

The Third University Reform in the GDR (April 3, 1969)

Abstract

Implemented over the course of several years (1967–72), the so-called Third University Reform led to a fundamental restructuring of the traditional university system in the GDR and further increased SED control over research and scholarship. From that point on, the economic and social relevance of university employees and their work was of foremost importance.

Source

Science and Research are among the Basic Foundations of Socialist Society

Now I will turn to the report on the key points of the discussion of the draft resolution and, using the report's five main sections as a guide, I will describe the outcome of this extensive discussion.

The Preamble lays out the aspects [of the discussion] that indicate the great importance of science and education in shaping our socialist society.

It is enshrined in our constitution that science and research, as well as the application of their findings, are among the basic foundations of socialist society. Through the consistent science and education policy of the party of the working class, our institutions of higher education have developed into important centers in the struggle for mastery of the scientific and technological revolution.

High achievements in science and education are a decisive contribution to the overall strengthening of the German Democratic Republic and thus to that of the entire community of socialist states. All college and university faculty and staff are tasked with working together with their partners in industry and society to make pioneering and world-class contributions to research and teaching. In doing so, they are to use the highest global standards for science and technology as their point of departure. In this way, higher education will make a decisive contribution to the class struggle with imperialism, particularly with the state-monopolistic system in West Germany.

In numerous responses to the draft resolution, faculty and staff members at institutions of higher education, as well as representatives of the socialist economy, gave convincing expression to their belief that pioneering and world-class contributions to teaching and research can only be achieved in cooperation.

[...]

Concentration Leads to Top Performance in Research and Teaching

Section I of the report explains how the scientific potential of universities and colleges is to be concentrated in order to achieve top performance in research and teaching.

The decisive question is how quickly the scientific potential of universities and colleges can be concentrated, particularly on tasks that are important for planned initiatives that will determine the structure of our national economy, and how long it will take to steer research and teaching consistently towards this goal.

Based on the prognoses of socialist society, of science and technology, of the national economy, and of

the education system, universities and colleges, together with their partners in industry, face the task of quickly implementing large-scale socialist research as the form of scientific organization most appropriate to the social system of socialism, and of harnessing the potential of institutions of higher education in order to make scientific advances by integrating them into tight-knit research associations.

This is only possible through close cooperation between universities, colleges, and socialist industry, and between universities, colleges, and other academic research facilities.

[...]

Unity of Class-Based Education and Research-Oriented Teaching

The fundamental intention of the principles presented in Section II on the restructuring of training and the improvement of education is the implementation of the unification of class-based education and world-class research-oriented teaching. The tasks of universities and institutions of higher education are to educate and shape students into well-rounded socialist persons. Familiarizing students with the latest scientific discoveries and problems, with the methods and processes needed to quickly translate research findings into practical application, and with the knowledge required to master modern technological and scientific processes will require reshaping the whole academic curriculum into a scientific-productive curriculum.

The creative potential of the students in the shaping of education and character development should be fostered and put to use in every way possible. This will lead to the development of new facets of the professor-student relationship and to new forms of socialist teamwork.

Problems relating to education and character development assumed a significant place in the discussion as a whole. This was also reflected in the large number of recommendations submitted to the Commission of the State Council on this topic; these recommendations made suggestions for changes, additions, and clarifications in the draft resolution. The students took a particularly keen interest in the tasks outlined in this section. Central to the discussion were questions regarding the political and ideological education of students. Many comments on this topic recommended that the resolution should include comrade Walter Ulbricht's view of the demands placed on a socialist college or university graduate, as formulated in his speech on the twentieth anniversary of the reopening of the Technical University in Dresden. The speech demanded that students acquire a solid socialist class-consciousness on the basis of Marxism-Leninism, that they master the use of science as a weapon in the class struggle and as the main productive force [in society], that they strive for scientific excellence, that they acquire a first-rate intellectual, cultural, and athletic education, and that they become prepared to defend our socialist fatherland.

These suggestions were taken into account when the draft version of the resolution was revised. The commission regards these additions as important clarifications. By placing high political-ideological demands on students and demanding subject-related expertise, and by stating in the resolution that students bear great responsibility for their own political-ideological and professional education and character development, the commission is meeting a demand frequently voiced by students themselves. The need for intellectual-cultural education and character development, as well as socialist military training, was also given stronger emphasis in the resolution.

The statements in the draft resolution on the responsibility of the faculty for the socialist education of students were welcomed. Many, particularly students, were of the opinion that the resolution should make clear that the responsibility of the scientist lies in combining highly-specialized subject-related training with the socialist education of the students.

[...]

Source: Abteilung Presse und Information, ed., "Die Weiterführung der 3. Hochschulreform und die Entwicklung des Hochschulwesens bis 1975. Materialien der 16. Sitzung des Staatsrates der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik am 3. April 1969," *Schriftenreihe des Staatsrates*, 3. Wahlperiode, H. 8, 1969.

Translation: Allison Brown

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