

INTERROGATING WESTERN KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS IN THE CLASS: What we get from International Students that we never really appreciate.

In this paper I shall foreground knowledge systems theories to reflect on my appreciation of the multi-cultural environment of teaching derived from the education industry. Through that reflection I hope to suggest some pitfalls of knowledge and discourse, constructed through a pedagogy that favours one system of knowledge creation. I believe that this pedagogy in many ways undermines learning and denies Western knowledge systems opportunity to further develop through the process of hybridity. I wish to argue that as we drill our students into imbibing the formats, structures and conventions of western knowledge we are not only further undermining some other knowledge base but also failing to challenge how we have come to know that which we know.

I begin from the premise that knowledges are based on pre-obtained perceptions and inferences from what is immediately known.

This is where cultural studies is crucial. In the 70's, argues Wallerstein, cultural studies "attacked the views of the dominant strata in the world-system that generalised their realities into universal human realities and thereby "forgot" whole segments of humanity, not only in the substantive statements but in the very epistemology of their research".

We can only understand knowledge when we are capable of recognising that many of our universally held assumptions hold back our capacity for understanding the multiplicity of human endeavour. Our understanding of the world in the academy has until now been certainly Eurocentric. This is not surprising as " Eurocentrism is constitutive of the geo-culture of the modern world".

The multicultural class present opportunity for teachers and learners to forge new relations and derive value from the meeting of cultures As it is in our universities students from all cultures are either rewarded or punished based on their ability to adapt to a specific cultural sensibility. This needs questioning.

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