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and Information

THE USE OF TIME IN THE CLASSROOM

In recent years, a great deal of effort has been expended in defending the point of view according to which the time devoted to learning is one of the most important inputs in strategies designed to improve the quality of educational outcomes. International comparative studies about the number of class days and hours demonstrate, however, a phenomenon apparently quite contradictory to the most widely-held beliefs on this subject: while a very wide variety of situations exists, many developing countries attribute more time to education than developed countries. The data presented in this issue of *Innovation*, which are drawn from the IBE's databank on the educational situation in the world, confirm this fact, which had already been revealed by previous studies of narrower coverage.

The importance of these data should not be underestimated. Indeed, they confirm yet again that the problems of developing countries are extremely complicated and it is not so much a matter of *formally* increasing the amount of time attributed to teaching as of using the time available in a more efficient manner. The more efficient and effective use of the time that pupils in developing countries spend in school depends upon several factors, among which three stand out: (i) improving the *working conditions of teachers*, so as to avoid the high level of absenteeism that is found particularly in rural and marginal urban schools; (ii) resorting to *educational methods* which would increase the amount of time that both the pupils and the teachers devote to individualized learning; and (iii) changing *management methods*, which would reduce the amount of time that teachers spend on administrative matters, not connected with the learning process.

As experience has shown, strategies to change education should be systemic. Modifying one aspect of the problem, and leaving the rest intact, does not bring about genuine and lasting change. Thus, increasing the amount of time that the pupils pass in school without changing the teaching/learning methods, the teachers' working conditions or the organization of their activities will achieve nothing.

This argument does not mean that the importance of time as a basic input in explaining learning achievements should be underestimated. On the contrary, the message conveyed by the data presented in this issue of *Innovation* enables us to state that more attention should be paid to modifying other variables—teachers, methods and management—taking into account their impact on an increase in learning time, and less to other criteria not connected with the quality of educational outcomes.

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**PRIMARY EDUCATION:
LENGTH OF STUDIES
AND INSTRUCTIONAL
TIME**

The national reports on educational development presented by Member States at the meetings of the International Conference on Education (ICE) represent a valuable source of information on the characteristics and functioning of education systems in various contexts.

However, there are at least three restrictions on using these sources on the part of national educational authorities, educators and researchers: (a) the presentation of the descriptive and quantitative data does not always correspond to a common and homogeneous framework; (b) not all the reports contain the most pertinent data; and (c) the data available are not necessarily processed and organized in a systematic manner.

Since the forty-fifth session of the ICE (Geneva, October 1996), the International Bureau of Education (IBE) has established a new method for bringing the data on the development of education in national situations up to date. For this purpose, the IBE has suggested preparing a profile of the education system in each country using a common structure and referring to the data contained in both the national reports and in other sources of information. The profiles are sent to the country in question in order to verify the relevance of the data contained in them and sometimes to obtain further information. Finally, these profiles, accompanied by a set of recapitulative and comparative tables on relevant aspects of the education system, will be made available to the international community in the forthcoming edition of the CD-ROM *World data on education*, to be published by the IBE and also available on Internet (<http://www.unicef.org/ibe>).

The objective of this activity is twofold. Firstly, to overcome the above-mentioned restrictions while making an easily accessible, up-to-date databank on national education systems available for consultation. Secondly, to encourage a richer exchange

and circulation of systematized information, while setting up a more active network for collaboration among countries.

Although we are dealing with preliminary data, which will be the subject of subsequent revisions and additions as the work of preparing and updating the educational profiles proceeds, in this issue of *Innovation*, we are presenting a concrete example of processed information concerning an issue of particular interest: the duration of the basic or primary education cycle, and the amount of instructional time at this educational level. It is hoped that the information provided here will be useful for analysis and comparison purposes.

Table 1

This table provides a synthesis of the situation concerning the length of the primary education cycle, taking into account the available information drawn from 184 education systems. As can be seen, the duration of this cycle varies between a minimum of three years (in two countries only: Armenia and Kyrgyzstan) and a maximum of ten (in Jordan and Iceland). The vast majority of countries are situated at the mid-point between these two extremes,

with a duration lasting between five and seven years (126 countries), while the six-year model is the one most frequently encountered in all geographical areas (eighty-three countries), with the exception of the Central European countries and the former U.S.S.R., where the four-year model finds most favour (fourteen out of the twenty-seven countries considered).

Primary education consists of less than five years in twenty-two countries, while the duration of these studies is longer than seven years in thirty-six countries; in this latter case, in general, it incorporates the lower-secondary cycle, and these levels combined tend to be considered as forming the 'basic education cycle' or 'compulsory schooling'. It was also considered appropriate to include in this table information concerning particular situations (specifically in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom) where different alternatives exist concerning the length of primary studies.

Table 2

We present in Table 2 the information provided by seventy-seven countries at the forty-fifth session of the ICE concerning the workload of teachers and, in par-

TABLE 1. Primary or basic education cycle by region: length of studies

Region	3 years	4 years	5 years	6 years	7 years	8 years	9 years	10 years	Total systems
Asia & the Pacific	-	1	7	21	3	2	-	-	34
Central Europe & former U.S.S.R.	2	14	1	-	-	7	3	-	27
Middle East & North Africa	-	1	4	8	-	1	5	1	20
North & South America	-	-	2	13	-	3	3	-	21
Sub-Saharan Africa	-	2	2	27	11	4	1	-	47
The Caribbean	-	-	-	6	8	1	-	-	15
Western Europe	-	2	4	8	1	1	3	1	20
Total	2	20	20	83	23	19	15	2	184
<i>Particular countries:</i>									
Canada	-	-	1	8	1	2	-	-	12
United Kingdom	-	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	3
Australia	-	-	-	4	4	-	-	-	8
Grand Total	2	20	21	96	30	21	15	2	207

Note: For the purposes of this analysis, countries have been grouped by geographical region and not according to UNESCO's official groupings of Member States.

Main sources: IBE databank (National reports on the development of education, 1992 through 1996); T.N. Postlethwaite, ed., *International encyclopaedia of national systems of education*, 1995; EURYDICE, *Dix années de réformes au niveau de l'enseignement obligatoire dans l'Union européenne*, 1996; Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos, *Sistemas educativos nacionales (1992-1996)*; UNESCO *statistical yearbook*, 1996

ticular, the average number of hours per week devoted to teaching in primary education (in the public sector). On this subject, it can be noted that, even though the overall average is 24.8 hours per week, there are significant differences between different geographical regions (from a minimum of 20.8 hours in Central Europe and the countries of the former U.S.S.R. to a maximum of 26.3 hours in Sub-Saharan Africa), as well as between countries in the

same region (in Sub-Saharan Africa, for example, it varies between a minimum of 16 hours per week in the United Republic of Tanzania to a maximum of 30 hours in Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mauritania).

Table 3

This table includes data concerning the length of primary studies and the total number of class hours in sixty-seven education systems (in

TABLE 2. Primary education: teachers' average workload (public sector). Countries (N = 77) in alphabetical order by region.

Region/country	N° of weekly hours devoted to classroom teaching	Region/country	No. of weekly hours devoted to classroom teaching
Sub-Saharan Africa		North and South America	
Angola	26.0	Argentina	22.5
Benin	28.0	Belize (av.)	27.5
Burkina Faso	30.0	Brazil (av.) *	25.0
Cameroon	27.5	Canada (av.) *	41.0
Chad	25.0	Chile	30.0
Congo	27.0	Costa Rica	20.0
Cote d'Ivoire	30.0	Cuba	25.0
Ghana	22.5	Ecuador	25.0
Guinea	30.0	Haiti	20.0
Madagascar	23.0	Honduras	25.0
Mali	26.5	Mexico	20.0
Mauritania	30.0	Nicaragua	25.0
Sudan	24.0	Panama	26.5
Swaziland (av.)	29.0	Paraguay	20.0
Togo	28.0	Peru	30.0
U.R. Tanzania	16.0	Uruguay	20.0
Uganda	22.0	Venezuela	25.0
Zaire	27.0	<i>Average</i>	<i>25.1</i>
Zimbabwe (av.) *	29.0	Central Europe & former U.S.S.R.	
<i>Average</i>	<i>26.3</i>	Belarus	27.0
Middle East and North Africa		Bulgaria	20.0
Algeria	30.0	Croatia (av.)	19.0
Egypt *	24.0	Czech Republic	23.0
Iran, Isl. Rep.	28.0	Hungary	20.0
Kuwait	20.0	Poland	18.0
Libyan Arab Jam.	20.0	Slovakia	22.0
Oman	17.0	Uzbekistan	14.0
Qatar	32.0	Former Yugoslavia	24.0
Saudi Arabia	18.0	<i>Average</i>	<i>20.8</i>
Syrian Arab Rep.	30.0	Western Europe	
Tunisia	25.0	Austria	20.0
Turkey	18.0	Denmark	18.7
U. Arab Emirates	34.0	France	24.0
<i>Average</i>	<i>24.7</i>	Germany (av.)	26.5
Asia and the Pacific		Italy	22.0
Afghanistan	24.0	Luxembourg	23.5
Australia (av.)	23.0	Malta (av.)	27.5
Bangladesh	36.0	Norway (av.)	22.5
China (av.)	19.0	Portugal *	35.0
Japan	18.0	Spain	25.0
Lao P.D.R.	25.0	<i>Average</i>	<i>24.5</i>
Myanmar	25.0	Average (77 countries) 24.8	
Philippines	31.5	* = Hours devoted to other educational activities are also included.	
Rep. of Korea,	26.5	<i>Sources:</i> IBE databank (National reports on the development of education, 1996) and Responses to the Questionnaire CONFINTED/Q/45/95, forty-fifth session of ICE, Geneva, October 1996.	
Thailand	25.0		
<i>Average</i>	<i>25.3</i>		

the public sector). The total number of class hours, or the total amount of time devoted to teaching, has been calculated bearing three elements in mind: (a) the school year, expressed in the number of class days or weeks; (b) the total number of hours or periods assigned to compulsory subjects in each class day or week, and in each grade (as far as possible, without including the time devoted to recreational activities or breaks between two classes); (c) the duration in minutes of each class 'hour' or period in each grade. This last point is particularly important and calls for special attention since the actual length of each class 'hour' varies between a minimum of 30 and a maximum of 60 minutes, and this is not always clearly specified. Furthermore, in some education systems, the length of the class 'hour' also varies with the grade under consideration, with a tendency for the actual length in minutes and the quantity of 'hours' of teaching to increase progressively with each passing grade. On the other hand, it is necessary to point out that the data obtained refer to the time laid down in official regulations, and there may be, at times, considerable differences between these regulations and their actual implementation in the classroom, as we shall see further on.

Although the information contained in this table offers a global view which highlights the remarkable differences existing at present, it is obviously difficult to compare, for example, the total time devoted to teaching in primary education in Germany (2,575 hours over four years) with that of Portugal (8,138 hours over nine years).

The time devoted to teaching in primary education has already been the subject of several analyses and studies. We already possess as a reference the study published by the World Bank in 1990 where it is argued that: 'Research from a number of countries has shown that the amount of time available for academic studies is consistently related to how much children learn in school. In general, the more time teachers spend actually teaching,

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TABLE 3. Primary or basic education cycle: length of studies and total amount of class hours.
Public sector (N = 67). Countries ordered by total amount of class hours.

Country/system	Duration (years)	Total amount of class hours
Portugal *	9	8,138
Sudan	8	7,759
Venezuela	9	7,533
Netherlands *	8	7,520
Slovenia	9	7,362
Iceland	10	7,003
Slovakia	4+5	6,990
Philippines	6	6,865
Finland (max) *	6+3	6,669
Norway	9	6,669
Sweden (average) *	9	6,665
Denmark	9	6,540
Libyan Arab J.	9	6,416
Brazil	8	6,400
Bahrain (est.)	9	6,375
UK (Scotland) *	7	6,365
Poland (est.) ***	8	6,301
El Salvador **	9	6,300
Chile **	8	6,270
Latvia	4+5	6,072
New Zealand ***	6	6,000
Australia (average)***	6	6,000
Canada (average)	6	6,000
Zimbabwe	7	5,832
U.R. Tanzania	7	5,806
UK (N.Ireland) *	7	5,795
Luxembourg *	6	5,618
Malaysia (est.)	6	5,597
Singapore ***	6	5,434
Benin (est.)	6	5,400
Togo (est.)	6	5,400
Paraguay (est.) **	6	5,400
UK (England, Wales) *	6	5,252
Cameroon (est.) ***	6	5,250
Cyprus	6	5,247
Indonesia (est.)	6	5,244
Jamaica (est.) ***	6	5,130
Belgium *	6	5,096
Bulgaria	4+4	5,086
Suriname ***	6	5,000
Spain	6	4,860
Guatemala (est.) ***	6	4,860
Former Yugoslavia	8	4,818
Mexico	6	4,800
Niger (est.) ***	6	4,680
Switzerland (average)	6	4,617
Egypt	5	4,539
Ecuador **	6	4,536
Colombia (est.) **	5	4,500
Burundi (est.)	6	4,446
Turkey (est.)	5	4,375
Sri Lanka ***	5	4,370
Japan	6	4,339
Peru	6	4,320
Italy *	5	4,300
Macedonia	4+4	4,296
Cuba	6	4,260
France	5	4,230
Vietnam	5	4,200
Greece *	6	4,068
Lebanon	5	4,050
Oman	6	3,840
Costa Rica **	6	3,810
Uruguay	6	3,780
Rep. of Korea	6	3,566
Austria	4	2,760
Germany	4	2,575
Country mean		5,367

Sources: IBE databank (National reports on the development of education, 1992 through 1996); * = EURYDICE, *Calendrier et rythmes scolaires dans l'Union européenne*, 1995; ** = Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos, *Sistemas educativos nacionales* (1992-1996); *** = T.N. Postlethwaite, ed. *International encyclopaedia of national systems of education*, 1995.

TABLE 4. Total amount of class hours during the first four years of primary education (presented from highest to lowest).
Public sector (sixty-seven education systems).

Country/system	Duration (years)	Class hours per year (1st-4th)				Total class hours
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	
Philippines	6	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,133.0	1,200.0	4,333
New Zealand ***	6	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	4,000
Australia (average) ***	6	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	4,000
Canada (average)	6	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	4,000
Luxembourg *	6	936.3	936.3	936.3	936.3	3,745
Malaysia (est.)	6	902.0	902.0	902.0	963.5	3,670
Benin (est.)	6	900.0	900.0	900.0	900.0	3,600
Togo (est.)	6	900.0	900.0	900.0	900.0	3,600
Colombia (est.) **	5	900.0	900.0	900.0	900.0	3,600
Paraguay (est.) **	6	900.0	900.0	900.0	900.0	3,600
Singapore ***	6	893.0	893.0	893.0	893.0	3,572
Egypt	5	867.0	867.0	867.0	969.0	3,570
Netherlands *	8	880.0	880.0	880.0	880.0	3,520
UK (Scotland) *	7	855.0	855.0	855.0	950.0	3,515
Cameroon (est.) ***	6	875.0	875.0	875.0	875.0	3,500
Turkey (est.)	5	875.0	875.0	875.0	875.0	3,500
UK (England, Wales) *	6	840.0	840.0	893.0	893.0	3,466
Jamaica (est.) ***	6	855.0	855.0	855.0	855.0	3,420
Italy *	5	800.0	800.0	900.0	900.0	3,400
Belgium *	6	849.3	849.3	849.3	849.3	3,397
France	5	846.0	846.0	846.0	846.0	3,384
Vietnam	5	840.0	840.0	840.0	840.0	3,360
Sudan	8	693.0	746.5	853.0	1040.0	3,333
Portugal *	9	787.5	787.5	787.5	962.5	3,325
Sri Lanka ***	5	760.0	760.0	760.0	1,045.0	3,325
Cyprus	6	765.0	765.0	874.5	874.5	3,279
Spain	6	810.0	810.0	810.0	810.0	3,240
Lebanon	5	810.0	810.0	810.0	810.0	3,240
Guatemala (est.) ***	6	810.0	810.0	810.0	810.0	3,240
Mexico	6	800.0	800.0	800.0	800.0	3,200
Brazil	8	800.0	800.0	800.0	800.0	3,200
Suriname ***	6	700.0	700.0	900.0	900.0	3,200
Niger (est.) ***	6	780.0	780.0	780.0	780.0	3,120
Indonesia (est.)	6	570.0	570.0	962.5	1,013.0	3,116
Zimbabwe	7	720.0	720.0	720.0	918.0	3,078
Chile **	8	760.0	760.0	760.0	760.0	3,040
Ecuador **	6	756.0	756.0	756.0	756.0	3,024
Venezuela	9	756.0	756.0	756.0	756.0	3,024
U.R. of Tanzania	7	700.0	700.0	803.0	803.0	3,006
Burundi (est.)	6	741.0	741.0	741.0	741.0	2,964
Switzerland (average)	6	655.5	712.5	769.5	826.5	2,964
UK (N.Ireland) *	7	665.0	665.0	665.0	950.0	2,945
Peru	6	720.0	720.0	720.0	720.0	2,880
Japan	6	637.5	682.5	735.0	761.3	2,816
El Salvador **	9	700.0	700.0	700.0	700.0	2,800
Cuba	6	690.0	690.0	690.0	690.0	2,760
Austria	4	630.0	630.0	750.0	750.0	2,760
Poland (est.) ***	8	633.0	665.0	665.0	791.5	2,755
Slovakia	4+5	614.0	643.5	702.0	731.0	2,691
Slovenia	9	641.0	641.0	669.0	726.0	2,677
Bahrain (est.)	9	625.0	625.0	625.0	750.0	2,625
Finland (max) *	6+3	598.5	598.5	712.5	712.5	2,622
Greece *	6	603.5	603.5	656.0	735.0	2,598
Denmark	9	600.0	600.0	660.0	720.0	2,580
Germany	4	561.0	613.0	689.0	712.0	2,575
Oman	6	640.0	640.0	640.0	640.0	2,560
Costa Rica **	6	635.0	635.0	635.0	635.0	2,540
Uruguay	6	630.0	630.0	630.0	630.0	2,520
Libyan Arab Jama.	9	581.0	581.0	627.0	697.5	2,487
Norway	9	570.0	570.0	570.0	769.5	2,480
Iceland	10	612.0	612.0	612.0	612.0	2,448
Sweden (average) *	9	494.0	550.0	570.0	740.0	2,354
Rep. of Korea,	6	506.5	544.0	589.0	612.0	2,252
Latvia	4+5	480.0	528.0	576.0	576.0	2,160
Bulgaria	4+4	398.0	528.0	576.0	600.0	2,102
Former Yugoslavia	8	499.5	499.5	527.0	555.0	2,081
Macedonia	4+4	432.0	456.0	504.0	504.0	1,896
Country mean		736.0	744.0	775.0	814.0	3,069

Sources: IBE databank (National Reports on the Development of Education, 1992 through 1996); * = EURYDICE, *Calendrier et rythmes scolaires dans l'Union européenne*, 1995; ** = Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos, *Sistemas educativos nacionales* (1992-1996); *** = T.N. Postlethwaite, ed., *International encyclopaedia of national systems of education*, 1995.

the more students learn. While classroom instruction is valuable for all students, it is specially important for poor students, whose out-of-school time and opportunities for learning are limited. [...] Worldwide, the official academic year for primary grades 1-6 averages 880 instructional hours, or 180 days, with slightly fewer hours in lower-income countries than in higher-income countries' (World Bank, *Primary education. A World Bank policy paper*, Washington, DC, The World Bank, 1990, p. 18-19).

These observations are based in part on the data contained in another World Bank publication, where it is possible to find more detailed information supporting this position: 'Using a variety of international and national sources, we have developed preliminary estimates for about 70 countries (61 of which are developing countries) of the total amount of class or instructional time (in hours) during an "average" year of the elementary school cycle (grades 1-6). Figures for this variable, which refer to the mid-1980s, are calculated by multiplying the number of hours of weekly class time by the number of weeks in the school year. [...] These estimates of annual hours of instruction range from 544 to 1,200, with a global mean of 866 hours of instruction during a "typical" year of elementary education. Surprisingly, the mean difference in annual hours of instruction between developing and developed countries is very small (865.7 hours versus 868.3 hours), perhaps due to the limited number of developed countries (9) for which we have accurate information. Developing countries in the EMENA region (Southern Europe, Middle East and North Africa) have, on average, the longest school terms (over 900 annual hours of instruction); followed by Asian countries with about 876 hours of instruction and finally countries in the SSA (Sub-Saharan Africa) and LAC (Latin America and the Caribbean) regions which tend to have the shortest school years in terms of total hours of instruction (847 hours and 839 hours, respectively)' (A. Benavot and D. Kamens,

The curricular content of primary education in developing countries, Washington, DC, The World Bank, 1989, p. 44. Policy, planning and research working papers, no. 237).

Table 4

The information for this table is drawn from sixty-seven education systems (in the public sector) in terms of the total time devoted to teaching (instructional time) during the first four years of primary education. The following tables (Tables 5 to 10) present the same information by geographic area. We chose the first four years of primary education as the mean in order to be able to make various comparisons of a general nature between different education systems. Indeed, independently of the total length of studies, it is generally during this period that the teaching/learning process concerning basic learning notions about language(s), reading, writing and arithmetic takes place. Although the question of the amount of time devoted to each teaching subject in primary education will be dealt with more thoroughly in a forthcoming issue of *Innovation*, in the first instance we can estimate that, on average, in the first primary grade, between 50 and 60% of the available time is devoted to the teaching of language(s), reading, writing and arithmetic, whereas by the fourth grade, this averages at between 45 and 50%.

The information included in Table 4 and the following tables does not appear to be directly comparable with the data reviewed in

the two above-mentioned studies and describes a slightly different situation.

Thus, the total average time devoted to teaching during the first to fourth primary grades is 3,069 hours, and tends to be greater in developing countries (3,166 hours, N = 37 education systems) compared with the more developed countries (2,950 hours, N = 30).

On average, the first grade of primary education consists of 736 hours of teaching, with a wide variation between a minimum of 398 hours (Bulgaria) and a maximum of 1,000 (Australia, Canada, New Zealand and Philippines). The fourth primary grade consists, on average, of 814 hours of teaching, which varies between a minimum of 504 (Macedonia) and a maximum of 1,200 hours (Philippines).

In developing countries, the average number of class hours in the first grade is higher than that in developed countries (approximately 766 and 698 hours respectively). This difference is also maintained, but to a lesser extent, in the fourth grade (approximately 831 and 793 hours respectively).

Once more it is worthwhile emphasizing the high degree of variance between one system and another, especially if we compare it with the evident common standard as far as the average number of years of primary education is concerned. As we have seen above (Table1), primary education consists of six years in a large number of education systems, but the differences are remarkable when we consider the total number of class hours

TABLE 5. Sub-Saharan Africa. Class hours during the first four years of primary education (presented from highest to lowest). Public sector.

Country	Duration (years)	Class hours per year (1st-4th)				Total class hours
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	
Benin (est.)	6	900.0	900.0	900.0	900.0	3,600
Togo (est.)	6	900.0	900.0	900.0	900.0	3,600
Cameroon (est.) *	6	875.0	875.0	875.0	875.0	3,500
Sudan	8	693.0	746.5	853.0	1,040.0	3,333
Niger (est.) *	6	780.0	780.0	780.0	780.0	3,120
Zimbabwe	7	720.0	720.0	720.0	918.0	3,078
U.R. of Tanzania	7	700.0	700.0	803.0	803.0	3,006
Burundi (est.)	6	741.0	741.0	741.0	741.0	2,964
Country mean		788.6	795.3	821.5	869.6	3,275

Sources: IBE databank (National reports on the development of education, 1992 through 1996); * = T.N. Postlethwaite, ed., *International encyclopaedia of national systems of education*, 1995.

PRIMARY EDUCATION: LENGTH OF STUDIES AND INSTRUCTIONAL TIME

TABLE 6. Asia and the Pacific. Class hours during the first four years of primary education (presented from highest to lowest). Public sector.

Country	Duration (years)	Class hours per year (1st-4th)				Total class hours
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	
Philippines	6	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,133.0	1,200.0	4,333
New Zealand *	6	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	4,000
Australia (average) *	6	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	1,000.0	4,000
Malaysia (est.)	6	902.0	902.0	902.0	963.5	3,670
Singapore *	6	893.0	893.0	893.0	893.0	3,572
Viet Nam	5	840.0	840.0	840.0	840.0	3,360
Sri Lanka *	5	760.0	760.0	760.0	1,045.0	3,325
Indonesia (est.)	6	570.0	570.0	962.5	1,013.0	3,116
Japan	6	637.5	682.5	735.0	761.3	2,816
Rep. of Korea	6	506.5	544.0	589.0	612.0	2,252
Country mean		810.9	819.2	881.5	932.8	3,444

Sources: IBE databank (National reports on the development of education, 1992 through 1996);

* = T.N.Postlethwaite, ed., *International encyclopaedia of national systems of education*, 1995.

TABLE 7. Eastern and Central Europe. Class hours during the first four years of primary education (presented from highest to lowest). Public sector.

Country	Duration (years)	Class hours per year (1st-4th)				Total class hours
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	
Poland (est.) *	8	633.0	665.0	665.0	791.5	2,755
Slovakia	4+5	614.0	643.5	702.0	731.0	2,691
Slovenia	9	641.0	641.0	669.0	726.0	2,677
Latvia	4+5	480.0	528.0	576.0	576.0	2,160
Bulgaria	4+4	398.0	528.0	576.0	600.0	2,102
Fr. Yugoslavia	8	499.5	499.5	527.0	555.0	2,081
Macedonia	4+4	432.0	456.0	504.0	504.0	1,896
Country mean		528.2	565.9	602.7	640.5	2,337

Sources: IBE databank (National reports on the development of education, 1992 through 1996);

* = T.N.Postlethwaite, ed., *International encyclopaedia of national systems of education*, 1995.

TABLE 8. Latin America and the Caribbean. Class hours during the first four years of primary education (presented from highest to lowest). Public sector.

Country	Duration (years)	Class hours per year (1st-4th)				Total class hours
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	
Colombia (est.) *	5	900.0	900.0	900.0	900.0	3,600
Paraguay (est.) *	6	900.0	900.0	900.0	900.0	3,600
Jamaica (est.) **	6	855.0	855.0	855.0	855.0	3,420
Guatemala (est.) **	6	810.0	810.0	810.0	810.0	3,240
Mexico	6	800.0	800.0	800.0	800.0	3,200
Brazil	8	800.0	800.0	800.0	800.0	3,200
Suriname **	6	700.0	700.0	900.0	900.0	3,200
Chile *	8	760.0	760.0	760.0	760.0	3,040
Ecuador *	6	756.0	756.0	756.0	756.0	3,024
Venezuela	9	756.0	756.0	756.0	756.0	3,024
Peru	6	720.0	720.0	720.0	720.0	2,880
El Salvador *	9	700.0	700.0	700.0	700.0	2,800
Cuba	6	690.0	690.0	690.0	690.0	2,760
Costa Rica *	6	635.0	635.0	635.0	635.0	2,540
Uruguay	6	630.0	630.0	630.0	630.0	2,520
Country mean		760.8	760.8	774.1	774.1	3,070

Sources: IBE databank (National reports on the development of education, 1992 through 1996);

* = Organización de Estados Iberoamericanos, *Sistemas educativos nacionales (1992-1996)*;

** = T.N.Postlethwaite, ed., *International encyclopaedia of national systems of education*, 1995.

foreseen during this period of time. In Cyprus, for example, the pupils have 5,247 instructional hours available (in theory), while in Uruguay the same number of school years amounts to 3,780 hours, in other words, almost 30% less (see Table 3).

In regional terms, it is the Asian countries where we find the highest average number of class hours (3,444); in Africa South of the Sahara, the average (3,275 hours) is higher than both the worldwide average (3,069 hours) and the average for developing countries (3,166 hours). The differences are less striking in Latin America and the Caribbean (3,070 hours on average), the Middle East and North Africa (3,037 hours), and Western Europe (3,017). At the other end of the scale lies Central and Eastern Europe, with an average of 2,337 hours (see Tables 5 to 10).

It is necessary to exercise a certain degree of prudence when analysing and comparing the information presented here. Beyond their preliminary nature, these data basically reflect the official position on the subject, and tell us nothing about the real situation in schools—which may be very different. Thus, for example, in Peru, primary pupils should theoretically receive 720 class hours per year. 'However, in practice, teacher and student absenteeism, teacher strikes, semi-official holidays, preparation for parades and other non-academic activities, amongst other things, have the effect that the total number of class hours is not fulfilled. It is calculated that pupils actually receive approximately 80 to 50% of the official number of class hours; in remote rural areas with single-teacher schools and multi-grade classes, it was estimated in 1996 that the amount did not reach 30%' (*Perú. Informe nacional, International Conference on Education, forty-fifth session, Geneva, 1996, p. 26*). In Niger, 'the official school calendar of the year 1990/91 has a total of 1,014 hours. After deduction of the breaks (30 minutes per day), the net amount of time devoted to teaching is about 930 hours. However, this does not take

teacher absence into account, and the estimate of 780 hours which forms the base of the mathematics syllabus might be a more realistic estimate' (H. Bergmann, 'Niger', in: T.N. Postlethwaite, ed., *International encyclopaedia of national systems of education*, 2nd edition, Cambridge, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 725). In general, 'time loss for unscheduled school closings, teacher absences, disruptions, and inclement weather is much greater in developing countries. [...] Teacher absences due to administrative procedures are also common in developing countries. For example, many teachers must travel considerable distances to be paid, while others are assigned to schools far from their homes; both situations contribute to teacher absences and reduced instructional time' (World Bank, op. cit., 1990, p. 19).

In the same way, the same data do not provide us with sufficient elements to estimate the effective use of instructional time. On this point, it has been observed that: 'in the United States, approximately one-fourth of the allocated time in elementary schools is spent on recess, lunch and similar activities. In the United Kingdom, the estimate of the percentage of allocated time that is instructional is virtually identical. In the classroom, between 7 and 27% of the time is spent on non-instructional matters. Figures above 15% occur in Australia, Canada and the United States' (L.W. Anderson, 'Time, allocated and instructional', in: T. Husén and T.N. Postlethwaite, eds., *The international encyclopaedia of education*, 2nd ed., vol. 11, Cambridge, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 3,547).

On the other hand, the number of class hours available to students and teachers is only one of the variables in question and its importance is relative: 'in order to be productive, instructional time requires the availability of other resources, including, in the first place, teachers' skills. Lack of the necessary resources may transform teachers into mere child-minders. Some kind of infrastructure, school books and

instructional materials are other necessary ingredients which give to teaching/learning time its value, and they constitute incentives for both students and teachers to make the best use of their time. Consequently, any reform which aims at increasing instructional time as a means to raise academic achievement ought, at the same time, to ensure that these other inputs are available in sufficient quantities' (B. Millot, 'Macroeconomics of educational time and learning', in: T. Husén and T.N. Postlethwaite, eds., *The international encyclopaedia of education*, 2nd ed., vol. 6, Cambridge, United Kingdom, Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 3,547).

In any case, it would be interesting to find out if the substantial differences which are evident in the total number of class hours available between, for instance, Iceland (2,448 hours) and the Netherlands (3,520), Oman (2,560) and Egypt (3,570), Uruguay (2,520) and Mexico (3,200), or Japan (2,818) and Malaysia (3,670) are associated with similar differences in terms of learning achievement among the students completing the fourth primary grade.

Massimo Amadio
Original: Spanish

TABLE 9. Middle East and North Africa. Class hours during the first four years of primary education (presented from highest to lowest). Public sector.

Country	Duration (years)	Class hours per year (1st-4th)				Total class hours
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	
Egypt	5	867.0	867.0	867.0	969.0	3,570
Turkey (est.)	5	875.0	875.0	875.0	875.0	3,500
Cyprus	6	765.0	765.0	874.5	874.5	3,279
Lebanon	5	810.0	810.0	810.0	810.0	3,240
Bahrain (est.)	9	625.0	625.0	625.0	750.0	2,625
Oman	6	640.0	640.0	640.0	640.0	2,560
Libyan Arab Jama.	9	581.0	581.0	627.0	697.5	2,487
Country mean		737.6	737.6	759.8	802.3	3,037

Source: IBE databank (National reports on the development of education, 1992 through 1996).

TABLE 10. Western Europe. Class hours during the first four years of primary education (presented from highest to lowest). Public sector.

Country/system	Duration (years)	Class hours per year (1st-4th)				Total class hours
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	
Luxembourg *	6	936.3	936.3	936.3	936.3	3,745
Netherlands *	8	880.0	880.0	880.0	880.0	3,520
UK (Scotland) *	7	855.0	855.0	855.0	950.0	3,515
UK (England, Wales) *	6	840.0	840.0	893.0	893.0	3,466
Italy *	5	800.0	800.0	900.0	900.0	3,400
Belgium *	6	849.3	849.3	849.3	849.3	3,397
France	5	846.0	846.0	846.0	846.0	3,384
Portugal *	9	787.5	787.5	787.5	962.5	3,325
Spain	6	810.0	810.0	810.0	810.0	3,240
Switzerland (average)	6	655.5	712.5	769.5	826.5	2,964
UK (N.Ireland) *	7	665.0	665.0	665.0	950.0	2,945
Austria	4	630.0	630.0	750.0	750.0	2,760
Finland (max) *	6+3	598.5	598.5	712.5	712.5	2,622
Greece *	6	603.5	603.5	656.0	735.0	2,598
Denmark	9	600.0	600.0	660.0	720.0	2,580
Germany	4	561.0	613.0	689.0	712.0	2,575
Norway	9	570.0	570.0	570.0	769.5	2,480
Iceland	10	612.0	612.0	612.0	612.0	2,448
Sweden (average) *	9	494.0	550.0	570.0	740.0	2,354
Country mean		715.5	724.1	758.5	818.7	3,017

Sources: IBE databank (National reports on the development of education, 1992 through 1996); * = EURYDICE, *Calendrier et rythmes scolaires dans l'Union européenne*, 1995.

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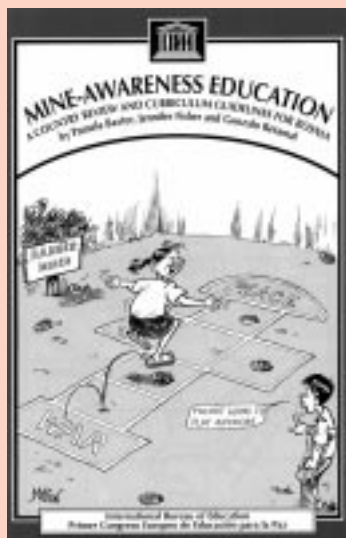
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INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Copenhagen, Denmark,
Late April 1998

The International Conference on Education and Children's Rights will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, during the last week of April 1998. The Danish Ministry of Education is the primary sponsor, in partnership with the Danish Association of Pedagogical Psychologists, the International School Psychology Association, and the Office for the Study of the Psychological Rights of the Child (Indiana University-Purdue University). Among the organizations co-operating in this project are the International Bureau of Education and UNESCO's Early Childhood and Family Education Unit, Education International, and the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

This conference is meant to advance education conditions to help achieve full development of children's potentials and respect for their rights. A four-and-one-half day programme will involve participants from about forty-five countries in presentations, school visits, structured exchanges, and planning sessions to strengthen education within their own countries. Information about Danish education will be used as the basis for stimulating consideration of education around the world. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child education standards will provide a primary framework. A set of countries representing diverse conditions and the major regions of the world is being invited to participate. Each country is being encouraged to send to the conference a four/five person team, including leaders in: (a) government educational policy (from the ministry or office of education); and organizations of (b) professional education, (c) educational psychology, (d) children's rights work, and (e) parents.

Parties interested in the conference should communicate with Joergen Hansen, Ministry of Education, Frederiksholms Kanal 21-25, 1220 Copenhagen, Denmark; tel.: 45.33.92.53.00; fax: 45.33.92.53.02; E-mail: joergen.hansen@uvm.dk; or with Stuart Hart, Office for the Study of the Psychological Rights of the Child, School of Education, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis, 902 W, New York St., Indianapolis, Indiana 46202-5155, United States of America; tel.: (1) 317-274-68.05; fax: (1) 317-274-68.64; E-mail: snhart@iupui.edu

WCCES NEWS

TENTH WORLD CONGRESS

« Education, Equity, and Transformation » is the theme for the tenth World Congress of Comparative Education to be hosted by the Southern African Comparative and History of Education Society on behalf of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) in Cape Town, 12-17 July 1998.

Call for papers (due 15 January 1998): The Congress will include plenaries (keynote addresses), commissions (see below), panel sessions (involving related presentations), individual paper presentations, and film/video screenings.

Commissions include: Literacy & Language; Indigenous Education; Higher Education; Gender; Teacher Education; Lifelong Learning; Vocational Education and Training; Civic Education; Educating All for Peace and Justice; Theories and Methods in Comparative Education; Dependency, Education and Development; Tradition and Change; Education; Internationalization and Globalization; Culture and Education; Race, Class and Education; International Trends in Teaching and Learning. Papers included in Commissions are solicited by commissions' chairs or channelled to commissions by the Conference Organizers.

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Congress registration and accommodation. The following rates (in US dollars) are for registrations received before 30 March 1998 (after which the rates increase by \$50).

• Member of a Comparative Education Society	\$220
• Non-member of a Comparative Education Society	\$ 270
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Please send check for registration, payable (in US dollars) to 'SACHES', to the above address. Indicate name(s), address, e-mail, telephone, fax, arrival and departure dates and whether you prefer to stay in a university residence, guest-house or hotel.

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