

Globalization of an educational idea: Workers' Faculties in Cuba, Mozambique and Vietnam

The starting point for this project are the *Rabfak* (*rabočij fakul'tet*, *Workers' Faculties*) that were founded in 1919 and were widespread in the Soviet Union until 1941. These can be understood as secondary educational institutions, as their goal was to provide workers and peasants, as well as their children, with general education enabling them to enter universities. At the same time they served to create a new loyal elite.

After the end of World War II, the Rabfak-idea was transferred to different countries around the globe where it was implemented in local contexts. While these institutions' names varied, their functions and structures remained similar to that of the Rabfak. The spread of this idea took place in two phases:

In a first phase, the idea of the Rabfak was transferred to mid- and east European countries as well as to Asian countries following a socialist development model immediately after World War II. Among European countries, such institutions were found to have existed in the German Democratic Republic, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the People's Republic of Bulgaria and the People's Republic of Poland, in Asia the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the People's Republic of China, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea set up similar institutions. In contrast to European countries, these were modified to accommodate the generally low educational level among the population by providing middle-school education before preparing students for university-level studies.

In a second phase, the workers' faculties spread to Africa and Latin-America, where they are found to have existed in Mozambique and Cuba. In contrast to the first phase, this transfer partly took place indirectly via the German Democratic Republic. Cuban Workers' Faculties were set up in 1963 with assistance of German advisors under the name *facultad obrera campesina* (FOC). In Mozambique they were founded in 1982 as *Faculdade para Combatentes e Trabalhadores de Vanguarda* (FACOTRAV).

This project takes the examples of "Workers' Faculties" in Cuba, Mozambique, and Vietnam to investigate the following questions:

- On which traditions was the development of the respective institutions based? In how far they were a copy of the Soviet Rabfak and what role did national, international and pre-national traditions play in their founding and development?
- In how far did they contribute to the envisaged change in elites? In contrast to European Workers' Faculties this does not only involve a focus on social (and gender) background but also on the role of national minorities as well as the question in how far Workers' Faculties contributed to the creation of a national intelligentsia in the first place.
- What do we learn about the respective country's understanding of education by investigating Workers' Faculties? Answering this question involves an investigation into the relationship between general education, vocational education and ideological education.