

Guidelines for School Policy for the German Democratic School (August 24, 1949)

Abstract

The SED's guidelines on school policy from August 24, 1949, made clear that schools in the future GDR were to play an important role in the creation of Socialist society, and that they had to adhere strictly to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. The program of the SED aimed to create a state comprehensive school [*Einheitsschule*] with carefully chosen, politically and ideologically reliable teachers. The traditional multi-track German school system was abolished as was the traditional authority of individual states in educational matters. Private schools, especially those run by institutions of the church, were no longer permitted either.

Source

Decision of the SED Executive Committee of August 24, 1949

The resolute continuation of democratic school reform is of essential importance in the further development of social conditions in Germany, especially the consolidation of the anti-Fascist-democratic order in the SOZ [Soviet Occupation Zone]. On the basis of social changes and experiences gained since 1945 in the implementation of school reform, there is both a need and a possibility to clearly outline, through guidelines for school policy, the tasks involved in the current phase of the development of implementing the law on democratizing German schools.

I. The basic political tasks of the German democratic school

The present phase of the social and political development is characterized by an intensification of the struggle for the national unity and independence of Germany and for the peace treaty, for the consolidation of the democratic order, the People's Congress movement, and the National Front. From this arises the German democratic school's task of educating the youth, to a decisive extent, into fighters for the unity of Germany, for a just peace, and for a peaceful and amicable coexistence between nations, especially with the Soviet Union.

In view of the intensification and inevitability of this struggle, these tasks can be fulfilled only if every teacher and educator combats all reactionary and neo-Fascist, militaristic, war-mongering, and especially anti-Soviet influences and theories, any religious, national, and racial hatred.

II. Tasks and character of the German democratic school in the anti-Fascist-democratic order

The struggle for Germany's unity and for peace demands the gathering together of all national forces. Of special importance in the SOZ is the consolidation of the democratic order through economic and cultural progress, the fulfillment of the Two-Year Plan, a boost in labor productivity, the training of a qualified younger generation for positions in industry and agriculture, and the development of a new intelligentsia.

Solving these tasks puts greater demands on the work of the schools:

1. A boosting of the performance standards in all general education and vocational schools, a deepening of the anti-Fascist-democratic content in the classroom and in education, and the transmission of well-

rounded and systematic knowledge; cultivation of the progressive national cultural legacy.

2. Education of the youth to a new morality and work discipline as the precondition for a conscious integration into the new society.

3. Creation of a new intelligentsia, especially from the circles of workers.

4. Development of politically conscious and highly qualified teachers and educators.

The children and youth of the broad mass of the gainfully employed, especially the workers, the farmers, and the progressive intelligentsia, must be educated and raised by our schools in such a way that they are willing and able to master the new democratic economy, to shape and control the new democratic state, and thus become builders and activists of our democratic society, of a new prosperity, and of peace. As a school of the democratic order, the democratic school serves the interests of all progressive people, improves their knowledge, and promotes their education. Through its place within the democratic society, it has developed beyond the progressive bourgeois school.

III. The new organizational forms of the German democratic school

In its structural design, the German democratic comprehensive school is not an instrument of leveling; rather it represents the uniform organization of a multifarious school system that is built up organically and systematically. This system offers every child the possibility of educating himself in a well-rounded and continuous fashion, and of participating in the advancement of society in accordance with his abilities.

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IV. Role and importance of the teacher in the democratic school as a teacher of the nation

The teacher of the new democratic school stands within the social and cultural life of his nation. He is no longer the servant of a ruling minority, whose interest is directed at preserving the existing social and cultural conditions; instead, he receives his instructions from the progressive forces of the nation and, as a teacher of the people at all levels of the comprehensive school, serves all working strata and all people who are actively working together on behalf of the wellbeing and liberation of our people.

The teacher must combine his pedagogical work with the struggle for the building of a new democratic society. For all teachers and educators, the principle holds that political education and social work in keeping with their vocational and political education is the indispensable prerequisite for their professional qualifications.

The new democratic school calls for the politically conscious and scientifically educated teacher. It is therefore necessary that every teacher, in addition to a good general education, acquire an objective knowledge of Marxism-Leninism and a thorough knowledge of his subjects and of pedagogy. His subject-specific, theoretical training must occur in living connection with school practice and his own social activity.

The German democratic school can only fulfill the objectives of its school policy with teachers who meet the following basic requirements:

1. The teacher at the democratic school must at all times prove himself as a fighter for the unity of Germany and for a just peace, and he must personally support the struggle of the National Front without reservations.

2. Every teacher must be an honest fighter for peace and against all war-mongering.

3. Every teacher must be a true friend of the Soviet Union and must constantly advocate the development of a genuine relationship of friendship with the Soviet Union among his students, the parents of his students, and the public.

Every teacher must be conscious of the objective of democratic society and must realize it through his leading role in teaching and educational work, and therefore be eager to continually pursue professional qualifications.

[...]

Source: *Dokumente der SED*, vol. 2. East Berlin: 1951, p. 324 ff.; reprinted in Christoph Kleßmann, *Die doppelte Staatsgründung. Deutsche Geschichte 1945–1955*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986, pp. 525–27.

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