

Chemistry Education for Socially Responsible and Sustainable Development: What are the Challenges for a Developing Country?

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Historically, Chemistry education in Mauritius had a clear utilitarian and vocational focus: it was meant to support local agricultural activities. Its inferior position compared to “higher classical attainments” was acknowledged. However, the introduction of the formal chemistry courses with external examinations and scholarships raised its academic status and inadvertently steered the shift from a vocational to a purely academic focus. Moreover, the logistical constraints to effectively communicate the subject’s inherent and interlinked macro, micro and symbolic components rendered it bookish. In the process, the appreciation of the nature, the methods of science, the skills required for scientific enquiry and higher order cognitive skills were neglected. This resulted in Chemistry being divorced from the developmental priorities of Mauritius.

This paper explores the challenges facing Mauritius because of the dichotomy between the educational focus and the country’s priorities and proposes corrective measures.