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Soviet higher education : an alternative construct to the western university paradigm / Alex Kuraev

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Abstract

Historically, the university was an alien establishment for Russia, reflecting the political ambition of its leadership, not the organic impetus of Russian society. In Soviet academia, the notion of university education was replaced by the concept of vocational-technical training. As a creation of the Soviet government, Soviet higher education represented a very unusual organizational construction with an umbilical connection to the communist party ideology and Soviet autocracy. In its organization and social purpose, Soviet higher education was quite different from the European notion of a university and remote from the international academic community. Soviet higher education opposed the western university model on a fundamental level: The pragmatism of practical training contradicted the ideology of academic liberal knowledge and institutional self-governance. An analysis of Soviet HE administrative structure reveals three defining characteristics: uniformity, top-down administration and one-man management. The purpose of Soviet higher education was to be a nationwide conveyor of a professional workforce that would supply the state with qualified specialists in each field of industry or social services. It intentionally promoted communal values. This review and analysis of Soviet HE administrative organization indicate that in both form and function, it seems to be an alternative to the traditional western notion of university education, rather than a variation of higher education in its traditional sense. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Kuraev, Alex, E-Mail: alexykurevmail.com