In 1969, when Fidel Castro was asked about the similarities between China's ongoing Cultural Revolution and Cuba's unfolding Revolutionary Offensive, he answered: "If we did something similar to the Chinese Communists, it was a historical accident." Castro was claiming his political and ideological originality because, even for casual observers, the parallels between the two campaigns were apparent. Both of them relied upon mass mobilization, promoted moral incentives, targeted an egalitarian society, hoped to turn the young generation into a "new man," and condemned the betrayal or at least corruption of the Soviet Union.2

But perhaps the most identical dimension of the two campaigns

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2 The similarities of China and Cuba in the 1960s have drawn modest attention from American-based scholars. For example, Carmelo Mesa-Lago put these two countries into the same category in contrast with the USSR and stated that they were "characterized by emphasis on ideological development (the goal of a New Man, classless society, egalitarianism, etc.), a mobilization regime, and anti-market tendencies." He also suggested that the Cultural Revolution and the Revolutionary Offensive were "fairly similar." Carmelo Mesa-Lago, "A Continuum Model for Global Comparison," in Comparative Socialist Systems: Essays on Politics and Economics, ed. Carmelo Mesa-Lago (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1975), p. 96.
was their educational revolutions. The ultimate goal in each case was to break all institutional barriers between school and society. While approaches toward this goal varied, in both countries the integration of study with work was pivotal. In order to achieve this integration, students and faculty were sent to farms and factories; curricula were formulated based on immediate agricultural and industrial needs; schools, factories, and farms shared management; classroom-centered schooling was replaced by work-study programs; workers and farmers were dispatched to take up teaching and school-management positions; and full-time and institutional facilities were increasingly replaced by part-time and noninstitutional programs. The objective of this new educational system was to create not intellectuals, bureaucrats, or technocrats, but practically minded and pragmatically trained laborers. It is also noteworthy that all of these policies relied on a strong moral sense: they were intended to realize social equity, especially in terms of eliminating the division between city and countryside, elites and commoners, and mental and physical labor. In a word, they were part of the grand vision of a future, classless communist society.

Educators outside of the communist world recognized and even embraced the significance of the Chinese and Cuban educational experiments. As a UNESCO foreword for a Cuban education report in 1975 pointed out, it was “one of the extreme cases where everything in the education system constitutes a break, not only with the past, but also with what exists everywhere.”

At roughly the same time an American educator wrote that China’s educational reform was “one of the most extraordinary sets of events in educational changes in contemporary times.” In the Third World, the Chinese and Cuban educational innovations were also taken as an efficient tool for universalizing education.

Little evidence, however, suggests that China and Cuba turned to each other in search of inspiration, though both regimes had earlier sought to imitate the Soviet model. In this sense Castro’s claim is legitimate. Paradoxically, it is this coincidence that makes the concurrence of the two campaigns even more meaningful than imitation or inspiration.

The focus of this article is the two countries’ educational revolu-

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tions. By this we mean not the educational activism of their early literacy campaigns and work-study programs that correspond to what we call “education for social equality.” Nor do we center on the educational reorientation of the campaigns to catch up with capitalist economies through what we call “education for development.” We do not focus on the ideological indoctrination in education under the Maoist and Castroist regimes, since it is obvious even to casual observers. The center of our effort, instead, is to reveal the details of “education for communism”—the institutional changes China and Cuba made beginning 1967 in which they sought to dismantle the modern educational system as it had developed during the last two centuries in most Western and non-Western societies. Paradoxically, in the revolutionary period of educational change in the two countries, the policy objective was to deinstitutionalize education, abolishing the specific structures of schools, and to reestablish education only as part of workplaces and the broader and more general institutions of society. We also describe how and why most of these ambitious experiments failed to achieve the intended goals, so that the two regimes had to retreat and restore the previous system.

Our analysis emphasizes, at once, the distinctiveness of the Cuban and Chinese educational revolutions and the patterns they shared with other movements of educational reform. The Chinese and Cuban movements, no matter how innovative and unique they seemed at the time, unfolded in the context of a long-term educational debate. This was the debate on how society can best choose—through its educational practice—between equality and efficiency, and between reform and tradition. The radical changes and ensuing restorations of educational institutions in China, Cuba, and the other cases reflected a recurring dilemma. The choices between equality and efficiency and between reform and tradition posed fundamental problems that human society has faced in recent centuries and will have to face in the future.

**Historical Background**

As background to the Chinese and Cuban experiences, we explore the critique of education in the West and East (from the eighteenth century to the twentieth century) and the similar educational endeavors in the Soviet Union (in the 1920s) and in many Third World countries (mostly in the 1970s). Through reviewing all of these cases, we hope to establish an analytical framework that transcends national and cultural boundaries, synchronizing Chinese and Cuban campaigns, and linking them to other countries’ movements. All the movements we will dis-
cuss expressed a critique of modern and institutionalized education for its elite and urban orientation, its neglect of practical skill, and its separation of school from society and education from work. Such a critique can be traced back to the eighteenth century. In a broad sense it was part of a critique of modernity since the very beginning of modernization. A brief historical review will help us locate the development of this trend.

Jose Martí, the nineteenth-century father of Cuban nationalism, specifically condemned the separation of work from study in modern education as “a monstrous crime” and “an error of the utmost gravity.” He suggested that in the future every school should operate an “agricultural station” in which the students would be able to not only describe but handle a plough. In China, intellectuals raised the same argument as early as 1919, during the New Culture Movement and the May Fourth Movement. Cai Yuanpei, an influential educational theorist and the president of Beijing University, advocated work-study programs and proposed to “work every day and study every day” and “habituate the people of the entire country to work, in order to get mental workers to participate in the labor of workers and peasants.” Around 1920, there was even a movement called “work-studyism” in Beijing University, promoting “all-round education” and anticipating an ultimate elimination of the division of labor. An application of this new educational concept was the work-study programs carried out by hundreds of radical young men and women as they prepared to set off for France, Germany and Russia around 1920, seeking revolutionary ideologies and organizational experiences. Among them, Zhou Enlai, Deng Xiaoping, Cai Hesen, Cai Chang and Chen Yi became prominent communist leaders later on. Although financial necessity was more important than youthful idealism in these work-study programs, the experience still provided a linkage between early educational reformist thinking and the later communist ideology.

Western intellectual and political history provides more examples of the critique of modern education. Karl Marx, the key early figure in the world communist movement, conceptualized the future of education with an emphasis on integration of work and study. For Marx, the development of a “well-developed man” in communist society, as

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opposed to the alienated man under capitalism, required a thorough educational reform. Although strongly condemning capitalist exploitation, specifically child labor, Marx once commented positively on the implementation of the British Factory Reform Act of 1864, which proposed a half-day study, half-day labor project for working-class children.8 In the resolutions of the first congress of the First International, Marx defined future education as “mental, bodily and technological training, which imparts the general principles of all processes of production, and simultaneously initiates the child and young person in the practical use and handling of the elementary instruments of all trades.” Marx even suggested that the cost of such technological education should be covered by selling the products manufactured by those children. He believed that such integration of education with labor would “raise the working class far above the level of the higher and middle class.”9

Marx drew deeply on the tradition of the French Revolution, and it was in this upheaval that some of the earliest efforts at radical educational reform took place. The enthusiasts of 1789 sought to create, out of the drama of revolutionary change, the “new man” whose development had been foretold by Rousseau. As would be the case later on, their call for “regeneration” led on one hand to plans for “maisons d’égalité” celebrating equality for the youth of the nation, and on the other hand to campaigns imposing revolutionary discipline on both teachers and students.10

Utopian socialism and Russian populism also contributed to the vision of social change through education. For example, Fourier, the French utopian socialist, proposed a “harmonic education” in his phalansteries. In order to create well-developed individuals, people would switch their jobs and education would be based on the integration of working and living. The separation between mental and manual labor would disappear. The Russian populists were even more hostile to institutionalized education. For them, it only served the upper classes and was indifferent to the needs of the masses and thus became one of the main factors causing and maintaining social inequalities. Peter Kropot-

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8 Marx argued that under this act, the students who also worked seemed fresher and performed much better in their study than children who never went to work. See Karl Marx, Capital (New York: The Modern Library, 1936), p. 526.
kin called, therefore, for "the recognition of the necessity to close all universities, academies, and institutions of higher learning, and to open instead workshops." Mikhail Bakunin advocated an "all-round education" in which ultimately there would be no difference between scholars and manual laborers.\textsuperscript{11}

The concepts and proposals conceived by Marxism, utopian socialism, and Russian populism were tested after the October Revolution. In 1918, Anatol Lunacharski, the first commissioner of Soviet education, issued a report on education and enunciated seven basic principles, with an emphasis on "early fusion of productive labor and academic institutions" and school as a productive commune.\textsuperscript{12} In accordance with these principles, a set of experiments was put into practice during the 1920s. One example was the Unified Labor School system, based on the ideas of Paul Blonsky. This school system "was organized at the three levels (i.e., preschool, elementary, and secondary) as a single school, with provision for the unimpeded progress of the child from the first grade to the ninth or tenth," and manual labor and "socially useful activities" were the major part of the curricula.\textsuperscript{13} The Soviet educators proudly called this school "a school that does" rather than "a school that talks." Some educators argued that many established academic subjects should be either downsized or abolished. The most radical idea was the "withering away of the school," proposed by V. N. Shul'gin, director of the Institute of School Methods in Moscow. His vision of Soviet education was that children would grow up "not in a school, not in a kindergarten," but in "the factory, the mill, the agricultural economy, the class struggle."\textsuperscript{14} Factory-run schools and school-run factories were also quite common.

Just as the Chinese and Cuban experiments attracted Western educators in the 1960s and 1970s, the Soviet educators' innovations received praise or close attention from Western educators such as John Dewey, who visited Russia in 1928 and subsequently wrote a series of


\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 123.
articles with titles such as "What Are the Russian Schools Doing?" and "New Schools for a New Era."15

But when the time for industrialization and establishment of state bureaucracy came, the Communist party of the Soviet Union found that with all of these romantic reforms, the school system failed to produce well-trained technicians, engineers, and administrators. Starting in the early 1930s, the party and government issued a series of decrees to restore the previous system of modern and formal education, under the slogan "the mastery of knowledge," and labeled the educational reforms of the 1920s as an "extreme left tendency."16 Thereafter, Soviet education developed some distinct characteristics, including a rigorous system of academic disciplines, strict distinctions between subjects and grades, high rewards for academic excellence, and education-based social distinctions.17 Intellectual development was stressed as the priority in schooling, so much so that grade five or full credit was expected to be pursued by every student. Soviet education also heavily relied upon institutional facilities, and education was perceived as revolving around teachers, textbooks, and classroom activities.18 Therefore, from radical reforms to a return to the modern system, Soviet educators abandoned their egalitarian and romantic project and yielded to practical needs. The same cyclic development would reappear in the cases of both China and Cuba. The difference was that in the latter cases the governments became the main advocates and practitioners of reform, while in the Soviet case the educational activists were more enthusiastic and engaged than the government.

FROM ADOPTION TO REEXAMINATION OF THE SOVIET MODEL

The education systems in communist China and Cuba were originally established under Soviet influence. In China, with the slogan that education "must completely and systematically learn from the advanced experiences of the Soviet Union," Soviet textbooks were massively

17 For example, it was known among Chinese intellectuals of the 1950s that in the Soviet Union the salary discrepancy between mental and manual laborers was astonishingly sharp. For example in 1956 the salaries for housekeeper (working in academic institutions), graduate, associate doctor, and doctor were respectively 50, 90, 240, and 480 rubles per month. See Zhou, Educational Revolution, p. 425.
translated, and six hundred Soviet experts were invited to teach and even participate in school management.\textsuperscript{19} In the case of world history education, for example, China adopted the Stalinist line that insisted on the universal stages of development from primitive communist society to slavery, feudalism, capitalism, and socialism, regardless of the lack of evidence supporting this Procrustean world history framework.\textsuperscript{20} Famous Russian educators such as Anton Makarenko and I. A. Kairov became authorities, and the \textit{People's Education}, the leading pedagogical periodical, intensively introduced Soviet ideas.\textsuperscript{21} The Chinese even adopted the Russian model of Children's Palaces as the showcases for after-school activities.

The Cubans made similar efforts to imitate the USSR's education system. Armando Hart, the first minister of education of the Cuban revolutionary government, went to the USSR in 1961, shortly after the revolution was declared to be socialist, to study the Soviet system. The government established the Trade Union of Education and Scientific Workers, modeled after that of the USSR, which undertook educational reform. The Cuban government sent more than 4,700 students to the USSR and Eastern European countries in 1961 and 1962.\textsuperscript{22} It also established some specific programs after the Soviet model, such as the Makarenko Pedagogical Institute for teacher training, and some polytechnic schools.

The Chinese and Cuban enthusiasm for Soviet education, however, lasted only for a few years. Starting from 1957 in China and 1965 in Cuba (about seven or nine years after the regimes were established, respectively), the leaders began to feel uneasy about the general approach the Soviet Union had taken toward communism and reexamined what they had introduced from the USSR.\textsuperscript{23} In both cases,\footnote{Wei Chengsi, ed., \textit{Educational Thoughts in Contemporary China, 1949--1987} (Shanghai: San Lian Publisher, 1991), p. 2; Chen Yongfa, \textit{Seventy Years of the Chinese Communist Revolution} (Taipei: Lianjing Publisher, 2001), p. 669.}

\footnote{Ralph Crozier, "World History in the People's Republic of China," \textit{Journal of World History} 1, no. 2 (1990): 155--57.}

\footnote{Makarenko was a Soviet authority in using environmental methods of social conditioning to shape the minds and behaviors of young children, represented by his training camp named Gorky Colony. Kairov was a more theoretical academician who served as the president of the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences during the 1930s and published volumes of pedagogical textbooks.}


\footnote{China began to reexamine the Soviet model around 1957 within the highest circles of party and government. This came with the impact of the twentieth congress of the Soviet Communist Party, which severely criticized Stalin, and through China's own expe-}

\footnote{China began to reexamine the Soviet model around 1957 within the highest circles of party and government. This came with the impact of the twentieth congress of the Soviet Communist Party, which severely criticized Stalin, and through China's own expe-}
education was the first field in which the Soviet approach was reexamined and replaced. For the Chinese and Cubans, the deficiencies of the Soviet education were political, economic, and pedagogical. Politically, the Soviet system put intellectual development at the center of schooling and fostered an education-based and urban-centered social elite, and thus widened and deepened inherited disparities between city and country, and between physical and mental labors. Economically, the system relied so much upon formal education that it ruled out non-standardized and noninstitutional educational forms, thus hindering universalization of education. Pedagogically, the Soviet system was criticized for its narrowly defined conceptions of education and its rigid methods.

The turning point in China's postrevolutionary education came in early 1957 when Mao demanded that "education must serve proletarian politics, must be integrated with productive work." Laboring people ought "to be simultaneously intellectuals while the intellectuals should also be laborers." As signs of this educational reorientation, in the same year, China's People's Education stopped publishing articles written by Soviet educators and the Ministry of Higher Education canceled the granting of the "associate doctorate," a Soviet-style academic rank close to associate professor in the West.

24 For example, as Wei Chengsi put it: "The fatal weakness of the Soviet system lay in its strict routinism and divorce from real life. It restricted the breadth of disciplines and the lives of the students; teaching and studying were inanimate. The whole of schooling activities became a step-by-step ladder-climbing procedure in accordance with designated standards. The students' activism, initiative and creativeness were largely ignored." Ibid.

25 Chinese and Cuban writers were by no means alone in criticizing Soviet education. In Yugoslavia, which followed neither Soviet nor Chinese-Cuban lines, the educational theorists posed a similar criticism of Soviet education. As Miroslav Peculic put it, the Soviet reforms in the 1930s "shook the very foundation of the inherited authoritarian, repressive pedagogy, its bookish concerns, and its methods of acquiring knowledge." While the Soviet system formed after the 1930s was brought about by the "bureaucratic Counterrevolution . . . [it] did not want the workers and peasants to receive a general education. Strict discipline and obedience were the desired qualities." Miroslav Peculic, The University of the Future: The Yugoslav Experience (New York: Greenwood Press, 1987), p. 49.

26 Mao Zedong, Chairman Mao on Education Revolution (Beijing: People's Publisher, 1967), p. 11.

27 China did not have Ph.D. programs before the Cultural Revolution, so this "associate doctorate" could be seen as the highest degree, requiring four years to complete. In
The turning point of Cuba’s postrevolutionary education came in 1965, with a similar reorientation from intellect to ideology and from academic study to a more utilitarian education. This change came in June when the government proclaimed an “aggressive effort” and an “educational offensive to secure an ideological transformation for every citizen.”28 Several years later, when Castro looked back on the education policies of the early 1960s, he said that “we saw we were creating technicians who, by not participating in the productive activities of the country, were turning into 100% intellectuals . . . cut off from reality and concrete problems.”29 He also said that the libraries were filled with foreign textbooks, so the students were living “in an imaginary world” and it was “quite a jolt” when they left schools and faced reality. It was in this context that China and Cuba embarked on their educational experiments.

THE EDUCATIONAL REVOLUTION IN CHINA

The reorientation in Chinese education was brought directly by the Great Leap Forward in 1958, in a dramatic manner: from fifth or sixth grades of primary schools on up to the universities, the students and faculty suspended their routine activities and plunged themselves into productive work, especially the iron-and-steel campaign of building furnaces on the campuses. It was taken as a concrete step toward the integration of study and work.30

In September 1958, the Central Committee of the party and the State Council jointly issued “The Directive on Education” with an emphasis on integrating productive work with study, especially in the form of schools and factories or farms running each other. According to one source, in 1958 there were 397 colleges and universities running 7,240 factories and 13,000 middle schools running 144,000 factories.31 In the meantime, numerous factories, communes, and administrative

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30 According to one source, by the end of September 1958 there were 86,000 furnaces built by 22,100 schools of all kinds in 22 provinces. Wei, *Educational Thoughts*, p. 4.
31 Ibid. In many cases a school operated more than one factory or workshop. Beijing University, for example, opened twenty in two weeks.
units either opened schools or operated work-study programs. The Liming Machinery Works in Shengyang, for example, opened a university with the project of training hundreds of workers to get university diplomas in three or four years. The students in elementary schools were also busy with vegetable growing, poultry raising, or manure collecting. Some people even proposed that the word “study” should be eliminated “because the word ‘work’ implies any form of production and learning,” and school might be renamed as the “garden for labor and production of the new generation.” Indeed, as John Cleverley pointed out, “Any idea that there was one good school, state run, academic and full time, should be abandoned. All work units could run schools and able people teach.”

Curriculum was also a main target in this radical change. All science and technology subjects were required to find direct illustration and application outside the classroom, and the work of teaching was often carried out at factory and farm sites. Most graduates of Qinghua University in 1958, for example, chose as their research topics the participation in productive work, especially through designing irrigation systems or hydraulic power stations for the communes around Beijing.

With the attack on modern education came the degradation of academic study and research. An editorial of the *People’s Daily*, titled “Drag Bourgeois Individualism through the Mire,” attacked the core of academic work: personal motivation and individual efforts. As it argued, academic work is “guided by bourgeois individualism” and “based on individual proposals, without plan and emphasis.” In accordance with this criticism, many universities initiated “discussions” over some otherwise commonly accepted notions about intellectual work. When a history student at Xibei University naively insisted that the notion of “specialization of labor” and the distinctions between intellectuals and common laborers were still useful in socialist society, he was submerged by the critique from his peers and accused of “selling bourgeois stuff” and trying to “pit the intellectuals against working people.” Formal education and specialized expertise were often characterized as useless or even a farce. For example, the biology students at Beijing University felt shameful when they could not tell rice from wheat, and physics students were no use at all when they were asked to help peasants in

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34 *People’s Daily*, 25 April 1958.
designing hydraulic power stations. The students said, disappointedly, “We can get a grade 5 when taking written exams but if tested with real problems we can only get a 2.”

Underlying all of these principles, policies, and episodes was the personal educational vision of Mao, whose favorite title for himself was “the great teacher.” Several Maoist notions should be taken into account in understanding this reorientation. The first was Mao’s epistemological assumption, elaborated in his “On Practice” and in many other works, which claimed that true knowledge comes only from practice and that productive activity is the fundamental source for learning. The term “practice” in Maoist thought often means direct participation, and “knowledge” often refers to first-hand experiences. The second notion was Mao’s aversion to formal education and distrust of intellectuals. As he once put it, “I have always had an intense hatred for school. So I have decided never to go to school again.” In a talk in March 1958, later publicized under the title “Against Blind Faith in Learning,” Mao said that academic and institutional education had been proven unnecessary for intellectual or technological achievements in many cases, especially for such prominent figures as Confucius, Jesus, Sun Yat-sen, Marx, and Franklin. In addition, the time for schooling was too lengthy and as a result the students knew nothing about cultivating rice, mustard, wheat, or millet. Later on he sought to “chop curricula in half.” He also chided many cadres who respected “professors,” saying that they were “terrified” by those who had “piles of learning.” Third, Mao himself had very specific thoughts about the work-and-study project in future society even before he became a communist. In 1919 he told his friend that, in the future, children should be separated from their parents, put under direct state supervision, and should run workshops and farms to earn their own food. In

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36 People’s Daily, 7 July 1958. The faculty were even worse: a professor authoritative in botany could do nothing to protect fruit trees from insect pests, and some zoology professors accidentally killed peasants’ rabbits by overdosing them. In contrast, many peasants could do much better in dealing with these issues simply by using onion or pumping the sick rabbits’ stomachs. Therefore it was these “uneducated” people who were teaching the “educated.”

37 People’s Daily, 30 July 1958. The top grade possible was 4 or 5.


39 Ibid., p. 246.

40 Ibid., p. 116.

an article written in 1919, in order to create the "new youth," he proposed to set up "work and study" schools in which the students would spend four hours per day engaging in agricultural work.\footnote{Mao Zedong, "Students' Work," in the \textit{Mao Zedong's Early Writings}, eds. Department of Documents of the Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee and the Editing Group of the Mao Zedong's Early Writings of Hunan Province Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (Changsha: Hunan Publisher, 1990), p. 450.} The fourth notion was his grand vision of future society in which individuals would become well-rounded persons, with no one holding a fixed occupation. In 1958, he talked frequently about the idea that peasants, workers, soldiers, cadres, students, and intellectuals should alternate their jobs.\footnote{Mao even proposed to run a factory in his guard regiment, suggesting that soldiers have four hours for study and four hours for industrial work every day. Anonymous, \textit{Mao Zedong in the People} (Beijing: People's Publisher, 1958), p. 63.}

The Chinese educational reorientation was promoted not only by Mao's ideological and moral rhetoric and utopian fantasy, but also by other leaders' more pragmatic considerations. Among them Liu Shaoqi, the party's second in command until his fall in the Cultural Revolution, had suggested even before 1958 that two educational systems—or "legs"—be established. One would be full-time and the other work-study or part-time, with emphasis gradually shifted to the latter. For Liu, the "two legs" educational system would solve China's two major problems. The first was universalization of education. As he put it: "With current conditions, if there is only one full-time system, we can not universalize education." He said that in many provinces half of the children had no full-time schools to attend. The only way to solve this problem was "to establish those half-agricultural/industrial work half-study schools in which the children would be able to earn some for their food, with some subsidies from the government and families." He proposed not to increase the numbers of full-time schools and the amount of state finance for them, but to develop the second "leg."\footnote{Liu Shaoqi, \textit{Anthology of Liu Shaoqi}, vol. 2 (Beijing: People's Publisher, 1985), p. 465.}

Liu's second concern was unemployment and juvenile problems. Since 1949, the gradual disappearance of the private sector had severely limited employment opportunities, especially in cities and towns. This situation was exacerbated by the large number of graduates from primary and secondary schools who could neither go to a full-time school to continue their education nor find a full-time job. According to the \textit{People's Daily}, a serious juvenile delinquency problem in some
cities emerged as early as 1953. For Liu, the work-study programs would serve as a transitional arrangement to solve these problems. With his support, in 1963 and 1964 the educational authority extended the work-study experiment and called it “a fundamental measure of educational revolution” and created four model schools: in municipal Shanghai, and in Guangxi, Guangdong, and Shandong provinces.

China’s educational reorientation suffered a setback as the disastrous consequences of the Great Leap Forward became evident in the early 1960s and the party decided to retreat. But several years later, when the Cultural Revolution came, education bore the brunt of the campaign and underwent a far more radical change than that of the previous reorientation period. This was an educational revolution. Education was selected as the target because, for Mao, all non-Marxist elements had taken advantage of education’s relative isolation from society and turned it into a breeding ground for themselves.

China’s education was in complete turmoil from 1966 to 1968, due to the student rebellion, the Red Guard movement, the purging of faculty, and the suspension of all schools. When the dust settled and schooling resumed, the education system moved to implement Mao’s three directives. First was the May 7 Directive in 1966, demanding that students of all levels participate in industrial and agricultural work and learn military affairs as well, and shortening the length of schooling. Second was the July 30 Directive in 1967, in which Mao said that the educational revolution must be carried out with participation of workers, peasants, and soldiers. Workers and peasants must step into the schools to take the role of leadership. Third was the July 21 Directive in 1968, in which Mao allowed colleges of sciences and technology to reopen, but excluded humanities and social sciences. The length of study had to be “chopped off” and students had to be selected from

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45 People’s Daily, 4 April 1966.
46 People’s Education, Beijing, September 1964.
47 For example, Lu Dingyi, the head of the Propaganda Department of the Party, complained in 1962 that the educational standard had declined below that of the Nationalist era. The Ministry of Education issued a set of temporary work regulations to reestablish normal curriculum—impaired during previous years—in full-time schools. Cleverley, The Schooling of China, p. 150.
48 In 1963–65, the Chinese Communist party launched the Socialist Education Campaign. The name of the campaign is somewhat misleading, because it was targeted at the cadres in the People’s Communes, to audit them and educate them with socialist ideology, and had very little to do with the education system.
49 People’s Daily, 1 August 1966. As a result, the length of schooling, from primary school to university, was shortened from 16 years to 12.
50 Wei, Educational Thoughts, p. 7.
experienced workers and peasants who would return to their workplaces after graduation. This new type of student was therefore called a “worker-peasant-soldier student.”

Under these guidelines, Chinese education was dominated by “socialist new-born things.” For higher education in rural areas, the Chaoyang Agronomy College in Liaoning Province was “a unique model of the new type of education that the advocates of the ‘educational revolution’ thought might well be introduced to the world.” The principles of the college were as follows: (1) leadership of the working class in education; (2) classrooms scattered in rural middle schools; (3) students selected from the communes and sent back to them; (4) opposition to “intellect first”; (5) half-work, half-study; (6) the integration of productive research, production, and teaching, the latter subject to the former; (7) no regular campuses; (8) no standard qualifications for admission; (9) worker-peasant-soldier students enrolling, administering, and reforming the college; and (10) establishing the rank of worker-peasant faculty. According to the report of the party committee of the college, “the old College was a little pagoda . . . while the new College opens to all peasants.” The curriculum was reduced to a minimum: the students began to plant sorghum as soon as they registered and there was no need to study the sciences of soil and planting in advance.

For higher education in the cities, the Shanghai Machine Tools Plant set an example to develop engineers out of workers. According to an official report, before the Cultural Revolution the plant had about 350 engineers who had college or even graduate diplomas and about 250 experienced “worker-engineers” with only middle school or, at best, vocational school diplomas. It was not those better educated and more specialized but those less educated and more experienced who became the backbone of the designs and innovations. One summary showed that in 1958, the worker-engineers undertook about 60% of projects. This rose to 80% in 1960 and, during the Cultural Revolution, 100%. Mao’s famous July 21 Directive specifically referred to this factory’s innovation—promoting and relying upon engineers from workers rather than specialists—and suggested that this practice be institutionalized. In response, the factory founded a “July 21 Workers’
College,” and this new type of college quickly spread all over the country.

For middle and primary education, the May Seventh Middle School of Lanzhou Foundry Plant provides an illustration. This school was originally the Fifth Middle School in Lanzhou, Ganshu Province, but from the fall of 1968, after the school was “hooked up” with the plant, it was renamed to indicate the affiliation between the school and the factory. Similar liaisons were also established among the school, a commune, and an army company. Under this “hook-up” system, the director of the revolutionary committee of the plant assumed the role of director of the school, the grades and classes were organized into military forms and renamed as companies and squads, with each unit assigned a political director chosen from workers. The students and teachers were divided into two groups: one going to the plant and the other to the commune, and alternating during the year. The subjects physics and chemistry were renamed the “basics of industry” and “basics of agriculture” (it was a common practice for all middle schools then to indicate the direct link between these two subjects and production) and were taught on site at the factory and commune. Four old workers were hired as full-time teachers, while several dozens of workers, peasants, and soldiers served as part-time teachers; among them was only one technician who was thought to have been “integrated very well with the workers.” The original teachers and staff either went to the plant and commune with the students, or were sent to work in factories and communes in order to “reform” themselves without teaching assignments.

The successive stages of educational reorientation and revolution in China from the late 1950s to the mid-1970s, unfolding directly under Mao's auspices, went much deeper than the equivalent movement in the Soviet Union during the 1920s. The end of the Chinese educational revolution, however, came more abruptly than in the Soviet Union. After Mao’s death in 1976, the party denounced the Cultural Revolution and purged the radical group of the “Gang of Four.”

56 During the Cultural Revolution, all administrations were reorganized and renamed as revolutionary committees, and the chief was called the director of the committee.
57 During the Cultural Revolution, a campaign called Up to the Mountains and Down to the Villages sent millions of urban youth and intellectuals to countryside to be “reeducated” by the peasants. We have excluded this campaign from our study, since we are focusing on education in school systems rather than political or ideological education in general. For the same reason we have excluded the May 7th Cadre School, also established during the Cultural Revolution, from this article.
Gang of Four was accused of responsibility for every disastrous policy, and education was believed to have been “the most disastrous area during the ten-year turmoil.” Deng Xiaoping, who led the historic transformation from Maoist ideological experiment to a pragmatic development, announced to the nation’s top scientists that China’s technology lagged ten to twenty years behind the West, and that the twenty-year educational revolution was the main reason for this setback.58

Starting around 1977, therefore, modern education returned to China, first with reintroduction of examinations for college admission, followed by reestablishing and expanding all formal educational institutions. All “socialist new-born things” disappeared; quality, grade, and the percentage of promotion became the priority for schooling. The “key schools” (elite schools) were established in every province and city. China’s swing between experiment and restoration led a Yugoslav educator to conclude dialectically, “The extreme that rejected knowledge, science, and culture provided a transition to another—a reversion to the old school, a strengthening of the disposition for technocratic reform.”59 Yet the Maoist educational revolution still left some traces. Programs such as part-time and adult schools, night classes, and short-term technical training survived, and some of them were integrated into the new forms of education, such as the Broadcasting and Television University, which issued certificates equivalent to those of a two-year college. The legitimacy of these programs, however, depended no longer on ideology but on their practicality as a supplement to formal education.

The processes of educational reorientation and revolution in China from the late 1950s to mid-1970s were fundamental and comprehensive. The essence, however, could be found in a slogan that was painted on the walls of every school: “Open Door Schooling.”60 The word “door” here referred to all distinctive features that distinguished education from other vocations. Therefore to open the door meant to eliminate all of these distinctions and create a type of new education that was politically, intellectually, and physically integrated with other social enterprises. In other words, education would no longer exist as an independent entity or for its own sake.

58 People’s Daily, 22 March 1978.
59 Peculic observed the entire process of the Chinese experiment and retreat. He criticized China’s rash experiments as “mechanized surgical intervention” that degraded culture into a “vulgarized, democratized knowledge.” Peculic, University of the Future, p. 54.
60 This phrase dated from the era of the Cultural Revolution, but its intent applied to the previous period as well.
The Educational Revolution in Cuba

Cuba’s educational change began less abruptly than that in China. In the early 1960s, while Cuba modeled its policies principally on the Soviet Union’s formal system of education, certain signs heralded the later developments. In 1961, the “year of education” in the Cuban revolutionary calendar, the government launched its literacy campaign, closed all secondary schools, and sent more than 100,000 students (organized into “brigades”) to the countryside to live with and teach peasants not only letters, but also ideology, for six months. The Cuban government also established “Schools of Revolutionary Instruction” in the same year. The objective of this school system, as Castro once explained, was “the ideological formation of the revolutionary and then, by means of the revolutionaries, the ideological formation of the rest of the people.”61 What distinguished this school system from other socialist countries’ party academies was that the ages of the students were all above fourteen; most school sites were chosen in rugged, isolated, rural areas; and the students had to work partly for their own expenses. In 1962 the program had twelve regional schools and one national institution, with 12,000 students in total.62 The project of recruiting teenage students and training them into elementary teachers was another early educational innovation, starting in 1960. The trainees had to study and work in the campus set in the mountains for four years, with the last two years in the Makarenko Pedagogical Institute near Havana. Upon graduation, the students would not only be assigned teaching jobs in rural areas but also would assume political leadership at the local level. In the area of adult education, the “Worker-Farmer Faculties” comprised a nationwide network, taking the form of half-day work, half-day study, designed to raise the educational levels of working people for university study. After several years of preparation, these worker-students would begin regular study in universities. These early policies, while reflecting the urgent needs of literacy and making education more accessible for working people, were in accordance with some ideological guidelines, notably the integration of school with society and study with work. As Guevara advocated in his influential essay “Man and Socialism in Cuba,” “society as a whole must become a huge school. . . . Education is increasingly

integral, and we do not neglect the incorporation of the students into work from the very beginning."63 Such educational concepts were also closely associated with the notion of the "new man," "an unselfish, self-sacrificing, frugal, fully-socialized, egalitarian human being"—whom Guevara himself was considered as personifying.64

In May 1964, the government adopted Resolution 392 on polytechnic education with emphasis on the integration of work with study. The Resolution stated that the building of a new society required a new attitude toward life, which is "love for work and respect for the worker." This new attitude, however, could not "occur spontaneously as the result of a complex process." Polytechnic education was therefore designed to provide a "constant and natural condition of life" in which work was an essential element. Further, the function of such an education was not only ethical, but also epistemological, because "education based on experience of life is the most effective."65 This resolution signaled an educational reorientation in the years to come.66 As the Chinese educational reorientation was driven by national political and economic campaigns, so were the Cuban events. The high tide of Cuban educational change came in the years from 1966 to 1971, when the "Revolutionary Offensive" gathered momentum and was officially launched in 1968. It was during that time that Cuban education went through a revolutionary change similar to that of China during the Cultural Revolution.

Starting in 1965, the overall Cuban elementary and secondary school system experienced a radical change. The first and perhaps the most influential project was known as "school goes to countryside," first implemented in Camaguey province in 1965, then adopted by all other provinces. The project moved all students and teachers in secondary schools and pre-university institutions to the farms for a period of thirty-five to forty-five days, combining study and work in the fields. The educational purposes of this project were summarized in a report of Granma Weekly Review:

64 Mesa-Lago, Cuba in the 1970s, p. 6.
65 Ibid., p. 11.
1) To achieve continuity in studies within the new productive work plan so that production may be maintained and regular school promotion will not suffer; 2) To move away from a strongly theoretical framework, as expressed in books, lectures and theoretical works, to give meaning to the concepts: "linking the school with life," "theory together with practice," and "education" together with "productive work"; 3) To apply planning for polytechnic education to the sector of agricultural production; 4) To strengthen the character of school children to conform with socialist moral standards, and to contribute in the long run to education in the family; 5) To strengthen the ties between the city and the countryside, between manual labor and intellectual labor.67

The plan was also meant to get the students acquainted with the problems in the countryside and to feel obliged to put their societal obligations before their personal preferences in their career choice.

When the Revolutionary Offensive came, a new project—"the basic secondary school in the country," embracing grades 7 to 10—was introduced to replace the "school goes to countryside" approach. The difference between the two was that "its pupils, mainly from urban districts, are boarders, they combine study and work systematically during the whole school year, and their activities always form part of an economic development plan." The students worked three hours in the fields each day (with five for academic work) to make themselves "self-supporting in terms of food production, and some of them were also associated with light industrial work."68 Castro announced that in the near future "it will no longer be today's '45 Days School Goes to the Countryside'; by then it will be the 'School in the Countryside.'"69 In 1969 there were 250,000 students enrolled in this project.70 The main principles for this school system were thus: education within the community, combining intellectual and physical work, training the students into producers, uniting education with economic development plans, integrating urban youth with peasants, education by self-help and socially useful work, educating young people in the care and conservation of public property, and education through vocational training and guidance.71

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67 GWR, 3 June 1967.
68 Theodore MacDonald, Making A New People: Education in Revolutionary Cuba (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1985), p. 125. According to the author, all students in these schools changed their names into new ones with political meanings.
70 MacDonald, Making A New People, p. 125.
71 Figueroa, Experiments and Innovations, pp. 15–23.
Another innovation in elementary and secondary education was to integrate schools with newly established communities. In the second half of the 1960s, in order to create a completely new social environment for the new generation, the Cuban government established many new communities in the countryside with residential quarters, factories, farms, hospitals, nurseries, schools, grocery stores, and laundry services. Children were put into nurseries in daytime as early as the end of their mothers’ maternity leaves. All schools were boarding schools and the students spent at least five days a week in school, combining study with work based on community needs. In 1967 there were three pilot projects for such communities. In the inauguration for San Andres De Caiguanabe, one of the pilot communities, Castro announced that “San Andres is a step into the future that lies ahead” and such schools would be established all over the country by 1975.72

Cuban higher education also experienced fundamental transformation. After the Revolution, the facilities of Cuban higher education were seen as out of proportion to the country’s economic condition. As a result, the number of universities was reduced from seven to three (University of Havana in the west, University of Las Villas in the central part, and University of Oriente in the east73). In those that survived, curriculum and enrollment were reoriented toward more practical goals. From 1959 to 1967, among the entire student population, students in social sciences declined from 25.3% to 7.1% and in humanities from 4.3% to 2.1%, while enrollment in education increased from 19.7% to 26%, in engineering and architecture from 13% to 23.7%, and in agricultural science from 4.7% to 10%. The most striking decline was in the discipline of law: the percentage of the students of law declined from 11.2% to 0.8%—that is, in 1959 there were 6,000 law students but in 1967 only 200.74

The integration of study with work was also set as a primary goal in higher education. One important form was the enrollment of large number of workers and peasants (after several years of preparation in the Worker-Peasant Faculty). This policy not only changed the composition of the student body but also brought about fundamental changes in curriculum. Herbert Matthews, an American sympathizer of the Cuban Revolution, revisited Cuba in 1972 and closely observed such changes. According to him, “A worker is brought to the univer-

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72 GWR, 5 February 1967.
sity not to study books while he leaves his work, but to study as he con-
tinues working, contributing his practical knowledge to the university —he teaches as he learns, and in the factory he teaches the university student who comes to work there."75 This description could just as well
have been used to identify the Chinese “worker-peasant-soldier” stu-
dents in the state-run universities and the worker-students in the fac-
tory-run colleges. As with their Chinese counterparts, the prospective
students in Cuba needed to have a “report” from a mass organization,
especially the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution, to prove
their revolutionary attitude.76

Another important measure was that the universities set up work
centers in factories or mines that directly linked research and teaching
with practical productive needs. For example, all three major universi-
ties set up such work centers in the Moa Bay and Nicaro nickel plants.
There were also a number of educational hospitals where teaching and
study were combined with practice.77 According to José M. Millar, the
rector of Havana University in the early 1970s, the university was a
place apart from society before 1959, but had become “an integral part
of the revolutionary economy and social system.” He announced that
the university would be “a vast complex of schools, factories, farms,
 mines, hospitals, et cetera, where students are workers and workers are
students.” This concept is an educational revolution. The essence of
this revolution was “the total socialization of education through inte-
gration of work and study.”78

As China’s educational revolution was to a great extent a brain-
child of Mao, so also was Cuba’s educational revolution a product of
Fidel Castro. Like Mao, Castro tended to consider himself a teacher.
“I have always had a great addiction to education,” he once put it.79
The similarities between the two leaders are remarkable, quite aside
from the adherence to Marxist ideology. Both of them had unpleasant
memories and negative views about the old education from their per-
sonal experience.80 As Mao envisaged putting children under direct

75 Matthews, Revolution in Cuba, p. 344.
76 Eusebio Mijal-León, “Higher Education and the Institutionalized Regime,” in
Cuban Communism, ed. Irving Louis Horowitz (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers,
1989), p. 416. In China the requirement was a letter of recommendation from the work unit
to which the student belonged.
77 Matthews, Revolution in Cuba, p. 344.
78 Ibid.
80 Both Mao and Castro were intelligent but sometimes defiant students, and neither
was favored by his elementary teachers. In their later years, Castro defined old schools as
government supervision and having them work for their own subsistence long before he gained power, Castro did so in 1958 when he was still in the Sierra Maestra. As he put it, “I shall create agricultural units for each 25,000 inhabitants. . . . These units will have a training center for the children. . . . [they] will be housed and fed, clothed and educated and by their own work they will make these centers self-supporting to the point where they will be able to amortize the plant and machinery, which will belong to the state.”81 Mao doubted that the “professors” had real knowledge and so did Castro, with his favorite sardonic story about a professor of the “University of the School of Agronomy of Havana” who goes into the rocky area of the Guanahacabibes peninsula to plant 67 hectares of citrus.82 He coined a term, “the agronomists on the sidewalk,” to refer to such professors, meaning that they lived in the cities and had grown nothing. Mao worried, for both ethical and practical reasons, about students’ ignorance of agricultural work and the conditions in the countryside, while Castro demanded that “even if they are just six, and in first grade, they will know how to grow lettuce, how to produce a head of lettuce.”83 Mao did not like humanities and social sciences, and considerably reduced the curriculum and enrollment of these subjects in higher education, as did Castro. For Castro, the universities would be replaced by technological institutes and future Cubans would be “an engineer, an agronomist, a soil technician, a livestock specialist.”84 Finally, both of them envisaged a future with no tangible and institutional barriers between school and society. As Castro put it, “In the future, practically every plant, agricultural zone, hospital, and school will become a university” and “One day we will all be intellectual workers!”85

But what made Castro a little different from Mao was that he stressed not only the ideological and pedagogical purpose of the educational revolution, but also clearly illustrated its pragmatic aim and necessity. In this sense he combined the roles of Mao and Liu Shaoqi in China. Castro on numerous occasions told Cubans that, as an under-

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82 Castro discovered such ignorance during one of his inspection tours in the early 1960s and used this story to discredit “professors.” In a mass rally in 1967 he told people this story sardonically and repeated several times that the ignorant person was a “professor,” a “real expert,” and the “man who really knows.” GWR, 7 May 1967.
83 GWR, 5 February 1967.
84 GWR, 7 August 1967.
developed country, Cuba could not afford to provide all children with free and full-time education. The students—or at least a large portion of them—had to earn their rights to education by integrating their study with physical labor. In a 1972 speech specifically for the Basic Secondary School programs, Castro said that Cuba had about 3.5 million young people needing education. "In this situation, we have no alternative...in addition to being an infrangible pedagogical principle, a social and human necessity, it is further a necessity for our country's development."86

If in China the end of the Cultural Revolution brought an abrupt conclusion to the educational revolution, then in Cuba the educational revolution concluded in a similar but less drastic manner. In June 1970, Castro publicly admitted the failure of the project of producing ten million tons of sugar—a major economic target for the Revolutionary Offensive. This setback started a process of reexamination of and retreat from the previous radical policies of social transformation. In 1977 Castro admitted that the regime had made "a major mistake in education during the 1960s" by introducing some "unrealistic" projects that no doubt impaired the country's economic construction.87

Starting in the mid-1970s, Cuban education appeared to have some new features similar to those of China after Mao: the emphasis shifted from the integration of work with study to a focus on grade, discipline, and promotion. A new elite school system called the School for Exact Sciences was established in the early 1980s. The Cuban government launched the "battle for quality" to improve education, and Castro himself even called on a number of occasions for fighting fraud and cheating in exams.88

The Cuban educational system experienced revolutionary changes from the 1960s to the early 1970s that were as sweeping and radical as those of China. Castro was fully aware of the significance of the revolution: as he once proudly said, "People talked about it and gave it attention, but Cuba was the first to put it into practice."89 If the essence of educational revolution in China was "Open Door Schooling," then its Cuban equivalent was Castro's announcement that in the future

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86 Figueroa, Experiments and Innovations, p. 6.
87 GWR, 17 September 1978.
89 Ward, Inside Cuba, p. 95.
every productive unit would become a university and José M. Millar’s vision of a “total socialization of education.”

INTERPRETATION OF THE EDUCATIONAL REVOLUTIONS

The Chinese and Cuban educational revolutions, despite their failures, were episodes of world-historical significance in themselves because they were such massive and path-breaking social mobilizations. But in the connected world of the late twentieth century, we must expect that these two nations and their educational movements were tied to other processes in the world from which they inherited the past, with which they shared the present, and to which they bequeathed their heritage.

In Tanzania, for example, one of the key projects of President Julius Nyerere’s Ujamaa socialism in the 1960s and 1970s was Education for Self-Reliance. It demanded that every school become a working community, self-supporting through integrating study with “practical and work-oriented subjects.” Students were responsible for planning and running farms and were graded accordingly. These policies were considered not only as the means for self-financing, but also to help develop a proper attitude toward socialism and to blur the distinction between manual and mental labor. Tanzanian educational reform may have had something to do with Chinese-Cuban influence: Nyerere was deeply impressed by China’s Cultural Revolution during his two trips there in the late 1960s, and he also argued that Cuban education might be a good example for Tanzania to follow.

In Nicaragua, after the Sandinista rebels came to power in 1979, the new government carried out a profound educational reform that emphasized “participatory education for the masses, . . . educational innovation for scientific and technical fields, linking education to productive work, . . . [and] the transformation of education to support the new economic and social model.” Under this reform, enrollments in

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humanities declined significantly while applied sciences greatly expanded. The Nicaraguan reform also sought to “shape a new person” or selfless Sandinista revolutionary.”93 Foreign influence in the case of Nicaragua was more obvious than for Tanzania: the Sandinista government was advised to a great extent by Fidel Castro, who sent brigades of teachers to participate in Nicaraguan literacy campaigns that followed Cuban models.

Most extreme of all the educational movements was that of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge. There the regime, from April 1975 to the very end of 1976, went beyond the other educational revolutions, renouncing the hope that education could have a positive role in society: the entire education system was abolished because it was condemned as a bourgeois and colonial legacy. The Cambodian communists, though under Maoist influence, thought that even Mao had failed to carry out his revolution because he broke his promise to launch more cultural revolutions periodically and retained such pre-revolutionary social institutions as money, family, urban centers, and school system. This explained, the Khmer Rouge argued, how it was that as Mao’s death approached the revisionists took over and restored everything.94 Taking a lesson from China, they decided simply to abolish all of these institutions—instead of reforming them—from the very beginning when they took over Cambodian cities in the spring of 1975.95 From 1977, when the Khmer Rouge decided to restore some elementary and secondary schools in the countryside, the guidelines for education were nearly identical with those of China and Cuba in the era of educational revolution. For example, as one of the Party’s documents proposed, “Our goal is to keep schooling close to productive work. . . . Theory should be learned at the same time it is being applied to actual work. Our people study and at the same time directly serve the production movement. To implement this, schools are located mainly in the cooperatives and factories.” As Karl Jackson points out, these guidelines were “yet another cue from the Cultural Revolution, schooling was not to be separated from working because educational

94 In 1974 Mao appointed Deng Xiaoping, previously in disgrace as a capitalist-roader, as a deputy premier to stabilize the economic situation, and this led to some educational change.
95 For the Khmer Rouge’s general political and educational policies and Maoist influence on them, see Ben Kieman, The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia, 1975–1979 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), and David P. Chandler, Brother Number One: A Political Biography of Pol Pot (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999).
specialization would eventually breed elitism and lead to impractical, theoretical solutions to real work problems."96

Educational change and debate elsewhere in the world, especially in the 1960s, showed resemblance to the changes in China and Cuba. New national governments, as they took power after the end of colonial rule in countries of Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean, expanded educational systems dramatically, in hopes of achieving universal primary education. The examples of Ivory Coast, India, Indonesia, and Algeria stand out, as each of these nations brought about a dramatic increase in literacy for populations that had previously had little schooling. Their achievements were all the more impressive in that these multilingual countries faced a dilemma on the language of instruction that made certain choices more complex than for Cuba and China. Nor were educational campaigns limited to countries that had either recently escaped colonial rule or undergone a revolution. In Brazil for example, also in the 1960s, Paolo Freire arose as an educational reformer whose Pedagogy of the Oppressed called for education to challenge social inequality. Freire became linked to the educational approach of Che Guevara in the 1960s, and later made contact with Jonathan Kozol, a critic of urban education in the United States.97

How, then, can we best approach the analysis of the Chinese and Cuban educational revolutions? The additional cases just cited make it clear that the Cuban and Chinese movements—or at least many of their policies—were not unique in a global context. What approach is best for enabling the analyst to connect the Chinese and Cuban movements with other cases of educational change, and at the same time show how and why they differed?

In the analytical summary below, our framework identifies three approaches taken by those who would reform the elite-and-urban bias of the modern educational system. We have labeled these approaches as “education for social equality,” “education for development,” and “education for communism.” Each of these approaches brought its own set of educational dilemmas, which tended to cause the leaders of educational change to shift from one approach to another.

The first approach of educational critics is that of “education for


social equality.” The Chinese and Cuban campaigns began as a conti-
nuation and radicalization of a long-term tradition, based on a utopian view of social equality that attacked the elitist and parochial tendencies of modern education. This approach was represented in the thinking of early Chinese and Cuban nationalists, Marxists, utopian socialists, and Russian populists, as indicated in the opening section of this article. This approach to education, which can be traced as far back as the Enlightenment, complained of the privileges that the elite received in education, and argued that the organization of education did more to create and justify social hierarchy than to limit it. Education, said these critics, should serve the oppressed, not replicate their oppression.

The literacy campaigns in the early years of the Chinese and Cuban revolutionary governments corresponded to “education for social equality.” These campaigns were immensely successful in advancing certain aspects of social equality by expanding education. The most compelling evidence is that they increased the level of literacy, within a relatively short period, to a point where most adults and school-age children could read. These literacy campaigns paralleled those of the Soviet Union and Turkey in the 1920s, and those of decolonizing nations in Africa and Asia during the 1950s and 1960s. For the world as a whole, the period from 1950 to 1975 is arguably the time in which literacy made the greatest advances for the human population. In addition to the expansion of literacy, the “education for social equality” approach emphasized the dignity of work, the practicality of education, and the linkage of study and work at all levels. Marx’s early praise for the integration of work with study at a young age underscored a theme that was to recur in educational reforms throughout the twentieth century.

The costs of “education for social equality” were high, however. Though the benefits of improved communication for the population and political loyalty to the new government were tangible, the economic benefits were slow to appear. For countries with meager economic and educational resources, such campaigns became too utopian to carry on when overplayed by the state. This focus on the most basic

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98 For Cuba, already higher in literacy than most Latin American countries, a comparatively high level of literacy had been reached by 1965. For China, perhaps a majority of the population had become literate by 1965, though the growth in Chinese literacy was limited by the complexity of the system of writing and by the wide range of languages and dialects in the country.
educational institutions led to neglect of the more advanced side of education and alienated the families that hoped to benefit from advanced education. It dissipated economic and educational resources—which were already limited in these countries—rather than concentrating them where they were economically most efficient.

For this reason, the approach of “education for development” gradually received more attention and even became a priority among educational practitioners in China, Cuba, and elsewhere. “Development” here meant rapid economic advance, in particular to catch up to the developed capitalist countries. In this approach, China and Cuba can be linked with the other countries carrying on a process of decolonization, or campaigning against neocolonialism. This desire for development was shared by socialists hoping to prove the validity of their system. It meant emphasis on vocational training, on work-study, and on engineering and applied science. Liu Shaoqi in China and Fidel Castro in Cuba during the early 1960s were clear examples of this practical, on-the-job approach to education aimed at meeting production goals.

The dilemma of choosing between social equality and development was addressed by educational analysts as well as political leaders. As Trobe Mende argued, “much of the education now dispersed in poor countries is not only irrelevant to the solution of the problems they face, but tends to be positively harmful. It perpetuates contempt for menial tasks, and widens the gulf between the privileged minorities and uneducated or illiterate Masses. . . . It fails to provide any vocational training, elements of modern science, useful technology, or knowledge about modern agriculture to confront real problems impeding material progress.”99 While the first part of this quote addresses issues of social equality, the second addresses issues of economic development. Thus, “education for development” was adopted by many analysts as another perspective to understand and assess educational changes in the 1960s and 1970s, when educational movements in the Third World were unfolding, and it is still reflected in some recent works even when most of such experiments have failed.100 Some authors put Cambodia, Laos, China, Tanzania, Cuba, and Mozambique into a single category of developing countries that made efforts to break the pat-

terns of the Western type of education.\textsuperscript{101} The “center-periphery” hypothesis, dependency theory, and world-system theory are often utilized in these arguments.

The problem with “education for development,” however, was that it tended to rely on specialization and expertise, and thus slipped back to the system of elite-and-urban privilege and (as early Soviet reformers might have said) of schools that talk rather than schools that do—against which the whole process of educational reform had been launched. In the Soviet Union and in most decolonizing countries, educational and governmental leaders responded to this second dilemma by returning to the approach of the modern educational system. For the Soviet and other responses to this dilemma, the result was the abandonment of reform except for the maintenance of some exceptional institutions emphasizing “education for equality” (e.g., the Soviet Children’s Palaces) and “education for development” (e.g., female physicians) to differentiate their education from that of Western industrial countries.\textsuperscript{102}

This is where the Chinese and Cuban regimes drew the line and became different. Up to 1967, the educational reform movements of China and Cuba were not fundamentally different from the earlier movement in the Soviet Union, or from the contemporary movements in decolonizing countries. But Mao chose to launch the Cultural Revolution in 1967—at a fortuitous moment of global contestation that became more explicit in the following year—and encouraged resistance against the pressures to relent to the contradictions in education. What we have called the vision of “education for communism” emerged at that point in China and, almost immediately, in Cuba.\textsuperscript{103} The essence of “education for communism” is that education is taken as a means to approach a classless community—the most essential feature of communist society—rather than to strengthen existing social distinctions. The governments in both countries, uniquely, resisted the restoration of administrative, managerial and technological hierarchy as a way of improving economic efficiency. Instead, they gave


\textsuperscript{102} The high proportion of women among Soviet physicians was often presented as an example of both economic and social advance in the Soviet system.

\textsuperscript{103} “Education for communism” is our term, and is not taken from Chinese or Cuban usage. It is meant to imply that Chinese and Cuban leaders rejected Soviet education as revisionist or neocapitalist, and saw themselves on the verge of getting past the stage of socialism and into the creation of communism through education.
full support to efforts to expand production by promoting a sense of social equality and revolutionary consciousness. The governments in both countries, uniquely, resisted the restoration of hierarchy as a way of meeting production goals. They gave full support to the effort at once to affirm social equality and expand production by intensifying the efforts of continuing revolution. As an essential part of this radical social and political project, the regimes would dismantle schools as separate institutions and merge them into work units. Learning would take place as part of a general social mobilization. This approach helps explain both the intensity and the concurrence of the two campaigns. In this approach, the objective of education was to overcome the limits of the choice between equality and development. Such education would create a transformed society in which the collective will and energy of a people are able to create a new morality and a breakthrough in productivity. Rather than seek to accommodate or catch up to capitalist society, this was an attempt to surpass it.

The Chinese and Cuban leadership expressed this particular approach to education through three distinctive sets of ideas. The first is that they had an obvious populist and anti-intellectual tendency that not only led them to doubt the intellectuals’ ideological stands but also the validity of their knowledge. This distrust of intellectuals consequently led the leaders to discredit institutionalized education—the breeding ground of intellectuals. In this view, the problem of the existing educational system was not only that it lagged behind other countries but that it also obstructed the continuation of the revolution. Second, Mao, Castro, and other leaders criticized the existing educational system for its “isolation” from society. On the surface, at issue was whether the system fit the needs of society, but as they perceived future society as a “total” one in which all enterprises and occupations are integrated into a huge “commune,” education would be the first activity to lose its institutional independence. This grand vision of a future society—sharply different from the Soviet society of the time with its specialization and distinction in discipline and vocation—was clearly a driving force in the two countries’ educational revolutions. Finally, the Chinese and Cuban perceptions of the issue of revolutionary successors or “new man” had a great impact on Maoist and Castroist educational thinking and practice.104 For the Chinese and Cubans, Soviet education only encouraged the growth of a highly specialized

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104 For a more comprehensive analysis of this issue, see Yinhong Cheng, “Creating the New Man: Communist Experiments in China and Cuba, A World History Perspective” (Boston: Northeastern University, 2001; unpublished dissertation).
and privileged class of bureaucrats and technocrats. With alertness to this Soviet lesson, the issue of cultivating the revolutionary successors began to obsess Mao from the late 1950s and became one of his priorities in the next decade, while in Cuba Castro and Guevara called for turning the Cuban youth into the generation of the “new man.” Accordingly, the objectives of the two countries’ education became quite opposite to those of the Soviet system.

Yet the result was a collapse of the experiments and restoration of modern education. In all cases, conflicts between education for equality and education for development caused the national leadership to restore the unreformed modern system of education. For Tanzania, there was no government strong enough to undertake such a thoroughgoing radicalization of education. For Nicaragua, the limits on governmental power were reinforced by the fact that the regime came to power only in 1979, after the Cuban and Chinese educational revolutions had been renounced, and Cuban educational assistance to Nicaragua was mainly of the “education for development” variety.

China and Cuba were the exception, if only for several years each. Faced with the dilemmas of choice between equality and development, and desiring to avoid return to the perils of elitist modern education, these two regimes moved toward implementing the more drastic proposals for educational change first voiced in the Soviet Union in the 1920s. The Cuban campaign ran from 1967 to 1971, and the Chinese campaign ran from 1967 to 1976. In that interval, the two regimes attempted to deinstitutionalize education and set education within the wider framework of “education for communism.”

There may never be a full solution to the problem of understanding educational reform, since it involves so many different social movements and intellectual traditions, spanning more than two centuries and many national and cultural boundaries. However, one thing remains predictable: as long as educational controversies and contradictions remain unresolved, the tensions and fluctuations in educational policy will continue, and the cycle of reform campaigns will reappear in various forms.105

105 For instance in China, where the Maoist educational policy was reversed twenty-five years ago, there has emerged a new wave of celebration of Che Guevara since 1998 in response to the country’s economic reform, which has stressed efficiency while ignoring equality. The celebration has recently taken the form of staging an experimental play based on Guevara’s revolutionary discourse, in which a new education is emphasized. On this celebration of Guevara, see Liu Zhifeng, ed., “Che Guevara: A Red Storm in Chinese Society and the Intelligentsia” (Beijing: The Social Science Publisher, 2001).
The Soviet Union, China, and Cuba—and the other countries that attempted large-scale educational change—achieved great educational advances but failed to find realistic solutions to the fundamental contradictions in modern education. Instead their revolutions only weakened the institutional dimension of education and brought about negative and harmful effects for social and economical development. In this sense, their attempts and failures were a part of a broader dilemma of the twentieth century between equality and efficiency and between reform and tradition. In principle they are all desirable but in practice they are often in conflict with each other. While the examples of perfect balance between either of these two sets of contradiction or dilemma are rare to find, the examples of unsuccessful or even disastrous drastic changes are numerous. Educational revolutions or experiments everywhere, from this perspective, provide compelling examples of the swing of the pendulum between two extremes.