

‘Woke’ Culture Corrodes Today’s Schools at Alarming Rate

Teaching represents one of the oldest professions and requires prolonged training and formal qualifications. The specific training required depends somewhat on the level of a candidate’s proposed activity: elementary, secondary or college/university.

Elementary-school candidates learn the basics of several subjects and how to implant in students a love for reading, writing and math; secondary-school candidates focus on content specialization. College instructors often need a doctorate in a particular subject to perform their duties. Teachers at all levels, however, have long been expected to address students’ emotional, psychological and social needs.

The profession has undergone several transformations, from individual tutoring in ancient societies to classroom instruction in the Middle Ages and the present, from single-room institutions to complex systems. Technology and remote learning have over the years assumed an increasingly significant role in the teaching process.

Teachers’ unions have sometimes proved controversial but have over the years provided support and advice to teachers and enabled instructors to negotiate regarding contracts and labor issues. They continue to offer teachers certain discount-program opportunities.

The concept of ‘woke culture’ has over the past 20 years invaded academia and introduced discordant ideas regarding diversity and equality. Ariel Zeller, an online writer for the *Daily Mail*, contends that ‘woke culture’ has infected and is corroding schools. Teachers and the classroom environment

indoctrinate rather than educate students. They seem to have become unusually political, changing the profession substantially. The spreading 'woke culture' seems often to serve as the basis of their behavior. Professionalism has, at times, become subservient to such controversial social issues as critical race theory, cancel culture and government mandates. The level of academic standards in the classroom has come into question.

The 'woke culture' introduced into the U.S. classroom a movement known as critical race theory (CRT). Based on the mid-1970s writings of several legal scholars, the movement proposes to examine the intersection of race and law in the U.S. and scrutinize social, cultural and legal issues as they relate to race and racism. CRT embraces the idea that race is not real but a means of oppressing and exploiting people of color.

CRT has prompted a major conflict between liberals and conservative educators. Conservatives contend the concept represents a far-left effort to replace the American conviction of individual rights with the notion of unequal rights based on identity. They consider the concept one of the most radical anti-American opinions ever introduced into the classroom. They view the use of CRT in the educational process as storytelling rather than teaching.

CRT advocates contend that white supremacy advances the interests of Caucasians at the expense of non-white individuals and that white supremacy continues to dominate the educational process. They propose to destroy racism in the classroom by applying their hypotheses and processes in the classroom.

'Cancel culture' represents a modern form of ostracism, a long-term dismissal from a social or professional circle. The reasons for cancellation vary from the expression of an objectionable opinion to unacceptable conduct. The effect of

cancellation can last for a lifetime.

Individuals have challenged people holding opposing views and with different behavior for much of human history, but the present-day cultural and racial diversity afford increasingly greater possibilities for personal dismissal. Today's deeply divided and suspicious public intensifies the chances of ostracism

The group of conservative and moderate educators known as The Locke Society has declared that 'cancel culture' has its origin in the classroom. Sophia Solano, a graduate of American University in Washington, D.C. and author, contends that "'Cancel Culture' divides students, professors."

While education is primarily a state and local responsibility, the federal government has recently issued a mandate for schools throughout the U.S. The mandate pressures educational institutions to require all teachers and employees to be vaccinated against the COVID-19 Delta variant. Several teachers unions readily accepted the mandate, but the National Teachers Union hesitated, expressing acceptance only after much consideration. In September 2021, a federal judge blocked a vaccination mandate for New York City teachers. The vaccination mandate has created conflict among teachers and administrators.

Under unionism, teaching moved from strictly a traditional student-teacher interactive process to a relatively active political operation involving both classroom instruction and union-type activities. The introduction of 'woke culture' into the teaching process has moved the focus of the process even further from the traditional model.

Some educators have accepted the woke teaching model, but other educators contend that sticking to the model and the accompanying ideologies results in the perpetuation of the dogmas inherent in critical race theory, 'cancel culture' and

government mandates. Strong differences of opinion continue and may be diluting the quality and effectiveness of the teaching profession. {eo}

Franklin T. Burroughs was awarded a Nishan-e-Homayoun by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi for his work in the Iranian Ministry of Court and has received certificates of recognition from the California Senate and state Assembly. He is a member of the adjunct faculty of John F. Kennedy University and has served as president of Armstrong University and interim dean of the School of Business at Notre Dame de Namur University. He has taught at the University of California at Berkeley. He has been the managing director of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Iran and has served as consultant to the Ford Foundation, UNESCO, the U.S. Department of Commerce and the government of Iran. He has also been visiting scientist at the U.S. Department of Energy. He serves as an English language officer (contractor) with the U.S. Department of State. Dr. Burroughs serves as an international consultant in education, Middle East affairs and cultural diplomacy.

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