

Final Report

**International Conference
on Education
40th Session**

**Geneva
2-11 December 1986**

UNESCO

**International Bureau
of Education**

PART IV

A. RECOMMENDATION NO. 75 TO THE MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION CONCERNING THE IMPROVEMENT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION: OBJECTIVES, STRUCTURES, CONTENT AND METHODS

PREAMBLE

The International Conference on Education, convened by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, meeting in Geneva at its 40th session, held from the second to the eleventh of December, nineteen hundred and eighty-six,

Having regard to the relevant conventions, recommendations and declarations adopted at the international level, and more particularly by Unesco,

Noting that universal recognition of education as a fundamental right for individuals and a prerequisite for social progress has led over the last two decades to the unprecedented growth of education throughout the world, particularly at the secondary and higher levels,

Recalling that the Convention and Recommendation against Discrimination in Education adopted by the General Conference of Unesco at its eleventh session stipulate that secondary education, in its different forms, should be made generally available and accessible to all,

Recognizing that each Member State has its distinctive constitutional features and its particular educational needs and arrangements,

Emphasizing that secondary education should contribute both to the full and all-round development of the individual and to his or her preparation for cultural, social and economic life, and wishing to strengthen, and to seek new forms of, co-operation in education,

Recognizing the importance of relevant secondary education as a contributory factor to faster cultural, socio-economic, scientific and technological development in all contemporary societies,

Recalling that Recommendation No. 68 adopted by the International Conference on Education at its 34th session called on Member States to reorganize secondary education by transcending its traditional academic emphasis and by associating general, technical and vocational education in one balanced, harmonious and flexibly diversified system,

Noting that the process of bringing together and sometimes of grouping together general education and vocational education has manifested itself in a great number of Member States,

Noting also that during the last decade, secondary education was subject to profound reforms which have affected its structures and curricula, and reaffirming the importance of strengthening the interrelations between the various levels of education,

Recognizing that rapid scientific, technological and social developments present new challenges which call for the improvement of secondary education in order to meet the present and future needs of individuals and society,

Believing that the clearly defined goals and objectives of secondary education, derived from the national objectives of education, and their review in the light of changing circumstances and needs constitute significant steps towards the improvement of secondary education,

Recognizing that the essential prerequisites for the improvement of secondary education embrace suitable initial and continuing training of teaching staff, the availability and

proper management of physical resources, the updating of curricula and programmes, textbooks and teaching aids, and the development of appropriate forms and methods of education,

Adopts on 11 December 1986 and submits for consideration by the ministries responsible for education and the appropriate authorities and agencies in the various Member States, institutions within the United Nations system having responsibilities in this field, and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned, the following Recommendation:

A. GENERAL PRINCIPLES AND KEY CONCEPTS

1. Secondary education is a phase of education during which young people are led to become independent, responsible adults. It is during this period that the young acquire the knowledge and skills needed to prepare them for life in all its aspects.
2. The improvement of secondary education should be seen in the perspective of life-long education. The organization of secondary education should be flexible enough to provide continuity and complementarity between institutions which are elements of the formal general and vocational secondary school system and institutions and programmes outside this system, as well as providing an opportunity for continuation or re-entry into secondary education for those who left it earlier or who never had a chance to enter secondary education.
3. The choice of objectives, structures, content and methods in secondary education should be guided by the following general principles and key concepts:
 - (a) promoting the all-round and harmonious development of the individual by providing the conditions needed for his or her intellectual, moral, physical, aesthetic and social education and preparation for life in society, and educating the young generations in the spirit of peace, international understanding, co-operation and mutual respect;
 - (b) encouraging the participation of the entire population in the development strategy of secondary education, either directly or through the intermediary of the bodies responsible for educational management, including cultural or scientific institutions;
 - (c) offering each individual real equality of opportunity and the greatest possible chances of success;
 - (d) meeting the needs of cultural, socio-economic, scientific and technological development and taking account of distinctive national characteristics; respecting, in the case of territories still under foreign occupation, the right of the populations of these territories to an education adapted to their needs. Their national and cultural identities must be preserved and national school curricula should not be modified in such a way as would distort that identity;
 - (e) ensuring the high quality of instruction and education, which should be regarded as the main task in the circumstances of rapid quantitative growth in secondary education and of its universalization;
 - (f) regularly evaluating, reviewing and adjusting curricula, textbooks, methods and teaching-learning processes with a view to improving the quality of education, keeping pace with rapid scientific and technological progress and the resulting developments in knowledge and know-how, and producing individuals who can, through self-directed learning, orientate themselves in changing industrial, agricultural and social processes and who may themselves promote such changes and progress in society and take an active part in them;
 - (g) clarifying the objectives, structure, content, forms and methods of secondary education in a continuous process of reflection;
 - (h) using in the educational and training process approaches and technologies corresponding to those existing in the society, due regard being paid to the need to incorporate modern scientific and technological achievements;
 - (i) developing and updating science and technology teaching and encouraging an interdisciplinary approach in that type of education, bearing in mind also the need to intensify students' humanistic education with a view to ensuring their harmonious development;

- (j) taking into consideration the fundamental role of general education while promoting closer links between general education and technical and vocational education, with a particular view to enhancing the status of the latter;
- (k) closely interlinking the education imparted by schools themselves with the many resources offered by the out-of-school environment ;
- (l) promoting interaction between education and work in accordance with general principles, programmes and measures such as those set forth in Recommendation No. 73 adopted by the International Conference on Education at its 38th session;
- (m) putting into practice as far as possible the principles set forth in the other recommendations on secondary education adopted by the International Conference on Education.

B. PRACTICAL MEASURES AND PROGRAMMES AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

4. National education policies should favour and, whenever necessary, give priority to the improvement of secondary education through:
 - (a) continuous reflection on the objectives of secondary education with a view to improvement;
 - (b) adoption of legislative, administrative, financial, social and educational measures to ensure the further democratization of secondary education and the improvement of its objectives, content, structures and methods;
 - (c) re-examination of the share devoted to secondary education within the total expenditure on education;
 - (d) reinforcement of educational provisions for disadvantaged groups of the population and regions of the country, and development of special measures at the planning and implementation levels such as a better distribution of schools to reach rural and suburban areas;
 - (e) ensuring equal rights to secondary education for migrants and national minorities, while enabling them to maintain links with their culture of origin and their mother tongue, in particular by teaching in those subjects;
 - (f) appropriate provision for the education of handicapped young people, including theoretical and practical teacher training;
 - (g) development and improvement of secondary technical and vocational education, especially in relation to the changing requirements for qualified manpower brought about by the challenges of science and technology and national development;
 - (h) establishment or development of evening courses outside school time and outside the formal education system and of distance-teaching programmes (for example by correspondence, by radio or by television);
 - (i) introduction of measures to motivate and stimulate young people and adults to acquire a secondary education in society, in industrial and agricultural enterprises and in the family;
 - (j) to promote greater access for girls and women to scientific studies and to technical and vocational secondary education and encourage them, through appropriate measures, to pursue their studies particularly in those fields which enable them to participate in all sectors of the national economy.
5.
 - (a) Appropriate mechanisms should be established or further developed to promote an optimal use of available resources, in particular to ensure greater continuity and complementarity between the different types of secondary education.
 - (b) In addition, training in educational management, for middle-level staff at local and institutional levels in particular, could be promoted.
6. As part of the general improvement of secondary education, in-depth examination of the existing structures is required. Whenever necessary, practical measures should be taken, in order:
 - (a) to ensure that structures are better adapted to the country's cultural socio-economic, scientific and technical development;

- (b) to develop overall structures, institutions and cycles most conducive to achieving the national goals and objectives for secondary education and in harmony with the current trend of rapprochement between general and technical/vocational education.
7. Educational structures should be developed in a sufficiently flexible manner so as:
 - (a) to be able to respond to changing societal needs while maintaining continuity and coherence and providing equal opportunity of access and the greatest possible chances of success;
 - (b) to provide, by appropriate procedures, for the possibility of transfer from one type of course or kind of education to another, thereby making it easier for students to have access to alternatives as they proceed;
 - (c) to permit the integration of education, science, culture and production and provide for continuous linkage of education and work;
 - (d) to improve examination and assessment techniques, the latter being considered as an integral part of the teaching-learning process, with a view to continuous monitoring of the progress and results achieved by students in relation to the objectives of the course;
 - (e) to design referral and selection procedures in such a way that they are entirely non-discriminatory.
 8. The process of improvement of secondary education should lead to a substantial raising of the scientific level of the whole content of secondary education, which should be forward-looking and should be in line with the achievements and requirements of social, scientific and technological progress in order to provide the conditions for new professional qualifications connected with the mastering of integrated technologies.
 9. A balanced secondary curriculum is essential for the all-round personal development of students and their personal aptitudes and interests should also be catered for. Continuous curriculum appraisal and renewal are essential to avoid overloading and imbalance. The subjects taught should include languages, mathematics, natural sciences, technology and social science studies. Provision should be made for cultural, moral, spiritual aesthetic and physical education and for education related to new ways of thinking for the nuclear and space age. These components should prepare students for life and work in society in general. The content of secondary education should highlight the cultural and intellectual tradition of each country. It should also be directed to the strengthening of respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and peoples' rights; it should promote peace, international understanding and friendship among all nations; it should counter racial segregation and discrimination on grounds of race, sex or religion.
 10. Curricula should be developed through a broad process of research, evaluation and consultation, involving teachers, teachers' organizations, parents, students and representatives of various sectors of cultural and socio-economic life. Introduction of new curriculum elements should be the subject of prior studies and evaluations.
 11. The process of curriculum renewal should make possible the elimination of outdated material to make way for newer elements (for example, environmental and ecological education, informatics, new technology, etc.) called for by scientific and technological challenges. These elements may form part of integrated or interdisciplinary courses to contribute to coherence in the curriculum and to avoid overloading it.
 12. Curricula, especially at the upper secondary level, should provide for creativity, flexibility and diversification. The core of compulsory subjects should be complemented by optional subjects and various extra-curricular activities.
 13. Importance should be attached not only to what is taught but also to the way in which it is taught. It follows that the forms and methods of teaching, as well as instructional materials, must be continuously reviewed.
 14. Methods should be developed and used which stimulate active participation of pupils in the teaching-learning process and develop their self-learning possibilities, their desire to learn and their taste for the acquisition of knowledge.
 15. In the teaching-learning process, emphasis should be laid on 'learning how to learn'. Appropriate methods and forms of the organization of the students' work should be used to this effect, such as, for example, group work, self-directed learning and other forms of individualized learning.

16. The introduction of work experience or familiarization with the world of work in the general education curriculum also calls for a change of emphasis in the methods used: visits, education excursions and practical work experience outside the classroom should be organized. Outside experts should also be invited into schools more frequently.
17. Science and technology education implies the introduction of more laboratory, experimental and practical activities of all types leading to more active participation on the part of the student in the processes of scientific exploration and technological development. Likewise, arts education should be linked to the use of such sources and means of culture as museums, archives and libraries.
18. Modern technologies, such as, for example, microcomputers, may bring substantial support to the improvement of the teaching-learning process, favour individualized learning and help to develop the pupil's personality. On the basis of analysis of the practical results of the use of computers in schools, appropriate changes should be made to the content of studies utilizing computers. School authorities should assess the usefulness of new equipment before acquiring it.
19. Appropriate steps should be taken to develop national capacities for the production, at reasonable cost, of instructional materials and equipment, including textbooks, software and other materials for science and technology education.
20. Teachers should be involved in the preparation of the materials needed, as a way of enhancing their professional competence.
21. Guidance and counselling services should be developed and extended to every secondary school and student. Educational and vocational orientation and guidance should, whenever possible, be an integral part of secondary-school life. Girls should be encouraged to pursue further studies leading to scientific and technological careers and more generally to careers in which they are underrepresented.
22. It is also essential to develop out-of-school forms of orientation and guidance such as, for example, visits to industrial and agricultural enterprises and other places of work.
23. Due support should be ensured for the development of educational research as an essential tool contributing to the attainment of the established objectives. Educational research and innovative activities should be encouraged at all levels and taken into account in political decisions and educational practice.
24. In order to enhance the contribution that research can make to the improvement of secondary education, appropriate steps should be taken to make the results of educational research and the innovations to which it may lead better known. These results should be taken into account in the pre-service and continuing training of teachers, administrators and other secondary education personnel.
25. The development of national, local and institutional management capacities, especially by training, can enhance the effectiveness of secondary education administration and management methods. The involvement of teachers and parents in this process is also desirable.
26. Performance and efficiency in educational management should benefit from a greater and better use of modern technologies. The development of management resource centres and management information systems should be seen as important for the improvement of secondary education.
27. Each country should consider which administrative functions can best be carried out by central services and which by regional or local services with a view to better use of resources, more effective participation of all groups and better information and communication among the different administrative levels.
28. Evaluation of the functioning of the management of secondary education should be an integral part of management. This would require appropriately designed monitoring systems for all aspects of secondary education.
29. It is essential that educational policies encourage, and educational practices secure, wider participation by all sectors of the population in both the democratization and the improvement of secondary education.
30. The improvement of secondary education requires the training of a sufficient number of teachers and other educational personnel and enhancement of the quality of such training.

31. In this connection, long-term and medium-term policies and objectives concerning teacher education should be formulated and practical action foreseen, which may include:
 - (a) encouraging the most motivated young people to enter the teaching profession;
 - (b) reorienting teacher education methods and curricula towards an improved balance between subject content and educational psychology components with a view to the harmonious professional preparation of teachers; this preparation should be based on actual teaching practice providing a basis for the analysis and evaluation of educational activity. It should also make possible a reasonable shortening of the period of adaptation of young teachers;
 - (c) measures to regulate the supply of, and demand for, teachers, particularly in the areas of science and technology, as well as in other areas where a shortage may be perceived;
 - (d) developing a systematic approach to in-service education aimed at upgrading, updating and generally improving the knowledge and professional qualifications of different categories of secondary educational personnel on a regular and recurrent basis. This approach should be differentiated in accordance with the qualification standards of the various groups of teachers and the concrete needs of pedagogical practice, and should be conducive to exchanges of innovative experience, research and pedagogical reflection thereon;
 - (e) measures to ensure that educational personnel are promptly provided with scientific and technical information, with the necessary documentation, visual aids and technical equipment for teaching.
 32. Other categories of educational personnel, such as administrators, principals, inspectors, guidance and counselling personnel, should receive appropriate pre-service and in-service training for their work in secondary education.
- C. INTERNATIONAL AND REGIONAL CO-OPERATION
33. Taking into account the variety and dimensions of problems and issues associated with the development and improvement of secondary education, particularly, but not exclusively, in developing countries, a concerted international and regional approach could help Member States to find solutions to existing problems and issues at the secondary level.
 34. Member States should strengthen and develop further bilateral regional and international co-operation with a view to the improvement of secondary education and give all necessary support to Unesco's regional programmes of educational innovation for development. Such co-operation is particularly desirable in the teaching of modern languages as an instrument of education for international understanding.
 35. Unesco, as the leading international organization in the field of education, should endeavour:
 - (a) to pay special attention to the development and improvement of secondary education in its programmes for the years to come;
 - (b) to promote further international and regional co-operation in the field of secondary education through its various international and regional programmes and projects;
 - (c) to foster, particularly through its regional network of educational innovation for development, closer co-operation between Member States with a view to the improvement of secondary education;
 - (d) to encourage international and regional co-operation in the field of training and the raising of the qualification standards of teachers and secondary education managerial staff through various programmes and international and regional projects;
 - (e) to support efforts aimed at the development of the Associated Schools.
 36. Unesco, and the International Bureau of Education as a specialized body within Unesco, should also endeavour:
 - (a) to facilitate the exchange of information and experience in the field of secondary education between different countries, including the exchange of secondary-school curricula, teaching materials and specialists. IBE's documentation service should play its role to the full in this connection;

- (b) to promote research and studies with a view to the improvement of secondary education;
 - (c) to carry out follow-up activities to this Conference and to advise Member States upon request on ways of applying this Recommendation in the light of the real situations prevailing in various countries.
37. Unesco, in co-operation with other international organizations, should strengthen activities concerning education for international understanding, co-operation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms. They should also promote innovative measures in Member States for the revision of secondary-education curricula in this light and for encouraging the mutual revision of textbooks in order to free them from prejudice, incitement to racial hatred and a hostile attitude to other peoples. International exchanges of information on the results achieved should be encouraged.
38. Unesco, in co-operation with other international organizations, regional bodies and concerned international non-governmental organizations should further encourage joint activities and contribute efficiently to the systematic exchange of ideas, information and experiences regarding the improvement of secondary education by using various means, such as promoting the organization of regional and international conferences, workshops, seminars and meetings to discuss various aspects of the improvement of secondary education, and supporting the exchange of educational personnel to study other countries' experience.
39. The International Bureau of Education, in co-operation and co-ordination with other units of Unesco, should:
- (a) within its programme of educational documentation and information, give appropriate attention to secondary education and its improvement by collecting information concerning secondary education curricula and programmes, innovative experiences and reforms in the field of secondary education, analysing this information, disseminating it and making it available to Member States;
 - (b) within its study activities, and particularly within its series of studies and surveys in comparative education, study ways and means of improving secondary education in collaboration with national research institutions;
 - (c) pay special attention to the system for the training of teaching staff and for improving their qualifications and to progress noted in this respect in national programmes, collect information on school documentation and innovative experience acquired in teacher education and in teachers' professional practice, and transmit such information to Member States.

B. RECOMMENDATION ON EDUCATION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST AIDS

The International Conference on Education,

Recognizing that the world is faced with a problem of which the full gravity has become apparent only since the Unesco Secretariat sent the preliminary draft of Recommendation No. 75 concerning 'the improvement of secondary education: objectives, structures, content and methods' to Member States, namely the AIDS pandemic, as the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) recently called it,

Noting that many governments and public opinion in general find themselves at present helpless and lacking in the necessary minimum of information to face up to this new disease,

Considering that there is a great deal to be done at the educational level and certainly in schools with a view to implementing emergency programmes of preventive information, and that, in particular, such information should focus upon secondary-school teachers and pupils and on the parents of those pupils,

Considering that Unesco has an essential role to play in this respect, in close collaboration with WHO and other agencies, organizations and bodies in the United Nations system,

Recommends the Director-General of Unesco to examine the possibility of preparing as a matter of urgency and in co-ordination with other competent bodies in the United Nations system, a draft emergency programme of education and information in schools for AIDS prevention, and to submit such proposals as he deems appropriate to the next session of the General Conference of Unesco;

Expresses the wish that this programme may become operational in all Member States as soon as possible and that it may make possible the rapid establishment of co-operation among Member States that already have experience in this matter;

Appeals urgently to financing agencies and bodies and to foundations to make available to Unesco the resources needed to implement this important educational aspect of the fight against AIDS.