

No.16

22431
School Furniture
Development:
An Evaluation

Educational studies and documents



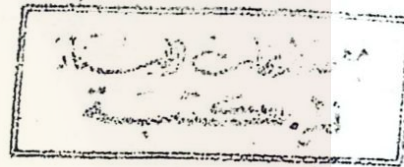
153
Unesco

School Furniture Development:

An Evaluation

by
F.B. Scriven & Associates

22431



21 MAY 1987

HBRC

المركز القومي لبحوث الإسكان والبناء

Housing & Building National Research Center

Since 1954

Unesco

Preface

The last five years have seen a growing world-wide concern with changes in traditional teaching methods - formal teaching is giving way to informal, so-called "active" methods where students spend less time being lectured to in large groups and more time in small group project work and independent study. In many countries this evolution is being hindered by outmoded school furniture. The traditional classroom situation calls for a podium to elevate the professor over his charges, and seating arrangements to ensure a minimum of movement on the part of students. With the new teaching methods, however, it is assumed that students will move about the classroom frequently and with ease. Thus, the traditional "table-banc" - a cumbersome desk and seat unit accommodating two students - is giving way to individual chairs and tables which can either serve one or two students or be grouped to serve four or six. Furthermore, new teaching methods underline how necessary it is to develop a wider range of furniture. Traditionally, teaching spaces were wholly taken up by a teacher's desk, a small segment of chalk board, and student seating. The need now is for more chalk board, abundant display space, moveable trolleys with special purpose materials (library books or animal cages for example) and an abundance of different types of storage.

Unesco is playing an increasingly important rôle in helping developing countries adapt school furniture in line with educational methods and goals. The present publication includes an independent evaluation of two of the Organization's projects along with a review of a similar, but far more ambitious project in a European country. The reader will quickly come to see that the designing and construction of furniture is no simple matter. They imply expert knowledge in many specialized areas of concern ranging from the study of furniture size in relation to the physical characteristics and needs of children, to the

proper selection of glues and inspection of welded joints. The reader may also be surprised by the critical nature of the evaluations themselves. In fact these evaluations are being published and distributed so that Member States can benefit from the oversights and misfortunes of others. For its own part, Unesco has learned a great deal from them, in particular that it is better to concentrate limited funds on research and development of excellent chairs and desks for students rather than to spread these resources over the gamut of furniture required in a school. Member States, on the other hand, should recognize that any piece of furniture needs to be built exactly as it was designed and that any deviation from the original design makes careful testing in a "live" classroom situation inevitable.

Partially as a result of this evaluation, Unesco is aware of the need to improve the quality of its services to Member States in what is a specialized, yet highly important field. As a first step towards satisfying this need, it has embarked on a substantial study on how to go about planning and designing for furniture production on a large scale, but with the maximum use of local skills and materials.

Since it will be some time before the over-all results of this study are complete and available, it has been decided to publish and distribute these evaluations now. It is hoped that they will be of particular value to educational planners and administrators at all levels, but especially useful to those who are responsible for the purchase, distribution and maintenance of school furniture. At the same time, they should prove of value to furniture designers and manufacturers.

The evaluations have been undertaken by F.B. Scriven and Associates, a firm of educational facilities planning consultants in London. Mr. Scriven is the author of Sports facilities for schools in developing countries, No. 8 in the Unesco series Educational Studies and Documents.

In addition, he has undertaken advisory missions for Unesco to Africa, Asia and the Arab States, two of which have specifically involved him in furniture design. His associates on this study have worked on the research and development of furniture in Europe.

The views put forward in this publication are those of the authors and are not necessarily an expression of Unesco's policies in the area under study.



Table of Contents

	Page
Introduction	7
Case study of a project to produce standard desks and chairs in schools in Sri Lanka	13
Case study of a project to equip three secondary schools in Tunisia	23
Case study of a project to produce a range of furniture for educational establishments in the United Kingdom	43
Appendices and references	51

HBRC

المركز القومي لبحوث الإسكان والبناء
Housing & Building National Research Center

Since 1954