

**Unpacking Paradise: Geography
Education Narratives from the Seychelles**

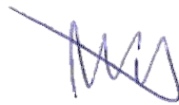
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'I, Indra Persaud, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.'

Signed:

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I confirm that the word length of the thesis (exclusive of bibliography and appendices) is 79,231

Abstract

The hybrid legacy of an English-based curriculum and socialist education principals, fused with contemporary aspirations to be a 'knowledge-based society', mean Seychelles' model of education presents a peculiar, paradoxical *mélange*. The small island nation is inextricably linked to England's far-reaching 'educational space', yet while this connection enhances the legitimacy of its educational achievements, local governance is compromised. To understand the nature and scope of this compromise, the forces influencing education in Seychelles are explored through one area of the curriculum: geography education.

The research draws on teachers' narratives to investigate the extent to which geography education is framed by a (neo)colonial geographical imagination. The narratives, co-constructed from stories of classroom practice, make meaning from the everyday and the 'taken-for-granted' lives of geography teachers in Seychelles. Close and trusted relationships had to be developed so teachers felt comfortable sharing their stories. Given the intimacies involved, an intriguing set of ethical and methodological challenges were encountered.

Through the linking of personal stories of geography curriculum making to public narratives of geography education, and to wider social, cultural and historical events, the intricacies of teaching geography in a small and relatively isolated professional community were revealed. The politics of language, culture and power created unease in geography classrooms, yet this disquiet did not resonate with teachers' proud sense of *Kreolité*. Also, while some teachers felt marginalized from geography curriculum conversations, others were keen to engage in 'subversive' dialogue in order to challenge the curriculum status quo and develop a greater sense of professional self-worth.

As an example of the use of storytelling to support teachers' professional development, the inquiry also provides an innovative contribution to understanding the way powerful discourses and the dialectic realities of globalisation not only shape geography teachers lives, but also destabilise vulnerable SIDS' education systems.

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Acronyms/Abbreviations

ALDEC	Adult Learning and Distance Education Centre
BEd	Bachelor of Education
CCATS	Centre for Curriculum, Assessment and Teacher Support
CDS	Curriculum Development Section
CIE	Cambridge International Examinations
IGCSE	International General Certificate of Secondary Education
IOT	Indian Ocean Tuna (Canning Factory)
MoE	Ministry of Education
MTS	Medium Term Strategy
NC	National Curriculum
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NIE	National Institute of Education
NIP	National Institute of Pedagogy
NYS	National Youth Service
PGCE	Post-Graduate Certificate of Education
Seybrew	Seychelles Breweries Ltd
SoE	School of Education, UniSey
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SITE	Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education
SPPF	Seychelles People's Progressive Front
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UCLES	University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation
UniSey	University of Seychelles

Chapter One Introduction

1.1 An 'autobiography of the question'

Leaving Sussex University in 1992 with a Geography degree and a PGCE in Secondary Geography, I was the product of 20 years in the English education system. The PGCE year at Sussex had been dominated by talk of the new National Curriculum (NC) and my geography education lecturer, Tony Binns, had spent the whole PGCE year closely involved in national level discussions about the NC for Geography. As PGCE students we had been asked to count the number of geography attainment targets and statements of attainment and I was able to witness the horror in the eyes of teachers I observed during school placements when there was any mention of the word National Curriculum for Geography. Even as a teacher trainee during 1991-1992 I sensed that most teachers were resigned to the fact that the new curriculum was about to turn their geography departments upside down.

I decided to leave the UK immediately after my PGCE year. I did not relish the prospect of joining a department in the throes of curriculum upheaval, forced into the 'straightjacket' of statutory orders. My mother, a teacher of more than 20 years at the time, was scathing about the government's meddling in education. Her rebelliousness meant that she had to survive on the periphery of school politics, refusing to engage in the discourses of a national curriculum. I suppose I took my cue from her and decided to steer clear too. I took the decision to emigrate to Seychelles, a country I had never heard of prior to joining Sussex University, in order to teach geography. I was offered an expatriate contract to teach geography in the state school system.

The contrast between teaching at Seaford Head School in East Sussex (during teaching practice) and *Lekol*¹ *Bordmer* (Seaside School) on Mahe, Seychelles could not have been greater. Despite being part of a 'British' system, in which the medium of instruction was supposed to be English and the curriculum supposed to be based on the Cambridge Ordinary ('O') level syllabus, *Lekol Bordmer* was a world away from anything I had expected. Corporal punishment

¹ *Lekol* is the *Kreol* word for school

was still being practised, despite an official ban, *Kreol* was spoken in most classrooms and the geography curriculum was, to be generous, 'sketchy'.

While on the PGCE I was drilled on the importance of attainment targets, curriculum objectives and lesson planning. In Seychelles the main concern was making sure the students remained in a classroom that was usually about 30°C, with no fan, a few ancient books, some chalk and a tired blackboard. Sister Jane, the Irish, Christian-missionary Headteacher, would threaten to hit the children if they did not behave and I reluctantly played along, aware of my newcomer status, not wanting to upset the status quo. I tried to focus on the geography, to fill in the curriculum gaps and update or re-conceptualise the curriculum where possible. In trying to escape the NC straightjacket of 1992 England, I found myself in an alternative nightmare.

The realisation that I had the power to re-make the geography curriculum single-handedly (being the only geography teacher at *Lekol Bordmer*) was both daunting and liberating. The power gave me an added sense of importance while at the same time forced me to think about the curriculum choices I was making. This sense of curriculum power and responsibility has been re-asserted throughout my teaching career. At the American Cooperative School of Tunis (ACST) in Tunisia, for example, I was given free rein to single-handedly re-design the whole middle school geography curriculum. In addition, again single-handedly, I had the power to design both day and residential fieldwork activities for geography students, across the whole secondary age-range, including IB level.

Re-designing the middle school geography curriculum at ACST was particularly challenging. American schools tend to teach geography using a regional approach, based on the National Geography Standards (GENIP, 1994). Most American geography textbooks are designed to reflect this approach. Being a product of the English geography education system, my approach to teaching geography was systematic, focusing on themes and crosscutting issues. I attempted to combine both regional and systematic approaches in the re-design of the curriculum, and had to supplement American core textbooks with some standard English ones. The process was

empowering. I was able to re-vision the curriculum and explain my vision to both the parents and students of ACST.

I associate teaching geography in England (I've taught in state secondary schools in North London and Diss, Norfolk) with being part of a wider professional team of geography teachers, who speak the same language and play the same game. The language is dominated by NC jargon and the game driven by formal assessment and school league tables and yet, despite this, the sense of being part of a group of geography teachers engaged in curriculum conversations was invigorating. The energy gained from being part of an engaged profession (through membership of the Geographical Association, enrolment on the Institute of Education's master's programme and conversations with the online geography teaching community on twitter) was immeasurable.

So why return to Seychelles? Why explore the narratives of Seychellois geography teachers? On one level the motive was simple. I wanted to find out how Seychellois enact the geography curriculum. I wanted to hear their stories about teaching geography, on a small island in the Indian Ocean. But at a deeper level, my motives were more complicated. I was interested in the forces that combined to shape how the geography curriculum is both made and enacted. What forces created the unique set of circumstances that worked to empower and/or disempower geography teachers in Seychelles? As a precursor to my exploration of these forces, I offer an examination of some of the powerful forces that have shaped my own geography teaching.

My passion for geography developed very young. From the moment of realisation that my father referred to Guyana as 'home', I was intrigued by the fact that my home was not his home. Having been born and raised in London, Camden Town was the only home I knew. My father, however, was not a Londoner, not British but Indo-Guyanese. This meant that I had to spend considerable time explaining to people why I looked 'Indian' but had never been to India and didn't speak 'Indian'. I often gave up explaining to people where Guyana was because most people lost interest after you pointed out that it was not Ghana in Africa but Guyana in South America. I could sense

that my explanations were too long-winded for most casual conversations. And yet, within me, I became fascinated with a country that formed such a large part of my heritage but to which I had never been. Geography helped me establish a relationship with myself.

Learning about Guyana through books was only a small part of my early geographical education. Being constantly asked where I was from forced me to face the reality that people are curious about identity and difference and that they will often ask naive questions exposing an overwhelming lack of geographical knowledge. I often felt offended that people confused Guyana with Ghana, and sometimes felt obliged to give them a quick geography lesson about where, in South America, Guyana could be found. This geography lesson would include the naming of the three 'Guianas' leading to a quick history lesson on British, French and Dutch colonialism. So much history and geography wrapped up in skin colour! Geography was my saving grace. Through geography I was able to explain to people why I looked 'Indian' but had never set foot on Indian soil. I recounted the story of my ancestors who had been shipped from India to work as indentured labours on the sugar plantations of Guyana.

My inherent geography, so publicly on display, served as a catalyst to becoming a geography teacher. I knew the importance of being able to describe location and place, origin and migration. I knew how important it was to get it right; to make sure people didn't feel offended by geographical ignorance. I knew the importance of being able to explain notions of identity, belonging and cultural diversity. This geographical mission led me to Sussex University, to study Geography in the School of African and Asian Studies, to meet Tony Binns and to do the PGCE course. Equipped with the pedagogical skills that the PGCE course offered, I entered the geography classroom certain in the knowledge that geography was the best subject to help students understand their place in the world.

As described thus far, the forces shaping my geography teaching are essentially personal. The additional influences of mentors, colleagues and geography curriculum experts have helped to fine-tune my teaching, as have

the constant demands of government, parents and students. These combined forces, sometimes operating within a distinctly English context and at other times within American, Tunisian, South African or Seychellois contexts, have produced the unique teacher I am today. My experience of different types of geography education has revealed certain commonalities. Exploring these commonalities, or the ties that pull different geography education narratives together, is part of the purpose of this study. The main purpose of this study, however, is to find out what shapes geography education in Seychelles.

1.2 Research themes and focus

1.2.1 Making and Enacting the Geography Curriculum

Geography teachers must not only juggle the demands of their subject discipline, their students and their school but also the demands of the local community, the wider education system and their nation state. These demanding relationships are part of the complex role teachers perform as they enact the geography curriculum. In order to explore these relationships, in a Seychellois context, this research explores how geography teachers negotiate their subject (curriculum content, pedagogy and links to the wider academic community); converse with their students; conform to national educational demands (assessment structures, education policies, professional expectations); negotiate broader societal demands (from parents, employers, government, community groups, the media etc.), while also attempting to collaborate with other teachers through professional communities of practice.

The processes of making and enacting the curriculum are notoriously difficult. Distinct from curriculum planning (Graves, 1979) or curriculum development (Rawling, 2007), curriculum making involves the mobilisation of three forces: the subject, the student and the teacher (Lambert and Morgan, 2010:50 and figure 1, below). For teachers, who not only help make the curriculum but also play the pivotal role of transferring it to the classroom, these processes are especially problematic. Engagement in curriculum negotiation lies at the heart of the complex role that teachers perform (Apple, 1979, Giroux, 1992, Sachs, 2003, Hargreaves, 2012). The level and tempo of teacher engagement is

critical if negotiations are to be meaningful. Engaged and empowered teachers are more able to take part in curriculum conversations and can become positive agents of educational change. If teachers are excluded or marginalised from curriculum conversations this can, in effect, undermine the very purpose of the curriculum itself (Friere, 1970, Giroux, 1992, Hargreaves, 2003 & 2012).

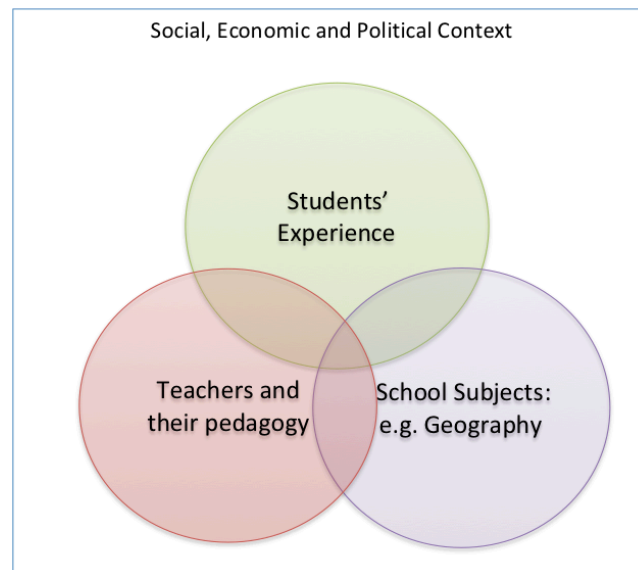


Figure 1 Curriculum Making: balancing competing priorities

(Figure 1 is a simplified version of the three pillars of curriculum making (Lambert & Morgan, 2010:50) framed by Schwab's (1978) milieu - social, economic and political context)

Geography teachers are required to harness the power of their subject knowledge and their professional authority to engage in curriculum conversations and to create meaningful learning experiences for their students. The strength of teachers' professional authority and subject knowledge can be understood using Foucault's notion of the 'power-knowledge dialectic' (Foucault, 1980, Scott, 2008:55). Empowered teachers shape subject knowledge through their role as curriculum-makers. Employing their authoritative pedagogical skill teachers then enact this subject knowledge in the classroom. Meaningful and engaging classroom experiences then re-empower teachers. If teachers are marginalised from the knowledge (curriculum)-making process, they are removed from the heart of the educational 'power-knowledge' dialectic.

Curriculum making is the art of balancing three 'pillars'; student experience; pedagogy; and the subject, to produce a curriculum that is coherent and meaningful (Lambert & Morgan, 2010:50 and figure 1, above). Successful curriculum making harmonizes the trialectic 'energy' of subject, teacher and student and holds them in balance (Hart, 2001; Lambert & Morgan, 2010). If one source of curriculum energy overwhelms the others, coherence is threatened. Alternatively, if one or two sources are de-energised the subsequent lack of curriculum harmony can become problematic. Establishing a sense of curriculum balance is, therefore, critical for any teacher, school or education system.

The conflicting forces of curriculum making are not static. Subject specialists, for example, proffer that their subject matter is not fixed. The content of the geography curriculum is under constant review and often shifts to reflect the priorities of those who hold sway within the discipline. The state, responsible for national curricula as well as school management and evaluation structures, can also realign their educational priorities. Students, who breathe life into the curriculum, ultimately decide whether to embrace, challenge or reject all or parts of it. Parents, employers and the wider community, who each hold large stakes in the education of young people, also hold diverse and often conflicted views about what should be in the curriculum and how it should be taught. Teachers, who must enact the curriculum in the classroom, are responsible for navigating this complex set of curriculum demands.

1.2.2 Geography Education De-centred

Any exploration of the intersections and conflicts between the major forces that shape geography education first requires a de-centring of both geography and education. A 'outward-looking', de-centred approach places geography education within wider social, political and economic debates and problematizes the way education reinforces or challenges the social, political and economic processes within which it is embedded (Robertson, 2005, Thiem, 2009). An understanding of the wider theoretical debates about knowledge and society; development and democracy; nation building and

globalisation etc. is, therefore, necessary (Burbules & Torres, 2000; Apple, 2000; Thiem, 2009:155). Each of these debates makes reference to education as being a potential force for both transformation and reproduction of the status quo, pointing to the complex role education plays in wider discourse (Suarez-Orozco & Qin-Hilliard, 2004; Robertson, 2005). It is unsurprising, therefore, that it is not only governments, teachers, young people, parents and employers who have a stake in education, but also educational publishers, examination boards, nongovernmental organizations, the media, educationalists and even religious leaders (Spring, 2009:206).

The wider debates that form the social, economic and political context within which curriculum making and enactment takes place need to be considered. Naturally, debates revolve around ideas or phenomena that are highly contested, thus making the role that education plays within each debate especially unclear. For example, one of the most powerful phenomena to be experienced in small island states like Seychelles is that of globalisation. From colonial dependency to the more contemporary experiences of cultural homogenization, small island states are inherently more vulnerable to the forces of globalisation. These forces, when applied in education, can result in the appropriation of educational 'space' by more powerful, global educational agencies (Robertson and Dale, 2006). Robertson (2005) contends that the array of actors involved in education has been radically altered by globalisation. As power shifts to supranational agencies, nation states may no longer play the dominant role in shaping their national educational priorities and practices. The issue of educational power transfer from national to global structures, however, is not so straightforward. In many small ex-colonial states, for example, national education systems did not exist prior to colonial rule and as such, educational space in many small states has always been 'inherently international' (Crossley, Bray & Packer, 2011:48).

Given the internationalism of many small states, another debate of fundamental significance for education is that of 'nation-building' and self-determination. Bray & Adam (2001) explore the tensions experienced by small sovereign states in trying to balance the desire for international educational legitimacy with the need for national self-determination and identity. While

nation-based educational policies, curricula, assessment and certification are more easily developed and administered in large, developed countries, the limited pool of specialist expertise; lack of economies of scale; insufficient human and financial resources for research; and highly personalized, incestuous bureaucratic structures, represent serious constraints for small developing states (Bray & Adam, 2001). Education systems in small countries, therefore, when weighing their limited capacity for self-determination with the understandable desire for international educational credibility and portability of qualifications, are often compelled to import policies, curricula, certification etc. These imports often remain unmediated and unreconstructed for national or local contexts (Crossley et al., 2011:5).

The overriding desire for international legitimacy and credential portability means that many small nations depend on the services of international providers of assessment and certification. The decisions that these service providers make with regard to curricula and assessment can often determine small states' national educational priorities. At national levels, primary and secondary institutions and practices are often geared to the teaching and assessment of international high school curricula (e.g. Cambridge 'O' levels/IGCSEs/'A' levels). This is not only problematic in terms of the lack of curriculum ownership and engagement but also in terms of the significant backwash effects felt at lower-levels of the education system (Lowe, 1999; Crossley et al., 2001; Bray & Adam, 2001). Western examination boards (in England, France etc.) have always been key players in shaping the education systems in colonial countries (Bray & Adam, 2001:233). While many small nations worked hard after independence to develop national or regional examination bodies (e.g. the Caribbean Examinations Council and the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment) a significant number of ex-colonial small states continued to rely on external providers, such as the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) syndicate for portable, internationally accredited qualifications (Crossley et al., 2011:31).

While portability of credentials is an important factor for small states that may only offer a limited range of local higher education opportunities, the issue of curriculum ownership is equally important. Governance and ownership of the

curriculum is closely tied to questions of national self-determination and cultural identity. The post-colonial struggle for political, economic and cultural sovereignty is highly emotive for small states disadvantaged by their inherent physical and human vulnerabilities. The heightened sense of vulnerability experienced by most small states deepens their desire for a sense of cultural and political identity. After gaining independence many indigenous peoples and communities were able to gain wider access to education. Many curricula were revised to be more inclusive of the histories and geographies of indigenous and first nation peoples. For Seychelles and certain other post-colonial small islands (e.g. Mauritius, Martinique), the end of colonial rule witnessed the creation of new nations where no single community or group of people could lay claim to 'first' nation status since no indigenous population pre-dated the colonial era. Cultural identity in many of these new nations was based on some form of 'créolité'. Créolité is a term that tries to encapsulate the complexities of multiple or hybrid identities (Hall et al., 1996:623; Sharp, 2009:98-99). In Seychelles, the term *Kreol* is used not only to describe the people and their culture but also their language.

Building a national identity on the basis of a creole culture is complex. Créolité represents the constant making and re-making of culture in response to diverse cultural influences. The term is highly ambiguous, parodying the nature of créolité itself. The process of creolization involves the crossing and merging of cultural boundaries (Pieterse, 2001, Giroux, 2005). Creolization feeds on cultural diversity and fluidity and typifies the postmodern (postcolonial) rejection of fixed, distinct boundaries (Marsh, 2009:274). The transient nature of créolité not only makes it impossible to define but also vulnerable to cultural imperialism by more dominant cultural forces. Westernisation, Americanisation, Islamisation or the global spread of the English language, for example, represent some of the powerful forces that threaten the heterogeneity of Creole culture. From an educational perspective, the adoption of international curriculum standards and the growth of English medium schools, reveal a trend toward a more homogeneous 'world education culture' (Spring, 2009). This world culture prioritizes uniformity of educational policy, structure, curriculum and assessment standards, and as such, poses enormous threats to indigenous, local and national education cultures.

World education culture employs the principles of structural and procedural uniformity, universal access to education and credential access to the global economy (Spring, 2009). At national levels, education systems adopt the principles of world education culture in order to produce workers for the global economy. These workers are able to access the global 'knowledge economy' and adapt to the shifting demands of global capitalism. A global hierarchy of portable educational credentials defines workers' mobility, with those earning more portable credentials enjoying the rewards of increased global mobility. For small states that are inherently international (Crossley et al., 2011), the desire for global mobility can be one of the main driving forces of national education systems. The prioritizing of international mobility means educational emphasis is placed on international curricula and high-stakes international exams (Bray & Adam, 2001, Crossley et al., 2011). While the advantages of conforming to the dominant education culture are obvious, the risks in doing so also need to be examined. Small states may experience a loss of indigenous, local educational culture, rooted in local languages and customs (Rohlehr, 2011). This loss can then threaten the sense of local and national cultural identity (UNESCO, 2011).

1.2.3 Geography Education Re-centred

Geography education plays an important role in helping students form personal, community, national and global identities. However, both the purpose and practice of building multi-layered identities are highly contested. Not only does this mean that the teaching of geography can be very challenging, it also means that geography curriculum making is highly contentious. Teachers, when making or re-making the curriculum, fuse their own energies with those of the subject and their students. Building the means for teachers to play a more active role in curriculum making is not easy, especially in the context of small states. Teachers need to feel empowered, with both the confidence and capacity to balance the competing forces of curriculum making and create meaningful curriculum experiences. Teachers take ownership of the geography curriculum by drawing on their personal and collective geographical imaginations. Both Hargreaves (2003) and Sachs (2003) advocate for teachers

to be given opportunities to 'tap into' their imaginations and to reflect critically on their roles as educators in complex and rapidly changing societies. Through self and shared narratives, teachers are able to share their experiences and build professional and personal self-worth (Sachs, 2003:132).

The sharing of geography teachers' narratives offers a platform on which to build a collective sense of purpose and professional status. For Seychellois geography teachers, the sharing of stories also helps to uncover some of the personal, intrinsic and extrinsic forces that shape geography education in Seychelles. For a small island state trying to negotiate the dialectic realities of globalisation, the geopolitics of geography education present complex challenges. For example, despite its location in the Indian Ocean, Seychelles still remains part of Europe's far-reaching supranational 'educational space'. Both English and French based curricula and assessment form part of Seychelles' national education system and for the whole education sector (including further and higher education) the main medium of instruction is English. While this increases the international legitimacy of Seychelles' education, the country's sense of educational ownership and governance is undermined. As Thiem (2009) reiterates, one of the main problems, for any country, is to maintain its education system's coherence and cohesion in the face of supranational demands.

1.3 Research Significance

Existing research on geography education in Seychelles is very limited (see Felix, 2012, unpublished doctoral thesis on the comparative acquisition of map skills among secondary school students in Seychelles and India). Other doctoral research on Seychelles education explores school improvement (Purvis, 2007), teacher induction (Marie, 2012), mathematics education (Valentin, 2011), and student life (Leste, 1994). This study aims to examine the forces that combine to shape geography education in Seychelles by drawing on teachers' personal and collective geographical imaginations and experiences. Elbaz (1991, in Brooks, 2006:355) argues that teachers prefer to tell stories of their teaching. Cochran-Smith & Lytle, (1993) and Jalongo,

Isenberg and Gloria (1995) further claim that enabling teachers to share their narratives 'encourages them to value their knowledge about teaching and to further reflect and develop deeper understandings stemming from their experience' (Brooks, 2006:355). Influenced by these sentiments and the work of Brooks (2007), this inquiry foregrounds the narratives of geography education in Seychelles.

Rather than being purely theory seeking or theory generating (Bassey, 1999 in Brooks, 2007:94), the study is illuminative in nature, as it attempts to reveal how far geography teachers feel able to engage in and influence geography curriculum conversations. This is significant because the research helps to uncover, through the use of narrative, some of the complexities and paradoxes of teaching geography in an intimate and marginalised environment. In this regard, the research represents a postcolonial attempt to 'speak back to the centre' (Gregory, 2009:562) through the re-telling of more diverse geography education stories. Furthermore, the research contributes to a broader understanding of how the sharing of teacher narratives may be used as an instrument for empowering communities of educational practice. Finally, beyond the context of teachers and geography education, the study provides an important example of the way national education systems can be both resilient and vulnerable to the forces of the global economy.

Chapter Two Review of the Research Context

This chapter first provides an overview of Seychelles' educational landscape, with a focus on geography education. The complexities of geography curriculum making and enactment are then critically reviewed with special attention paid to the dialectic of teachers' power-knowledge. Third, a review of the broader educational and societal concepts and ideas that help frame geography education is presented. The chapter concludes by outlining the research questions.

2.1 Seychelles Geography Education

2.1.1 Education in Small Island Developing States

In Small Island Developing States (SIDS) policymakers and practitioners can easily be overwhelmed by their multiple, polyvalent roles. Given their small numbers the capacity to develop specialist expertise and professional confidence is seriously limited (Crossley et al., 2011:5-6). Bray & Adam (2001) have also highlighted the problems faced by small states, like Seychelles, where 'home-grown' educational policies, curricula, assessment and certification are not only constrained by the limited pool of specialist expertise, but also by a lack of economies of scale, insufficient financial resources for research, and highly personalized bureaucratic structures. The adoption of external policies, curricula and assessment help to address these constraints and also offer a way to mitigate the risks of nepotism and favouritism commonly experienced in small societies.

Curricula and assessment designed by international examination boards can, however, effectively determine educational priorities in small states, where teaching and assessment is geared towards external examinations. The Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) syndicate is typical of such exam boards, and is an important lever in shaping national education systems in many SIDS (Bray & Adam, 2001:233). While the small island states of the Caribbean have managed to successfully developed their own examination

body (the Caribbean Examinations Council) and certain South Pacific small island states are now members of the South Pacific Board for Educational Assessment (SPBEA), many SIDS still rely heavily on international examination providers (Crossley et al., 2011:31).

Reliance on Cambridge 'O' level, IGCSE and 'A' level assessment is not only problematic for SIDS from a curriculum ownership and engagement perspective, but also because of the significant backwash effects that are felt lower down their education systems (Lowe, 1999; Crossley and Holmes, 2001; Bray & Adam, 2001). Despite these problems the desire for portable, internationally accredited qualifications remains a key factor in many small states (Crossley et al., 2011:31). By subscribing to the credentialist role external examinations offer, small states concede their limited capacity to challenge the curriculum structure or content of imported exam specifications. As Crossley et al. (2011:5) contend, imported curricula often go unmediated and unreconstructed for small state or SIDS contexts. Purvis (2004) reiterates the challenges faced by SIDS in the context of Seychelles' education and concedes that 'economies of scale remain an important factor' (p.50), with recurrent staff shortages at teaching, curriculum development and management levels.

2.1.2 Education in Seychelles

Seizing power in a coup d'état in 1977, the Seychelles People's Progressive Front (SPPF) launched a radical project of post-colonial social transformation (Shillington, 2009) – see Appendix 1 for a timeline of key events affecting Seychelles education system. Just a year after gaining independence from Britain in 1976, the SPPF, lead by France Albert Rene, introduced the ideology of one-party socialism to Seychelles. Part of this ideology pushed for greater economic self-sufficiency through import substitution policies and for tight, central control of capital, social welfare and national resources. While this radical move to socialism took place during the Cold War era, SPPF publicly declared their 'non-aligned' status, in attempts to reassure both East and West that they were not taking sides (Shillington, 2009:127). The socialist project was clear, maintain political and economic independence, ensure national

security and maintain social unity. As part of the project free schooling for all children between 5-14 years old was made compulsory and a free national health service was introduced. Figure 2, below, shows the evolving structure of the education system prior to independence, after SPPF restructuring, and subsequent changes.

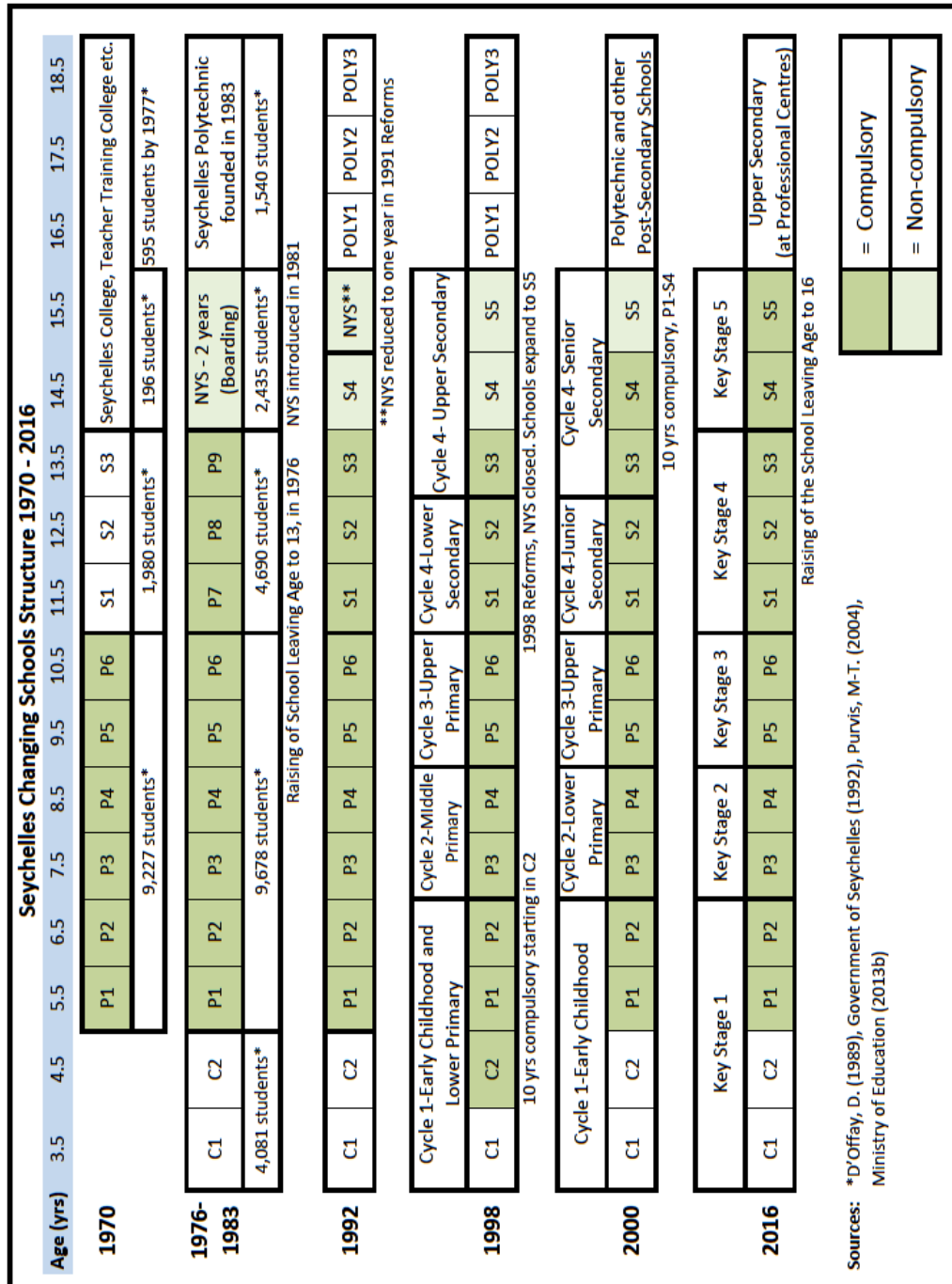


Figure 2 Seychelles' Changing School Structure, 1970-2016

Prior to independence, the education system, for Seychellois children older than 11 years, consisted only of private schools and a limited number of parish schools. The provision for primary schooling depended largely on the Catholic and Anglican churches. By making school compulsory for all children between the ages of 5 - 14 and nationalizing all privately run educational institutions, the SPPF government aimed at making the system more equal. To provide a standardized system for all children, a new district zoning system was introduced and schools were built to ensure each district could meet the needs of their local school population. The school building and renovation project required substantial investment, so combined with international financial assistance from the Chinese Government and the African Development Bank, the government dedicated between 11-14% of its annual budget during the 1980s, to education (Government of Seychelles, 1992, Shillington, 2009:157, Purvis, 2004:46). These generous annual budget allocations were not only spent on building educational infrastructure, but also on developing new curriculum materials and training new teachers.

D'Offay (1989) detailed how the numbers of lower secondary school children more than doubled, from around 1,980 children aged 11-14 years in school in 1970, to around 4,690 students in 1985. In addition to this growth, a radical new institution was introduced in 1981, for all 14-16 years olds: the National Youth Service. Once established, more than 1,000 students per year group were enrolled on the 2-year residential programme. The NYS was set up so children, once they had completed 9 years compulsory education, could 'receive not only formal education...but begin to play an active part in the life of their society' (Government of Seychelles, 1987). As the Government proclaimed, children attending the NYS:

'...learn to contribute in the production of their daily needs and in this way practise the national goal of self-reliance. They learn to care for themselves and for their comrades. They participate in projects for the improvement of their village as well as helping in community projects outside the Youth Villages. The students should develop into a new type of person who will be the seeds of the new society and who possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes that will enable them to work for the continuing

improvement of the society. It is for these reasons that it is called a Service and not just a school'.

(Government of Seychelles, 1987)

Not content with expanding secondary education, the new government also embarked on an ambitious post-secondary educational project; the creation of the Seychelles Polytechnic. While the NYS offered an education up to Cambridge 'O' level, most students were not able to complete these at NYS. The Polytechnic, established in 1983, provided students an opportunity to upgrade their academic achievements after leaving NYS. It offered both Cambridge 'O' level and 'A' level courses as well as vocational courses in the fields of; Agriculture, Art & Design, Business, Construction, Education and Community, Engineering, Health, Hotel and Tourism, Maritime, and Media (Ministry of Education, no date).

The Polytechnic represented a third stage of educational structuring, following the expansion of the secondary system and the creation of NYS. In addition to these radical changes, the socialist government introduced universal provision of free school meals for crèche and primary children, and, through a Creolisation Policy, the use of *Kreol* as the medium of instruction in the first year of primary school. *Kreol*, prior to independence, had not been formally recognised as either a medium of instruction or an official language, despite being spoken on the islands for over 200 years (Shillington, 2009:170). The government, with UNESCO support, commissioned a small group of Seychellois to develop an orthography (a standardized system of spelling) for *Kreol* so that it could be used as an official language in the education system.

While the Creolisation policy initially lacked wider local support, beyond that of the Ministry of Education (Shillington, 2009:173), the formal use of *Kreol*, both in written form (newspapers etc.) and during official functions, is now embedded within Seychellois society. As Shillington explains:

'...the government's Creolisation policy has paid off....respect now given to the language. It has allowed Kreol to enter the mainstream of Seychellois life. It is no longer just the language of the poor. ...Orally, Kreol is the national

language. As such, it has played an important part in the creation of a single Seychellois identity, where people are no longer defined primarily in terms of race, ancestry and language.'

(Shillington, 2009:173)

SPPF's moves to build a post-colonial national identity, based on the principles of equality and unity, can be understood as part of their populist rejection of colonial rule. As Shillington (2009:154) recounts, 'the inequalities of post-slavery society had penetrated deep into the culture and minds of all classes of Seychellois society...thus there was no single concept of a Seychellois identity'. McAteer (2008:293) also describes the feelings of the time by quoting President Rene as saying; 'dependent on the (British) Government, on the English, on the Church and on their employers (the Seychellois people) thought nothing could change their lives...they had become a people without a soul'. Widespread apprehension, however, among the white middle-class and land-owning elite meant that the socialist, one-party state was constantly criticised for being too radical and undemocratic. Under relentless pressure, both from within the country and from the international community, the SPPF eventually agreed to embrace multi-party democracy (Shillington, 2009:207). A new constitution was written and after two referenda, it was adopted in June 1993, paving the way for democratic elections in July of the same year. The main opposition presidential candidate, Mr Mancham, 'campaigning on a promise to abolish the NYS, to end Kreol in schools, to provide support for private schooling and to make tourism the main industry of the country' (Shillington, 2009:215-6).

The SPPF retained power, winning 59.5% of the presidential vote. The new, democratically elected government introduced a new flag, a new national anthem and slowly set about liberalising the economy. Post Cold War, and in an age of free-market globalisation, the Seychelles moved towards the part-privatisation of the housing sector and the privatisation of most parastatal organisations (such as Seychelles Breweries, the tuna canning factory and numerous industrial enterprises). Many international hotel corporations were leased land, in prime locations, for the creation of five-star holiday resorts and the government publicly announced its intention to build a third pillar of the

economy (after tourism and fisheries) based on international financial and off-shore services (Shillington, 2009:227). Despite these rapid structural adjustments to the economy, the education and health systems remained free for all. Investment in education remained healthy and with the reforms of 1998/1999, the controversial NYS experiment finally ended. The expanding secondary school system, based on district level provision, absorbed the NYS students and each school offered a limited range of Cambridge O' level and IGCSEs (Purvis, 2004).

The 1998/1999 educational reforms also created the National Institute of Education (NIE), for the purposes of raising the profile of the teaching profession, improving the quality of both pre- and in-service teacher training programmes and developing a national curriculum for schools. As Purvis (2004:48) explains, the convergence of teacher training and curriculum development was intended to 'optimise the use of the system's most experienced education professionals and to bring about a better integration of curriculum innovations and action-research into teacher training'. The quantity and quality of the teaching force is a constant concern for Seychelles. The NIE was part of the government's attempt to attract more Seychellois to the teaching profession and upgrade the qualifications of existing teachers. Due to the rapid rise in pupil enrolment during the 1980s, Seychelles had been forced to recruit a substantial number of teachers from overseas. D'Offay (1989:591) cites that 50% of post-primary teachers, at the time, came from outside Seychelles, while an interview with the then Minister for Education, James Michel (1988) revealed that a third of the total teaching force were expatriate. The Minister for Education, now the President of Seychelles, went on to say that,

'...the lack of trained Seychellois teachers is the result of the past elitist system of education when only a few young people per year could attend university.....currently 60 Seychellois are on training overseas, including the special B.Ed. Scheme at Sussex University ...and we are exploring linkages with an Australian university to train primary teachers'.

(Minister for Education, 1988)

According to figures published as part of the 1993-1996 Education Policy Paper (Ministry of Education, 1993), 24% of Primary teachers, and 40% of Secondary teachers were not qualified for their post in 1992, with the system relying on an expatriate body at secondary (24%), NYS (41%) and Polytechnic (44%) levels. By 2003 the situation had improved, but still around 20% of the total teaching body remained untrained or had only the most basic level of training, especially at primary level (Purvis, 2004; see Table 1, below).

Table 1 Teacher Qualifications (2003)

Teacher Qualifications 2003					
Qualifications	Crèche	Primary	Secondary	Post-Secondary	Total
Graduate + teaching qualification	1	18	229	74	322
Graduate - no teaching qualification	0	2	12	19	33
Overseas Diploma	3	14	61	31	109
Diploma Part 2	1	44	153	18	216
Diploma Part 1	24	211	16	31	282
Education Certificate - 4 years	5	10	4	21	40
Education Certificate - 3 years	33	85	5	6	129
Education Certificate - 2 years	32	95	21	9	157
Education Certificate - 1 year	40	48	9	0	97
Uncertified	42	139	31	11	223
Honorary Certificate	0	1	7	0	8
Total	181	667	548	220	1616
Note: includes all state and private schools					

Source: Purvis, 2004

Purvis (2004:47) went on to say that whilst 'almost all primary school teachers are Seychellois...11% of teachers (in secondary and post-secondary institutions) were expatriates originating mainly from Sri Lanka, India, and Kenya. This created a degree of instability in staffing...alongside differences in teacher expectations'. She added that,

'...the sustained reliance on expatriate staff has been a characteristic of the education system for the past two decades. In spite of several efforts to encourage more young people to join the teaching profession, teacher training remains an unpopular option with many school leavers, especially those with good all round profiles. The current intake into teacher training still remains too low to cover the attrition rates at all levels'.

(Purvis, 2004: 49)

In light of on-going structural reform and limited institutional capacity, the government's nation-building educational project has been a challenge. While the Creolisation policy was eventually embraced by wider society, deeper educational tensions remain. The constant, deep-rooted desire for external legitimacy meant that the secondary system was shaped almost entirely by an inherited, British curriculum model of education linked to the Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) board. Purvis (2004) argued that the inherited model 'strongly influenced the development of the (Seychelles) comprehensive system, resulting in a certain amount of mismatch between the curriculum, school policies, teaching strategies and the profiles of the learners'. She added that,

'..the disparities are especially apparent at secondary level where the curriculum has a strong tendency towards the traditional academic subjects, with a clear focus on the requirements of international examinations, which are actually taken by a minority of students.'

(Purvis, 2004: 49)

Table 2, below, shows the number of international exam entries, per subject, between 1999 and 2010. From 1999 to 2004 students sat Cambridge 'O' level examinations but in 2005 a switch was made to the Cambridge IGCSE and the DELF exam was introduced for French. In 2004, the final year of 'O' level examinations, 645 students were entered for the English Language compared to just 202 for Mathematics.

This trend of consistently low exam entries for Maths was halted with the introduction of IGCSE Mathematics in 2005. Exam entries significantly increased, with an average of 670 students entered for Mathematics between 2005 and 2010 (table 2, below). While the DELF exam is consistently the most popular subject by exam entry, most IGCSE entries are for English as a Second Language, with Mathematics ranking third, Geography fourth, Combined Science fifth and Co-ordinated Science sixth.

Table 2 Cambridge 'O' level, IGCSE and Delf Entries, 1999-2010

Subject	Year										IGCSE Average Entry by subject	Rank				
	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	O Level Average Entry by subject	2005	2006	2007			2008	2009	2010	
Art and Design	45	44	0	72	88	108	60	127	106	139	132	147	146	133	9	Art and Design
Biology	142	138	138	244	191	175	171									Biology
Chemistry	129	162	161	176	211	168	168									Chemistry
Combined Science	12	21	22	56	94	67	45	365	369	367	364	393	408	378	5	Combined Science
English	194	242	242	525	600	645	408									English
French	223	252	252	634	583	709	442									French
Geography	190	151	151	258	266	282	216	637	453	355	370	450	420	448	4	Geography
History	79	31	31	81	79	58	60	272	166	167	125	112	131	162	8	History
Physics	101	175	175	157	164	170	157									Physics
Mathematics	141	184	184	239	215	202	194	892	660	643	593	655	578	670	3	Mathematics
Coordinated Science								427	417	350	306	268	251	337	6	Coordinated Science
English 2nd Lang								1060	984	924	781	937	935	937	2	English 2nd Lang
English 1st Lang											57	36	45	47	10	English 1st Lang
ICT											301	226	190	264	7	ICT
Delf (French exam)								1065	1040	942	1055	1022	1016	1023	1	Delf (French exam)
Average Number of entries	126	140	136	244	249	258		606	524	486	408	425	412			

Source: Ministry of Education, Centre for Curriculum, Assessment and Teacher Support, 2011

Results in Cambridge 'O' level and IGCSE exams are disappointing. In the past, on average, only around a quarter of all S5 students were entered for the 'O' level Maths exam and of those only an average of 20% passed with a grade C or above (Purvis, 2004). With the introduction of Cambridge IGCSEs in 2005, the overall pass rate increased for Mathematics, with the percentage of those gaining a C grade of above rising to around 27% in 2010 (see figure 3, below). It should be noted, however, that the rise in the percentage pass rate at grade C or above corresponds with a lowering of the numbers of students entered for IGCSE Mathematics, as shown in table 2, above.

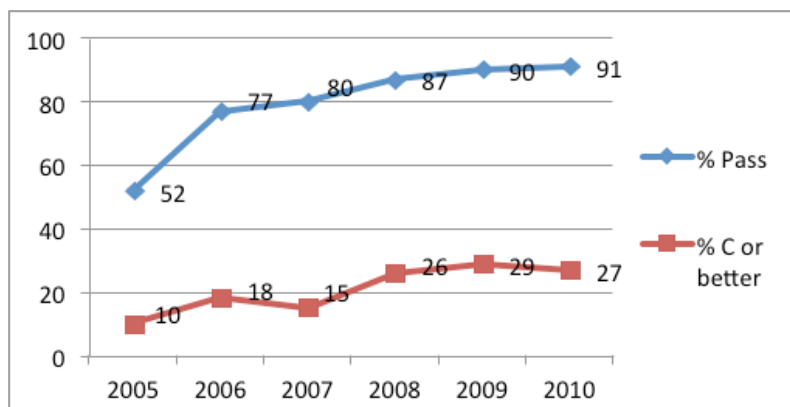


Figure 3 Percentage Pass and Percentage C grade or higher in Mathematics IGCSE, 2005-2010

Source: Ministry of Education, Centre for Curriculum, Assessment and Teacher Support, 2011

While pass rates for IGCSE Mathematics may have gradually risen between 2005 and 2010, other subjects did not fare so well. Table 3, below, published in the local daily newspaper, the Nation, on 12.01.2011, shows that some subjects, including geography, saw an overall decline in the percentage of grade A*-C, compared to 2004 figures. The dramatic declines in 2005 were linked to the huge increase in exam entries in the first year of IGCSE examinations (refer to table 2, above). By 2009, the percentage of A*-C grades began to recover but Geography, Combined Science and Art & Design were still below 2004 levels. The disappointing percentages of higher grades in 2009 could, however, be offset by the overall increase in the number of students taking international exams.

Table 3 Percentage pass rates in selected IGCSE subjects, Years 2004, 2005 & 2009

Subject	2004		2005		2009	
	Pass (%)	A - C (%)	Pass (%)	A* - C (%)	Pass (%)	A* - C (%)
Art and design	98	87	100	34	100	62
Combined science	88	47	91	0.3	88	4
Geography	89	52	73	18	97	34
History	70	42	86	26	99	46
Mathematics	76	27	52	10	90	29

Source: Nation, 12.01.2011

In 2011 initiatives were made to revisit the qualification system at secondary level. These moves were focused on the further development of technical and vocational areas of the curriculum. The Ministry of Education, in a newspaper article appearing in the Nation on 12.01.2011, acknowledged that many students were...

‘...not benefiting as much as one would like as there is no examination system in place from which they could access equally valued and appealing qualifications. These students represent a majority in our education system. There is hope, though. The setting-up of the Seychelles Qualifications Authority and the drawing-up of a National Qualifications Framework could not have been timelier, and this could perhaps hold the key to the design and introduction of a comprehensive and high-quality assessment and certification system at secondary level, which will truly cater for all students regardless of ability and interest.’

Nation, 12.01.2011

In effect, the article referred to the Ministry of Education’s new ‘Technical and Vocational Education and Training’ (TVET) programme for secondary schools. Rolled out in September 2011, the TVET programme is an alternative to the IGCSE channel. A Ministry of Education leaflet (no date), describes the TVET programme as ‘an innovative technical vocation programme...that takes into consideration students’ interest and mode of learning, and the needs of industry...and has been developed particularly for students who would have difficulty doing the IGCSE’.

The TVET programme represents one example of a more localised curriculum solution, adapted to meet certain demands of the Seychelles economy, while also addressing issues related to chronic underachievement in international academic exams. Although Crossley et. al. (2011) argue that educational space in SIDS has always been 'inherently international' (p 48), the TVET programme, together with the NYS project and the Creolisation Policy, signify attempts to make education more meaningful and representative of local needs. So rather than just 'taking' (importing) international educational policy, training, curricula, assessment and certification (Crossley et. al., 2011:4), Seychelles has also experimented with localised curriculum 'making'.

2.1.3 Geography Education in Seychelles

Despite becoming a British colony in the early 1800s, Seychelles remained predominantly a French and Creole-speaking island. The French based Catholic Church continued to influence society with only the English based Anglican Church offering basic geography in their primary parish schools during the early colonial period. The Catholic schools, more popular and better equipped than Anglican schools, offered lessons in church history rather than geography (Johnstone, 2009:92). Domingue (2001) relates how a 'battle for both control of the curriculum and medium of instruction' ensued between the French and British and recounts how the Catholic Church claimed it was well known that 'God preferred to be addressed in French'. A girls' school was established in 1861 and a boys' school in 1867 and through these schools the Catholic Church was able to consolidate its power and continue to promote the French language (Shillington, 2009:26).

By 1901, around 3,000 primary age children were attending Catholic parish schools while the British provided basic grants for the Anglican Church to run their schools (Johnstone, 2009). It was only after the 1944 British Education Act was passed in Britain that the government established the Education Ordinance in Seychelles. The Ordinance spelt out the British Government's responsibility for education in Seychelles and made English the medium of instruction (Domingue, 2001). A 10-year plan (1946-56) set a target that 80% of children should receive free schooling between ages 6-11 (Shillington,

2009:53). The Catholic boys' and girls' schools were transformed into grammar schools geared towards the Cambridge 'O' levels and, in 1963, Cambridge 'A' level courses were introduced. By 1964 there were 6 'Modern Schools' offering a lower secondary education but the vast majority of children (85%) left school at the age of 12. In 1976, on the eve of independence, the British government started to extend secondary education by adding two years to Junior Secondary, but, as Domingue (2001) concedes, the overall system was 'elitist and problematic'.

In their efforts to universalise education, the post-independence socialist government looked to their international allies for support. Guinea sent teachers to help the new government and these teachers introduced history and geography into the school curriculum. Being Francophone, however, the Guinean teachers delivered the curriculum in French. They brought with them French history and geography textbooks and it was only after the bulk of them left that teaching switched to English (Morel, 2011). In the 1980's the new 'National Institute of Pedagogy' published local social studies, geography and history curriculum materials for primary level and lower secondary, although Seychelles College (the ex-Catholic boys' and girls' schools) continued to offer Cambridge 'O' levels. The NYS replaced Seychelles College in 1981, yet the Cambridge 'O' levels, including geography, continued as the main form of academic assessment. Despite further restructuring of the education system during the 1980s and 1990s, the Cambridge 'O' level geography syllabus dictated the nature of secondary school geography, with local curriculum documents closely aligned to the Cambridge syllabus. This alignment to Cambridge syllabi continued after the switch to IGCSE geography in 2005.

2.2 Geography Curriculum Making Issues

As a subject that helps students construct and reconstruct their geographical imaginations, geography faces a huge task. This section not only reviews the concepts of curriculum making and enactment but also critically examines geography education's 'power-knowledge dialectic' (Foucault, 1980; Scott, 2008:55).

2.2.1 Making and Enacting the Geography Curriculum

A broad definition of curriculum, offered by Kelly (2009:13), refers to 'all aspects and dimensions of the educational experiences which pupils have during any period of formal education, and...their underlying principles and rationale'. This 'totality of experience' approach to curriculum conception attempts to incorporate both formal and informal knowledge taught in schools as well as notions of the 'hidden', 'actual', 'planned' and 'received' curriculum (Kelly, 2009). A more focused definition of curriculum, advocated by Young (2010) equates curriculum with 'powerful knowledge', or knowledge that develops 'higher order concepts' that students would not have access to in their everyday lives. Young (2010:12) argues that 'powerful knowledge' 'offers an objectively better basis for understanding the world'. The objectivity of a 'powerful knowledge' curriculum is ensured because high order concepts are grounded in the 'most reliable', socially based knowledge available (Young, 2010:14). While acknowledging that powerful knowledge is fallible and not absolute, Young (2010:14) argues that such knowledge represents the 'nearest we can get in our search for truth'. Young refers to this conception of knowledge as social *realist*, as opposed to *constructivist* because it privileges the objectivity and universality of knowledge over the subjectivity and relativity of knowledge.

A curriculum focused on the acquisition of 'powerful knowledge' lays down the 'conditions for acquiring new knowledge' (Young, 2010:18). Traditionally these conditions have tended to take the form of disciplinary or subject-based concepts since these, Young (2010) contends, provide the most reliable 'epistemic access' to powerful knowledge. The activities involved in the teaching and learning of the curriculum are called pedagogy. Bernstein (1971, in Goodson, 1988:28) refers to the curriculum and pedagogy as systems through which formal education is realized. In addition to these two systems, Bernstein (1971:47) argues that evaluation also forms part of the 'modern epistemology' of schooling (Goodson, 1988:29). These three systems (the trilogy) of pedagogy, curriculum and evaluation, when combined, have a powerful normative effect on education.

The trilogy of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation is evident in Tyler's (1949) four elements of curriculum; Objectives, Content, Methods and Evaluation. Tyler used these four elements to help pose the following questions to curriculum planners:

1. What educational purposes should the school seek to attain?
2. What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to attain these purposes?
3. How can these educational experiences be effectively organized?
4. How can we determine whether these purposes have been attained?

(Tyler, 1949: i, in Kelly, 2009:20)

Graves (1979:73) argues that Tyler's four elements represent a linear model for curriculum planning. This linear approach is reiterated in Scott's (2008:19-20) more recent discussion of the four dimensions of curriculum:

- Dimension 1. Curriculum aims/objectives (rationale)
- Dimension 2. Curriculum content/subject matter
- Dimension 3. Curriculum methods or procedures (pedagogy)
- Dimension 4. Curriculum evaluation or assessment

Rawling (2007) differentiates between curriculum 'planning' and 'development' by arguing that planning 'suggests organizing and sorting' material while curriculum development 'implies taking things forward beyond what is stated or provided' (p.7). Curriculum subject frameworks, which provide only a basic skeleton of core concepts and skills, require developers to create the subject content and experiences that students receive in schools. Teachers are, therefore, at the heart of the curriculum development process. While subject bodies, universities, examination boards and the state are key stakeholders, teachers form the heart (and soul) of curriculum articulation.

The centrality of teachers to the process of curriculum development (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988:185; Kelly, 2009) means that they possess considerable agency. In order to capture the sense of teachers' agentic power Clandinin & Connelly (1992) used the term 'curriculum maker'. Clandinin & Connelly (1992) explored teachers' active inquiry into curriculum and discussed how teachers

make the curriculum 'alongside students' (Ciuffetelli Parker et. al, 2011:10). As curriculum makers teachers inhabit one of four curriculum 'commonplaces' proposed by Schwab's (1973). His four 'commonplaces' are the teacher, the learner, the subject matter and the milieu and each is a source of curriculum energy and agency (Schwab, 1973).

Lambert & Morgan's (2010) curriculum making model (embedded in Figure 4, below), loosely based on Hart's (2007) 'trinity of educational practice', has much in common with Schwab's 'commonplaces'. Lambert & Morgan (2010) refer to three agents, teacher, student and subject, as 'pillars' of curriculum making or as 'zones of influence' (p.50). The purpose of curriculum making, argue Lambert & Morgan (2010:50), is to provide a sense of curriculum 'coherence' and to 'hold in balance' its various influences. Schwab's (1978) fourth dynamic, the milieu or social setting, both surrounds and shapes teachers, learners and the subject. The milieu consists of the political, social and economic forces that influence curriculum making and thus operates both within and beyond the geography classroom (Yandell, 2015).

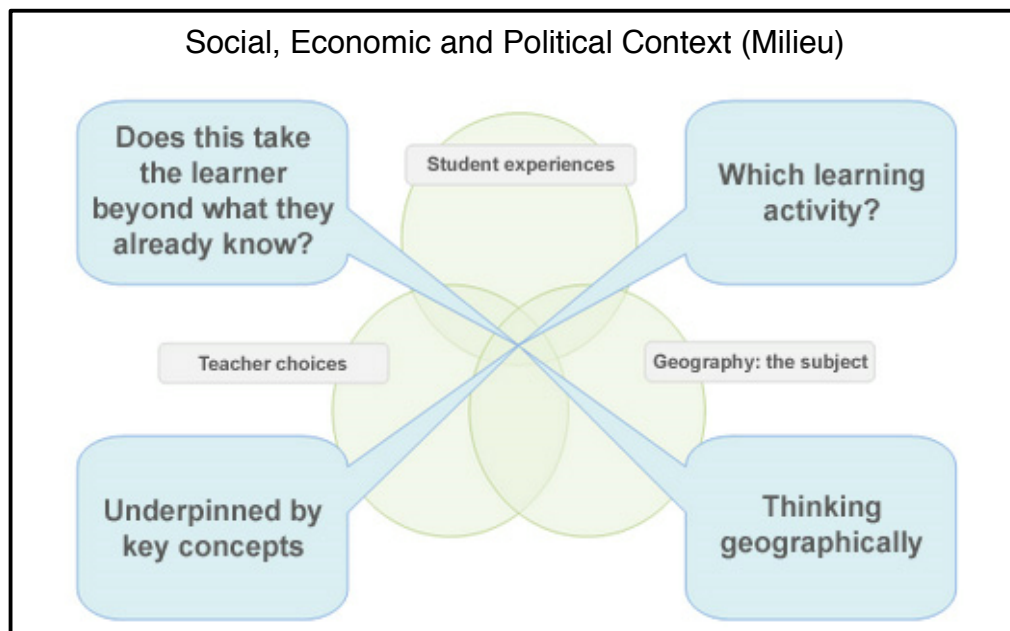


Figure 4 The Four Commonplaces of Geography Curriculum Making

(Figure 4 embeds Lambert & Morgan (2010:50)'s three pillars of curriculum making – the teacher, student and subject within Schwab's (1978) fourth dynamic, the milieu)

Figure 4 (above) illustrates how curriculum making is embedded within a milieu that consists of myriad government policies and priorities, the demands of the economy, civil society, non-governmental organizations and the media, popular culture, religious doctrine, and learning, publishing and testing corporations (Spring, 2009:206). Yet, despite these multiple and often conflicting demands, the school curriculum tends to be dominated by a culture that is surprisingly uniform in terms of management and structure. Disciplinary conventionalism lies at the heart of most western school curricula with the presumption that traditional academic disciplines provide 'intrinsically worthwhile knowledge' (Scott, 2008:8). A filtered selection of this knowledge is packaged as school subjects and then 'delivered' by a complicit school management regime (Scott, 2008:7).

Disciplinary conventionalism relies on a 'scientific' curriculum model of knowledge delivery where success is measured by its end product: a certifiable 'performance' of subject knowledge in formal examinations (Scott, 2008). Successful examination performances earn credentials not only for the individual student but also for the teacher, the institution and the system as a whole. Examination boards, within this exam-focused system, therefore have enormous power in shaping the way disciplinary (subject) knowledge is conceived, translated and transferred to the classroom. The privileging of exam-based curriculum knowledge is widely accepted and a consensus reached on the effectiveness of the 'scientific' curriculum model (Scott, 2008:61).

While all subject disciplines may claim to be 'intrinsically worthwhile' and relevant, geography's claim is 'particularly strong because it is an integral part of our everyday lives' (Roberts, 2011:246 in Butt, 2011). As Roberts (2011 in Butt, 2011) reiterates;

'What we experience directly in local places interconnects with people and places in a much wider global world...We continue, throughout our lives, to be bombarded with representations of both the real and imagined worlds on television, in music, film, books, newspapers and advertisements...From the earliest age we use all these experiences to try to make sense of the

world. Massey (2005) refers to the set of ideas people develop to interpret the world as their “geographical imaginations”.

(Roberts, 2011:246-7 in Butt, 2011)

Our geographical imaginations are not, however, constrained by the arbitrary disciplinary boundaries that have been constructed between the sciences and humanities and so, by nature, geography is interdisciplinary. This means that academic geography can be regarded as an ‘awkward discipline’ (Bonnett, 2008), although school geography is often presented as less problematic.

The modern school geography curriculum, dating from an era of world wars and British Empire, was established on the principles of a ‘man-land’ paradigm, where descriptive accounts of the world were presented from an empire perspective (Lambert & Morgan, 2010:7-9). School geography in the UK was ‘dominated by educated, middle and upper-class men’ (Lambert & Morgan, 2010) who endorsed Mackinder’s advice that ‘teaching be from a British standpoint’, in order to see ‘the world as a theatre for British activity’ (Marsden, 1997:244). Bonnet (2008) and Sharp (2009) also argued that geography, as an academic pursuit, was founded on a colonial ideology that believed space could be accurately described, demarcated and possessed. As western colonialism triumphed over space, a ‘scientific’ (accurate, objective and detached) knowledge of the world was constructed (Sharp, 2009:31), laying the foundations of modern geography and geography education (Kobayashi & Peake, 2000, Morgan & Lambert, 2003). This imperialist possession of space, without regard for the rights and dignity of those living in occupied territories, unfortunately remains a core tenet of geography’s essentially male, white, western ‘grand narrative’ (Bonnett, 2008; Sharp, 2009; Standish, 2009).

Marsden (1997) relates the changing fortunes of geography education, from the imperial heyday of Mackinder’s British-based geographical vision to the attack on the subject’s ‘old-fashioned content’ in the 1960s and 1970s. Seen as representing the ‘dead hand of tradition’ (Marsden, 1997:247), the ‘old-fashioned’ geography curriculum was pulled apart. Some geographers chose to embrace the new quantitative, positivist revolution in the social sciences,

while others sought to integrate with humanities in an effort to move away from rigid subject-specific curriculum divisions. This polarisation in geography meant that debate over curriculum content in the 1980s, mandated by the political desire to produce a national curriculum for England, became 'impoverished' (Marsden, 1997:248). According to Marsden (1997:248), the geography national curriculum, launched in the early 1990s, revived a geography curriculum that was:

'...utilitarian and merely informational in content, instructional in terms of educational processes and nationalistic in its social purpose'.

(Marsden, 1997:248)

The history of geography curriculum development in England illustrates how education is continually used to reinforce certain ideological standpoints and social and economic processes (Robertson, 2005; Thiem, 2009; Standish, 2009; Scoffham, 2011). Morgan and Lambert (2005:26) remind us of the work of the educational sociologist Ivor Goodson, who suggested that school subjects far from being rational entities are, rather, 'the creations of interest groups whose prime concern...(is)...maintaining and extending their own status'. The geography curriculum can, therefore, be used to promote a variety of conflicting agendas, and can be simultaneously asked to reinforce government-led nationalism, market-led skills and competencies as well as practitioner-led subject rigour. A confusing mix of educational goals can present challenges for school geography. For example, a deeper understanding of what connects people living in local places to a much wider global world can help students to unravel the ideologies that govern their lives, yet school geography often avoids these big issues (Morgan & Lambert, 2005: 50). As such, Morgan and Lambert (2005:51) argue that school geography offers only a 'partial and unrealistic view of the world' and can 'prevent...deeper levels of understanding'.

The belief in a 'grand narrative' of the world, or in a 'bigger picture', underlies modernist approaches to geography. Whether from the perspective of a nation-based political hierarchy of nation states and civil society; or an economy-based hierarchy of market driven skills; or from a subject-based intellectual

hierarchy of knowledge; geography serves the idea of there being a natural order of things. This promise of a natural order or 'truth' is modernity's big idea (Morgan, 2002). A more 'humble' approach to understanding the world is offered by postmodernism, says Morgan (2002). Suspicious of the 'grand narratives' or 'truths' of ideologies such as Marxism, capitalism or humanism, a postmodern attitude embraces disorder and 'mocks any epistemology that promises to reveal pre-ordained orders or rationalities' (Morgan, 2002). By acknowledging that chaos, uncertainty and irrationality limit the possibilities for any innate order, a postmodern approach allows geography to challenge the status quo (Jackson, 1996). Huckle (1997) applied postmodernist thought to the project of critical school geography. By focusing on the ways that knowledge of places and spaces is constructed and re-constructed, critical geography attempts to deconstruct the myths of social and economic order (Morgan 2002:22). More recent developments in academic geography have, however, witnessed the shift from a critical geography to critical geographies, where multiple perspectives and experiences are explored through a wide range of post-structural, postcolonial discourses. Marsden (1997, in Morgan, 2002:20) blames the shift toward multiple 'geographies' for undermining the disciplinary integrity of geography.

While geography teachers may be tempted by the promise of postmodernism, the time and space to engage in making the curriculum more reflexive and transformative, is very rarely available. Yet, in these times of great uncertainty, with a 'crisis' in capitalism and threats to our livelihoods from climate change, terrorism, etc. a deeper understanding of disorder may be what is required from the geography curriculum (Hicks, 2006, Morgan, 2012, Roberts, 2011). Furthermore, as citizenship is being rescaled to meet certain global demands, and technology offers us the chance to live more mobile, 'weightless' lives, school geography could be at the 'cutting-edge' of glocal, hybrid geographical negotiations. To make reference to these conditions, however, would require the opening-up of space for curriculum negotiation and the co-authoring of curriculum stories (Olson, 2000:181). The telling of fragmented, multi-storied geographical narratives would enhance students' understanding of the complexity and 'messiness' of the world (Morgan & Lambert, 2005:54).

In spite of its paradoxical and 'messy' nature (Scoffham, 2011:128), attempts have been made to 'fix' geographical knowledge of the world within national curricula. A utilitarian approach to selecting core geographical knowledge has dominated curriculum development (Scoffham, 2011:128). The approach differentiates high and low-status concepts and knowledge so that teachers are able to 'deliver' high status knowledge for students to acquire. The acquisition of this select geographical knowledge serves a range of conflicted purposes, ranging from 'economy-building', 'citizen-building', 'nation-building', 'democracy-building', 'cultural tradition-building' and 'morality-building'. The multi-faceted function of the geography curriculum, however, exposes the possibility that it may not effectively serve any of these purposes and may struggle to deliver its economic, civic, and moralistic promises. Thus, for Bernstein (1990 in Scott, 2008:5) the core purpose of geography, as with all disciplines, is rather to transform the cultural into the natural, 'the contingent into the necessary, the past into the present and the present into the future'. Bernstein's view of the curriculum is based on Durkheim's (1956) belief that the purpose of formal education is the cultural transmission of knowledge (Young, 2008:13).

Young (2008:14) uses the 'cultural transmission' approach to education to argue that certain knowledge, rather than serving the needs of the powerful, can provide 'more reliable explanations and new ways of thinking about the world'. This knowledge is deemed 'powerful' because those who possess it have the 'language for engaging in political, moral and other kinds of debates' (Young, 2008:14). Such knowledge can either be context-dependent (accessible through everyday living and acquired during the course of growing up) or context-independent (not tied to the particular, beyond one's own experience). Powerful context-independent knowledge, Young (2008) argues, is conceptual and provides the basis for generalizations and making claims to universality. In order to acquire this powerful conceptual knowledge, students must follow a subject-based education, most commonly offered in schools, where teachers with specialist knowledge are able to 'select, pace and sequence' the contents of the 'powerful' curriculum (Young, 2008).

While a postmodern geography would reject any notion that 'powerful' knowledge provides the language for engagement, simply because there are so many languages and therefore so many ways to engage, the idea of powerful geographical knowledge provided the basis for a renewed emphasis on 'key concepts' in the geography national curriculum in England. Lambert and Morgan's 2010 publication 'Teaching Geography 11-18, A Conceptual Approach', supported this move toward a more concept-led geography curriculum, signalling a concerted move away from 'competency' or 'skills-based' geography. And yet, as Firth (2011:142) explains, western educational policy is still strongly influenced by the notion of the 'digital economy' and the premise that advanced capitalist societies are becoming 'knowledge societies'. While there may be limited evidence to support the notion of a 'knowledge society' (Ball, 2008 in Firth, 2011:143), school curricula have, on the whole, adopted the rhetoric, even if, ironically, this has led to the devaluation of knowledge through the processes of knowledge standardization and commodification. This irony points to the complexities of modelling education on a market-orientated ideology and may provide justification for returning to a more 'abstract, formal or disciplinary knowledge' approach to education (Firth, 2011:143). Enacting a more academically rigorous geography curriculum however, requires teachers who feel empowered.

2.2.2 Teachers' power - knowledge dialectic

Teachers enact the geography curriculum by harnessing the energies of geography education's 'power-knowledge dialectic' (Foucault, 1980, Scott, 2008:55). This means that teachers, to breathe life into the curriculum, must tap into the discursive powers of their subject, their profession, their students, the state, parents, employers, the market and local, national and international communities. To successfully channel these multiple forces in order to create meaningful classroom experiences, geography teachers must feel empowered. If their professional status is undermined, teachers may feel like a 'subaltern class of technicians' (Giroux, 2011:location260). Teachers can feel 'de-skilled' (Apple, 1990, Giroux, 2011) and disempowered when the state, the market and society conspire to hollow out education and recognize only a reduced form of pedagogy. A reduced pedagogy merits 'memorization, high-stakes

testing and helping students find a good fit within a wider market-orientated culture of commodification, standardization and conformity' (Giroux, 2011:location169).

De-skilled teachers can quickly become demoralised, Demoralised and disempowered teachers are likely to resort to 'taking' rather than 'making' the curriculum. By adopting 'teacher-proof', standardized curricula closely tied to standardized assessment, teachers relinquish ownership of, and responsibility for, the education process. Hargreaves (2003) exposes the irony of a 'knowledge society' that relies on and yet vilifies its teachers. Teachers are systematically undermined and devalued and even labelled as failures if they refuse to comply with a reduced pedagogy. Further, in educational systems where international examination boards hold the balance of power, in terms of making and assessing the curriculum, teachers can feel completely marginalised. In small states, for example, where education systems rely heavily on external examination boards and a limited number of local specialists, teachers can easily feel overwhelmed and dispossessed (Crossley et al., 2011:5-6).

Kent (2008, in Castree et al., 2008) has taken the above scenarios to the extreme by describing teachers (and learners) as 'pawns in the capitalist state's game'. He argues that teachers, even as they 'fiddle' with the curriculum (by using more creative pedagogies), work in vain, because of 'the inexorable forward march of capitalism' (Kent, 2008 in Castree et al., 2008). This fatalistic attitude, however, also disempowers and even dehumanises teachers and young people, by denying them agency and dignity (Morgan, 2002). Hargreaves (2003) prefers to see teachers as catalysts rather than casualties of the knowledge economy. As catalysts, he argues, teachers develop, pool and tap into their 'collective intelligence' (Hargreaves, 2003) to effectively and confidently balance the competing forces of curriculum making and create meaningful curriculum experiences.

To help develop a 'collective intelligence' and establish a deeply rooted source of pedagogic power, Giroux (1992, in Scott, 2008) suggests 9 principles of critical pedagogy, summarized below:

1. Schools are democratic public spaces where all voices should be heard.
2. Critical pedagogy is an ethical project; we are responsible for each 'other'.
3. There are political implications of 'celebrating difference'. Must acknowledge multiple and sometimes conflicted or contradictory identities and need to offer possibility of creating new transformed identities.
4. Teachers should avoid 'master narratives'. No text or story is 'sacred' since there are a multiplicity of texts and narratives.
5. Disciplinary boundaries should be removed to allow new ways of thinking.
6. Rationality is not neutral, reason is not innocent and knowledge is not value-free.
7. Critical Pedagogy represents a political pursuit of a better, more just world.
8. Teachers should operate at a local level to uncover how power and resistance are mobilized but teachers should also be aware of the 'totalising forces' that work to suppress resistance.
9. Teachers should advocate for student voice. Student consciousness can be raised through personal narratives. These personal narratives may conflict with wider narratives.

(Scott, 2008: 103-106, summary of Giroux, 1992)

Giroux sees schools as sites of struggle where teachers act as 'transgressive intellectuals' who 'read text critically' in order to challenge dominant ways of thinking and acting (Scott, 2008:111-113). This means that teachers, who become critical pedagogues, see the curriculum as a socially constructed text that is embedded in its own history and try to devise ways to deconstruct it. In the process of deconstructing the curriculum teachers are able to show that the curriculum is a 'cultural script', which 'introduces students to particular forms of reason and structures specific stories and ways of life' (Giroux, 1992:77).

Giroux's principles for critical pedagogy support the postmodern premise that all knowledge is positioned and situated (Morgan, 2002). This means that Giroux rejects any claim that 'history is dead' because all knowledge is historically and ideologically rooted, not free-floating or value-free. Giroux, Apple and other critical pedagogues, inspired by the work of Paulo Freire, prefer to act with and on behalf of the 'oppressed', in order to understand their histories and geographies. In geography education, a critical teacher would

attempt to help students understand their position in the world and expose social injustices and inequalities. This pedagogical approach aims to help empower students by providing them with the knowledge and skills they need to function as critical agents, to engage in social change and to create more democratic societies. Morgan (2002:24), however, questions the authority teachers have to speak on behalf of the 'oppressed' and asks whether teachers can really speak on behalf of their students. Scott (2008:15) responds to this issue by proffering that critical pedagogues present a view of world that, in the end, can be too abstract and de-contextualised. By choosing to concentrate on issues of class, gender and race, critical pedagogues present an essentialist, reductionist view of identity, making it difficult for students to fully understand the complex links between multi-dimensional, often contradictory cultures, and social change (Scott, 2008:15).

Scott (2008:14-15), in addition to questioning the reductionist nature of critical pedagogy, wonders how feasible it really is to 'disrupt conventional knowledge structures' given the strict confines of state and corporate regulation and standardization. Furthermore, in the process of empowering students by 'unmasking hegemonies and critiquing ideologies', Scott (2008:14-15) points out that critical pedagogy is itself ideological and instrumentalist, based on a normative model of society not dissimilar to the more obvious market-based or state-controlled pedagogies. So, how can teachers engage? Sachs (2003) passionately believes that teachers should not undervalue themselves and calls for an 'activist teaching profession' where teachers regain their sense of pedagogic confidence and self-worth. Both Sachs (2003:133) and Hargreaves (2003:18) argue that developing teachers' capacity for imagination and emotional engagement is vital in this regard.

Using the ideas of Brown and Lauder (2001), Hargreaves (2003) contends that teachers should develop their 'collective intelligence' by drawing on their imagination and emotional engagement. This sentiment is echoed by Sachs (2003), who explains that teacher 'communities of practice' work when the two 'core dimensions' of engagement and imagination are embraced. According to Sachs (2003:133) an 'engaged' teaching profession takes part in meaningful educational activities, produces sharable curriculum artefacts and has

community-building conversations. To tap into their 'imagination', Sachs (2003) argues, teachers need time for exploration, careful reflection, suspension of judgement and disengagement. Being able to balance these two qualities, of engagement and disengagement, is a professional capability that is as important as the ability to be technical experts, say Brown & Lauder (in Hargreaves, 2003:18). Communities of practice, therefore, can use the 'two interconnected strategies' of critical self-narrative and shared narrative, to reaffirm teachers' professional identity (Sachs, 2003:132). Through self-narrative and shared narrative (publicly shared, debated and contested) teachers can re-energise their sense of professional and personal self-worth.

2.3 Beyond Geography Education

'...struggling to make history and geography,
but not under conditions of our own making'
(Kent, 2008 in Castree et al. 2008:694)

The following section reviews the global milieu in which geography curriculum making takes place.

2.3.1 De-centring Education

To gauge the forces that shape geography education, both geography and education need to be de-centred. A de-centring shifts focus onto the wider social, political and economic processes that influence both the purpose and nature of geography education. This focus, on how social and cultural processes influence education, forms part of an established body of social constructivist thought concerned with the relationship between society and schooling. Young (1971) and Bernstein (1973) theorized about this relationship by concentrating on social power and the control of knowledge. Althusser (1971) developed a theory known as social reproduction, where schools help reproduce the work skills and attitudes needed to maintain social relations in wider society. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Giroux (1990, 1997, 2003) and Apple (1990) broadened the focus, however, from social reproduction to cultural reproduction by linking culture, class and power to education (Marsh, 2009:252).

Social constructivism is based on the notion that knowledge is socially constructed. Questioning how and why knowledge comes to be constructed in particular ways and how these particular constructions seem to have the power to resist subversion, is the work of critical social theorists (Apple, 2004:27). The history of critical social and critical education theory testifies that the complex nexus linking culture, class, power and education cannot be easily unpicked. For instance, existing structures of neoliberalism require education to simultaneously support capital accumulation, reproduce citizens and workers and legitimize the status quo (Thiem, 2009:166). This multitasked mandate positions education between production and social reproduction, and the conflicting political projects of capitalism and democracy (Thiem, 2009). Put more simply, education must try to support a complex and contradictory status quo. When the tensions between culture, class and power are able to maintain a precarious balance, education assists by echoing the equation. So, within whatever structure the elements of education, culture, class and power can be bonded, for example, in the form of a post-Fordist 'knowledge economy' or a post-Keynesian 'learning society', education must be a complicit and compliant partner (Kent, 2008 in Castree et al., 2008).

The faithful compliance of education, however, cannot always be assured, nor can the forces of culture, class and power be easily kept in balance. Critical education theory helps to unpack the tense narrative of the single, albeit inherently conflicted, project for education. Rooted in the ideas of a political economy of capitalism and critical social theory, critical education theory helps to extend and enrich our understanding of the way education may resist or challenge the single narrative (Morgan, 2002:16). Resistance is made possible through 'border pedagogy' (Freire, 1970) or critical, progressive, radical, subversive or postcolonial pedagogies (Giroux, 1990, Giroux, 2011, Apple, 2004). Despite the different versions of pedagogic resistance, each has in common an attempt to challenge the commodification of education and the erasure of difference (Apple, 2003). In order to challenge these powerful tendencies, resistance pedagogies advocate for open and more inclusive dialogue. Challenging dominant ideology (in the form of neoliberalism or religious fundamentalism) does not equate, however, to the total rejection of

the idea of a single source of power or influence. Postmodernism, however, rejects this idea.

Postmodernism rejects the idea that capitalism, or any other ideology, has the totalising power to shape all narratives (Morgan, 2002:23). This means that culture or education cannot be viewed through a single, privileged lens and that there is no central project but, rather, a multitude of projects, perspectives and platforms (Castree, 1999:138 in Morgan 2002:23). Postmodernism places a spotlight on the politics of recognition and argues for deeper and broader critical theories of culture and identity. In attempting to address a more eclectic and awkward reality of multiple identities and paradoxical projects, postmodernism regards critical education theory as pious and painfully utopian (Ellsworth, 1989). Critical or border pedagogy is also regarded as being too instructivist and moralistic, while simultaneously overestimating the power teachers may have to resist the status quo (Kent, 2008 in Castree et al., 2008).

While postmodernism denies the authority of the single narrative, those engaged in the dominant western project of classroom-based, public-service education function on the basis that there is a starting point, a consensus or a core idea (Scott, 2008:5). The core idea often takes the form of the 'bigger picture', where the assumption of an overriding consensus of vision is the starting point. Thus, the problems of society are viewed as more than simple isolated events, but part of the interactive dialectic between individuals and society (McLaren, 2002:69). Within this interactive 'bigger picture' (or grand narrative) critical pedagogy acknowledges the plurality of positionalities and situated knowledges, but only as far as these form part of a much broader dialectic.

Dialectical theory examines society's underlying political, social and economic foundations and views education as part of the cultural terrain, where schools are sites of on-going struggle (Thiem, 2009). This struggle is based on the intense desire to simultaneously conform to, and resist, the 'bigger picture' (McLaren, 2002). This social contradiction, to both conform and resist, opens up new forms of thinking, revealing new contradictions and, perhaps, offering ways to transcend them. Critical or border pedagogy, therefore, promises

resolutions to the contradictions found within the 'grand narrative', but is limited when dealing with incompatible ideas that stubbornly remain paradoxically opposed to each other (McLaren, 2002).

Religious fundamentalism, for example, is paradoxically opposed to dialectic, cosmopolitan tolerance (Hargreaves, 2003:33). While a dialectic cosmopolitan pedagogy welcomes and embraces cultural complexity, fundamentalists find this 'disturbing and dangerous and take refuge in a renewed and purified tradition and, quite often, violence' (Hargreaves, 2003:33). Violence, the most extreme form of resistance, is not, however, an acceptable solution for critical cosmopolitan pedagogues, as they categorically oppose the non-dialectic breakdown of social order. Acknowledging these absolute limits for border pedagogy (operating at the margins, rather than as a separate, rogue entity) is a necessary step when looking for signs of compliance and resistance in geography education. In order to explain compliance and resistance, a de-centred approach is needed so that more diverse patterns of geography education, in more specific contexts can be examined. By contextualizing geography education, it becomes possible to reveal its location 'between' production and social reproduction, culture and economy, public and private (Thiem, 2009).

2.3.2 The 'Power-Knowledge' dialectic

To locate geography education within the realms of production and social reproduction etc. requires an understanding of what shapes these social formations. The argument is that whatever influences production and social reproduction, for instance, will also influence geography education. This approach assumes that geography education, resting on an underlying layer of geographical knowledge, is socially constructed. Yet, to assume the social embeddedness of geographical knowledge is a contentious proposition. Scott (2008) presents the debates surrounding curriculum knowledge; the type packaged and delivered through the education system. His careful unpicking of the various approaches to understanding how knowledge works in education demonstrates that the belief in an intrinsic, internal logic of knowledge still prevails. The notion that knowledge exists in its own right, independent of

social context, forms the basis of the widespread acceptance of disciplinary foundationalism (Scott, 2008). A foundationalist view of knowledge, Scott (2008:45) argues,

‘...is underpinned by a realist ontology, a belief that...knowledge inheres in the world regardless of how it is received and interpreted...and a belief that the world can be known in an objective way.’

Scott (2008:45)

The assumption that certain knowledge domains or disciplines are ‘intrinsically worthwhile’ (Scott, 2008:8) is, however, widely contested. Social constructivists, for example, view all knowledge as socially constructed, where no single form of knowledge can claim absolute privilege or be ‘intrinsically worthwhile’. Foucault (1969) carried this notion further, by claiming that all knowledge is time-specific and embedded in historically located discourse. This means that the disciplinary knowledge privileged by the school curriculum, exists only by virtue of those who have the power to shape curriculum discourse.

All discourse, according to Foucault, is the preserve of the powerful. The powerful are able structure and shape knowledge so that, in turn, knowledge re-creates the same power structures. This relationship is called the ‘power-knowledge’ dialectic (Scott, 2008:55). Within this dialectic, knowledge is not neutral or objective but ordered and structured and deeply rooted in a complex nexus of power relations (McLaren, 2002:72). For critical pedagogues (Apple, 1990, 2004, Giroux, 1990, 2011) curriculum knowledge also falls within this nexus of power-knowledge and is thus, also historically and socially rooted. Furthermore, this knowledge-power dialectic not only applies to the realm of disciplinary or subject knowledge, but also extends to the realm of the person (Scott, 2008:61). This means that discursive power struggles not only shape the content and structure of the curriculum, but also influence how teachers and students are classified and labelled according to performance in knowledge-based exams.

Through discursive power struggles a consensus is reached that affords schools the power to process both knowledge and knowledge about people

(Apple, 2004:33). This 'approved' school knowledge effectively acts as a filter to 'process' people. Critical pedagogues contend that schools, as sanctioned knowledge and people processors, exist to legitimize and reproduce the status quo. If a socio-cultural and economic system is dominated by capitalist ideology, they argue that schools will mirror this. So, if society rates the production of capital more highly than the equitable distribution of it, schools will reinforce this. In order for schools to support a capitalist ideology, knowledge needs to be regarded as a commodity and divided into low-grade and high-grade knowledge. Those who possess high-grade, more valuable knowledge need to be in short supply in order to maintain their competitive advantage (Thiem, 2009:160). Schools will focus on producing an elite, competitive stock of people with high status knowledge. A commodified curriculum neatly aligns exam-based disciplinary knowledge with the principles of capitalism, by ensuring the production of a limited supply of highly prized students. In this scenario, therefore, certain forms of knowledge remain exclusive, in order to keep their 'high-grade' status, and cannot be more equitably shared otherwise they lose value. Furthermore, for certain forms of knowledge to be classified as high-grade, discursive power struggles must take place.

Power struggles over the forms of knowledge that should remain highly prized take place in areas where power congregates. Traditionally this would be within universities, where 'experts' who already possess high status knowledge, government funding agencies and corporate sponsors battle to promote their knowledge interests (Apple, 2004:39). Power also congregates in the boardroom, where corporate interests set priorities for education and frame knowledge in 'productive' terms, i.e. 'technical knowledge' or 'productive knowledge' (McLaren, 2002:73 quoting Giroux). Framing knowledge in this way means that education is modelled to serve the interests of a corporate elite. Terms such as 'knowledge economy' or 'knowledge society' are favoured as these evoke the message that possession of high-status knowledge equates to being a high-status person. Power also gathers in other places, such as churches and mosques and at supranational levels, in organisations such as the United Nations (Thiem, 2009:158). Depending on these varying seats of power, education and knowledge can be modelled in yet more ways.

Spring (2009:28) describes these models as ranging from a homogenous, globally controlled 'world education culture' to more diverse, locally controlled education and knowledge systems. He argues that these competing approaches present conflicting messages about the purpose of knowledge, where knowledge can be used for 'economy-building', for 'citizen-building', for 'nation-building', for 'democracy-building', for 'tradition-building' and/or for 'morality-building' (Thiem, 2009).

While 'economy-building' in a 'knowledge-economy' is capitalism's favoured approach to education, Hargreaves (2003:61) warns the net result of such an approach is the degeneration of curriculum knowledge into 'soulless standardization'. Standardization, described as the 'banking' model of education by Freire (1998), categorises knowledge into low-grade and high-grade information so that it can be efficiently delivered to classrooms and regurgitated in essays and exams. Students, as passive 'empty' recipients of knowledge, are filled up and tested so that those who have acquired high-status knowledge can be easily identified. Such an approach, warns Hargreaves (2003:xx-*Introduction*), has the potential to alienate large proportions of students who either find the high standards 'depressingly unattainable' or find the standards too simplistic and too readily achievable to be of any use. In its most extreme form the 'knowledge economy' has the potential to divide rich and poor and create anger among those who are unable to attain the required 'knowledge' standards. Education that moves away from these more extreme tendencies will focus not only on knowledge but also sets of values, dispositions and a sense responsibility for society.

Capitalism's potential to alienate people using education highlights the complexities of modelling education on market-orientated approaches to knowledge. Critical educators, by adopting a values-driven approach to education, prefer to build emancipatory knowledge which can help to explain how social relationships may be distorted and manipulated by relations of power and privilege (McLaren, 2002). Rather than reproducing the status quo critical educators want knowledge to act as a force for transformation, by creating a foundation for social justice, equality and empowerment (Robertson, 2005). Tension exists, obviously, between these different educational power

camps. On one hand, global agencies such as the World Bank and the OEDC, together with most neoliberalist governments will promote the 'knowledge economy' and educational standardisation in order to expand the market economy through individualised access to knowledge (Lingard, 2000, Spring, 2009, Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012). On the other hand certain supranational institutions like the UN and the Commonwealth, together with some developing countries support the 'cosmopolitan democracy' agenda for education by calling for more social inclusion and equity through programmes such as 'Education for All', 'Education for Sustainable Development', and the education targets of the 'Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) (Lingard, 2000:91).

It is worth restating that postmodernists reject critical pedagogues' assumption that knowledge can emancipate because knowledge, for postmodernists, only offers a partial, relative explanation of the world (Morgan, 2002:18). Furthermore, they insist that knowledge cannot help to 'overcome' power because knowledge is power itself. Similarly, Lyotard (in Morgan, 2002) maintains that knowledge cannot conform to a single 'metanarrative' of rationality, reason or truth, while Foucault (in Morgan, 2002:19) also contends that any totalising interpretation of history ignores the detailed nuances of the many histories experienced in the world. While critical postmodernism may offer marginalised groups a way to 'take back' their histories and epistemologies (Morgan, 2008:18), this may only be possible if the power-knowledge dialectic is able to shift to support such an endeavour.

2.3.3 Globalisation, Educational Governance

To 'take back' control of one's own history requires considerable power and determination. The same applies to the reclamation of one's own geography, education, sovereignty, etc. Yet, for many, the ability to reclaim sovereignty can be seriously undermined by the gathering of powers on a global scale. As more powers shift to the global stage, local, national and even regional actors can become increasingly marginalised. Globalisation, described by Gregory et al. (2009:308) as the 'unstoppable process of global integration', can lead to a coalescing of agendas that have huge coercive power (Kerkenrath, 2005). The global convergence of power acts as a normative pressure, where countries

are pressured to conform by their peers. This type of peer pressure is called 'normative isomorphism' (Herkenrath et al., 2005) which means that as more countries comply more pressure is exerted on those who do not. The pressure to adopt global 'best practices' and policy agendas comes not only from influential 'advanced', western nations, but also from global financial institutions (i.e. World Bank/IMF), global corporations, and international organisations such as the United Nations and the OECD.

For many nation states the pressure to conform to global educational 'best practice' and policy is immense. Dale and Robertson (2006) and Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) contend that educational spaces have, under the forces of global convergence, ceded to the dominant neoliberal notion of the 'knowledge economy' and surrendered to supranational standardization and benchmarking. Yet, despite yielding to some of these global capital production pressures, national education systems still need to ensure social reproduction and cohesion at national levels. Dale and Robertson (2006) describe this dichotomy as the conflicted rescaling of education. The process of rescaling can expose the limits of national educational institutions as they come under increasing pressure to maintain coherence in the face of conflicting agendas. As national education institutions give way to 'pluri-institutional' and 'pluri-scalar' governance, argues Thiem (2009), curriculum debates get caught up with the contested issues of citizenship and employment in a globalised, 'knowledge-based' world. Long-term investment in education is considered essential if schools are to respond to the complex needs of global neoliberalization and citizenship, yet, in many countries, short-term fiscal restraint is the overriding concern, pushing long-term commitment to education off the agenda (Thiem, 2009).

Given the realities of national budget constraints, compliance with global educational standards is often not possible. Furthermore, nationalist affirmations of educational agendas are often made to counter the drive for greater global compliance. Herkenrath, König, Scholtz and Volken (2005:363-364) describe the competing forces of global convergence and divergence as the dialectical realities of globalisation. They explain that events at one site can produce divergent or even contrary occurrences at others (Herkenrath et al.,

2005:363-364). Thus, compliance to global education standards should not be assumed, either as an intension or as an eventuality.

So how do the forces that shape education operate at different scales? It seems that 'best' practices, promoted by more advanced, neoliberal countries and global institutions, are commonly perceived as the most legitimate and worthwhile. As more countries choose, or are forced, to adopt these 'best' practices a certain threshold is reached, meaning such practices become entrenched (Herkenrath et al. 2005). Borrowing or copying of 'prestigious' educational models can also take place. Importing such models can be risky, however, if they remain unreconstructed or unmediated. While importing 'proven' practices offers countries more 'cost-effective' solutions to their educational needs, there is no guarantee that these practices will suit all. Some educational models or practices may also be borrowed, on more selective terms, and be unpacked and reconstructed to suit local conditions (some local examples to counter global market orientated practice are offered by Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012). The processes of modification, re-interpretation or re-articulation are extremely important for countries if they want to take ownership of imported models and practices.

Contradictions in the geographies of neoliberalization further serve to highlight the complexities of globalisation and the global limits of capitalist market-orientated education (Thiem, 2009). These limits are clearly illustrated by the conflicted educational experiences of the United States. While the 1980s witnessed a shift in educational emphasis from social mobility and civil rights to workforce development in the US, the 1990s saw experiments with privatization and then in 2000s there was a further shift to standardization and accountability, encapsulated in the policies of 'No Child Left Behind' (see Hargreaves and Shirley, 2012). The politics of education are complex, and western powers can send very mixed messages about the purpose and nature of education. The mixing of different types of policy and practice is, argue Kerkenrath et al. (2005), the result of cosmopolitan, eclectic approaches to education. Global institutions and large western nations are able to experiment with the mixing of educational agendas, which can then lead to confused, superficial and/or hybrid policies and curricula. Given this cosmopolitan

hybridity of global education culture, national institutions may opt for more straightforward, local educational policy and curriculum solutions.

Educational space is determined by the constant struggle between integration and differentiation (Braudel, in Gregory, 2009:388). Hall (1999) identifies three simultaneous forces that determine social relations: both the weakening and strengthening of national particularities alongside the creation of hybrid cultures and complex, multiple identities. These three forces may operate with varying intensities at different times and in different places. As certain places become more integrated and connected, remaining places, effectively become more marginal (Herod, 2009:22). This unintentional consequence of integration points to yet another irony of globalisation: with the shrinking of space (in a smaller, faster world), knowledge of the locale becomes more important (Herod, 2009). Re-connecting with the locale shifts the focus onto local identities and loyalties, local spaces and local processes in order to develop what Massey (1991) might call a 'global sense of place'. For education, the emphasis is on how the curriculum makes space for the locale and how education contributes to understanding local cultural, political and economic processes (Thiem, 2009:157-8).

Education constructs 'locally-lived' as well as 'globally-lived' spaces for economic and political elites, but education can also lie at the centre of local struggles for democracy and contribute to post-colonial narratives. Through the production of geographical imaginaries (territorial affinities, frameworks of 'who we are') the curriculum channels the ideals of national and community based identity and citizenry (Thiem, 2009:160). Locally based curricula can, therefore, form part of a resistance to the coercive powers of 'world education culture'. Local educational governance may also be re-asserted if imported curricula fail to keep their promise of 'success'. Unmediated curriculum imports, if ineffective and unsuited to local conditions, may extenuate local inequalities. This can then lead to curriculum backlash and resistance. More probable, however, is that nationally governed education policies and curricula will try to balance the competing needs for international legitimacy, national self-determination and local identity, resulting in complex *glocalised* curriculum arrangements.

Tackling issues of identity, through *glocalised* curricula is, however, highly contentious.

2.3.4 'Glocal' Postcolonial Identities

A *glocalised* curriculum is education's response to the realities of multicultural, multi-scalar identities and rescaled citizenship (Thiem, 2009:162). As social and cultural relations are made and re-made in reaction to neo-liberalist, democratic and nationalist agendas, the forces of globalisation and advances in digital and mobile technology create new modes of interaction, 'identity making' and mobility (Sharp, 2009:98-99, Elliott & Urry, 2010). Increased mobility, across physical, social and cyber space, reshapes how people and communities define themselves and relate to each other (Massey, 2005). The rapid expansion of social networking, smart phone technology, internet blogging and personal video messaging offer multiple ways for individuals and groups of people to express themselves and link with others to forge new social groups, loyalties and identities. These new, seemingly open and democratic modes of self-expression are inherently personalised and customized to reflect the lifestyles and opinions of the individual or group. In conjunction with the dialectic realities of globalisation, digital technology simultaneously provides for greater convergence and divergence of social relations. As a consequence, relationships between individuals, between the individual and civil society, and between civil society and the state, become far more complex. Recent testimonies from the 2011 Arab Spring across North Africa and the Middle East illustrate some of the new modalities for civilian unrest and national revolution, where personal video footage, relayed across global news channels, can expose and overcome state oppression. Similar accounts of urban unrest in England during the summer of 2011 or the Paris terrorist attacks of 2015, captured by mobile phone and through social networking sites, also point to a re-definition of the way people can be mobilised and events are experienced.

The fluid and transient nature of culture and cultural relations means that the making of identity is susceptible to a wide variety of influences. Corporate, state and personalised media (film, television, books, music, social networking)

together with mobile technology (internet, mobile phones etc.) can have a huge influence over the way culture is expressed, as demonstrated by the highly self-conscious management of culture in Arabic states or by the increasing awareness and celebration of hybrid cultures (Sharp, 2009:98-99). The celebration of hybridity, and the creolization of culture, forms part of the struggle for cultural recognition by groups who refuse to be limited by a western imagination (Hall, 1996:623). Championed by postcolonialists, such as Homi Bhabha and Salman Rushdie, hybridity embodies a collective resistance to colonial power (Sharp, 2009:121). The possession and imposition of power by the colonial centre (the West, the Occident), means that white, western cultures and ways of knowing are privileged (Foucault, 1970, 1980; Said, 1978). Postcolonialists interrogate this privilege by challenging the space occupied by 'sanctioned' knowledge and 'preferred' identities. In doing so, post-colonialists try to create spaces for 'Other' ways of knowing and being in the world (Young, 2003, Gregory et al., 2009).

The appropriation and domestication of space is an act of colonisation. Capitalism, modernity's colonising force, reproduces itself and expands across space, re-writing the landscape (Sharp, 2009:68; Herod 2009:111). By imposing its own meaning on the landscape, capitalism makes space more familiar and 'known'. Postcolonialists argue that western scholarship behaves in a similar fashion, by legitimising a 'scientific' worldview founded on the European Enlightenment's notions of 'accurate', objective and detached knowledge of the world. The 'scientific' conquering of space, through accurate measurement of time and distance, was employed by western imperial powers, to huge economic and political advantage. Through territorial control, spanning all continents of the world, western notions of 'objective knowledge', 'ownership' and 'possession' of space became normalized. European colonial expansion, therefore, is credited with the establishment of a supposedly 'neutral' intellectual legacy, based on the language and tools of western science (Furedi, 2009:41). Science became the legitimate 'basis for comparison' (Sharp, 2009:31) and helped the west produce 'accurate' maps and 'reliable' models of the world. Western imperialism represented a 'triumph' over space, to the detriment of the 'Other'. Those not privileged or sanctioned

by the West were, effectively 'trapped in place' or were made to feel 'out of place' (Sharp, 2009:31 & 78-80).

In order to re-establish a sense of place and reclaim space for the 'Other', postcolonialists 'speak back' to the centre and try to 'provincialize western scholarship' (Gregory et al., 2009:561). Moving beyond the simplistic Cold War notions of First World, Second World and Third World, postcolonialists attempt to uncover indigenous and non-western ways of knowing, and celebrate non-western, multicultural and multi-scalar identities. Recognising complex identities, however, in the wake of global capitalist expansion and its inherent tendency for cultural convergence, is problematic. As Medea (2002:139) illustrates with his discussion of identity politics in Reunion, the 'relations between globalisation and cultural identities are delicate'. Reunion, despite being a multicultural, multiracial island in the Indian Ocean, is defined by the West as a department of France and privileged by the EU's economic power base. While local 'bursts' of cultural resistance are common, the island and its people are identified through their economic and cultural ties with Europe (Medea, 2002).

The rejection or denial of complex, multiple identities can be hugely traumatic, as Fanon (1967) has so vividly described. Fanon focused particularly on the racial tensions and trauma of hybridity, where non-white people in a white world are conditioned to always feel inferior. The celebration of hybrid identity was, for Fanon, both premature and dangerous, because it subsumes distinct cultures and identities in order to create an ambivalent condition that would always be made to feel socially inferior. Similar arguments are used to detract from postcolonial attempts to recognise indigenous knowledges. Either non-western ways of knowing are disregarded as unscientific and therefore intellectually inferior or the postcolonialist pursuit, itself, relies too heavily on the principles of western scholarship (Gregory et al., 2009:562).

Whilst postcolonial thought may be theoretically rooted in the west, the everyday realities of living in contested, conflicted, hybrid spaces deserve to be explored using all forms of analysis. Analysis of the global hegemony of capitalism can reveal how local, national and regional relations are continually

being redefined by market economics and global corporate culture. In addition, an analysis of nationalism; the policing of borders; the construction of citizens; the forging of national-identities, together with an analysis of the resistance, evasion and apathy toward nationalist projects, may also reveal how national spaces are under constant negotiation (Appadurai, 1996:189). Furthermore, an analysis of the ordinary, everyday realities of living, where the forces of globalisation and nationalism are held in balance, should also be undertaken, in order to reveal how 'localized spaces' (Appadurai, 1996:181) are created and re-created. Localized spaces (neighbourhoods, villages, streets, estates, websites, social networks, virtual spaces etc.) are where people use their local knowledge to reproduce a locality. Localised spaces can be home to complex hybrid cultures that transcend national borders, through connections to diasporic communities, or that transcend physical space, via the radio, television or internet to connect to vast virtual communities. People, whether urban or rural, western or non-western, rich or poor, invariably live their lives in these complex, multidimensional, local spaces (Massey, 2005).

A *glocalised* curriculum recognises that people occupy multidimensional, multi-scalar spaces. Place-based education, by 'reclaiming the significance of the local in a global age' (Gruenewald and Smith, 2008:xiii) reaffirms the 'situatedness, contingency, particularity and diversity' of life lived in local spaces (Morgan, A. 2011:99). Through a critical pedagogy of place, place-based education aims to 'decolonize' (undo the damage done by multiple forms of oppression) and 'rehabituate' (learn to live together in place, without doing damage to others, human and non-human) (Gruenewald, 2008:149). This rooted, deeply-descriptive and moralistic approach to teaching about life lived in particular localities, offers pedagogues a way to transform learning through explorations of 'place attachment' and the complexities of a local 'sense of place' (Morgan, A. 2011:100). What place-based education may not be able to offer, however, is a broader analysis of the way local lives are inextricably tied to economic, social and political events operating at national and international levels. While individual lives may be embedded in complex but, nonetheless, mundane local rituals and habits, the 'personalization' and 'cosmopolitanization' of identities can only be fully understood in relation to broader, and arguably, more powerful social relations. Class, capital and

competition act as forceful organizers and categorizers of people. By appealing to an individual's sense of aspiration; to be competitive; to accumulate capital; to be socially upwardly mobile, these forces construct a global imaginary for the local individual to transform into a globally competitive, cosmopolitan, mobile entrepreneur and citizen of the world.

The promise of cosmopolitan identity and rescaled, global citizenship is targeted at the individual. While place-based education focuses on ecologically sustainable, community-based citizenship, and multicultural education promotes national unity through equity, diversity and education for all, the promise of cosmopolitan citizenship is directed solely at the individual (Mitchell, 2003). The individual must assume responsibility for his or her own livelihood, no matter the circumstances. Cosmopolitan education is organised so that it offers a personalized, skills-based, standardized, portable and life-long access to learning, and places the individual, supposedly, at the centre of 'decision-making'. By choosing to be a 'strategic cosmopolitan' the person becomes more 'individuated', mobile, globally connected and globally competitive (Mitchell, 2003:388). The ability to respond to the changing needs of the market, to shift from place to place and to be 'at home' anywhere, allows cosmopolitan citizens to adapt to changing demands of global capitalism and to play a productive role in the global 'knowledge economy'.

Teaching for the global 'knowledge economy' places emphasis, therefore, on labour mobility and the 'personalization' of learning (Elliott & Urry, 2010, Hargreaves, 2003). In the 'knowledge economy' educational credentials need to be internationally accredited, portable and transferable. Not all schools are equipped to meet this demand, so new avenues offering mobile, digitized learning are explored. The transfer of learning to 'unembedded' virtual, internet-based platforms reflects the broader trend toward more unembedded, portable living. Giddens (2002) and Elliott & Urry (2010) argue, however, that this trend has the potential to upset both locally situated communities and nationally based identities. The 'lucky' minority, who are able to afford and/or gain entry to the higher echelons of the global knowledge economy, enjoy the benefits of globally competitive salaries, pension packages, travel-expenses, and domestic help etc., while the 'unfortunate' majority remain locked in place,

immobile and seemingly 'uncompetitive' (Elliott & Urry, 2010). For the majority, unable to achieve the 'glamorous' lifestyles of cosmopolitan elites, feelings of resentment, envy, and disempowerment are likely to stir. The elite, sensing the growing resentment, may then congregate inside gated enclaves to mitigate the fear of civil unrest and attacks on their material possessions. This extreme form of social division, between a mobile, global elite and an immobile local underclass, does not serve the interests of social cohesion and equality. The dangers of such division also threaten the development of national identity and can potentially lead to wide-scale violence (Giddens, 2002).

The preceding sections have outlined some of the wider debates that form the cultural, social, economic and political contexts within which geography curriculum making and enactment take place. An understanding of these contexts helps in the problematizing of the way education can reinforce or challenge certain processes (Robertson, 2005, Thiem, 2009). Depending on how it is framed, education may be used as a force for transformation or reproduction of the status quo. Small Island Developing States (SIDS), as this chapter has outlined, are inherently more vulnerable to the dialectic realities of globalisation. For some SIDS, global integration can lead to the appropriation of their educational 'space' (Robertson & Dale, 2006, Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012), while other SIDS may try to resist the spread of global educational agendas and embark on 'postcolonial' struggles for educational sovereignty.

2.4 The research questions

Geography curriculum making is controlled by a multiplicity of forces operating at many levels. For teachers, who play the pivotal role of making and enacting the curriculum, balancing these forces can be hugely problematic. Engagement in curriculum making lies at the heart of the complex role teachers' perform (Apple, 1979, Giroux, 1992, Sachs, 2003). If teachers are marginalised from the curriculum making process the very purpose of the curriculum risks being undermined (Freire, 1970, Giroux, 1992, Hargreaves, 2003). The review has illustrated that engaged geography teachers draw on their personal and collective geographical imaginations and experiences to

enact the curriculum. For Seychellois teachers, the forces of globalisation and the complexities of educational geopolitics influence their everyday experience. For example, a combination of English, French and *Kreol* based curricula make up the Seychelles education system, although English is the principal medium of instruction at secondary and tertiary levels. While the use of Cambridge IGCSE and 'A' level exams increases the international legitimacy of Seychelles' education system, the country and teachers' sense of curriculum ownership and governance is compromised.

The review not only presented some of the most pertinent issues related to geography curriculum ownership and ideology but also showed that teachers need opportunities to 'tap into' their imaginations and to reflect critically on their roles as geography educators in complex and rapidly changing societies (Hargreaves, 2003 and Sachs, 2003). To enact the geography curriculum teachers use representations of the past to create geographical imaginations of the present and future. **The first research question, therefore, seeks to uncover how geography teachers weave notions of their colonial past, globalised present and possible futures into their curriculum making.**

The recognition that complex identities and hybridity evolve as a consequence of globalisation is especially relevant for any exploration of Seychellois geography education narratives. The hybrid nature of *Kreol* language, culture and politics is an integral part of everyday life in Seychelles and is undoubtedly the result of both the forces of colonialization and globalisation. Given these hybrid realities, **the second research question seeks to explore whether there is a distinctive *Kreol* geography education and if so, how is it manifest and what shapes it?**

The process of sharing narratives was offered, in the review, as a way for teachers to build both professional and personal self-worth (Sachs, 2003:132). The sharing of narratives provides a platform on which to build a collective sense of purpose and professional status. **A third research question considers the degree to which Seychellois geography teachers are able to express a sense of professional self-worth.**

Chapter Three Methodological Framework

This chapter outlines the methodological framework used in the research. The first section critically examines systems of 'knowledge' and 'truth testing' and sets out the underlying epistemological approach used in narrative research. The second section provides an overview of narrative inquiry approaches. As part of the overview issues of validity are discussed. The third part of this chapter describes the ethical implications of being a researcher positioned as an 'outsider within' the research context. The final section describes how narrative inquiry has been used in education research.

3.1 Knowledge

This section examines the epistemological hierarchy of different systems of knowledge and acknowledges the growing consensus that our world is far more complex than originally imagined. It is argued that more epistemologically difficult ways of knowing the world may be needed (Hviding, 2003). Using an interpretivist perspective the privileging of 'absolute Truth' is shown to be both misleading and illusory (Bonnett, 2008:13, Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:210-211). By adopting a position where truth and knowledge are dynamic, it is argued that both truth and knowledge must be scrutinizable (Bridges, 2003:79).

3.1.1 Knowledge as product

'...the Lone Ethnographer rode off...in search of his 'native'. After...a series of trials, he encountered the object of his quest in a distant land. There he underwent his rite of passage by enduring the ultimate ordeal of 'fieldwork'. After collecting 'the data' the Lone Ethnographer returned home and wrote a 'true' account of the 'culture'

(Rosaldo, 1989).

The notions of product and property are inextricably linked to knowledge (Bridges, 2003:loc.2363). The commodification of knowledge is possible because consensual 'tests for truth' (Hirst, 1965 in Bridges, 2003:loc.1264) have established an epistemological hierarchy for different forms of

knowledge. Truth tests privilege knowledge that adheres to the principles of rationality, objectivity, logic and value-neutrality (Giroux, 2011:loc. 529-559). Such knowledge is predominantly concerned with 'explanation, prediction and technical control' (Giroux, 2011:loc.539) and is part of a culture of positivism. Positivists regard their knowledge as intellectually superior to knowledge produced within the speculative culture of the social sciences because positivism uses formal logic to verify knowledge and produce law-like statements or generalisations (Kitchen and Tate, 2000:8). The use of logic to verify knowledge is, however, just one of a variety of procedural principles to determine the 'truth' of knowledge (Bridges, 2003:71). Different truth procedures can be applied to specific areas of knowledge (Bridges, 2003:78). For example, scientific knowledge categorised according to Habermas' (1978) taxonomy of science can be tested using Bridges (2003) regimes for 'truth' (table 4, below).

Table 4 Areas of Knowledge and related 'Truth Tests'

Knowledge	Truth Test
<p>Empirical-Analytical (Empirical, Positivist, metaphysical, technological)</p>	<p>Correspondence Test - empirical knowledge corresponds with checkable facts and an observable single external reality.</p> <p>Coherence Test - mathematical and metaphysical knowledge is consistent and logically sound. This test produces an established set of objective, value-neutral, law-like statements and generalizations.</p> <p>Pragmatic Test - technical knowledge works</p>
<p>Historical-Hermeneutic (Behaviouralist, Phenomenological, Existentialist, Idealist, Pragmatic)</p>	<p>Correspondence Test - behaviouralist knowledge corresponds with observable human behaviour within a positivist tradition.</p> <p>Consensus Test - phenomenological, existential and idealist knowledge uses social agreement, based on the constructivist notion of multiple truths, to reach consensus about particular experiences.</p> <p>Pragmatic Test - pragmatic knowledge based on experience about how and why knowledge works</p>
<p>Critical (Marxist, Realist, Postmodernist, Poststructuralist, Feminist, Postcolonialist)</p>	<p>Correspondence Test - foundational Marxist and realist knowledge corresponds to a single external reality that is structured around power relations and causality.</p> <p>Consensus Test - non-foundationalist postmodern, poststructural and postcolonial knowledge depends on the constructivist notion of multiple truths to reach consensus about who controls and influences particular ideas and beliefs</p> <p>Pragmatic Test - critical pragmatic knowledge test asks for 'whom' does knowledge work?</p>

Based on Habermas (1978) and Bridges (2003:78)

Although broader taxonomies of knowledge include the experiential realms of moral, religious and aesthetic knowledge (Hirst, 1974), Habermas' taxonomy is concerned with the most common forms of knowledge in the fields of natural and social science. While there are various criteria for truth available to the sciences, correspondence and coherence criteria are privileged so that stable, law-like generalizable truths can be produced. The persistent trend in science is to view these truths as 'value-free', with greater significance bestowed on seemingly 'rational', absolute knowledge. This means that positivists are much less likely to have to defend what they do, being secure that their forms of knowledge carry more weight (Oakley, 2000:29).

The belief, that the world is 'objectively knowable' and, more crucially, that knowledge exists in it's own right, is part of a 'realist' ontology. Realists believe that knowledge inheres in the world regardless of how it is received and interpreted (Scott, 2008:45). This ontology draws on the Cartesian dualism of the objective and subjective realms (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:203). True knowledge is limited to what can be known objectively, while subjective knowledge is inaccessible to 'pure' science and is thus 'not truly knowable' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:203). The 'unknowability' of subjective knowledge legitimises and privileges objective knowledge, making it more valuable and marketable. Trade in this more profitable commodity supplies the market with universal versions of reality. Those that rely on these versions of reality surrender to what Hannah Arendt, (1966) terms the 'coercive nature' of universal or absolute 'Truth'.

Rejecting the absoluteness of a single reality means working within a more interpretivist paradigm. Interpretivists believe that any knowledge, even if more positivist in nature, is culturally bound and value-laden. Positivism and the scientific method are viewed as part of the west's cultural archive (Foucault), along with the Cartesian dualism of mind/body, the Hegelian tension of self-society and the Christian regulation of social and spiritual life (Smith, 1999:42). These western cultural values are underpinned by concepts of lineal, measurable time and fixed, measurable space. Together the quantification of

time and space shape western thought and provide a platform for cultural supremacy.

3.1.2 Knowledge as power

From an interpretivist perspective, the predominance of an absolute Truth is both disingenuous and deceptive (Bonnett, 2008:13, Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:210-211). The world cannot be 'easily mastered' and positivism's 'cheerful certainty' suggests a degree of epistemological complacency (Bonnett, 2008:28). Positivist science is vulnerable to the charge of oversimplifying human experience and activity, to the point of caricature (Montello and Sutton, 2006:12). This charge is inextricably linked to positivism's embeddedness within a culture of western power (Smith, 1999, Bonnett, 2008). The inherent problem is that positivism 'reinscribes' enduring forms of western oppression (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:210-211). Yet positivist knowledge is not the only form of knowledge that is the preserve and product of the powerful.

For Foucauldians the powerful are able to structure and shape any form of knowledge because all knowledge is time-specific and embedded in the historically located discourses of the powerful. This power-knowledge dialectic infers that all knowledge is deeply rooted in relations of power (McLaren, 2002:72). Within this paradigm, Habermas' tripartite of scientific knowledge is unfeasible because all knowledge is regarded as context-specific and value-laden. It also implies that the seemingly more rigorous truth-tests applied to empirical and positivist forms of knowledge are not superior to or more valid than any other test for truth. Thus, since all truth and knowledge is dynamic, all should be open to scrutiny (Bridges, 2003:79).

All knowledge should be publicly held to account so that those who produce and control knowledge cannot distort or suppress the knowledge they do not like (Bridges, 2003:84). Scrutiny would be easier if knowledge was separate from power, but from a Foucauldian perspective, this separation is not possible. Instead power and 'truth-regimes' collude to legitimize forms of knowledge that adhere to the culture of positivism. Yet, beyond the strict

regime of absolute truth, an alternative notion of 'trustworthy' knowledge should equally be acceptable.

Trustworthiness is an important validity tool for assessing both knowledge and the methods of creating and sharing knowledge. For example, research should be able to ensure that generated knowledge is based on 'truthful' representations of people's constructions of their own worlds (Bridges, 2003:87). To strengthen the trustworthiness of knowledge, consensus truth-tests employ triangulation methods and constant negotiation (Bridges, 2003:81). Both these methods aim to make consensual 'truth-testing' more rigorous, although there are many pitfalls when applying these two tools. Consensus testing, for example, runs the risk of producing knowledge that is deluded, beliefs that are self-perpetuating or ideas that have been self-censored (Bridges, 2003:77).

Given the risks associated with negotiating consensual knowledge, researchers often resort to correspondence and coherence tests to establish the legitimacy of the knowledge they share. The triangulation of 'truth-tests' may seem advantageous, but circumstances may render the process impossible, especially when different knowledges appear irreconcilable. As the world becomes increasingly complex, more epistemologically intricate ways of understanding people and events may be required (Hviding, 2003). Forms of knowledge contained within the traditional sciences may need to be let loose so that they can forge new alliances and negotiate new knowledge boundaries. Where traditional forms of knowledge struggle to provide adequate insight into complex problems, knowledge boundaries may need to be contested and renegotiated. The increased complexities created by globalisation, for example, may be one driving force for this knowledge renegotiation. The extent to which new knowledge communities are able to flourish, however, may be qualified by powerful elites who, if under threat, could move to contain dialogue and the sharing of 'subversive' knowledge.

3.1.3 Knowledge a dialogic enquiry

'In economic terms knowledge is not a competitive good. It has the distinctive virtue...that it can be infinitely distributed without loss to any of those who are sharing it'

(Bridges, 2003:loc.2362)

New forms of scholarship emerge when traditional knowledge and power systems are no longer fit for purpose. The decline of the role of the nation-state as provider of solutions for its citizens (Hobsbawm, 2000) combined with an increasingly loud call to action from postcolonial voices, illustrates the complexity and uncertainty of today's world (dis)order (Hviding, 2003:45). Globalization, although an historical process long in the making, has gained considerable speed and intensity in the last two decades (Hobsbawm, 2000:61). The shift from national to global can re-invigorate local calls for action that build on patterns of local resistance found in earlier phases of globalisation. The way people responded to colonisation in the past can offer insights into how local communities deal with the present-day forces of globalisation. To understand these new dynamics, new disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches are needed. These approaches encompass the call for a decolonization of traditional knowledge and power spaces in order to allow the formation of new power-knowledge dialectics. These new discourses of knowledge and power allow for unexpected connections to be forged, shared and openly scrutinised. In this scenario knowledge is not property but 'dialogic enquiry' (Bridges, 2003).

Dialogic enquiry attempts to counter the 'false consciousness' (Giroux, 1997) offered by traditional science. This false consciousness develops through a process of collective amnesia, where the powerful are able to suppress or eradicate the past (Giroux, 1997). Sharing knowledge of the past is an essential activity in building a collective, democratic, critical consciousness. To help uncover this knowledge a narrative-discursive approach can be used. Narrative research methods have been labelled 'constructivist' (Bruner, 1991; Brockmeier & Harré, 2001 in Hwang, 2008) or 'indigenous' (Chilisa, 2012, Smith 1999), but are not restricted by these definitions. The sharing of

knowledge through the telling of stories need not be bound by any specific epistemology.

Stories that not only speak to the past but also challenge the privilege of 'preferred' ways of knowing may be labelled as 'postcolonial'. Challenging traditional power-knowledge dialectics that sanction certain forms of knowledge is, typically, postcolonial. Postcolonialism tries to negotiate space for 'Other' ways of knowing and celebrates multicultural and multi-scalar ways of being in the world (Thiem, 2009). Although criticised for relying too heavily on the conventions of western scholarship (Gregory et al., 2009:562) postcolonialism provides a lens through which 'taken-for-granted' knowledge can be re-examined. For example, enduring colonial power relations and complex identities are scrutinized and spaces created for previously marginalised narratives (Jazeel, 2012b).

3.2 Knowledge through narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry is grounded in the methodologies of post-positivism and phenomenology. While positivist methodology relies on the principles of 'neutrality' and 'scientific objectivity' to legitimize knowledge, post-positivism rejects these principles on the basis that they 'dehumanize' our worldview (Smith, 1999:39). Post-positivism challenges the myth of a single narrative by rejecting the conceptual rigidity and hegemony of a 'universal' story. Instead, post-positivism supports knowledge diversity and multiple truths. By embracing different knowledges (histories and geographies) space is created for marginal voices and the power and privilege of the 'grand narrative' is destabilized.

Phenomenology is centred on the notion that people make sense of their world within the contexts and specificities of their own experience. Narrative inquiry in education, for example, tells the stories of teachers and students in order to make meaning from their experiences. By foregrounding 'smaller voices' ignored by more positivist methodologies (Webster and Mertova, 2007:103), narrative inquiry creates the space that allows Seychellois geography teachers to share their knowledge.

3.2.1 Knowledge through narratives

Chase (in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:656-8) describes four distinct characteristics of narratives:

1. Narratives are distinct forms of discourse. They shape and order past experiences and are a form of retrospective 'meaning-making'.
2. Narratives are active. They communicate points of view, express emotions, thoughts and interpretations. They make the 'self' the protagonist and highlight the uniqueness of human action and experience. Narratives shape and perform the self, experience and reality. The active narrative gives 'voice' to the particular (the what, how and where of the story).
3. Narratives are constrained and enabled by particular circumstances/contexts.
4. Narratives are socially situated interactive performances produced for a particular setting, audience and purpose. Stories are flexible, variable and shaped, in part, by interaction with the audience. Narratives are joint-productions.

Narratives help people make sense of their world within the contexts and specificities of their own experience. Mitchell (1981:ix-x) describes narratives as 'modes of knowledge emerging from action', while McPartland (2001, quoting Bruner, 1986) suggests that 'one of the primary functions of narrative is to hold cognition, emotion and action together'. Bakhtin (1981, 1984) goes further by arguing that storytelling is a dialogic process of 'human becoming' in which both the storyteller and story-listener co-create meaning and shape each other's identities. Narratives are powerful because they allow people to speak about the forces that shape their lives. As Salman Rushdie (1993) explains,

'...those who do not have power over the story that dominates their lives, the power to retell it, rethink it, deconstruct it, joke about it, and change it as times change, truly are powerless, because they cannot think new thoughts'.

(Rushdie, 1993:17)

Narratives, therefore, help to create space for systems of knowledge and power to be identified and interrogated (Madison, 1998:280). Tamboukou

(2012) argues that narratives 'contribute to the search for meaning by revealing multiple perspectives while remaining open and attentive to the unexpected'. She further explains that stories 'ultimately reconfigure the sphere of politics as an open plane of horizontal connections, wherein the past can be remembered and the future can be re-imagined' (Tamboukou, 2012:2). Thus, to explore Seychelles' geography education of today and imagine a future geography education it will be necessary to revisit the geography education of the past.

3.2.2 Narrative Inquiry

The smaller voices that traditional western science has tended to ignore can be heard using narrative inquiry (Webster and Mertova, 2007:103). Narrative inquiry re-presents and re-constitutes personal experience through storying. The assumption is that people's stories of their everyday practices offer insights into their social and personal identity (Squire, 2008). Narrative inquiry draws on an eclectic mix of approaches and is 'fairly unconcerned about the theoretical and methodological contradictions' that may result from using these different approaches (Squire, 2008, Mishler, 1995). Loosely associated with a form of pragmatic politics, contemporary narrative research is predominantly concerned with the politics of 'voice' (Squire, 2008).

Narrative inquiry emerged as part of the 'narrative turn', over two decades ago, when humanist and poststructuralist traditions of narrative research were brought together (Squire, 2005). Humanist origins of narrative research began with early anthropological studies and then post-war Chicago School sociology. These early movements championed the 'life history method', and were later developed through feminist theory, psychology and sociolinguistics (Chase in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:652-653). Key narrative theorists during the 1960's were Labov and Waletzky who devised a characterisation of narrative structure that transformed the study of narrative (Chase in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Labov and Waletzky's narrow definition of narrative, however, was soon criticised because it ignored the interactional nature of narrative as part of conversation (Reissman (1997:155-156). Alternatively, poststructural and postmodern (Foucault, 1972; Lyotard, 1984), psychoanalytic and deconstructionist (Derrida, 1976) approaches came to view narratives not

simply as versions of text that have structure, but as modes of thought that are agentic and political (Bruner, 1997:64 in Chase, 2005). Eventually the politicisation of narrative brought the two strands of narrative research together (Squire, 2005:9). Narratives became modes of resistance and storytellers became agentic in constructing events (Chase in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Yet, more than two decades after the 'narrative turn', Webster and Mertova (2007:114) concede that narrative inquiry is still 'an emerging method'

Chase (2005, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) identifies five common approaches to narrative research: i. Psychological - an individual's life story ii. Lived experience - how a person constructs a recognisable 'self', including multiple and often conflicting identities, iii. Transformative - narratives as strategies to make sense of, resist and/or transform broader discourses, iv. Ethnographic – 'everyday' multi vocal narratives gained through immersion in the 'field' and v. Auto-ethnographic approach – telling your own story. Alternatively, Dhunpath and Samuel (2009:ix) propose four approaches to life-history research that depend on the nature of truth stories employ. Thus, personal 'truth' stories are based on '**lives as experienced**', where the 'constructed nature of meaning-making' is explored (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009:x). Dialogical 'truth' stories explore the 'way in which public understandings...are fuelled through the reporting (of events etc.) in the public domain' and can be regarded as 'social truths' or 'declared stories', relating to '**lives as told**' (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009:x). While 'forensic' truth stories objectively recount '**lives as lived**' and healing 'truth' stories employ an agentic and restorative purpose, attempting to understand '**lives as capable of being reconstructed**' (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009:x-introduction).

Through its multiplicity and diversity of approaches narrative research brings different and sometimes contradictory layers of meaning into dialogue with each other (Squire et al, 2008:4, Mishler, 1995). Narrative research can explore how stories are structured and the ways in which stories work, who produces them and by what means, the mechanisms by which they are consumed, and how narratives are silenced, contested or accepted (Squire et al, 2008:4). These myriad methods for exploring meaning leave narrative research exposed to accusations of incoherence. Squire et al. (2008:6)

acknowledge this charge and explain that incoherence derives partly from the divergent beginnings of narrative research and partly from the 'theoretical fault-lines that traverse it'.

One of the starting points for narrative inquiry is the researcher's own narrative or autobiography because the researcher's role in the co-construction of narratives is a key tenet of the narrative approach (Clandinin and Connelly, 2004; Squire, 2008). Chase (2005, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:657-8) explains that narrative researchers often develop their own voice as they construct other voices. The narratives constructed by the researcher are then 'performed' for an audience (readers, other scholars). This performativity raises complex issues about voice, representation and interpretative authority. Critics of narrative research, such as Craib (2004), Frosh (2002) and Cowen (2009) have highlighted these issues, especially with regard to the researchers' involvement in framing the narratives they share. Narrative researchers need to be highly reflexive about their own agendas and priorities for framing their own and their participants' stories in particular ways (Squire, 2008). The process of telling any story is highly selective and thus can be politically and ethically problematic (Gready, 2008:138).

Further concerns regarding narrative research relate to the nature of stories themselves. Stories are not 'permanent', as their meanings can shift according to the audience and the context in which they are told. Participant storytellers, within the parameters set by their own language, construct versions of their life that they are willing to share at a particular moment. These versions may change; making it difficult for researchers to be completely certain of the narratives they hear. As Bassey (1999 in Brooks, 2007:93) warns, storytellers may tell stories they think researchers want to hear. In addition to these concerns, stories may not be a trustworthy reflection of the feelings and events that happened in the past because memory can be selective (Neisser, 1988 in Brooks, 2007:109). Narrative researchers, however, argue that through the process of selecting and telling of specific recollections of the past, storytellers are able to indicate what they value from their past experience. A further critique, however, highlights that there is no way for a listener to know firstly;

what may have been omitted from the recollections, and secondly; whether the omissions were made consciously.

Proponents of narrative research are honest about the inherent difficulties that characterise their type of research. Despite the difficulties, narrative inquiry offers unique ways of creating space for stories of everyday knowledge and power. Squire (2008) suggests that the eclectic mix of narrative research can be organised into three epistemologically distinct, yet concurrent methodologies:

1. Narrative structure (structural) – how events are structured within a story
2. Narrative content (thematic) – the everyday events and experiences that make-up the story.
3. Narrative context (contextual) – the cultural context within which stories are lived and told.
(Squire, 2008)

Narrative research may use one, a combination or all three methodologies, simultaneously. For example, in order to explore the forces that shape geography education in Seychelles, this research adopts the contextual narrative approach. Although the stories could be approached from purely structural or thematic perspectives, these approaches would not address the powerful discourses within which Seychellois geography teachers' lives are embedded. To explore these discourses and to find out the extent to which geography education in Seychelles is framed by a colonial geographical imagination, a contextual narrative approach is needed.

The creation of space for Seychellois geography teachers' to share their ways of knowing could be classified as a postcolonial endeavour. A transformative narrative approach, which examines how narratives function as strategies to make sense of, resist and transform powerful discourses, seems particularly suited to the postcolonial project. Chase (2005: 667-669) links 'transformative' narrative research to movements for social justice and democracy. Transformative narratives offer a way to 'break the stranglehold of metanarratives that establish rules of truth, legitimacy and identity' (Tierney, 2000 in Chase, 2005:668). From these standpoints, storytellers who may

otherwise be marginalised, reclaim the right to tell their own story (Chase, 2005:668) and engage in the politics of 'voice' (Squire, 2008).

3.2.3 Validatory Issues

Narratives, by their very nature, are constructed from two perspectives at once: the 'then' perspective and the 'now' perspective (Conle, 2001). Mixing these two perspectives is unavoidable so any narrator or audience would be unwise to assume that stories 'truly' represent past experiences (Conle, 2001:28-29). Validatory tools that seek to establish the 'truth' of stories are, therefore, not best suited to narrative research. Debate about the conceptualisation of validity has tended to divide into two broad camps representing positivist and non-positivist or interpretivist research approaches (Bryman, 2001 in Brooks, 2007:98). Guba and Lincoln (1989) argue that the concepts of absolute 'truth', accuracy and objectivity used to validate positivist science should be replaced by the concept of 'trustworthiness' in interpretivist research, which, of course, includes narrative inquiry. Other scholars involved in narrative research have proposed further alternatives to supersede the rigidity of absolute 'truth' and objectivity, see table 5, below. These alternative criteria for determining the 'validity' of narrative knowledge closely resemble Bridges' (2003:71) truth tests (see section 3.1.1). Narrative research, therefore, cannot prove that stories are true, only that they are consensually worthy of being believed.

Interpretivist researchers also contest the notion of research reliability (Cole, Riessman, 2008:189). Narrative coherence can operate on a number of levels, which, according to Webster and Mertova (2007:93), include global coherence (an overriding system of beliefs or goals), local coherence (consistent structuring of the particular) and themal coherence (consistent identification of recurrent themes). Alternatively, Riessman (2008:189) refers to the 'coherence of the text' (the narrative) and coherence in how the text is linked to theory. These notions of coherence, when combined with various principles of trustworthiness (table 5, below), enable narrative research to claim space within the interpretative field of knowledge sharing.

Space for narrative research is not guaranteed. Critics (Cowan, 2009; Craib, 2004; Philips, 1994 in Cole, 2012) question the legitimacy of alternative truth

tests and claim that 'narrative has not yet developed a shared understanding of the criteria of adequacy or of epistemological warrant' (Philips, 1994 in Cole, 2012). Further accusations relate to the professed self-indulgence and/or self-deception found in certain narrative (Crites, 1979 in Conle, 2001:28). Craib (2004:64-67) contends that certain stories are told in 'bad faith' because they either deny self-agency (similar to Sartre's notion of the denial of consciousness) or consist of myth-based constructs that perform a self-healing role for the storyteller. 'Bad faith' narratives are, however, an unavoidable risk in narrative inquiry and researchers concede that they may never be completely preventable (Conle, 2001:28).

Table 5 Criteria for assessing narrative research

Criteria	Notes	Scholars
Accessibility	...to the context, process and construction of knowledge, i.e. gaining access to teachers, building trust, listening	Barone, 1992, Webster and Mertova, 2007
Adequacy, Aesthetic finality, Continuity, Closure		Connelly and Clandinin, 1990
Authenticity / Honesty	*Trustworthiness of the research. Trusted if confirmed by participants. They verify their stories as being authentic. Narrative is 'thick' enough to be coherent at all three levels (global, local and themal) - Critical others corroborate narratives which increases authenticity	Blumenfeld-Jones 1995; Lincoln and Guba, 1986, Webster and Mertova, 2007
Believability	*Stories not necessarily true but they do have to be believable. The story 'rings true' or is plausible and resonates with the reader	Blumenfeld-Jones 1995; Bruner, 1986
Credibility, Compellingness, Moral Persuasiveness		Barone, 1992, 1995
Dependability, Confirmability		Brooks, 2007
Economy	*The thick, richness (integrity) of the data is balanced with the necessity to be economical (requires careful coding and indexing based on critical events)	Webster and Mertova, 2007
Explanatory power		Connelly and Clandinin 1990; Polkinghome, 1995.
Familiarity	*The everyday becomes the subject. Point to the familiar and routine and 'bring it back into mind' - interpersonal distancing to make the familiar (self-evident 'truths') strange again, so they can be recorded and understood	Webster and Mertova, 2007
Fidelity		Blumenfeld-Jones 1995; Grumet, 1988
Honesty		Webster and Mertova, 2007
Transferability	*Research provides a base for application to another setting -e.g. critical events found in the narratives can be used as a basis for designing professional development/training opportunities	Webster and Mertova, 2007
Verisimilitude	*'Rings true', appears true, gives the impression of truth, resonance, plausibility, and corroboration with 'like' events.	Webster and Mertova, 2007

*Webster and Mertova (2007)

(Table constructed from sources indicated in the 'scholars' column)

To counter the inherent risks involved, Conle (2001:24) advises narrative research to establish and abide by three principles:

1. Sincerity of the story.
2. Honesty about researcher's state of mind, feelings and motives for doing research.
3. Comprehensiveness of the narratives constructed.

In order to observe these principles narrative researchers need to be deeply reflexive about every aspect of their work. Within the bounds of ethical decency and confidentiality, honesty is required when telling their own stories since details of researchers professional and private lives can become public property. Reflexivity governs the processes of investigating, participating in, and interpreting stories (Mishler, 1986; Riessman, 2003 in Hwang, 2008). Being reflexive not only compensates for the possibility of 'bad faith' narratives but also increases researchers' working knowledge of themselves as they discover deeper meaning in their own lives (Atkinson, 1998:1). This sense of discovery of both self and 'other' is warranted within an interpretative paradigm because interpretivist research is illuminative in nature, rather than being purely theory seeking or theory generating (Bassegy, 1999 in Brooks, 2007:94).

3.3 The knower and the known

Reflexivity, although challenging, lies at the heart of narrative research. The ethical issues of conducting narrative research as an 'outsider/insider' researcher, however, make it especially challenging. These issues are explored below.

3.3.1 The researcher and the researched

The interconnectedness of self (the researcher) and other (the researched), where the self defines the other and vice versa, means that knowledge gained of the other is also knowledge gained of the self (Bakhtin, 1981). The quest for knowledge of the other becomes, therefore, a journey of self-discovery. Of concern, however, is that research becomes too self-indulgent or is an act of self-denial (Greenbank, 2003:795). Some researchers may also engage in 'ventriloquy' (using others to give voice to your own ideas) and use the

crossing of borders to disguise or camouflage their own ideas while parading these as 'native voices' (Fine, 1994:22 in Bridges, 2003:loc.2346). Reinharz (1988:15-16) provides clear instructions for reflexive researchers keen to avoid these pitfalls,

'...you have to go hear...in their space. Before you can expect to hear anything worth hearing, you have to examine the power dynamics of the space and the social actors. Second, you have to be the person someone else can talk to, and you have to be able to create a context where the person can speak and you can listen. That means we have to study who we are and who we are in relation to those we study. Third, you have to be willing to hear what someone is saying, even when it violates your expectations or threatens your interests. In other words, if you want someone to tell it like it is, you have to hear it like it is'

(Reinharz,1988:15-16, in Bridges, 2003:loc.230).

Entering the space of others creates complex power dynamics. The researcher is both the learner and the 'expert', technically skilled at 'learning'. These skills position the researcher as the 'knower', able to collect evidence of everyday experience and turn this into 'knowledge'. Those being studied, the 'researched', are 'in the know' in terms of their belonging, though this does not equate with being able to understand (Bridges, 2003:loc.2190). This dynamic interplay between the knower (the researcher) and the known (the researched) involves a complex switching of 'outsider' and insider' roles. Smith (1999:137) highlights that most research methodologies position the researcher as the 'outsider'. The outsider is a university educated 'expert' positioned not only as 'more skilled' but also as neutral, objective and less involved in insider politics (Smith, 1999:10). Paradoxically, this positioning also means that researchers are seen as members of an elite community of 'experts' with 'insider' knowledge of their own. When researchers enter the space of 'others', however, they do so as 'outsiders' or 'phenomenological strangers' (Bridges, 2003:loc.2199). The stranger, it is assumed, has the ability to observe 'taken for granted' experience and 'make the familiar strange' (Stenhouse, in Bridges, 2003:loc.2190).

Smith (1999) as an advocate of indigenous, decolonialized methodologies, argues for research of the 'other' to be carried out by members from within the community. Researchers from indigenous communities (like feminist researchers before them) are 'insiders', better placed to speak on their communities' behalf. Yet, while 'insider' researchers attempt to speak with, for and to their own communities, Razavi (1992 in Bridges, 2003:loc.2154) concedes that it is rare to find a complete 'insider' researcher. This may be due to the paradoxical position indigenous researchers are placed in, of being simultaneously within and outside their communities. The complexities of being both an outsider and insider, the knower and known, are discussed openly by Smith (1999:137). She admits to the frustrations of sometimes being perceived as an outsider by the community that she regards as her own. She also acknowledges that some indigenous communities prefer to talk to 'outsiders' who are less involved in local politics and more likely to keep confidences, reducing the risk of any repercussions if they choose to speak candidly (Smith, 1999:10).

With more privileged access to insider knowledge, 'insider' researchers need to acknowledge the risks of being too deeply immersed in their own communities (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:16). To contend with the problematic nature of 'insider' research, Smith (1999:137) reiterates that constant reflexivity is crucial. Reflexivity involves not only asking questions such as 'why am I doing this?', 'what are my biases?' and 'what is my personal investment?', but also asking deeper epistemological questions related to the:

'...difference between practical knowledge and scholarly knowledge, and particularly to the special difficulties involved first in breaking with inside experience and then in reconstituting the knowledge which has been obtained as a result of this break'

(Bourdieu, 1994:1 in Middleton, 2004:2).

In addition, to avoid accusations of collusion or seduction, by those being studied, insider researchers must be open to scrutiny from 'outsiders'. Sharing reflexive accounts of insider research forms part of this transparency process.

Reflexive accounts need to illustrate awareness of both the processes and implications of research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:14). Since research is about producing knowledge, researchers need to acknowledge that they influence the processes of knowledge generation. As Gibbons et al. (1994:82 in Middleton, 2004:2) explain, 'to understand knowledge, it is necessary to understand the institutions in which it is produced'. Thus, researcher reflexivity should draw attention to the complex relationships between i. the processes of knowledge production, ii. the various contexts within which knowledge production takes place and iii. the involvement of the knowledge generator (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000:5 in Tao, 2012). For insider researchers, however, the situation is yet more complex. As well as being both knower and known they may also be held more closely to account, for the consequences of their research, by their own communities (Smith, 1999:138).

3.3.2 Ethical considerations

Postcolonial and indigenous researchers view any act of research as an 'exercise in ethics' (Clegg & Slife, 2009:24 in Chilisa, 2012:171) so, as such, this whole thesis represents an engagement with ethical questions. While reflexivity and transparency are core values of postcolonial narrative research, other values like mutual worth, dignity and respect, also form part of a postcolonial code of ethics (Smith, 1999). Further, humility and clarity, in terms of not taking people or things for granted and being clear about the aims and limitations of research, also feature as important ethical considerations.

Smith (2005, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:99) takes the discussion about ethics a step further, however, in claiming that many western codes of ethics are more concerned with protecting the individual than the collective or the community. The concepts of respect and social justice, for example, tend to rest on more narrow western definitions and these may not be easily transferred or applied in indigenous contexts. In addition, western, 'top-down' codes of ethics, governed by ethics boards in western research institutions, tend to protect the interests of the academy rather than those of communities being researched (Smith, 2005, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:100). For 'outsiders' it can be easier to deal with ethical issues on an individual basis

(Smith, 2005, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:99). Individuals are able to consent to being participants without the need for whole community agreement or consent. This can lead to tension between members of indigenous communities who may judge certain research practices as unjust, immoral or even criminal (Robbins, 2006 in Aitken and Valentine, 2006).

3.4 Narrative Inquiry in Education

While narrative research has been carried out 'in multiple ways across several disciplines' (Lewis, 2010), including psychology, sociology and anthropology, this final section of chapter 3 introduces some of the narrative research conducted in the field of education. Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) article, *Stories of Experience and Narrative Inquiry*, published in the journal *Educational Researcher*, was one of the first to refer to narrative inquiry using an educational context. Building on a wide range of narrative concepts and methods Connelly and Clandinin (1990) sought to highlight the importance of narrative inquiry in 'bringing theoretical ideas about the nature of human life, as lived, to bear on educational experience as lived' (p.3). From this initial foray into the methodology, successive narrative inquirers in education have explored the lived experiences of teachers (Elbaz, 1990; Leggo, 1991; Clandinin & Connelly, 1995; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995; Bell, 1997, Gallas, 1997; Tompkins, 1998, Connelly & Clandinin, 1999), students (Hutchinson, 1999; Murray Orr, 2005, Hopwood, 2012), parents (Pushor, 2001) and teacher training institutions (Samuel & Mariaye, 2016). Research into specific educational 'subject' or 'topic' narratives, such as Le Mare's (2007) inquiry into the stories of 'fair trade' education, Brook's (2007) 'expert' geography teacher stories and Hopwood's (2012) exploration of geography students' classroom experience, are less common.

Teachers' knowledge is largely held tacitly, in holistic, often narrative, forms (Elbaz, 1983 in Bell, 2002:210). Teachers' narrative research focuses on listening to and hearing teachers' stories (Bell, 1997; Gallas, 1997; Jalongo & Isenberg, 1995). Research tends to look at ways in which teachers' narratives shape and inform their practice. Clandinin, Pushor, & Murray-Orr (2007) contend that 'stories are the form in which...teachers...most often represent

experiences' and that 'stories...surround and envelope teachers'. By telling stories and narratively inquiring into teaching practices, research can make the known (i.e. the everyday familiarity of the classroom) strange and open it up to new possibilities (Clandinin et. al., 2007). In much of their work Connelly and Clandinin (1989, 1990) use Dewey's (1938) notion that life is education. They recall Dewey's (1938) assertion that 'one learns about education from thinking about life and one learns about life from thinking about education' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1989:4). They argue that in 'practice it is impossible to separate being a teacher from the rest of your life, (since) educational stories are life stories' (ibid). Dewey (1929:24) aimed to bring about a 'destruction of the barriers which have divided theory and practice' so that a 'dialectic wholeness', between educational theory and practice, could be achieved. Connelly and Clandinin (1989) applied this principle to their narrative research in order to illustrate that theory and practice in education are dynamically intertwined, uncertain and always tentative. They argue that both reflection and deliberation are not only the theoretical elements of telling educational stories, but also are the practical elements of living and re-living stories (Connelly and Clandinin, 1989:10).

Generating theory from teachers' practice should not be an 'optional extra', argues Sachs (2003:82). According to Sachs (2003:82) one important method for generating theory is the analyses of teachers' narratives as they provide a window through which to understand and theorise about teachers' everyday lives. Furthermore, teachers' narratives provide the glue for a 'collective professional identity' and a provocation for renewing teacher professionalism (Sachs, 2003:132). Sachs (2003:132-135) contends that teacher stories should be made public and that self-narratives have emancipatory qualities because teacher identity lies at the heart of the profession. Paradoxically, according to Sachs (2003:86), action research has been less successful in allowing teachers to pose critical questions about the way their practice is politically defined or manipulated. This lack of success may be due to the limitations of action research in analysing the wider political and ideological factors that control teacher's lives. Thus, narrative researchers, located outside the 'everyday' and familiar of the classroom, offer more profound ways to analyse

everyday stories by setting them within the contexts of broader educational and political change.

Despite the promises of educational narrative inquiry, researchers who collect, share and analyse teachers' stories need to be aware of many methodological constraints (see section 3.2.2) that affect narrative 'trustworthiness' and comprehensiveness. As Brooks (2007:74) reminds us, 'not all areas of influence can be articulated and known, either by the teachers themselves or by the researcher'. Similarly, Doecke et al. (2007:13), caution that teachers' narratives should not be 'romanticized'. While acknowledging the limitations and risks of narrative enquiry in education, Brooks (2006, 2007) reiterates Elbaz's (1990) claim that 'teachers express what they do, and their knowledge, through narratives'. Working with geography teachers in England, Brooks (2006:356) explored teachers' 'memories of and relationship with geography as well as how and why they decided to teach geography'. Enabling the sharing of narratives, argued Brooks (2006:355), encouraged teachers 'to value their knowledge about teaching and to further reflect and develop deeper understandings stemming from their experience'.

As Brooks (2006) drew on Gudmundsdottir's (1990) research, which suggested teachers' subject knowledge influenced how they taught, this research draws on Brooks' work in order to understand the context within which geography teachers enact the curriculum in Seychelles. The next chapter explains how the research was designed and implemented.

Chapter Four The Research Process

This chapter outlines the framework and methods used for constructing, deconstructing and then reconstructing the personal (geography education as experienced) and 'public' (geography education as told) narratives of geography education in Seychelles

4.1 Framework for the narrative inquiry

Three distinct methodologies can be employed in narrative research, structural, thematic and contextual (see section 3.2.2). In order to address the research questions, this inquiry used a contextual narrative approach, as a purely structural or thematic approach would not have adequately scrutinised the discourses within which geography teachers' lives are embedded. By examining discourses of power, the contextual approach lends itself to transformative narrative research as it allows for an exploration of the way narratives function as strategies for making sense of, resisting and transforming powerful discourses (Chase, in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

To make meaning of the experiences of geography teachers and to understand the broader dynamics of Seychelles geography education both personal and 'public' (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009) stories were required. Personal, or 'lived experience' narratives, offer a recognisable 'self', however conflicted and multiple-faceted the 'self' maybe (Tamboukou, 2012). As such, 'lived experience' stories contributed teachers' personal accounts of geography curriculum making that drew on recollections of their past and current experiences. 'Public' narratives, on the other hand, attempt to capture the way people, events and/or phenomena are reported in the public domain (Dhunpath & Samuel, 2009:*x-introduction*). Public reporting can include formal written statements, such policy documents, press releases etc. as well as publicly disseminated, spoken and written media (newspaper articles, radio shows, open discussions at conferences and public meetings, online public discourse on social media, blogs and websites). A 'public' narrative of Seychelles geography education, 'as told' in the public domain, identifies certain key events and provides important contextual references that not only

helps to construct a richer story of geography education but also aids the analytical deconstruction of teachers' stories.

The narrative inquiry consisted of a series of stages, as outlined in figure 5, below. First, data were generated through personal storytelling sessions, the production of transcripts and the gathering of publicly available ephemera. Then the data underwent a primary phase of analysis and interpretation in order to construct a set of personal narratives and a public narrative of geography education. A secondary phase of analysis and interpretation followed, as the narratives were deconstructed and then lastly, the stage of narrative reconstruction. The four stages were not linear but cyclic and iterative, involving continual reflexive examination and re-evaluation of the data between and during each stage of the inquiry.

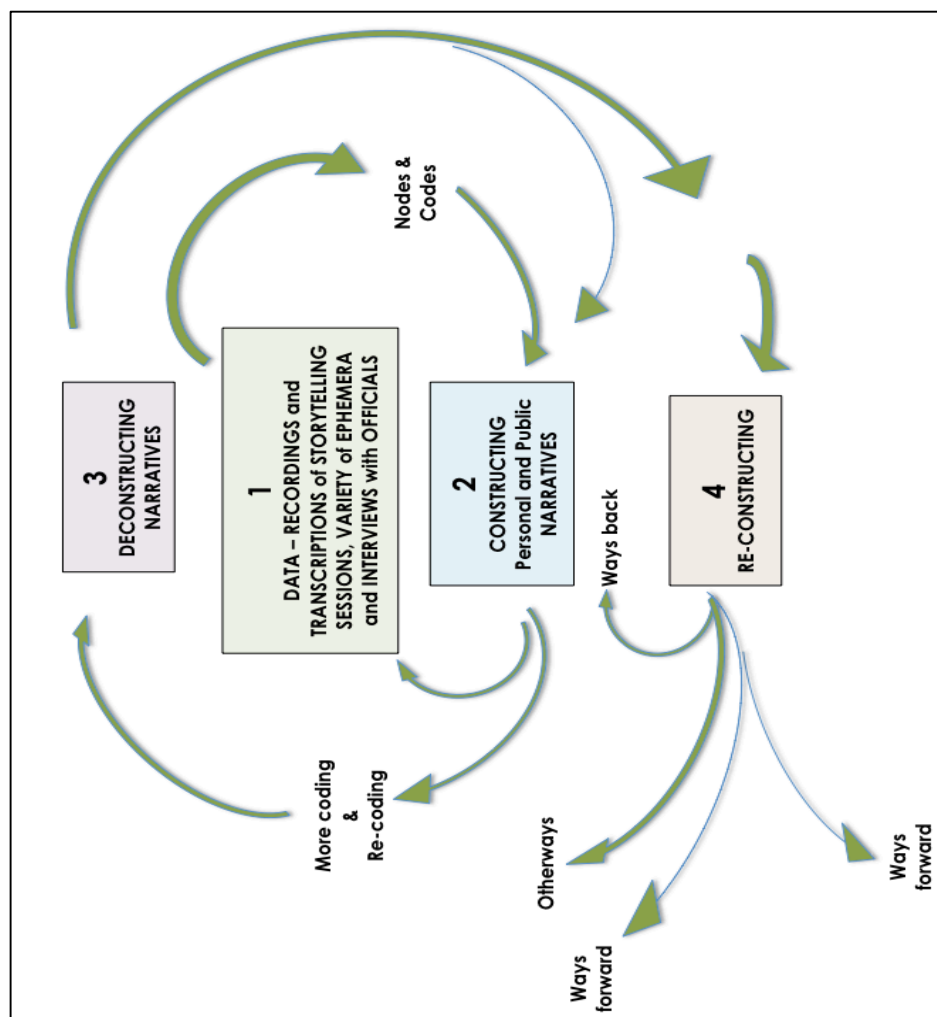


Figure 5 The Narrative Inquiry Approach

4.2 Stage 1 Data Gathering

4.2.1 Selection of Teachers

This section describes the processes of identifying, contacting and inviting geography teachers to share their stories.

There are only ten state secondary schools in Seychelles, eight on the main island of Mahe, one on Praslin and one on La Digue. There are also three private secondary schools where geography is taught in the English medium, to Cambridge IGCSE level, while a fourth private school offers a French based education. Letters were sent to all state schools and the three English private schools, through Headteachers to the Heads of Geography Departments, inviting geography teachers to participate in the research. In addition to these schools, two further institutions were approached. The first being SALS (the School of 'A' level Studies), the only state upper secondary institution to offer 'A' level courses, and the second being ALDEC (Adult Learning and Distance Education Centre), a government funded centre offering part-time, evening course, including geography IGCSE and 'A' level, to adults. Before any contact was made with teachers, permission to carry out school-based research was sought, in writing, from the Ministry of Education's Director of Schools (appendix 2).

After initial invitation letters were sent to schools, follow-up calls were made and, in some cases where it was difficult to reach the HoD by phone, school visits were undertaken. Contact was established with all but one of the fifteen institutions, and arrangements made for teachers to ask questions related to the purpose, parameters and practicalities of the research. Not all geography teachers felt they had the time to participate, and many explained by phone that they had not been teaching for long so felt unqualified or unconfident talking about their geography teaching. After this initial contact phase, face-to-face meetings were arranged with those who chose to collaborate. At the first session with each collaborator, details of informed consent were discussed, in line with BERA's professional research code of ethics and the ethical protocol approved by the Institute of Education (appendix 3). An 'information note'

outlining the research was provided (appendix 4) and a consent form (appendix 5) was discussed with, and signed by, each collaborator. The specific terms agreed with collaborators included permission to audio-record storytelling sessions on the strict condition that personal identities in both transcripts and final narratives would remain anonymous and all stories would be treated in confidence. This was ensured by the use of pseudonyms not only for each collaborator and their school (see table 6, below), but also for any teacher mentioned as part of their storytelling. This level of protection was necessary so collaborators felt secure in sharing personal experiences and opinions, especially given the intimate nature of Seychelles' teaching community. A further guarantee was made that any sensitive information forming part of the final thesis would only be used with collaborators' consent. All collaborators were also informed that they were entitled to discontinue their involvement in the research at any time, without any recrimination or sense of regret.

Table 6 Collaborating Teachers

Pseudonyms are used for both school and teachers' names		
	15 secondary schools (or equivalent) (private & state)	12 Collaborating Teachers (Dates of story-telling sessions)
1	Lekol Sitron	Anselma (7.11.2013, 19.3.2014 and 5.5.2014)
2	Lekol Bodanmyen	-
3	Lekol Zoliker	-
4	Lekol Kapisen	Bernadette (8.11.2013 and 28.3.2014)
5	Lekol Vetiver	Cecile and Danielle (5.11.2013 and 12.3.2014)
6	Lekol Bilenbi	Elva (25.10.2013) Farida and Guyliane (8.11.2013 and all three on the 25.3.2014)
7	Lekol Bordmer	-
8	Lekol Mangliye	-
9	Lekol Kalbas	Hilda and Ivan (15.11.2013)
10	Lekol Patatran	-
11	Lekol Bwa Mediz	-
12	Lekol Bwa Marmay	-
13	Lekol Bwa Rouz	Joel (15.11.2013 and 5.5.2014)
14	Lekol Bwa Kwiyer	Kristine (22.11.2013)
15	Lekol Bwa Dou	Lewis (14.12.2013)

In total twelve geography teachers, from eight schools, collaborated in the study (see table 6, above). Of the twelve collaborators, all were practising geography teachers. Eleven were from government institutions, while one taught in a private secondary school. Ten teachers taught secondary level geography up to IGCSE level, one taught 'A' level and one taught IGCSE geography at ALDEC, the adult education institution. Of the twelve collaborating teachers four were expatriate, although two had taught in Seychelles for more than 15 years while the remaining two expatriates for only two years.

Although geography departments in all state secondary schools were contacted not all teachers felt able to participate. The twelve teachers who did agree to share their stories, however, made up a significant proportion (around a third) of all practising secondary geography teachers in Seychelles, at the time of the study. Despite constituting a significant proportion of all geography teachers, the collaborators are not viewed in terms of a 'representative' sample since the need to select representative samples is not a prerequisite of narrative research. As discussed in section 3.2, narrative research does not require sampling to be carried out in a strict, positivist sense. Instead, participants in narrative inquiry are selected for the purposes of understanding personal experiences and exploring how individuals make sense of their lives (Longhurst in Clifford & Valentine, 2003:123). As such, the research relied on teachers' self-selection and their continued collaboration indicated a willingness to both share stories and, to some extent, support the aims and objectives of the study.

4.2.2 Collaborative Storytelling

The procedures and protocols followed during storytelling sessions are outlined in this section, alongside the ethical considerations that were made while sharing stories.

Sharing personal stories can be an emotional experience so the building of close and trusted relationships with narrative collaborators required considerable time (Gergen and Gergen, 1988, Webster and Mertova, 2007:

88). Negotiating access and ensuring adequate time was available to share stories was crucial so collaborators felt neither rushed, intimidated nor invaded. For some collaborators one session proved sufficient or follow-up proved difficult, while for others a series of follow-up sessions was scheduled, as their stories required further elaboration.

Collaborators chose the venue for each session, some preferring their staffroom, others the school library or their classrooms. Some collaborators preferred to share their stories individually, while others (for example Elva, Farida and Guyliane) attended some sessions together. Most sessions were conducted during the school day, either during lunch times or free-periods, which meant that time was often restricted and some conversations became distracted or were interrupted by more pressing school activities.

Boundaries for story telling needed to be negotiated and occasionally re-negotiated with collaborators. Boundaries established what was ethically acceptable and guarded against stories becoming too tangential or too demanding, both in terms of time and emotion. When storytelling became uncomfortable or too challenging for certain collaborators, space was provided so they could remain quiet or non-committal and, when necessary, time was offered for deeper reflection (Webster and Mertova, 2007:86).

The precautions and protocols outlined above provided the structure for open and honest storytelling sessions. Parameters were set and broad questions asked, in accordance with Chase's (in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005:662) suggestions for initiating story-telling or in-depth interviews. General questions, such as 'how did you become a geography teacher?' and 'how long have you been a geography teacher?' were used to initiate conversations, (see appendix 6, sample transcript 1 line 9,) although it was not always obvious which broad, follow-up questions would resonate. Familiarity with Seychelles geography education made the initiation of conversation easier and the adoption of an open, friendly posture put collaborators at ease and allowed conversations to flow as naturally as possible.

Broader 'contextual', as well as burrowing 'critical event' questions (Webster and Mertova, 2007:87) that aligned more closely to the research, were posed although a list of pre-determined questions was not used to direct the storytelling sessions. Instead more organic conversational dialogue was encouraged, so teachers felt confident to speak, unhindered by the need to respond to a rigid set of questions. At times stories moved 'beyond the logic of what [was] expected' (Chase, 2005:662), leading to paradoxical moments where, on one hand appropriate questions were needed so as to encourage teachers to share their story, but on the other hand, particular details and events were unknown, making such incidences difficult to cater for or anticipate. Despite difficulties in maintaining cohesive conversations, and avoiding tangential dialogue, stories were told and teachers felt in control of their story (Chase, 2005).

Burrowing questions, categorised as being 'sensitising', 'practical' or more 'theoretical' in nature (Webster and Mertova, 2007:87), were used to explore specific relationships, patterns and trends in teacher's geography curriculum making. When specific questions went unanswered or conversations came to a natural pause, supplementary and/or rephrased questions were asked to clarify possible misunderstandings and refocus conversations. Some sessions went beyond the designated hour, as teachers were keen to share stories, with some teachers agreeing to follow-up sessions (see table 6, above) so as to tell their story more thoroughly.

During each storytelling session, I tried to acknowledge that I was a 'guest in the private space' of my collaborator's world (Stake, 1998:103). This meant applying a strict code of ethics in terms of being respectful of collaborators' points of view and opinions. Earning the respect and gaining the trust of collaborators was paramount and a pre-requisite for attaining the right to re-tell stories on the collaborator's behalf (Sharp, 2009). I would not feel comfortable recounting teachers' personal stories if conversations had been conducted without explicit reference to the purpose and persuasion of the study (Samuel, 2009:6). In general, story gathering is fraught with ethically sensitive issues that throw up a series of difficult questions. Some of the questions I pondered during this phase of the research were: On what basis did teachers self-select?

What were their motives for collaborating? Were teachers denied the space to tell their stories if they felt their stories did not match my research aims? Were all collaborators treated equally? Were questions framed in ways that extracted stories I wanted to hear? Was discussion of certain topics foreclosed if I judged them to be irrelevant, too sensitive or too personal? Continued sensitivity to these deeper, ethical and psychoanalytic issues helped to ensure a degree of reflexivity that guided the interpretative process.

As Riessman (2008:23) explains, narrative interpretation works alongside the sharing of personal stories. Being reflexive about these concurrent processes required awareness that careful listening to the particularities of each story would, in turn, guide responses and subsequent questioning. This meant my research preconceptions were in play during conversations and these, in turn, are likely to have shaped the way stories were told (Riessman, 2008:24). I was also aware that teachers' stories constituted imitations or representations of their past experiences that were re-enacted and mediated during storytelling. Access to the 'real' events or experiences that formed part of teachers' stories was impossible so, instead, these were presented as mimeses, or mediated versions of events (Riessman, 2008:22). Being cognisant of this enabled the subsequent unpacking of some of the multiple voices and subjectivities contained within teachers' stories (Bakhtin, 1981).

4.2.3 Recoding, Translating and Transcribing Personal Stories

This section describes how the storytelling sessions were recorded, translated, transcribed and then validated by collaborators. The mechanics of recording and transcribing are described as well as an account of the related ethical issues encountered.

Prior to each storytelling session teachers were asked if they felt comfortable with being recorded and fortunately, they all responded positively. A digital audio-recording device was used on all but one occasion, when the device failed to work. All conversations were conducted in English, although some switching of language was used, which is a common trait in conversations amongst Seychellois, who are trilingual in English, French and *Kreol*. The

switching between English and *Kreol* was relatively straightforward given my level of *Kreol language* proficiency and familiarity with Seychellois' accents and phraseology. Conversations took place naturally and where inferences were not immediately clear, especially in the use of *Kreol* metaphor, teachers were asked to clarify meanings.

Transcription, according to Riessman (2008:28-29), transfers complex verbal exchanges (dynamic or 'messy' talk) into a linear, written form of representational text and is, thus, a deeply interpretive process. In effect, as Riessman (2008:29) argues, the same stretch of talk can be transcribed in many different ways, depending on the theoretical and methodological approach and purpose of the research. Given that the narrative process of transcription relies so heavily on the researcher's interpretative powers and persuasions, I produced each transcript personally and with great care (see appendix 6, for transcription samples). The audio-recordings were first uploaded into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis computer programme that facilitates transcription. Using the Microsoft version 10 of NVivo, the audio recordings were listened to and transcribed line by line. In group sessions, when teachers talked over each other it occasionally proved difficult to decipher who said what, so in these instances I also relied on handwritten notes taken during each session.

During transcription the matter of understanding certain English accents, expressions and phraseology did arise. Both Seychellois and expatriate collaborators spoke English with accents that were, at times, difficult to understand, so the audio-recordings were replayed several times in some instances. Collaborators also used certain expressions or phraseology that could not sensibly be transcribed verbatim. In order to provide clarity and make sense of certain passages of conversation, grammatical and linguistic restructuring was carefully carried out so that the essence of teachers' messages remained intact.

Ethical issues on three levels, philosophical, positional and practical (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006), were experienced during transcription. While transcription attempts to preserve the essence of conversations, it nevertheless remains a

highly interpretive construct. Similar to the act of collaborative storytelling, when producing transcripts it is not possible to occupy a 'neutral objective position, merely presenting what was said' (Riessman, 2008:28). Instead my involvement in constituting the transcripts, that I subsequently went on to analyse (Samuel, 2009:12), must be fully acknowledged. As such, conversations were converted into text most suited for narrative analysis, meaning that the transcription process was a directed one. Methods for involving other data and meaning, such as the storyteller's intonation, body language, hesitations, etc., were not used, meaning that my textual representations of dynamic talk are incomplete. This echoes Cole's (2012) assertion that transcriptions of stories are 'compromises' as they are only ever partial.

To mitigate the risks of false or overly distorted transcriptions and, in an effort to be as transparent and collaborative as possible, copies of transcripts were shared with each collaborator, where feasible. Collaborators who took part in only one session and could not be reached for follow-up sessions were not able to view their transcripts. Attempts to email transcripts to certain teachers proved futile (due to teacher's limited internet access) so printed copies were given to collaborators at second and subsequent sessions. Most teachers read through and verified their transcripts and in one case a teacher requested a section from one transcript be removed because he felt certain details were too sensitive. This 'member-checking' procedure minimised the risk of misrepresenting or misappropriating teachers' stories and allowed for a collaborative approach to the verification and validation of the final transcripts.

The process of transcript verification by collaborators, however, is not without risk. Collaborators may decide to 'strategically mimic a (different) identity' (Samuel, 2009:16) to the ones adopted during storytelling sessions. Teachers may choose to represent themselves in certain ways, especially when their spoken conversations are committed to paper. This switching of identity can be problematic, in cases where there is a tendency to 'mask the truth' and downplay or overplay certain aspects of their experience. The 'foregrounding' or 'back-grounding' of certain events and opinions may be done so that teachers present a more 'negative' or 'positive' image of their situation, in order

to serve their own or the perceived purpose of the researcher. This mimetic condition is indicative of the 'internal dialogue' that teachers engage in, as they present their personal stories (Samuel, 2009:16).

The issue of representation, in terms of whether the transcripts and narratives authentically represent collaborators' voices, presented ethical problems on a philosophical level. My positioning, as an 'outsider within', presented further ethical concerns, of which some are outlined in sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.2, above. On a more practical level, conducting, recording, translating and transcribing stories was irregular and 'messy'. Put simply, the data collection process was iterative rather than linear (Clandinin and Connelly, 1989:14, Freeman, 1996 in Samuel, 2009) so certain stories may appear uneven or inconsistent.

4.2.4 Collection of 'public' stories

A wide variety of public information and data were collected in addition to the stories that teachers shared. 'Public stories' were gathered in order to narrate a geography education 'as told' in the public domain. This section describes the methods used to source relevant, publicly available data.

Gaining access to official documents, reports, and statistics is notoriously difficult in Seychelles, with limited circulation of official reports and research that, in theory, should be in the public domain. Historically, the Ministry of Education has relied on press statements published in the government-controlled newspaper, *The Nation*, to disseminate news and information about education policy and practice. More recently copies of policy documents and a selection of official reports and plans, alongside summative statistics, have been available to download on the Ministry's website, but the service is unstable and often unavailable. My long established ties with many in Seychelles' education community allowed access to certain 'published' material, such as curriculum documents and education policies, which were not readily available through conventional sources. Using such relationships was often the only way to access 'public' documents that were not held in either the National Library, the Ministry of Education Documentation Centre, school offices or on the Ministry's website.

Given the relative paucity of published information by the Ministry of Education, other forms of ‘public’ or ‘declared’ statements were sourced. Web-based articles relating to geography education in the daily and weekly newspapers were scanned, as well as publicly available education blogs and online commentary. Conversations with a number of key geography education professionals (see table 7, below) were also held. During conversations with officials at the Ministry of Education, the Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education (SITE) and other public organisations, notes and journal entries were made, samples of which can be found in appendix 7. The assorted ephemera were then used collectively to construct a ‘public’ account of Seychelles geography education.

Table 7 List of Key Officials involved in Geography Education

Key officials involved in geography education (past and present):
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ghislaine Boniface, Social Science Curriculum Coordinator, Ministry of Education. • Louisette Morel, Initial Teacher Trainer, SITE. • Maureen Ellenberger, ex-Curriculum Coordinator for Geography, NIE • Dr. Dorothy Felix, Senior Policy Analyst, Ministry of Education, and BEd Secondary Geography lecturer, SITE. • Francoise Mein, ex-geography teacher, ex-teacher trainer, Director at ANHRD. • Dr. Michele Martin, ex-teacher trainer, Director for Sustainability for Seychelles • Dr. MT Purvis, ex-director of the National Institute of Education. • Egbert Benstrong, ex-Director of Centre for Curriculum, Assessment and Teacher Support (CCATS), Ministry of Education. • Dr. Odile De Commarmond, Director of Centre for Curriculum, Assessment and Teacher Support (CCATS), Ministry of Education. • Jean-Michel Domingue, past CEO Seychelles Qualifications Authority, CEO of the Tertiary Education Commission. • Penda Choppy, Director of the <i>Kreol</i> Institute

4.3 Stage 2 Constructing the Narratives

This section describes the second stage of the inquiry process. To make meaning from the everyday familiarities of teaching geography in Seychelles, a ‘re-storying’ or narrative construction was carried out. The construction of narratives constituted the primary phase of analysis, where the personal stories and publicly ‘declared’ accounts of geography education were scrutinised and re-storied in order to explore new ways for thinking about experience, practice and teacher knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 1989:14).

4.3.1 Constructing the Personal Narratives

Twelve teachers shared their stories of geography curriculum making. Their stories were recorded, transcribed and preliminarily assessed during the data gathering stage. Transcripts from the first round of storytelling sessions underwent a 'first reading' to locate meaningful elements (Braun & Clarke, 2006:89) and identify critical events, experiences and relationships. A hand drawn diagram was produced to help conceptualise the key elements and relationships, see figure 6, below.

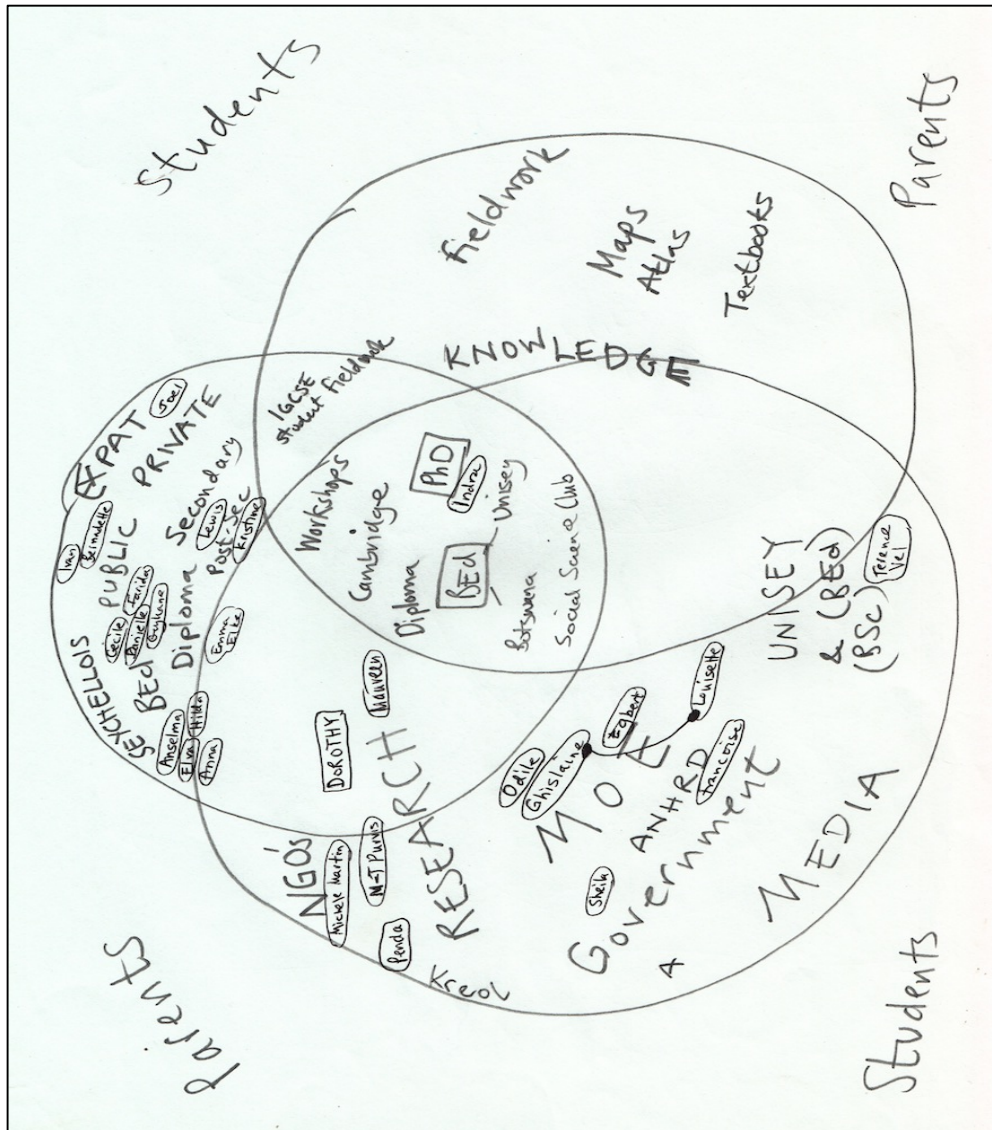


Figure 6 Hand drawn diagram to identify elements, events and relationships between the twelve teachers, their geography teaching and the wider education context

The three overlapping circles (figure 6, above), representing the collaborators, geographical knowledge and the educational context, were placed within a broader milieu, represented by young Seychellois and their parents. Teachers were divided into various categories, Seychellois or non-Seychellois, state or private school, and those with secondary, post-secondary, diploma or post-diploma qualifications. These categories were not mutually exclusive, and in the case of teachers who were non-Seychellois, some identified as Seychellois because of the length of time they had lived in Seychelles.

The twelve collaborating teachers often made reference to their subject mentors and trainers, as well as key people in the Ministry of Education and elsewhere, who had directly or in-directly influenced their geography teaching. Some of these people formed part of a wider circle of geography educators. A sense of the web of experience and connected lives of geography teachers was revealed and this is illustrated in figure 7, below.

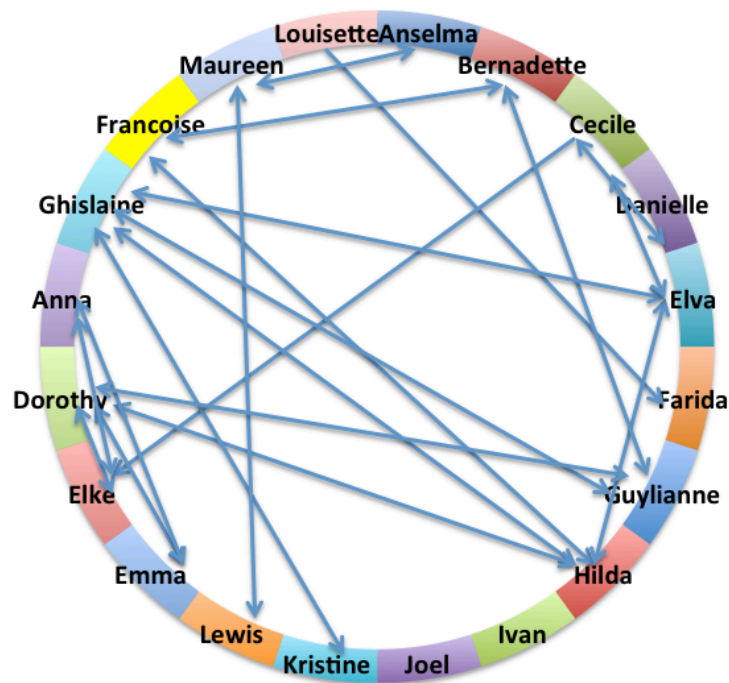


Figure 7 Professional relationships between the 12 collaborators and the wider geography education community

A priori theoretical and epistemological standpoints were used to guide the first reading of the transcripts (Braun & Clarke, 2006:84) and explicit (etic) codes were extracted using ideas and concepts derived from the main research

questions (Owens, 2011:84). Coding involves the establishment and attribution of codes, 'the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data... that can be assessed in a meaningful way' (Boyatzis, 1998:63 in Braun & Clarke, 2006). As Braun & Clark (2006:88) explain:

'...the process of coding is part of analysis...as you are organising your data into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005). However, your coded data differ from the units of analysis (your themes), which are (often) broader. Your themes, which you start to develop in the next phase, are where the interpretative analysis of the data occurs (Boyatzis, 1998).
(Braun & Clarke, 2006:88)

During the first reading of the primary round of transcripts, implicit ideas and events (emic codes) also emerged. This initial process of emic and etic coding was 'circular, sporadic and...messy' (Cope, 2003:451 in Owens, 2011:84) and required constant reflexivity so as to embrace new ways of understanding the stories. The codes identified in the initial phase were summarized in the form of a 'word cloud' (see fig. 8, below). The word cloud gives greater prominence to the codes that appeared more frequently in the primary transcripts. Some of the codes were found to be less critical when new concepts and ideas came to the fore during subsequent readings.



Figure 8 Word Cloud of phenomenon coded during initial reading of transcripts

With a developed sense of the critical events and experiences gained from reading the initial session transcripts, deeper, more directed storytelling was possible at subsequent sessions. The emergence of emic as well as etic codes

prompted a re-negotiation of the analytical process, permitting, as Samuel's (2009:13) describes, both an 'outsider' and 'insider' research stance (fig. 9, below).

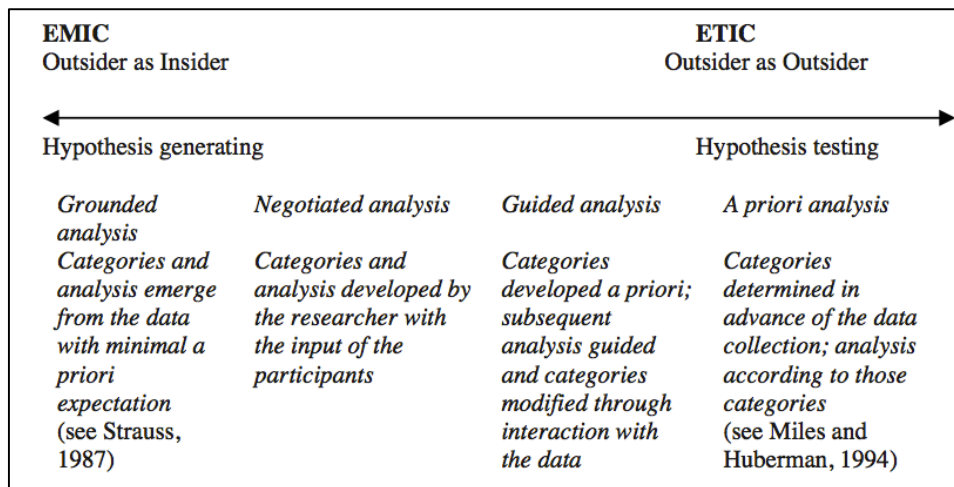


Figure 9 Data analysis and interpretation

Source: Samuel, 2009:13 (adapted from Freeman, 1996)

After the first phase of reading and coding, the second step towards narrative construction involved the further development of ideas and the identification of critical events and experiences using both primary and subsequent (follow-up session) transcripts. Diagrams were drawn (see figures 10 and 12 below) to help collect and sort ideas generated from the readings, into more recognisable themes. Drawing diagrams helped to organise thoughts into concrete ideas and allowed the exploration of a variety of ways to create the narratives.

One diagram (fig. 10, below) was pivotal in providing a plan for crafting the final narratives. Building on the 'relationships' diagram (figure 7, above), I enlarged the collaborators circle (outer ring) and placed within it a smaller circle. This inner circle represented a fusion of common themes, ideas, key events and experiences of the community of geography educators (including the twelve collaborating teachers) who occupy the outer circle. Drawing their stories together and devising a set of trial narrator identities (inner circle) helped conceptualise the stories that would eventually become the final narratives in the study.

(purple) were gathered together and consolidated to form Odette's story. Similarly, Kristine and Lewis' stories were synthesized to form Simon's story. The blending and merging of stories not only helped to consolidate key themes and ideas, giving each of the final narratives a particular character and rationale, but also helped the process of meaning-making (Clandinin and Connelly, 1989).

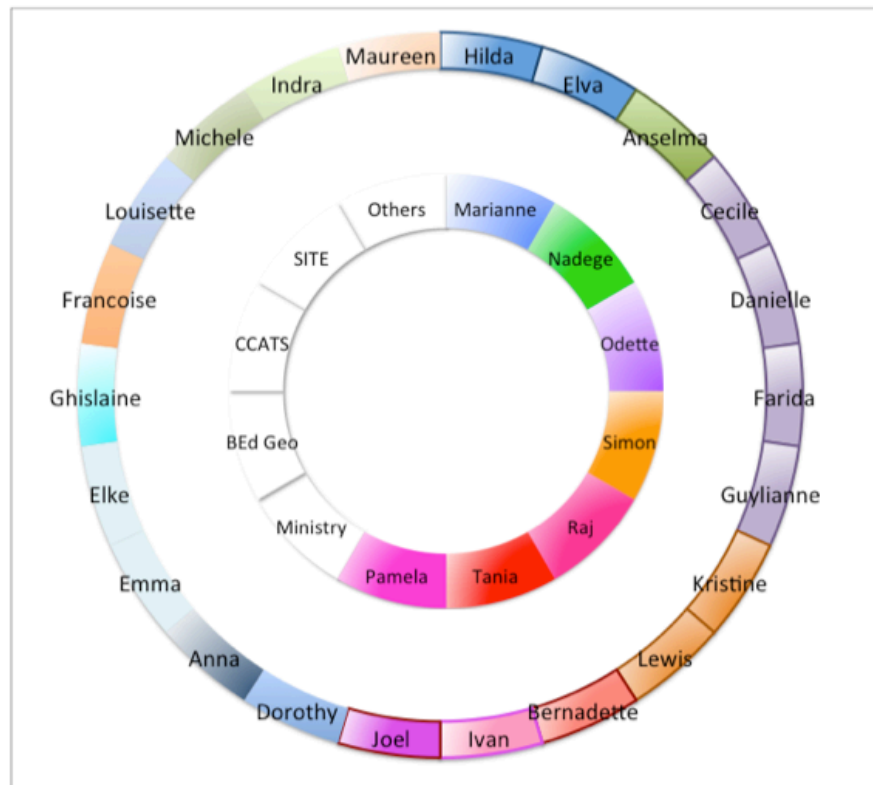


Figure 11 Simplified geography educator circles

The geography educators identified on the left of the outer circle (fig. 11, above) were among those interviewed from the Ministry of Education and past and present teacher training institutions. The white-coloured section of the inner circle represents the public or 'declared' stories that were told, as well as other stories of geography education expressed in the public domain. The 'public' testimonies both aided the construction of a public narrative of geography education and helped contextualise the personal narratives.

The creative 'playing' with ideas using diagrams was erratic but proved highly productive in terms of distinguishing core themes and critical events. A final

hand-drawn diagram (fig, 12, below) further consolidated and synergised the phenomena into five broad themes, and these were used to frame the final narratives.

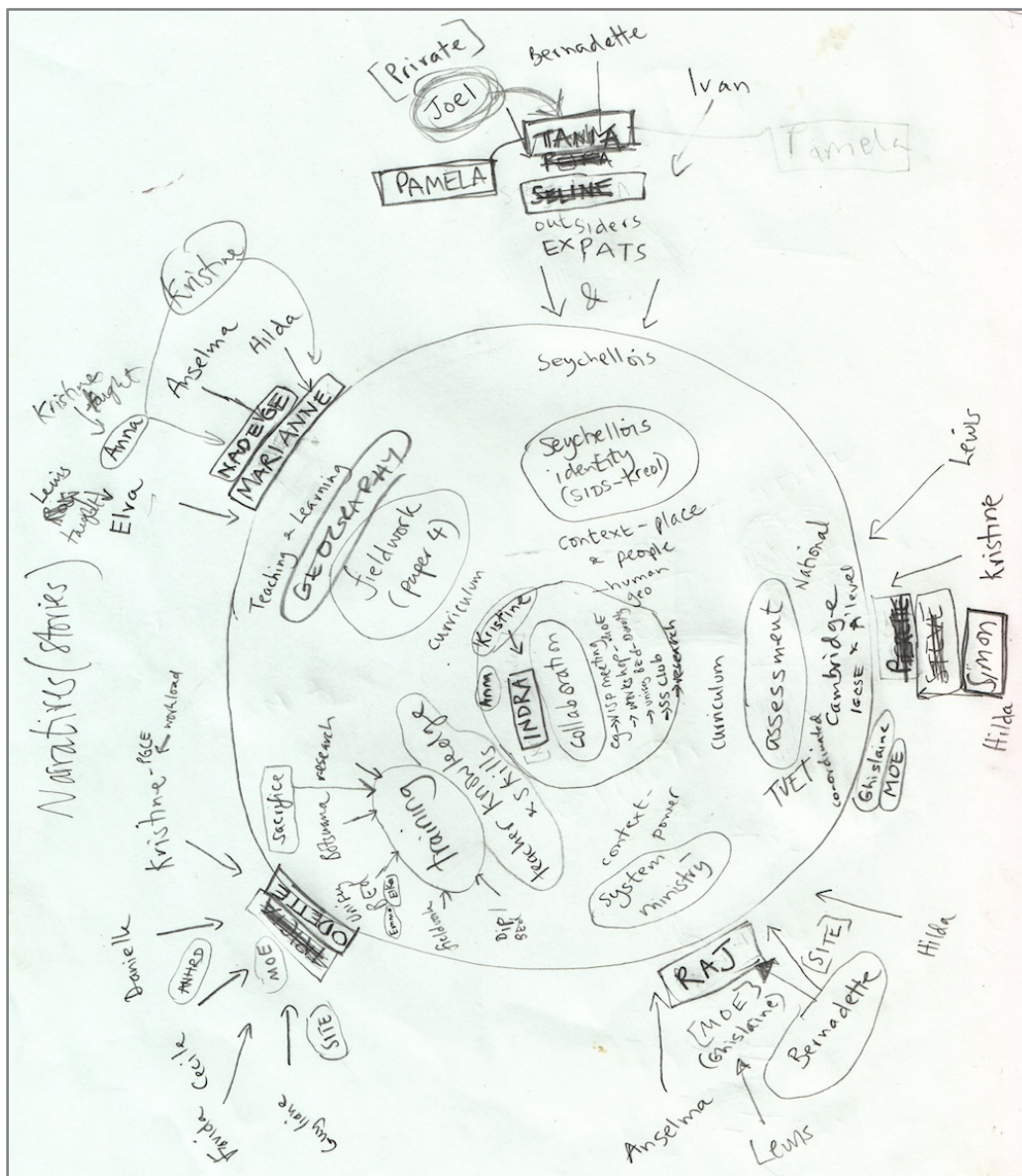


Figure 12 Synergising of five core themes for the personal narratives

The themes (shown more clearly in fig. 13, below) provided the scaffolding needed to build the personal narratives, giving each story a distinct architecture. Simon's narrative, for example, relates a story of geography curriculum and assessment in Seychelles. His story is mainly drawn from Kristine and Lewis' transcripts but also includes the voices of other teachers.

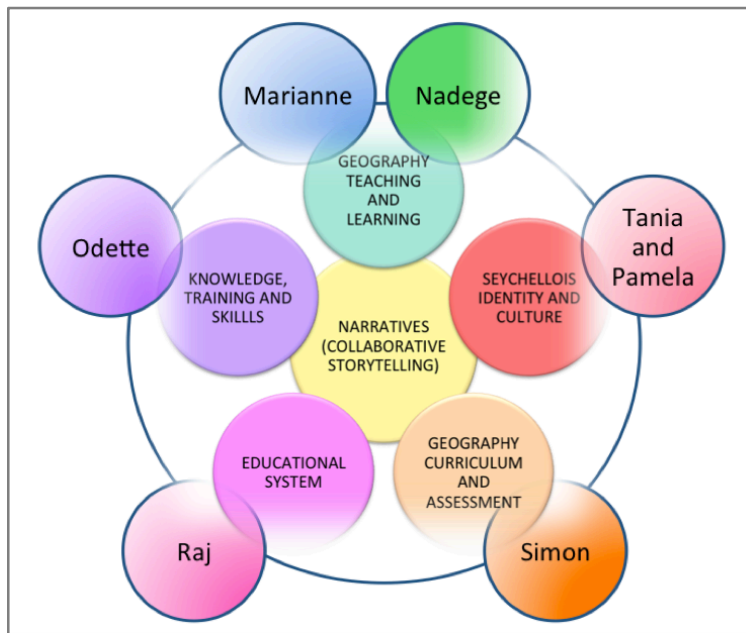


Figure 13 Six narrators and five broad themes

Although Clandinin and Connelly (1989) contend that the methods of narrative analysis and meaning-making necessitate that certain stories are drawn together, the procedures for synthesising stories are not clear. For this research, in addition to my creative drawings, both manual and digital coding with NVivo were used to identify relevant passages in each of the source stories (transcripts). Over the course of multiple readings sections related to the themes in each transcript were manually sorted with the aid of Excel spreadsheets. This was complimented by the digital coding, sorting and filtering of key passages using NVivo (see appendix 8). Working with NVivo was an illuminating experience. Being able to code and then quickly collate ideas and events enhanced the systematic search for commonalities and discrepancies in the teachers' transcripts. The digital coding process helped with the comparison, amalgamation and evaluation of the transcripts, revealing ideas and events that were then collated with those identified manually.

To construct each narrative, the selected passages of text from the original transcribed source stories were crafted together around each of the broad themes. To ensure that the original sources could be easily identified each passage of text was labelled using line-referenced notation (examples are provided in appendix 9). The notation system used the first letter of the

collaborator's name and then the respective line number in their transcript. In Simon's case, for instance, one section of his narrative is labelled as L1 LN109-111. This means the original source of this section is line numbers LN109-111 of Lewis' (L1) transcript. All six narratives were initially produced in this way so that reference could easily be made to the relevant passages in the source stories.

The careful referencing of the original transcripts (source-stories) was a fundamental part of the construction process as it ensured that collaborators' voices were not lost or misappropriated. While time-consuming, this meticulous cross-referencing was considered a rigorous method for validating and corroborating the six personal narratives. Furthermore, each narrative is not limited by, or to, its theme. Constructing narratives that were as rich and as authentic as possible (Webster and Mertova, 2007), meant that personal details, events, experiences and opinions not directly related to the central theme, were also included. The key themes did, however, provide the starting point for the deconstruction of each of the six stories (see section 4.4, below).

4.3.2 Constructing a 'public' narrative

Built around the same themes framing the personal narratives, a public narrative was constructed using an assortment of press statements, published newspaper articles, written by both government and non-government agencies, social media blogs and websites, education policies, curriculum documents, exam reports and classroom textbooks (see figure 14, below).

In order to sort the many public sources of information about geography education, NVivo was used to store and process most data, using a discrete database and coding structure. While the personal narratives were coded on a Mac version of NVivo, the data sources for a public narrative were entered into a PC NVivo database in order to analyse them independently. By separating the 'public' dataset from the personal stories, the two datasets were treated as distinct entities so a fresh lens could be applied to the public story. This approach is similar to that of Walshe (2007) who realised that her first set of coding 'limited (her) interpretation of the data'. Entering the public data into a

new NVivo database allowed for a new way of seeing things, as each source had to be classified afresh (see appendix 10). During the classification and coding process, novel events and relationships were identified, which helped to anchor the narrative. Once these key events, such as the inauguration of the Social Science Teacher Club, were identified the process of writing the narrative became possible.

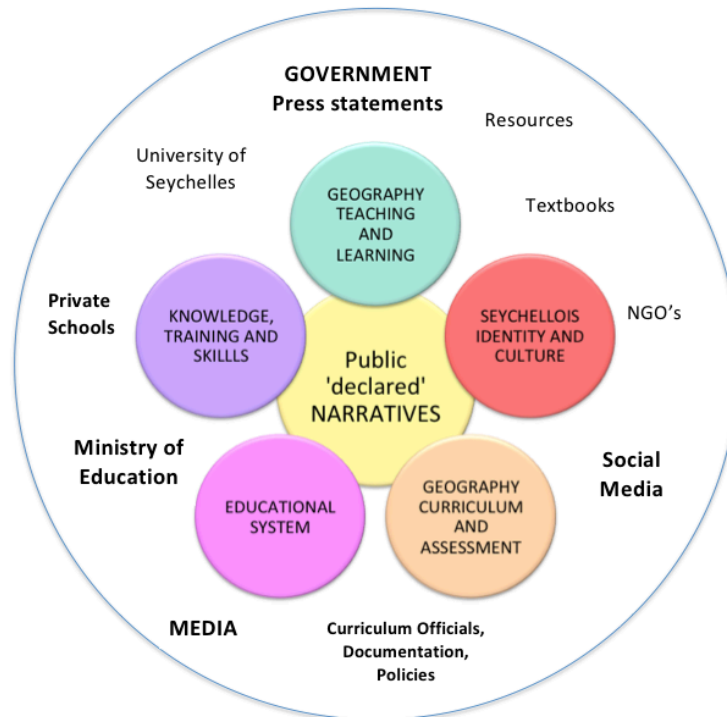


Figure 14 Public Narrative themes

Employing the same five themes used to frame the personal narratives helped to provide narrative coherence and continuity. The educational timeline (appendix 1) also gave the narrative a temporal frame of reference. Critical events, such as the switching from Cambridge ‘O’ level to IGCSE in 2005, became very apparent, and helped shaped the narrative.

My ‘public’ narrative presents one version of the ‘declared’ social story of geography education, sourced from in a wide variety of published documents and artefacts as well as articulated by public officials with a responsibility for geography education. The media, the government and civil society have a vested interest in geography education, and through public statements and publications their institutional views and concerns are expressed. To some

extent the 'declared' narrative constitutes a more traditional data set, since it is constructed from more 'official' and publicly recognised sources of knowledge about geography education.

4.4 Stages 3 and 4: Deconstructing and reconstructing the narratives

While a 'negotiated' (Samuels, 2009) or 'in-between' (Chilisa, 2012:25) analytical methodology was used to construct the personal and public narratives, a deeper phase of analysis was undertaken using a process of deconstruction. Closely associated with the French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930-2004), deconstruction is an analytical strategy for exposing and challenging the conceptual rigidity and hegemony of 'single' stories (Barnett, 2009:147). By assuming that meanings and knowledge are not fixed or stable, deconstruction tries to show that meaning is conditional and contextual, revealing multiple realities (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007:12). Derrida regarded narratives not simply as neutral texts that have structure, but as modes of thought that are agentic and political (Bruner, 1997). Narratives legitimise meaning through their reliance on institutionalised sets of meaning, which, in turn, marginalise 'other' meanings (Shapiro, 2009:321). Through the process of re-telling and analysing the 'other' stories of geography education my deconstructive analysis attempted to uncover diverse meanings, examine and then challenge them.

The iterative process of deconstruction was initially guided by the three research questions (in section 2.4). The questions created *a priori* categories of meaning (Samuel, 2009:12), which were used to examine the stories from a pre-emptive, 'outsider' perspective. During the process of telling stories and constructing the narratives, further ideas and categories of analysis emerged. These 'insider' meanings, coming from the stories themselves, revealed what was 'intended' by the narratives, and these deliberate meanings were also examined. The deconstruction phase of the analysis then explored what was going on, in terms of meaning, behind the stories (Winter, 2013:184-185). So, while an 'insider lens' was used to examine the stories' intended meaning, an second 'outsider' lens was used to go beyond these meanings and explore

what may have been omitted, excluded, marginalized or ignored (Winter, 2013:184-185). To do this, the deconstructive analysis 'triangulated' knowledge stored in the personal and public stories with the broader discourses that shape geography education (Chilisa, 2012:131).

To help frame the broader context the following 'three commonplaces' or dimensions of 'inquiry space' (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006:479) were used:

Temporality:

Recognition that events and people always have a past, present, and a future. Narrative inquiry tries to understand people, places, and events as in process, as always in transition.

Sociality:

Concerned with personal (feelings, hopes, desires, moral dispositions etc.) and social conditions (the environment, surrounding factors, forces and people, that form each individual's context).

Place:

The specific concrete, physical and topological boundaries of place in which events take place. In narrative inquiry, the specificity of location is crucial.

(Connelly and Clandinin, 2006:479-480)

The temporality dimension is often used by indigenous researchers who believe that storytelling is a way of 'coming to know the past' (Chilisa, 2012) and that sharing stories is a way of 'recovering...stories of the past' (Smith, 1999:37-39). My deconstructive approach, however, did not only examine the discursive practices within which Seychellois geography teachers 'come to know their past', but also examined how teachers located themselves in the present and future. The dimensions of place and sociality extended the framework and provided a more complex structure for the deconstruction.

Due to the interconnectedness of temporality, sociality and place, both within and beyond each narrative, the deconstruction process was understandably problematic and imprecise. First, each of the initial questions was connected to a specific dimension. The temporal nature of understanding how geography teachers weave notions of their past, present and future into their geography

teaching and how they were able to reflect on their roles as geography educators in a changing society, is obvious. Therefore the temporality dimension was used to address the first research question. Similarly, understanding the specificities of place and space helped to unpack the second research question about the distinctiveness of *Kreol* geography education. The third question, concerning teachers' professional self-worth, was linked to the sociality dimension so, in turn, examining aspects of temporality, place and sociality within each narrative provided a way to tackle the research questions.

The deconstruction process uncovered more complex issues that led to the generation of more profound questions. These questions necessitated a 'simultaneous exploration of all three commonplaces' (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006:479) and this explorative analysis is presented in the final chapter of the thesis. To facilitate the analysis of both the research questions and emerging issues, a series of colour-coded matrices, in the form of excel spreadsheets, were created. These matrices helped to sort ideas into the three dimensions so that each question could be considered, while also helping to reveal multi-dimensional issues that needed further interpretation. A sample of these analytical matrices is presented in appendix 11.

The many layers of narrative interpretation, both in the construction and deconstruction phases of analysis, made this inquiry both methodologically and ethically complex. Reflexive scrutiny, of both the geography education narratives and the context within which they were told, was essential for a coherent analysis to take place. Coherence, in terms of the way the narratives could be linked to theory (Riessman, 2008:189) was necessary for the analysis to move beyond the immediate spaces in which geography teachers' lives were experienced. So, while the narratives opened up space for teachers to describe their practice, deconstruction and final reconstruction created space for the recounting of practice through a different lens. The lens used to reconstruct the stories turned its gaze in the future, in order to anticipate what lies ahead for geography education in Seychelles.

Chapter Five Personal narratives of geography education

Introduction

This chapter presents a range of personal narratives of teaching geography in Seychelles. The stories recounted by Marianne, Nadege, Tania, Pamela, Simon, Raj and Odette are rooted in teachers' professional experiences and are each loosely constructed around a key theme (see figure 13, section 4.3.1, above). The themes do not restrict the narratives, but act as signposts for the deconstruction and deeper analysis found in chapters 7 and 8.

Marianne and Nadege are experienced Seychelloise social science teachers, both having completed their BEd in Social Science at Edith Cowan University, Australia. While Marianne is a HoD and teaches IGCSE geography, Nadege has not yet taught IGCSE classes. Both their stories focus on the teaching and learning of geography in state secondary schools. Odette, a Seychelloise, has been teaching geography IGCSE for more than 5 years but has still not had the opportunity to do a BEd degree. Her desire for more geographical knowledge, skills and training is the principal theme of her story. Simon, also a Seychellois, has recently retired but taught both A' level and IGCSE geography. His story focuses on the nature of the geography curriculum and related assessment practices. The three non-Seychellois teachers, Raj, Tania and Pamela, represent an assortment of stories. While Pamela teaches IGCSE geography in a private school, Tania and Raj teach in the state sector. Tania narrates both her own and Pamela's stories of teaching geography in Seychelles, providing an insight into Seychellois culture and identity, while Raj, who has lived in Seychelles for more than 20 years relates his experiences of teaching geography within the Seychelles educational system.

5.1 Marianne

Marianne is the Social Science HoD at Lekol Bilembi. She has over 6 years geography teaching experience and graduated with a BEd in Social Science from Edith Cowan University in Australia. She chose to share her story across a series of free periods and break times and preferred to remain in the staffroom, although at times it was noisy, as all windows of the staffroom were kept open to allow for a free flow of

air. On one occasion she apologised for the interruptions as students kept coming into the staffroom to see her, as she was busy sorting out permission slips for a field trip. On another occasion we both ended up laughing as she realised I had noticed her brush termite dust from her skirt, as termites were slowly eating the underside of the staff room table.

“Being a geography teacher wasn't really my first choice. I wanted to be an agronomist but the careers guidance lady said that agronomy wasn't a priority for Seychelles. At the time the government was offering university scholarships in tourism and education so I decided to switch to education. I liked history and geography so I thought I'd train in these two subjects. I went to the NIE to do the teaching diploma and then was offered a scholarship to do my BEd at Edith Cowan. There were about 10 of us doing the BEd in history and geography and others doing BEd maths or English. We were the last batch because the ministry no longer sends BEd students to Australia. The time I spent in Australia was really great. I had the opportunity to see so many places, and it's helped me put Seychelles into perspective. I took so many pictures, which I use in the classroom because my students love seeing them.”

As she spoke, I wondered how her experiences in Australia might have shaped her geography teaching in other ways and was going to ask her but she moved on to talk about her present responsibilities.

“I've been teaching history and geography for more than 6 years, and this year I'm only teaching geography because we've got enough history teachers, three expatriates. For geography there's two expatriates and me. I don't really have close contact with other geography teachers except one HoD who was with me in Australia. I see her when we (*all the HoDs*) are called to the ministry to discuss ideas like the new curriculum or the format for the national exam. At the ministry I also see Ms Ghislaine, she was one of my geography teachers at NIE but now she works at the ministry, coordinating geography. She tries her best but the ministry don't really offer us much CPD and the HoD meetings are really just to pass on information.”

Marianne seemed frustrated that meetings at the ministry were not more productive or inspiring, although she was eager not to criticise her former teacher. While she spoke I was wondering why she didn't have much contact with other geography teachers. Before I could ask, she went on to offer ideas about how the curriculum could be improved:

“The ministry have been talking about updating the geography curriculum but so far there is only the new curriculum framework. We need to update S1-S3 geography because some topics are too long. We don’t have time to finish some of the topics, especially in S3. Sometimes the S3 exam is placed at the end of the year and there is time to finish all the topics, but when the S3 exam is at the end of the second term we struggle to finish.”

I was curious as to why the timing of the S3 exam kept changing, but Marianne continued by talking about teaching some of the S1-S3 geography topics:

“A lot of the topics we teach are not related to anything in particular. They are very abstract. I think we should change some of the topics, like development and trade for example. It’s a really big topic and we’re expected to dilute it for S1-3. Trade itself is a huge topic because you can’t explain one thing without going into more detail. Maybe we should just keep the development topic and leave out trade. Also, when we teach volcanoes in S2 the students get confused. They ask ‘Miss, how do rocks come out of the earth?’ They seem to understand earthquakes a bit better, I don’t know why. Even with the ‘natural regions’ topic, I try to explain tropical rainforests and tropical deserts but when it comes to tropical monsoons they’re lost. They ask ‘Miss, how come we get different types of climate?’ Even when you explain that certain locations get certain types of weather, they find it hard.”

Marianne felt sorry for the students who struggled with some of the topics and I could understand her sympathies. I asked which topics she enjoyed teaching:

”I don’t mind teaching any topic if the students are motivated, although I don’t like teaching energy, it’s quite a long topic, going through all the types of energy. Geothermal energy is OK but when it comes to coal, oil...the students don’t understand the formations. For example, when you explain anticlines, they don’t get it, and folding is really hard for them to understand. They find geothermal and HEP easier but when you start explaining wave power and tidal, it’s like Greek to them. Generally students prefer human topics like population or topics where they get to talk about things in Seychelles, like farming. They like the farming topic because some of them get to visit a farm

and we have people from the Ministry of Agriculture come in to talk about things like food security in Seychelles.”

Although I was interested in exploring why Marianne’s students preferred topics in which they could learn about Seychelles, I sensed Marianne was reluctant to go into more detail, so I asked about her experiences of teaching IGCSE Geography:

“This year, because we have enough history and geography teachers there is a small group of S4 IGCSE students doing both geography and history. Usually students have to choose either history or geography and mostly they choose geography. Even though most opt for geography it’s not because they like the subject, it’s because they don’t like history. Students tell me they’d rather do geography because in history there’s too many notes to copy whereas geography has more diagrams!”

Marianne felt too many students were choosing geography for the wrong reasons. With such a limited choice, students ended up doing geography despite having little interest in the subject.

“I’ve got a low ability S4 class and I’m trying to teach them hazardous environments. I thought they’d be interested to learn about tropical cyclones, earthquakes and so on, but my gosh, it’s a headache. They don’t understand anything and yet they still have to follow the IGCSE syllabus. They know they won’t be selected to sit the final Cambridge exam, but we make them sit the same assessments as the others. They hardly score anything in the S4 assessments and then when they get to S5 we tell them they haven’t been selected for the Cambridge exam.”

Marianne was disheartened when she spoke about her low ability S4 students, as the school system wasn’t able to offer them alternatives to the IGCSE assessments even though they were not sitting the final IGCSE exam. I asked about the resources she had to support her teaching:

“For IGCSE we use the textbook 'Tropical Maps' but we've had the textbooks for quite some time and students have drawn in them and written in the answers, so they're not in a good condition. We also use the maps from past IGCSE papers for our mock exams and revision. We're supposed to give the

IGCSE maps back to the ministry but we keep them! For S1-S3 we've got 5 sets of photocopied maps, which we use over and over again and we also use the local textbooks 'Physical Geography of Seychelles' and 'Human Geography of the Seychelles'. These books haven't been updated for years though. For example, in the 'Population' section of the book, the pyramid is from 1978!

I was amazed that teachers were still using the same textbooks I had used 20 years ago. I also wondered why the ministry collected the IGCSE maps and question papers as it seemed understandable that teachers would want to keep possession of them.

"We try to develop our some of own resources in the department and we use the 'Wider World' with different level classes. The 'Wider World' covers most topics and it's colourful, but the batch we have is old with lots of pages missing. For the lower achievers it's difficult to set questions or design activities for them using the books we have. And most of the time the photocopier is not available so it's hard to photocopy worksheets. I end up setting questions from the book that I know they can't do."

The frustration in Marianne's voice was clear. She seemed resigned and felt there was no way to change the situation for her lower ability students. Marianne continued by describing the difficulties of using alternative resources, such as audio-visual materials, in her lessons:

"I'd love to teach using my laptop and a projector but the school only has a projector for the TVET programme. The students enjoy lessons with the projector but there's too many logistics to borrowing and setting it up. Unfortunately we don't have any videos for geography and even if we did there'd be a problem because most classrooms don't have electricity so we can't use the TV. There's electricity in the labs so we can use the TV in the labs, but most of the time they're occupied. The school has tried to fix the electricity in the classrooms but usually there's no socket or the socket isn't working."

Marianne continued to talk about her teaching, turning to the issue of fieldwork:

"I've mostly taught myself how to do fieldwork and I've bought my own books to help me teach the IGCSE paper 4 because the 'Wider World' doesn't have anything on fieldwork. Some paper 4 questions are a real struggle. For

example, there was this exam question about drawing a graph to show a beach profile. I got the students to plot the data on the x and y axis, but then when I looked at the mark scheme what the students had done was wrong. The mark scheme showed the data in degrees, so I had difficulties. Sometimes I give the students the wrong marks, because the marking scheme is not really clear.”

Our conversation was interrupted by three students returning permission slips for the field trip. When we resumed, Marianne continued to talk about the resources she uses to help teach the IGCSE course:

“We get access to past papers, mark schemes and examiners’ reports online, on the Cambridge website. The reports are quite detailed, although most teachers don’t make much use of them. I do my own exam analysis but really we need some training, especially the new teachers because they struggle. People from Cambridge came to do some training a while back but I wasn’t teaching then so I didn’t get it. We need training in fieldwork and how to mark paper 4 type questions. The ministry don’t give us the full IGCSE marks, so we don’t know how the students do for each paper. We only get the overall mark but it would be good to get the breakdown to see where the students are weak. It would be good for teachers to get together to discuss paper 4, how to prepare for it and do the marking.”

My time with Marianne ran out as her free period was over, but when we met again, during her lunch-break, she continued to talk about fieldwork:

“I’m collecting permission slips for our coastal fieldwork. We can’t really take groups out during school time, because then we need staff to supervise our other classes, so I’m taking the students during the half term. We will do beach profiling at Anse Royale. Most teachers don’t really know how to teach fieldwork because they haven’t done fieldwork themselves and don’t have the experience of handling the process. There are so many technical things involved, like doing bipolar surveys, sampling. It’s very difficult and not all teachers can cope with it.”

Marianne was clearly pleased that she able to take her students on fieldwork. She seemed very focused on making sure her students had sufficient experience to sit the fieldwork based exam:

“For coastal fieldwork we measure the profiles and longshore drift. We have two wooden metre poles that the school carpenter made for us and we use protractors from the maths department, which we’ve mounted on pieces of plywood and then attached string to make the clinometers. Most of the equipment we’ve made ourselves. For weather investigations we’ve got a basic thermometer, a rain gauge and a windsock but nothing to measure air pressure. If we had our own weather station it would be better. We have to be creative with the fieldwork; we don’t really have a choice. When it comes to rivers though, I just show students pictures of the equipment and explain how to they would be used. It’s not really fair on the students because really they should have the chance to do river fieldwork.”

Marianne’s creative attempts at making fieldwork equipment were impressive but it was a shame her students were unable to carry out a river investigation. I asked about the case studies she used:

“When we did Cambridge ‘O’ level geography teachers used case studies from the Home Region (*Seychelles and Mauritius*). The ‘O’ level focused on Southern and Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands but the IGCSE syllabus is global so we can use any case study, which is better. To teach urbanisation I tend to use cities like Jakarta or Indian cities. I don’t use European cities that the students don’t really relate to, so I localise (*regionalise?*) it a bit for the students, even if it is not really the Seychelles context.”

It was interesting that Marianne’s students felt Asian cities were more familiar than European ones, and that Marianne welcomed the freedom to choose global case studies, rather than having to stick to the African and Indian Ocean context. Marianne went on to voice her annoyance, however, that her students were not so curious about other places:

“Most of my students don’t ask questions and will accept whatever I tell them. Even my top set S5 class don’t want to do the research for case studies so I have to tell them everything. They don’t like giving their point of view so whatever you tell them goes. I’ve been trying to teach them how to answer questions where they have to discuss a case study in more detail. There are some questions in paper 1 where they have to make reference to case studies but they complain, saying ‘Miss, writing a whole page for a case study is a lot!’”

Marianne's described a common issue about students' writing skills but then went on to explain the specific difficulties for first language Kreol students:

“Writing in English can be hard for a lot of them. Even talking English in class can be difficult. I teach in English, but sometimes, if I pick on a student to explain something and they ask if they can explain in *Kreol*, I let them. Even me sometimes, I'll explain things in English and then, if students want me to explain the same thing in *Kreol* I will. Sometimes when you explain things in *Kreol* they say 'Ah, ok, that's what you meant!' because *Kreol* and English words are different. So I do sometimes explain things in *Kreol* but as much as possible I stick to English.

As Marianne prepared to go back to class, she wanted to reassure me that she used English in the classroom, as this was official government policy. Although students are taught in Kreol for the first two years of primary school, English is supposed to be the only medium of instruction at secondary level.

5.2 Nadege

Nadege, currently teaching at Lekol Sitron, is a S1-S5 social science teacher with 10 years' experience. Despite her lengthy experience she has not yet taught IGCSE geography but is due to take her current S3 class into S4 and prepare them for the IGCSE. Nadege organised for our storytelling sessions to take place in the school library during her lunch breaks. The library was cosy and quiet and felt more intimate than her busy staffroom. The library staff were friendly and allowed Nadege and me to talk quietly in one corner while students either played chess or read books quietly.

“I decided to become a teacher when I was in Miss Maureen's geography class at NYS. I thought to myself 'wow, this is something I would like to do one day', so when I finished my 'A' levels I went to NIE and started the diploma in primary education. I was then offered the secondary geography and history course and went to Australia to complete my BEd. When I returned I taught mainly history, but I found that I liked geography more, so now I'm teaching more geography. I'm in my tenth year as a teacher and still teaching because it's what I love.”

Nadege's passion for teaching was clear in her voice and it was interesting that her love of geography had grown during her 10-year teaching career. Nadege continued her story by explaining what geography meant to her:

“Geography is about everyday life, it helps us to understand so many things. If we know geography then we know why the weather changes and, for complex things like famine, world hunger, it helps us to understand and judge for ourselves. I try to pass these skills onto my students, to help them become better citizens, because good geography students can analyse, form their own opinions and can even move people. They can form groups and go out and challenge even the government about issues. For example, in our district, with all the hotels, my students ask me 'Miss, why is it feasible to run a hotel? What about the environment?' So, you see, geography helps us to understand why our coast is being developed like this. Geography also helps our students understand things like fishing and now with the oil ... *(she was referring to the recent oil speculation in Seychelles)*... we can discuss what will happen, how the oil exploration will impact us.”

Nadege talked so passionately about her geography teaching and her students. She continued by describing her teaching of local case studies:

“The ‘Physical Geography of Seychelles’ unit helps students understand their location and where Seychelles is in the world. It covers most of the physical aspects of Seychelles. With the ‘Human Geography of Seychelles’ unit we do fishing, trade and I try to invite stakeholders in to explain what is happening. If I cannot get someone to come, I send students out to research, so a group will have to find out about IOT *(Indian Ocean Tuna, a canning factory)*, another group about Seybrew *(Seychelles Breweries)*...and then they come to class to present. For the settlement topic I use the example of Cascade to show a linear pattern. I haven't been to visit the new islands of Perseverance or Eden though ... *(she hesitates, unsure how to continue)*... Eden Island is a place where you can get everything...and students do ask questions about it. I encourage this kind of discussion because it needs to be talked about.”

I understood what she was implying. Eden Island is an exclusive new marina development, reclaimed from the sea. It boasts a hotel, shops, restaurants, a casino and nightclub as well as a new supermarket

selling imported products from South Africa. Many richer Seychellois will shop and dine on Eden Island but it caters mainly for foreign investors and tourists and feels very western. Many Seychellois students would not have visited the island and some may feel quite uncomfortable about what it represents.

“We cannot just talk about issues in the UK. If we can talk about political issues in the UK then we should be able to talk about Seychelles. If we can make judgements about UK and America, then why not Seychelles? Seychelles directly impacts our students, and our students are the future...they’re the ones who will have to deal with the issues, so it’s right for them to ask questions. I know some teachers don’t encourage conversations and just stick to the syllabus and say 'let’s move on', but geography is the only subject that directly deals with people.”

The end-of-lunch bell rang and Nadege had to go. When she resumed her story, in our follow-up session, she spoke candidly about her own and her colleagues’ geographical knowledge and pedagogy:

“Although I wasn’t really trained as a geography teacher I think I am doing OK. There are still certain topics some teachers in the department and I find a bit difficult. Sometimes we feel we don’t know enough to teach a topic. I was thinking maybe we could get someone to come and teach us, for example, I find some physical geography topics very difficult. Weathering, rivers and climate, the five factors affecting climate; latitude, altitude...I need more information. I would like somebody to help me because I didn’t do ‘A’ level geography, only ‘O’ level. For a while I’ve been thinking that I’d like to do my ‘A’ level geography, I just don’t have the time.”

Nadege seemed serious about doing ‘A’ level geography and I was tempted to help her, but before I could offer she explained that she was planning to do it next year, when her daughter was a bit older and she had more time in the evenings.

“One of our geography teachers says she has problems with human topics, especially the IGCSE settlement topic, the shopping bit. We just don’t have the ‘out-of-city’ shopping thing in Seychelles, so we need help with this. We need someone to teach us because when you know better, you can do better. I’m the person responsible for PD (*professional development*) in our department so maybe when we have our PD sessions you could come in to teach us!”

I was keen to conduct geography PD sessions and we agreed that she would check with her HoD to make the arrangements. At the same time I wondered if other teachers, from other schools might be interested in joining in, and if I should approach the ministry to check on this. Nadege had already turned to the topic of fieldwork:

“It would also be good if somebody from Cambridge could come to explain certain things to us, like fieldwork. I've tried fieldwork but I need more training, more information...some practice with the instruments. It would benefit the students. Then instead of sitting for paper 4 students could actually do the coursework and we could assess them, because there is scope here in Seychelles for students to carry out fieldwork. Only the IGCSE students get to do fieldwork but what about the others who don't do the IGCSE? We need to develop the students' fieldwork skills, but most teachers don't have the skills to teach fieldwork, that's the problem. I'm planning to start some fieldwork next year, with my new IGCSE group. They could do some coursework and I could mark it, even if we don't send it to Cambridge.”

As she shared her desire to do coursework, I thought about trying to arrange a meeting between Nadege and Pamela, an expatriate teacher at one of the private schools, who teaches the Cambridge coursework option (see her story below). Nadege went on to talk about some of the challenges she faced doing fieldwork:

“The problem is we have very little fieldwork equipment. We have measuring tapes and some metre rulers and for beach profiling we make our own clinometers. One student asked me about a flowmeter but we don't have these because they're too expensive, it would be good if the ministry had one, though. The ministry should have more fieldwork equipment for us to borrow because they don't have much either. It's not just fieldwork equipment. When I want to show the students a powerpoint I have to borrow the history teacher's laptop. I'm hoping to buy my own laptop this year because I need to use the laptop more and move away from textbooks because students are sick and tired of textbooks.”

Nadege shared Marianne's frustrations about the challenges of using digital resources. It seemed Nadege also relied heavily on outdated textbooks, and this was impacting the way her students responded to geography. She continued to explain more about the way the S4 and S5 geography classes were organised:

“This year there are four IGCSE geography classes and only one for history. At the moment I’m teaching an S5 classes that will do the national exam, not the IGCSE. For a while students who weren’t entered for IGCSE didn’t do any assessment, but last year they introduced the national exam. Our students did pretty well; only one student got a ‘U’, although I don’t think the national exam was challenging enough, it was much easier than the IGCSE exam. Maybe there should be two levels in the national exam, one for higher ability students and one for the lower ability.”

It was clear that the new national exam needed time to evolve. Nadege had already tried to suggest ways to make the national exam more interesting:

“I remember when I was at the meeting to discuss what was going to be in the national exam and I told them we should include fieldwork, maybe not in detail like IGCSE, but something...questions like ‘what is a field work?’ ‘Why do we do fieldwork?’ We could give students some basic field data and ask them to analyse it. I thought the students would cope with this, but most teachers said no. They said it would be too difficult for the students. I told them that I teach lower ability students and I always do fieldwork. I said that we could bring the level down and make it simpler. I told them ‘we could ask students to label field instruments, or ask what instruments are used to measure certain things, or the students could label the width of the river’, but the other teachers said no.”

Nadege had further concerns about the new national exam:

“We were only told about the new exam in the second term last year. It was so late so we just stuck to teaching the IGCSE topics, just without the fieldwork. The IGCSE is better because students have to know something about fieldwork. Actually I preferred the old ‘O’ level syllabus because it dealt with the home region, and we could easily relate to it. The IGCSE talks about shopping in urban areas and Seychellois cannot deal with this. The urban models are what students have the most problem with because the models are not really applicable to Seychelles.”

Nadege continued to suggest ways in which her 'lower-ability' students could achieve more through alternative assessment:

“In reality the IGCSE is only for the top 20-25 students (*out of an average cohort size of 120*). The lower ability students, even when we give them simple assessments, find them difficult. It's their comprehension; they don't understand the question. If you ask them orally they can answer you, but when they have to write the answer, they have difficulty. I think it would be better if the geography exam was done orally and had practical mapwork, like asking students what they would find if they went north or asking them to measure the bearing of something. The lower ability students know how to do these things and can tell you about different people's opinions; they can formulate their own hypothesis; go out and test it, but the Cambridge exam and even the national exam doesn't cater for all the abilities.”

Nadege was adamant that her 'lower-ability' students should have the opportunity to show what they could do and, like Marianne, made reference to the language issue:

“My low ability students understand when I say 'take out your exercise book' and 'write the date' in English, but when I tell them to 'match the words from A to the definitions in B' they don't understand my instructions, so I have to say it in *Kreol*. I have to explain each instruction in English and then *Kreol*. The problem is that the exam papers are in English. The school allows us to read the questions to the students and when, for example, they are doing mapwork I allow them to use an atlas to find places. Using the atlas to locate the capitals and write them down on a map is a skill at least!

As she mentioned atlases, Nadege made an appeal for more local maps, local atlases and other resources:

“We don't have any '*Atlas for Seychelles*'. We need a set badly. We also need maps of the Indian Ocean region. Most of our resources are outdated and we don't have any of the books written for the Cambridge IGCSE, we only have the old version of the '*New Wider World*'. The '*Human Geography of Seychelles*' is so outdated it has statistics from the 70s and 80s! As a teacher, I know I should go out and get the most recent information but it's not always so easy. When we go to IOT or when the people from STB (*Seychelles Tourism*

Board) come to school, I try to get information from them about fishing and tourism but I think the ministry should get these organisations to send their reports to us so we can update our information.”

The availability of appropriate resources seemed to be sticking point, as was the S1-S3 geography curriculum:

“We really need to sort out our geography syllabus. I’ve been hearing things about a new curriculum but the Ministry haven’t started to work on it yet. At the moment we have too many topics in each term and there are some objectives that are a bit outdated or don’t really apply anymore. The timing of the topics needs to be adjusted because there’s still confusion, for example, the coast topic is in the S3 syllabus but we never have time to complete it in S3. Even though we’ve told the ministry this, they still put coast questions in the S3 exam. The ministry now want to add climate change. We can add it to the weather and climate unit but then we need to remove some things. I think we could remove the Solar system from S1 but some teachers like teaching it. Maybe the topics we do in S1 like population and settlement could be moved because we teach them in detail later. Industry is also a topic that students do twice, so we could remove industry and keep it for when students are in S4 and S5.”

Nadege glanced at the library clock and I knew she needed to go. While she was getting up to leave, she was still offering suggestions about the way the Ministry could review the secondary geography curriculum and also made some interesting remarks about the primary geography curriculum:

“We don’t need to start the syllabus from scratch, we just need to go through it to see which topics are important. Another topic we could remove from S1 is the ‘Physical Geography of Seychelles’. Students already cover some of the physical features in primary six, so they get bored when we teach it again in S1. The Ministry should consult the primary teachers. To be honest, I think they need to intensify the geography at primary school. Students need to start geography earlier. I’ve always said that when students come to secondary they are poorly equipped with geographical knowledge and skills. They can tell you a lot about Seychelles but anything beyond Seychelles is difficult for them.

World geography should be introduced earlier; maybe not as early as P1 but students should start learning about the world from P3.”

I nodded in agreement as she hurried to her next lesson, with the thought only occurring to me, there in the library, that I should also have sought personal stories of geography education from primary school teachers.

5.3 Odette

Odette, after completing ‘O’ levels, went straight to NIE. After graduating from NIE with a diploma she started teaching history and geography at Lekol Bordmer and then two years later moved to Lekol Vetiver, where she has been for the last three years. Odette’s classroom, in which we met to share our stories, was bleak. Small piles of tattered books were balanced on broken chairs at the back of the room. There were no book cupboards or any other furniture besides old desks and chairs and her teachers’ desk. There was nothing on the classroom walls to suggest it was a geography room.

Odette began her story by describing how she felt when she first arrived at Lekol Vetiver:

“I was told I had to teach IGCSE when I first came here. It was very tough at first and in these three years of teaching IGCSE I haven’t had any training from the ministry or from Cambridge. I’ve managed to cope with help from my colleagues and the HoD, so now it’s a bit easier but I still find teaching paper 4 very difficult. I follow the book and try to get the students to understand but it’s hard. If you look at the IGCSE results, the students do OK on paper 1 and 2 but paper 4 is just *bad* (Odette’s emphasis).”

Odette was very emotional as she described the difficulties of starting to teach IGCSE without proper training. Despite this she was adamant that students be given the opportunity to do IGCSE geography:

“This year we’ve got 120 students doing geography in S5 and about 40 of them will do the IGCSE exam. Even though most students now do the national exam I still think the Ministry should keep doing the IGCSE. It challenges the high ability students. If the Ministry decide to stop offering IGCSE then the national exam must really be a high quality exam.”

As she spoke Odette sorted through a pile of geography textbooks on her desk. She explained that these were her own books, bought so that

she could prepare to teach the IGCSE course. She continued by talking about the geography teaching resources they used in her department:

“We use the ‘*New Wider World*’ to teach the IGCSE and the national exam classes, because the national exam covers the same topics as the IGCSE, just at a more simple level. I try to make my own worksheets and visual aids and use past exam maps. Most of the new maps are kept at the ministry so we have to fill in a request form to get the maps and they can take forever to send them. There was also a situation with the books last year. We needed more ‘*New Wider World*’ books so I filled in the book request form and I gave it to the HoD to send to the ministry. We kept calling the ministry and we even tried to collect the books ourselves but when we got to the ministry the person in charge of the bookstore wasn't there and the key had been misplaced!”

Odette was incredulous that this could have happened and obviously annoyed at the bureaucracy involved in acquiring essential teaching resources. She continued to describe the teaching resources she uses:

“We’ve got some basic fieldwork equipment and I try my best to go on the internet to learn how to use them before I show the students. We don’t really need to do the full investigations but knowing how to use the instruments is important. I use my own laptop to research but the main problem is internet access here at school. I don’t have access at home so I can only get onto the internet at school. We don’t really share our resources with other schools, but it would be good to share. I wouldn’t mind meeting with other geography teachers...we could try to work on the handbooks because the ones we’ve been using for S1 topics are old, older than me!”

As she spoke I wondered why geography teachers were not sharing resources, and tried to think of ways to get teachers together to share resources. Odette continued by describing the topics she liked teaching:

“When I was a student ‘plate tectonics’ was my favourite topic and as a teacher it's still my favourite. I love physical geography but human geography not so much. With physical geography I can show students a video and they can connect to it, it's real. I find human geography a bit boring. For example, we have to teach population over and over again and the students don't always understand. It is like we are trying to get them to see something they can't

really see. With physical geography, they can see a river, they know what a river looks like, but with human geography it's too abstract. It requires a lot of thinking and the students don't like to think. They want you to think for them!"

I was really interested in Odette's comments about her students finding some of the topics too abstract and would have liked to explore this further but one of her colleagues came into the classroom to ask her a question, so we were distracted. When we resumed, she started to describe the challenges she faced teaching geography:

"I teach some of the lower ability groups in S4 and S5 and I find it very difficult because they are not interested at all. When we organised coastal fieldwork last half term most of them put their name down for it but on the day itself only 8 students turned up. They are not a pleasure to teach because most of them only picked geography because they don't like history. Most of them can't read or write English properly but sometimes they participate in *Kreol*, it all depends on the topic. They don't watch any news and they don't really know what is going on. It is only when we do the population topic and I talk about sex and so on, that they show any interest! They're not even interested in watching films although they like TV series like the 'Vampire Diaries'. I've used cartoon films like 'Ice Age' and 'Dinosaurs' in class but they are so interested in the movie itself they don't really see how it relates to geography. Sometimes I try to get them to have a discussion but I usually end up discussing with myself!"

Odette felt really deflated telling me this. She was trying to make geography lessons more appealing but struggled to get students to make the connections to geographical concepts and ideas. She went on to describe the topics and issues that stimulated her students:

"When I do volcanoes in S2 some students show an interest and when we discuss the tsunami that affected Seychelles most of them are interested. Also when I teach the 'development' topic, students want to know if Seychelles is a developed or a developing country. If I say it is a developing country they will disagree. They want Seychelles to be a developed country. I try to explain that we haven't reached the developed stage yet, but you see, there is a concept in Seychellois kids' minds that Africa is a developing continent and that Seychelles is not part of Africa. When you tell them Seychelles is part of Africa they are like 'No, no, no'."

It was fascinating to hear how Odette negotiated this delicate topic as it revealed a lot about the complexities of Seychellois identity. Odette, continued, speculatively:

“I think it’s just their pride; they don’t want to accept that we are similar to a lot of African countries. They don’t feel African. They say they’re Seychellois and ‘in Africa you’ve got Zulus and other tribes, but in Seychelles we don’t have tribes’. They say that ‘in Africa people are poor, and they live on the streets and in Seychelles we don’t have that, so Seychelles is not like African countries’. To be honest, the students know there is poverty in Seychelles but they don’t want to accept it and when I show them pictures of shantytowns in other countries they laugh. I tell them it’s not funny, but they just don’t see it.”

Odette seemed despondent and disappointment in her students’ attitude. I tried to change track and asked her about how she became a geography teacher:

“It wasn’t my plan to teach and I didn’t think I would like it but when I was at the NIE I ended up enjoying it. At that time the package for new teachers was very attractive and as trainees the SR3,925 salary seemed like a lot of money. We were promised that after completing the diploma we would get the chance to go abroad to do our BEd, so I was happy to start teaching. At NIE we used laptops and they encouraged us to use the LCD and the OHP but when we got to schools there wasn’t these things...in most classes there’s no electricity so we can’t even use a projector. I wish we could have a proper teaching room for geography with electricity and our own projector. The problem is, in my 5 years of teaching, we haven’t been given the resources to work with and we don’t get enough support. It just frustrates me to the point where I say ‘that’s it, I’m done, I’m giving up’.”

It was disheartening to hear Odette describe her situation and to feel her sense of resignation. She went on to describe a similar predicament for her colleagues:

“I’ve been threatening to quit teaching ever since last year. A lot of the people I trained with have already quit. From my geography group at NIE there are only 3 of us left, from a class of 16! Most of them quit because they didn’t get the chance to do their degree. A lot more teachers will quit if they don’t get any

further training. The ministry don't seem to realize that while they delay our training many of us are leaving. We're just fed up of waiting. They're going to lose even more geography teachers because none of us are happy. Honestly, though, I don't think the Ministry are bothered. I feel I'm going to be stuck with my diploma because the ministry don't want to release us for training."

As Odette spoke about the Ministry I could hear the resentment in her voice:

"There's a big shortage of teachers and there aren't any kids out there who want to become teachers. When the government sent students to Australia for the BEd a lot wanted to train to be teachers but then everything changed. I've heard they stopped sending teachers to Australia because so many of them didn't come back! So now we have to wait. It's been over four years. They promised us they would do something and there are at least four groups of teachers who left NIE with a diploma who are still waiting to do their BEd. There are some rumours that we will do the BEd at the University of Seychelles. I don't mind doing my degree in Seychelles, as long as I get the chance to do it."

The Ministry was obviously trying to juggle their responsibilities to both students and teachers, but managing the shortage of teachers by limiting the opportunities for teacher training and development seems counterproductive, as teachers were becoming very demoralized. Odette went on to explain how she felt the current system of training, based at the University of Seychelles (UniSey), was unfair:

"You see there is something the ministry must understand, a student that I taught at Lekol Bordmer is now doing his BEd at UniSey! One of my students from four years ago is doing his BEd and I'm still stuck with my diploma. That's not fair. However much I love teaching, I cannot stay in a profession where I'm not getting any professional development. You know, I even thought about applying for the BSc in Environmental Science at UniSey but I figured the ministry wouldn't release me so in the end I didn't apply."

Odette could not mask her frustration with the new arrangements for teacher training:

"To be honest the government should have kept NIE and should have looked for somewhere else to send students to do their BEd if they didn't want to send

them to Australia. To close NIE was the biggest mistake the government made. UniSey is not producing enough teachers but NIE used to produce a group of five geography teachers each year. And now, with the new SITE (*Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education*), there is more confusion. Some teachers I know have applied to do their BEd at SITE but they've been told the BEd course is not ready. But some students are doing their BEd at SITE, so SITE is not being honest."

The situation seemed confused with teachers feeling they were being denied access to training. The power struggle between the Ministry, SITE and UniSey also left teachers feeling neglected and distrustful.

We were coming close to the end of our session and I could see that Odette was feeling annoyed. As she finished her story, she issued a general warning:

"I've heard that the ministry is planning to send teachers overseas to places where they might actually come back from after they finish their BEd. There are rumours that it might be Botswana. The Ministry will select which teachers to send, but I'm telling you, they'd better be fair. Those who graduated with their diploma first should be picked. It would be so unfair if they sent the UniSey students before us. Those students haven't got any experience but the ministry will probably pick them because they're already on the BEd course. They'll go to Botswana and we'll be stuck in school. But, you know, if the ministry send them to Botswana and not me then, for sure, I will resign. They'll still have to replace me because I will leave. My bond expired last year, so I don't owe them anything. They will have to choose me or loose me.

As Odette stood up to prepare for the group of students coming in for their geography lesson, I left her classroom feeling miserable. Odette's story had been one of disillusionment and frustration, although she seemed determined to study for the BEd and was still committed to being a geography teacher.

5.4 Raj

Originally from Mauritius, Raj has taught geography at Lekol Kapisen for more than 10 years and lived in Seychelles for nearly 25 years. He first taught at the National Youth Service but when it closed he moved to Lekol Kapisen and has been at the school ever since. He is currently the HoD for Social Science and teaches mainly IGCSE geography

classes in S4 and S5. We met in the school library, which was very spacious and well stocked with books, although the books seemed rather dated. We spoke quietly so as not to disturb the few students in the library. Raj was relaxed and talked openly, occasionally interrupted by calls to his mobile phone from colleagues requesting assistance on classroom matters.

“This year started very badly. We didn't have enough teachers in the department. Two teachers were on overseas leave, one was on maternity leave and one expatriate hadn't arrived so there were only three of us, it wasn't easy! I was teaching whatever was necessary, history or geography, trying to cover classes. The whole department is expatriate; two are from Kenya, three from Sri Lanka and me, a Mauritian. One of the problems with some of the expatriates is that they don't know how to handle the Seychellois children. They might be qualified in the subject, but they struggle. Another problem is some of them are not able to teach geography.”

Raj went on to explain the issue further:

“One of the expatriates in my department is having difficulties. He's trying but teaching geography at secondary level is not easy. I cannot give him just the low ability classes but in the good classes he has difficulty teaching the subject and in the weaker classes he has difficulty controlling the class! He's a graduate but he's finding it difficult and this makes extra work for me. What can I do when he cannot teach mapwork or physical geography? The other day he asked me how to teach 'coasts'! How do I explain 'coasts' to him if he's never taught the topic before? I had to give him the definitions for 'high-tide' and 'low-tide' and then, in class, he only gave the students the definitions. When a student asked him why we have tides he did not know!” You see, geography is a technical subject; it's like a science. A teacher can't teach geography if they don't have the right qualifications.”

Raj continued by questioning the Ministry's expatriate recruitment practices:

“I don't know why the ministry employs teachers who don't know the subject. If they want us to do the Cambridge IGCSE, they need to give us geography teachers; otherwise we should remove geography and just teach history! Can you believe the ministry sent me a fifty-year old expatriate who doesn't know

anything about the subject! Every morning the person comes to me and asks me 'Sir, what to do today?' because they have never taught the Cambridge syllabus. Some of the older expatriates are tired and they think they've come to Seychelles for a holiday. The ministry bring them here for a holiday and want me to mentor them!"

Although frustrated by mentoring certain teachers, Raj explained that it was easier to mentor Seychellois 'A' level graduate students who teach while they wait for government scholarships for university (traditionally, in Seychelles, 'A' level students finish their academic year in December and start university the following September, if awarded a scholarship):

"When I get an A' level student, it's easy to handle them. They know the subject; they've done the IGCSE and A' level geography. They are fresh and young and they listen to you. They come to class with you and help out, and after a term they start teaching on their own. It's also easier to mentor Seychellois teachers who have followed our system, because they know the Cambridge syllabus. But the big problem is no young Seychellois teachers are coming through. It makes me feel sad that there are no new geography teachers. Where are all the good students who have gone to university?"

Raj suggested one reason why teachers may not be attracted to teaching or chose to leave the profession:

"Expatriate teachers who've just come get the same salary as the teachers who've been working in the system for years. It's not right. The ministry is failing to recognise the experience we've acquired on the job. All those years of teaching are worth more than the certificates expatriates have. That's why so many Seychellois teachers are leaving. They know that expatriates earn thousands more (*rupees*) than they do,"

Raj's phone rang and he had to deal with a classroom issue over the phone. When he resumed telling his story he continued his scrutiny of the Ministry:

"You, know, last year I was talking to an official at the Ministry and we were outside a resource room so I asked what was inside and she said 'lots of books'. I asked to see them and there were so many good history and geography books just sitting there! When I asked the Ministry to deliver some

of the books to the school they said they were not able to do it, so I got a pickup truck and went there, took the books and brought them back to school myself!”

We laughed as Raj recounted this extraordinary event. He had grown impatient with the Ministry and taken matters into his own hands. It seemed he was used to doing similar things when taking students out on fieldwork:

“The ministry want us to do fieldwork but there is no support at all. So when I take students to the coast or the river, I have to inform my wife, she’s a doctor, and tell her ‘if there’s any casualty, I’ll call you’. I even inform the parents that I’m taking the students at my own risk and ask them to help me if something happens! You see, if something goes wrong teachers should get support from the school and the ministry but they don’t want to support us. They say the fieldwork is up to you!”

I began to think of ways UniSey could help support schools with fieldwork, as they had recently set up the Centre for Environmental Education and were encouraging schools to make use of the new facilities. Raj, meanwhile, wanted to say more about the ministry:

“I love teaching and I love geography but the ministry, their different policies...they say they’re talking to us, asking for our advice, but in fact they’re imposing things on us. So now, when I go to the HoD meetings I tell them I won’t speak because there’s no point. Before, all the HoDs used to meet every Monday at the ministry. We used to discuss the geography topics and there was coordination. The meetings were good and things like this need to be encouraged, but the Ministry stopped them a few years ago, I don’t know why. Now they are just implementing things too drastically...for example, this term the ministry has introduced Morning Prayer. It is part of the new ‘social renaissance’ but not all students want to do Morning Prayer and sometimes I have to scold them to do prayer!”

As I considered the irony of forcing children to pray as part of a social renaissance initiative, Raj explained some of the broader issues he had to deal with:

“Only around 30 from 120 students in S5 will do five IGCSEs; the others do only two or three. This is not enough. It is not enough for a system where

everything is free. Seychelles has a good education system for such a small island, education is free and we have the Cambridge exams and follow international standards. Everything is perfect but our students. They're not interested in education. They've switched-off. We've got so many problems in class that very little teaching and learning is taking place. Most of my time is spent disciplining students, even in my IGCSE lessons. But you see, the S5 students didn't have a regular geography teacher in S1 or S2. So the problem is at the root, the students don't have proper geography teachers for three years so what can we do for them in S4 and S5?"

Raj continued to focus his attention on the Ministry's role in tackling student misconduct,

"All the high officials at the ministry know what is happening. I don't know why they don't tackle the problems. Why don't they put the Education Act in place? Students should be well dressed and if they're found outside the school during the day they should be expelled and if they don't do their work they should be excluded from school. The ministry already has these policies so why don't they enforce them? They would only need to dismiss a small number of students for the rest to understand. There's also the TVET (*Technical and Vocational Education and Training*) programme so we can put some of the most disruptive students there and try to give them what they need."

The TVET programme, only recently introduced in secondary schools, is designed for students deemed unable to cope with the full range of academic subjects. It consists of 2-days in school and 3-days per week in technical schools that cater mainly for post-secondary students. Although TVET was not designed as a programme for disruptive students, it seems some teachers consider it to be for that purpose. Raj went on to explain how students transition to post-secondary:

"Most students do IGCSE geography because they need it to get into many of the post-secondary schools. STA (*Seychelles Tourism Academy*) and MTC (*Maritime Training Centre*) ask for IGCSE geography so that's why students do it. It's not because they have a passion for geography! It's tough for the students who don't get a place at a post-secondary and you find some of them crying when they don't in, but most know that they'll get a place, whether they

pass the exams or not. They know the government will take care of them, that's why so many don't take the exams seriously."

Raj was implying that students' lack of motivation to do well in exams was due to the Ministry's post-secondary quota system. The Ministry often lowered entry criteria in order to fill student quotas at each institution. Raj also attributed students' attitude to deeper political undercurrents:

"You see there's this political influence that students know about. They know that if they don't get accepted into a post-secondary school, their parents can appeal to the ministry and then they'll be accepted. This isn't right. There should be a standard and the ministry should stick to it, without political influence. The Ministry should have a cut-off mark and that's it. If you're 'borderline' you can be put on probation and if you don't perform then you shouldn't get a post-secondary place. But, you see, students are even accepted with a 'U' (ungraded)."

Many regard the quota and appeals system as a political instrument to ensure the majority of students gain places at post-secondary institutions. The system is criticised for lowering academic standards. Raj continued by adding a provocative appendage to his analysis of the situation:

"Some of my students have told me that because next year is an election year all students will get a place at post-secondary! In the past, when it was an election year everybody got a place and now it's really hard to change this attitude. It affects the whole society because when students go into the world of work they cannot really depend on themselves because they think somebody will come and take care of them!"

As I contemplated his remarks, Raj's phone rang again and he explained he needed to go. As he was leaving he concluded by saying:

"There needs to be change, but the ministry is reluctant to talk to the public...maybe because the changes will have a political impact. They don't want to discuss exam results...each year you hear schools are doing better and the Ministry publish how many students have passed the IGCSE exams but they should also tell the public how many students did not sit the IGCSE.

Maybe they don't want to discuss certain things in the media but they should...they need to talk about our problems.”

5.5 Simon

Simon, a recently retired Seychellois teacher, has taught 'A' level, 'O' level and IGCSE geography. During his career Simon worked at NYS, various secondary schools and the government 'A' level school. Simon and I met in a small café in Victoria, the Seychelles capital. Although we had never worked together, we had known each other, professionally, for over 20 years:

”I loved teaching geography because the subject has always fascinated me. Geography is down to earth and all around us and we can see it easily. For example, when I taught degradation, my students could see it and when I taught volcanoes, even if we don't have any in Seychelles, I could show them footage of a volcano erupting. I used many case studies, not just the ones from the textbook. My students used to say 'Sir, will they (Cambridge) know about this?' and I'd reply 'it's not whether Cambridge will know about it, but whether you know what you are writing and if you are writing sense'. It proved to be a good method...it always got me good IGCSE results. When I had a top set for IGCSE they would score some of the best results in the country!”

Simon clearly had a passion for geography and was proud of his teaching abilities and exam record. He continued his story by recalling when he first started teaching IGCSE geography:

“I remember when we switched from the geography 'O' level and a gentleman came over from Cambridge to help us with the IGCSE-style marking. We did only two days training with him and that was it! The 'O' levels were too restrictive, so only a few students could do them. They were not really designed to reach the maximum number of students. At least for geography the IGCSE is better because it tries to balance the quantity and quality of students. Personally, I think the level of IGCSE is too low; the pass mark goes right down to 20% for the three papers!”

Simon's experience allowed him to compare the 'O' level and IGCSE geography syllabi. Despite reservations about the IGCSE course itself, Simon's main concern was with the quality of teaching at IGCSE:

"But, you know, even though the IGCSE is easier, students are not performing. The problem is not the IGCSE; it's the teaching...that's why so many students don't make it through to the exam. And now, with the new national exam, I'm worried that the quality of geography teaching will go down further and even more students will not be able to do the IGCSE."

As Simon spoke I could see that he was genuinely troubled by recent changes and I was interested to know more about his views on the new national exam for geography. He continued to express his concerns about the quality of teaching:

"To be honest, I'm amazed at the things teachers don't know that they should know. The ministry needs to improve teachers' content knowledge because to teach a subject you need to be competent in that subject. They used to have workshops for geography but they stopped them years ago. Even when there was the NIE there wasn't anything substantial, that I recall, in terms of training. Training should be developed but you know the sad thing is the ministry isn't taking proper care of the subject. They really need people who are confident in geography, people who are geography specialists."

Simon paused to see how I would react to his comment. He knew what he was saying was sensitive. To reassure him I explained that I planned to offer my assistance to help develop fieldwork training for geography teachers, as this seemed to be an area that was particularly lacking at the Ministry. He agreed this would be a good idea and returned to the issue of examinations:

"I think the Ministry should keep doing the IGCSE because it challenges the high ability students to perform better. To switch completely to a national exam is not a good idea. If they do stop the IGCSE then the national exam needs to be a high quality exam and not just for the sake of it. To be honest, I don't think the Ministry have the resources to do a national exam; they don't even have a proper exam centre."

He then expressed concerns about local geography exams:

“The main problem for the geography exams is having the right maps and inserts, and good quality photos and pictures. When the exam papers are photocopied the students complain because they can’t see the black and white maps clearly and the photos are not clear. Sometimes I used to draw the diagrams on the board for the S3 exam because on the exam paper they were so bad. To be honest, I don’t think the Ministry will be able to provide new maps. They only have copies of three or four maps to use each year for the S3 exams and we use these same maps for exam practice so students have seen them all before! So you see, if the Ministry can’t get any new maps then they won’t be able to set a proper mapwork paper for the S5 national exam.”

Simon continued by describing some of the issues of setting a reliable S5 geography national exam:

“The national exam is based on the IGCSE but the exam structure is different. From what I’ve heard S5 teachers only received confirmation of the new exam half way through last year and they weren’t told about the structure of the exam; they only saw the paper after the students had finished it! When I saw the geography paper I thought it was quite easy, with mainly low-order questions like; name, list, state, and lots of diagrams for the students to identify. The mapwork question was bad because you could barely see what was on the map. Even though it was in colour it was too small so it was hard to read the names of mountains and rivers that the students had to find.”

As he described the exam problems Simon became upset so I asked if he wanted more tea or something to eat. Apart from us, the café was empty, so the waitress came over quickly. After we ordered tea Simon continued to explain how S5 students were separated into those who did the national exam and those who were entered for the IGCSE:

“The ministry looks at students’ overall performance in S4, their end of year exam and their S4 assessments, and if they score above 40% they are selected for IGCSE. The ministry now include some of the assessments done in S5 before they make the selection. Selection is an issue though, because students think it’s teachers who make the choice but it’s the ministry’s decision. The 40% cut off mark is controversial because some schools were using 30% or even lower but the ministry stopped this because of the new national exam. They said students who score below 40% overall and below 20% in their

continuous assessments will tend to fail the IGCSE so they will not enter them. Anyway, at least now the students who don't do the Cambridge IGCSE have the chance to do the national exam."

Selection for the IGCSE was an interesting issue and Simon continued to explain how some teachers influence the process for reasons beyond students' exam performance potential:

"I've heard that some teachers are now restricting the number of students they enter for Cambridge to improve the percentage of passes at IGCSE. With less students doing the IGCSE, the results won't look so bad, so it gives a better impression. Also I know the Cambridge IGCSE is expensive; it costs 1,250 rupees per subject per student, so there is the financial aspect as well. The Ministry is also planning to evaluate teachers on their students' results, so maybe that's another reason why only the best students are being selected to do IGCSE. But, you know, the Ministry shouldn't assess teachers on students' results when schools don't have the right teachers to teach the subjects. If students don't have a good geography teacher in S1, S2, and S3 it's unfair to evaluate the teacher's S5 geography results.

Our tea arrived as Simon angrily expressed his ideas about teacher evaluation. After we poured the tea Simon returned to the subject of the national exam:

"If we have to continue with the S5 national exam, I think the whole of S5 should take the exam in July. This would serve a double purpose; everybody sits the exam and everybody gets a S5 certificate. We did this a long time ago when there was a two-tiered national exam with an extended paper and a core paper. The new national exam has not really been thought through, it should have been piloted it first. The ministry has always struggled with what to do with students who don't get selected for IGCSE. This is why they introduced the TVET programme, but when you look at the students who are actually in TVET they're students with behavioural problems. That's wrong! It should be the good students who are not academic that are in TVET."

I explained that I was familiar with the TVET programme and its rationale. In order to return to the issue of geography, I asked Simon to share his story of teaching A' level geography:

"The students sit all three geography papers (the AS core and A2 options papers) at the end of two years, so it's like the old 'A' level. We asked management why students couldn't sit the AS after the first year and they said that it costs more for students to sit the exams separately. Personally, I think the students would do better if they sat the AS first, because the 'A' level performance has been going down, not only in geography but in other subjects also. The main reason is to do with the students selected for A' level. The entry criteria should be a minimum of 4 C's at IGCSE but the Ministry tell us we need to lower the criteria to 2 C's and 2 D's. You see the ministry are under pressure from parents. The ministry knows parents will appeal the decisions and often students are accepted after the appeal. In some of the other post-secondary schools the entry criteria goes down as low as E and F grades. For A' levels I think we shouldn't accept lower than three C's and a D at IGCSE."

Simon continued to explain how lowering the entry criteria affected his geography teaching:

"When the criteria was lowered we had a big rise in the number of students doing 'A' level geography. We used to have about 40 students and they would all have at least a C in geography IGCSE but then it rose to 60 students and only half of them had a C grade or better. We struggled to finish the geography syllabus because the students couldn't cope. Covering the 'A' level in two years is difficult. If students had three years they would do much better because there would be time for revision. I tried to give regular assessments but sometimes I ran out of time. In topics like hydrology, if I had the time, I would've tried to do some fieldwork, but the syllabus is so broad and we really had to rush. We didn't have time to take students on fieldtrips although I tried to do a coastal investigation where the students visited a coastal site and interviewed people about the different management strategies. The students found this very interesting."

Simon described his coastal fieldwork based on Seychelles' policy of coastal zoning where certain construction is restricted. He used the scenario of an ecotourism project and asked his students to debate how the Seychelles Tourism Board should manage the project, including the resettlement of residents and fishermen, the impact on beach flora and fauna, possible coastal erosion etc. The students had

to decide whether this type of development could be regarded as ecotourism.

As Simon explained this activity I was reminded of the controversy surrounding the actual development proposal at Cap Ternay, a secluded bay in the northwest of Mahe. The bay had been leased to the Emirates Company for the construction of a luxury hotel but many local environmental organisations and community members were lobbying the government to put a stop to the project. There had been heated discussions in the press and online, with much criticism directed towards the government. I wondered how Simon dealt with such controversial issues in the classroom:

“As much as possible, where Seychelles politics is concerned, I avoided going into detail. Students at Lekol Bwa Dou knew that talking politics wasn’t allowed, so they restricted their conversations. Even in the staffroom, lecturers aren’t really supposed to talk about local politics. There isn’t any written policy saying this but the lecturers know. In geography class we would just talk about things generally, and when I used a Seychelles case study I would just say that there are ‘conflicts of interest between the different stakeholders!’”

I knew what Simon was alluding to and he knew that I knew. Teaching geography at ‘A’ level could be politically sensitive. Expressing opinions could place both students and lecturers at risk if certain sensitive topics were raised.

We had both finished our tea and Simon said he soon needed to leave. As I paid the waitress, Simon ended his story by maintaining he should have received more support when teaching the Cambridge ‘A’ level course:

“I had problems understanding the ‘threshold’. If the exam paper is easy the threshold goes up and if the paper is difficult the threshold goes down, but Cambridge should’ve given us training on this. I don’t really know how the marking is done and I never queried any of the geography marks. Other departments tried and they were told about the threshold. All I used were the geography marking schemes, which are so brief. From just three or four lines in the marking scheme I tried to devise the whole answer. When I asked if we could get training from Cambridge I was told that due to financial constraints it wasn’t possible. In all the years I taught ‘A’ level I didn’t get any help or training!”

5.6 Tania and Pamela

Tania is a Kenyan expatriate geography teacher at Lekol Kalbas, a government secondary school. I met Tania by chance while visiting the school and she volunteered to talk about her experiences of teaching in Seychelles. As she related her story she also referred to her friend Pamela, a UK expatriate, teaching geography at Lekol Bwa Rouz, a private secondary school. Tania and I sat in a small meeting room adjacent to the school office. As the school secretary closed the door to give us some privacy she graciously offered us tea, which we both accepted. Tania began her story:

“I’ve been teaching geography for about 10 years; 8 years in Kenya and now two years here at Lekol Kalbas. It’s really different from Kenya in terms of teaching and the nature of the students. I don’t feel Seychellois students are as keen to learn as the students back home. In Kenya we may have less resources but at least you see the students’ desire to learn. When they come to class they’re really eager, they want to hear from you, they will even ask you questions and they will challenge you on things. But this is something I don’t find in Seychelles. I have asked my fellow teachers and they say the students were not like this before. They told me that the students behave differently today, even though they are products of the same system, so something has gone wrong somewhere! Of course there are a few exceptions but, to be frank, I don’t see the students’ desire to know about the world. It is all about Seychelles. Anything that stretches beyond Seychelles just seems so weird to them and by the look on their faces you can see they are questioning the relevance of it.”

I was intrigued by Tania’s comments, as she was able to view the Seychellois from a different perspective. She carried on by explaining how the students’ limited interest in things beyond Seychelles impacted her geography teaching:

“You’d be surprised that some S4 students don’t even know the names of the neighbouring countries. If I ask them to show me where a certain country is, they have no idea if it’s in Africa or wherever, even the most obvious country. When it comes to the IGCSE it’s a challenge because Cambridge is about the world. The students ask why they have to study about earthquakes in Indonesia or the coast in the UK. I tell them that when it comes to the Cambridge exam they will be questioned about these things, but still you don’t

see any enthusiasm. Maybe it's how they are brought up or how they are taught at primary school. I think it has to do with the system. There is more emphasis on what happens in Seychelles, because they know so much about their own country. When we talk about issues to do with Seychelles, be it geography, climate, tourism, we can have an interesting debate. You see they are confined to this little space and their world ends here, Mahe, Praslin and a few islands. They feel this is all they need to know."

Tania's explanation seemed plausible because, from my knowledge of the curriculum, most topics in the primary social science curriculum were locally orientated, with little geography or history of the region or wider world. She offered further explanation:

"The students can understand tourism in Seychelles because they see tourists coming from France, Italy etc. but they can't stretch beyond seeing these people as tourists. I don't think they study how Seychelles is connected to other countries because these connections are not really integrated into the education system."

We were interrupted as the secretary knocked and came in with our tea. I mulled over Tania's comments as I sipped my tea, while Tania moved on to telling me how she felt as an expatriate:

"If I were a Seychellois teacher I would command more respect. There are some teachers who are not Seychellois but they speak *Kreol* so it's different for them. If I stayed in Seychelles and learnt *Kreol* then in 2 or 3 years I would be accepted as a Seychellois. I would be seen as being on their side. It doesn't matter whether you are black, white, Indian, the moment you speak *Kreol*, you are a Seychellois. In class the students don't take notice when I speak in English but if I mention two or three words in *Kreol* then I'll have their attention! This shows you the power of *Kreol*."

*I empathised with Tania as I too had come to realise the power of *Kreol* in the classroom. Tania was keen to go into more detail about being an expatriate teacher, this time making reference to her friend Pamela:*

"For some expatriates it can be quite challenging in Seychelles because there are different layers to the society. For example, straight away I am given my place because I don't speak English with a Seychellois accent. Luckily I have

friends in the expatriate community, like Pamela, who comes from the UK. She teaches at the private school so it's interesting talking to her. She told me that at her school, to get students to improve their English, all talking in the classroom must be in English. She says they were even thinking of banning *Kreol* but then decided it was a bad idea because students would still speak *Kreol* in the playground when teachers were not around."

It seemed that language policy was an on-going issue in both private and government schools. Tania went on to describe how other aspects of teaching geography were similar for both her and Pamela:

"The Seychellois students at the private school are the same as my students when it comes to learning about other places. Pamela says that when she does population her students always ask 'Miss, when are we going to learn about Seychelles?' It's good for students to know about their own country but for geography they need a balance, they need to look at the local and the global. We both do local fieldwork in the Valee de Mai and on the local beaches. Pamela tells me that her students are more interested in natural geography than her students in the UK and I have found this with my Seychellois students too. They are really aware of the environment. They know their environment is threatened and they get quite passionate about it."

Tania seemed impressed by her students' environmental awareness and implied that this awareness may influence their geographical abilities:

"The students find physical geography a lot easier and when we do fieldwork they all want to participate. When we do human topics it is more class-based and they get bogged down because it's not practical, it's more about ideas. For example, when we do population and settlement, especially urban issues, like urban sprawl and models of town planning, it's completely alien to them. To be honest I would like to do some human fieldwork but it's not easy. I could do something on tourism and for energy I could use the new wind turbines but there is no nuclear or hydroelectric power, so it's hard to make the topic relevant to Seychelles."

Tania realised her story was becoming a bit too negative so she tried to say something more positive:

“Pamela’s students love debating. She told me that when they did the energy topic they looked at coal in China and her students did a role-play between the Chinese government, a coal company and environmentalists. They had passionate discussions but she says the problem is her students are too competitive; they just wanted to win the debate! For homework though, she says she has stopped giving her students research or newspaper articles because they don’t have the skills to do it. Her students in the UK would use lots of sources from the internet but in Seychelles her students just copy and paste from Wikipedia so she says it’s a waste of time.”

As Tania reflected more deeply about the learning in her classroom she began to assess her own pedagogy:

“When I first came to Seychelles I used the same case studies I used in Kenya but now I understand that these are not so relevant for my students. I am slowly learning more about Seychelles and I’m trying to use some local case studies. You see, in Kenya I understood my students and I knew what buttons to press to get them interested in a lesson. If there was something current or relevant, like a recent cyclone or earthquake, I knew they would be interested. But I can’t really bring in current affairs here because the students would say ‘what cyclone? What earthquake?’”

It was interesting how Tania had begun to change her teaching approach, adjusting it to the Seychelles context, but she was still struggling to cope with students’ lack of knowledge of the outside world:

“I hope that the longer I’m here I can learn more about the local culture so I can use it as a way to connect with the students. But, it’s funny, the more I learn about the students and find out why they behave the way they do, the more I think they’re...I don’t want to use the word ‘victims’...they’re just products of the system. You see, in Kenya, and Pamela says it’s the same in the UK, the students are more involved in political debate. I guess it’s because of the history of Seychelles that students here are not so politically aware.”

Tania cautiously made reference to the wider political context in Seychelles, implying that her students’ naivety was due to certain historical and systemic issues. She seemed reluctant to develop this idea further preferring, instead, to focus on other social issues she had observed in her geography classroom:

“There are divisions between the rich and poor in Seychelles and sometimes these tensions come out in class. I don’t know what it’s like in the private school but there’s also tension with the Indian community; some students will say ‘the Indians come and take the Seychellois jobs’. They call Indians ‘malbar’ and if one student calls another student a ‘malbar’ it is an insult. They don’t want to be Indian even though they are in the Indian Ocean! The students tell me ‘don’t call us African, don’t call us Indian, don’t call us white, call us Seychellois’. In a way I see it as a kind of denial and I think it goes back to the Seychellois psyche. They prefer to be called Seychellois rather than anything else.”

Tania still felt perplexed by her students, but was very aware of their strong sense of Kreol identity. I could see she was struggling to understand the ‘psyche’, to which she had referred, and this was further elaborated as she explained how difficult it was to ‘place’ Seychelles:

“It’s not easy to find facts about Seychelles because a lot of figures are not published. For example, when we discuss issues like the number of Indian workers in Seychelles it’s very difficult to find data for a local case study. For the IGCSE exam I have to give students facts and figures so I use the Mexicans in America and the Polish in the UK case studies. When I teach development the students want to discuss Seychelles; is it an MIC making its way towards being an MEDC? I give them the basic development indicators but it’s really hard to judge. There are some really strange statistics so it’s hard to compare Seychelles with other countries. Seychelles is so small it’s quite anomalous.”

The complexities of being a small island developing state (SIDS) made Seychelles hard to ‘place’ and provided Tania’s students with further challenges:

“When we do development my students talk about how Seychelles used to be when local people could go to any beach. Now some of the beaches are only accessible through the big hotels because a hotel can take over a whole stretch of the island and you can only get to the beach through the hotel. The Seychellois really resent this. The students tell me that a lot of the smaller islands are private and only for rich tourists, not for Seychellois. In a way, these islands are like super-resorts, out of bounds, like a gated community.”

Tania seemed to be thinking out loud, trying to make sense of the realities of living in Seychelles. The secretary knocked on the door again; to inform Tania she was needed in the staffroom in a few minutes. I thanked Tania for sharing her story and she ended by saying:

“You know the strange thing is the students still think the government will look after them, that the ministry will find a place for them at post-secondary or will find them a job. I think that’s why they don’t try so hard in the exams. Very few of them will do 5 IGCSEs, maybe it’s because they think they don’t need them. I think it will be hard to change this mentality.”

As Tania left for the staffroom she looked back and remarked that I should try to contact Pamela at the private school. Tania hurriedly explained that Pamela was the only teacher in Seychelles to do the IGCSE coursework (paper 3) rather than the alternative to coursework (paper 4), so she would be an interesting person to meet. I assured Tania that I would (see section 7.3.5 for details of the meeting with Pamela).

This chapter presented the personal stories Marianne, Nadege, Odette, Raj, Simon, Tania and Pamela. Each story addressed certain aspects of geography education in Seychelles and offered numerous ideas that require further analysis. The analysis, offered in chapter 7, juxtaposes the six personal stories with a more ‘official’, public story of geography education. This public story forms the next chapter.

Chapter Six A Public Narrative of Geography Education

The personal stories of the last chapter form individual layers of a broader landscape of geography education in Seychelles. This chapter adds a further layer to the landscape by presenting a more formal, official, public narrative of geography education, as found in recent media articles, government policy documents, research papers etc. The public narrative is constructed around the same five themes (see figure 14, section 4.3.2, above) used to frame the personal narratives. The story is divided into parts, each tackling aspects of the five themes.

6.1 Curriculum and Assessment - part one

The Centre for Curriculum, Assessment and Teacher Support (CCATS), of the Ministry of Education (MoE), issued a statement in June 2014 about their plans to launch the National Schools' Social Science Fair. The statement, referring to both history and geography subjects, said;

'Over the past decade exam performance has stagnated and fewer students sit the IGCSE exam in the two subjects, especially in History. The decreasing popularity of these two subjects is due to a variety of factors, which may include the limited promotion of history and geography outside the classroom context. It is important therefore that we, together with our educational partners look for ways to stimulate and sustain interest in the fields of history and geography.'

(Press release, CCATS, June 2014)

This recognition of the decreasing popularity of social science and stagnating exam performances prompted the Ministry not only to launch the Fair but to also convene a 'Social Science Teacher's Club'. The Today newspaper attended the launch of the Fair and the inauguration of the Club, commenting that:

'Officials say that the decrease in enrollment (*sic*) for IGCSE in the public school system have been quite alarming, with only 117 students out of a population of 1160 taking History... In contrast, larger numbers...are sitting for Geography but the

grades range mostly between D and G. The subjects' unpopularity is believed to be due to factors such as teaching or learning techniques and the lack of promotion of these subjects outside the classroom'

(Today, 23.6.2014)

The newspaper goes on to quote Dr Odile De Commarmond, Director General of CCATS, who said that 'the public at large is questioning the knowledge base of our youth on the history and geography of Seychelles', while the paper also quoted Dr Dorothy Felix, Senior Policy Analyst and geography specialist, who stressed that 'the Social Science Fair will promote the subjects and bring together the teachers, as well as develop students' knowledge and skills through investigations, research work and interpretation of data' (Today, 23.6.2014).

The two officials of the MoE, although concerned about the popularity of social science subjects and the performance and knowledge base of social science students, preferred to stress the 'limited promotion of history and geography outside the classroom context' (CCATS, June 2014). The Today newspaper, however, chose to remark on the 'teaching or learning techniques' (23.6.2014) which the Ministry hoped to address by setting up the new Teachers' Club. There was no further elaboration as to why the popularity and performance had deteriorated, although the Today newspaper emphasized the limited local knowledge base in history and geography when quoting the Director General. While the local knowledge of Seychelles may be an issue, the former President of Seychelles, Sir James Mancham, in a letter to the Nation editor expressed his concern about 'quality' education arguing that it 'should be inclusive of "savoir faire", "savoir vivre", community living and *global awareness*' (Nation, 8.10.2012, my emphasis). Mancham's inclusion of global awareness, as opposed to knowledge only of the 'locale', is part of his wider 'global citizen' discourse, a theme that gives the title to his autobiography 'Seychelles Global Citizen: The Autobiography of the Founding President of the Republic of Seychelles' (2009).

Well-known for his political stand against the promotion and inclusion of *Kreol* in schools, Mancham (2009, 2012) has been a very vocal advocate of global

awareness, global citizenship and English as the medium of instruction in schools. At the time of his presidency, when Seychelles first gained independence in 1976, he championed the British-based education system in Seychelles, which, according to Campling et al. (2011:105) still bore resemblance to the 'old grammar school system of colonial times'. When he was deposed by the 1977 coup d'état, the Rene government made attempts to reform the school structure and private schools were abolished for the period of one-party rule (1977-1992). The on-going spat, between those who believe *Kreol* should have no place in schools and those who introduced *Kreol* in primary school as the first language of instruction and who continue to promote the speaking, reading and writing of *Kreol* in national fora, has been a characteristic of Seychelles public life (Deutschmann and Zelime, 2014).

6.2 Identity and Culture - part one

The Ministry of Education's 1988 Language Policy specified that *Kreol* be 'the medium for teaching and learning in early childhood years' (MoE, 2013b) then from Primary 3 English becomes the medium for core subjects, with all three languages (*Kreol*, French and English) taught as components of the Languages learning area (MoE, 2013b). In support of the language policy, the 2013 National Curriculum Framework (NCF) argues that 'confidence and proficiency in one's first language contribute to self-esteem, a sense of identity and achievement throughout life' (p.18). The NCF (2013) points out that 'extensive research in the use of a child's first language in the early stages of learning has shown beyond reasonable doubt that learning in one's first language is more effective and enhances the acquisition of other languages' (p.17). Although no research is referenced, the NCF publication is adamant that *Kreol* provides the foundation not only for learning but also for the socialisation of children and the making of a cultural identity.

Elsewhere in the 2013 NCF document the Ministry of Education point out that:

'Our sense of identity is closely linked to our appreciation of our national and cultural heritage. The multicultural foundation of Seychelles society provides an additional asset to understanding of cultural diversity and harmony. Competent learners

value their national identity, understand the importance of our history and traditions, while valuing the cultural diversity of Seychelles, the Indian Ocean region and the world'

(MoE, 2013b:28)

Stressing the close link between identity and nationhood, the NCF document is part of a national story of post-colonial identity making. The 'multicultural foundation' was born from successive rounds of European expansionism based on the trade of slaves and spices. Seychelles had no native or indigenous people, as Benjamine Rose, Principal Secretary at the Ministry of Tourism and Culture and Peter Pierre-Louis, a policy analyst at the same Ministry, explained to Andre Vitcheck, a journalist writing an article about Seychelles. 'All of us are of mixed race, of European...Asian (Chinese, Indian and Japanese) and African decent (*sic*). No one is superior to the other. We take pride and thrive in diversity' (Vitcheck, 2013). This official story of multicultural harmony is pervasive and the topic of many *Kreol* songs and cultural artefacts. Songs and poems were the vehicle of choice during the early days of post-colonial *Kreol* identity making, with Patrick Victor's patriotic songs among the most influential:

*'Prezan zot in vwar ki nou en nasyon ki annnan son
langaz ek son sanson'*

(Now they see that we are a nation with our own
language and our own song)

Patrick Victor (*Zwe Sa Lanmizik*)

'Dan nou lalang nou a ekrir pour nou zanfan lir'
(In our language we can write for our children to
read)

Patrick Victor (*Liberte Total*)

6.3 Curriculum and Assessment - part two

During the fervour of post-colonial nation building the socialist government designed a national curriculum that not only used *Kreol* in the first two years of primary school but also re-orientated 'syllabi...to the local context' (Purvis, 2004). The primary social studies curriculum focused almost exclusively on Seychelles, with students progressing from primary (P9), at 14 years old, to the NYS. Only a small minority of students were eligible to sit for the Cambridge

'O' level in geography, which had to be done at the Polytechnic, after completion of two years at the NYS. Today, the primary social studies curriculum is still predominantly Seychelles-focused, although students in P6 (aged 11) also study the Indian Ocean Region and the World continents and oceans briefly (see table 8, below):

Table 8 Social Studies in the National Curriculum, P3-P6

	P3	P4	P5	P6
	Concepts: Time, Place, Scale, Interdependence, Cultural diversity, Sustainable Development			
	HOME/SCHOOL	DISTRICT	COUNTRY	REGION/WORLD
Place (location)	What is a community?	Mapping your neighbourhood	Victoria	Indian Ocean Region
	My Home My neighbourhood	Important Places in your District	Seychelles (Mahe, Praslin, Silhouette, La Digue)	World (Continents and 'some countries')
	My School	Emblems and Mottos		
People, Services, Activities and Attitudes	Home	People and activities in your District	History of Victoria and Seychelles	Indian Ocean Neighbours; Cultures, languages etc.
	School-who is who? Sense of belonging	Services in the District	Activities in Victoria	Trade and Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region
	Neighbourhood	Identify problems in district, suggest solutions	Government of Seychelles	Human features of Mauritius, Reunion, Madagascar and Maldives
Natural Environment	Your Home Environment	The District environment	Land Use in Victoria	Weather and Climate of Seychelles
	Weather at your School	Caring for our environment	Physical Geography of Seychelles	Oceans and Continents: Indian Ocean environment
		Weather in the district	Land use in Seychelles	Indian Ocean climate (monsoon)
		District Land Use		Land Use in the Indian Ocean region

Based on Ministry of Education, 2007, Social Studies in the National Curriculum

The P6 Social Studies National Exam is based on the P4-P6 syllabus, and consists of two papers. Paper 1 is divided into two sections, the first a series of multiple-choice and 'fill-in-the-blank' questions, and the second a series of

match-the-pair questions. Paper 2 is a more demanding paper, where students need to write sentences and use their graphicacy and numeracy skills. Between the years 2009-2012 the following number of children sat the P6 National Exam for Social Studies (see table 9, below):

Table 9 Primary 6 Social Studies exam entry numbers, 2009-2012, with mean scores and standard deviation

Year	Number sitting Exam	National Mean	Standard Deviation
2009	1270	51.37	22.08
2010	1280	48.77	21.57
2011	1312	50.30	20.22
2012	1286	57.25	20.35

Source: Ministry of Education, 2013a

While the ‘National Means’ generally seem respectable, it is not known how these marks translate into grades. Further, P6 Social Studies performance is not part of the Ministry’s new Medium Term Strategy (MTS) 2013-2017. The MTS, funded by the EU and UNESCO, was launched publicly in 2015. One focus of the MTS is primary students’ performance in English and Mathematics. The P6 students’ performance is used as a measure of preparedness for secondary education (see table 10 below). Table 10 is an extract from a much larger table of Priority Objectives, Indicators and Targets on p.117-118 of the MTS (MoE, 2014), and provides the baseline grades in English and Mathematics, as well as the Target grades for each year of the strategy.

Table 10 Targets for percentage of students scoring C or above in P6 Mathematics and English exams

Priority Objective	Indicator	Means of measurement/ verification	Baseline (2013)	Target (2014)	Target (2015)	Target (2016)	Target (2017)
<i>Preparing students for secondary education through quality instruction and holistic learning experiences</i>	Percentage of students in P6 scoring grade C or above in English and Maths	Measured by the end of P6 National Examination results	English: 18% Maths: 17%	English: 20% Maths: 20%	English: 23% Maths: 25%	English: 26% Maths: 30%	English: 30% Maths: 35%

Source: MTS, Ministry of Education, 2014

The baseline percentage for P6 English and Mathematics can be used as a proxy for the literacy and numeracy skills of students learning geography. Less

than 20% of children entering secondary school have a grade C or higher in English and Mathematics, which makes the task of the secondary geography teacher more challenging. Furthermore, given the narrowness of the primary curriculum, most students entering secondary school have a very limited knowledge of the wider world.

In comparison, students leaving primary schools in England should have covered, according to the new national curriculum for Geography and History (Department for Education, 2014), the geography of Europe and the Americas, the history of the Roman Empire, Ancient Greece and the ancient history of a non-European country/region, as well as the geography and history of their own country. The Seychelles primary Social Studies curriculum is decidedly narrow, with very little time given to the colonial history of the islands and the region and limited focus on the geography of other countries. To further highlight its narrowness, the Seychelles' primary Social Studies curricula is compared, in more detail, to those of England, Mauritius, the USA and Australia in appendix 12.

The Seychelles secondary geography curriculum, due for a much needed review, has essentially served the needs of the Cambridge 'O' level and IGCSE syllabi. During the time of NYS, students in the academic channel would follow a watered-down version of the 'O' level syllabus in preparation for Polytechnic. When NYS closed, the curriculum was shifted to the newly expanded secondary school system. As part of these systemic reforms, which began in 1998, the National Institute of Education (NIE) was set-up to review the National Curriculum. By 2004 a new Geography National curriculum (GNC) was published (MoE, 2004), which, again, was a watered-down version of the Cambridge O' level syllabus, except for a 10-week topic called 'Our home in the Universe' and a 4-week topic on the 'Physical Geography of Seychelles' both taught in S1 (see table 11 below). As secondary schools assumed the responsibility for conducting the IGCSE exams, shifting from O' levels in 2005, the GNC remained practically the same, with only very minor modifications, the most significant of which was the removal of the 'Folding and Faulting' topic from the S2 curriculum.

Table 11 Lower Secondary Geography National Curriculum

S1			S2			S3		
Unit	Title	Weeks	Unit	Title	Weeks	Unit	Title	Weeks
1	Introduction to Geography	2	8	Maps-geomorphology	5	15	Trade and Development	3
2	Our Home in the Universe	10	9	Rocks and Minerals	2	16	Industry and Environment	4
3	Physical Geography of Seychelles	4	10	Earth Structure	3	17	Weathering and Mass Movement	3
4	Weather and Climate	4	11	Folding and Faulting	3	18	Rivers	9
5	Settlement	5	12	Earthquakes and Volcanoes	6	19	Mapwork Skills	4
6	Population	5	13	Mapping human geography	2	20	Coasts	8
7	Tourism: Trends and Impacts	3	14	Climate and Vegetation	10			

Source: Ministry of Education, 2007 (Geography In the National Curriculum)

Plans to review the present GNC, as part of a wholesale curriculum review for all subject areas, are currently in the pipeline. The subject reviews follow the publication of the new National Curriculum Framework (MoE, 2013b) and review teams are being set up to look at each subject area. In conversations with Ms Boniface, the coordinator for all social science subjects at the Ministry, and other geography educators, it is evident that the existing secondary curriculum lacks sufficient reference to concepts such as globalization, sustainability and climate change. The Ministry is keen to include more specific references to climate change in the S1-S3 geography curriculum, possibly adding it to the S1 Weather and Climate Unit. The issue will be what topics can be removed from an already overloaded curriculum. The team is yet to meet officially although teachers have informally made their preferences known, with some, like Nadege (section 5.2), identifying which topics they feel should be retained.

Irrespective of the changes to the S1-S3 curriculum, students sit a national exam at the end of S3, with results used for streaming purposes in S4. Students who score the required marks are selected for IGCSE classes, while the remaining students follow a modified IGCSE syllabus and sit a local exam at the end of S5. It was originally believed that the majority of S5 students would be able to access the IGCSE Geography exam, so when it first replaced the 'O' level syllabus in 2005, 637 students (approximately 55% of the S5 cohort) were entered for the IGCSE (see table 12, below).

Table 12 Exam entries for O' level and IGCSE subjects between 1999-2010

Subject/ Entries	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	O' Level Average	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	IGCSE Average	Rank
Art and Design	45	44	0	72	88	108	60	127	106	139	132	147	146	133	9
Biology	142	138	138	244	191	175	171								
Chemistry	129	162	161	176	211	168	168								
Combined Science	12	21	22	56	94	67	45	365	369	367	364	393	408	378	5
English	194	242	242	525	600	645	408								
French	223	252	252	634	583	709	442								
Geography	190	151	151	258	266	282	216	637	453	355	370	450	420	448	4
History	79	31	31	81	79	58	60	272	166	167	125	112	131	162	8
Physics	101	175	175	157	164	170	157								
Mathematics	141	184	184	239	215	202	194	892	660	643	593	655	578	670	3
Coordinated Science								427	417	350	306	268	251	337	6
English 2nd Lang								1060	984	924	781	937	935	937	2
English 1st Lang											57	36	45	47	10
ICT											301	226	190	264	7
Delf (French)								1065	1040	942	1055	1022	1016	1023	1

Source: CCATS, Ministry of Education

From table 12, above, it is clear that the proportion of students entered for the IGCSE Geography exam has reduced significantly since the exam was first introduced in 2005, with an average of 448 students (approximately 35% of total S5 cohort) entered nationally each year between 2005-2010. Although higher than the average yearly entry for the geography 'O' level, the IGCSE yearly average entry is far below the number of students entered for English as a Second Language or French (Delf). Table 12 also shows how Geography consistently received more than double the entries for History IGCSE, which saw a yearly average of only 162 student entries compared to Geography's 448 students. These figures made Geography the fourth most popular subject in the rankings between 2005-2010, after French, English as a Second Language and Mathematics.

While the Cambridge geography exam entries seem healthy when compared to history, it should be noted that students generally have the choice to enter only 5 IGCSE/DELTA subjects, including English, French, Mathematics, one social science and one science subject. The majority of IGCSE students will only be entered for 3 Cambridge exams, after a rigid selection process coordinated by the Ministry, plus an assortment of national exam subjects. Despite the rigorous process to decide Cambridge entries, the general performance at IGCSE level is worrying and an issue of national concern. The Ministry of Education has made the raising of Cambridge IGCSE results a 'priority objective' of the MTS 2013-2017 (see table 13 below):

Table 13 Targets for percentage of S5 students scoring C or above in core IGCSEs

Priority Objective	Indicator	Means of measurement / verification	Baseline (2013)	Target (2014)	Target (2015)	Target (2016)	Target (2017)
<i>Providing students with all the competencies and skills in preparation for tertiary education or the world of work</i>	Percentage of students in S5 scoring grade C or above in IGCSE English and Maths and Combined Science	Measured by the end of S5 Cambridge Exam	English: 43% Maths: 22% Combined Science: 4%	English: 45% Maths: 25% Combined Science: 5%	English: 45% Maths: 27% Combined Science: 7%	English: 55% Maths: 30% Combined Science: 10%	English: 60% Maths: 35% Combined Science: 15%

Source: Ministry of Education, 2014:118

While the MTS focuses on English, Mathematics and Combined Science, the 2013 baseline percentage of grade C or above passes for these three subjects, indicates how much progress is required for the secondary school system to improve. Using the baseline and yearly targets as a proxy for geography, it is evident that students' low literacy and numeracy levels will continue to impact their ability to perform well in IGCSE geography.

To gauge how IGCSE geography performance fares against the three priority subjects, table 14, below, illustrates the percentage of A*- C passes for IGCSE subjects between 2005 and 2010. For the majority of subjects, including geography, there is an inverse correlation between the number of entries and the percentage pass rate at A*-C level. When entries decrease, the percentage pass rate increases so, for example, with geography, 637 students were entered in 2005 achieving only an 18% pass rate, but when entries decreased in subsequent years the percentage pass rate increased significantly. Having entered large numbers of students in 2005, the first year of the IGCSE, the MoE subsequently adjusted Cambridge entries. The reduction in entries meant that foreign exchange exam costs were kept at an optimal level, without too much 'wastage' on entries that could not guarantee at least a subsidiary pass.

Table 14 Entries and percentage of A*- C passes for IGCSE subjects, 2005-2010

IGCSE Average by subject	2005		2006		2007		2008		2009		2010	
	Entries	A*- C % pass	Entries	A*- C % pass	Entries	A*- C % pass	Entries	A*- C % pass	Entries	A*- C % pass	Entries	A*- C % pass
Art and Design	127	34	106	60	139	55	132	45	147	62	146	48
Combined Science	365	0.3	369	0	367	0	364	1.4	393	4	408	2
Geography	637	18	453	28	355	34	370	40	450	34	420	24
History	272	26	166	43	167	46	125	34	112	46	131	47
Mathematics	892	10	660	18	643	15	593	26	655	29	578	27
Coordinated Science	427	16	417	19	350	31	306	36	268	49	251	36
English 2nd Lang	1060	39	984	45	924	51	781	56	937	50	935	43

Source: Ministry of Education (2011)

6.4 Systemic Issues

With the raising of the entry fee for each Cambridge exam, from £21 to £42 in 2012, the Ministry of Education recently revisited the idea of localising all S5 exams. In 2008, Dr John Nolan, Special Advisor on Education to the President of Seychelles, recommended that 'new, local Seychelles Examinations, compatible in standard with the IGCSE and GCE' be introduced 'in due course' (Nolan, 2008, p85) and that the Ministry should start making preparations for local exams, not only at S5 but also at the 'A' level equivalent stage (Nolan, 2008, p85). In conversations with Ministry officials (*Official A, 5.5.2011 and Official B, 13.2.2014*), it seems that the pressure to localise exams has been building, given increasing Cambridge exam entry costs and the significant proportion of students failing to earn even a subsidiary pass. Officials also conceded that due to the on-going issue of teacher shortages often there were not enough qualified and experienced teachers available to deliver consistent, quality IGCSE level teaching.

The complete localisation of S5 exams would be a significant milestone for the government, but would be at the same time, a very controversial decision. Private schools, which are currently expanding their services, are certain to continue with Cambridge exams meaning that only state secondary schools would be fully localised. The risk is that state schools may be then be seen as offering a 'second class' education, especially if the most experienced and qualified teachers were recruited to teach the Cambridge IGCSE courses in the private sector. The Ministry of Education would need to reassure parents and other stakeholders that the local IGCSE equivalent exam was comparable and reliable. If parents were not convinced, or preferred their children sat internationally assessed exams, then many could leave the state system, which then could undermine state schools further.

When officials were asked how the Ministry of Education would manage the localisation of all S5 exams, they explained that Cambridge International Exams (CIE) officials would be recruited, initially, to help with local validation of examination procedures. So the MoE, already facing calls to improve student performance and meet the targets of the MTS, would also have to cope with

the added pressure of managing the rigours of a comprehensive local exam. As well as this added responsibility, the Ministry would have to explain to stakeholders why their recently published MTS targets refer to Cambridge IGCSE percentage passes in the three core subjects, if they no longer plan to offer the Cambridge IGCSEs.

Discussions with parents and the wider public would need to be open and transparent, with the Ministry having to handle relations very carefully so as to reassure parents, teachers, employers and students about the quality of local exams and marking. But, as a Ministry official disclosed, with regard to the marking of existing local exams, 'there are big issues with marking...many mistakes are made' (*personal conversation 13.2.2014*). Furthermore, when discussing the ramifications of complete localisation, I pointed out to the official that:

'...It's not just a matter of setting exam papers, what about all the support materials...past papers, mark-schemes...and textbooks to go with the exams? What about maps and other resources written to support the exams? There will be pressure on the Ministry to produce all these support materials because teachers and students are used to having access to exam support materials at this level...if these resources are not available it will seriously undermine the exam itself.'

(Persaud, in conversation with Ministry of Education official, 13.2.2014)

While the above concerns about the preparation and resources required for successful localisation of exams are valid, so too are broader questions about the way the Ministry communicates with its stakeholders. When the MTS was launched in May 2015, hard copies were circulated to guests invited to the launch and copies were sent to schools. Yet, despite numerous requests for either a hard or soft copy I was only able to access the document online, from the UNESCO IIEP website and not from the Ministry's own website. The Today newspaper also had to download the MTS document from the UNESCO website and made reference to the web-link in their article on the MTS dated 18th May 2015. Similarly, the new National Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks, published in 2013, were only made available on the Ministry's

revamped website in December 2015, despite notification in the press that they would 'be placed on the Ministry of Education's website' in 2013 (Nation, 27.7.2013).

For many years the MoE's outdated and poorly resourced website suggested that they did not regard this mode of communication and dissemination as a priority. A more important form of communication for the Ministry is the use of general press statements and specially crafted articles written for the Nation newspaper. Prior to the creation of the 'Today' daily newspaper in 2011, the Nation was the only daily newspaper, loyally publishing government press releases. The Today newspaper, however, now offers basic analysis of information and statistics contained within Ministry press releases and will sometimes complement their articles with editorial comments. Just after the launch of the MTS the Today newspaper published an extended and quite inventive article, giving the Ministry a fictional 'mid-term report' grade of C-, commenting that:

'It is now up to the Ministry of Education, educators and management staff, to drive improvement. The ministry in particular needs to show it is monitoring progress against the Plan and resources are being allocated more effectively to address areas of need'

(Today, 18.5.2015)

Public scrutiny of educational standards and performance, as illustrated by the Today's newspaper article on the MTS, is a relatively new phenomenon. Typically, the Ministry would carefully script articles to publish in the Nation, to showcase Ministry-led activities and events. Publication of Cambridge exam results is done annually, but the figures are often incomplete and accompanied by very limited analysis or explanation. Similarly, local TV news reports will outline the content of official press statements, with very little analysis or debate. Given this custom, the Ministry of Education are able to put their spin on both the Cambridge IGCSE and A' level results. IGCSE results are always published as percentages passes, including subsidiary passes, calculated using the number of entries and without reference to the total cohort of students. This makes results more palatable, given that the Ministry prudently pre-selects students for Cambridge exam entry. Until this year there was no

systematic online publication of S5 exam results, neither Cambridge nor local, so these could only be accessed via the print media or television. Archived or historical data is not available other than by laboriously scanning through old newspaper articles, which, in turn, are not catalogued according to specific article content.

The controlled reporting of S5 results, restricted to only a brief summary of International Cambridge and Delf exam data, meant that the general public had no access to results of the whole S5 cohort. With such restrictions, public scrutiny of the Ministry of Education's record was limited. With the release of the MTS in 2015, Ministry officials affirmed they would publish the percentage pass rates from A*-C grade, of the three core subjects, using whole cohort figures, so that progress against MTS targets could be monitored. In 2016 the Ministry finally published, on their new website, eight years of educational statistics, which retrospectively make certain details about student performance available to the public.

6.5 Curriculum and Assessment - part three

Given the limited historical access to S5 student performance data it is difficult to clearly assess the state of secondary geography by the end of secondary schooling. National exam results were not available, nor were the figures related to those going on to study geography at 'A' level. The Ministry, using a quota system, coordinates selection for 'A' level but numbers of students following 'A' level geography were not published. It is only possible to access the number of 'A' level geography students who sit the final exam as a summary of 'A' level results was published in the national press. IGCSE geography is, however, an entry requirement for certain post-secondary vocational courses offered by the Seychelles Tourism Academy and the Maritime Training Centre, which means IGCSE geography remains a far more popular course than history.

Despite the subject's popularity, IGCSE geography is not an easy option. Mark Howell, a UK geography teacher working in Seychelles, has blogged about the IGCSE geography course. He has publicly expressed his concern that the

IGCSE specification is overloaded and that 'coming from the UK GCSE's, (it) felt more like teaching a watered down A-Level than a GCSE in terms of the amount of content and the number of topics covered' (Howell, 2014). He continued his public blog by saying that IGCSE geography contains 'content which previously I had only taught A-Level students, concepts like underpopulation and the Hjulström curve' (Howell, 2014). As an experienced UK teacher Mark said he found the IGCSE specification 'a lot to get through' and that with his first cohort he:

'...failed to teach the entire course, teaching only Tourism and the Environmental Issues sections of Unit 3. This may cause problems for them in paper 2 and so I have elected to start teaching the IGCSE half way through year 9 for future year groups in order to get the course done'
(Howell, 2014)

Comparing the Cambridge IGCSE geography course to the one he taught in the UK, Mark publicly expressed that he felt the UK GCSE had become 'too narrow and it was nice to teach a much broader range of content', although he also said that the Cambridge IGCSE course felt 'a little archaic' giving an example of the skills students needed, such as being 'able to read and interpret analogue weather equipment'. He continued by explaining that:

'We had to buy this equipment (barometer, max/min thermometer, hygrometer, rain gauge, anemometer) and it was a lot more expensive than buying a digital weather station, harder to read and far less accurate. Which begs the question, who uses these analogue devices these days? – Answer, nobody. I know the board has to consider parts of the world where digital equipment is not available, but I teach on a small island in the Indian Ocean, there can be few places harder to get this equipment than here.'
(Howell, 2014)

Mark does, however, acknowledge certain improvements Cambridge have made to their 2016 IGCSE geography specification, although the 'archaic' analogue weather devices still feature. The improvements include clearer references to the types of case studies needed for each topic, for example, Theme 1 Population and Settlement; Topic 1.3 Population Structure requires a

'country with a high dependent population' as a case study. As Mark concedes, the 'second guessing about case studies...has been addressed', ending his blog with the expectant 'a big improvement I hope' (Howell, 2014).

6.6 Teaching and Learning

The dependency on textbooks is a common feature of teaching in most Seychellois classrooms and geography is no exception. Classrooms are typically laid out with individual desks in rows and are shared by subject teachers, so there are very few specialist-teaching rooms, besides the science laboratories and computer rooms. Geography teachers work in classrooms where the overriding culture is for students to sit at individual wooden desks, each with a textbook, or a view of the blackboard. Typically notes are copied from the textbook or blackboard and students are often expected to write down the answer to questions from the textbook or board in silence. Although many geography teachers will engage their students in lively debates, the overriding culture of teaching is teacher- rather than learner-centred. This is partly due to the colonial tradition of the grammar-school system, but also due to the architecture of most secondary schools.

Using a common design that does not feature electrical air-conditioning, classrooms rely on slatted windows to encourage natural air circulation. This means sound travels easily between classrooms causing much distraction. Such levels of exposure force teachers to keep classrooms as quiet and controlled as possible in order to minimise the disturbance for others. This tradition has led to very didactic teaching styles that rely heavily on textbooks or the blackboard, with minimal group or social activity in classrooms.

The reliance on textbook teaching, which is especially hefty due to extremely limited internet access in secondary schools, means geography teachers use resources that are often very outdated. Many of the geography textbooks used at S1-S3 level are more than 30 years old, such as the locally produced 'Plans and Maps' (1983), 'General Physical Geography' (1983), 'Reading Map' (1983), 'The Physical Geography of Seychelles' (1990), 'The Human Geography of Seychelles' (1984) and the Atlas for Seychelles (1977). Other,

internationally sourced textbooks, for S1-S3, include 'The New Wider World' (2009) by David Waugh, 'Physical Geography in Diagrams for Africa' (1985) by R. B. Bunnett, 'The New Reading Tropical Maps, 3rd Edition' by R. B. Bunnett, the 'Discover Geography' Series (1990s) by Keith Grimwade and the Philip's Modern School Atlas (2003) (see figure 15, below).



Figure 15 Selection of Geography texts used in the classroom

Clockwise, from top left: Map Reading for East Africa (Bunnett), The New Reading Tropical Maps (Bunnett), Discover Physical and Environmental Geography (Grimwade), The Physical Geography Seychelles (MoE), Physical Geography in Diagrams, For Africa (Bunnett)

For IGCSE geography many teachers rely on David Waugh's 'New Wider World', although the Ministry has recently purchased copies of the 'Cambridge IGCSE Geography' (2010) textbook by Steve Sibley & Gary Cambers, which features a brief tourism case study of the Seychelles. It is unclear as to the number of copies per school but, in general, textbooks are not given to each child to take home, but rather kept in classrooms for use in school. If students wish to use a textbook at home they are usually encouraged to buy a personal

copy, either from local bookshops or from overseas. Worryingly, a senior Ministry official divulged that 'some of the textbooks given to schools are sometimes sold to students by their teachers' (personal communication, 26.9.2013). The same official lamented about the 'lack of control in schools...(where) books are lost but not replaced' and went on to explain that teachers are not supposed to make students pay for books since the Ministry's policy is that books are provided free of charge by the government.

The Ministry's educational remit includes the purchase of all textbooks and equipment for schools and, in principle, should have the funds to carry out this responsibility. However, in a recent report by the World Bank (Report No. 85290-SC, 2014) serious questions were raised about the level of funding available for learning materials. The report states:

'The large share of the budget allocated to salaries also comes at the detriment of other categories of expenditure. Learning materials in particular are not only underfunded, but the budget allocated to this expenditure is actually under-executed, seriously undermining the quality of education.'
(World Bank, 2014:78)

Apart from the issue of limited learning materials, the World Bank report raised further concerns. One of their most critical observations was that the 'priority given to education, within total public expenditure, had decreased over time, resulting in an actual reduction of public funding to the sector in 2011 compared to 2004' (World Bank, 2014:77). The report continued to explain that:

'In 2011, less than half of the budget for education was allocated to primary and secondary schooling, including 20 percent to primary education, 15 percent to secondary, and another 10 percent to primary and secondary together (in the case of multi-grade schools). Another 36 percent went to post-secondary institutions, including 20 percent to the University of Seychelles. This distribution differs from that of most other middle- or high-income countries with similar levels of enrolment'
(World Bank, 2014:70)

Although the World Bank report goes on to explain that the 'high priority assigned to post-secondary education ... reflects the substantial investment

involved in establishing the new University of Seychelles' they conclude that this 'left little room to expand expenditure on primary and secondary education' (World Bank, 2014:56). Such low levels of funding for primary and secondary schooling in general, and for learning materials in particular, have serious consequences for the quality of teaching and learning of geography. Given these circumstances it is understandable that student performance in geography, especially IGCSE, is weak.

6.7 Knowledge, Training and Skills

In order to improve the quality of geography teaching, teachers (including teacher trainees) and the government must secure access not only to funds for resources but also to specialist subject training. The government has, until recently, been the sole provider of initial teacher training and in-service training, either through the Polytechnic School of Education or the NIE. The government are also able to negotiate with overseas teacher training institutions, such as the University of Sussex in England or Edith Cowan University in Australia, to provide BEd level training for teachers graduating locally with a Diploma in Education. Partnerships have also been arranged with overseas universities to assist with supporting teachers at Masters and PhD level (University of Warwick).

The dynamics of accessing specialist teacher training have evolved in recent years. With the inauguration of the University of Seychelles in 2009, teacher training shifted from the NIE to the re-branded School of Education (SoE), under the University's Faculty of Science. The SoE introduced specialist primary and secondary BEd courses, including a BEd Secondary Geography programme that commenced in 2013. This evolution was short-lived, however, because in 2014 the SoE returned to the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, and was once again re-branded as the 'Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education' (SITE). All courses below level 7 of the National Qualifications Framework (below degree level) were transferred to SITE and degree level education courses taught at SITE but accredited by the University of Seychelles. Students already enrolled on BEd courses were, in effect, caught between two institutions.

While existing pre-service BEd Secondary geography students remained at UniSey and SITE, diploma level in-service geography teachers were unsure of their options. Some teachers, after completing the diploma and a three-year bonded contract with the government (bonds apply to graduates who receive government scholarships), were no longer obliged to teach in schools. A significant number of geography teachers, having completed their bond during the period of 2012-2014, became eligible for further training. Under pressure to secure training opportunities, the Ministry organised for a group of 6 in-service geography teachers to start their BEd degree, in July 2014, at the University of Botswana. The decision to send in-services teachers to Botswana was made despite the opening of SITE and the declaration, in the Nation (6.1.2014), that SITE would offer teacher training programmes at BEd level, in Mathematics, Geography and History subjects.

Acutely aware of the growing frustration among the group of in-service geography teachers, who initially expected to go to Edith Cowan to complete their BEd, the Ministry made the decision to send them to Botswana. Previous cohorts of diploma level teachers went to Australia for the two-year BEd upgrading course, but with growing numbers not returning to Seychelles, after completion of their courses, the government decided to stop sending teachers to Edith Cowan (personal communication with Ministry Official C, 10.7.2012). Officials at the Ministry have hinted that the selection of the University of Botswana was partly due to financial reasons, as the Botswana BEd cost less than at the University of Seychelles, although there are no publicly available records to show this is the case. Other possible explanations as to why geography teachers were sent to Botswana are that i. a cohort of in-service Seychellois Science teachers was already following a BEd programme at the University of Botswana, ii. geography teachers were adamant that they wanted to go overseas for their BEd, and iii. the government may have decided that the risk of them not returning from Botswana was considerably less than sending them to a university in Europe or Australia (personal communication with Ministry Official C, 10.7.2012).

Odette (see section 5.3) was one of the six in-service geography teachers selected for the BEd course in Botswana, leaving for Gaborone in July 2014.

The Seychelles government sponsors their course fees, living and transport costs, in return for their bonded service on return to Seychelles. Meanwhile only two pre-service BEd secondary geography students joined the degree course at SITE in 2013. No new cohorts have been recruited for the local BEd geography course, which means no new geography teachers are being trained, apart from the two who are due to complete their BEd in mid-2016. This situation is worrying, and means that schools will continue to rely on expatriate geography teachers from Sri Lanka, India or Eastern African countries, many of whom are unfamiliar with the Cambridge IGCSE course.

Apart from degree level education, training in geography fieldwork for both in-service and pre-service teachers is another area of concern. As evident from the personal stories related in chapter 5, most geography teachers do not feel confident enough to conduct fieldwork and most do not take students outside the classroom. Ms Boniface, the Ministry official in charge of geography curriculum development conceded, in a recent report (Boniface, 2014), that 'the IGCSE paper 4 is entirely based on (fieldwork) investigation, and this is one paper that students are not doing well on'. She continued by acknowledging that 'teachers themselves (have) requested training on conducting fieldwork and on how to teach students to do this paper' (Boniface, 2014). Despite the diploma course including a unit on fieldwork many teachers still did not feel confident undertaking fieldwork. One of the lecturers who taught the fieldwork unit at the NIE lamented that 'most of the diploma students who were trained don't carry out fieldwork or outside work' when they start working in schools (Lecturer A, personal conversation 7.5.2011). She continued to explain that teacher trainees are 'young' (post-secondary school leavers) and saw fieldwork as 'trips more for their own benefit' and that they 'found it difficult to process and transfer the knowledge and skills to their own teaching' (Lecturer A, personal conversation 7.5.2011).

6.8 Identity and Culture - part two

Despite the difficulties in conducting geographical field studies, teachers and students generally hold positive views about the environment. As Mark Howell (2013b) publicly recognized on his blog, his Seychellois students:

‘...love their surroundings and recognize how important they are to sustaining a good lifestyle on this island. No stunning beaches and rainforest means no tourists and no money. They recognize this and want to do something about it, always volunteering for any kind of conservation project’
(Howell, 2013b)

This keen sense of environmental protectionism, closely linked to a strong sense of Seychellois patriotism, can however be a challenge in the geography classroom. Students tend to romanticise about the beauty of Seychelles, easily swayed by the touristic narrative of their home being an ‘island paradise’, and so may feel reluctant to learn much about the world beyond. As Mark Howell again, remarks, ‘for the geography teacher this lack of world outlook and, at times, xenophobia, is frustrating’ (Howell, 2013b).

While teachers, like Mark, publicly express their feelings about teaching geography in Seychelles, others have voiced concerns about the broader socio-economic and cultural issues related to the rapid changes in Seychellois society. Rose and Pierre-Louis admitted to the journalist Vitчек, that they ‘...are actually fearful of the disappearance of (Seychellois) culture due to the rapid advancement and use of technologies like social media and cable TV’ (Vitчек, 2013). They continued by saying that Seychelles has ‘very rich traditions, traditional dance and music. It is something that identifies all of us as Seychellois, but it is being rapidly eroded at an alarming rate’ (Vitчек, 2013). These added complexities mean geography teachers in Seychelles, like most places in the world during times of such rapid social change, confront difficult issues not only of environmental concern but also of social and cultural concern too.

Epilogue

Unfortunately the Social Science Fair, originally planned for July 2015, did not go ahead. The postponement of the fair was due to Social Science departments being overstretched given the relatively large cohort of in-service teachers sent to Botswana. With departments relying heavily on newly arrived expatriate teachers or part-time teachers, the Ministry felt they would be unable to produce the quality of work necessary to display at a national fair.

Chapter Seven Narratives Deconstructed

The personal and public narratives of geography educations presented in chapters 5 and 6, form part of the initial phase of analysis and interpretation. In order to address the three research questions and create space for the generation of further questions, the narratives were deconstructed. The deconstructive process involved a deeper reading, using an 'outsider lens' (see section 4.4), in order to 'open up' and 'expose' some of the narrative's underlying subtleties, contradictions, prejudices and internal illogicalities as well as their sources of authorization (Winter, 2013:184-185).

The unravelling of narrative content attempts to 'position' the stories of geography education and untangle some of the powerful discourses within which they are embedded. This unravelling can be regarded as only a 'part of a much larger intent' (Smith, 2006:3) because:

'Taking apart the story, revealing underlying texts, and giving voice to things that are often known intuitively does not help people to improve their current condition'

(Smith, 2006:3)

While advocating a methodology for social justice, rather than simply for deconstruction, Smith (2006) acknowledges that deconstruction is perhaps the prerequisite for social justice, as it 'provides the words' and the 'insight' (p.3) to explain peoples' experience.

The deconstructive analysis employs the three dimensions of temporality, sociality, and place (see section 4.4) to provide a framework for understanding the contextuality of the stories, not only in relation to the initial research questions but also in the generation of more penetrating questions. Aspects of temporality, sociality and place within the stories are unpacked and then linked to broader ideas and events.

7.1 Temporality - Geography teaching of the past, present and future

Events and people have a past, present, and future. This means people and events are 'always in transition', always 'in process'. The **first research question** sought to uncover how geography teachers weave notions of their colonial past, globalised present and futures into their geography teaching. The temporality rooted in this first question is also ingrained in the **supplementary question** about teachers' ability to critically reflect on their roles as geography educators in a rapidly changing Seychelles and in a rapidly changing world.

7.1.1 Colonial legacies

Simon, although recently retired, started teaching at the NYS when it first opened in 1981. His career as a geography teacher spanned the evocative era of post-colonial independence to the current period of complex social and environmental change. His story provides an historical perspective that the other personal stories do not offer, as Simon is able to assess changes in geography education over longer period of time. Raj, one of the oldest collaborating teachers, arrived in Seychelles during the early 1990s, more than a decade after independence so had no personal experience of teaching geography during colonial rule. In fact, none of the narratives could speak of a time teaching geography before independence, although both Nadege and Marianne drew on their experiences of 'O' level geography from the time they were students. The Cambridge 'O' and 'A' levels were introduced by the British government during the 1960s, but were only accessible to a small percentage of the Seychelles population. The colonial school system provided lower secondary education for around 60% of 11-13 year olds (roughly 780 students from a total population of 1,300 children in each year group in primary), but only around half of these students (around 400) went on to study at upper secondary level (Campling et al., 2011:48). Of those completing 'O' levels at the time of independence, 'only 25 made it to 'A' levels' in each year (Campling et al., 2011:48), representing just 2% of the student population.

Simon, based on many years teaching Cambridge 'O' levels, explained that they were 'too restrictive' because 'only a few students could do them' and that they 'were not really designed to reach the maximum number of students' (p.138). While 'O' levels may have been elitist, even within the socialist structure of NYS, the geography 'O' level was fondly remembered by Nadege, who 'preferred teaching the old 'O' level syllabus because it dealt with the home region' (p.124). The geography 'O' level focused on Southern and Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean Islands, with Mauritius and Seychelles named as the 'home region'. Given the relatively large size of the 'O' level cohort in Mauritius, the Cambridge examination board must have tailored the syllabus to the larger island, with Seychelles included in the 'home region' more for convenience than for a sense of colonial patronage, especially given the relatively tiny numbers of Seychellois students actually sitting the exam.

The tailored 'home region' gave the geography 'O' level a distinctiveness that was befitting of the newly independent Seychelles, despite the fact the syllabus was designed and examined elsewhere. Nadege preferred the syllabus because case studies focused on the region, giving the islands more prominence. This matched a post-colonial sense of pride in being a sovereign state that warranted a distinct positioning within the Cambridge system, so from a geography subject standpoint the 'O' level syllabus fed the celebratory mood. The same cannot be said, however, for earlier versions of Hong Kong's post-colonial geography curriculum, which regarded China as a 'neighbour' and reflected the 'apolitical' stance of the colonial period (Lam, 1998:47). Due to these shortcomings the Hong Kong geography curriculum was subsequently changed to 'strengthen knowledge' of China, as the 'home country' (Lam, 1998:47). This emphasis on 'home' country and region seems an essential part of a post-colonial reassertion of sovereignty and identity, with the geography curriculum helping to 'reorder the national (and regional) space' by constructing an 'imagined' home and regional territory for students (Morgan, 2000:61).

7.1.2 Geography for nation-building

It seems that despite the complications of having to continue with Cambridge 'O' levels, given their lingering colonial connotations, geography teachers felt a sense of satisfaction as the syllabus allowed them to superimpose a new sovereign identity onto the designated Mauritius and Seychelles 'home region'. For newly independent states, as Green (1997:35) suggests, education helps to 'construct the very subjectivities of citizenship'. Citing Hobsbawm (1977), Green (1997:35) goes on to explain that schooling is often seen as 'the most powerful weapon for forming...nations' and uses Singapore as an example to illustrate how education contributed to their nation building in both 'civic and republican form' and was part of their 'politics of survival' (Green, 1997:144). Wilson & Tan (2004) corroborate this by explaining that through the Singaporean education system it was envisaged that 'the younger generation would acquire the "right" instincts to bond as one nation; to have a strong sense of national identity and social responsibility; and to have confidence in the nation's future'. For the Seychelles there seemed to be a similar enthusiasm, not only for celebrating citizenship and statehood but also in fashioning a national *Kreol* identity.

While the tailor-made geography 'O' level allowed a way for teachers to foreground the home region at upper secondary level, the primary and lower secondary curricula needed to be reconstructed in order to serve the aspirations of the new *Kreol* nation. The aim of the post-coup, socialist government, however, was far more ambitious than just tinkering with the inherited, English-medium, social science curriculum. The Rene government set about 're-imagining' the whole of Seychellois society through the *Kreol* language, not only as the medium of instruction in the first years of primary school but also in the signing of emancipatory songs and a new national anthem, performance of poems and plays and the publication of new media, all powerfully communicating in *Kreol* (Anderson, 2006:145). As Anderson (2006:205) explains the creation of new identities requires 'new narratives' and for Seychelles their new narrative was built around *Kreol*, not only by 'officialising' the language but also by re-imagining the whole nation through a *Kreol* cultural lens.

During these early years of *Kreol* nation building, the more educated, trilingual Seychellois, including geography teachers like Simon and Marianne, would have found multilingual cultural border crossing relatively straightforward. Rene, alongside his loyal, culturally adept 'foot-soldiers' formed a new 'intelligentsia' (Anderson, 2006:118). This new 'intelligentsia' grew as youth were conscripted through school-based groups such as the 'Young Pioneers' and the 'Youth League'. All 14-16 year olds were also sent to NYS to be schooled in the new ways of socialist self-determinism. Despite the fervour of *Kreol* nation building, however, there were still substantial voices opposing the use of *Kreol* in primary schools. Although a member of the new intelligentsia himself, Mancham, the deposed president, publicly resisted the re-imagining of primary education, arguing instead that English be the medium of instruction at all levels of the school system and that access to the private education, for Seychellois students, be maintained (Shillington, 2009:215-6).

Despite protestations, the *Kreol* curriculum, which included the new primary social science curriculum, new primary subjects in politics and citizenship, as well as the use of *Kreol* in lower primary, formed part of the new narrative of 'identity-building'. The *Kreol* curriculum appropriated the existing geography and history curricula in order to project a new vision of cultural and political literacy in Seychelles. To ensure this vision was embraced, education was centrally planned and controlled. The government implemented the new curriculum as part of an integrated approach to remodelling the social capital of the new nation state. The Ministry of Education, responsible not only for re-imagining the nation's social capital and the realization of 'human capital' for the socialist economy, also had to produce a teacher workforce for the expanding education system.

Given the non-availability of local teachers to serve a universal education system, the socialist government initially had to rely on the assistance of French-speaking social science teachers from Guinea (see section 2.1.2). These teachers helped to construct a new history and geography of Seychelles but, problematically, it was written in French not *Kreol*. Only after the National Institute of Pedagogy (NIP) was established in 1978 were Seychellois commissioned to write primary social studies curriculum materials in *Kreol*.

The nature and scope of the primary curriculum is analysed in more detail in section 7.2, below. The NIP was also tasked with producing materials for secondary geography, written in English, as preparation for end of school examinations. As Odette and Marianne both testified, the geography textbooks published by the NIP, during the late 1970's and 1980s are still being used in classrooms today.

7.1.3 Geography teaching in the present day

Despite the antiquated nature of local geography textbooks, they represent a 'golden era' of Seychellois textbook production and curriculum development. Considerable money was spent (see section 2.1.1) designing, writing and printing the black and white materials, which although basic by today's standards, were a novel addition to the geography classroom. Their significance is even more apparent today, since the textbooks are still in use, more than 30 years after they were first published. Their long shelf life is revelatory of the prevailing teaching style that has remained highly textbook-dependent. Yet, somewhat paradoxically, given the prevalence of teacher-led, textbook-based teaching, the old geography textbooks have not been replaced in any substantial way. Today's geography teachers have to create their own resources, which, as Odette admitted, are not necessarily shared beyond geography departments. Some geography teachers may choose to share but this remains an ad hoc arrangement given that the Ministry does not co-ordinate the sharing of teacher-made resources in any systemic manner.

The paucity of local geography textbooks produced since the 1980s means some geography teachers have become more self-reliant, producing their own teaching materials. Such self-reliance is typical of teachers like Simon and Marianne who started teaching in the early days of independence when Seychelles was very much a nation 'in the making'. They had to be more resourceful in the classroom, especially as classrooms were very basic. There was no electricity and only chalk and a blackboard at teachers' disposal. These resilient teachers are probably more able to cope with the scarcity of resources in contemporary classrooms, having lived through scarcity in the past. Younger teachers like Odette and expatriate teachers like Tania, however, seem more

resentful or perplexed by the lack of modern textbooks and equipment, and are quicker to accuse the Ministry of not providing the resources they feel they need.

Another lasting legacy of the past, apart from the timeworn geography textbooks, is the general lack of electricity and electronic devices in geography classrooms. As both Marianne and Odette despairingly remarked 'most classrooms don't have electricity so...we don't have any videos for geography' because 'we can't use the TV' (Marianne, p.117) and 'we can't even use the LCD projector' (Odette p.130). While Marianne seemed to be more accepting of this situation, Odette was far more reproachful, citing that she had been trained to teach using a laptop and a projector but was unable to use this technology in her classroom. The impact this must have, not only on teacher morale but also on the basic development of geographical pedagogy, is significant. As a subject so dependent on visual imagery to evoke a sense of landscape, space and the processes of change, the severe lack of photographic and digital images in the classroom is concerning. Geography classrooms like Odette's that have no posters or pictures on the walls to stimulate students' geographical curiosity could benefit from digital materials projected onto a wall, but this is still not possible in the majority of classrooms due to the lack of electricity supply.

With respect to geography teaching at upper secondary level the ubiquitous 'New Wider World' textbook by David Waugh, seems to have taken on bible-like status. Out-dated copies of the British-based textbook were used in all schools visited during the period of research. The book was used across a range of age groups and in both IGCSE and non-IGCSE classrooms. No teachers, apart from Pamela who taught at the private school, had classroom sets of texts written specifically for the Cambridge IGCSE course. The dearth of IGCSE textbooks was yet another puzzling situation. Given that the Ministry decided to transition to the Cambridge IGCSEs in 2005, it seems odd that no IGCSE textbooks are being used. Odette, who owned a personal copy of an IGCSE textbook, seemed resentful about having to buy it, as neither her school nor the Ministry would do so. The widespread absence of more stimulating and motivating textbooks specifically aimed at the IGCSE

specification meant that geography teachers were expected to teach a challenging course without adequate resources. This situation is likely to be a contributing factor to the poor overall exam performance at IGCSE level.

7.1.4 On-going Geography Curriculum, Assessment and Training Issues

Simon was able to explain how the change from the Cambridge 'O' level to IGCSE geography was part of a broader strategy by the Ministry to 'reach the maximum number of students'. By the early 2000's 'O' levels were deemed 'too restrictive', and Simon echoed the rationale of the time; that IGCSEs would offer more students access to a Cambridge education. Simon's experience teaching both 'O' level and IGCSE meant he witnessed how the government tried to 'balance (the) quantity and quality of students' entered for the new IGCSEs (p.138). This trade off was the right choice, in Simon's view (p.136), while Marianne also felt that the IGCSE was better because it 'is global so we can use any case study' (p.119). Despite these varied validations, the IGCSE still seems to present geography teachers with significant challenges in Seychelles.

As Mark Howell testified in his blog, the 'IGCSE geography is not an easy option'. His concerns, that the IGCSE is overloaded and 'more like...a watered down A-Level' (Howell, 2014), reveal the rigorous nature of the current Cambridge course. The Ministry, in response to the large numbers of students failing the course, when it was first introduced in 2005, reduce entries in order to establish a balance between the number of entries and an 'acceptable' percentage pass rate (see section 6.4). In contrast to Mark's opinion of the IGCSE, however, Simon felt that 'the level of IGCSE is too low; the pass mark goes right down to 20% for the three papers!' (p.139). Simon probably felt this way because he was used to the rigour of the 'O' level exam, and felt the IGCSE exam was more generous in its marking. Yet, despite the seemingly liberal IGCSE marking, students were not performing to Ministry expectations. Simon believed the reason for this was 'not the geography IGCSE; it's the teaching' (p.139).

As a confident, experienced ex-geography teacher, Simon seemed quite judgemental of teachers whom he felt lacked sufficient content knowledge. He advocated that 'to teach a subject you need to be competent in that subject' (p.139). Yet, Simon's assertion that poor teaching caused poor IGCSE exam performances was quickly qualified by his comment that:

'...there (hasn't been) anything substantial, that I can recall, in terms of training. Training should be developed but you know the sad thing is the ministry isn't taking proper care of the subject. They really need people who are confident in geography, people who are geography specialists.'

(Simon p.139)

This sensitive issue of specialist geography training was a concern shared by all collaborators in government schools revealing a chronic situation that seems to have afflicted the Ministry for decades. The perceived lack of support from the Ministry, and its various teacher-training institutes, proved to be a bone of contention for teachers. The issue may be largely explained by the rather bizarre fact that responsibility for teacher training and professional development has been juggled between a number of institutions, despite the tiny size of the country (figure 16, below).

The trilogy of curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation (Goodson, 1988:29) provides the frame for figure 16, below, where the various bodies in charge of each sector are listed. The Teacher Training College (TCC) operated during colonial rule but soon after independence the School of Education, under the auspices of the Polytechnic, took charge of teacher training. While pre-service training was managed by the School of Education, in-service professional development was offered at the Ministry headquarters. The Ministry was also responsible for curriculum development during this time, through their Curriculum Development Section (CDS), which replaced the prolific National Institute of Pedagogy. This arrangement changed in 1999 with the opening of the NIE, which assumed the roles of both curriculum development and teacher training, with the Ministry retaining overall control of examinations. Ten years later, however, the tasks were divided, with the remit for curriculum development returning directly to the Ministry while teacher training was

passed to the newly established University of Seychelles' School of Education. This arrangement was even more short-lived as just 4 years later, in 2014, teacher training returned to Ministry hands, through yet another organisation, the Seychelles Institute for Teacher Education (SITE). This constant 'toing and froing' has left many of this involved in education frustrated by the lack of continuity and coherence.

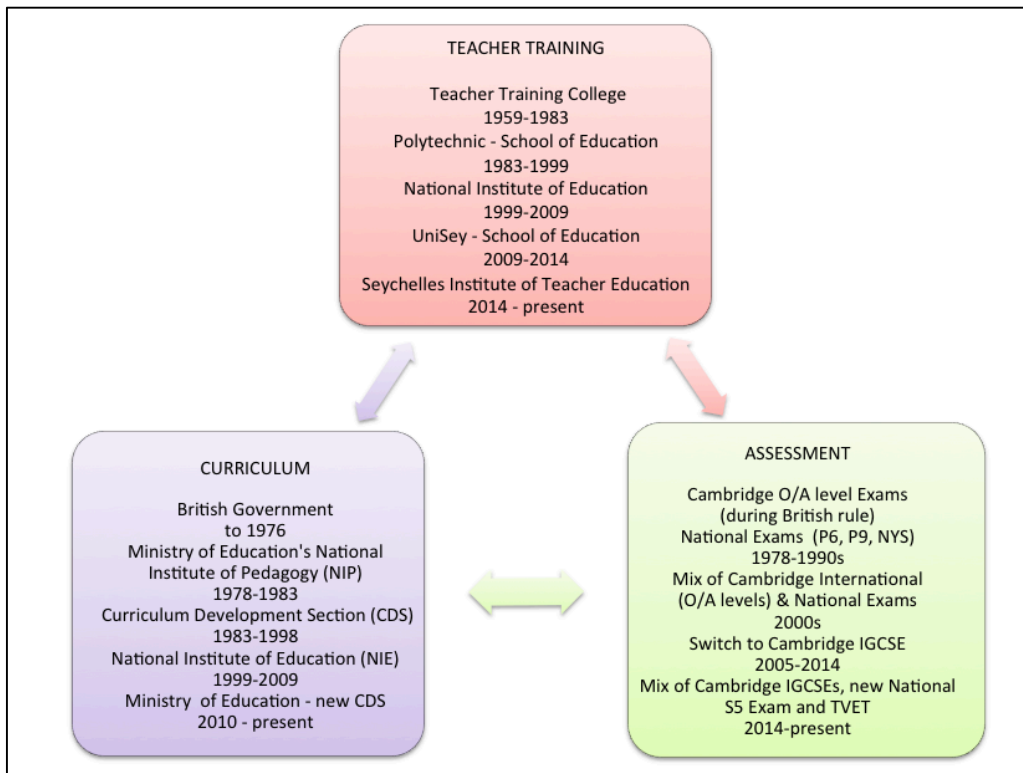


Figure 16 Trilogy of curriculum, pedagogy (teacher training) and evaluation (assessment) in Seychelles

For further detail regarding dates see the Education Timeline in Appendix 1

Odette, having trained at the NIE, believed closing it was 'the biggest mistake the government made' (p.132). She felt this because the University of Seychelles was 'not producing enough teachers' whereas the NIE produced 'a group of five geography teachers each year' (p.132). Odette went on to explain that with the new training institution, SITE, there was 'more confusion' with some teachers applying to SITE to do a BEd degree being told that the BEd course was 'not ready' (p.132). Odette was not convinced by this explanation,

as she knew of students doing their BEd at SITE, and so accused SITE of 'not being honest' (p.132). This reaction from Odette seems to be symptomatic of the general muddle surrounding teacher education, with many in-service teachers unable to upgrade to a BEd degree. Although there are many reasons why teachers are unable to pursue further professional development, the most significant reason is, however, the Ministry's restriction on releasing teachers for training due to persistent teacher shortages.

The demoralising effect of being denied access to further professional development has wide-reaching repercussions. Given the tight control the Ministry has over selection for further training (even when offered by the University of Seychelles in-service teachers need official release from the Ministry) accusations of 'unfairness' and 'dishonesty' understandably arise (see section 7.3 for a more detailed analysis of these issues). Demoralisation amongst teachers can be contagious and such feelings, together with the very real issue of limited professional development opportunities and the generally poor teaching conditions in classrooms, mean that many Seychellois teachers grow resentful. This is probably why Simon was so quick to justify his derogatory comments about teachers' lack of subject knowledge by blaming the Ministry for its dereliction of duty to geography teachers. Given this rather damning conclusion from Simon, it seems that many geography teachers are unlikely to be as effective as they could be in terms of creating exciting and challenging lessons to explore the complex geographical ideas and issues of contemporary Seychelles and the wider world.

The persistent grip that the Ministry has on teachers' career and training opportunities was recently being extended through the Ministry's attempt to, according to Simon, 'evaluate teachers on their students' results' (p.141). Simon reveals that this new approach to teacher appraisal may be 'another reason why only the best students are being selected to do IGCSE' (p.141). Thus, in collusion with the Ministry, teachers seem to be selecting an exclusive set of S5 students who exhibit the potential to pass IGCSE geography, while directing the majority of students toward the newly re-introduced S5 National Exam. Although retired, Simon remained troubled by this complicit process and felt 'worried that (with the new S5 national exam) the quality of geography

teaching will go down further and even more students will not be able to do the IGCSE' (p.139).

The main concern about the new S5 National Exam, introduced in 2013, seemed to be maintenance of quality of both geography teaching and assessment, especially since, in Simon's view, the Ministry did not 'have the resources to do a national exam; they don't even have a proper exam centre' (p139). Nadege, however, seemed relieved that her geography students had some form of summative assessment at the end of S5 as she explained that prior to the national exam 'students who weren't entered for IGCSE didn't do any assessment' (p.124). Despite her frustration at being informed so late in 2013 that students would sit the new exam in December of the same year, she seemed genuinely pleased that there was now an official alternative to the IGCSE. Raj, however, as a Head of Department, felt the Ministry was 'implementing things too drastically' (p.135), referring not only to the national exam but to other initiatives linked to the recent 'social renaissance' programme.

The wholesale decision by the Ministry to introduce the S5 National Exam so rapidly is indicative of the commanding control they possess. Similar to other highly centralised education systems like those in Thailand, Hong Kong and China (Lam, 2007), teachers are expected to adhere closely to the national curriculum, use textbooks supplied by the government and teach toward government-designed national examinations. Although not as strictly imposed as in the countries mentioned by Lam (2007), where teachers are closely monitored to make sure they teach what is in the authorised textbooks, the highly centralised nature of the system in Seychelles means that the Ministry of Education acts as 'judge, jury and executioner', not only of all government teachers but also of all students in the state system. The Ministry's controversial proposal to completely localise all assessment at some point in the future (Nolan, 2008:85), thus breaking the long-established relationship with the Cambridge examination board, is yet another illustration of the power the Ministry wields over all government schools.

Given the monolithic power that the Ministry of Education possesses it could easily display the tendencies of a typical educational institution, that Young & Muller describe, of being 'conservative', 'resistant to change' and of perpetuating 'anachronistic forms of authority and archaic curriculum priorities that bear little relation to the demands of the contemporary world' (Young & Muller, 2010:12). While it seems that the absolute authority of the Ministry is indisputable, it has nevertheless been involved, over its relatively short history, in a constant round of change and transition. Apart from the shifting responsibilities for teacher training and development, the Ministry has been involved in establishing new educational institutions at post-secondary level, restructuring them relentlessly, managing national assessment at primary, secondary and post-secondary levels, as well as developing curricula at all levels of the education system. This overwhelming responsibility to meet the educational demands of an emergent *Kreol* nation, has meant that certain responsibilities have been neglected. Rigorous review of the primary and secondary curricula is one area that seems to have suffered from serious neglect, with the geography curriculum particularly affected.

Although new versions of the National Curriculum and Assessment Frameworks (2013) were recently published, a systematic review of the primary and secondary curriculum has not yet taken place, with only the recent introduction of the TVET curriculum representing any significant change at secondary level. An appraisal of the geography national curriculum is long overdue, especially in light of recent updates to the National Curriculum Framework, the new national exams at S5, the TVET curriculum and possible localisation of IGCSE exams. Given these numerous structural changes, as well as the more important disciplinary evolutions in geographical knowledge and ideas, the geography curricula both at primary and secondary levels warrant serious review. While slight modifications were made to the geography national curriculum following the transition to the IGCSE (see section 6.3), a comprehensive review has not taken place for over 20 years. This may be due to the many institutions responsible for curriculum review deciding that the geography curriculum did not merit a radical re-think given that IGCSE geography continued in the same vein as the 'O' level syllabus. Thus, taking

their lead from Cambridge, those in charge of the geography national curriculum felt no obligation to change it.

Howell (2014) has remarked how the current Cambridge Geography IGCSE still feels 'a little archaic'. When switching to the IGCSE's, in 2005, the Ministry was unable to negotiate content for specific subjects, and in geography's case, the tailor-made 'O' level was exchanged for the more global-looking yet ultimately conservative and traditional IGCSE. The geography IGCSE is typical of what Young & Muller (2010) describe as an 'undersocialised' curriculum, constructed around a 'static body of knowledge' that is taught 'for its own sake' (see also Lambert et al, 2015:731-732). The seemingly inert and antiquated knowledge contained in the IGCSE shapes the lower secondary and non-IGCSE geography curriculum, despite the fact that the majority of Seychellois students are not selected to sit the IGCSE exam. Thus, geography students not able to access IGCSE examinations are subjected to a 'problematic' curriculum, shaped by a more traditional (Purvis, 2004), conservative (Morgan, 2002) and objectivist view of 'foundational' geographical knowledge (Rawling, 2001, in Winter and Firth, 2007:345).

Young and Muller (2010) and Young and Lambert (2014) would argue that Seychellois students, irrespective of whether they sit the final IGCSE exam or not, should be 'introduced to 'foundational', or powerful geographical knowledge because this knowledge represents "the epistemic rules" of the specialist community of geography. This 'powerful knowledge' provides ways for understanding the world objectively and takes geography students 'beyond their everyday experience' of living on a small island in the Indian Ocean. Lambert et al. (2015:731-732) recognise, however, that this requires 'teachers of geography...to recontextualize (geographical knowledge) in a manner that enables epistemic access—or ways to think geographically'. The authors also recognise that many students have struggled to see 'any "relevance" in what they are being offered at school' (Lambert et al., 2015:731-732) and this is especially the case if geography teaching is the epitome of "boring school". This issue is very pertinent in the case of geography education in Seychelles, with some teachers even admitting that they find the geography national curriculum 'boring'. Odette confessed that that she found 'human geography a

bit boring' having to 'teach population over and over again' (p.128-9) while Marianne conceded that 'a lot of the topics we teach are not related to anything in particular...they are very abstract' (p.115).

7.1.5 Ways forward...

The stories of Marianne and Odette relate a classroom situation in which geography often feels inaccessible, confusing and repetitive, even for teachers. Their stories reveal a sense of curriculum powerlessness and an estrangement from powerful geographical ideas. They seem overwhelmed by the task of helping their students to 'see something they can't really see' and to understand concepts that are 'too abstract' (p.129). Marianne provided the example of the Trade and Development topic, explaining that:

'...It's a really big topic and we're expected to dilute it...Trade itself is a huge topic because you can't explain one thing without going into more detail. Maybe we should just keep the development topic and leave out trade'.

(p.115)

This suggestion was Marianne's way of trying not only to reduce the voluminous content of the curriculum but also to simplify its conceptual demands. The responsibility for curriculum change, however, rests with the Ministry.

The Ministry's reluctance to make any significant changes to the geography curriculum may be the result of their close adherence to the Cambridge vision of geography. It could also be a reflection of Seychelles' preference for a more traditional, 'old-fashioned', imperialistic view of the world (Marsden, 1997:248) that maintains ties with the colonial motherland. Despite the fervent re-imagining of a post-colonial *Kreol* nation, Seychelles may feel that links to a British-based vision of the world is advantageous. The 'dead hand of tradition' that Marsden (1997:247) described in relation to past geography curricula, seems welcome. This is peculiar given the Ministry's more progressive strides in other areas of the national curriculum, such as the recent introduction of TVET in secondary schools and past experimentation with the socialist NYS. In some ways these initiatives are more suggestive of a 'utilitarian and

instructional' approach to education...more 'nationalistic in social purpose' (Marsden, 1997:248). Whatever the reason, Seychelles' geography curriculum has remained stolid and contains, as some may describe, 'dead knowledge' and 'inert ideas' (Hart, 2009).

Apart from 'Physical Geography' and 'Human Geography' Seychelles units, which still rely on textbooks written during the socialist period of educational restructuring, the secondary geography curriculum does not feed the narrative of a contemporary *Kreol* nation, in a complex, globalised world. The cultural literacy contained in the S1-S3 curriculum reiterates the knowledge priorities of a more British-based, metropolitan worldview and limits the exploration of alternative views, be they from a small island, *Kreol*, African, regional (Western Indian Ocean, Indian Ocean Rim) or broader Global South perspective. Besides these cultural and political omissions, the existing curriculum does not incorporate any meaningful discussion of climate change or sustainable development, two issues that lie at the heart of so much that the nation, the region and the globe as whole, are trying to tackle.

The aim, signified in April 2014 at a workshop led by Ms Boniface, the geography curriculum co-ordinator, that climate change be incorporated into the lower secondary geography curriculum, is now evident. Ms Boniface is also keen to include more substantial references to sustainable development in the revised curriculum. She, with a team of curriculum reviewers, planned to commence the review by the end of 2015, although the scope of the review is still unknown. The challenge of any review, however, is to avoid the appropriation of the curriculum by certain 'interest groups whose prime concern...(is)...maintaining and extending their own status' (Ivor Goodson as quoted in Morgan and Lambert, 2005:26). As the tussles over the last few decades in England illustrate, geography curriculum reviews can be used to reinforce an array of ideological standpoints and socio-economic systems (Robertson, 2005; Thiem, 2009; Standish, 2009; Scoffham, 2011).

The promise of a new geography curriculum in Seychelles offers hope to those who feel restrained, marginalised or even perplexed by the current one. But the challenge for the Ministry, apart from ensuring that the review process is inclusive and collegial, will be the reformation of a new vision for the

geography curriculum. Will the Ministry choose to 'wipe the slate clean' and fashion a new, more progressive geography, as attempted in the late 1970s and 1980's, or will they prefer to tinker with the existing curriculum by adding in units on climate change and sustainable development? If the latter is the case, the question remains: what topics will be removed, and why? Further issues for the Ministry will be how to resource the curriculum and provide support for teachers, especially if more radical changes to the curriculum are made. These issues are critical since the Ministry may feel they lack the capacity to resource and support a more comprehensive review and so will be disinclined to make the radical changes some would like to see. Such considerations, in terms of limited expertise, resources and funding, were probably factors that constrained previous reviews in the 1990s and 2000s.

The forthcoming curriculum review will also need to address the issue of continuity between lower secondary and upper secondary geography and decide how much S5 assessment will dictate what is taught at lower levels. The problem of providing resource materials for both the new curriculum and the national exam will also need to be addressed, with decisions being made regarding the purchase or production of textbooks that are best suited to the Seychelles National Exam as opposed to the Cambridge IGCSE. As Brooks acknowledges:

'most teachers teaching a post-14 examination-based curriculum will rely on a school geography textbook that has been written specifically with that examination in mind, and often by the examiners responsible for that examination itself (Kington, 2004) ...*(this places)* examiners in a position of power as not only defining geography at this level (through the specification) but also arguably defining the tools of instruction and therefore possibly influencing how it is to be taught (through the textbooks they write)

Brooks (2006:354-5)

If there are no specific textbooks purchased or produced for the national exam this will allow teachers the freedom to develop their own materials but it can also leave students at the mercy of teachers who may not have the confidence or sufficient geographical knowledge to prepare students adequately at this

level. Furthermore, if there is no specific textbook or resources provided by examiners, teachers may not be clear about the content of the S5 national exam.

Lam (1998:39) recounts the geography curriculum review experience of Hong Kong after the handover to China the 1997. In Hong Kong's case, where most schools adopted national curricula and used government textbooks, the review and implementation process took 2 years and the 15-member curriculum review panel consisted of academics, university geographers and subject specialists. For Seychelles, with only one small university with one geography subject specialist (the researcher), and only two subject specialists at the Ministry, the curriculum review team could lack sufficient academic expertise, not only in designing the curriculum but also in producing adequate resources to accompany it. The responsibility will fall on a handful of specialists and teachers to justify their selection of the most 'powerful' geographical knowledge, in the hope that all geography teachers will then be able to follow, 'pace and sequence' the contents of the 'powerful' curriculum (Young, 2008:15). Guidance on pacing and sequencing topics will need to be produced, although traditionally Seychellois geography teachers are expected to follow the curriculum in the order it is written, and stick to the designated weeks allocated for each unit (see Table 11, p.157, for an example).

For the reviewers it may be prescient to consider the ideas of Morgan & Lambert who have argued that school geography is limited in what it can achieve and that the geography curriculum can only offer a 'partial' and somewhat 'unrealistic' view of the world that sometimes prevents deeper levels of understanding (Morgan & Lambert, 2005:50). Despite the confines of the school geography curriculum, it is hoped that the reviewers will not feel restricted as they attempt to 'transform the cultural into the natural, the contingent into the necessary, the past into the present and the present into the future' (Bernstein, 1990 in Scott, 2008:5). It is also hoped that the curriculum review panel will include the voices of those who want to create space for teachers to show how knowledge of places and spaces is constructed and re-constructed and for students to challenge the status quo (Jackson, 1996). Furthermore, during this age of great uncertainty, with threats

to Seychellois livelihoods from globalisation and climate change etc., the space to explore the 'supercomplexities' (Whalley et al., 2011) and 'messiness' of the world is what is required from the new geography curriculum (Morgan & Lambert, 2005:54, Hicks, 2006, Morgan, 2012, Roberts, 2011).

7.1.6 Summary of the Temporality Dimension

In response to the first research question, using a temporal lens to deconstruct geography teachers' narratives, it seems the powerful legacy of Cambridge's vision of school geography still resonates today. Ironically, some teachers who taught the old 'O' level syllabus felt it better served the needs of the aspirational, post-colonial state, as it allowed for the superimposition of their new sense of sovereign identity, onto the 'home region' of Mauritius and Seychelles. The IGCSE-orientated geography curriculum, which could be regarded as an 'undersocialised' curriculum taught 'for its own sake' (Lambert et al, 2015:731-732), now determines the content of secondary school geography even though the majority of students do not sit the IGCSE exam. Despite issues concerning the relevance and suitability of the geography national curriculum, the 'powerful knowledge' it contains provides ways for geography teachers to take students beyond the everyday experience of living in a small, *Kreol*-speaking nation. These opportunities, however, were not always exploited, as some teachers felt estranged from powerful geographical concepts and ideas.

The stories also revealed that some teachers were able to reflect critically on their roles as geography educators. Older teachers such as Marianne and Nadege were able to display a sense of resilience and resourcefulness, while younger teachers like Odette felt they were unable to be as effective as they would have liked in the classroom and seemed more resentful. The absolute authority of the Ministry left geography teachers feeling unable to forecast the nature of either the curriculum or assessment, with proposals to completely localise assessment floated for some time in the future. This lack of power, over the future direction of the subject and assessment, seemed to limit teachers' ability to evaluate their own positions and contributions to geography education.

7.2 Place, space and locality - Kreol geography education

The narratives of Seychelles' geography education reveal their 'specificities of location' (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006:479). This location is not only represented in terms of the physicality of place, the natural boundaries of the islands and their vast expanses of ocean, but also in terms of the 'imagined spaces' of the young nation. An exploration of these specificities of place and space helps to address the **second research question**, which asks whether there is **evidence of a distinct Kreol geography education and if so, how is it manifest and what shapes it**. Following the previous section, which examined the temporal dimension of the curriculum, this section focuses on the extent to which geography education is influenced by a Seychellois sense of *Kreolité*.

7.2.1 Kreolité in the geography classroom

The reconfiguring of Seychellois identities, after more than a century of slavery and successive eras of European colonial rule, is part of a broader process of cultural revisioning that has been termed 'creolization' (Knepper 2006:79)². The process leads to the making of new, multiple identities or *créolité* (Knepper 2006:79). Creolization, according to Knepper (2006:85) has to be 'improvisatorial' and 'adaptive' to mitigate the harmful legacies of colonization as well as the more immediate threats from contemporary globalisation and new forms of colonisation (see section 2.3.4). For Seychelles, inherently open to external forces and the prevailing winds of change, space and identity are under constant negotiation (Appadurai, 1996:189). This permanent state of flux characterises the *Kreol* condition, with Seychellois continually obliged to adjust or defend their space and identities in order to maintain a sense of *Kreol* community and locality.

Odette tried to describe her students' sense of *Kreol* identity. She recounted that, according to her students, 'Seychelles is not part of Africa' (p.130). Her students' refusal to identify with the continent was due to 'their pride', as they

² Knepper draws on the works of Glissant and Chamoiseau & Confiant, who examined the Caribbean notion of *créolité*

did not want to accept Seychelles is similar to a lot of African countries; 'they don't feel African', Odette explained (p.130). As a younger Seychellois teacher, whose formative years coincided with the birth of the nation and who perhaps had more memory of the assistance and comradeship offered by African countries during the years of nation-building, Odette was proud of her African heritage. Although she tried to empathise with her students, it was clear she felt connected to the African continent.

While geographically and historically Seychelles is closely tied to Africa, today's Seychellois youth may not feel so attached to their neighbours, especially as many students are under the impression that 'in Africa people are poor, and they live on the streets' (Odette p.130) while denying that poverty existed in Seychelles. Yet, despite disappointment in her students' views, Odette was willing to concede that her students were aware of poverty in Seychelles, despite not wanting 'to accept it' (p.130). This feeling of cultural denial was also explored by Tania, as she discussed her students' sense of identity. Tania seemed perplexed that her students 'didn't want to be Indian' (p.148). She recounted their reaction, when asked about their identity: 'don't call us African, don't call us Indians, don't call us whites, call us Seychellois' (Tania, p.148).

Odette and Tania's insights offer different lenses through which to understand the dynamics of *Kreol* identity. Odette could be considered an 'insider', while Tania, as a Kenyan expatriate, offered an 'outsider' perspective of *Kreol* culture and society. Tania's views provide a certain clarity, as she is perhaps able to 'see through the fog of local prejudice' (Bonnett, 2008:84). While Odette was open in her discussion of her own and her students' cultural positioning, Tania went further to describe the tension in her geography classroom when issues of identity surfaced, especially in relation to the Seychellois Indian community. 'They call Indians "malbar"', Tania explained, while recounting that 'if one student calls another student a "malbar" it is seen as an insult...even telling a Seychellois that Seychelles is part of Africa is an insult to them' (p.148).

In rationalising the 'lack of acceptance' of other cultural identities and the essentialisation of *Kreol* identity, Tania drew on the notion of a 'Seychellois psyche' (p.148). Although she did not elaborate what she meant by this idea, Tania explained that Seychelles was an enigma, a place that was hard to 'place' as it was so difficult to find definitive statistics that could easily define the country (p.148). Her struggle to 'position' Seychelles, and the Seychellois, indicates the complexity of trying to pigeonhole such a paradoxical nation. Simple binaries of either 'developed' or 'developing' are problematic, as both Tania and Odette testified in their teaching of Seychelles as a 'development' case study. Winter and Firth (2007:238) discuss similar issues in their study of student teachers of 'Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in England. The authors argue that simple binaries of 'rich/poor' and 'developed/developing' call:

'into play the history of the social evolutionary order of economic development marked by the domination of countries of the North and the dependency of Southern countries on Northern countries. In other words, the 'othering' of the people and lands of the South occurs through stereotypes of inferiority'.

(Winter and Firth, 2007:238)

Both Seychelles and Seychellois refuse to be neatly categorised, especially if the categorisation is regarded, in some way, as 'inferior'.

Seychellois pride is rooted in the struggle for independence and self-determination. While many Seychellois resist being simply defined, some have tried to distinguish their *Kreol* origins. Rose and Pierre-Louis (see section 6.2) explain that Seychellois are 'of mixed race, of European...Asian...and African descent...no one is superior to the other...we take pride and thrive in diversity' (Vitcheck, 2013). While this may be the 'official' account of Seychellois identity, the stories of Odette and Tania reveal a more complex interpretation. The 'melting pot' of mixed races is not necessarily as harmonious as Rose & Pierre-Louis attempt to portray. Such superficial responses to the question of *kreolité* may have been offered in an effort to, as Morgan (2001:292) described, 'play the game' by adopting 'politically correct' responses, such as telling foreign journalists what they wanted to hear. Refreshingly, both Odette

and Tania choose not to play the 'game' and were more candid in their storytelling.

In deconstructing what it means to be *Kreol*, through teachers' stories of their geography classroom practice, the 'affective', more emotive views of both teachers and their students are revealed. These untempered opinions resist a more rationalist, western desire to dress opinion in more politically correct language (Morgan, 2001:292). The collaborating teachers, if reluctant to admit certain things that may have sounded too emotive or unethical, may have used their students as proxy voices, in order to attribute opinions they felt were too sensitive or inappropriate for a teacher to express. Either way, their stories reveal a complex and sometimes troubling notion of *kreolité* played out in geography classrooms. The stories also expose classroom opportunities that have been denied, in terms of encouraging students to explore, question and problematize the notion of *kreolité*. The essentialisation of *Kreol* identity, through the denial of 'other' interpretations, may accentuate a sense of 'parochialism', where students show little interest in learning about other cultures and places.

7.2.2 A parochial geography education?

Seychellois students' reluctance to engage with 'other' places and cultures was discussed by Tania, who explained they were not 'as keen' as the geography students she taught in Kenya. While her Kenyan students would ask questions and challenge her, this was something she did not experience with her Seychellois students. She continued by explaining that:

'...to be frank, I don't see the students' desire to know about the world. It is all about Seychelles. Anything that stretches beyond Seychelles just seems so weird to them and by the look on their faces you can see they are questioning the relevance of it.'

(Tania, p.144)

The causes of this parochialism are manifold. On one level young people can be more concerned with the affairs of their peers and reluctant to empathise with those outside their circle of friends, but for students living on a small

remote island the tendency toward more insular and conservative opinions can be powerful (Baldacchino, 2008:49).

The inclination toward insularity is a characteristic strongly associated with both islandness and smallness (Commonwealth, 1997, Briguglio, 1995). As a microstate (both in terms of population size and landmass) the Seychelles is among the 15 smallest sovereign states in the world. Its smallness, together with its islandness and remoteness (more than a 1,000 miles off the east coast of Africa) mean that Seychellois can naturally resort to an inward-gaze and an intrinsic provincialism. While these characteristics may explain some of the attitudes of Seychellois students, scholars are quick to add that small islanders are also naturally open to externalities, especially since they are heavily dependent on 'others' for trade (Commonwealth, 1997, Briguglio, 1995). Trading, from the times of slavery and colonialism to present day dependence on tourism, forces small islanders to be outward-looking and exposed to events beyond their shores. This paradox, of simultaneously being encumbered with an inward and outward gaze, mean that Seychellois tend to be both vulnerable and resilient at the same time (Briguglio, 2003).

The complexities of being a Seychellois and the impact this has on teaching geography in Seychelles were raised in Mark Howell's blog (2013b, see section 6.8). Others have also publicly expressed their concern about the 'disappearance' of Seychellois culture, blaming 'the rapid advancement and use of technologies like social media and cable TV' (Rose & Pierre-Louis in Vitchev, 2013). Rose & Pierre-Louis felt that Seychellois traditions were being 'eroded at an alarming rate' (Vitchev, 2013), heightening the sense of cultural vulnerability and susceptibility to more dominant global cultural forces. In reaction to this feeling of loss and exposure, some students may feel more inclined to essentialise their *Kreolité* and evoke more nationalist sentiments. Similarly, the Ministry of Education may also be inclined to retain a more place-based approach to social science education, especially at primary level.

John Morgan (2000:65) discussed the tendency for geography curricula to speak to nationalist agendas. Drawing on the concerns expressed by Tate, that 'economic globalization, and the communications and information

revolution, have the potential for undermining (national) identities', Morgan (2000:65), argues that education can 'act as a bulwark against these changes...through the teaching of a sense of place...characterised by separateness'. The calls from Tate, for a 'distinctively "British" geography' were viewed, by Morgan, as part of a broader movement to 'put English language, literature and Christianity at the centre of the (English) school curriculum' (Morgan, 2000:65). Morgan also highlights Tate's 'persistent' use of the themes of 'belonging' and 'nationhood', as a means to arouse feelings of patriotism. This sense of patriotic education, of loyalty to one's own country and culture, may explain some of the parochialism of the geography curriculum and student attitudes in Seychelles.

Tania believed that her students' parochial attitude had 'to do with the system'. She explained that:

'...there is more emphasis on what happens in Seychelles, because (students) know so much about their own country. When we talk about issues to do with Seychelles, be it geography, climate, tourism, we can have an interesting debate.'

(p.145)

The 'system', which presumably means the primary social science curriculum, was discussed further, when Tania disclosed that Seychellois students 'don't...study how Seychelles is connected to other countries because these connections are not really integrated into the education system' (p.145). Tania was acknowledging the 'place-based' (Gruenewald and Smith, 2008:xiii, Morgan, A. 2011:100) nature of the primary curriculum, which, she felt, affected her students' worldview. Nadege was of the same opinion and made a concerted plea for the system to be changed, saying that 'World geography should be introduced earlier' (p.127). The students' more narrow-focused understanding of the world presented challenges at secondary level, as 'they were poorly equipped with geographical knowledge and skills' said Nadege (p.127). Students' poor world knowledge was particularly problematic for those doing IGCSE geography, because, as Tania (p.144) reiterated, 'Cambridge is about the world'.

7.2.3 *Kreolising* the geography curriculum

The 'worldliness' of the Cambridge IGCSE is questionable, given the specification still represents a more western, Eurocentric understanding of geography and the world (CIE, 2007). Yet Tania's claim that the Cambridge syllabus is 'about the world' is a comparative statement, given the overwhelmingly local nature of the primary social science curriculum and the regional focus of the previous Cambridge 'O' level geography syllabus. To compensate for the more challenging world-focus at IGCSE level, Marianne explained that she tried to 'localise it a bit for the students' so rather than using 'European cities that the students don't really relate to', she preferred to use 'Jakarta or Indian cities...even if (they are) not really the Seychelles context' (p.119). By selecting Asian-based urban case studies Marianne felt her students would relate more easily to these especially since, as Tania described, the geography of urban sprawl, deprivation and town planning is 'completely alien to them' (p.146).

By attempting to 'localise' or '*Kreolise*' the IGCSE, Marianne was making a 'claim' on the curriculum through a reaffirmation of the 'particularity and diversity' of locally imagined spaces (Morgan, A. 2011:99). Whether she realised it or not, Marianne was actively 'recolonizing' the IGCSE (Gruenewald, 2008:149) in order to teach about *Kreolised* localities, drawing on the sentiments of 'place attachment' and the complexities of a localised 'sense of place' (Morgan, A. 2011:100). Marianne did, however, acknowledge that her students preferred topics where they could 'talk about things in Seychelles, like farming' (p.115), as did Odette, when she recounted that most of her students show an interest when 'we discuss the tsunami that affected Seychelles' (p.129). Both Odette and Marianne's experience seems to resonate with Tania's (p.145), as she also felt that her students were more likely to have an interesting debate about issues to do with Seychelles.

The propensity to draw on and explore local knowledge and experience is what makes geography an 'educationally relevant' and 'intrinsically worthwhile' subject, argues Roberts (2011:246, in Butt, 2011). The discipline, according to Roberts, should invite students to explore their 'geographical imaginations' (Massey, 2005) and use their everyday experiences 'to try to make sense of

the world' (Roberts, 2011:246-7, in Butt, 2011). While this approach to geography education seems to be happening on one level in Seychelles, Nadege revealed that some teachers 'don't encourage conversations' that are too politically sensitive, preferring to 'stick to the syllabus' (p.122). This reluctance to engage with locally sensitive issues was also conveyed by Tania, who explained that both her own Kenyan students and Pamela's UK students would get more involved in political debates than her Seychellois students. Tania justified her students' unwillingness to debate local political issues by cautiously suggesting that her students were 'victims' and 'products' of the system (p.147).

Tania's reference to the 'system' relates to the remnants of 'one-party-state' politics. During the years of one-party rule many Seychellois felt disenfranchised and there were numerous cases of human rights violations, especially involving supporters of the deposed President (Mancham, 2009:185). The power of the state meant that Seychellois either tended to comply with decisions taken by the Rene government or left Seychelles altogether. The proclivity to nepotism and favouritism, so common in small societies, also impaired the open and transparent functioning of government and gave rise to a culture of control and repression. This undemocratic backdrop, which sits uncomfortably alongside the more celebratory foundations of the young *Kreol* nation, is still partially visible today despite the transition to multi-party democracy. The current government is still criticised for certain human rights abuses (Today, 7.8.2015, Hoareau, 2015) and for stifling the media, especially local television, which consists of one state-run channel. Given this political environment, it is understandable that many students feel reluctant to discuss politics in the classroom.

Simon's story, like that of Tania's, also told of instances where he avoided 'going into detail' about local politics, saying that his 'A' level geography students 'knew that talking politics wasn't allowed, so they restricted their conversations' (p.143). The complicity in limiting political debate, both at Simon's old school and Tania's school, was also recognised by a very frustrated Nadege. Nadege seemed annoyed that her students were free to discuss controversial issues related to other countries and 'make judgements'

about them, presumably through textbook case studies, but did not feel 'able to talk about Seychelles' (p.122). She continued her grievance by saying:

'...if we can make judgements about UK and America, then why not Seychelles? Seychelles directly impacts our students, and our students are the future ...they're the ones who will have to deal with the issues, so it's right for them to ask questions'

(Nadege, p.122)

The combined testimonies of Tania, Simon and Nadege seem to point to a certain malaise in geography classrooms, where both students and teachers struggle to tackle pertinent local geographical issues.

The climate of apprehension, as described above, seems not to tally with the more proud displays of *Kreol* identity and belonging that are also on show in geography classrooms. This contradiction, of a *Kreol* resilience married with a sense of nervousness, implies a certain cultural fragility, where many young Seychellois feel unable to question the status quo, through some sense of deeper loyalty to their country. This loyalty is manifest as a culture of *Kreol* compliance, where passivity is seemingly the best option when living in such a small society. There also appears to an expectation that this compliance will be reciprocated with government favours. Both Raj and Tania make assertions to this Seychellois way of life when they disclosed that:

'...students still think the government will look after them, that the ministry will find a place for them at post-secondary or will find them a job. I think that's why they don't try so hard in the exams...maybe its because they think they don't need them'

(Tania p.149)

'It effects the whole society because when students go into the world of work they cannot really depend on themselves because they think somebody will come and take care of them!'

(Raj p.137)

7.2.4 The politics of language in the geography classroom

In addition to the political and cultural nuances of Seychellois life, the politics of language are also played out in the geography classroom. While the National

Curriculum Framework (2013:18) states that 'confidence and proficiency in one's first language (*Kreol*) contributes to self-esteem, a sense of identity and achievement throughout life', Nadege was adamant that many of her students were denied these feelings of self-esteem and achievement in secondary school because they struggled to read and write in English. Nadege explained that her 'lower ability' students found even simple assessments difficult because they were not able to understand the questions written in English. She suggested that geography assessments be carried out orally since students' English oral skills were better than their written skills. Convinced that her students had the cognitive abilities to understand geographical concepts and issues, she believed it was their written language skills that proved too much of a barrier for her students. Nadege also revealed that she often reverted to speaking *Kreol* in class so that her students could understand her instructions, and would read out the exam questions in *Kreol* to some of her 'weaker' students (p.125).

The politics of language proficiency and skill in communicating knowledge and understanding is complex, especially more so when both the teaching and learning take place in a second language. The Ministry has recognised that Seychellois teachers often do not use English in their classrooms (MoE, 2014:47) and have made the increased use of English by teachers, one of the targets of the MTS (2014:84). Yet the need to explain concepts in both *Kreol* and English is acknowledged by teachers. Marianne disclosed that she explained geographical ideas and exam instructions in both languages, saying that when she explained things in *Kreol* her students would reply; "Ah, ok, that's what you meant" (p.120). This practice, of using both languages, may support the notion that students acquiring concepts through one language tend to find it easier to engage with these concepts in a second language. The danger, however, is that students' *Kreol*-based understanding may make it more difficult for them to explain in written English, especially under exam conditions, as Nadege testified.

The ubiquity of the *Kreol* language, while testament to the success of the government's Creolisation policy, is also seen as problematic. English is required for most skilled jobs, while government and business administration is

carried out in written English despite much of the oral discourse being in *Kreol*. The educated middle class or intelligentsia, are typically tri-lingual, speaking and writing *Kreol*, French and English. The hegemony of English, however, cannot be denied, since the school and examination system is predominantly in the English language, with IGCSEs, 'A' levels, other post-secondary and tertiary courses examined in English. The dominance of English as the medium of assessment suits those in society who are more familiar with formal, written English while many Seychellois still struggle to read and write English, despite universal primary education (MoE, 2014:47).

The choice of language for a post-colonial education system is complex, as the experience of Singapore illustrates. While many of the Singaporean population spoke Malay or Tamil at home, they were expected to learn in English or Mandarin in school (Green, 1997:148). Singapore changed its educational language policy in 1979, in response to poor exam results, and created three language streams for first and second language English speakers, with prominence also given to mother tongue languages (Green, 1997:148). This complex structuring of language within post-colonial education systems can be found in other countries, such as South Africa; where 11 national languages were given equal educational status post-Apartheid, creating huge challenges for the educational system (Sayed & Jansen, 2001), and Mauritius; where the lingua franca is Mauritian *Kreol*, with French and Hindi among other common languages but English being retained as the medium of instruction and examination in schools (Nadal & Ankiah-Gangadeen, 2015). For Seychelles, the controversy over the medium of instruction is still very much a live issue.

Tania raised the issue in relation to the language policy in Seychelles' private schools. She explained that the private school in which her friend, Pamela, worked, had a strict classroom policy for speaking English, in order to improve students' language proficiency. While the school decided the idea of a complete ban on *Kreol* was unworkable, the insistence that English be spoken in classrooms was unequivocal. The desire, of certain Seychellois parents, for their children to improve their English as a way of improving their exam performance, explains this strict language policy. Advocates of the exclusive use of English in schools, like Mancham, speak of the 'savoir faire' and 'global

awareness' (Nation, 8.10.2012) that a 'quality' education provides, implying that a more *Kreolised* education would not offer essential knowledge and skills.

Many Seychellois firmly believe that state schools, like private schools, should retain links to English-based Cambridge exams. While the challenges of teaching and learning geography in English are great, the feeling exists that the English medium of examination provides that most authoritative way to evaluate Seychellois students. The supremacy of the language pervades the system, in spite of the simultaneous influence of *Kreol*, indicating that the maintenance of an English-based education system is a priority, even if state secondary schools do eventually localise their examination procedures. Ensuring Seychelles holds its global ranking as a reputable, internationally accredited nation, with 'world-class' educational standards is a key driver for the government (Crossley et al, 2011:31), especially since adopting the rhetoric of being a 'knowledge society'. So, despite championing both *Kreol* language and culture, the government conforms to a more traditionalist, neo-colonial education system that not only provides the small nation with valuable international credentials but also reinforces the status of Seychelles' educated, more globalised elite.

7.2.5 Problematising the *Kreol* curriculum

Balancing the competing needs of international legitimacy, national self-determination and local identity can result in complex glocalised curriculum arrangements. While post-colonial nations keenly re-make their national curricula to tell a more nationalist story, as the experience of Seychelles and Hong Kong show, the choices made in terms of what to include in a national curriculum are not easy. From a geography curriculum perspective, the new Hong Kong administration decided to increase, threefold, the time allocated to the teaching of China (Lam, 1998:42), given that the previous curriculum had 'only eight periods' on the geography of China (Lam & Lai, 1994). The new curriculum dedicates about one-quarter of the syllabus to China, a similar proportion to Hong Kong and the remaining half to other parts of the world (Lam, 1998:42). In post-colonial Seychelles, primary history and geography became a more localised 'communities curriculum' (Halvorsen, 2009:117),

focusing on children's immediate cultural, political and natural environments.

In post-colonial Botswana similar efforts were made to 'localise' the secondary geography curriculum so that it fed a more nationalist agenda (Tabulawa, 2002). Rather than teaching history and geography separately, the two disciplines were joined as Social Studies, with the view that this would 'contribute towards nation-building' (Tabulawa, 2002:108). As Tabalawa (2002) revealed, however:

'...the introduction of Social Studies...did not go down well with teachers ... (because) in their view, it represented a lowering of standards and a dilution of the more robust academic subjects of geography and history'

(Tabalawa, 2002:108)

The switch to social studies is a popular choice for a variety of reasons, although subject specialists are often very vocal about the loss of subject specialism. In Seychelles, although secondary teachers may have their own subject preferences, they are generally required to teach both history and geography in lower secondary, with only IGCSE teachers able to 'specialise'. At primary level, however, the social studies approach seems to be a permanent feature, despite serious flaws in its design.

A senior Ministry official involved in curriculum policy admitted, in a personal communication (20.5.2015), that the primary social science curriculum 'lacks history'. She explained that there is 'no discussion of the slave trade or colonialism' which 'made geography harder' (Ministry official, 20.5.2015). She also believed that primary students had a 'limited global awareness' making it more difficult for students to understand the interdependent relationships that were, and still are, so crucial to Seychellois culture and livelihoods. These 'structured absences' (Morgan, 2001:290) embedded in the primary curriculum are revealing. The post-colonial remaking of the curriculum, in an effort to build a forward looking, *Kreol* nation, choose to neglect essential aspects of Seychellois history. Such omissions may be illustrative of a young nation preferring not to look too closely at the trauma and brutality of its slave past, but may also point to a more revisionist remaking of history and geography, that downplays the dehumanising effects of slavery and colonialism, easing the

consciences of the '*gran blan*'³ slave-owner families and the Seychellois elite (see Smith's, 1999, discussion of denied histories).

Whatever the reasons for the historical shortcomings of the primary social studies curriculum, there are other aspects of the curriculum that are also problematic from a geographical perspective. The more 'community-based' approach at primary level encourages the study of local natural features, including landforms, rivers, coasts, temperature and weather, and plant and animal life through observation and the mapping of the classroom, school, and neighbourhood. Teachers are expected to offer students direct experience of their immediate surroundings, followed by an exploration of the wider community. This approach is similar to what Halvorsen (2009) terms the 'Expanding Communities Curriculum in Geography Education', taught in some US primary schools. Although Halvorsen believed the 'communities curriculum' helped students to 'understand social science concepts in a more real-world, meaningful context' (Halvorsen, 2009:116), the approach has been strongly criticized for restricting the 'development of content knowledge' and for lacking 'theoretical grounding and intellectual rigor' (Halvorsen, 2009:116).

The 'community' approach to social studies also relies heavily on the willingness and ability of primary teachers to carry out local fieldwork and investigations. In Seychelles it seems that despite receiving training in conducting fieldwork, primary teachers do not feel confident undertaking fieldwork (Lecturer A, personal conversation 7.5.2011). Teachers often 'found it difficult to process and transfer the knowledge and skills' learnt, during fieldwork training, to their own teaching (Lecturer A, personal conversation 7.5.2011). With such limited opportunities for students to conduct outdoor investigations, essential skills are not developed at, impacting the potential for learning at secondary level. Ironically, though, secondary students seemed, in Odette's (p.131) view, to have a closer affinity to physical and environmental geography.

³ Literal translation is 'big whites' meaning the powerful, white landowners and slave-owners.

7.2.6 A 'natural' propensity to natural geography?

Odette believed that students found physical geography easier because it was more tangible or 'concrete'. She explained that students 'can see a river, they know what a river looks like', meaning that direct contact with their physical surroundings helped students' understanding of the concepts of landform and geological process. Human geography, Odette said, was 'too abstract' so students struggled to 'see something they can't really see' (p.129). The implication that her students preferred experiential learning, where a close relationship to the natural environment was a key aspect of their cognitive understanding, is interesting and it seems other teachers also felt this about their Seychellois students. Both Tania and Pamela noticed that their students were 'more interested in natural geography' than their UK or Kenyan students, adding that Seychellois students' found 'physical geography a lot easier' (Tania p.146). Explaining this greater affinity for physical geography is complex, however, as there could be a number of factors at play.

One reason why students may be more able to relate to their physical surroundings is that Seychelles is still very 'rural' in many respects, covered by extensive forest, with imposing granitic mountain features, as well as being surrounded by numerous beaches and a vast ocean. The 'presence' of so much nature, including intense humidity with very limited air conditioning, means students are very much 'exposed' to the natural environment as an everyday fact of life. Secondly, given the remoteness of the islands, people have, until only recently, been forced to rely on their local environment for most of their food, shelter and livelihoods. Being so reliant on the sea, for fish, and now on tourists attracted to Seychelles for its natural paradisiacal 'beauty', means that all Seychellois share a very close bond with their immediate natural surroundings. These cultural and proximal ties to the physical geography of their home may play a large role in students' ability to relate to and better understand their local physical environment. Another reason, however, may be linked to the way the physicality of Seychelles is foregrounded in politics and popular culture, since the country depends so heavily on maintaining its reputation as an unspoilt, tropical paradise. Constant reference to the 'beauty' of the islands, and stringent rules governing the way the landscape and

endemic wildlife are protected and conserved, means that students are inundated with messages to safeguard their islands.

Apart from the reasons described above, to explain students' interest and aptitude for learning physical geography, a further reason may be due to the foreclosing of more open, politicised debate about local human geography issues. Teachers' narratives revealed that often, discussions about local controversial issues are not encouraged in geography classrooms, so teachers had to depend on case studies from other countries. Students, therefore, may instinctively sense that conversations about certain local social issues are not permitted in the geography classroom, so instead turn their attention to less subjective, more objective, 'concrete' topics, where the potential for argument is reduced.

Despite the myriad reasons to explain why students showed a preference for local physical geography, despite opportunities for fieldwork being limited, Tania seemed to genuinely believe her students were 'really aware of the environment', and knew it was threatened and felt 'passionate about it' (p.146). This belief was also echoed by Mark Howell, who blogged that:

'Despite the difficulties in conducting geographical field studies, teachers and students generally hold positive views about environmental protection and conservation...No stunning beaches and rainforest means no tourists and no money. They recognize this and want to do something about it, always volunteering for any kind of conservation project.'
(Howell, 2013b)

Seychellois students' passion for environmental protection is, again, very interesting. John Morgan (2000:62) writes that school geography 'stress(es) the need to manage space to avoid encroachment by inappropriate land uses...(and) there is an emphasis on planning and management'. This emphasis in most geography textbooks, including the ones used in Seychelles, feeds the Seychelles' government agenda of 'teaching' people how to 'act' in relation to their natural environment. Constant messages in the media and in schools prioritise the need to 'clean up' Seychelles, with regular beach, river

and street cleaning activities organised. The government employs people to clean and 'sweep' the beaches every morning before tourists arrive. Furthermore Seychellois are made very aware of the negative impacts of climate change, with on-going campaigns associated with the threat of climate change, sea level rise and coastal erosion. Geography serves this national, as well as regional and global agenda, by providing students with knowledge about environmental change and management. So despite limited access to practical fieldwork, geography students can easily adopt the 'environmentally concerned' 'model of citizenship' (Morgan, 2000:62) promoted not only in geography textbooks but also, more broadly, by the Seychelles government.

The 'western' practice of 'fieldwork', which, as Morgan (2000:62) argues, can be 'implicitly framed in terms of taking "deprived" urban schoolchildren into the countryside' is not really applicable in Seychelles, since even the most deprived Seychellois already live in the 'countryside'. The affective and character-forming benefits of 'fieldwork' that typify more western approaches to geography may not, therefore, be such a priority for geography teachers in the Seychelles context, because many students already have a close affinity to their natural surroundings. Unfortunately this may mean, therefore, that the cognitive benefits of fieldwork are forgone, as teachers struggle to offer their students more 'technical', scientific ways to measure natural processes, as well as deeper enquiries into how, why and for whom their environment is being managed. For example, important questions about how 'protected areas', 'reserves' and certain imaginings of space serve particular interests (Lefebvre, 1991, Smith, 1999, Sharp, 2009) are not generally explored in any detail, despite some students voicing frustration at being denied access to certain beaches etc. (Tania, p.148).

It seems that the default position for most geography teachers is not that of a 'neutral' teacher (Winter and Firth, 2007:351), since the pervading message in Seychelles education generally, and geography education in particular, is that of the enthusiastic protector of wildlife and the natural environment. It is almost seen as a patriotic duty to be the custodians of 'paradise'. While Winter and Firth (2007:354) posit that 'the emotional dimension of environmental education should not be overlooked' there is a danger, as Howell recognises,

that students are lulled into a more romantic notion of their home being an island paradise and feel they need not learn much about the 'world beyond' (Howell, 2013b). There is also the danger that students are encouraged to uncritically accept the 'reservation' and 'protection' of spaces, without being allowed to challenge the notion of 'protected areas', especially when these areas are being protected from Seychellois themselves.

The teaching of environmental issues presents many challenges. While geography teachers in Seychelles do not present local environmental topics in a 'sterile' or 'barren' way (Winter and Firth, 2007:356), they may not necessarily feel able to explore the deeper ethical and political issues involved in environmental protection and conservation. This can mean that students are 'denied opportunities to engage in thinking, discussion, critique and actions of profound ethical and political importance' (Winter and Firth, 2007:356). Kwan and Stimpson (2003:135) also felt, based on research in Singapore, that most environmental education in their island nation was not 'transformative', as it 'closed down the space for teachers to develop environmental education much beyond transmission'. More 'socially critical and emancipatory' approaches were not permitted by the Singaporean government, the authors argued, because 'centralist...examinations and accountability measures held teachers to curricula that are academic rationalist...in character' (Kwan and Stimpson, 2003:136).

There are striking similarities in the approaches of both Seychelles and Singapore to school based environmental geography. Yet, while school geography has yet to adopt more 'socially critically' approaches, Seychelles civil society is now far more engaged in discourses around environmental protection, mindful of *Kreol* peoples' needs and aspirations. The recent mobilisation of civil society, local academics, landowners and businesses around the future development of Cap Ternay⁴ (Today, 12.8.2015) is illustrative of this new approach. For geography teachers, however, the challenge remains. How do they negotiate the need for their students to

⁴ The Cap Ternay bay was leased to Emirates for a hotel development but the project was halted after pressure from civil society meant the President called for an alternative, more sustainable development to take place.

understand issues taking place in their 'own backyard' (Allen and Massey, 1995 in Marsden, 1997:249) with the need to understand changes taking place elsewhere in the world? Echoing Allen and Massey (1995) it is only by understanding broader, regional or global events that students understand the changes that happen locally, because, as they say, 'we live local versions of the world' (Allen & Massey, 1995 in Marsden, 1997:249).

7.2.7 Summary of the Locality Dimension

In response to the second research question, using a locality lens to deconstruct geography teachers' narratives, there seems to be considerable evidence to support the presence of a *Kreol*-based geography education. The sense of patriotism and loyalty to a *Kreol* culture may explain some of the distinctiveness of the geography curriculum and the insularity of some of the students' attitudes. While Nadege appealed for the 'place-based' nature of the primary curriculum to change and other teachers lamented about their secondary students' parochial outlook, Marianne made attempts to '*Kreolise*' the IGCSE curriculum in order to teach about '*Kreolised*' localities', thus illustrating the complexities of how teachers enact a localised 'sense of place' (Morgan, A. 2011:100).

While the local politics of language, culture and power seem to create a mood of unease in geography classrooms, this feeling of disquiet does not resonate with teachers' proud sense of *Kreolité*. This paradoxical situation points to the strange condition in which Seychellois geography teachers can be resilient and yet vulnerable, loyal and yet resentful, proud to be Seychellois and yet struggling to have their voice heard.

7.3 Sociality - Geography education 'communities of practice'?

The narratives of geography education illustrate how teachers and curriculum officials make sense of their practice (Elbaz, 1991, Brooks, 2007:17) as well as their social positioning in the educational hierarchies of Seychelles. Deconstructing the narratives, through an exploration of curriculum structures

and professional networks within which geography education takes place, helped to address the **third research question**, which considered the **degree to which Seychellois geography teachers were able to express a sense of professional self-worth**. Following both the temporal and place analyses, this final section of deconstruction opens up the geography teachers' 'power-knowledge dialectic' (Foucault, 1980, Scott, 2008:55). Using 'insider' and 'outsider' lenses, the disciplinary, professional and social tensions of teaching geography are unpacked in order to identify issues that may have gone unnoticed or been disregarded by the powers that be (Winter, 2013:184-185).

7.3.1 Geography teacher networks

The linked lives of geography teachers, first illustrated in section 4.3.1 (figure 7), are further developed in figure 17, below. Professional relationships are shown by linking each narrator to their corresponding collaborator(s) and to other educators and officials mentioned in the personal narratives.

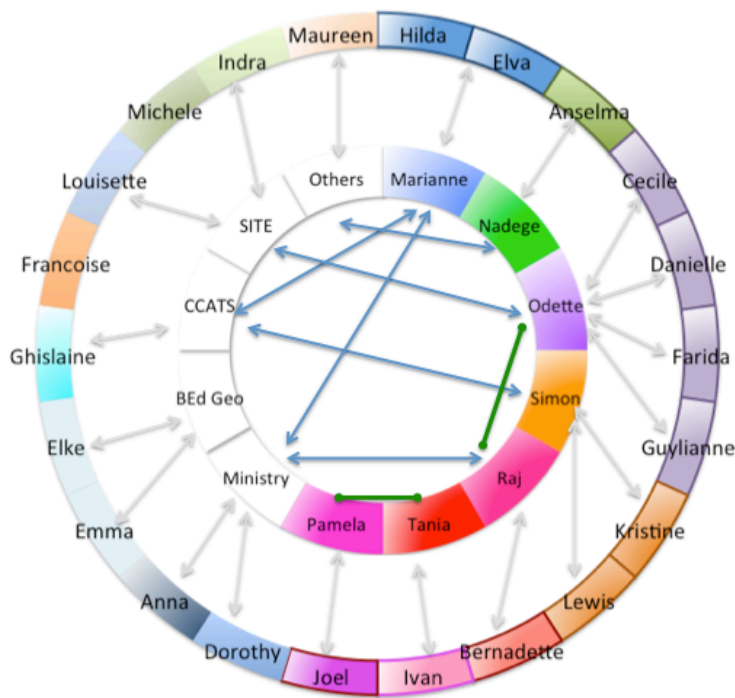


Figure 17 Linked lives of geography educators

Pamela and Tania are both expatriates and linked as friends, but are not linked to any local geography teachers, while Raj was Odette's geography teacher.

Apart from these direct links, most geography teachers do not seem to share close professional ties. Marianne's story confirmed this regrettable situation as she revealed she '(didn't) really have close contact with other geography teachers except one HoD' who trained with her in Australia (p.114). Most ties are between teachers and Ministry officials or teachers with their past lecturers. This hierarchical relationship, where teachers are beholden to both lecturers and Ministry officials suggests an imbalance of power, with limited evidence of teacher-teacher interaction.

With few opportunities to share their 'wisdom of practice' (Brooks, 2010) geography teachers seem not to have an effective way to relate what they know about their practice with other teachers. Although Brooks (2010) acknowledges the risk of teachers being tempted to 'justify bad practice' and advocates a 'business as usual' approach when meeting with other teachers face-to-face, the need for geography teachers to collectively critique their own practice is essential. Teachers can develop their pedagogy through reflective (Schön, 1987) and reflexive practice (Moore, 2004) but if this is not encouraged or embraced, the teaching and learning of geography can easily become stale. In part response to the deteriorating situation for geography education in Seychelles (CCATS, June 2014, Today, 23.6.2014) the Ministry orchestrated an attempt to 'stimulate interest in ... geography' through the launch of a 'Social Science Fair', together with a 'Social Science Club' for teachers (see section 6.1).

The top-down conception and implementation of both the social science fair and teachers' club, signifies the dominant role the Ministry plays in coordinating activities to showcase geography and promote teachers' professional development. There are no independent subject associations or clubs operating outside the remit of the Ministry, apart from the NGO 'Wildlife Clubs of Seychelles', which works closely with school students and teachers. Geography teachers, therefore, tend to rely on personal relationships with past lecturers and their departmental colleagues (see Marianne, p.117 and Odette, p.127), given the absence of social structures, outside Ministry control, to bring subject teachers together.

The potential for a university-led subject association does exist, and it is hoped that the sharing of geography education narratives has provided initial opportunities for teachers to engage emotionally and imaginatively (Sachs, 2003:133 and Hargreaves, 2003:18) with ideas about geography education. Although other geography-related academics at UniSey have been preoccupied with establishing a local BSc Environmental Science degree programme, some have shown, through their work with the Wildlife Clubs of Seychelles, an interest to reach out to secondary and primary schools.

7.3.2 Barriers to geography teachers' professional engagement

Given the lack of existing forums in which teachers are able to openly discuss issues related to geography education, two Heads of Department, Marianne (p.114) and Raj (p.135), reminisced about the previous 'HoD meetings' that were held regularly at the Ministry. Although meetings still sporadically took place, to mainly 'pass on information' (Marianne, p.114), they were once held weekly, and provided Head of Departments the opportunity to 'discuss the geography topics' (Raj, p.135) and coordinate the curriculum. Raj (p.135) recounted that 'the meetings were good' and 'need(ed) to be encouraged' adding that he did not know why the weekly meetings had stopped. Simon (p.139) also referred to geography workshops held 'years ago' which had also ceased. These past occasions for collaboration and discussion seem to have been appreciated but sadly, when asked why such meetings were no longer held, a senior ministry official explained that they could not take place 'during school time due to the chronic lack of teachers' (Personal conversation 13.2.2014).

The prolonged shortage of teachers in social science, exacerbated by the decision to send a significant number of in-service geography teachers to Botswana for the 2-year upgrade to BEd level, meant that remaining teachers were overloaded and denied the chance for even rudimentary training. With no formal agency or system to provide supply teachers, due to the limited pool of teachers (Bray & Adam, 2001), the Ministry is endlessly forced to rely on expatriate teachers, who can often put increased pressure on struggling departments, as Raj so vividly described (p.133). With both expatriate and local teachers requiring subject support, especially at IGCSE level, the onus

falls on the Ministry to offer training, development and opportunities for geography teachers.

Unsurprisingly, Odette staunchly asserted that, despite how much she 'loved teaching', she could not 'stay in a profession' where she received no professional development (p.131). As a novice teacher, still keen to pursue further training and upgrade to BEd level, Odette represents a more vocal and indignant group of younger teachers. This group of teachers may feel a sense of entitlement to the opportunities enjoyed by previous generations of geography teachers who trained overseas. Seemingly less loyal to the Ministry, especially given that similar prospects were not so readily available, younger teachers like Odette are likely to be more outspoken and quick to blame the Ministry for its shortcomings. The criticisms levelled at the Ministry by younger teachers contrast with the anecdotal findings of Brooks (2010), who explored how teachers interact with power and authority. Brooks (2010) found that younger teachers would 'get on with it... in a largely uncritical way' while 'older teachers (were) more likely to question and challenge...policies and initiatives' (slide 4). In Seychelles, it seems younger teachers are not so accepting or resilient.

There are many factors that contribute to Odette's sense of frustration at not being able to access further training and professional development. From a career perspective, Seychellois teachers without a BEd are unlikely to progress into senior management or earn higher salaries. The BEd also represents a pedagogic credential, demonstrating a level of competence in teaching and learning about the discipline. Being denied access to this credential and the knowledge that goes with it, means teachers are denied a sense of agency and professional status. It then becomes more difficult for teachers to develop the necessary 'pedagogic techniques' (Tapsfield and Lambert, 2011:4) to enact the geography curriculum and take students beyond their lived experiences. For geography teachers to effectively help their students 'make new meanings (that are) challenging, counter-intuitive, surprising and...significant' (Tapsfield and Lambert, 2011:4) they need to feel agentic. This sense of agency, in terms of understanding and having the ability to

improve one's own practice, is vital for an 'activist teaching profession' (Sachs, 2003).

As Sachs (2003) explained 'activist' teachers have a sense of pedagogic confidence and self-worth. Odette wanted to become an 'activist' teacher, but felt she was being denied by the Ministry. The authority and control of the Ministry meant that, according to Odette (p.132), they would 'select which teachers to send (for training)', hinting that the selection process might not be open or transparent. This suggestion is common, as Bray & Adam (2001) confer, in small societies where bureaucratic structures are so highly personalized. Odette hoped that the Ministry would 'be fair' (p.132) in their selection of BEd students, advocating that in-service teachers be given priority over pre-service teachers. She was not privy to the process of selection and thus anxious about whether she would be chosen. This situation undermines teachers' agency and places the power of the profession in the hands of a few people within the Ministry. With such power, senior Ministry officials control teachers' access to subject knowledge and professional skills, since the vast majority of Seychellois do not have the private funds to pay for their own training and independent scholarships for teaching are practically impossible to attain.

Apple (1990) and Giroux (2011) both warned of the de-skilling that occurs when powerful systems collude to undermine the teaching profession. Teachers can easily become de-moralised and lack creative energy when they are expected to function with reduced forms of pedagogy (Giroux, 2011). In Seychelles, rather than being 'pawns in the capitalist state's game', as Kent (2008, in Castree et al., 2008) posited, teachers could be regarded as Ministry 'pawns', who are deployed and redeployed as those in authority chose. But this argument further undermines teachers, denying them the agency already curtailed by the state (Morgan, 2002). This is why Odette was clear in her pronouncement that if she was not chosen for the BEd course she would resign, adding that she had completed her 'bond' so did not 'owe (the Ministry) anything' (p.132). This proclamation of 'freedom' from bondage gave Odette a sense of empowerment, where she felt she could negotiate access to training from a 'better' position, given her threat to resign. This high stakes game with

the Ministry, in the context of severe teacher shortages, meant that certain teachers possessed important bargaining power.

The trade between teachers and the Ministry is a complex one. Teachers, in exchange for an initial acquisition of knowledge and training (the diploma phase), commit themselves to the state education system, for the length of their bond. As the bond period nears completion, both teachers and the Ministry enter a phase of negotiation, where the Ministry uses the promise of further training as a bargaining strategy, while teachers may threaten to resign if further training is not secured. For young teachers entering the profession this custom of posturing and grandstanding by both teachers and the authority can be tense and very disruptive. Odette put it bluntly when she said that most of the diploma students she trained with had 'quit because they didn't get the chance to do their degree' (p.131). She added that,

'...a lot more teachers will quit if they don't get any further training. The ministry don't seem to realize that while they delay our training many of us are leaving. We're just fed up of waiting.'

(Odette, p.131)

These teachers, who had chosen to leave the profession, could be described as 'fatalities' of the system rather than merely 'casualties' as portrayed by Hargreaves (2003:xx-introduction).

7.3.3 Geography teacher 'casualties' and 'catalysts'

Casualties of an education system operate within a culture of fear and insecurity and are not encouraged to learn or take risks, but instead are required to conform (Hargreaves, 2003:61). While Hargreaves applied these characteristics to the context of teaching in a 'knowledge society', the scenario seems apt when describing the conditions for some geography teachers in Seychelles. Alternatively, geography teachers who are 'catalysts' would, according to Hargreaves (2003:18,128), pool and tap into their 'collective intelligence' within a collaborative culture of professional trust. The issue for Seychelles, however, is since the number of geography specialists, educators and academics is so tiny (Bray & Adam, 2001), with key individuals

overburdened by their polyvalent roles (Crossley et al., 2011:5-6) the time and energy available to build a genuine professional learning community is severely limited. Raj, as an overloaded HoD, typifies the situation of having to juggle a large teaching load, cover for absent teachers, mentor expatriates and trainees, as well as complete his administrative duties, leaving little time for meaningful professional development.

A recent front-page article (figure 18, below), entitled 'Teachers' Exodus. Why oh Why?' (Le Seychellois Hebdo, 3.7.2015) raised serious concerns about the number of teachers leaving the profession and the impact this had on the education system as a whole. The article, which features pictures of the Minister for Education and her two Principal Secretaries, describes 'several factors driving teachers...from their vocation', including:

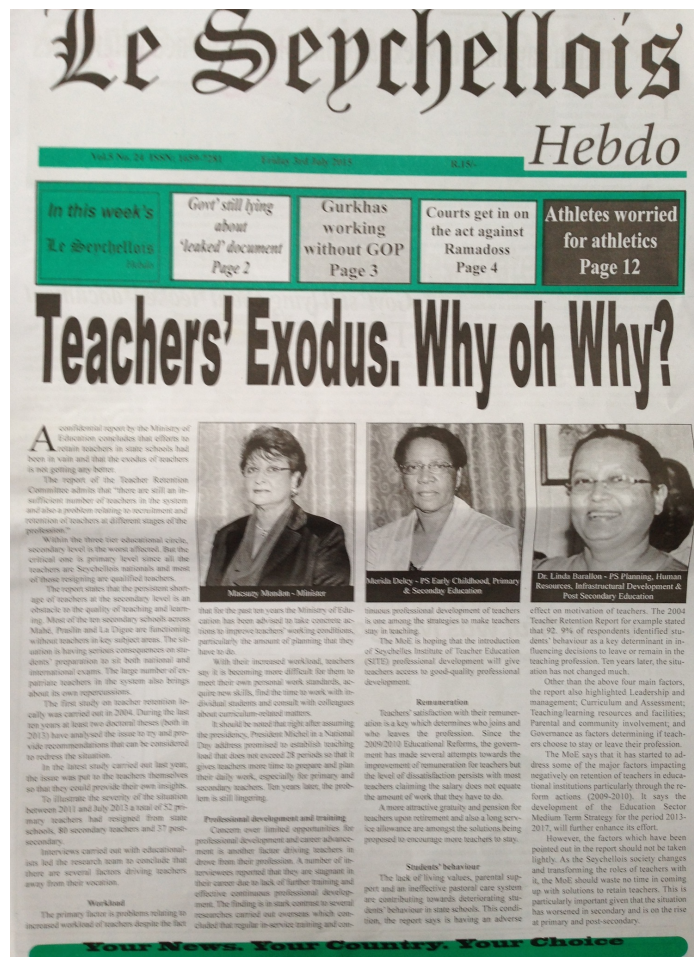


Figure 18 Teachers' Exodus. Why oh Why?

Le Seychellois Hebdo, 3.7.2015

‘...limited opportunities for professional development and career advancement (meaning that teachers) are stagnant in their career due to lack of further training and effective continuous professional development.’

(Le Seychellois Hebdo, 3.7.2015)

Remuneration, workload and student behaviour were also highlighted, while the article quoted from a ‘confidential report’ which concluded that ‘efforts to retain teachers in state schools had been in vain and that the exodus of teachers is not getting any better’ (Le Seychellois Hebdo, 3.7.2015). The story told by the article resonates with much of the talk found on local social media networks, where teachers use Facebook to express concerns. This public criticism of the Ministry is, however, at odds with the authoritative sense of control the Ministry enjoys, suggesting that such newspaper articles (produced by ‘opposition’ organisations) and social media provide an outlet for frustrated teachers.

For geography education the shortage of teachers, in conjunction with poor working conditions, limited resources and an authoritarian Ministry, mean that severe strain is placed all concerned. Raj, with so many years in the system, felt the most pressing issue was that ‘no young Seychellois teachers are coming through’ (p.134). Given the negative publicity and general malaise within the profession, it was not surprising that so few young ‘A’ level geographers were interested in teaching. As Raj conceded, he felt ‘sad’ about the situation, although he was also keen to know where the geography university students...had ‘gone’ (p.134). Despite the government providing scholarships for higher education and training, and sending students overseas, as well as to UniSey, there is a persistent reluctance among young people to join the teaching profession. When overseas training opportunities were halted, fewer students enrolled on teacher training courses, with the situation becoming so dire that, in July 2014, the Ministry committed to sending a group of teachers to the University of Botswana (Nation, 30.7.2014).

From the personal stories of geography teachers in this study, it seems some of the older teachers, like Marianne and Nadege, were not initially interested in teaching geography as a specialist subject. While teachers like Simon trained prior to Seychelles’ independence, new recruits like Marianne were encouraged to become teachers in order to help build the new nation. This means teachers

were not necessarily recruited because they had a passion for geography, but rather for patriotic reasons, during a time of rapid educational expansion. Nadege, too, initially planned to be a primary teacher, only becoming a geography teacher when offered the chance to train in Australia. In stark contrast, Catling et al. (2010:344) explored how a group of teachers in the UK were ‘turned on’ to geography and found many had early formative life experiences that had drawn them to the subject (see figure 19, below). The personal journeys of teachers lead many to the geography classroom, whether through an early love for the ‘outdoors’, travel and holidays to different places, or even a passion for maps.

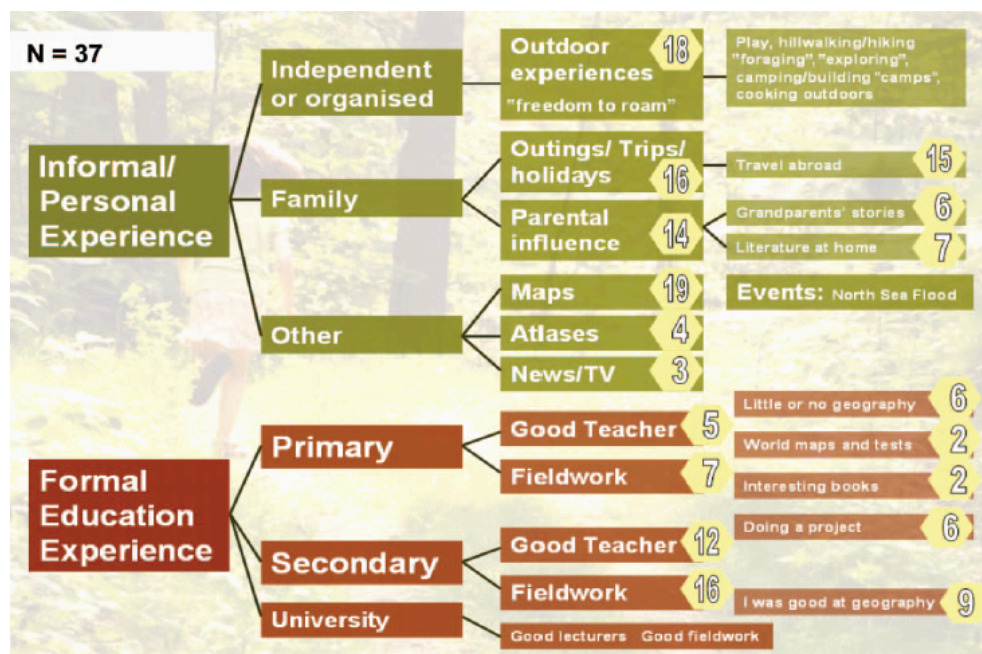


Figure 19 Primary Geographers formative experiences
 Source: Catling, Greenwood, Martin & Owens, 2010)

A deep love for geography is often very strong among geography teachers, and this passion can resonate powerfully with their students. Nadege was one teacher who seemed to have developed a real keenness for geography and was excited about the prospect of teaching a group of IGCSE students for the first time. In preparation for taking on the group, she was eager to know more about fieldwork and was keen to update her subject knowledge, even if that meant doing the ‘A’ level geography course as a refresher. Her resourcefulness and genuine interest in self-improvement was invigorating,

especially as she saw opportunities for further learning during departmental professional development sessions for which she was responsible. Her enthusiasm prompted the 'coming together' of a small ad hoc group of in-service and trainee geography teachers to discuss the possibilities for fieldwork in Seychelles. Details and analysis of this rather unusual meeting are presented in section 7.3.5, below.

While Nadege could be considered a 'catalyst' teacher (Hargreaves, 2003) in her efforts to work collaboratively and try new pedagogies, the tendency to accept the status quo, especially in terms of teaching an outdated curriculum, using outdated textbooks, can be overpowering (Kent, 2008 in Castree et al., 2008). The Ministry has also struggled to initiate new ideas and resources, despite acknowledging the need to address the 'limited local knowledge base in history and geography' (Today, 23.6.2014, quoting the Director General of CCATS). With the introduction of the Social Science Fair postponed, in preference for the need to focus on exams, teachers could have felt deprived of opportunities to be more creative. This feeling of dispossession (Crossley et al., 2011:5-6) forces teachers into 'play-safe strategies' (Lam, 2007) where they are 'unwilling to take any risks', as Lam (2007) found in his study of Geography Teachers in Changchun, China.

'Non-risk' takers find it difficult to respond to calls for change, preferring to 'adhere to the textbooks...and examination requirements', argued Lam (2007). Such compliance means teachers are unlikely to have the confidence to re-make the curriculum, or even view the curriculum as a 'socially constructed' text, embedded in its own history (Giroux, 1992). As Winter and Firth (2007:353) found, in a study of trainee teachers in the UK, trainees tended to shift from viewing knowledge as socially constructed to teaching knowledge as objective fact when they started teaching in schools. The pressures of an exam-orientated curriculum, especially one directed by an external examination board, as in Seychelles, limit the scope for critical pedagogy and curriculum deconstruction. Space is not opened up for teachers to 'introduce students to particular forms of reason' or to help students challenge the way that the curriculum 'structures specific stories and ways of life' (Giroux, 1992:77).

Striking the balance between an English-based, academically 'rigorous' geography curriculum and the 'ideological thrust' (Marsden, 1997:249) of a nationalist, *Kreol* curriculum is challenging. While the ubiquitous use of English-based textbooks, such as David Waugh's 'A New Wider World, shapes much of Seychelles' lower secondary geography, the 'authoritative' text of the Cambridge IGCSE specification influences the S4-S5 geography experience. Yet, despite the rigour and authority of Cambridge-based geography, teachers with few academic ties to the discipline can easily become dispossessed, and their curriculum making skills 'dead' or 'dormant'.

Teachers should be at the heart of the curriculum process as they are the key to curriculum articulation (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988:185; Kelly, 2009), 'curriculum makers' (Clandinin & Connelly, 1992) not 'takers'. These ideas were discussed with a senior Ministry official (personal conversation, 20.5.2015) as part of an effort to advocate for geography teachers to be included in the forthcoming curriculum review. The official agreed that inclusion of teachers 'fostered curriculum ownership' (Official E, 20.5.2015) but was concerned that most teachers 'lacked the subject expertise and were already overloaded'. Given these constraints the official felt that teachers would be 'reluctant to include new topics' (Official E, 20.5.2015), preferring more conservative, 'play-safe' strategies (Lam, 2007). Nadege, however, offered constructive ideas about curriculum change, suggesting that the Ministry consult primary teachers as well as secondary teachers during the review process. She was adamant that primary geography needed to be enhanced, as students started secondary school without essential geographical knowledge and skills (p.126).

The precise make-up of the curriculum review committee was unknown at the time of writing, making it impossible to forecast the exact nature of the committee and how it will function. The Social Science Teachers' Club, despite being relatively active in terms of social events, does not have a collective position with regard to the curriculum review, and there are no formal relationships between geography academics at UniSey, Ministry and SITE, for the reviewers to call upon.

7.3.4 Powerful pedagogies in geography education

Purvis (2004) warned that it would only be possible to re-make the Seychelles national curriculum when improved leadership, greater accountability, improvements in support, and school-based curriculum development took place in parallel. The added goal of building a 'knowledge society' and the recent launch of the MTS (2014), represent further challenges for re-making the national curriculum. As argued by Purvis (2004), more support needs to be provided so Seychellois teachers can feel confident teaching a 'knowledge-based' curriculum. Similarly, Roberts (2013) would maintain that geography teachers need a 'powerful pedagogy' in order to effectively provide students access to 'powerful' geographical knowledge. Supporting this pedagogy remains the key question. Geography academics at UniSey could play a greater role in supporting more collaborate professional development among geographers but, given the tensions that exist between the Ministry and UniSey, for example over the decision to send teacher trainees to the University of Botswana rather than UniSey, such collaboration might prove difficult.

To help build more powerful pedagogies in geography there may be scope for Seychelles to learn from the GeoCapabilities Project (Lambert et al. 2015) which aims to articulate what a generic 'future' geography curriculum would look like, while acknowledging that specific content of a geography curriculum is socially produced in local cultural settings (p732). Alongside the GeoCapabilities project, many of the professional development and teacher-focused resources published by the Geographical Association, the Australian Geography Teachers Association and other international geography teaching bodies, could also help teachers and the Ministry build more powerful pedagogies. These improved pedagogies are not only necessary for teachers to improve the quality of teaching and learning in geography classrooms but also for the Ministry, in their attempt to meet the performance targets of the MTS (2014). The Ministry, however, needs to recognise they require help to support both a powerful curriculum and powerful pedagogies, because, as Simon (p.139) pointed out, 'they really need people who are confident in geography, people who are geography specialists'. While Simon knew he was

being contentious by pointing out the limited capacity at the Ministry, as a confident and experienced ex-teacher, he felt this needed to be said.

For geography teachers to become more 'activist', both Sachs (2003:133) and Hargreaves (2003:18) argue that teachers' capacity for imagination and emotional engagement is vital. Their views chime with Chalmers et al. (2002) who suggest that teachers needed to 'develop' in three ways, professionally, personally and socially (p320-321). Developing in these ways involves 'not only the use of new teaching activities in the classroom, but also the development of the beliefs and conceptions underlying the actions' (Bell & Gilbert, 1996:15 in Chalmers et al., 2002). The clarification of core concepts and content was important for teachers, Chalmers et al. (2002) argued, when developing new knowledge and methodological frameworks, but, they added, 'contemporary professional development seldom focuses on exploring beliefs and concepts' (p320-321). While much work has been done in the last decade in reviewing the national curriculum in England, with renewed emphasis on understanding core geographical concepts and ideas, this has yet to be attempted in Seychelles.

What may make the curriculum review process in Seychelles especially challenging is the personal dimension of 'managing the feelings associated with changing...activities and beliefs' particularly if these go 'against the grain of current accepted knowledge' (Bell & Gilbert, 1996:15, in Chalmers et al., 2002). 'Play-safe' teachers are likely to resist attempts to introduce new ways of constructing and enacting the curriculum, although 'catalyst' teachers, like Nadege, are more likely to embrace change. Chalmers et al. (2002) suggest that local networking among geography teachers and association-driven meetings with teachers using social networking, have great potential for professional development. Unfortunately, while online professional development has evolved in many countries, Seychelles has yet to engage seriously with such possibilities. Online 'communities of practice' could showcase innovative geography teaching and open up 'professional' space for geography teachers to engage but as yet, there are no subject-specific or professional websites for teachers. Facebook, however, is popular among Seychellois teachers, with an active 'Teachers' Corner' Facebook page. I have

also created a web space⁵ where geography teachers can share resources, but the site remains at an embryonic stage. The poor levels of internet provision in most schools, however, limits the access teachers have to digital sharing and learning.

The work to encourage geography teachers' self-reflection and self-narrative is embodied in this research. The co-constructed narratives, already shared with collaborators will, hopefully, be shared among more teachers and be debated and contested. In addition, during the process of collaboration, Ms Boniface, responsible for geography curriculum development, agreed that I could conduct a professional development session, to help develop teachers' fieldwork skills. The session, held in and around the Anse Royale UniSey campus, was geared mainly toward fieldwork for the IGCSE paper 4 exam and proved popular with teachers. During the day teachers practiced both river and beach fieldwork techniques as the campus is situated near both a large river and the Anse Royale coast. Odette, Marianne and Raj attended the session and news spread about the support available for fieldwork at UniSey. Following the event, other teachers wanted to make use of the resources and services at UniSey, and made individual requests for me to facilitate fieldwork for their IGCSE students. Between 2014 and 2016 I have been able to conduct whole-day fieldwork sessions for seven groups of IGCSE students from a range of secondary schools, with the help of Terence Vel, Director of the University Centre for Environmental Education (UCEE).

The above example, of a small-scale community of practice, while important, is nonetheless ad hoc and piecemeal, relying on personal relations between individual teachers and myself. Ideally, all geography teachers in Seychelles should have the confidence to carry out their own fieldwork. Currently there are only a few teachers, like Marianne, who have the experience and confidence to organise fieldwork for their IGCSE students. Nadege aspired to be like Marianne. She expressed this during storytelling sessions and was keen to find out about doing IGCSE coursework, rather than the alternative to coursework (paper 4) exam. Picking up on her curiosity, and knowing that Pamela was the only teacher in Seychelles who offered students the chance to do IGCSE

⁵ www.maheseychelles.com

coursework, I organised a 'gathering' for Nadege and two BEd geography students, to learn more about IGCSE geography coursework from Pamela. As such, the 'gathering' could be regarded as an example of the pooling and tapping of 'collective intelligence' (Hargreaves, 2003:18) or as a collaborative exchange of geography teaching experience and ideas.

7.3.5 A case of subversive dialogue?

Pamela, a geography teacher at Lekol Bwa Rouz, a private school, is an expatriate from the UK and friends with Tania (see section 5.6). After contacting Pamela, on Tania's recommendation, a 'gathering' was organised at Lekol Bwa Rouz, not only so teachers could share their fieldwork and coursework experiences, but also for Nadege and the trainee teachers, Emma and Elke, to see an exemplar of a 'UK style' geography classroom. Pamela's classroom was a typical modern 'British' geography classroom, with the usual paraphernalia of globes, wall maps, displays of student-work, class-sets of textbooks, as well as a fixed projector (secured to the ceiling) and laptop/desktop computer. The classroom's temperature control meant that instead of radiators for heating, there were air-conditioning units, so the room could be sealed against the heat, wind and rain. Nadege, Emma and Elke were envious of Pamela's classroom, and explained to Pamela that most of their classrooms didn't even have electricity, let alone air-conditioning or a projector.

Overall the 'gathering' was fruitful, as Nadege learnt much about the logistics of doing IGCSE coursework and Pamela heard about the conditions and constraints of teaching geography in state schools. While the power dynamics were not necessarily balanced, the teachers and trainees spoke candidly, with Pamela admitting that she would probably be 'eaten alive' in a state school classroom in Seychelles (extracts of the discussion are included in Appendix 9). During the discussions about IGCSE coursework Pamela adopted the 'expert' teacher position, explaining procedures for planning, teaching and submitting coursework, and how to apply to Cambridge to be a coursework moderator. Pamela expressed amazement that teachers in state schools were not able to work autonomously, and described how she had 'complete

freedom' to design her own geography curriculum, even starting IGCSE topics in S3. She listed some of her S1 and S2 topics and the Seychellois teachers were surprised that topics such as the 'geography of crime' were part of Pamela's curriculum.

Pamela emphasised that she carried out fieldwork and geographical investigations in each year, from S1-S5, and that her crime unit included an investigation into crime in Seychelles. This was a novel idea for Nadege, Emma and Elke, as they were only accustomed to the geography national curriculum (GNC) taught in all government schools. The Seychelles GNC contained very little emphasis on geographical investigation, with fieldwork enquiry essentially reduced to what was required for the IGCSE paper 4 exam. Students in lower secondary, non-IGCSE classes, and even A' level classes (the Cambridge A' level specification does not include any compulsory fieldwork) were not routinely provided with opportunities to conduct geographical investigations, even of the most rudimentary kind. So, while Pamela stressed the importance of conducting fieldwork and geography enquiry throughout secondary, Nadege tended to view fieldwork in more instrumentalist terms, as part of the requirement for IGCSE.

As the discussion progressed Pamela explained that the skills learnt while doing geographical enquiries were 'the more relevant part of our subject' and that she had to tell her students that going on 'trips' was not fieldwork. The conversation became more difficult as it became evident that students were often taken on 'fieldtrips' or excursions where the teacher acted as a tour guide (Kinder, 2013:182) and this practice was generally accepted as 'fieldwork' in many state schools. As the trainees, Emma and Elke, began to realise, there was much more to geographical enquiry than just taking a group of students to visit a waterfall or a beach. Despite the differences of perspective, Pamela, Nadege, Emma and Elke were able to learn from each other, in a collaborative exchange of geography teaching experience and ideas. The gathering provided a rare opportunity for a diverse group of geography teachers to share their various 'expertise' and, hopefully, develop a deeper sense of professional self-worth.

The unusual meeting that took place between Pamela, Nadege, Emma and Elke, with myself acting as facilitator, opened up space for a more subversive dialogue, where both the expatriate and Seychellois teachers' assumptions were destabilised. The gathering could be seen as an attempt to 'resist' the conventions of teacher 'training' in Seychelles, normally conducted by the Ministry, by bringing together teachers from both private and state schools, together with teacher trainees. While not as radical as educational scholars such as Freire or Michael Apple may envisage, the teachers were able to dialogue openly. The power required, however, to challenge the status quo (Kent, 2008 in Castree et al., 2008) by calling for students to have greater access to more rigorous geographical enquiry, is daunting. For example, when Nadege suggested (see p.124), at a meeting to discuss the S5 geography national exam, that an element of fieldwork be included, other teachers blocked the idea. Although upset on this occasion, Nadege seemed determined to battle on, resisting the incessant temptation to 'play safe' with geography education.

7.3.6 Summary of the Sociality Dimension

In response to the third research question, using a sociality lens to deconstruct geography teachers' narratives, it seems opportunities for Seychellois geography teachers to express a sense of professional self-worth are lacking. Geography teachers do not seem to enjoy close working relationships beyond their department, with few occasions to learn from academic or pedagogic geography 'communities of practice'. Widespread teacher shortages seem to exacerbate the lack of development opportunities for practicing geography teachers, with some teachers threatening to resign in order for their appeals to be heard. Many geography teachers had already left and there are few signs that enough young people are interested in joining the teaching profession. While Nadege could be regarded as a 'catalyst' geography teacher, there were too many incidents in which teachers felt dispossessed or disinclined to become active curriculum-makers, preferring instead to wait for the Ministry to make decisions.

The top-down conception and implementation of both the social science fair and teachers' club denote the powerful position the Ministry holds, not only in initiating teachers' professional development, but also in the professional lives and career opportunities of geography teachers in state schools. For teachers to develop more powerful pedagogies and to gain access to more powerful geographical knowledge, new forms of collaboration need to be trialled. With a significant cohort of social science teachers now at the University of Botswana, maybe there is scope to explore the potential of online collaboration, between teachers, schools, the universities of Seychelles and Botswana, SITE and the Ministry.

7.4 More questions come to light

Employing the three dimensions of temporality, sociality, and place (Connelly and Clandinin, 2006:479) this chapter addressed the initial research questions. The narrative deconstruction revealed many intricacies and ambiguities, which, in turn brought further questions to light. The deconstructive analysis proved complex because both the research questions and their three analytical dimensions were so closely interwoven. The many issues arising from the deconstruction of the intertwined stories warrant further discussion and the final chapter examines some of these issues.

Chapter Eight Narratives Reconstructed - Implications and Considerations

This final chapter reconstructs the ideas and knowledge generated during the inquiry. The reconstruction uses the findings of the deconstructive analysis to reform ideas and present a series of synthesised narratives. The chapter then offers a final reflective account of the methodological issues raised by the inquiry, followed by a discussion of the research's contribution to the fields of geography education, in particular, and education, more generally. The thesis concludes with recommendations for future policy and practice and suggests possible areas for further research.

8.1 Reconstructed Narratives

Some of the issues revealed during the narrative deconstruction are reimaged in this section. The ways in which Seychellois geography teachers made 'sense of their lives' (Longhurst, in Clifford & Valentine, 2003:123) are recreated, as well as issues concerning geography curriculum making, the future curriculum in Seychelles and, more broadly, issues of educational governance.

8.1.1 Geography Teacher Identities

While not aiming to simply characterise individual teachers, figure 20, below, suggests some of the positions and identities geography teachers have adopted in Seychelles. Firstly, Simon's story recalls a past era that witnessed the ending of British rule and the establishment of a nation with its own education system. Relieved to be finally leaving the profession, Simon's story is of a confident, experienced subject specialist. Second, Marianne and Nadege's stories portray a sense of resilience, growing up and becoming teachers during the early period of nation building. Their narratives exemplify the contemporary, patriotic teacher, loyal to the post-colonial cause. Odette's story, on the other hand, represents a future that is less tied to the legacies of the past, seemingly impatient with what the present offers, and eager for more

in terms of subject knowledge, access to training and professional opportunities. Further, the expatriate teachers' stories illustrate how non-Seychellois teachers keep education in state schools afloat. Critical of the ministry, they nevertheless have little option but to conform even when, like Raj, they have lived in Seychelles for many years.

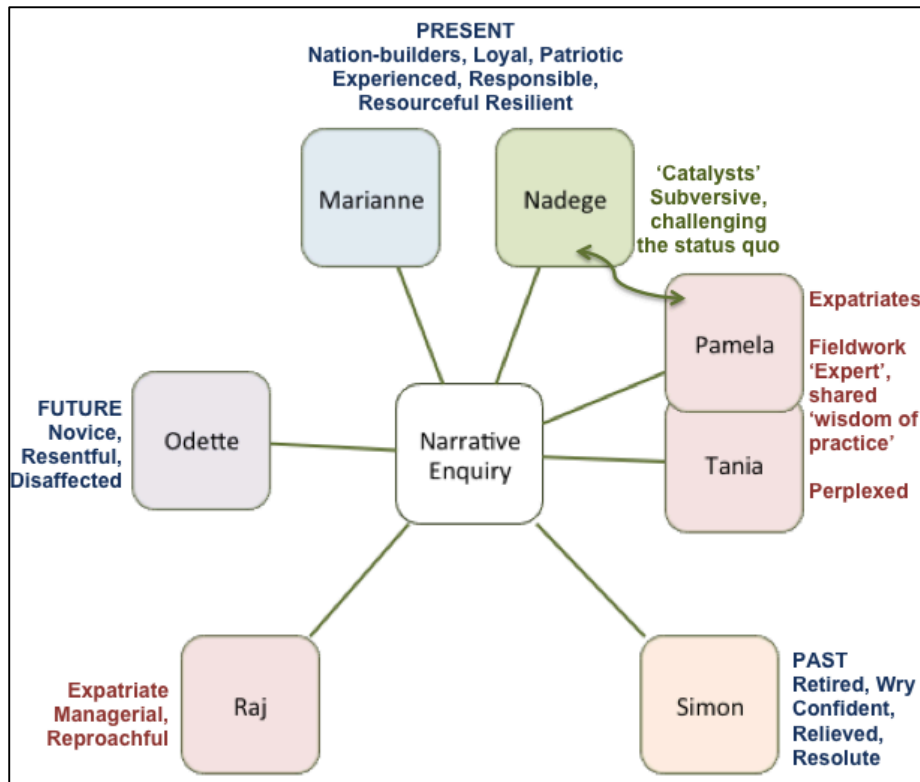


Figure 20 Orientations and attitudes to being a geography teacher in Seychelles

The collaborative exchange between Nadege, Pamela and the two BED students shows how teachers are able to initiate small communities of practice, where, in this case, they were able to challenge accepted methods of doing (or rather not doing) fieldwork. In so doing, the teachers were able to subvert the 'already known' in an attempt to take their geography teaching to places it had never been. Lastly, Tania's story described the peculiarities of teaching in Seychelles and the perplexing issue of Seychellois identity. While more complex than a simple reliance on *Kreol* language, Tania's insights into her geography students' sense of identity and place were very perceptive.

As the first generation of Seychellois geography teachers move into retirement, the profession will continue to rely heavily on expatriate teachers. The lack of

younger recruits and the worrying levels of disaffection in the profession do not bode well. However, a core group of resilient geography teachers, seemingly willing to try new ideas and challenge established practices, offers hope for the future of geography education in Seychelles.

8.1.2 Geography curriculum making revisited

For many of the reasons outlined in this study geography curriculum making in Seychelles is particularly challenging. The following set of diagrams (figures 21-24) suggest ways the three pillars of curriculum making – teacher, subject and student (Hart, 2001; Lambert & Morgan, 2010), are positioned in various scenarios, with the Seychelles situation presented last (fig. 24). Each pillar of curriculum making is symbolised as a circle and the respective size of the circles illustrates the relative dominance of each pillar. The first scenario represents an ‘ideal’ approach to curriculum making (fig. 21 with the three pillars in balance, while the next two diagrams show a teacher-centred (fig. 22) and subject-centred (fig. 23) model of geography curriculum making. In the case where the subject dominates, for example, the subject circle overwhelms the remaining two.

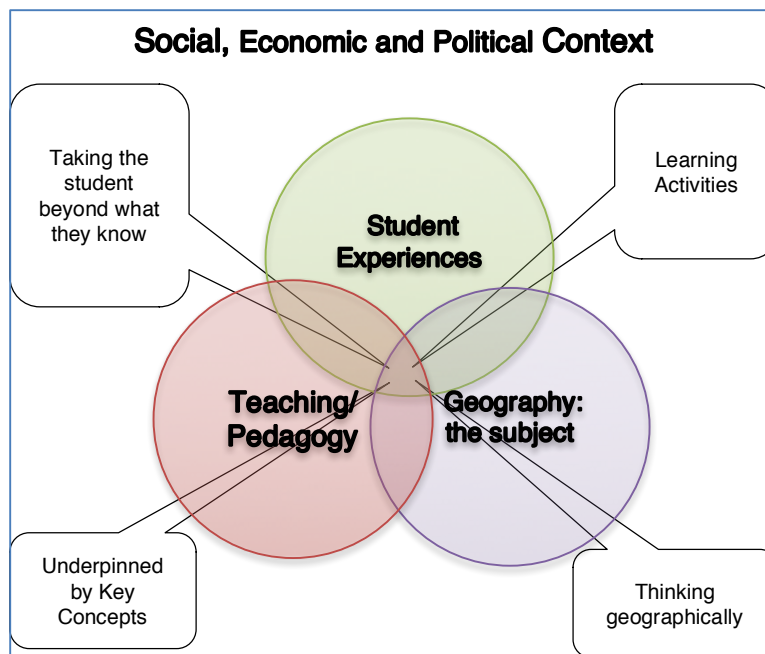


Figure 21 The three pillars of geography curriculum making, in-balance (the ideal)

Source: Hart, 2001 and Lambert & Morgan, 2010

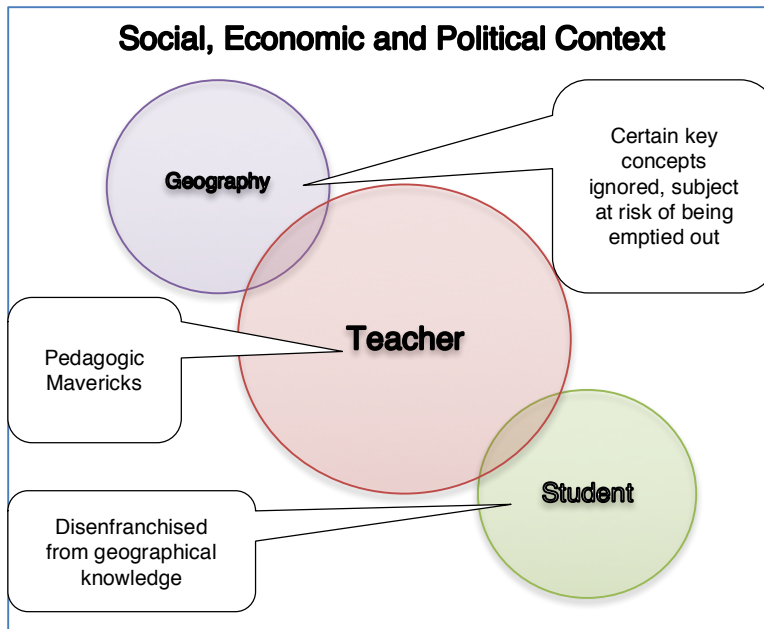


Figure 22 Teacher centred geography curriculum making

Based on Lambert, 2010

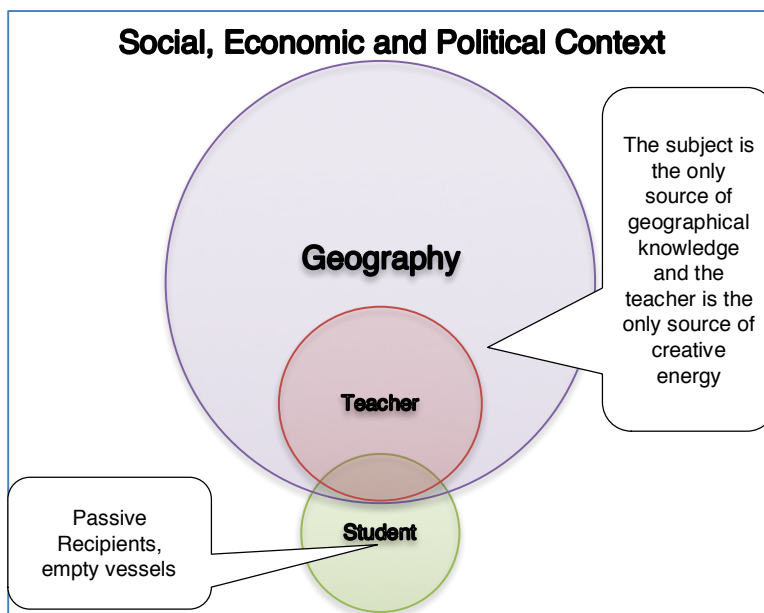


Figure 23 Subject-based geography curriculum making

Based on Lambert, 2010

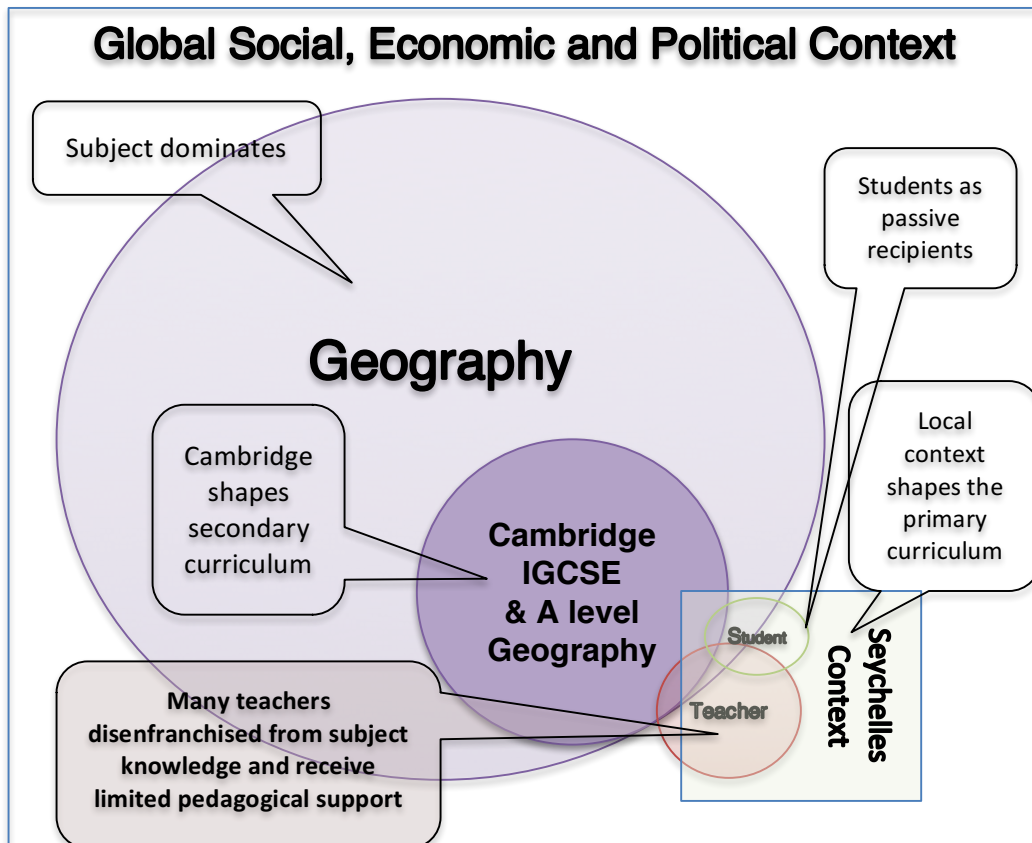


Figure 24 Seychelles geography curriculum making

The final scenario (fig. 24) tries to summarise the experience of curriculum making in Seychelles. The balance between the three pillars is compromised because secondary curriculum making largely conforms to an unreconstructed version of geography envisioned by Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). The dominance of CIE's geography subject specification is understandable. With many teachers disenfranchised from the broader body of geographical knowledge, other forces, such as the government's agenda for nation building or national exam and selection procedures, influence the task of enacting the curriculum. While some government officials appear unconcerned by teachers' weak association with a broad geographical community, since this means teachers are less likely to advocate on behalf of their subject and more likely to comply with government policy, the problem of subject identity remains. If teachers do not feel they belong to a broad subject community they will be unable to invite their students to explore the wonders and powers of geography and will find it more difficult to re-make the Cambridge curriculum for their students to access it more successfully.

Primary geography, in contrast to secondary, adopts a social science context-specific, 'communities' approach to curriculum, with limited reference to key geographical concepts or places beyond Seychelles. This makes the emphasis on 'examinable' CIE subject knowledge (Goodson, 1988:29) at secondary level more challenging, with the Cambridge IGCSE and 'A' level exams only providing reputable, 'impartial' educational credentials to the few who are able to earn them. It seems that CIE's assurance of exam neutrality and rigour, in terms of question setting and marking is unlikely to be questioned, while local high-stake national exams will continue to be prone to accusations of bias, nepotism and dubious quality. In addition, the quality and reliability of locally-produced support materials, past exam papers, mark-schemes and core texts to accompany the curriculum, is unlikely to match those produced by CIE. Given such circumstances, the powerful normative effect of CIE permeates Seychelles, reducing much secondary teaching to the 'delivery' of 'examinable knowledge', even though, ironically, the majority of students sit for only two or three Cambridge IGCSE exams.

8.1.3 The future geography curriculum

With the anticipated review of Seychelles' geography national curriculum, as well as on going changes to student summative assessment, the question of the future geography curriculum is an intriguing one. Within the new National Curriculum Framework - NCF (2013), it is not entirely clear where geography is positioned, as both the 'Social Science' and 'Science' Learning Areas address key geographical concepts and skills. While traditionally grouped under 'Social Science' at primary level, much of the 'science' knowledge and skills in the NCF (2013) relate directly to geography topics currently taught at secondary level, especially at IGCSE. The interdisciplinary nature of geography makes it an 'awkward discipline' (Bonnett, 2008) and this means it will probably continue to lie across a range of NCF 'Learning Areas'.

Underpinned by a set of 9 competencies for 'lifelong learning and responsible citizenship', the 2013 NCF is, in essence, an 'instrumentalist' (Young, 2010:22) framework, with an overall aim to:

‘enable children and young people to become lifelong learners and to help them develop capacities and values to be active and responsible citizens’.

(MoE, 2013a: 4)

The ‘Learning area’ and ‘subject area’ curriculum documents have yet to be published, with the geography subject curriculum committee still in the early stages of formulation. It is, therefore, unclear whether the knowledge stipulated in the forthcoming geography curriculum will be based, as Young (2010:25) suggests, on ‘specialist knowledge developed by a community of researchers’. For Young (2010:24) a curriculum should prioritise the ‘intellectual development of students’ rather than aim to address broader social concerns. As a way to envisage a future curriculum, Young and Muller (2010:16) present three scenarios for the way knowledge could be characterized, providing possible pathways for Seychelles’ future geography national curriculum. Labelled as Future 1 (F1), Future 2 (F2) and Future 3 (F3), Young and Muller’s (2010) scenarios can be summarised as follows:

- Future 1** Knowledge boundaries are given and fixed, ‘under-socialised’ knowledge; subject delivery of knowledge for its own sake.
- Future 2** The end of knowledge boundaries, knowledge is arbitrary, subject divisions are artificial, ‘over-socialised’ knowledge, with emphasis on skills and experiential learning.
- Future 3** Boundary maintenance as prior to boundary crossing ... for the creation and acquisition of new knowledge, epistemic rules of specialist communities provide ways to understand the world objectively and take pupils *beyond their everyday experience*.

(Young 2008; Young and Muller, 2010, with additional notes based on Lambert’s, 2012, slides)

In an attempt to distinguish between F1, F2 and F3’s broad philosophies, as well as the knowledge and curriculum frameworks they employ, the diagram, figure 25 below, lists their key tenets.

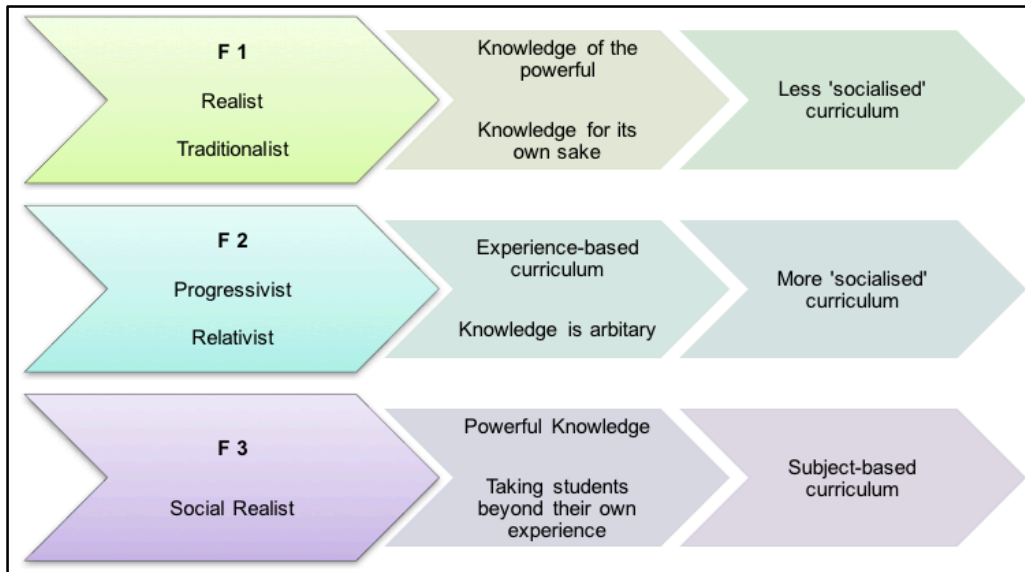


Figure 25 Curriculum Futures

Based on Young and Muller (2010)

The traditional and, in parts, archaic geography of the Cambridge IGCSE and 'A' level curricula typifies an F1 approach, where knowledge is dictated by powerful 'outsiders', with minimal local contextualisation. In contrast, the primary 'communities' curriculum in Seychelles is typical of the more 'socialised' F2 approach, where knowledge is gained predominantly from students' and teachers' own local experiences. An F3 approach prioritises 'powerful disciplinary knowledge' (Young & Lambert, 2014) rather than focusing on learners and their experience. Powerful disciplinary knowledge distinguishes between the knowledge and learning that takes place in homes, workplaces and communities and that which takes place in educational institutions (schools, colleges, universities). This means that an F3 curriculum promotes access to knowledge beyond students' everyday experience, with teachers being the source of disciplinary expertise. Young and Muller (2010:16) contend that an F3 curriculum provides a more reliable basis for understanding the world and imagining possible futures.

In Seychelles, the reliance, at secondary level, on 'given and fixed' geographical knowledge, as offered by CIE, is likely to continue. Geography curriculum makers have limited access to the wider community of geography educators, so without exposure to more contemporary geographical ideas, they are unlikely to fully develop their subject expertise. Limited professional

development opportunities also mean that only a select number of teachers and Ministry officials are encouraged to engage in curriculum discussions. Consequently, the Ministry is likely to retain the F1 approach at secondary level and the F2 approach at primary level, as they both represent familiar, 'play-safe' pathways. If so, the disciplinary gap between primary and secondary will continue, with secondary students lacking essential geographical knowledge when progressing from primary school.

As Whalley et al. (2011:381) argue the curriculum is a 'creature of circumstance...influenced by national needs, histories and political investment as well as institutional inertia'. They continue by saying that:

'... consequently, it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to determine what geography curricula "should be", for they are products of time and place'.

(Whalley et al., 2011:381)

If this is the case, the 'inertia' that characterises present geography curriculum making is likely to continue, signifying an 'impossible situation' or an 'aporia' (Winter, 2013:186). An inert curriculum persists when there is seemingly no obvious way forward or when no one argues strongly enough, or has the power and persuasion, for change. This state of paralysis is characteristic of the 'aporia' (Derrida, 1993:13) or the 'non-passage' (Derrida, 1993:12). In order to 'disrupt' the familiar, to create room for 'other' curriculum possibilities, those with the power to decide need to be open to doing things differently. Yet, in order to take a different view of the geography curriculum at both primary and secondary, it is first necessary to understand what the current curriculum represents. Without this knowledge, of the underlying assumptions, concepts and theories shaping the existing geography curriculum, it will be impossible to advocate for, or similarly resist, certain forms of change.

In the process of understanding the present geography curriculum in Seychelles, it may be prescient to examine the 'structured absences' (Morgan, 2001:290) it contains. For example, the primary social science curriculum lacks important historical references to slavery and colonialism, which, as a Ministry official (personal conversation, 20.5.2015) conceded, 'makes geography

harder'. Similarly, the primary students' 'limited global awareness' (Ministry official, personal conversation, 20.5.2015) restricts their ability to engage properly with the secondary geography curriculum, especially in terms of understanding global relations, the rise of new superpowers and their effect on Seychelles and the region. How such 'absences' are rationalised or justified is unclear, but to address them will require significant curriculum change.

Wrangling over the content of a geography curriculum can be traumatic, as Eleanor Rawling, past Subject Adviser for Geography at England's Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, affirmed in her book (2001) *Changing the Subject: The impact of national policy on school geography 1980-2000*. In Rawling's (2001) experience the Geography Working Group (GWG), set up by English government to formulate the geography national curriculum, took advantage of divisions among geography educators and marginalized those in favour of more progressive approaches. The GWG, Rawling (2001:58-59) explained, became characterized by an atmosphere of distrust, coercion, hostility and accusation. Part of the problem was that, according to Rawling (2001:27), geography educators 'underestimated the increasingly politicized nature of curriculum decision-making and the growing influence of the New Right' in England during the late 1970s and early 1980's. She suggested that the geography community wrongly assumed the government would call upon their expertise as it gained control over the curriculum during the 1980s (Rawling, 2001:30). Academic geographers, whose ideas and experience were not entertained, separated from school geography educators, leaving them to fight the curriculum battle alone (Rawling, 2001:41).

Rawling (2001:45) argues that school geography educators were 'ill-prepared' for the battle to decide what would be in the curriculum due to a lack of debate about what school geography should be. Geography educators failed to manage the struggle between the older (descriptive, regional) and newer (progressive, scientific etc.) geographies, and, as Rawling (2001:53) testified, certain educators were out-manoeuvred, outplayed and even bullied by the chairman and other members of the GWG during meetings. As a result, Rawling (2001:47) believed that geography education 'paid a high price' as the 1991 Geography Orders dispensed with enquiry-based learning, issues-based

investigations and values education.

In Seychelles, if the existing curriculum is simply replayed it could keep teachers and students 'trapped in place' (Sharp, 2009:31 & 78-80), unable to access 'powerful pedagogies' (Roberts, 2013) and more contemporary geographical ideas. The argument for change, however, must be made cautiously. If the secondary geography curriculum were to adopt a more F2 'place-based' approach, emulating primary social science, the temptation to 'essentialise' *Kreol* knowledge, culture and identity may be hard to resist. The everyday realities of being part of a globally contested, hybrid space (Appadurai, 1996:189) require knowledge and analysis of all, not only *Kreolised* practices. Seychelles belongs to a world organised by and working for global capitalism. To understand the workings of these forces and how local, national and regional relations are continually redefined by market economics requires knowledge of global development and trade. Similarly, the ways in which Seychellois identity and citizenship are created and re-created, together with an analysis of how they may be resisted, evaded or ignored requires the use of many lenses, not just a *Kreol* one.

Furthermore, to fully understand *Kreolised* spaces, it is also necessary to explore how a sense of *Kreolité* transcends national and physical boundaries, through connections to the *Kreol* diaspora. Thus, while a 'place-based' geography may promise to 'rehabilitate' (Gruenewald, 2008:149) the curriculum, it may struggle to offer a broader analysis of the way local lives are inextricably tied to cultural, social, political and economic events operating at regional and global scales. With increased mobility, both into and out of Seychelles, across physical, social and cyber space, the way Seychellois define themselves, and relate to each other, is rapidly changing. The rapid rise in personal use of social media and digital technology means that Seychellois are able to publicly express themselves, declare loyalties and forge new relationships as never before. As a consequence, the close relationships between individual Seychellois and the state have become even closer.

The removal of many social barriers and the further collapsing of 'space' between individual and state, mean that an F3 geography curriculum may offer

ways to make sense of why certain boundaries still persist. The epistemic structure of specialist 'knowledge' communities, as part of a social realist curriculum, provides opportunities to transcend the immediacy and 'hyper-reality' (Kincheloe and Steinberg, 1997) of intensely personalised and politicised everyday lives. In doing so, an F3 geography curriculum may provide scope for exploring how Seychellois lives are intricately linked to regional and global events and create space for Seychellois geography teachers to help their students analyse the global 'corporate' curriculum (Morgan, 2001) so pervasively mediated through television, film, popular music, video games and online.

By highlighting the benefits of an F3, social realist approach to Seychellois geography curriculum making, this narrative reconstruction may seem conflicted. While the thesis has drawn on both post-structuralist and post-colonial ideas as part of a broader interpretivist methodology, such ideas may not sit comfortably with an acknowledgement of the merits of a social realist approach to geography curriculum. This tension between methodologies is echoed by one of the inherent 'contradictions' in education (Young, 2012). According to Young (2012), school subjects, while representing a 'traditional elitist curriculum', also provide the 'tools for students to think beyond them and "think the un-thinkable"' (Young, 2012). Thus, the conflicted role that school subjects play is re-enacted here, as a curriculum based on powerful geographical knowledge may provide Seychellois teachers and students with the means to challenge the powerful. Fortunately, recognition of the power of a social realist curriculum does not preclude the use of more progressive methodologies in education research.

If an F3 geography curriculum were to be developed in Seychelles, curriculum officials at the Ministry, as well as many primary and secondary teachers, would need support from geography specialists to help deepen knowledge of powerful geographies and pedagogies. Lam (2007), in his study of geography teachers' curriculum-making practices in China, found that teachers needed a stronger understanding of educational ideology and the knowledge structure of their subjects to be able to engage more deeply with curriculum-making. Similarly, in Ireland, Clarke (2006) found that teachers tended to 'play safe',

both in terms of what and how they taught, while also arguing that the Northern Ireland geography curriculum touched only marginally on more contentious political and historical issues of the region. While similar challenges exist in Seychelles, with limited subject expertise at the Ministry and very slow progress on the geography curriculum review, the development of an F3 curriculum may yet be further complicated by the national rhetoric of transforming Seychelles into a knowledge-based society'. While supposedly focused on 'knowledge', the realities of a Seychellois 'knowledge-based' society are more closely aligned to those of a 'competency-based *economy*'.

8.1.4 Geography knowledge for a 'Knowledge Society'?

In recent years education policy has focused on the need to build a 'knowledge-based society' and produce graduates who are able to respond to the needs of the Seychelles economy. In trying to appeal to Seychellois' individual sense of aspiration, by evoking the powerful 'ideal' of being competitive, active citizens, Seychellois are encouraged to assume responsibility for their own livelihoods. In this context, the geography curriculum has come under pressure to be more personalized and skills-based (Elliott & Urry, 2010, Hargreaves, 2003), and fit more comfortably with the NCF (2013) rhetoric of 'life-long learning'. This approach, more consistent with an F2 competency-based version of geography, supposedly places each learner at the centre of 'decision-making' (Mitchell, 2003:388). Yet, whether the personalized responsibility for learning can be fully realised is debateable especially given the mixed messages transmitted by the Seychelles government.

With a hybrid legacy of a British-based curriculum and socialist education principals combined with contemporary aspirations to be a 'knowledge-based society', the Seychelles model of education is a peculiar, paradoxical *mélange*. Education is free but its aims are closely tied to those of the state. Graduates, in return for free education, are expected to contribute to society through bonded contracts. Those wanting to be teachers are offered free but carefully controlled access to tertiary education and training, on condition of bonded service to government schools. This centralised approach seems dialectically

opposed to the individualised nature of the 'knowledge-economy'. Under the 'individualised' scenario, teachers and students who do not perform are expected to accept personal liability. Thus, in the event of poor exam performance, for example, teachers and students are blamed for not working hard enough. This means, therefore, that despite holding immense power and influence, the government can avoid being held directly accountable for any systemic shortcomings.

It is common practice for Ministry officials to 'blame' schools and teachers for poor teaching and poor results, accusing both teachers and students of being lazy. This culture of blame and mistrust makes the task of improving the quality of teaching and learning very challenging. Yet, while teachers and students are targeted, certain fundamental systemic issues go unchecked or unchallenged. A case in point is the system of student quotas, which seemingly provides universal access to post-secondary education by providing more places than potential students. Effectively, many secondary school leavers presume they will automatically gain a place in one of the many post-secondary institutions, despite weak academic performance. This can then have the knock-on effect of not only lowering educational and behavioural standards at secondary level, but also of setting up a significant number of students to 'fail' at post-secondary, as they do not possess the necessary pre-requisite knowledge and skills to succeed.

The centralised management of students through the quota system creates wide-scale repercussions. As a state controlled tool for placing students in the 'appropriate' academic or vocational institution, it allows the Ministry to place, replace and displace students. Rather than purely on merit, given that assessment scores in many cases are very poor, students who conform are more likely to gain access to post-secondary education and training. With limited public scrutiny, possibly due to widespread acceptance of such arrangements, significant numbers of students can 'slip through the net' at post-secondary level. The Ministry's quota policy should be made more transparent so that methods of allocation and entry criteria are better understood. Wider knowledge of the workings of the quota system could,

potentially, lead to improved placement and student better performance, but may also expose the inherent weaknesses of secondary school system.

A second issue that seems to have gone unchallenged in Seychelles is the recent rise in numbers of secondary level students enrolled on vocational training. The recent decision to raise the school leaving age to 18 while the system struggles to improve students' academic performance, has meant that more students are channelled into the TVET (technical and vocational education and training) programme. More children from younger ages (currently S4, but this is being lowered to S3) are following 'skills-based' rather than 'knowledge-based' curricula. While the expansion of TVET may serve the immediate needs of the system, the longer-term implications of a 'skills-based' education are unknown and are at odds with the desire for a 'knowledge-based' society. Presumably more able to access 'skilled' employment and contribute to the economy, TVET students may struggle to be part of a 'knowledge society'. The Seychellois 'knowledge society' may, therefore, become the preserve of an educated elite, consisting only of those who can gain access to powerful knowledge.

8.1.5 Education for whom?

Elliott & Urry (2010), in their discussion of social mobilities, describe how an elite group of global society enjoy the privileges of a global knowledge economy; high-status jobs, higher salaries, medical insurance, travel opportunities etc. The aspiration of some Seychellois to join both the local and global elite, means they place great value on internationally accredited, portable educational qualifications. The growing demand for private education, with a third private school offering Cambridge exams recently opened on Praslin island and the introduction of a sixth-form at Mahe's Independent school, indicate the increasing desire for an exclusive and internationally-recognised education. Yet, with a growing divide between those who can and cannot afford private education, it is more likely that those who gain membership to the 'knowledgeable' elite, will also be able to secure access to the best paid jobs and most powerful positions. Seychelles already ranks among the worst in the world in terms of the gap between its richest and

poorest people⁶, so further gaps in the quality of state and private education are likely to exacerbate this worrying situation.

Chronic educational inequalities in such a small, intimate society threaten social cohesion. With a significant number of students leaving state education with minimal formal qualifications, the risk of unemployment and underemployment among school leavers has grown. The government's recent emphasis on a 'social renaissance' to tackle the persistent issues of drug abuse and petty crime, especially among young adults, illustrates the vulnerability of many school leavers as they struggle to find adequate employment. A disturbing statistic that further demonstrates the fragility of Seychellois society is the proportion of the population who are imprisoned, which is the highest in the world (nearly 800 per 100,000 people), according to www.prisonstudies.org (2015). With such an alarming incarceration rate, mainly due to draconian drug laws, many marginalized school leavers become casualties of system.

High levels of incarceration are a peculiarity of small territories, with 22 of the 30 worst prison rates in the world occurring in small islands and small states (www.prisonstudies.org, 2015). This phenomenon may indicate the fragility of such small communities, with poor levels of social cohesion, or may, alternatively, point to the more efficient workings of the police and criminal justice system, where those who break the law are more likely to be caught and punished. Whatever the reasons, there is a significant chance that those leaving school with very few credentials will be further marginalised and this is a worrying issue not only for the education system but also for the government and Seychellois society as a whole. The danger that persistent social inequality may threaten national identity and lead to social unrest (Giddens, 2002) is a legitimate concern, prompting some wealthier residents in Seychelles to live within gated enclaves, such as the newly-built Eden Island complex. Resentment is likely to grow among poorer Seychellois, as they are increasingly excluded from the privileges enjoyed by local elites.

⁶ <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/income-gini-coefficient> UNDP

Bitterness about the growing 'divide between rich and poor' (education officials, personal communications 13.2.2014 & 17.2.2014) is palpable. One official from the Ministry conceded that 'this is not what we were promised' (Official H, 13.2.2014), with respect to social inequality in post-colonial Seychelles. The same official explained that the promise was for the 'new Seychelles...to be more equal...but now it is like a new colonialism...with a big gap between rich and poor'. She went on to reiterate that 'the rich can afford private schools...while the government schools are really suffering'. A second official said that 'students and parents don't value education because they receive it for free' and continued to 'blame' the welfare system, arguing that '...they have no drive or motivation to improve themselves' (Official J, 17.2.2014). These disparate views about education reveal the complexities of contemporary Seychelles. Having vowed to provide 'free' education and a socialist welfare system, the 'new' Seychelles has become more 'liberal', in terms of allowing more educational choice. Yet the 'choice' of paying for private education is, obviously, limited to those who can afford it.

The mounting presence of the private education sector in Seychelles places further stress on a struggling state system. Private schools are not only able to attract the 'best' Seychellois teachers, often 'poaching' government-trained teachers, but are also able to offer students more sophisticated learning environments, using digital resources and mobile technologies. The use of more modern teaching and learning resources within the private sector, places state schools at a distinct disadvantage, leading to deepening resentment (Elliott & Urry, 2010). The expansion of the private sector in education, health and other sectors, places the state in a difficult position with its citizens. As Hobsbawm (2000) and Hviding (2003) contest the state seems no longer able to provide 'solutions', with the driving forces of globalisation and neo-liberalism combining to undermine its authority. The 'speed and intensity' (Hobsbawm, 2000:61) of these forces mean that private schools in Seychelles can disregard 'national' curricula and assessment and align themselves to international standards and practices (Herkenrath et al. 2005).

The retention of Cambridge curricula means that private schools look outwards, adopting a 'commodified' curriculum aligned to the needs of the

Cambridge exam board (CIE). For Seychellois, Cambridge curricula represent 'high-status' knowledge, access to which parents are prepared to pay, through private schooling for their children. This reinforces Cambridge's status, rewarding those who are able to earn Cambridge credentials and allows private schools to assume a position of educational superiority. Tabulawa (2002:103) described Botswana's similar reliance on the Cambridge syndicate as the 'quality assurer' of secondary education. He described how Cambridge remained a powerful player in the country's Senior Certificate phase of secondary education despite the 'localisation' of certain aspects of the exam process. The debate about the localisation of the Seychelles exam system is also undoubtedly shaped by the hegemony of the Cambridge syndicate (Dale & Robertson, 2006 and Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012).

8.1.6 Underfunding of State Education

The responsibility for coordinating the geography curriculum at the Ministry falls to one person, Ms Boniface. She is also responsible for the history curriculum, as well as primary social science, and is also heavily involved in the implementation of the TVET programme. With such an overwhelming remit, it is hardly surprising that progress on the current geography curriculum review has been limited. As the process gathers momentum, however, the fate of the review may not simply rest on the expertise of team members, but rather on financial constraints within the Ministry. One of the most important factors limiting curriculum innovation over the last decade has been financial. Chronic underfunding of primary and secondary education has meant that curriculum innovation has, in effect, been stifled.

The recent financial health of Seychelles, as described by the World Bank (2013), is summarized, below:

'By the end of 2006, queues could often be seen at banks as people sought to purchase hard currency. Shops ran short on basic items, including food, because overseas suppliers had not been paid. Although fuel never ran short, payments to suppliers had become irregular, and sometimes suppliers almost missed critical delivery dates. The government hospital, which often sent medical cases

overseas for specialized treatment, was failing to pay its bills, and foreign medical centers were threatening to stop receiving its patients. In domestic hospitals, delays in paying drug suppliers created shortages or total stock-outs of critical medical supplies. The education sector fared equally poorly.’
 (World Bank, 2013:23)

The extract recounts the situation in 2006, which prompted the government to develop a structural reform programme in partnership with the IMF. Leading up to this time, Seychelles’ finances were ‘extremely vulnerable’ with total government debt standing at 200 percent of GDP in 2002 (World Bank, 2013:16). When the global financial crisis hit in 2008, Seychelles’ external reserves were almost non-existent and debt servicing so high, it pushed the economy to the brink (World Bank, 2013:20).

An IMF debt package forced Seychelles to compress government spending, adjust the exchange rate of the rupee, impose fiscal tightening and downsize the public sector. The effect on education was immediate, with teachers’ salaries effectively cut, due to the devaluation of the rupee. To illustrate the impact of fiscal tightening on education, figure 26, below, shows how the percentage of GDP expenditure on education dropped to below 4% (UNESCO, 2015).

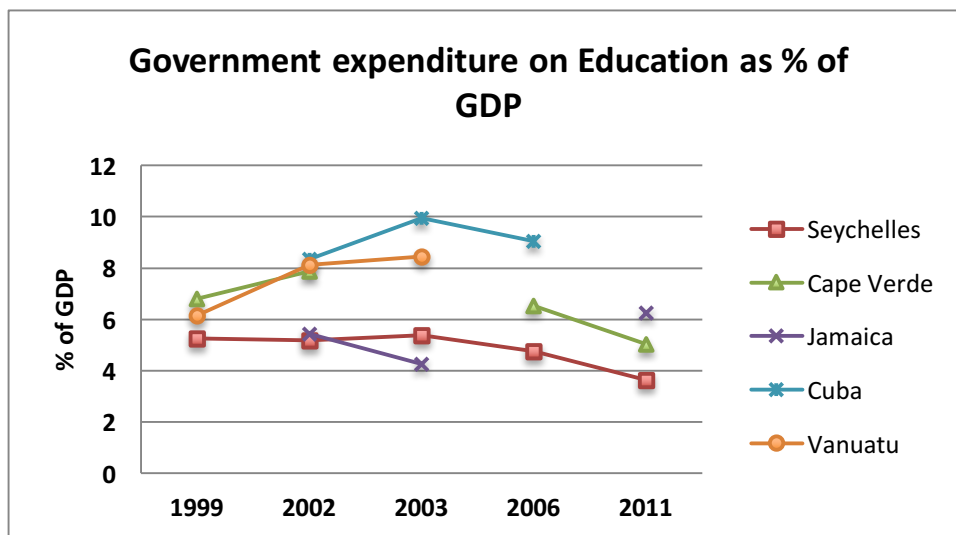


Figure 26 Government expenditure on education as percentage of GDP, for selected Small Island Developing States, 1999-2011

Created from UNESCO database (2015)
http://data.uis.unesco.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=EDULIT_DS

While the UNESCO figures show an overall downturn in education expenditure in Seychelles, they do not indicate how expenditure is divided between tertiary, secondary and primary education. Figure 27, below, however, demonstrates the percentage of GDP spent on the secondary and primary sectors, between 2003 and 2015.

There has been a marked reduction in overall spending on primary and secondary education, since 2006, from an average of 4% to an average of just over 2% of GDP. The decline occurred during the period of economic adjustment prior to, and since the 2008 financial crisis, and also coincided with the inauguration of the University of Seychelles. As the World Bank (2014:70) commentated, the establishment of the university seemed to have an adverse effect on the secondary and primary education sectors as they ended up receiving less than half of the education budget.

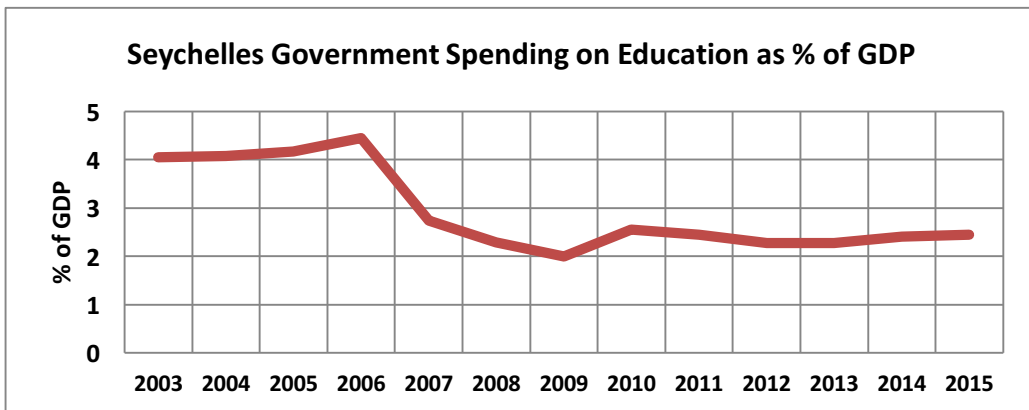


Figure 27 Seychelles government spending on primary and secondary education as percentage of GDP, 2003-2015

Sources: Official Gazette (Appropriation Bills) and National Bureau of Statistics, Seychelles <http://www.nsb.gov.sc/downloads-2>

With most of the education budget used to pay salaries (92% of recurrent spending, World Bank, 2014:71), there is limited scope to expand spending on the primary and secondary curriculum and professional development. The World Bank (2014:78) reiterate that the production of learning materials in Seychelles is ‘underfunded...seriously undermining the quality of education’, although comments like these from the World Bank seem rather disingenuous considering they have encouraged the country to reduce its overall public spending. The transition to a more ‘market economy’, with an expansion of

private sector manufacturing and services, including health and education, was at the recommendation of institutions like the World Bank. The under-resourcing of the primary and secondary education could be viewed as a concerted attempt, by such agencies, to encourage the growth of private education. With state schools undermined, parents are more likely to look for alternatives, corroborating the recent growth in private schools provision.

With state schools suffering from on-going teacher recruitment, retention and resource issues, many parents and teachers look to the private sector. This has the effect of 'hollowing out' the state sector, raising concerns about government policy and governance of education. The underfunding of Seychelles primary and secondary education seems to be directed by external agencies, like the IMF and World Bank. These supranational organisations, together with UNESCO, the EU and educational corporations like Pearson, Microsoft, and the CIE syndicate, wield much power over small jurisdictions like Seychelles. Yet, a tension exists, for while organisations like the World Bank promote a neoliberalist 'knowledge economy' and educational standardisation approach (Lingard, 2000, Spring, 2009, Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012), institutions like the UN and the Commonwealth encourage a more 'cosmopolitan democracy' approach to education. The UN's more egalitarian mandate is exemplified by their Sustainable Development Goals (2015) for education and the recent UNHCR resolution (A/HRC/32/L.33, 2016) on the right to education, which seeks to address the 'negative impacts of the commercialisation of education' (UN, 2016).

8.1.7 Contested Governance of Education

When hegemonic ideologies and agendas converge they can exert persuasive normative pressure (Green, 1997:183) forcing countries to conform. In Seychelles, the current IMF-led government austerity programme complies with the more dominant neo-liberal agenda. The IMF-led programme has 'rescaled' (Dale & Robertson, 2006) local governance structures, replacing local decision-making with more complex 'pluri-scalar' (Thiem, 2009) systems. According to Mountz (2014) some small states, rather than being 'sites of struggle for self-governance' (Baldacchino, 2010:189), actively nurture

partnerships with global institutions and larger, more powerful states. The Seychelles scenario supports Mountz's (2014) argument. Historically, during the Cold War, despite being a socialist state Seychelles was able to exploit global geo-political tensions and develop close political and economic ties with both communist and western powers. Today, Seychelles continues to exploit the strategic interest that many powerful countries and organisations show in Seychelles, since its ocean host's vital global shipping routes and marine resources, while its islands are close to areas in the Middle East and East Africa where many wars (Somali piracy, terrorism, drug trafficking etc.) are being fought.

With global geo-politics being played out, in and around Seychelles, the local education system finds itself operating under an array of contested agendas. The realities of IMF-induced fiscal austerity, however, mean that the lofty educational targets of the UNESCO and EU-led MTS may not be achievable. As such, the 'dialectical realities of globalisation' (Herkenrath et al., 2005:363-364) reveal Seychelles' vulnerability to conflicted global forces, where educational governance structures and policies appear at odds. Confronted by such contrasting mandates, local Seychellois leaders in charge of education may struggle to govern. This, in turn, means teachers may lack the direction required to re-make the curriculum and energise their teaching.

8.2 Research reflections and considerations

The narratives of Seychelles' geography education presented in the thesis have created space for teachers to describe their practice. The telling of stories is, however, less important than knowing who will listen to or read them, and whether they will be taken seriously (Smith, 2006:71). By revealing some of the awkwardness and complicities of geography education many of the stories do not make comfortable reading. They unmask conflicts of interest and teachers' struggles for access to subject knowledge and pedagogical skills, as well as for professional self-esteem. The narrative deconstruction unpacked some of the paradoxes of post-colonial Seychelles, where much of the education system is still cast in the image of the past imperial power. Furthermore, it exposed the complexities of *Kreol* identity and what it means to be a Seychellois.

The process of telling any story is highly selective and thus can be politically and ethically problematic (Gready, 2008:138). For narrative research to be trusted, researchers need to ensure the sincerity and comprehensiveness of their narratives and be honest about their state of mind, feelings and motives for doing research (Conle, 2001:24). The narratives constructed for this inquiry were limited by the collaborators' and my own powers of storytelling, and are thus products of our acts of remembering and forgetting, of neglecting and amplifying, and even of distorting past experiences (Riessman, 2008:29). Thus, the performative nature of these stories raises complex issues about voice, representation and interpretative authority.

The teachers' stories constituted imitations or representations of their experience, mediated through storytelling. The added issue of representation, in terms of the authenticity of my transcriptions and narrative constructions, is similarly problematic. The fusion and distillation of stories from 12 collaborators, while integrating key ideas and experiences, necessitated the omissions of details deemed less significant. A rigorous process of 'member-checking' by the collaborators, of both transcripts and narratives, was used as a verification technique but this process was not without risk. Collaborators could have decided to 'strategically mimic a (different) identity' (Samuel, 2009:16) to the ones adopted during storytelling sessions, although fortunately, this did not occur during the 'member-checking' process. The possibility, however, of so-called 'bad faith' narratives still remains an unavoidable risk of narrative research (Conle, 2001:28).

To reduce the risk of narrative insincerity, I tried to be reflexive about my research agenda and my priorities for framing teachers' stories in particular ways (Squire, 2008). My positioning, as both 'insider' and 'outsider within', presented ethical concerns about the possibilities of being too immersed in the lives and community of my collaborators (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:16). To contend with the problematic nature of both 'insider' and narrative research, constant reflexivity was crucial (Smith, 1999:137). Thus, the persuasiveness of the research's authenticity relies on whether readers believe that the narrative principals of sincerity, honesty and comprehensiveness were abided and whether the narratives are sufficiently coherent (Webster & Mertova, 2007:93). While there is no way to govern how the stories will be received and interpreted

by readers, they nevertheless remain, alongside the narrative analysis, open to scrutiny.

Narrative inquiry, by seeking to understand personal experience, will often rely on a small number of collaborators in order to understand how they make sense of their lives (Longhurst in Clifford & Valentine, 2003:123). Being more illuminative in nature (Bassegy, 1999 in Brooks, 2007:94), this research reveals the ways in which Seychelles' geography teachers feel (un)able to engage in and influence geography curriculum conversations. During the later stages of analysis it became clear that the voices of primary teachers who taught geography could have added to the discussion. If time had permitted I would have engaged more closely with teachers from primary schools to gain an understanding of their experiences of teaching geography. In spite of this, the range and number of collaborators who did engage with the study constitute a significant group of secondary and post-secondary geography teachers.

8.3 Contribution and Suggestions for Further Research

This final section of the thesis outlines the inquiry's academic contribution and offers policy and practice recommendations for geography education in Seychelles and, potentially, other small island developing states (SIDS). The thesis concludes with a call for further research into the complexities of education in SIDS.

8.3.1 Contribution to educational research

The overwhelming majority of educational research carried out in Seychelles (Purvis, 2007, Barallon, 2011, Figaro, 2012, Marie, 2012) has used traditional research methodologies and tackled local, school-based educational management issues. While these research methodologies and issues are important they can often 'oversimplify complex problems' (Firth and Morgan, 2010:111). Instead, by using a narrative approach, this study contributes to our understanding of geography education's 'underlying relationships' (Giroux, 2001:8 in Firth & Morgan (2010:111). Drawing on critical theory and using deconstructive analysis, the narrative inquiry made 'links between the inside

and outside of (geography) education, (and) between past, present and future' (Firth and Morgan, 2010:111). The linking of geography teachers' lives to public narratives of geography education and to wider social, cultural and historical events, helped to reveal the intricacies of teaching geography in intimate and relatively isolated professional communities.

The study constitutes a postcolonial attempt to 'speak back to the centre' (Gregory, 2009:562) by re-telling stories of geography education from small island perspectives. The sharing of more diverse teacher narratives not only enhances our understanding of geography curriculum making, but also how the act of storytelling can contribute to building communities of educational practice. Beyond the context of teacher' lives and geography education, the study also provides an important example of the resilience and vulnerability of education systems in SIDS. The struggles over curricula content, teacher development, student learning, as well as school governance and management, are being played out in Seychelles. The pressures exerted by austerity and neo-liberal approaches to education can render state-based governance structures impotent. The research offers, therefore, an insight into the way power dynamics converge to create an inertia of action which can then be exploited by private and international providers of education.

8.3.2 Policy and practice recommendations

In light of this study, it is recommended that the Seychelles geography curriculum review committee create space for the exploration of curriculum absences. Similarly, contested notions, such as 'Kreolité', 'citizenship', 'sustainable development', 'climate change', 'globalisation' and the new buzzword, the 'blue economy', need to be unpacked. If the review does not allow room for curriculum makers to examine challenging geographical concepts and experiences, it will, in all likelihood, reproduce a 'tired' curriculum. The denial of difficult geographies would, effectively, replicate a tactic used by past colonial powers (Tamboukou, 2008:78).

Geographers have the responsibility to unpick simple truths and understand more complex and often contradictory phenomena (Morgan, 2000). This makes

it difficult for geographers to reach a consensus about what their subject represents, meaning that school geography is caught in a state of 'limbo', always open for the 'incoming of the other' (Winter, 2013:186). To help geography teachers embrace more difficult geographies and cope with the challenges of teaching a subject that is so conceptually complex, a geography subject association or a more formal community of practice should be established in Seychelles. This body could support geography curriculum makers and represent geography educators at national curriculum negotiations and other educational fora. The University of Seychelles could help the development of a geography subject association, building partnerships with schools and industries in which geographical knowledge and ideas play a key role. The Departments of Environment and Education at UniSeY could take a leading role in this endeavour.

Developing an online community of practice, although challenging given existing internet access issues, would help teachers share their more powerful pedagogies. Exploring the content of online resources such as the GeoCapabilities website could be a starting point for the development of a local, and even regional or SIDS-based, online platform for geography curriculum makers.

Beyond geography curriculum making, the growing threat to state education in Seychelles needs to be recognised. The government of Seychelles, in strategic partnership with supportive international partners, such as UNESCO and the EU, need to protect and strengthen state education. Through policies such as the 'Education Sector Medium Term Strategy' (MTS) (Ministry of Education, 2014) state provision can be significantly improved. The MTS targets for public education will not be met, however, if the necessary funds and resources are not allocated to the Ministry of Education.

8.3.3 A call for further research

To better understand the condition of 'aporia' (Derrida, 1993:13) afflicting state education in Seychelles further research is necessary. The competing educational, political and economic forces leading to the current state of

'inertia' need to be analysed in more detail. These forces are also at work in other small and vulnerable states, undermining local capacity to provide quality state education. Therefore a deeper analysis of the threats to national governance of education in SIDS should be undertaken.

Further research is also necessary to understand the ways in which geography curriculum making is enacted in SIDS. As part of a broader negotiation, where teachers have to contend with a diverse range of conflicted views and agendas, geography curriculum making is caught-up in the social, economic and political dynamics not only of local and national communities, but also of the global community (Blum, 2008). More research is required to further unravel the embedded and contested nature of geography education, both in Seychelles and beyond.

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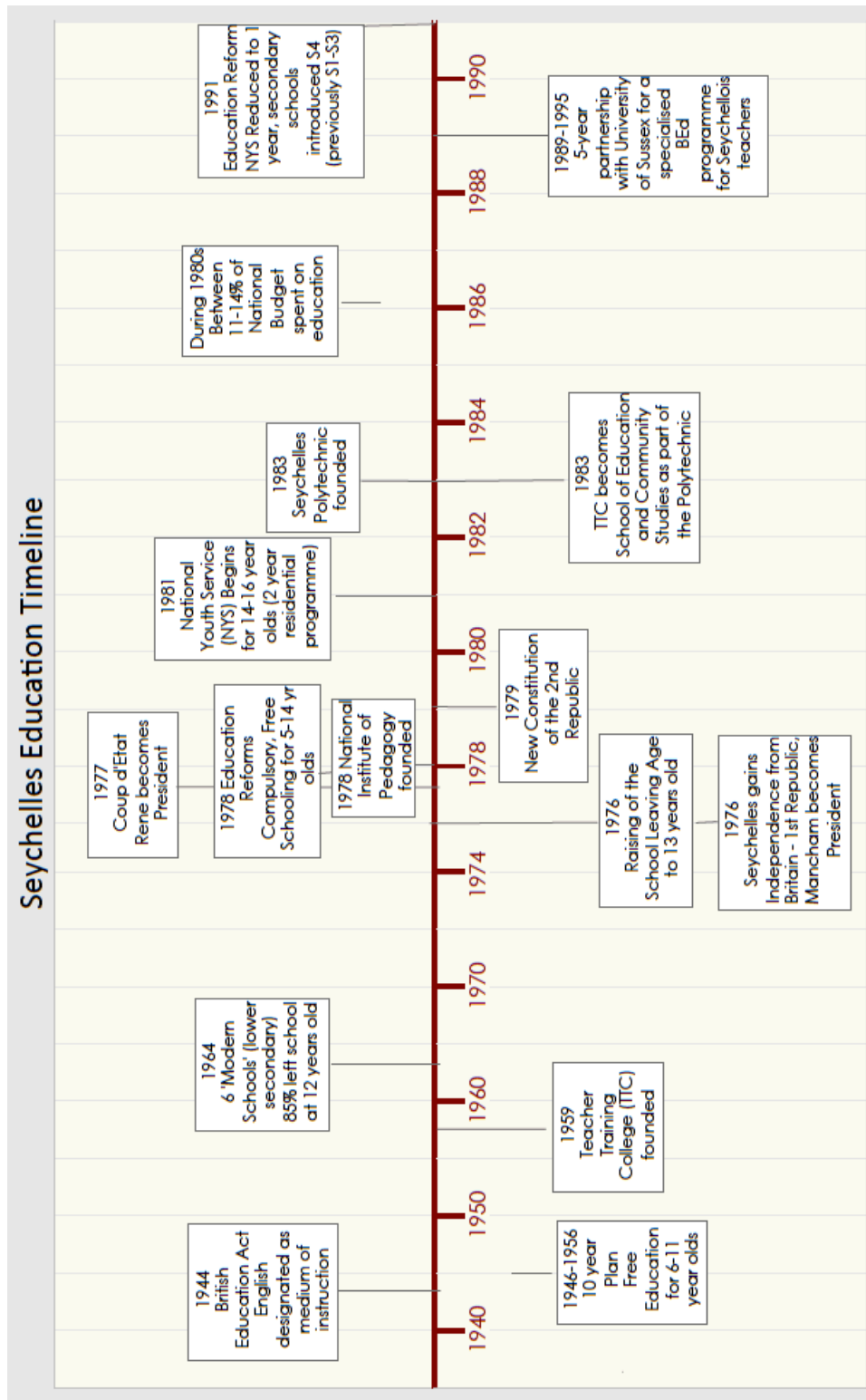
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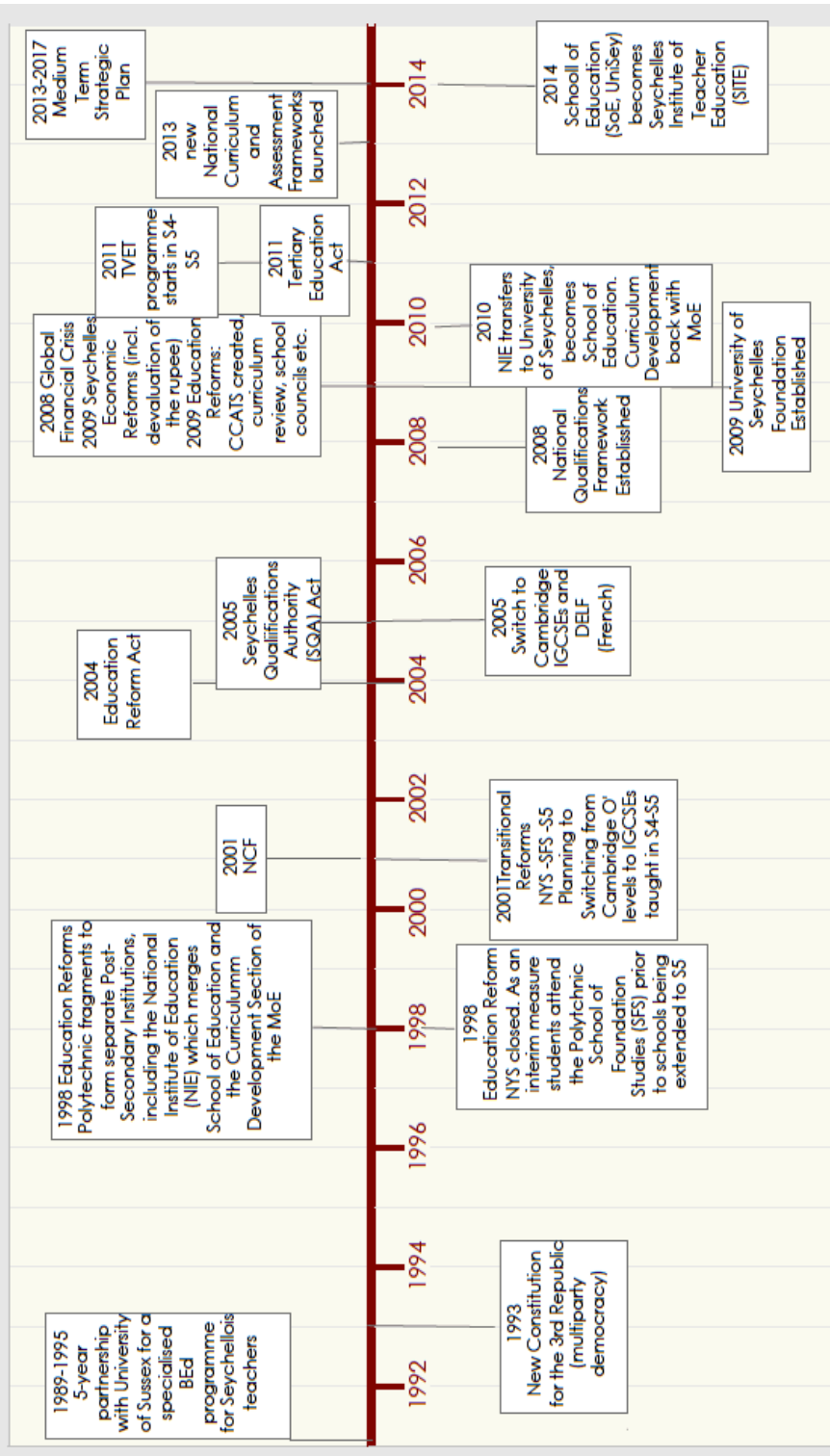
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Appendices

Appendix 1 Seychelles Education Timeline



Seychelles Education Timeline (continued)



Appendix 2 Permission letter from Ministry of Education

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Mont Fleuri, P.O. Box 48, Republic of Seychelles
Tel: 283283 Fax 224859

Please address all correspondence to the Principal Secretary



Your Ref:

Our Ref:

Enquiries To:

Telephone Ext: 3131

Date: 25th February 2011

Mrs Indra Persaud

Dear Madam,

**RE: APPROVAL GRANTED TO CONDUCT INTERVIEW WITH GEOGRAPHY/EX
GEOGRAPHY TEACHERS**

We wish to convey the approval of the Ministry of Education for above activity to be effected as planned and scheduled.

We wish you luck,

Yours sincerely

Odile Octave (Ms)
Director General - Schools
FOR: **PRINCIPAL SECRETARY (EDUCATION)**

Appendix 3 UCL (UoL) IOE Ethics Approval

Ms Hazel Croft
Faculty of Children & Learning
Dean of Faculty: Professor Richard Andrews

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Ms Indra Persaud
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6 June 2013

Dear Ms Persaud

Ethics approval

Project title: Unpacking 'paradise': geography education narratives from the Seychelles

I am pleased to formally confirm that ethics approval has been granted by the Institute of Education for the above research project. This approval is effective from 30 May 2013.

I wish you every success with this project.


Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hazel Croft'.

+++++++
Hazel Croft
Research Student Administrator
On behalf of the Faculty of Children & Learning Research Ethics Committee

cc: Professor David Lambert
IOE Research Ethics office

Appendix 4 Information Sheet for Collaborators

University of London Institute of Education		 Leading education and social research Institute of Education University of London
Information Sheet for Collaborators		
Project Title:	Unpacking 'paradise': Geography education narratives from the Seychelles	
Start Date:	October 2013	
End Date:	October 2014	
Main question:	What factors shape geography education in Seychelles?	
Name of researcher:	Indra Persaud (self-funded)	
Contact Details:	email guyjazz@yahoo.com mobile 2717XXX	

Please will you help me with my research?
Here are some questions and answers that might help you decide to participate:

1. Who will benefit from this research?
The research project hopes to increase our knowledge about teaching geography in Seychelles. If you decide it is worth taking part in the project, the findings should help you and others to improve geography education in the future.

2. Who is being chosen?
A small number of current and past geography teachers are being interviewed because the project involves a series of interviews with each teacher. You have been selected because you have been teaching geography in Seychelles for a significant amount of time.

3. How will you be requested to participate?
You will meet with me for three informal interviews. Each interview will be for about an hour. The three interviews will take place over the next twelve-month period. The interviews can take place at your school or workplace, in a café or another place where you feel more comfortable.

Written summaries of the interviews will be shown to you so that you can verify them and clarify issues that may arise. You will also be given a summary of my eventual research findings.

4. Will the interviews be confidential?
YES because I will **NOT** use your real name or the real name of your school and only my supervisor at the University of London will see the original transcripts of our interviews. Original transcripts will not be passed to the Ministry of Education in Seychelles. All transcripts, notes and recordings will be stored safely on my password-protected hard-drive.

5. Can you withdraw from the interviews?
YES, you can say 'stop' during an interview and tell me to stop taking notes if you feel uncomfortable or need to leave. You can also pull out or withdraw from the research at any time.

If you would feel more comfortable meeting at a quiet café/restaurant I offer to pay the costs (within reason) of your food and/or drink.

If you would like to ask me any questions about this research please contact me on mobile number 2717XXX or by email at guyjazz@yahoo.com

I hope you will enjoy participating in this research and thank you for reading this information sheet and considering my request.

I will contact you in a few days to find out if you would like to take part in this project.

Appendix 5 Collaborators Consent Form



Leading education
and social research
Institute of Education
University of London

Consent Form

There are two copies of this form for you to sign, if you agree to take part in this project. One is for you to keep and the other is to return.

Researcher's name and contact details:

Indra Persaud at guyjazz@yahoo.com or call on 2717XXX

Project title: Unpacking 'paradise': Geography education narratives from the Seychelles

Consent: I have read the information sheet for participants and agree to take part in the three interviews (each one not more than one hour) over the course of the next 12 months.

Please tick the box if you give your consent:

Date:

Name:

(Your real name will not be used in the research)

Address (or school):

(Your address or school will not be revealed in the research)

Signature:

Researcher's Declaration:

I have discussed and answered all questions that the participant had regarding this research project.

Name of researcher: Indra Persaud

Signature:

Appendix 6 Sample Transcripts

Transcript 1

Ivan, Lekol Kalbas

15.11.2013

1 ... (You can fill in a new one, if you don't mind, because my supervisor says I must get the consent
2 otherwise I'm not allowed to use anything that you tell me, but everything is confidential, I'm not
3 going to use your name, and I won't even say the name of the school, so everything you say is
4 confidential...and I am not working for the Ministry... I'm at the University of London, the Institute
5 of Education and my supervisor is in London so when I discuss things it is with him, it is not with
6 the Ministry, because I know if you want to say some things about the Ministry it needs to be
7 confidential) Yes, in case it gets back to them...(well, I know, I know...Seychelles is small...we know
8 that...but that is why I am trying to ...I won't use your name...) ok, that is understandable...(so,
9 how long have you been teaching geography?) First of all I am not a Seychellois, but I have been
10 teaching geography for some time ...not here...here it has been a year...but back home...for about
11 eight years...(and back home, where is home?) Uganda (oh, wow...welcome...so how long have
12 you been in Seychelles now?) Just a year (and how are you finding it?) Well, it is so different ...(it
13 must be...a small island) yes a small island...it really is quite different, even in terms of
14 approach...in terms of teaching...and the nature of students ...the student's conduct and their
15 desire for education...you don't feel they are so keen...(right, as opposed to back home...back
16 home it is different?) it is different in a way...maybe less resources but at least you see the desire
17 to learn ...students really want to learn, when they come to class they are really eager, they want
18 to hear from you ...they will even ask you questions and they will challenge you on a few things
19 ...something you don't see here (really) yes...so for me...(what do you think is the reason... from
20 your experience, you been here one year...why do you think...?) From my experience, when I ask
21 my fellow teachers, especially locals who have been teaching for some time...' you know, you
22 don't see the zeal, the desire, among the students to learn, what explains it?'...they were like 'you
23 know, I wasn't like this before...we are products of the same system, but we are so different', so
24 what is happening here ...so something went wrong somewhere and now what we are seeing is
25 actually the result of something that went wrong somewhere ...so unlike before where teachers
26 were teacher then, respected and listened to, and students would be at school knowing what they
27 wanted to learn ...it is a different story today...(you know from my focus on the geography...to
28 see if students are interested in finding out about the world...through geography, that is how we
29 try to open up their minds about the world...because obviously they are on a small island in the
30 middle of the ocean, so how do we open up and help them discover the world, but as you say,
31 maybe they don't want to discover ...or do some of them...have you found that they are
32 interested?) Erm, to be frank with you...of course we have a few exceptions, but generally
33 speaking I don't see that in them, (...and so their knowledge and interest in other places?) It is all
34 about Seychelles, it is all about Seychelles, anything that stretches beyond Seychelles, it just looks
35 so weird and you see on their faces that they are questioning the relevance of this...'why should
36 we study this?', that is why...you would be surprised that you are teaching S4 and a student
37 doesn't know just the country next door...you show them an atlas or you say 'ok, here is a map of
38 the world, can you show me where this country is and they have no idea if it is in Africa or
39 whether...the obvious, or the simplest...you know, so to me that already answers your
40 question...you don't see that in them...(and what about having the Cambridge syllabus, as it is an
41 exam from another country...it is an international exam...so do you see that that is a problem or
42 an issue for them or a challenge or do they cope?) Yes, it is a challenge and when it comes to us
43 teachers, who understand what they need to study ...I mean they need to stray beyond this
44 country because Cambridge is about the world, it is not about Seychelles as a country, I think we
45 have been trained to teach that, it is part of the curriculum, the subject, the topics that we need
46 to handle, we need to cover all that ...but we have a challenge when it comes to it because 1. it
47 just looks so strange to them...I mean, 'why must we study about, for example, earthquakes in

Transcript 1 (continued)

48 Indonesia', or 'why must we study about a coastal investigation in the UK or Australia?', you know,
49 to them it doesn't really....despite, you know, we try to tell them that apart from you knowing,
50 when it comes to the exam you are going to be questioned about these things, so you need to
51 know this...but still you don't see the enthusiasm, you don't see that...so I think there is a
52 challenge there
53 (So, it is interesting for you, as someone who is new to Seychelles, because you can see, as an
54 outsider, maybe why they are like this...have you got any ideas why they are like this?) Erm, well, I
55 think it has to do with the system...what they have been through to where they are...I think there
56 has been less emphasis on what happens outside than what happens in....because I tell you what,
57 they know so much about their country...you talk about issues to do with here, let it be
58 geography, let it be climate...they will give you quite interesting answers ...they know about these
59 things from general knowledge, but beyond this they don't know, so probably it has to do with
60 how they are brought up, the kind of things they are emphasising right from primary school and
61 other secondary school classes, maybe this has not been the focus...their minds have not been
62 opened up to things beyond what is here (Do you think it is partly to do with being an island, that
63 they are not part of a big continent, so it is quite insular?) Exactly, you see they are confined in this
64 little space and to them, pretty much, their world end around here, Mahe, Praslin and a few
65 islands..., you know 'that's us now, and that's all we need to know is here', so what happens
66 beyond, is yeah, 'that's for them'...yes, it is to do with being a small island ...(yes, that is
67 interesting because on Mahe there are a lot more foreign influences, and on the news and in the
68 papers they talk about the Arab influence, and then you have Eden Island, which is more wealthy,
69 white South Africans, and they see a lot of different people, you know, the Indian population...so
70 Seychelles is a place that has influences from lots of different countries...so, maybe the Praslin
71 students don't see that so much...or?) no, they see that....when it comes to tourism they
72 know...when you ask them 'what is the major foreign currency earners for this country?', they will
73 tell you tourism and if you ask them 'where do most tourist that come to Seychelles come from?'
74 they will tell you 'They come from Italy, they come from France...' they know these things and
75 they even see these people, they can describe all this....but I think it comes back to how it has
76 been integrated into the education system, so to speak, these influences ..do they stretch beyond
77 seeing and knowing that these people are from there and they come to Seychelles for business, or
78 whatever, but is there a close connection to what they study in class as part of the curriculum, I
79 mean, how do they link...this is the issue....(I think it is really important what you are
80 saying...because I know often then is quite a lot of tension with the immigrant Indian
81 community...I wouldn't go as far as saying it is racism but there is tension...and even talking about
82 Africa as if it is a different place...do you find that?) Yep, yep, yes...even here they have derogatory
83 names so they would call the Indians 'malbar'...and if a student calls a fellow student 'malbar' it is
84 an insult...and being told that this country is part of the African continent is more or less an
85 insult...(yes, other people have said that to me)...so there is that denial or lack of acceptance and
86 all that, so it all comes back to they psyche now...(so where do you think the young Seychellois
87 today, that you teach in your classes, where do they identify, if they don't feel that they are part
88 of Africa, where do they feel a part of or ..?) This is an interesting question, and it is a question I
89 have also asked a few Seychellois friends and none of them has really given me a definite
90 answer...ha-ha...because I said to them 'ok, you guys are not really Indians, yes you are in the
91 Indian Ocean but you are not Indians, you don't want to be Indians, even those of Indian descent,
92 you claim you are Seychellois', so for them Seychellois is a race, it is a tribe....so where do they see
93 themselves I think, in a way, it is pretty much denial, but then, they prefer to be called Seychellois
94 as a name rather than anything else, so for them; 'don't call us African, don't call us Indians, don't
95 call us whites because we are not white, but call us Seychellois, to us that is definite, that
96 describes us', and to them that is it (and that is the biggest part of their identity, but what I am
97 struggling with is 'what is Seychellois?', because it seems to be a real mix, because there is Indian,

Transcript 1 (cont.)

98 and there is African but it is hard to define) Yes this is what I have also observed, here, if I stayed
99 here longer enough, or if I am interested in learning Kreol and I choose to learn Kreol and in 2 or 3
100 years I am perfect, if I am not here where they know me as an African and I happen to go to
101 another island, and I speak Kreol then I'm a Seychellois now, and everybody would identify me as
102 a Seychellois, so I would be on their side so whoever comes and doesn't speak Kreol it would be
103 him against us...so I think it comes back to Kreol...the language, if you speak the language then
104 you are Seychellois...whether you are black, white, Indian, it doesn't matter, the moment you
105 speak, you are Seychellois. This is what usually happens in our class, sometimes you are teaching
106 and then, as usual, noisy and so on, so you shout in English 'can you please keep quiet or stop
107 doing this', nobody will care, they will just continue, but you mention 2 or 3 words in Kreol and
108 they are like 'hey, wow, Sir, you speak Kreol?' so now you will have their attention, so it shows you
109 the power of Kreol, as Seychellois, it is pretty much to do with that, you must speak the language
110 then you are a Seychellois, then today...fashion, a sense of style...because to them the way I dress
111 here, I don't wear a t-shirt, but to be a typical Seychellois when you come to teach it is fashionable
112 to wear a t-shirt and shorts, and have this flamboyant lifestyle, this is a typical Seychellois,
113 according to them, so these are the little things that have surprised me as a foreigner (yes, it is
114 interesting that you are seeing these things and are coming to terms with this very different
115 culture and then, in the classroom, it can make your life difficult or challenging, to try to find ways
116 to reach the children and find out how they are thinking and to make a connection with them) yes,
117 exactly, and I think that is a challenge for most teachers who come abroad to teach here because
118 there are always those different layers...and even the way we speak English, you know, I don't
119 speak English with a Seychellois accent so straight away you are given your place now, you belong
120 here and later on not speaking Kreol makes things worse (so have you felt that they don't show
121 you respect or they do show you respect, or..) eh, yes, if I was a Seychellois geography teacher
122 here I would command more respect than I do right now, they won't give you the attention and
123 the respect that you deserve as a teacher simply because you are not a Seychellois...you know, we
124 have some teachers who are not Seychellois but they speak Kreol and for them it is a different
125 story, you know in class because they have the language they will have the respect (and I suppose
126 if you can speak Kreol you will know a lot more about what is going on in the community, you've
127 got those connections in the community, whereas it is much harder for those someone like you
128 who has only been in Seychelles for a year, so you don't really...) yes, interact at that level, where
129 you meet people in the street and you can talk about social issues in the environment, yes, it
130 doesn't happen, very true (so are you hoping to stay longer, or are you only planning to stay 2
131 years...well, I don't know the terms of your contract, I don't know the circumstances of why you
132 are here, but are you enjoying it, would you like to stay?) Oh, that is a contractual argument..(I
133 don't know anything about it, if you would rather not say...) yes, I will leave that to myself.. (I am
134 just hoping that it is not so difficult that you wouldn't want to stay because actually many
135 expatriates do stay, they do enjoy Seychelles, so despite all the issues you are talking about I
136 think...well a lot of Sri Lankans have stayed quite a long time, and they seem to adjust, and I've
137 been here 20 years so I have kind of adjusted, but my husband is Seychellois, so I know the
138 education system relies on people like you...) yes, expatriates, yes...I think I will separate the two
139 scenarios ...whatever we are talking about here is an experience we get when we are in a school
140 or a classroom situation, beyond that I think life is normal, personally I am not really interested in
141 those community issues because I don't...yes, I am part of the community, but those that they talk
142 about in the community, politics and all sorts of thingsso beyond here although there are a few
143 challenges I am fine it is Ok with me, I have come to understand the nature of the students. I
144 know why they behave the way they behave, so I know they are...I don't want to use the word
145 victims, but they are just a product of the system...(well that is very insightful of you, because you
146 have only been here a year, but to come to that kind of understand is very good) yes, that is how I
147 look at it...

Transcript 1 (cont.)

148 ... (and do you have much support, are there other expatriates that you are friends with, or friends
149 with Seychellois?) Oh yeah, most expatriate communities we are friends, and yeah, some teachers
150 are quite helpful... (and in the geography department is there much support? do you share
151 materials, do you work as a team?) Yes we do, we have a structure where we reconcile all our
152 approaches and content (so when you came they gave you a lot of support?) yes, they gave me
153 support, apart from the induction, but we went through all the topics and topic content and we
154 continue to do that, once in a while, reviewing what we have looked at so far, what are the issues,
155 is there any better way to do it, so we do that on a daily basis, so there is that kind of support in
156 my department (oh good, you are lucky... and what about from the Ministry... other teachers have
157 said that they have not received much training from the Ministry, especially with dealing with the
158 IGCSE and practising looking at mark schemes, things like that...) at that level I have not had
159 experience of that for the year I have been here, we have not done that, but I know one
160 department has had the opportunity to go abroad and I think a few people came from Cambridge
161 to Seychelles to talk about these things (yes, but that was a while ago) as for me we haven't, and
162 not in my department, we haven't, not yet... (but you feel there is enough support within the
163 department... and what about fieldwork? do you work together to help the students, or not really,
164 that hasn't really happened?) yes we do, so far this year I think we've had about four coordinated
165 fieldtrips in the department, we do things like coastal investigation and river investigations and we
166 usually do it in such a way that we do it as a team so that it is coordinated to ensure that we
167 maximise all the resources because it is really hard to do it by yourself with such a huge number of
168 students, so we rely on each other's support (Brilliant, that's so good... and the other teacher was
169 saying that it is much easier with the physical geography, with coasts, rivers, but with human
170 geography have you done much?) no, it is more or less typical classroom, it is easier with the
171 physical that is very true. Actually all the trips we've done they are to do with the physical part of
172 the syllabus (yes, because I've been talking with other teachers and they've told me that they
173 prefer the physical. I don't know, they must find the human a bit more challenging and I am not
174 sure why. I don't know if they think it is a bit more abstract, I don't know, I haven't really thought
175 about it yet) I think I agree with the analysis that probably students find it a lot easier, the physical
176 part of it, because usually when you are doing fieldwork everyone wants to participate, everyone
177 wants to do something, they want to do the measurements, they want to do the recording, they
178 want to do all this, and then when you are doing the human, it has to do more with research, and
179 you have to cram a bit so they don't forget what the science means and it bores, so to speak, I
180 don't know if this is the right word to use, but they get a bit bogged down because it is more
181 talking, and they have to look at it and try to remember, and cram it, yet the physical is a bit more
182 practical so you find them a bit more interested in doing it.. (I understand, the more tangible the
183 thing is, so they can touch and measure, rather than discuss ideas which may be too abstract) and
184 I think this stretches beyond geography as a subject because other teachers have told me that
185 when it comes to those things where they have to use their hands, for practicals, you see
186 everyone on board, but when it comes to discussions about 'why is it like this?', you know, they
187 are so bored, they are not interested, so it is like that but what explains it, well, it is another
188 research again! (But there are in geography, you know, we have to tackle some of the
189 controversial issues, when you look at a case study... the good and the bad... different people's
190 attitudes... another geography teacher was talking to me about the wind farm, obviously in
191 Seychelles we have these wind turbines and a lot of people are against, so that builds up a good
192 case study of those who are for and those who are against, but do the students get into that kind
193 of debate or they are not really... do they enjoy talking about such issues?) Well, I haven't have
194 such an experience with that kind of ... I haven't tackled any of those kind of issues ... so I wouldn't
195 be in a position to give you a fair analysis of this... but I think when it comes to things concerning
196 the environment and environmental conservation they know that the environment is threatened,
197 when you talk about coral protection they have some idea, they are quite knowledgeable, and

Transcript 1 (cont.)

198 they really become quite passionate about some of these things but that is generally speaking
199 (and, here, because of the impact of tourism it becomes quite controversial, doesn't it, the more
200 developed, the more tourists, the more hotels, the more land that's taken up ..) yes, the more
201 destruction ...(yes, erosion...) yes, they are aware of that, they are really aware of that, so yes, a
202 few times I have had interactions with them, but that is at the club level, we have what you would
203 call the geography club and some times these are what we talk about and some times we've
204 been out to some of the islands and you see they are really quite passionate aboutso they
205 know and they don't like it and in many cases they will tell you...'You know what Sir, this thing is
206 causing us problems and so Seychelles, in twenty years time it will be like this and Sir, we don't
207 like it', so you would say 'ok, what must we do now, what are you going to do about it?' ...and they
208 would come up with some pretty interesting ideas...(oh, OK, so it doesn't actually stir up some
209 emotion) [BELL RINGS] That's my bell! (ok, wow, we just talk and talk and talk, but thank-you it has
210 been fantastic...) when are you going, are you still here? (Yes, I am around...I will come back and I
211 would love to talk to you again...) yes, I'll be here...(yes, in my letter I explained that I would like to
212 meet with you three times) yes, I am happy to talk with you, I'll be here ...most welcome (thank-
213 you, I've learnt so much from you)... Interesting...(yes, it is so eye-opening, your perspective, it is
214 good that you see certain things because a lot of people who live here don't see, so it takes
215 someone like you to come and open up our eyes) I like that...alright...I'll see you next time you
216 come back...I'll be here...see you again (bye...) bye.

Transcript 2

Lewis, Lekol Bwa Dou
14.12.2013

1 ... (You were talking about all the people who have left...) Yes, the teacher from Lekol Bordmer, she
2 was a history specialist and she was the head of the department. She left for the police
3 department...but what you see is that people have left, and if they were going into teaching it
4 would be ok, for example, Miss YY has left to teach at Lekol Bwa Mediz, (yes, I think I know her,
5 because I went to there)...Yes, she is new there... (Yes, I saw Mrs CS and SV)... and C but sometimes
6 they call her YY... (Where was she teaching before?) We were colleagues at Lekol Bordmer before,
7 as well as S, we were also colleagues, and before she left YY was at Lekol Zoliker but she is
8 different because she was a former student of Lekol Bwa Mediz so when the vacancy came up
9 they targeted her...well, when you look at the school and you look at the staff it is 90 percent
10 local...you have a few expatriates who have established themselves here...but they would not
11 usually recruit expatriates... (Yes, I know, they are mainly local, Seychellois...I know Z, SV, CS)...yes,
12 they are local...you understand that they trust more the local teachers for the local children...this is
13 of paramount importance but, unfortunately, I don't know why... I don't understand why the
14 Ministry of Education doesn't want to do that...when you look at my case for example...why didn't
15 I stay...people thought I left Lekol Bordmer because of the discipline...but it was not because of
16 this...after 31 years teaching, I did not have any problems with discipline...more when I look at the
17 attitude of the ministry in terms of experienced teachers...for a particular case...you have a review
18 of salary...when I see colleagues getting hundreds of rupees and I get just twenty one rupees...and
19 I check with them...and they say, no... it is ok, you have been in the system and you are getting
20 your remuneration but you are not getting anything for your experience, but this is not
21 good,...well anyway, I kept on...I was waiting for my children...I taught them both and they both
22 got A's...I ensured that they were both in my geography class from S1 ...because I know how it is,
23 there are so many changes and in both cases there was no private tuition at home, I ensured that
24 what I gave them I was giving to the other children...yes...it's the consistency, once they have a
25 good teacher all the way through, they can do well...Yes, but when I went to Lekol Mangliyer there
26 were two expatriates, I too was an expatriate...I came over in '82...but when I went there... the
27 frustration I felt there...two expatriate ladies, coming over, unable to properly teach geography...it
28 is not that I am an expert, but certain things are basic in teaching geography, the content...you
29 might find it difficult to manage a class but the content, in terms of knowledge, if you are a trained
30 geography teacher... (yes, you have to have the knowledge)...yes, it is basic, but almost on a daily
31 basis... 'Sir, help me do this', 'what is this' *mimicking the two teachers*...it started to annoy
32 me... (and was this for S1 and S2 classes or for IGCSE?)...it was throughout, throughout the whole
33 syllabus...struggling with the classes, managing the classes, the IGCSE syllabus was even worse
34 because is not taught where they come from, the paper 4...
35 (Where are they from?) You have one from Uganda and one from Sri Lanka... (ok...so they don't do
36 the Cambridge IGCSE there?) No, they don't do Cambridge so they find it difficult, so I said, OK, by
37 helping them I am helping the children, but then one day...you know the country is very small
38 here...I learned about their package...they were earning several thousand more than me so then I
39 said to myself, this is not right...and because of the ROA system you have formal assessment
40 throughout the school and out of the 10 assessments, I had to prepare 8 out of the 10, so in the
41 end I gave up, I said it is not right, it will go on like that, so I decided to submit my resignation...but
42 as it was decided, at the same time I was hoping to talk to someone from senior management at
43 the ministry but they did not do anything and it was in the last week of my one month notice that I
44 saw two junior officials from the ministry who did an exit interview and that's all...it is sad in the
45 sense, to tell you frankly, the job where I am is new to me, it's interesting...it is in a field to do with
46 population...I am a senior research officer...but in terms of performance I am better at teaching...I
47 am much better at teaching than what I am doing now...at times I fell a bit embarrassed...I'm not
48 really doing the work I should do...I should be teaching... (Yes, that's your passion, teaching)...yes,

Transcript 2 (cont.)

49 it is so deeply rooted...and you know, its not that I've changed the place where I live and almost on
50 a daily basis I meet people, teachers, students, parents...'Sir...come back, why are you there? We
51 miss you'. Students especially, when I meet them, even those from Lekol Mangliyer, even the
52 short time I was there...'Sir, come back, we need you, we are finding it difficult to understand the
53 other teachers, and they don't teach the same the same as you...it's not the same...we are not
54 getting ...the short time you were with us we were learning, and now we are not getting anything'.
55 (And with all that experience, as you say, if they don't recognise that experience, that means that
56 they are not recognising all what you bring because teaching is nothing without experience)...its
57 good...you need to be trained for any job...but what they fail...with the system, even where I am
58 now...I see the whole system...there is a failure to properly recognise experience acquired on the
59 job, it's more than the certificates that somebody has...ok, and the unit where I work was
60 completely depleted of its staff because the salary structure was ...there were three ladies working
61 there and they all left within 1 and half months and one of them had worked there for 16 years
62 and she stumbled on a situation where there was not progress and new ones came in and in terms
63 of salary...the three of them left...and with education it's the same thing...continuously going to
64 lose teachers...why...because they tend to lose those that are better because outside, whether it
65 be in the public or private sector...they value teachers a lot...(That's it, the skills the teacher
66 have)...it is difficult to see a teacher outside who is not working...(yes, its their communication
67 skills)...yes, and that's why I decided to get out completely and to get another job...I think it is
68 true, I think it has come to the point where the Ministry has told other ministries not to take our
69 teachers....(Yeah, there is a lot of poaching, I know so many good teachers who are working with
70 Barclays)...they paid good a salary....but not just private, even in the public sector...at Lekol
71 Kapisen a teacher left for the Bureau of Information...she is a Director there, she was a teacher...a
72 very good English teacher...she was there for 10 years. It's sad, it's sad and the same can be said
73 for all...I don't know how this is going to change ...[sad laugh]...(Well my research is not going to be
74 able to tackle all of these things, you now, really what I am interested in is more the geography, so
75 my very first questions I've asked to all the teachers is why did you want to become a geography
76 teacher or how did you become a geography teacher?) Well actually, it goes very deep down in
77 history I would say...when I was at school, or college as they say in Mauritius, I was doing O levels
78 at the time... there was a very good geography teacher, a lady, she in a way inspired me in that
79 particular subject... I was doing a lot of other subjects, eight O levels, but that lady, in the
80 beginning I had other teachers for geography, but when I reached Form 4 she took over because
81 there you have to specialise in a channel, so I dropped sciences and went into the heart sciences,
82 as they call it, history, geography, literature and I would say, this lady really inspired me...and then
83 when I went into the job market I could not afford to go to university because the financial
84 resources of my parents could not allow it...so the next option was teacher training which was
85 free, because the old system was geared towards producing more teachers for the education
86 institutions so I went for teacher training and I opted for geography...and there also, I had very
87 good lecturers for geography because I did social studies with geography. Geography was a
88 specialised subject and this time it was a gentleman for geography...we had the methodology part
89 and also the content part...there were two of them actually, one for the content ...and the content
90 one was more inspiring in the sense that that guy was wonderful...for his lectures he was so
91 knowledgeable and in a way I have taken from him...I hardly use books when I teach...and people
92 find that strange...the students say 'Sir, you don't come with books but yet..' and I say 'I don't
93 come with the books physically, but the books are there, I need to prepare before I come, I can't
94 just come and...I need to prepare...it is there... I don't need to show you the books, don't worry
95 the books are there'...and one day I remember one student said 'I went to check the facts you
96 have given and they are there, they are the same!' 'You see, I told you, I don't come with the
97 books physically but books are there'. And that fellow, he was inspiring...a three hour lecture...he
98 came without anything...he came by bus at that time, I am thinking of more than 25 years back. He
99 didn't have a car he was a lecturer at the Mauritius Institute of Education...a part time lecturer...he
100 came in the afternoon for those who study in the evening...I remember when he had finished his

Transcript 2 (cont.)

153 teaching at Lekol Takamaka it was something different, the school being small...you got to know
154 almost everybody, the parents, but also the students (but because of the older ones went off to
155 NYS and then had to close NYS, they had to rearrange everything) Yes, even with the closure of the
156 NYS, I personally think it was not wise...because of the political decisions they had to take...but
157 when you look at the social problems that we have with the young these days, if the NYS was
158 around...I don't tell you that such problems would not exist, but I think to a lesser degree
159 ...because the NYS, I think again here, the assessment was not properly done, maybe it was just
160 financial (I think it was also political) Yes, it was political because...(and financial as well) ...it was
161 completely political...there were political connotations with it, many opposed it and strangely
162 enough those who opposed it they are benefitting from it today. The leaders...(yes, I know, lots of
163 people, when I speak to them, they say they really think it was the best thing) It was, it was the
164 best thing for them, it made them independent, and today, what do see...the drug problem...if we
165 had the NYS today...I don't mean we would not have any of it, but the intensity of it would have
166 been less. It was a very controlled single environment. There were things that happened there, of
167 course...you cannot have a flawless ... it doesn't exist...but basically that existed, both the young
168 men...(and it was a whole rounded education, not just academic)...because at the end, initially it
169 was not that academic, but at the end they were doing O levels ...they could have maintained that,
170 it did the country a lot...for the local Seychellois...but going back to Lekol Takamaka, those days I
171 would cherish them all my life...they were wonderful because they were the first years of my
172 teaching, and proper teaching in a sense because, as I told you, I was only part time it was not in
173 full employment as a teacher but then when I reached there initially of course it was ...you are in a
174 different country...you have to adjust to certain things, but then rapidly... it was very rapid... I got
175 accepted very easily and this was something that helped me a lot, I will tell you frankly, the
176 community, not just the school, the community even today, when I go there, it is as if a preacher is
177 coming 'oh sir'...(that's so sweet) It has marked me a lot, the way they appreciated me and they
178 accepted me because whether you like it or not I was a foreigner but the way they accepted me,
179 the school accepted me the community accepted me so, on my part, I had to give them something
180 good and it helped me make it there. I could see that there was respect there. I had to give back
181 for that respect that they were showing and from there on I gave back and actually because of
182 that particular environment I rapidly became a good teacher, I would tell you frankly, and I
183 became so good that they asked me to go to work at the curriculum development section.
184 (I think that's how I first met you, when you were at the CDS...) Yes, and even though I wasn't
185 quite qualified as such for that job, because of the quality of the work that I performing there,
186 they got me at CDS, but then I realised when I went there I was not done for the office job, so I
187 asked to go back and I went to Lekol Bilembi, no actually, from CDS, that was in the late 80s early
188 nineties, I went to Lekol Bordmer. I did a small spell at Lekol Bordmer, two years, that's the time
189 when Nathalie was born, until 1990, and then I went to Lekol Bilembi. For about 5 years, then I
190 was transferred back to Lekol Bordmer. Bordmer is the school that I have spent most of my
191 teaching career...17 out of the 31 years have been at Bordmer...in all I have spent 31 years
192 teaching here...(an incredible record)...it's been good, it's been good, I would tell you frankly...(and
193 so having initially started doing history, geography, but you soon focused on the geography? You
194 went to CDS ...was that for geography?) Actually when I went to CDS it was for history, because
195 Mrs Chong Seng was doing the geography part so I went for history, maybe if I was doing the
196 geography I would have stayed, because I am more of a geography teacher than a history teacher.
197 I went there...it was not the subject, actually, that drove me out...it was...I felt more at ease, now I
198 told you, now I know that in a way the decision had to be taken, but in a way I do feel that I should
199 not have ...for the reasons of ...how will I put it... more in terms of job satisfaction. Conforming...I
200 am a better teacher than an curriculum developer ...I am a better teacher than a research
201 officer...I am telling you frankly, so this is something that maybe I would regret later, I don't know,
202 but the teaching is still in me, I don't think it will go away...I don't think it will go away.
203 (You never know, you never know what can happen...you might end up back in the classroom,
204 somehow, in some way)...it's a ...people have asked me that question before...they told me that

Transcript 2 (cont.)

205 you are never...but I say never is a word that you cannot use very easily. It is a very strong word,
206 you should never say never too easily. Never say never... you don't know what... I know that I
207 have, they have taken their decision, that's for sure (yes, you have to...you needed a change)
208 ...never? I don't know, if maybe the conditions were changed...if there is a new approach towards
209 recognising experience for teachers, maybe I would consider coming back. I wouldn't say never..
210 (Well, they are trying to bring in this whole idea of performance ...which I am still not sure about,
211 because I know in other countries, related to your results...how students are doing in their
212 IGCSE)...they should have taken that into consideration (yes, they are trying to ...maybe...bring in
213 something like that) but they don't...frankly, over the years that I have been teaching the IGCSE
214 each time I had a top class it was the top result for the country...yes...but then there was a
215 rotation, again, sometimes, so somebody else would take them...and the results were not that
216 good. I told you for my two children, Nathalie first...during the days of Natalie it was the O levels,
217 it was not like it is, no, I don't think it was. No, it was IGCSE...it was the days of Colin...do you know
218 Colin? Sabrina? I know these students because I taught them for 5 years before they did their O
219 levels and they were top in their school. Sabrina was going to be a medical officer, a doctor, but
220 she had some health problems, Angele is an environmental engineer, Colin is a manager at
221 Barclays...I remember them because they were in my geography class...very good ...each time I
222 had a good class the results were impressive...last year I had Jean Luc...there were 30 students in
223 the class...and the lowest mark was a 52...lowest mark...and it went up to the 90's...Jean Luc got an
224 80 something...his was not the only one...there were others...the results have always been
225 good...it is the experience...the experience of doing it and all the time...some people they are, in a
226 way, amazed...they ask me 'you are the only one who does not do extra class, yet your results are
227 always very good?' ...this is the perception...that you need extra class...no...you need to be good in
228 class to succeed...(exactly)... you need to be good in class...and for both of them, Nathalie and Jean
229 Luc there was not a single second of extra class...it was in class...what I did in class...of course
230 there was work that I gave them for homework, routine revision that started very early, actually,
231 you need to be able to do it this way for you to get good results...I started very early in S5...the
232 revision...which people tend to forget, how do you do it...set up questions to do at home, then
233 mark...give them the marks. You show them how to do it...(but this comes with experience, to
234 know the paper, to know what Cambridge are looking for) actually you have said...to know what
235 Cambridge is looking for...right now there are teachers who are teaching IGCSE, they don't know
236 what Cambridge is looking for...they don't know what is paper 4...I was amazed. Of course these
237 two ladies are from abroad... they did not understand a single thing about paper 4 what skills are
238 required...one day they said 'Sir...I don't know what is this' but then, when you recruit, you need to
239 ensure that these people who are coming over... knowing the system it very important, knowing
240 the students, how to deal with them, knowing the syllabus, knowing the programme, you
241 need...but this you get to know with time...in time you will think you have such a good
242 comprehension ...you need to understand that when you start the job... you should accept that
243 you don't know everything. You need to learn what to do (hmm, and with geography there is so
244 much to know about the world, the case studies that you use...you want to bring in new ones,
245 more recent topical ones, not just the old ones from the book) Yes, that's what I did for S5...'sir,
246 will they know about it?' and I say 'it's not, "will they know about it" but will you know about it
247 when you are writing it, if you are writing sense, if you are writing things that are true, there is no
248 way that you are going to be penalised'. This is how we got to end up...eventually it has proved
249 that for me it is a good method ...it has always got me good results in the end.
250 (Did you get much training to do the IGCSE, the new syllabus, when they brought it in? Because I
251 know they did bring some people in)...only once, it was not with the teaching of geography IGCSE
252 style...there was one gentleman who came over, Steve Sidley, but he came specifically for the
253 marking ...we had one or two days training with him, but it was more geared towards marking of
254 the ...and that was also how I came to understand about how I have always been a very harsh
255 marker. While marking there it was always down there...if it was a case study question with 25
256 marks on my part it reached 13...but the average was 21 or 19...so this also was a technique I

Transcript 2 (cont.)

257 used...students are always thinking 'I want to get to that 20'...and I always told them that 20 is the
258 barrier you should get for a question of 25 marks...'when you get to 20 you are safe, you are not
259 good...for you to be good you need to reach 22, 23' I told them, so it worked...but the training for
260 IGCSE...it was more on my own I would say...I did not get much training...(but what about from the
261 ministry, any help from the ministry?) No, I don't remember anything in particular which
262 ...initially...in the past, in the old days, you remember we had workshops, but these stopped...we
263 did not have anything...all the other subjects, I have seen them going for workshops every now
264 and then (but, when there was NIE, or now, with Ghislaine at the CDS?) No, there is nothing
265 substantial that I can recall, that has been done in terms of training, as such. That's why the young
266 ones, they struggle with ... (yes, that's what they have told me when I've been doing these initial
267 interviews, that they really want some more training, especially with the fieldwork...that paper 4)
268 Yes, they could have easily done that with those already in place. I was there, I got to know...but
269 one strange thing, the fieldwork part, I remember when I did O level geography, there was some
270 of it at that time, but it was completely different, but it was fieldwork...I remember...I remember
271 that lady with the chain you measure the tide...but that was very long ago...initially here we did
272 not have it, but then later on it was introduced...very interesting the fieldwork but it's one area we
273 should...it needs to be developed...in terms of providing training and resources for the teachers
274 ...(yeah, I am hoping to try and now that I've seen there is such a big need, I am hoping to bring in
275 some kind of training...it's just that I have to work with the ministry, though, to see if they are
276 willing...) but the problem, I will tell you frankly, is that the people there they themselves are not
277 confident with that. If you go there they might tell you yes but they themselves are not very
278 confident with the paper 4. Paper 4 is completely different from the other papers. Paper 1 is more
279 academic, paper 2 is application, but paper 4 is something else...it is a paper where you need to
280 write about how it would have been...had you gone outside...the techniques and so on (You know
281 when you get the results, do you get a breakdown of how the students have done in each paper,
282 so do you know how they have done in paper 1, paper 2) No (so you just get the total marks)
283 ...they might have it but they have not supplied it to us...(right, so you as a teacher, you don't
284 know how they did in paper 4) No we get the overall (not the breakdown) it would be good to get
285 the breakdown to see where.. (Yes, to see where the weaknesses are) Yes, but they do supply, but
286 this is more general...Cambridge, if you go online, you will see the examiners report, which is quite
287 detailed, which the teachers should make use of, but they don't make use of. In the examiners
288 report you have everything, all the weaknesses that you need to tackle (but this should be
289 something to get all the teachers together...to do some training...to go over the report, look at the
290 results, do a bit of analysis, break it down...) yes of course...I did it personally, as soon as the report
291 was available ...ok...this is the paper...because it is quite detailed the report, I tell you frankly, it is
292 quite detailed (Yes you learn a lot from the examiners comments) ...yes, but there needs to be
293 something concrete in that area, especially for the new ones coming in, they do struggle at times,
294 a bit, with the subject and also they need to consolidate the content of the teachers, some new
295 ones when they come in, I am amazed at certain things they don't know, that they should know. In
296 my days I did know those things, for example, I told you what I had, but maybe also then
297 competition was more, you had to know quite a lot before being admitted for teacher training.
298 You needed to have known the subjects, you needed to be very competent in your subject to be
299 able to get in, because this is what teaching is about...it's not flawless, but you need to have a very
300 high degree of competence in the knowledge of your subject.
301 (Well see, this is what I wanted to talk about now...because Seychelles is a small island and the
302 students themselves are quite insular in terms of what they know, their world, so geography is the
303 subject where we have the opportunity to teach students about the wider world...and it is really
304 important for Seychelles students to have an idea of their place in the world, through geography,
305 but as you say, if the basic geographical knowledge is lacking for some of the teachers then the
306 students are going to struggle) That's right, my belief is that we need to intensify the teaching of
307 geography from a very early stage...it is not just because, as you say, we are isolated, yes, but we
308 live in a world and we need, especially now, we know that events that happen thousands of miles

Transcript 2 (cont.)

309 away have an effect on us (Yes, like that whole tsunami..) yes, this is something to ensure that
310 future generations get to know as early as possible because we need to be prepared (but I was
311 actually quite surprised that up to P6, that most of the social studies curriculum is all local) Yes,
312 they need to start very early for them to get to know about the world...you need to know the
313 countries of the world, not in details, it's not possible to do that (but at least the continents and
314 some key countries) Yes, key countries we should know...whether we like it or not we need to
315 know about the United States, we need to know about China, we need to know about Russia,
316 these are key countries in the world we need to know about them. We need to know about South
317 Africa, a major player on the African continent, we need to know (and as you say, from that
318 primary level) Yes they need to know where these countries are, a little bit about the country
319 itself, the physical aspects of these countries, when you speak about mountains...I've always said
320 that when the students reach secondary they should not be so poorly equipped with geographical
321 skills and geographical knowledge. They are poorly equipped...they will tell you a lot about the
322 Seychelles, yes, they will tell you a lot about the history of Seychelles, but when you start moving
323 out, it becomes very difficult for them...and I think that a change of approach would be...world
324 geography should be introduced earlier, for people to get to know about the world, about these
325 countries which are key players in the world, whether we like it or not...we might not like China
326 the way they are doing things but they are there. (That's it, and with the globalised world now and
327 with the internet and television, the students are exposed to so many things and as you know with
328 so many cultures and nationalities that come here to Seychelles, so many Indians, so many
329 Russians, so many Europeans, it is good to know a bit more of world geography) but this should
330 have been done earlier in primary...maybe not as early as P1 but I believe that students should start
331 getting to know the world as from P3. P3 is a reasonable age for them to get to know the
332 countries. I am not saying that they should know in depth about the USA, but they should know
333 where the USA is (to get a sense of...) what you have...where are the oceans and the continents
334 and so on...and I think there is work to be done there in that area... (Wow, I think we have spent a
335 whole hour talking, which is brilliant, it is so brilliant...
336 'We are in our fifth year now...we have seen four geography teachers...one comes and says this
337 thing, another comes and says another thing', right, now I say, 'ok, now I am your fifth teacher,
338 what do you have to do this year? What have you done before...you are in the IGCSE programme,
339 one year is done, you are left with two terms...so, you are supposed to have done this, this and
340 this'. When I reached at paper 4 they said 'Sir, sir, what is paper 4?' 'You need to sit for three
341 papers in IGCSE, you have paper 1, paper 2, you don't do paper 3, which is the coursework, you do
342 paper 4, alternative to coursework'. 'Sir, but, nobody has told us about this before'. I say 'What,
343 but paper 4 is about fieldwork?'. 'Sir, what is fieldwork?' they had not touched fieldwork at all...
344 (Wow)...they had not touched fieldwork at all, so I said 'ok, this will be ...we will need to work...I
345 see you have missed quite a lot, so we will need to work on this fieldwork business, alongside with
346 you have done'...I saw a lot of topics that they did, so we were going to do the fieldwork...and so I
347 did that with them...I did river studies with them, and I met one of them, last two weeks back and
348 he said 'Sir, sir, so how is your job?' and I said 'ok, ok' and he said 'Sir, you know the rivers you did
349 with us...it came up in the exam!' and I said to myself at least they were prepared for the exams.
350 But you see that is one of the problems, getting the students ready for the exams...it is not normal
351 for them to have reached S5 not knowing what they will be doing for the exam...and this is
352 something that needs to be done. You know what happens, there is the IGCSE syllabus, it is sent to
353 school but there is no coordination of it...one thing that people tend to forget...here students can
354 change from one school to the other, they change place...they are living here...they go to live at
355 their aunt, they go to a town school, and there should be some continuity to it...all the schools
356 should not be doing exactly...it is not possible to be doing exactly...but at least they are following
357 the same stage so when they move school they are not...they don't find themselves doing
358 something completely different (or missing a whole topic or repeating the same topic)...but I was
359 amazed about this paper 4, this paper 4...it was only then that they got to know what they should
360 have been doing! It's a bit sad, it would say...it is sad that nobody is taking proper care of the

Transcript 2 (cont.)

361 subject, that is the problem...if you had some people taking...you know, you have people there
362 who are geography specialists but in my opinion they are not taking care of the subject, taking
363 good care of the subject is to ensure these things even if you ... (yes, but the basic thing would be
364 to offer some proper training in the IGCSE) Yes, that's what I am saying, there should be a good
365 coordination of the thing, not just let people go there...(Yes, but also as you say...lower down, with
366 the whole syllabus, because now there is going to be this national exam, S5, the whole syllabus...)
367 The national exam, the way they have introduced it for S5, to tell you frankly, in my own opinion,
368 people may not like it...it's just a waste of resources...the way they have introduced it...it's for
369 those who have not qualified for IGCSE, across the board, in all the subjects. I will take one
370 example...geography might not be a good one but it is also the same thing... I will take French...in
371 French, they have basic French A1...A1 is meant for primary school students...you have young men
372 and women of S5 who have not been able to qualify for A1 and then you design an exam for them
373 that is lower than A1...does it make sense? A1 is meant for primary...just to say they have sat for
374 national exam you give them an exam that is so diluted there is almost nothing in it. I did not see
375 the paper for geography...I don't know what they have put in it and my guess is that it will be so
376 simple that it will not add real value because you have to think of the value of an exam. You can't
377 just give an exam for the sake of giving an exam. (But I suppose it is so they can exit S5 with some
378 kind of certificate) But they could have done it in a different way. Why not let the whole group
379 have an exam in July. It will serve a double, dual purpose...the whole of S5 has a national exam,
380 everybody is going to get an S5 certificate...we did have it before...two levels of exams...those who
381 are academically sound they have the top paper and those that are not that good can have the
382 second paper...you can have three papers, you can have a common paper for the whole group and
383 then you have something else separately for the two groups. In the end everybody is going to be
384 assessed on the same level, but now the way you look at it, somebody who has not been
385 successful for say, geography, has not really qualified, they will do the national exam...it's so
386 diluted that the student can get 60-70%, the other one, who got 25 has qualified for IGCSE exams
387 but then unfortunately that exam is failed...he will get nothing...the other one who got 70 will say
388 'hey, I've got 70, what did you get? You failed', which is not true actually...he failed because he
389 was not admitted to IGCSE this also needs to be reviewed...(I think there will be a lot of teething
390 problems with this whole new S5 exam, as you say, it not really thought through) you know, it has
391 not really been thought through at all. It has just...the idea came up you have to do it. The idea
392 came up...let us investigate it first...let us find out how it should be. What is the target group? Is it
393 something that is really useful...we need to look at that first...(or valued...will parents and society
394 even value it?) Of course, and then you have some sort of...maybe it would have been difficult, but
395 some sort of testing of that system. (I think the problem is the fact that the IGCSE is not doing
396 what it should be doing) No, I don't think so...I would tend to disagree with that. The IGCSE
397 programme, at least for geography is one that is designed to reach a maximum number of
398 students, the way it is designed...that's my opinion. O level was not designed that way. The O level
399 was very restrictive. Very few students could attempt O level. IGCSE geography the scope is there
400 for a larger group to enter, the problem is with the teaching of IGCSE...that is why a lot do not
401 make through IGCSE. It's not because the level, I personally think it is too low...to tell you frankly,
402 going down to 20% for the 3 papers, it is not even 7% for each paper, I find it a bit low. But the
403 way they have done it, I do understand we should. My belief is not with the IGCSE syllabus. If
404 these students don't make it, it is because, primarily, the teaching of geography is not good.
405 (But can you be entered for IGCSE geography even though you don't qualify to do maths, English
406 and science?) Yes, if you prove yourself in one subject you can do that IGCSE subject. For example
407 if you prove yourself in Maths, but not in English, you can do the Maths because you have proved
408 yourself. (So, really, the numbers being entered for geography could be quite high?) It should be
409 but it will not be because now with national exams the teaching is going down...and there is also
410 the unfortunate aspect of the ministry evaluating the school on the results...how can you evaluate
411 me on the results when you don't give me teachers to teach the subjects but you evaluate me...it's
412 unfair. So what do some teachers do now they restrict the numbers just to give a good

Transcript 2 (cont.)

413 impression, which is not good...it is not good. I know it is also expensive to send children for their
414 IGCSE, it costs 1,250 rupees per subject per student so if a student enters 5 subjects that's 1,250
415 times 5, and if you have 1000 students entering for a particular subject it is 1000 times 1,250, so it
416 is ...there is the financial aspect as well, but if you have to move to local exams you need to be
417 very careful about that. These exams should be at a level that is recognised nationally, at least. It
418 should not be something that is weak that does not have any value. I don't know.
419 (I think that is why there is such a demand for private schools, because parents are willing to
420 sacrifice) but this is something they should take into consideration as well...if so many parents are
421 willing to sacrifice, try to review the system and see how you can adapt. A colleague told me that
422 quite a few of the good students are moving to the independent school because the school is
423 expanding and the best students in the present S1, present S2 and present S3 are moving there.
424 And surprising they are parents who are not, eh...initially we used to have parents who were
425 wealthy enough to afford independent school, but now even those of medium range they are also
426 opting for that, so this should be a sign. Government should understand that people are willing to
427 sacrifice to get something better...and it's not possible to compare independent with the state
428 schools because there they have the choice of accepting or not accepting students, state schools
429 do not have that choice...they need to accept whoever is in the district...but we need eh...I
430 personally think, we can get a better product with the investment that we are doing. It's just that
431 we need to relook at the system...we have been thinking about those who could not qualify for
432 IGCSE...over my 31 years of teaching, I have seen it, one major flaw of the system that affects
433 geography and all of the other subjects, one major flaw of the system is the inability to accept that
434 children are different...different abilities. There are some students who will never be academically
435 good, but these same students if you take them very early, they can be very good at something
436 else...(and that is why the NYS was such a good thing...because it gave those students an
437 opportunity to do all kinds of things rather than just purely stuck with the academic, and that is
438 why, I suppose, they are trying to explore that with the TVET). There again, they try to
439 explore...but again, I think they have done it wrong. When you look at the students who are in
440 TVET they are students with behavioural problems. They are not the students who should be on
441 TVET; they should be in some reform school. People don't like it when I say that. Those who
442 should be in TVET should be those good students, good students of behaviour but who are not
443 academically good. I have always said that but I don't see anything coming from there. We know
444 Seychelles has an economy that is based primarily on tourism. The tourism sector employs
445 hundreds of expatriates doing very simple jobs. Now, why, when we have the P6 exam, it is a very
446 good benchmark, when you look at it, you can, very easily identify the students that are non-
447 academic. Very easily, a student who has scored 60/600, 10 points from each subject, this student
448 is not academic, unless the student was sick on that particular day, which you can very easily
449 identify the student is not academic, but yet, what do we do? We pursue with that student for 5
450 more years on an academic level...what product do we get in the end? Nothing ...whereas if we
451 had, maybe not at S1 but at S2, started proper channelling S3, S4 and S5...instead of sending that
452 student for IGCSE that he will not be able to do, we have gone for the national exam which is a
453 diluted exam, S3, S4 and S5, that student could have started his training in chambermaid, waitress,
454 you name it, for the tourism industry. This would be two years gained in training of a student for
455 the tourism sector and then, after S5 they go for their third year of training and after the three
456 years and I'm sure you would get a much better product and than after just one year at there at
457 STA. There was a project like that, whereby at S3 there would have been some channelling, but
458 still I don't see it materialising, it's not there. Very good ideas have come up and yet we don't
459 see...regional secondary schools, whether we like it or not, we have to accept that students are
460 different and in the society we need students with different skills, with different abilities. We need
461 them to be good at what they are doing everywhere, we need good fisherman, good carpenters,
462 we need the mason, we good educators...(Well I remember in the schools before we had all those
463 workshops, they used to do carpentry) It's there but still you have this aspect of they need to sit
464 for academic exams...they need to start earlier, it's too late I believe. They could have had

Transcript 2 (cont.)

465 vocational schools at an earlier age. (Well, maybe this TVET might eventually evolve into
466 something...) yes, it needs to evolve. When I look at TVET I see the wrong approach, in a sense that
467 in it you have students, some not all, some students that are more problematic in terms of
468 discipline and they confuse that with ability. They have strong behavioural problems and TVET will
469 not tackle that...it will tackle it in the sense that these students will not be in... in schools, 'TVET pa
470 pou laz ozordi, good, zot o', you understand, that's the way it is. The timetable is set for TVET but
471 they do not go. The approach, I think... they say it has been successful, but when I look at it, it
472 could have been better with a different approach. The very fact that there is this connotation of
473 bad behaviour with TVET is wrong...you shouldn't have it this way. When you go to schools TVET,
474 TVET is bad behaviour. Wherever you go TVET is bad behaviour. Is that what TVET should be? It
475 should not be...there are good students who are struggling with their academic studies, it is these
476 students who should be in TVET, the good students with no behavioural problems but struggling
477 because they don't have the academic ability, they should be in TVET. You train them and they will
478 be able to advance...anyway...

Appendix 7 Sample of Research Notes and Journal Entries

Notes and journal entries were made with respect to the issues discussed with officials from the Ministry of Education, the University of Seychelles and the Seychelles Institute of Teacher Education (SITE).

Extract from notes of meetings with Curriculum Officials, Ministry of Education 10th May 2011 and 26th September 2013

Past: Mrs Chong Seng in charge of Geography curriculum making during 1980's. Glen Mundy at School of Education, part of Poly, doing teacher training, then he moved to Ministry to work on Curriculum Development, succeeded by Ravi Raman, then by Maureen Charlette, based at NIE.

With NYS closure schools start teaching O level syllabi in S4 (although SFS replaced NYS so students started O levels/IGCSEs in S4 then repeated or expanded O level subjects in SFS)

2000 NIE opened as part of major restructuring. Many teachers moved to schools to teach O level in S5 with closing of SFS at Poly. Curriculum Section at NIE headed by Elva Gedeon, Maureen Charlette was in charge of Geography and Odile Jean-Louis-History. MT Purvis developing new partnership with Malta University for BEd but cancelled by new UniSey administration. Teacher trainees lost chance to complete BEd through old route (ECU/Malta). Around 12 geo teacher trainees left the course and education. New Primary BEd with UniSey through ECU (Primary only) with plans for PGCE courses for Secondary only once students have completed their degrees....BIG TIME LAG.....no secondary teacher trainees graduating from the system for 4 years. Schools will be in a desperate state as older teachers retire. Foundation Studies in Education (2.5 A levels) leading to AICE offered as a 2 year course through UniSey, then further 2 years to attain BEd (Sec)??? BIG ISSUE of LACK OF TRAINED TEACHERS FOR SECONDARY due to restructuring of courses by UniSey

CCATS currently undertaking review of curriculum - conducted surveys, questionnaires with teachers, parents, students and employers (focus groups etc.). Data needs to be analysed etc. Review of curriculum also includes production of new resources/textbooks

GEO Curriculum/IGCSE: Fieldwork lacking. IGCSE Paper 4 refers to fieldwork but most done in classroom. FIELDWORK---too much hassle, need permission from Ministry, Head, other teachers, parents etc. Time consuming etc. etc. NOT much fieldwork done

Textbooks given to schools but some teachers sell them to students!! Lack of control in schools...books lost but not replaced...Teachers can't make students pay for books, and policy is that students should not have to pay for their own books.

Extract from notes of meetings with Ministry official, 5th May 2011

1999 reform, S5 and IGCSE introduced at school level
Closed CDS...'fatal mistake' wanted to streamline curriculum planning and transfer staff from ministry to schools (moved loads from poly to schools too)
Smaller curriculum section at NIE but too small, focused more on teacher training rather than curriculum development

400+ entered for geo IGCSE each year on average
In 2005/6 had IGCSE trainers from Cambridge to run training in Seychelles
Need to organise another training session soon

IGCSE costs rising dramatically next year from £21 per entry to £42 per entry. On average have around 3,500 subject entries per year

New plan to localise curriculum/assessment and reinstate the CDS within the ministry
Plan to localise the assessment, with guidance from Cambridge, in order to reduce costs and have more ownership. Previous cooperation/training with Mauritius Cambridge O level syndicate, they came to Seychelles.

EMIS (ED management information section) collates data
Graham Sims had all past data on his own database, once he left no continuity...data not available from NYS, poly days (others in charge of data but left without handing over!)

Data from 1999 onwards is available.

SACMEQ international testing of math in P6 (2000 and again in 2007)

Distinct feeling that in 2007 students felt strain of economic tensions etc. Just before economic reforms of 2008. High level of absenteeism in P6 in 2007

2008 economic reforms required 20% cut in government departments. Research unit cut from the planning department.

2008 reforms affected overall performance across the board (P2, P6, S3, IGCSE and A level results). Seems to be a dip in performance in 2010, 2 years after the major reforms/economic restructuring. The effect on student performance has not been investigated, no time, but feel that the social, political and economic stress/trauma during the 2007-2008 period had a distinct effect on education.

Extract from notes of meetings with University of Seychelles officials, 17th February 2014

Official said students and parents won't value education while they still receive it for free...also blamed the welfare system...education not valued because people rely on welfare...no drive or motivation to improve themselves

But why? Why chronic levels of poor teaching? Why lack of teachers and poor behaviour?

Is student behaviour a scapegoat? Blame students rather than face the real issues...chronic underfunding...massive gap in society...expansion of private sector...more people using private health care and schools...major divisions in society....

Senior official at UniSey: The Ministry of Education is monolithic and they are 'afraid of evidence', too much favouritism

My reflections from UniSey meetings:

ministry central CONTROL...through bonding after training

Bond system worked when government main employer BUT since restructuring system broken down...more privatisation, more private sector opportunities

Now BONDED to Seychelles, not restricted to government so graduates are freer to join private sector. The undermines state...lack qualified people...

Is this what IMF etc. want? Reduce size of state, make people PAY for health and education?

State system becomes SECOND rate, hollowed out, poor quality for those who can't afford to pay

Journal Entry 20th February 2014

My thoughts:

BIG THEMES

-TRAINING

-SACRIFICE

Teacher trainees – sent for 2 years to study overseas – have to leave family, young children and even babies, in order to train at Sussex, Botswana etc.

Those remaining have to work extra classes - to cover for missing teachers, some at the ministry teach part-time in schools, lots of teachers taking on other people's classes.

Ministry tries to control using the bonding system but once bond is served many teachers leave education.

NO system of supply...if used part-timers/supply would probably not have any FULL-TIMERS!

Extract from notes of meetings with Curriculum officials, 28th April 2014

Botswana confirmed...trainees will go in September...ANHRD organising the BEd training in Botswana

Some may not cope, as the course is quite rigorous. Will UniSey have to pick up the pieces, if teachers return without passing the course?

Discussed idea of partnering with Botswana...UniSey could do foundation year....then students go to Botswana for one year?

A BIG SHAME UniSey not more involved! Weakness of UniSey BEd that Ministry prefers to send teacher trainees to Botswana?

Extract from notes of meetings with SITE official, 17th May 2011

At aged 15 started teaching at Good Shepard Catholic School, Hermitage

Did pre-service course at TTC and graduated in 1976

1978 Head teacher at 19 years old (small, one stream primary school)

Promoted to Studies coordinator/deputy Head at Secondary School

In 1977 Guinea teachers, French speakers, they introduced history and geo in French in school. They had independence before Seychelles, then came 'to help' Seychelles. They bought in all the books. When Guinea teachers left Social Studies switched to English. Apart from Guinean teachers, Algerian and then later Mauritian teachers came 'to help'.

1980 Teachers Diploma for all teachers introduced

Selected to do diploma in history & geo because good at French

1980-1985 5 years to complete diploma (part time course at ministry)

Tutors on the diploma were Agnes Chong-Seng, Sarah Rene and Pat Nanty. They also worked in curriculum development for social studies. They wrote much of the history and geography curriculum material for schools.

(Were the 1980s a Golden Era? Especially for curriculum development?)

1990-1992 Went to Sussex for the 2 year BEd

Then 1993 moved to School of Education, part of Polytechnic, then later to NIE

Other comments...

History curriculum: slavery part of story but so political. Sensitive to teach about slavery in schools. Odile Jean Louis researching slavery for PhD. Was social studies coordinator at ministry for a while. She has found it hard to develop a slavery curriculum, resistance from other teachers.

Journal Entry 30th September 2013

Are some teachers 'solda rene'?

Are their stories biased toward government? Government apologists?

Is it necessary to balance stories?

The linking of life stories to history of education/geography education...older women...educated during colonial times...lived through independence/coup d'etat, now in new phase of globalisation

Colonial times:

Went to church schools, locally trained, schools elitist, reliant on church. Women go into teaching. Geography part of the British/Anglican curriculum (not so important in Catholic schools) History/geography curriculum relationship...unequal. Why become a geography teacher...for many it was not their first choice.

Struggle for independence, Independence, Coup d'état:

New schools, expansion of system...NYS introduced

No time to consolidate subject matter...focus on new structures, building schools

'Golden age in terms of investment and energy...focus on 'Education For All' major theme of new SPPF government

NIP produced loads of geography/history resources

Teachers promoted quickly to leader positions, fast-tracked promotion to management positions in newly expanded primary schools in each district/region

More patriotic, national geography of Seychelles developed

Late 1980-early 1990s:

Upgrading of skills/qualifications...in order to further expand schools...S4 and then S5

(NYS phased out): University of Sussex partnership

Women left families for two years to earn BEd.

1990s restructuring

NYS gone, schools expand...

Need for management skills

Focus on Management...leadership...NIE founded...train more Seychellois teachers

Focus on Careers/employment...moved into teacher training and careers as these were national priorities

2000s Masters programme localised

Management focus...to promote SIP etc.

Curriculum 'lost'? Geography neglected, new resources not produced.

Priorities on improving performance in IGCSE (after switching from O levels)

Schools/teachers more accountable in terms of published exam results...used to measure success in education.

Focus on improving exam performance in international exams

Vocational education ignored...geography steady/growing numbers due to very few students choosing history.

Recently

Re-establish CDS within Ministry to develop curriculum

NIE part of new local University...teacher training part of university

BSc in Geography and Environment at UniSey

Appendix 8 Coding using NVivo

Code Name	Transcript Sources	Number of References	Created On	Modified On
Assessment	1	17	2 Jun 2015	15 Jun 2015
A level	1	3	2 Jun 2015	2 Jun 2015
Exams	6	26	5 Apr 2015	3 Jun 2015
Standards	1	1	3 Jun 2015	3 Jun 2015
Human Geo	2	6	3 May 2015	3 Jun 2015
Geo Curriculum	4	7	5 Apr 2015	3 Jun 2015
Physical geo Seychelles	2	2	2 Jun 2015	3 Jun 2015
Physical geo	1	2	14 Oct 2014	2 Jun 2015
Primary geo curriculum	2	3	2 Jun 2015	2 Jun 2015
Education system	3	18	2 Jun 2015	3 Jun 2015
Geo Skills: fieldwork	5	13	14 Oct 2014	3 Jun 2015
Geo Subject Knowledge	3	7	2 Jun 2015	15 Jun 2015
Local geo knowledge	2	10	3 May 2015	3 Jun 2015
Identity	5	14	5 Apr 2015	15 Jun 2015
Language Kreol	3	5	3 May 2015	3 Jun 2015
Culture	3	7	2 Jun 2015	3 Jun 2015
Ministry	4	33	2 Jun 2015	3 Jun 2015
Teacher recruitment	2	7	2 Jun 2015	2 Jun 2015
Teacher shortages	4	13	15 Oct 2014	2 Jun 2015
Student motivation	4	13	2 Jun 2015	3 Jun 2015
Student subject preferences	3	4	2 Jun 2015	2 Jun 2015
Student study skills	1	1	3 Jun 2015	3 Jun 2015
Subject choice	5	6	5 Apr 2015	2 Jun 2015

TVET	2	2	2 Jun 2015	2 Jun 2015
Teaching profession	5	14	5 Apr 2015	2 Jun 2015
Teachers skills	3	5	3 May 2015	3 Jun 2015
Teachers subject knowledge	2	7	2 Jun 2015	2 Jun 2015
Teacher training	6	29	5 Apr 2015	3 Jun 2015
Teacher Collaboration	4	10	5 Apr 2015	15 Jun 2015
Teacher networks	2	2	3 May 2015	2 Jun 2015
Discipline	2	6	3 May 2015	2 Jun 2015
Expatriate teachers	1	6	2 Jun 2015	2 Jun 2015
Knowledge exchange	2	3	3 May 2015	2 Jun 2015
Parochialism	1	5	2 Jun 2015	2 Jun 2015
Pedagogy	3	7	3 May 2015	15 Jun 2015
Geo teaching skills	5	19	5 Apr 2015	2 Jun 2015
Learning skills	5	7	5 Apr 2015	3 Jun 2015
Political context	5	13	5 Apr 2015	3 Jun 2015
Teaching resources	4	15	5 Apr 2015	15 Jun 2015
Textbooks	2	3	14 Oct 2014	2 Jun 2015

Appendix 9 Referenced Narratives (2 samples)

Simon

I've been teaching geography for more than 15 years, first in secondary schools, where I was mainly teaching the IGCSE classes, and now at post-secondary, teaching A' level. I love teaching geography because it has always fascinated me. Geography is down to earth and all around us and we can see it easily **(L1 LN109-111)**. For example, when I talk about degradation, my students can see it and when I do volcanoes, even if we don't have any in Seychelles, I can show my students footage of a volcano erupting **(L1 LN114-115)**. With geography there is so much to know about the world so I use many case studies not just the ones from the textbook. That's what I did with my S5 students and they used to say 'Sir, will they *(Cambridge)* know about this?' and I would reply 'it's not whether Cambridge will know about it, but whether you know what you are writing, if you are writing sense, if you are writing things that are true'. That's how I used to explain it to them and it proved to be a good method ...it always got me good IGCSE results. When I had a top set for IGCSE they would score some of the best results in the country **(L1 LN213-214, 245-249)**.

Some of the teachers were amazed. They used to say 'you're the only teacher who does not do extra classes, yet your results are always good!' You see, that's the perception, teachers need to do extra classes but no, you need to be a good teacher to succeed and you need experience teaching the IGCSE syllabus. I used to give students homework and routine revision starting early in S5. I would set questions for students to do at home and then mark their work and show them how to answer the questions. You have to know what Cambridge is looking for. Some IGCSE teachers don't know what Cambridge want. Some of them don't even know what paper 4 is about! **(L1 LN225-236)** Paper 4 is tough because you need to read a lot, the hypothesis, the questions, the instructions, etc. Students will just glance through it and not really read the instructions so they lose marks. They miss instructions to label diagrams and plot information on graphs, because they don't read them. It's because our students are poor in English, they prefer easy questions, like fill in the blanks, multiple choice and matching type questions. They are so used to these types of questions so adapting to IGCSE is a big challenge. I think teachers should try to incorporate IGCSE style questions in the S3 exam so students can get used to them **(FG1 LN173-185)**.

Simon wanted to talk about subject knowledge...

To be honest, I'm amazed at the things new teachers don't know that they should know. The ministry needs to improve teachers' content knowledge because to teach a subject you need to be competent in that subject. This is what teaching is about **(L1 LN292-300)**. Training needs to be developed, but the problem is that certain people at the Ministry are not that confident in geography, especially the paper 4. Paper 4 is completely different from paper 1 and 2. In paper 4 students need to write about how they would carry out an investigation, how they would go outside to do fieldwork, the techniques and so on **(L1 LN272-280)**. It is sad that nobody at the Ministry is taking proper care of the subject. We need people who are geography specialists **(L1 LN360-363)**. Even when I first started teaching the IGCSE I didn't get much training. There

was one gentleman who came over from Cambridge a long time ago, when Seychelles first switched from doing the O levels. We had two days training with him, specifically to help us with the IGCSE style marking (**L1 LN251-255**). The Ministry used to hold workshops back then, but they stopped these years ago. Even when there was the NIE (*National Institute for Education*) there was nothing substantial, that I recall, in terms of training. That's why young geography teachers struggle with the subject (**L1 LN261-266**).

We changed from the Cambridge O level syllabus because it was too restrictive, so fewer students could attempt O level geography. It was not really designed to reach the maximum number of students. The IGCSE programme, at least for geography, is better designed (**L1 LN396-399**). It tries to balance quantity and quality of students. But even though the IGCSEs are easier, I think the level of education is slowly going down. Students are not performing at IGCSE (**EFG2 LN255-256**). The scope is there for more students to do IGCSE geography, but the problem is the teaching...that's why lots of students do not make it through to the IGCSE exam. It's not because of the level of IGCSE, which I personally think is too low; the pass mark goes right down to 20% for the 3 papers, that's not even 7% for each paper! The problem is also not with the IGCSE geography syllabus. When students don't make it, it is because the geography teaching is not good (**L1 LN399-404**). And now, with the new national exam, I am worried that the quality of teaching will go down further and even more students will not be able to do the IGCSE (**L1 LN409-413**).

Simon's story then moved onto geography assessment...

Nowadays, in a school with around 120 geography students in S5 about 40 will do the IGCSE exam (**EFG2 LN239-240**). For example, when I was teaching IGSCSE between 5-10 students from the S42 class were selected to sit the Cambridge exam with the S41 class, making about 35-40 students in total. We had to look at their overall performance in S4, including their S4 end of year exam and their S4 assessments, and if students scored above 40% they were selected for IGCSE (**FG1 LN112-116**). Selection is an issue though, because students think it is the teachers who make the choice but it's the Ministry's decision to use continuous assessments as well as the end of S4 exam. The ministry are even asking teachers to include assessments done in the first term of S5 before making the selection. The 40% cut off mark has been quite controversial because some schools use 30% or even lower but the ministry has now told schools to stop selecting students that score lower than 30% because now they've introduced the new national exam. Most of the students who score around 20% in their continuous assessments will tend to fail the IGCSE. The continuous assessments are also a problem because students don't really see the assessments as important as exams. They tend to study more for exams than the assessments, without realising that the assessments are important for IGCSE (**EFG2 LN220-233**). Anyway, at least now the students who don't get selected for the Cambridge IGCSE have the chance to do the new national exam (**FG1 LN132-133**).

The national exam for geography is based on the IGCSE syllabus but the exam structure is different. From what I've heard the S5 geography teachers only received confirmation of the new exam half way through last year and they weren't really told about the structure of the exam; they only saw the

paper after the students had finished it (**FG1 LN120-125**). S5 teachers have told me they were not really prepared for the paper; they just thought it would be an easier version of the IGCSE (**EFG2 LN39-42**). In my opinion last year's geography paper was quite easy, with mainly low-order questions like; name, list, state, and lots of diagrams for the students to identify (**FG1 LN125-127**). I don't think it was up to standard, a bit like the national exam for French, which was so diluted there was almost nothing in it (**L1 LN370-376**). The geography map work question was bad because students barely understood what was on the map. Even though it was in colour the map was too small that students couldn't read the names of mountains and rivers they had to find (**C2 LN131-137**).

I think the Ministry should keep doing the IGCSE (**EFG2 LN243-244**). Switching completely to a national exam is not a good idea (**C2 LN78-80**). The IGCSE challenges the high ability students to perform better. If the Ministry stop offering the IGCSE than the national exam needs to be a high quality exam (**EFG2 LN244-252**) and not just introduced for the sake of it (**L1 LN377**). To be honest, the Ministry don't really have the proper resources to do a national exam; they don't even have a proper exam centre. Also they have not really set the standards (**C2 LN80-83**) and you need certain standards for a national exam (**B2 LN55**). The main problem for our geography exams is having the right maps, inserts, photos and pictures. When they are photocopied in black and white the students complain. I remember I often had to draw diagrams on the board during the S3 geography exam because the diagrams on the exam paper were so bad (**CD1 LN268-292**). To be honest I don't think the Ministry will be able to provide new maps. They only have enough copies of three or four maps that they use each year for the S3 exams. They use the same maps so the students have seen them all before. If the Ministry can't get new maps then they really can't set a proper mapwork paper for the S5 exam (**B2 LN61-69**).

Anyway, at least with the new S5 national exam the Ministry can say all students have sat an **exam (L1 LN373-374)** and have the chance to get a national exam certificate (**FG1 LN132-133**). I've heard teachers are now restricting the number of students they enter for Cambridge, to try to improve the percentage of passes at IGCSE. With less students doing the IGCSE, the results won't look so bad, so it gives a better impression. Also I know the Cambridge IGCSE is expensive; it costs 1,250 rupees per subject per student, so there is the financial aspect as well. The Ministry is planning to evaluate teachers on their students' results, so maybe that is another reason why only the best students are being selected to do IGCSE (**L1 LN412-418**).

Simon then shared his views on student performance...

To be honest, I don't think the Ministry should assess teachers on their students' results when they can't provide schools with the right teachers to teach the subjects. If students don't have a good geography teacher in S1, S2, and S3 it's unfair to evaluate the teacher's S5 geography results (**L1 LN409-412**). For example, when I think of my last IGSCCE class, I remember them telling me 'Sir, we've had four geography teachers in four years...one teacher comes and says one thing, another teacher comes and says another thing'. So I said, 'Ok, I'm your fifth teacher, what do you have left to do in S5? What did you cover in S4...you are supposed to have done this, this and this'. When I

got to paper 4 they said 'Sir, what is paper 4?' So I explained that they would sit three papers, paper 1, 2 and paper 4, the alternative to coursework. And they replied; 'Sir, nobody has told us about paper 4' and I said 'but paper 4 is about fieldwork' and then they asked 'Sir, what is fieldwork?' I couldn't believe what I was hearing. So, you see, that is one of the problems, students reach S5 without knowing even the basics for the IGCSE **(L1 LN336-349)**.

If the Ministry want to move completely to local exams they need to be very careful about it. The local (*S5 national*) exams need to be at a level that is recognised, like the Cambridge IGCSE **(L1 LN416-417)**. To be honest I think the IGCSE is better for students and even the students know it themselves **(C2 LN91-93)**. They don't take the national exam seriously. Many of them don't show up to class once they've been selected for national exams. For example, my nephew was in S5 and he did 4 IGCSEs, English, Maths, Science and French. He was selected for the geography national exam (*not IGCSE*) so he decided not to do it because he didn't need it to get into the SIT electrical engineering course **(H1 LN97-106)**.

A lot of students don't see the importance of geography until they reach S5. It is only in S5 that they realise they need geography to get into certain post-secondary courses. A lot of them want to go to MTC (Maritime Training Centre) **(CD1 LN153-154)** or the STA (*Seychelles Tourism Academy*) and they need IGCSE geography to get in so it is only then that you see them striving **(H1 LN113-115)**. Most of the students will only do the minimum to get a place at post-secondary. They know of students who were suspended or played truant, who were then accepted on a post-secondary course so they say if those students can get in then we only need to do the minimum. You see it's because of the quota system. The Ministry is more interested in filling the quotas for post-secondary school than the quality of results **(EFG2 LN91-107)**.

Simon also shared his experience of a previous national exam, as an alternative to Cambridge...

If we have to continue with the S5 national exam, I think the whole of S5 should take the exam in July. This would serve a double purpose; everybody sits the exam and everybody gets a S5 certificate. We did this before, with a two-tiered national exam so those who were academically brighter students did the extended paper and those that were not so good sat the core paper. But this new national exam, in my opinion, has not really been thought through at all. The idea just came up and teachers were told to do it **(L1 LN378-393)**. The ministry should have piloted it first to find out the pros and cons **(C2 LN170-173)**. What is the target group? Is it something that is really useful? To be honest, I think they need to relook at the whole system. One major flaw of the system that affects geography and all the other subjects, is the inability to accept that children are different...they have different abilities. During all my years of teaching the ministry have always struggled with what to do with students who don't get selected for IGCSE. We have to accept that some students will never be academically strong enough to do the IGCSE, but, if you help them early enough, they can be very good at something. This is what the TVET programme should be for, but the Ministry have got it wrong. When you look at the students who are actually in TVET they are students with behavioural problems. But it is the students who are not academically strong but can behave that should be in TVET **(L1 LN431-443)**.

Then Simon shared his experience of teaching A' level geography...

Anyway, now I'm teaching A' level geography, so I've got other things to think about. The students' A' level performance has been going down, not only in geography but also in other subjects. The number of failures is increasing because students are just not interested. You give them the textbooks, tell them to read and some of them will leave the books in the cupboard or there on the bookshelf and only after two years, just before the final exam, they will come for the books **(K1 LN127-132)**. Our students sit the three geography papers (paper 1, the core and paper 2 and 3, the options) at the end of two years, so it's like the old A' level, not the new AS and A2 exams. We've asked management why the students don't sit the AS after the first year and they said that it costs more for students to sit the exams separately so it's not in their favour. Personally, I think the students would do better if they sat the AS first and then the A2 in the second year **(K1 LN111-121)**.

I think the main reason for the poor performance it is to do with the students we select for A' level. The entry criteria should be a minimum of 4 Cs at IGCSE but after we select students that qualify with this criteria the Ministry tell us we need to lower the criteria to 2 Cs and 2 Ds. You see the ministry are under pressure from parents. The ministry knows parents will appeal the decisions and often students are accepted after the appeal, so some post-secondary schools will even go as low as E and F grades. For A levels I think we shouldn't go lower than three Cs and a D at IGCSE. If we accept students with 2 Cs and 2 Ds they will only be able to do the subjects where they scored a C at IGCSE so what A level subject can they chose with their 2 Ds? **(K1 LN152-161)**

Since the criteria was lowered we've had a big rise in the number of students doing A' level geography. A few years ago there would be about 40 students and they would all have at least a C at IGCSE but now we have about 60 students and only about 30 of them have a C grade or above. The rest only chose geography because they did not meet the criteria for any other A' level subject. Many students want to do physics or maths but they are not accepted so they decide to do a social science, geography or history or sociology. We end up with the students who are not accepted in science and maths. Some teachers are now struggling to finish the syllabus because in a class of 15 students you'll have 10 students who got a C grade or above and 5 who did not **(K1 LN164-174, 196-201)**.

Simon talked about some of the difficulties of covering the A' level geography syllabus...

To cover the A level syllabus in two years is difficult for most of our students. If they had three years they would do much better because there would be enough time for revision. I try to give assessments every two weeks and at the end of the topic but sometimes I run out of time. In topics like hydrology, if I have the time, I do some fieldwork, but time management is the problem because the syllabus is so broad and we really have to rush. We don't really have the time to take students on fieldtrips although I try to do a coastal investigation into management strategies where the students visit a coastal site and interview people about the strategies implemented. The students find this activity very interesting **(K1 LN89-101, 240-244, 348-351)**.

You see, in Seychelles there is the policy of coastal zoning, where construction is prohibited in the area just above the high water mark. The students like to argue about this in class because even though the policy is there it's not respected. Many hotel establishments and restaurants, at Beau Vallon for example, are built on the beach, and the students argue that this is one of the reasons for coastal erosion. I then use the scenario of an ecotourism project at Soleil Beach, and get them to discuss whether the STB (*Seychelles Tourism Board*) would have to displace people. The students debate whether this type of development would be ecotourism if people have to be displaced (**K1 LN523-532**).

Simon also explained how he tries to avoid local politics in geography lessons...

As much as possible, where Seychelles politics is concerned, I avoid going into detail. Students know themselves that talking politics is not allowed, so they restrict their conversations. Even in the staffroom, lecturers are not really supposed to talk about local politics. I haven't seen any written policy saying this but, because of an incident a while back, the lecturers know. In geography class we just talk about things generally, and when we do a case study we just say that there are conflicts of interest between the different stakeholders. Students get the chance to discuss local politics in 'citizenship' classes but in geography we only talk about politics for decision-making activities. We once discussed how local people are denied access to certain beaches and some students talked about their experience of being denied access to some of the tourist beaches (**K1 LN511-551**).

For topics like energy or trade we talk about Seychelles' imports and exports. The students like debating this. They explain that Seychelles imports everything, and only exports tuna, so we discuss the problems of trying to balance trade. Students are familiar with the core geography topics, except for weather and atmosphere, which they only do briefly at IGCSE. When we do global interdependence in year 2, they ask what it is but when I explain it is trade and tourism they feel more confident. To them the tourism topic is easy, even though it is not the case at all. With the tropical environments topic most students have only briefly looked at the rainforest and savanna at IGCSE and have not done anything on soils or granite and limestone landforms (**K1 LN415-423, 531-533**).

Simon ended his story by sharing his experience of A' level assessment...

If we have a query about the A' level teachers can get help or advice through the Cambridge website, but we mainly use the website to get copies of past papers and marking schemes. We've not had any direct contact with Cambridge although recently some people from Cambridge came to train the A' level English and science teachers. We asked about training for geography but we were told that due to financial constraints it was not possible at the moment. My colleagues tell me they've not had any training in geography A' level for the 11 years they've been teaching! The main problem we have with the A' level exam is the threshold. When the exam paper is easy the threshold goes up and when the paper is difficult the threshold goes down, but we would like Cambridge to train us on this. We don't really know how the marking is done and we've never queried any of the geography marks, but other

departments have tried and they were told about the threshold. All we really use are the brief geography marking schemes, and from just three or four lines in the marking scheme we have to devise the whole answer **(K1 LN56-76)**.

Odette

Odette teaches both history and geography at Lekol Vetiver. She has been teaching for 5 years and is now determined to do a BEd course in geography education.

After O' levels I went straight to the NIE to do the diploma in teaching. After that I went to teach at Lekol Bordmer and then two years later I moved here to Lekol Vetiver, so I'm now in my 5th year as a teacher. When I was a student 'plate tectonics' was my favourite topic and as a teacher it's still my favourite. I love physical geography but human geography not so much. With physical geography I can show students a video and they can connect to it, it's real. I find human geography a bit boring. For example, we have to teach population over and over again and the students don't always understand. It is like we are trying to get them to see something that they can't really see. With physical geography, they can see a river, they know what a river looks like, but with human geography it's too abstract. It requires a lot of thinking and the students don't like to think. They want you to think for them! **(CD1 LN52-58, 66-67, 109-114)**

I was told I had to teach IGCSE when I first came to Lekol Vetiver. It was very tough at first and in these three years of teaching IGCSE I haven't had any training from the ministry or from Cambridge. I've managed to cope with help from my colleagues and the HoD so now it is a bit easier but I still find teaching paper 4 very difficult. **(CD1 LN104-107)** I follow the book and try to get the students to understand but it's hard. If you look at the IGCSE results, the students do OK on paper 1 and 2 but paper 4 is just BAD (*Odette's emphasis*). The paper 4 is hard and we don't have the resources **(CD1 LN95-95)**. I even bought my own books to photocopy for the students but the school only allows me to photocopy so much. I want the kids to have the information. This is the book I use... (*Odette points to an old edition of the Wider World*) ...I try to encourage parents to buy the newer version but it is expensive so we can't really expect parents to afford it **(CD1 LN283-285)**

We use the same textbook to teach the IGCSE and national exam classes, because the national exam covers the same IGCSE topics just at a more simple level. I try to make my own worksheets and visual aids and use past IGCSE maps, the OS maps or the S3 coordinated exam maps. I remember before, when we did the coordinated exam and even the IGCSE exam, the ministry used to send us extra papers so we could keep some to use but now the ministry send the exact number so it is difficult. Most of the new maps are kept at the ministry. When I filled in a request form to get more maps last year the ministry took forever to send them. I also remember the situation we had with the books last year. We needed more 'New Wider World' books, because we only had 15 copies for a class of 30, so I filled in the book request form and I gave it to the HoD to send to the ministry. We kept calling the ministry and we even tried to collect the books ourselves but when we got to the ministry the

person in charge of the bookstore wasn't there and the key had been misplaced (**FG1 LN135-151**).

Odette continued to share her experiences of teaching geography ...

This year we've got 120 students doing geography in S5 but only about 40 of them will do the IGCSE exam. Even though most students now do the national exam I still think the Ministry should keep doing the IGCSE. It challenges the high ability students. It challenges them to perform better. If the Ministry decided to stop offering IGCSE then the national exam must really be a high quality exam (**EFG2 LN239-252**). Whichever exam we do we still need more general resources, especially for fieldwork. We've got some basic instruments and I try my best to go on the internet to learn how to use them before I show the students. We don't really need to do the full investigations but knowing how to use the instruments is important (**EFG2 LN156-160**). I use my own laptop to research but the main problem is internet access here at school. Sometimes we get access, especially during the time when the students are doing their Cambridge ICT exams, but once the exams are over we don't get internet everyday. I don't have access at home so I can only get onto the internet at school. Some schools do get internet everyday, which makes it easier to teach because you could download resources and get new information (**FG1 LN90-102**). We don't really share our resources with other schools, but it would be good to share. I wouldn't mind meeting with other geography teachers...we could try to work on the handbooks because the ones we've been using for S1 topics are old, older than me (**CD1 LN 297-301**).

The S1 students seem to like history and geography because the subjects are new to them. In S2 you see them begin to loose interest, but it does depend on the topic. They prefer physical geography, like volcanoes, earthquakes. The S4 students like tourism, probably because Seychelles is a tourist destination and they can use Seychelles as a case study. We encourage the S4 and S5 students to do their own research because for the IGCSE there are lots of case studies. My S51 class actually do the research for homework and sometimes for their assessments they will use case studies that I've never heard of, so I have to check them so I can mark their work correctly (**EFG2 LN129-139, 346-349**).

I also teach some of the lower ability groups in S4 and S5 and I find it very difficult because they are not interested at all. When we organised coastal fieldwork last half term most of them put their name down for it but on the day itself only 8 students turned up. If it had been a normal school day all of them would have been there, just to get out of school. They are not a pleasure to teach because most of them only picked geography because they don't like history. Most of them can't read or write English properly but sometimes they participate in Kreol, it all depends on the topic (**FG1 LN165-172, 179, 245-247**). They don't watch any news and they don't really know what is going on. It is only when we do the population topic and I talk about sex and so on, that they show any interest! They're not really interested in films although they do like TV series like Vampire Diaries. I have used cartoon films like Ice Age and Dinosaurs in class but when I show them the students are so interested in the movie itself they don't really see how the concepts relate to what we are

learning in class. Sometimes I try to get them to have a discussion but I usually end up discussing with myself **(CD1 LN125-142)**

When I do volcanoes in S2 some students do show an interest and when we discuss the tsunami that affected Seychelles most of them are interested. Also when I teach the 'development' topic the students want to know if Seychelles is a developed or a developing country. If I say it is a developing country they will disagree. They want Seychelles to be a developed country. I try to explain that we haven't reached the developed stage yet. You see there is a concept in Seychellois kids' minds that Africa is a developing continent but that Seychelles is not part of Africa. When you tell them Seychelles is part of the African continent they are like 'No, no, no'. I think it is just their pride; they don't want to accept that we are similar to a lot of African countries. They don't feel African. They say they are Seychellois and 'in Africa you've got Zulus and other tribes, but in Seychelles we don't have tribes'. They say that 'in Africa people are poor, and they live on the streets and in Seychelles we don't have that, so Seychelles is not like African countries'. It may be true that we don't have a lot of poverty but at the end of the day we are part of the African continent. To be honest, students do know there is poverty in Seychelles but they don't want to accept it. Another thing is the students tend to think it is funny when we talk about shantytowns. When I show them pictures of shantytowns they laugh. I try to get them to see that it's not funny, that there are kids the same age as them that are suffering, but they just don't see it. I don't know what is wrong with the kids these days **(CD1 LN144-185)**.

Odette then talked about how she became a geography teacher...

It wasn't my plan to teach and I didn't think I would like it but when I was at the NIE I ended up enjoying it **(CD1 LN316)**. At the time the package for new teachers was very attractive and as trainees the SR3,925 salary seemed like a lot of money. We were promised that after completing the diploma we would soon get the chance to go abroad to do our BEd, so I was happy to start teaching **(FG1 LN51-56)**. The problem is, during my years of teaching, teachers haven't been given the resources to work with and we don't get enough support. It just frustrates me to the point where I say 'that's it, I'm done, I'm giving up' **(CD1 LN318)**. At NIE they showed us how to use a laptop and different resources, but what we learnt at NIE was completely different to what is actually done in schools. At NIE they encouraged us to use the LCD and the OHP but when we got to schools there wasn't these things...in most classes there is no electricity so we can't even use the LCD projector. I would like to use the projector because I learnt to teach that way. Lekol Vetiver only has one projector and a lot of other teachers want to use it so I don't always get access. If I want to use it I have to move students to a room with electricity but then I waste time moving them and setting up everything. Most of the time I just give up and use the textbook. It would be better to have a special teaching room for geography where we could have our own projector **(CD1 LN72-85)**.

Odette then turned to her frustrations...

I've been threatening to quit teaching ever since last year. I haven't made up my mind yet but I am just fed up because I don't have the resources I need. A lot of the people I trained with have already quit. From my geography group at NIE there are only 3 of us left from a class of 16. Most of them have quit because they didn't get the chance to do their degree. A lot more teachers will quit if they don't get any further training **(CD1 LN304-349)**. The ministry don't

seem to realize that while they delay our training many of us are leaving. We're just fed up of waiting. They're going to lose even more geography teachers because none of us are happy. Honestly, though, I don't think the Ministry are bothered **(C2 LN154-168)**. I feel I am going to be stuck with my diploma because the ministry don't want to release us for training **(CD1 LN325-331)**.

There is a big shortage of teachers and there aren't any kids out there who want to become teachers **(CD1 LN331-333)**. When the government was sending BEd students to Australia a lot of students wanted to train to be teachers but then everything changed and the Ministry decided to stop sending people to Australia. It was so discouraging for us, but they will have to release us at some point. We missed out on the scholarship and now they say we have to wait **(FG1 LN56-58)**. It's been four years now. They promised us that they would do something and there are at least four groups of teachers who left NIE with a diploma and are still waiting to do their BEd **(CD1 LN215-222)**. There are rumours that we will do the BEd at the University of Seychelles. I don't mind doing my degree in Seychelles, as long as I get the chance to do it. It doesn't matter about the country, as long as I get to do a degree. You see, there is something the ministry must understand, a student that I taught at Lekol Bordmer is now doing his BEd at UniSey! One of my students from four years ago is doing his BEd and I'm still stuck with my diploma. That's not fair **(FG1 LN56-80)**. However much I love teaching, I cannot stay in a profession where I'm not getting any professional development **(EFG2 LN351-532)**. You know, I even thought about applying for the BSc in Environmental Science at UniSey but I figured the ministry would not release me so in the end I didn't apply **(CD1 LN369-372)**.

To be honest the government should have kept NIE and they should have looked for somewhere else to send students to do their BEd if they didn't want to send them to Australia. To close NIE was the biggest mistake the government made. UniSey is not producing many teachers but NIE produced at least a group of five geography teachers each year. And now, with SITE, there is more confusion. Some teachers I know have applied to do their BEd at SITE, but when they called SITE they were told the BEd course is not ready. But there are students doing the BEd at SITE so SITE is not being honest. When teachers see this confusion they stay away from SITE **(EFG2 LN476-489)**.

The other day I was talking to a person who works at the ministry and I asked her 'what's happening with the BEd?' She told me the ministry are looking for places to send teachers where they feel teachers will want to come back to Seychelles after finishing. She told me definitely not Australia because most of the teachers sent to Edith Cowan did not come back. The ministry needs to find ways for those teachers to pay back the government. If they have chosen to stay in Australia they must pay the scholarship money back. I know some of them are paying but for those who are not maybe the Australian government should not renew their visa. Maybe that should be one of the criteria for getting the visa to stay in Australia **(EFG2 LN551-557)**.

Anyway, we are still waiting. There are six of us waiting to do our BEd. There are more rumours that they might send us to Botswana. The Ministry will select who they want to send but, I'm telling you, they'd better be fair. Those who

graduated with their diploma first should be picked. I know the ministry have said the local UniSey BEd is more expensive, but it would be so unfair if they sent the local UniSey students before us. Those students haven't got any experience but the Ministry will probably pick those who are already on the local BEd course. They will go to Botswana and we'll still be stuck teaching in school. The UniSey BEd is not validated and the students on the course know it and are upset. I know I would be upset if I was wasting my time doing something that is not validated. But, you know, if the Ministry send them to Botswana and not me then, for sure, I will resign. I'll give them one month's notice and then I'm leaving. I've been waiting for five years so why should I bother if the ministry are not going to do anything for me. They will still have to replace me, even if I don't get the scholarship, because I will resign. My bond expired last year, so I've already completed the 5-year bond, so I don't owe them anything. They will have to choose me or loose me **(EFG2 LN490-509)**.

Appendix 10 Coding 'Public' narrative data using NVivo

Code	Sources	References	Created	Modified
A level and HE	4	5	7/8/15 11:06	7/8/15 17:23
Academic curriculum	13	14	21/1/14 11:20	6/8/15 21:06
Assessment issues	30	60	21/1/14 12:06	7/8/15 17:27
Low attainment	15	20	21/1/14 12:04	7/8/15 11:03
Attitude to physical environment	4	4	6/6/15 11:35	26/6/15 18:10
Colonialism	3	4	24/6/15 15:27	7/8/15 17:30
Commitment and Passion	12	16	21/1/14 09:03	6/8/15 20:39
Curriculum issues	20	34	21/1/14 12:05	7/8/15 17:14
Differentiation	3	4	22/1/14 13:02	6/8/15 21:06
Discipline	9	10	24/6/15 18:57	7/8/15 11:17
Engagement with Public	18	22	7/6/15 12:27	7/8/15 15:41
Expatriates	8	15	21/1/14 08:56	5/7/15 09:05
Experience	1	1	5/8/14 21:50	5/8/14 21:51
Fieldwork	7	8	21/1/14 15:08	7/8/15 17:16
Paper 4	5	13	21/1/14 08:59	7/8/15 17:16
Finance Budgets	3	3	7/8/15 15:30	7/8/15 16:04
Geo career	1	1	7/6/15 12:28	7/8/15 10:59
Geography Curriculum	13	20	22/1/14 09:24	7/8/15 11:09
IGCSE archaic	1	1	6/6/15 11:09	6/6/15 11:09
IGCSE case studies	1	1	6/6/15 11:13	6/6/15 11:13
IGCSE content	3	4	6/6/15 11:03	26/6/15 14:58
IGCSE skills	5	10	6/6/15 11:09	7/6/15 11:59
Kreol Identity	11	25	22/1/14 10:47	7/8/15 16:13
Kreol language	5	15	21/1/14 11:23	25/6/15 14:35
Local Teachers	7	9	21/1/14 08:51	7/8/15 10:34
Neo-colonialism	2	3	21/1/14 14:27	7/8/15 15:53
NYS	3	6	7/8/15 10:38	7/8/15 16:12
Political context	24	47	24/6/15 15:32	7/8/15 16:14
Primary curriculum	3	3	21/1/14 11:23	5/7/15 07:39
Private Ed	11	16	24/6/15 15:36	7/8/15 15:53
Public space beaches	2	2	7/6/15 15:28	26/6/15 15:29
QA Standards etc.	15	22	24/6/15 16:07	7/8/15 15:53
Quotas for A level	1	1	7/8/15 15:46	7/8/15 15:46
SIDS characteristics	5	10	21/1/14 14:28	7/8/15 17:29
Small close community	5	10	21/1/14 09:01	7/8/15 17:29
Social renaissance	12	19	26/6/15 17:59	7/8/15 16:09
Student motivation	14	21	6/6/15 11:20	6/8/15 21:20
Student voice	3	4	29/1/14 04:43	26/6/15 15:27
Subject knowledge	4	5	21/1/14 08:57	7/8/15 10:59
Systemic issues	61	125	21/1/14 08:55	7/8/15 17:30
Teacher capacity	17	38	21/1/14 11:21	6/8/15 20:39
Teacher expectations	18	20	21/1/14 11:13	7/8/15 11:34
Teacher movement	6	10	21/1/14 15:00	26/6/15 14:33
Teacher networks	8	11	21/1/14 08:49	7/8/15 10:59
Teacher Shortage	22	33	7/6/15 11:47	7/8/15 17:26
Teacher training	28	59	21/1/14 11:17	7/8/15 17:26
Teaching resources	4	9	22/1/14 13:00	7/8/15 17:16
Teaching styles	7	9	21/1/14 12:03	7/8/15 10:55
TVET curriculum issues	22	36	21/1/14 12:29	7/8/15 10:36
Values	9	15	21/1/14 12:39	6/8/15 21:51
Website media engagement	2	2	4/7/15 20:54	7/8/15 11:15
Workload	6	7	21/1/14 09:01	7/8/15 11:22

Appendix 11 Questions/Dimensions Analysis Matrix

COLOUR CODING		
TEMPORALITY	PLACE	SOCIALITY
Q1a. TEMa Colonial past and globalised present (AND FUTURE) into geography teaching	Q2a. PLACEa distinct Kreol geography education	Q3a. SOCa express sense of professional self-worth
Q1b. TEMb roles in complex and rapidly changing societies	Q2b. PLACEb how manifest and shaped by?	Q3b. SOCb sharing narratives collective sense of purpose and professional status
Marianne	Nadege	Tania and Pamela
Geography Teaching and Learning		Simon
<p>The ministry must get the breakdown from Cambridge but they don't give us the breakdown, so we don't know how the students do for paper 4. We only get the overall mark for each student but it would be better to get a breakdown to see where the weaknesses are.</p> <p>The O' level syllabus focused on Southern and Eastern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands but now the new IGCSE syllabus is global so we can use any case study, which is better. CONTRAST TO Nadege ***</p> <p>I don't really have close contact with other geography teachers except one HoD who studied with me in Australia. The HoD meetings at the ministry are mainly to pass on information... we (all the HoDs) are called to the ministry when they want to discuss new ideas, like the new S1-S3 curriculum or the format for the national exam. Ms Ghislaire. She was my one of my geography teachers at NIE</p>	<p>I said we should include fieldwork, not in detail like IGCSE, but something like 'what is a fieldwork?' 'Why do we do fieldwork?' Give students some basic data and ask them to analyse it. The students could cope with this, but most teachers said no. They said it would be too difficult for the children.</p> <p>The Cambridge IGCSE is better because you have to know something about fieldwork. We were only told about the new national exam in the second term last year, which was quite late.</p> <p>IGCSE mapwork is not challenging though. The S3 geography exam is more challenging than the IGCSE mapwork! In reality though, the IGCSE is only for the top 20-25 students. For some, it would be better if the geography exam was done orally and had practical mapwork... but the national exam and Cambridge don't cater for all the abilities... exam paper is all in English. For classes like my S25, the school does allow us to read the questions to them</p>	<p>You see, that's the perception, teachers need to do extra classes but no, you need to be a good teacher to succeed and you need experience teaching the IGCSE syllabus. Some IGCSE teachers don't know what Cambridge want. Some of them don't even know what paper 4 is about!</p> <p>It's because our students are poor in English, they prefer easy questions, like fill in the blanks, multiple choice and matching type questions. They are so used to these types of questions so adapting to IGCSE is a big challenge.</p> <p>We changed from the Cambridge O level syllabus because it was too restrictive, so fewer students could attempt O level geography. It was not really designed to reach the maximum number of students. The IGCSE programme, at least for geography, is better designed. It tries to balance quantity and quality of students. But even though the IGCSEs are easier, I think the level of education is slowly going down. Students are not performing at IGCSE</p>
Assessment	<p>Assessment / System</p> <p>Pamela... was horrified when she saw how low the entry grades are for post-secondary.</p>	<p>Curriculum and Assessment</p>
liberation	<p>I don't feel Seychellois students are as keen to learn as the students back home. In Kenya we may have less resources but at least you see students' desire to learn. When they come to class they are really eager, they want to hear from you, they will even ask you questions and they will challenge you on a few things. But this is something I don't find in Seychelles. I have asked my fellow teachers about it and they say it wasn't like this in Seychelles before. They say that although today's students are products of the same</p>	

8	<p>We do help each other in our department and we try to develop our own resources</p> <p>Even without training from Cambridge it would be good if IGCSE geography teachers could get together to discuss how to prepare for paper 4, and how to do the marking.</p>	<p>At least once a month the ministry used to have a HoD meeting where all the HoDs would meet, discuss and share what they were doing in their departments. I don't know why the Ministry stopped these meetings because they were good and things like this need to be encouraged.</p> <p>I didn't really like Australia. I mean it's nice, but it's Australia and I'm a Seychellois. Seychelles is my country, my home. I feel I belong here. I remember when I was there, there were times I would go to town and not see anybody I knew, and I felt lost.</p> <p>physical geography topics very difficult. Weathering, rivers and climate, the five factors affecting climate, latitude, altitude...</p>	<p>system, they are different, so something has gone wrong somewhere. Unlike before, when teachers were respected and listened to, today it's a different story.</p> <p>students at the private school are very wealthy and have access to everything. Pamela told me that one weekend she was on the beach and one of her students turned up on a jet ski and another one of her students has been to Singapore 23 times, flying business class every time. There are divisions between the rich and poor in Seychelles and sometimes I see the social tensions come out in my class.</p> <p>I think it comes back to Kreol, the language. If you speak the language then you are Seychellois, whether you are black, white, Indian, it doesn't matter, the moment you speak Kreol, you are Seychellois.</p> <p>I think it has to do with the system. There is less emphasis on what happens outside than what happens in Seychelles, because they know so much about their own country. When we talk about issues to do with Seychelles, be it geography, be it climate, they will have an interesting debate.</p> <p>the more I learn about the students and find out why they behave the way they do, the more I tend to think they are...I don't want to use the word victims....they are just products of the system.</p> <p>tension with the Indian community and the students will say that 'the Indians come and take the Seychellois jobs'. They call Indians 'malbar'. If one student calls another student a 'malbar' it is seen as an insult. Even telling a Seychellois that Seychelles is part of Africa is an insult to them. I tease my Seychellois friends by saying to them 'you don't want to be Indian even though you are in the Indian</p>	<p>The scope is there for more students to do IGCSE geography, but the problem is the teaching...that's why lots of students do not make it through to the IGCSE exam. It's not because of the level of IGCSE, which I personally think is too low, teaching will go down further and even more students will not be able to do the IGCSE</p> <p>Ministry's decision to use continuous assessments as well as the end of S4 exam.</p> <p>ministry has now told schools to stop selecting students that score lower than 30% because now they've introduced the new national exam</p> <p>last year's geography paper was quite easy, with mainly low-order questions like; name, list, state, and lots of diagrams for the students to identify. I don't think it was up to standard.</p> <p>I think the Ministry should keep doing the IGCSE. Switching completely to a national exam is not a good idea. The IGCSE challenges the high ability students to perform better. If the Ministry stop offering the IGCSE then the national exam needs to be a high quality exam and not just introduced for the sake of it.</p> <p>the Ministry don't really have the proper resources to do a national exam; they don't even have a proper exam centre. Also they have not really set the standards and you need certain standards for a national exam.</p> <p>I don't think the Ministry will be able to provide new maps. They only have enough copies of three or four maps that they use each year for the S3 exams. They use the same maps so the students have seen them all before. If the Ministry can't get new maps then they really can't set a proper mapwork paper for the S5 exam.</p>
Identity and Culture	<p>we need to update the S1-S3 geography curriculum because some topics are too long.</p> <p>I've had to buy my own books to help me teach the IGCSE paper 4. I've mostly taught myself how to do and the new IGCSE book has some good information to help students prepare for paper 4</p>	<p>That's why we went back to our homemade equipment. When it comes to rivers though, I just show students pictures of the equipment and how they would do an investigation. It's not really fair on the students because really they should have the chance to do river fieldwork.</p>	<p>I actually preferred teaching the old O' level syllabus because it dealt with the home region. Contrast with Marianna***</p> <p>The ministry decided to stick to the IGCSE syllabus, so (the national exam) is not based on a different syllabus, except there is no fieldwork.</p>	<p>We really need to sort out our geography syllabus. I've been hearing things about a new curriculum but the Ministry have not started to work on it yet. At the moment we have too many topics in each term and there are some objectives that are a bit outdated or do not really apply anymore. The timing of the topics needs to be adjusted because there is still confusion, for example, the coast topic is in the S3 syllabus but we never have time to complete it in S3 so we send it to S4. But the ministry, even though we've told them this, they still put coast objectives in the S3 exam</p>
Educational System	<p>Most teachers in Seychelles don't really know how to teach fieldwork. They haven't done fieldwork themselves and don't have the experience of handling the process.</p> <p>A lot of the topics we teach are not related to anything in particular. They are very abstract. I think we should change some of the topics, like development and trade for example. It's a really big topic and we are expected to dilute it for S1-3. Trade itself is a huge topic because you can't</p>			

<p>restricting the number of students they enter for Cambridge, to try to improve the percentage of passes at IGCSE. With less students doing the IGCSE, the results won't look so bad, so it gives a better impression.</p>	<p>to be much easier though you are in the Indian Ocean'. They say 'don't call us African, don't call us Indians, don't call us whites, call us Seychellois'. In a way it is a kind of denial or a lack of acceptance. I think it all goes back to the Seychellois psyche. They prefer to be called Seychellois rather than anything else.</p>	<p>this, they still put coasts questions in the S3 exam. The ministry now want to add climate change to the curriculum. We can add it to the weather and climate unit but then they need to remove some things. I think we could remove the Solar system from S1 but some teachers like teaching the solar system. Maybe the topics we introduce in S1 like population and settlement could be moved because we teach them in detail later. Industry is also a topic that students do twice, so we could remove industry and keep it for when students are in S4, S5.</p>	<p>explain one thing without going into more detail. Maybe we should just keep the development topic and leave out trade. Also, when we teach volcanoes in S2, the students get confused.</p>
<p>Cambridge IGCSE is expensive; it costs 1,250 rupees per subject per student, so there is the financial aspect as well. The Ministry plans to evaluate teachers on their students' results, so maybe that is another reason why only the best students are being selected to do IGCSE.</p>	<p>in my country and Pamela says it's the same in the UK, there tends to be more political debate. I guess the political history of Seychelles means that the students here are not so politically aware.</p>	<p>Another thing that could be removed from S1 is the Physical Geography of Seychelles. Students already cover some of the physical features in primary six, so they get bored when we do it again in S1.</p>	<p>Geothermal energy is OK but when it comes to coal, oil...the students don't understand the formations. For example, when you explain anticlines, they don't get it, and folding is really hard for them to understand.</p>
<p>And they replied; 'Sir, nobody has told us about paper 4' and I said 'but paper 4 is about fieldwork' and then they asked 'Sir, what is fieldwork?'</p>	<p>(Students) talk about what Seychelles used to be like and how local people could go to any beach. Beaches are still accessible now, but some are only accessible through the big hotels... and local people resent that. Some students tell me that some of the smaller islands, like Desroches and Denis are only accessible to wealthy people. The islands are like super-resorts that are out of bounds, a bit like a gated community.</p>	<p>Ministry need to consult the primary teachers. I think we need to intensify the geography at primary school. Students need to start geography earlier. Students com(ing) to secondary ... are poorly equipped with geographical knowledge and skills.</p>	<p>Generally students prefer human topics like population, or topics where they get to talk about things in Seychelles, like farming.</p>
<p>During all my years of teaching the ministry have always struggled with what to do with students who don't get selected for IGCSE. We have to accept that some students will never be academically strong enough to do the IGCSE</p>	<p>human topics it tends to be more class based research or homework and they get bogged down because it is more about ideas. For example, when we do population and settlement, especially urban issues, urban sprawl, areas of low deprivation, models of town planning...it's all completely alien to them</p>	<p>Fieldwork is a skill and we need to develop fieldwork skills, but most teachers don't have the necessary skills to teach fieldwork, that's the problem. Although I wasn't really trained as a geography teacher I think I am doing OK.</p>	<p>Once the students start IGCSE, however, you find they are not really interested in geography, especially the lower ability students. Teaching them the IGCSE topics is very difficult.</p>
<p>it's because of the quota system. The Ministry is more interested in filling the quotas for post-secondary school than the quality of results. This is what the TVET programme should be for, but the Ministry have got it wrong. When you look at the students who are actually in TVET they are students with behavioural problems.</p>	<p>I teach migration I try to look use the local case study of Indian workers in Seychelles but for the IGCSE exam I need to give students facts and figures and it's not easy to find the facts in Seychelles. Figures are not published so even if I discuss the issues in class, it's very difficult to use the case study in the exam.</p>	<p>Only the IGCSE students get to do some practise fieldwork but what about the others who don't do the IGCSE? opportunities to do tourism fieldwork relevant for Cambridge are pretty limited. Tourism is the obvious topic but I haven't done any tourism fieldwork yet. At</p>	<p>KREOL: I have to explain each instruction in English and then in Kreol, or the Kreol equivalent. Sometimes when you explain things in Kreol they say 'Ah, ok, that is what you meant!'. So I do sometimes explain things in Kreol but as much as possible I stick to English.</p>
<p>I think the main reason for the poor performance it is to do with the students we select for 'A' level. The entry criteria should be a minimum of 4 Cs at IGCSE but after we select students that qualify with this criteria the Ministry tell us we need to lower the criteria to 2 Cs and 2 Ds. You see the ministry are under pressure from parents</p>			<p>I've been trying to teach them how to answer questions where they have to discuss a case study in more detail. They even complain that 'writing a whole page for a case study is a lot!' Writing in English can be hard for a lot of them. Even talking English in class can be difficult.</p>
<p>Curriculum</p>			<p>Learning</p>

<p>Geography Teaching and Learning</p>	<p>We are supposed to give the IGCE maps back to the ministry, along with all the extra exam papers, but we decided to keep them</p>	<p>the moment I'm teaching energy, Seychelles has just installed some new wind turbines but nuclear power and hydroelectric power are not options here, so it is hard to make the topic relevant to Seychelles.</p>	<p>Identity: they are confined to this little space and their world ends here, Mahe, Praslin and a few islands. It is as if they feel this is all they need to know and what happens beyond is not for them. They know about tourism because they see tourists from France, Italy etc. but I think it comes back to how other influences have not really been integrated into the education system.</p>	<p>We don't really have the time to take (the A level) students on s although I try to do a coastal investigation into management strategies where the students visit a coastal site and interview people about the strategies implemented. The students find this activity very interesting.</p>
	<p>The 'Wider World' covers most topics and it's colourful, but the batch we have is old with lots of pages missing</p>	<p>I would like to start some coursework next year, with my new IGCE group. They could do an as if it were for paper 3 and I could mark it even if we don't send it to Cambridge.</p>		<p>With geography there is so much to know about the world so I use many case studies not just the ones from the textbook. Skilled/Confident</p>
	<p>We also have some 'Geography in Place 1' and 'Place 2' textbooks, which we use for the higher ability students. For the lower achievers I find it difficult to set questions or design activities for them to do using the books we have</p> <p>Often I end up setting questions from the book that I know some students can't do.</p> <p>most of the time we cannot photocopy resources because the photocopier is not really available, so it is hard to make simplified work-sheets for the students</p>	<p>physical geography there are more technical terms. For physical it's either right or wrong, whereas in human geography you can explain and give examples</p> <p>...our students are the future...they are the ones who will have to deal with the issues, so it is right for them to ask questions. Some teachers don't encourage conversations and just stick to the syllabus and say 'let's move on'. But geography is the only subject that directly deals with people</p>	<p>I am slowly learning more about Seychelles and I'm trying to incorporate more local concepts and case studies. In Kenya I understood my students and knew what buttons to press to get them interested in a lesson. If there was something current or relevant, like the cyclone in the Philippines, I knew they would be interested. I can't really bring in current affairs here because the students would say 'what cyclone?'</p>	<p>the problem is the teaching...that's why lots of students do not make it through to the IGCE exam. It's not because of the level of IGCE, which I personally think is too low; the pass mark goes right down to 20% for the 3 papers, that's not even 7% for each paper! The problem is also not with the IGCE geography syllabus. When students don't make it, it is because the geography teaching is not good.</p>
	<p>they have more copies (of the Wider World) at the Ministry and promise to send us copies but they never do!</p>		<p>When we do they all want to participate. They all want to do the measurements and the recordings etc.</p>	<p>ASSESSMENT With the new national exam, I am worried that the quality of teaching will go down further and even more students will not be able to do the IGCE.</p>

Appendix 12 Comparative Primary Curricula

		England Geography / History		
		Places	Topics	Skills
Ages 5-7 (Y1-Y2)	England KS1 Geography	UK Small area of non-European country Equator N/S Poles	Daily and seasonal weather Polar/Tropical Climates Key physical features Key human features	Maps, atlases, globes Compass directions Directional language Routes on a map Aerial photos, Map symbols; Simple Fieldwork skills
	England KS1 History	Changes within Living memory Events beyond living memory Lives of Significant individuals Significant local events/people		Chronological Framework
Ages 7-11 (Y3, Y4, Y5 and Y6)	England KS2 GEOGRAPHY	UK Europe incl. Russia N/S America Hemispheres; Tropics; Polar Circles; Prime Meridian	Physical: climate zones, biomes, rivers and water cycle, mountains, volcanoes and earthquakes Human: settlement, economic activity (incl. trade links, natural resources (energy, food, minerals and water)	Maps, atlases, globes Digital mapping 8 point compass 4 and 6 figure grid-ref OS Map symbols and keys Fieldwork: observe, measure, record and present using range of methods (sketch maps, plans, graphs, digital technologies
	England KS2 HISTORY	Stone Age to Iron Age Roman Empire, impact on Britain Anglo-Saxons and Scots Viking and A-S up to Edward the Confessor 1066 A local history study one period beyond 1066 Achievements of the earliest civilizations Ancient Greece One non-European contrast (e.g., early Islamic, Mayan, or Benin)		Chronological Framework Combine overview and depth studies Devise questions about change, cause, similarity and difference Knowledge of past constructed from a range of sources

Sources: Department for Education (2013) Geography programmes of study: key stages 1 and 2, National Curriculum in England, Crown Publications, Reference: DFE-00186-2013 and Department for Education (2013) History programmes of study: key stages 1 and 2, National Curriculum for England, Crown Publications, Reference: DFE-00173-2013

Seychelles Social Studies			
Places	Topic	Skills	
Kreol Curriculum			Seychelles KS 1 (P1-P2) Ages 5-7
My Home (house)	Physical environment around my home., e.g. plants and trees. Roles of people in the home. Caring for the home. Homes today and in the past	Plan of Home	Seychelles KS2 Social Studies Ages 7-9 (P3-P4)
My neighbourhood	Know your neighbours. Important Places in the neighbourhood. Protecting your neighbourhood and making it a better place. Life in my neighbourhood a long time ago	Mapping & modelling neighbourhood Survey opinions	
My School	Physical features of the school; People in school; roles and relationships; Sense of belonging	Plan of the school, Mapping the school	
My District	Compare features; land use, landmarks. Economic Activities and Services (DA, social services). How people socialise and care for each other. Issues and making the district a better place	4 cardinal points, routes, District land use mapping (site visits)	Seychelles KS3 Social Studies Ages 9-11 (P5-P6)
Victoria	Emblems and Mottos; historical buildings, historical importance of district; living in the district in the past	Mapping Victoria, giving directions. Using orthophoto maps	
Seychelles (Mahe, Praslin, Silhouette, La Digue)	Location, connections (transport networks, streets) physical and human features. Identify land use. Quality of life in Victoria. How to improve Victoria Historical landmarks. First settlers, Why and where they settled in Victoria	Using maps of Seychelles, Mahe, Praslin, Silhouette and La Digue	
Indian Ocean Region	Physical features; archipelago, geology (granitic, coralline) of islands. Physical and human features; Economic and social activities on Mahe, Praslin, Silhouette and la Digue Historical places of interest Weather and Climate; elements, instruments, factors influencing. Seychelles Climate (seasonal winds and rainfall)	Map of the continents and oceans (identify 'some countries') map countries of the Indian Ocean	
Continents and 'some countries'	Oceans and Continents (identify) Locate Indian Ocean, name countries (and capitals) of the Indian Ocean. Seychelles trading partners in IO. Physical and human features of Mauritius, Reunion, Madagascar and the Maldives, Comoros		

Ministry of Education (2007) *Social Studies in the National Curriculum*. Victoria, Government of Seychelles

Mauritius Geography / History	
<p>The Environment, History and Geography integrated in core subjects in order to 'de-load' the curriculum.</p> <p>Through Language (Literacy): Development of environmental awareness; understand the importance of the environment and the need for preserving natural resources; respect and protect the environment; develop a love for nature; care for plants and animals; keep the environment clean.</p> <p>Also Civic Values Education: Myself – self identity, My family, My friends, I am citizen of Mauritius – the national anthem, the Mauritian flag, the head of state and the Prime-Minister.</p>	Stage I (Ages 5-7)
<p>Students introduced to History & Geography: Study of the locality (the environment of the child) - the house, the school and the wider environment. Links made between local and national History and the wider world.</p> <p>Also Civic Values Education: Mauritius – a sovereign nation: (an independent republic), Living in a democracy – the right to vote, • Mauritius – a population of many origins, but all united, Tolerance and respect of others' culture, belief, lifestyle; Ethics of sports and games.</p>	Stage II (Ages 7-9)
<p>Geography/History separate subjects to reinforce concepts of time and space. History concentrates on both local and national history of Mauritius and the islands while Geography deals with the physical and economic geography of Mauritius with a special focus on present day environmental issues</p> <p>Geography Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sense of positive self-identity, 2. A sense of place and location in relation to the locality, region, country and the wider world; 3. Awareness of simple and observable aspects of and phenomena in the natural and social environments; 4. Geographical location and distribution of physical and human features in Mauritius and Rodrigues; 5. Fieldwork to understand the natural and social environments; 6. Acquisition of a range of practical and thinking skills (observing, collecting, classifying, presenting and representing and interpreting geographical information in the environment; sketch-map drawing, map reading and interpretation at different scales (local, regional, national and global; use of ICT to represent geographical information); 7. The interdependence of people and environments; 8. Awareness of conservation of natural resources and protection of the natural environment; 9. Attitudes of social sensitivity like empathy, tolerance, and understanding the richness of a multicultural society. <p>Also History (not included) and Civic Values Education: Citizens of the Indian Ocean, Mauritius: a member of the Indian Ocean Commission; Learning about our friends living in Comoros, Madagascar, La Reunion and Seychelles. – many cultures, a common goal; Appreciating the value of sports through the Indian Ocean Island Games.</p>	Stage III (Ages 7-11)

American Social Studies		
Standards		
<p>1. People, places, and events in the immediate and distant past, the present. Re-tell stories about past events, people, places, or situations.</p> <p>2. Conflict, cooperation among individuals and groups; factors that contribute to cooperation and factors that may cause conflict. Ways of resolving disagreements.</p> <p>3. Concept of location; Major landforms and geographic features. How people depend on and adapt to the physical environment; Types and patterns of settlement and land use. Reasons why particular locations are used; Factors that influence human migration.</p> <p>4. Appreciate culture (beliefs, customs, traditions, art and achievements); Connections between folktales, legends and stories and the traditions of various communities.</p> <p>5. Social behaviour; rights and responsibilities of the individual in relation to his or her social group; Identify sources and purposes of authority/ leadership in the community.</p> <p>6. Characteristics of good citizens; qualities of an effective leader; how citizens can improve their community.</p> <p>7. Goods and services; how they are exchanged; Renewable and non-renewable resources; use of resources in daily life; how we need workers with specialized jobs.</p> <p>8. The meaning of 'tools' and how tools are used; Tools and techniques influence people; Name some of the most important tools and techniques in contemporary life.</p>	<p>Use maps to read and display geographic information. (Northern and Southern hemispheres, North and South Pole)</p>	USA K-Grade 2
<p>1. Time, Continuity, and Change: Patterns of change in society (e.g. religious rituals, governance, development of communication systems, etc). Concept of cause-and-effect in history. How people in different times and places viewed the world differently.</p> <p>2. Connections and Conflicts: Causes and consequences of conflict and cooperation among individuals, groups, societies and nations (e.g. environmental conflict, management of water & waste/recycling, roman empire: conflict of beliefs, slavery, native American societies, American revolution). Explain different ways groups interact with one another (e.g. trade, cultural exchanges, war).</p> <p>3. People, Places, and Environment: Major landforms and geographic features of Africa and North America. Geographic factors that influence human migration. Types and patterns of settlement and land use and why particular locations are used for certain human activities.</p> <p>4. Culture: Distinguish and appreciate cultural diversity (e.g. languages, art, music, and other cultural elements). Concept of culture (a set of customs, traditions, values, beliefs, art and achievements)</p> <p>5. Society and Identity: How groups and social systems (schools, families, religions) influence the individual. How social systems (e.g., schools, media, religions, families) create 'identities' or 'stereotypes' for groups of people.</p> <p>6. Governance and Citizenship: What citizenship means in terms of membership in, and allegiance to, a country. How citizens can improve their community. Organization and major responsibilities of governance systems. How governments meet the needs and wants of individuals and society.</p> <p>7. Production, Distribution and Consumption: Human, natural, and capital resources. Uses of renewable and non-renewable resources. Relationships between the locations of resources and patterns of population distribution. Ways people satisfy their basic needs and wants through the production of goods and services. Examples of organizations (i.e. factory, shops, banks) that are part of an economic system. How changes in transportation and communication have affected trade and economic activities.</p> <p>8. Science, Technology and Society: Examine ways in which tools and techniques make certain tasks easier. Identify ways that tools and techniques can have both positive and negative effects on people's lives</p>	<p>Primary and secondary sources in historical research. (e.g., letters, diaries, maps, photos, interviews, newspapers, film).</p> <p>Maps and globes; 8 then 16 cardinal directions, Eastern and Western hemispheres, Latitude, longitude, scale</p>	USA Grade 3 - Grade 5

AERO Common Core Plus (2012) Social Studies Curriculum Framework, K-8 Standards and Performance Indicators. Office of Overseas Schools, US State Department.
http://www.projectaero.org/aero_standards/socialstudies/socialstudies.pdf
 [Accessed online 12.6.2016]

Australian Geography		
Standards		
<p>Concepts: Place; Space and Environment The places people live in and belong to, their familiar features and why they are important to people, The reasons why some places are special to people, and how they can be looked after, Countries/Places that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (A&TSIP) belong to in the local area and why they are important to them, The representation of the location of places and their features on maps and a globe</p> <p>Concepts: Place, Space, Environment, Interconnection and Scale Features of Places: The ways that space within places, such as classroom or backyard, can be rearranged to suit different activities or purposes, The ways the activities located in a place create its distinctive features, The natural, managed and constructed features of places, their location, how they change and how they can be cared for, The weather and seasons of places and the ways in which different cultural groups, including A&TSIP. People and Places: Places as parts of the Earth's surface that have meaning to people, how places defined at various scales, ways in which A&TSIP maintain connections to places, connections of people in Australia to other places in Australia, Asia and the world. The location of the major geographical divisions of the world in relation to Australia (identify continents, oceans, equator, hemispheres and North/South poles), the influence of purpose, distance and accessibility on frequency of visiting places</p>	<p>Early Stage: People Live in Places</p> <p>Stage 1: Features of Places and People and Places</p>	Australian K-Year 2 (Early Stage and Stage 1)
<p>Concepts: Place, Space, Environment, Interconnection, Scale, Sustainability Places are Similar and Different: states and territories of Australia & their major natural and human features, the many Countries/Places of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (A&TSIP) throughout Australia; Australia's neighbouring countries & their diverse characteristics, the main climate types of the world & the similarities and differences between the climates of different places, the sim. & diff. in individuals' and groups' feelings and perceptions about places, and how they influence views about the protection of these places, the sim. & diff. between types of settlement, demographic characteristics and peoples' lives The Earth's Environment: Location of the major countries of Africa and South America, their main characteristics, incl. types of natural vegetation and native animals in at least two countries from both continents, the types of natural vegetation and the significance of vegetation to the environment & to people, the importance of environments to animals & people, and different views on how they can be protected, the custodial responsibility A&TSIP have for Country/Place, and how this influences their past and present views about the use of resources, the natural resources provided by the environment, & different views on how they could be used sustainably, the sustainable management of waste from production & consumption.</p> <p>Concepts: Place, Space, Environment, Interconnection, Scale, Sustainability Factors shaping places: The location of the major countries of Europe and North America in relation to Australia and the influence of people on the environmental characteristics of places in at least two countries from both continents, The influence of people, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, on the environmental characteristics of Australian places, The influence of the environment on the human characteristics of a place, The influence people have on the human characteristics of places and the management of spaces within them, the impact of bushfires or floods on environments and communities, and how people can respond.</p> <p>A diverse and connected world: The location of the major countries of the Asia region in relation to Australia and the geographical diversity within the region, Differences in the economic, demographic and social characteristics between countries across the world, The world's cultural diversity, including that of its indigenous peoples, Significant events that connect people and places throughout the world, The various connections Australia has with other countries and how these connections change people and places, The effects that people's connections with, and proximity to, places throughout the world have on shaping their awareness and opinion of those places.</p>	<p>Stage 2: Places are Similar and Different</p> <p>The Earth's Environment</p> <p>Stage 3: Factors shaping the human and environmental characteristics of places</p>	Australian Year 3 - Year 6 (Stage 2 and Stage 3)

Australia Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (2015)
Version 7.5 F-10 curriculum, Geography Scope and Sequence, <http://v7-5.australiancurriculum.edu.au/australian%20curriculum.pdf?Type=0&s=G&e=ScopeAndSequence>
[Accessed online 12.6.2016]

Appendix 13 Bwa Rouz Gathering

Extracts of Geography Teachers gathering (Pamela, Nadege, Emma, Elke and the researcher, Indra) 5th May 2014 Lekol Bwa Rouz

Indra: Well thank you again for allowing us to come...

Pamela: Not a problem.

Indra: ...I went to see Nadege at her school and she was mentioning about Paper 3 ... and talking about actually doing coursework with students. Then when I came and was talking to you, you were saying that you had to actually be approved to do the coursework.

Pamela: Yes, there's two sides. You have to have the coursework approved and you have to write your proposal to Cambridge in order to do it. That's not difficult. It's just a case of emailing them... You just have to go through what you are going to do and then they say yes that's fine or they say actually do this instead... and then you can be approved as a moderator to mark your own work. The alternative is send them away and they mark it for you but it's better to be assessed yourself because the way I've done it is now I am assessed I can take their coursework and I can mark it. And if it's not good I can still enter them for Paper 4, but if it is good I can strike off Paper 4 and get it out the way early. So it's better if you can assess yourself...if you decide to do training, you can apply to be a moderator... They send you some training packs to train you to mark coursework. So you read through and it tells you how to mark it and it's got lots of examples in there... You just have to make sure you're thorough, but it teaches you how to do it so it's straightforward... I think it's better because we know the fieldwork's an important part of geography. And you have to teach them stuff anyway about making hypothesis and interpreting data for Paper 4 so why not do it for real and submit a piece of coursework and then if it's good you can take away an exam.

Nadege: So each student will work on something different or as a group?

Pamela: Well... they collect the data together and then they write up their own project... it's a shame my year 11 (S5) ones got posted last week because even though you mark it yourself you must send a sample and the exam board request that you send a sample of your work so they can make sure you're not marking too harshly. So my year 11 ones which were finished went last week.

Nadege: (looking over the Year 10 pieces of coursework) And is this the same kind of themed piece of coursework or is it a different topic all together?

Pamela: I've gone for the same theme; it's coastal work... it's looking at evidence for erosion and deposition at coasts around PtiZil

Indra: Wow, brilliant and it's so topical. This is exactly what we (Emma and Elke) were doing this morning. We were actually at Anse Calla at eight o'clock this morning.

Pamela: Yeah we were there last week... So, doing the coursework... it's more or less a five-part project... which I normally allow five weeks of class time to do. And we do one part per week along with homework. So write a short introduction, well I say short introduction this is all theory, so set the scene, the places that we are going to, diagrams to show they understand the subject knowledge, but that's more or less from class notes. So it's not too difficult for them.

Nadege: Pictures? Images? Sketches?

Pamela: Yeah they draw diagrams...and then after part one they do the methodology, so the methods they will use and that's easy because I tell them that we are going to do... So they just have to explain... most of the student can get, you know, full marks on these sections. You tell them what to do really, so that's straightforward. Then they do a whole bunch of data presentation, so simple things like sketches, photograph analysis...beach profiles...so we do a whole bunch of – the more the better. Flow lines. Everything. The more data the better. They put all that together and then, erm, the tricky bit, the bit they all struggle with is the analyzing. So the first bits easy, then they have to come up with what does that all mean and then analyse the data and talk about what they've found. So I make them go graph by graph what does it mean, what's the geography behind this... and that's the bit that they struggle the most with. Then they write a conclusion and evaluation. So there's five parts to it and then it's done and you don't have to worry about Paper 4. Although I still give my students the option of Paper 4. This year two of them were not happy with their coursework grade and will sit Paper 4 but because they've already done the preparation they know what I hypothesis is they know what data interpretation is, I don't do any preparation for Paper 4 at all. They will just sit the exam and, erm, they'll do very well.

Nadege: We are doing this. It's just that we don't get to mark it and it's not in their finals.

Pamela: That's such a shame.

Nadege: We are doing it...we did it for secondary 3, but the government always want to do Paper 4.

Pamela: So it's the government?

Nadege: They decide, yes.

Pamela: Yeah, that's difficult. Paper 4 is a lot to go through. And you don't have control because there could be anything on that paper 4. Whereas with this (coursework) you can set the title, you can have control over it. I can see why the government want to do Paper 4 because there might be some stuff that won't work with coursework or you know, you do have to take time to prepare. And some staff might resist that so I can see why they do it but it's such an important part of geography you know. It's the one part of geography that is you're going to follow this subject through A Level and degree level it's the thing you'll end up doing as a job. You know if you have a job in geography you're going to be doing fieldwork. So it's really important I think...and the students get so much more out of it to actually see it all the way through right to the conclusion and then actually printing it out and having a final piece of work that is theirs with their name on it, as opposed to just doing a paper 4 exam, another exam.

Nadege: Paper 4 has things like settlement and shopping and they don't have an idea ...

Pamela: Yeah it's really tough.

Nadege: ...If we are doing beach profiles, coastal fieldwork...they actually see...

Pamela: ...yeah, there are concepts that come up with Paper 4 that our students struggle with and shopping is, as you say anything to do with urban setting, is very difficult. It seems very unfair and I wrote to the exam board and they got back to me and I said you know this needs to be addressed because you go out of your way as Cambridge to offer an international GCSE that's supposed to be accessible to everybody and yeah settlement is so high up there, it always comes up...and our students don't have the concept of it. It's

not fair. I think their argument will be well some people would go to school where they're not on the coast or there's no rivers so everyone's got to learn about stuff that – I don't know. I'm frustrated with Cambridge, the board. I'm frustrated with the specification, the case studies frustrate me. They're not clear on what case study you're supposed to teach. That needs to be addressed and I see it has been addressed on the 2016 specification but it's too late.

Nadege: Because I remember for O level it used to be the whole region. For example the paper was set for Mauritius, Seychelles, and then they concentrated on only certain case studies, but with IGCSE you have to teach everything.

Pamela: And I notice the big money markets get their own specification, Brunei, Middle East get their own specification because the big money international schools there pay a lot of money and they obviously complain so Cambridge have to do something about it but Seychelles is not going to do that, there's not enough money here. So yeah it's tough. Yeah Brunei gets it's own specification and it's a tiny little place you know... But I do think it's good. I think it's good to do it (coursework). It does rely on students to do independent study. And I know the students who don't do the work at home do suffer on it. But you know you're hard working kids, it's the way to go for sure. And it's not too hard to get the approval, as I said. It's really not that bad. If I have your email address I can send you my proposal. What were you thinking of being the focus of yours... coastal fieldwork?

Nadege: Yeah...coastal and tourism. Because one physical and one human.

Pamela: It's probably too much time to do both and I think the exam board would not want you to do both. I think they would want you to do one or the other. I mean I do both but then the second one is for travel and tourism. Erm, you don't offer travel and tourism?

Nadege: No we don't do that. So there's a GCSE in travel and tourism? Okay...So Cambridge does not send you the subject, you can choose?

Pamela: You can choose. You have to propose... what you send to them is a title and you tell them what methods you're going to use and you have to show the links with the course, but that's easy. You just go to the specification and you just pick out the bullet points so for this it's coasts, it's coastal features, coastal processes. Extract that bullet point and provided it links with something in the course they will allow you to do it. But it doesn't matter which part of the course, I mean if we had a volcano here you could do that. We're tied here because there's only so much, I mean, we can't really do rivers because the rivers here aren't really rivers, they're streams, erm but you could do a tourism one you could do a coast one...

Nadege: When you mention rivers, another problem we have – most students don't know what a river is. They see only what we have here, as you say, it's streams. Whenever Cambridge sends us about rivers they are thinking about small streams that we have. For them it's difficult to get –

Pamela: Yes it's very difficult to make them visualize. Erm, it's part of the challenge of teaching here isn't it.

Nadege: What about wetland?

Pamela: It's the link with the specification. Erm, mangroves don't come up in the specification...you can include it but it's not mentioned explicitly so I think you'd struggle to get that approved. I think you're limited to rivers, coasts, tourism, at a push you could do something on population or if you're in Victoria you could get away with something on shopping possibly in Victoria.

Indra: 'Cause we were mentioning the new Eden Island shopping complex –

Pamela: Yeah, there's a study to be done there isn't there.

Indra: And then comparing it with STC. Maybe. Sphere's of influence for the two big shopping –

Pamela: Yeah shoppers in Victoria against the shoppers in Eden Island, the sphere of influence...there's a study to be done there and if you could get some rent prices and apply that there are counts you could do traffic counts. There's stuff to be done there to do with shopping but like you say I find a lot of kids here are not really interested in some human geography, they struggle. Changes in shopping things like that are very hard to teach here because shopping hasn't gone through that change yet, of the parts of the city and the CBD.

Indra: Something that they can see, such as the beach, the river, to get their hands dirty, it's far more interesting...

Pamela: Yeah I think so. I think you're better off doing physical but some students really struggle with physical content, because it's all conceptual, you can't really see it. You can't see coastal erosion, you can't see things like that, they do struggle. Um but that's the challenge... you know the ones that don't pick up the concepts, you can help them and even I'm assuming you'll encounter those with learning difficulties with English, very severely dyslexic, you can even help with that. You can sit with them and construct sentences and provided they come up with the concepts, you can do that. Where as with Paper 4 they just have to sit it.

Nadege: For our students, when the results come it's always paper 4 that they do very badly. This is why the results drop. They do well for Paper 1, Paper 2 excellent but Paper 4 they have problem...and it's hard to prepare them for Paper 4 because it's dull. It's boring. The content...they just read and they don't like it. Whereas if they are doing it themselves they will...

Pamela: Yeah I think so...and you don't have to waste time... if I was preparing them for Paper 4 I would have to teach really dry things like, you know, safety requirements on a field trip... and that's dull. I'd much rather be out there doing some fieldwork. Like I say, five-week block where I focus on nothing else and then it's done. And if they don't do very well they can do Paper 4 instead...it's good to have the option. And you can split entry. You can split the entry, so some of the kids do paper 4 and some don't.

Nadege: Okay, right.

Pamela: ...so I will split entry every year so they will have a choice to take the coursework grade or enter the exam.

Nadege: But what about teaching, like you were saying...you teach only paper 3?

Pamela: Yeah, because I think that in teaching Paper 3 they will learn about setting hypothesis, they will learn about writing a methodology and things they need to do for Paper 4 so, erm, they will all do the coursework and it's at the end of the coursework they will decide actually if the grade wasn't very good they can do Paper 4.

Elke: But during the two years you make them do projects like that...

Pamela: I make them do it yes...so they will all produce a piece of coursework...they will all attempt the coursework. I think it's valuable but you've obviously got a big problem with the government saying no. How can they not give the schools autonomy, that's incredible!

Nadege: I suppose it's a way of saving... they are always talking about schools having their autonomy...

Pamela: Wow. That frightens me a little bit. As a teacher that would really frighten me. I need to spend some time in government school.

Indra: You should. Go to Lekol Sitron...it's actually a really nice school. Where Nadege teaches...it's worth having a little visit.

Pamela: Yeah I would love to. I think some of the kids... think I would get eaten alive... but I trained in one of the toughest schools in the UK ... but maybe I'm overestimating my ability. I'd love to come and visit...but you say autonomy is a problem.

Nadege: But the biggest problem at the moment is the lack of teachers.

Indra: Yes, Nadege, you have to cover for other teachers who are not there.

Nadege: Yeah. That's a big problem.

Pamela: Yeah (.....) because a lot of our parents are concerned about sending kids to the government school for A level...especially compared to the standard that they are getting when they are there. They see kids who were performing very well in private school, in geography, but when they reach A Level the standard goes down completely. Some of them even fail. I've no experience myself but I hear from the kids, I hear their concerns and I hear their friends and relatives have been to the (local schools) and, erm

Indra: ...the massive concern (in the government schools) is the level of qualifications of the teachers. They don't often have a BEd. I know Nadege went to Australia, didn't you, to do your BEd.

Pamela: So what is the level of qualification? I hear there's a lot of teachers coming from the African continent.

Nadege: There are a few...they come from Kenya, Uganda, Guinea.

Pamela: And what is the level of qualification?

Indra: It's hard, the Sri Lankan teachers are trained but there's issues because they don't have the background in Cambridge so that's been a big issue in the schools because someone like Nadege, or the head of department who would have a lot of experience and know Cambridge inside out, are asked to train these incoming expatriates and the expatriates often get a better package than them, more money, housing, accommodation. The Seychellois are trying to train them ... and that puts so much strain on the existing department, it's not sustainable.

Elke: Even the language is a problem.

Indra: Yeah the accent can be heavy so the students don't understand the accent...

Pamela: ...staggering.

Indra: ...And so then the results, generally, are not very good.

Pamela: That's the reason this school exists, as far as a can gather, because of the results.

Indra: And the ministry knows this....

Pamela: We're at capacity now, lower down...we have a waiting list for the bottom years. In ten years we will be absolutely at full capacity I'm sure.

Indra: And then that means, you know, some of the best students are not in the government schools...

Pamela: Sorry.

Indra: ...well, I want Emma and Elke to see that this is the reality of how it is in Seychelles these days. There's competition. And Seychellois even though they don't actually have a lot of money they will put money aside or try and get a

scholarship for an alternative education...and some of the best teachers are now leaving for these schools.

Nadege: We don't have teachers and we don't have new students, we don't have anything.

Pamela: Well I know that whenever we advertise a teaching post we get a lot of applications. A lot of Seychellois teachers are interviewed and we appoint a few of them.

Nadege: Yeah, there are Seychellois teachers here aren't there?

Pamela: Yeah, there are two or three, in fact, more than that probably.

Indra: The government schools need degree holders, but most of the teachers only have diplomas. They're teaching secondary with a diploma.

Pamela: Oof...well in the UK they are even encouraging teachers to get their masters degree

Indra: You would be shocked to know how many unqualified teachers are working in the secondary schools...so it's not a surprise why the results are so bad.

Pamela: It's supply and demand isn't it. Nobody wants to be a teacher so then, of course, you'll accept people who aren't qualified.

Nadege: That's it we have to.

Emma: We've got to make it more appealing. Whether it's more money or better working conditions or something, we've got to raise the profile....

Indra: So Emma and Elke are on the BEd, the local BEd, so they're doing a three and a half year degree, in secondary geography.

Pamela: So where are you training at the moment?

Elke: Before we were at Lekol Zoliker, and now we are going to Lekol Vetiver...

Indra: Lekol Zoliker is in the town...so it's a kind of urban school.

Pamela Okay. That suggests you've had some challenges.

Elke: It was quite challenging, but there's some good geographers there and there's actually one woman who's just done her masters. And at Lekol Vetiver they've got a solid team of geography teachers and actually one of them is doing degree online.

Indra: The teachers are desperate to get a degree but often they're not given the study leave. So it's kind of a catch 22, until they are actually educated to a higher standard, the level of teaching won't rise.

...

Nadege: Do the students choose to be doing IGCSE geography or it's optional?

Pamela: No, everybody does IGCSE geography...so they do English Second Language or English First Language, English Literature everybody, Maths everybody, Geography everybody French everybody, Science, most do the triple science, biology, chemistry, physics as separate sciences, Travel and tourism, Business Studies and they can pick either Art or History. So in total it works out between, depending on the ability and the options, between 10 and 14 GCSEs.

Nadege: Wow...that everybody does?

Pamela: Everybody does.

Nadege: But they don't have to meet a certain standard to actually sit for the IGCSE?

Pamela: No, everybody sits.

Elke: Every student? You don't have low ability students?

Pamela: We have low ability students, yeah, but we have an SEN department here for special needs and we actually attract quite a few students because of that, because we cater for low ability students.

Emma: You have people to work with those students.

Pamela: Yes we do. We do.

Nadege: We don't. As a secondary teacher we are also the special needs teacher. There are all mixed in one class.

Pamela: Ours are also mixed, cause we only have one class per year, but there are students who don't do French...they go out and do additional English classes instead of French. Or maybe they struggle with history because there's a lot of essay writing, they will come out of history and do additional maths or English. But they are given support in lessons with a TA usually. So that's part of our appeal, I think, that we do try and cater for weaker students. But everybody enters the IGCSE (.....) We don't, by and large, have a problem with homework. We don't generally have behavioural problems. I've never had to remove a student from my classroom here.

Nadege: We do.

Pamela: Do most of yours not enter the IGCSE then? Or some not enter?

Nadege: ...we have 103 S5 students taking geography and we have 17 doing the IGCSE. Those are the figures, that's the situation.

Pamela: And is it because the others would not grade?

Nadege: If we were to enter all 103 we would get about 85 Us. Most will fail.

Pamela: What's the difficulty for them is it the language or the content?

Nadege: Language is one, English is a big big problem and the skills required. Some of them lack interest, there are learning issues, lack of resources, for example, we have one group with 40 students in a class, it's not realistic. And it's because they are forced to do geography. See they don't like history they tend to do geography and it's only because they have to, not because they want to.

Indra: Only 17 out of 103 can make that standard and that's just actually being entered. A lot of them don't actually get good grades. They're just the ones being entered.

Pamela: I guess it's a cost thing. I know that schools are on a budget and you have to pay to enter. It's tough.

Nadege: It's a waste of money to enter them. That's why it's now stricter about who is entered.

Indra: It's a vicious circle because if the students know they're not going to be entered then they immediately won't try as hard.

Nadege: And they are very lazy also. Now the government has introduced the national exam. It might be a bit easier and they will all focus on that, neglecting IGCSE.

Elke: And they know they are going to get into post secondary eventually so

....

Pamela: This is the next problem isn't it? Post secondary the grades are very low.

Nadege: There's no incentive. Even A' level, the grades are Fs, Es. And if you are taking, for example, trainee teachers who get E, F, G, what are they going to teach? They will teach E, F, and G.

Indra: It will never end.

Pamela: Absolutely. It's frightening! What to do?

Indra: Well, if you were in the Ministry of Education as a consultant, you'd have to come up with some kind of recommendation! They've brought in all kinds of experts, specialists and it's an on-going issue. You know I've been here twenty years and the standard is not improving.

Nadege: Most teachers will agree that it's not because of the money. It's not because of the salary we get. We are willing to work. We need more money, everybody needs more money, but the main problem is lack of support.....and decisions are made by those people sitting in their offices when they don't have a clue what is going on there in the classrooms. We've said over the years that they need to do something nationally. Like tackle social problems, 'cause it's the social problems coming in the school that needs preventing early. For example having a special needs teacher, we need some special needs teachers, we need them. We don't have them. When we were asking for special needs teacher during the December holiday, last year, they organized a 3 day workshop for all teachers to train us how to deal with special needs. But we are not able. We cannot do it. And they got somebody from the UK to come in. They said they deal with students with physical disability, dyslexic students, autism...and the ministry want to do this here but we can't...this is pushing teachers way. We feel that in five years time we are going to have to deal with autistic kids, we have to deal with those who cannot read, who cannot write, cannot sit, ADHD, we are scared, we run away.

Indra: Well, these are obviously much bigger issues...but, erm, in terms of the geography, you obviously are teaching geography for many years now, what do you feel are the main issues you face as a geography teacher?

Nadege: Lack of resources.

Indra: In terms of stationary resources, textbook resources or...?

Nadege: Everything. We have nothing.

Pamela: So in your classroom, typically, what are the resources you would have?

Nadege: We have 'New Wider World', which we have lots of copies.

Pamela: The Key Stage 3 textbook? I know the one.

Nadege: We have the black book called 'Geography'. We have some books but that's all we have, nothing more than books.

Elke: There's no electricity in a lot of the classrooms.

Pamela: And I complain when my aircon breaks down!

Nadege: We don't have aircon. And you can imagine, 33 students sitting in a classroom. It's hot.

Pamela: Yeah, I feel very guilty about the fact that I complained that one doesn't work. I feel awful. Well that has to be resolved doesn't it?

Nadege: Yeah...

Pamela: You know, I saw that when we took our students to Lekol Bwa Dou. Our students are used to this school and we took them to Lekol Bwa Dou and it was like as you say and they were really worried.

Nadege: Yes. It's uncomfortable. Sometimes we cannot blame the students. It is uncomfortable. Especially in the afternoon, 1 to around 2:30, it's hot, it's humid, it's crowded and as a teacher you are in front there with chalk and a blackboard, talking, talking reading. I don't blame the students.

Pamela: Modern teaching needs access to things. We live in a world where kids all have phones and they can look at YouTube. We need to do that as well, you know. I rarely teach a lesson where I don't show some kind of video clip or, you know, some kind of file or some kind of projection of an image.

Especially since we're talking about a subject where image analysis and the studying of a photograph is part of an exam so you must do that all the time. If you don't have that kind of resource available to you you're never going to be successful. That's tough. That's really tough. Wow, I feel like I have things to complain about but I really don't.

Nadege: Even photocopying is a problem. You put something into photocopying and the photocopier is not working for three four weeks. They are fixing it and if you need one copy urgently you can't get it until the day to do your photocopying. Every department has their own day. If it's not your day you will not get it! And everything is black and white.

Emma: So are we allowed to have a look at the coursework?

Pamela: Of course, by all means. They are in various states of finishedness and of various qualities. These two are very very good. This one is very good. These are less good, I would say. By all means, have a look.

Elke: So when you send them to Cambridge, you send each coursework separately?

Pamela: Yeah, you must fill in a cover sheet. So these are the travel and tourism ones but they're pretty much the same ...(the cover sheet) looks like this. So you fill in this sheet with the name of the student and the title and it just has the things that you're supposed to mark, so application of knowledge, what's the connection between key ideas and aims of the project, so you have to give a score out of ten, or whatever. Then awareness of limitations, so that's about evaluation, valid conclusions... So what Cambridge do is send you three sample ones to show you what a top grade evaluation looks like, what a middle one is, what a bad one looks like.

Nadege: Like any projects you have your criteria.

Pamela: Absolutely. So you then just make your assessment. They ask for a sample of ten, but we only have 11 or 12 in the class, so we send all of them, but you would only be asked for a sample.

Nadege: So you correct it first and then you send it?

Pamela: You correct it and then you send the grades and in March they ask for the grades in the coursework, erm, so it must be done. I actually get mine done in year 10 to give myself time, so you must have it done by around about February, so you've got to mark it. It takes a while to mark, then you send the results, submitted online, it's all done online, and then they will ask for the sample. Ours went last week. Usually they will take the best one, the worst one and then randomly in the middle they will pick names. Erm, then you have to send them with all the paperwork.

Elke: So does this school work like government schools where they train as soon as they get into secondary, they start training for IGCSE or....?

Pamela: Nah it's too long, so we start IGCSE in Year 9. Christmas of Year 9 we would start IGCSE. So they have two and a half years for IGCSE, which gives us a good enough amount of time to go over things ... (discussing the coursework of different students)...If they can take what they found in the real world and the relate it to what they learn in class because anyone can do the introduction, where you just copy it out of the textbook and just write. Anyone can do that. It's the analysis bit where they pick up the big marks. It's the hard bit.

...

Nadege: With A level, in terms of the Cambridge, they don't necessarily have to do field work?

Pamela: No, it's not on the syllabus.

Indra: It's criminal.

Pamela: I know. I was shocked. And yet, it is for travel and tourism A' level. And then you look at the science specification and they all have timed experiments and yet geography unbelievable. It's not even an option.

Indra: So you get them to a certain level at GCSE but then A' level those skills are lost.

Pamela: Yup. It's really wrong and I hope they address that with the 2016 specification. I hope there's been something done about that. I haven't looked yet but I am hoping there is.

Indra: Having spoken to a lot of my (UniSey) students, many of them through IGCSE and A' level haven't done any fieldwork. I was shocked, it's criminal!

Pamela: That is the case here when I came. They say well we've been on trips and I said well that's not fieldwork. It's so important, it's the most relevant part of our subject, to industry, for a job, I think.

Indra: Yes, fieldwork and coursework skills.

Pamela: Yeah, absolutely. It's really important and I do a piece of fieldwork in every year. In Year 7, 8, 9, and 10. We get the IGCSE done by Year 11, but every year group goes out and does some fieldwork at some point.

Nadege: So that's S1, S2, S3, S4 and S5 they do it every year?

Pamela: Yeah.

Indra: So what do you do in your Year 7 (S1)?

Pamela: Year 7 we do weather investigation, so on the back of the wall I have a bunch of weather equipment but I also have weather equipment I give to them. So we carry out investigations on weather over a period of a month, they record it so each do it in their own at home and we collect the data together and they write that up. S2 do a mini version of the coastal fieldwork. S3 do a project on crime, which is more secondary data based but we do also do some stuff where they do questionnaires and they ask people about crime rates and we use national statistics.

Emma: Crime in Seychelles?

Pamela: Yeah. They write up an investigation about crime statistics in Seychelles and they research how to deal with it. So that's what I do there. So I try to do some different ones, in Year 10 is the live one.

Nadege: So how does that fit in with your S3 curriculum. So your S3 curriculum is what you design?

Pamela: Oh yeah, the whole S1 to S3 curriculum is mine. I've got total freedom. Everybody here is. Everybody here is employed on that basis, that's the way our head teacher views it. He's going to employ staff who are as good as they can be in their subject area and then he's going to leave you alone. You deliver your subject in the way that you see fit. So what I do is I try to make it interesting. So there are key concepts in IGCSE, which need to be dealt with at Key Stage 3. So things like if I am going to do a project on coasts we must do coasts at Key Stage 3. And yeah, I do crime in S3 'cause it's a really interesting geographical topic. We look at geography of crime but other things as well, I am doing whatever I think is interesting. I try to change the scheme to work every year because I get bored of things and as things become more relevant. How much freedom do you have?

Nadege: No freedom. All schools have to do the same because there is the national exam at the end of S3 and the end of S5

Pamela: So how are you responding to changes in the national curriculum? Presumably you vaguely follow the British national curriculum?

Nadege: Nope. No.

Pamela: You must do if you do the British IGCSE?

Indra: No, they don't.

Pamela: That makes no sense.

Nadege: In S4 we start the actual IGCSE...but for S1-S3 we don't follow the British system at all.

Pamela: Wow.

Nadege: We use the topics from IGCSE, so we do coasts in year in S3. In S1 we do planets, population, settlement, tourism. In S1 we do the history of Seychelles as well. S2 we do maps, the national region, rocks. S3 rivers, coasts, industry and development.

Pamela: It's a lot. It's a lot of work.

Nadege: And we don't get through it really. In terms of the curriculum....What do you do? What's your scheme?

Pamela: I change it every year. I do Seychelles and mapping in S1, and rivers and floods, I do globalization, I do a unit on Antarctica, which is excellent, they really enjoy that, weather and climate and I do a project on a landscape on the end term which is kind of a research project, where they make a landscape, "Landscape in a Box" I call it. I do development in S2. Development, coasts, population, ecosystems, crime and I do Japan but I am going to change that, I'm changing that to Everest in Nepal. I got a real nice piece of work that I put together that I am really excited to teach. And then S3 tourism, tectonics, and then I start IGCSE. There's just so much content that you have to otherwise you're never going to finish.

Indra: So interesting...well we don't want to take up too much of your time...

Pamela: Have you had a look round? Would you like a quick tour on your way out?

Nadege: Yes, that would be nice. We would actually like to look around your classroom because what I like is that you actually have the student's work on the wall. Maps, and the ecosystems display, wow.

Pamela: Yeah you have to do some display work.

Indra: I like the contour models. Do you do those with your students, Nadege?

Nadege: No.

Pamela: I do those with my S1s. That's when I do those relief models. This is the stuff we do for crime. This is kind of data representation and mapping what they expect is a crime. So that's about perspective and this is about the real data. And then they do a written analysis of it. I just googled crime statistics Seychelles. There's a huge pdf on it.

Indra: It gives Emma and Elke an idea of what the students can produce.

Pamela: I am not one to necessarily encourage students to use their books to revise from, that's why they have textbooks. The textbook is for revision. For me those who are meticulously neat, that's a waste of time. In my lesson you should be doing structured things.

Nadege: But we have to give all the notes, because our students don't have textbooks. We used to give out photocopies but then they said no more photocopy because some students just throw it away so we spend time in class just copying notes. If it's a case study they need to copy.

Pamela: Yeah even we take notes. I mean I tackle this in a completely different way. You can spend hours copying and pasting so I spend hours putting websites together and I put them up there, with video clips and stuff and I just tell them to revise the case studies, go to the website. But I can rely on things

like Internet access in order to do that. Technology is there to help you but only, off course, if the students have access.

Nadege: Which they don't have.

Indra: So we will have a quick tour of the school...thank you for all your time...

Nadege, Emma and Elke: Yes, thank-you....