and Vocational Education, adopted by the General Conference of Unesco at its twelfth session (1962),

Considering the Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Co-operation, adopted by the General Conference of Unesco at its fourteenth session (1966),

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Considering the Recommendations of the International Conference on Educational Planning held in Paris in 1968,

Considering the relevant recommendations adopted by the International Conference on Education at its various sessions,

Considering that any educational system should not only give everybody the right to education but should also promote equality of educational opportunity,

Considering that the need for equality of educational opportunity is a principle of social justice and fundamental human rights,

Considering the objective needs for quantitative increase and qualitative improvement of educational standards for all children,

Considering that, despite similarity in their aims and aspirations countries' strategies and criteria may differ, particularly between technically advanced and developing countries,

Considering that democratization of education embodies political, socio-economic and cultural policy decisions aimed at reducing and eventually eliminating inequalities in educational opportunity,

Considering that the social background of pupils can give rise to serious disparities in their access to primary and secondary education affect their school results and prevent many adolescents from receiving the vocational training that their abilities warrant,

Considering that all the potential abilities of youth must be used if the economic and social development of society is to be secured,

Considering that, in the last analysis, all measures to ensure equality of opportunity can but increase the efficacy of educational systems,

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

Basic Principles

I) The measures to be taken to ensure equality of educational opportunity should be examined in the light of the following principles:

a) the social and economic structure of societies and the

economic, social and cultural policies of governments directly affect each person's educational opportunities;

b) inequality may be related to the complex and usually overlapping and interacting effects of numerous factors whose magnitude and nature vary from one country to another. They may be classified under the following heads:

- (i) the social structure of societies the socio-economic characteristics of the environment, the socio-economic background of the pupils (the occupation of parents, family income, living conditions, state of health, etc.);
- (ii) social and cultural factors (educational standard of parents, cultural level of the environment, mother tongue, the status of ethnic and linguistic minorities, religious beliefs, and influence of certain traditions, etc.);
- (iii) geographical and demographic factors (place of residence, density of population and its distribution over the territory, density of school network, transport, etc.);
- (iv) educational factors (structure of the school system, language of instruction, curricula, methods, evaluation and examinations, attitude and competence of teachers, etc.);
- (v) the pupil's perception of his place and opportunities in the school system;
- (vi) the level of psychological development of children;

c) since little is known, in most cases, about the effect of these various factors, interdisciplinary research and surveys must be undertaken in order to determine the part they play and the magnitude of each of them and also to find how they interact. These studies, surveys and research should not prevent immediate action whereupon gradual corrections leading to new effective solutions would represent economy in time and resources.

2) Educational planning should be conceived as an organic part of overall national planning. Within it, provision should be made for various measures to promote equality of opportunity and to ensure access to schools of all types at all levels equally for boys and girls and for children in urban and rural areas. They should be properly co-ordinated; priorities should be fixed according to the particular

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resources, needs, and facilities of local, regional, and national environments.

3) While, in the last resort, equality of opportunity is to a large extent a consequence of the social and economic structure of society, improvements in curricula, methods and teacher training should be sought with a view to promoting equality of opportunity within the educational system.

Measures to promote Equality of Educational Opportunity

Structure and general organization of education

4) The structure of an educational system should take account of the effect of the pupils' social background on their school careers and subsequently on their adjustment to the society as a whole and to working life. In this connexion, social, educational and vocational guidance should be further developed. Studies should be undertaken to determine measures most appropriate to take advantage of any positive factors inherent in the condition of underprivilege and to compensate for the adverse affects.

5) In this connexion, the education children receive before they enter the primary school appears to be of the utmost importance. It is therefore important to provide or to develop pre-primary education and to make it accessible to all children, both in country areas and in cities, especially in association with development programmes. Thus all children would be enabled to make an equal start in their studies.

6) If economic considerations make it difficult to provide or develop this form of education, the organization, curriculum and methods of the primary school during the first two years should take account of that situation.

7) In order to avoid disparities in access to secondary education not only the conditions of admission but also the whole organization of education at this level should be reviewed. A study should be made of the advisability of modifying the structure to secure greater flexibility and easier passage of pupils.

8) Secondary education, general and vocational, full- or part-time, should be open to every pupil, according to his age, ability and aptitudes, and the manpower needs of his country. The organization

of these types of education should therefore be flexible and diversified, so as to reduce the number of pupils who receive no training at all and to facilitate for girls the access to technical studies at the secondary and higher level. Multipurpose educational and cultural centres should also be established at this level, where necessary and feasible.

9) Whatever the organization of the school system, some individuals will not obtain the education and training most suited to their abilities and to the needs of society. Therefore, in the effort to provide life-long education for all, it is necessary to meet neglected needs, especially through the maximum utilization of facilities already available

The school zoning map

10) Disparity in access to education at all levels is closely related to the distribution of the various types of school throughout the country. The density of the school network should be examined and provision should be made where necessary for the establishment of new educational and cultural centres, planned so as to develop and enrich the cultural life of the community.

11) In those parts of a country which are difficult of access education facilities should be provided through all appropriate means for children in isolated areas.

Rôle of the community

12) Until such time as all countries can realize the objective of universal and free education, provisions should be made by governments, where necessary, to meet partially or fully, the cost of the following:

- a) school fees;
- b) books, materials and apparatus for use in schools;
- c) school meals;
- d) transport for pupils travelling long distances;
- e) boarding schools.

13) Costs not covered by the above measures (children's upkeep, loss of their earnings, etc.) should be offset by grants and

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scholarships, and it is important to simplify the administrative formalities for their award, to inform parents about them and to make more funds available for them, so that more of the underprivileged members of the community may benefit from them.

14) The prominent influence exerted by the community and the environment on the family and in effect on equality of access to education should be recognized. However, due regard should be given to the existing influences of all cultural groups within the community, to their different levels of development and to the composite value systems which tend to create differences in goals and methods. The community (institutions, socio-cultural organizations, enterprises, etc.) should be encouraged to place a high value on education and to take an active interest in promoting the equality of educational opportunity. In particular, it is desirable that parents should be called upon to participate in the cultural development of the community and to collaborate regularly with the school and keep in constant touch with it.

Curricula and methods

15) A critical examination of the content of curricula should be made, with a view to adapting them to the aspirations, needs and abilities of all children, especially of the disadvantaged.

16) The wide variations in individual learning and achievement characteristics, as well as in social background and motivation, must be matched by an appropriate range of resources in the school for guidance and teaching. In the impending cybernetic era, specific knowledge and skills may not be of greater importance than general problem-solving and information processing skills, skills in managing human relations and the non-violent resolution of conflict. The adaptation of curricula to these ends, and towards fostering wisdom, compassion and humaneness is a rising priority.

17) Providing social and vocational guidance should be considered as of great importance in alleviating disadvantages in background.

Teachers

18) Teacher trainees and serving teachers should have an opportunity to study the various components of the social

background and their influence on the child's school career. It is desirable that some teachers should be specially trained to teach socially disadvantaged children and that the special needs of socially disadvantaged and handicapped children should figure in the training course of all teachers. To this end, they should receive adequate psycho-pedagogical and sociological training.

19) Teachers should also be capable of organizing the cultural activities of the community.

20) In order to improve and intensify co-operation between school and family, the school should be able to enlist the assistance of social workers and other specialists trained to establish contacts with disadvantaged sections of the community. The school should initiate and participate in social work programmes and in the education of parents.

21) In this connexion, teachers should be trained to organize their classes for learning purposes in small groups or to develop various forms of attention to small groups so that the needs of individual children can be adequately met. In this they should be supported by students in training or specially trained auxiliaries or aides.

22) It is important that the various measures mentioned in the above paragraphs should be applied at all levels of education. In particular, they should be intensified at the beginning of the primary school course and when pupils begin their secondary education.

23) Special attention should also be given to the training of teachers for vocational education, with due emphasis on methods of teaching pupils from disadvantaged sections of the community.

24) Every attention should be paid to the recruitment, selection and allocation of good teachers to work in disadvantaged areas, and every inducement should be given to them. Every effort should be made to reduce staff changes in such areas to a minimum.

25) Close teacher-pupil relationship should be encouraged at all educational levels, and the utmost attention should be given to the development of a joint sense of responsibility among teachers, pupils and parents.

26) Specific training for higher-level personnel and teachers engaged in adult education should be systematically organized.

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Emphasis should be placed on the need to evolve methods suitable for this type of education and on the nature of relations between teachers and the adults being taught. The adults should assume part of the responsibility for their own education.

Educational innovation and development

27) Innovation is desirable at all levels of education, especially to help bridge the gap between the cultural life of disadvantaged areas and that of the school. Accordingly, research and experiments should be undertaken in order to determine which methods are the most effective, the various needs of the region and the community concerned, so as to take into account the characteristics of each.

28) Plans and strategies to increase the educational value of the mass media, private or public, both for children and for parents, should be prepared forthwith.

29) The reform and overall planning of education should take into account the results of experimentation on the democratization of education.

30) The variables which appear to affect the school performance of the child are complex and may differ from one society to another. As still little is known about these variables and their effects, further thorough research and surveys should be undertaken.

31) Research and studies on the social background of pupils should be co-ordinated with those of other services concerned, taking into account the intellectual, moral and social development of children and adolescents.

32) It is felt necessary to conduct studies on the complexities of a particular community (population migration trends, influence of traditions, linguistic problems, etc.) to help overcome existing educational difficulties.

International co-operation

33) International co-operation is an important prerequisite for achieving the above objectives, within the framework of the goals of the Second Development Decade, as quoted in resolution 9.11 adopted by the General Conference at its sixteenth session.

34) International bodies, and particularly Unesco, should be

invited to accord greater attention to the problems resulting from the effect of the social background on schooling, by:

a) continuing their normative action in favour of educational opportunity, with special reference to girls' education;

b) promoting studies which will reveal the nature and gravity of the problem;

c) co-ordinating and supporting action-oriented research in Member States which aims at rendering the educational system more responsive to community and individual needs;

d) encouraging within Member States, regionally and internationally, the collection, reviewing and summarizing, and dissemination of research information relevant to various stages of educational democratization and the improvement of educational opportunity, for the benefit of governments, educationists, teachers and ultimately of children throughout the world. Attention must be given to the establishment of a more active system of exchange of information on research taking into account existing systems at the regional level;

e) encouraging, both on a bilateral and on a multilateral basis, qualitatively as well as quantitatively, at the international level, the continuation of, and increase in, basic material aid in certain specific areas, such as: the supply of food and textbooks to children, the building of boarding schools, of rural schools, etc.

35) The regional institutions should give due regard to streamlining their efforts, on a regional basis, with the specific purpose of helping each other solve similar problems, bearing upon reciprocal influences, which might in one way or another affect the recognition and implementation of the concept of democratization of educational institutions.

36) In view of the immensity of the problems faced by developing countries and of the fact that many of them may not be able to carry out the necessary studies, experiments and projects, a concerted international effort is required including:

a) more generous efforts, financial and technical, on the part of the technically advanced countries;

b) provision, at the international level and particularly by the technically advanced countries, to enable the developing countries

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to draw upon the experience of the more technically advanced countries;

c) studies to be undertaken by or sponsored by Unesco, particularly the IBE, in collaboration with other international and regional agencies on education in order to enable developing countries to evolve a more democratic policy for the intake of children into available places in institutions, to develop and improve methods of selection and identification and to achieve a better knowledge of capacity of children for further education;

d) assistance of Unesco in facilitating the planning and execution of collaboration between Member States in the planning and conduct of research programmes designed to determine:

- (i) the nature of the relationship between social conditions and academic achievement;
- (ii) which of these relationships have high pedagogical relevancy;
- (iii) what is the relative plasticity of the component units of these relationships as well as the relationships themselves;
- (iv) by what mechanisms and in which direction must these relationships be modified to optimize development toward what ends with particular emphasis on the improvement of content and methods;

e) assistance of Unesco in the training, in appropriate institutions, of educational research workers, educational administrators, planners, counsellors and other workers.

37) The Conference recommends that Unesco (IBE) work out a basic methodology for guiding the complex research to be undertaken and facilitating international co-operation in this field.