

school furniture handbook

Information and guidance
for the use of schoolteachers, school
administrators, furniture designers
and furniture manufacturers on
all aspects of furniture for educational
buildings, with particular emphasis
on conditions in developing countries

Volume One
General and specific
aspects

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Educational buildings and equipment



Titles in this series

Planning buildings and facilities for higher education
(Co-published with the Architectural Press Ltd., London,
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Building community schools
School furniture handbook
Planning standards for higher education facilities

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Preface

Since 1969, Unesco has participated in school furniture projects in more than fifteen countries, including Algeria, Cuba, Iraq, Iran, Sri Lanka, Swaziland and Tunisia. In response to requests from these countries, Unesco has provided technical assistance and advice on various aspects of the furnishing of educational establishments of all kinds.

The purpose of these Unesco-assisted projects was to develop designs and establish standards for furniture appropriate to present-day educational systems and teaching conditions. Educational authorities in many countries are becoming increasingly aware of the key role that school furniture can play in the achievement of educational objectives. It is evident that 'traditional' school furniture, designed for conditions that no longer exist, has become out-dated. For instance, the introduction of teaching in small groups in primary schools requires that individual chairs and small tables replace the heavy and inflexible desk-bench units which have been standard equipment for nearly a century. Again, the large increase in the number of students has completely changed the scale of furniture requirements.

Another aspect of the projects referred to above was the desirability of designing school furniture so that it could be manufactured in the countries concerned, using local materials, labour, and managerial and technical resources.

The reduction of costs was also an important objective.

Experience gained from these projects revealed that the design, manufacture and supply of school furniture poses a series of interrelated problems: functional, aesthetic, industrial, technical, economic, financial and administrative. Furthermore, the solution of these problems calls for an interdisciplinary approach involving administrators, educators, architects, furniture designers, manufacturers, and others directly or indirectly concerned.

In the course of the Unesco-assisted projects in various countries, nearly all these problems were encountered (though not necessarily all of them in every project) and they had to be faced and solved. This led to the identification of a limited number of general principles which need to be studied in order to prepare the ground for any school furniture project at the national level.

In order to enable this valuable experience to be shared, Unesco undertook to initiate a study for the purpose of preparing a practical manual dealing with all the important issues and problems liable to be encountered in the course of a school furniture project.

The Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA), which had been a partner of Unesco in many of the national projects in question, offered to finance this study and the publication of the manual.

The result was this school furniture handbook, which is intended primarily to serve as a practical guide and a source of information for people involved in any stage of school furniture planning and development:

Educational administrators responsible for the planning and implementing of school furniture supplies.

Educators who develop teaching methods the application of which requires a certain physical environment in school spaces.



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Teachers who in their day-to-day work, together with their students, use the furniture not only in its functional capacity but also as part of the educational process.

Architects who plan the school and its spaces and who therefore regard the furniture as an important element of the spaces they create.

Designers of school furniture.

Manufacturers and craftsmen who produce the furniture.

Economists who plan the financing of the country's educational needs.

The handbook is in two volumes. Volume one contains basic practical information on the various aspects of school furniture. It sets forth and explains the successive stages of a school furniture project from conception to completion, and deals with the technical problems involved. This is followed by a series of monographs examining some important and critical ground subjects such as materials, economic evaluation, anthropometry, testing and codification, together with the specifics of various broad categories of school furniture. The third part of Volume one gives details of Unesco-assisted school furniture development projects in seventeen countries, followed by a directory of relevant sources of information and a bibliography.

Volume two complements the first volume by providing a wide range of examples not only of school furniture and furniture arrangements, but also of design and procurement procedures, including furniture lists, design specifications, tender documents, etc.

For assistance in the preparation of this handbook, Unesco is indebted to P. B. Scriven and Associates and to Bo Fritzell, Architect, S.A.R.

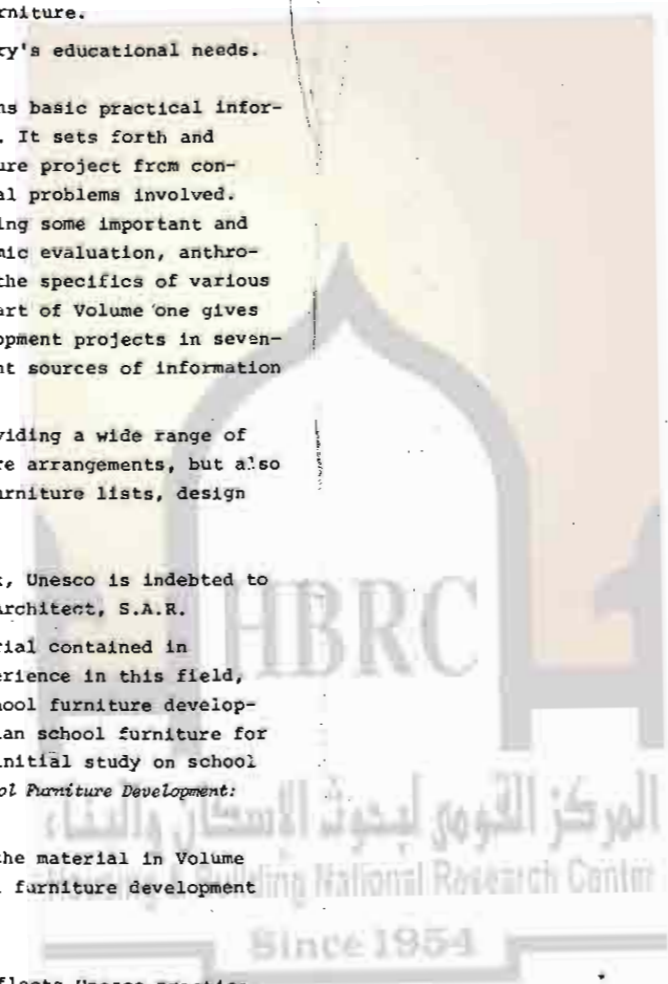
F. B. Scriven and Associates prepared the material contained in Volume one. They were chosen because of their experience in this field, having worked as consultants with Unesco for a school furniture development project in Algeria (Standardization of Algerian school furniture for primary and secondary schools) as well as for an initial study on school furniture published by Unesco under the title *School Furniture Development: an Evaluation*.

Bo Fritzell, who is responsible for compiling the material in Volume two, has worked with Unesco previously on a school furniture development project in Spain.

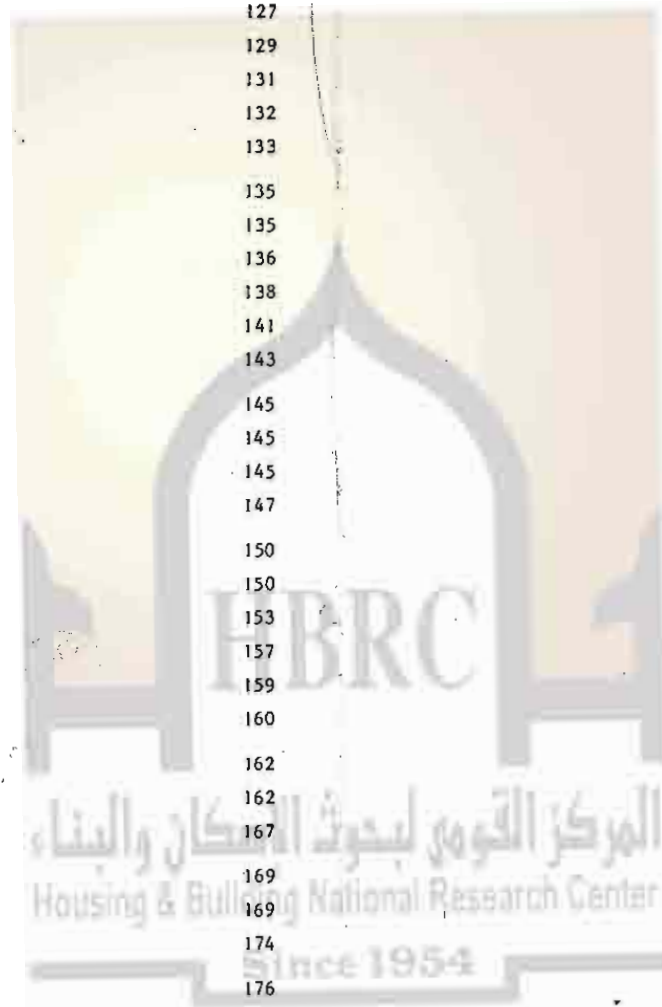
While much of the material in this publication reflects Unesco practice, the views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the Organization.

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