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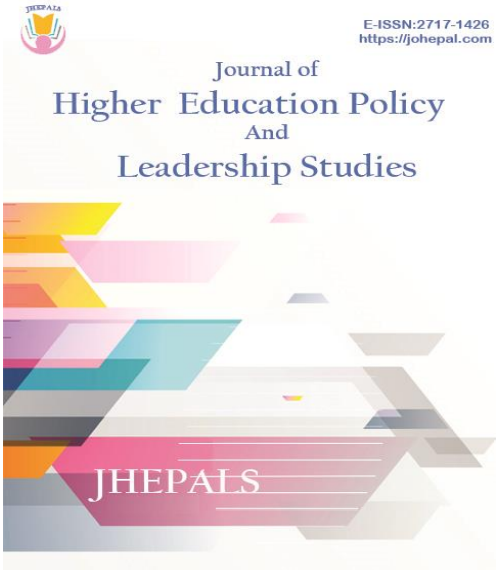

A New Woke Religion: Are Universities to Blame?

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A New Woke Religion: Are Universities to Blame?

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Abstract

This article argues that in haste to define people as victims, from specific identities like race, a new woke religion is giving an interesting world a malign image. Higher Education (HE) promotes woke agendas that narrow debates and confine curricula content, by dismissing thinking and action that does not align with new identity policy and practice. This is the roar of "smug, entitled mediocrities", says Burchill (2021). The word woke is discussed and how HE uses it to limit opportunities, damage relationships and foster divisions with disastrous results. Woke-speak robs people of individuality and decency. Education, with a duty to fit students for life and work, should also have a role in developing personal awareness, responsibility and ideas of citizenship. To achieve this, governing systems need radical overhaul to minimise human divisions and improve life quality. HE must take a lead by promoting both instrumental and intrinsic values. In moral philosophy, these values are the distinction between what is a means to an end and what is an end in itself.

Keywords: Values; Diverse Views; Cancel Culture; Changing Influences; Creative Thinking

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Introduction

Things are instrumental when helping to achieve a particular goal; intrinsic values, in contrast, are thought desirable in and of themselves. There is unease that instrumental values dominate in higher education (HE) institutions, because their business direction relegates intrinsic concerns. Both values must balance to produce citizens who understand their multi-cultural context and have developed reflective thinking to communicate, cooperate and collaborate for progress in society. An example shows how we are losing knowledge and sense. The word 'spooky' has been banned for being racist. Etymologists have tried to exonerate the Dutch word origin, meaning 'ghost' (apparition) as it demonstrates there is no knowledge high enough to sway the certainty of right. Black Army pilots were called Spookwaffe, because they made a sudden appearance in the German Tuskgee Training Institute in World War 2. The German Airforce was called Luftwaffe and Spookwaffe* was a fun name to mark their arrival, with no negative connotation at that time.

Increasingly, words have racist links; master bedrooms (master & slavery); chess (white goes first) and brunch (reeks of white privilege) to name a few. HE gives in to intimidation, with facts twisted and manipulated by promoting group think to divide and destroy people. The Philosophy Professor at Sussex University, Kathleen Stock, has been forced out of her job because of constant death threats, as she questioned that gender identity is more socially significant than biological sex. University activists posted "Ding dong, the witch is dead" on line when she resigned. This reveals toxic university environments, where feelings trump facts (Lambert, 2021)

The Modern Agenda

People criticise society's woke agenda (action against oppression of different identities) which is killing honesty, integrity, open debate and respect. They blame education for pursuing this in policies and practices to produce a generation that dismisses others with different views. Curricula are de-colonised from critically assessing and contextualising Western arguments and assumptions. Student assignment linguistic mistakes are not penalised to comply with inclusive marking. Visiting speakers are de-platformed and lecturers cancelled (removed) if not holding official views. Professor Patton, a communication expert at the University of Southern California, was teaching business students about Chinese customs, saying the expression "neige" (pronounced nee-gah) was used as a pause in negotiations. The students complained that the racial slur affected their mental health. This was nothing to do with the N-word and the context did not suggest a racist interpretation. The university backed students and Professor Patton had to stop teaching while the complaint was investigated and found not to violate policy. However, relations between students and staff are strained after several similar complaints were made about other staff (Allen, 2020).

Increasingly, people behave in provocative, irrational, intolerant, unpleasant ways. Universities, traditionally upholding different views, have fallen to intimidation and are ripping off society for diminishing degrees - a view commonly expressed by people in the street. Recently, at a meeting with third-year students from a UK Russell University, they

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announced their course was now "a high-way to hell" (a song by the group AC/DC). Fed-up with bullying from woke policies, which they regard as spiteful, stupid and deeply harmful, many students could not wait to leave and gain freedom from a poisonous environment. Online harassment is the sinister aspect of today's university intolerance.

Civitas is a British think-tank focusing on democracy and social policy issues. It suggests that UK universities banning free speech can be categorised – red 35%, amber 51% and green, 14%. The top ten Russell group universities had the worst record for free speech according to Civitas studies (Hudson & Williams, 2020). Researchers found that speech could be curbed by perceived "transphobic episodes" in around 70% of red and 50% of green universities. More than a third of staff had experienced serious bullying and harassment and even been cancelled for views on a range of identity political issues. Many UK highly qualified, experienced people have left the university system, because of disrespectful treatment, to pursue intellectual interests elsewhere. Questionable behaviour is now normal by students and staff, to demonstrate low moral integrity. The Essay Mills Prohibition Bill brought to the British Parliament on 10 February, 2021, to prevent students buying assignments and theses, suggests a negative study attitude and perhaps a problem in keeping abreast of learning, which inclusive marking policies do not help. Thus, ethical standards of behaviour and performance have declined and woke agendas have exacerbated this situation (Glendinning, 2022).

Conflicting views must be heard, instead of assertions strengthening prejudices to divide and rule. The French philosopher, Lévy warns that our cancel culture, ostracising others who disagree with us, is "churning out imbeciles" (Smith, 2021). He says we must acknowledge all human relations are welcoming and worrying, but both are vital and must be challenged. Cancel culture thus goes against convention, as it opposes balanced views. The 20th century philosopher, Alexandre Kojeve, predicted this, saying that humanity would regress to an animalistic, vegetative state – everyone in their own burrow (O'Neill, 2018).

Woke once meant the past tense of wake, as in "I woke up late after a night on the tiles!". The term was officially included as an adjective in the Oxford Dictionary of English, Version 9.1.284 (2017) with the American Dialect Society voting it the slang word of the year. Woke was first defined as "well-informed and up-to-date", but now mainly as "alert to racial or social discrimination and injustice". According to the Urban Dictionary (2015) "being woke means being aware and knowing what is going on in the community – related to racism and social injustice". The Merriam-Webster dictionary (2021) explains the popularity of "stay woke", from Erykah Badu's (2019) song "Master Teacher" meaning "self-aware - questioning the dominant paradigm and striving for something better", although social justice is not mentioned. The mantra, "I stay woke", is now in our political vocabulary, meaning being awake to sensitive social issues like racism. This has led to bizarre responses, like Cambridge University removing white statues as representing white supremacy - built when this marble colour was the only possibility! Marks and Spencer (M & S) has banned tobacco to describe the colour of garments as having a racist connotation (Burchill, 2021).

Originating in America to convey racial prejudice and discrimination, woke encompassed broader social inequalities from the 2010s, like sexism, identity politics and social justice issues – as in white privilege and slavery amends for African Americans. Following the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, the term was popularised on Black Twitter by Black Lives Matter (BLM) activists to raise discrimination

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awareness, with the movement gaining momentum after the police killing of George Floyd in 2020. The phrase, "stay woke" became an Internet meme, used by white people to signal support, but criticised as cultural appropriation. This is misjudged or inappropriate adoption of the customs, practices and ideas of one group by another – typically the more dominant one. Dreadlocks (platted hair sections) are criticised as the music legend and Rastafarian, Bob Marley, popularized this hair-style. In the Rastafari movement, dreadlocks, inspired by the Biblical Nazarites, mark a covenant with God, since combs, razors and scissors are believed as an invention of Babylon and Western (white) society. Today, they are trendy, fuelling cultural appropriation debate. Historically, dreadlocks have not belonged to a particular civilisation, but cultural appropriation advocates consider such hair-styles, typically worn by Africans, as unprofessional or unkempt, but cool on others, whether worn as a political statement, spiritual conviction or fashion mark.

Agreement Lack

There is no fixed woke definition, but it is generally associated with identity and race ideas, promoted by progressives and now identified with the millennial generation. In May 2016, MTV News said it was among ten words teenagers should know. In 2017, Birmingham, Alabama, established Woke Vote, to register millennials. McCormack and Legal Miller (2019) say that "stay woke" repeats Martin Luther King's plea to "to stay awake, to adjust to new ideas, to remain vigilant and to face the challenge of change". Lopez Bunyasi and Smith (2019) argue against "Woker-than-Thou-it is". Education about social justice is worthy, but aiming to be recognised by others as woke is misguided. While woke was popularised for racial prejudice and discrimination of African Americans, it is now adopted by activists with different causes. Mirzaei (2019), senior lecturer in branding, says the term is applied to everything from soft drink to razors.

Woke Popularity

Left wing political thinkers have made woke popular as a result of the drive to make people aware of the historical discrimination of African Americans due to the slave trade. The situation was explained as exceptionalism holding that a species, country, society, institution, movement, individual, or time period is exceptional (extraordinary), implying that the referent is superior in some way (Morgan, 2020). The concept quickly travelled from America to elsewhere. Woke ideas include a rejection that:

- views a nation as not democratic
- people of colour suffer in society compared with white people
- white citizens practice privilege
- people of colour deserve amends for slavery and discrimination;
- inequalities among racial groups, in workplaces, demonstrate discrimination;
- law enforcement agencies (like police) discriminate against people of colour and needed to be reformed
- women suffer from sexism
- individuals should be able to identify as having no gender or a particular one
- trade and industry are controlled by private owners for profit, rather than by the state is deeply flawed (capitalism).

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Woke Critics

Woke impacts on society have been much criticised. The "Great Awokening" described it as a "cult of social justice on the left, a religion whose followers show the same zeal as any born-again Evangelical (Christian)" (Sullivan, p. 9). It punishes dissent by banishing (cancelling) sinners from society, or subjecting them to public demonstrations of shame. In 2021, Letts, the British film director, suggested that "in a world so woke you can't make a joke". Les Echoes in March 2021 listed *woke* among 8 words adopted by Generation Z – the generation succeeding Millennials and preceding Generation Alpha. The French call this "un tournant sociétal" - a societal turning point (Thomas, 2021).

Romano (2020) says that on the American right, woke, like cancelled, signals political correctness gone awry. Progressive social movements, like Black Lives Matter, exaggerate the social problems. They accuse the left-wing of using the culture of cancel to damage prospects of those not considered woke. British people remark that anger and frustration mount because of repeated attacks on white supremacy, which ignore white slavery and discrimination, with a longer more violent history (Smith, 1980).

The London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, is offering grants to change street names as part of his diversity drive to support Black Lives Matter. Indigenous people will generally accept and respect other citizens, as long as their own core values and national laws are upheld. They would rather support all lives matter, as they view woke movements divide rather than unify people. The Black-American social linguist, McWhorter argues that the history of woke is similar to political-correctness, a left-wing phrase adopted by the right as an insult. In "Woke Racism" (2021), he labels as hyper-woke a group he calls "The Elect" - those mean and nasty to other people. He is waking up the world to Woke Racism and is respected for fair-mindedness, wit and common sense.

Thus, woke is contentious and HE inclusive policies, like de-platforming speakers, decolonising the curriculum and accepting language errors, are regarded as divisive. Woke movements spot-light problems, due to bias and cultural differences, which do not always align with the host nation. The Black Lives Matter protests, common since 2020, have caused much damage to property and people, with blackness defined as a tragedy due to white supremacy. This ignores the fact that white people are killed and reviled in the same way. Do you remember the awful police murder of Tony Timpa in 2016? White killings and harassment get little media coverage because of supremacy views. The white slave trade to Africa, went on for far longer than the black one to the West, with worse treatment (Smith, 1980). Critical Race Theory, taught in education, attributes everything to a power struggle between oppressors and oppressed, with truth skewed in teaching, say the Free Speech Union, who submitted findings to the UK Education Secretary in October 2021. Examples are defining police as chosen by, protecting and serving only people in power and "whiteness" shields and insulates as all systems are biased towards them. Universities are committed to affirmative action, whereby standards for racial and other minorities are relaxed to get them through courses. It makes no sense, as employers will not hire people with less stringent qualifications.

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Rip Off Higher Education (HE): The Influence of Woke Policies

HE policies and dynamics differ over time and between countries and political systems, so context is vital to consider. Normally, effectiveness is judged by two values; intrinsic and instrumental: gaining knowledge and competencies for their own sake or achieving these for work and social status. Kumar's (2017) research of 500+ students over Pakistan showed that 60% gave more value to *the* personal intrinsic nature of education rather than the professional instrumental one. Labour-market driven policies, with university degrees the currency, mean HE has become a tool for economic progress, so moving away from its original role as a context for self-awareness and personal development. Public dissatisfaction with HE quality, values and direction indicate a need for change (Hall, 2021).

A mixed model, where intrinsic is valued equally with the instrumental purpose, creates inclusive education, with societies more knowledgeable, equitable and less vulnerable to woke movement group-think pressures dividing people. This is exemplified in curricula for teaching values, described by James (2022), an educational leader. Employers say that many graduates are personally, practically and academically unfit for jobs and students complain about teaching quality, but endure this to gain vital qualifications (Sage & Matteucci, 2022).

A liberal arts tradition is an intrinsic approach, with education assisting people to make free, autonomous choices about life goals (Negus, 2022). There may be an economic base to individual choice, but the intrinsic notion allows for personal motivations and interests. Robinson and Aronica (2009) argue that education has become an impersonal, linear process, like a factory assembly-line. They advocate a less standard input, to suit individual student talents and needs. Waters (2012) adds that education is achieved through rigid, rationalised, productively efficient but impersonal bureaucracy. Durkheim (2006) sees the mechanism of power influence over others as maintaining the desired status quo. However, since education entails ontological (what exists) as well as epistemological (how we establish validity) implications, focus should integrate educative and social functions, rather than just transmitting existing knowledge, which becomes a repeated process and an unchallenged absolute truth (Heidegger, 1998, 2010; Dall' Alba & Barnacle, 2007).

HE, as the final stage before the work-place, shows an instrumental view dominating the intrinsic one. Both stances are considered rivals: the instrumental- treating HE as an investment with financial workplace profits and the intrinsic, viewing it as detached from economic cost-benefit arguments. HE power allows woke movements to flourish, with staff cancelled if not supporting them. Professor Biggs, Oxford University, says the real blame for the ludicrous culture on British campuses lies with universities not immature students (Daily Telegraph, 30 October, 2021). Students are customers, with vice-chancellors nervous of antagonising them.

University History

Bologna was the first European university, with academic freedom the accepted culture, which the present woke movement has damaged (Sage & Matteucci, 2019). Programmes have been de-colonised – if born in the bonded-slavery era, your writings, art or music are likely to be removed from study. Jane Austen, the author, has been banished because she

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was a tea-drinker, although she fought to abolish the slavery which enabled production. In some cases, research is banned if not supporting woke ideas.

Graham (2013) distinguishes between three HE models: college, research and technical universities. The college is the oldest, with Christian values. Later, when scientific knowledge questioned theological truth, the research model was transformed by introducing liberal arts. This originated in the 16th century at Cambridge and Berlin. The third model is the technical - established in an industrial revolution context, like Glasgow, Scotland. While the introduction of capitalism changed work-relation structures, the technical model was based on industrial competencies, acquired by formal education and verified for application in society. Thus, the disparate fields of education and industry were conceived linearly for the first time.

World universities tend to follow a mixed approach, but some still have a specific tradition. Presently, HE targets social inequalities - persisting everywhere and becoming wider (Dorling & Dorling, 2015). Woke philosophy, aiming to reduce discrimination, is making it worse with policies cancelling ideas not following particular views. Brennan (2004) describes three HE forms: First is the elite - preparing and shaping student mind-sets from the dominant class. Second is the mass - transmitting knowledge and competencies for workplace technical and economic roles that most people will undertake. Third is the universal - adapting students for rapid social and technological changes affecting cultural, social, economic, ability and language differences. The universal model has been constrained by woke ideas, which are spread anonymously online. Chatterton (2022) adds that educators are not prepared for rapid technology innovations, to high-light spending policies. Romero (2022), a professor at a Chile Medical school, is investigating how technology is employed in learning and teaching, to develop better uses. Universities must take steps to monitor online malicious activities.

The Higher-Learning Angle

Education does not adequately develop processes now that intelligent machines implement routines, so needing higher-level thinking and collaborative communication to solve complex issues (Sage, 2020a). Since the 1970s, academics have questioned research based on linear theories, codifying and applying abstract ideas in ways not translating to normality (Taylor 2011). First generation research (PhD) and second generation professional doctorates develop MODEL 1 Knowledge - produced objectively from a research design collecting data to answer a theoretical question (research on practice). Considered remote from reality, there is a move towards MODEL 2 Knowledge, created and used by practitioners within their daily work (Maxwell & Shanahan, 2001). This pursues a constructionist stance (Schon, 1985, 1993; Deutsch, 2013), with research and practice existing in a spiral, observant, reflective relationship, leading to new knowledge for informing actual pursuits. This emerges from a need to understand reality and develop professionals able to judge what is possible and impossible. Brain limits prevent humans from easily getting the big picture, so a practitioner model emphasises broader knowledge and experience to transform the ambiguous quantum world. This limits motivated reasoning and confirmation bias producing ineffective judgements. Targeting personal abilities, knowledge and data collection for work contexts, accounting for political, economic and social issues influencing actions, brings confidence and competence to pursue effective

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practice (intrinsic & instrumental view). Practitioner models facilitate participants in innovative ways, to reflect, review and refine for future directions. The approach has international popularity for evolving, maintaining and sustaining workplace improvements. Evidence is collected in a personal portfolio to broaden a picture of performance and potential and integrate intrinsic and instrumental education values in a practical format (Sage, 2020b).

Money and moral values compete and collaborate simultaneously and developing work competencies coexist with identifying and using people potential, as well as pursuing employment, morality and citizenship. New technologies change the traditional HE model, as physical presence is not necessary anymore (Sage & Matteucci, 2022). Studying while working is easier for gaining further qualifications. This increases profit potential, but needs big money for new technologies, resources and infrastructure, so funding from other industries is essential (Kaiser et al., 2014). Climate change, a rise of terrorism, economic uncertainty and job atomisation increase cross-discipline and national mobility, with demand for quality HE, operating in a rapidly changing, unpredictable environment. With a HE business mentality operating, often cheap labour (inadequately educated lecturers) is employed. This further declines standards and concerns employers, who now provide their own applicant tests.

HE Changing Attitudes

Hard and soft skill competency is insufficient, as HE must change attitudes and behaviours for a globalised knowledge-based-economy. (Sage & Matteucci, 2019). Universities, which "increasingly instrumentalize, professionalize, vocationalize, corporatize, and ultimately technologize education", have been extensively criticised (Thomson, 2001, p. 244). Livingstone (2009) sees the intrinsic purposes of education and the instrumental contemporary labour market as contradictory to distort policy-making. Students are not educated just to gain high economic returns, with citizenship, social and cultural capital equally important to develop.

Bourdieu (1984), Abrahams (2022), Adams (2022) and Frath (2022) think that degrees and diplomas neither indicate academic application to workplace activities, nor signal required competencies. They focus on the mismatch between education and workplace needs and signal criteria produced by the ruling class to select and sort people. These experts do not dismiss human capital theory, but are sceptical of its narrow meaning, used to maintain power and reproduce social inequalities. HE is a social construction of interacting and competing individuals, undertaking common tasks for qualifications (Burke, 2012). Capabilities exist in and out of HE, including both innate traits and acquired abilities, in dynamic social contexts. Sen (1993 p. 30) defines capability as "a person's ability to do valuable acts or reach valuable states of being; (this) represents the alternative combinations of things a person is able to do or be". These should not be seen only as means to a goal, but as an end itself. They are a condition of well-being, so education must develop these for life satisfaction. However, this is subjectively understood, so the same levels of life satisfaction may not mean social and economic equality. Life satisfaction relates to expectations, aspirations, past experiences and socio-economic circumstances (Saito, 2003). The capability approach, assessing educational attainment or teacher and curriculum quality is useless, if not including learner ability to convert resources into competencies. Sen (1985,

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1993) challenges human capital theory, which sees education as an economic investment, with dominance of institutional settings and power over individual acts. Educational outcomes, measured by tests directed at future income, are poor indicators of an overall well-being purpose, with Britain showing the highest student life dissatisfaction of OECD nations (Schleicher, 2020). The capability approach can be detrimental, imposing life-long disadvantages on individuals and societies, if delivered badly (Unterhalter, 2003, 2005, Walker & Unterhalter, 2007).

Capabilities have both intrinsic and instrumental value. Material resources can be obtained through innate and acquired personal abilities, transformed into capabilities. A person seeing these as means not an end can become an effective citizen if choice exists. Thus, resources, with instrumental value, can also have an intrinsic one. American student development is based on the liberal arts tradition to build free, active, society members, promoted by Negus (2022) and Ebner (2022) in their principles for professional development. This draws on Socrates' "the examined life", Aristotle's "reflective citizenship" and Stoic ideas of education that is "liberal" - freeing the mind from habit and custom to produce reflective, communicative, sensitive, alert, citizens (Herder, 2002). Webster (2022), a professional dancer and teacher, exhibits this in the creative, active curriculum that benefits all learning.

Today, interdisciplinary liberal arts education exists across the social sciences, to prepare students for life challenges (Kozol, 2012, Negus, 2022, Webster, 2022, Ebner, 2022). Kozol examined the social context of American schools - focusing on interrelationships that exist, are maintained or transformed between students, teachers and parents. This showed them as institutions where social discrimination spreads and increases. He criticises the instrumental purpose of market-driven education, placing politics, businesses and commerce as key players shaping the purpose, content and curriculum, with students, parents and teachers as token participants. Hess (2004) says that educational institutions operating and interacting with the economy are accountable for basic knowledge delivery. This may be standardised with a national curriculum for high quality knowledge delivered to learners of all social backgrounds. However, school catchment areas are divided socially, culturally and economically to perpetuate differences in attitude and performance (Sage, 2020).

Hess (2004) describes those who do not challenge state-controlled education and others favouring a non-bureaucratic system, governed by market competition and accountability. He cautions against increasing monopolistic environs, where only the fittest survive, because equity is ignored. The problem is not HE underfunding but spending efficiency. Apart from job competencies, people must be able "to frame and express their thoughts and participate in their local and national communities" (p. 4). Stuart Mill, the English Language Philosopher, stressed effective communication for solving personal, professional and societal problems. His mental breakdown at age 20, was attributed to an overly academic education that followed instrumental not intrinsic values (Sage, 2021). Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory (2009) shows institutions as subsystems: the Micro, Meso, Exo and Macro, plus the Chrono as time changes. The Micro involves activities and roles experienced through interpersonal relationships, like family, schools/colleges, religious, social institutions or peer interactions. The Meso includes relationships between Micro components, like the relationship between institution and

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workplace or family. The Exo interacts between structures that a person does not directly participate in, but influence Micro system functions to impact on them.

Examples are relationships between family and peers of the developing person and family and schools/colleges, etc. The Macro system incorporates the cultural environment and social context in which a developing person lives. Finally, the Chrono system introduces a time dimension exerting changes, shaping a dynamic, complex, natural ecological environment for world understanding. This theory transformed Finish education, which is considered world-beating (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2014; Takala et al., 2015).

Bronfenbrenner says that poverty and social inequalities develop not because of individual characteristic and capability differences, but result from institutional constraints that lower socio-economic sectors cannot surmount. Freire (2009) criticizes "banking education", where teachers and students have discrete roles, with the former depositors of knowledge and the latter as depositories. This sees knowledge acquired within formal education as an absolute truth, with reality static to preserve the status quo. Power play means that those with knowledge and accepting its acquisition as fixed, become oppressors, whereas others lacking or challenging it are the oppressed. Social roles mean inequalities are maintained and intensified. McGregor (2022), once a head teacher, shows how this occurs for learners with disabilities, like hearing loss.

Freire (2009) sees banking education as a "historical hubris", as social reality is dynamic and non-static. What we know today cannot determine future knowledge and social roles, or prohibit challenging and transforming these into something new. This resembles human capital theory, with individuals using educational attainment as an investment for future wages and climbing the social ladder. The assumption of linearity between past individual actions and future economic and social outcomes is at the core of banking education and human capital theory. Freire criticises current transmissive education and argues that an approach exposing reality, by promoting dialogue between teachers and students, produces reflective thinkers, to create and constantly transform actuality. This problem-posing approach, aligns with the intrinsic view of development, as mainly detached from material gains through increased qualifications. Sage et al. (2010) in a project with Japan, show how they fosters intrinsic values, through communication and relationships, in a Moral Curriculum.

Originating in Germany, the term Bildung shaped German education (Waters, 2012). This provides an individual approach within an appropriate context (constantly changing) to reach superior personal and professional development, as well as citizenship. The term links with mind liberation from superstition and social stereotypes. It is amenable to transformation, problem-solving and intrinsic values (Hegel, 1977). However, HE involves students, teachers, administrators, policy makers, support workers, businessmen, marketers and individuals with various abilities/disabilities, social roles, demographic and socioeconomic characteristics. Their interests may conflict to view the HE purpose differently and make policy difficult. Arum and Roksa (2011) claim that HE students make no real progress in high-level thinking and complex problem-solving. Ones with a broader life picture perform better than those seeing university through instrumental lenses (Entwistle & Peterson, 2004). Findings question validity of the HE instrumental view, as those intrinsically motivated perform better academically and in jobs, to show convergence, despite instrumental policies. Aronowitz (2004) accepts education is to prepare students to

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meet work challenges, but even when broader attainment exists, it fails to alleviate class-based inequalities. Social class relations are reproduced through education to reinforce inequalities in world findings (Stephens et al., 2015, Sage & Matteucci, 2019).

Ganding and Apple (2002) suggest education decentralisation, using the Citizen School as an example - prioritising quality provision to impoverished pupils. They back radical structural reform, with the relationship between communities and state based on social justice not power. Those sceptical of human capital theory, conclude that graduates cannot guarantee secure employment and high wages. Over-education, due to ever-increasing supplies of graduates, but limited high-skill job growth, is observed (Sage & Matteucci, 2019). Pay differences between graduates and non-graduates are due to stagnation of the latter's wages not additional income from degrees. Sage (2020a, b) quotes research showing that only 15% of what is learnt is in formal contexts. Families play a vital role in encouraging abilities and traits through a kindly environment. As HE requires great monetary investment, high-income families have more chances and means to promote talents and career prospects.

Livingstone and Stowe (2007), based on the General Social Survey (GSS), looked at American education completion rates, dividing individuals into family and class origin, residential area as well as race and gender. Working-class are discriminated against, compared with mid- and high-class students, with a better balance for race and gender in urban areas. Stone (2013) says inequalities exist because of bad luck and argues for lots when accepting university applicants. Higher marks on a standard sorting test, do not prove applicants will be better academically (Livingstone, 2009). Society cannot solely depend on lotteries and computer random algorithms, so there is a case for test results, if supported by ongoing evidence of progress. Personal portfolios are common in America, to provide a broader picture of performance and potential, which employers prefer to exam grades (Sage 2020a, b).

Diploma Disease

Lowe (2000) argued that widening HE participation creates credential hyper-inflation, causing labour market degradation. It also means that practical and personal talents are marginalised without equal status to academic ones. People interested in practical careers, like building, plumbing, catering, retailing or tourism, are considered of lower status in Britain, but not everywhere. This relates to diploma disease, where labour markets create a false impression that a higher degree is necessary for a job, inducing individuals to undertake them (Collins, 1979). It is like the Weberian theory of educational credentialism, determining social stratum (Karabel, 2005; Waters, 2012). Credential inflation has been much debated, questioning formal education roles and the utility of relevant ability acquisition within universities (Walters, 2004; Hayes & Wynard, 2006). Evans et al. (2002) focus on tacit skills, not acquired formally, but by work, life-experience and informal learning. These are the personal traits for handling sudden occurrences, with communication underpinning all competencies.

HE academic degrees are pre-planned dynamic processes, with knowledge acquired soon out-dated. Policies, like the 1999 Bologna Declaration, support graduates engaging in job training and life-long education programmes (Coffield, 1999). Academics argue that

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institutions should have a broader role, acknowledging benefits that HE brings to societies, by promoting productivity, innovation and democratisation, as well as mitigating social inequalities from open policies (Abrahams & Adams, 2022).

Sage and Matteucci (2022) provide evidence to suggest that focus on academic goals, at the expense of personal and practical ones, has led to a narrow view of education and social acceptance. Broadening educational opportunities to value all talents, as in the Educational Robotics programme (Cobello & Milli, 2022) ameliorates economic and social differences. Boosting employability equally is vital, with a framework that ensures HE satisfies this aim (Diamond et al., 2011). Nevertheless, this can be negative, making the employability gap between high- and low-skilled wider, with no international policy framework for non-graduates. It is questionable how much national policy has been affected by the Bologna Declaration, as equal HE opportunities do not match recommendations (Milburn Commission, 2009, State of the Nation, 2013). Bias towards graduates from higher social classes exists and educational inequality persists in spite of world policy to widen HE participation (Burke, 2012; Bathmaker et al., 2013).

Lorenz (2006) notes that the employability agenda, promoted by HE, cannot be sustained in a diverse environment. HE creates winners and losers, centralising monetary and nonmonetary gains for dominant countries, particularly English-speaking ones, so social inequalities increase between and within nations (Messenger, 2002). Tomusk (2004) positioned education within recent institutional changes and a rapid rise of short-term profits. HE Loan agreements from the transnational World Bank, for developing countries reforms, have an implicit goal of national debt and vitiation (process change impairing utility or reducing efficiency) of national fiscal and monetary policies. Recipient human resources are thus redistributed in favour of a transnational dominant class. Effective HE implementation is complex, as competing interests make it impossible to satisfy all concerns. What is needed is a broad understanding of political, economic, social and national situations, but unfortunately woke agendas narrow thinking, to result in a mismatch of education and life requirements.

Review

There has been wide HE expansion since the 1950s, accelerating in the 21st century, with intelligent machines taking over workplace routines. Employees are now needed to think, communicate and work at higher levels. Thus, new technologies encourage improved human abilities and an interdisciplinary economy, requiring personal and practical as well as academic competencies, which employer reports say are seriously lacking. On a recent Chief Officer training, groups of six considered performance problems in their industries. Reporting back, all eight groups put communication issues at the top, which they confirmed were vital for relationships and effective performance, but often underdeveloped (Sage, 2020). Western HE policy focuses on greater dissemination, to lessen income and social differences. However, this is challenging, because of conflicting group interests and inability to target the vulnerable, which has exacerbated the woke movement. The HE business approach is problematic for poorer people to access learning and develop communication for collaborative teams. Nevertheless, studies show successful transition of students into

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the modern labour market, where people now work with intelligent machines (Cobello & Milli, 2022; Matteucci, 2022).

These initiatives have an economic framework informed by the 1999 Bologna Process, where communication, coordination, communication, collaboration, competitiveness and employability are realised. The Bologna Process and other institutions (EU, World Bank, OECD) have also produced structures to link HE with workplace dynamics (Heinze & Knill, 2008; Hunter, 2013). However, the HE intrinsic notion has less importance in this agenda, with negative implications for those with low qualifications and competencies, who are economically and socially marginalised. Since practical professions have less value in British culture, this will not change until they are accorded equal status to academic ones. Education and training, to level up society, must widen opportunities to produce citizens with personal and practical as well as academic abilities to satisfy society needs. Universities are viewed as preparing society's elite, excluding those unsuited to academic learning.

Conflicting theoretical stances prevent effective progress, with the dominant approach increasing income and workplace position. In contrast, intrinsic ideas concentrate on understanding ontological and epistemological considerations. Thus, development of personal creativity and freedom conflicts with institutional power, dominance and economic values. This influences perceptions of HE aims - to preserve or transform social roles and relations. Even if approaches appear contradictory, they can develop as complementary processes. An instrumental perspective aims for increased HE participation of the deprived to reduce income and social inequalities. Other benefits are improved health and well-being, from valuing active communication, collaboration and citizenship (Sage, 2020a, b). A shift towards intrinsic purposes values other attributes to broaden and deepen thinking.

Education is not another market process to supply graduates as work products. Acquired knowledge, certified by degrees or diplomas, is neither an essential nor a sufficient condition for most jobs. Increasing HE costs, from internationalisation and job changes, preserve well-paid jobs, mainly for those from high socio-economic backgrounds. Deprived students are disadvantaged regarding education, parental in-expertise and elitist traditions favouring the dominant class. Humans learn continuously from changes around them. Formal education is where no learning engagement happens for many, because of its narrow aim and prescribed approach, which does not meet the ability and interest range.

Information processing needs greater attention in educator training, as nowadays staff lack neuro-scientific knowledge to communicate effectively with the range of mother-tongue languages spoken in classrooms. Students, families and educators are largely disconnected from each other. Educators teach a prescriptive curriculum, with families attaching market value to attainments. Thus, students pay greater attention to knowledge taught for tests and care less about practical application and their own holistic development, which must consider their impact on others.

To tackle increasing social inequalities due to present, narrow educational aims, we must adopt policies from Freire's problem-posing and Sen's capabilities approaches, Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological systems theory and Cobello, Milli and Matteucci's Educational Robotics, which put intrinsic and instrumental values into active learning. This aligns with the Bildung model, recognising education, not only as instrumental, but as means for liberation, cultural realisation and social transformation. Trends towards economy-based-knowledge, through strict instrumental means, persist even though evidence shows

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this does little to alleviate income and social inequalities. There is prolonged global economic stagnation and a continuous deterioration of democratic ideals, made worse by the pandemic, war and woke movements that encourage narrow thinking. We need to implement a model, where knowledge, personal and practical abilities are equally valued and not restrained by economic reasoning. This can produce an economy, which can become a means rather than the only goal for human development and progress (Stephens et al. 2015).

Freedom of speech, understanding and respect for all positions are basic to pursuing truth and academic excellence. Marcuse (1969) in "An Essay on Liberalism" said that "Society cannot be indiscriminate in its tolerance of speech, where freedom and happiness are at stake". Rationalism, in this context, refers to basing opinions and actions on reason and knowledge rather than religious belief or emotional response.

The Chopper's Podcast suggests that 50% of Britons do not feel free to speak their minds (telegraph.co.uk/choppers-politics). There are many examples of free speech controversies. Gonville and Caius, one of Cambridge University's oldest colleges, intends to remove a commemorative window to the eugenicist, Sir Ronald Fisher, their President who died in 1962. Winston Churchill, Britain's Prime Minister (1940-45 & 1950-55) is symbolising the old world versus the new, with attempts to remove his statue and rename the college, supported and founded in his name at Cambridge University in 1960. He has been deemed a white supremacist, promoted by the "Charity So White", which attacks white dominance. Churchill fought to protect millions of non-white people in the British Empire. Andrew Roberts, author of "Churchill: Walking with Destiny" (2018), said:

> "Churchill did his best in the exigencies of wartime to alleviate the Bengal famine. In his political career, he fought again and again against slavery and for the rights of non-whites within the British Empire. Churchill was moreover instrumental in destroying the worst racist in history, Adolf Hitler" (p. 48).

As the last globally powerful Englishman, Churchill is blamed for Western nations dominating the world for 200 years, with undoubtedly a history of exploitation, but also the positive spread of Christian principles, the rule of law, modern medicine and education. People should be judged for character not skin colour or differing opinions. Dominating people tend to exploit the rest to some extent. However, the sad response of many UK universities is to decolonise the curriculum and wipe out white culture. This is in response to movements like Black Lives Matter, which act to dismantle systemic racism, racial discrimination, as well as social and criminal injustices, to create fairer systems. Although the intent is worthy, it is pushing liberal democracy as the product of white supremacy. You can now label anything you do not like as racist and make the case to censor and remove it. Universities are the self-appointed guardians of this truth and have lost their reputation for impartiality and free speech. The UK should be regarded as a model for other countries although not a post-racial society a government review found in March 2021. Universities uphold rights of minorities and support policies to stamp out inequality, but promote a message that deviating from mainstream perspectives means an onslaught of abuse.

Confident, thoughtful, reasonable people should not seek to denigrate ancestors for doing things not considered crimes at the time, although all actions would not be repeated

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today. Neither should they sneer and dismiss others for holding contrary views. World universities are now pursuing woke agendas without reflecting on their promotion of further division and hate in society. It makes no sense as all lives must matter in a bid for better equality and relations amongst citizens and it is character not a particular identity that is important. In summary, three general society challenges influencing education are considered for debate, along with suggested solutions (Sage, 2021).

Challenges

Capitalist Democracies

These promote wide divisions between rich and poor. In Britain, the top 10% own five times the wealth of the rest of the 90% together (Office of National Statistics, 2021). As money brings power this means the poor are likely to be exploited to bring resentment, inferiority and distrust. This issue must be addressed as leaders in industry, commerce and public services have seen their salaries leap enormously, whilst those actually doing the work have found their pay falter alarmingly to create further power differences.

Multi-culturalism

Live and let live is a lovely idea in theory, but in practice leads to different rule systems, thinking, behaviour, attitudes and life styles. The Civitas report (MacEoin & Green, 2009) suggests that Sharia Law, allowed in the UK, endorses divisions, disparities and brings minimal compliance and has led to a less liberal British society. This has implications for education, particularly as males and females are regarded differently in both types of law. This cause of divisions must be re-visited.

Education Rewards for Correct Responses

Rewarding correct responses, as giving a tick if a sum is right, has led to Just World Theory and a false sense of trust - if we do the right thing and make the required response, everything will be fine. This does not reflect reality and leads to a victim-blaming culture, increased anger, distrust, dishonesty and a self rather than other outlook. We must look at how to deal with people responses and reflect on the Japanese approach. This accepts all responses positively - but may be improved. They do not mark students down for wrong answers to maths problems, as focus is on the process and how they are able to explain it clearly. Thus, students learn to think about consequences of actions through this method. They do not feel suppressed and learn resilience and respect more easily.

Solutions for Education to Pursue for Insight and Understanding

Respect National Values and Laws

If we do not educate everyone to respect national values and laws, divisions will increase. There has to be a basic commonality for core values to avoid suspicion and rejection. Education has to spell this out strongly and make clear the problems of anarchy if this respect is not forth-coming. Institutions exist to uphold academic freedom not protect feelings.

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Give Equal Status to Personal, Practical and Academic Intelligences

British Education presently concentrates on narrow academic goals to pass more exams than any other nation, which excludes those with greater personal and practical intelligences, who do not flourish in an academic milieu. Change must happen to broaden opportunities and reduce divisions. More active learning, recorded in a variety of evidence in a personal portfolio, gives students a chance to present their performance and potential in a more practical way to develop initiative, control and confidence. Inclusive policies and practices herd all students in a single directional, one-size-fits-all system. This means many do not engage with education and society misses out by lacking employees for personal and practical working roles, which are not encouraged or rewarded to the extent of more academic jobs. Much inequality and frustration arise from a lack of value given to the broad range of talents that learners exhibit.

Teach Philosophy and Intercultural Communication

Philosophy brings insight and understanding of how society operates and why particular thinking in various parts of the world has evolved. This begins a better acceptance of life and its changes. Intercultural communication is essential to teach in plural societies, where many students are learning in a language which is not their mother-tongue, bringing problems in understanding communicative content, conventions, conduct and clarity for acquiring knowledge and making relationships. Finland has a world-beating system and makes intercultural communication the foundation for effective learning and relationships.

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