

FIN DU THEME

The CNU had undeniably (quite) a few flaws, but it was an efficient bulwark against localism when it came to commissioning, and it guaranteed a highly competent/skilled staff composed of postgrads that were both lecturers and researchers. It has been sidelined for (/in the appointing of) most of the university positions. In matters where it would/used to make decisions, now it merely gives its advice, thus contributing to the accusations or rumours of local cronyism.

Q1

According to the first two documents, to what extent should diversity be crucial to American and British universities?

INTRO: Diversity issue: in DOCUMENT 1 (ECON) → US universities ; DOCUMENT 2 (GUA) → US/UK elite universities

1. Universities are apparently much involved in enforcing diversity: should = advisable?

DOCUMENT 1: diversity statements (promoting equity, inclusion, and social justice) are compulsory within 1/5 of US faculty jobs requirements.

DOCUMENT 2: despite a superficial diversity within universities, **elite** universities are highly conservative within which the interests of privileged groups perpetuate existing power structures (hierarchies of difference based on your accent and previous school) : “unspoken” advantage (like a deceptive taboo = what is but shouldn’t be).

2. But “affirmative action” and “being woke” have become trigger-words (diversity isn’t that natural yet): should = normal?

DOCUMENT 1: Advocates underline that, judicially, the diversity statements are lawful : affirmative action is de facto outlawed, so the absence of lawsuits means that those statements are legal. Critics, however, claim that diversity statements are antimeritocratic, and infringe on the freedoms of the First Amendment. Moreover by bureaucratising ideology, the sincerity of the diversity statements are comparable to forced speech.

DOCUMENT 2: overt classism (distinction according to social classes) and overt racism in elite universities: AA makes people less likely to secure a place (“impostor syndrome” and inferiority complex in academic but also social spaces).

3. Boomerang effect: whatever importance is given to diversity, the privileged will always benefit most from the situation:

DOCUMENT 1: Those who criticize diversity statements (mostly Republicans) feel like they flaunt a political leaning. Critics therefore tend to limit freedom of thought in the name of protecting it (Stop woke Act + banning the teaching of critical race theory + dismantling DEI offices in universities).

DOCUMENT 2: distorted ways of still privileging the privileged: US “extracurriculars” way to exclude students along racial or class lines, and in the UK, privileges are granted to those from elite private schools. They pour into the narrative that disadvantaged students are unfairly advantaged: it justifies privileged families from elite fee-paying schools into elite professions, and meritocracy is undermined because the belief is that poorer or coloured students are actually undeserving recipients of a “politically correct”, woke agenda.

Q2

Can education bridge the gap?

1. Granted, education is meant to « elevate » a person: it is about teaching about how to BE or to BECOME who one truly is. Bridging the gap between ignorance and knowledge, in order to find one’s place/identity in society (cf. Oliver Twist or Charles Dickens’s biography)...
2. Yet, too often education has been confused with elevating towards HAVING/BEING MORE. Part of the meritocratic ideal, it bridges the gap between the rich and the poor: thanks to education, social mobility (an « elevation » on the social ladder) is possible. (cf. doc from Le Monde)
3. Education has turned into a market, a good that can be consumed/bought (cf. graph). Today our society seems to underline that HAVING matters more than merely BEING. Is that a gap that can be bridged?