

**Being Rooted and Living Globally: A critical approach to the (re)presentation
of history in Social and Modern Studies textbooks**

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This thesis results entirely from my own work and has not been offered previously for any other degree or diploma.

Signature

Abstract

This research engages with history curriculum in the Social and Modern Studies (SMS) school textbooks in Mauritius as part of the Nine Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) reform that was introduced in January 2017. I will examine the inclusion of an alternative narrative moving away from a colonial-centric education as a structured attempt (Sternhouse,1975) to investigate how history is (re)presented in the Social and Modern Studies (SMS) textbooks.

This research situates the dominant discourses in the teaching of history within a postcolonial and decolonial dialogue (Bhabra 2014) in juxtaposition with critical literacy. This theoretical commitment and philosophical assumption engage with history as they challenge the inheritances of the imperial institution. I argue how we think and engage with the history is marked by our colonial past (Mazama 2003; Wane 2008) that continues to have an impact on present-day practices. I examine how history teaching ought to disrupt the process of coloniality (Maldonado Torres 2016) by confronting stories of tragedy and oppression, of imperialism and colonisation, to reconstruct alternative stories of strength and resilience.

Drawing of these theoretical intersections, history is explored conceptually and reflected empirically with Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis. By using a critical discourse analysis as a method of analysis to critically engage with the meaning systems embedded within the text, this research recognizes the subaltern voices and reinstates the possibilities for recognition (Fukuyama 2018). This thesis advocates a liberating perspective (Wa Thiong'O 1986) to decolonise historical knowledge and imagine alternative possibilities in an era of global interconnectedness.

The findings indicate how the new historical narrative nurtures specific dispositions as part of a neoliberal agenda that affirms a colonial subtext. I offer an alternative way of reading history with strategies to cultivate a space for historical understanding for students to become creators and owners of their own history.

Keywords: History, Language, Entangled worlds, Historical understanding, Postcolonialism, Decolonisation.

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List of abbreviations

MIE	Mauritius Institute of Education
MoEHRTESR	Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NYCBE	Nine Year Continuous Basic Education
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SMS	Social and Modern Studies
TJC	Truth Justice Commission

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background to this study

This section situates Mauritius as a small island in the Indian ocean that was once described as “a flotsam left behind by the wreck of the colonial world” (Houbert 1981: 75) and as a *nation* that lies in the past and in the present with “possession in common of a rich legacy of memories and the desire to live together to perpetuate the value of heritage” (Renan, 1990: 19).

Mauritius bears the hallmarks of being complementarily a country of Eastern and Western worldviews, ethnically, linguistically, and religiously borrowing traditions from its diverse heritage. It is a country of Asian and African cultural, political, historical, and institutional connections. (Samuel and Mariaye 2019: 2)

The colonial influence of the Dutch (1638-1658; 1664-1710), the French (1710-1810), and the British (1810-1968) led to a long history of colonial entanglements (Fanon, 1952) that have influenced our political thoughts and liberation movements. Pre-independence, with the absence of a native population and a history of multiple European colonisations, Mauritius became “a land of immigrants, of powerful landlords, and of officials presiding over indentured laborers that were imported to fuel the economic agenda of the emergent sugarcane industry”. (Samuel and Mariaye 2019: 5)

The French settlers owned and controlled the resources on the island and were the economic and political elite of the country while the British held administration of the island. The colonial sugar industry was dominated by African slaves under the French settlement, and Indian indentured migrants brought on the island after the abolition of slavery in 1835 to continue to work on the sugar plantations.

Colonialism was described as a “kind of bipolar world” (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2020: 42) where the Western civilisations, home of the Enlightenment, were deemed as the creators of rational thought resulted in racialised notions of slavery with Black people in particular being framed as less ‘human’. Colonialism and enslavement created systems that defined people as masters/slaves or worthy/worthless epitomising the racial hierarchy of binaries on which imperialism is based and which it actively perpetuates (Mambrol 2016).

The British Empire does not exist in the same ways it did during its colonising years; its power is not as physically observable anymore. Instead, it has become an imperial power: maintaining high social and cultural position through ideological imposition (education, language, canonical literature, popular culture, and politics). (Govender 2011: 70)

The legacy of slavery and racism created a sense of double consciousness (Du Bois, 1994) where the slaves’ sense of self only existed through the eyes of the other. The slave’s ‘non-existence’ had his humanity questioned. Sithole (2021: 130-131) pointed out:

What does it mean to think from the positionality of the non-human? The subject is incompatible with the existence of the slave. The question that preoccupies the slave has to do with being prefigured as non-human – it is the question of life and death, of knowing that it is possible to be killed at any time, without any form of accounting being required. The burden of life assigns a different weight to the human (the subject) and the non-human (the slave). (ibid. 131)

I argue that the imposition of this colonial subjectivity carries a weight that is damaging and limiting to one’s sense of self. This thesis attempts to engage with constructs that allow certain bodies and experiences to be privileged as opposed to others. The colonial law made a fundamental distinction between two categories of people with an emphasis on corporal punishment with the ‘Code Noir’¹ to legitimise the right to use

¹ The Code Noir (translated as the Black Code) defined the conditions of slavery in the French colonial empire.

force to coerce subjects to follow custom (Mamdani 2001: 656). Mamdani further elaborated that the races were said to have a claim to higher rights as they were governed through civil law that spoke the *language of rights*, while ethnicity was governed by customary law that spoke the *language of tradition*, of authenticity.

These were different languages with different effects, even opposite effects. The language of rights bounded law. It claimed to set limits to power. The language of custom, in contrast, did not circumscribe power, for custom was enforced. The language of custom enabled power instead of checking it by drawing boundaries around it. (ibid. 654)

Ethnicities recognised on the other side an acquired culture from the colonisers to oppress people (history.com 10.06.2019) but also provide people with the ability to construct themselves otherwise. Ethnicity in Mauritius has been used post-independence as another category of people on the island that emerged known as the 'Coloureds' (also known as the free people of colour, gens de couleur, or Kreols) born on the island with a different status, rights, and entitlements" (Ramtohol 2018: 185). The Kreols' mixedness led to other distinctions (using colour symbolism) to indicate the binaries of superiority and inferiority with further divisions with the Grand Kreol (middle class), as a person of mixed European and black descent and the Ti Kreol (lower class) as a person descended 'only' from African slaves. Ethnicity was used in contemporary Mauritius to provide people with recognition to re-imagine one's identity in ways in which are not hierarchical but diverse.

Ethnic identity is the result of a dual process of formation and transformation. On the one hand, it is linked to the origin of migration and to the age-old content of culture, while on the other it is continually being forged by the new situations and relationships the migrant confronts when he or she is putting down roots in a new land. (Chazan-Gillig 2000: 40)

The research engages with stories of hegemonic ‘whiteness’ in the colonies that legitimated a certain racial superiority against non-white people (Morrison 1993; McIntosh 2016; Pickering 2020) rendering the notions of skin colour as central in the constructions of belonging and nonbelonging. This research provides the space to think, identify, and reflect on historical memories and the construction of a multi-ethnic identity as part of a set of relationships that is constantly negotiated within a wider power relations framework.

1.2 Positioning the geographical entities of Mauritius

Karlberg (2005: 1) posed “the ways we think and talk about a subject influence and reflect the ways we act in relation to that subject”. This is how I examine the text within a wider context to promote (or not) the emancipatory ways of thinking and acting.

In what follows, this thesis claims that to understand the history we ought to transcend the insularity of our geographical location to embrace the interconnectedness of the global world. While by geographical and political definition, the 720 square miles island is one of fifty-five member states of the African Union, this thesis defines the island’s links to the world in an era of accelerating globalisation beyond the borders of a single continent but rather to its connections to a number of subcontinents across the world.

The concept of “subcontinent” (Kumar 2012) brings together colonised nations with strong sociocultural, economic, and geopolitical links. Mohammad-Arif (2014: 2) argued that this can only happen through a process of *imagining* and constructing the regions as a *common cultural space* “nurtured by a sentiment of belonging, which is expressed at the level of both emotions and practices”. The question of borders and Otherness (Bhabha 2006) is further elaborated by Anzaldúa (1987) who claimed that borders are

set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep cage. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in constant transition. The prohibited and the forbidden are its inhabitants. (Anzaldúa 1987: 23)

I am examining in this thesis how the textbooks portray Mauritius' connectivity/positioning to the wider world and the fluidity of these geographical definitions (Samuel and Mariaye 2019: 3) in the teaching and learning of history. Building on Chapman and Baker's (2002) work on the changing geography, this research locates Mauritius as a small island in the Global South with significant connections with a *moving world* (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2020) as I argue that

geographic topographic borders are insufficient to demarcate regional boundaries [...] it is no longer possible simply to write a static geography [...] it is important to recognize and understand the ceaseless pattern of change (Chapman and Baker 2002: 1).

While migration has played a key role in the earlier times following wars, enslavements and colonialism (Lange 2003), the world today continues to be driven by a new wave of immigrants as people move about, leaving one place, finding another to escape poverty, political instability, natural disasters or human right abuses. In such conditions the displaced migrants experience an alternative sense of being as they experience rootlessness (Dizayi 2019). This thesis recognises the psychological effects of a moving world with modern homelessness, relocation, displacement, and within this post-colonial predicament (Breckenridge and Vander Veer 1993) exposes how we ought to

rethink in the context of nation states made porous by new technologies, and economic globalisation, and at the local level, communities, and classrooms, reconstituted by flows of licit and illicit bodies, information and capital, in ways which we have hardly begun to theorise (Threadgold 2003: 7).

Scholars (Fraser 2009; Santos 2014) have described the 21st century as a time where colonised nations would embrace their Southern-ness as “countries of the South” (Samuel and Mariaye 2019: 6). By transcending our geographical borders as a culturally and racially diverse nation, I argue that the consequences of globalisation have further extended Mauritius’ diversity beyond its physical spaces as we redefine the constructions of the past, the present and the future. This thesis challenges the notion of our ‘location’ to create ways of being and anti-colonial possibilities (Darder 2018) and draws on Lewis Gordon (2019) who interrogates the *geography of reason* defined as

only certain groups of people in a specific geopolitical location called the ‘North’ have a future and reason. The structure of the relationship is reason supposedly coming ‘down’ to the people of the ‘South’. The implications are many. For example, the presumption is that through reason, people from the North offer the ideas that make people from the South appear. Those from the South thus become passive recipients of such light. (Gordon 21.1.19)

1.3 My identity and my journey

My interest in this research topic emerged from my lived experiences residing both in the Global North and South. This is where my story begins. I was born in Mauritius into a simple and humble family, with a nuanced understanding of my mixed-race heritage. As a woman of colour, my identity lies somewhere between the possibility of a Portuguese/Mixed ancestry and an African/Indian heritage. I also belong to a wider extended multicultural community categorised as *gens de couleur* (people of colour - a designation I resent) or more bluntly as a “Kreol” – a word that has evolved over the years but still carries dishearteningly the historical weight of rootlessness, struggles, exploitation and racism. I believed once moving to the Global North and mastering the language of the West would give me the ‘approval’ and the ‘bi-cultural sophistication’

(Allahar 2010) to find my voice. It is important for me to share those identity categories as I start writing this research as they represent the positions from which I speak, read and write the world.

This section traces the construction of my identity as a Mauritian that stands out from the majority of (colonised) experiences that traditionally claim a 'natural' relationship between 'people' and the 'soil' (Mathys 2017: 467, author's emphasis), as "no matter where you are born, you are the son or daughter of the original soil or homeland of the parent through whom you trace your descent" (Nzongola-Ntalaja 2007: 71). The question is what happens when you cannot trace that descent. What follows elaborates on what inspired me to study the (re)presentation of history in the construction of identity – a personal endeavour and an intellectual fight.

This quest takes me back to Franz Fanon's writing in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) on identity, and internalized colonialism. In this thesis, his study on identity production in colonial conditions becomes an appropriate reflection of the internal conflict that many colonised and post colonised subjects face, as he wrote

and then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight bore on me [...] As I begin to recognise the symbol of sin, I catch myself hating the Negro. But then I recognise that I am Negro. (1952: 325)

As a child of colour, and a descendant of an 'nth' generation of a mixed ancestry, I would resent the inferiority projected on my mixedness and the proximity to the essentialised categories of the "Other" – the colonised subject. The question that, for me, was left unanswered was how I could decolonise my history while preserving my true dignity to become human again and to engage meaningfully with the world. As a woman of colour, the innate sense of inferiority predestined me to a strong desire from a young age to emulate the "Other" to become part of the English speaking, economic

and political elite and embrace the “essential qualities of the West of course” (Fanon 2001: 46).

Language became a major marker of who I was and the privilege I held. As in many post-colonial countries, English and French were the languages I was taught through and, within the broader educational system, they were a major determinant of any child’s progress up the ladder of formal education. English and French (because of our colonial history) became the languages of knowledge, power and politics – the white man’s language – while Mauritian Kreol², the language of the colonised (Rajah-Carrim 2004; Owadally 2013) became delegitimized and violated (Fanon 1952). Kreol, now known as the language of national unity, is recognised for many children of African descent as

a window to [their] culture, it is a window to [their] folklore, it is a window to [their] parables, to [their] proverbs, to all the stories that [they] hear at birth and what [they] grow up with. (Varma 2012: 25)

As Wa Thiong’O (2005: 12) wrote, “English was the official vehicle and the magic formula to colonial elitedom”. If the loss of one’s language meant “a loss of memory and remembrance” (Sibanda 2021: 151) and resulted in a life of non-existence, adopting the colonising languages meant achieving a “human” status (ibid.). As Wa Thiong’O (2005) explained, people without memories are left unconnected to their own histories and culture with a mistaken belief that if they master their coloniser’s language, they will own it. This thesis goes beyond a linguistic examination of the text with a reflection of how history begins as a place of struggles where the knowledge used as part of the colonisation process shapes power relations (Foucault 1980).

I remember how my school history lessons consisted of cramming three-hundred-year history and accomplishments of three successive periods of colonisation with the

² Mauritian Kreol is a mix of African and Asian languages, with influences from French.

Dutch, the French and then the British as a monotonous and unconnected subject (Loewen 2009). I memorized an endless list of historical facts about the atrocities of slavery, the Code Noir³, the peonage⁴ and the systemic segregation that were built into the system.

The process of colonisation created feelings of dislocation among slaves and their descendants, while the systematic omission of Africa in Mauritius' schools and its national identity ever since has exacerbated the sense of otherness in the Ti Creole minority. (Beehary 05.2019)

While history described oppression and lack of dignity of a colonised past, I argue that the stories in the previous social studies textbooks did not address the implications of the “intensity of colonial wounds” (Mignolo and Walsh 2018: 125) in our present. This thesis expands on stories of bitterness and conflicts based on an “epidermalization of inferiority” (Fanon 1952). It is important for me not to let my old self to be lost in this oppression that can be self-perpetuating but strive for a better and truer self as I transcend the problem of colour line and break out of the “captive mind” (Mulder 2016: 16) – a way of thinking that refers to an uncritical imitation of the West. As DuBois (2019) wrote

while the healing of this vast sore is progressing, the races are to live for many years side by side, united in economic effort, obeying a common government, sensitive to mutual thought and feeling, yet subtly and silently separate in many matters of deeper human intimacy, if this unusual and dangerous development is to progress amid peace and order, mutual respect and growing intelligence, it will call for social surgery at once the delicatest and nicest in modern history. It will demand broad-minded, upright men, both white and black. (Du Bois 2019: 144)

⁴ The Peonage also known as debt slavery referred to a system where the employer compelled the slaves to pay off a debt with work e.g. The worker lost 2 days wages if he was absent for one day. His wage could also be cut if he was late or sick. On Sundays, they had to perform two hours of corvée before 8 in the morning. (SMS Grade 8: 27)

Living and working from a distant periphery of my home country, I identify with Anzaldúa's experience as in "where I go, I carry home on my back" (1987: 21). This research is driven by this insider/outsider position that defines how I appreciate my colonial heritage, the history of resistance of my ancestors and the history of the land that affirm who I am. I also recognise the plurality of my identity that has led me to develop tolerance for contradictions and ambiguities. Anzaldúa described this state of mind

as cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling in all three cultures and their value systems [...] undergo[ing] a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders and inner war. (1987: 100)

She further argued that this leads to a (re)construction and a (re)definition of oneself as one "seeks new images of identity, new beliefs about ourselves, our humanity and worth" (ibid. 109). I had to let go about what I thought I knew about my history and began to see the world differently. DuBois (2019: 1) added that

it is a peculiar sensation, this double consciousness, this sense of always looking at oneself through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity; and that this new consciousness in the form of emancipation and transformation calls for self-realisation and self-respect and an enormous amount of wisdom and patience.

I now reside in Chinese-dominant Singapore where I am categorised as an expatriate or a contemporary nomad – a feeling of being in-between worlds. I have much empathy for Barker and Galasinski (2001: 22-23) in *A Dialogue on language and identity* as they spoke about being "dislocated" culturally and positioned as "legal aliens" - a state of mind I can relate to in my own sense of *being* in the world.

By pursuing a doctorate in Education and Social Justice, this course has challenged my learning, unlearning and relearning of history and alternative ways of being in the world that Western ideologies have rendered invisible, and this has in turn led to a

shift in the way I read the *word* and, in the dialogue, I have with the *world*. In the process of decolonising my own thought processes as I am writing this thesis, I am drawn to Sheik (2020: 3) as she shared

for those of us seeking higher education as former colonised beings, we enter the academy as both the researcher and the researched. There is a pressure to present ourselves either as a traditional representative of an entire region or ethnicity, or as an assimilated 'modern' researcher, with the dichotomy never being questioned. Yet this fragmenting of the self points directly to the limitation of the individual subjective 'I'.

It is my intention to reflect on my insider/outsider experience and my own privilege as I interrogate the way history is produced and circulated. I embrace decolonisation thinking as a source of freedom and it brings me to understand more of what it takes to acknowledge and discover my own "self". I claim that change needs to come from within. It starts with embracing our own local identity which is defined in Fukuyama's words in terms of struggles for recognition and respect (Fukuyama 2018). Fukuyama suggests that people seek recognition of their own worth, which is a central tenet of critical pedagogy as well. While many aspects of historical events bring different emotions of anger and shame as part of the darker side of history, I argue that history can equally be the psychological ground for other virtues such as pride, courage and resilience, essential for a shift from Eurocentric epistemologies to articulating history from the subaltern side (wa Thiong'O 2005).

My thinking is driven by "a passion for truth" (wa Thiong'O 2005: ix) with questions that relate to how the written text here can develop empathy and tolerance for Others. My hope is that this research will inspire a greater political commitment for social justice where history teaching allows new understandings.

1.4 The importance and significance of this study

Textbooks have always been a part of school life. What we learn in school textbooks inform how we think about ourselves. This was the case from my own experience of teaching and being taught in Mauritius. This research starts with the premise that written language in itself is linguistically powerful as it can be used to define, control and change the world in which we live (Govender 2011; Kooy 2007).

[Textbooks] are not just materials for teaching curriculum content. They are filled with the potential to teach a community's (or a country's) values, beliefs, and ways of thinking about the world and its people. They do this through their use of language: how they speak about diverse peoples (and places) and their ways of being; which communities their designers choose to include and exclude through the texts they analyse; and how they question texts about issues of power between different communities. They are therefore both positioned and positioning (Govender 2011: 58)

Given the omniscience of textbooks, teachers justifiably rely heavily on its factual content to develop and organise lessons as “professional decision makers circumscribed by textbook content” (Kooy 2007: 200). This over-reliance has always existed in the Mauritian education and informs the teaching and learning of history. This research has both theoretical and practical implications.

First, this research evaluates this “uncritical” text (Marino 2011: 421) and examines the reading and thinking of history with a linguistic curiosity. It provides an examination of the complex structures of the text in the SMS textbooks and the *kind* of knowledge they contain (Höhne 2002). Höhne (2002:13) argued that “questions could overcome traditional, normative criteria in textbook research such as ‘true’ or ‘false’ and shed light on the total textbook discourse”. This research does this. I look at the way history is presented, by looking at the legitimacy of historical knowledge within a broader discussion around the construction of a decolonial identity – an under-researched aspect of education in Mauritius’ education and practice.

Second, this study makes a distinct contribution to the methodological considerations in textbook research. While previous studies have focused on the impact of textbooks focusing on the importance of readability for students with a concern for disciplinary knowledge (Mikk 2000; Mahamud 2014; Marino 2011), the focus of this research has been on how the new narrative could potentially influence the way students interact with the world by applying linguistic analysis and critical discourse to the text.

Third, there have been significant developments in history textbook research (Apple and Christian-Smith 1991; Fuchs 2011; Hasberg 2012; Repoussi and Tutiaux-Guillon 2010) that have led to greater emphasis on a critical analysis (Niewolny 2009: 1) of the content of production and consumption of the texts. This study further makes a distinct contribution to the literature by contextualizing the application of critical literacy into history production by asking more authentic questions developed in Chapter 3 to further look at *how* history is (re)presented and interpreted in Mauritian school textbooks.

Fourth, this research moves the debates in textbook and curriculum development a step further into the way history is produced and reproduced with postcolonial and decolonial dialogue (Bhambra 2014). This research emerges from a concern about the historical discomfort, the vulnerability of historical atrocities and encourage compassion for a socially just future. I examine the connections between language and identity in this thesis as I draw on the work of several thinkers and scholars (Connerton 2008; Grever and Van der Vlies 2017; Wineburg 2001) who asked provocative questions on the significance of identity and the teaching of history. By embracing decoloniality in this research,

the worldviews of those who have suffered a long history of oppression and marginalisation are given space to communicate from their frames of reference. It is a process that involves 'researching back' to question how the discipline [history] through an ideology of Othering has described and theorized about the

colonised Other and refused to let the colonised Other name and know from their frame of reference. (Chilisa 2012: 14)

This alternative paradigm to textbook research questions the universality of our assumptions and asks new research questions that transcend the traditional, normative history textbook research (Grever and Van der Vlies 2017) to teaching and learning history as a lived, social practice (Fairclough 1992). This research provides a space to understand the decolonial moment as I examine the (re)presentation of history within its legacy of colonial entanglements and the unfolding of modernity. This epistemological shift relates to “a careful and sensitive reading of the text” Moore (2013: 514) which is done by empathetically engaging with the meaning of the narrative and by understanding the underlying motives, intentions and agenda behind the narrative. Mignolo (2011: 118) elaborated how unhelpful distinctions have been made between the first and third worlds where,

once upon a time, scholars assumed that you have to be a token of your culture. Such expectation will not arise if the author ‘comes’ from Germany, France, England or the US. As we know, the first world has knowledge, the third world has culture; Native Americans have wisdom, Anglo Americans have science. The need for political and epistemic de-linking here comes to the fore, as well as decolonializing and de-colonial knowledges, necessary steps for imagining and building democratic, just, and nonimperial/colonial societies. (Mignolo 2011: 118)

Lastly, this thesis makes a wider contribution which relates to the applicability of its findings in history teaching. While the NYCBE reform in Mauritius provides a radical and promising educational endeavour to the Mauritian educational reform, it deserves to be further researched as I examine how changes in the education system can only genuinely be meaningful if they bring about change in how people see themselves, the world, and act. To meaningfully engage with history, this research makes a distinct theoretical contribution to value the lived experiences of colonised peoples to intimately experience the world as it is lived as it deconstructs the historical text to

examine how the text is organised and present history. By thinking and reading history in this way provides I argue the platform to adopt more of an ethical and activist stance (Moore 2013) for social transformation to take place.

My intention in this research is to translate the findings of this study into a pedagogical space for critical action and social transformation. My hope is within this space of negotiation and dialogue, students will be encouraged to recognise the history of colonisation within globalisation and *within that gaze* reflect on the past and the present as a continuum of the future. This space will inspire a greater political commitment for social justice in the construction of our individual identities within a context where globalisation allows new understandings.

The findings evaluate how can history become relevant and engaging (Bain 2007) in our contemporary realities and offer an insight into how our historically connected experiences in the form of small stories within a larger narrative can promote emancipatory ways of thinking and acting. Through this research and the data presented, I plan to disseminate the findings of this thesis with the curriculum team within the Mauritius Institute of Education with the aim of developing training resources. My intention is to share the findings in local educational conferences and workshops as I see this research relevant in enhancing our understanding of history as a space for social transformation, emancipation and social justice.

1.5 Research Questions

In what follows, I interrogate the construction of the historical narrative from a critical theoretical perspective with a view to investigating how history (re)presented in the SMS textbooks promotes emancipatory ways of reading and thinking about history.

The overarching focus of this study examines the stories of the voiceless and the silenced within a dominant hegemonic order within the epistemological consequences. By moving away from simplified dichotomies of 'colonised' and 'coloniser', 'slave' and 'master', 'black inferiority and white privilege', the questions engage with and reflect on how the historical text create a space for negotiation and emancipation.

The question that drives this analysis is: How is history (re)presented in the SMS textbooks? The (re) presentation highlights the conceptual and the linguistic processes in the text production in the teaching of history. This problem will be responded with the following research questions:

RQ.1. In what ways do language, power and knowledge interact in the construction of the historical narrative?

RQ.2. To what extent do the colonial and contemporary encounters potentially influence the way Mauritian students self-identify?

The rationale for using CDA in this research as a method of analysis provides a process in which I deconstruct the text to find out how the historical text is produced, negotiated and potentially consumed (Fairclough 1992). Informed by a dialogue between both a postcolonial position and a decolonial perspective, I argue that history teaching and learning “needs emancipation from hearing only the voices of Western Europe, emancipation from generations of silence, and emancipation from seeing the world in one colour” (Guba and Lincoln 2005: 212). This way of thinking problematizes this research and doing research as “a significant site of the struggle between the interest and knowing of the West and the interest and knowing of the ‘Other’ (Smith 1999: 2) – a power struggle:

what we know and how we know [are] grounded in shifting and diverse historical human practices, politics and power. There are in the production of knowledge multiple centres of power in constant struggle [through] conflict, compromise

and negotiation [...] whichever group is strongest establishes its own rules on what can be known and how it can be known. (Foucault 1977: 151)

This research emphasises the power to name, describe and condemn (Chilisa 2012) situations of oppression and allow a space for transformation to take place. Govender's study on critical literacy in South Africa informs my thinking as I examine the textbooks critically and ask the following questions,

What texts are chosen for analysis? What questions are asked? How is power dealt with? Are the pedagogical strategies that the textbooks use guiding learners toward asking critical questions about texts and society? Are the textbooks getting learners to design and redesign texts from various perspectives, and for various audiences, with democratic values in mind? (2011: 62)

My ontological stance draws on the contributions of influential postcolonial (Spivak 1988; Bhabha 1994; Said 1995) and decolonial thinkers (Lugones 2007; Mignolo 2000; Quijano 2007). With the insight of those scholars, this thesis argues for anti-colonial possibilities (Darder 2018) as I interpret the nature of social reality. I claim that we ought to reclaim our humanity by recognising the unsaid, the sentiments behind stories told, the break from "intellectual enslavement" (Mulder 2016: 16) to engage with history to achieve freedom and become human again (Fanon 2001). By understanding the past, recognising the voice of the "Other" (Miller 2008), defined as the marginalised and their realities, rather than focussing on their deficits, the focus here becomes the Other's resilience, which is I claim is required for social transformation.

This study is positioned within a critical paradigm as I deconstruct the power relations and the status of historical knowledge through theoretical grounding of the works of Paulo Freire (1996) and complemented by Michel Foucault's (1972) analysis of the theorisation of power that legitimise and subjugate knowledge. I argue how CDA as a

method of analysis in this thesis exposes in a dissident way how the discourse of power, dominance and inequality are enacted and resisted in Mauritius' history teaching. Within the strands of CDA, I choose to focus on Fairclough's three-dimensional model (Fairclough 2013) that offers a method of analysis that focuses on: first the linguistic features of the text, second the discourse as it is produced and potentially consumed by the students and third on a broader level, how the concepts of ideology and hegemony influence the way the discourse relates to the social structures. These dimensions are further broken down into three main stages: the description stage (linguistic features of the text), the interpretation (the way the author produces historical knowledge using specific knowledge systems) and lastly the explanation stage (how the discourse supports and challenges social practices and social structures).

1.6 Thesis Structure

This thesis is organised into six chapters.

Chapter 1 sets forth the rationale for this research before revealing the country's geographical entity to the wider world. This chapter acknowledges what inspired me as the researcher to conduct this study alongside its importance and significance to broader political discourses. I highlight the gaps in the existing body of knowledge and the contribution of this research in the teaching of history in Mauritius before articulating the research design and concluding with a chapter synopsis.

Chapter 2 provides a brief review of the educational reforms in Mauritius before situating the role of history teaching. I explain the rationale behind the methodology used in this research to examine the textual data.

Chapter 3 offers a theoretically rich and nuanced analytic approach to history teaching. I explore and define key concepts and terminologies that I will be using to understand

the data presented in this thesis as I draw on the contributions of influential postcolonial (e.g., Spivak 1988; Bhabha 1994; Said 1995) and decolonial (e.g., Quijano 2007; Mignolo 2000) thinkers. To fully situate how I will be deconstructing written language, this chapter engages with Wa Thiong'O's work, *Decolonizing the Mind* (1986) before examining the broader relations of domination and subjugation that exist in society, with the work of Fanon (1952; 2001) and Said (1983;1995). I apply key concepts in Critical Pedagogy with the work of Freire (1996) and Foucault (1972) that further inform the method of analysis.

Chapter 4 explains the ontological and epistemological assumptions about the nature of reality, what counts as knowledge and the value systems that grounds this research. It describes the method of analysis with a critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992) before outlining the research design, the ethical considerations and the process of analysing the text to provide a critical insight into how social meaning unfolds in language.

Chapter 5 provides a discussion of the findings drawing on a postcolonial and decolonial dialogue (Bhabha 2014) and critical pedagogy to analyse how language, power and history interact in the construction of the historical narrative. I also illustrate through small stories the extent written language potentially influence the way students self-identify. I offer an insight into the powerful implications of the third space (Bhabha 1994) as a pedagogical resource to generate hope, negotiation and dialogue in the teaching of history.

This thesis concludes with Chapter 6 which contains a summary of key points based on the research findings before elaborating on the applicability of these findings in historical teaching. I highlight the contribution of this research to debates in critical literacy in Mauritius and opportunities for future research.

Chapter 2: The educational legacy

2.1 Development of Education

This section sets the scene to give the reader some grounding of the Mauritian education system. I describe the educational discourse prior to independence in 1968:

During the Colonized Mauritius period, educational policy tended to be preoccupied about whom and what agenda should influence the schooling system or not. This introduced into the country a separation between one kind of schooling for the upper classes and their progeny who were the ruling elite (the colonizers) and another for the working-class labourers (the colonized). (Samuel and Mariaye 2019: 6)

'Education' and 'Colonialism' remain a research area in postcolonial studies where much remains to be done (Bray 1992). The shifts in curriculum reforms can be traced back from the colonial government decisions to set up a ministerial system in Mauritius that led to the Education Regulations of 1957 and the Education Act of 1982 and their various amendments. The colonial-centric education policy within the architecture of the British Colonial system led to the perpetuation of white privilege, where

residual vestiges of the British colonial administrative system which selected public official[s] on the basis on performance making end of cycle assessment the foundation of meritocracy in public service. Elite colleges systematically 'creamed off' the top performers at the end of the primary school cycle to ensure maintenance of their supremacy. (Samuel and Mariaye 2019: 15)

In Chapter 1 I articulate how racism underpinned colonialism and mass enslavement. The Mauritian education system intentionally made "every new generation believe that the hegemonic system that we were currently living in, was the only possible and 'normal' way to live" (Mulder 2016: 6). By inheriting a colonised educational system that was resistant to change, as a society it could be argued that we internalised the sense that the 'West' is 'better' and lacked the imagination to think of history otherwise.

This is reflected in the language of instruction, the structure of the schooling system alongside the international education benchmarks that reinforced the Western logics.

One of the ways in which colonised education perpetuates this lack of imagining other possibilities is the way in which history is taught. There is a difference between history 'as what happened' and history 'as that which is said to have happened'. (Trouillot as quoted in Allahar 2011: 244)

While the national educational system developed during the French and British colonial periods suggested a straightforward trajectory of phases and stages in the schooling system, it minimized how "the lived experiences of schooling within this system are more messy and contested" (Samuel and Mariaye 2019: 13).

The government's impetus for free primary education for all, which started in the 1940s, resulted in near universal enrolment at primary level, long before primary education was made compulsory in 1982. (Bay-Layla and Sukon 2011: 4)

The 1975 students' riots in Mauritius remains an important turn in Mauritius education history to bring greater equality in secondary education with the decision to provide free secondary education in 1976. While there had been some significant improvement with the educational system, the education system remained highly hierarchical with the elites coming from families with home-based entitlements (Bunwaree 1994). The riots in February 1999 following the death of a local Mauritian reggae singer that died in police custody unveiled a dark episode of the profound racial inequalities within Mauritian society. The riots lasted over four days between the 21st and the 25th of February 1999 further revealed the deep dissatisfaction of the schooling system perpetuating privilege, elitism and disguised neo-colonialism (Ramtohul 2018).

Prior to the Nine Year of Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) reform, the schooling system emphasised what Freire (1996) refers to as the "banking concept" (Ekanem

2014; Chintaloo 2021) that aimed to “colonize people’s hearts and minds to encourage passivity and docility” (Mulder 2016: 1) to create “an atmosphere of submission and of inhibition which lightens the task of policing considerably” (Fanon 2001: 29). Juggernaut (1985) pointed out how

the old-fashioned classical curriculum with its academic bias, the absence of practical work of any kind and the concentration of all efforts on the gaining of scholarships made the teaching in the schools unsuitable for the needs of the community that ought to be educated for life as well as for living [...] the school in the colony had failed to achieve its main purpose: the provision of education for all instead of instruction for a privileged few (179).

The process of assimilation of European reasoning (Gail and Altbach 1984; wa Thiong’O 2005) to join the public service was one of the goals of being educated in colonial Mauritius. This meant escaping from the sugar fields into a “prestigious job in town” (Houbert 1981: 98). This led to an obedient loyalty from the local elite and negated the fact that they were still subjects of a hegemonic system where

Becoming the obedient political subject was a sensible defensive tactic when confronted by a hostile state or an aggressive, deviant enemy, but it also offered its own oblique possibilities of agency within local and national politics. (Russell 2016:112-113)

Post-independence education policy was underpinned with “desires for egalitarianism and integration through the force of a unifying nationalism” (Bertz 2007: 162) with the desire to achieve western international standards in the form of PISA as specified by the OECD to measure academic achievement. As a result, the educational reforms that followed were a response to both the internal political pressures to establish a Mauritanised curriculum celebrating our localness (Aumeerally 2006; Samuel and Mariaye 2019) and the consequence of Mauritius agreeing to international protocols⁵

⁵ Such as Education for All (EFA), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

that aimed to promote a more inclusive and equitable education and schooling to maintain the image of a “good State” (Samuel and Mariaye 2019: 13). The profound desire of making Mauritius at par with ‘big’ nations is evidenced in previous educational reforms *Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008-2020* which stressed the significance of being innovative and creative in education to transform Mauritian society. Other key documents such as the *Education Reforms in Action* (2008-2014), the *Learning For Life* (2009) and the *National Curriculum Framework* (2009) emphasised the importance of key skills and knowledge systems to meet global challenges (Nadal et al 2017: 203).

Revisions of the educational policies⁶ emphasised the centrality of education as the primary driver to the country’s development from a low-income mono-crop agricultural economy to an upper middle-income economy (Voluntary National Review Report of Mauritius 2019). The educational reviews emphasised the need to develop a curriculum to respond to the needs of the country primarily to “develop a keen sense of active citizenship and adequate workforce” (Curriculum Framework 2008: 7). The impetus for subsequent educational reforms⁷ were in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4⁸ and the challenge for the newly elected government in 2014 moved from “education for all” to “learning for all” (Educational Reforms in Action 2008-2014: 4). “The intention was to embrace UNESCO principles of activity-focused ‘learning to do, learning to be’) inclusive education (ADEA 2011: 63). The Government’s Programme (2005 – 2010) reviewed the Curriculum and remoulded the

⁶ Document issued in September 2006 by the Ministry of Education & Human Resources entitled “Towards a Quality Curriculum – Strategy for Reform”.

⁷ The educational reforms of 2001-2005 were presented in the documents: *Ending the Rat Race in Primary Education and Breaking the Admission Bottleneck at Secondary Level – The Way Forward* (2001); *Curriculum Renewal in the Primary Sector* (2001); Further reform proposals were made in the document entitled *Towards Quality Education for All* (2003) and *Bilan chiffré de la réforme de l’éducation* (2005)

⁸ UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Education which is to ‘ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all’ (Draft Policy 2015 from Kumar 2017: 164)

conditions in which knowledge was produced with new textbook resources as a medium for deconstructing the inequalities produced and enforced by the colonisers.

Further discussions started in 2010 with the NYCBE implementation and restructured the curricular objectives to strengthen the values of a modern society. The NYCBE is the most recent educational reform (MoEHRTESE 2016) that proposed a new structure of the schooling system in Mauritius with the introduction of seamless and compulsory schooling over nine years in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 which aims at ensuring a more inclusive and equitable quality education. The NYCBE was a national attempt to decolonize its educational structure by delinking from the traditional British model of primary and lower secondary schooling (Ramtohul 2018).

I would argue that the NYCBE reform evidenced with the standardisation and centralisation of the national curriculum aimed at producing learning outcomes to fit a neo-liberal agenda that underpins education in contemporary Mauritius. Within global trends towards international comparison, educational achievement aimed at valuing an education that goes beyond summative assessments to the acquisition of specific skills as part of processes of inquiry and critical thinking. The nine-year schooling reform is linked to this major educational transformation to revise and rewrite the national textbooks to adjust to a new political reality. Within a wider political context, the Truth and Justice Commission (TJC) founded in March 2009 investigated the consequences of slavery in Mauritius and recognised the unacknowledged contribution of people of African descent to the advancement of Mauritius. The TJC recommended that the teaching of Mauritian history should be introduced at all educational stages.

As a post-colonial island, the challenge remains in new educational reforms to analyse, understand and recontextualize what historical knowledge is and should be so that the present generation can imagine “what our children and students ought to become” (Biesta and Priestly 2013: 231). Much of this thinking draws a parallel with a Freirean perspective which advocates that by encouraging learners to become critically constructive in their understanding of knowledge and who they are, they can make choices that influence their world and emerge from their educational experiences more than just school subjects.

2.2 The Nine Year Continuous Basic Education Reform (NYCBE)

To understand the educational reforms, I provide a brief overview of the different reforms since the 1990s.

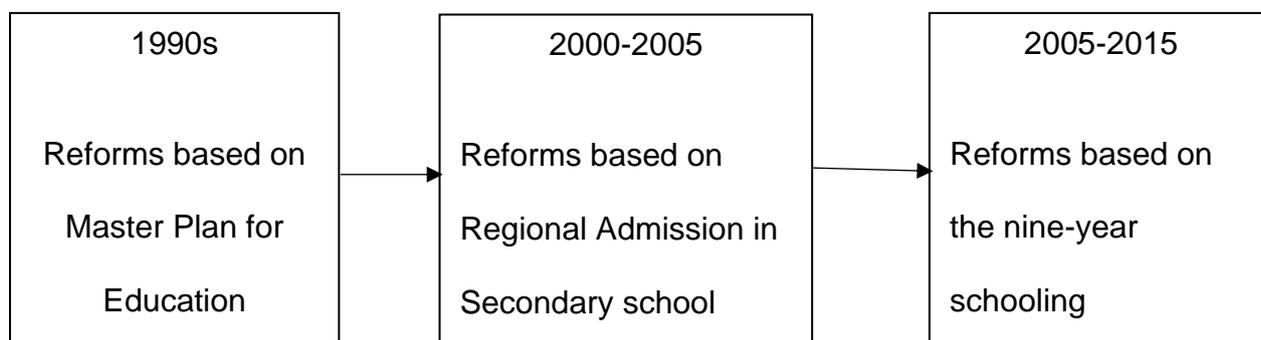


Figure 2.1: Education reform timeline

The figure above reflects how the conversation on the nine years of basic compulsory education started with the “Master Plan for the Year 2000” (Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 1991) emphasised the need to promote quality and equity in education. The elections in 1997 led to a new Government and a new policy articulated in the “White Paper – Pre-primary, Primary, and Secondary Education” in 1997 and an “Action Plan for a New Education System in Mauritius” (Ministry of

Education and Scientific Research 1998) to increase access to education and promote quality of education⁹. This led to the revision of all the textbooks for the primary level. The new left-wing party in 2005 were mandated to relieve the stress of the fierce competition at primary level to regulate the admission in sought after secondary schools.

Thereon, the Educational and Human Resources Strategic Plan (2008-2020) highlights the foundation of the NYCBE reform to introduce more equality and justice in the education system. This radical change with the NYCBE in January 2017 aimed to “equip all students with the knowledge, foundational skills and attitudes leading to an empowered 2030 citizenry” (Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research – MoEHRTESR - 2016: 2). This new reform proposed an *innovative* narrative to an educational system that was governed by the Education Regulations of 1957 and the Educational Act of 1982. Mauritius inherited an educational system from its French and British colonisers (ADEA 2011: 4) that legitimised a colonial-centric education through its graded system and by the languages of instruction.

Prior to 2017, the Mauritian education system defined primary education from six years old to eleven years old and secondary education for the next five years leading to the Cambridge School Certificate and an additional two years of higher secondary ending with the Cambridge School Certificate. The end of primary school led to a highly competitive examination known as the Certificate of Primary Education (Kumar 2017; Samuel and Mariaye 2019) that allowed only the best students to attend the few highly rated secondary colleges.

⁹ The educational reforms 2001-2005 were presented in the documents Ending the Rat Race in Primary Education and Breaking the Admission Bottleneck at Secondary level – the Way Forward (2001), Curriculum Renewal in the Primary Sector (2001) and Quality Education for All (2003).

The intense competition to secure a place in the star schools—referred to as the rat race—begins right from lower primary years, thus exerting immense psychological pressure on both students and their parents and perverting the very function of the school within the society (Kumar 2017: 164)

The NYCBE redefined the concept of basic education with a seamless progression of learners from primary to lower secondary education over a continuous nine-year cycle with no pressurized examinations at the end of the primary cycle. The reform translates the Government's commitment to align the Mauritian educational system to the global community¹⁰ where quality education is strongly oriented towards various benchmarks, indicators and targets. In this thesis, I choose to focus on the *relevance* of this new educational reform:

Relevance can be examined at several levels. It means how responsive the system is to the individual's needs, or the needs of the communities, sub-regions and regions. Finally, it is concerned with how responsive the system is to the demands of the global context today. Understood in that way, relevance can only result from quality teaching and quality curriculum that prepares learners to be autonomous citizens on one hand and, on the other, to efficiently meet the challenges of the twenty-first-century global world and those of the Mauritius context. (ADEA 2011: 81)

As a result, the National Curriculum Framework developed syllabuses for core and non-core subjects to 'capture' particular skills, attitudes and values as part of the neoliberal doctrine. Neoliberalism redefined the requisite knowledge of a global economy within a "commodity" approach to education with an emphasis on individual responsibility and "free" competition under controlled conditions to embrace the world with confidence and determination (NCF 2016: 12). The NYCBE brought this radical curricular change with an emphasis on 21st century competencies where

It enables all children to become problem solvers, critical, creative and innovative thinkers, and to develop their capacity and potential to become successful learners as well as responsible and active citizens (NCF 2015: 9)

¹⁰ The SDGs form part of the United Nations (UN) "2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", which was unanimously adopted in 2015 by all UN Member States as a "plan of action for people, planet and prosperity".

As part of this curricular change, textbooks have been reviewed. The new curriculum offered an *alternative* paradigm to decolonize its educational structure by “delinking the pre-existing system from the traditional British model of primary and lower secondary schooling” (Samuel and Mariaye 2019: 18).

While the complexity of our language-in-education policy is beyond the remit of this thesis, it is important to highlight here how contemporary political considerations took precedence over the value of local languages. The colonial languages of English and French are compulsory and taught as core languages. They were viewed in the colonial era as “neutral languages” that allowed a “certain political stability” and “social prestige” (Nadal et al 2017: 208). The ancestral languages such as Tamil, Urdu, Hindi, Telegu, Mandarin introduced in 1955 were selected as optional languages at primary/secondary level to preserve the cultural and/or religious affiliations. As advocated by extensive research in language in education (Cenoz 2009; Garcia 2011 as quoted in NCF 2016:63), multilingualism emerged as a requirement in the new educational reform. The changing linguistic landscape with the rise of Kreol identity movements warranted the learning of Kreol Morisyen (Mauritian Kreol) to develop the linguistic proficiency in Kreol, our mother tongue. While Kreol itself has been negatively perceived as a language of deficit with a lack of a standardised orthography (Adawonu 2001; Harmon 2015), Mauritius introduced Kreol Morisien (Mauritian Creole) in January 2012, as an optional subject in schools. “Although Kreol Morisien is the main vernacular of the country and is widely used in classroom situations as a support language, it has always been considered with official disdain” (Harmon 2015: 2). Kreol Morisien textbooks as part of the nine-year schooling became a step towards the practice of freedom with an emphasis on learning about heritage and the construction of the identity for many Kreol children.

This thesis brings the conversation forward and examines the representation of the Kreol history in critical literacy that have remained unaddressed in finding out how responsive the system is to the individual's needs, or the needs of the non-dominant communities (ADEA 2011: 21).

2.3 The relevance of the Social and Modern Studies textbooks

Central to this new education reform is the introduction of the Social and Modern Studies (SMS), a new subject drawn from History, Geography, and Sociology that reinforces and extends key historical and geographical concepts and skills.

The study of history helps learners to recognise the need for harmonious co-existence of people with different cultures, languages and values. It develops patriotism and a sense of commitment to preserve the national heritage. (NCF 2015: 80)

The new history syllabus therefore emphasised a range of holistic abilities over the exclusive reading and writing skills and textbooks were reviewed in line with this agenda. The National Curriculum Framework (2017) states

The Social and Modern Studies (SMS) textbook for grade 7 has been designed based on the philosophy of the new National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2016) which aims at promoting the *holistic* development of children and developing in them *competencies* to meet the challenges of the *21st century*. (SMS grade 7: iv)

The new historical narrative in the SMS textbooks introduce 11- to 14- year-old learners to historical knowledge to enable them to read the world into their own reality and their own reality into the world (Freire 1996). This thesis chooses to focus on the relevance of historical knowledge within the SMS textbooks for Grades 7,8 and 9 as the first cohort to embark on the NYCBE at lower secondary level. I propose to use

Foucault (1972) as a “means of tracing the contours of the space of questioning” (Nichols 2010: 111) to answer the research question and Freire’s (1996) language as an emancipatory process of reflection, in which learning becomes a means towards a more just society. Together, Freire’s language of *critical thinking* (ibid.) and Foucault’s language of *divergent thinking* (1972) are used by Stinston (2016: 74) as a means to engage in, what he refers to as,

critical reflections of [...] lived experiences [...] the consequence of rewording [...] the world with the languages of reflection, critique, and difference has resulted in [...] rethinking the purposes and possibilities of education.

I elaborate in Chapter 3 on the way in which the power-knowledge concepts used in this thesis connect with the literature on postcolonialism and decoloniality and the way in which Foucault (1972) and Freire (1996) have been used and interpreted. I aim to unsettle the existing historical knowledge to challenge the Eurocentric foundations of history teaching and meaningfully engage with the possibilities and limitations of the historical text, before setting out my own research agenda.

This research will inevitably bring together my own insider knowledge of history as a former student of the system, and as a researcher by reconstructing a dialogue with the narrative. By selecting key factual historical events to understand the meaning embedded behind the stories, this research looks at the way power that shapes modern life and influences how particular representations of identity develop, lead to actions and decisions.

2.4 The construction of language in history

As others have suggested (Al-Kassimi 2018), the linear model of history teaching promotes a one-way flow of ideas on how colonisation enabled a future based on progress, modernity and development and legitimised a painful past. Inherent in the NYCBE, I argue that the teaching and learning of history offers the “possibility of a new representation, of meaning-making and of agency” (Bhatt 2008: 182) to rearticulate history teaching to allow the student to challenge this space and rethink about their process of becoming.

Moving away from the traditional notions a dichotomous relationship between the coloniser and the colonised which have informed the construction of history, this thesis acknowledges the fluidity and dynamic construction of language. If the colonial times testify an oppositional relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, Bhabha (1994) uses the concept of ambivalence to destabilize the authoritative aspect of colonial disposition. Ambivalence challenges the authority of colonial supremacy and disturbs the one-to-one relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. Bhabha (1994) refers to the Third Space (herewith referred to as third space) as a zone that transcends the historical antagonism and reconfigures the relationship between the dominant culture and the Other – an “in-betweenness” (Dillabough 2002: 207)

The making of a third space does not thus grant a voice or a visibility to the other. Instead, through exposing and discussing dilemmas in resonance, a new space is formed – something that is not entirely ours, but neither is it completely different from ourselves. (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2020: 30)

Bhabha (2014) described this “contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation as a space that we will find those words with which we can speak of *Ourselves* and *Others*” (as quoted in Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2020: 30). The third space, in fact, transcends the politics of polarity and dominance/subjugation to reconstitute the relationship

between the self and Other hereby promoting the conditions for cultural exchange. Bhabha (2014) further opens up a distinction between the concepts of *cultural diversity* and *cultural difference* and the need to clarify the enunciation of cultural difference that can take place in that space of this “in-betweenness”. “By exploring this interstitial space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves” (Qasmiyeh and Fiddian-Qasmiyeh 2020: 133–4).

The powerful rethinking of this third space or “hybridity” (Bhabha 1994) implies that history ought to rest on the notion of cultural difference, and not cultural diversity.

Cultural diversity is an epistemological object—culture as an object of empirical knowledge—whereas cultural difference is the process of the *enunciation* of culture as ‘*knowledgeable*’, authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification. If cultural diversity is a category of comparative ethics, aesthetics, or ethnology, cultural difference is a process of signification through which statements *of* culture or *on* culture differentiate, discriminate, and authorize the production of fields of force, reference, applicability, and capacity. (Bhabha 1994: 24)

This quote suggests two relevant points as I analyse the textbooks narrative: Bhabha indicates how difference and hybridity exist concurrently as we read the world – this translates for me as the ability to use my interpretation of history as a Mauritian with lived experiences of the system and acknowledge that my reading is also informed by the Western traditions and structures of power within which I write and think. The second point relates the way Bhabha acknowledges the agency of culture to produce systems of knowledge which asserts of legitimacy and diversity of alternative epistemologies. The third space becomes this structure in which language can be appropriated, and re-textualized to challenge the historical identity and hybridity emergences as a consequence of this interaction.

It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this hybridity, this third space, we allude [to] the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves. (Bhabha 1994: 88)

Central to the idea of “hybridity”, I argue that critical pedagogy can deepen a normative understanding that we are connected to our past and supports a hybrid sense of localness and foreignness (Samuel and Mariaye 2019: 27). The analysis in Chapter 5 deconstructs the textuality to examine how the text legitimises the way we read and think about history. While our present is justified by a discourse of freedom, moving away from linear thinking, and neat storylines to recognising and discovering contradictions and ambiguities, this thesis engages with Freire’s emancipating process of reflection (Czank 2012) to question who we are and how we become as we are, as Zuleika Bibi Sheik puts it,

grappling with what is left after we strip away the years, accolades and achievements bestowed upon us by indoctrinated formal schooling and learning how to speak from and beyond the colonial wound as an act of collective healing and what it means to live-think-be and do decolonial feminist work. [This process of reflection] asks us to reimagine ourselves in relation, invoking within us the connection to ourselves, our ancestors, the land, our bodies and others, so that the knowledge that is inherent and deep within us may be cultivated. It asks, when we peel away the layers of scar tissue necrotised at the colonial wound through ‘epistemological deep listening’ and heal all that has been erased, denied, shamed, negated and exiled, what emerges? (2020: 2)

The quest for a recognised sense of self also demonstrates how the subjugation of minority groups are part of larger global struggles. This research looks at how the *small stories* in the textbooks introduce the students to time, places and heroes as well as social and political initiatives that reinforce (or not) a positive and critical expression of equality and social justice in practice. This research re-textualizes written language to create an active space of dialogue to claim our humanity by engaging with a conversation on the reality of power and re-imagining a future based on reflexivity, liberation and empowerment (Agboka 2014: 298).

I am invested in this thesis in understanding the extent to which the colonial legacy contributes to the way we see ourselves, as descendants of the colonised. The role of the postcolonial, according to Gayatri Spivak, is to “reverse and displace” (Spivak 2003: 97). By unsettling the existing text, it forces the reader to reassess privilege, moving away from western institutions within modernisation and globalisation, to embrace the geopolitics of knowledge (Mignolo 2007). In Chapter 3, I examine in more detail how I read and think of history grounded in the works of Frantz Fanon (1952) and Edward Said (1995) as the basis for epistemic justice.

2.5 Situating history teaching

History [...] play an important role in the curriculum as they prepare children for the world they live in and for their adult life. They seek to promote an understanding of the complex and interdependent world and to impart a broad set of common values such as valuing our own selves, our families and our local communities, other peoples and places, and the environment. (Curriculum 2006: 109)

In a multicultural society as Mauritius, learning about our ancestry and values have been fundamental in promoting a sense of patriotism, of “deep horizontal comradeship”(Anderson 1983:16) as a nation where national unity is critical as part of national building. By developing an “imagined community” (Anderson 1993), this thesis draws on the social construction of unity itself where

the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion (Anderson 1983: 15).

Where does history teaching situate itself? School history textbooks have been associated with a passive consumption of a ‘boring’ text (Issit 2004; Hawkey 2007) where “textbook knowledge served to express, the traditions of scholasticism,

deductive logic and rote learning of received knowledge negatively associated with textbooks” (Issit 2004: 686-687). This research challenges the traditional status quo of the *boring* text to examine how the new narrative might encourage students to think and value the nuances of historical knowledge.

In this thesis I build on the existing literature on historical thinking where scholars have examined how students make meaning out of historical concepts such as empathy, evidence, historical significance and engage with their narratives (Stearns et al 2000). Other researchers have built on sociocultural approaches to history education that focusses on the socio-political context in which the historical narratives are embedded. This approach unravels the political and cultural dimensions of historical thinking that explains how we ought to look at the student’s culture and identity in the teaching and learning of history.

In this paper I situate history within a decolonised epistemology as I examine history from the perspective of the voiceless and assess how the historical text promote emancipatory ways of thinking and acting. This brings me back to Foucault’s mechanisms of control that affect the way we interact with the social world. He used the concept of the “panopticon” (Foucault 1977) as a metaphor to illustrate how societies subjugate its citizens from a central location, that is panoptic. Within those “unconscious” structures, students are exposed a type of knowledge where they are told what to think and how to think that generate norms and determine the student’s sense of self. The panopticon provides the blueprint as an instructive model with systems of control within a neoliberal agenda that gives the teacher specific instructions on what to teach and how to teach alongside the targets/teaching guidelines. The system therefore achieves its aims: the internationalisation of the disciplinary mechanism itself. This carefully thought out curriculum leads to the “need

of conscious control” (Hayek 1945: 527) or “guided freedom” (Ward 2011: 191) that allows power to remain in a sense anonymous.

This research invites the reader to examine what is valuable and unique (Wineburg 2001) about our Mauritian history by looking at the process of reading history. While in the past, memorizing historical facts distinguished “the educated from the uneducated” (Stearns 1993), this thesis argues that the contemporary narrative interprets the teaching of history as a space to interact with the world. By questioning our filiations/affiliations (Portes et al 1999), this research aims to recognise how language shape our understanding of history and ultimately how the students can develop the competencies to critically question the inequalities embedded in society.

Gaudelli (2009: 71) argued that the learners must re-invent themselves to survive in this new ideology. With the increased interconnection between countries and cultures contributing to forming a more homogenous world, it suggests the emergence of a unified world. Maldonado-Torres wrote

Children are expected to aspire to bring about a future that is an extension of the present and a future that affirms and redeems the present and the past. In societies with a segregationist or colonial past and with a present of systemic inequalities, [youth] are expected to play a major role sanctioning the present order and continuing its existence in the future. In this context, as soon as youth — some youth, any youth — have a dissatisfaction with the present, a different perception of the past, and/or different ideas about the future they are perceived as a problem [...] since youth represent the future, their view as a problem causes a battle of temporalities to ensue, but also one of definitions of space and subjectivity, particularly if the youth in question are part of social groups whose lands have been taken and whose forms of subjectivity are vilified. Nothing less than the definition of the very basis of sociality — the self and its relation to the other in time and space — is at stake, and so also the understanding of the conditions on which people should get to explore ideas and share expressions that would help them to make and remake themselves, their space, and their sense of time. This explains why [history] learning has become such important zones of struggle: it is there that a great amount of youth and other students come together to explore those ideas and get to determine how they are going to position themselves in relation to them. (Maldonado-Torres 2016: 2-3)

2.6 Analytical framework, method, and data

Theoretically, by looking at the construction of knowledge through “lived experiences”, this research challenges the traditional epistemic position of textbook research (Grever and Van der Vlies 2017) and allows for an alternative epistemology to “create counter-hegemonic intellectual spaces in which new readings of the world can unfold, in ways that lead us toward possibilities of social and material change” (Darder 2018: 94). By recognising that there are alternative ways of examining the school textbooks, I examine the social injustices and inheritances of history through the stories being taught from postcolonial and decolonial traditions (Bhambra 2014) to speak of the critical issues of subordination and marginalisation that subaltern communities had to face over the years. This research situates itself within an epistemology of the Global South (Santos 2007) that reflects a Mauritian heritage, experience and perspective that strives to move away from a Eurocentric imagination (Darder 2018) to provide an epistemologically fluid and flexible means of knowing the world that would “deterritorialize and destabilize the fixity of knowledge” (Paraskeva 2011: 3).

I reframe history teaching within a dialogue between Postcolonial studies (Spivak 1988; Bhabha 1994; Said 1995) and Decolonial perspectives (Quijano 2007; Mignolo 2000) despite their inherent disciplinary differences with their geographical origins and remit (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020). I argue that both traditions of thought “challenge the insularity of historical narratives” (Bhambra 2014: 115) and provide the theoretical arguments to interrogate historical inequality and the historical legacy. I propose in this contemporary approach ways of decentring coloniality to not only reveal situations of oppression and subordination but to disrupt it through questioning the inherent assumptions that underline the text. Foucault (1972) informs the kinds of questions that emerge from this theoretical analysis by providing the contour to questioning

about discourse and the production of knowledge within colonial power (Nichols 2010: 119).

To answer the research question: How is history (re)presented in the SMS textbooks? the research corpus consists of the trilogy of history school textbooks (Grade 7 to Grade 9) where selected stories are deconstructed to examine the ways in which texts are produced and potentially consumed through the lines of inquiry developed in Chapter 4. I argue that this source of data will offer a discursive narrative to map how colonial encounters described in the historical narratives define our past, present and future.

This research also draws on the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) on *Decolonising Methodologies*, who elaborated how “decoloniality” as an epistemology begins with embracing existential realities of suffering, of oppression and domination. Smith (1999) wrote

to acquiesce is to lose ourselves entirely and implicitly agree with all that has been said about us. To resist is to retrench the margins, retrieve what we were and remake ourselves. The past through its consumption, circulation and reproduction, its stories, local and global, the present, our communities, cultures, languages and social practices – all may be spaces of marginalisation, but they have also become spaces of resistance and hope. (4)

Smith (1999) insisted that research is not an innocent academic pursuit but driven with an agenda, that is not always explicit, but a reflection of societal and political ideology of institutions and individuals. Within this epistemology, I resist deconstructing the text from the perspective of the colonised, but I instead allow the text to shape and define history and theorise hope as a space of critical resistance. Bhabra (2014: 116) wrote

By bearing witness to different pasts, one is not a passive observer but is able to turn from interrogating the past to initiating new dialogues about that past

and thus bringing into being new histories and from those new histories, new presents and new futures.

By confronting the written language using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis (1992), I use the words in a counter-hegemonic way to invite the reader to listen and hear history from the perspective of the colonised. As a method of analysis, this approach (further elaborated in Chapter 4) provides a commitment to social constructivism and presents us with rich material to make sense of our experiences and for the construction of our identity.

Niewolny (2009: 2) elaborates on "a critical agenda [that] underlies the CDA framework, enabling researchers to pose questions of politics and resistance". In fact, by deconstructing the assumptions, motivations and values that inform the narratives and connecting with the historical struggles, the storylines, and the semiotics that inspire the textuality in the textbooks, this research aims to assist in the democratisation of the teaching of history. As Vasquez (2014) puts it, it is only by 'deconstructing' and 'reconstructing' the texts where issues of power, oppression, resistance, and social injustices are made more visible, can this research find the impetus for taking social action.

Hountondji (2002: 78) courageously wrote in his struggle for constructing meaning that he had

to work on the margins [and] to clear the field patiently, establish the legitimacy and the outlines of an intellectual project that was at one authentically African and authentically philosophical.

I propose to follow his footsteps in developing respectful research (Cole and O'Riley 2012) into historical narratives emphasising the richness of small stories. Agboka (2014: 318) believed that it is important to develop this sensitivity to understand

narratives and this “knowingness” is, I argue, about my ability to authentically engage with the colonial legacies as an insider.

Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

3.1 The rationale

I offer an overview of a conceptual framework that brings together the theoretical concepts offered by decolonial and postcolonial theories into a conversation with a critical pedagogy, using the intersection of two influential thinkers Paulo Freire and Michel Foucault. By deconstructing the power relations and the status of historical knowledge through theoretical grounding of the works of Paulo Freire (1996) and complemented by Michel Foucault's (1972) analysis of the theorisation of power, the analysis exposes how the historical text attempts to develop a more nuanced understanding of history moving away from a totalized project exclusively articulated and engineered through the voice of the West (Al-Kassimi 2018:2).

Freire(1996) frames my own thinking on the textuality of history teaching in Mauritius. Freire (1996) criticised the banking model of education which sees students as passive, empty vessels to be filled by the wise all-knowing teachers that discouraged critical thinking. By applying Freire's emancipatory way of thinking, I argue that history teaching ought to encourage learners to become critically constructive in their understanding of historical knowledge and who they are so they can make informed choices that influences their world. The students can only then emerge from their educational experiences more than school subjects. While Freire focussed on what education does and what it should do, I argue that Freire's limitation lies in the way this education (through its curriculum) comes into being.

I argue that Foucault (1972) adds to Freire's perspective by encouraging this research to elaborate further on the nature of power relationships to encourage the student to think the unthought. By asking fundamental questions on a curriculum that tells us how to think and what to think, Foucault (1972) informs the kinds of questions I ask

as I challenge how history is presented by examining specifically the authorship and the regimes of practices. Together, Freire's language of critical thinking and Foucault's language of divergent thinking contribute to a language of reflection as the student rethinks the possibilities of history teaching and learning. I further elaborate on a Freirean and Foucauldian approach to textuality in Section 3.2.2.

This chapter illustrates the relationship between the concepts used in this research within a system of belief, assumptions and theories that support and inform the research (Antonenko 2015). Drawing on Antonenko's (2015) definitions of conceptual frameworks, I choose to view this conceptual framework as a way of aligning all key components of this research "to convince the reader of the study's importance and rigor" (Ravitch and Riggan 2012: 7). This framework recognizes the "epistemic beliefs that serve as a lens for understanding how knowledge is defined, constructed, and evaluated, where knowledge resides, and how knowing occurs" and conceptual frameworks are "more than a literature review" (Antonenko 2015: 56-59) as they "add coherence, clarity, relevance and logic" (ibid. 67), organize the researcher's thinking process and serve as a 'scaffold' to guide the research inquiry, creating a *powerful theory-based argument*. This will be discussed again in Chapter 5 as I interpret the results.

This research attempts to problematise the teaching of history and broader political and cultural pressures that inform it by critically looking at the way discourses are produced, taught, and strengthened. I consider it is necessary to take a step back to provide a space to underline the way written language has been defined and used in this research (Section 3.2). By moving away from the elusive value of history teaching based on a "consensus-based model" (Psaltis et al 2017: 49), I will be making connections with Freire's (1996) views of knowledge as an emancipatory process and the development of critical consciousness alongside Foucault's perspective on power

(Foucault 1977) and his critical approach to the study of language (Foucault 1972). The aim of this critical dialogue will uncover nuances that critical pedagogy alone may miss by making connections between those two authors' foundational contribution to the philosophy of education.

Section 3.3 then brings history teaching to the forefront as a site of enunciation where I interrogate the colonial entanglements and silences of history and engage with the legacy of colonialism within a postcolonial and decolonial dialogue (Bhambra 2014). This section describes the values and assumptions about discourses of empire and subalternity that inform the institutions of our times, and questions them by looking at the histories and evolutions. This chapter concludes with Section 3.4 where I specifically draw on the works of two leading scholars Franz Fanon (1952; 2001) and Edward Said (1983; 1995) as they recognized the 'colonised wound' (Fanon 1952; 2001) in a long history of denial of ways of being and doing. They urged us to look at the oppressive colonial foundations and mechanisms of colonialism that still persist today in the production of knowledge.

3.2 History: Text, Textuality and Discourse

This section explores the concept of the written word in remembering the past. An overview of the knowledge systems surrounding the study of written language in this research starts with Said's (1983) understanding of how words and the contexts within which they are read and used matters.

What words are doing, what designs they might have upon us, can only be understood from within their own world; which is not only a world of semantic and synchronic structure, but also a world of dialectical and diachronic development. The world is the book. (Nixon 2012: 82)

While there is a rich body of literature on the centrality of language in textbooks (Harmon 2015; Govender 2011; Olson 1980; Owadally 2013), in this section, I apply the ontological vocation in Freire's (1996) work to a Mauritian teaching context. This inspires me to look at the construction of a narrative as a powerful meaning making tool to reimagine the world as "colonies can avert asymmetry, prejudice and injustice when dialogue and exchanging of learning are their founding principles" (Samuel and Mariaye 2014: 519).

3.2.1 The text

The curriculum is never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts [...] it is always part of a selective tradition, someone's selective, and some group's vision of legitimate knowledge. It is produced out of the cultural, political and economic conflicts, tensions, and compromises that organize and "disorganize" people. (Apple 1993: 1)

This research begins with an inquiry into how texts are produced, understood, and reproduced. It goes beyond the fixity of texts to embrace the meaning and creation of written language within a discursive context. I found it helpful to draw on Gee (2011), who elaborates on the representation of language as "the result of social interactions, negotiations, contestations, and agreements among people. It is inherently variable and social" (21).

As words assume new meanings as they are being negotiated and contested, this research attests to the fluidity of knowledge and how "texts are never neutral" (Vasquez et al 2004: 4). If texts are never neutral, then neither are those who construct texts, nor those who read texts. Critical literacy reveals how dominant groups have often placed themselves at the centre of how history is written, how the world is created, and how the students (viewed more than a passive receptor) read and

assimilate the texts within their own identity categories and ideological constructions (Gail and Altbach 1984; Wa Thiong'O 2005).

By recognizing that the world is a socially constructed text that can be read as learners read the word and the world (Freire and Macedo 1987), this research reveals the “constructedness” of the text as “versions of reality” (theantiracisteducator.com 14.10.2021) that “situates the subaltern sensibilities at the epicenter, driving and producing research that speaks to the specificities of their subalternity” (Darder 2018: 102). To critically be able to engage with how language influences the way students interact with history, this thesis analyses the repertoire of questions and learning activities to evaluate whether the student is reading *with* the text rather than reading *against* the text. What this research brings to the discussion is how much of the thinking within the new educational reform pushes the reader to think “from, alongside and *with*” (Walsh 2012: 12) the stories being told. To read *with* a text, the student carefully reads the text as intended by the author while reading *against* the text raises more question such as: What does this text tell me about the author? Who is included/excluded in the narrative? Why? Whose perspective does this text represent? Whose interests are served by the text? What are the limits of the text?. Those questions evaluate the way students potentially consume the text (Janks et al. 2013: 238) by naming the world and denouncing the oppressive realities (Freire 1996) to

recognize and comprehend it, the otherwise is that which exists in the borders, edges, fissures and cracks of the modern/colonial order that which continues to be (re)molded, (re)constituted and (re)shaped both against and despite coloniality. (Walsh 2012: 12)

This thesis recognises that texts are intrinsically related to issues of power. Wineburg (2001) further claimed that texts are presented and accepted by teachers and students as a fixed story of objective truth as the “collective authors’ voices are never made clear, seem to take no point of view, and present information that is primarily economic

and political". In writing the textbooks, the authorship is also seen as the "omniscient narrator" (Grever and Van der Vlies 2017:288) who constructs a space in which they disappear behind an unemotive voice as they reconstruct the past to inform the contemporary realities. The writing is formal, clear, and concise, communicating the idea that emotion is irrelevant. For Foucault (1988:209) authorship is a problem; we must, he argued "locate the space left empty by the author's disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the opening this disappearance uncovers". This is where Foucault challenges the authorship, the representation of the "I" – who wrote the text and what was their position? While Foucault does not offer methodological "certainties" (Tamboukou 2011), "they do encourage and inspire the making of new questions to interrogate the truths of our world" (Tamboukou 1999: 215).

Still, I could claim that after all, these were only trails to be followed, it mattered little where they led; indeed, it was important that they did not have a predetermined starting point and destination. They were merely lines laid down for you to pursue or to divert elsewhere, for me to extend upon or redesign as the case might be. They are in the final analysis, just, and it is up to you or me to see what we can make of them. (Foucault 1980b: 79)

The question of how language is understood and how the knowledge can be represented in words (Jenkins 1992) is captured in this short excerpt by Gray:

"I will start", said the conjuror, "by explaining the world you live in. Everything is made of one thing."

"Atoms" said Lanark.

"No, Print [words]. Some words are made of atoms, but yours is made of tiny marks marching in neat lines, like armies of insects, across pages and pages and pages of white paper. I say these lines are marching, but that is a metaphor. They are perfectly still. They are lifeless. How can they reproduce the movement and noises of the battle of Borodino, the white whale ramming the ship, the fallen angels on the flaming lake?"

"By being read", said Lanark impatiently. (1987: 484-485)

There are central assumptions from this short conversation. The first one

is that written texts are mutually dependent and that to understand any particular text requires the reader to seek to understand the textual configuration of which it is a constitutive element. [Second], there is also the assumption that texts are deliberate interventions: they are actions; they are the products of willed agency; expressions of cognitive intelligence. [Third], they have designs upon their readers and a vested interest in how related texts are read and interpreted. They are purposefully located by their authors within the constantly evolving polity of letters. Finally, there is the assumption that the world is inescapably wordy: how we understand the world, how we represent it, how we render it knowable, is part and parcel of what the world is and what it becomes. (Nixon 2012: 87)

This way of examining the text recognises that we ascribe meaning to the world as opposed to the view of the world as having meanings of its own that shape our way of imagining the past (Jenkins 1992). Chapter 4 provides the necessary steps that explain how “history should join hands with literary criticism in search of the ethical as it interrupts the epistemological” (Spivak 2003: 16). I do not intend to engage exclusively in a linguistic analysis in this thesis but shift the focus of the discussion on what lies beyond the text by examining the Discourse spelled with a capital “D” to engage with the wider context of the analysis (Gee 2011).

The meaning[s] we give to words are based on knowledge we acquire and choices we make, as well as values and beliefs – and yes, even interests – we have. Words are consequential. They matter. Words and the world are married. (Gee 2011: 25)

Borrowing Wa Thiong’O’s (2005) descriptions of language, this study examines how the written word in Mauritian history textbooks transmits an image to the world, which in turn influences the students who read them. The language of the text provides this “image-forming in a child’s mind” (15), that informs the way they perceive themselves and their place in the world; their “capacity to confront the world creatively is dependent on how those images correspond or not to that reality, how they distort or clarify the reality of our struggles” (2005: 15).

This links in with the work of critical linguists who view the ability to read the meanings in texts as the realization of social processes, which means seeing texts as functioning ideologically and politically in relation to their contexts (Threadgold 2003: 17). By embracing the critical value of the text, this interaction recognizes that we are *social products* of our *social histories* that act as a grounding force to root us to our heritage, but it also allows us to enter our critical futures by discussing issues around resistance, contradictions and radical possibilities. Fanon's ideas add to the discussion of language within the wider cultural and political situation as he argued that

to [write] means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization (Fanon 1952: 17-18).

Allahar (2011: 244- 245) points out there are differences in the way history is told. Events that happened in the past can be recounted as facts but rely on historians to decide "to which facts to give the floor, in what order of context" (as quoted in Mulder 2016: 6). I consider Bennett's (1990) position that history is equally an act of interpretation, as the text invites the students to interpret history.

Keeping the past open ... serves every politics in principle but none in practice. For the latter requires, however provisionally, that the past be fixed, that what can be said of it ... be subject to definite limitations ... if those truths are to count for much. This is not a matter of closing down the past but simply of recognising that its openness cannot be infinite if the truths produced there are to prove actionable. (Bennett 1990: 281)

In my analysis I examine the tensions and disagreements in the texts as I unravel the location, the tensions and the schisms in which the text is being produced (Mambrol 2016). What this research seeks to find out is how the text engages with the historical enquiry skills and concepts to develop the historical imagination and historical empathy (Cooper 1992) of the students which he defined as

the ability to make a range of valid suppositions about the past, supported by arguments alongside the ability to understand the ways in which people in the past may have thought, felt and behaved differently based on their knowledge bases and the different social, political and economic constraints of the society in which they lived (Cooper 1992: 12).

In that line of thought, I agree with Jenkins who said,

If we want our children to understand the world they currently live in 'historically' then histories that are articulated in intellectually stimulating and critical ways and that link up with great suggestiveness to the vocabularies and methods now found in cognate discourses ought not to be ignored. (Jenkins 1992: 15)

To analyse the link between power and knowledge, critical literacy allows one to deconstruct and reconstruct the text in ways that challenges the linguistic strategies that shape the narratives. I specifically draw here on Foucault who argued that we ought to focus on the discontinuities of history, the breaks between the past and present, to demonstrate "the strangeness of the past, [and] relativize and interrogate the legitimacy of the present" (1972: 21-30). This is further elaborated by Jenkins (1992: 9),

There is an element of recent literary imperialism at work here which has inflected in quite specific ways this larger move towards 'textuality'. That is, the post-structuralist, post-modernist view of the past as an infinite text which can be endlessly re-textualised.

The social construction of the text recognizes that history as a written discourse is as liable to deconstructionism (Jenkins 1992), as the past can only exist in the way the present articulates it. Texts therefore can be deconstructed and reconstructed for "the purpose of changing problematic ways of being or doing" (Vasquez et al 2004: 8).

3.2.2 A Freirean and Foucauldian approach to textuality

As I mentioned above, Freire's (1996) philosophy on the role of pedagogy frames my own thinking on the textuality of history teaching. Freire's significant contribution to critical pedagogy originates from his ideas about the relationship between oppression, literacy and educational praxis. He criticized what he terms the banking model of education which sees students as passive, empty vessels to be filled by the wise all-knowing teachers. Freire linked this banking model of education to the relationship between the oppressor and oppressed. In the same way that the colonizer-colonized relationship was acceptable in the colonised era, the teacher-student relationship discourages critical thought and perpetuates oppression.

In the "pedagogy of the oppressed", Freire (1996) argued that an effective education is built upon a democratic relationship between the teacher and the student who are open to learning from one another. This relationship allows for 'conscientisation' - a critical awareness of one's social reality through reflection that precedes action. Conscientisation allows students to become aware of the contradictions in their social/political/economic contexts and they can take action to resolve those contradictions and ultimately achieve the democratic ideal of freedom and equality for all. Freire (1996) looked at knowledge acquisition as an emancipatory process, as part of a critical education for a just society. In his problem-posing approach to education, Freire argued that teachers ought to problematize issues discussed in class by having a dialogue where students bring their own perspectives for discussion, they can together implement change and successfully change the conditions of oppression.

While Freire wrote on the process of rediscovery, "he did not, however, clearly delineate the process of rediscovery" (Lotier 2017: 156). In other words, Freire focused on what education does and should do and less on how education through its

curriculum comes into being. If Foucault is saying that we need to understand how a history is written (and then what it 'does' to people), Lotier (2017) argued that Foucault (1972;1982), in a way, added to Freire's perspective by encouraging us to "pose a quite different question: *how* is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another" (Foucault 1972: 27). Foucault (1982: 786) asked the questions: "How", not in the sense of "How does it manifest itself?" but "by what means is it exercised?" and "what happens when individuals exert (as they say) power over others?" Drawing together insights from the intersection of the work of Freire and Foucault (Stinson 2016; Lotier 2017) allows this research to investigate the historical struggles and the intimate connection between the deeply hegemonic function of colonial-centric education and language. Fairclough (1992) recognizes the micro-analytical linguistic descriptions and how these textual practices are embedded within and constituted by social relations of power (Niewolny 2009: 3).

With history teaching being heavily invested by the notions of colonialism and power, it is critical here to understand how these power dynamics "create the conditions of possibility for specific narratives to emerge as dominant and for others to be marginalized" (Tamboukou 2011: 4). While the concept of power has been approached from many angles and theoretical perspectives (Hindess 1996; Wartenberg 1990; Wrong 1997), I choose to approach the complexity of power from a Foucauldian perspective as

A relational force that permeates the entire social body, connecting all social groups in a web of mutual influence. As a relational force, power constructs social organization and hierarchy by producing discourses and truths, by imposing discipline and order, and by shaping human desires and subjectivities. (Karlberg 2005: 4)

Foucault (1980: 102) situates himself against the expressions of power as he wrote "we should direct our research on the nature of power [...] and base our analysis of

power on the study of the techniques and tactics of domination". It is a question of analysing a regime of practices – “practices being understood here as places where what is said and what is done, rules imposed and reasons given, the planned and the taken for granted meet and interconnect” (1982: 75).

By moving away from the supposition that power is not necessarily inherently oppressive (Foucault 1977), Foucault argued that we cannot escape from power which is omnipresent and productive – reinforced through the educational system and the wider political and economic ideologies. He advocates that instead of trying to uncover and seek the “truth”, we ought to look at power/knowledge in constant negotiation that produces reality and knowledge as a discourse that can be transformed. By looking at the historical conditions, the assumptions, and the power relations behind the text I analyse how history is presented and can be shaped alternatively to achieve more meaningful freedom.

By drawing on the Freirean and Foucauldian philosophical toolbox, this thesis challenges the teaching and learning of history to create opportunities to develop a critical consciousness in understanding knowledge and existence through history based on reflection and action. By encouraging students to think the unthought (Stinson 2016: 76), they will be able to engage with wider struggles in the future by asking very pertinent questions such as

What is this text trying to do to me? Whose interests are marginalized or privileged by this text? Whose account of a particular topic or issue is missing? Said differently, whose voices are silenced? Whose voices are dominant? Whose reality is presented? Whose reality is ignored? What are the positions from which I am reading this text? What experiences am I drawing from to make meaning from this text? (Vasquez et al 2004: 5)

The text viewed from the perspective of the excluded and the subdued proposes counterhegemonic understandings and knowledges for social emancipation. The

Freirean and Foucauldian philosophies inform this analysis as they create opportunities to develop a critical consciousness in understanding knowledge and existence through the written language.

3.2.3 The Discourse

We live in an essentially unbalanced world. The flow of ideas, reflecting 500 years of Western domination of the globe, remains a one-way street – from the West to the East. Most Westerners cannot see that they have arrogated to themselves the moral high ground from which they lecture the world. The rest of the world can see this. (Mahbubani 2001: 9)

While stories we are told in history textbooks are varied, controversial, and contested in many ways, Jenkins (1992: 21) voiced how “history is never for itself, it is always for someone.” Who tells the story and how they ultimately define us, brings us to look at the intrinsic power of stories as they contribute to the construction and imagination of the nation (Carretero 2018).

This research claims as a starting point a Eurocentric experience of history teaching and learning. With the *language of imposition* (Kedzierski 2016), the globally imposed academic lingua franca in the form of the English language suggested power and dominance that urged a specific relationship to the world - a relationship of binary opposites: the Global North and the Global South, a position of superiority and inferiority. Weinstock (2014) suggests that the language policy

consists in the range of measures, coercive and incentival, that States enact in order to modify the linguistic repertoires and linguistic patterns of behaviour of individuals so as to make them reflective of what is considered to be the optimal value or set of values operative in the area of language. (Weinstock 2014: 318)

Wa Thiong’O (2005: 91) describes an acculturation process that takes places in a child’s mind reinforces the way colonised children and future generations define

themselves as “English speaking” (and French speaking in the case of Mauritius) to the outside world – a status that has brought with it “accidental advantages” (Kedzierski 2016: 68).

The child was exposed exclusively to a culture that was a product of a world external to himself ... the colonial child was made to see the world and where he stands in it as seen and defined by or reflected in the culture of the language of imposition. (Wa Thiong’O 2005: 17)

As Fanon argued “speaking a language meant above all assuming a culture and bearing the weight of a civilization” (1952: 10) as he elaborated in his book *Black Skin, White Masks* that it was not just about speaking the master’s language but

speaking it in the right way, with the right accent and the right expressions. The more the colonised subject is able to speak this language, the whiter he gets and the more he is able to gain a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements. (Mulder 2016: 12)

Wa Thiong’O (2005) provides an interesting insight into the linguistic coloniality and the coloniality of being that have persisted in postcolonial countries, uprooting people’s language and their memories, resulting in them becoming voiceless. Sibanda (2021: 150) added language became a colonial tool for enslavement and created a being from a “non-human with no existence” and “as the racialised perspective would have it, the colonised did not have knowledge since they did not have language, and lack of language disqualified a person from humanitas”. By being deprived of the power to speak, deprived of an identity and humanity and forced into speaking the master’s language,

colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native’s brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. (Fanon 2001: 38)

Freire agreed with Fanon when he argued that that the oppressed want to resemble the oppressors but unlike Fanon, Freire believed that the oppressors could equally change their own thinking when he said, “those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly” (1996: 40). Wa Thiong’O (2005) argued that the world has witnessed a movement from “the physical violence of the battlefield” to the “psychological violence of the classroom” through the way in which language is used to teach as a means to subjugate. The “physical empire” has been pushed back but “the metaphysical empire remains” (9). He referred to this state of mind as colonial alienation, the

distancing of oneself from the reality around; and an active identification with that which is most external to one’s environment. It starts with a deliberate disassociation of the language of conceptualization, of thinking, of formal education, of mental development, from the language of daily interaction in the home and in the community. It is like separating the mind from the body so that they are occupying two unrelated linguistic spheres in the same person. (ibid. 28)

The outcome is a “calculated erasure of memory and forced amnesia” (Sibanda 2021: 154) and the censorship of certain elements in history which I will further elaborate in Chapter 5.

Wa Thiong’O’s language as being is not about revenge or erasure of colonial languages, but rather a practice of decentring colonial languages as the only real languages and the Eurocentric idea of humanity as the only humanity. The future imagined by wa Thiong’o is one of co-existence of languages, where all languages are equal in their differences. (Sibanda 2021: 158)

Fanon’s work takes me back to Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1995) as the latter speaks of the way the Eurocentric knowledge and power of the “West” constructed itself against the East. Said recognises the inherent relationship between power and the production of historical knowledge through his discussion between the dichotomy between the Occident and the Orient. Specifically, he demonstrates how the West’s

sense of superiority over the East as a result of “fallacious attitudes produced and developed during colonial times” (Said 1995: 2) continue to persist in modern times.

Constructing his argument with respect to Foucauldian thought on power and knowledge, Said translates the connection between colonial powers and colonised individuals and countries (Dizayi 2019: 81).

The Orient/Occident binary replicated as the coloniser/colonised or the East/West, influenced the way I argue knowledge is produced, taught and reproduced, with Europe/the West, being the dominant part of the binary and the East/rest of the world as the “Other” becoming part of our internalised colonial consciousness that is naturalised and essentialised in what is referred to as the “colonized mind” (Fanon 1952). I argue for the relevance of a contrapunctual reading (Said 1983) of the colonial discourse to assert the capability and agency of colonised people to recreate themselves by resisting “the cruel practices and treacheries that deform mankind’s history” (Said 1995:22). Dizayi (2019) pointed out how Said(1994) explains how texts represent intentions and attitudes and how they legitimize the positional superiority of western knowledge:

The point of contrapunctual reading must take account of both processes, that of imperialism and that of resistance to it, which can be done by extending our reading of the texts to include what was once forcibly excluded. (Said 1994 as cited in Dizayi 2019: 83)

Said (1983) situates the concept of interpretation in any act of reading. By locating the text within one’s historical context and understanding it within that context, Nixon (2012:83) commented how this “reworking is essential”. The questions that follow as part of this interpretation “Who produced it? When was it produced, how and for what purpose? What is missing?” Said (1983) advocates a *contrapuntual reading* of the text (to use the metaphor of music) as the reader goes over the same text from different angles where “interpretation becomes a matter of balancing authorial agency against

historical structure – a matter of understanding the process of ‘structuration’ as evidenced in specific texts” (Said 2004b:62). Said’s contrapuntual reading reminds me of Susie Lingham’s description of music and the notion of plurality in the contemporary.

By listening for difference in the syncopated rhythms and infinite turns and inflections, we recognise new simultaneously familiar yet strange and wonderful territories, still vulnerable to making and re-making. (Lingham quoted in Huangfu 2000: 175)

The challenge here is arguably how to understand history within its dominant conceptual framework as objectified visions and values, based on evidence acknowledgment (Sarti 2013), and value the nuances and different realities of history within a social and political context that reinforces a selective tradition (Williams 1989; Taxel 1989; Apple 2004). The selective tradition here reinforces the dominant ideology where narratives are strategically positioned to transmit the values and beliefs of those in power, that ultimately leads the reader to position himself/herself within this narrative and develop a belief system accordingly (Su 2007). Threadgold (2003) argued that the politics of deconstruction are precisely about unsettling this selective tradition, displacing hegemonic conceptual systems to affect social change. In this research, I propose to move beyond a western epistemology and “a language of empirical inquiry that has been predominantly anchored in fixed western epistemologies of patriarchal dominance, class divisions, heterosexism, abled bodies, and racializing reproduction” (Darder 2018:95).

In summary, this section highlights how texts are rarely pure and never simple (Lang 2003). Behind a text exists a figurative language, an emotional language, a structure, a historical judgement, and a political ideology that historically legitimized the present and the future political agenda (Carretero 2018: 97). Lang (2003: 8) wrote how “narratives can explain, narrative can argue, narratives can reveal a tight relationship

with sources of evidence". The fluidity of the narrative responds to changes in society, the economy and the education system itself. Through the stories we read, we can imagine the life of our ancestors, their emotions, appreciate their fears and treasure their hopes. Les Back (2019) defined hope as "the attention to the present and the anticipation that something unexpected will happen and emerge from its ruins. Hope, then, is not a belief but an empirical question." (5) The questions that this research seeks to address is *how* to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct the written language from those struggles from a postcolonial and decolonial stance that integrates rather than isolates knowledge about history. As discourses shape our interpretation of the texts (Janks, 2010), 'we' ought to reconstruct those texts to gain 'our' agency and bring to the forefront "the voices, perspectives, values and ways of being that are so often silenced by normative constructions" (Govender 2011: 58).

3.3 Reclaiming history

Desai and Sanya (2016: 12) wrote how "shared oppressions and exploitations, albeit experienced differently, led to shared resistance, and a desire for common emancipation". I argue this resistance and emancipation ought to be translated into an educational framework that educate about risks and fears. By examining the extent history teaching explore the systems of injustices and the way in which racial capitalism influences opportunities for the non-dominant groups, this thesis redefines our interaction with(in) the world in which we live with global systems of knowledge remain marked by powerful ideas and concepts that emerged from European modernity through systems of exploitation via colonialism and coloniality which continue to have a lasting impact today.

To find one's own way one cannot depend on the words of the master; one has to delink and disobey. Delinking and disobeying here means avoiding the traps of colonial differences, and has nothing to do with the rebellious artistic and intellectual acts that we are used to hearing about in European history. [...] In the non-European world it is a matter of delinking from dialectics and turning to analectics; and delinking from progress and seeking equilibrium. (Dabashi 2015: 20)

This research proposes an epistemology of disobedience (Mignolo 2009) that urges us to “delink” and “disobey” a Eurocentric way of thinking and to validate knowledge from the perspective of those who have suffered in a systematic way from the injustices produced by domination, discrimination and exclusion caused by colonialism. Moving from “dialectics” which I interpret as the use of opposing viewpoints to gain meaning to “analectics” associated with Enrique Dussel (2008) articulates a practical approach to ethics in a world that involves introducing the “Other” into the totality as part of an enriching self. By deconstructing racism, imperialist ideologies, colonial violence and reconstructing knowledge from the margins, from a perspective of fullness and abundance rather than scarcity and deficiency, this paradigm will inform and shape the inquiry process and analysis of the historical narrative.

By deconstructing the historical narrative within a postcolonial/decolonial framework, this research explores how history and its past shapes our language and recognizes how the humanity of people has often been denied to people of colour, indigenous persons, particularly women by the “knowledge systems” that emerged from colonialism and slavery. Fast forward into the future, in an era of globalisation and accelerated global interconnections, globalisation has also been described as the legacy of colonialism. Similar ideologies exist with the process of globalisation with the ongoing colonialism (Fukuyama, 2018) that is no longer related to conquer territories as part of the process of sovereignty, but created growing economic inequalities as the Global North as the settler exploit resources and cheap labour from

poorer countries in the Global South to maintain their wealth. To be able to “rehumanize” the other, Langer-Osuna and Nasir (2016: 723) argued that we need to understand the deep connections between the self and the society. At the core to this epistemological shift is teaching students to become makers of meaning (Darder 2018) to be able to (re)read the world and subaltern histories, in ways that critically and openly challenge what Freire referred to as the “tragic dilemma of the oppressed” (as quoted in Darder 2018).

3.3.1 Humanising History

I am particularly drawn to the way Fanon (1952; 2001) envisaged a fractured society to come forward and heal. Fanon’s vision looks at how the human self emerges from the entanglements of history as one aspires for dignity and equality to regain ownership over one’s self. By deconstructing the language of the colonised, the political and discursive conditions of the past and the epistemic violence, Fanon offers the colonised subject the opportunity to discover “dignity” and “to be true to oneself”, as he said:

Dignity is not located in seeking equality with the white man and his civilisation: it is not about assuming the attitudes of the master who has allowed his slaves to eat at his table. It is about being oneself with all the multiplicities, systems and contradictions of one’s own ways of being, doing and knowing. It is about being true to one’s Self. (Fanon 2008: vii)

By drawing on Fanon’s critical reductive humanism (Gordon 1995) that decentres the human being in their quest for human liberation, I am attempting to deconstruct in this research the dominant language in which history is taught. This humanizing endeavour that draws on the significance of lived experiences (McLaren 1998: 452) to re-invent

a new discourse to empower the exploited, the disempowered and the enslaved, which is

in line with Frantz Fanon's insistence that as colonised subjects liberate themselves from the colonizing frameworks that have constricted their voices and consciousness, they [...] show themselves capable of speaking the unspeakable. (Darder 2018: 98)

In *Can the subaltern speak?* Gayatri Spivak (1988) refers to a negative social space within a colonial context where there is no sense of agency, no sense of a distinctive identity for the subaltern to speak, leading to his/her social disempowerment. The real depth of Spivak's work becomes evident as we read language as a discourse, where meaningful utterances can provide the enabling conditions through which the subaltern can emerge from their position of disempowerment and start speaking for themselves. This decolonial attitude starts with deconstructing the assumptions, motivations and values that inform the historical text by connecting with the historical struggles, the story lines, the semiotics that inspire the textuality in the textbooks.

Deconstructing implies

interrogating distortions of people's life experiences, negative labelling, deficit theorizing, genetically deficient or culturally deficient models that pathologized the colonised Other – and retelling the stories of the past and envisioning the future. (Chilisa 2012: 17)

Le Grange (2019: 31) wrote "decolonisation does not necessarily mean turning back the clock to a time when the world was a different place – it needs to speak to challenges faced in a contemporary world". The way I interpret Fanon and use his insight on colonial violence in this thesis does not limit itself to a literal resistance and rejection of colonial systems but interrogates the mechanism of colonialism.

Drawing on the concept of “abyssal thinking”, Santos (2014) argued that humans are divided into distinct zones of being and non-being that results in the alienation of the latter within the wider context. By asking fundamental questions such as “Who and when, why and where is knowledge generated ... Asking these questions means to shift the attention from the enunciated to the enunciation” (Mignolo 2009: 2). Mignolo forces the reader to articulate what lies beyond the construction of situated knowledges in addressing those fundamental questions for “any epistemic de-colonial de-linking” (2) to begin. By “delinking” from the existing rules of the game and deprivileging an imperialistic view of humanity based on the rhetoric of modernity, I embraced Thiong’O’s work on *Decolonising the Mind* that privileges human dignity which is based on a decolonial view of humanity. Grosfoguel (2007) points out that doing this does not imply becoming inward looking, anti-European or fundamentalist. On the contrary, a decolonial approach allows a truly universal outlook which looks at “how ideas are always arrived at from a variety of sources – there is no one truth out there, but many truths” (Bhabra 2014: 10).

By imagining a social future in which we acknowledge our own positionality, cognitive biases and our contemporary sensibilities, this research unveils the hidden logic of power relations and works towards articulating an alternative way of thinking for a unified future. This position illustrates an epistemic shift that urges one to critically question the existing reality that identifies the current capitalist patriarchal structures as inherently oppressive towards people of colour and attempts to strengthen a system that has been inherently imperialist to create an inclusive platform by interrogating the narratives of racism and imperialism.

3.3.2 Reading the Mauritian History within a postcolonial and decolonial dialogue

This thesis uncovers an under-researched area in textbook research in its attempt to present an epistemological shift in the way the Mauritian historical narratives are examined. The analysis looks at forging a connection between a postcolonial and a decolonial dialogue (Bhambra 2014) and demonstrates how those two broad churches will guide the research. The postcolonial and decolonial frameworks (Bhambra 2014) begin with an imperial history that still offends the deepest sense of our humanity that we ought to seek freedom from. I choose to engage with a *critical dialogue* with the traditions associated with the postcolonial and decolonial arguments in what Bhambra called *connected sociologies* to challenge our way of thinking about history and transforming it into an emancipatory discipline. She wrote:

Postcolonial and decolonial arguments have been most successful in their challenge to the insularity of historical narratives and historiographical traditions emanating from Europe. This has been particularly so in the context of demonstrating the parochial character of arguments about the endogenous European origins of modernity in favour of arguments that suggest the necessity of considering the emergence of the modern world in the broader histories of colonialism, empire and enslavement. (2014: 115)

While the postcolonial approach acknowledges the enduring practices of colonialism of imperialism, it also emphasises the significance of those colonial practices to our understanding of our history and the need to reclaim and rethink the history and agency of people who have been subordinated. The decolonial argument decentres the hegemony and encourages the decolonisation of historical thinking and this is translated into uncovering the stories that pertain to colonised and marginalised peoples and challenging how our history has been traditionally constructed and taught by looking at implicit colonial ways of thinking. By reframing history within a dialogue

between postcolonial studies (Spivak 1988; Bhabha 1994; Said 1995) and decolonial perspectives (Maldonado-Torres 2007; Quijano 2007; Mignolo 2000), I argue despite their inherent disciplinary differences due to their geographical origins and remit (Bhabra 2014; Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020) both traditions provide the theoretical arguments to interrogate the processes of knowledge production to embrace meaningfully our historical legacy. Both traditions of thought “challenge the insularity of historical narratives” (Bhabra 2014: 115) to attest how our inheritance transcends from the convergence of the diversity of cultures.

While both are concerned with emancipation, there is a tendency within postcolonial studies to map ethnicity onto Marxist theories of emancipation while decolonial [studies] maintains critical distance to and unearths the whiteness of Marxist traditions (Mignolo 2011). Decolonial thought, on the other hand, emphasises that struggles for independence from (western) globalisation mandate the participation of local traditions and cultures as critical hermeneutical resources. (Chin Ming 2019: 194)

The desirability of a postcolonial model typified in social sciences privileges history, western colonialisms and deconstruction (Chin Ming 2019). As Bhabra (2014: 117) puts it “postcolonial scholarship has been integral to the exercise of opening out and questioning the implied assumptions of the dominant discourses by way of which we attempt to make sense of the worlds we inhabit. As Venn also noted,

postcolonialism is both a theorization of the interconnections between the present and the past, the local and the global, the vernacular and the cosmopolitan, the postcolonial and the postmodern and a tool for attempting to overcome the underlying problem of opening critical spaces for new narratives of becoming and emancipation. (2006: 1)

Other scholars such as Borst et al (2018) maintained that to unpack the negotiation of our identities and social futures, both the postcolonial and the decolonial traditions should be read together, not in opposition to each other as, despite their alternative worldviews, they both start with colonialism.

In postcolonial thought, the spotlight is mostly on the resilience of oppressive structures in peoples' minds and behaviours. In decolonial thought, there is more emphasis on the agency of the colonised both within the process of colonial domination and the process of decolonising their own minds and social structures. (Borst et al. 2018: 45)

Thematic concepts such as dominance, hegemony, racism, inequality connected to object/subject position in the coloniser/colonised and the oppressor/oppressed dialectic provides a useful model for understanding power gradients. If the postcolonialism paradigm seems very restrictive within its emphasis on binarisms (oppressor/oppressed, imperial/subaltern etc), decolonial thought provides the space to understand how current systems of knowledge are structured and how we recover our subaltern epistemologies (Chin Ming 2019). Bhabha's work is particularly relevant here as he argued that we ought to “move beyond narratives of ordinary subjectivities” in favour of the ‘in-between’ spaces [...] that initiate new signs of identity” and that “we must not merely change the narratives of our histories but transform our sense of what it means to live” (1994: 256).

Within the many intellectual strands of decolonisation (Jansen 2019), this research's epistemology analyses the tradition of decoloniality, articulated as the colonial legacies grounded in the work of Bhabha (1994), Quijano (2007), and Mignolo (2011). By moving the conversation forward away from the colonised/coloniser dichotomy to embrace the embeddedness of our colonial being through our past, I argue that

a task of de-colonial thinking is the unveiling of epistemic silences of Western epistemology and affirming the epistemic rights of the racially devalued, and de-colonial options to allow the silences to build arguments to confront those who take ‘originality’ as the ultimate criterion for the final judgment. (Mignolo 2009:4)

As Ndlovu-Gatsheni aptly pointed out

decoloniality involves re-telling of history of humanity and knowledge from the vantage point of those epistemic sites that received the “darker side” of modernity, including re-telling the story of knowledge generation as involving borrowings, appropriations, epistemicides, and denials of humanity of other people as part of the story of science. It is also a call for democratisation of knowledge, de-hegemonisation of knowledge, and de-Europeanisation of knowledge. (2013: 10).

With this epistemological break, decolonising history interrogates the historical narratives by interrogating the assumptions behind the text produced. Colonisation has been justified on the economic justification of how the world worked and those assumptions informed and justified the expansion of colonial rule in the world. However, Santos (2007) spoke of a sense of exhaustion haunting the Global North, which has led to the idea that global social injustice cannot be addressed by conventional means. He advocates an epistemological revolution with an Epistemology of the South, as a space for transformation to imagine and build democratic, just societies. Santos (2014) described his “epistemology of the South” as

a set of inquiries into the construction and validation of knowledge born in struggle, of ways of knowing developed by social groups as part of their resistance against the systematic injustices and oppressions caused by capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy. (Santos 2014: 0)

I argue that the simultaneous reading of postcolonialism alongside a decolonial reading of the text would radically decentre western thinking and power.

3.3.3 (Re) designing language

I aim to reclaim language in this research as a means to think, enunciate and speak as a marker of being (Mignolo 2011a) as language becomes a means by which the “dis-membered (coloniality) being can be re-membered (decoloniality)” (Sibanda 2021: 143) – through a process of “recuperation” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2020) to restore history.

In the analytic step, the individual distances himself/herself (akin to bracketing in phenomenology) from the past and future and analyses how the past, future and the present imbricate one another. By distancing himself/herself from the past and future the individual is able to experience a moment of freedom from the present – free from colonising thoughts. In the synthetic moment the individual re-enters the present with a renewed sense of self, able to see the wholeness of past, present and future, and asks ‘What does this mean?’ and ‘What can I do?’ This is the moment when the individual is able to join others or mobilise others in collective action to alter the present that will make possible a different future”. (Le Grange 2019:39 as cited in Pinar 2011)

Pinar’s (2011:40) description is reminiscent of the process of conscientization and the development of critical consciousness (Freire 1996). The pedagogy of knowing, within a Freirean discourse, views knowledge as a way for social and political change within a framework of reflection and action. This perspective allows for a deconstructive and reconstructive epistemology (Santos 2007) by examining the power differentials of peoples who have been seen as naturally inferior to others and giving them a space to be represented in the world.

To get a sense of our origins and our history, particularly in a small multicultural country with a colonial past where there are so many stories to tell and difficult realities to forgive, this research attempts to unravel the past by looking at the historical scholarship and exploring the meaning of the small stories as part of larger narratives.

As the production of historical texts are normally organized around the concepts of progress and freedom (Carretero 2018: 101), narratives also lead us to interrogate the social structures of power and oppression by asking questions ‘how’, ‘with whom’, ‘from where’ (Walsh 2012) that draws on the significance of relationality (Vázquez 2012) to be able to reflect on contexts of struggles. Vázquez (2012) defined this relationality as a

form of a togetherness where there is no dichotomy between master and slave. The key concept for them is ‘us’ [togetherness], a word that indicates semantically that there are no kings, chiefs, no caudillos, caciques or ‘mandones’ (patrons), words that don’t exist. (Vázquez 2012: 5)

Aziz Ali Dad (2018) describes our contemporary society as becoming *more opinionated* and *less knowledgeable* because their knowledge is based on a monologue text offered in books. Readers tend to focus on a collective corpus in the form of ready-made views and conclusions but miss the “inner geological changes and processes of thinking before thought bursts forth on the upper terrain of ideas” (Thinking in the age of unthought 30.09.2018). He criticised the modern perspective of thinking as it

lacks the idea of “what thinking is [...] we act too much with little thought, as a result, our actions remain meaningless, and we take our opinion as thinking or knowledge [...] Thinking the unthought” therefore, opens an intellectual space that offers a dialectical conversation that enables us “to think after thoroughly thinking through. (Aziz Ali Dad 30.09.2018)

In this context, I argue that it is important for students to think from and with their own lived experience to fully understand how coloniality and decoloniality continue to operate in the modern world – a concept that links to Seixas’ cultivation of historical thinking which he defined as the ability to deepen one’s

understanding of historical events and processes through active engagement with historical texts, establishing historical significance, identifying continuity and change, analysing cause and consequence, taking historical perspectives and understanding the ethical dimensions of historical interpretations. (2004: 72)

By making connections with the past and the history of our ancestors, historical knowledge enables us to find out about our lineage, our *métissage* and our history of resistance by looking at the explicit and implicit meanings of the texts. By recognising through a critical reading of the text the contradictions, the tensions, the unknown and the ambiguities, the students reading the books can understand the complexity of the diverse society we live in today and (re)construct and (re)define their cultural distinctiveness and their “new” identity. The analysis in Chapter 5 examines how the

text opens this conversation. The quest for self-understanding and distinctiveness is defined as “the sense of who [we] are. It is about sameness with others and uniqueness of the self” (Val and Vinogradova 2010: 1).

Understanding Western Eurocentric history and its historicity as flooded by silences is perceiving not just the very colour of coloniality, but also how such colour was constructed right at the onset of colonialism (Paraskeva 2011: 200).

By (re)designing language (Janks 2013) in history as a space for negotiation, contestation, and reimagination and going beyond the process of discovering (Seixas 2004), the student can meaningfully engage with the stories and challenge the historical interpretations and recreate a world with an understanding of the past. In Bhabha's words, “we must not merely change the narratives of our histories, but transform our sense of what it means to live” (Bhabha 1994: 256).

As we try to understand and organise our experience of the world (content of history) within this “essentially narrative framework” (Hawkey 2007: 265) we may grow in our understanding of the world and people around us and imagine a better and socially just future with alternative ways of beings in the world. The students would understand their local history and get *a sense of place* to make wider connections.

As Hannam (1984: 1) urged us to move away from history which focuses on the causes of people's misfortunes and the

trap of ending up normalising and universalising coloniality as a natural state of the world [for] it must be unmasked, resisted and destroyed because it produced a world order that can only be sustained through a combination of violence, deceit, hypocrisy and lies. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 10)

This research looks at the significance of history with an attitude that focuses outwards on the world to unravel connections and relationships on a much wider scale that may ultimately enable them to recognise that adversity deepens maturity and promotes resilience for the present and for their social futures. This chapter highlights the

epistemological implications of having a multicentric understanding of critical literacy within postcolonial/decolonial dialogue. Alongside the emancipation and the conscientisation (Freire 1996), I reveal my epistemological curiosity to destabilise language to focus on connectedness and humanity.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Introduction

I started this research with the aim of examining curriculum developers' views as a starting point. My preliminary thoughts were that their outlook would suffice to examine their curricular intentions as the authors of school textbooks. However, as Jenkins (1992) puts it

the idea that the historian can somehow directly access the past, that past construed as existing in some kind of mute way and yet which at the same time can be heard to speak if listened to attentively enough [...] distort[s] that authentic voice. (Jenkins 1992:9)

As the research progressed, I held more of a pragmatist's view of the world of pedagogy and curriculum development. Pragmatics

recognises that there are many different ways of interpreting the world and undertaking research, that no single point of view can ever give the entire picture and that there may be multiple realities. (Karamagi 2021:33)

In addition to the physical restrictions with undertaking the research in Mauritius, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, I chose an alternative way of examining the subtleties of the written language by drawing on the enduring centrality of texts in State mandated school textbooks to access historical knowledge. A close analysis of the text offered a more satisfactory understanding between language and the social context (Fairclough 1992) and allowed an insight into how the production and potential consumption of the written text as a product of dominant ideologies.

The thesis is guided by the following research question: How is history (re) presented in the SMS textbooks? From the viewpoint of methodology, it is the Foucauldian idea of history that suggests that one ought to see the written language as a form of knowledge (Grever and Van der Vlies 2017) and as a form of power that defines the

kind of data (Georgakopoulou 2006) I use to understand language and the issues of self. By engaging with an alternative way of constructing meaning, I deconstruct the historical text in a way that values freedom to “create counterhegemonic intellectual spaces in which new readings of the world can unfold, in ways that lead us towards possibilities of social and material change” (Darder 2018:94) grounded in lived experiences.

4.2 The Theoretical Underpinnings

The epistemological standpoint in this research sets a theoretical commitment and philosophical assumption that “human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as to construct or make it” (Schwandt 1994:237). Based on the individual’s life experiences, knowledge and values, they are actively developing their knowledge to understand an evolving reality. The ontological assumptions in this research define the construction of language as subjective, shaped by the multiple connections that students must negotiate with their environment. Bakhtin (1981:293) wrote

[...] there are no ‘neutral’ words and forms – words and forms that can belong to ‘no one’; language has been completely taken over, shot through with intentions and accents [...] Language is not an abstract system of normative forms but rather a concrete heteroglot conception of the world [...] As a living, socio-ideological concrete thing [...] the word in language is half someone else’s.

Threadgold (2003) elaborates on the theoretical assumptions of a social constructivist view of language

the idea that realities and subjectivities are constructed in and by language; that subjects construct themselves and the worlds they inhabit in their everyday uses of language; that power relations are constructed and deconstructed through these processes; that this activity is characterised by narrativity, that changing narratives, telling stories differently, might change the social world and that the goal of work on and with language is a politics committed to social change. (6)

The analysis that follows in Chapter 5 describes language in its social context (Gee 2011) as it moves beyond the semantics but examines the *Discourses* with a capital “D” (Gee 2011).

Those Discourses are defined as “ways of being in the world. They are forms of life. They are socially situated identities. They are, thus, always and everywhere social products of social histories” (3).

What has become very apparent in my reading of language and society is that behind a historical narrative exists a political ideology that historically legitimized the present and the future political agenda (Carretero 2018:97). Gee (2011) recognises how language is influenced by social structures and social interactions and ultimately how discourse is more than just language. To use Fairclough’s words: “language [...] is socially shaped, but also socially shaping” (1995:55) which suggests that the analysis should not limit itself to only *what is being said* but should also investigate *how something is said* within a certain structure (Archer 2000).

By critically examining the underlying assumptions, motivations, experiences and values that inform written language, I aim to identify how power relations (Foucault 1980) are projected into people’s lived experiences. Hilferty (2007:243) wrote that to work within a critical framework requires the researcher to reveal oneself and assert one’s position to acknowledge the values that would inevitably influence the research. I speak here from a specific place and I want to acknowledge this space. I situate myself as a subaltern researcher – as a member of the cultural minority within wider Eurocentric system grounded in the social constructivist approach to meaning making, a role that emphasises a closeness to the research topic (Chilisa 2012:34). I apply the concept of social constructivism to the learning of history where the students interpret the historical text through their own lived experiences and interactions with other people, readings, observations. Interpretation is key to understanding human

reality as I am examining the production of stories about the past. I further elaborate on my positionality in Section 4.4.

The constructivist believes that to understand the world of meaning one must interpret it. The inquirer must elucidate the process of meaning construction and clarify what and how meanings are embodied in the language and actions of social actions. To prepare an interpretation is itself to construct a reading of these meanings; it is to offer the inquirer's construction of the construction of the actors one studies. (Schwandt 1994:222)

The analysis of the narrative provides a commitment to social constructivism and a robust analytic framework shaped in this thesis by a balance of the authorial voice (text production), the signature (of the researcher) and the audience (Grade 7/8/9 students) acknowledged in this inquiry. I am particularly looking at the interpreting of the multiplicity of voices in the production and potential consumption of history as part of deconstructing the historical text. As the researcher, I see myself as a *bricoleur* working in a literary genre that allows a creative, nonlinear, dynamic interaction with lived experiences as I stitch together meaningful texts in the form of stories in which I aim to balance the voice, the signature and the audience where the reading of the text recognises

an active construction of one's self through the processes of *appropriation, social struggle and becoming*. Appropriation involves the negotiations between one's self and the world that create the developing individual. Social struggle suggests that the use of voice requires hard work, an effort to find and fight for one's place in the world. Finally, becoming is a refusal to merely repeat the old but rather to maintain a momentum toward something or someone yet to come. (Lensmire 1998:285)

By moving away from an objective and positivist paradigm, this research emphasises an epistemology which is

deeply committed to the contrary view that what we take to be objective knowledge and truth is the result of perspective. Knowledge and truth are created, not discovered by mind. They emphasize the pluralistic and plastic character of reality – pluralistic in the sense that reality is expressible in a variety of symbol and language systems; plastic in the sense that reality is stretched

and shaped to fit purposely acts of intentional human agents. (Schwandt 1994:125)

4.3 Methodological desideratum

This thesis recognizes the humanity of people around us – a humanity that has often been denied to people of colour within a context that privileged a certain kind of “knowledge systems” that emerged from colonialism and slavery (Gordon 2007). This leads me to reflect on how history identifies with a narrative of struggles and silences and how does the subalterns potentially receive and appropriate historical knowledge and are able to reflect on those instances in the modern world.

The analysis recognises the impact of “a certain kind of subjectivity, a certain kind of self and a certain type of narrative data” (Georgakopoulou 2006:128) that requires a deconstruction of the historical knowledge to be able to rethink how we ought to read and think about history. This epistemological framework advocates for an alternative and meaningful paradigm that aims to examine the textuality in school textbooks and *reclaim subjugated knowledge* (Brooks and Hesse-Biber 2007). In this process, I highlight the importance of personal experience, subjectivity, positionality, worldview and emotions (ibid. 14) to speak the unspeakable as I engage with the stories behind the texts. This process requires, in Darder’s words, an

epistemological creativity, imagination, questioning, doubting, and risk-taking so necessary to this approach and [...] signals a research design that incorporates the subaltern researcher as an unapologetic political participant, whose knowledge is understood a priori as partial, unfinished, and deeply informed by the particular historical, economic, and cultural configurations of the times. (2018:100)

I share Joyce Nielsen’s (1990) views on how as researchers we carry our worldviews, histories and biographies” in our research and those worldviews “can be understood as maps that guide researchers to particular research topics with which they find affinity, or to particular respondents with whom they share rapport” (Brooks and

Hesse-Biber 2007:13). This situated location (Haraway 1991) offers me a unique way to see the world and connect with the emotions of the narratives. Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007:14) wrote

rather than dismissing human emotions and subjectivities, unique lived experiences, and worldviews as contaminants or barriers to the quest of knowledge we might embrace these elements to gain new insights and understandings, or in Other words, new knowledge.

4.4 My positionality

I position myself discursively in this research as an “insider” by birth and also as an “outsider” as I have lived away from my homeland for over two decades. As part of the fluidity I hold in terms of my acquired global identity, there is a powerful sense of loyalty I hold by belonging to both the North and the South and their respective histories that have equally left me at times feeling that I do not feel part of either. I am, as Agboka (2014) would suggest, bi-culturally positioned and in a privileged position to play this dual role as an insider and outsider in this research. This bicultural identity might not represent the local reality as most of my identity is also linked to being a product of a Western higher education. By employing CDA method of analysis to uncover the implicit colonial ways of thinking, I acknowledged the tension between my intentions in this research. While the CDA is known to be inherently a western research approach that reproduces the assumptions and biases of the North, I argue that it is also a method that could be tailored to different social and cultural contexts (Schneider 2013). Agboka (2014) suggests that the only way forward to successfully insert myself in this research is “to decolonise my mind and unlearn what I had learned” (ibid. 308) and in so doing engage in a process of self-reflexivity to unravel my own hidden assumptions and biases.

As part of this research, I also allow myself to be re-taught some of the cultural norms of my own native country while being mindful of “Othering one’s own world” (Fuchs 1993:108). This position underlines the non-neutrality of my arguments, as researchers, we can never be neutral as we are always positioned culturally, historically and theoretically.

By looking at the historical narrative through the stories being told, they allow me to be

better attuned to cultural context, better able to see how this context has been woven into the fabric of living and telling, and, not least, being able to draw upon the poetic power of language in conveying the ambiguity, messiness, and potential beauty of people’s lives. (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2015:29)

Similarly, Said’s views (1995) inform the way I belong to the world where his “critical lexicon” (quoted in Nixon 2012:151) resonate as I read the world. In Nixon’s words, the author assumed that “the world is inescapably wordy: how we understand the world, how we represent it, and how we render it knowable, is part and parcel of what the world is and what it becomes” (Nixon 2012:151). In this PhD journey, I have been greatly influenced by critical theorists and anti-colonial intellectuals, out of a desire to further pursue my interest in inclusion and exclusion. I have been profoundly inspired by the contextual adversity of colonised nations and our capacity for resilience to turn our lives around and survive to stand up and be heard. Looking at positioning myself within a decolonising framework, I draw on the work of Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) on decolonising methodologies, where she looked at how indigenous people connected self-determination, rights and sovereignty to pathways to social justice. Her research recognised and conceptualised marginality and sights of struggle that many colonised countries such as Mauritius can relate to.

My aim, aside from engaging and deconstructing the narrative as a subaltern researcher, is also to become a *cultural worker*, actively producing meaning irrespective of their social locations; as Darder (2018) wrote

[subaltern researchers] do not simply see their work as an academic exercise in knowledge construction, but as part of a larger imperative for liberating subaltern meaning and provoking revolutionary thought [...] they do not enter the arena as impartial and neutral observers or solely objective thinkers but, rather, as transformative intellectuals, grounded in a humanizing emancipatory political vision of inquiry. (100)

It was important to be open and honest with the authorship in this research and to be “cognizant and critically reflective about the different ways our positionality can serve as both a hindrance and a resource towards achieving knowledge throughout the research process” (Brooks and Hesse-Biber 2007:15). Hirsh and Olson (1995) highlighted that there is a self-reflexivity exercise behind the writing of this research which should not only be seen as *confessional* but rather determine the effect that this position has on the analysis of this research. Upon reflection, I feel in a privileged position as I am looking at historical knowledge, knowledge production and knowledge institutions. My positionality is reinforced as an insider and as an outsider that informs the methodological choices I make and the philosophical assumptions I advocate, which clearly describe my world views and how these will shape the ontology behind this research. My role as researcher, as I connect with the narratives in the textbook, becomes the role of what I define as an *open-ended* interpreter. I look at the narratives as relational and holistic texts and value their strength as a form of linguistic data as they open a space for a dialogue where assumptions and world views may be questioned.

As revealed in Chapter 1, this research begins with how my reality is influenced by my own history and cultural location. Teater (2014) poses a very relevant question: “If we acknowledge that everyone has a distinct and unique view of reality, then how do we

come to know and understand the Other's view of reality" (Teater 2014:77). In the same line of thought, feminist scholar and philosopher Sandra Harding (1995) questioned how "we learn to see ourselves as Others see us" (cited in Hirsch and Olson 1995). As we all get immersed in our own lived experiences entangled with our own individual emotions, Others make judgements based on what can be observed externally. To truly share an insight on human relationships, I draw on Sandra Harding's views about the importance of promoting a respectful representation of the Other to deconstruct the moral legitimacy of history. As a starting point, it requires me to reflexively maintain a critical awareness of my own self and my certainties throughout this research.

4.5 The text as Stories

Stories become rehearsals for later action more than reconstructions of the past; they are more about imagining the future than about remembering the past [...] the past informs and shapes the future in ways that foreground the intertextual links of stories making them part of an interactional trajectory, showing up their natural histories as events that can be transposed from one context to another across time and space. (Georgakopoulou 2006:227)

While narratives have been particularly linked to fictional accounts such as stories and tales, and nonfictional accounts such as life stories and autobiographies, I offer here a disclaimer of the way I define the historical narrative in this thesis. I use the concept of *small stories* within the textbooks to examine how I use them to form part of a holistic narrative that can both reflect the power relations in society and construct social identities (De Fina and Georgakopoulou 2015). Stories here are described as textual accounts of events, people's experiences situated within a neat storyline with a start, a middle and an end.

Events are not just temporal, they have a causal sequence; one event leads on ineluctably to the next. We can treat stories people tell as having a plot and categorize them like plays. (Gibbs 2018:10)

The stories constructed into a plotline become a *heuristic* for introducing key episodes and contents in history in an attempt to develop historical understanding (Kooy 2007:201). I situate and connect those textual accounts as a system of stories, entangled within a complex network in continuous and complex interactions that form part of the larger narrative. The multitude of stories represent a multiplicity of voices, ongoing understandings and future-oriented reflections that highlight moral dilemmas and the dominant values that predominate in society.

The text behind a story is never an “isolated discursive realisation created in a social vacuum” (Despaigne 2019:8) but constitutes a rich and diverse genre that creates historical moments, that has the power to *tell* the students *how* and *what* to think to contextualise their interpretations in connection with historical events. The *act of reading* history becomes bounded and conditioned by the political, epistemological, the ideological construction of the narrative. The historical narrative becomes a secondary kind of data that

make sense of what we know, what we feel and experience in the world in which we live. Personal identities are constructed and (re)conceptualized as we share our narratives... narratives are a window into meaning-making processes in the lifeworld. (Sotou-Manning 2014:162).

As the students read and interpret the text, they do so from a position that is created by the textbook authors and this position is referred to the “subject position” (Foucault 1972). In Foucault’s view, subjects are positioned by hegemonic discourses in terms of status, power and knowledge, which determine their interpretation of self, world and Others. I will elaborate on how the linguistic processes and techniques used as part of the authorial intent in Chapter 5.

I chose to move away from this “neatness” of how stories are constructed (Ochs and Capps 2001) as I argue here that they are rarely pure and never simple but represent a site of many struggles that can unite or divide. This is how the richness and diversity of stories ought to be interpreted through the use of narratives as “narratives can explain, narratives can argue, narratives can reveal tight relationship with sources of evidence” (Lang 2003:8) and most importantly as Sotou-Manning (2014:162) argued

[by] allowing us to interpret new experiences, as narrative and life imitate and emulate one another. This happens by connecting events, arranging them temporally, and depicting these events from particular perspectives. (Bruner 1986; Ochs and Capps 2001)

The historical narrative becomes in this thesis

constructed around a core of facts or life events, yet allow a wide periphery for the freedom of individuality and creativity in selection, addition to, emphasis on, and interpretation of these remembered facts. (Lieblich et al. 1998:8)

To deconstruct the assumptions about the pastness of the stories “the about, the what and the who” (Freeman 2003:338) I examine *how* stories in the past inform and shape the future (Georgakopoulou 2006). I situate the stories as part of a larger narrative that appreciates its intrinsic links to human experiences and the emotions, cognitions and values that underline those experiences. I argue that the selected stories will allow me to illustrate, by going down a *picaresque narrative river* (Bearnman and Stovel 2000: 71) to understand the process of becoming, the “how” rather than the “why”. The analysis of the stories calls for an epistemology that allows us to examine (the “how” question) by moving away from looking at narratives as an end in itself but enquiring instead *how* language is constructed. This standpoint recognizes a space for reflection and reflexivity to understand the meaning, intention and a form of thinking for social transformation. Sotou-Manning (2014:161) pointed out that

language can serve as a space where *change* can be negotiated as individuals can concretely start questioning their own realities and identify the socio-ideological impact of systemic and institutional discourses on their beliefs and practices, on their heteroglot conceptions of their worlds.

4.6 Applying Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a method of analysis

By engaging with a critical stance in the analysis of workings of power in the discourse (Toolan 1997), this research looks at the exercise of power and emancipation of the self as I unpack how the way history is taught serves the interest of some over others and potentially shape the way the Mauritian students self-identify. “To practise discourse analysis is to be *en garde*, to be prepared for critical engagement” (O’Halloran 2008:1) as discourse provides a frame to understand policy production in education as part of the dominant system of social relations to examine what can be said or thought (Ozga 2000:94).

CDA was chosen due its focus on social relations between texts and the power relations that are internalised within the texts (Fairclough 2003). While there is a variety of literature and conceptual positions taken by CDA (Fairclough1992; Van Dijk 1993; Wodak 2001; Luke 1995), in this research I apply a particular strand of CDA as conceived by Fairclough’s (1992) three-dimensional theory of discourse. While CDA has arguably shortcomings (Widdowson 2004) with regard to its definitions of text, discourse and context used and for “failing to” establish a clear methodology, and lacking theoretical vigour in its formal analysis” (Schegloff 1997), I found Fairclough’s model a valuable and powerful linguistic tool that allows some flexibility in the analysis as he believed “there is no set procedure for doing discourse analysis; people approach it in different ways according to the specific nature of the project, as well as

their own views of discourse” (225). As a method of analysis, I use CDA to interrogate language within wider social discourses where the text is deconstructed, challenged and reformulated for change to be possible to achieve a socially just society.

Fairclough’s (2013) model for Critical Discourse Analysis (Figure 4.2 below) provides a clear pathway on how I deconstruct and analyse the textbooks across three main skills (description, interpretation and explanation).

The connection between text and social practice is seen as being mediated by discourse practice: on the one hand, processes of text production and interpretation are shaped by (and help shape) the nature of the social practice, and on the Other hand, the production process shapes (and leaves ‘traces’ in) the text, and the interpretative process operates upon ‘cues’ in the text. (Fairclough 2013:94)

The non-prescriptive toolbox can be adapted and tailored to this research’s concerns (Schneider 2013) as I deconstruct the text in the SMS textbook within its wider production, reification, implementation and interpretation (Bowe et al 2017).

While it was not practical to code every element in the textbooks, I draw on Fairclough’s method to select the texts that only demonstrate the existence of ideology and power relationships. I focussed on the multifunctionality of those selected texts (Fairclough 2010: 92) as I examine their relationship to wider sociocultural practices by looking at specific features within the context in which the text is written to develop content based themes.

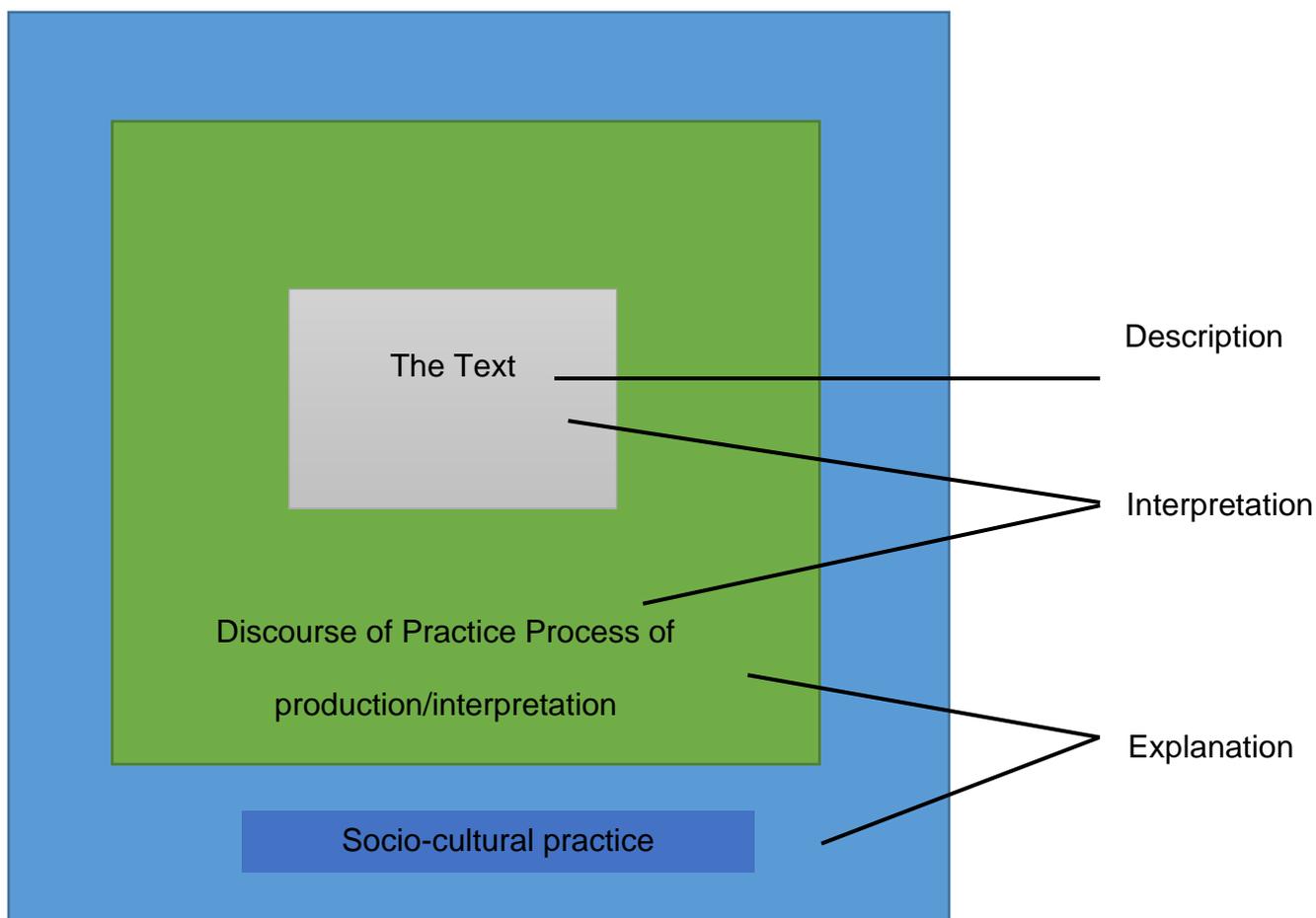


Figure 4.1: Fairclough's three dimensional model

Figure 4.1 above emphasises the interdependence of Fairclough's three dimensions with the mutually constitutive relations between the text, the discourse practice and the sociocultural practice. The position of the boxes allows the continual movement back and forth between the different levels of analysis (Janks 1997).

Fairclough's (2013) three-dimensional model begins with how the linguistic description and meaning-making of the text is constructed as the student potentially engages with the text. I examine here the word frequency, the keywords, the concordances and collocations, dominating textual features that provide the starting point to analysing the lexical and grammatical pattern of the texts. What follows from this semiotic analysis is the construction of a larger narrative that can produce and convey knowledge and reflexivity (Hickson 2015:1) to enable individuals to critically engage

with the constructions of language and provide possibilities for emancipation to build a more democratic and socially just society.

The second stage of the analysis refers to the interpretation where “the aim is to specify what conventions are being drawn upon, and how” (Fairclough 1992: 11). References here are made to the repertoires and conventions around language used that informs the text being produced by the authors of the school textbooks and received by the students. Govender (2011: 63) wrote how through this process, the authors “consider the ideal audience for whom the text is produced, and how the text works to construct that audience (while silencing others)”.

Lastly, in the explanation stage of the analysis, “the aim is to explain [the] properties of interaction [between text, recipient and social context] by referring to its social context” ((Fairclough, 1992, 11). By situating the text within its social context are questions that relate to the way “discourse is the power to be seized” (Foucault, 1996). Janks (2013: 234) argued,

At stake are questions of who gets control over the discourses [...], whose rights prevail, whose identities are validated, whose values become hegemonic, what is the role of the law, what is the future of the black body and, at a more mundane level, who is elected as President?

Guided by the research questions in Chapter 1, Fairclough’s model guides the way I deconstruct the text to reveal the power relations within the text and the imperialistic motives of language, and the entanglements of human relationships within the broader coloniality discourses. Language is considered as one way in which ideologies are constructed, maintained and challenged but the meaning of this language can only be understood through interpretation and re-interpretation of the text (Fairclough 1992).

Following from Fairclough’s model, the analysis takes the shape of the table below:

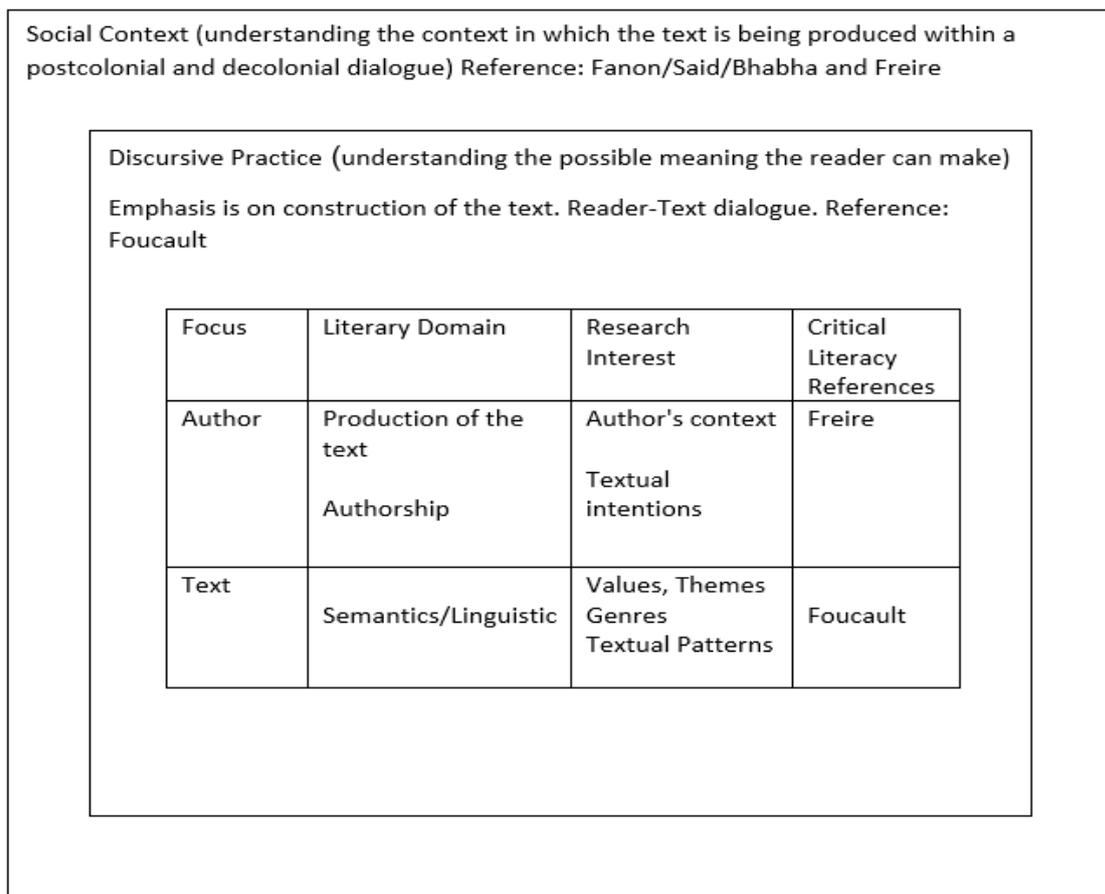


Figure 4.2: Framing the meaning of the text within Fairclough’s framework

Methodologically, I endeavour to expand CDA’s analytical possibilities as I interrogate the meaning off the text within the wider structure by asking specific questions such as: Under what circumstances were the text produced? Who produced the text? For what purposes were they produced? What constraints were placed on the text production? CDA examines how the text has the potential to shape how students think and see themselves by specifically looking at the construction of the textual data and how the text brings experiences into being. It does not look at the impact of the textbooks as this would require an evaluation of the reader’s interpretation of the text, but it examines how the text construct an argument and how this argument fits into wider social practices.

An essential element of CDA is the concept of intertextuality that has been defined as the concept that texts are shaped in relation to one another. By adopting a process of purposive snowball sampling (Gentles et al 2015) I argue that it can produce a unique type of social knowledge that is more emergent and interactional in nature. Using my own insider/outsider knowledge of key regulatory policies in education, I identified key texts in the NYCBE policy documents that represented the order of discourse (Fairclough 1992). I viewed each text as a “link in a chain of texts” (Fairclough and Wodak 1997: 462) that reacted to, drawn upon and transformed other texts as I examined the relationship between them. This intertextuality (Fairclough 1992) allowed me to revisit the text at different levels, raising questions and imagining how they could have been constructed differently.

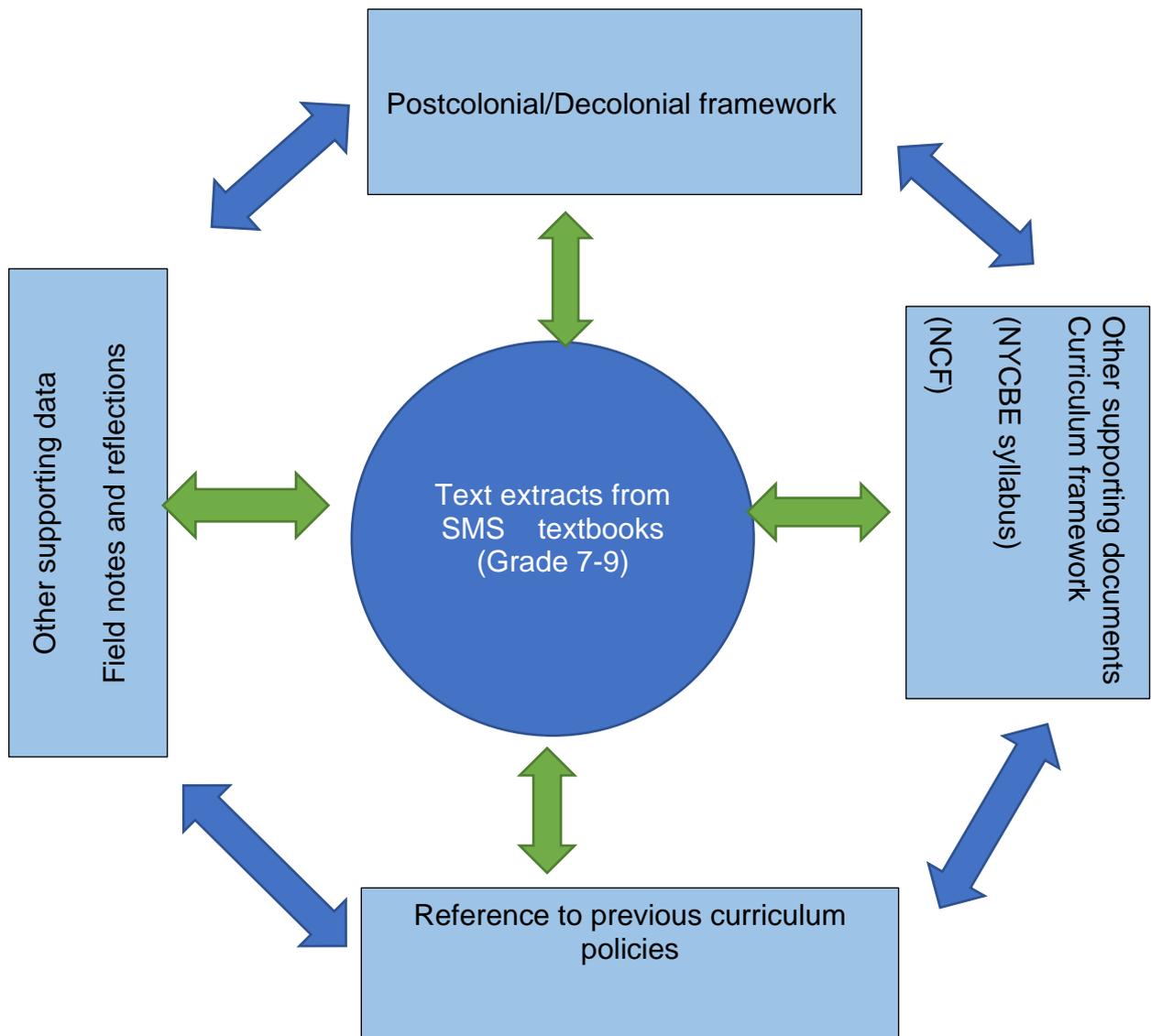


Figure 4.3: The construction of Intertextuality

By recognising how the various texts bring new interpretations and understandings bring a sense of connection between the stories, *intertextuality* provides a useful method within CDA to interrogate the texts not as isolated stories but as part of a network with other texts and this dialogue between the texts allows me as the researcher to broaden my analytical perspective as I examine their both the purposes which the various texts serve (from the authorship’s view) and the way in which

describe historical knowledge (features, structures and linguistic details). As Threadgold (2003) wrote

it is essential to understand not just the workings of individual texts, but the ways in which they are traversed by traces of, and enter into networks of, Other texts and discourses to form part of the hegemonic discursive structures which form social realities, subjectivities and bodies. (19)

4.7 Ethics

This research method focuses on a systematic analysis of the written language in the form of small stories from a caring and committed ethical obligation (Rose 2004) that articulates the notion of thinking and knowing with a caring disposition about the way we ought to think of human relationships in an era of global interconnectedness. Grounded in “a series of concrete moves: thinking-with, dissenting-within and thinking-for” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2012: 1) acknowledges the ‘Other’, this research claims that

There is no substantive moral truths (because there are no truths) and no universal moral procedures (because nothing is universal). There are only cultural forms of storytelling arising out of human relationships. (Brinkmann and Kvale 2005: 175)

Of concern here is whether the text data presented here should be replicable, systematic and verifiable. While the analysis is very much based on the construction of language in history teaching and our lived experiences, I draw on a kind of objectivity that

involves an understanding of the social and historical context of one’s viewpoint, for we always ‘see’ something against a larger background of tradition, history and community.” (Brinkmann and Kvale 2005: 161)

While the approach here facilitates an impartial and consistent analysis, the qualitative approach of this research inherently challenges the empirical character of the discourse as the research implies a process of “inferential analysis that is deeply grounded in the a priori subaltern sensibilities of the researcher” (Darder 2018:101).

Academic *rigor* within the context of a decolonizing interpretive research must be understood then as not only a cognitive or abstract process of analysis. Rather, it also entails a deeply physical, emotional, and spiritual activity of communal solidarity; which, when practiced consistently, allows subaltern researchers to become more integral human beings, through a creative and itinerant epistemological process of problematization and radicalization (Darder 2015) – an empowering process of knowledge construction that although deeply rooted within the researchers’ worldview, also crosses frontiers to evoke the common humanity of all. (Darder 2018:100-101)

Darder (2018) engages with Freire’s notion that “the emancipatory knowledge of the researcher must emerge from an intimate understanding of the empirical knowledge of the people” (Freire 1996 181). In the context of this thesis, I interpret Darder’s statement to examine the struggles and resistance of the subalterns and engage with the emancipatory possibilities begins with a deep knowledge of the local Mauritian history to capture the strength of an alternative epistemology to challenge western ‘regimes of truth’. This study provides as an opportunity to authentically connect with an alternative epistemology embedded into the “theorisation of identities, the subjectivities and the habitus of the researchers” (Threadgold 2003:10-11) that recognises a reflexive positionality that allows for “a” truth but not “the” truth.

Of paramount importance is that as this research recognises the conditions and positioning of specific groups that have been marginalised and how history teaching attempts to reclaim their sense of agency for social justice. The reality of this research is more complex than a dichotomous outlook of the past but reveals how as an insider I examine the exploitation and deprivation of the colonised *through* the text. It brought me back to Spivak’s question “Can the subaltern speak?” as I had to face my own

vulnerability and grief as the text was no longer just a mirror of history I would look at *about* the Other but a window into the struggles and anxieties *of* the Other. It has been an experience that has forced me to take step back at various stages in this process as I engage with the construction of my reality and my embeddedness in power structures. While certain voices are lost in the imperialistic system, I argue that the subaltern does speak. To do it, they needed space for reflection, courage and perseverance.

4.8 Data and Method

4.8.1 Collecting the data

To answer the research question, three State mandated textbooks were examined. The inclusion criteria were the first batch of SMS textbooks (Grade 7, Grade 8 and Grade 9) representing the first set of nationalised standardized textbooks published on an annual basis from 2018 as part of the 2017 educational reform. By 2020 only Grade 7, 8 and 9 were available on the market. A total of nine chapters were selected to be further examined, focusing on the themes relevant to history and identity construction. The focus here is not to look at the stories as isolated texts but part of larger narrative over the three years that brings in the possibility of a broader analytical perspective. In Table 4.1 below, the title of each chapter selected for the analysis is detailed:

SMS textbooks	Chapters selected
Grade 7 (Knowing my country)	My country and myself (p.1-78)
	Our country, Our people (p.81-98)
	Peoples, Settlement, Places (p.101-118)
Grade 8 (The Making of Contemporary Mauritius)	The Road to Independence (p.1-55)
	Mauritius: A democratic country (p.85-125)
Grade 9 (Mauritius in the Changing World)	Socioeconomic development since 1968: achievements, challenges, and prospects. Pre-/post-independence (p.1-52)
	Historical links with Europe, Africa and Asia (p.85-102)
	Appreciating the importance of maintaining and strengthening relationships in the context of change and globalisation. (p.125-128)
	Migration, Circulation and Displacement (p.115-168)

Table 4.1: Collection of textual data from SMS textbooks

The documents were collected as hard copies and references were also made from the online version of the textbooks. I first became familiar with the text by labelling the sections highlighted above in Table 4.1, identifying the salient features that relate to the sub research questions: R.Q.1. In what ways do language, power and

knowledge interact in the construction of the historical narrative and R.Q.2. To what extent does the colonial and contemporary encounters potentially influence the ways students self-identify.

I present in what follows in Sections 4.8.2 to Sections 4.8.4 a working model for analysing the representation of history within Fairclough's three-dimensional critical discourse analysis (CDA). By drawing on Koller (2012), the concept of identity is theorised in this research as a structure of the self that comprises beliefs and knowledge, norms and values, attitudes, expectations and emotions that are here reinforced and negotiated within a postcolonial and decolonial framework. I first look at how the historical text is produced and potentially appropriated before examining how those linguistic parameters potentially influence the construction of the student's identity.

I start with highlighting prominent ideas with any recurring words/phrases as I completed a mind map for each grade. Following on to this initial step, lines of inquiry¹¹ were developed as the study progressed and remained open-ended, descriptive and nondirectional (Creswell 2011). Darder (2018) described this interpretive process as

a multitude of careful (re)readings of the world and of subaltern histories, in ways that critically and openly challenge what Freire referred to as the "tragic dilemma of the oppressed (96).

¹¹ Building on Ya Chen Su's (2007) study on textual analysis and ideological representations of history and Carretero (2018) on narratives and the construction of national identities

<p>Lines of Inquiry</p>	<p>The sub questions to investigate are:</p> <p>RQ.1. In what ways do language, power and knowledge interact in the construction of the historical narrative?</p> <p>Internal lines of inquiry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the role of the authors? - What defines the historical text? - How does the text define the role of the student? <p>RQ.2. To what extent does the colonial and contemporary encounters potentially influence the way students self-identify?</p> <p>Internal lines of inquiry:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the key stories? - To what extent do those stories potentially influence the student's sense of self?
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Table 4.2: Identifying internal lines of enquiry

4.8.2 Dimension One: Textual analysis

By bringing to the forefront the textual features (Fairclough 2013), the micro level analysis examines the patterns in the text, the semantic value of key words that are strategically used in school textbooks to examine the curricular intentions of the text before moving on to the discursive practice that connects the text to the discourse- as shown in Table 4.3.

Action (Thematic analysis)	Descriptive Analysis of the text
Identifying micro level textual relations and their semantic value. How is the text constructed?	<p>Focus is on the linguistic properties of the text, i.e., the wording/grammar/cohesion/text structure/vocabulary.</p> <p>What is the purpose of the content?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What experiential/relational values do words have? - Are sentences active/ passive? - What pronouns are used we/you? - How does the text describe dominant/minority groups? - What are the historical events/dates? - What historical groups are represented and whose achievements received the most sustained attention? - What national heroes does the author intend the reader to sympathise with or respect the most?

Table 4.3 Dimension One: Descriptive linguistic analysis

4.8.3 Dimension Two: Data interpretation

The focus in the second stage of this analysis focusses on the interpretation of the text as a social practice. Specifically, I draw on Freebody and Luke (1990) and Kohler's (2008) literacy resources as they ask: "What is [the text] saying at surface level? What does this mean to me? What does this do to me? What do I do with this?" (Kohler

2008:540) – an approach that could more succinctly be described as the “head, heart and hands” (Freebody and Luke 1990:10) response to the understanding of history that potentially shapes the student’s interaction with the text.

Within this dimension, the text becomes a tool to reveal the ideologies and the challenges in our lived experiences. This dimension of the analysis connects with the personal relationship one has with history by problematising the structure, the wider discourses and the power relations that establish the new agenda as part of the nine-year educational reform. The analysis of the text is interpretive, bounded by my own insider and outsider knowledge of history teaching and learning, and the extracts from the textbooks and policy documents mediated by an established procedure.

Action (<u>Discursive practice</u>)	Interpretation of the texts
<p>Understanding, exposing, and challenging the use of power in the narrative</p> <p>How does the text articulate history in terms of depth and challenging the content?</p>	<p>How are the texts strategically positioned to allow the student's engagement with the text? What are the activities in the textbooks (e.g., pair/group work, discussions, presentations) that contribute to using one's voice inside and outside the classroom? How does the dialogue link with power/ voice?</p> <p>To what extent do the text/genre inform the student?</p> <p>What is this text trying to do to me? Whose interests are marginalized or privileged by this text? Whose account of a particular topic or issue is missing?</p> <p>Whose voices are silenced/ dominant? Whose reality is presented/ignored? What are the positions from which I am reading this text? What experiences am I drawing from to make meaning from this text?</p> <p>(Vasquez 2014)</p>

Table 4.4 Dimension Two: Interpretation

4.8.4 Dimension Three: Data explanation

The final stage explains the significance of the text within broader sociocultural and political practices. The written language becomes a critical guide as I examine how the texts position themselves against the realities of their lived experiences. Central to this position I examine how language and identity is connected. By interpreting the narratives within the wider context of consumption, the analysis responds to R.Q.2: To what extent do the colonial and contemporary encounters potentially shape the Mauritian students' identity? I combine, link, and relate those ideas, thoughts and

words from the text as discussed above to forms broader thematic categories that further inform the themes for R.Q.2. (See Appendix 4-6).

This stage locates the narrative in broader socio-cultural and political terms or in Fairclough’s term, the macro level. This explanation integrates the relationships between the historical narrative and the discursive formations to enter into a dialogue with alternative of ways of understanding the fluidity of our identity.

Action (Social practice)	Stories into Narrative
The construction of pre-colonial/post-colonial identity.	Narrative of Non-Being (Stories of nonexistence) (Invisibility, Exploitation, Racism, Unbelonging)
Analysis of the stories as part of a larger narrative.	Narrative of Being (Stories of Recognition) (Forged Togetherness, Unified identity, Resistance, Memorialisation)
	Narrative of Becoming (Stories of shifting identity) (Historical significance and historical understanding)

Table 4.5 Dimension Three: Data Explanation

To summarise, this chapter unravels the theoretical underpinnings, the methodology and procedures used to examine the research question in this study. The data analysis focuses on a deductive approach as I examine how language represent history in the textbooks. The findings are subsequently interpreted within a critical discourse in Chapter 5 before looking at how to (re)construct the historical narrative as a space that carries stories of hope and resilience and promotes social transformation among the historically oppressed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5: Analysis

5.1 Introduction

What follows in this chapter is a critical de-construction of the text and a discussion of the findings as I answer the overarching question: How is history (re)presented in the SMS textbooks? This chapter begins with the description stage of the CDA framework as I use a specific set of questions to examine the linguistic structures of the text in Section 5.2. This entry point for the analysis through a thematic analysis provides an insight into how the text promote a particular narrative about history teaching in Section 5.3.

5.2 How does language, power and history interact in the construction of the text?

By applying CDA in language as a social practice (Fairclough and Wodak 1997), I examine how language is chosen, used and positioned in the textbooks as I locate in Section 5.2.1 the presence (absence of) the authors in the text, the structure of the instructional materials in Section 5.2.2 before looking at the interplay of language, power and history in Section 5.2.3.

I consider it is important to understand the context the language is produced by examining the act of writing within the relations of power. By interrogating the positioning of the authors, I endeavour here to problematise the powerful authorities and the discursive practice in Section 5.2.1 to understand the *kind* of knowledge (Höhne 2002) presented by the authors of the textbooks.

5.2.1 The authorial intent

The text is grounded on specific learning outcomes highlighted in the National Curriculum Framework (2017):

The Social and Modern Studies (SMS) textbook has been designed based on the philosophy of the new National Curriculum Framework (NCF 2016) which aims at promoting the holistic development of children and developing in them competencies to meet the challenges of the 21st century. Consequently, the themes presented in the SMS textbook seek to prepare learners with knowledge about themselves, the people and the society around them, the nation and the world, through the lenses and methods of Social Sciences disciplines, namely: History, Geography and Sociology. (SMS Grade 7/8/9: iv)

This direct statement reflects how Mauritius like many governments and policymakers across the world advocate the need to develop future ready citizens which has led to the popularity of 21st century skills. This framework is linked to a *selection* of competences from the World Economic Forum's 21st Century Skills (2016) centred around and conceptualised as productive skills, critical reasoning, creative thinking and collaboration, for young people to be effective workers and citizens in the Knowledge Society of the 21st century.

The ability to think, speak and write logically, to solve problems and to synthesise information are key competencies that the teaching of SMS fosters in the learners. (Teaching and Learning Syllabus 2017:1).

The pre-specified aims reinforce the status quo of a hierarchical educational system as the curricular reform enforces a linear, top-down way of producing knowledge. The factual historical knowledge and skills, mandated by the learning syllabus are “entangled in the politics of control, conformity, obedience and oppression” (Vassallo 2012:2). The text is therefore not accidental and emanates from wider political pressure to conform to a narrative that emphasise specific notions and representations of the 21st century competencies students ought to acquire.

As history telling is an interpretation of an interpretation, it is almost impossible to recover the original meaning of the historical event – Foucault pointed out how it is important to know “who” the authors are to interpret the text within the context in which they are written. This leads me to unravel the authorship and the act of writing into five further sub-sections: the authors as omniscient narrators (Section 5.2.1.1), the function of the authorship (Section 5.2.1.2), the positioning of the authors (Section 5.2.1.3), a student-centered approach (Section 5.2.1.4) and the non-representational thinking model (Section 5.2.1.5).

5.2.1.1 The authors as omniscient narrators

I start with the deconstruction of the “acknowledgement” section in the textbooks which is from my experience not always read nor analysed. I argue this section answers one of the questions I highlighted in Chapter 4 “who produces the text?”. What the text reveals is a top-down approach in the authorship with the details of authors (and job titles) as part of the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) – as shown below:

Professor Vassen Naëck - Head Curriculum Implementation, Textbook Development and Evaluation

SOCIAL AND MODERN STUDIES PANEL

Pierre-André Boullé	- Panel Coordinator, Senior Lecturer, MIE
Chandrashekhhar Padaruth	- Subject coordinator, Senior Lecturer, MIE
Jay Ramsaha	- Subject coordinator, Senior Lecturer, MIE
Seema Goburdhun	- Subject coordinator, Associate Professor, MIE
Tejwant Mohabeer	- Senior Lecturer, MIE
Marie Karen Sharon Iyapah	- Educator
Poorooshotum Behary	- Educator
Shahoudah Khan Boodhoo	- Educator
Teena Gomes	- Educator

SMS (Grade 7/8/9: ii)

Schubring (1987: 45) argued that the name(s) on the front pages of a textbook almost never represent(s) the only author(s) but the few names mentioned stand for a

“collectivity” of authors. This *collectivity* refers here to the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE), an institution working under the aegis of the Ministry of Education (MOE) that was set up to support teacher education, curriculum development and research. With the biography of the authors at the beginning of the textbooks, the reader is invited to acknowledge a particular status of the authorship – it invokes expertise alongside a stable and diverse entity.

As part of the process of producing the text, the content is then discussed and reviewed by a “validation panel” (Grade 7: iii) consisting of Social Studies Educators from Mauritius and Rodrigues, headteachers, university lecturers, representatives of political groups (Les Verts Fraternelles – name of a political party) acknowledged in each book (Grade 7/8/9). The *collectivity* of members in this panel positioned on page ii (in bold style) represent an authority in the production of the text. Further safeguards are put in place for the teaching of politically contentious topics such as the Chagos disagreement (SMS Grade7: 6) where the State directly through the MOE supervises, monitors and censors the content.

By sanctioning the narrative delivered (Apple and Christian-Smith 1991; Nicholls 2007: 44) and defining the “right” knowledge to be produced, the State implicitly acts as a political mechanism to influence what part of history may be suppressed, ignored or erased (Connerton 2008) to support the formation of a particular way of thinking - Eli Podeh (2000:66) described the State as a kind of “supreme historical court”. Writing history in a pedagogical context is in fact a challenging task:

How do the authors of history textbooks retain their voice as objective and politically neutral in the selection of historical topics within the requirements of the new curriculum that portray them to act as the agent of ideological manipulation or a mechanism for policing knowledge? (Issit 2004: 689)

The authorial intent leads me to think of the relationship between the identity of the writers, what they write and how they write about the pre-set guidelines set in the NCF. The question that come to my mind are: How does the selected representatives that forms part of the validation group bring more intellectual rigour to the production of the text? Within the remit of this study, it is not possible to access the internal discussions in the production of the textbooks but my aim here is to raise those reflections as an area of research that could be pursued further.

The act of writing reminded me how an authorship described as the “omniscient narrator” (Grever and Van der Vlies 2017:288) in the form of a *collectivity* of authors disappear behind an unemotive voice as they reconstruct the past to inform the contemporary realities. The extracts below demonstrate how the writing is direct, authoritative and concise, implicitly communicating the idea that emotion is irrelevant. The collective authors' voices take no point of view, and present information mostly in a factual way – as shown below:

Let's try to understand the terms 'colonisation' and 'colony'.

Colonisation is when a new group of people takes control of territories or countries.

It involves the movement and settlement of these people to a new location and the spread of their **culture** into the new area. Colonisation may also involve dominating the **original inhabitants** of the area, known as the **indigenous population**.

A **colony** is a settlement that has been established by people who are from a different place.

People who migrate to settle permanently in colonies controlled by the mother country are called **colonisers** or **settlers**.

SMS (Grade 7:53)

Slavery was an **economic system**. It was composed of slave trade and slaves considered as chattels in order to achieve the economic goals.

SMS (Grade 7:86)

The way countries and people of the world interact and integrate is called globalisation. Globalisation has led to the movement of goods, services, technology, knowledge and people across the world.

SMS (Grade 9:100)

From a Foucauldian perspective, authorship *is* a problem. Foucault questions the intention of the authors in contemporary times and theorizes the function of the authors in discourse. While the act of writing school textbooks in a way removes the author's individuality, Foucault (1998) argued

“it is not enough, however, to repeat the empty affirmation that the author has disappeared [...] we must locate the space left empty by the author's disappearance, follow the distribution of gaps and breaches, and watch for the opening this disappearance uncovers” (209).

5.2.1.2 The function of the authorship

Fairclough (2003: 194) raises very pertinent questions about the modality and evaluation of the authorship and these questions guide this analysis:

What do authors commit themselves to in terms of truth (epistemic modalities)? Or in terms of obligation and necessity (deontic modalities)? To what extent are modalities categorical (assertion, denial etc.), to what extent are they modalized (with explicit markers of modality)? To what values (in terms of what is desirable or undesirable) do authors commit themselves? How are values realized – as evaluative statements, statements with deontic modalities, statements with affective mental processes, or assumed values?

The text is deconstructed syntactically into two types of meaning: the deontic modality that shows certainty and the epistemic modality that shows possibility. By using nine

modal verbs “can”, “may”, “must”, “could”, “might”, “shall”, “should”, “will”, “would” the text creates modality and their commitment to “truth”. The textbooks use a combination of both epistemic and deontic modalities (see Appendix I for more detailed extracts). While it is important to acknowledge that modal verbs/adjectives are not as clear cut as they can be used to convey different point of views depending on the context it is used, by stating “care has been taken to provide the basics, that should help every student develop key competencies ... to become a successful learner” (Grade 7/8/9: iii) indicate how the text authoritatively talks about what is, what will be and what should be accomplished in the textbooks. Further deontic modalities that can be seen across the three textbooks are “at the end of the units you *should* be able ... you *should* learn ... you *will* read ...”. The predominance to deontic modalities is linked to the corpus of knowledge that is presented as a fixed story of *objective* truth. In the context of history teaching, the deontic modalities indicate how historical understanding is linked to specific norms, expectations and values and are assessed accordingly.

5.2.1.3 The positioning of authors

In this section, I examine the values which the authorship commits to. The questions that drive this analysis are:

To what values (in terms of what is desirable or undesirable) do authors commit themselves? How are values realized – as evaluative statements, statements with affective mental processes, or assumed values? (Fairclough 2003: 194)

From the evaluative statements across the Teaching and Learning Syllabus and the NCF (see Appendix 2 for further details), the extracts demonstrate the positioning of the authors. Statements such as “the SMS curriculum is designed to prepare learners to be active and responsible citizens of tomorrow” (92) expose a relationship with the world that is positioned within a neoliberal value system. The neoliberalist value

system postulates how firstly all students can succeed regardless of sociocultural contexts and competition and secondly, how the curriculum emphasises on how responsible, successful and adaptable the students ought to be as they make sense of the demands and uncertainties of the rapidly changing world (OECD 2018).

5.2.1.4 A student centered approach

The text illustrate how questions are asked in the imperative mode:

Recall how our islands were colonised as from the 16th century? (Grade 7: 54)

Name and Locate the different islands forming part of the Republic of Mauritius (Grade 7: 1)

Write a few sentences to describe the contributions of the slaves in the development of Mauritius” (Grade 7: 86)

The powerful positioning of the text reinforces the importance of factual knowledge. While those statements exemplify the concept of banking education (Freire 1996) and the subordinate epistemological status of the students (Issit 2004:689), this two - dimensional (Erikson and Lanning 2014) approach to teaching would not on its own meet the intellectual demands of the 21st century. Alongside the text being fixed and uncritical, the textbook also focuses on a text that is more exploratory and communally discussed with a learning strategy informed by Hick’s learning inquiry method (SMS Grade 7:96-97) an adaptation of Bloom’s Taxonomy of learning (1956). This innovative pedagogical approach to learning encourages students to use higher order thinking skills for students to inquire into, organise and explain events that have happened.

Within a three-dimensional teaching, the inquiry-based activities not only engage learners in the learning process but also empower *them* to be responsible for their individual learning (see SMS Grade 7/8/9: iv). The information-seeking questions (what happened?) and the explanation-seeking questions (Why? How?) not only evaluate the historical knowledge acquired but develops the student’s historical inquiry

and thinking skills by eliciting information from various primary and secondary sources of history as they extract, order, collate, and present their interpretations of the evidence to their peers.

Levstik and Barton (2004) commented that this tool of inquiry allows students and teachers to think together, ask questions, discuss areas, gather data from a range of sources (photographs, maps) and develop explanations that tell *their* stories or versions of historical truths. This approach reminds me of Foucault's way of constructing meaning systems where the students construct "their" truths that shape their social realities. This approach to inquiry encourages the students' historical thinking as

texts tell the reader how, when, and where to read; how they stipulate a selective version of the world and of "being" and "doing" in that world; and how they position some readers as inside and outside of, visible and invisible in that world. (Luke 1995-1996:18)

As the storyline recognises an empathetical reading of the text, it explores the multiplicity of stories and subjectivities of other viewpoints. The process of asking thoughtful questions, seeking a range of evidence, analysing the findings, and crafting complex answers creates a space for historical thinking. Wolk (2003) described historical thinking as

empowering [students] with multiple perspectives and questioning habits of mind and encourage them to think and take action on their decisions through inquiry, dialogue, activism, and their daily decisions about how to live so that they help make a better world. (102)

There is a clear attempt to move away from a banking system of teaching. The act of writing underpins a student-centered philosophy that promotes the teacher-student interaction in the learning process. The diagram below illustrates the way in which the

authors construct the text to encourage students to think deeply about history. The text across the three textbooks were categorised under the themes below:

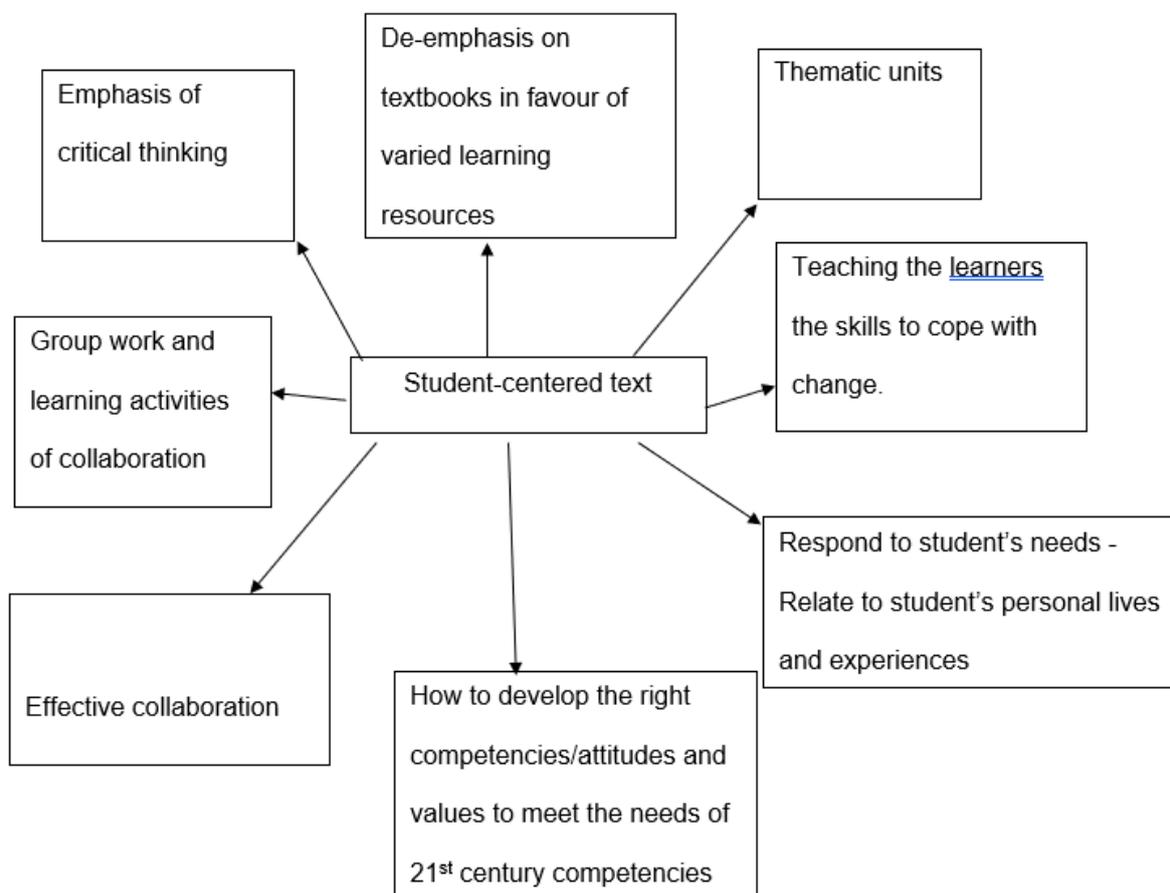


Figure 5.1: Student-centered text

The pedagogical implication of a student-centered approach to teaching history aims to develop intellectual thinking and cognitive flexibility (Erikson and Lanning 2014).

5.2.1.5 Non-representational thinking

By moving away from representations as social facts (Foucault 1972) linked to a range of socio-political practices in the Western world where order, truth and subject, the textbooks refer here to the construction of a disposition, a way of thinking that affirms

“movement, intensities, and encounters” (Lorimer, 2005). An example of thematic of the non-representations used in the textbooks:

Teaching through real examples and application and experiences both inside and outside of school. Students understand and retain more when their learning is concrete, relevant and meaningful to their lives.(NCF 2017)

This approach encourages students to have an open-ended discussion of the uncertainties of the future and unsettles objectivity. Meaning making becomes subjective. The text is guided into asking questions, engaging in a dialogue and analyse and synthesise ideas to further form historical understanding. The diversity of thinking is promoted through discussions (SMS Grade 7/8/9: iv), case studies (SMS Grade 9: 73) and mind maps (SMS Grade 8: 22; Grade 9: 22) as the text builds connections across historical knowledge, learning skills and attitudes. I provide in the Table 5.1 below a number of extracts from Teaching and Learning Syllabus in Grade 7,8 and 9 that reflects the non-representational thinking model under three headings Knowledge and Understanding, Historical Skills and Attitude.

Scope and Sequence of content areas	Extracts from teaching and learning syllabus based on NCF Grades 7,8 and 9 (2017)	Non-representational thinking
Knowledge and Understanding	<p>Developing in the learners a sense of existence in the past as well as the present.</p> <p>Learners need to understand how the present has come about.</p> <p>Need to cultivate an appreciation for the heritage of their country.</p> <p>Understanding of how diversity of cultures within society and the world has developed.</p> <p>Recognise the contributions of each culture and to explore its value system.</p>	Time and space, evidence, continuity and change, cause and effect, significance, perspectives, cultural understanding and empathy.
Historical skills	<p>Communication skills (<u>writing</u> and speaking)</p> <p>Research skills (collecting, organising, and interpreting data & information)</p> <p>Thinking skills (hypothesising, comparing, drawing inferences)</p> <p>Decision-making skills (considering alternatives and consequences)</p> <p><u>Interpersonal skills</u> (seeing others' points of view, accepting responsibility, and dealing with conflict)</p> <p>Interpretation skills (reading and interpreting pictures, maps, charts, and graphs)</p> <p>Critical thinking</p>	<u>Non hierarchical</u> interaction/mutual learning, working together, critical thinking

<p>Attitude</p>	<p>Teaching through real examples and application and experiences both inside and outside of school. Students understand and retain more when their learning is concrete, relevant and meaningful to their lives.</p> <p>Preparing learners to become active and responsible citizens Outline a set of 21st century competencies to be developed and attained in a progressive and consistent way by all learners,</p> <p>Understand that although they are unique in themselves, they also share <u>many</u> similarities with other children. Develop positive attitudes and a spirit of inquiry that will enhance their understanding of their world Empower them to think rationally Participate actively and become effective members of a democratic society.</p>	<p>Connection to history Relevance of history Lived experience</p> <p>Complexities of the world, Development, Lived experiences, Globalisation, Neoliberal agenda</p>
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Table 5.1: Extracts of non-representations

5.2.2 The text

In this section, I examine how the historical text potentially influence the way students interact with the world by applying a linguistic analysis to critical discourse. The act of writing is examined here as a process that extends itself beyond its semantics to engage in what language does (or not). My intention is not to look at the textual data as a series of discrete events covered in each chapter but instead look at the *kind* of history that is being contained. Before I engage with the kind of history, it is important to highlight that all the textbooks are written in English - the use of English as the

language of government and education in postcolonial contexts is well attested in the work of Mair (2003) and Rassool (2007).

5.2.2.1 Mediated text

An interesting observation is how historical knowledge is no longer contained only in the textbooks. The textbooks reveal a dynamic transfer of knowledge that is further consolidated using contemporary sources. This is exemplified across the textbooks with hyperlinks such as the preservation of our heritage (<http://www.patrimoineenperil.mu> – SMS Grade7:70) or industrialisation in the 1960s (<http://www.mauritiustimes.com/mt/sada-reddi-42/> - SMS Grade 9: 20).

The use of electronically mediated textbooks and hyperlinks direct the students to other sources of knowledge as students become more inquisitive about history. If the impact of hyperlinks have been questioned (Gordon and Alexander 2005:145-146) as to how hyperlinks can dominate the students' worlds and weaken the development of their narrative receptivity, I would agree with Lyotard (1979) who argued that the technological advances have transformed "the nature of knowledge". Knowledge can no longer be seen under a Eurocentric world view but understanding history is rather constructed by a "process of articulation" (Bickley, 1994:74) that allows a multiplicity of perspectives. In this sense, while the historical texts are made up of stories that are seen as objective, the meaning the students bring into their interpretation of the stories with the multimodality of the sources they are presented with encourage them to further construct their own views, values – their own historical reasonings.

5.2.2.2 From education to learning

The text across all the textbooks illustrates a predominance of learning exemplified by words such as “learning objectives”, “learning about the past”, “learning about each other”, “learning through inquiry”, “learning experiences”. Patrick (2013) refers to an interesting observation on how the language used in textbooks has shifted from “education” to “learning”. Traditional *education* has been referred to the process of receiving and providing knowledge, through systematic instruction while *learning* refers to an ongoing process of acquiring new skills and knowledge, through lived experience.

The text emphasises learning activities that are designed to acquire knowledge about history as the text encourages the student to learn through different learning activities. I categorised the text into six types of learning activities and questioning.

Activity Type	Questioning	Examples in textbooks
<p>Content focus – the focus is on acquiring historical knowledge</p>	<p>Who?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>What is/are?</p> <p>Identify?</p> <p>Evaluate?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who were the people living in the <u>Chagos Archipelago</u> before 1971? - What was the population of the island at that time? - On which islands of the archipelago did they live? - What were their daily activities? - Why were the 'Ilois' forced to leave the <u>Chagos Archipelago</u>? - What happened to the 'Ilois' after their deportation? <p>(Grade 7: 6)</p>
<p>Interactive focus – Based on active <u>learning</u> activities that focus on the student's interaction with others to support the learning outcomes</p>	<p>Discuss and share</p> <p>Work in groups (<u>group assignments</u>)</p>	<p>Imagine you are a <u>historian</u> and you are writing about the history of your country. Make a list of the places you will visit to consult primary sources. What type of primary sources you will consult? Present your findings in class. (<u>Grade 7:37</u>)</p> <p>Life was <u>very...hard</u> for the slaves. They were ill-treated and punished harshly. Observe the pictures on pages 12 and 13. In groups, discuss each picture and share your views in class about the life of the slaves. Write <u>a few</u> sentences about what you have discussed. (<u>Grade 8: 13</u>)</p> <p>Find out how the 'Abolition of Slavery' is commemorated in our islands. You may work in groups to create a poster to show the different activities organised in our islands to remember this event. (Grade 8: 22)</p>

<p>Critical thinking – focus is on providing the space for students to think about and use the knowledge in new and <u>different ways</u></p>	<p>Analyse case study</p> <p>Analyse a scenario and present your views as a group</p> <p>What is the relevance and applicability of this topic in other areas?</p>	<p><i>Mr <u>Sonn</u> and his wife have 2 sons, <u>Dev</u> and <u>Sam</u>, and 1 daughter, <u>Pinky</u>. They live in a <u>small rented house</u>. Mr <u>Sonn</u> used to work on the sugar estate as a labourer while his wife was a <u>maid</u>. Life was not always easy for the <u>Sonn</u> family. Mr <u>Sonn</u>, against all odds, did his best to give his children the best opportunities through education. The children worked <u>very hard</u> at school so that they could get a good job and have a better life for them and their parents. Dev is now a <u>dentist</u>. Sam is a teacher and <u>Pinky</u> is a successful entrepreneur.</i></p> <p>(a) What can you say about the story of Mr <u>Sonn</u> and his children?</p> <p>(b) According to you, have Dev, Sam and <u>Pinky</u> successfully improved their lifestyle?</p> <p>(c) How has <u>hardwork</u> at school enabled Mr <u>Sonn's</u> children to move up the social ladder? (Grade 9: 73)</p>
<p>Co-create of knowledge – students are encouraged to produce something to engage with ideas at conceptual level</p>	<p>Using technology to produce, explain, describe and visualise information</p>	<p>Share your views with the whole class using creative strategies, for example, role play, poster presentation or in any other which you may think of. (Grade 9: 50)</p>

<p>Problem Solving – presenting students with scenarios which they are asked to address</p>	<p>Based on the knowledge about the topic, their understanding and skills, the student analyse the case, make recommendations</p>	<p>Why does the United Kingdom want to keep the <u>Chagos Archipelago</u>?</p> <p>Imagine you are a judge at the International Court of Justice.</p> <p>a) What would be your decision regarding the case above?</p> <p>b) Write two reasons to justify your decision.</p> <p>(Grade 8:87)</p>
<p>Reflection – process of understanding how students think the way they do, their assumptions, attitudes and beliefs</p>	<p>Writing why they think about a specific topic?</p> <p>Asking students to write how they feel about it, why this might be the case?</p> <p>Using reflective writing processes</p> <p>If they could do something differently</p>	<p>Think about the consequences of colonisation. Write your ideas down and share with your friends. (Grade 7: 53)</p> <p>Why is it important to maintain peace in the world?</p> <p>How can we resolve conflicts peacefully? (Grade 8:38)</p> <p>Can you think of the consequence of the competition and rivalry among the colonial powers? (Grade 8: 41)</p> <p><u>Carrying out</u> an inquiry: Find out about the situation in the past. We inquire from a historical perspective using a variety of sources.</p> <p>2. Describe and explain the context in the present day.</p> <p>3. Think about future scenarios.</p> <p>- What could be the probable future, based on the evidence gathered?</p> <p>- What could be a desirable future, based on your own thinking, suggestions and the values of sustainability? (Grade 9:127)</p>

Table 5.2: Deconstructing learning

The variety of learning activities makes history learning an engaging experience and encourages their constructiveness of history inside and outside the classroom while being aligned to the learning outcomes of the unit. This approach to history teaching encourages the use of open-ended questions and often begins with “how”, “in what ways”, “what was it like or imagine” – questions that do not lead to simplified dichotomies of yes/no, true/false but develop empathy for past historical experiences, such as the pain that slaves suffered or compassion for the Chagossians for their ongoing struggles.

This approach to historical instruction allows for students to develop personal reflections and an authentic appreciation of the topic being studied. The diversity in the range the discussions e.g. on slavery (in pairs/groups/presentation) illustrate how first order questions (e.g. *what* is meant by colonisation? *What* was going on in Mauritius at that time?) and second order questions about knowledge (e.g. *In what ways* do you think the slaves protested against the ill-treatment and harsh punishment? (e.g. Grade 8: 19); *Why* do people move from one region to another? (Grade 9: 111) that emphasises how the students engage with the creation of their knowledge about history.

5.2.2.3 Chronological structure

The breakdown of the chapters below (Table 5.3) elaborates how stories that link past, present and future further develop the students’ inquiry skills. The content is structured in a chronological way, allowing students to gain an initial foundation in the past before moving to a more detailed exploration and interrogation of the historical material as shown in the table below.

		Content Areas		
		Knowledge and Understanding		
Content Area	Topics	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
Knowing my country (past)	My country and myself	X		
	Our country our People	X		
The making of contemporary Mauritius (present)	The way to Independence		X	
	Mauritius a democratic country		X	
Mauritius in the changing world (future)	Our Links with the world (future)			X
	Population studies (future)			X

Table 5.3: Deconstructing content

The storyline is organised in a chronologically coherent and systematic way across all three books that informs the national history of Mauritius. The different chapters' content is carefully selected, organised and grouped chronologically under different time periods so that the stories become part of a common plot or a main storyline (Wertsch 2017). The periodization of history, with its discrete categories and time periods, allow the organizing and systematizing of historical knowledge.

History teaching is cumulative and sequential, with each year's study building on what has been learned previously- as evidenced in the chapter breakdown. The rationale behind this approach is explained,

Traditionally, the argument has been that students, especially younger students, do not know enough content to engage in critical examinations of issues, events, or movements. Mastery of content becomes the precursor to engagement, critique, inquiry, and interpretation. (Jewett 2007:165)

While a chronological approach to history emphasises the development of chronological thinking skills where history can be understood in simpler ways (that could fit in with younger students' ability to understand the concept of time) than the

most recent ones, this approach assumes to be building block on which students to understand the cause and effect of historical events and organises historical knowledge in an incremental linear way. The text brings history to its logical, modern terminus: globalisation. If globalisation has also been referred to the dominance of a single western culture over the rest of the world (Papastephanou 2005:541) - Grade 9 textbook emphasises how the educational reforms' rationale have been on the need for students to develop specific attributes such as problem solving, critical thinkers, collaborate for a technology-driven future.

5.2.2.4 Turning points

An important linguistic development that the authors have used is the turning points in the text. Turning points have been argued to *signify, represent, and define* lasting changes that represent a lasting shift in the zeitgeist (Grever, 2001:11). It is particularly in times of crisis and instability that society undertakes fundamental change, often from a perceived threat or dramatic event. A turning point, therefore, results from a punctuation in the equilibrium of everyday life (Baumgartner and Jones 1991). Examples of the turning points in the textbooks are:

Extracts demonstrating turning points	Textbooks
The civilising mission of colonisers as the colonial enterprise	Grade 7: 53
The Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbour, World War II in 1939	Grade 8:45
January 1968, just before independence, when a riot broke out in the capital, Port Louis. Violent clashes which started between two unruly gangs, later led to inter-ethnic riots	Grade 9:31
Chagossians fight claiming their right to return to their home	Grade 7: 7

Table 5.4: Examples of turning points

As history is about assigning meaning to the past, the turning points are useful frames of reference as they mark an end as well as a new beginning in a narrative (Grever and Van der Vlies 2017:295). However, they can also be slippery concepts as contemporary writers have the *power* to define with hindsight what the turning points are. If turning points offer a shift in the stream of history, they can be as meaningful or meaningless depending on what we read into them. Turning points implicitly represent the dominant culture in which they are situated. Howard Zinn (1970) wrote that

there is an underside to every age about which history does not often speak, because history is written from records left by the privileged. We learn [...] about the thinking of an age from its intellectual elite. (102)

The textbooks have been linked to the “great tradition” (Sylvester 1994), an approach which privileged the stories of great men in the nation’s past, the stories become a way to make sense of the world within a “specific kind of discourse with conventionalised textual features” (Georgakopoulou and Goutsos 2000:64-68). This is

exemplified with the introduction of the great colonisers in Mauritian's history from Grade 7 (see figure below) that reflects how history is defined by the positioning of wealthy white men and their influence and powerful impact they had on the development of Mauritius.

Unit 2 | Our country Our people

Let's read about the contributions

Prince Maurice Van Nassau

The Dutch sailor Wybrandt Warwick discovered our island in 1598. He named it Mauritius after **Prince Maurice Van Nassau**, the stadtholder of Holland. Some places in Mauritius still bear Dutch names.




Mahé de Labourdonnais

General de Labourdonnais arrived in Ile de France in 1735 as a governor under the French East India Company's rule. He is the real founder of the French rule in Ile de France.




Pierre Poivre

Pierre Poivre came to Ile de France in 1767 as an Intendant under the Royal administration. He wanted to make Mauritius a 'Spice island'. Under his rule, roads were widened and many stone houses were built in Port Louis, a few of which still exist today.




84

of a few European Colonists

Bernardin de Saint Pierre

Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint Pierre was a French writer and botanist. In 1768 he travelled to Mauritius and studied about plants. He is best known for his novel, Paul et Virginie.




Charles Mathieu Isidore Decaen

General Decaen was the last French governor of Ile de France. He came to the island in 1803. He continued with slave trade and slavery in the island. He built Lycée Colonial for the education of the elite.




Sir Robert Townsend Farquhar

Sir Robert Farquhar was the first British governor of Mauritius. He arrived in the island in 1810. His contributions to the island were mostly in the field of agriculture and public works. Farquhar is also remembered for his dealings with the slave trade and his activities in Madagascar.




Discuss and Share

You have noted above the contributions of some European colonists in our island. Now, find out about other European colonists who have contributed in the development of our islands.

85

SMS (Grade 7: 84-85)

The selection of topics in history teaching excludes controversial or politically contentious issues and clearly avoids engaging with the traumatic past (Weldon 2010: 82). This is exemplified as other significant turning points have not been mentioned such as how the Great Depression of the 1930s led to economic hardship for labourers on the island and led to the first racial war with riots and strikes by the working class against the owners of the sugar plantations which were overwhelmingly powerful Hindu families (Salverda 2015). Another example of an untold story would be how the universal suffrage following the new constitution allowed people the right to vote (in English, French, Gurati Hindi, Tamil, Telegu, Urdu, Chinese and local Creole) that

increase the electorate in the 1948 elections and marked the collapse of 150 years of Franco-Mauritian hegemony (Salverda 2015:60).

5.2.3 A decolonised narrative – the interplay of language, power and history.

The final stage of the CDA exemplifies the centrality of whiteness and Eurocentric stories in the teaching of history and its significance on identity. “White” is presumed in our contemporary society to be meaningful index of identity that brings “moral choices” (theguardian.com 20.04.2021) in the way students engage in conversations in racial identity as we tackle systemic injustice. I broke down the topics covered across the SMS textbooks into western history topics and non-western history topics in Table 5.5.

Western history topics	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Non-western history topics	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9
Total number of pages on each topic							
Globalisation	1	-	6	Mauritius and its links to Africa (<u>not</u> through slave trade)	-	-	4
European colonisation	12	17	5	Mauritius and its links with India			3
African Slave Trade	7	23	5	Mauritius and its links to China		5	
Industrial revolution	-	1	1	Decolonisation	5	-	5
World War I/II	-	10	-	Construction of National identity			
Mauritius and its links to France			2				
Learning inquiry (<u>Hicks'</u> model)	5	-	4				
	22%	54%	19%		5%	5%	12%

Table 5.5: Western and non-western history topics

The table articulates how western history (95% across all the textbooks) is still the dominant narrative in shaping the history of Mauritius. The narrative illustrates how the lower grade textbooks begins with a linear narrativization of the historical asymmetries of power with the colonial occupations associated with physical systems of oppression/domination with empire-building (SMS Grade 7: 81-85). The oppressive constructions of history produced and reproduced Eurocentric knowledge in an oppressive and patriarchal space with specific discourses, practices, and beliefs as the language reconstitute the colonial legacies.

5.2.4 Reflections

The analysis revealed that on the surface, the chapters and orders of the discourse may appear linear, objective and candid, however the content of the history textbook is selected is carefully constructed in line with the curricular requirements. The way history is constructed reflect a backward design strategy where the learning goals (skills, attitudes, behaviours and values) stated in the NCF leads to specific learning objectives that includes clear, measurable actions verbs and specific conditions under which student will perform the learning activities.

The linguistic structures, the criterial features and choice of words with the corresponding detachment of the author from the reader further extend the textual language's "transcendental status" (Olson 1980: 192) as objective and impersonal. As students approach the narratives as the final authority, they are less inclined to be critical of the knowledge they encounter to become obedient followers (Bellino 2014a:4). While the impeccable nature of the narratives (Wallace-Casey 2017) could refrain the student from being "spontaneously critical" (Levstik 2008:27) of the historical text they are presented, there is equally a clear impetus to move away from the banking model (Freire 1996) with the use of compelling questions as part of the learning inquiry method to encourage the students interrogate historical facts and construct their own understandings of Mauritius, themselves, and the world.

As an emancipatory educational process, the new narrative attempts for students (the former objects) to become subjects empowered to not only exist in the world, but also to engage with it. The way the language is constructed encourages the students to analyse the causality of events and avoid viewing the world as static and unchangeable. This puts great focus on the student-teacher dialogue where concrete

situations in the everyday life functions as a point of departure to stimulate critical reflection (Freire 1977).

At the heart of this new narrative, there is a fundamental orientation to understand change through the questions of causality and significance (Steffes, 2009:270) with the innovative use of Hick’s historical inquiry approach to historical understanding (SMS Grade 7:96).

Unit 2 | Our country Our people

Learning through Inquiry

An inquiry is not simply answering a question or finding a right solution to a problem. It is a process that engages the person conducting an inquiry into investigation, exploration, and research and finally arriving at a conclusion.

Let's study the different steps that are involved in the process of inquiry.

1 What is the key question you are interested in finding the answer to?
What are you interested in finding out about the person you have selected? Write down as a question.

2 Make a plan, and then collect your information from different sources.
Think about what resources will help you to get the information, and then begin collecting your information.

3 What did you find out about your question? What additional information did you find?
After you have collected your information, explain what you found out about that person based on the question you wrote in step 1. Write down any other information you found out during your inquiry.

4 How do your findings link with what you already know?
Once you have written down all of the information you have found, ask yourself 'how does this information relate to what you already know?' You may write a report/create a poster/present orally.

5 What have you learnt from the inquiry? What new questions does this raise for you?
Discuss what you found from the inquiry. Share your findings.

ACTIVITY 2.7
Conducting an Inquiry
Identify and choose any one personality (past/present) from any three fields/areas given below and conduct an inquiry by following the step-by-step instructions provided above.

1. Arts and Culture	2. Education
3. Science and Technology	4. Politics
5. Literature	6. Sports
7. Medicine	8. Entrepreneurship

96 97

SMS (Grade 7: 95-96)

This curricular change attempts to overcome the passive compliance (Luke 1995 :29) of learning about history as the students are encouraged to engage with the

construction of language as subjective, shaped by the multiple connections that they must negotiate with their environment to construct their own interpretations of history. This pedagogical approach offers specific strategies and skills for students to become *social critics* to make decisions that will affect their social, political, and economic realities (Giroux & McLaren, 1992).

There is also something quite “neat” about the conceptualisation (plot line) of texts in the textbooks. “A classical approach, though not unusual in textbooks for this age level comes in posing binaries: good and evil; friend and enemy (Kooy 2007:200). Hawkey (2007:263) explains how “unproblematic” stories have been as “the past has always been organised and shaped through stories, complete with their neat beginnings and ends and often laden with moral purpose”. The depth and challenge of the content (Hawkey, 2007) exemplified by the “incremental dive in history as an entry point for deeper historical understanding in the higher grades for students acquire relevant and age-appropriate historical thinking skills” (SMS Grade 7/8/9: iii) introduces “effective history teaching” (Kooy 2007:202).

The CDA also reveal how school textbooks within its own specific genre and lexicogrammar, are strategically used to transmit a particular version of history. The “permanence of the print” (Luke et al 1983:12) contributes to a text that is read as a concrete and reliable source of knowledge (Brand 2010) as they present “simplified versions of very complex and layered histories” (Grever and Van der Vlies 2017:290) bounded by specific political choices (Brand 2010). The content is also mediated by other strategies to relinquish some control to the reader with the use of hyperlinks to actively engage with other sources of history.

The last section of the analysis reveals how the wider political context restricts what counts as authorised knowledge and prescribes how language ought to influence the

way student will interact with the historical content. Within an educational reform that has been influenced, shaped and determined by the political party in power as reflected in Chapter 2, at the extreme, the textbook “becomes the vehicle for the transmission of authorized dogma [...] and an agent of ideological manipulation or a mechanism for policing knowledge” (Issit 2004: 688-689).

While this theoretical basis offers important implications if we are concerned with the necessity for the language to “act” as it extends the knowledge and belief of the new curriculum into a language of action to the outside world. In practice, the text is limited in the way it supports the learner’s ability to transfer and apply what they have acquired and understood through their meaning making autonomously and effectively. I referred to the concept of conscientisation in Chapter 3 (Freire 1996) defined as the process of “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and *to take action against* the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, 1996:17). This suggests the ability of students to engage with the history’s struggles, situations of inequality, and domination and wanting to change it. Conscientisation becomes a key component that will be used to interpret how students develop an understanding of their situation in the communities from which they self-identify.

Segall (1999) reminded me how the educational value of studying history is not to study history of the past itself but how this particular past positions us to act or (not to act) in the world but rather it is “for it is from a present that we construct pasts and upon which we create futures” (366). The text ought to also recognise how history can be an evolving act where students ought to be encouraged to interact with the text in some kind of *resistance* that would further prompt further them to challenge the stories presented and further investigate how the past informs our present and our social future. The questions of “what if ...” would encourage what Goudvis et al (2019) described as “imaginative thinking” where the students would interpret and think

creatively. Only then I argue that students would be able to develop Freire's conscientisation' where they have a "fuller perception of social, political, and economic contradictions which enables them to take action of the oppressive elements of reality". (Freire 1996: 17). The challenge remains to translate these academic thoughts into instructional practice.

5.3 To what extent do the colonial and contemporary encounters potentially influence the way Mauritian students self-identify?

To answer this question, I apply Fairclough's framework (see Appendix 4) to "connect microevents to broader discourses and contexts with the intent of asserting the construction of social experiences through narratives" (Sotou-Manning 2014:162). In attending to the texts, I use a technique that John Muckelbauer (2000) calls productive reading, through which

one reads in order to produce different ideas, to develop possible solutions to contemporary problems, and, as importantly to move through contemporary problems in an attempt to develop new questions. (2000:73-74)

The small stories legitimated by the different colonial occupations and contemporary global issues allowed me to develop emerging themes to understand the formation of the self. The small stories stitched together to connect the dots elaborate on the narrative of "nonbeing" (see Appendix 5), "being" (see Appendix 6), "becoming" (see Appendix 7) defined how the subalterns in history struggled for their own liberation throughout the Mauritian history. Underlying those stories of freedom, recognition and emancipation, I argue that the text reflects a multiplicity of stories attached to different situations and relationships, places and people (McLeod 1997:17) form part of the

Mauritian student's national, cultural and self-understanding. This history becomes part of who they are and can shape the way students identify as Mauritian citizen and their potential identity (Wertsch 2008) .

5.3.1 A Narrative of Non-being (Stories of subjugation)

The institution of slavery is considered as one of the most important chapters in Mauritian history with two significant migratory movements with the slave trade in Africa and indentured labourers from Asia (known as the “new form of slavery”) in SMS (Grade 8:25).

Locked in a segregated history (Eichstedt and Small 2002), rather than depicted as parallel histories and intertwined belongings (Nimako and Willemsen 2011), slavery is compartmentalized in separate subsections, using “short terse sentences that likely fail to capture students’ attention and leave little room for explanation or details. (Weiner 2014a: 16)

Mauritius’s slave population of African, Malagasy, Indian, and Malay made up 90% of the population at the time of the abolition of slavery in 1835. If those darkest pages of our history (Fokeer 1922) have always been acknowledged in the Mauritian textbooks, this thesis acknowledges the ontological nonexistence of the subalterns and how they are represented in the narrative. While the topic of slavery seems openly spoken about (Marino 2011: 423), I explain in the following sub-sections how the dominant narrative surrounding the identity of slaves tends to be obscure, silent and ignored.

5.3.1.1 The absence of being

The descendants of slaves (known as the Kreol in Mauritius) were linked to a lack of tangible colonial past compared to other indentured labourers with genealogical and cultural linkages with their ancestral country that enabled them to affirm themselves as emerging from a known civilisation (Eriksen, 2007). The slave descendants' story begins from a dissociation from their place of origins and a lack of historical evidence about their past that left them with a sense of uprootedness and a loss of identity – a void that could never really be filled.

Once brought to Mauritius, slaves had no opportunity of ever returning to their country or seeing their family and friends again.

Slavery that developed during the period of colonisation was characterised by severe physical punishment for any slave who displeased his or her owner.

SMS(Grade 8:11)

With very limited information on who they were, where they came from, the image of the African slaves and their descendants is reduced to what is perceived from the master's eyes. Slaves were viewed as property to the extent that when slavery was abolished, Britain paid compensation to *those* people who had *lost property* in the process.

'Chattel slavery' means that 'people' were treated as 'goods'. They were bought and sold in markets. They were hired out and even insured as goods. These enslaved men, women and children became the 'property' of their owner.

Enslave means to make a person slave by taking away his or her freedom and forcing him/her to work for no pay under threats and punishment.

'Chattel slaves' (also known as 'bien meuble') had no rights and their children who were born in Mauritius also became the property of the slave owner.

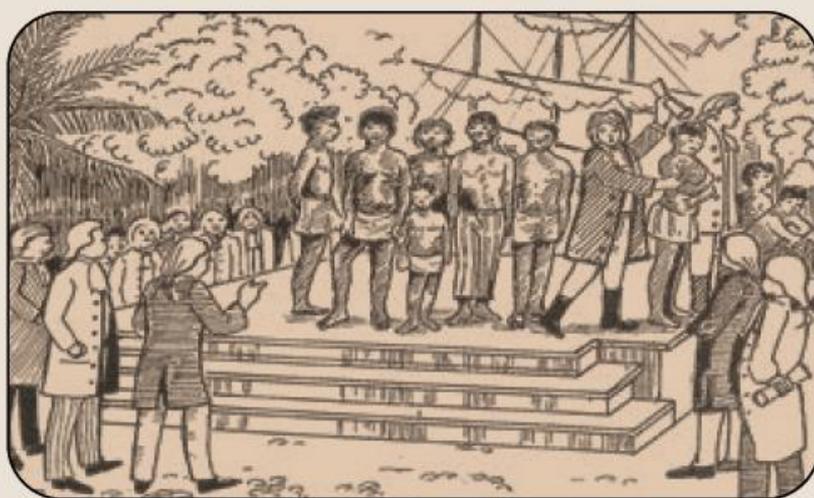
SMS (Grade 8:11)

Category of Slaves	Estimated Value of each category
Agricultural slaves attached to a plantation	Between £ 52 - 142
Agricultural slaves not attached to a plantation	Between £ 54 - 144
Skilled slaves	Between £ 64 - 142
Total amount paid to Mauritian slave owners for 66,613 slaves	£ 2,100,000

Source 2: An extract of the Commissioners of Compensation

SMS (Grade 8: 21)

The colonial power structures reinforced a racial hierarchy that legitimises the oppression of black people and a culture of violence (SMS Grade 7:86; SMS Grade 8:14).



Slaves sold in the market



Slave being branded



Slave being punished

SMS (Grade 8: 13)

From the photographs, the slaves were “being branded”, “being sold in the market” (SMS Grade 8:13) – statements that reinforce how slaves were the property of their masters, and could be

itemised, catalogued, tagged, indexed, classified, ordered, priced, exchanged, replaced, sold, dispatched, liquidated, expunged, and undergo whatever else can be done to a thing. Through capture, birth, inheritance and transaction, the slave is the property of the master. (Sithole 2021:133)

Sithole (2021) wrote a “slave exists in the realm of non-existence where his existence is the existence that calls his humanity into question” (131). This powerful statement reflects instances in the textbook where a slave was positioned as a non-being, a thing that only acquired its worth if bought or sold. The absence of being is (re)presented in the textbook as a narrative of the subdued without an existence of their own. They only gained value by becoming an “object of value” (Sithole 2021:134) that was determined by the master. Having no value on their own and having value in terms of their overuse and misuse, the slave had nothing that was deemed to be “human”(Mpofu and Steyn, 2021:2). The slaves, Mbembe insists, are considered by the master to have no reason and transcendence to aspire to (Sithole 2021:134). “What is understood to be the human has nothing to do with the slave” (ibid.130) but [their] sense of who [they] were came from the eyes of his masters”.

Land ownership symbolically redefined the subaltern’s position in a racial hierarchy. Generations of landless where “land ownership is still skewed in favour of the economic elite while certain groups, particularly of Afro-Malagasy origin, are landless” (TJC 2011: 3) brought me back to Fanon’s words in the *Wretched of the Earth* when he wrote “for colonised people, the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity.”

5.3.1.2 The lack of agency

Denied of any form of being (Sithole 2021:131), slaves became what Fanon (2001) described as “a white man’s artifact” (16). Not “existing” meant that the slaves

[had] no structure of power, no world, to stand upon as there is nothing that gives validity to her existence...The brutalisation [...] will not call for any moral response or any form of sanction. (Sithole 2021:132)

By examining the extracts of the Protectors of slaves Copies of Report from No.1 (SMS Grade 8:20), the subalterns could not ‘speak’ or be heard and needed an advocate to speak for them. There was a strong desire instead to emulate the social elite (and here I refer to the social elite to the colonists or subalterns who were associated to the colonists by marriage (SMS Grade 8: 31) and secure privileges and freedom.

Date	Name of slave	Name of proprietor	Name of complaint	How disposed of
1829	Jean Jacques Jean Pierre Prosper	Mad. Gondreville (Flacq)	.. General ill treatment, too much work, and Sunday labour	.. Complaint false; complainants punished with ten stripes of a cane each; severely admonished, and then returned to their master.
1829	Jean Louis	Mile Teychyney (Savanne)	..Inattention to him when ill, and being struck with fist, after punishment with a cane.	.. It appears that the punishment inflicted was deserved, the slave was returned to his master, who was at the same time cautioned against striking a slave with his fist.
1829	Victorine	Madme Sturbell (Savanne)	..Being deprived of her hours of repose, and over-worked	.. Complaint frivolous and unfounded; negress sent back to her mistress severely reprimanded.

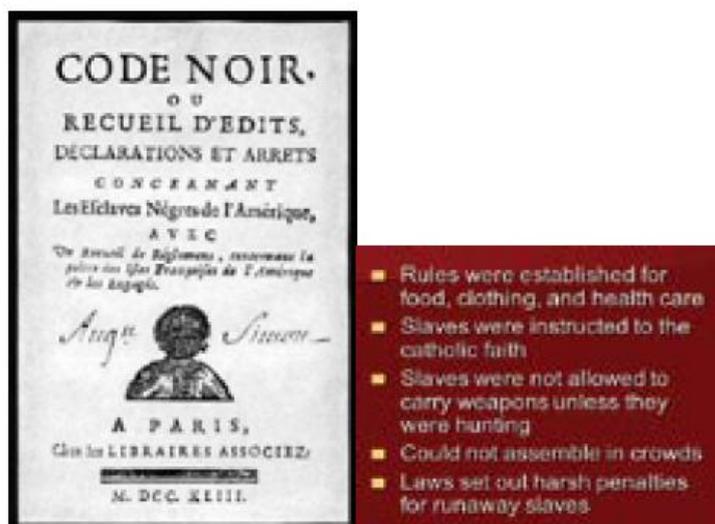
Source: Protectors of slaves Copies of Report from No.1- Abstract and Appendix of Complaints preferred between the 25 December 1829 and 24 June 1830

SMS (Grade 8: 20)

In fact, in 1829 when slave protection officers were introduced, out of the 182 complaints made 122 were dismissed (Yank 2017: 196). The way those complaints were resolved appear suspicious and dishonest claims with limited credibility. As Yank (2017: 196) wrote,

Existing police records for this period are in very poor condition, and there is little evidence that anything concrete was ever done for slaves who registered complaints with these authorities.

This is further elaborated in Gerbeau's (2018) book on Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean as he wrote how the Chief Registrar of Mauritius, responsible for the slave register which was the main source of checking for illicit trade, was himself an importer of slaves from East Africa (196).



The laws such as the Code Noir can tell us what laws governed slaves' and owners' lives

SMS (Grade 8:14)

The Code Noir (SMS Grade 7:86; SMS Grade 8:14), a rule policing slavery, was historically located as a system of control that presupposed certain *dispositions* by the slaves and by their masters. The Code Noir and the various checks in a way I argue legitimised and reflected the panoptic control (see Foucault's reading of panopticism in Chapter 2) as the "subject creates the world, structuring it through violence and

making sense of reality through control and possession of the Other” (Sithole 2021:132). The panoptic gaze objectified the slaves where their identities were limited to a *number* (as show below) to exercise control on the colonial subjects.

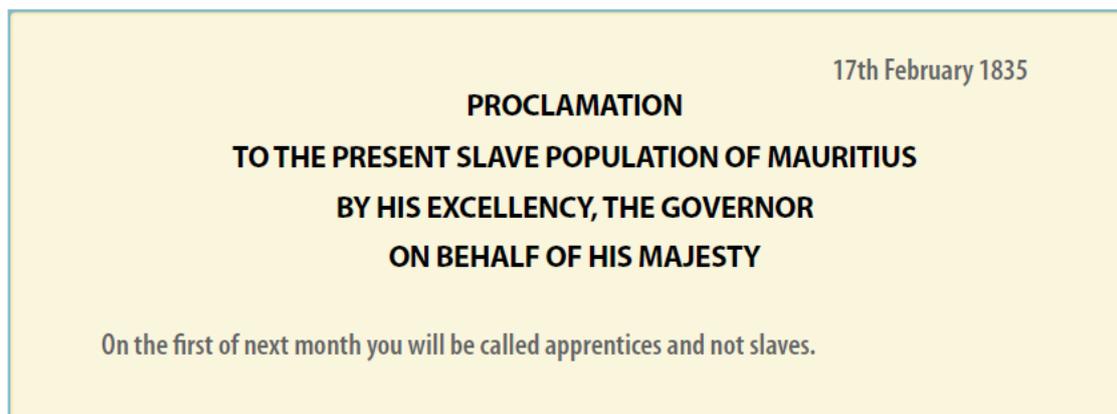


**Archaeological artefacts and excavations can reveal
information we did not know about**

SMS (Grade 8: 14)

The text further illustrates how the abolition of slavery did not mean the end of a system of control as “there was no celebration after the end of the abolition of slavery in 1835” (SMS Grade 8:22). Slavery led to an apprentice system of four years within a similar system of ruthless exploitation. Years of colonial oppression had led to distorted conceptions of who the slaves were, and the circumstances of their manumission (SMS Grade 8:21).

Source 1 is the Proclamation and Source 2 is an extract of the Commissioners of Compensation.



Source 1: Proclamation

Some slaves had been freed even before the abolition of slavery. They were called manumitted slaves. Manumission could happen if an owner gave his or her slave his/her freedom. An enslaved person could also buy his or her own freedom after having saved some money and given it to the Government. Some women became free after marrying their owner.

SMS (Grade 8:31)

I further elaborate on the position of women in the next section. Their “ownership” was heavily constrained by their status in a patriarchal society through dominance.

5.3.1.3 Being invisible

A disclaimer is found in the Grade 8 textbook, “the past sadly did not leave much of a record for the poor, the uneducated and the underprivileged” (14). Historical texts are “constructed from a set of secondary narratives, myths, symbols, metaphors and images” (Yadgar 2002:58). These sources suggest that there are more evidently historical sources from the great, the good, the powerful and the influential.

The historical text makes selective choices of great *men* (in the past) who conquered the world, establishing movements and bringing growth and development to foreign

lands (Bickley 1994:19). On the surface, these are great stories of our colonial heroes: Prince Maurice Van Nassau, Mahé de Labourdonnais, Pierre Poivre, Bernardin de Saint Pierre, Charles Mathieu, Isidore Decaen, Sir Robert Townsend Farquhar... (SMS Grade 7: 84-85) and we cannot feel but grateful for their contributions to the country. Hawkey (2006) wrote that stories in history teaching are situated in the “great tradition” (Sylvester 1994), an approach which privileged the stories of great men in the nation’s past to the slaves and the coolie history. And those records were intended to influence how they would then be institutionalised in the form of statues, buildings, place names, public monuments, sites of memory and museums (Chan Low 2004).

The representation of women in the narratives is scarcely recognised during slavery. The extracts below illustrate how women remained invisible and silent. The stories (or lack of) highlight the stereotypical expectations of women slaves experience with the ingrained prejudices as nurturers and the overt discrimination to achieve the same salary as their male counterparts. The emphasis on male accounts represents in addition to the imposition of race as a system of power, the ideas of an oppressive gender system.

- Women could not run away into the forest as the men because they often had children. So many of them ran away into the town of Port Louis and hid in the huts of other slaves.

(SMS Grade 8:19)

‘He (Honore Eudes) had been asked by the government to explain to the slaves what abolition implied, and on the same 4th June 1839 he proclaimed that all slaves in Rodrigues were henceforth free. He told them they would be given free transport if they wished to leave Mauritius. He then offered them a monthly wage of 3 piastres, to the women 2 piastres, free food as much as they could consume according to custom already established, 11/2 lb of salt fish per week, two coujarons of spirits as before, and the liberty of cultivating their small gardens. Unanimously, they accepted these conditions for a trial period of one month, and Eudes was “confident” all his slaves would continue to work on his estate as before. Five slaves from L’Orangerie also accepted these conditions.

(SMS Grade 8: 23)

5.3.1.4 Resistance

To deconstruct the abstractedness of freedom/resistance (SMS Grade 7:67) in the textbook, I examined stories of protests, expectations, and fears in the discursive practices that made this resistance possible. The findings reveal that slaves resisted oppression by actively protesting for their own liberation.

Protest against slavery

Now you know that the life of the slaves was very hard. In what ways do you think the slaves protested against the ill-treatment and harsh punishment?

- Slaves never accepted their enslavement. They fought very hard against slavery in their own way.
- From the moment they were captured and sold, many revolted and tried to escape from the ships.
- Very often they ran away and became maroons.
- Once in Mauritius, they continued to escape even though they faced severe punishment.
- Women could not run away into the forest as the men because they often had children. So many of them ran away into the town of Port Louis and hid in the huts of other slaves.
- Even though they were not allowed to practise their original culture and speak their language, they adapted the original culture and created a unique culture of their own which has survived to this day. In this way, they retained their humanity and their identity.
- Even though they were not provided with proper medical facilities, they made use of existing plants and herbs to cure themselves.
- Many became skilled and were able to sell their goods they produced at the market and save some money.

SMS (Grade 8: 19)

The extract above suggest that text is asking the students to critically think how slaves resisted their enslavement and reflect on the psychological wounds of the slaves as they built their lives within the corrosive restrictions of slavery institution. The text portrays violence as forms of resistance where Le Morne became a refuge for the runaway slaves in the 18th and 19th century - an epitome of struggle for the liberation of Mauritian maroons who did not accept colonial domination and lifelong servitude. "Le Morne Cultural Landscape is an exceptional testimony to maroonage or resistance to slavery in terms of the mountain being used as a fortress to shelter escaped slaves"

(SMS Grade 7:67). The landmark of Le Morne is a symbolic representation of memories and the painful story of freedom. This powerful cultural landscape represents the hope for the enslaved and oppressed, a voice for the voiceless, a powerful living memory and symbol

to one and all through the memories and the dwelling spaces, the mental and physical world of the slaves, the world slave owners and administrators, travellers and missionaries did not, could not and would not penetrate. (Teelock 2001:458)

While the narrative describes a rich timeline of resistance with protests, not all protests are violent. Significant turning points in history are the 1975 students' strike when students protested against the inequality of the educational opportunities and the colonial content of the textbooks (SMS Grade 9:39) or more recently in 2019 when the International Court of Justice urged the UK to end its "unlawful occupation" of the Chagos Islands (Grade 7: 8) are instances where people took a stand against the dominant and powerful to be recognised, to be humane again in a non-violent way.

Fanon's discourse in *The Wretched of the Earth* (2001) interrogates the mechanisms of colonialism. He explained how the violent rejection of the colonial system in the form of the resistance mentioned above was an inevitable consequence of colonialism. As I read Fanon I am reminded of the importance of not being "fixated" on the violence itself but understand history as part of a larger narrative of the colonial entanglements that contributed to the black body that could not be seen past its blackness (Fanon, 1952). Gopal (2019) further elaborated how black people as colonial subjects were not only passive victims but on the contrary, actively resisting as they continued to fight for freedom and self-determination.

5.3.1.5 Reflections

The lack of humanness and meaningful existence in the narratives above highlight a psychological malaise for the descendants of the slaves. Boswell's (2006) research on ethnic identity in Mauritius: *Le Malaise Creole* provides a reflective account of the oppressive conditions of slavery and the case of dispossession, physical and psychological trauma that remained attached to the identity of the Kreol descendants.

In deconstructing slavery, Sithole's (2021) meditations on the dehumanisation of slaves' insight is essential.

To be the master is to possess that which is nothing, to do whatever to it and to practise any form of what Saidiya Hartman (1997) terms 'terror making', which is the operating logic of the power vested in the master by himself and for himself. (Sithole 2021:136)

Colonised people as a result, perpetuate their conditions by emulating the culture and ideas of their oppressors. The melancholia of non-belonging had serious ramifications for the psyche of the colonised, who had a deeply implanted sense of inferiority. The "Amelioration" of Slavery punctuated the fact that to be enslaved meant to be subject to "despotic terror" (Sithole 2021:137). What strikes me here is how can slaves described as "non-beings", previously deprived of an existence, be also seen as a what Calvin Warren (2018:24) defined as an "ontological terror". Warren explored the tensions between blackness and being where he argued that

the world is both fascinated with [blackness] and terrified of it. Antiblack violence is violence against nothing, the nothing that unsettles the human because it can never be captured and dominated. Blacks, then, allow the human to engage in a fantasy — the domination of nothing. By projecting this nothing as terror onto blacks, the human seeks to dominate nothing by dominating black being, to eradicate nothing by eradicating black being. (2018:24)

Of significant relevance here is how does the marginalised break out of this “captive mind (Mulder 2016: 16) with a lack of land (wealth). Not only were there conditions attached to their release, but the question was/is *how to become humane again* after years of internalised racism and oppression that have caused people of colour to accept their subjugated position as being the ‘epidermalization of inferiority’ (Fanon 2001) and that has also led to the “captive mind” (Mulder 2016: 16).

5.3.2 A Narrative of Being (stories of recognition)

This section offers an insight into the text as it narrates stories of recognition and set the conditions for possibilities and hope.

5.3.2.1 Memorialisation

Following on the process of cultural discarding and forgetting, Araujo (2012) reflected how memory making and remembering is something significantly pivotal while reconstructing the identity of the non-dominant groups. She wrote that memory is something anachronistic and is constructed in relation to the past, which is updated and recognised in the present. Žižek (2000) argued that the best way to forget something is to memorialise it – statues are classic examples of memorialisation such as the “War Memorial” monument erected in Curepipe in memory and honour of the brave Mauritian soldiers who were killed during World

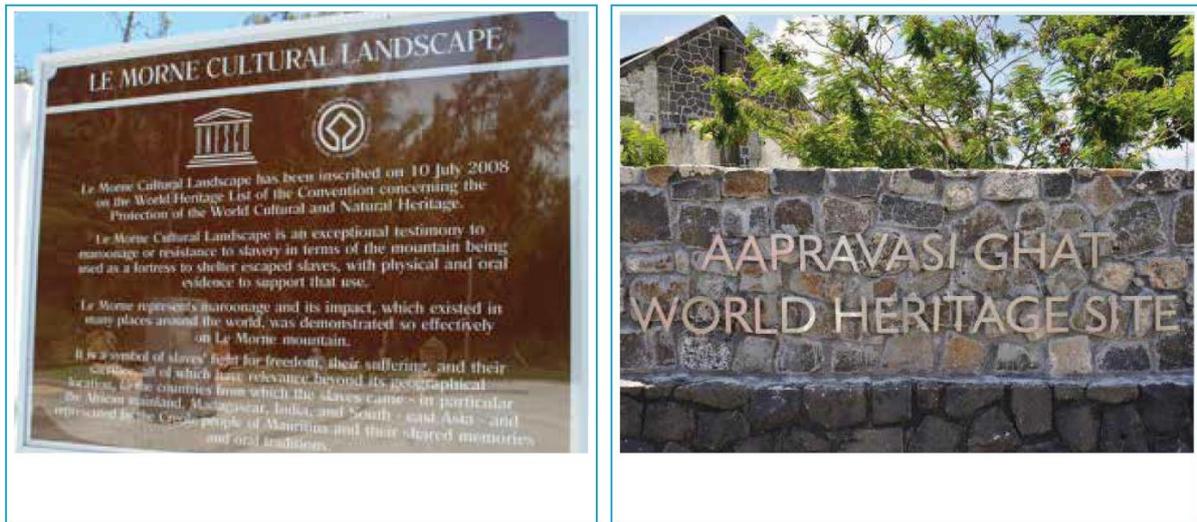
War I (SMS Grade 8:43) was a way to remember the ones we have forgotten.



War memorial monument found in Curepipe

SMS (Grade 8:43)

The stories of memorials in fact represent ways of preserving memories of both the great and the vague by experiencing the emotions evoked by their achievements. Those monuments allow us to make history a living memory. As indicated by Nandan a postcolonial writer, memory is something dynamic and empowering as “we represent while we remember, we reconstruct while we remember [...] remembering creatively is important for empowerment [...]” (quoted in Harmon 22.09.2013). Wreath laying in historical places in both Le Morne and Aapravasi Ghat (SMS Grade 7:67) to remember the Slave Route on the 1st of February to commemorate the anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery has become a ritual where flowers are laid in honour of the slaves.



Picture 5: Le Morne Heritage site and the Apravasi Ghat

SMS (Grade 7:67)

5.3.2.2 Recognition

By examining a significant historical event that resonates throughout all three textbooks – the case of the Chagos Archipelago disagreement, the text illustrates the voices of the Chagossians who were forced to move out of their homes as the largest island, Diego Garcia, was chosen to serve strategically as an American military base.

The Chagos ongoing struggle (as shown in Grade 7:7) provides a provocative storyline that allows the examination of the self within the current world politics that demands for recognition and for an identity to reclaim their sense of being.



Picture 2: Chagos islanders claiming the right to return to their home

SMS (Grade 7:7)

Lister (2007:170) wrote “how in a globalizing world the question of the ‘who’ of justice becomes as important as the more traditional question of the ‘what’ of justice”. This question is relevant here in the treatment of a displaced group of people having to confront the demands and the pressures of imperialistic motives to get back their homeland. In May 2019, the International Court of Justice ruled that the archipelago was legally part of Mauritius and Britain had illegally separated the island in 1965 from Mauritius in exchange for its independence – a case of an incomplete decolonization process.

Britain has apologised for the “shameful” way it evicted islanders from the Chagos archipelago in the Indian Ocean, but insisted Mauritius was wrong to bring a dispute over sovereignty of the strategic atoll group to the United Nations’ top court.

(SMS Grade 8: 86)

The new narrative recognizes the need for the subalterns to fight for their fundamental rights as human beings and for social justice against vestiges of colonialism. The nonrecognition of the Chagossians' rights and entitlement condemned them to face extreme poverty and discrimination.

Still, this case represents decades of a tireless fight for justice and redress, against colonisation and imperial subjugation, perpetuated to this day by racism and denial of the humanity of a population of the Global South in the name of western security interests. It illustrates the vacuousness of arguments, fashionable in both liberal and right-wing contexts, suggesting that colonialism is a 'thing of the past' and draws into sharp relief the failures involved in addressing colonial history and its enduring present. (Al-Jazeera 9.12.18)

The case of the Chagos islands reminds us how injustice is intricately connected to coloniality and the legacy of racism that leads to some form of "imperial nostalgia" (Bhabra 2018) that continues to shape inequitable power dynamics.

While the narrative acknowledges the recognition of finding out "who" the people living in the Chagos Archipelago before 1971 were and "why" they were forced to leave the Chagos Archipelago (Grade 7:6), it goes further to urge the students to further their historical understanding by visiting other sources of knowledge (www.chagosrefugeesgroup.org – SMS Grade 7:6). The rationale here is to confront those uncomfortable memories of a colonial past and the legacy of an imperial history (El-Enany 2020) that school textbook history writing *can* discard. Rather the text testifies how as part of an open democratic dialogue, students are able to get a deeper insight into the historical processes and the possible futures for the marginalised, further challenge their own status and inheritances and question those vestiges of colonialism.

5.3.2.3 Rootedness

This section discusses the emphasis on our roots (SMS Grade 9:101) as they become a means “to preserve and communicate cultural truths intergenerationally” (Porat 2001:51) that reinforces a national identity. The importance of being *rooted* and *our commitment to our origins* is illustrated in the topic on our cultural heritage and an emphasis on how culture ought to be transmitted from generation to generation in the form of values, beliefs, customs, traditions, and norms (SMS Grade 7:61).



Map 1: Places of origin of our ancestors

SMS(Grade 7:59)

The purpose of this map allows the students to reflect to their origins and the significance of roots, origins and backgrounds as they claim a particular identity.

Our Cultural Heritage

Our cultural heritage reminds us of the past. They are evidence of the way our ancestors were living. These can be seen not only through our customs and traditions but also through historical places, objects, artefacts and different forms of art.

Our cultural heritage is our legacy. It is of historical, social and aesthetic importance.



The idea of heritage acknowledges our attachment to the past and our belief that it should be valued and preserved for future generations.

SMS (Grade7: 66)

The extract above illustrates the Mauritian identity as a collective identity within a diverse nation that focuses on fundamentally a shared knowledge system that privileges its diversity and heritage as its symbolic strength or resilience as a nation.

Think of what our ancestors brought with them when they came to Mauritius.

You may consider some of the questions given to help you.

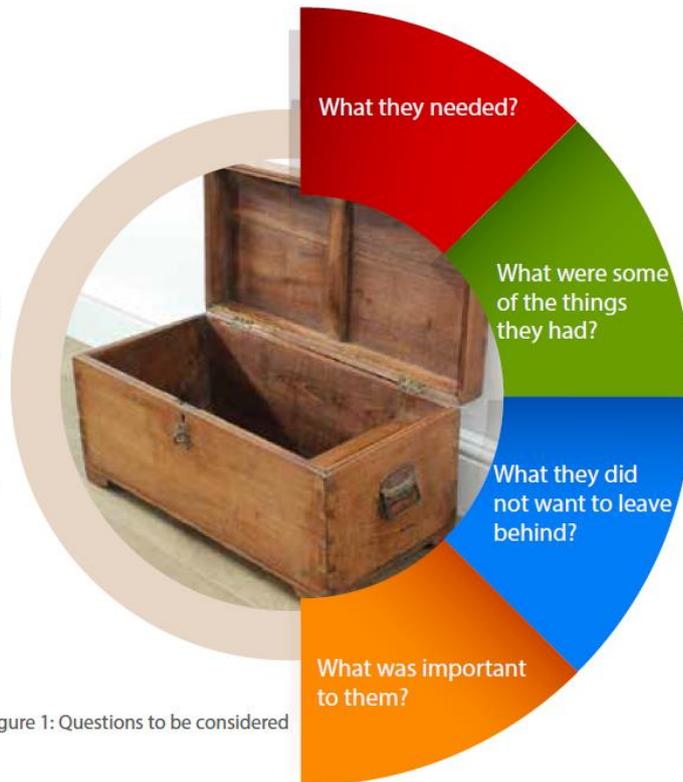


Figure 1: Questions to be considered

Although many of our ancestors were not able to bring what they wanted or needed, all of them brought their own culture to Mauritius.

SMS (Grade7: 60)

One of the consequences of colonialism brought people of the most diverse origins into contact. Historically, people from diverse backgrounds through slaves, indentured labourers and colonists encountered each Other and learned new ways of engaging. While cultural markers such as place of birth, ancestry, skin colour, as we have seen above in the findings, make claims on their existence (or nonexistence), their ways of being became invariably translated and re-formed as a result of their encounters within the Eurocentric traditions.

■ The Plural Society of Mauritius

Observe the picture below. It shows the diversity of the Mauritian population.



The population of the Republic of Mauritius is around 1.3 million. Mauritius is known as a plural society where a variety of ethnic groups and communities of different cultures, religious and linguistic backgrounds co-exist and where all the ancestral cultures have been preserved. There is harmony among its mixed population. These features make the island a unique place in the world. Mauritians are known for their tolerance and kindness towards all people.

SMS (Grade 9: 32)

The emphasis on rootedness takes me back to the beginning of this thesis when I described how Mauritius's geographical entity, as a sovereign nation claimed and defined bounded territories as per its Constitution. The "local" territory sustains an illusion of fixed physical boundaries that articulates memories that have traditionally referred to our ancestry and defined who we are and where we come from. I agree with Yadgar (2002:58-59) who described the way in which the national narrative is portrayed in the textbook as "the story that a (national) collective tells about itself". By defining our national identity in terms of our cultural heritage, the text highlights the

importance of loyalty to our ancestral origins that starts with our diverse history (SMS Grade 7:42; SMS Grade 7:80).

The findings recognise discourses on nation building in the construction of a national identity. The educational reform celebrates a pluralistic identity (SMS Grade 7:76) where key moments highlight the concepts of patriotism, unity, diversity and the symbolic repertoires associated with multiculturalism in the textbooks.

This shows that there is a sense of belonging. With time, we have built a Mauritian identity, with common goals and shared values. We participate in various social activities together, that forms our collective Mauritian identity. This is called having a collective identity.



Picture 11: Children celebrating independence day

SMS(Grade7: 76)

The text highlights a narrative where our being, situated in borderlands (Anzaldúa 1987), was naturally revealed, and tensions and conflicts minimised as part of our national belonging. Illustrated in the form of collective identity as cultural expressions (SMS Grade 7:73) with the use of expressions described below reinforced the absorption of nationhood (Brand 2010: 84).

Some people use **expressions** like '*mosaic*','*rainbow*','*salad bowl*' to show their appreciation of multiculturalism and cultural diversity.

There are also many **sayings** from well-known personalities who recognised the advantages or importance of cultural diversity. For example, Maya Angelou, a famous American poet and civil rights activist, said that "*in diversity there is beauty and there is strength*".

SMS(Grade 7: 73)

Sondgeroth (2009) wrote that those stories have a purpose to create the underlying heartbeat of a nation, and they do that. The patriotic storyline becomes a "collective memory" of the nation that the students are socialized into to make sense of the past events and to create cohesion in the present with a view to the future (Grever and Van der Vlies 2017:287). The text is well intentioned, proudly assuming knowledge and understanding of cultural pluralism with a shared past, a shared religion, a shared heritage, and a shared knowledge across the textbooks (SMS Grade 7:69) as qualities of strength for the island.

The National Heritage Fund (NHF) is a government organisation which manages, protects and promotes our national heritage to develop a sense of belonging and civic pride with respect to national heritage.

There are many sites in Mauritius and in Rodrigues which are now on the list of our protected national heritage sites. A list for these sites is available on the National Heritage Fund website, which is <http://www.nhf.govmu.org>.

SMS(Grade 7: 69)

Berger and Lorenz (2008) commented that State elites and the majority of professional historians presupposed that education in (national) history was essential for "nation-building and for responsible citizenship" (12) but some authors have implied that this often implied the exclusion of cultural and ethnic minorities (Stuurman 2007). The stories in the textbook contradict this view as they carefully illustrate *all* the ethnicities and celebrate our diverse cultures that make our rainbow nation to encourage a sense of patriotic nationalism. And this is particularly evident with the way the text actively

encourages the students to dig deeper into the history of minorities. Students are instructed to:

Visit the Nelson Mandela Centre. Work in groups and create a poster to show your findings. Your poster can include drawings or pictures of the various aspects:

- (i) related to slavery and
- (ii) ways to promote African and Creole Culture.

(SMS Grade 9:96)

5.3.2.4 Reflections

I argue that the text describes the idea of affinity and shared experience of 'being' to empower students to deal with differences and contradictions by developing an empathetic imagination. By starting with the known and the familiar (the local) and moving out to the distant and imagined, the text interrogates and problematises the notion of cultural contact itself to draw connections between the past and present by understanding how the nature and impact of past developments explain today's world and anticipate the future. The more recent past transcends the limitations of this rootedness to our ancestry to embrace a world community that is motivated to celebrate human connectedness defined by one's experiences.

The textbook has typically used history education to shape the national identity and collective memory (Wertsch 2008) to justify the present-day governance. Reflecting on the country's turbulent early history, its diversity and uniqueness as an island and its commitment to preserving our cultural differences and diversity by acknowledging each ethnic group, the contemporary realities have meant further movement of people and the result is a problematisation of what constitute our uniqueness in our identity in

the history it creates. The relevance of this “singular useable past that leaves little room for ambiguity or debate” (Wertsch 2008) as a means to socialise students into a common narrative can be problematic with the contemporary realities. Goethe in Carr (1986:202) expressed the view that

history has from time to time to be rewritten, not because new facts are discovered but because the changing present opens new perspectives on the past. The sense of accelerating change in the present leads some historians to discourage any attempt at a history of one's own time. We can be eyewitnesses to the present, but we cannot have a truly historical understanding of what goes on until after a decent interval has passed.

While forgetting implies a censorship of certain elements, here, it is not necessarily seen as a failure in the writing of history, as explained by Connerton (2008)

the emphasis here is not so much on the loss entailed in being unable to retain certain things as rather on the gain that accrues to those who know how to discard memories that serve no practicable purpose in the management of one's current identity and ongoing purposes. Forgetting then becomes part of the process by which newly shared memories are constructed because a new set of memories are frequently accompanied by a set of tacitly shared silences. (63)

Connerton (2008) suggests that by allowing the text to overlook sensitive and politically contentious turning points in the past, the discourse provides a living space for the present and the formation of a new identity. The construction of the text utilizes the techniques of “forgetting” and “erasure” to create this neat linear storyline and give an illusion that history should avoid contradictions and tensions. As Stradling (2001: 100) wrote “the question is not should we teach them but *how* should we teach them.” As a result, particular versions of the past can persist as they fit the canon and are considered “relevant for later cultural formations” (Olick and Robbins 1998:129).

In the process of cultural discarding, certain events or experiences *must* be forgotten to be able to form a new identity that is “signalled by two types of semantic evidence,

one the emergence of a new type of vocabulary, the Other the disappearance of a now obsolete vocabulary” (Connerton 2008:64). The SMS text relates to these historical movements particularly when critical nouns such as “imperialism” is replaced by “emancipation” or “fate” for “progress”. The time-related and future-oriented concepts (Koselleck 1985) reflect a change in the value and purpose of knowledge about the past moving from a didactic and heuristic writing of history, to a claim to a future oriented storyline of certainty and objectivity. By influencing the textbook revisions and imposing their idea of what constitutes right knowledge for the present and future, the State decides which sensitive topics about the past may be suppressed, ignored or erased (Connerton 2008) to support the ideological, political values and power relations.

While historical knowledge is actively constructed, the text disengages legitimately with students from a non-dominant background with a history of continual generational oppression exemplified by a lack of visibility in the narratives as one’s race/ethnicity becomes an identity maker that signifies one’s place in the world. While Freire (1996) assumed students would be able to interrogate reality and transform “systems of oppression so that they can become beings for themselves” (1996:55), I share Dillabough’s (2002:211) concern that

we cannot create a ‘pedagogy for the oppressed’ as if it is liberating without analysing the structure and organisation of knowledge that underlies the various categories of oppression themselves. Moreover, to teach about issues of oppression, to reconstruct the language, to attempt to engage in social change is not necessarily to affect it.

For non-dominant students, history remains a story where the subalterns based on their race, class and gender are not invited in the narrative. To engage with history learning, I argue that students ought to be able to see themselves and identify with the stories to have their experiences validated. Smith (1987:97) wrote “locating the subject

in one's everyday world means locating oneself in one's body and material existence". If students are to be visible and engage meaningfully with the historical narratives, they ought to be able to see themselves as participants in the storyline and their place in the world, as well as the truthfulness of the narrative interpretations.

5.3.3 A Narrative of becoming (Stories of intercultural encounters)

Identity has been so far seen here as *discrete* and as a *static given* - Mary Louise Pratt in her book *Imperial eyes* (1992) used the notion of 'contact zones' to describe those spaces where cultures met, clashed, and grappled with each Other in the context of highly asymmetrical relations of power such as colonialism and slavery. The author emphasises the importance of moving away from identity as a fixed given but embracing it more as a verb in the contemporary world, which implies a more active process of embracing experiences of interconnectivity and interculturality. Constructing the 'contemporary' narrative indicates a critical urgency to conceptualise the 'new', the 'modern' and an openness to an infinite possibility of constructing an identity that belongs and is legitimate to that future (Gordon, 1995).

5.3.3.1 Shifting identity

While the previous section emphasises tolerance and respect of "our" ancestry (Grade 9: 32) that unites and reconciles us as the "rainbow" nation, Grade 8/9 locates the individual in the contemporary realities while still fulfilling one's need to belong (Smith

1991: 161). It would seem dislocational in a cultural sense (Moore 2006:98) to be told that the global, the transnational, the citizen of the world should reconsider the illusion of fixity of the local to embrace the volatility, fluidity, and uncertainty of a moving world (Bekerman 2013).

As the 21st century unfolds with globalization and increasing economic, social and cultural integration among countries in the world (Beck, 1997; Castells, 1996; Macgilchrist and Cristophe 2011), post-colonial identity is now defined as a form of homogenisation (Liebes 2003) with the increased interconnection between countries and cultures contributing to forming a more homogenous world suggesting the emergence of a global culture. While there is a greater connection and homogeneity as part of globalisation (mauritiusimes.com 02.01.2021), it is argued that the national still matters with the rise of populism and nationalism (Millei 2018).

I would argue here that the globalizing process poses potential challenges to the country's expectation for singular loyalty in its national narrative as history school textbooks traditionally,

reach into the very distant past and claim earlier civilizations that lived on what is currently national territory as constituting natural predecessors of the modern state. It will embody a particular set of values and perhaps even a political, economic, cultural, or religious mission; it will likely also include implicitly or explicitly a set of cultural - linguistic, ethnic, religious, confessional traits or characteristics understood to be central to the national identity, markers that will be at one and the same time, of course, inclusive and exclusive. (Brand 2010:79)

International migration now "problematizes the traditional territorial contours of the national community whose story the State seeks to inculcate" (Brand 2010:78). In times of growing mobility of people across borders, major social transformations and major technological shifts are prompting new ways of thinking about how we might relate to each other. This leads me to reflect on how the discourse ought to evolve to

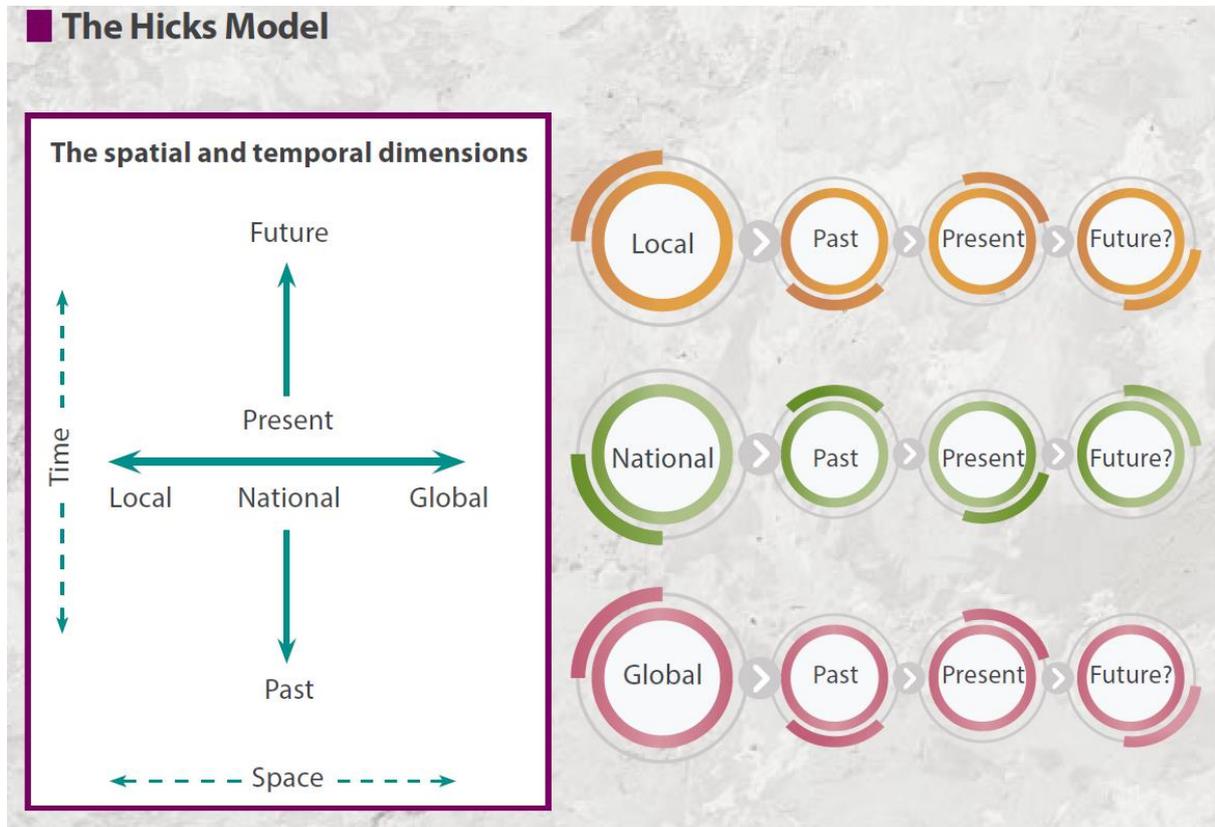
promote educational encounters that emphasises the concept of diversity associated with present migration.

5.3.3.2 Intercultural interactions

If the global and the local appear as opposite political dialectics, the stories illustrated in Grade 9 show how the global and the local can coexist with an intensification of worldwide social relations. Inherent in the intercultural encounters as part of global interconnectedness is the concept of open-mindedness and the intermingling of people, ideas and perspectives (De Costa 2014). An important pedagogical question regarding the extent to which our identity should continue to preserve a loyalty to our local values and commitments with our colonial encounters (SMS Grade 7:64) on the one hand and engage with the demands and challenges of a dynamic world on the other.

The making of Modern Mauritius (SMS Grade 9:93-118) defines the Mauritian people as people of the world (SMS Grade 9:108) - people *living in a global village*. The text in the Grade 9 textbook explicates the notions of place, time and self, linked to the concepts of globalisation and modernity with a critical urgency.

The Hicks Model



SMS(Grade 9: 129)

The findings in Grade 9 textbook illustrates how people negotiate the global-local dialectic as the students learn about the mutually beneficial relationships in a context of change and globalisation (SMS Grade 9:99). The text suggests the importance of being locally rooted while actively engaging with a global community and a redefinition of the Otherness. While the Other has been synonymous with the marginalised and the subdued in the earlier Grade 7 and 8, constructed by hegemonic discourses and asymmetric power relations, the “Other” in Grade 9 is reframed as synonymous to ‘stranger’, culturally different but approachable and intelligible (Leinius 2014: 40). The text suggests the development of “rooted cosmopolitanism” (Appaiah 2017:2) – where traditions of tolerance and respect are encouraged as globalization brings the need for multiple affiliations (Portes et al. 1999). While contemporary encounters reflect the irrefutable fact that all cultures are dynamic, changing through engagement with an

Other - the development of new forms of identity emerge from the struggle to maintain traditions and the tensions between embracing the new and retaining the old.

The pedagogical implications of this philosophical worldview justifies this openness to Otherness (Kahn 2004:6) to appreciate the global. A critical reflection of the stories about globalisation suggests a push for an intercultural dialogue with the Other and the recognition of other perspectives to build a hybrid self. There is a clear endeavour to invite the students into a more critical and complex interaction with the past, the present and the future. Drawing on decolonial approaches to cosmopolitanism (Mignolo 2010; Santo 2007) a decolonial positioning challenge the persisting coloniality in the world. Leinius (2014:20) argued “self-transformation must include the acknowledgement of one’s dominating practices, as well as a strategy for creating non-dominating practices of collective contestation, to be truly emancipatory”.

5.3.3.3 Patterns of oppression in contemporary realities

The new narrative presents history teaching as a standardised response to the needs of the free market. While the content of the existing topics articulates how the nation has been explored, conquered, and exploited by Western colonialists, more recent accounts of patterns of oppression in contemporary realities would enhance the student’s understanding that the Western world is a product of coloniality and modernity (Smith, 1999). Unlike the colonialism of the past that focussed on direct military rule and direct subjugation, students ought to be exposed to modern forms of enslavement which are incipient, subtle, and pervasive. Students ought to recognise the current capitalist production of vulnerability (Gordon 2007), where migrants are kept on the side of the abyssal line and denied of their full humanity and citizenship, calls for consciousness, empathy, and mobilization.

By discussing the current cultural and political landscape and the exploitative economic relations where the West created and constructed macrosystems that supported coloniality and topics such as ongoing civil wars and territorial disputes, cyber warfare that manipulate populations, minority women that continue to be disadvantaged in terms of lower wages, lack of training and occupational segregation (McKewon 2016), history teaching can only then open spaces for critical reflection and action.

5.3.3.4 Reflections

As we live in times of unprecedented changes resulting in uncertainties in our traditional identities, I claim that the concept of 'who we are' has shifted and continues to shift. In the context of globalisation and unprecedented levels of global mobility (prior to the Covid-19 pandemic), at the intersection of these mobilities of culture, of people, of ideas and of ideologies and sentiments in the contemporary era, 'becoming' also implies the mobility of desires, hopes, and aspirations. With the possibilities of cultural contact and exchange driven by the accelerated global interconnectedness, the findings reveal how we position ourselves within the world. The longstanding patterns of control, exploitation and domination in the name of progress and modernisation make coloniality a natural side of the modern self. Avner Segall (1999: 366) wrote that

for many of us learning history in school was based on the preemie that we should study history so the past will not repeat itself and it is not the repetitive past we ought to fear (for the past never repeats itself) but rather, the legacy of the past in our present. For it is from a present that we construct pasts and upon which we create futures.

Our contemporary sensibilities recognise a historical thinking that assumes the *differentness* of the past as we ascribe our present values and understandings to empathise with differentness (Steffes 2009:270). The challenge of history teaching is to engage with the past by moving beyond such stories to develop historical consciousness to embrace a contemporary reality (Seixas and Clark 2004).

The third space theory (Bhabha 1994) provides a useful conceptual framework for explaining how two distinct cultural practices can coexist productively, where – for example – the narratives can lead students to construct an identity beyond the borderland of Mauritius. Situated in poststructuralist and postcolonial discourses, *third space* refers to a metaphor for a space in which two cultures meet; it refers to an in-between hybrid space. As Bhabha clarified

the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerge, rather hybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables Other positions to emerge (as quoted in Rutherford 1990: 211).

The third space (Bhabha 1994) I mentioned as part of a narrative of “becoming” would allow the students and the teachers are able to (re)position themselves into new ways of thinking of history. As the hybridity in the third space challenges the idea that identity is defined as something fixed and invariable (Bhabha, 1994), a new hybrid identity emerges when “competing discourses and positionings transform conflict and difference into rich zones of collaboration and learning” (Guitérrez et al. 1999: 286–287).

Guitérrez et al. (1999:287) asserted that learning contexts are “immanently hybrid, that is, polycontextual, multivoiced, and multiscripted, [... and this hybridity] serve[s] as the

building blocks of Third Spaces”. If history provides identity, we cannot afford a history curriculum that is limited to an uncontested chronological recounting of events. Instead, we need to shift the instructional focus from hearing about history to asking questions worth pursuing, to create a space of identity formation which connects to Bhabha’s (1994) idea of hybridity, characterized as something familiar but new, and go beyond the dichotomy of the colonizer and the colonized to become.

The focus here is about transforming the learning environment into expansive activity systems (Gutierrez 2008) where questions that would need to be asked are:

Who are the subjects of learning, and how are they defined and located?

Why do they learn, and what leads them to make the effort?

What do they learn, and what are the contents and outcomes of learning?

How do they learn, and what are the key actions or processes of learning?

Spivak (2012) uses the example of Schillers’ aesthetic education that transcends the neat polarities of tradition and modernity, colonial and postcolonial, to interpret the globalized present. She believed that we ought to train our minds and our imagination in the interest of the humanities by problematizing our understanding of the Other. By expanding the imagination and our capacity to know and understand the Other where local and global values are echoing and supporting each Other, we make differences explicit and allow students to discuss their own understanding of history. By engaging students in learning about history through hands-on inquiry, questioning, writing, and “doing history” (Levstik and Barton 2000), the text would allow students to become keen observers of the world. In such a world view, engagement is crucial as Jordao (2009: 102) argued,

to engage is to question, and to question is a manifestation of care to simply accept, rather than engage and question, might be a sign not of respect, but indifference.

I argue to *do* history, the text ought to engage with a variety of historical sources: photographs, films and documentaries, history websites, history books, museums and historic sites, archives, family places, family documentation activities to be able to think flexibly about multiple sources to provide learning opportunities that respect a plurality and conflicting perspectives. By connecting the historical text to their lived experiences and establish personal connections with historical concepts, the language potentially allows students to interact and become creators of their own versions of history. This leads me to agree with Anagnost (1997) as he wrote the narrating activity is never final: a narrative is an ongoing performance (through language, texts, etc.) which can never be complete.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

6.1 Revisiting the Research Questions

The research questions interrogate how the historical text is intrinsically related to issues of power and dominant ideologies. I examine how identity rooted in language is produced and negotiated through interaction of the self and the Other as part of local and global contexts and the power relations within these. This research examines the stories of the enunciated and the silenced within a dominant hegemonic order within the epistemological consequences thereby creating new possibilities (Mignolo 2000b). The (re)presentation of history is explored conceptually and reflected empirically with Fairclough's (1992) three-dimensional model of CDA. By deconstructing the power relations and the status of historical knowledge through theoretical grounding of the works of Paulo Freire (1996) and complemented by Michel Foucault's (1972) analysis of the theorisation of power, the analysis exposes how the historical text attempts to develop a more nuanced understanding of history moving away from a totalized project exclusively articulated and engineered through the voice of the West (Al-Kassimi 2018:2).

6.1.1 R. Q 1: To what extent does language, power and history interact in the construction of the historical narrative?

What follows is a summary of the key points to answer R.Q 1:

- The SMS textbooks limit the (re)presentation of history mostly as a singular version of the past. While I demonstrated how the authority of text has intrinsic features that points to a rigid structure, this narrow conception of history through its centrally controlled curriculum offers a careful selection of stories in a

chronologically linear storyline where students can incrementally dive into Mauritius' history. I argue how the linearity of the storyline could potentially limit historical understanding. It may be useful to combine different histories, places and time periods in a productive way to generate "dynamic transfers that take place between diverse places and times during the act of remembrance" (Rothbert, 2009:11).

- History (re)presented as a neat storyline limits the teaching of emotive and controversial histories as a necessary step to navigate controversy effectively. The text does not confront both dominant hegemonic economic powers and enduring legacies of coloniality (Mignolo 2007). I share a similar view to Levstik and Barton (2011) when they argued that "the art of forgetting is not enough". Tensions and contradictions can be "a source of strength depending on how they are managed"(Hodge 2012:16).
- There is a clear attempt to move away from history teaching as a "static generational memoir" (Collins and Dolan 2011: 75) to include experiences of the traditionally excluded as part of a decolonised agenda. With a stronger narrative and concrete historical evidence, the students acquire factual knowledge from the mandated curriculum, and engage actively in meaning making of the content specifically with "learning by inquiry" (Grade 7: 96-97) as a significant pedagogical turning point. There is nevertheless limited evidence of the learners' ability to understand concepts such as evidence, relevance and reliability (Foster 2014:24) as they evaluate accounts of the past to construct their own perspective of history. Specifically, questions such as "Why do we think the way we do?" "How could we think differently?" and "What thoughts do we wish to create?" ought to be pursued.

- The revised textbooks position students with the possibility of constructing alternative narratives to emerge from their educational experiences more than just “school subjects” (Buchanan 2016: 57). Specifically, the text sparks the student’s curiosity on tensions within history but limits the potential to critically challenge systems of power and continues by perpetuating a subtext of domination within a neoliberal agenda. The contemporary encounters with the information revolution and globalisation emphasize the centrality of modernity and progress with the need to develop future ready citizens with specific skills at the expense of strategic knowledge dispositions. By moving away from discussions on dichotomous forms of categorization and binary positioning and encouraging students to share their understandings of broader concepts such as discrimination, marginalization, vulnerability, and contradictions would allow an authentic engagement with the relevancy of history to the present.
- The turning points as frames of reference mark an end as well as a new beginning in a narrative (Grever and Van der Vlies 2017:295). They are illustrated within a linear conception of history with a political undertone in the interpretation of historical knowledge where ideas of exceptionalism and advancement reign (Klein 2010). As in many colonised societies, the historical narrative is dominated by a vision of western progress, of moving from being nothing to something, in the name of progress and development. Events and individuals are seen in terms of their exceptionalism rather than in terms of their acts of exploitation.
- The NYCBE’s rhetorical commitment is grounded into a progressive vision with 21st century competencies that appeals to an economically driven agenda and

a progressive pedagogy (Freire 1972). The construction of the text emphasises skills over dispositions to create social change. While the banking concept was a method of dominance that perpetuated the existing social conditions while undermining a development of a critical consciousness for transformation of reality (Freire, 1996:53), the new narrative maintains a social construction tied to power; from which it is possible to translate it either into the interest of domination or emancipation.

6.1.2 R. Q 2: To what extent do the colonial and contemporary encounters potentially influence the way students self-identify?

What follows is a summary of the key points to answer R.Q 2:

- The colonial encounters highlight the relevance of a painful past; a past embedded in colonial influences, drawn out of migration histories that started with slavery and indenture. The dehumanisation narrative (absence of being) affirmed a lack of an existence as a human being that was underpinned by the notion of the West's civilising mission and the spread of development through the colonisation process to achieve 'progress'.
- This "abyssal thinking" (Santos 2014) produced a "system of visible and invisible distinctions, the visible ones being the foundation of the invisible ones" (Ndlovu- Gatsheni 2013:12) where even if the colonialists left decades ago, their laws and etiquettes continue to prevail in the form of the Napoleonic Code, a strong reminder of the powerful French influence in Mauritius. I argue here that forgetting is not the answer to creating neat and linear history storylines, but students should explore the colonial wound to be able to embrace

decolonial healing. There is limited evidence as to whether this encouraged or enabled through the text. As Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) wrote “We are all wounded, [...] we can connect through the wound that alienated us from Others. When the wound forms a scar, the scar can become a bridge linking people who have been split apart”. (Anzaldúa 1987:102)

- Post-independence emphasizes a renewed sense of self based on the ideas and sentiments to unify the nation and foster racial harmony in a diverse and multicultural society. The nationalist ideology centered on a shared past and a common future with marginalised groups fighting for the “need to be known” and dominant groups to “recognise something authentic and distinctive in Others” (Dillabough 2002:205). While this nostalgia of the past and our rootedness to our colonial heritage provides stability, coherence, a certainty about the past in a time of unprecedented social and cultural changes and global alienation, the narrative of the future reconstructs the boundaries of sovereignty with a view of intercultural openness and emancipation.
- The text evolves to frame students as neoliberal subjects as part of modernity, unproblematically diverse but equal products of a linear, bloodless history. With a modern world characterised by globalisation and connectivity, history emphasises the possibilities of new kinds of identities that are not only linked to our individual identities based on our genetics but the construction of a cosmopolitan identity by reconstructing the boundaries of sovereignty.
- The new narrative does not engage extensively with patterns of oppression, exploitation and domination that are produced and reproduced in our contemporary society. The progressive vision of the new curriculum does not

yet address a liberating perspective (Wa Thiong'O 2005) as it continues to assert a narrative that is inherently colonial. The text does not allow further discussion on how modern-day conflicts often have their genesis in colonial policies and practices but sees globalisation and modernity with the notion of uncritical progress.

- To conclude, this research question recognise how language influences the way we interact with the world and potentially shape the way students self-identify. The findings illustrate how identities conceived only as genetic and historical constructions are clearly insufficient in an era of global interconnectedness. The new narrative suggests new directions in the construction of the student's identity as dynamic, shifting and malleable in the rediscovery of their own historical truth. The challenge remains for the narrative to balance recognition of our ancestral heritage and develop dynamic ways of being born out of recognition, compassion and empathy in an era of global interconnectedness. As Drucker (1969) puts it, students should not be completely set adrift from their own cultural moorings to cause a profound discontinuity between the past and the future.

6.2 Contribution of this research

This section assesses the extent to which this research contributes to the body of knowledge highlighted in Chapter 2, before concluding this thesis with the potential direction of future research.

This research brings an innovative element in school textbook research in Mauritius with an empirical element within a new educational reform. At a time when decolonising is becoming more widespread, this research examines how history is (re)presented by looking at the historical knowledge and the construction of a decolonial identity. The data offer a discursive map how colonial encounters described in the historical narratives define our past, present and future.

By applying Fairclough's three-staged model of analysis, this research becomes "a political platform" to examine the textuality of the narrative, the discursive practice, and the social dimensions to meet the critical aims in education for social justice and transformation. While recognizing the important contributions made by Critical Pedagogy, this research combines the linguistic textual analysis within the micro/macro context of the narrative behind the stories being told to offer more authentic questions in the teaching of the Mauritian history. While the contributions to language-in-education policies are important and offer wider resonance, the specific case of these texts is a novel contribution.

This research comes as an important contribution to debates in critical literacy practice with roots in the work of Freire (1996) and Foucault (1972), positioning a critical engagement with the new curriculum by encouraging the learners to actively engage with the texts. By drawing on Freire and Macedo (1987) on the centrality of language in education, this research recognises the connection between the personal and the political narratives acknowledged by many feminist writers (Mills 1959; Hanisch 1970; Steinem 1992) and appreciate the richness of the text and its textuality. This study recognises the controversial nature of what is included and excluded in the Mauritian history textbook and how certain assumptions and ideologies are promoted. To decolonise history, historical "facts" on their own are insufficient to read the word, we

need a relationship with the text to meaningfully engage with the historical narrative to nurture a malleable sense of self.

This research goes beyond the existing body of knowledge on language-in-education policies (Owadally 2013; Nadal et al 2017) to explore the applicability of its findings in history teaching in Mauritius. By re-examining how historical knowledge is produced, presented and strengthened within an alternative paradigm, this research challenges the Eurocentric foundations of history teaching through the lens of a postcolonial and a decolonial dialogue (Bhambra 2014) to transform the findings into a pedagogical space for an ethical and activist stance.

Finally, the analysis uncovers that the *kind* of knowledge in the textbooks is motivated by a neoliberal subtext behind the NYCBE's transformative conception of education. While this progressive vision goes back to Freire's progressive pedagogy, the new narrative limits the historical teaching in the context of its colonial entanglements within the broader contemporary sensibilities.

Through this research and the data presented, I plan to disseminate the findings of this thesis with the Ministry of Education, and the curriculum team within the Mauritius Institute of Education with the aim of developing training resources. My intention is to share the findings in local educational conferences and workshops as I see the findings contributing to the understanding of history as a space for social transformation, emancipation and social justice.

6.3 Further research

This research raised several questions for future research. While this thesis offers one way of exploring the knowledge behind the content of the SMS textbooks, there are several other directions that could be explored further.

First, one of the central premises of historical understanding is the belief that students can be empowered to “read the texts that structure their lives” (Seixas 2004: 561). By examining further how “the conscious mind [of students of non-dominant groups in linguistically heterogeneous schools] accepts, rejects, uses and experiences the ideas it is presented with” (Issit 2004: 690), I argue that research could provide a further insight into how students from non-dominant groups engage with the historical content and how they see Mauritius and themselves as Mauritians.

Second, I would be interested in exploring further how we create learning spaces that are truly inclusive and transformative, by studying the classroom interactions. While this research recognises the complexity of power in language, the need for further research into the pedagogical methods to engage with history is particularly pertinent in the current climate where there are new pedagogical requirements for remote and online learning.

Third, while it has been beyond the scope of this thesis to investigate the dialogue between the teacher and the student in an actual classroom situation, the engagement with the textbook knowledge cannot be seen on its own but in tandem with the oral dialogue between the teachers and the students. The next stage to this research would lead me to examine the way in which the lessons are structured and taught.

6.4 Limitations

This paper begins a conversation on the way the language influences the way the students interact with the world. As with any research, this study has limitations.

First, the findings are based on a limited data set as I engage with the 2017 NYCBE educational reform that has only been underway for just over three years. Grade 7 to Grade 9 textbooks were targeted and provided a data source of narrative data for the

purpose of this study. To expand on the possibilities of this analysis, I suggest that a longitudinal study of the textbooks would provide a further insight on the cumulative effects of changes in the history textbooks.

An analysis of the text in this research can only tell half of the story as we assume teachers and students actively engage with how the text is organised and presented. Due to the limitations in terms of location, time and the pandemic restrictions, it was not possible to conduct school visits and observations of history classes to examine the way history was being taught in Mauritius. The schooling system in Mauritius has suffered a significant setback with school closures and the less well-established online learning systems in place. While these lines of inquiry could not be further pursued at this current time, this is an area that can be followed up.

This research has used CDA as a western method of analysis to reflect the workings of power in discourse (Toolan 1997) and shown how it has the potential to methodologically support decolonial research to deconstruct the hegemonic discourses and uncover the vestiges of colonialism. Within the limitations of this framework, the depth of the analysis would benefit from additional intertextual readings.

While this research framed the textuality of the text from the position of the marginalised, history can be expressed through a variety of genres. By viewing the historical narrative with different lenses, and embracing different analytical perspectives, various lessons could be shared. From a decolonial perspective, I cannot underestimate the impact of my own cultural and ethnic affiliation and my *bi-cultural* position as the researcher, as described at the start of this paper, and how my conscious or unconscious biases influenced this research. I documented my thoughts and the decisions to critically reflect on my own assumptions during the research process and my transparency has allowed me to mediate my own biases.

6.5 Further thoughts

A decolonised perspective of knowledge recognises the (re)construction of the text as “constructed and constructive” (Vasquez et al 2004: 169). This section concludes this research with what a progressive, decolonised and emancipatory history teaching would require.

In the construction of a dynamic identity, by repositioning students from passive listeners to active participants sharing *an authority* with Others, students should be encouraged to question the *foreignness* of historical subjects (Wineburg 2001) by being curious about the context of people’s lives and motives in the past.

What needs to be understood is not just the postcolonial experience but the invisible vampirism of technologies of imperialism and colonial matrices of power that continue to exist in the minds, lives, languages, dreams, imaginations, and epistemologies of modern subjects in Africa and the entire global South (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013: 11)

Building on the innovative pedagogical tool with historical inquiry in the Hicks’ model (SMS Grade 9), students are encouraged to construct their own realities and resist an image of passive adaptation. They can develop authentic and sustainable selves within a contemporary world and become “meaning makers (Van Boxtel 2010: 56). The challenge is for the learner to situate themselves intellectually and culturally (Poonoosamy 2010: 15) to the wider world with ways of being that emphasise freedom, agency and concern for justice. History becomes not only a historical skill but a disposition, an orientation.

From the findings I conclude that constructing a sense of self, with questions such as: “who was I?,” “who am I?” and “who do I want to be?” involves reflecting on one’s life trajectory, rather than viewing our being as a collection of disconnected moments. To find one’s voice and renegotiate identity beyond the binary limitations of white/black or Kreol/non-Kreol means one ought to create a space of freedom through objectifying oneself. This would then translate into what Pearson et al. (2010) described as a space where learning is a consequence of thinking where

knowledge comes on the coattails of thinking [...] Knowledge does not just sit there; it functions richly in people’s lives so they can understand and deal with the world (8).

6.5.1 Transforming the classroom context

Zembylas and Kambani (2012) provide an interesting insight into how classrooms should be supporting the way history is read and thought about. They argued that for students to study history and be more engaged in historical event/people, the teachers ought to create a supportive emotional classroom environment based on trust, and being sensitive to students’ backgrounds, ideas and emotions, for students to engage with controversial issues. Students can only then learn to grapple with the tensions and manage the new imperatives for growth. An emotionally supportive classroom would allow students to feel heard as they reflect and share their lived experiences, then become part of the story and become visible. Eisenhart (1995) posited that

telling stories about self is also a means of becoming [...] a way of thinking about learning that requires the individual to be active, as well as socially and culturally responsive. (1995: 19)

This inclusive learning space would allow learning from discomfort of anarchic storylines in a culturally sensitive way to envision alternative ways of being.

6.5.2 Re (designing) historical content

Levstik (2000) argued that historical timelines, names, and memorized "facts" are *not* compelling. The enduring themes and questions such as questions about real world dilemmas that humans have struggled with over time are more *compelling* history. Practically, this is exemplified in the case of the Chagos islands as one of the key stories in the textbooks where islanders remain in a state of exclusion, stripped of a sense of belonging to their homeland, racially marked, vulnerable to exploitation and unfreedom that is not an exception in modern democracies. The questions we need to ask are: "how do the current global political and economic policies, migration rules systematically lead to extreme forms of vulnerability?"; "What are the new forms of unbelonginess and statelessness?"; or "How does the current global economy abuse and coerce?"

By embracing conflicts, dilemmas can be both freeing and empowering and focus on each student's agency to make a difference. This is where I argue that the creation of a third space (Bhabha, 1996) would allow students to legitimately engage with the historical narratives as they connect with their own lived experiences to encourage the "excitement that lies around controversies" surrounding historical events, and a "sense of history" to ultimately provide the "imagination" (NCF 7-9:86).

6.5.3 How to teach for understanding?

For history to become a pedagogical space of hope, negotiation and discussion requires the contribution of skilled, knowledgeable teachers. Teachers' professional knowledge and activism become increasingly important given the strong correlation between skilled, knowledgeable teachers and high levels of student learning (Ancess 2001; Elmore and Burney 1999; Sykes 1999). History requires

teachers to be human, to accept the constructive process of doing something like meaning making, to recognise the definitional challenges and ambiguities of being and doing, and to be mindful of the need to establish and maintain caring relations. (Gabel 2002: 178).

What is needed is a space for students and teachers to assume this shared vulnerability as they “accept dissent, accepts conflicts, and encourage resistance” (ibid. 179). While curricular change has led to a change in the content, I argue that little attention has been paid to the development of appropriate pedagogical strategies for teachers to implement the new curriculum. Bickley (1994: 20) argued that the fear from teachers is to engage in a practice “where anything goes” and where “they and their students lose the firm ground that they once thought to have existed”. The teacher as a focus for curriculum discourse tends to be minimised and treated in derivative ways. At the risk of oversimplifying, Clandinin and Connelly (1990: 246) argued that

many milieu curriculum arguments tend to treat the teacher as an unconscious reproducer of inequitable social structures; many subject matter arguments demand rationalistic disciplinary training of teacher; and learner based arguments tend to see teacher as nurturer.

To engage in historical thinking and the quest for social transformation, Freebody and Luke (1990) aptly argues that historical understanding should not only limit itself to “what do I do with this knowledge?”, not in the sense of how the student compliantly implements what he/she learned but rather about what they do *to* it. Moving the role of the teacher from a process of instruction to one of “enabling” a process of exploration and creation is grounded in the convictions expressed by Dewey (1938) who argued that the purpose of education is not to prepare children for any fixed destination but to enable them to grow and develop towards adulthood (Collins and Dolan 2011: 77). This view of teaching history becomes less prescriptive and less tightly defined by a curricular framework.

The pedagogical implications *to do* history expect the students and teachers to struggle together (Gabel 2002) within an environment that allows inclusivity, sensitivity, and openness. The third space (Bhabha 1994) (re)positions students and teachers into new ways of thinking and reading history. The challenge remains on how to generate a discursive environment where the text can speak to, with and against each other to construct a contemporary history.

6.6 Concluding Thoughts

The SMS textbooks provide a cohesive and stronger historical narrative of the past through an understanding of our lineage, our métissage, our colonial entanglements and our history of resistance. It recognises the complexities of history in terms of ambiguities, the pluriversality of our present and the contemporary challenges with globalisation.

The new narrative moves the conversation forward with a clear impetus for students to become knowledge producers as compelling questions opens a dynamic and energising space driven by curiosity rather than conservative complacency to explore tensions, contradictions and resistance as they interrogate their historical legacy. If the new curricular reform comes across as a “vessel of pride, its shiny surface resistant to criticism and hostile to pressures of change” (Buchanan 2016: 48), its ‘finishedness’ and its selective version of history should be continually challenged to recognise how history ought to be (re)presented to become relevant in the present and for the future.

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Appendix 1: The modality extracts

<p style="text-align: center;">Deontic Modality</p> <p>Notions of permission, obligation, and volition (<u>implying</u> human control)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Epistemic Modality</p> <p>Notions of possibility, necessity and prediction (<u>implying</u> lack of control)</p>
<p>Care has been taken to provide the basics that <u>should</u> help every student develop key competencies, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that <u>would</u> make him or her a successful learner for the grades beyond. (grade 7/8/9: iv)</p>	<p>The <u>content is contextual</u> and based on the needs of the Mauritian learners. These activities <u>can</u> be used to <u>carry out</u> continuous and formative assessment. [...] We <u>hope</u> that this new SMS textbook will be enriching for <u>one and all</u>. We will <u>welcome</u> comments and suggestions that can <u>bring improvement</u> to this textbook. (grade 7/8/9: iv)</p>
<p>At the end of the unit, you <u>should</u> be able to... In the following section, you <u>will</u> read... You <u>will</u> learn... (across all textbooks)</p>	<p>Care has been taken to provide the basics that <u>should</u> help every student develop key competencies, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that <u>would</u> make him or her a successful learner for the grades beyond. (Grade 7/8/9: iv)</p>
<p>These textbooks <u>have been designed</u> in line with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and syllabi for Grades 7, 8 and 9 (Grade 7: iii)</p>	<p>Consequently, the themes presented in the SMS textbook <u>seek</u> to prepare learners with knowledge about themselves, the people and the society around them, the nation and the world ... (Grade 7/8/9: iii)</p>
<p><u>As per the philosophy</u> propounded by the NCF, the content and pedagogical approach, as well as the activities, have been <u>crafted</u> to allow for an incremental and continuous improvement of the learners' cognitive skills. The content is contextual and <u>based on</u> the needs of the Mauritian learners. Care has been taken to <u>provide</u> the basics that <u>should</u> help every student develop key competencies, knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that <u>would</u> make him or her a successful learner for the grades beyond. (Grade 7/8/9: iii)</p>	<p>These activities are <u>mere guidelines</u> and educators are <u>advised to adapt them</u> according to the needs of their learners. [...] Educators are, therefore, <u>encouraged to carry out</u> these activities as these <u>would develop</u> their learners' communication and thinking skills. (Grade 7/8/9: iv) Educators are, therefore, encouraged to <u>carry out</u> these activities as these <u>would develop</u> their learners' communication and thinking skills. (Grade 7/8/9: iv)</p>
<p>Moreover, <u>keeping in line</u> with the aims and objectives of the NCF and ensuring continuity, at the same time, the <u>various topics</u> in the textbook <u>reinforce and extend</u> the key historical and geographical concepts and skills introduced in the primary cycle of the curriculum.</p>	

Appendix 2: Statements indicating the authors' positioning

Table 5.3: Evaluative statements
The Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) is designed to provide the condition and context for <u>each and every</u> child to climb the ladders of opportunity. (12)
We have the responsibility to prepare the young people for a world where they should be ready to change careers <u>several</u> times during a lifetime. We advocate a system that prepares young people to be ready for what awaits them. We acknowledge that notions of change, innovation and adaptation ... (14)
The SMS curriculum is designed to prepare learners to be active and responsible citizens of tomorrow. (92)
The increasing complexities of the global environment in which we live make it imperative to equip learners with the knowledge, skills and values that would enable them to succeed in becoming effective citizens in the 21st century. The complexities of the real world and the multiplicity of perspectives require that learners be provided with the opportunity to inquire into these complexities, and to construct their own understanding of the 21st century world they live in. (91)
The SMS curriculum involves learners in the process of investigating, inquiring and thinking for themselves so that they can better understand the interconnectedness within a society, recognise that real-world issues rarely have a single correct solution, and thereby learn to make decisions and respect the decisions of others. Quality decision-making requires the application of critical thinking skills. (92)
The importance of inquiry lies in the active construction of new knowledge by the learner. Inquiry questions provide the focal point for thinking, as learners will investigate, extract, analyse and synthesise information. Through this process, learners will develop understanding and gain insights into a diversity of issues (92)
<p>The SMS curriculum is designed to prepare learners to be active and responsible citizens of tomorrow. Learners will be equipped with the capacity to communicate effectively, develop civic literacy, and develop awareness on global issues while developing such skills as critical and creative thinking. 21st Century Competencies, which include both skills and knowledge, are</p> <p>classified into three broad domains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive Domain, which includes problem identification, reasoning, critical thinking, argumentation, creativity and innovation • Intrapersonal Domain, which involves the ability to reflect on one's own behaviour and emotions and the capacity to manage same to achieve one's goal. Intrapersonal domain includes perseverance, appreciation for diversity, and development of initiative, focus, flexibility and openness. • Interpersonal Domain, which involves expressing ideas and effectively communicating with the other, includes empathy, collaboration, leadership, responsibility and conflict resolution. (92)
Learners should be empowered to assume responsibility for their own learning and to set objectives and plans accordingly. (29)
The increasing complexities of the global environment in which we live make it imperative to equip learners with the knowledge, skills and values that would enable them to succeed in becoming effective citizens in the 21st century. (91)

Appendix 3: Deconstructing identity

Social Practice (From a decolonial/postcolonial perspective – How can the text shape the students’ identity?) Refer to the coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, N. (2007)

Discursive Practice

Post independence (survival-driven phase)

- Culture, beliefs and values
- “where” do we come from
- How is national identity constructed, social cohesion / national building Creating a unifying collective memory
- The need for a strong sense of national identity for post colonial multicultural Mauritius (promoting cultural diversity)

Pre-industrialisation (efficiency driven phase)

- How important is national identity in Mts impressive economic transformation
- History used as a proof of the nation’s success

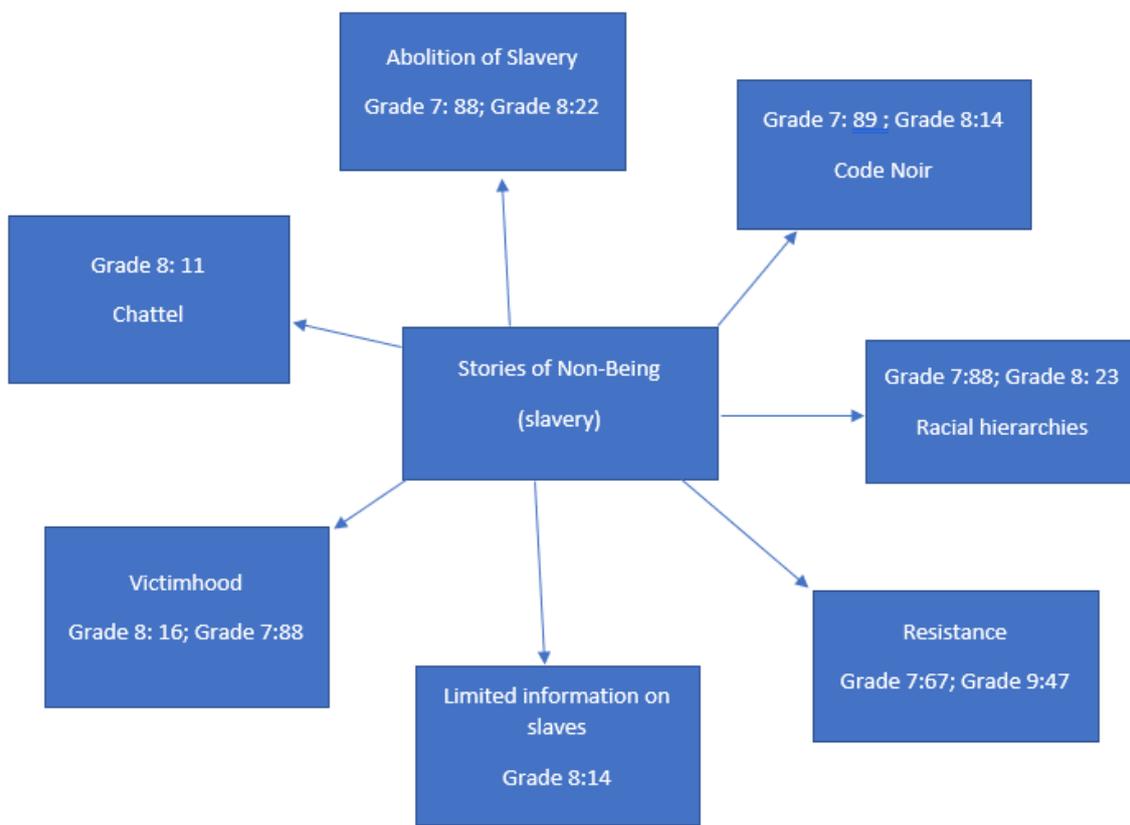
Modernity (ability -driven phase)

- Globalised and competitive economy and the importance of maximising on the country’s human capital, focus on fostering critical thinking and creativity
- Rise in globalisation and cross border movements, national identity has to be negotiated

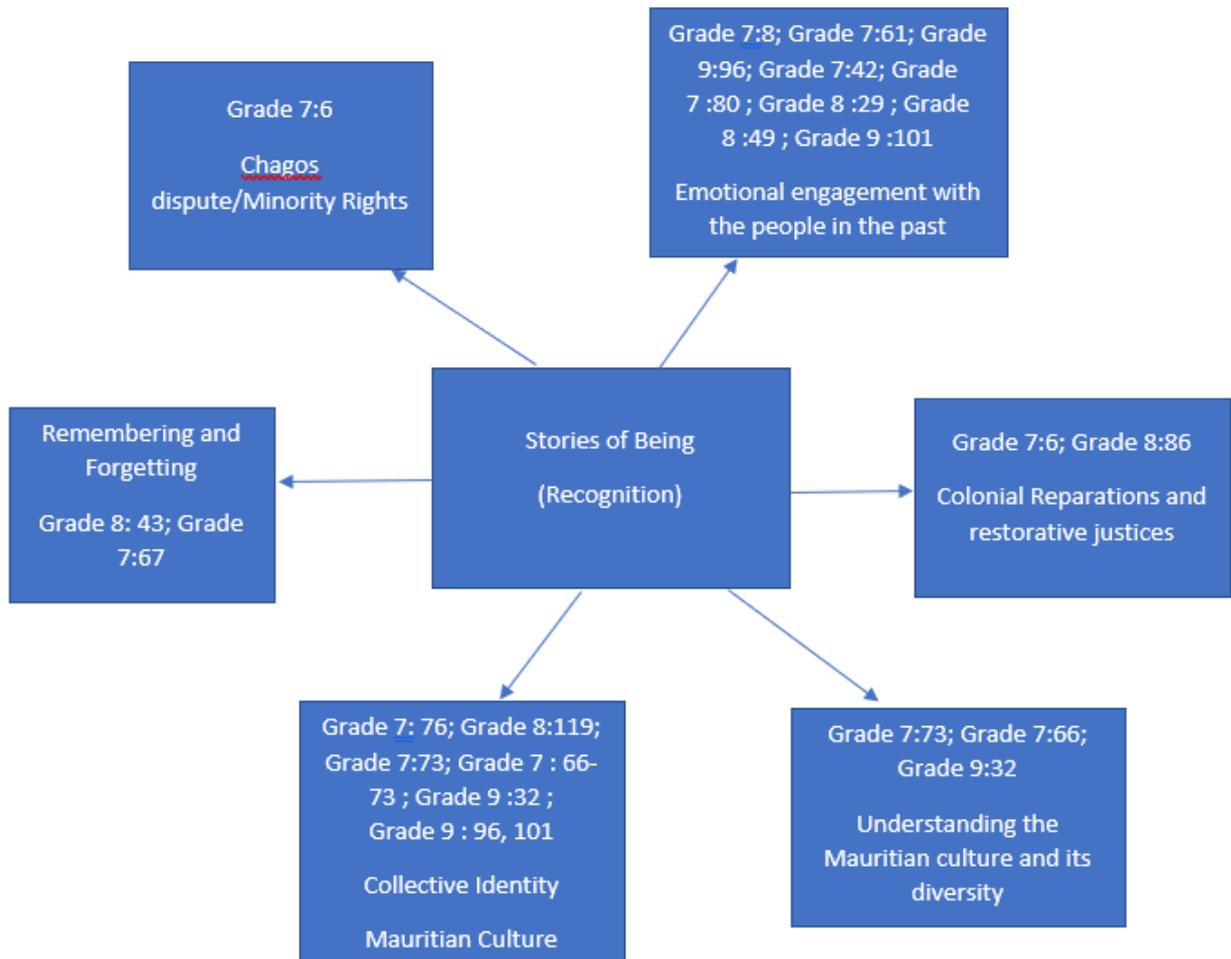
The text : Text that relate to constructing an identity

(Grade 7: 71) (Grade 9: 85)

Appendix 4: Stories of nonbeing



Appendix 5: Stories of being



Appendix 6: Stories of Becoming

