

Epistemological Access and the Higher Education agenda in Mauritius

Nicolas Ragodoo

University of Mauritius

Abstract

This paper focusses on the experience of university education across social classes in the Mauritian setting. It highlights how higher educational institutions lay emphasis on enhancing physical access to university education, as well as skills-based teaching, and the training of subject specialists. Public and private universities, as well as the regulatory authorities, do not place epistemological access high on the agenda, being more concerned with the rhetoric of equality of opportunities. Irrespective of their class background, students seem to be even less concerned with accessing meaningful knowledge so as to be able to question the established structures and processes. This paper argues that academics have a crucial role to play in putting epistemological access back on the agenda. The study highlights that the epistemological agenda is not only absent in public discourse, but suffers from deliberate erasure, given that the Mauritian higher education field, and the education system as a whole, seem to have established a situation of stasis, where all the parts of the educational machinery seem to be well-oiled and therefore operate in a relatively stable environment. The challenge, therefore, is to place epistemological access back at the centre of the higher education agenda. Reflecting on the current situation, where all the parties seem happy and satisfied, this paper puts forward that it is up to the organic intellectuals, who have been through the system, and are fully aware of the biased way in which it operates, to lead this fight for its transformation.

Keywords: Inequality, University education, Social Class, Organic Intellectuals, transformation