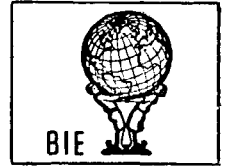




INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON PUBLIC EDUCATION
GENEVA



XXVIIIth Session
Unesco-I.B.E./724, 1965



PRE-DRAFT RECOMMENDATION No. 58
TO THE MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION

concerning

LITERACY AND EDUCATION FOR ADULTS

Note. It is for the Conference, in its group meetings, then for the drafting committee specially appointed for this purpose, to draw up Recommendation No. 58 concerning literacy and education for adults, the draft recommendation of which will finally be put to the Conference at a plenary meeting. The present pre-draft recommendation must be considered as an outline serving as a starting point or even as a basis for discussion. This discussion will take place chapter by chapter and the amendments proposed should be presented in writing on the prepared forms, which can be obtained from the chairman's desk.

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
of July, nineteen hundred and sixty-five, the following
recommendation:

The Conference,

(I) Considering that the campaign against
illiteracy finds its justification in a) the Universal
Declaration of Human Rights, according to which, in
Article 26, everyone has the right to education,
b) the respect which is due to every human being and
requires that to everyone the means of attaining culture
should be available, c) the fact that literacy education
for the masses is an essential factor in the economic,
social, political and cultural progress of individuals
as well as of communities;

(II) Considering that, in addition to these
reasons founded on ideas of law, respect and progress
there are others arising from practical necessities
which are becoming more and more urgent: a) in the
world of today, and even more so in the world of to-
morrow, men and women who are obliged to live and move

about will be all the more likely to encounter difficulties if they are unable to read, write or calculate;

b) in view of the fact that the rapid and huge increase in the number of literate adults largely determines economic development and trade, which are governed as much by the increase in the volume of production as by that in the number of consumers and their needs;

(III) Considering that adult literacy constitutes an important element in the influence which parents can exercise on their children and will thus produce, within the family, conditions more conducive to the education of the younger generation;

(IV) Considering that the success of literacy campaigns depends, in any country, on the effect given to emotional and financial considerations, on the illiterate adults' understanding of the kind of effort demanded of them as well as on the declared intention of leaders to end the scourge of ignorance;

(V) Considering that, after the many recommendations which have hitherto been drawn up on adult literacy teaching, the time has come for a stage of intensive implementation;

(VI) Considering that the provision of continuing education for adults also corresponds to a thirst for justice as well as to the imperative needs of production and trade resulting in a demand not only for an ever increasing number of workers but also for suitably educated and trained leaders;

(VII) Considering that adult educational advancement, 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;

(VIII) Considering that every country, without exception, is concerned in various ways with continuing education for adults;

(IX) Considering the work done by various governmental and non-governmental organizations, both national and international, and the new trends which influence literacy education for adults;

(X) Considering the appeal which, in its declaration of 19th November, 1964, the thirteenth session of the General Conference of Unesco 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;

(XI) Considering that, in spite of similar aspirations, countries differently situated must find different solutions to the problem of literacy and education for adults;

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

A. A C T I O N T O P R O M O T E L I T E R A C Y
A M O N G A D U L T S

I. B A S I S O F P R E V E N T I V E A N D R E C U P E R A T I V E A C T I V I T Y

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) recuperative action or action to make illiterate adults literate.

2. Preventing action, the aim of which is to increase the opportunities of receiving primary education, will have the effect of gradually eliminating the primary source of illiteracy; it is therefore important to emphasise once more the need to provide and to improve universal compulsory primary education, for girls as well as for boys.

3. In any recuperative action account must be taken of the fact that, in regard to illiteracy, countries may be divided into four main categories: (a) countries in which adult illiteracy no longer exists; (b) countries where adult illiteracy still exists, although in varying degree, but where its source is

being eliminated owing to the introduction of compulsory primary education; (c) countries in which adult illiteracy has a tendency to increase because of insufficient schooling and on account of a discrepancy between the growth rate of the school age population and the rate at which primary schools are opened; (d) countries in which a large majority of the adult population is illiterate owing to insufficient schooling in the past and at the present time owing to the lack of adequate provision for adult literacy education.

4. Whatever the situation may be at the start, in all literacy action those responsible must be unwavering in their determination to end a state of affairs which is inconsistent with the needs and aspirations of our time.

5. The long experience which various countries have been able to acquire after many failures due to insufficient organization and the lack of a well defined plan for their adult literacy campaigns, makes it advisable to establish closer links than have existed in the past between the literacy campaign, continuing education for adults, economic and social development, with its priorities, and the acquisition of useful knowledge.

II. PRELIMINARY STUDIES AND PLANNING

6. All action to combat illiteracy must be preceded by thorough study and objective assessment of

present and future needs in relation to such matters as: (a) the number of children to be given schooling at present and in the foreseeable future; (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 adults bear to the adult population as a whole; (d) their distribution in the various administrative or geographical districts of the country (with information showing the numbers of the rural and urban populations in the respective districts); (e) the quantitative comparison of the present situation with that which existed at different periods in the past; (f) the results already obtained in this field thanks to the literacy work being carried out.

7. These various studies must be supplemented by other research more closely connected with economic and social planning and the planning of education and showing (a) the national plans for economic and social development at present in force and those which exist in draft form; (b) the general educational plan; (c) the national network of means 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 estimate and origin of the internal and external resources available.

8. It goes without saying that, even where, properly speaking, no plan exists, every literacy campaign must be based on the general principles of planning (systematic provision for the measures to be taken, economy of time and energy, coordination of the various activities, etc.).

9. As regards the strategy to be adopted in the campaign against illiteracy, a country may have to choose between a general mass literacy campaign affecting all types of illiterate persons in the country at the same time, or selective and intensive plans linked up with economic and social development priorities and providing both literacy education and elementary vocational and civic training for selected categories of illiterate persons who are most anxious for education while, at the same time, of course, arrangements are being made for the progressive elimination of illiteracy throughout the country as a whole.

10. The concept of experimentation, which is inseparable from educational research, must be applied also to problems affecting the organization and administration of literacy work; 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 be submitted to partial experimentation or that experiments already conducted be taken into account.

11. It would, for example, be preferable for a country to experiment with a set of schemes to be considered as a first stage in eradicating illiteracy in its territory, while at the same time they form an integral part of a national plan for literacy education associated with the economic and social development of the country, and the scope of which would be determined according to the number and distribution of illiterates on the one hand and to the means available on the other.

III. AUTHORITIES RESPONSIBLE AND FINANCING

12. Choice of the authorities to be responsible for organizing literacy education should receive special attention and be made in relation not only to the centralized, federalist 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 combating illiteracy must rest with the education authorities it is desirable that, as far as possible, other ministerial departments or authorities (planning, industry, agriculture, sanitation, health, labour, social affairs, communications, etc.) should be associated with the work.

14. There must be close coordination between the various authorities engaged in providing literacy education for adults; where circumstances so permit or

require, it may be desirable to consider setting up a special body (for example a general directorate, committee or council) and services or establishments which might be responsible possibly for: (a) training and further training of teachers; (b) preparation, testing, publication and distribution of reading material and teaching aids; (c) education by means of radio and television; (d) the production, distribution and utilization of educational films and other audio-visual aids; (e) provision of necessary premises; (f) supervision and inspection of courses; (g) study and research into methods, materials and the evaluation of teaching; (h) organization of a system of libraries for the newly literate; (i) information and documents; (j) any other technical or administrative aspect of literacy education.

15. It is important that the existing situation be taken into account and that help and support from non-governmental organizations be not underestimated, whether it relates to the organization, implementation or financing of the literacy action.

16. In view of the magnitude and intensity of the effort required and account being taken of each country's particular characteristics, the financial resources available consist usually of the following: (a) funds allocated to literacy education in the budgets of the various educational administrative

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) contributions from private sources or due to social work which is independent of official administration; (f) financial assistance furnished from abroad.

17. The scientific organization of expenditure is necessary in any action concerned with education but is even more so in the case of literacy education; every effort should therefore be made (a) to find solutions which will be at the same time the most effective and the least costly; (b) to avoid administrative complication; (c) to ensure that there is no overlapping in the various kinds of official action and that there is no duplication of work as between public and private bodies, etc.

IV. STAFF ENGAGED IN LITERACY TEACHING

18. In view of the special nature of adult literacy education work and of the methods and techniques required, the staff engaged must be many and varied; it is however desirable that ordinary

teachers be engaged in literacy education if only to guide and direct persons who may have the task later on; extra pay should be received for this work.

19. Whenever it seems necessary for non-professional teachers to be engaged, a careful choice should be made without, however, discouraging well-meaning people whose help may prove to be indispensable, and training courses should be provided for all concerned, whether they be professional or non-professional teachers.

V. EDUCATIONAL ASPECTS

20. All action to promote literacy should be preceded by a publicity campaign designed to reach all the interested groups in order to ensure that the action itself is better understood and its practical value duly appreciated.

21. All educational work 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 that he has personal responsibilities. It would, therefore, be desirable to endeavour to induce the adult to share in his own education, with a view to adapting himself to the world in which he lives; by using suitable educational methods

it should be possible to make the illiterate adult an active partner with his teacher in applying the syllabuses which concern him, since adult education should, to a great extent, be a work of human emancipation.

22. During the consolidation stage, it is particularly important to encourage and devise educational methods which, adapted to adult psychology, to the aims of functional literacy teaching, to the subjects to be taught and to the various social milieux, are specially designed to eliminate as rapidly as possible the difference between the newly literate and the individual who has had an ordinary education; for this purpose all means should be employed to avoid allowing the newly literate adult to stagnate at a level at which the techniques of exchanging ideas and knowledge remain superficial and prevent any true emancipation.

23. No adult literacy campaign can succeed unless steps are taken from the beginning to provide various types of teaching material suitable first for the early teaching and then for training the newly literate; to prevent loss of the recently acquired knowledge it is important to maintain the new literate's interest, particularly in reading,

by provision of newspapers, reviews and various publications as well as by the setting up of school and people's libraries.

24. The success of a literacy programme depends largely on the nature and power of the emotional, social, cultural, religious, family and economic motives of the men and women for whom the programme is intended.

25. The corresponding methods call for the application of new materials and means which must be designed and employed with due regard to the psychology of the adults, men and women, as well as to their needs and interests in order that their education may become really an integral part of their lives.

26. Reading, writing and arithmetic lessons should be focused on topics which are of immediate concern to the adults: preparing for more productive and better paid work, improving the living conditions within the community setting (health, diet, leisure), civic and social training, etc.

27. Since the proportion of illiterates is higher among women, an important place should be allotted to their literacy education so that they may receive the knowledge and information necessary for their effective cooperation in raising the

family's standard of living, in improving the conditions in the home as well as in bringing about better individual and collective education.

B. E D U C A T I O N F O R A D U L T S

VI. E D U C A T I O N A L A D V A N C E M E N T F O R A D U L T S

28. It is becoming progressively clearer that it is not possible to confine adult education to traditional literacy teaching while at the same time it is also less and less possible to restrict educational work to children and adolescents. The rapidity of technological, social and political transformation in the various parts of the world, whatever their degree of development and the state of their economic structure, affects ideas about education which, keeping pace with the evolution of ideas, tend to embody the notion of becoming in the philosophy of education. The outcome of these various factors is the gradual development of systems of continuing adult education.

29. Increasing numbers of adults, both those who have had the advantage of normal schooling and those whose education was insufficient, are anxious to fill in the gaps in their knowledge and to prepare themselves to carry out the many new tasks which are constantly arising. These adult educational activities, whether or not they

take place within a formal educational framework, occupy an increasing place in the general educational system. But they cannot reach significant proportions or produce the desired results unless they take place within the framework of continuing education from which they draw their inspiration and their methods of work.

30. Although every country is, in a general way, interested in adult educational advancement, those which have solved the problem of adult literacy or are about to do so are in the best position to provide for the educational, and therefore social, advancement of adults who have been unable to complete their primary education.

31. As encouraging experiments in a number of countries have proved, this educational and social advancement is not limited to primary education; parallel with the movement in favour of equal opportunity for secondary education and with due consideration of the growing demand for qualified staff, there is need to provide secondary level education for workers who are able to avail themselves of it without giving up their vocational work.

32. As and when primary and secondary education become universal and the numbers of "student workers" gradually decrease, provision

should be made, where circumstances so permit, for courses of various kinds leading to the same certificates or diplomas as are granted in ordinary primary or secondary schools even if their syllabuses and methods of teaching have to be adapted to adult needs and psychology.

33. It is necessary that adult primary courses be provided in the towns as well as in rural areas; on the other hand, secondary level courses, especially evening courses, can be provided only where ordinary secondary schools already exist.

34. Organized within a well-defined school setting, this provision for the educational advancement of adults has its place and its proper function within measures of wider and more general scope known, according to the particular country, as mass education, continuing education, popular culture, etc.

VII. ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITIES AND FINANCING

35. Experience already gained in this connection tends to show that, among others, the following considerations should be taken into account: (a) educational advancement should, in the last resort, lead to the inclusion of a certain category of adults among the pupils studying at primary or secondary level; (b) this problem, in spite of its importance, is proportionately smaller than that of adult literacy

education; (c) countries which have attempted to solve it are usually sufficiently well equipped with the educational and other means for doing so; (d) the value of such educational provision is enhanced by the increased efficiency of workers, who benefit in this way.

36. The setting up of more or less independent bodies responsible for administering and conducting action undertaken in this field may be desirable if justified by the numbers involved; a practical solution would be to regard provision for the educational advancement of adults as a supplementary activity of the authorities responsible for the development of primary and secondary education, this new activity being concerned with a category of pupils who, by reason of their age, their experience of life and their available free time, present very special characteristics.

37. In this latter case in particular, the necessary appropriations could be made under a separate heading in the budgetary provision for primary and secondary education.

38. Where the educational system so permits there is every reason for connecting with this new form of activity that of extra-scholastic educational institutions for adults (e.g. popular and workers' universities), "polytechnics",

unofficial educational establishments, particularly courses provided by industrial enterprises, which have most immediate interest in benefiting from the adults' educational advancement.

VIII. SYLLABUSES, METHODS AND OPPORTUNITIES

39. In the organization of courses for adult pupils, it is necessary that consideration be given (a) to the requirements for the diploma, the value of which latter should be legally the same as that of the diplomas granted in the case of ordinary primary or secondary education; (b) to the additional mental effort required of a pupil who is working and, incidentally, to the necessarily limited time at his disposal and to his reasons for **undertaking further studies.**

40. It should be possible, at least in the case of primary level education for adults, to condense the content of the ordinary course syllabus by omitting some matter unnecessary from the standpoint of the learning process and of practical value, while including certain other knowledge essential for adults.

41. As regards secondary education for adults, it would seem desirable to omit or condense some matter considered as unessential and, on the other hand, to provide for an introduction to certain problems which cannot fail to interest persons who are more mature.

42. More than in the case of syllabuses it is necessary that the methods adopted in primary or secondary level education for adults be based on the following considerations: (a) the difference in age and therefore in the **mental development**, the interests and needs of the pupils; (b) the necessity of covering the syllabus in a shorter time; (c) the extra fatigue of pupils who are engaged elsewhere in vocational work or work in the home; (d) the more practical nature, the more utilitarian significance and the immediate social value of courses for adults as compared with those intended for children.

43. In the present connection the special importance of teaching aids cannot be overlooked. When the classes are held in the evening at an ordinary primary or secondary school it is easy for use to be made not only of the school premises but also of the teaching material, in particular the scientific equipment; as regards textbooks, it would appear that for reasons of economy it is necessary in many cases, and especially in education at secondary level, to make use of books employed in the ordinary classes.

44. Whatever be the nature of the examinations or tests for the diplomas to which the primary or secondary level courses lead, these diplomas should have the same value as those awarded to pupils at

ordinary schools and, in particular, should confer the right to continue study at a higher level; adult students who do not complete their courses should receive certificates of attendance.

45. When organizing primary or secondary level courses for adults the authorities concerned should consider how best the courses can be made accessible by such provision as: (a) adjustment of the time-tables to working hours and work in the home; (b) no charge or reduced fees for enrolment and examinations; (c) free provision or the sale at a very low price of textbooks and other material; (d) possible granting of scholarships, loans on trust, etc.

46. Whether required by legislation or whether of their own free will, public and private enterprises must also cooperate in the educational advancement of adults by granting facilities which make it possible for courses to be attended especially in the case of secondary level education; such facilities may be: (a) arranging or reducing working hours to the extent required by the nature of the courses; (b) granting paid leave, especially during periods when examinations are held; (c) possible offering of allowances or other opportunities by way of encouragement, etc.

47. If society and the various groups of which it is composed should, in their own interest,

do all in their power to improve general culture and vocational education, they are entitled to expect from those who receive these benefits proof that they take an interest in their studies.

IX. TEACHING STAFF

48. When the primary level education for adults is provided in connection with ordinary education and the classes are held outside school hours, serving primary teachers would seem to be the most suitable for the work, provided that it is properly paid and constitutes for them an additional source of income.

49. In so far as secondary education for adults is provided at so-called evening establishments where special remuneration is received for the teaching, it should be possible for the latter to be given by secondary school teachers who are engaged in similar work, as well as by specialists especially trained for the purpose.

50. It is mainly through direct contact that the teachers concerned can become aware of the psychological and educational needs of adult pupils. It is therefore desirable that occasional study groups be arranged in order that **in-service** training, rather than **prior** training, may be given to teachers engaged in the educational advancement of adults.

51. Nevertheless, for the purposes of their general professional training the teachers should, during their ordinary training courses, have an opportunity to become familiar with theoretical and practical aspects of some of the problems raised by adult education.

X. INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION

52. Since the total amount of work to be accomplished in the field of literacy and education for adults exceeds by far the capabilities of those countries in which the degree of cultural, financial and technical development is severely affected by the situation, the need for outside aid, whether unilateral or multilateral, is being felt more and more.

53. Such outside aid, which will supplement the funds and other resources available for literacy education in the country concerned, could include:

- (a) sending experts capable of organizing literacy campaigns and of ensuring that they are conducted on a scientific basis;
- (b) supplying literacy material, equipment and relevant information;
- (c) offering scholarships for visits to or training in countries where positive and lasting results have been obtained from literacy campaigns.

XI. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRESENT RECOMMENDATION

54. It is important that the text of this recommendation be given wide publicity by Ministries of Education, school 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 the services concerned, the administrative and teaching staff and the general public.

55. Unesco regional centres, with the co-operation of the ministries concerned, are invited to facilitate the study of this recommendation at the regional level with a view to its adaptation to the special characteristics of the regions concerned.

56. In countries where it seems necessary, Ministries of Education are invited to request the competent bodies to undertake certain activities, such as for example: (a) to examine the present recommendation and to compare it with the de jure and de facto situation in their respective countries; (b) to consider the advantages and disadvantages of implementing each of the clauses not yet in force; (c) to adapt each clause, should its implementation be considered 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.

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