Chapter 9

Walking the Tightrope of Decolonisation in Education: Critically Gauging Curriculum Emancipation in SIDS Contexts

Aruna Ankiah-Gangadeen
Mauritius Institute of Education
a.ankiah@mie.ac.mu

Pascal Nadal
University of Seychelles
headtps@sedec.mu

Abstract

This chapter begins with an examination of two emancipatory moves in the Mauritian curriculum, namely the introduction of technical subjects and Mauritian Creole at upper secondary level with the responsibility for curriculum development, assessment and certification attributed to local institutions. It offsets these decisions with similar curricular experiences in the Seychelles, another SIDS that shares the geographical location and colonial past of Mauritius. While these enfranchising acts appear momentous against the backdrop of pervasive colonial influences, we choose to adopt a different lens for a better understanding of the phenomenon in current times. A consideration of the politics-educational policy-curriculum nexus within a world market economy brings to light the risk of anamorphic readings of the situation, whereby the distinction between colonial and global forces is blurred. In a compressed world where boundaries have ceased to exist, we argue that turning inwards may merely reinforce insularity

instead of enabling SIDS to achieve their vision of economic resilience. Placing the aspirations of the youth (the consumers of the curriculum) and the aspirations of SIDS at the centre, we make a case for the establishment of a creolised curriculum for global citizenship. We affirm that this strategic and pragmatic move recognises the need and sees the opportunity to plough from available resources for the country's advancement.

Keywords: *curriculum decolonisation, SIDS, creolised curriculum, global citizenship*

Introduction

While delineating the schism between the local needs of Mauritius, a Small Island Developing State (SIDS), and the country's attempts to fulfil economic aspirations like the 'big' countries, Nadal *et al.* (2017) argue that insular needs should not be overshadowed by drives towards internationalisation. Instead, indigenous knowledges should be preserved and valorised. In the field of education for example, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) should be given its rightful place rather than be kept as a 'second best option by default'. Along the same lines of thought, Bray (2016, p.6) posits that endeavours in the educational domain, just as in others, should be carried out in relation to the particularities of SIDS, since they *"are not just small versions of large states. Rather, they have distinctive features that demand particular strategies for development."* Interestingly, even though Maistry (2021) contends that dislodgement or dismantling from hegemonic Western frameworks is not a given, five years into the implementation of a major educational reform, we note some rather bold emancipatory curricular moves in Mauritius. These are occurring despite the predominant mindset nested in neo-colonial beliefs that (over)value Western epistemology and certification. Two initiatives are particularly noteworthy. First, the introduction of a new branch of studies, namely 'Technology Education', in Grades 10 and 11. Secondly, Mauritian Creole, the undisputed mother tongue of most Mauritians, is now being offered at these same levels. Not only

are the curricula of both subjects homegrown and tailored to the local context, but the assessment and certification are also overseen by local institutions. It is notable that these subjects are considered on a par with those offered at School Certificate level and examined by the Cambridge Assessment International Education (CAIE) – the significance of which is brought out below.

The decolonisation of the curriculum adds an intricate layer to curriculum studies. This movement situates itself within manifestations of identity and questions established epistemic notions. Although decolonial discourses may be from ideological, political, sociological or other perspectives, they attribute centre stage to identity construction, voice and representation in discussions on the relevance and appropriateness of the curriculum. The current chapter is a deep reflection on the challenges of decolonising the curriculum in a context of globalisation and internationalisation. It adds to the "complicated conversations" advocated by Le Grange *et al.* (2020: na) by engaging in a critical reflection on curricular enfranchisement in the Mauritian educational sector and providing insights into similar thrusts in the Seychelles, a comparable SIDS context. Both islands are located in the Indian Ocean, to the east of Africa. They are former French and British colonies, hence the significant status of French and English in addition to the local language, Mauritian Creole. Symptomatic of *"a mindset which sees the colonial languages as the given carriers of knowledge"* (Deutschmann & Zelime, 2022, p. 61), English is the medium of instruction in Seychelles though, with time, some allowance was made for the learners' first language. In Mauritius, the learners' first language can be used for support during the first three years of primary schooling, as per the Education Ordinance (Colony of Mauritius, 1957), a colonial language-in-education policy. In the case of the Seychelles, Seychellois Creole is the medium of instruction in the first two years of primary schooling. The shift to English occurs as from Primary 3 through an early exit transitional bilingual model of education. The education systems of Mauritius and

the Seychelles are modelled on that of the British, namely six years of primary schooling followed by seven years of secondary schooling. Though the curriculum is developed locally, mainstream educational offers for 'academically gifted' learners remain solidly entrenched in the international examinations tradition associated with so-called 'prestigious' qualifications like the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), the International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE) or the 'Diplôme d'Etudes en Langue Française' (DELF), an official qualification in French language delivered by the French Ministry of Education. Both islands have a highly examinations-oriented system (Deutschmann & Zelime, 2022), where academic achievement is prized as the pathway to social mobility. On the other hand, technical and vocational areas are relegated to those who do not meet the expectations of mainstream education. Such conditioning, Allais (2020) reveals, is yet another aspect of Africa's colonial legacy.

This brief backdrop highlights the deep mooring of the islands' education system in that of the West and helps bring out the gutsy nature of curricular emancipation, limited as this may be. Yet, whilst we underscore the progressive nature of decolonisation pursuits, we nonetheless acknowledge the difficulties of completely breaking away from Western influences due to the prevalence of global trends, the necessity for small islands to be part of the world market and the aspirations of the people.

Caught in the nets of globalisation and internationalisation

In the field of education, attempts to decolonise the curriculum (eg, see Kassaye, 2014, and Kim, Lee & Joo, 2014, regarding Ethiopia and South Korea respectively) are faced with a simultaneous sweeping movement towards the internationalisation of the curriculum, the perceived route to economic prosperity and enhanced mobility across the world. The necessity of being part of the internationalisation - or

in some instances, as in the case of Poland (Pachet & Seabra, 2014) Europeanisation - of the curriculum for economic reasons can be noted across continents. While this tendency is more apparent in the Higher Education sector, the school curriculum has not been spared. Pachet and Seabra (2014, p. 402) argue that, during the previous few decades, most diverse political and social contexts have driven the education and thus, the curriculum agenda *"by economic policies whose orientations follow globalised decisions (...) and the adoption of accountability policies that are anchored in a perspective of technical rationality connected to market principles."* Such an approach, they go on to say, bespeaks "*technicist orientations*" (Pachet & Seabra, 2014, p. 403) to knowledge construction and a "*utilitarian vision of school*" (Pachet & Seabra, 2014, p. 403). This prompts the epistemic question: 'What is to be included in the curriculum?'

Traditionally, the curriculum is defined as *"an official statement of what students are expected to know and be able to do"* (Levin, 2008, p.8). However, the nature of the knowledge to be acquired clearly varies in relation to the times and prevailing forces. In the colonial era, globalisation had led to the spread of colonial knowledge to the detriment of indigenous knowledges that were vilified (Maile, 2021). Today, the same trend may be noted with the difference that 'foreign' knowledge is no longer imposed but, rather, embraced for the benefits it brings. Despite protests against a Euro-centric or 'white' curriculum (Bird & Pitman, 2020; Choat, 2021) and movements like #RhodesMustFall, the propensity towards the internationalisation of the curriculum appears in various guises, such as foreign language study in Taiwan (Jeng-Jye *et al.*, 2014), and the endeavour to reduce *"disparities between Israeli educational achievements and those in leading world economies"* (Mathisa & Sabar, 2014, p. 260). The appeal that the internationalised curriculum represents can even be seen in the form of universalised tests, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), that measure students from disparate contexts around the world according to the same attainment standards, thereby (we may argue)

prompting countries partaking in this assessment to gear their learning programme accordingly. As Anderson-Levitt (2008) avers, *"[w]hoever holds the power to set the test questions is shaping definitions of a global intended curriculum"* (p. 362).

What makes market-driven curricular conversations within a global space more significant in small island contexts? While globalisation has brought its fair share of benefits to SIDS, thanks to advancement in travel and technology, it has enhanced the fragility of such contexts because *"they are usually 'takers' rather than the makers of the world economic* policies" (Crossley *et al.*, 2009, p.3). Further, Encontre (1999) stresses that SIDS risk economic marginalisation due to their inability to keep pace with the fierce competition in the trade arena. Another hazard resulting from a shrunken world is the inability of any country to be sheltered from the blowback of events happening outside its borders. Two stark contemporary examples illustrate this. We all witnessed how the COVID-19 pandemic, which originated in China, spread across the globe like wildfire. The subsequent impact on the health sector and economy is something for which no country had a buffer. Similarly, the economic consequences of the current war between Russia and Ukraine are being felt all over the world. It is increasingly necessary, therefore, for SIDS to match the potential of 'Big States' for their own survival and to achieve their vision of economic resilience.

According to the Education Strategy 2014–2021 (UNESCO, 2014, p. 15):

> *The growing importance of the knowledge economy has profound implications for the role of education as a determinant of economic growth. Increasingly, countries' ability to compete in the global economy and to respond to existing and emerging challenges depends on their education systems' ability to impart foundation skills, which enable further learning, and to impart transversal skills, which foster mobility. Therefore, it is more important than ever for economic growth strategies to be underpinned by an education and training system which develops a literate and trainable workforce.*

The stakes for SIDS with limited or no natural resources, one of their several vulnerabilities (Tu'akoi *et al.*, 2018; Jules, 2012), are more consequential, as these countries bank highly on their human resources. Former colonies, like Mauritius, rely mainly on education - hence, curriculum as capital. This emerges very clearly in the Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008–2020 (Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, 2009, p.1), which spells out the country's educational vision, namely *"(a) Quality Education for all and a Human Resource Development base to transform Mauritius into an intelligent nation-state in the vanguard of global progress and innovation."* This very telling statement foregrounds the activation of policy levers in curriculum planning, and thus in determining what goes into the curriculum.

The gamble of international testing

As an offshoot of the tension between indigenous and global drives in curriculum content, a similar conundrum crops up when it comes to assessment. On the one hand, it is generally accepted that national assessment systems offer meaningful and localised benchmarks to evaluate competences developed according to standards defined by domestic educational policies reflecting the country's needs and aspirations (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2003). However, the lure provided by international assessments can and should in no way be minimised, especially in contexts where education represents the main gateway to socioeconomic advancement (Nadal *et al.*, 2017). The latter observation is particularly true in situations where the remnants of former colonial educational policies are still visible and appealing to many (Fleisch *et al.*, 2019), and where the urge to break the fetters of insularity in search of greener and larger pastures abroad is ever-present (Nadal *et al.*, 2017).

Thus, whilst we note that a number of sub-Saharan African countries - like Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, and Tanzania - have devised their own national assessment system at secondary level (where the

reliance on international certification is generally more pronounced, given the stakes for university admission), other countries have opted for regional continental forms of certification. For instance, countries like Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria and Sierra Leone enrol candidates for the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE). As its name implies, the WASSCE is a standardised test administered by the West African Examinations Council for anglophone West African countries. Even though not all seven key domains of learning are tested, certifications of this nature signal the coming together of formerly colonised countries to set up assessment systems that can carry more weight than national tests. In so doing, the ties with reputed traditional examining bodies from the northern hemisphere may be severed.

However, a number of sub-Saharan countries, like Lesotho, Mauritius, Seychelles, Swaziland and Zimbabwe, still resort to an examining body like CAIE for the enrolment of candidates in 'O'-level, 'A'-level and IGCSE examinations (Cheng & Omoeva, 2014). In the case of Zimbabwe, Fleisch *et al.* (2019) remark that the recourse to Cambridge international examinations alongside assessments that are locally organised by the Zimbabwe Schools Education Council (ZIMSEC) constitutes an example of the *"coexistence of the new and the old"* (p. ix). Fleisch *et al.* (2019) point out that, far from being an anecdotal occurrence, the *"trade-offs between the 'Western' and the 'African' knowledge systems will be influenced by the ongoing debates about decolonising the curriculum"* (p. xii).

One such debate concerns the influence of imported high stakes standardised tests on learners' critical perspectives. For Ekoh (2012), who focused on the Nigerian education system, this situation leads to an erosion of the critical African worldview. Even though we will here refrain from comparing Nigeria and Mauritius, as the two contexts have widely disparate realities, a number of observations about the situation in Nigeria resonate with local considerations in Mauritius. For instance, certificates from international examining bodies are perceived as bearers of pride and prestige (Dillard, 2001) in both contexts. This in turn leads

to a commoditisation of education that ends up hailing Western identity instead of really liberating and transforming local mindsets, as educational curricula should normally do (Omolewa, 2006). Also, the difficulty to *"[adapt] African knowledges into a colonially imported style of education"* (Ekoh, 2012, p. 34) does not work towards the creation of recognitive social justice (Woods *et al.*, 2012), which aims at allowing the learner to meaningfully interact with the curriculum in a bottom-top manner (Meo, 2005).

Moreover, the long-observed obsession with white-collar employment opportunities afforded by certificates from international examining bodies (Kitchen, 1962) has led to a situation in Africa whereby *"manual and agricultural work which had hitherto, been the basis for the individual's social esteem [...] became diminished in value"* (Ekoh, 2012, p. 26). This reminds us of the prevailing situation in Mauritius and the Seychelles (Purvis, 2004), where *"the TVET sector has been - and still is - perceived as the poor relation of the [...] educational system, attracting a substantial portion of drop-outs from the mainstream channel"* (Nadal *et al.*, 2017). Indeed, in both contexts, the outcome of a national exam at Grade 9 level determines if learners can carry on with their secondary studies in a full-fledged academic stream where assessment is conducted by an international examining body in Grades 11 and 13, or whether they will be earmarked for the TVET stream, where they will be exposed to locally designed and assessed programmes.

The case of the Seychelles warrants particular attention here, as - at the school's discretion - some vocational stream learners enrolled in the General Pathway Programme (i.e. those who did not qualify to read for the fully academic IGCSE or DELF examinations) may still be allowed to follow part of the DELF/IGCSE programme if they demonstrate that they have the capacity and the will to commit to extra efforts alongside the technical studies that they undertake at school and through work attachment. Nonetheless, it should be pointed out that efforts towards the valorisation of local TVET programmes are visible both in the Mauritian and Seychellois education systems. In the latter system, for example, learners

who have completed their IGCSE may still opt for admission to specialised technical and vocational schools. These schools operate in areas like agriculture, technology, maritime studies, and tourism - the last two contributing to forming manpower in fisheries and tourism, two fields that constitute the cornerstone of the island's economy (Senaratne, 2021). TVET learners who have achieved more advanced academic standards than their peers from the General Pathway Programme may qualify for enrolment in courses offered at a higher level than the usual Apprenticeship Schemes proposed by centres of professional learning. A similar provision has materialised in Mauritius with the adoption of the Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) reform in 2015, as it is henceforth possible for learners to be channelled towards TVET centres and polytechnics through multiple exit routes after the 9th, 11th and 13th grades of their schooling journey.

Undoubtedly, the valorisation of TVET courses to answer the domestic needs of the island in collaboration with local Tertiary Education Institutions (TEIs) like the University of Mauritius and the University of Technology of Mauritius remains a laudable initiative. However, it should be highlighted that one major preoccupation of Polytechnics Mauritius, the body set up to achieve the vision of the country in the field of technical formation, has so far been the securing of partnerships with foreign universities and international entities from countries like Australia, Switzerland and Malaysia for the accreditation or co-awarding of its qualifications. These affiliations with so-called prestigious foreign institutions of higher education are proudly advertised on the institution's website. Somehow, even when it comes to devising programmes that are not entirely academic and that aim at fulfilling local industry needs, it seems challenging for service providers from developing countries to do away with the 'international label' preoccupation.

To revert to the regular academic secondary education stream, the recourse to high-stakes international examinations nurtures a sense of educational elitism that proves detrimental - and, therefore, undemocratic - to a

large segment of the student population (Omolewa, 1982). A similar pyramid of exclusion operates in Mauritius, due essentially to the academic 'casualties' brought about by the system's shortcomings, including at the level of assessment (Callikan, 2019).

If in the case of Nigeria, the urge to access the handful of institutions offering the best chances to satisfy the high-stakes certificate requirements has led to malpractices like bribery and fraud (Omolewa, 1982), in Mauritius it fuels a different phenomenon: that of shadow education (Foondun, 2002). Indeed, it is an established practice for Mauritian learners enrolled in public - and, therefore, 'free' - schools to attend paid private tuition sessions either after school hours or during weekends. Often a lucrative and unregulated business activity, these sessions draw crowds of learners that may at times be as large as or even larger than the 'regular' classroom population size at school. Moreover, they may sometimes be serviced by the same teachers entrusted with the teaching of the subjects at the public schools where the learners are enrolled.

Given that shadow education is a reality at primary level, where national examinations are conducted, the prevalence of private tuition as an educational practice cannot therefore be solely attributed to the dependence on international examining bodies. However, it can hardly be disputed that the aspiration to succeed in Cambridge's 'A'-level examinations at the end of the secondary school cycle exacerbates the practice of resorting to private tuition. The implications in this case are that success in these high-stakes international examinations is a critical door opener either to the world of work or to that of prestigious universities, especially for those students competing for scholarships.

Language in education: The added stake

The last aspect that will be considered in this section is that of the language used as medium of instruction and testing. As posited by Zelime *et al.* (2018, p. 18), "*examples*

from different parts of the African continent clearly illustrate the potential negative impact that L2 medium of instruction and examination can have on learners' academic achievement." In Mauritius as well, year in and year out, local examination reports by the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate draw attention to the fact that, even at primary level, candidates perform poorly in subjects like Mathematics, Science, and History and Geography, essentially because they find it difficult to understand and respond to high-order and open-ended questions set in English for national examinations (Rivet, 2016). We can, therefore, deduce the added difficulty that international examinations set in English pose to candidates sitting for examinations in subjects that entail an increasing level of complexity throughout their secondary schooling journey.

A similar observation about the adverse effect of a second or foreign or additional language medium on academic performance can be made about the 'highly exam-oriented' (Deutschmann & Zelime, 2014, p. 70) system in place in the Seychelles. As high-stakes final examinations take place in English there as well, *"advanced writing skills in the L2 are essential and a gatekeeper to educational success in all subjects"* (Deutschmann & Zelime, 2014, p. 70). Consequently, learners often fall short of the required level of mastery in the L2 *"to meet the goals of the curriculum [...] or to meet the practical demands of communicating subject-specific knowledge in writing"* (Deutschmann & Zelime, 2014, p. 70). Studies conducted in other contexts, such as in Hong Kong, have come to the same conclusion. For instance, as part of a quantitative study on the learning of biology through a bilingual learning programme, Yuen Yi Lo and Xuyan (2021) showed that the demands in terms of productive language skills (especially writing) proved more taxing for learners who took the biology test in a second language than for those who answered in their mother tongue.

In the light of such glaring evidence of academic prejudices brought about by curriculum mismatches and maladjusted assessment systems, why do countries -

especially small vulnerable developing states - still insist on the cachet that confer academic affiliations with international service providers? Is there more to be lost than gained by departing from the diktat of former colonial influence from the northern hemisphere? This is the question we answer using Mauritius as a case study.

Decolonial moves in the Mauritian curriculum

The NYCBE brought changes in the schooling sector, amongst which the added emphasis on TVET in a system that, as discussed above, is predominantly academic. This educational provision is undoubtedly tardy since the Report of the International Meeting to Review the Implementation Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States had, a decade before, already identified TVET as a significant area for sustainable employment (United Nations, 2005). The Ministry of Education has recently strengthened the move triggered in the educational reform by working on the introduction of a technical branch at upper secondary level to open up pathways for both mainstream students and Extended Programme[1] students to specialise in this area by eventually joining polytechnics. This major change has a twofold impact. First, it highlights the significance of technical competencies for the country's workforce and an appreciation of added opportunities that these competencies offer on the job market[2]. Secondly, it led to the development of a homegrown and 'home-assessed' programme, as all the expertise at

1 Students who do not clear the end-of-primary education examinations after six years of primary schooling are channeled to the Extended Programme at the secondary level. There, they are afforded fours years of study (instead of three for mainstream learners) that culminate in their participation in the National Certificate of Education (NCE) examinations.

2 In September 2022, a first batch of 371 students graduated from Polytechnics Mauritius in high-demand labour market fields such as Health Sciences and Nursing, IT and Emerging Technologies, and Tourism and Hospitality (Jugnauth: 'La

the levels of curriculum development and evaluation lies in local institutions. Indeed, the portfolio of subjects that this area will comprise will be based on the needs of Mauritian industry, such as hospitality. Further, assessment will not be conducted by CAIE, but by the National Examinations Board. The certification to be issued by the University of Mauritius will be considered on par with that from CAIE. While this initiative may be deemed a celebratory break from the Western grip, it must nevertheless be pointed out that local institutions were entrusted with the entire project after attempts to secure consultancy services from the West were unsuccessful. This goes a long way to show how indigenous resources are still marginalised even when the curriculum must be closely aligned with the local reality and industry needs, and the examining body has the requisite expertise.

The above remark is even more pertinent for the second policy decision case studied in this chapter, as it concerns the teaching and learning of Mauritian Creole (hereafter referred to as 'MC') at secondary level. MC is the sole home language of almost 85% of the population, way ahead of French (less than 4%) for example (Central Statistics Office, 2011). Nevertheless, it was only after years of struggle by advocates from diverse borders (Nadal & Ankiah-Gangadeen, 2021) that, in 2012, MC was finally introduced in Grade 1 as an optional subject on par with ancestral and heritage languages already taught at school, such as Hindi, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Modern Chinese and Arabic. Nine years later, as learners of MC were about to sit for the National Certificate of Education (NCE) examinations, serious questions arose about the future of the language, given that post-Grade 9 examinations offered in Mauritian secondary schools are conducted by CAIE. Would the latter be willing and able to offer MC to a small group of candidates from just one small island as part of the wide range of 'O'-level subjects it proposes as an international examining body? Was MC meant to have a future beyond Grade 9, as is the case for other optional languages in the curriculum, or

réforme de l'éducation répond aux intelligences multiples', 2022).

was it meant to fall into oblivion past the stage when national examinations are held? And should MC be offered beyond Grade 9, how would it be certified and which examining body would be entrusted with this task?

When the official response finally came, it was announced that CAIE would not be examining Mauritian candidates in MC. The decision, taken by a ministerial committee presided by the Prime Minister himself, was to opt for a homegrown solution, with the University of Mauritius being entrusted with the award of a National School Certificate in MC (Groëme-Harmon, 2021). It was pointed out that this local qualification would be on par with the international 'O'-level qualifications awarded by CAIE, eg, for promotion to upper grades or even as a gateway to employment in some sectors. Two distinct sets of reactions followed this announcement. Some decried that the absence of an internationally recognised qualification for MC meant that it was being viewed as a 'second-class' subject. Others celebrated the fact that - after more than 50 years of independence - the country was at least starting to enfranchise itself from some colonial ties in the field of education. But, at the risk of displeasing those who upheld the latter view, it is worth recalling that the homegrown solution involving the local university as examining body and the local institute of education as curriculum developer was only sought after CAIE had communicated its unwillingness to include MC in the panoply of more than 40 subjects that it currently examines. Had CAIE's response been positive, the entire 'homegrown' discourse upon which the country is now priding itself may not even have arisen. In fact, securing CAIE's agreement to assess the island's vernacular language would probably have been hailed as an unprecedented feat by a small island that strives to play in the big leagues!

These two nuanced cases of curriculum decolonisation in Mauritius are quite telling and propel us towards a broader reflection on the difficulty of completely shaking off colonisation, be it of the mind or in action, in contemporary times. In the rest of the chapter, we engage more deeply with

this phenomenon, taking into consideration the parameters within which decolonisation occurs.

Rescripting the 'curriculum decolonisation' discourse

At the outset of this chapter, we foregrounded two enfranchising moves in the Mauritian curriculum and pointed out that these were, in truth, not an indication of complete emancipation from Western influences. Comparable curricular experiences in the Seychelles were discussed. A better understanding of the phenomenon called for its study within the broader socioeconomic context, especially that of SIDS. The literature reinforced the discussion by highlighting how the powerful currents emanating from globalisation underscored curriculum-related decisions, not only in small islands or postcolonial contexts but also in bigger and more advanced nations. This prompted us to readjust our lens. It became clear that an exclusive focus on curriculum content and assessment would be myopic and push us to reiterate commonly rehashed discourses about colonialism and neo-colonialism. It would have been easy to adopt this path as the two examples forming the crux of this chapter undoubtedly reveal traces of colonised mindsets whereby Western mores still dominate, and the local is viewed as a secondary or fall-back option. However, this would have been a partial and not wholly truthful reading of the situation, or rather an anamorphic stance (a notion we borrow from Jules, 2012) whereby we present a distorted image of reality. As mentioned above, curricular decisions cannot be viewed in a vacuum. Since these are linked to broader educational goals - which are themselves crafted to achieve the government's aspirations for the country - the intricate link between politics, educational policy and the curriculum (Kelly, 2009) needs to be acknowledged and made overt.

Two cases in point from Mauritius are particularly illustrative. First, as part of a Bilateral Agreement on Circular Migration between Canada and Mauritius (Global Forum on Migration and Development, 2018), the Mauritian Ministry

of Labour, Industrial Relations, Employment and Training facilitates the migration of Mauritian workers to Canada to operate mostly in blue collar sectors like food processing, cleaning services, welding and repairs, and mechanics and transport. At the same time, though, this ministry runs a special desk to facilitate the entry in Mauritius of foreign workers - mostly from countries like Bangladesh, India and Madagascar - to take employment principally in the manufacturing and construction industries. It is estimated that the number of workers from Bangladesh present in Mauritius has increased fivefold over the last 14 years (Bhuyan, 2019). Bangladeshis indeed account for more than half of the 45 000 foreign workers currently present in Mauritius (Hilbert, 2020).

Recently, it was reported that even tourism, the flagship sector of the Mauritian economy, might not be spared by the phenomenon of foreign labour recruitment (Hilbert, 2022). That is because of the incapacity of local hotel operators to fill up to 10 000 posts that will become vacant over the coming years. Chastened by the prolonged episode of COVID-19-induced border closure; in search of a better work-life balance; and attracted by the higher pay package offered by international cruise companies, the local workforce - especially young people - is no longer interested in taking up available positions in the domestic tourism sector. Consequently, the government is being compelled to consider pressing demands on the part of local hotel operators to envisage the recruitment of foreign workers (Hilbert, 2022) even though the country has always prided itself on the uniqueness and authenticity of the Mauritian smile as the linchpin of its touristic offer. Paradoxically, the total number of foreign workers employed in Mauritius is greater than the total figure of unemployed Mauritian nationals, signalling a mismatch between the country's labour needs and the people's professional aspirations (Hilbert, 2020). Therein lies the need for international global competence for an inclusive world (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018).

The current times thus call for rescripting the decolonial discourse and taking on the challenge of developing a curriculum for the global citizen. Such a curriculum is informed but not held back by the historical (colonial) past. For SIDS, it provides an opening rather than reinforces insularity. This is by no means indicative of a capitulative stance towards the dominant (Western) powers but, instead, a strategic and pragmatic move that recognises the need and sees the opportunity to plough from available resources for the country's advancement. It bespeaks the conscious agentic move of the subaltern from the periphery towards the centre. No consideration of what a curriculum should include can take place without the learners and yet, ironically, they remain marginalised from the whole debate. Today's youth is no longer held back by the contours of their birthplace. A quick Google search provides an insight into the extent of youth exodus all over the world. Borders, that had long grown fuzzy with advancement in transport, have ceased to exist with the advent of new technologies, fast food and brands. The aspirations of the youth cannot therefore be quashed through the imposition of a narrow curriculum that limits the scope of learning to what is solely local and contextual. With knowledge now available at the click of a mouse, the emphasis in curriculum design should be on competencies, skills and critical thinking in order to develop future citizens who can display flexibility and resilience in an effervescent world; and who can exert critical thinking and are sound decision-makers (Acedo & Hughes, 2014).

Yet, the paradigmatic shift to a curriculum for global citizenship does not entail blanketing contextual and cultural specificities that causes identity erasure. Instead of the 'MacDonaldisation' of the curriculum, we argue for the creolisation of the curriculum, with hallmarks that go beyond mere accommodation and assimilation and that, instead, target hybridisation as an ongoing process. This takes us to the concept of rhizomatic identity that Glissant (1997) reappropriated from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1980) on schizoanalysis in order to discuss the multiplicity

of racial, ethnic, and cultural identities, as well as the complexity of never-ending creolisation processes. According to Glissant (1997, p. 11), the rhizomatic thought is the principle underpinning *"the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other".* With roots growing around other roots and sharing cultural bounds for the sprouting of new identities - often in unpredictable manners and places - the rhizome as a sturdy underground plant system that survives harsh seasons and terrains is an appropriate metaphor to depict modern-day curriculum development endeavours. These endeavours aim at enabling the emergence of agentic, resilient and cosmopolitanised 21st century learners who unilaterally embrace indigenous stimuli, without being impervious to exogenous influences. By drawing from surrounding elements as assets for his subsistence, this learner is prepared to live in what Glissant (1997) calls a 'Tout-Monde' in the title of his treatise. The 'Tout-Monde' precisely acknowledges and hails the differences and diversity present around us as characteristic and inescapable traits of our global world. As such, the curriculum for global citizenship acknowledges and valorises indigenous knowledges. Additionally, it recognises and addresses the shortcomings of the system.

Epilogue: The 'Bleu de Nîmes' allegory

As we reflect on the line of argument we pursued in relation to curriculum decolonisation in this chapter, an image inexorably resurfaces: that of the 'Bleu de Nîmes'. This 72-metre superyacht was chartered for almost $1 million by the Government of Mauritius at the beginning of 2022 for a special mission. Indeed, as part of Mauritius's long-standing diplomatic dispute with the UK over the ownership of the Chagos Archipelago (which it claims was unlawfully dismembered from its territory by the UK as a blackmailing deal in exchange for independence), the Mauritian government organised a much-talked-of expedition to the Chagos. Officially, the purpose was to carry out a scientific reef-mapping exercise, but the underlying political move

was apparent, especially following favourable international backing obtained from the UN General Assembly and the UN International Court of Justice. The political agenda was established when the delegation landed on one of the islands, hoisted the Mauritian flag there and sang the national anthem...

On the face of it, this does seem like a bold move by a small Indian Ocean island to end its decolonisation process from a major player from the Northern hemisphere. But is it really so? Two simple facts do the talking: i) The boat carrying the delegation had to be chartered from another country, as no vessel from Mauritius was available for such a long trip; ii) journalists on board were all from foreign media outlets (notably from the UK and France, the two former colonisers of the island, and from the USA - which is currently leasing one of the archipelago's islands from the UK to host a military base), as it was felt that local journalists would not be able to ensure adequate international coverage of the event.

The 'Bleu de Nîmes' allegory is telling. The aspiration for absolute colonial enfranchisement does not necessarily translate into an unconscious severance of (neo)colonial ties. Nations are compelled to act cautiously, bearing in mind the rippling effects of measures envisaged. The same observation applies to attempts at curriculum decolonisation. Curricular emancipation, while a desirable prospect, must be informed by contextual realities and a forward-looking vision for the country and its people. We thus posit that a creolised curriculum that enables glocal education empowers the future workforce to be part of the 'Tout-Monde'.

References

Acedo, C. & Hughes, C. (2014). Principles for learning and competences in the 21st-century curriculum *Prospects*, *44*, 503–525. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-014-9330-1

Allais, S. (2020). Skills for industrialisation in sub-Saharan African countries: Why is systemic reform of technical and vocational systems so persistently unsuccessful? *Journal of Vocational Education & Training*, 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2020.1782455

Anderson-Levitt, K.M. (2008). Globalization and curriculum. In F.M. Connelly (Ed..), *The Sage Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction* (pp. 349-368). Thousand Oaks: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412976572.n17

Bird, K.S. & Pitman, L. (2020). How diverse is your reading list? Exploring issues of representation and decolonisation in the UK. *Higher Education, 79*, 903-920. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-019-00446-9

Bhuyan, O.U. (2019. September 28). Bangladeshi workers in Mauritius increase fivefold in 14 years. *NEWAGE Bangladesh.* https://www.newagebd.net/article/85956/bangladeshi-workers-in-mauritius-increase-fivefold-in-14-years

Bray, M. (2016). Higher education in small states: Evolving patterns in the context of globalisation. *Island Studies Indian Ocean/Océan Indien, 3*(1), 6-9. Available at: https://web.edu.hku.hk/f/staff/376/Bray.Island%20Studies.pdf

Callikan, S. (2019. February 18). Tertiary education gratuity and the pyramid of exclusion. *Mauritius Times*. http://www.mauritiustimes.com/mt/tertiary-education-gratuity-and-the-pyramid-of-exclusion/

Central Statistics Office. (2011). *Housing and population census volume II: Demographic and fertility characteristics.* https://statsmauritius.govmu.org

Cheng, X. & Omoeva, C. (2014). *EPDC national learning assessments mapping project: Key findings.* https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/EPDC_NLAMP_report-v3.pdf

Choat (2021). Decolonising the political theory curriculum. *Politics, 41*(3), 404–420. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395720957543

Colony of Mauritius (1957). *The Education Ordinance*. Government printer. OCLC Number / Unique Identifier: 26821876

Crossley, M., Bray, M., Packer, S., Colin, M., Martin, M., Atchoaréna, D. & Bainton, D. (2009). *Education in the small states of the commonwealth. Towards and beyond global goals and targets. Paper for the 17th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (17CCEM),* Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 14 June 2009. https://doi.org/10.1080/00358530903371429

Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. (1980). *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. Brian Massumi. Continuum, 2004. Vol. 2 of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. 2 vols. 1972-1980. Trans. Of *Mille Plateaux*. Les Editions de Minuit. Available at: https://files.libcom.org/files/Anti-Oedipus.pdf

Deutschmann, M. & Zelime, J. (2014). Towards a framework for investigating language-in-education-policies in second language medium of instruction contexts – The case of the Seychelles. *Island Studies.* Special Issue: 3rd International Conference on SIDS, Sept 2014, Samoa, 68-77. Available at: https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1082442/FULLTEXT01.pdf

Deutschmann, M. & Zelime, J. (2022). Researching Kreol Seselwa and its role in education in the pursuit of educational equity in the Seychelles. In E.J. Erling, J. Clegg, C.M. Rubagumya & Reilly, C. (Eds.), *Multilingual Learning and Language Supportive Pedagogies in Sub-Saharan Africa* (pp 61-78). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003028383-4

Dillard, E.M. (2001). *Testing freedom: A history of the West African examinations council, 1952-1979.* [Unpublished doctoral thesis]. UCLA.

Ekoh, I. (2012). *High-stakes standardized testing in Nigeria and the erosion of a critical African worldview.* [Unpublished master's thesis]. University of Toronto.

Encontre, P. (1999). The vulnerability and resilience of small island developing states in the context of globalization. *Natural Resources Forum*, *23*, 261-270. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1477-8947.1999.tb00914.x

Fleisch, B., Gultig, J., Allais, S. & Maringe, F. (2019). *Background paper on secondary education in Africa: Curriculum reform, assessment and national qualifications frameworks.* University of the Witwatersrand. February 2019. https://doi.org/10.15868/socialsector.35774

Foondun, A.R. (2002). The issue of private tuition: An analysis of the practice in Mauritius and selected south-east asian countries. *International Review of Education*, *48*, 485–515. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021374811658

Glissant, E. (1997). *Traité du Tout-Monde – Poétique IV*. Gallimard. ISBN 9782070750382

Global Forum on Migration and Development (2018). *Bilateral Agreement on Circular Migration between Canada and Mauritius. Available at:* http://www.gfmd.org/pfp/ppd/10271

Groëme-Harmon, A. (2021, May 17). Le kreol morisien au school certificate: Plus besoin de Cambridge International. *L'express.mu.* Available at: https://www.lexpress.mu/article/393615/kreol-morisien-au-school-certificate-plus-besoin-cambridge-international

Hilbert, P. (2020, January 7). Travailleurs étrangers: la barre des 45 000 atteinte. *Defimedia.info.* Available at: https://defimedia.info/travailleurs-etrangers-la-barre-des-45-000-atteinte

Hilbert, P. (2022, September 11). Manque de main-d'œuvre dans l'hôtellerie : le gouvernement examine la possibilité d'autoriser des travailleurs étrangers. *Defimedia.info.* Available at: https://defimedia.info/manque-de-main-doeuvre-dans-lhotellerie-le-gouvernement-examine-la-possibilite-dautoriser-des-travailleurs-etrangers

Jeng-Jye,H., Chia-Yu, C. & Derwen, C. (2014). A review of curriculum study in Taiwan. In W.F. Pinar (Ed.), *International Handbook of Curriculum Research* (pp 493-501). London: Routledge. ISBN 9780415804301

Jugnauth, P. (2022, September 30) "La réforme de l'éducation répond aux intelligences multiples". *Le Mauricien.* https://www.lemauricien.com/actualites/societe/pravind-jugnauth-la-reforme-de-leducation-repond-aux-intelligences-multiples/516763/

Jules, T. (2012). Re-reading the anamorphosis of educational fragility, vulnerability, and strength in small states special. *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, *15*(1), 5-13. https://doi.org/10.52214/cice.v15i1.11479

Kassaye, W. (2014). Curriculum development and research in Ethopia. In W.F. Pinar (Ed.), *International Handbook of Curriculum Research* (2nd Ed.) (pp. 161-182). London: Routledge. ISBN 9780415804301

Kellaghan, T. & Greaney, V. (2003). *Monitoring Performance: Assessment and examinations in Africa. Report of the ADEA Biennial Meeting* – Grand Baie, Mauritius – December 3-6, 2003. Available at: https://clearinghouse.adeanet.org/en/monitoring-performance-assessment-and-examinations-africa

Kelly, A.V. (2009). *The curriculum: Theory and practice*. Sage. ISBN: 9781847872753

Kim, Y.C., Lee, D.S. & Joo, J.H. (2014). Curriculum studies as reconceptualization discourse: A tale of South Korea. In W.F. Pinar (Ed.), *International Handbook of Curriculum Research* (2nd Ed.), (pp. 299-314). London: Routledge. ISBN 9780415804301

Kitchen, H. (1962). *The educated African: A country-by country survey of educational development in Africa.* New York: Praeger. UNESCO Catalogue Number 0000151935

Levin, B. (2008). Curriculum policy and the politics of what should be learnt in schools. In M. Connelly (Ed). *The Sage Handbook of Curriculum and Instruction* (pp.7-24). Thousand Oaks: Sage. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412976572.n1

Le Grange, L., du Preez, P., Ramrathan, L. & Blignaut, S. (2020). Decolonising the university curriculum or decolonial-washing? A multiple case study. *Journal of Education* (University of KwaZulu-Natal), (80), 25-48. https://doi.org/10.17159/2520-9868/i80a02

Maile, S. (2021). Curriculum ecologies: Paradigmatic shifts in discourses of change in post-apartheid South Africa. In K.G. Fomunyam & S.B. Khoza (Eds.), *Curriculum Theory, Curriculum Theorising, and the Theoriser: The African Theorising Perspective* (pp. 148-176). Brill/Sense Publishers. . https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004447943

Maistry, S. (2021). Curriculum theorizing in South Africa as social justice project: Insights from decolonial theory. In K.G. Fomunyam & S.B. Khoza (Eds.), *Curriculum Theory, Curriculum Theorising and the Theoriser: The African Theorising Perspective* (pp. 133-147). Brill/Sense Publishers. . https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004447943

Mathisa, Y. & Sabar, N. (2014). Curriculum planning from the national to the glocal: The Israeli case. In W.F. Pinar (Ed.), *International Handbook of Curriculum Research* (pp. 253-269). London: Routledge. ISBN 9780415804301

Meo, G. (2005). 'Curriculum planning for all learners: Applying universal design for learning (UDL) to a high school reading comprehension program', *Preventing School Failure*, 52(2), 21–30. https://doi.org/10.3200/PSFL.52.2.21-30

Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources (2009). *Strategy Plan 2008–2020*. Available at: http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Mauritius/Mauritius_EHRSP_2008_2020.pdf.

Nadal, P. & Ankiah-Gangadeen, A. (2021). The study of Mauritian Kreol at school: Dynamics and lessons from the catholic primary education sector. In P. Choppy & A. Vel (Eds.), *Créoles: Enjeux éducatifs et culturels. Proceedings of the XVIth International Colloquium of Creole Studies*, from 29/10/18 to 02/11/18, University of Seychelles, (90-106). UniSey Press. Available at: https://unisey.ac.sc/wp-content/uploads/UniSey-Press_2021-Actes-du-XVIeme-colloque-international-des-etudes-creoles.pdf

Nadal, P., Ankiah-Gangadeen, A. & Kee Mew, E. (2017). Navigating between outward-looking socioeconomic aspirations and inward-looking international education drives for SIDS: Can Mauritius sail out of cross-currents? In T. Jules & P. Ressler, (Eds), *Is 'small' always small and 'big' always big? Re-reading educational policy and practice in small states* (pp. 195-216). Peter Lang. ISBN 9783631705971

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. (2018). *PISA. Preparing our Youth for an Inclusive and Sustainable World. The OECD Pisa Global Competence Framework.* Available at: https://www.oecd.org/education/Global-competency-for-an-inclusive-world.pdf

Omolewa, M. (1982). Educational assessments and its reform: The Nigerian experience. *International Journal of Educational Development, 2*(2), 117-126. https://doi.org/10.1016/0738-0593(82)90024-4

Omolewa, M. (2006). Educating the "Native": A study of the education adaptation strategy in British colonial Africa, 1910-1936. *The Journal of African American History, 91*(3), 267-287. https://doi.org/10.1086/JAAHv91n3p267

Pachet, J.A. & Seabra, F. (2014). Curriculum research in Portugal. In W.F. Pinar (Ed.), *International Handbook of Curriculum Research* (pp. 397-410). London: Routledge. ISBN 9780415804301

Purvis, M.-T. (2004). Seychelles in perspective – placing child development in context. *Seychelles Medical and Dental Journal,* 7, 46 – 51.

Rivet, A.D. (2016, April 8). CPE 2015: performances en hausse. *Defimedia.info.* Available at: https://defimedia.info/cpe-2015-performances-en-hausse

Senaratne, M. (2021, January 8). Blue Economy in 2021: Perspectives from Seychelles. *Observer Research Foundation.* Available at: https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/blue-economy-2021-perspectives-seychelles/

Tu'akoi, S., Vickers, M.H., Tairea, K., Aung. Y.Y.M., Herman, N., Ofanoa, M. & Bay, J.L. (2018). The significance of DOHaD for Small Island Developing States. *Journal of Developmental Origins of Health and Disease,* 9, 487–491. https://doi.org/10.1017/S2040174418000466

UNESCO (2014). *Education Strategy 2014–2021.* Available at: http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0023/002312/231288e.pdf.

United Nations (2005). *Report of the international meeting to review the implementation programme of action for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States*. Available at: https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/549467?ln=en

Woods, A.F., Dooley, K.T., Luke, A. & Exley, B.E. (2012). School leadership, literacy and social justice: The place of local school curriculum planning and reform. In I. Bogotch & C. Shields (Eds.), *International handbook of educational leadership and social (In)justice* (pp. 509–520). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-007-6555-9

Yuen Yi Lo, D.F. & Xuyan Q. (2021). Assessing content knowledge through L2: mediating role of language of testing on students' performance. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development.* https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2020.1854274

Zelime, J., Deutschmann, M. & Rijlaarsdam, G. (2018). The effect of the language of testing on second language learners' academic performance in social studies: The case of Kreol Seselwa and English in the Seychelles classrooms. *L1-Educational Studies in Language and Literature, 18*, 1–22. https://doi.org/10.17239/L1ESLL-2018.18.01.10