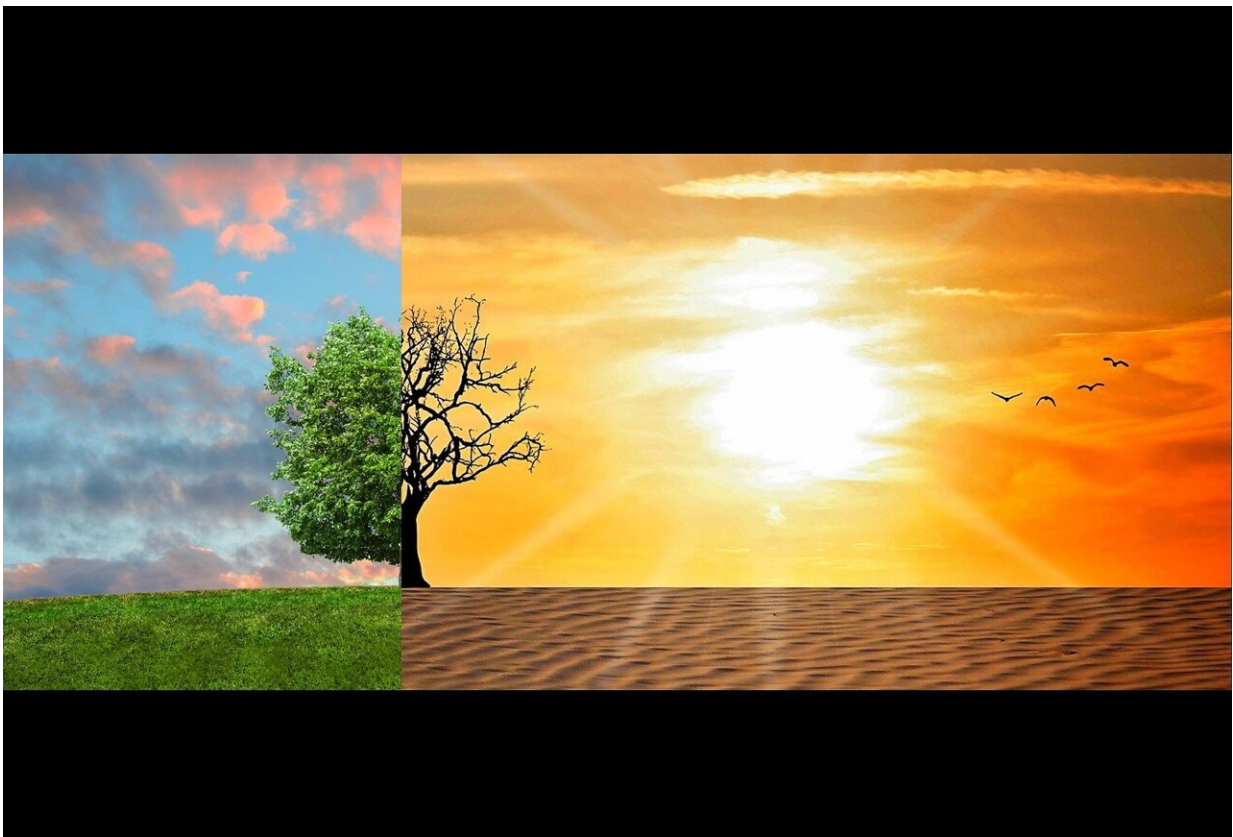


Accelerated Christian Education textbooks used in UK schools deny human-caused climate change

May 17 2023



Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

One of the world's largest fundamentalist Christian education groups is teaching its students climate change denial as fact, and still presents the

theory of evolution as an "absurd and discredited" conspiracy theory, finds a report by University College London (UCL) researchers.

Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) is one of the world's biggest providers of creationist science materials, consisting of reading programs and a core curriculum, for thousands of affiliated schools worldwide, including dozens across the UK and Europe.

There are currently 11 schools in England and Northern Ireland officially affiliated with ACE, although experts expect there to be many more as the schools are notoriously isolationist, conservative and don't advertise themselves widely.

In the report, published in *Cultural Studies of Science Education*, researchers found that its latest edition, which has been released to year groups from Key stages 1 to 3 gradually over the last few years, now claims to show "evidence" that human-caused climate change is not real, and still presents evolution as a [conspiracy theory](#). This is despite claims by the curriculum's developers that its materials allow students to make up their own minds about evolution.

The addition of climate change denial as a proof point for creationism follows on from previous editions that claimed the existence of a "vapor canopy" that surrounded Earth until it burst, causing Noah's flood. Although the most recent edition doesn't include this and the claim has largely been dropped by the group, space within the material previously given over to the theory now covers climate change, specifically to deny a human link between rising temperatures and to reassure students of God's plan in preparing a new heaven and Earth with a better climate.

Lead author Dr. Jenna Scaramanga (IOE, UCL's Faculty of Education and Society) said, "It is worrying that the most recent edition of this material not only still promotes creationism as a valid scientific theory,

but adds climate change denial to its increasingly anti-science agenda. Students studying at ACE schools or using ACE materials move into mainstream further or [higher education](#) ill-equipped to study advanced science or to make informed judgments about scientific discoveries.

"Presenting creationism and evolution in this way is a conspiracy theory, as the providers and teachers argue that mainstream scientists are colluding to promote false ideas. Teaching children in this way means they are more likely to easily accept and believe other conspiracy theories."

The authors found through analyzing the third and fourth editions of the material that younger primary/[elementary school children](#) are not exposed to any ideas contrary to ACE's literal interpretation of the Bible until Year 9, or the eighth grade in the US, around age 13. Researchers say this is contrary to Ofsted education guidance, which stipulates that [primary school children](#) must be exposed to a broad and balanced science education.

The fourth edition of ACE's material was first released for the youngest age group, five- to six-year-olds, in 2009, with subsequent grades following gradually. Material for 12- to 14-year-olds was released in 2016 and 2020 respectively.

Overall, the only substantial difference between the third and fourth editions were two new arguments, which have both been widely discredited by scientists. One is the claim of tiny amounts of polonium found in granite rocks as evidence that Earth formed instantaneously, while the other is that traces of blood vessels and soft tissue found in some dinosaur fossils prove they must have died comparatively recently, suggesting that Earth is a young planet.

ACE has previously been criticized for relying on rote memorization

over other learning styles and presenting misleading or distorted information. The curriculum delivered within ACE schools regularly includes creationism within non-science lessons and depicts those who believe in evolution as making an immoral choice.

The material has also been previously criticized for supporting white supremacism and defending South African apartheid. In its first 20 years, ACE was involved in over 150 lawsuits, mostly relating to accreditation, with subsequent court cases. The company believes that Christian schools should not be regulated, and schools using its curriculum have defended this belief through litigation.

Dr. Scaramanga added, "Questions need to be asked about how these schools and those which rely heavily on ACE publications pass Ofsted checks when their curricula and materials clearly fail to provide a broad and balanced science [education](#) and fail in the requirement of teaching respect for different beliefs."

More information: Jenna Scaramanga, Michael Reiss, Evolutionary stasis: creationism, evolution and climate change in the Accelerated Christian Education curriculum, *Cultural Studies of Science Education* (2023).

Provided by University College London

Citation: Accelerated Christian Education textbooks used in UK schools deny human-caused climate change (2023, May 17) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2023-05-christian-textbooks-uk-schools-deny.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.