

# Has the USA Educational System Failed?

## Why it Has Failed and What can be Done.

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### **Abstract**

This essay examines the reasons for the current education crisis in the USA, it analyzes and considers the matter and subject of the USA educational system, factors of failure and suggests potential solutions as remedies.

**Keywords:** books; technology; the great writers of the west; education; critical thought; USA.

In dealing with educational issue in the US, we should make clear the analysis unit - which in our case is the situation of education in the United States - and try to avoid calling in cause and reporting on the educational system, if not crisis, worldwide.

Such a topic and analysis objective should be considered as a voyage of intellectual discovery which induces critical thinking and increase sensitivity in the consequences that mass media, falsehoods political code words and hype can have and increase awareness on mutual effort to gain truth and facts amid the lack of scientific research and result, while facing virtual darkness we are all confronted with and befuddled with, perhaps and even made effective fools of.

The effort of intellectual discovery to get at and find what is valid and authentic in this present world of confusion in many cases, is a hard cut to teach the distinction between truth and facts and what can be easily tailored as a constructed opinion.

The temptation and pressure in many cases to consider only what fashionably is defined as updated literature, when it comes to education, places alternative thinkers, as in my case, to be accused of a prejudice in favor of the past and older western authors.

I say these writers have stood and been vetted by the test of time and future generations without them and not being exposed to them will suffer in my view intellectually. And so I see a crisis in our educational system for this and other reasons I will define and speak of including the dominance of technology in our system at least in the United States which is leading to a kind of print and cultural illiteracy. Now let us take a look at what I see as the decline of our system of education and the possible reasons for it and what, if anything, can be done.

*Let me give you some examples.*

One day a few years ago at a coffee shop in Bayside, NY where I live, I entered into a conversation with a waitress who revealed to me in passing that she had never heard of Tolstoy, one of the greatest writers for all ages and about whom his fellow writer Maxim Gorky said the world stopped a beat at his death. I was in shock at this revelation.

Let me give you another example where a colleague in an office I was working with in a passing comment said she had never heard of the great English epic poet John Milton.

Once again, I was in shock that a person with a college and graduate degree had never heard of this premier English poet one of the greats of all time and of all ages and generations.

Finally, in a similar conversation in a bookstore in Manhattan, a young girl stated much again go my shock that she had never heard of the very great book 1984 by George Orwell. Again, I ask what is going on to produce these intellectual deficits, if not essentially a kind of literary and cultural ignorance and even an ignorance of history.

*Let me offer some reasons.*

First, it is apparent that the former liberal arts curriculum has been decimated if not actually eliminated to a large extent. Our colleges have become vocational solely geared for the purpose of the student obtaining employment after college or a short time thereafter. The older and past western writers the very greats vetted by the passage of time and approved by the judgment of history such as Shakespeare, Milton, Boswell, Tennyson, Keats, and Dickens have been eliminated by the forces of politics and multiculturalism. The result is that the minds of our young people are left in some sort of cultural and intellectual vacuum bereft of content. Better put, without history, literature, a second language, and philosophy, our society and its young people are left with nothing to work with and form their lives on.

A second reason for this change if not deterioration in our educational system has been the dominance of technology which largely consists of the quick fix of mails, text messages, and computers and the passive images of TV and screens on computers or otherwise results in speed and not depth, which can never replace the active mind engagement of print and the printed book. These passive images and media result in little or no thought process and we are left with a society that can no longer think creatively and actively. There can never be replacement for the active mind replacement and involvement of the printed book and to make the matter worse many people today, whether students or adults, paste and cut parts and portions of

other printed material, with the result again that any sort of real thought is avoided. There is little or no original thinking nor is it present or involved or required.

Third, there is the constant barrage of standardized tests our high school and college young people are faced with which serve only to the pressure of passing these tests and to narrow the channels of thought and creativity. It would appear that our school system and even our employment arena have no use for creativity and anything original but want only robots who come on time dress well and do not rock the boat.

*What then can be done?*

I understand that our youth must obtain employment after graduation from college or shortly thereafter and so the college and high school years must be to some extent vocational. Yet I still suggest and cannot emphasize this more strongly the reinstatement of our liberal arts curriculum, including the western writers of the western canon I have mentioned, such as Tolstoy, Gorky, Shakespeare, Keats, Dickens, Austen, Conrad, and the Brontes. That should be combined with two years of world and American history and two years of a second language and at least two years of philosophy. I say that it is only with these reforms that our young people can be fully educated and informed and effective thinking people. I add that I have no prejudice against more modern thinking and literature, even Marx and Lenin, and entertain no bias against non-Western cultures, but welcome all cultures and ideas each to be examined individually on its own and for its own worth. I welcome all in the marketplace of ideas and thinking.

We are faced with a thinking crisis and educational crisis.

*Should our society be formed on political correctness, politics, and the current fads in literature, and not thought but propaganda?*

If we let this continue and occur and not address this crisis, our system will be moving into intellectual darkness based on politics, and what is adjudged most current and faddish based on pop and rock music, or intellectual judgments solely based on newness that rejects history and the work and thought of the past.

Education is not merely vocational and based on technology, but must always be the transmission of the past, whether history, literature, or thought. I urge and ask for educational reformation for the reasons. I state and say to not wait one hour or one day longer to address this issue.

We must have no bias and look forward to the contribution of all cultures to a thinking world.

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