**Florida State Educational Policy: A Controversial Element of Community Development**

**(A factual event in a cross-cultural setting)**

**LDR 810-42 Cross-Cultural Dynamics**

**Assignment No. 3**

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**Instructor Assigned Essay or Project**

1. Write a 5-page essay based on one (1) of the three (3) items below:

a. Write a paper highlighting a cross-cultural experience that involved a project or

work-related activity to which you could have applied Community Development

principles. Discuss the principles you violated and the principles you used. Give a

synopsis of, now being aware of the principles, you could have proceeded for a

positive outcome.

b. Develop a project plan related to your work that will focus on a cross-cultural

strategy and enumerate practical applications of Community Development

principles.

**c. Choose a** **factual event in a cross-cultural setting from books, media, or personal**

**the knowledge that was development-focused and critique it through the grid of the**

**10 principles.**

2. Paper Outline

a. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.

b. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.

c. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.

d. Use a minimum of eleven scholarly research sources (two books and the

remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

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**Introduction**

The thought of community development in a state like Florida comes with different interpretations like laudable ventures, linked to projects, infrastructural developments, the building of roads and bridges, electricity grid installations, and so much more. But there is one missing factor in the Florida educational system called, community development education (CDE). From all indications, CDE is not sufficiently embraced, emphasized, or leveraged for capacity building, initiative, and innovation. Instead, the cross-cultural dynamics are partly stagnant devoid of relations and relationship building. The Florida state educational policies and systems seem hijacked and inundated with partisan politicization at the detriment of the minorities, societies, communities, and the people they serve.

**School curriculum and book ban create firestorms**: Given the rising tide of discontent between parents, teachers, and Governor DeSantis over the curriculum and books banned in Florida schools, the parties are not backing down just yet. Parents from colored and minority black American groups want the history of slavery taught in Florida school curriculum because it sheds light on their forefathers in the past and resonates with them. Moreover, the parents from the Evangelical white groups are uncomfortable with books on slavery, and the LGBTQs being taught and read in schools. Governor DeSantis and these parents believe this is a Liberal progressives’ agenda to force their Woke-ism and Critical Race Theory (CRT) ideas on the schools, the library shelves, and the people of Florida. The Governor and the Evangelicals see the school curriculum and books as tools for negative branding and judgment of people, designed to open old wounds of animosity about the past pitching the people against themselves. This study essay focuses on cross-cultural dynamics regarding education which is a major function of community development principles. It critically examines the origin and causes of the curriculum dispute between Florida parents, primarily white evangelicals, and the schools over the curriculum that offer lessons on the slavery of the past, including books that highlight ethnicity and racial discrimination.

**Series of unresolved issues**: To compound the issues further, you cannot mention “gay in Florida schools anymore." “Wokeism is a term derived from the word “woke,” which initially meant being aware of social and political issues, particularly around race and injustice. The concept of Wokeism has expanded to encompass a broader range of social issues such as gender, sexuality, and environmental concerns” (Toke, 2023). Introduction. (Para. 6). Critical Race Theory is grounded in the Civil Rights Movement, focused on social justice, liberation, and economic empowerment (Tate, 1997).

**The NACDEP precept analogy unfolds development pathways**: The National Association of Community Development Extension Professionals (NACDEP): defines community development as “a practice-based profession and an academic discipline that promotes participative democracy, sustainable development, rights, equality, economic opportunity, and social justice, through the organization, education and empowerment of people within their communities, whether their locality, identity or interest, in urban and rural settings.” Introduction (para. 1). NACDEP ‘s definition is a game changer. It offers series of compelling additives, and social interventions called “participative democracy, sustained development rights” often based on “education and empowerment of the people” (and “equal rights” that drive socio-economic equity and transformative leadership (Al-Omari et al., 2020; Baldwin, 2023), and financial independence.

**The ten principles of community development**: The purpose of critiquing the Florida policies on education is not about showcasing the negativity of the actions of Governor De-Santis or the impact alone but, to offer realistic development pathways (Huntington, 2023; Johnson, 2023) “educational empowerment” and equity (Khadim, et al., 2023; Lim et al 2023), across the board. **1)** The state governance of its education policies must start where the people are Governor DeSantis and his unilateral executive orders are irrational, overzealous actions, regarding the banning of books on slavery, LGBTQs, and transgender entertainment, thereby infuriating the American Association of University Professors, AAUP, and the gag orders, “Do not Say Gay”, went too far. Some members of the community see such actions as despicable and disrespectful to the community and the people. **2)** Governor DeSantis has little or no concrete, established relations or relationships with liberal Florida schools or university authorities or colored and black parents. Book banning is contrary to children’s human rights, their access to information, and the development of critical thinking skills (Vissing, & Juchniewicz, 2023). **3)** To many, Florida state lacks the temperament to keep educational policy simple and has no intention to support school curriculum programs simple enough, and acceptable to the community. **4)** Florida state has had little or no policy or appetite to involve a broad spectrum of the community, reflecting the cultural diversities and inclusion of its people. Rehn, J. (2023) writes, Unfortunately, the Supreme Court has only taken cases about libraries on three occasions, each of which has resulted in its complex web of plurality opinions. **5)** Florida state has shown little or no sensitization training in any location designed to prepare the communities of colored, black, and white parents to address its interference in the state educational policies which must reflect their opinions, norms values, interests, and expectations without specific racial preferences. **6)** The Florida government will not train in what it terms liberal or progressive-oriented schools and universities. The state seems to be at a verbal war with schools that stick to freedom of speech. Since January 2021, Florida has been among the 42 states that have introduced anti-critical race theory bills that restrict discussions on racism and sexism in public schools (Bissell, 2023) and the community is feeling marginalized despite the First and Second Amendments that protect freedom of speech. **7)** Florida may have no records of training trainers of the Liberal or Progressive party persuasion especially when it is seen as a hotbed of policies towards the LGBTQ gender identity, which the states see as “lewd and obscene (Purvis, 2023). **8)** Governor De Santis will not identify and involve local leadership, both existing and emerging when they don’t share his extreme conservative views and policies. **9)** Florida state is hardly seen as cooperating with local, regional, and national governments. Like Texas, Florida will not cooperate with universities and dons that share the ideals of freedom of speech, or progressive or liberal ideologies. **10)** Governor DeSantis is not known to encourage interdependent relationships rather than dependent or independent relationships. Professor Jack Stripling (2023) writes, that Florida’s new - targeted diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) program- “is state-mandated censorship, which has no place in a democracy,” This is counterproductive (Wolfe, 2023; Wood Jr, 2017) in the evolving patterns of college education leadership.

**Summary:** Governor DeSantis and Florida state seem to be at war against liberal-oriented Disneyland, schools, and universities due to conflicts of ideologically conservative policies without exception. Irene Mulvey, president of the American Association of University Professors, said in a recent interview with The Washington Post -those eight states, including Florida, now have educational gag orders (Pendharkar, 2023) which are counterproductive. Florida’s new law states that a personnel decision, such as dismissal, cannot be appealed beyond the university president.- That would eliminate opportunities to dispute such actions through arbitration” (para. 3-13). Professor Irene and fellow professors of universities (AAUP) seem to be alarmed about the authoritarian-looking actions of Florida Governor DeSantis. The media frenzy about a series of derailments about the First Amendment right is palpable.

**Conclusion**: Many Americans seldom hear of Christian nationalism playing out in manifold proportions, often disguised as “patriotism”, or Judo-Christianity, even as QAanon recently. But this is real. Christian nationalism seems to fan the ambers of unending flames of fires in US religious and socio-political systems. Including fires of ethnocentrism, hate, racial discrimination, over-zealous abortion rhetoric, and condemnation. This was seen playing out in the January 2021 revolt by an angry mob desecrating the sanctity of the US capitol. Burke, et al., (2023) argue that the ascendance of White Christian nationalism has profound implications for democracy and public institutions in the United States, as a contemporary religious-political movement that seeks to fuse Christianity with civic life. But, Cooper-White, P. (2023), argues, that this explores the motivations behind adherents to Christian nationalism due to its conservative evangelization, fear of loss of white social status, the allure of patriarchal authority and hierarchy, the allure of conspiracy theories, allure of guns’ ownership. The antidote for Christian nationalism is the kingdom and servant leadership (Allen, & Fry, 2023; Wolfe, 2023; Wood Jr, 2017)) tested as realistic with no extreme ideologies. To change the status quo and the endemic, structural conservativism in the Florida education system (Hayes, 2022; Huntington, 2023; Johnson, 2023) will require: i) a newly, democratically elected legislative body, ii) a democratically elected governorship by November 2024, iii) Florida’s wide-ranging educational systems must be wholly integrated into Florida’s social, cultural, community development systems.

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