# Socialist Education (February 25, 1965)

## Abstract

The program passed at the VI. Party Congress of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) in January 1963 called for efforts to restructure East Germany's education system. With the implementation of the Law on the Unified Socialist Education System, these efforts were largely complete. The law provided for a common curriculum for all students up to grade ten; the curriculum emphasized vocational training and political-ideological education.

## Source

### Law on the Unified Socialist Education System of February 25, 1965

The German Democratic Republic has entered the new, socialist age. After the triumph of socialist conditions of production, the main thrust of the creative activity of the working class and of the entire population is now the comprehensive build-up of socialism [*der umfassende Aufbau des Sozialismus*]. The realization of the historic tasks of the socialist program agreed upon at the VI. Party Congress of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany—the mastering of the technological revolution and the development of the socialist community—demand, in the interest of society and of every individual, a higher quality education system: the uniform socialist education system.

The working class, together with the farmers' collectives and all other workers, and under the leadership of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, has created the foundation for the victory of socialism. The German Democratic Republic has become a capable, modern industrial nation and a bastion of peace. It is closely allied with the socialist Soviet Union, with the other countries in the socialist community, and with all peace-loving peoples. The people of the German Democratic Republic are free from exploitation and oppression; they are socially secure. Women have equal rights. In keeping with women's important role in socialist society, special attention is paid to their advancement and development. All the love and care of the workers' and peasants' state is devoted to the young generation, which is achieving great things in production and in political and cultural life. The party of the working class, the government, and the National Front of Democratic Germany are constantly working to give responsibility to youth, to show them trust, and to give them every possible opportunity to obtain qualifications for their professions and for life in society.

All citizens of our country—irrespective of sex, social status, worldview, faith, and race—enjoy the same rights. The privilege of education is no longer the sole preserve of the exploiter classes. As once envisioned and demanded by the best humanist thinkers of the German nation, access to scholarship, culture, and technology is open to all in our state. Everyone can develop his abilities to the fullest. The doors to supervisory and executive positions at work and in society are open to our citizens.

This is how the socialist community evolved in the German Democratic Republic. The principle is: Everything with the people, everything by the people, everything for the people.

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A high standard of education and a high standard for socialist personal conduct decidedly influence the pace of social progress. At the same time, education and culture are becoming the responsibility of the entire nation to an even greater extent than before.

To achieve these goals, it is necessary to create a uniform socialist education system. Such a system aids in the growth and development of well-rounded people, meaning people who are informed about socialism, who are highly qualified, healthy, mentally and physically productive, and cultured—people who are able and willing to fulfill the historic tasks of our times.

In this ongoing, far-reaching revolution in the history of the humanist struggle for the education of the entirety of the people, the German Democratic Republic can rely on the fact that it has already created a capable and proven system of education.

The antifascist-democratic reform of schools and institutions of higher learning liberated the education system from the disastrous influences of German imperialism, militarism, nationalism, and fascism. The property owners' monopoly on access to education was broken. As demanded by the revolutionary German workers' movement—and also, earlier on, by the democratic educators of the bourgeoisie—the educational and pedagogical principles of secularity, uniformity, state-controlled education, scientifically based education, and equality of educational opportunities have been fulfilled, and all that is anti-humanist has disappeared from classrooms and lecture halls. An organically organized, uniform school system emerged with eight years of elementary schooling. One-room schoolhouses in villages were gradually eliminated. A high level of general education for all children in the population was increasingly assured in all types of schools. The young generation was raised in the spirit of peace, friendship among nations, and humanism.

Universities and colleges are, for the first time in German history, open to the children of workers and farmers. Our universities, colleges, and technical colleges have truly become educational institutions of the people, because the German Democratic Republic not only proclaims the right to education but has also created the material prerequisites to realize this right for all social strata.

The build-up of socialism also placed higher demands on the education system. The socialist school emerged; it distinguished itself through its continual elevation of the level of education in all subjects and at all levels, through its close connection with life, through the combination of instruction and productive work, through the introduction of polytechnic instruction, and through the extension of general schooling to ten years.

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The uniform socialist education system shall from now on correspond to the demands of the comprehensive build-up of socialism in accordance with our society's perspective. Our priority is to link school and life even more closely. The curriculum is to be adjusted to reflect the newest discoveries in science, technology, and culture. A practical socialist education, focused on career training, needs to be guaranteed. The individual elements of the education system must be connected, in terms of both content and structure, in such a way that they form a uniform, coordinated whole.

It will thus be possible to continue to raise the scientific standard of education and instruction at all levels of the uniform socialist education system and to further improve the effectiveness of the entire system of education through an ongoing process of education and instruction. The educational policies of our socialist state will then continue to be executed consistently on a higher level.

The accomplishments of the German Democratic Republic in the field of education and its ongoing systematic enhancement of education are a national achievement that stands as a model for all of Germany. The socialist education system of the German Democratic Republic is an entire historical epoch ahead of the education system in West Germany.

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With its practical, democratic, and humanistic approach to education, the uniform socialist education system sets new standards for the entire German nation.

It provides new impulses for the great movement toward education among the entire people. Millions of people are earning qualifications and achieving a higher level of education. By working while they learn and learning while they work, they have embarked upon the path to an educated, socialist nation.

The uniform socialist education system allows the socialist state, which is based on the development of socialist democracy, to play a leading role in cultural education. The goals of the uniform socialist education system concern the entire people. Kindergarten teachers, teachers at general polytechnical secondary schools, teachers at vocational and technical schools, professors at institutions of higher learning, the directors, master craftsmen, and instructors in factories, parents and the family (who assume a new moral and educational role in socialism), social organizations, and all societal forces work toward these goals.

The implementation of the uniform socialist education system, along with the meeting of all academic, organizational, and economic prerequisites, must be carried out methodically and incrementally. In the course of this implementation, the continuity of educational and instructional processes must be preserved.

The solution to this historic challenge is made possible by the accomplishments of all workers. It requires the efforts of all organs of the state and the economy and of all societal forces.

The People's Chamber [*Volkskammer*] of the German Democratic Republic hereby resolves:

## Part One
## Principles and goals of the uniform socialist education system and factors in social education

Paragraph 1

(1) The goal of the uniform socialist education system is a high standard of education for the entire nation, the formation and education of well-rounded and harmoniously developed socialist individuals who consciously shape society, alter nature, and lead happy, fulfilled, and dignified lives.

(2) The socialist education system contributes significantly to enabling the citizens to shape socialist society, master the technological revolution, and participate in the development of socialist democracy. It imparts to the people a modern general education and highly specialized training and, at the same time, develops character traits within them that are consistent with the principles of socialist morality. The socialist education system enables them to be good citizens and to perform valuable work, to continue to learn, to be active in society, to contribute to plans and assume responsibility, to lead healthy lives, to use their spare time wisely, to play sports, and to nurture the arts.

(3) This goal unites the socialist state and all societal forces in a common formative and educational effort.

Paragraph 2

(1) With the uniform socialist education system, the socialist state ensures that all citizens of the German Democratic Republic have the same right to education.

(2) The basic elements of the uniform socialist education system are:
– institutions for early education

– ten-year, general polytechnical schools
– institutions for vocational training
– college preparatory institutions
– engineering and technical colleges
– universities and colleges
– institutions for adult and continuing education for workers
Special education facilities admit children with physical or intellectual disabilities.

(3) The socialist education system's emphasis on uniformity in goals and structure allows for differentiated education at the later stages, as determined by the demands of society and the capabilities of the individual.

(4) The socialist education system is structured so that every citizen can advance to the next institution of learning, up to the very highest institutions, universities and colleges. The best and most capable shall be selected for the institutions of higher learning. The social structure of the population of the German Democratic Republic shall be taken into consideration in the selection process.

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Source: Gesetz über das einheitliche sozialistische Bildungssystem vom 25. Februar 1965 (available online at: http://www.verfassungen.de/ddr/schulgesetz65.htm); reprinted in Siegfried Baske, *Bildungspolitik in der DDR. Dokumente.* Wiesbaden, 1979, pp. 97–130.

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