



Co-constructors of policy-shaping in Mauritius: ICTE policies

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## Declaration

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Philosophy, in the Post-Graduate Programme in Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

I, PREMLATA KOOSHMI RAMTOHUL declare that

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PREMLATA KOOSHMI RAMTOHUL

  
29<sup>th</sup> November 2022

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29<sup>th</sup> November 2022

## Abstract

This thesis builds on my ongoing experience in the field of ICT within education. Since the 1980s, the global interest in expanding the use of ICT devices to activate pedagogy in schooling has produced mixed reactions. The voices of support or challenge have emerged from within and outside schooling. These voices include the views of the governmental officials, the industrialists in the private and public sector and parents of school-going children. The study explores the co-involvement of a range of stakeholders influencing policy-shaping against the backdrop of postcolonial theory and appropriate postmodern and post-structuralist thinking. The particular case study of the small island Mauritius context forms the location of this study. This study explicates the rarely acknowledged colonial entanglements of the multiple consistencies and contradictions of the varied voices. It exposes the contingent and polyglot perspectives and processes of the shaping of the policy for ICT in education.

Drawing on a foundation of the specific official educational policies, this study produced data through semi-structured narrative interviews of a range of shapers of policies, probing their responses to their involvement, reaction and/or implementation of the planned goals in practice. A grounded, inductive approach to qualitative analysis and a cross-case analysis yielded the emergence of five superordinate, yet fluid and overlapping typologies to depict the key construction shaping processes of ICT policy. The typologies were labelled Negotiators, Influencers, Legitimisers, Enactors and the self-proclaimed Excluded voices of the policy-shaping processes. The initial theoretical framework presented at the opening section of the thesis was used to further abstract deeper levels of analysis of the study's findings.

The emergent analysis provides a critique of the continuing impact of colonial and neoliberal educational policies on SIDS contexts. The implicit powers of the industrial agents collude with the official governmental systems. More powerful political interests related to the need to develop support from local populations as part of electioneering campaigns dominate the official space. The pedagogical foci underpinning ICT introduction are relatively sidelined during the introduction of ICTE efforts. What constitutes even the official policy becomes contestable. Paradoxically, those who initially appear disempowered in the policymaking process, like parents and teachers, exert powerful shaping forces over the ICT enacted space in education contexts. Policy emerges as a contested complication conversation.

The thesis highlights the confluence of perpetual colonialism, political rhetoric versus pedagogical reasoning and the paradoxes of power. The thesis expands the framing of the ICT environment as infused simultaneously with a complicity, vulnerability and invisibility of the stakeholders. These characteristics are also not stable or consistent within particular stakeholder groups or individuals who speak a polyglot discourse of policy-shaping. The spaces are characterised by a tacit discourse of electioneering timeframes, a deliberate choice for ignoring and silencing of the rationale and concrete research evidence and logic. The policy-shaping space is dominated by illusory information and under-scrutinised global discourses. The effect is to sustain ICT globalisation and intensive marketing propaganda where international benchmarks are prioritised over local relevance. In such a space, post-truth policymaking emerges as a new construct.

This thesis recommends that any potential to improve policymaking processes lies not only in the hands of policymakers but the population in general, as it has been found that everyone is a policy-shaper. Therefore, everyone needs to be critical about what is proposed or borrowed from the international community, including from their subtle spokespersons as depicted by the influences of the industry shapers. The thesis recommends foregrounding pedagogical and educational logic

rationales and sensitivity to contextual schooling contexts when developing policies. To be able to do so, experts and bureaucrats would need to draw clear boundaries between electioneering agenda and education policies. Enhancing synergy between policymaking and the research space has the potential to protect policy from the dominant international discourse. The public, in general, must also be made more aware of dis/misinformation and be critical of political and industry rhetoric.

**Key words:** *Case study, SIDS, ICT, policymaking, policy-shaping, education, post-truth, illusion, contested complicated conversation*

## **Dedication**

*To my parents*

*and their vision for their children despite all odds,*

*Thank you.*

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## List of Abbreviations

<b>BYOD</b>	Bring Your Own Device
<b>CPE</b>	Certificate of Primary Education
<b>EDLP</b>	Early Digital Learning Programme
<b>GATT</b>	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
<b>GTU</b>	Government Teachers' Union
<b>HRDC</b>	Human Resource Development Council
<b>HSC</b>	Higher School Certificate
<b>ICT</b>	Information and Communication Technology
<b>ICTE</b>	ICT in Education
<b>IITE</b>	Institute for Information Technologies in Education
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Organisation
<b>KM</b>	Kreol Morisien
<b>MIE</b>	Mauritius Institute of Education
<b>MoEHRTESR</b>	Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research
<b>MOOCS</b>	Massive Open Online Courses
<b>NCF</b>	National Curriculum Framework
<b>NEPAD</b>	New Partnership for Africa's Development
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PISA</b>	Programme for International Student Assessment
<b>PTA</b>	Parents Teachers Association
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SIDS</b>	Small Island Developing State
<b>SITP</b>	School IT Project
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>WTO</b>	World Trade Organization

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# Prologue

## Naivety, complexity and disruption

The following milestones mark my personal research journey about the phenomenon of policymaking during the course of this study:

### **A naïve conceptualisation of policy and policymakers**

I began my journey into policy analysis with quite a confident understanding that policymakers were those individuals, like myself, who sat in lofty offices in government buildings. How restricted was that worldview! My role at the Human Resource Development Council within the official ministry of education circles in the Mauritian context often switches between being a contributor to policies and being a policy implementer in the field of education and skills development (especially for and in the ICT sector). My notion of policymakers was circumscribed by those occupying seats in the policymaking structure. I believed that bureaucrats write education policies and are then tasked with ensuring the monitoring and evaluation of their implementation. This seemed to be a comfortable linear, technical, standardised and ritualistic process. As such, I regarded my role as an insider in policymaking processes as generating evidence to assist policymakers in decision-making. I was under the impression that locally-resourced evidence and input from significant stakeholders were sufficient grounds to justify the introduction of a policy. My job was to canvass their views before the implementation of new policies.

These conceptions explain my earlier constitution of the study sample that primarily encompassed insiders within the formal policymaking circles (politicians and bureaucrats) and a relatively small sample of outsiders: other shapers such as teachers and their union, a consultant from an international agency, a parent-teacher structure and an ICT company.

## **Shift from policymaking to policy-shaping**

Despite my insiderness (or perhaps because of it) I was oblivious to certain important facets of policy and policymaking. As I engaged more deeply in the study, I realised that my conception of policymaking was relatively narrow and naïve. The decision-making process was far more complex and intersected than I originally believed. In the first instance, I came to the realisation that policy extends to a range of spheres beyond the formal policy texts that policymakers develop.

A thorough review of the literature assisted in broadening and expanding the definition of policy. I came to realise that policy can be understood and (mis)understood, (re)interpreted, practiced and experienced differently by different people. It is not the sole property of those who design plans for the education landscape. The text belongs to everyone who could choose to re-appropriate it in varied ways. Could policy be considered as ephemeral, transient and situated: a thing of beauty or disdain in the eye of the beholder?

Further on in my journey, I gained the insight that the boundaries of what can be considered as policy could also be expanded. Could policy be regarded as that which is enacted and experienced in spite of the formally dictated text: could it be that which occurs in practice?

The phenomenon of the study which is *policy-shapers' constructions of policy development* is studied under the lens of ICT in education. The roles these shapers played in Information and Communication Technology in Education (ICTE) policymaking processes disrupted my preconceived notion about who a policymaker or shaper is and what policymaking and shaping is.

## **Broadening my perspective further in the survey field**

My experience in the field made me realise that there is an even wider spectrum of shapers who were previously in my blind-spot. These might not usually be considered as shapers of policies. Still, they exercise significant influence on what occurs in the world of policy design and even the world of educational practice. Furthermore, some of them could have been deliberately silenced or marginalised. However, shifting shapers to the periphery is not always a deliberate move. Some people may choose to operate on the margins and not portray themselves as overt shapers of policy. What are the benefits (and drawbacks) of this form of complicit marginalisation?

These realisations resulted in my data generation being widened to include curriculum developers and researchers who shape policy on-the-ground. I concluded my fieldwork by gathering data from these shapers of ICT education policies.

### **Disruption of my preconceived notion of who plays the central role in ICTE policymaking**

The perceived ownership of power in policymaking was disrupted in this study. It was only at the level of data analysis that the major and more influential players in ICTE policy making became apparent. It became clear that those participants who claimed to be excluded (namely, parents and the ICTE industry) played a central role in shaping ICTE policies. The power of the two self-proclaimed excluded voices appears to exceed those claiming power from inside policymaking structures. However, these subtleties did not manifest at the forefront of the policymaking landscape but lay just below the surface. Ideally, I should have been aware of such issues before conducting the study. Nevertheless, the data was sufficient to achieve the study's aim of generating key issues for a critical interpretation of policy-shapers' constructions of ICTE policies. I now outline this journey in more formal academic reporting.

# SECTION 1: SETTING UP THE STUDY

## CHAPTER 1

### **Background to the study: contextualising the phenomenon in a small island developing state (SIDS)**

#### **1.1. Introduction**

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is gaining traction as a gateway to efficient and effective education systems that activate student learning in diverse settings across the globe (Coleman & Dlamini, 2017; Fu, 2013; Fullan & Langworthy, 2014; Kozma, 2008; OECD, 2001, 2020; Olivier, Oojorah & Udhin, 2022; Prensky, 2005a, 2005b; Trucano, 2015; UNESCO, n.d.-a, n.d.-b, 2017; World Bank Group, 2021). ICT is generally believed to enhance pedagogy to the point that Siegfried and Hermkes (2020) assert that the question should no longer be whether it should be used in the classroom, but how it can be meaningfully integrated into educational processes. Global acknowledgement of ICT's relevance to the teaching-learning process has raised the need for a review of current education policies. Adjusting the traditional school landscape to incorporate it (De Witte & Rogge, 2014) calls for the purchase and installation of considerable infrastructure, including hardware, software, and licenses, and for teaching staff to be orientated to its use.

While the literature extols the value that ICT adds to education, caution should be exercised in assessing the impact of any innovative strategy in education since deep substantive change often takes time to manifest (Fullan, 1991). Although Information and Communication Technology in Education (ICTE) is often touted as an invaluable resource capable of transforming teaching and learning, the broader discourse on ICT in education reveals mixed opinions.

For instance, Munro (2010, p. 46) states that, "ICT has supported and enhanced practice, but it has failed to transform education". The rollout of technology and associated resources in schools does not necessarily lead to improved teaching and learning outcomes (Chandran, 2019; Davou & Sidiropoulou, 2017; Jhuree, 2005; Xuereb, 2006). Whilst Coyne and McCoy (2020) note that no robust longitudinal study has been conducted to demonstrate the causal effect of ICT use on students' academic achievement, the provision of ICT devices in schools seems to accelerate. In an article by Pepper (2017), Selwyn questions whether schools are making the best use of students' time, suggesting that school spaces have become stultified and mechanistic, and as a result do not serve the

interests of young learners. He adds that while ICT has the potential to make learning engaging, a good teacher and a good whiteboard can also do so.

Furthermore, digitising curriculum might place a burden on learners (and by inference on their parents) to provide the infrastructural and physical resources to activate their involvement with ICT in the classroom. It cannot be assumed that the architects of the education system (Ministries of education, school boards) will provide the necessary hardware and support. The Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) policy places the responsibility on parents to provide learners with the required equipment. This policy has been critiqued since it assumes that all learners have the financial capacity to afford these 'baseline requirements'. Selwyn (2011) notes that human society is characterised by inequalities and differences. Variations in health, housing and income levels imply that people do not have equal access to resources and opportunities (especially sophisticated ICT devices and an internet connection at home). It is thus likely that (pre)existing inequalities within the broader social structure will become more visible in the BYOD classroom environment (Selwyn, 2017). While much hope is placed on ICTE's potential to enable universal access to the benefits of education (Selwyn, 2011), inequality could be exacerbated by ICTE policies. The questions that thus remain in the quest for new directions in educational policies concern are: how these innovations may obstruct or supplement broader social justice imperatives to extend access to education to a broader section of the population, and whose interests are being served by ICT's rapid expansion within the educational terrain?

Indeed, effective integration of ICT into the educational system is a complex and multifaceted process (Aktaruzzaman, Shamim & Clement, 2011) because it is not merely about digital technology (hardware or software) as sociological, cultural and educational contextual factors are likely to come into play in achieving its potential. These 'extraneous' factors could include pedagogical as well as non-pedagogical concerns whose emphasis varies in line with varying stakeholders who are complicit (or not) in activating ICT in the education and schooling systems. Designing curriculum and pedagogical activities, institutional readiness, teachers' competencies, access and financing (Tinio, 2003), and the availability of relevant hardware and software programmes and materials are amongst the range of issues to consider. The hidden and long-term costs associated with purchased or donated ICT devices are often overlooked. Furthermore, the ICT endeavour may be driven by hidden economic agendas and could be implicated in continued domination and ideological imposition to maintain control of formerly colonised systems.

Apple's (1990) seminal work highlights the need to understand schools as sites of production and reproduction of specific kinds of knowledge that are not neutral and apolitical. To what extent does ICTE expand these patterns of continued habituation of inequities in the broader society? This argument is supported by Carnoy and Samoff (1990) who view schools as places that serve as agents of cultural and ideological hegemony. If the selection and organisation of knowledge for schools is an ideological process that serves the interests of particular classes and social groups (Apple, 1990, 2004), the advent of ICT in education could further this hegemonic process.

Notwithstanding the above, and despite contradictory evidence and conflicting views on the impact of ICTE, policymakers continue to make costly investments in ICT. The quality and direction of decision-making hinges on how well-informed policymakers are on the advantages and drawbacks of ICT in schools. This study explored the reasons behind such decisions. Within post-independence contexts, global neoliberal educational policies continue to influence former colonies. What role do ICTE policies play in global hegemonic discourses which have the potential to distort domestic policies? To answer this question, it is necessary to establish the source of decision-makers' evidence or policy ideas, and if they consult a variety of sources. It is also possible that decision-makers are not in a position to contest the current global preoccupation with the professed positive values of ICTE. Alternatively, do other factors limit their ability to challenge the choices made in policymaking processes? Is influential rhetoric likely to subdue policymakers' critical perspectives on ICT in education and awareness of invisible agendas that privilege certain choices? If so, 'non-pedagogical forces' could influence policymaking in a post-colonial small state. Against this backdrop, the question is: To what extent do policymakers interrogate whether ICTE mediates or hinders divergences across contexts of privilege and/or peripheralisation? Are policymakers complicit in promoting the adoption of ICT that might not necessarily be pedagogically justified? In particular, my research aims to foreground an 'ideological apparatus' (Althusser, 1971) (if any) behind the adoption and expansion of ICTE focussing on 'non-pedagogical factors' such as the hegemonic forces, not just residing in ideas but inscribed in taken-for granted practices and customary routines, that activate individuals, groups or agencies to advance their agenda.

This chapter also raises fundamental concerns about how globalisation could use ICTE to perpetuate the coloniality of post-colonial small island development states (SIDS) by making decision-makers (un)consciously complicit in their venture. There is a general impression that a natural system bears upon everyone equally without human agency (Osland, 2003). Globalisation creates the impression of a natural flow of services and products, ideas and practices from country to country, from those 'who know' to 'those who do not know', with its foundation built during colonisation (Osland, 2003).

Policymakers, especially those in government bureaucracies, are the focal point for decision-making. The study sought to establish what underpins their rationale and decision-making processes. Whom do they rely on to engage their choices as official policymakers with respect to ICTE? It is against this background that the research sought to understand policymakers' construction of ICTE. The focus was thus on policymakers' role in activating (or not) schoolteachers and their schooling contexts in ICTE policy adoption.

## **1.2. Overview of chapter**

In this opening chapter, I explain how I came to ask key questions about the processes to construct ICTE policies in school settings. Having problematised the development of policies considering global discourses and forces such as globalisation and neoliberalisation, section 1.3 defines the contours of the study, reflecting on the specific context of post-colonial SIDS and how the logic of coloniality has been historically established. I also describe a small island developing state (the island of Mauritius) as the bounded heuristic site to investigate and understand the phenomenon. Section 1.4 discusses the experiences that prompted me to conduct this research as well as the process of identifying its focus.

This chapter concludes with a discussion on the need to understand the worldviews of policy-shapers in section 1.5. As the section unfolds, I describe my motivation for embarking on this research and focus on the study's contextual and research imperatives. The structure of the thesis is presented in section 1.6, while section 1.7 foregrounds the role of policy actors and opens up the research space to explore the phenomenon.

### 1.3. Contours of the study

#### 1.3.1. Small Island Developing State (SIDS): a contextual research space

Small Island Developing States have become not only a subject of lively scholarly debate but also a site of political struggle arising from definitional ambiguity (Maass, 2009). The literature offers multiple conceptions of small states, which can be categorised into first<sup>1</sup>, second<sup>2</sup> and third generation<sup>3</sup> small island research that characterises SIDS as multifaceted depending on one's vantage point and interest.

First-generation small island research that was preoccupied with defining the operational limits of its constructs (Samuel & Mariaye, 2017), has been criticised for offering a limited perspective of the role played by SIDS in global interrelations (Jules & Ressler, 2017a; Samuel & Mariaye, 2017). Such researchers were concerned with the scale of particular geographic, demographic and colonial features. They used largely quantitative parameters to define whether a country could be labelled as a SIDS. This school of thought emphasises the homogeneous characteristics of SIDS (vulnerability, constrained autonomy and a narrow resource base) that are positioned at the periphery of development (Bray, 1991; Bray & Packet, 1993). Such constructs enable international agencies to draw on pseudo-scientific arguments to justify their interventions in the domestic space to impose their 'natural' superiority through hegemonic powers (Baldacchino, 2012). Deficit notions of SIDS that are reliant on developed countries promote positive interpretations of the developmental agendas of the latter. It would appear that the power to self-define has been taken away from SIDS. It is likely that reliance, subservience or capitulation are perpetuated from one generation of SIDS to the next and that their national interests have been increasingly side-lined over time. This view is supported by Samuel and Mariaye (2017) who describe SIDS populations as embodying politeness and a reluctance to critique their benefactors. They thus defer to those who offer them support from the outside. This corroborates early researchers' observations that small state policymakers accept the prescriptions of 'international expertise' in good faith (Baldacchino, 1994). Thus, first-generation research tends to reinforce SIDS as pathological, and in need of repair.

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<sup>1</sup> Definitional categorisation

<sup>2</sup> As prominent members of international society

<sup>3</sup> Producing interpretations of themselves

The second generation of research on SIDS tends to romanticise local assertiveness, and maintains that success was achieved because of small islanders' nimbleness, social partnerships, and opportunism (Jules & Ressler, 2017b). This self-definition is described as "geostrategic" and highlights the policy flexibility adopted by small islands (Jules & Ressler, 2017b, p. 33). It was assumed that change was easily achieved because of the small scale of the effort required. The notion of smallness is embedded in the colonial discourse of choosing how to self-project big or small as it suits them (Jules & Ressler, 2017b). There was a conscious agenda to counteract the earlier deficit notions of SIDS in an almost celebratory exoticisation. This second-generation research projected the socio-spatial nature of SIDS to counteract the dominantly held view that they are an abnormality in the family of nation states (Bray, 1991). It highlights that small states exist in large numbers and are spread across the globe<sup>4</sup>. They, therefore, require specific policy prominence in global discourses. In summary, this research was concerned with depicting the many issues that arise when examining relations between SIDS and their neighbours and partners.

Samuel and Mariaye (2017) note that third-generation research on SIDS is concerned with small islanders producing interpretations of themselves and expanding their agentic potential. They argue that whilst SIDS populations have been shaped by particular social, historical, political, cultural and economic movements, they have the agentic potential to mould their own development in relation to wider discourses (Samuel & Mariaye, 2017). This agenda is motivated by a quest to reposition SIDS within global hegemonic discourses of power. They assert that SIDS should embrace their specific "historical trajectories of oppression and marginalisation with a view to realise the possibility of reversing the tides of injustice" (p. 174). The fluidity of this third-generational space influenced the design of the current study that examined how a targeted group of individuals within the SIDS context, namely policymakers and shapers, may or may not be steering definitions of self and others. Policy exchange, borrowing or relationships with respect to ICTE for schools formed the study's parameters.

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<sup>4</sup> Bray's (1991) conceptualisation of small extended this number to a total of 57 countries, paving the way for a problematising of the definitional characteristics of SIDS. However, the Commonwealth and the World Bank agreed on a total of 50 small states, with a population threshold of 1.5 million (Everest-Phillips, 2014; Sutton, 2011). The United Nations groups 38 countries as SIDS (Baldacchino, 2012). More recent studies suggest that the internal demographics of residential populations exclude many 'islanders' who may consider themselves citizens of SIDS, but who do not necessarily reside within the geographic space of the SIDS itself.

Expanding the responsibility of policy decision-making in education to broader parameters is a challenging task for those who are engaged in policy design, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. How this plays itself out within the complex contexts of SIDS is the focus of the current study. SIDS<sup>5</sup> such as Trinidad and Tobago, Malta, Jamaica and Mauritius, to name but a few, are characterised by economic power remaining within the lineage of wealthy colonisers. My study aimed to explore how (if at all) this historical past manifests itself within current and future decision-making processes as supposedly independent countries divested of their colonial political ties. Are educational policy decisions capitulating to values and practices that do not emanate from local contexts? How do local policy decision-makers choose their strategies and practices when designing educational policy? Does policy imitation rather than local interests dominate SIDS' spaces, and why? What enables or constrains the reshaping and recreating of histories and the realisation of a more socially just future for SIDS?

Despite third-generation studies, it remains unclear whether policy actors are critical to the existence of hegemonic forces (subtle or hidden) that influence policymaking processes. Sium, Desai and Ritskes (2012) argue that both the colonised and the colonisers are implicated in their future choices. What is portrayed and ultimately accepted as in the best interests of SIDS could be tainted with oppression, subjugation and homogenisation of future SIDS generations.

My study focused on the ways in which ICT policies have come to be designed and orchestrated in recent times within the SIDS context. The choice of ICT policymaking was driven by increased interest in the use of ICT in SIDS education systems since the 1990s. Chan Mow et al. (2017) argue that ICT education policies are pivotal components of the regional and national development of SIDS in the Pacific region. They add that identification of challenges paves the way for major initiatives grounded in the context of small islands where growing dependence on the knowledge economy is increasingly facilitated by ICT. Thus, ICTE is seen as necessary given the advent of the knowledge economy or information societies. It would appear that such meta terms and narratives have a significant impact on domestic education policies. Related to these 'universal global' forces, a 'new' definition of progress is instilled among countries that assign value to certain knowledge and practices in relation to a few top-performing states in completely different contexts.

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<sup>5</sup> Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago gained independence in 1962, Malta in 1964 and Mauritius in 1968.

I was interested in why policy actors chose to focus on this particular set of initiatives for the educational terrain and what informs their policymaking processes as their decisions are likely to have long-term consequences for education and society. Are policymakers indeed drawing on their agentic potential (as suggested by third-generation SIDS research)? To what extent do policy choices defer to particular characterisations of SIDS in relation to their colonial partners? Are SIDS policymakers escaping a (re)production of colonial hierarchies? Is it possible to reverse the rising tide of socioeconomic inequalities first planted by early colonisation discourses? I was interested in exploring how renewal could influence the future from both inside and outside of SIDS. My role as researcher was to activate critical reflection on the kinds of choices that policymakers have made and are continuing to make.

There is a paucity of research on SIDS policymakers' interpretations and beliefs, especially in the field of ICTE. Analyses of SIDS and unanswered questions offer a lens to understand how policymakers' constructions within a post-colonial contextualised SIDS emerge. I, therefore, sought to understand the constructions of policymakers in SIDS who are taking decisions at the intersection of the many forces<sup>6</sup> that might be (or not) systematically exploring their critical agentic potential.

### **1.3.2. Mauritius - the heuristic site to investigate the phenomenon**

This section introduces Mauritius, which is emblematic of a post-colonial SIDS and is an understudied context with respect to the phenomenon of interest. The country's history is also traced to provide background information to anchor the study.

Coloniality is the condiment that has given Mauritius its unique flavour. A safe stop-over on the spice route from Europe<sup>7</sup> to the African sub-continent, Mauritius<sup>8</sup> experienced “a Dutch<sup>9</sup> infancy (a stage of ego-centricism), a French<sup>10</sup> childhood (a stage of dependence), a British adolescence (a stage of emerging assertiveness and independence) and an independent adulthood<sup>11</sup>” (Irvine, 1984, p. 11). The dynamics of the island are purely Mauritian given that colonialism<sup>12</sup> did not come from outside but “was built into the fabric of the whole society” (Houbert, 1981, p. 75), shaping society, the education

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<sup>66</sup> The forces can be intrinsic, internal and external to SIDS.

<sup>7</sup> When the British conquered Mauritius in 1810, the population was almost 100 000. However, more than 80 percent were slaves.

<sup>8</sup> Mauritius served as a strategic passageway to support European seafarers' trade.

<sup>9</sup> Sugarcane was introduced to Mauritius by Dutch settlers in 1639.

<sup>10</sup> The French engaged in sugarcane cultivation and imported slaves from Madagascar and continental Africa.

<sup>11</sup> Mauritius was a Dutch colony (1638-1710), and a French colony (1715-1810) and became a British colonial possession from 1810 to 1968, when it attained independence.

<sup>12</sup> Mauritius was uninhabited until the arrival of Europeans. Slaves were brought from Africa and Madagascar during the French occupation (Republic of Mauritius, n.d.). Indians were brought in during the French and British occupations of the Island and they joined forces with the British to suppress the immigrant Indians (Mehta, 1989).

system and policymaking.

As a consequence of its colonial history, French and English are part of the linguistic landscape, with English mainly used in administration as the official language and French favoured in the workplace. English and French are regarded as international languages, giving the island's business community an edge. Rather than emphasising coloniality in languages, Gopee (2018) considers them as tools and vehicles for socio-economic mobility as proficiency in English and/or French yields economic rewards. Both English and French are increasingly spoken in families alongside a heritage language and Kreol Morisien<sup>13</sup> (KM), which nowadays stands as a language in its own right (Gopee, 2018).

Given the strategic location of the island, slaves and indentured labourers were required to work the sugar estates (Vaughan, 2005). The island's economic importance diminished with the opening up of new sea routes from the west to the east. Slavery was abolished in 1835 and hundreds of thousands of Indians were brought from India to work the sugarcane fields (Vaughan, 2005). There are mixed narratives about Chinese merchants who arrived around 1830. The Chinese remain a small group in terms of numbers (Carter & Ng Foong Kwong, 2009). By then, Mauritius was home to a mix of European settlers (the minority dominant segment today), Indo-Mauritians, Sino-Mauritians and the Afro-Mauritian population. The island attained independence in 1968, after Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, Malta and other SIDS.

The economically dominant ethnic community are the Franco-Mauritians, descendants of the former French colonists as well as the *gens de couleur*<sup>14</sup>, who also enjoy privileges as an ethnic group (Salverda, 2016). He finds that this group have control over resources and the continuing dominance of the Franco-Mauritians in the private sector is to a large extent the legacy of the past. They are connected to each other through, among other things, and family ties. The Indo-Mauritians (Hindus and Muslims) and the Sino-Mauritians (Chinese) were the ethnic outgroups (Mehta, 1989). Upon conversion to Christianity, many Sino-Mauritians enjoyed improved social status. Creoles<sup>15</sup>, who are Catholic descendants of African slaves and do not come from a European or Asian background (Eriksen, 1986), and Indian labourers are the most socially disadvantaged groups (Ramtohul, 2015, 2009). While European mill planters and multinationals dominated the private sector, educated Indo-Mauritians gained entry to positions of power due to the Hindu-dominated political terrain (Mehta,

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<sup>13</sup> Kreol Morisien is an indigenously grown language that has gained formal recognition in the education system in 2012 (Samuel & Mariaye, 2021).

<sup>14</sup> People of colour.

<sup>15</sup> The creole group identity is less marked than that of ethnic groups like the Indians or the Chinese. However, creoles relate their history more closely to Mauritius than the other groups (Miles, 1999) with the result that the creole language is one of the few symbols of a Pan-Mauritian identity (Carroll, 1994).

1989). Thus, communalism and caste-based relations are the bedrock of political organisation (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2022). Ever since the 1953 elections, the interests of one's ethnic group have been more important than those of one's social class (Simmons, 1982). Ethnic differences are used as tools during elections; the Bertelsmann Stiftung report (2022) notes that candidates generally represent their ethnic group rather than their class.

The stable political system (a democratic republic with a parliamentary system and a non-executive president) and good governance have become a soft power tool for Mauritius to negotiate its role in the international community. As a strategic move to stay connected to the colonisers and reap the benefits, Mauritius positioned itself at the intersection of endogenous systems and a globalised world. It chose to forge economic and strategic ties with its European counterparts to improve local living conditions through arrangements such as preferential trade agreements (Zafar, 2006). Without underestimating the influence such relationships can have on decision-makers, much has been achieved (Roberson & Dale, 2008; Jules & Ressler, 2017a; Ramtohul & Eriksen, 2018; Samuel & Mariaye, 2017). The island is regarded as a success story for its sustained economic growth and significant improvement in the standard of living of its population (Sobhee, 2009). It is now classified as an upper-middle-income economy (World Bank Group, 2022). It did not take long for Mauritius to demonstrate its potential to re-shape its social, historical, political, cultural and economic milieu.

### **1.3.3. The Mauritian educational landscape**

This section reports on the discursive struggle over education policies in Mauritius that played out in different times and spaces.

In the post-colonial period, Mauritius maintained a government-funded school network based on the British model with a British-based examination system. The country inherited the education system from the British comprising pre-primary (three years), primary (six years ending with a highly competitive national examination, the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) and secondary education (five years) to which students who pass the CPE are admitted. Passing the School Certificate (SC) exams at the end of the lower secondary schooling enables students to continue studying for a further two years, after which they sit for the Higher School Certificate (HSC) exam and are able to enter tertiary education (Ministry of Education, 2009). However, there are gaps between education policy rhetoric and reality. For example, Bunwaree (1997) has argued that equal opportunity is a myth on the island. Bunwaree (1997) contends that discrimination is built into the mechanisms that marginalise vast sections of the local population. The main issue is the high failure rate in the CPE, with clear disparities apparent between the performance of different ethnic and class

groups (World Bank Group, 2015). The country's Nine-Year Continuous Basic Education (NYCBE) policy (MIE, 2015) comes to highlight the need for an inclusive and equitable education system to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4<sup>16</sup>. However, the situation on-the-ground suggests that formal access to education does not necessarily imply an equal chance of success among students from different backgrounds (Maniar & Chandran, 2022).

Attempts to change this competitive system were abandoned due to social pressure<sup>17</sup>. Ramtohul (2006) claims that norms, beliefs and stereotypes are slow to change as a patriarchal culture is strongly embedded in Mauritian society and politics. Due to its historical and contextual peculiarities, education reforms and policy agendas are caught between the logic of becoming part of a competitive global economy and the national concern to replace the Eurocentric curriculum. This is apparent in the various waves of education policies (such as 'The Education System of Mauritius: Proposal for Structural Reforms' by the then Ministry of Education Arts and Culture in 1990, the 'White paper: Pre-primary, primary & Secondary Education' by the then Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development in 1997, and 'Towards a quality curriculum - Strategy for reform' by the then Ministry of Education and Human Resources in 2006). Not only have successive governments emphasised education as a primary driver of development, but economic transitions have dictated the type of education to be provided (See section 1.4). This scenario required policymakers to grapple with the implications of institutional structures, the hierarchical education system, and modes of knowledge production. Similarly, Mauritius embraced the ICT revolution and developed education policies underpinned by ICT. Acquisition of hardware, software and curriculum development and teacher training have dominated the educational horizon in recent years. This study was thus conducted against the background of considerable change in the Mauritian education system.

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<sup>16</sup> SD4 is about quality education.

<sup>17</sup> A number of attempts were made to challenge the status quo in pursuit of a more just and inclusive society, through several publications such as 'The future in our hands, Mauritian education for today and tomorrow', 1979, 'Ending the Rat Race in primary education and breaking the admission bottleneck at secondary level', 2001; and the 'White paper: Pre-primary, primary & Secondary Education, 1997, Action Plan for a new education system in Mauritius-Pre-school, primary school, middle school and college education'. However, these efforts were largely unsuccessful.

## **1.4. Clarifying the problematic and phenomenon of the study**

The Mauritian economy slowly shifted from the industrial sector to the service sector in the late 1980s. Increased foreign investment in the 1990s fuelled the development of the service sector. Mauritius has thus become a knowledge and innovation-driven country (Board of Investment, 2017). In 2000, the country articulated its vision of becoming a cyber-island (Ministry of Finance, 2016). Popular rhetoric holds that education should play a central role in every aspect of life in order to prepare Mauritius for the information age. Demand for highly-skilled labour increased as it promoted new growth points to provide value-added services such as ICT (HRDC, 2007). This study thus investigated if students are being prepared to function within a system that is imbued with neoliberal capitalist ideology. Despite mixed evidence on ICT's impact on learning, the dominant discourse on its benefits appears to drive the agenda of introducing ICT in schools, possibly serving as a positive indicator for Mauritius in international classifications.

### **1.4.1. Shifting waves of ICT education policies in Mauritius**

While ICTE measures in Mauritius have been sporadic, I use the term 'policy' to characterise them. ICTE policies emerged in four waves over the past three decades, with multiple initiatives and significant investments. Unpacking these shifting waves provides a better understanding of the phenomenon under the research lens. This discussion also assists in clarifying the problematic in the post-colonial SIDS context, but within changing global forces. The shifting waves of ICTE policies are:

1. Installation of computers and computer literacy from 1990s
2. Use of ICT as a pedagogical tool from 2000
3. Acquisition of interactive white boards and laptops in each classroom, individual tablets for each student, digitisation of curriculum, training of teachers from 2011
4. Attempts to integrate ICT into the curriculum to teach other subjects from 2017

ICT implementation in Mauritius commenced in the 1990s and is ongoing. These policies sought to create IT-enabled schooling. The purchase of hardware and software featured prominently in budget speeches [for instance, in the Ministry of Finance's presentations (Ministry of Finance, 2018, 2019, 2020)], as part of political discourses and formally documented policies (such as Government Programme 2020-2024) (Republic of Mauritius, 2019) and attracted widespread media attention. Teachers' orientation to the digitisation of the primary school curriculum (its supporting hardware, software and preferred pedagogical practices) is among the activities that usually follow such policy declarations.

In most cases, ‘inside’ decisions (within the island context) seem to be influenced by ‘outside’ induced agendas (triggered through donations or technical assistance from abroad). There appears to be a limited in-depth analysis of the planning and theoretical rationale that informs such decision-making. This scenario piqued my curiosity. The ICTE projects extend from developing ICT literacy to expanding ICT as a didactic tool for teaching and learning. Five significant characteristics of the waves of ICTE policies can be identified, namely, [1] material and resource intensive projects; [2] sporadic measures; [3] undertaking new projects before previous ones are implemented; [4] the urge to purchase the latest fashionable devices and, lastly, [5] ICT is becoming ubiquitous in schools for teaching and learning.

In its early years (**first wave**), ICT was introduced in schools to promote IT literacy to increase learner familiarity with computers. It should be noted that the 1980s was marked by the spread of neoliberalism as part of the quest of the West for power that gave rise to a global hegemony (Slater, 2008). The 1980s also witnessed a major shift from the ‘industrial society’ as the dominant economic model to manufacturing (WTO, 1995). The ‘post-industrial’ society (‘information society’ or ‘knowledge economy’) of the 1990s represents the shift towards the provision of services (Resnick, 2002). It is possible that these labels are coined and disseminated by corporations to seduce developing countries into adopting a Western-driven agenda, guiding their path to Western notions of evolution and progress. These terms seem to be ambiguous rather than providing clarity on their meaning and implications for the developing world. They can also possibly exert (un)due pressure on developing countries to follow this path, perhaps at times, out of touch with local realities.

An early example of ICTE projects is the MaurITprime which was the first initiative to provide basic computer literacy (Word Processing, Graphic Design, Databases, Student/Machine Interface, Spreadsheets, Information Retrieval & Research, Skills Application Software) to primary school students (UNESCO, n.d.-c). This project emphasised digital literacy and a narrow focus on equipment rather than enhancing student engagement or pedagogy. It aimed to equip six schools with two desktop PCs each and appropriate software, a floor turtle, colour printer and an overlay keyboard, initially financed by donations. A Mauritian primary education IT curriculum was planned for the broader system. As this was a pilot exercise rather than a comprehensive national strategy, the intervention began with involving at least two teachers in each of the six selected primary<sup>18</sup> schools. These teachers were trained to activate the ICT resources allocated to the school to the fullest extent regarding children’s learning development. The plan was to expand the project to all primary schools

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<sup>18</sup> The official broader profile of the Mauritius education system (2021) is as follows: 319 primary schools + 178 secondary schools; 5 936 primary school + 9 379 secondary school teachers (Statistics Mauritius, 2019).

and teachers. It was envisaged that, by the end of primary school, students would be able to use technology independently to communicate and solve problems in all aspects of their learning. While the decision to distribute ICT devices to primary schools might have been based on the desire to ensure sustainability, there is no evidence that the project was effectively rolled out in all schools, possibly due to a lack of locally resourced funds. Nevertheless, public rhetoric continued to foreground ICT devices as central to enhancing the quality of the education system.

Unwin (2007) notes that the release of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) coincided with rapid developments in ICT and the emergence of the globalising knowledge economy. While with the exception of MDG8 these goals made little reference to ICT (Clarke, Wylie & Zomer, 2013), the use of ICT in schools received its first major push (**second wave**) at system level in Mauritius in 2002 with the Ministry of ICT's 'School IT Project' (SITP). Two characteristics of the second wave can be identified. Firstly, the SITP was developed under an overarching framework of technical assistance from the World Bank (Minges, Gray & Tayob, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2002). Secondly, the project was premised on an expanded roll-out to all schools, which required costly investment in ICT infrastructure. Much of this was not available locally. Moreover, consignments of equipment needed to be purchased in bulk. The plan was that all the then 277 primary schools in Mauritius would have at least a computer laboratory with 21 computers, two printers (one ink-jet colour and one laser black and white), a scanner, a digital camera and a server with a LAN. They would all be connected to a network (School Net) controlled by a powerful central server based at the Ministry of Education and Scientific Research (MoESR), which would provide an Internet connection and on-line educational resources (Ministry of Education, 2002). The challenges of this ambitious project were recognised by those charged with implementation. Jhurree (2005) notes that, despite training of ICT teachers, schools were not equipped with appropriate computer labs to accommodate the expensive equipment. He adds that this was due to a lack of funding and policymakers' misjudgement of the size and scale of the project.

Furthermore, the limited number of computers made available in the initial stages of the roll-out increased student-computer ratios. This called for a re-evaluation of the kinds of pedagogical strategies that would be required by teachers, with those who were now expected to teach computer studies at the lower secondary level requiring training in ICT Curriculum Integration (Minges, Gray & Tayob, 2004; Ramharai & Goodoory, 2003). Lastly, the increase in student-computer ratios and the rollout of the project to secondary schools called for massive investment in imported ICT hardware and software.

Despite the relative under-resourcing of physical hardware, between 2001 to 2006<sup>19</sup> the Ministry of Education embarked on the recruitment of ICT teachers, raised funds to acquire hardware and software, and established a national educational network and a data centre as well as a governance structure for ICTE project coordination. The Education & Human Resources Strategy Plan 2008-2020 (EHRSP) was developed by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources (2009). This strategy stipulated that by 2015 support technologies will be embedded in the primary education system, ICT will be used as a tool for teaching and learning in the classroom, and instructional materials will be reviewed and developed to meet the changing technological needs. However, there is no systematic evidence that these plans achieved their goals or, indeed, if they were ever implemented.

The **third wave** can be characterised by greater sophistication as well as an abundance of ICT devices in schools. At the same time, the curriculum was digitised to include electronic devices such as interactive whiteboards (IWBs) in classroom pedagogy. Mauritius was selected as the platform for the Franco-African countries because of its apparent progress in the field of ICT (Government Information Service, 2013). Funds donated by the French government (Jhurree, 2005) were used to equip more than 1000 primary classrooms with interactive digital projectors. This includes IWB software, laptops for teachers, IT-driven whiteboards and an open platform that enables the creation, dissemination and sharing of free educational resources. The platform's name is 'Planète Sankoré', and the project is popularly known as the Sankoré Project (Oojorah, 2017). In 2014, an additional 500 projectors were purchased to extend the project to Standard IV to VI (primary school) classes (Government Information Service, 2013). The fact that local funding became available soon after donations were received to extend the project to all schools renders ICTE policies all the more intriguing. Are there cultural predispositions that influence the way that ICT policies emerge in the post-colonial SIDS? Given that external influences seem to impact domestic policies, are policymakers' opinions driven by dominant perspectives and Western ideologies rather than the contextual demands of SIDS?

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<sup>19</sup> By the end of 2002, 330 newly recruited ICT teachers had been trained by the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) and they were posted to primary schools in January 2003. From 2006, a further 5,400 primary school teachers were targeted for ICT training (Ramharai & Goodoory, 2003).

The change in government a few years later led to ICTE policies undergoing another notable transition from one IWB per classroom to one tablet per student. The increase in the number of ICT devices in classrooms, changing classroom configurations and the investment required for such projects are notable. A further shift is noted from collective learning to the provision of devices to individual learners. Is it premature to interrogate whether the impetus for this move is rooted in Western individualism?

Tablets were distributed to Grades 1, 2 and 3 students in all primary schools (Ministry of Finance, 2019, 2020), and ICT moved from periphery to the 'centre' of the mainstream school ethos. In reflecting on these trends, I became aware that an overarching, globalising frame was omnipresent in ICTE projects throughout the three waves. The third wave would apparently help African countries to achieve 'Education for All' (EFA) through digital empowerment by means of innovative technologies (Government Information Service, 2013).

These many initiatives give the impression that Mauritius has made significant strides in its education system by demonstrating a strong commitment to improving its education system and contributing to global education policy initiatives. However, from a capitalist consumerism lens, such projects can be viewed as spreading commercial products to all Mauritian schools. ICTE has become a highly resource-intensive policy. Sustaining ICT initiatives calls for maintenance, replacement of hardware and software, updates and upgrades and dealing with obsolescence. These issues have to be accounted for in the costing of ICTE projects. Moreover, it should be recognised that the ICT system relies on costly imported devices. However, there is a dearth of research on the extent of critical engagement when adopting foreign ICT initiatives. I was interested in establishing how these initiatives align (or not) with local priorities. Who were the ultimate beneficiaries of the ICT initiatives?

Despite massive investment in establishing ICTE in local schools, some studies have shown that ICT devices have not reshaped or transformed education practices, as they have not been incorporated in pedagogy. Research on the use of IWBs found no major difference between the results of learning using IWBs and that using the traditional blackboard (Bahadur & Oogarah, 2013; Jhuree, 2005). This study revealed that teachers avoided critique of the technology by presenting it as benefiting all types of learners; however, few were actually using the digital boards. This could be due to teachers' need to align with formal policymakers' positive narrative about ICTE. A more recent study shows that the use of tablets has not been fully exploited in the classroom to benefit teaching and learning (Hurreeram & Bahadur, 2019). Kozma (2005, 2008, 2011) asserts that policies need to be aligned with other strategic policies if they are to have the desired impact. This includes strategic-operational

alignment, horizontal alignment and vertical alignment. However, the extent to which the said policies were discussed with diverse stakeholders has not yet been researched.

The **fourth wave of ICTE** involved major reform of the education system, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) within the NYCBE 2015 (MIE, 2015), also supported by the World Bank (Saute, 2018). The NCF 2015 stresses the need for both teachers and learners to become ICT-savvy in a world that is now predominantly digital and where technology is ubiquitous. To meet this objective, the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) (operating under the aegis of the Ministry of Education), which is mandated to provide teacher education, curriculum development and research, offers training to teachers in the use of ICT equipment to enhance teaching and learning. The Ministry of Education has also appointed ICT support officers to promote a digital culture in primary schools. The fundamental learning areas seem to hinge on the use of ICT across the curriculum (MIE, 2015). While an ICT strategy for the education sector was developed in 2018, it is not available in the public domain. Among other things, this strategy proposes an Early Digital Learning Programme Project (EDLP) that aims to integrate ICT into teaching and learning at the primary level through the use of adapted tablets (Government Information Service, 2018).

The reform process is apparently driven by Sustainable Development Goal 4 on inclusive and equitable quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning. Another policy document, namely the ‘Inspiring every child’ policy prides itself on the NYCBE’s alignment with global standards (Ministry of Education, 2016). However, these could suggest capitulation to global frameworks and following the global trend of ‘standardisation’ of international educational goals. Global influences on domestic education policies are apparent in SIDS. In this sense, ICTE policies could be regarded as a fashionable move in developing country contexts rather than as having pedagogical value. The premises that inform such policies are not set by the local Ministry of Education, but by the global governance system (Chandran, 2019; Mansell, 2014, 2011). Chandran notes that ICTE projects rest on the economic viability of public-private partnerships<sup>20</sup>. She contends that there has been a singular focus on providing access to ICT devices and that the lack of ownership of these projects results in devices falling into a state of disrepair and schools becoming “graveyards of useless equipment” (NCERT, 2006 cited in Chandran, 2019, p. 35). ICTE, therefore, appears to be an example of an endogenous ICT project driven by exogenous models that have little to no local relevance. The lack of clarity among policymakers on what is shaping their expectations and what informs their

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<sup>20</sup> One such example is the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), development of information and communications technology (ICT) infrastructure, organised by five ‘consortia’, led by AMD, Cisco, HP, Microsoft and Oracle (Farrell, Isaacs, Trucano, 2007).

interpretation of what the ICTE policies they develop could achieve warrants research on policymaking processes in post-colonial SIDS.

Research on the role of global discourses in shaping ICT policies reveals that, in many cases, assumptions rooted in global ICT policy contradict the reality in developing countries (Chandran, 2019; Mansell, 2011; Thompson, 2004). Mansell (2011) claims that even when insights from endogenous models inform policy texts, there is persistent recourse to assumptions on how ICT contributes to development goals that are aligned with exogenous models. Klees (2020) notes that the World Bank takes the lead in education policy but creates the impression that it operates hand-in-hand with countries through bilateral, multilateral and civil society partnerships. For example, it controls the 'Education for All' processes.

#### **1.4.2. The shape of policy around ICT in Education (ICTE) in Mauritius**

It is worth noting that not all policies are documented or gazetted as legislation in Mauritius, especially those relating to ICTE. Rather, they take the form of guidelines or roadmaps for implementation to perhaps comply with global education policy initiatives. Some policy documents are not even made public, e.g., the ICT Strategy 2018 for the Education Sector. Only selected features of this 'policy text' have been presented to the Cabinet (Government Information Service, 2018). The policy document itself is apparently kept within the walls of the Ministry of Education and is not formally recorded as the Ministry's policy. It is likely that policies are developed to legitimise politically-driven initiatives or are symbolically formalised to build the electorate's trust in politicians, or to seek funding and collaboration to roll out further ICT devices in schools. These 'policies' have not gained legitimacy in school spaces where headteachers, teachers, and students reside. It appears that ICTE strategies' key audience is the broader constituency of the electorate or funding agencies. Yet, these measures are regarded as 'policies' because they shape directives and practices around ICTE budgeting and monitoring.

### 1.4.3. Aim of the study

The literature notes that ICTE policies and initiatives primarily occur under an overarching framework of international agencies that serve corporations, symptomatic of a Western-centric and universalist model of economic growth and development. Despite mixed discourse on ICT's impact on education, policymakers invariably lean on the dominant fashionable model, reinforcing dependence and hegemonic relationships with developed countries. This suggests that the former colonisers' capitalist agenda is cushioned within ICTE policies and policymaking processes that seduce policymakers to embrace ICT. I argue that ICTE policies are historical both in their relationship to space and time and micro and macro contexts. They tend to intertwine with policy-shapers' personal histories and concepts, as well as reflections that translate into policy. By studying the SIDS policy-shaping processes, particularly those individuals involved in designing and shaping policies, it is possible to understand how and why policy-shapers' constructions emerge in the way they do.

Given the aforementioned considerations, I explored the interpretations of those who participate in policymaking processes as to what shapes their declared expectations. I also sought to understand what informs their interpretation of what the ICTE policies they develop could and can achieve. The study, therefore, aimed to understand the constructions of the interpretation of policy-shapers at the helm of countries and those at the margins. The study is postcolonial in the sense that it sought to problematise ICT in schools and dig deeper into policy-shapers' constructions to detect any colonial legacy in the ways in which they shape policies. The research adopted a critical perspective as patterns emerging from the data may suggest deeper underlying reasons why the participants made particular choices, for which a merely interpretivist lens lacks sufficient criticality.

Against this backdrop, the study aimed to engage what role policy-shapers activate (or not) in policymaking during the (changing) processes of design and implementation. The sample of ICTE policies on which my analysis of discourses is based includes those developed between 1990 and 2018. This period covers the main ICTE policies developed in the local context. This study investigated how this phenomenon of *policy-shapers' constructions of policy development* is manifested in a post-colonial SIDS.

#### **1.4.4. Critical questions**

Assertions made by numerous scholars (Carnoy & Samoff, 1990; Gandhi, 2019; Klees, 2020; Mansell, 2011) on the various influences and conduits used to spread Western knowledge across the globe informed the construction of the following critical questions to guide this study:

- 1. What are policy-shapers' constructions of ICT education policy development for a small island developing state?**
- 2. How have policy-shapers' constructions of ICT education policy development emerged in a small island developing state?**
- 3. Why have these policy-shapers' constructions of ICTE policy development emerged in these ways?**

The first and second research questions are related and are operational questions that I expected would yield a better understanding of the motives behind the choices of policy-shapers and what the ICTE policies they develop can achieve. The third question aimed to gain a deeper understanding of why policy-shapers construe policies in the way they do. It was anticipated that responding to these research questions could assist in establishing policy development processes' contribution in varied settings on a broader level.

#### **1.5. Establishing the need to understand the worldviews of policymakers**

It is important to discuss the motivation for choosing the topic. This thesis builds on, and is grounded in, my ongoing interest and experience in the field of ICT policymaking within the realm of education and skills development. While it is professed that ICT in schools would prepare the younger generation to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, policymakers' interpretations and what they aim to achieve in decision-making around policies for ICTE for primary schools have received limited attention.

The study is situated in a time of major change in the Mauritian education system and the constantly rapidly mutating world of work driven by technological developments, disruptions and globalisation. Public discourse around the introduction of ICTE usually focuses on the new kinds of ICT devices that students are exposed to from an early age. This suggests that the motive for their introduction is driven by a pedagogical agenda that scaffolds cognitive growth in early schooling, empowering the future workforce. The overarching reasoning behind these decisions is presented as the need to enhance learning. However, there is an underlying assumption that the introduction of ICT is a

manifestation of the modernisation of the education system. There are high expectations that investment in ICTE will raise educational standards and prepare young people for the knowledge-based global economy. In parallel, discourses on the fourth and fifth industrial revolution and the need for relevant and adaptable human capital have been intensifying (Republic of Mauritius, 2019; Ministry of Finance, 2018, 2019, 2020). These Euro-centric labels appear to be dominating local education policy priorities. The desire to be on par with developed education systems and countries features strongly in the various ICTE policies.

Massive investment continues to be made in purchasing different types of ICT devices (in an erratic and sporadic manner) despite contradictory and inconsistent evidence on ICT's impact on learning. It is likely that, as opposed to the promises made, ICT in education could be considered as not only counterproductive to students' learning experiences but could also be at the expense of possibly relevant local knowledge systems that have developed over time. However, positive discourse on ICTE dominates official media circles. It is possible that deeper underlying reasons for such advocacy that are hidden by official narratives. These so-called education reforms underpinned by ICT raise questions about the nature of the ICTE policies and decision-makers' interpretations of what ICT can achieve in education.

From one vantage point, this could suggest that policymakers value Western education practices more than local ones. From another angle, the high recurrent costs (maintenance, updates, upgrades, obsolescence) of ICT devices in classrooms do not seem to be part of the equation when decisions are taken. Indeed, such critiques are viewed with suspicion. Are invisible hegemonic commercialised interests at play that favour international sellers of expensive ICT devices? Are the goals of developing world contexts being seduced into this agenda of commercialisation? Decisions about ICTE are likely to have a permanent impact on the education system and society at large. It is important to highlight that these trends might not be unique to Mauritius as many countries are following a similar trajectory. The roots of international agencies' complicity with ICT vendors can also lie in hegemonic relationships or even coloniality.

These concerns influenced my reflections as I began this study. The research was stimulated by a series of questions with incomplete answers such as: what were the drivers behind this erratic, sporadic or perhaps hegemonic ‘policy’ decision-making, especially by those in the official circles of public ministries? What informed policymakers’ decision-making, and how and why were these particular decisions made? Who was shaping these ICTE policies, how and why? What pedagogical value do policymakers perceive in ICTE? Do they have preconceived notions about the value of knowledge that come from the West (or that first impressions are sufficient to take major decisions about education), and why? Is ICTE’s expansion across the globe intertwined with the profit-driven agenda of corporations and/or a colonial endeavour?

In this regard, the study provides fresh perspectives on policy-shapers’ choices and the policy-shaping processes they adopt. It assists in answering pertinent questions such as: Who defines SIDS students’ educational goals and why? What interests determine the choice of a particular path? Does the realm of policy development lie in the local or international space? What motivates the international community to support SIDS? What are the policy development processes? Are these processes documented and why or why not? Are there (in)consistencies in the ways in which ICTE policies are developed? Is there a hidden neoliberal agenda in the imported policies? Is ICT complicit in this agenda, or it is neutral? Is the market gaining too much power over our lives, and why? How do teachers and parents perceive students’ use of ICT? Do they have a choice when it comes to ICTE policies?

By attempting to respond to some of these emerging questions, this study will assist in informing judicious and relevant design of education policies that are relevant to local contextual demands and critically analyse dominant international pressures and discourse. The findings are likely to benefit policymakers, politicians, teachers (educators), students, educational technologists, researchers, curriculum developers and parents. They could also be applicable to other settings as the phenomenon appears to manifest itself in varied contexts. Other disciplinary areas could also benefit from this study where similar trends are noted.

## **1.6. Organisational structure of the thesis**

The thesis constitutes ten chapters organised in three sections.

Section 1 consists of chapters 1 to 4.

Each chapter begins with an overview that sets out what is to come. This first chapter provides the background to the research. It contextualises the study and explores the interplay between sociological, historical, cultural and educational contextual factors in the use of ICT in schools. The chapter foregrounds pedagogical and non-pedagogical concerns related to the phenomenon under study. It also discusses the study's significance which framed what it explored and why.

The second chapter reviews the literature on policymaking and enactment in post-colonial SIDS. It explores the dominant foci of existing and/or hidden perspectives on policy processes in the multi-contextual space where policy actors operate.

Chapter 3 assists in building the theoretical framework that is made up of the constructs of policymaking processes and the postcolonial epistemic perspective. The review of the literature on postcolonial theory and policymaking theories not only identifies relevant concepts within these fields but also serves as a lynchpin for the study's contribution to the body of knowledge in a post-colonial SIDS context. Bringing chapters 2 and 3 together serves as an initial framing lens for this study.

Chapter 4 provides an account of the way in which this study was conducted, outlining the research design, methodological approach, ethical considerations, data generation and analysis. I describe the field research process that mainly involved semi-structured narrative interviews in the context of ICTE policies. Given the nature of the study, this chapter argues for alternative approaches which are culturally appropriate for education research. Thus, decolonising research methodologies constituted an integral part of this study.

The five chapters in section II hinge on a set of three superordinate typologies of policy-shapers that emerged from the analysis of the field data. Section 2 starts with an orientation to the emergent typologies.

Chapter 5 provides an orientation to the emergent typologies of policy-shapers.

Three superordinate typologies emerged from the analysis of the data, namely, 'Promoters' of ICTE policies, 'Enactors' and 'Excluded voices'. Supported by excerpts from the data, the three typologies are presented in chapters 6, 7 and 8, respectively.

Chapter 9 presents the interrelationships across the typologies in a thematic manner, structured around the issues that mainly emerged from the preceding three chapters. This chapter also draws from the theoretical lens and the literature (as the framing lens) to create a dialogue with the themes that emerged.

Section 3 switches the focus from the analysis phase to the discussion in chapter 10.

The various strands of the research are brought together, questions arising from the study are considered in the context of the relevant literature, and implications are drawn. Finally, I set out an agenda for future research.

### **1.7. Synthesis of chapter**

This introductory chapter sketched post-colonial SIDS' relationship with the wider macroeconomic context. Various characterisations of SIDS have been presented, with a shift from demographic operational definitions of what constitutes a SIDS to revealing the complexities of their agentic potential to generate their own interpretations and representations of themselves. The chapter opened up questions on whether ICT in education is an enabler to improve pedagogy or simply part of a global trend of greater commercialisation of the ICT industry. It focused on decision-makers grappling with policymaking shaped by both international forces and micro level factors, which introduced my interest in this phenomenon. I was keen to understand how policy actors deal with the non-pedagogical factors that could be influencing ICTE policymaking. As outlined by the critical questions, this study aimed to peel back their many layers of interpretations to understand how ICTE policies are constructed and what influences shape this process.

The following chapter examines the specific features of policymaking within SIDS contexts.

## CHAPTER 2

### **From policymakers to policy-shapers: shifting studies on policymaking and enactment in post-colonial SIDS**

#### **2.1. Introduction**

In the preceding chapter, I provided an introductory background that explained the impetus for my doctoral study. I essentially reflected on the potential ideological aspects, contradictions and inconsistencies related to the use of ICT in schools. The present chapter shifts the discourse to a review of the literature on the phenomenon of policy development within the domain of ICT in education in a post-colonial SIDS. This chapter thus explores how the realm of policymaking can be expanded to include a range of actors shaping policy choices under the gaze and influence of the macro global and universalising agendas.

The literature review provides a solid foundation for anchoring, motivating and legitimating the research, while identifying the research gaps that this study seeks to address. The sifting of the literature helps to explore the dominant foci of existing and/or hidden perspectives on policy processes in a multi-contextual space, where policy actors operate within their own varied spaces. The potential influence of these diverse settings and spaces on policymaking is explored. Shapers of policies may also embody distinct facets of their lives that intersect or overlap with one another. Consequently, this research aims to gauge what has not yet been foregrounded in the extant body of literature concerning the worldviews of policymakers of ICTE in a post-colonial SIDS.

#### **2.2. Overview of chapter**

In section 2.3, I start by discussing conventional conceptions of policy and policymakers to build an understanding of the policymaking process and what is referred to as policy. Learnings from section 2.3 serve as a basis to explore and outline, in section 2.4, some of the dominant international discourses about policy development, particularly with respect to ICT. In this section, I broadly elaborate on the variety of actors who are involved in the process of engaging with policymaking or influencing policy. This latter group is argued to be a more comprehensive set of policy-shapers compared with the previously conventionalised narrower set of policymakers. This section disaggregates the diversity of policy-shapers spanning from macro to micro-institutional levels, each voice bearing an influence on the official policy and the policy enacted in practice. Sections 2.5 and 2.6 problematise the nature of ICTE within the context of post-colonial SIDS. Building on the

previous chapter and arguments so far, sections 2.7 and 2.8 respectively synthesise the discussions. To do this, I engage with a redefinition of the conception of policy and what I am referring to as, not only policymakers, but more broadly as policy-shapers to move forward in this research. Section 2.9 extends the problem and refines the phenomenon of the study. The policymaking and shaping processes within the temporal-spatial dynamics of power provide the backdrop to develop the theoretical lens integrating policymaking theories, policy spaces and postcolonial theory in chapter 3. Section 2.10 synthesises the chapter by shifting the attention away from written policy documents to the people within and outside policymaking sites who shape policy.

### **2.3. Building an understanding of policy, policymakers and policymaking**

One cannot think of policymakers differently without trying to unpack notions of ‘policy text’, ‘policymaker’, ‘policymaking’ and ‘policy implementation’, especially in a post-colonial context. Nevertheless, the point of departure is to develop an understanding of the conventionalised concepts of policy, policymaking and policymakers, in general, prior to engaging with the specific terrain of ICTE policymaking.

The search for a working definition of ‘policy’ in non-Western ICTE contexts relies heavily on the definitions proposed by Western scholars (Fimyar, 2014). A post-structuralist approach extends policymaking to include dimensions beyond the work of official (Government) institutions (Ozga, 2000). In this sense, policy involves not only policy directives but “negotiation, contestation or struggle between different groups who may lie outside the formal machinery of official policy-making” (p. 113). She explains that education policy is not confined to the formal relationships and processes, neither micro-institutional spaces nor legislations as policy is also shaped by its political, social and economic contexts, that required to be studied.

From a similar perspective, Ball’s (1993) seminal work reveals a dual conceptualisation of *policy*, namely as *text* and as *discourse*. The latter operational conception points to policy as constituting more than simply written documents. Additionally, Ball does not view policy trajectory progressing in a linear fashion since the multiple influences at the different levels of the policy trajectory provide policy with a chaotic and complex character. This characterisation of policy, which acknowledges the complex nature of the policy field, makes any analysis of the policy development process difficult (Pillay, 2014).

As education is a distinct policy area with potential influence on many other fields, education policymaking constitutes further complexifications. Indeed, the education policymaking field is a highly complex process that is in constant flux and involves a broad range of actors (Ozga, 2000). It is noted that, however, a government-centric approach, intrinsically, limits the role of the individual agency in decision-making, signalling the repressive nature of policymaking structures (Raab, 1994). This domain is generally regarded as a purely top-down process with decision-making power held by a selected few, but the process is also, paradoxically, influenced by the broad array of vested interests and other groups (Han & Ye, 2017). Vested interests have the potential to be powerful forces for maintaining the status quo especially when those institutions face threatening reforms (Moe, 2015). It is likely that in such circumstances, policy would be compromised especially if the vested interests come into conflict.

Further, policymaking is not static but involves a continually changing set of processes. The central role of government could be seen as being overtaken by the interdependence of varied stakeholders and policy networks influencing its trajectory (Rhodos, 1997). Policy networks constitute clusters of policy actors, agencies, institutions and organisations whose work is aimed at generating and implementing policies via transnational agreements, policy advisory, philanthropy and conditionality (Ozga, 2005). The assumption, therefore, that policies are centrally designed and orchestrated without contestation does not always hold true (Pillay, 2014). Policymaking inevitably operates within a politicised context, where a range of different stakeholders are likely to attempt to influence the judgement of policymakers and undermine or support the latter's independence. However, the lack of attention to the macro-political level is the main limitation of traditional policy-cycle approaches (Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992). Even though the intentions of centrally-positioned policy actors<sup>21</sup> are prime in policy development, a deeper and broader understanding of policymaking processes can be gained by critiquing the complexity of policymaking processes. This critique would involve bracketing and acknowledging the range of policy actors who make certain choices and influence policy development both directly and indirectly. But, if policy is about choices, changes and influences, it will always represent, over-represent or marginalise certain groups or individuals. From this perspective, it would be highly inapt to conceptualise policies by notions of linearity (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010).

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<sup>21</sup> Centrally-positioned policy actors comprise mainly bureaucrats and politicians.

Even if ICTE policy, which is the focus of the study, is often developed through an atheoretical approach of ‘what works elsewhere’, policy as text is important. The literature illustrates that policy texts can be muddled or compromised by the demands of the competing interests of several policy-shapers and the context in (and for) which the policy is being shaped. The interests can be as diverse as, to cite a few, industry as a profit-making enterprise, and different opinions about society’s needs and the role policymakers should play in meeting these. Policy extends beyond the text produced by the official institutions. It is an interactive discourse between various shapers of policies, their conflicting interests, and the nature of the context within which policy takes root and is enacted.

#### **2.4. ICT in education (ICTE) policies**

The signifiers, namely policymaking, policy text and official policymakers, appear to be context-sensitive. They cannot hold a similar status or have the same meaning in contexts that are characterised by diverse, complex sociological, political, historical and cultural spaces. The interaction between the unique local spaces and their broader macro-international framing partners activate evolving environments (each with their unique forms of complexities). This dialogicality across spaces shapes policies in multiple and unique ways that overlap with each other. Each of those concepts and practices embodies their own selected realities and ideological, political, and socio-cultural foundations. Therefore, I take a distance from the conventional singular, essentialised meanings of policymaking in general. I explore, recognise and interrogate the unique contested dynamics involved in the specific realm of the ICTE policy context. This kind of analysis acknowledges the range of stakeholders who activate or not robust influences in the ICTE policy context.

### **2.4.1. International discourse of ICTE policymakers**

Over the years, the international community<sup>22</sup> often claims to recognise the benefits of ICTE. It justifies its use by students by arguing that it meets the purpose of education. For example, Papert (1979) made an early claim that computers were to be considered a panacea for enhancement in education. He went as far as to assert that key educational theorists, namely Dewey, Montessori and Neill, proposed to educate children in a spirit that he found to be fundamentally correct. However, Papert opines that “their [the key theorists’] proposals failed in practice due to the lack of a technological base. The computer now provides it” (Papert, 1979, p. 85). Nearly two decades later, Bill Gates and associates claimed that access to the internet would resolve educational issues and would provide access to the best educational resources for learning and improving access to the best school facilities.

All these claims provide historical, advocacy perspectives that ICT would drive advances in all aspects of education, from delivery of high-quality content, ongoing teacher pedagogy, professional development, curricula, monitoring, to assessment of student performance. These advocacy arguments suggest that ICT prepares people, in general, but more particularly for a world where ICT is considered necessary to successfully navigate their future careers and lives. Moreover, technological prowess was promoted as a key driver to activate the national economies (The Earth Institute Columbia University & Ericsson, 2016). These discourses, drawn from a broader international community primarily located in the developed world, have ripple effects throughout the policy landscape of the developing world. Currently, international funding support is preferentially awarded to countries predisposed to accepting educational interventions when such activities are leveraged through ICT. For instance, UNESCO has recently developed the ‘ICT Competency Framework for Teachers’ to promote the successful integration of ICT in teaching and learning (Miao et al., 2022). Such endeavours depict the importance of rethinking the role of teachers in applying ICT to enhance and transform learning. Other scholars have also emphasised the importance of a reconceptualised approach to teaching in a technologically-enabled environment so that teachers make ICT an effective ally in their teaching and learning process (Tengku Sepora, Chow & Chuah, 2017). This groundswell of opinions about the worthwhileness of ICTE prompts policymakers, who are responsible for the future of education, to review how they should respond. My concern arises from whether policymakers themselves are adequately familiar with the range of reviews in the literature on ICTE, which are not all complimentary about the influence of ICT on the quality of educational provisioning. What then could be considered as driving policymakers’ decision-making

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<sup>22</sup> The international community comprises renown international figures, international agencies and multinationals.

around the use of ICT in the education system?

Having laid these foundations for ICT adoption within the system, governments present a perspective of ICTE policy as an epitomised version of the ultimate goal of transforming education systems (The Earth Institute Columbia University & Ericsson, 2016; Wallet & Kimenyi, 2019; Xuereb, 2006). The intentions of policymakers seem to be guided by a confidence that ICT would activate an efficient and coordinated effort to support achieving the broad objective of education. It also appears that there is little documentation of what policymakers actually do on a daily basis and how their way of work and practices influence how they use evidence (Oliver, Lorenc & Innvaer, 2014). It is likely that the appeal of ICTE lies in its promise to quick-fix educational strategies as claimed by Papert (1979).

However, from a ten-year<sup>23</sup> retrospective analysis of the use of ICTE in Zimbabwe, the use of ICT in teaching and learning was not as confidently adopted by government officials as had been predicted earlier (Dube, 2017). The research shows that one decade later, the use of ICT in the schooling system still appeared sporadic. Further, it appears that access to the hardware and software required for the ICT roll-out on a national scale was an issue. The exorbitant cost of equipment and the need for well-oriented teachers to activate ICT in practice became more evident as the original enthusiasm faded. The short-term pilot nature of the original projects could not be sustained when getting to scale.

Even when access and usage were seemingly on the increase, studies showed that the patterns of extended engagement with ICT in Eastern African contexts remained generally sporadic (Hennessy et al, 2010). ICT devices were made available in a haphazard way and were not yet mainstreamed in pedagogy (Dube, 2017). Mauritian schools have witnessed similar whimsical overlapping shifts in the waves of ICTE. Even before one particular type of device is ‘actually’ fully or effectively deployed, another one is already being procured and installed. Schools are left to grapple<sup>24</sup> with ever-changing ICTE devices (Hennessy et al., 2010). This issue seems to be common in certain specific regions. Pyneandee (2018) and Udhin (2019), in the opening orientations of their theses conducted in the Mauritian context, described the overlapping ICT initiatives<sup>25</sup> in the form of expensive provision and expansion of ICT devices. This feature of inconsistent policymaking could be partly due to policymakers’ reactionary responses to the ongoing rapid refinements of ICTE devices that characterised the emergent field of ICTE.

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<sup>23</sup> Use of ICTE between 1995 and 2005

<sup>24</sup> From educators’ perspective, the challenges faced outweigh the perceived benefits of Tablet PCs (Jugee & Santally, 2016). Their satisfaction level was also low as compared to the expected outcome of the ambitious project.

<sup>25</sup> ICT initiatives straddle from Interactive Whiteboards to PC and tablets.

Mehendale (2019) claims that the education sector has become an attractive entrepreneurial platform where corporations experiment their products. Against such a backdrop, rationally, policymakers would be unlikely to commit to strategies for the education system when the devices themselves were considered still in developmental and at experimental stages of readiness. If left unchecked, the schooling systems of developing countries may get trapped in the spiral of profit-driven interest of corporations and testing of new products. The question remains: why do policymakers continue to invest in ICT when a growing body of formal research points to the mitigating factors influencing its potential success to lever change in the education system? What drives policymakers to support ICT as a solution to education challenges? My study aims to explore the drivers of policy choices.

Apparently, corporations and donors of ICTE devices are directing the choices of officials. However, public policy is defined as “whatever governments chose to do, or not to do” (Dye, 1992, p. 7). This means that the final decision of making choices rests with local policymakers. This study seeks to understand policymakers’ perspectives of ICTE, which includes the vantages and influence of various educational stakeholders. It might be argued that the agenda outside the formal educational sphere may be directing the choices of what governments choose to do. For example, corporations and donors of ICT devices may be directing the kinds of choices that governmental officials prefer to enact within the schooling system. Their interference in education policies as external influences on domestic policymaking seems to matter when it comes to taking decisions (Coe, n.d.<sup>26</sup>; Hennessy et al, 2010; Government Information Service<sup>27</sup>, 2013; Ministry of Education<sup>28</sup>, 2021).

Kozma (2008) suggests that many ICTE projects, often sponsored by donor agencies and corporations, steer national policies and programmes. The agenda for such policy steering requires the support of selected policymakers to pave the pathway for donors to access the education system. Generally, donors or economic enterprises advocate the use of ICTE by offering donations and creating the need for the introduction of ICT within schooling. Policymakers become entrapped within the marketing strategy. What appears as the donors’ benevolent interest to improve education might be construed as subtle marketing ploys. The temporary and unsustained long-term investment of ICT resources is often influenced by the market rhythms of donors which has a knock-on effect on local policies. Such policies are interpreted by practitioners in schooling contexts as being largely imposed by external top-down drivers but supported by localised mediators. Chief amongst the mediators are governmental officials who become brokers of the marketised agenda.

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<sup>26</sup> Vitalhub Innovation hub provides ICT infrastructure in schools in Sri Lanka.

<sup>27</sup> Interactive whiteboards were donated to schools in Mauritius.

<sup>28</sup> MTN Rwanda donated computer labs in TVET schools in Rwanda.

The corporations which supply devices to education systems are also influenced by shifting innovations in the field of technological development, and there is an economic logic to shift their proposed strategies frequently to maximise profitable returns. This potentially suggests that the policymakers' choices might become erratic if they align their responses to the shifts of the corporate world agenda. Within this conception, the shaping of official policy might be indirectly orchestrated by forces outside the world of the policymakers themselves. National and other initiatives, such as New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), Schoolnet, One Laptop Per Child, and PanAfrican Research Agenda, span several countries in Sub-Saharan Africa and are mainly externally driven rather than engage local stakeholders (Hennessy et al., 2010).

Majority of the programmes (described by Pyneandee, 2018 and Udhin, 2019) involving the use of ICT in schools have been found to operate in isolation from each other. This isolation perhaps conceals the profit motive of corporations to sustain their business by deploying new product lines and making previous ones obsolete. New products would also continue to seduce policymakers and students with newness. Besides, students seem to show enthusiasm and motivation to use new ICT devices as they enjoy their attractive music player, calculator, and dictionary features (Jugee & Santally, 2016).

A meta-review of literature conducted by LeBaron & McDonough (2009) to understand the exponential growth of ICTE suggests that ICT initiatives in schools are not structured and appear more random than organised to achieve targeted goals. The review emphasised that spending on ICTE is insufficiently systemic and inappropriately targeted. These arguments are clearly articulated by Unwin (2005, 2022)<sup>29</sup>. His examination of ICT and the formal and informal structures surrounding the extremely poor and marginalised African countries, has led to the following claim:

*There is considerable interest in delivering educational ICT initiatives across Africa. African governments are eager to use ICTs so that they are at the forefront of technological change; donors and international agencies are eager to provide resources to help 'Bridge the Digital Divide'; the private sector is keen to invest where companies see potential market growth possibilities in the future; academics are interested in sharing the results of their research on the subject; and civil society organisations are willing to help facilitate delivery of schemes on the ground. However, this multiplicity of interest means that there is frequent duplication of effort, lessons are not sufficiently learnt and shared, and there is a wasteful lack of co-ordination in the activities that actually take place. There are many examples of small-scale initiatives, embarked on with the best will in the world, but that only benefit a few people for a short while. If all those involved would truly work together for the interests of the poor and marginalised in Africa, rather than primarily for their own agendas and targets, it would be*

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<sup>29</sup> Currently he is UNESCO Chair in ICT4D and Emeritus Professor of Geography, Royal Holloway, University of London. His core work focuses on the reasons behind the failure of ICT to substantially help the poor worldwide as opposed to what has been professed (Royal Holloway, 2022).

*possible to achieve very much more than has heretofore been achieved. (Unwin, 2005, p. 121).*

This kind of inconsistent behaviour of policymakers may be considered erratic as they choose one initiative and suddenly change for another. Exploring the reasons behind the erratic approach of policymakers in developing ICTE policies could provide insight into their perspectives about policy development, especially as their decisions can have a major impact on schools and the budget for education. I was keen to understand if the economic imperatives of corporations are the only sources of influence on the policymaking processes. It is worth examining whose interests are being served in light of the unfolding complexities of ICTE.

Policy is not just a static entity but is dynamic and context-dependent, and that it is important to consider the spatiotemporal aspects of policy processes in order to better understand the effectiveness of policy (Sharma & Gupta, 2018). In fact, policies seem to operate at different scales, ranging from global policies that affect multiple countries or specific countries or regions. The scale of policy can have significant implications for its effectiveness, as policies that are developed at one scale may not be appropriate or effective when implemented at another scale. In addition to scale, the space-time configuration of policy also involves the ways in which policies are implemented and experienced over time and in different contexts. For example, a policy that is effective in one context may not be effective in another context due to differences in culture, history, or social structure. Similarly, a policy that is effective in the short term may have unintended consequences or become less effective over time.

These issues lead to another feature of education policymaking that is the pressure and status associated with adhering to international protocols or Global Education Policies (GEP), such as SDG4 or Education for All. ICT has portrayed a high potential in helping to attain the universal goals for education (Brush, Glazewski & Hew, 2008). These policies act as principles, guidelines, and frameworks that govern the development and implementation of education policies across countries and regions. Drawing on Bourdieu, Rizvi and Lingard (2010) have characterised the global policy field as a site of struggle and looking closely at individual countries outside the bright light (Sassen, 2009) of a global education policy discourse, complicated stories of local interpretation, enactment, (re)contextualisation and resistance to global policy solutions are seen (Exley, Braun & Ball, 2011).

Education reforms underpinned by the use of ICT are aligned with these goals. UNESCO also proposes guidelines on how to go about enhancing education systems in the context of major economic, political, social and technological trends (Miao et al., 2022). Intergovernmental organisations like the United Nations and its agencies, such as UNDP and UNESCO, form a large and diverse involved group of institutions in the policy space that envelope and bind developing countries in these international protocols. The international or ‘universal’ goals give relevance to the ICTE policy processes.

Mohabeer Chana (2021) brings into sharper focus the relationship between ICT(E), SDGs and neoliberal globalisation (as a global governance system), a cog designed by a few countries in the pursuit of increased economic wealth and power. She argues that the wider neoliberal global agenda advocates ICTE to prepare students to function within the neoliberal capitalist system. Local policymakers seem to demonstrate compliance with international protocols and global governance systems by taking pride in aligning national policies<sup>30</sup> with protocols. These seem to work in the interest of the capitalist system. They could be finding potential value in doing so. Understanding their drives and their logic in choosing to align themselves with the international protocols has the potential to enrich this study further.

A host of strategies are deployed to support, reinforce and filter down international protocols and guidelines to diffuse global meta-narratives among local policymakers. Firstly, high-level international conferences organised by international agencies play a crucial interfacing role. For instance, the World Summit on Information Society 2005 (WSIS) emphasised the potential of ICT to expand access to quality education, and to foster literacy and provide universal primary education in developing countries (United Nations, 2005). The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2006, p. 40), as a result of the Schooling for Tomorrow programme, published the book “Personalising Education” with the contributions of 11 renowned scholars<sup>31</sup> who strategically legitimise the use of ICTE. A decade later, to reaffirm commitments, a joint ‘International Forum on ICT and Education 2030’ was organised by UNESCO with the Government of the People’s Republic of China. This event was a follow-up to the UNESCO International Conference on ICT and Post-2015 Education that was held in 2015 in Qingdao (UNESCO, 2017).

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<sup>30</sup> National policies such as the National Curriculum Framework 2015.

<sup>31</sup> David Hopkins, David Miliband, Sanna Järvelä, Manfred Spitzer, Yvonne Hébert, William J. Hartley, Jean-Claude Ruano-Borbalan, Johan Peter Paludan, Charles Leadbeater, Tom Bentley, Riel Miller. They claimed that ICT can increase authenticity and interest in learning; build virtual communities; help to share perspectives among students with different expertise; provide peer support and benchmarking practices in different fields; facilitate the use of technology-supported inquiry approaches and problem-based models; provide innovative ways of integrating ‘just-in-time’ support and interaction.

Secondly, international agencies take a benevolent stance in their approach to intervening in countries, which can be regarded as a strategic move to infuse policy spaces.

Thirdly, international agencies generally appear to harbour a broad assemblage of high-level decision-makers<sup>32</sup> to advise on the future education plans of their respective countries. Their reinforcement strategies seem to privilege communication, interfacing, commitments and undertakings as an integral part of their approach, as opposed to exclusively disseminating ICTE. For instance, the 2<sup>nd</sup> African Ministerial Forum on ICT Integration in Education and Training was co-organised in 2016 by international agencies and corporations<sup>33</sup> (African Development Bank, 2016). Apart from mainstream conferences, commitments and declarations made in previous high-level conferences later come to reassert ICTE and to possibly prioritise it on governmental agenda. Other examples include the Ministerial Forum ‘Global Dialogue on ICT and Education Innovation – Towards Sustainable Development Goal for Education (SDG 4)’ that was organised by the UNESCO Institute for Information Technologies in Education (IITE) in partnership with the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation in 2018 in Moscow (UNESCO, 2018). The bringing together of the business community and potential buyers (Ministerial officers of high rank) on a common platform to discuss ICTE is noteworthy. This kind of collaboration is likely to turn policymakers into advocates of ICTE and co-producers of the international discourse. Possibly the profit-seeking pursuits of corporations are played down, and the benevolence of international agencies foregrounded. It would be difficult for one to detect the manipulative intent of systems under the guise of humanitarianism. Compliance could be swift, especially when assurances to improve the education system and bring social justice in the world are taken as uncontested underlying principles.

Much has been promised<sup>34</sup> by the international community to address the world’s economic and social needs, and to promote equity through ICTE (UNESCO, 2017). Fourth, these promises and the compliance with international protocols seem to echo as a coherent policy narrative towards a singular universal definition of progress. Be they coherent or not, these narratives conceal a deeper characteristic. These are seen suspiciously by certain scholars as having been orchestrated by corporations to influence policy actors with their policy prescriptions. Technology vendors are an integral part of the narrative that “education is broken” (Weller, 2014, p. 118) and local pedagogy is

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<sup>32</sup> Decision-makers comprise politicians, bureaucrats, ICT companies and researchers.

<sup>33</sup> The co-organisers were the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), the Global e-Schools and Communities Initiative (GESCI), the African Development Bank Group (AfDB), Intel, UNESCO, the International Organization of La Francophonie (IOF) and Microsoft.

<sup>34</sup> The promises vary from deepening of North-South knowledge exchange, facilitating the design of cooperation strategies and outlining action plans to scale up digital innovations and capitalise on best practices that will accelerate progress towards Education 2030.

dated and “needs to be fixed” (Gurumurthy, 2019, p. 32).

Literature is laden with partnerships of international agencies with multinationals, together ‘helping’ developing nations to achieve global goals (Veenis, 2017; Lundahl & Waldow, 2009; Lawn, 2014; Klees, Samoff & Stromquist, 2012; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). Apparently, the World Bank now directs the processes of ‘Education for All’ (EFA) (Jones, 1992; Mundy, 2002). It primarily prioritises its own research or selects and interprets the research that fits its ideology or those that uphold its values, basing its one-size-fits-all recommendations on ideology and not objective and impartial evidence (Klees, 2002; Klees, Samoff & Stromquist, 2012). Neoliberal discourses, that have been made to spread the neoliberal education reform agenda of developing countries by the World Bank (Klees, 2012), pervade the policy space and dominate the policy agenda worldwide (Klees, 2020). The enormous corporate interests in ICTE cannot go unnoticed.

#### **2.4.2. Benchmarking and international comparisons**

Fifth, reinforcing of internationality meta-narratives amongst ICTE policymaking involves the way international comparisons have been widely accepted as a ‘normal’ exercise to improve the status of developing countries. In order to expose the ‘strengths’ of ICTE, the areas of weakness of non-compliant local policy actors are emphasised. International organisations (such as OECD, WEF and others) share a globalised opinion of education and efficiency, based on a quantitative view of progress (Carnoy, 2000). Their ways of generating and using evidence are not necessarily consistent with improving education systems in small contexts. Using these data, the quality of national educational systems is regularly compared against a set of global benchmarking criteria<sup>35</sup>. This creates a flawed notion of what requires attention in the developing world and its knowledge systems. Deployed as a governing strategy, these hegemonic international benchmarks could exert (in)direct power over the policymakers of developing world countries, thereby subtly making them lose confidence in their own power to define for themselves their future plan for education. While benchmarking could be perceived as a sound tool to uplift education systems, it has the ability to generate instability and insecurity among decision-makers (including politicians) to prioritise certain actions over others. Portrayed as objective, they can act as adverse criticism of policymakers’ performance on the (inter)national level, as a measure of the development of the country. Efforts to improve the country’s global positioning can be riddled with the politicians’ agenda when they leverage the rankings and, in the process, align with recommendations therein. Perhaps

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<sup>35</sup> Some examples of global benchmarking are Global Talent Competitiveness Index, Ease of doing business, The Digital Talent Gap.

(unknowingly) politicians in SIDS are becoming subservient to these international rankings as they seem to be facing a continually moving target.

However, the World Bank seeks to position itself as the one holding power to manipulate education policy processes in developing states (Klees, Samoff and Stromquist, 2012; Klees, 2020). By acting as self-proclaimed managers to control the creation and administration of knowledge within SIDS, international agencies continue to exert powerful leverage (Goodwin-White, 2017). Similarly, a recent publication by UNESCO introduced a roadmap to guide the development of ICTE masterplans from conception to implementation (Miao et al., 2022). Practical guides hand-hold policymakers to address key matters, such as curricula, assessments, and digital learning resources for their national ICTE policies. Perhaps, this is what Baldacchino (2012) contended regarding how international agencies open up spaces for their interventions by instilling their ‘natural’ superiority through hegemonic powers. Policymakers, having the responsibility of overseeing education systems, could become vulnerable to manipulation (Baekgaard et al., 2017) under the pressure of highly dominant, and uncontested, ‘coherent discourse’. ‘Fear of being left behind’ can be a powerful campaign for policymakers to join the ICTE bandwagon.

Hickling-Hudson and Klees (2012) disagree that policy recommendations of the World Bank for instance (usually claimed to be universal) are objective and impartial. They argue that the premises of the World Bank are ideologically-based favouring neoliberalism mediated by international agencies that have hints of a hegemonic project with colonial endeavours. They also contend that neoliberalism frames the purpose of education in terms of investments made in the development of students as human capital. What students should learn and the value of education is relative to their individual prospects for future earnings. This narrow conception of education raises important questions about the purpose of education and the relationship between schools, democratic life, and state governance (Hastings, 2019). Similarly, perhaps ICTE is being ‘coerced’ into being introduced in developing countries through ‘consent’ under the overarching hegemonic frame of developed ones. Such concerns make it difficult to establish the neutrality or the pedagogical complementarity of ICTE.

### **2.4.3. Conceptions of individual dispositions to ICTE**

Lastly, the international discourse also attempts to create a new conception of the learners' dispositions towards ICTE. At the macro-level, the move to align the learning preferences of today's students with the coherent global narrative about ICTE is apparent. Today's students are presented as enthusiastic and having an affinity for ICT as they are born into a world where ICT use is widespread (Prensky, 2001) and are better utilisers of technologies (Papert, 1998; Prensky, 2001, 2005a, 2005b). These types of affirmations serve as propaganda for the use of ICTE and the need to change education systems to keep up with the likings of the new generation. Learners of the technological era are characterised as 'digital natives', a term coined by Prensky (2001). The premise of developing ICTE policies is also associated with students' familiarity with ICT (Ghavifekr & Rosdy, 2015). However, evidence is scant to suggest that the so-called 'digital natives' learn differently. The last two decades have witnessed how students are viewed as raw materials in need of crafting for a market-driven knowledge economy within global capitalism (Koopman & Koopman, 2021). The predominant discourse about ICTE relates to preparing students to operate in a 'knowledge society' (Ghavifekr, Afshari & Amla, 2012). Perhaps the urge to form part of the 'knowledge society' has led many countries to invest heavily in ICTE. Why policymakers do not go beyond the lens rooted in foreign notions of development and they ignore the value of education outside of work, is an especially important research task to be undertaken.

### **2.4.4. ICTE as a pedagogy or enterprise**

Ornellas and Sancho (2015) single out three myths about ICTE. The first myth, they argue, is that a top-down policymaking process of the provision of ICT in schools is enough to enhance education. The second myth is that today's students, because they are digital natives, learn better and more with ICT. The third relates to the information society where people have unlimited access to information, therefore, are better informed. From their perspective, such an educational discourse is made up of messages from people with little knowledge about the complexity of education systems. They conclude that these deeply rooted myths are eroding the possibilities of developing educational systems in this increasingly globalised world. However, viewed from a different angle, perhaps non-pedagogical actors have developed a highly complex understanding of the potential of education to manipulate it for the profit of digital ICT corporations. In a way, ICTE would have little to do with education.

ICTE has been characterised as bearing two distinct sets of ideologies, namely *ICTE as a pedagogy* and *ICTE as an enterprise* (Chandran, 2019). While Chandran does not engage in the magnitude of these two ideologies, Gurumurthy (2019) suggests that policy and programme design in ICTE has tended to be disproportionately influenced by technology experts and vendors, while the important role of pedagogical experts is undercut. Intrinsic to such a composition of policy actors around policymaking would be the search for financial benefit on behalf of corporations rather than approaches founded on pedagogical reasoning. If ICTE policy is largely influenced by non-pedagogical actors, the role of being an education policymaker is gradually being conferred to peripheral influences. The former influences are possibly considered benign given that ICTE is highly regarded and promoted by trusted, hence credible institutions such as UNESCO and the World Bank. ICT is portrayed as a tool for the common good to support the transformation of education and achieve coherence with internationally agreed development goals (Miao et al., 2022). Perhaps policymakers also try to benefit from corporations. Officially, they profess an interest in modernising their education systems, but policymakers' political interests seem to become emphasised in negotiations and dealings with non-pedagogical actors. If there is a kind of complicity in the negotiations, whose interest is being served and why, will be studied.

#### **2.4.5. Relationship of post-colonial SIDS with ICTE**

The (colonial) history of countries can provide some explanation for this phenomenon. Colonials left their former colonies to deal with massive debt, conflicts and other major issues. At times, historical relationships with the global network can benefit small states, especially those that were colonised and already inherited a kind of dependence on their masters. Jules and Ressler (2017a, p. 26) posit that “small states that have experienced colonisation were able to piggyback upon their (former) colonial masters' global networks and secure lucrative preferential treatment”<sup>36</sup>. In this interconnected world, small states are increasingly relying on networks which allow them to exert efforts on the best possible approaches to tackle local issues (Jules & Ressler, 2017a). Efforts are constrained by policymakers through the development of ‘modern’ policies to raise the level of SIDS to develop internationally competitive outward-oriented strategies (Kuwayama & United Nations, 1999; McBain, 2001). However, it is likely that in doing so, global hegemonic market-driven policies are slipped into the local policy space. This situation only exacerbates the colonies' dependency on their former colonisers. Instead of progressing, SIDS would ultimately bounce back to the margins,

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<sup>36</sup> For instance, the Sugar Protocol that began in 1975 meant that Mauritius along with other African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states enjoyed guaranteed prices for their sugar. These fixed prices were much higher than world prices (African Business, 2015). This strategy is a worthy starting point for SIDS for development after colonial control (Samuel & Mariaye, 2017).

making them more dependent on their colonial masters. However, this time they would become complicit with their own marginalisation.

It is important to note that a shift from “methodological nationalism”<sup>37</sup> would widen the outlook on developing education policies (Jules & Ressler, 2017b; Robertson & Dale, 2008, pp. 19-32). But, in the drive to learn from ‘modern’ foreign education systems rather than confine policy to local ideas and practices, there is an almost unconscious (uncontested) connection in the minds of many people between ICT (foreign and modern) and the ‘quality’ of education (Selwyn, 2011). This can be part of a larger problem if policymakers are uncritical of their own drives to modernisation, which is perhaps sharply shaped by corporations. But, little is known about the drives of policymakers (if they are their own) for not questioning the ability of ICT to bring about quality in education. By studying the policymaking processes, such as exploring how policymakers execute power and advocate overtly or subversively, particularly those actors who help design the policy, it is possible to understand how and why this prevails. Macro-level forces perhaps also have micro level consequences. Yet, literature is scarce on the opinions of policymakers amid these macro forces trying to shape local policies.

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<sup>37</sup> Methodological nationalism is the tendency to seeing the nation as a given, often as a natural and universal unit and taking the nation state as the container of societies. This deepens the difficulty of both looking beyond, and of imagining alternatives to the nation state (Robertson & Dale, 2008).

## **2.5. Contextualising policy, policymakers and policy-shapers: the policy-shaping context**

As contexts are constantly changing, the literature made it clear that policy is also always in a state of flux and is continuously being shaped by its context. So is ICT. ICTE policy-shaping could as well be conceptualised as involving a series of unfolding and changeable phases, which include discussing policy ideas, negotiating policy text production, and engaging with the implementation of officialised or legislated intentions in policy enactment (Hall, 1989, 2020). Policy-shaping also involves policymakers' changing ideas about policy and discussions they hold with various shapers. Though these go undocumented, they shape policies in unique ways (Hall, 1993). Ball (1994a) describes the policy-shaping space as characterised by interactive sets of shifting relationships between officialised policy texts and the numerous compromises, conflicts and challenges of varied agendas, in addition to a range of diverse people's interests. He argues that "[the texts] are cannibalised products of multiple (but circumscribed) influences and agendas" (p. 16). Policy-shaping entails

*representations which are encoded in complex ways (via struggles, compromises, authoritative public interpretations and reinterpretations) and decoded in complex ways (via actors' interpretations and meanings in relation to their history, experiences, skills, resources and context). (Ball, 1994a, p. 16)*

This argument recognises that even the policy text (as a result of the interactive dialogicality of the shaping processes) is considered an embodiment of multiple agendas and compromises. The process of developing the officialised policy texts could be interpreted as an important exercise for policymakers to legitimise their collaborating partners' interests. The policy texts may, therefore, signal the kinds of relationships which include political, sociological, cultural, and econometric concerns. The textual form of policy could be seen as paving the way for the deployment of preferred resources into the social system. Oojorah (2017) argues that, in the case of ICTE policies, this policy unfolding includes clearing the pathways to ensure that ICTE devices are introduced in the education system, and the policy is used to justify the soaking up of a significant share of the education budget. The documented and formalised policies would generally represent a written commitment in which policymakers can continue to invest in ICT devices. This ensures the satisfaction of the corporations that benefit financially from the introduction of the ICTE. These unfolding processes suggest that policy has intrinsic and contextual complexities, and its deeper agendas are not always patently overt. To study the phenomenon deeply, this research will pay special attention to the changing socio-political-economic context that contributes to the emergence of policies in the way they do. Policy analysis, therefore, becomes the study of the relationships between the documented text and the broader context.

In the context of Mauritius, ICTE policies are not always formally and legally gazetted (section 1.4.2). Instead, official governmental or departmental documents outlining terms of reference to regulate the introduction and use of ICTE are seen as a flexible form of regulatory guidelines with no formal commitment or accountability for implementation. This practice, therefore, begs the question of whether the regulation is an official policy at all. It is intriguing to note that even after mobilising local and international resources and actors in the development of policies, politicians do not have the implementation of ‘the policy’ goals as their primary objective. Seemingly, policies only have a symbolic character, a form of disguised legitimisation (Jansen, 2002). This implies that politicians do not intend to bring any transformational change as a result of ICTE policy, but they merely translate policy into a symbolic break from the past rather than an attempt to steer the substance of change. Policies as symbolic rhetoric profess to speak on behalf of particular groups but may have their gaze directed elsewhere (Jansen, 2002).

Probably, policy texts are written down and, in a manner, only to preserve public confidence in formal structures and policymakers, rather than emphasising the substantive logic of their propositional content. Politicians apparently also engage in a form of political theatre where specific actors, driven by ideological and political agendas, consciously script opportunities to give impetus to their agenda by articulating it as a reliable reference (Rappleye, 2012). If ICTE is developed within such a space, the process can be characterised by opacity and complexity. Studying such elusive forms of policies from the perspectives of politicians and other policymakers can help gain a fuller understanding of the reasons behind ICTE related policy decisions.

## **2.6. ICTE policy as that which occurs in schools**

Whilst policy-shaping might be seen as being overtly about what occurs in the realm of the governmental circles, perhaps a more useful exploration could be made about what happens ‘on-the-ground’, i.e., within schools and classrooms with respect to ICTE policy. Policy texts could be considered as intended to play a crucial role in shaping practices amongst those who are intended to implement them. However, what factors influence and constrain implementers to make their choices in relation to policy goals is under-researched. The field of policy implementation analysis has focussed on how implementers make meaning of policies. Varied roleplayers can respond quite differently to the same policy, thus leading to the possibility that one policy can have multiple interpretations. Therefore, macro-level policies (top-down policymaking triggered by international partners, and protocols characterised by opacity and perhaps being symbolic) enter micro-spaces (mainly schools) where people could have their own diverse interpretations of ICTE. Their

preferences, resistance, concerns, and contextual constraints regarding ICTE generate other meanings and understandings about the activation of the officialised policy agenda.

Subjective interpretations of those outside formal policymaking structures can also be characterised as a form of policy-in-practice. The policy is likely to be shaped by a varied set of actors who influence policy both from inside and outside the education policymaking structures, beyond text, action, words and deeds, and also with subjective and contextual interpretations. The conceptualisation of policy places a high premium on people being subjective and active interpreters of policy (Pillay, 2014). At any particular point in time, there can be multiple interpretations of ICTE policy in the policy-shaping process as it occurs in schools. Central to these arguments is that “policy formulation is an ongoing cycle and is not a document or set of intentions that are centrally designed and orchestrated without contestation” (Pillay, 2014, p. 708). Education policymaking, therefore, involves a broad set of actors who do not necessarily operate in traditional linear patterns. The diverse group of actors and actions are not only confined to the policy developing phase (in all its complexities as discussed in section 2.4), but are also reshaped and re-interpreted by the role-players in the field, who are usually the individuals targeted to implement the officialised policy. Within this latter framing, ‘policy’ may be interpreted as that which occurs in the everyday reality of practice.

Despite the positional power and authority of macro-policies, the power of micro level actors in the policy cycle who shape practice should not be dismissed (Pillay, 2014). However, macro-policy reforms generally assume that teachers are willing and able to adapt their teaching practices, which is not necessarily true in practice (Jansen, 2001). Policymaking structures have specific and sometimes rather narrow remits and often act without a broader vision of how schools would be reacting to new policies like ICTE.

Even practitioners do not confront policy texts as mere naïve readers. They, too, have vested interests in their meaning-making of the policy as they inhere their own histories, experience, values and purposes (Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992). This means that actors (teachers and other ICT implementers) might not be passively receiving policies but might even profit from them or evade them. As such, policy can cross-counter each other. For instance, ICTE can detach and isolate teachers from their own professional roles and spaces. The classroom is likely to transform into an embodiment of industry rather than pedagogy. For instance, in Belgium, where schools are encouraged to write a school-based ICT policy to describe its expectations, goals, content and actions related to the future role of ICT in teaching and learning, the plans the studied schools prepared are rather general and underdeveloped (Vanderlinde, Dexter & Van Braak, 2012). This can be explained by the fact that

ICTE is a substantial load added to headteachers' daily work (Makkawi, 2010). ICTE is perhaps regarded as a peripheral activity.

With the increasing deployment of ICT in schools, there is a sentiment among teachers that ICT initiatives are well-thought strategies to control their work and schools (Ball, 2003, 2015; Malen & Cochran, 2008). For teachers, policymakers are arguably represented by ICT vendors who are taking over the classroom from them. A feeling of disempowerment and helplessness is felt among the teaching force, especially when the private sector seemingly has a growing role in education policymaking (Ball, 2010). The role of the private sector is not necessarily written down in formally documented policies, but their tentacled presence within the schooling context is palpable to many teachers.

Policy can then be understood as involving a set of practices, rituals or routines unique to a specific context. Policy can also be understood as that which is experienced in the wake of the ambient legislated and enacted (educational) environment (Samuel, 2017). Teachers' enactment of policies depends on their diverse roles and responsibilities, as well as support and accommodation in the particular settings of their schools (Samuel, 2017). Teachers mediate their own meaning and thoughts of ICTE policy in the classroom and act depending on the constraints and incentives. These incentives might not only derive from within their classrooms or school institutional contexts, but may be influenced by the broader terrain of the public and socio-cultural contexts.

Aligned with these interpretations of policy, policy is "both text and action, words and deeds; it is what is enacted as well as what is intended" (Ball, 1994a, p. 10). Interpreting policy can be highly subjective as it dialogues with the thoughts of whoever is encountering the officialised regulations, straddling from policy ideas and intents to perceptions happening in (in)formal spaces. If this is micro-politics, micro-politics at the school level has also often been viewed as a form of resistance to macro-politics (Shulte, 2018). Perhaps, the local shapers of policies are being interwoven in a macro-level hegemonic frame through ICTE policy. My interest is to explore more specifically the macropolitical policy environment, which has remained seriously under-theorised. Most policy implementation analysis studies tend to foreground how practitioners choose to enact or not the intended policy. Instead, my focus shifts essentially towards the hegemonic force or power that is invisibly, yet palpably there, within education policy settings. My aim is to examine the actors who need to relate their discourses about ICTE to one another (Shulte, 2018). It is likely that the matters of dominant and marginalised powers (social, economic and political) are ever present in ICTE spaces. This study intends to bring such silent discourses into the research space to understand

policymaking and policy-shaping processes from the varied shapers of policies themselves.

While teachers' perception of ICTE is a well-studied phenomenon, parental attitudes towards the use of ICT in schools have been rarely studied (Zubković et al., 2016). Parents provide their support to the use of ICT in both tangible and intangible ways, such as by purchasing ICT devices and by engaging in learning (Cranmer, 2006). By acceding to the requests of their children or by being silent about ICT use in schools, parents give their consent, thereby signalling their confidence in ICT to enhance learning. The increase of ICT devices in schools (signaling the confidence of policymakers in ICTE) has possibly led to high expectations among parents (Zubković et al, 2016). This kind of support turns parents into silent contributors to ICTE. It is also possible that parents are exerting pressure on local policymakers, which is latent in policymaking structures. However, little is known about what ordinary citizens or parents think of ICTE policies or about the existing policymaking processes. How significant their influence on policy will be explored.

ICTE policy, which is the focus of this study, most probably occurs within similar multiple agendas, compromises, subjectivities and meaning-making by active interpreters of policy. The policies hinge on the policy actors (within or outside the formal process) and the context (physical and ideological) within which the policy is developed. The text becomes mutated as it is reinterpreted, understood, enacted, experienced or felt in diverse ways. An understanding of the actors' interpretations of the policies cannot be achieved without deconstructing their historical, political, social and economic contexts. Moreover, policy interpretation is also a matter of struggle. Individuals and groups, with varying propensities and strategies to assert their worldviews, are likely to contest each other as they negotiate different interests. One or another interpretation may dominate at any given time.

## **2.7. Extending the problematic and phenomenon of the study**

The local and international discourse on ICTE is compelling as it provides a strong basis for studying policymaker's choices when they develop policies. Simultaneously and conflictually, a varied set of stakeholders may be considered as key shapers of ICTE policies. This shifting definition of policymakers to policy-shapers attempts to loosen the grip on stable, officialised policymaking structures and endeavours to shake off exhaustive and exhausting conventional definitions to make space for the ignored and silence(d) actors who may also have an opinion about policy.

Therefore, contrary to what was assumed initially, specifically that policies are centrally developed by a homogenous group of policymakers and enacted without contestation, policies are outcomes of struggles and compromises amongst policymakers, perhaps conceived and developed under a hegemonic frame of macro-level players. Policy-shaping, that encompasses policymaking, is a terrain of capitulation, power and power relations, ignorance and even marginalisation. A hegemonic order seems omnipresent in the form of ICTE where consent, rather than coercion, primarily characterises the relationships between local policymakers and macro-level actors. International discourse has triggered not just a change in education policies but made a conscious effort to change ideas and expectations about how education is viewed in the context of the knowledge economy, the role and outlook of policymakers, the importance of corporations in bringing about innovation in schools, and the virtues of globalisation and ICTE. Consistently, both the local and international discourses are leaning towards prioritising economic growth (aligned with international protocols), while education is deployed to serve the profit maximisation of corporations as ICTE policy remains “restricted to provision” (Mehendale, 2019, p. 29).

To achieve the globally set and locally embraced goals, ICTE policy in countries like Mauritius embodies persuasive ideas and arguments to make inroads in the new world order (rooted in a knowledge economy). The widespread acceptance of the value of ICT in education is palpable in the policies, such as the Education & HR Strategy Plan 2008-2020 (Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, 2008), National Curriculum Framework (MIE, 2015) and the ICT Strategy for Mauritius’ Education Sector (Government Information Service, 2018). Education policy seems to go hand-in-hand with new ICT developments by corporations. ICTE, it would appear, has become the basis for an alliance of capitalist interests across national boundaries that seeks to exert (in)direct power and influence the local policymaking space or the state apparatus. What is not yet known are the detailed reasons behind this sense of desperation to use ICTE without clearly articulating its vision or critically scrutinising the ‘role’ ICTE might be playing in education.

## **2.8. Synthesis of chapter**

Policy is not only made but is a process of ongoing shaping by its context. An analysis of policy, therefore, is a complex undertaking that extends beyond text. It is an analysis of multiple interpretations of the multiplicities of policy-shapers, their agendas and compromises, as all become embedded in the text. Policy-shaping may be considered an encompassing construct since policies are shaped by a range of (non)pedagogical actors. These policy-shaping actors are positioned in both micro- and macro spaces (interconnected by the same policies), and are shaping policies through coercion, consent, silence, resistance, marginalisation or self-interest. The impetus for ICTE policy, therefore, is not likely to always be solely linked to educational reasons and outcomes. It is likely that it has its roots in ideological and political influences. (Non)pedagogical actions, preferences and choices are not necessarily taken to alter the education landscape but to foster an econometric (capitalist) agenda. This is done by proposing unfounded market-driven solutions to varying educational contexts and challenges. Only a robust, well-designed marketing ploy can urge policymakers across several developing countries (around a coherent narrative) to willingly accept one-size-fits-all solutions for their varying educational challenges. ICTE policy is a complex confluence of such international and local influences and manifestations having major implications for education and the society. Embodied in policies, the visibility of such issues can (only) be raised by critical scholarly attempts.

Considering the learnings from chapters 1 and 2, the theoretical framing as presented in the next chapter will be informed by a critical theory and postmodern approach. Based on these conceptions of policy, policy-shaping, policymaker and policy-shaper, the methodological framework will be sketched out to broaden the horizon for the sampling of participants. This will ensure that it encompasses the range of policymakers in formal policymaking structures, actors who also shape policy on-the-ground, and any other shaper who might possibly be ignored or in a policy blind spot. It is expected such a set of participants will allow a deeper analysis of the phenomenon in the light of the ambient spatial and temporal realities of the SIDS.

## CHAPTER 3

### Theoretical framing

#### 3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter provided an in-depth understanding of the concepts of policy, policymakers and policy-shapers, the range of policy actors and the current goals of ICTE.

This chapter sets out the initial framing lens designed to examine the phenomenon and guide the study as a re-researcher<sup>38</sup>. While positioning the exploration within a theoretical framework, I faced the dual challenge arising from also being an insider to policymaking. I belong to the Research and Projects division that is a research unit that intersects with a technical unit and is also responsible for policy design and implementation in the education and skills development system. My work involves interfacing with the ICT industry and the education and training system, and engaging in research and development to develop and implement relevant skills development programmes to bridge skills gaps at industry level and contribute to the country's socio-economic development.

At a deeper level, my role as re-researcher and policy-shaper offers a fresh outlook and opportunities for ongoing introspection on the policymaking and shaping space. I find this space contradictory because I also inhabit a post-colonial SIDS with a unique history of displacement, influence, marginalisation, subjugation and power (discussed in chapters 1 and 2), which influence my understanding.

At this point, the arguments from the previous chapters are used as a stimulus to search for a critical lens to portray influence, marginalisation and power in policy-shaping processes in a post-colonial SIDS. The historical baggage of colonialism continues to be the dominant theme in discussions on ICTE policymaking. Chapters 1 and 2 questioned the neutrality of ICTE, as it mimics the characteristics of colonialism through economic exploitation/capitalism as a form of political and economic influence (Young, 2001).

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<sup>38</sup> The word is deliberately hyphenated in order to reflect the need for ongoing review and re-examination of the processes and products of the doctoral journey.

The majority of policymaking theories have sought to explain policy development in Western spaces, thus neglecting the specificities of a post-colonial SIDS. I argue that these theories fail to explore forms of domination in the wider policy-shaping space. Seth (2017) characterises the postcolonial space as the persistence of the colonial in the present. Thus, as a body of work, postcolonialism embodies the recognition of the Western imperialist project and its complicated legacies (Young, 2001). In the postcolonial analysis, colonialism is rooted in economic exploitation normalised or concealed in the dominant discourses of colonial societies (Wilmot, 2021). This theory provides a point of view that responds to colonialism and the complicated power dynamics that occur both during the colonial experience and in its aftermath. It offers a lens to examine how the experience of colonialism has led to certain ways of thinking that influence and shape the development of ICTE policies. In addition, postcolonial theory is considered a theoretical approach that seeks to disrupt the dominant discourse of colonial power (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2007). In this respect, postcoloniality is understood not only in temporal continuities but also in theoretical and political considerations.

The confluence of the constructs of policymaking theories and postcolonial theory equipped me with an initial critical lens to study policy-shapers' constructions of policy development in a space that has endured the domination of colonials and is declared 'independent'. This theoretical postulation is crucial since it enables candid research on the logic of policymaking. In terms of philosophical assumptions, postcolonial research has been described as located in a transformative research paradigm<sup>39</sup> (Mertens, 2007). Similarly, re-searching policymaking through a postcolonial reading would produce a transformative way of knowing about policy-shapers and policy-shaping in a post-colonial SIDS context.

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<sup>39</sup> Transformative research paradigm deals with questions of epistemology, ontology, and axiology that are sensitive to, for example, knowledge processes, understanding of life experiences, research relationships and power positions.

## **3.2. Overview of chapter**

This chapter is organised into three main parts.

Sections 3.3 and 3.4 work together to set out the study's theoretical underpinnings. Section 3.3 provides a primer on the postcolonial perspective, emphasising its potential for reframing ICT in education. I also highlight the limitations of the theories concerning the phenomenon and context under study.

Section 3.4 critically reviews the essential features of a broad range of prominent policymaking theories in dialogue with constructs of postcolonial theory, whose incorporation in ICTE will enrich the field's understanding. In light of the immense diversity, variation, contestation and ambiguities, section 3.5 anchors the study in the underpinnings of postcolonial theory and the constructs of major policymaking theories to critically explore the phenomenon.

The final part, section 3.6, synthetically combines elements of widely held policymaking theories and postcolonial theory within the unique phenomenon of a small island in a macro context. It presents a distinctive multifaceted lens to study the phenomenon.

## **3.3. Postcolonial theory**

### **3.3.1. Post(-)colonialism and ICTE policy-shaping**

The neoliberal period from the 1980s ushered in a wave of ICTE policies that are deemed to be rooted in economic exploitation normalised or concealed in the dominant discourses of colonial societies. In postcolonial analysis, exploitation that is perhaps hidden in policy-shaping processes and is (in)visibly activating and perpetuating forms of coloniality is brought to the surface. I, therefore, employ a postcolonial lens to explore ICTE policymaking processes from policymakers and policy-shapers' perspectives. The intention is to examine how forms of domination rule policymaking and if it can be opened up to diverse forms of knowing. As such, this research is not merely about studying policymaking. Postcolonial theory serves as a backdrop to the study to recognise the effects of colonialism on policymaking processes, even after the 'decolonisation' process has seemingly occurred. The need for a critical lens to complement the constructs from policymaking theories to portray influence, marginalisation and power in policy-shaping processes in a post-colonial SIDS was justified in the previous chapters. In this section, I tease out the main tenets of postcolonial theory and illustrate how each engages in issues such as power, knowledge, marginalisation, and control.

From the outset, however, it is important to distinguish between the terms *postcolonial* and *post-colonial* as used in this study because of their different character and inherent theoretical implications. However, defining these terms is challenging.

Postcolonial theory was developed during the mid-to late-twentieth century by Frantz Fanon (2008), Stuart Hall (2017), Edward Said (1978) and Gayatri Spivak (1999). The theory they used to analyse colonialism's impact on the colonised in the Middle East, the West Indies and South Asia has also been applied to settler-dominated, colonised indigenous minorities, particularly in North America and Australasia.

A good point of departure is Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin's proposition that postcolonial "cover(s) all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day" (1989, p. 2). However, postcolonialism carries different meanings in different parts of the world because of the different types of colonial encounters, agenda, and motives. Colonialism was not an identical process in different parts of the world, that led to variations in its conceptualisation (Loomba, 2015; Young, 2012). The commonality in the forms of colonisation was that it locked the original inhabitants and the newcomers into the most complex and traumatic relationships in human history.

As a body of thought, postcolonialism has generated countless academic debates and a considerable corpus of academic writings over the years, while many new definitions of postcolonialism, postcoloniality, post-colonialism, and other variations of the term have expanded, reduced, and refined the concept (McClintock, 1992; Shohat, 1992). However, most are woven into the fabric of European capitalism (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989; Loomba, 2015).

Spivak defines postcoloniality as "the heritage of imperialism in the rest of the globe (...) the political claims that are most urgent in decolonised space are tacitly recognised as coded within the legacy of imperialism (...)" (1993, p. 280). However, Ahmad (1995) contends that this definition creates the impression that 'imperialism' was a matter of the past or that postcoloniality is a condition that occurs outside Europe/the West. While European settlers are the minority in the 'independent' Mauritius, they remain the dominant segment today (section 1.3.2). The colonial encounter is possibly still shaping former colonial countries' economies, education systems, policymaking institutions and societies. Given this overarching frame, it would be difficult for policymakers to liberate themselves and local systems (of administration, education, policymaking) from this influence. Today, the modus operandi of Europeans is seemingly (re)configuring the globe distinct from previous colonialisms. Concurrently, the agenda is to maintain their privileges by preserving the status quo (Janmohamed, 1995). Their intervention seems to be in the form of new policies (as extractive institutions), with a

tendency to maintain dependencies for economic exploitation. Karl Marx characterised earlier colonialisms as pre-capitalist, while modern ones are underpinned by capitalism in Western Europe (Bottomore, 1983).

Modern colonialism goes beyond the extraction of resources to alter the setup of the economies of the former colonised countries and profit from the flow of resources. An example is neo-colonialism, where colonialism takes on the form of cultural imperialism, capitalism, and globalisation (Young, 2003). These characteristics permeate the policy space and dominate the policy agenda worldwide (Klees, 2020), profoundly affecting those living in post-colonial societies. They seem to enter silently, shifting the paradigm about global economies, inequity and the role of ICTE to satisfy profit-making interests. It can be argued that there are several similarities between the concerns raised by many postcolonial scholars and how ICTE, as part of the colonial design, promotes market solutions, often with a sense of optimism about the modernisation of schools. Given the already established colonial structures, post-colonial countries are fertile ground to perpetuate these new, invisible forms of coloniality. It is against this background that this study argues that ICTE policies are the latest fashionable tool of capitalism that is rapidly making inroads in developing countries to exploit them economically. This is perhaps what Martin (1985) meant when he claimed that ‘decolonisation’ was designed to perpetuate coloniality. ICTE seems to set in motion a complicity between the former colonisers and the elites (policymakers) to preserve the status quo (of colonialism). This renders it part of the colonial project that is possibly designed to maintain the domination of developing countries, as its propagation strangely coincides with the start of the neoliberal years.

By dwelling in such a complex space, it is more obvious why the term ‘post(-)colonial’ with a hyphen has been subject of ambiguities and contestation. The term already has temporal, and spatial considerations and beyond. It makes reference to an era following the departure of the formal structures of colonialism as well as to a set of critical attitudes towards colonialism (Gandhi, 1998; Seth, 2017, Shohat, 1992). It has been argued that the prefix ‘post’ in postcolonial reinforces, rather than challenges the dominance of Western interpretations of the realities of the rest of the world through making the language of critique accessible to the Westernised intellectual elite (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989; Crossley & Tikly, 2004; Hall, 1995; Loomba, 1998). Rather, postcolonial theory is concerned with the lingering forms of colonial authority after the formal end of Empire and never implied that colonialism has ended (Elam, 2019). Another common criticism is the hyphenated ‘post’. It cannot be claimed that colonialism is over when the entire world is witnessing the development of indirect forms of political and economic domination that are characteristic of neo-colonialism (McClintock, 1992). However, while ‘post’ in postcolonialism is often taken to have a

dual meaning and is controversial, the two terms (hyphenated and not hyphenated) have been used interchangeably in the literature. 'Post-colonial' is described by some authors as the period following the decline of European colonialism in 'third world' countries (Ashcroft, Griffith & Tiffin, 1998; Chambers & Curti, 1996; Gandhi, 1998; Loomba, 2005; Young, 2001).

When hyphenated, post-colonial denotes the historical end of colonial occupation. Debate is ongoing on whether or not colonisation has ended, and whether this period can correctly be called 'post-colonial' (Ahmad, 1995; Loomba, 2005; Grosfoguel, 2007; Mignolo, 2011a, 2011b). This simplistic way of looking at the term ignores its underlying historical and contemporary concerns (Loomba, 2005). It also suggests an effortless perspective to avoid its complexities across time and space.

In terms of its philosophical affiliation, Holmes et al. (2008) argue that postcolonial theory is rooted in critical theory, which links it, *inter alia*, to Marxism and poststructuralism. Postcolonial (without the hyphen) represents "a critical approach to analysing colonialism and one that seeks to offer alternative accounts of the world" (Sharp, 2009, p. 4). It is an umbrella term to signify the notion of 'class' and also a subset of both postmodernism and poststructuralism (Slemon, 1995, in Andreotti, 2011). Foucault, Derrida, Gramsci and Guha tend to privilege Western thinkers as their central theoretical apparatus, and underestimate their ethnic and racial perspectives (Grosfoguel, 2007). It has been argued that by doing so, they undermine their goal of producing subaltern studies. Rather than conceiving it as the beginning of a new era, postcolonialism is regarded as an ongoing process of disengagement with the colonial condition (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989; Hall, 1996). Despite these nuances, I have chosen to use post-colonial (hyphenated) as a temporal marker to mean the period following formal national independence from colonial rule. Postcolonialism (not hyphenated) is used as a critical approach to analyse colonialism. These two terms have important implications for this study.

Despite its critics, as a field of critical inquiry, postcolonialism has been enriched by the theoretical contributions of Edward Saïd, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak and many other scholars (Seth, 2017). They share a common commitment to reconsider the colonial encounter with a focus on the residual traces and memories of subordination, and its ongoing impact from the perspective of former colonised countries and peoples, within the context of contemporary globalisation. Collectively, they promote understanding not only of the power connotations of most discourses but also give voice to marginalised, dispersed global peripheries by questioning the ontological and epistemological foundations of the East-West discourse. This study builds on their work.

Saïd's<sup>40</sup> main contribution is the concept of 'orientalism' that conveys a Western perspective that establishes the East as lazy, deceitful and irrational. He drew on Foucault and Gramsci to explore how colonisers' conceptions of the colonised structured the ruling institutions that administered populations. This could mean that contemporary policymaking institutions and policies could still be influenced not only by the legacies of the colonial institutions' power relations but also by the colonial agenda, which may sound voluntary and embody a natural flow of knowledge. It is likely that through the policymaking structures, those at the helm of policymaking have become subjects of the colonial powers and have imbibed the colonial approach to policy development. Saïd's emphasis was on the intersections between power, hegemony and knowledge. Furthermore, he argues that not only the identity of the colonised, but also that of the coloniser was formed by the colonial encounter. There has been an overlapping of identities, but with massive power asymmetry between the two. The European colonisers' conception of themselves as civilised<sup>41</sup> was developed in tandem with a conception of Orientals and Africans as binary opposites who were characterised as inferior<sup>42</sup> in every way and required *dressage*<sup>43</sup> by a rational, Christian government and civilisation (Rattansi, 1997). In contemporary times, the 'one who knows' is seeking to use ICTE to transform developing countries' education systems, thus suggesting that the local knowledge system is inferior that needs modernisation. Saïd's insights offer resources to analyse the modern-day transfer of knowledge in the wake of globalisation and those that control this global phenomenon. He focuses on-the-global hybridisation that started with the processes of colonisation and is kept alive by the forces of unequal globalisation that have also led to de-radicalisation (Saïd, 1994, pp. 402-408). ICTE seems to be exacerbating this situation.

This notion is reinforced by Bhabha's characterisation of the politics of a "Third Space" of hybridity which emerges from the collision of cultures in the colonial and postcolonial world (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211). Bhabha also discusses the changing character of the colonised and coloniser as an ongoing process. He argues that the colonised mimics the coloniser. For Bhabha, 'mimicry' is distorted imitation that is an ambivalent mixture of regard and disobedience. He adds that the operations of the unconscious in the imperial context are far from simple because desire for, as well as fear of, 'the other', does not allow the identities of the coloniser and the colonised to remain fixed and unitary. What seems like a normal flow of technology from developed countries to developing ones, perhaps conceals a desire for a complex form of emulation, envy and a need to keep up with trends. However, domination is achieved through the denial of the colonialist's power (Bhabha, 1995). The implications

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<sup>40</sup> Saïd was displaced from Palestine and established himself as an academic in the US.

<sup>41</sup> Civilised means White, Christian, 'civilised', masculine, rational, adult.

<sup>42</sup> Inferior means black or 'coloured', pagan, barbaric, feminine and over-emotional, irrational, immature.

<sup>43</sup> Dressage means Training.

of this argument for policymakers need to be understood if they consider themselves under the hegemonic domination of developed countries or as elites.

The notion of the subaltern in postcolonial theory was firmly established during the 1980s. The term was first used by Gramsci in 1948, but remains difficult to define (Louai, 2012). Gramsci made reference to any 'low rank' person or group of people in a particular society suffering hegemonic domination of a ruling elite that denies them the basic right of participation in the making of local history and culture as active individuals of the same nation. According to Guha (1982), the subaltern was the colonised subject who was not only completely absent from colonial-produced accounts of the colonised period, but operated on a completely different and often separate level from the coloniser and the elite indigenous class. Spivak (1988) uses the term 'subaltern' to characterise women, black people, the colonised and the working class, that is, people of 'lower rank'. Subalternity, she suggests, is the oppressive dominance of Western thinking and is symbolic of the displacement of the subaltern subject (who is gendered and colonised) through the imposition of the narratives of internationalism and nationalism. According to her, 'the third world' is a creation of the West, an imperial representation of non-Western cultures as inferior that represents segregation. Her opening statement, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' notes that Western academic thinking supports Western economic interests. She thus holds that knowledge is never innocent and that it expresses the interests of its producers. This may mean that countries have no free will and that their future has been predetermined within Western premises. Crossley and Tikly (2004, p. 149) claim that, "many existing education systems still bear the hallmarks of the colonial encounter in that they remain elitist, lack relevance to local realities and [are] often at variance with indigenous knowledge systems, values and beliefs". Nandy (cited in Seth, 2009) highlights the need to take note of not only the imposition of rationales by 'the West' but the incorporation of such rationales by the elite leaders of the newly-established governance structures that deployed colonial discourse. The aim of postcolonial analysis in this study is to present a fresh account of education policymaking processes (more specifically of ICTE) from the perspective of policy-shapers (elite policymakers and other shapers) in historically marginalised parts of the world. Getting to the core of policymaking and policy-shaping will shed light on the non-pedagogical factors that are used to rally 'troops' such as globalisation, and neoliberalism concealed in ICTE. This strategy may not raise a flag as ICTE is presented as a forward-looking policy aligned with the international discourse of progress, modernisation and improved performance. Spivak, and Crossley and Tikly imply that Western education systems produced local elites in the 'third world' space that do not serve the population (subalterns). They imply that, as a Western product, ICTE is harmful to developing countries' population, i.e., students. In this sense, ICTE seems ideally suited to be the new tool of capitalism as it is generally not regarded with

suspicion but enthusiastically privileged and legitimised by policymakers (see chapter 2). Science and technology are viewed as being among the gifts that Western imperial powers bestowed as an integral part of their mission to civilise the colonised (Seth, 2009). Thus, elite policymakers can become complicit in the colonial agenda of domination of the population.

The policymaking space presumably conceals the domination and power that run through the policymaking structures, favouring Western forms of knowledge. The relationship between power and history that is likely to have been normalised and legitimised as everyday common sense seeks continuation through possible futures. One of the futures of decolonisation envisioned by Sium, Desai and Ritskes (2012, p. i) is the route towards a “tangible unknown” that involves “a constant (re)negotiating of power, place, identity and sovereignty”. If complicity is embodied within post-colonial subjects and structures made up of elites, how can one imagine a decolonised space for education policymaking? Policies are already unstable and fluid<sup>44</sup> because they rely on the subjective meaning-making of policy-shapers across time and space (see chapter 2). In this respect, it is hard to conceive of ICTE policy development existing in its current form if colonial education had not been successful in spreading a particular (Western) form of education. Through the workings of globalisation, it is likely that local policymakers have imbibed the ideologies of the Northern-centred global knowledge economy. Marxist geographer David Harvey characterised this as “accumulation by dispossession” as part of his overall theory of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2004, 2005, 2007). A controlled system seems to work towards the centralisation of wealth and power in the hands of a few captains of industry who reside outside the geographic and social frontiers of the SIDS. Driven by globalisation and neoliberal capitalist policies, the colonised and colonisers co-exist in interactive, integrative relations which are not only geographically situated beyond national boundaries but also locally embedded within the so-called ‘independent states’ (Sium, Desai & Ritskes, 2012, p. i). As such, coloniality cannot be understood as merely the dichotomous relationship of an imperial ‘centre’ controlling a colonial ‘margin’ but as a process (Suleri, 1995). Postcolonial theory aims to disrupt hegemony towards a more just and inclusive society. It recognises that it is possible that ICTE<sup>45</sup> is not politically neutral and is perhaps co-constituted with colonialism/capitalism. This study seeks to build on the legacy of previous scholarly work to disrupt any hidden hegemonic intention to strive for a more just society.

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<sup>44</sup> ICTE has also been characterised as sporadic.

<sup>45</sup> ICTE is as Western scientific knowledge.

In light of the above, non-pedagogical factors such as hegemonic forces that activate individuals, groups or agencies could dominate the ICTE policy context to advance another agenda. Postcolonial theory is a valuable framework for understanding the complex policymaking processes as policymakers navigate (post- or neo) colonial relations. It is anchored on the premise that a study in a post-colonial context on policy-shapers' interpretations of what they intend to achieve through ICTE policies should recognise the workings of ideology, power and marginalisation. It should expose any universalisation of ideologies and peripherisation of a group by a powerful group that results in an uneven representation of voices or the silencing of others.

This theory has diverse uses and can be applied across disciplines. It is a vast field of inquiry that implicitly informs my analysis as it helps me to make a case for the relevance of my work and offers an ongoing conversation to which I seek to contribute. I do not engage with all the concepts of what is broadly understood as postcolonial theory but focus on a few that are useful and relevant to my research. Firstly, it underpins it by informing my general understanding of phenomena in post-colonial SIDS and SIDS' relationships with Western ideas. Secondly, it is directly employed to analyse data in subsequent chapters, and thirdly it helps me to position myself as a researcher.

As discussed in previous sections, this theory rejects the ideal of a universal world that is anchored in the global North as nothing more than capitalism's strategy to impose itself on the world. From this perspective, this study closely interprets policy-shapers' worldviews concerning ICTE policy-shaping processes, focusing on structured inclusion and exclusion of certain people, constituencies, and policies and distortions in the ways power are concealed or disguised and organised as normal and common sense. This study challenges the neutrality and objectivity of policy-shapers and their role, if any, in constructing fixed notions, images, and knowledge of colonial subjects and cultures which support and legitimise policymaking structures and processes for ICTE. Policymakers are an essential sphere of influence in the type of future a country aspires to, based on their own interpretations of the objectives of ICT in education.

Postcolonial theory will be used to interrogate the presence of ideological tools that are hidden in ICT(E) devices introduced in schools and the grafting of Eurocentric notions at source to perpetuate coloniality. Tools that are professed to reduce inequality will be questioned. There are signs that colonialist designs are interwoven within globalisation, and ICT is being religiously employed as an "ideological apparatus" (Althusser, 1971) at the source. These endeavours might fuel the global capitalist logic of progress and modernity. Meta discourses, especially on the part of international agencies, guide the interpretation of events and processes that favour capitalist expansion through

ICTE. Postcolonial theory seeks to directly and explicitly reveal and challenge the hegemonic discourses inherent in the roles of intermediaries and how the north and south relate to each other. However, the colonial agenda in the macro-context is likely to evolve and enter into the micro-context's policies through neoliberal globalisation. A critical theoretical predisposition that evokes a fluid and dynamic rather than a singular conception is used as the framing lens.

### **3.3.2. Digital neocolonialism**

If ICTE is a colonial device, it forms part of the umbrella term 'digital neocolonialism' (Adam, 2019; Coleman, 2019). Digital neo-colonialism is a form of economic, social, or cultural hegemony that seeks to control a community, exploit it economically, and erase its identity (Martini, 2017). Oojorah (2017) claims that ICTE seduces former colonies through the use of the novel suite of ICT devices embedded in the colonial design. He conceptualises this as former colonials' move towards digital colonialism. There are variations in how this new term has been conceptualised. Adam (2019) defines digital neo-colonialism as the use of ICT devices by hegemonic powers as a means of indirect control or influence over a country. She posits that hegemonic powers need not be a country as in colonialism but could be a corporation or institution. Coleman (2019, p. 417) defines digital colonialism as the modern-day 'Scramble for Africa' where large-scale tech companies extract, analyse, and own user data for profit and market influence with nominal benefits for the data source.

As discussed in chapter 2, education policies increasingly hinge on Western technologies<sup>46</sup>, perhaps considering them superior to local pedagogy. In this sense, digital colonialism, or digital capitalism as modern variants of capitalism, could be fostering further dependence and hegemonic control of post-colonial countries. Anchored on the underpinnings of postcolonial theory, this research explores how policy-shapers conceptualise or not ICTE as a kind of digital colonialism. In doing so, it situates the analysis and conversation within social and historical patterns beyond the immediate context, which is an important element of the postcolonial approach to social justice.

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<sup>46</sup> Western technologies comprise purchase, use of ICT devices and ongoing upgrades and updates.

### 3.4. Postcolonial reading of policymaking theories

This review of policymaking theories is conducted using the lens of postcolonial theory. Theoretical arguments are clustered to develop a critical understanding of the most popular policymaking theories that underpin the development of the initial lens to support and to build the methodological plan. It is not the purpose of this section to single out a policymaking theory that can explain ICTE policymaking in such a contested and complex terrain. Instead, the constructs from this critical review are compared and contrasted with those emerging from this study's field data to add to the literature and make a meaningful contribution to theories explaining policymaking.

#### 3.4.1. External macro level influence

Much of the impetus and justification for ICTE policies in developing countries stems from their supposed success in advanced contexts (see chapter 2). Advocacy and ICTE policy dissemination develop into powerful international policy instruments such as guidelines and protocols to foster obedience. This approach tends to already characterise ICTE policymaking as top-down. At the macro level, four mechanisms of *policy diffusion* occur, namely, *policy learning*, *economic competition*, *imitation*, and *coercion* (Shipan & Volden, 2008). This policymaking theory seeks to explain the dominant top-down policymaking process in which the roles of local actors are undercut while external policy influences are foregrounded. Each mechanism operates under different conditions across countries, systems and cities (Cerna, 2013). Factors such as domestic politics<sup>47</sup> can condition policy diffusion (Meseguer & Gilardi, 2009).

*Policy learning* occurs when governments 'rationally' utilise the experiences of external actors in order to solve domestic problems (Shipan & Volden, 2008). It is expected that the adopted policy deemed 'successful' in some contexts, will achieve a similar level of success at the local level; a kind of 'learning' or lesson drawing from others' experiences. Firstly, this mechanism tends to undermine evidence-based policymaking to respond to local challenges. Secondly, it assumes that countries, their systems and policy actors are predisposed to change. Why this is so, is not explained by the theory. However, Jules (2012) argues that small states are increasingly embracing networks to find tried and tested solutions to iron out local issues. Learning from others can assist in adapting to situations and gaining a broader view of overarching developments and long-term trends (Jules, 2012). Networking with more advanced systems could also raise the standard of local education. However, imitation is a short-lived diffusion process (Shipan & Volden, 2008). The impact of policy

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<sup>47</sup> Domestic politics including political constraints and politicians' ideological preferences.

learning can also be superficial if actors are not profoundly engaged with the policy or if the contexts are highly diverse. However, policymakers are often inclined to favour superficial solutions rather than approaches founded on deeply-embedded pedagogical or robust educational research (Chandran, 2019). Claims made regarding its impact on teaching and learning are slippery to corroborate as evidence is often anecdotal (Hennessy et al., 2010).

This theory makes policy transfer appear somewhat simple, while studies on diffusion are often unclear on the actual impacts of learning processes (Elkins & Simmons, 2005; Meseguer & Gilardi, 2009). Given the newness of ICTE in developing countries, it is likely that policy is ‘learned’ or more appropriately emulated from international partners, with their ‘learning’ used as evidence. It is contended that such parachute policies will not be able to capture the cultural variations in the debates, conflicts, risks, and problems experienced in the original country (Lor, 2015). This phenomenon is also characterised by a superficial resemblance to practices in developed countries, a type of *imitation* but in a distorted form. It involves “copying the actions of another in order to look like the other” (Shipan & Volden, 2008, p. 842). It also describes the desire of domestic actors to conform to widespread international norms. *Learning* in the case of ICTE can involve legitimising *imitation or mimicry* (Bhabha, 1990), demonstrating a desire to be like the other, but not exactly.

Samuel (2017, p. 23) argues that, in general, policymakers are predisposed to fulfil the demands of those from whom concepts and ideas are borrowed. This can be a kind of ‘coerced emulation’ where governments are compelled to make policy changes; for instance, countries can be induced by financial donors to deploy their preferred ICT devices in schools. If the decision has already been taken at the international level, policymakers in these structures are held back from deciding how global influences affect education at the national level. If policy follows the dominant global discourse, then rational policy development stages<sup>48</sup> are weakened. Policymakers can gain time when they ‘learn’ or rather ‘take-away’ policies from other contexts, but the compelling question is what they seek to achieve when they emulate policy from others’ experiences if they have to trade-off their own power and its local relevance. Quick wins can sometimes be politically expedient (Weyland, 2006) but can also undercut local evidence and contributions and weaken local power.

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<sup>48</sup> Rational policy development stages comprise agenda setting, evidence seeking, policy formulation and decision-making, implementation, evaluation and reformulation.

ICTE is, at times, justified by rampant *global competition*, which can lead to the diffusion of policies through pressure stemming from the growing political and economic interdependence between different economies (in terms of the mobility of capital, goods, and services) and their impact on the payoff associated with the pursuit of different policies (Heinze, 2011). In the context of globalisation, *economic competition* can be subsumed by the mechanism *coercion* where governments are ‘obliged’<sup>49</sup> to adopt certain policies to secure their place in the global economic network. In the case of ICTE, its introduction is perhaps underpinned by the argument that schools should show a higher degree of correspondence with the wider world where ICT use is widespread.

Given that contexts differ, ICTE can be irrelevant in one context but represent economic gains in another. In the same vein, corporations could benefit from selling ICT to developing countries, but these countries also confront other challenges, and resources might be wasted on unnecessary devices (Chandran, 2019). In any scenario, this would lead to economic exploitation or capitalism through marginalisation, indebtedness, and dependence of developing countries on developed ones. However, policymaking theories adopt a ‘naïve’ or ‘Western’ approach to explain policymaking processes in post-colonial SIDS, perhaps downplaying the influence of coloniality/capitalism.

Incremental policy change can be a response to achieve superficial quick wins. Incremental change is realistic in the sense that it recognises that policymakers lack the time<sup>50</sup>, evidence (especially in the SIDS context) and other resources needed to engage in comprehensive analysis of all alternative solutions to existing problems. Because of these limitations and in an attempt to be rational, policymakers are likely to use past (local or foreign) policies and existing structures as a reference for legitimation and suitability to tackle issues. Incrementalism emphasises the diverse and disorientating nature of policymaking but also suggests that individual policy actors are capable of learning. Incremental decisions tend to reduce the risks and cost of uncertainty but represent only a small change in existing policies rather than a broader systemic transformation, as politicians also need to secure their political interests. ICTE seems to follow an elusive trajectory.

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<sup>49</sup> Governments may be obliged to abide by certain legal requirements and compliance with international law.

<sup>50</sup> This could be due to the electoral cycle or international pressure exerted as a result of relationships with former colonisers.

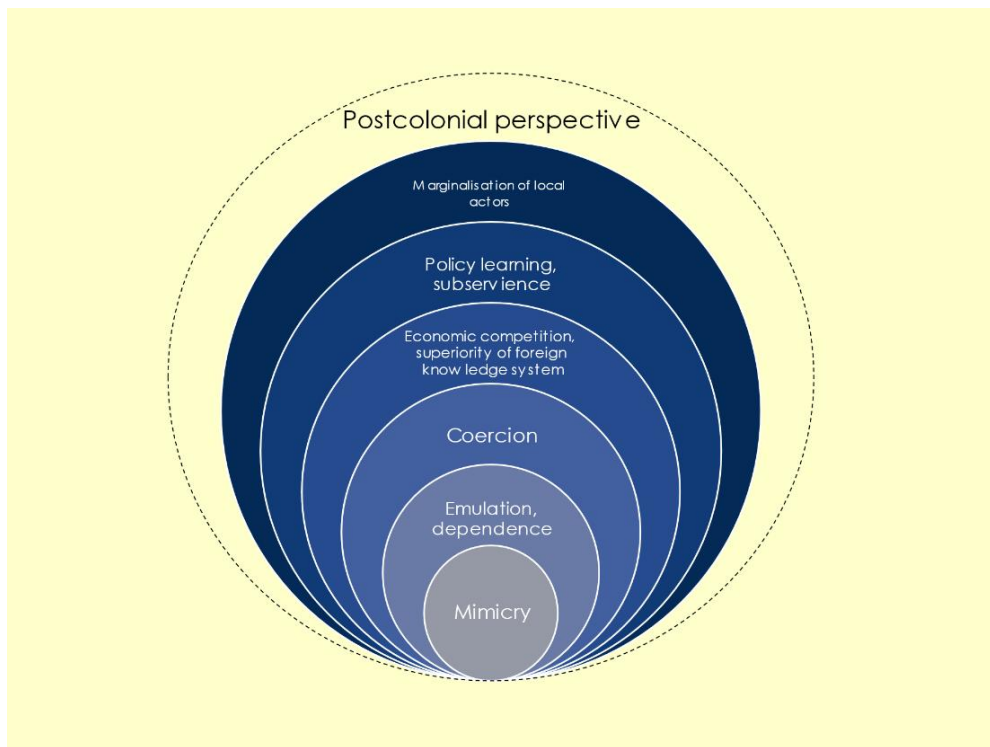
However, country-wide deployment of ICTE could also involve high risks for politicians. Given that policymakers support ICTE and are optimistic about its potential for educational transformation (Xuereb, 2006), they do not seem to regard it as a risky venture. Besides, ICTE is a highly resource-intensive, material type of policy that involves significant investment. Still, education policy cannot only rely on evidence to bring about change, as education also embodies political and social dimensions. Rationality is essential but purely evidence-based policy hardly involves government, politicians, bureaucrats, and interest groups, and thus undermines the ability of a range of policy-shapers to influence policies in the current economic, political and social context. Evidence and information that lack qualitative inputs from a diverse set of shapers of policy (perhaps not considered meaningful) can weaken decision-making. Local knowledge systems would not form part of the analysis and empirical evidence will often be based on Western methodologies. Policies solely based on such information can be erroneously accepted as rational and universal.

While understanding the perspectives of policy actors is key to this research, the theory of policy learning is not explicit on their respective roles and who learns in the process (people at the macro, meso- or micro level?) as well as how the views of those who enact policies are accommodated (if at all), what is learned and what effects policy learning has on the resulting policies (Bennett & Howlett, 1992). What interest does the international community have in sharing such ‘learning’? If learning processes are framed by locking local systems in ‘international best practices’, international protocols or bilateral agreements, it is likely that what is learned will be used to interfere in the country’s internal education policies. Policymakers will continue to be seduced by its ever-changing character as part of the policy to expand and sustain capitalism. This theory assumes that learning is democratic. In the local context, incremental learning from changing ICTE policy would be challenging. Policy learning can also be highly subjective because different individuals have different interpretations of what is being learned and why. They can selectively learn only those aspects that serve their interests or are congruent to their values and ideologies.

The importance of policy actors as the driving force of policy change has not gone unnoticed in policymaking theories. Kingdon (2010) challenged claims that serendipity is necessarily a key determinant, arguing instead that significant policy change can occur when three streams: *problem*, *policy* and *politics* converge and interact. Kingdon's model shows that while the three streams may operate independently of one another, it is at their confluence that policy emerges. This theory is based on his observation that key policy actors were often unable to explain why particular policy outcomes had occurred (Béland, 2015) retrospectively. It highlights that the role of ‘policy entrepreneurs’ transcends boundaries to influence policy to promote their preferred solutions.

Knaggård (2015) highlights the role of problem brokers who use knowledge, values and emotions to frame conditions as public problems and work to make policymakers accept these frames. In light of the discussions in chapter 2, purveyors of ICTE policy can be highly influential in convincing local policymakers of their deficiencies and the consequent naturalness and permanence of their subordination (Cairns & Richards, 1995) which is the *problem stream*, with ICTE as the *policy stream* and changes in government through elections and campaigns by interest groups (corporations and international agencies), the *politics stream*. While this theory has been found to be a powerful and relevant contribution to the ideational approach to public policy, the role of institutions and the relationship between ideas and interests are downplayed (Béland, 2016).

In the case of a post-colonial SIDS, institutions and the relationship between ideas and interests can play a significant role in shaping policies. Examining these factors will help to provide clarity on policymaking processes. Accounts of policymaking that emphasise the role of evidence tend to underscore the importance of 'knowledge brokers' (Béland, 2015). Researchers, practitioners, think tanks, advocacy groups, lobbyists and others can all function as 'policy entrepreneurs' or 'knowledge and problem brokers'. As a result, the policy actors' ideological leanings and the relationships among the key concepts are likely to be embodied in the process that shapes policy. There is a paucity of research on how these individuals work collectively and/or adversarially to influence policy, who they are and what interests they serve, especially in a small post-colonial context. Figure 3.1 summarises the discussion on the multi-layered macro-level constructs when viewed from postcolonial lens.



**Figure 3.1:** Postcolonial perspective on external intersecting macro-level influences on domestic policy

### 3.4.2. Domestic systemic inhibitors of change

Paradoxically, while ICTE policy is about change, theories such as historical institutionalism and path dependency explain policy as the status quo. *Historical institutionalism* is concerned with how institutions (their rules, policies) are shaped by groups of actors in pursuit of their interests. The formal rules of the political world and their own logic act as filters that favour particular interpretations of either the goals which political actors pursue or the best possible means to achieve them (Immergut, 1998). *Historical institutionalism* has similarities with *elite theory* and *path dependence*. All three place a premium on elite policymakers who promote their preferences based on their subjective values and ideologies, thus reflecting their interests and neglecting those of others. From a postcolonial lens, elites often, although uneasily, ally themselves with the imperialist (Seth, 2009). As power in such a structure is highly centralised, elite groups (un)knowingly work for maintenance of the status quo in their own interests (perhaps for (overtly) political purposes). As noted in section 3.3.1, it would be in the interests of former colonisers/capitalists to maintain their own structures<sup>51</sup> that best serve their profit-making interest (Janmohamed, 1995). Policy status quo can also be explained by the notion of symbolic policy that is not intended to be implemented (Jansen,

<sup>51</sup> The structures are characterised by top-down decision-making, marginalisation, colonial education system driven by performativity and accountability.

2002). New policies could be superficially layered on existing ones to create the impression of change and modernisation. Pseudo and symbolic policies are developed by politicians as a functional response to the inconsistent demands of policy actors<sup>52</sup>, diffusion of power and uncertainties about the means and goals of the policies in both the short and long term (Gustafsson, 1983). In serving the interests of elites and their allies, the policy itself is compromised, limiting any improvement (Greener, 2002).

It is difficult to change the overall policy once previous decisions are rooted in institutional structures and discourses (Kay, 2005), especially when there is a lack of will to change them. *Path dependence* places significance on previous policy decisions as they become highly institutionalised, but also impose limitations on future decisions (Pierson, 2000; Skocpol, 1992). This theory also helps to explain why education research struggles to consistently shift policy debates, particularly when challenging the status quo (Smith, 2007). It is possible that the legacies of colonial administrative structures are still shaping institutional structures (Spivak, 1988) and new policies are perpetuating them.

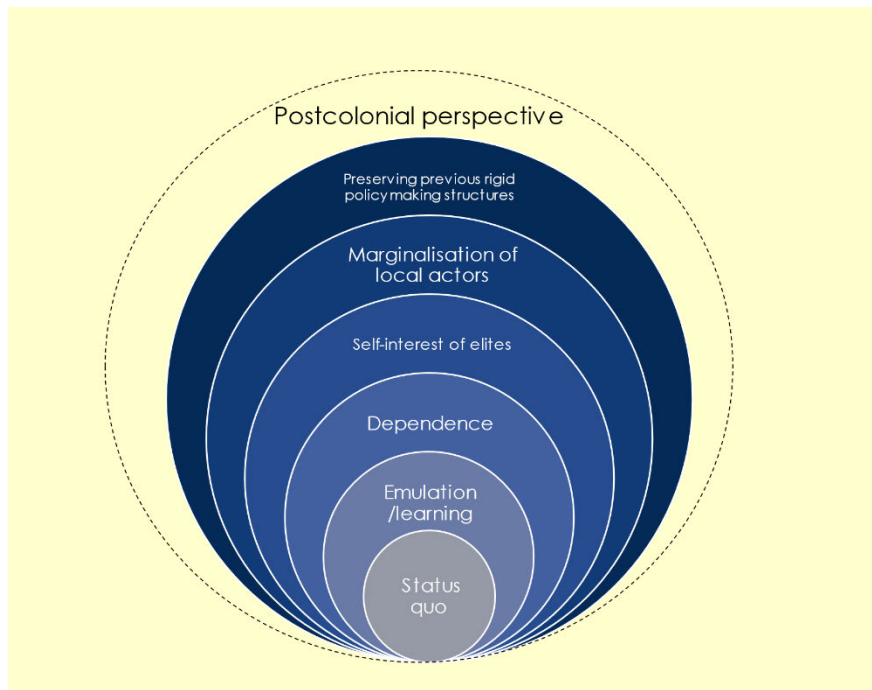
In *path dependence*, policymakers have to wait for a critical juncture (Capoccia & Kelemen, 2007) or a window of exceptional opportunity called a conjuncture to introduce a major change (Wilsford, 1994). The costs of reversal of an institutionalised policy are also high (Levi, 1997), especially if systems have been established, devices are purchased, and teachers are trained to use a particular device. Reversal would be difficult to contemplate politically. Dependence on corporations is thereby guaranteed. Perhaps, there is capitalism hidden in the sporadic nature of ICTE policy. While these theories alone fail to explain the eventual influence of external forces or public pressure in public policy formation, postcolonial lens offers an explanation of the factors that cause the maintenance of the status quo and enable capitalism to infiltrate education policies.

Perhaps because of the sporadic nature of ICTE policy (Dube, 2017), the status quo at the core is preserved (Jansen, 2002; Janmohamed, 1995; Gustafsson, 1983). This feature of policymaking is explained by Baumgartner and Jones' (2013) notion of 'punctuated equilibriums'. They posit that systems can quickly shift from one period of relative stability to another. These 'punctuations' occur when persuasive ideas gain increasing attention (e.g., the dominant international discourse on ICTE) that convinces decision-makers that ICT can transform education (chapter 2). Changes in the main aspects of policy usually result from shifts in external factors such as macroeconomic conditions or the rise of a new systemic governing coalition (Sabatier, 1988). Introducing ICTE by a narrow stratum

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<sup>52</sup> Policy actors can range from businesspeople, bureaucrats, experts, citizens.

of policymakers could enhance corporations' control of education systems. However, policymaking theories without the postcolonial lens do little to explain the policymaking processes and why policy debates do not shift. From a postcolonial perspective, policymaking constructs (such as the status quo, emulation, dependence, meeting interests of elites, marginalisation and rigid policymaking structures) have somewhat different significance (Figure 3.2). This study aims to contribute to policymaking theories that speak to non-Western contexts.



**Figure 3.2:** Embeddedness of systemic inhibitors of change at meso-level to maintain the status quo

### 3.5. Anchoring the study

The wide-ranging policymaking theories identified in the literature and postcolonial theory do not independently offer a comprehensive satisfactory framework to understand the reasons behind policy decisions in a post-colonial SIDS. It is evident that these theories are unable to adequately explain policies in developing countries, especially in post-colonial contexts due to contextual variations (Osman, 2002) as they are derived from studies of developed countries that cannot be directly applied to examine the ICTE policymaking processes of post-colonial SIDS. Indeed, the contexts of developing countries also differ from one another. However, in dialogue with postcolonial theory, policymaking theories show that policy is influenced by the interplay of macro-level features (SIDS in the global context), and the meso (institutional policymaking structures) and micro-setting (individual policy-shapers and networks).

Postcolonial theory problematises and reflects on these colonies. It highlights that colonialism's legacies are clearly present in their psyche and ideology, including the fact that the colonial masters imposed (and continue to do so in subtle ways today) their societal architecture on the formerly colonised countries. Colonialism also shaped modern inequality in several fundamental, but heterogeneous ways (Acemoğlu & Robinson, 2017). The use of postcolonial theory to examine policy-shapers' constructions of education policy development (of a political nature) involves identifying coloniality's impact in achieving social justice. While colonisation was not homogeneous either in terms of the colonial powers' policies or the duration of colonisation, the scale of the cultural, social and political impact on colonised countries was very similar (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989; Loomba, 2015). The common inherited experiences are economic and social exploitation and loss of identity are (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 1989, 1998).

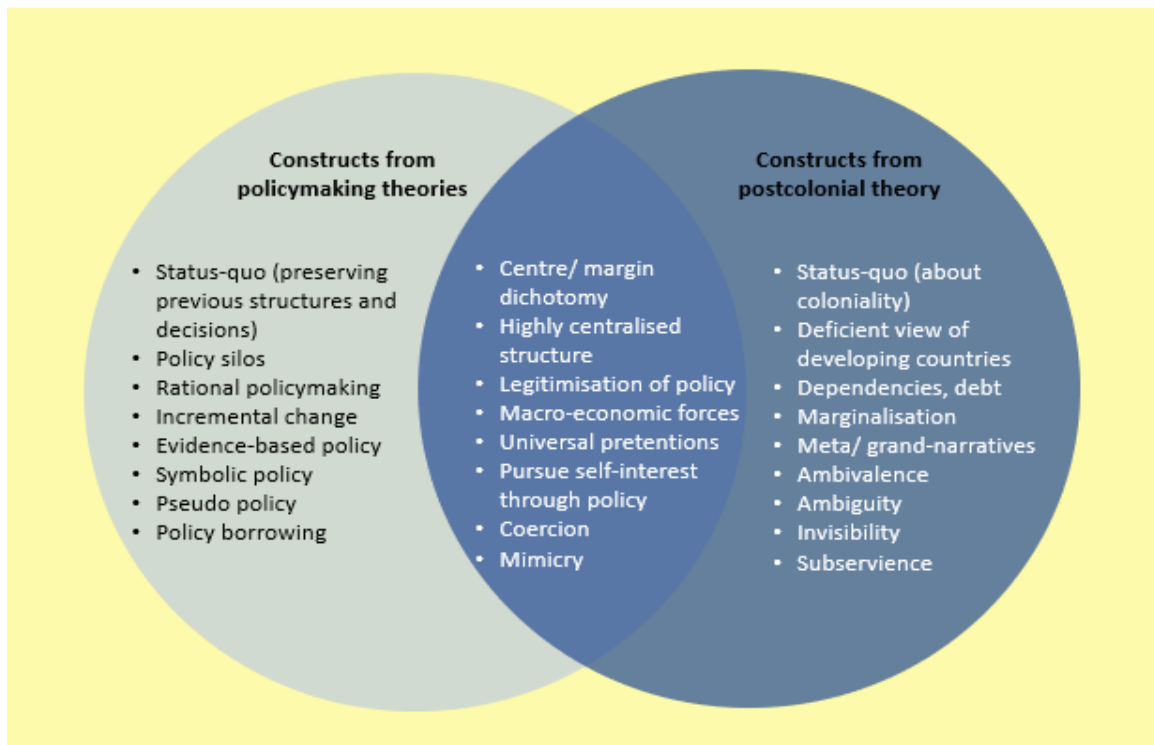
Postcolonial scholarship remains relevant and central to interrogating any implied assumptions of the dominant discourses to make sense of the worlds inhabited by policy-shapers, those that are dominant and others who are possibly ignored or marginalised. Therefore, it is not only the context of a post-colonial SIDS that is the driving force for the choice of the theory but the signs of continued coloniality in the policymaking and shaping space. As can be seen in the histories of colonialism, the influence and assimilation of 'foreign' ideas and practices into local contexts is undoubtedly not a new phenomenon. Signs of continued dependence on the formerly colonised countries are evident in strategies such as removing barriers to international trade, the mediatory role of donors, and coherent, robust advocacy to continually change ICTE devices. Postcolonial theorists assert that contemporary forms of coloniality are perpetuated through globalisation, performativity and other disguised forms (Loomba, 2015; Saïd, 1994; Young, 2003).

### **3.6. An initial framing lens: a postcolonial lens to examine policymaking**

In this concluding section of this theoretical chapter, the perspectives discussed are brought together in a coherent framework as an organising device to assist in the analysis of the data generated. SIDS is a unique phenomenon of a small island within a macro setting that embeds elements within the policy development process. The literature review sheds light on the enmeshing of context and policy actors to influence how policy agenda setting, policy development and policy implementation occur.

History can be a useful reference to understand what is happening today. Rehashing imperial narratives as a guiding framework can reveal local perspectives of policymaking. Using the frame of postcolonialism will assist in the enactment of thought that excavates and deconstructs any universal truth about how policy-shapers understand the world, history, and social organisation, but with explicit reference to postcolonial frame and context. At its heart, the theoretical lens provides a holistic approach to the ways in which space, history and power play a role in policymaking. The postcolonial approach to policymaking in SIDS could assist the problematisation and deconstruction of the meanings of contested spaces of policymaking.

One component of the theoretical framework comprises constructs from policymaking theories (small  $t_1$ ). The second component is drawn from postcolonial theory that construes the policy context as not merely a spatial but also an ideological one (small  $t_2$ ). The detailed discussion of the theories suggests that postcolonial theory has various points of contact with policymaking theories, but also divergences, depicted in Figure 3.3. Elements of policymaking theories are brought into play with constructs of postcolonial theory to develop an adequate lens to answer the research questions. Theoretical perspectives of policymaking and postcoloniality converse to provide a framing lens for the research (capital T). While they balance each other, these theories are the basis on which decisions were made on the study's methodology, such as the methods deployed to produce sufficient and comprehensive data and how data would be generated and analysed.



**Figure 3.3:** Relationship between policymaking theories and postcolonial theory

This research not only considers the different stages and dimensions of the policy at the local level but also examines the relationship between national and international contexts. This framework offers a strategy to understand the trajectory of the ICTE policies. As much as these theories work together, there are certain weaknesses. This is because there is no well-established or unified theory. I am aware that theory can distort certain aspects of the research as “every theory both reveals some aspects of that reality, and distorts or conceals other aspects” (Maxwell, 2012, p. 86). However, taken together horizontally, the two theories fertilise each other and produce new ideas to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under the lens. They enhance each other to provide a relatively complete powerful and compelling framework to gain a refined understanding of the constructions of policy-shapers.

### **3.7. Synthesis of chapter**

What sets this study apart from previous work is its close attention to the discourse of policymakers' decision-making and the socio-political context that contributes to the emergence of ICTE policies in a post-colonial SIDS. The prominence of the SIDS space in this study cannot be overstated due to its underlying particularities. Policymaking theories tend to maintain a stable stance on context, thereby disregarding the cultural and historical aspects of a post-colonial SIDS and the role of the range of policy actors who shape policy subjectively from their own vantage points and spaces. Postcolonial theory disrupts these stable and rational constructs to obtain a broader general understanding of the dynamics of the policy processes and the role of actors.

Drawing on these theoretical intersections, policymaking theories (small  $t_1$ ) and postcolonial theory (small  $t_2$ ) enriched the study with a set of constructs which will be used as an initial lens to analyse the data. They were found to be an appropriate point of departure to interrogate the presence of ideological features hidden in ICTE policymaking processes from policy-shapers' perspectives. Careful selection of constructs from the theories was useful to develop the lens to analyse the data. The multiplicity of actors in the policy-shaping spaces, their subjectivities and interactions within policymaking processes and context form the basis for studying the process. This initial lens was used to drive the choice of the methodological approach, sampling and research instruments which are discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### Research design and methodological approach

#### 4.1. Introduction

Following a review of the relevant literature and the building of a theoretical framework to serve as a framing lens for this study, this chapter details the research design and methodological approach used to explore policy-shapers' constructions of ICT in education. It puts forth my epistemological beliefs regarding the choice of research paradigm and approach. This chapter demonstrates how the philosophical underpinning was crucial to both shape the research design and explain approaches adopted to strengthen its credibility.

It is generally acknowledged that sound research must be systematic and rigorous in the design, implementation, data production and analysis, as well as in the interpretation and reporting (Lincoln, Lynham & Guba, 2017). In line with these requisites, this chapter discusses the rationale behind engaging in a postmodern critical worldview and case study approach. The postmodern notion that the past has everything to do with the present is also central to decolonising research methodologies. This study foregrounds what could be seen as decolonising research methods, in line with critical thinkers, as a purposeful and deliberate approach to disrupt methodological approaches that are historically and contextually bound in social-political rhetoric, to organise, conduct and disseminate research knowledge (Smith, 1999, 2012). My methodological approach aims to provide insights into contested interpretations of meaning-making, as well as issues of power in the policy-shaping landscape. Decolonising research methodologies challenge habituated Eurocentric norms of research agendas by foregrounding indigenous histories and cultures (Smith, 1999, 2012). This chapter brings into dialogue the convergences and tensions to mark a contribution to the movement of decolonisation to answer the research questions. These philosophical premises have implications for methodology and methods. My personal position is also captured in this chapter. At the end, I establish a link between the postmodern critical paradigm and postcolonial theory to create a theoretical lens for the generation of and critical engagement with data.

## **4.2. Overview of chapter**

This chapter is divided into eight major sections. Section 4.3 outlines my shifting worldview to arrive at the decision of adopting a postmodern critical paradigm and an exploratory case study methodology as the overarching *research design*. The *research approach* apposite to the theoretical framework is elaborated in section 4.4, showing how best the research questions could be answered. By leveraging the malleability of a case study methodology and adopting the lens of *decolonised research methods*, I engaged in developing a toolbox that pushed my thinking to reach those deep, layered perspectives not generally detectable on the surface. My worldview and my ideological position are bound to influence the research process. Clarity on my positionality is provided in this section.

The *sources of data* based on the case study approach are unpacked in section 4.5 for succinct analysis and interpretation. Data production *procedures* from these sources are discussed in section 4.6. These include the unfolding phases of the research study and the data generation methods, namely semi-structured narrative interviews, photo elicitation, field notes, audio recording and conscientisation, driven by ethical considerations throughout the process.

Section 4.7 delves into the complexity and messiness of the data analysis and interpretation process in view of answering the critical questions. *Validity, reliability and rigour* have been ensured throughout to enhance the credence of the study (section 4.8). Section 4.9 looks into the *methodological challenges* encountered and *research lessons learnt* in the course of the research study, while section 4.10 synthesises this chapter and makes explicit the lessons learnt.

## **4.3. Shifting worldview of the researcher: from interpretivist to postmodern critical paradigm**

### **4.3.1. Critical paradigm**

Early into the first phase of the study, as a constructivist researcher in the area of policy development in education, I sought to understand the development of ICTE policies from policy-shapers' perspectives driven by the assumption of the multiplicity of their realities in different spaces. As I progressed to read and re-read the terrain of the literature, the field and its participants, I had an unsettling feeling. I started to rethink whether the simplistic existence of multiple perspectives was moribund and felt that it was inadequate to describe the positionalities of multiple perspectives. I became conscious of the need to explore what underpinned the agenda of these multiple constructions. I also became alert and questioned whether these agendas were neutral and not perpetuating, maintaining and contesting hierarchies and marginalisation. This activated a need to draw on an

alternative paradigmatic lens that examines matters of power, marginalisation and contestation. This reflexive sentence prompted more sensitive attention to the criticality of broader discourses in the data set.

Consequently, while the aim of the research remained the same, the purpose transformed. I veered away from merely documenting a multiplicity of perspectives in a contested space (post-colonial SIDS) as that would prospectively give a too simplistic understanding. Instead, I sought multiple perspectives centred around local manifestations of policy-shapers rather than broad generalisations. It is likely that the policy shapers' various ways of knowing are generally taken-for-granted. I consequently wished to dig out policy development assumptions to question them in terms of a culturally constructed domination based on selective social, historical and economic values.

My postcolonial stance brought about a deeper and sharper significance to these manifestations as I intended to focus on the impact of human control and exploitation of colonised people and their lands, and analyse any cultural, political and economic legacy of colonialism and imperialism. My research turned towards an examination of the potential impact of colonial power structures on advancing social justice in the policy-shaping space of a post-colonial SIDS. Harvey (2000) argues that postmodern debate sets the framework for critical, theoretical and philosophical debates in many fields, including globalisation. With this, I was set to explore the world of diverse policy-shapers in varied spaces where multiple realities, meanings, interpretations, and truths become intrinsic to this research.

Aligned with my worldview, I acknowledged that my study was located within the *critical paradigm*. Critical theory challenges the notion of objective knowledge and power structures by arguing that *historical contexts* and *social processes* always shape understanding. It is a social philosophy first defined by Max Horkheimer in 1937 in 'Traditional and Critical Theory', oriented toward critiquing and changing society as a whole, in contrast to the traditional theory that oriented toward only understanding or explaining it. Horkheimer (1982, p. 244) describes a theory as critical in so far as it seeks "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" - a relevant core of the theory to this study<sup>53</sup>. Like Lukács (Hungarian) and Gramsci (Italian), the Frankfurt School focused on ideology and cultural forces as facilitators of domination and barriers to freedom. The critical theory argues that social problems are influenced and created more by societal structures and cultural assumptions than by individual and psychological factors<sup>54</sup>. Such an ideology

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<sup>53</sup> Critical theory emerged from the Marxist tradition and developed by a group of sociologists at the University of Frankfurt in Germany who referred to themselves as The Frankfurt School.

<sup>54</sup> German scholars in the 1920s, established as a school of thought primarily by the Frankfurt School theoreticians Herbert

is the principal obstacle to human liberation and is not aligned with the philosophical underpinnings of my study.

Guba and Lincoln's seminal study in 1994 defines a paradigm as a basic set of beliefs or worldview that guides an investigation. Within this worldview, the paradigm is considered constitutive of the abstract beliefs and principles that shape how the researcher sees the world. It thus became essential to outline how I acted within and interpreted my own research world as I chose to explore the space from the subjective experiences of policy-shapers. As argued by Lincoln and Guba (2017, p. 177), rather than locate foundational truth and knowledge in some external reality "out there", as a critical theorist, I locate the foundations of truth in the historical, economic, racial and social infrastructures of oppression, injustice and marginalisation. It is possible that policy-shapers are in a state of false consciousness<sup>55</sup> or even unaware of any subservient circumscription by ideological positionings. However, because of various reasons, as social actors, they are unable or unwilling to change their conditions (Lincoln & Guba, 2017). My research also explored such aspects of policy-shaping.

A defining characteristic of critical research methodology is the choices that allow linking theories and methods as an ongoing process that is contextually bound and not pre-determined (Morrow, 1994). For this to occur, rigorous analysis, critical approaches and diverse understandings are necessary (Bilgili, 2018). The interdisciplinary character of the critical paradigm provides the latitude to use varied methods and artefacts to reach the depth of policy-shapers' ideologies and thereby answer the research questions. Despite its emancipatory influence, critical theory has been critiqued for presenting information in an imprecise and obscure manner, often designed to prevent further inquiry and understanding. However, critical theoretical approaches also tend to rely on dialogic methods, such as methods combining observation and interviewing with approaches that foster conversation and reflection. This adds rigour and accuracy to research. The strength of the synergy in the conversation between the postmodern critique and critical theory is that it creates space for me, as well for ICTE policy-shapers, to question what has come to be 'taken-for-granted' and considered 'neutral' (Farias et al., 2019). I thus employed a critical mode of meaning-making to develop a democratic vision of policy-shaping.

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Marcuse, Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Erich Fromm, and Max Horkheimer.

<sup>55</sup> False consciousness a way of thinking that prevents people from perceiving the true nature of their social or economic situation (van Zoonen, 2017).

This lens enabled me to disrupt the status quo of the post-colonial SIDS context by posing novel, upsetting questions about policy development. It also made me sceptical about the authority of tradition, critical of values and knowledge held on to unreflectively and open to change. To achieve the set of goals, I also realised that I had to be cautious about choosing methodologies to reach the deep layers of the multiple realities of policy-shapers. This understanding of multiple realities gives the possibility to envision ‘other realities’, to learn about ‘different realities’ and even challenge realities contributing towards a just world. Congruent with Bell’s (2007) articulation of social justice<sup>56</sup> and my worldview as a researcher, I scrutinised patterns of social relationships, structures and power relations, interpreting nuances, paradoxes and complexities even within the prevailing trend of examining power and marginalisations in educational policy-shaping. Against this backdrop, my work homes-in on a postmodern critical, social justice and postcolonial paradigm.

#### **4.3.2. Ontological and epistemological assumptions**

Having located my research design within the critical paradigm, I need to clarify the ontological and epistemological assumptions of my study. Firstly, it is necessary to define ontology. Ontology is concerned with the kind of world being investigated, the nature of existence and the structure of reality. It can be conceptualised as the study of being (Crotty, 1998, 2003). Guba & Lincoln (1994, p. 108) state that the ontological assumptions are those that respond to the question “what is there that can be known” or “what is the nature of reality?”. Ontology as “a concept (is) concerned with the existence of, and the relationship between, different aspects of society such as social actors, cultural norms and social structures” (Barron, 2006, p. 202). My study was situated in the realm of policy-shapers in a post-colonial context. It is a social world of meanings. In this world, researchers assume that human beings have their own thoughts, understandings, interpretations, and meanings. It is a world of constant change in meaning-making, multiple truths and realities. Critical theory goes to the roots of historical forces and psychological pathology that condition thought and ideology that currently resides in modernity, as opposed to a more ahistorical and rationalist substance. Critical approaches examine social conditions to uncover hidden structures. Researchers in this type of research configuration cannot investigate how (if at all) power relations are played out without breaking the boundaries of the traditional research designs and countering dominant methods. This design rejects the notion that the status quo is the only possibility or alternative. It critiques the

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<sup>56</sup> Bell (2007) defines social justice as the “full and equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs. Social justice includes a vision of society in which the distribution of resources is equitable and all members are physically and psychologically safe and secure...The process for attaining the goal of social justice...should be democratic and participatory, inclusive, and affirming of human agency and human capacities for working collaboratively to create change” (pp. 1–2).

prevailing situation through designs that embody alternative social, cultural, technical or economic values. In my study, the nature of what can be known was shaped by policy-shapers within historical, social, political, cultural and economic forces. It is through the policy-shapers that I came to understand their constructions of ICTE policy-shaping in a post-colonial SIDS context.

Epistemology is a way of understanding and explaining how we know what we know (Crotty, 1998, 2003). This term is further explained by Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007, p. 7) as one that characterises the assumptions made about “the very bases of knowledge – its nature and form, how it can be acquired and communicated to other human beings”. It is concerned with the mind’s relation to reality. The nature of my epistemological assumptions about knowledge profoundly affected how I went about uncovering knowledge. My epistemological assumptions determined the kind of methods I used in this research. Epistemological questions respond to issues such as ‘how can reality be known?’ and the relationship between the knower and the known. Do we know things? And if we do, how and when do we know things? Epistemology also considers the process through which knowledge is found and the possibility of whether these knowledge-gaining processes can be shared and repeated by others (de Gialdino, 2009). Intrinsic to this study was also my insiderness, hence the subjectivity in this research. I could not detach myself from the space I was interfering with<sup>57</sup>. My way of knowing was through a critical design. This research strategy is dedicated to transgressing and undermining social conformity, passivity and similar values of capitalist ideology in hopes of bringing about social justice.

## **4.4. Research design**

### **4.4.1. Case study research approach**

The theoretical groundings of my research paradigm, namely the postcolonial theory, continued to push me towards an approach that would not only generate in-depth and multi-faceted data on policy-shapers’ thinking but would also allow critical insight into the reasons behind their spatial-temporal choices when shaping ICTE policies. This explains my inclination for a research design and methodology that would enable me to probe into the shapers’ values, interpretations and perspectives; to value multiple ways of knowing (Merriam, 1998); and also create spaces to learn about different realities and challenge realities contributing towards a just (global) world. As discussed earlier, I was interested in rooting out meanings of what was left unsaid as well as that which was said in order to expose (any) hidden assumptions in the post-colonial policy-shaping context. The intention of this

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<sup>57</sup> This is discussed in more detail in the prologue.

study was to advance knowledge. It was important that the research design provided the opportunity to inquire deeply, be open to multiple perspectives, and engage in the form of research that promoted and valued multiple ways of knowing. Following a review of the literature on case study methodology, I found that it fitted my worldview as well as the aim of the research, even though it has faced some contestations (Bedrettin, 2015).

Case study research has been used to contribute to researchers' and practitioners' knowledge in the fields of educational policy and comparative international education (Dei, 2005; Griffiths & Knezevic, 2010; Little, Aboud & Lenachuru, 2009; Stack, 2007; Wane, 2005). This methodology is pertinent to critically interpret multiple social realities of policy-shapers with due consideration to the contextual particularities of a post-colonial context. As Merriam explains: "reality is not an objective entity; rather, there are multiple interpretations of reality" (1998, p. 22). The positivist paradigm is evidently incongruent with this study as I was studying people. People's behaviours and actions cannot be reduced to a small, discrete set to be tested, such as the variables that comprise hypotheses and research questions (Cresswell, 2014). My worldview made me suspicious of the analytic neutrality claimed by positivist methodology. This paradigm provides an objective reality against which researchers can compare their claims and is loyal to the traditional notion of the absolute truth of knowledge.

Besides, Stake (1995, 2006) regards researchers as interpreters and generators of interpretations. Case study methodology was deemed apt to provide a rich and thick descriptive account of the construction of reality garnered through my investigation. As such, Merriam's and Stake's perspectives are in consonance with my philosophical stance. However, there are certain aspects from Yin's (2011) perspective that were also valuable to this study. For instance, he stresses that to maintain quality in research, four conditions need to be maximised related to design quality, namely construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability.

In the exploration of the phenomenon of my study, it was highly likely that I would come across a wide range of rich and valuable policy documents, artefacts, observations and interviews to gain clarity and join loose ends in my understanding of the policy-shaping landscape. Case study methodology provides the flexibility for data generation from a multiplicity of sources. This characteristic in dealing with varied evidence is its unique strength (Yin, 2011). Besides, multiple sources were expected to describe the complexities, nuances and even contradictions of ICTE policy development processes. The sources of data for my study also presented avenues for consideration of credible alternative explanations within the specific bounded context. This feature of the research

classifies this case as *explanatory* (Yin, 2003, 2006, 2014).

The conceptual space of the study was, Mauritius, emblematic of a small island developing state with a colonial history. Probing into a ‘not-much-travelled’ policy development SIDS space with a postcolonial lens gave this case an *exploratory* character as well (Yin, 2003, 2014). Merriam (1998) stresses the value of the case study approach as a way to gain an understanding of a phenomenon where predominantly the investigation process is of interest rather than the outcome of the research. Therefore, this study aimed to understand the processes of constructions of policy-shapers during policy development. The specific theoretical, contextual landscape of postcolonial and decolonial ethos filters within this case.

The decision to adopt a case study approach was also made to enable research on bounded systems (Creswell, 1998) or cases. The spatial-temporal dimension follows Yin’s advice (2003, 2014) to study ICTE policies<sup>58</sup> developed between 1997 and 2018 in Mauritius (the period which covers the development of ICTE policies). The processes of making/shaping the policies constitute the bounded case study. Time and place (Creswell, 2003), time and activity (Stake, 1995); and definition and context (Miles & Huberman, 1994) made the operationalisation of the case study reasonable in scope. Within this focus, the most appropriate approach for this study is characterised as both *exploratory* and *explanatory*. Such an approach extends my understanding to learn new revelatory meanings of policy-shapers’ constructed reality of ICTE through the theoretical lens fertilised by constructs of postcolonial theory and policymaking theories discussed at the end of chapter 3.

#### **4.4.2. Criticisms of a case study approach**

The case study approach has been criticised for lacking rigour and providing little basis for scientific generalisation (Yin, 1984). As indicated in previous sections, this study did not seek generalisability but to generate key issues for a critical interpretation of policy-shapers’ constructions of ICTE policies. This particularity of case study methodology is supported as one of its strengths by Stenhouse (1980). Nevertheless, analytical biases are acknowledged, and the sources of data are carefully identified and selected to frame the focus of exploration. In pursuing a critical view on the particularities of policy-shapers having important inherent atypical features, the study moved away from mere decontextualised quantification of the phenomenon that sets universalistic truths.

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<sup>58</sup> Policies comprising a significant share of measures relating to the use of ICT in education for learning purposes. ICT encompasses all the technology (entailing the specific devices or processes) that facilitates the processing, transfer and exchange of Information and Communication services.

The use of a small number of participants and producing a large number of unreadable documents have also been put forward as a criticism of this approach (Yin, 2003, 2006, 2014). However, given the aim of the study, the malleability of the case study approach was seen as a strength. The flexibility to combine methods enhanced rigour and allowed a more participatory role of policy-shapers, who shared their perspectives in a relaxed dialogic manner to generate rich data. This approach prompted a critical enquiry that looked beyond policy-shapers' perspectives to the factors that led to the development of those perspectives, including underlying assumptions. Achieving this objective would not have been possible without a flexible and diverse approach to account for contextual factors and garner data from the multiple perspectives of shapers and sources. Besides, the boundaries and units of analysis were delimited thoughtfully to avoid the generation of large amounts of data information (Njie & Asimiran, 2014).

#### **4.4.3. Researcher's positionality**

The term 'positionality' describes both an individual's worldview and the position s/he adopts in relation to a research task and its social and political context (Foote & Bartell 2011; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Rowe, 2014). Disclosing my positionality helps me to be more open to the possibilities the research has to offer. Therefore, before presenting my study's findings, and in the spirit of self-reflexivity, I acknowledge my standpoint as an educated middle-class woman, descended from Indian indentured labourers who were displaced from India by colonisers. Through education, my family members have secured employment either in the private or public sector. I believe everyone needs to have the right to education. Still, I am intrigued to observe the homogenous understandings that people, within and outside the education system, have about the purpose of education. In short, it is to secure a job and have a stable life. This has not changed. Respect in society is elevated through a secure job. By occupying such a space in society, one experiences a sense of 'universally accepted achievement' in a post-colonial multi-ethnic society with pre-existing inequalities. Policies are apparently meant to address such underlying enduring issues in society, yet the impact is not always palpable.

Against this background, I acknowledge that I may have both privilege and power given the status I have been occupying during the past ten years in bureaucracy. I am an applied researcher at the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC), interacting extensively with policy actors, interfacing with industry to contribute to policy and developing relevant education and skills development programmes. There was a possibility that my familiarity with the policymaking environment influenced this research. But I was also in a position of tension. On the one hand, I was

preparing to critique the very foundations of ICTE policies while, on the other hand, I was seeking to engage my participants who were working to implement and/or advocate ICTE. I also acknowledge that I was embedded in this research process. I consider myself a data generation instrument (Amin, 2008) since I was deeply embedded within the field, able to unearth the intricacies of the flow of processes with which I was familiar as part of my everyday workplace responsibilities. I believe that this insiderness allowed me to produce a credible insight into the world of policymaking. However, this positionality created an ethical dilemma about working and simultaneously researching my work process. I acknowledge my official workstation located in the complexity of the post-colonial space of the ministry and its officialdom. My officially mandated task is to get on with my research quietly and dispassionately. My research task was to ask many questions.

The research process was developed to respond to the specificity of the post-colonial SIDS context and the critical postmodern theoretical perspectives driving the research. The second step was to identify a methodological design that would minimise the negative effects of power on the research participants and maximise their empowerment, thereby extending questions about the research and researcher toward decolonising research methodologies. I integrated the participatory and collaborative data generation and analysis techniques. The privilege that accompanied my professional location meant that my efforts to understand policy-shapers (mainly with vertical relationships) could have made them feel threatened about the positions they held in the Government. Privilege and positionality render undertaking research in post-colonial contexts difficult and risky but also, for me, essentially to contribute to the empowerment of those disadvantaged by the same systems that have (relatively) advantaged me.

Though I was not interviewing the elite all the time, I had, in several cases, a social background or status in common with the interviewees. I was located in relation to my involvement in policy-shaping in the field of education and skills development, as well as an insider to policy-shapers in education. This was a strength of this research. In the light of my identity, standpoint and subjectivity, I held a dual identification: that of a researcher as the instrument to conduct the interviews and as an insider to policy-shaping.

I acknowledge that my positionality was laced with this study and influenced it to some extent. My resources proved to be important tools that helped me make meaning of the text. I also recognise that my positionality is not fixed and will necessarily change over time (Holmes, 2020).

## 4.5. Sources of data

Given the complexity of the research agenda and the retrospective nature of the research, no one shaper or source was likely to have sufficient information that would allow digging deeply for a more robust understanding of the phenomenon. A hallmark of case study research is the use of multiple data sources, a strategy which also enhances data credibility (Patton, 1990; Yin, 2003, 2006). More so, my worldview urged me to develop a research process and identify data sources sensitive to the context. An epistemologically fluid, nimble and flexible approach was mobilised to know the world from multiple viewpoints.

### 4.5.1. Textual ICT education policies

This study constituted a reflection on the trajectory from the first implementation of an ICTE policy in schools in the 1990s to the present educational context. In the past three decades, only three policies broadly presented a picture of the ICT-in-education landscape in Mauritius. They are: MaurITprime 1997, School IT Project 2002, and IT Strategy for schools in Mauritius 2018<sup>59</sup> ((Refer to section 1.4.1.). The 3 ICTE policy sets are regarded as policy but technically they are not legislative documents. In common parlance, they are referred to as policy. They may be regarded as administrative or regulatory in nature, aiming the steer preferences for operational practice. I have used the term ‘policy’ to characterise them that they document the many ICTE initiatives.

The policies vary in their ‘purpose’, complexity, target audience, resource foci and beneficiaries without necessarily binding users with legislations around the policies. Nevertheless, the policies have been most influential in shaping the debate on ICTE and preparing the youth for what is envisioned as the ‘knowledge society’. The three policies have leading features of De Clercq’s (1997) grouping but with some nuances. She provides a categorisation of policies as *symbolic*, *procedural*, *material redistributive*, *regulatory* and *redistributive*. However, the identified policies cannot be distinctively compartmentalised with clear-cut boundaries. Samuel (2017) also posits that the dominant elements of each type of policy are embedded within a single policy, making their categorisation intricate.

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<sup>59</sup> IT Strategy for schools in Mauritius 2018 was developed to support the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2015.

However, as discussed in section 1.4.1, what constitutes even the official policy in documented forms in the Mauritian context is problematic. Therefore, my study will not focus on the policy propositions but the nature of the policymaking processes.

Nevertheless, I took up these documents, which carry recommendations and guidelines about different types of educational practices, as roadmaps of ICT in education. The three selected ICTE policies frame the focus of exploration. The choice of these policies allowed the study to engage with the shifts in educational intentions over time. Whatever the nature of the policies, they were subject to varying interpretations and notions of what the policies were to achieve. It was my intent to perform a close reading of the documents as background to this study. Given the aim of the study, I could not rely merely on analysing policies to explore inequalities but needed to engage with the discourse to draw on rich, contextual elements of policy and diverse perspectives of shapers of ICTE policies.

#### **4.5.2. ICTE policy-shapers as participants in a post-colonial space**

Generally, policymakers are defined as officers, and administrators of the Government. This research, however, integrates the qualitative sensibilities of voices that could have been excluded but in which new narratives of the policy-shapers' interpretations could unfold. This research adopts flexible methods to uncover policy-shapers' perspectives, be it in the administrative offices, international agencies, schools where policy occurs, and other spaces whose opinions are excluded or ignored. I use Grosfoguel's notion of "epistemic location" to ask whether someone resides within that place or not (2007, p. 213) and to argue that marginalised voices of these "epistemic locations" need to be predominantly heard. While chapter 2 theorised who can be a policy-shaper, decolonising research methodologies call for a shift from the conservative worldviews where they are located in the policy-shaping space and how they participate in the research to yield rich data. This choice permitted the study to explore how power is redistributed and re-oriented, thus allowing alternative methods and views to be considered.

A holistic picture of the policy-shaping terrain provided an expansive view of the many actors who shape policies – namely *politicians, administrators, technocrats; international consultants; opinion leaders, such as unions, school managers, researchers, teachers and parents* – revealing their social, political and geographic connectedness. Each shaper was deemed distinctive and, through a deliberate selection of data generation methods from multiple vantage points, provided interpretations of the processes of constructing educational policies in the Mauritian context. Simultaneously and conflictually, the various stakeholders were considered key shapers of ICTE policies, each bringing a unique pattern to my understanding of ICTE policy-shaping. It is recognised that this definition of

policy-shaper extends the scope from simply the authors of official policy texts to a policy as discourse. Maintaining the fluidity in this research, other shapers were identified through snowballing. This added richness and dimensionality to the interpretations. A stratified purposive sampling allowed me to recognise actors, such as *ICTE curriculum developers*, who did not even conceive themselves as policy-shapers, thereby bringing an ethical and postcolonial methodological dimension to the research.

## **4.6. Data generation strategies and research methods**

### **4.6.1. Denying “masters’ tools”**

My worldview of multiple realities rejects the notion of a single truth. As a postmodernist, I regard my theoretical position as uniquely inclusive and democratic. In doing so, my stance challenges any hegemony in not only the policy-shaping space, but also the canon of methodology that claims to be objective and universal. In the quest to expose any taken-for-granted imbalances in the ways policies are developed, I negate oppressive forces and raise consciousness for equal access and a humane and culturally sound approach to conduct research regardless of the background of the shapers of the policies (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Delving deep into the research provides more insight into re-searching rather than merely researching because it reveals what is involved, and what it really means and goes beyond the naïve view of ‘research’ as an innocent pursuit of knowledge. Therefore, my worldview determined what needed to be re-searched, who would be re-searched, for whose interest, and how the re-search would be conducted (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). I realised that the choice of methodology might lead to overlooking, deliberately marginalising or privileging certain groups and deciding whose knowledge counted if the interest of a dominant group was to be served through data production and interpretation.

Decolonial perspectives point to colonial continuities embedded not just in the epistemic foundations but also in the practices of data production (Chiumbu, 2017; Hlatshwayo & Adendorff, 2022; Smith, 1999). Positivist social science is claimed to be a project of imperialism disguised as methodological objectivity that enables the constitution of universally valid truths applicable across space and time (Smith, 1999; Ziai, 2016). Oojorah (2017), in his thesis, claimed that colonial supremacies have created a sense of otherness among Mauritians through exploitative systems, such as slavery and indentured labourers. He asks pertinent questions about the roles of the locals in knowledge

production and dissemination. As an endogenous local in Mauritius, my democratic outlook intends to go beyond lending voice to the constellation of policy-shapers. I want to avoid falling into the trap of “constitutive blindness” (Chiumbu, 2017, p. 2) that refuses other forms of seeing, knowing and being in the world that does not fit what we can spot through the frames to which we are habituated. I reflected that if the methodology was tainted with colonial ideologies, my understandings and interpretations would not be neutral either.

I turned to Walter Mignolo’s seminal work on epistemic disobedience (2013), Wanda Pillow’s *Race-Based methodologies* (2003), Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *decolonising methodologies* (1999, 2006, 2012), and Julia Suárez-Krabbe’s (2011) *decolonial research methodologies* because they all make an important point. They emphasise the recognition, questioning and negotiation of geopolitical, socio-political and cultural hegemony in knowledge-building practices (Grosfoguel, 2007). Smith draws attention to how methodological approaches are also historically and contextually bound in social-political rhetoric, justifying and supporting relations of power not only within research but even within chosen research methodology. She is one of the first authors who explicitly argued for a decolonisation of research practice. She carefully portrays how research about indigenous people was inserted into the colonialist project (Smith, 1999, 2006, 2012). The research space has been engulfed with straitjacketed methodologies that compel submission to prescriptions. Though the researched is treated as an object merely to extract data, these practices have been historically canvassed to appear credible.

Mignolo (2013) calls for delinking from modern thinking. This move, he argues, also requires epistemic disobedience for researchers to build a different beginning to re-position those who have been objects of research into questioners, critics, theorists, knowers, and communicators. Suárez-Krabbe (2011) calls for methodological flexibility that follows no specific guidelines of action but, rather, an ethical principle of decolonisation. A contextually bound and not pre-determined methodology provides the space for a fluid conversation between the context, the research, the researcher and the researched to bring up subjective interpretations of participants about the phenomenon. Pillow (2003) offers an epistemological shift on how we know what we know, how we come to believe such knowledge, and how we use it in our daily lives. Decolonising methodology entails unmasking its role and purpose in re-search. It involves recasting research from what the West has done unto the world.

These shifts impact and raise questions that are central to educational research, including who can be a 'knower', what counts as knowledge, and what the purposes of research and knowledge production are or should or could be. Besides, I was the instrument in this research and deeply and intricately implicated in the ways in which I generated data. I had to be conscious of my worldview.

After deeply reflecting on my positionality, I realised that researchers might also have power and privilege from their class, education, racial and ethnic backgrounds, or other identity positions. Both positionalities (power and privilege) have the potential to reproduce inequities. I looked inward to reconstruct my research agenda and went beyond the master's tools (Ziai, 2016). I lived a constant discomfort and interrogation about myself. I also wondered whether I was engendering or perpetuating dominance over my participants with my intersectional positionality as a researcher. I underwent self-interrogation to see more clearly.

The profound interconnected questions Smith (2012) asks about the researcher helped me to structure a self-assessment about my worldviews and how these influenced the design, execution, and interpretation of the research data findings. Smith breaks down the prevailing research process into smaller parts to interrogate the researcher, such as: who researches, who is being researched, who can be a researcher, who poses the questions, whose knowledge counts, whose words are read and heard, and who benefits from the research. A decolonising approach to research is twofold (Smith, 2012): a) the deconstruction of existing methodologies and methods that (re)produce the coloniality of knowledge; and b) a reconstruction or reinvention of research practice. Smith states that

*“when indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, problems are defined differently, and people participate on different terms” (Smith, 1999, p.193).*

I remained open to the worldviews of policy-shapers to understand their constructions as a whole from multiple parts and vantages to capture the richness of the interactions without being limited by a theory or being conscious of how my positionality could be affecting my understanding. I listened to understand and probed rather than replied. I experienced and realised the importance of unpacking the relationships being forged between my participants and me. Bringing the postcolonial principle of the theoretical framework forward and the pertinent issues raised by Ziai (2016) in his opening note at the 'International Conference Beyond the Master's Tools', I posed additional questions to create more space for the interpretation of the data to answer the research questions: How do I conduct postcolonial research without reproducing colonial structures of knowledge production? How do I reach out to voices to understand the whole? How do I get to understand the participants in totality?

How and when do I know that I now understand the participants' worldviews? How do I recognise the 'powerful' and 'overpowered'? When I was transcending boundaries to create an open and 'free' space to conduct research, I realised that my thesis inscribed itself within the decolonised methodologies space. I do not claim that the methods I employed were decolonised, but I was set on this journey to decolonising my research that comprised multiple layers of actions. I incorporated my participants in the research; I explained the meaning of the methods to them in detail and engaged them as collaborators and co-designers of the research agenda. I opened up opportunities for the co-production of knowledge. This was also one of the ways in which my research methods were decolonised.

Sanz De et al. (2007) claim that interpretations of participants are shaped by their background which characterises their identity. They also assert that these variables affect decision-making. Most importantly, critical theories posit gender and sex not as biological givens, but as discourses constituted by representations, practices, and institutions. From the time of 'decolonisation' onwards, the national identities of people in post-colonial context are built on the political ideology and political institutions of the West (Grotenhuis, 2016). In post-colonial SIDS, there are realities that make issues of ethnicity, religion, language and region important, and these are often strong markers of people's identities. In the case of Mauritius, the post-colonial island is home to a plural society characterised by a high level of social inequality (Meisenhelder, 1997; Selwyn, 1983). One feature of decolonising research methodologies implies considering these resistant and sensitive identity markers to gain an understanding of national identity and their perspectives.

Sium, Desai & Ritskes (2012) argue that decolonisation cannot happen in vacuity and without contestation. They reveal that the emotional process of decolonisation goes deep, to the extent of replacing the dominant with the marginalised, including those that represent the colonisers. Given my dual identification, I do not claim that my worldview is not tainted with colonial ideologies. Decolonising research methods have equipped me to shift the participants in a collaborative space that (re)defines them in a way that is culturally appropriate, respectful, honouring and ethical (Datta, 2018). I contest the 'traditional view' of who is a policy-shaper and recast it in a culturally responsive approach to conduct the study with dignity.

#### **4.6.2. Negotiating interviews**

This study explores the notion of power as well as influential organisations and structures through policy-shapers' interpretations. The literature is laden with research on the issues and challenges faced when researching elites. Nader (1972) was among the first to argue for researchers to study elite settings as 'studying up'. She called for a comprehensive approach to social research that includes the often difficult-to-access elite segment. Other broader terms are now coined, such as 'researching up' (Lather, 2001). My research is multi-directional, bearing an intrinsic connotation of identifying those who are both below and above (relative to my position), also both privileged or not, and excluded. Although they are all interconnected around the same policies, there could be high barriers to the participation of other shapers.

This view of (non)elites contributed to an expansion and transformation of my thinking to expose any structural inequality. However, researching without antinomies of 'up' and 'down' could constrain the effort of developing a better understanding of social multi-dimensional and multi-faceted spaces. Recognising the relationships of shapers with policies, the call for relational thinking in approaches to studying the elite (as well as the 'non-elite') by Howard and Gaztambide-Fernández (2010) was found to be relevant. The authors stress that "elite class status is related to the marginalisation and oppression of others" (Howard and Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010, p. 200). Breaking down this hierarchisation and stratification of social identities also means a break from substantialist thinking. Incongruent with my worldview, substantialist thinking pulls away participants from their social and historical context of a post-colonial SIDS, thereby discounting the dynamic and fluid relationships that generate meaning. Like their work, my research agenda linked to the theoretical view intended to reveal any untold ways that have become a naturalised part of educational systems in post-colonial SIDS. The argument made by Nader (1972), namely that the quality of life and our lives themselves may depend upon the extent to which inhabitants of small states understand those who shape attitudes and actually control institutional structures, resonates with this research. Bourdieu (1987) challenges researchers to interrogate their respective disciplines and the larger academic field, as well as their positions within each, throughout the investigative process. Guided by Bourdieu and Nader, I adopted a self-reflective and reflexive approach as an ongoing process to clearly identify, construct, critique and articulate my positionality and see beyond what is being said and not said.

Organisations and structures comprise mainly senior Government officials who, according to literature, articulate both power and knowledge, in that way pinning this research as an “elite (study)” (Neuman, 1997, p. 336). It is argued that when one examines governmental policymakers (seen as the authority) in SIDS contexts, they often appear (at least to the general local population) as powerful agents of change. However, in my view, as a critical researcher, Government officers might paradoxically be emasculated in their ability to activate independent, autonomous agendas since they capitulate to external rationalities for practical purposes (political expediency, economic restructuring, vulnerability). The powerful can thus be weak. It is difficult to be disconnected from leading or being led by power.

#### **4.6.3. Testing the instruments**

Given the complexity of the phenomenon under the lens, extensive piloting of interview schedules, providing instructions for picture selection, and managing expectations were required. These methods were laborious and required patience. Realising these issues, Pham (2018) advised critical researchers to ensure strong self-awareness and understanding of the complexity of social issues. Care had to be taken to increase the turnout, given that two<sup>60</sup> interviews of around two hours had been planned with each participant due to the nature of the study. I was somehow confident that the quality of the data would outweigh the labour put into these methods.

The pilot study was conducted with four main objectives in mind. Firstly, refining the instruments as well as my interviewing skills. Piloting helped me to enter the field with confidence and come out with a rich experience as well as rich data. Secondly, I wanted to gain a realistic picture of the operational processes when entering the field. Details like setting up the table and chair for a smooth communication flow, keeping eye contact, and participation in photo elicitation were considered. Thirdly, I wished to identify areas for improvement in data-generating strategies so as to enhance the quality and adequacy of data. Fourth, I wanted to reflect on the quality of data produced and whether the data would offer adequate richness for analysis and insights into policy-shapers’ constructions of ICTE policy development.

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<sup>60</sup> Two interviews were conducted for in-depth discussions and follow up questions.

A role play with a peer organised jointly by MIE and UKZN in May 2019 as part of the doctoral cohort seminar was enriching. The feedback and tips obtained from peers, UKZN and MIE supervisors, and observers happened to be an important learning process. Interviewing faux-pas and areas for improvement were flagged. Good preparation and confidence when in dialogue with the participant were stressed. Consequently, the photo-elicitation exercise was streamlined to allow the participant to choose 3 pictures out of 10, instead of 3 out of 12, as I had originally planned. This was because the participant-peer seemed overwhelmed when presented with too many choices. The pilot urged me to ponder on a strategy to keep track of practical issues, such as the selection of pictures by participants to avoid the loss of important data.

For the pilot interview that was conducted in real interview conditions at the end of May 2019, I secured the participation of a Headmaster with many years of previous working experience as a teacher educator. The choice of the participant was deliberate because he was positioned at the interface between a policy-shaper at the Ministry and practitioners at the school level. It was important for me to obtain a feel of the power relations during an interview to improve my coping mechanisms during moments of uncertainty. This interview yielded approximately one-hour recording value.

The interview was revealing. I realised that I had to better orient my participants to the process of yielding quality independent data. The participant did not answer specific questions completely, which indicated superficial engagement with the questions in some instances. At times, a short answer was provided without much elaboration, or the participant repeated himself. My anxiety transformed into my desire to control the direction of the interview to obtain rich data. I realised that I had to be conscious and mindful all the time so as to give space to the participant to express his views independently. At the same time, the use of probing questions was helpful in reaching a point that reified the argument made by the participant. Despite the fact that I used a semi-structured interview schedule, the interview turned into an unstructured dialogue between the researcher and the participant. But it was a worthy 'deviation' (I went with the flow) because it helped create a relaxed and convivial mood. Most importantly, it helped bring to the fore other issues that were found insightful. I also realised that, because Mauritius is a bilingual country, the participant used both English to French to express himself with ease. I envisaged even Kreol Morisien for future interviews, even if this required translation.

I realised interviews are complex social phenomena and not merely a research method. The pilot study unsettled my worldview to some extent. I took cognisance of certain realities in the school I was not aware of. The assumptions with which I walked into the interview were disrupted by the conversations we had on the implementation of ICT in schools. However, the participant did not have an opinion on the bigger picture of ICTE, mainly the macro level issues, but was merely using the lens of the school environment to talk about policy. This pilot yielded new insights into the study, and I revised my interview schedule regarding the flow of the questions. I also realised that I needed to customise the interview schedule for every interaction. The flow of the questions required to remain fluid and adapted to every encounter, the participants being heterogeneous, privileged and perhaps excluded from the policy-shaping space. It was expected that different vantage points would bring a rich dimension to the study. The variety of artefacts used during the interview stimulated the interest of the participant to actively engage in the study.

#### **4.6.4. Transition to semi-structured interviews from narrative accounts**

Encouraging participants to narrate their perspectives of ICTE policy development warranted methods that were not only stimulating but, rather, assisted them in giving an account of the choices made or not and exploring their interpretations. I had already obtained the gatekeepers' authorisation to access schools and interview Ministry staff (Refer to Appendix 2 for the template of letter to gatekeepers). One of the methods that facilitate data production in the guise of stories is narrative interviews. Narrative data is central to understanding past experiences and events of policy-shapers around ICTE policies. Narrative interviews are generally "a mode through which individuals express their understandings of events and experiences" (Mishler, 1991, p. 68). This method fosters flexibility to reinvent any distorted discourses while reducing unconscious defences and anxiety. Because of its characteristic collaborative feature, data emerges from the interaction, exchange and dialogue between the interviewer and participants (Creswell, 2014).

Nevertheless, getting to know the factors surrounding the selection of and decision-making about what constitutes the propositions and intentions of the policies is challenging. Added to this are the varied participants operating in several spaces and layers in the policy landscape. Scârnci-Domnişoru (2013) highlights cases where the narrative interview fails in the field because there are participants who, no matter how much the researcher tries to make them recount, do not like to talk or are not willing to talk. My research primarily rests on data generated from participants, and I did not want to take unnecessary risks. I, therefore, anticipated issues and avoided pitfalls. Following my reflection on the growing agenda for decolonising research, I did not consider only dominant voices

as participants.

I had prospectively identified 19 participants across the multiple categories of participants around four policy-shaping categories (formal policymakers and implementers of ICTE, consultants from international agencies, schoolteachers and managers, opinion leaders such as the Parents Teachers Association (PTA) and industry) to yield rich enough data for theorisation. Refer to Appendix 3 for the categorisation and selection of policy-shapers across the ICTE policies. It is noted that I relied on only one member of the Parent Teachers' Association of a school and two industry representatives for a critical interpretation of ICTE policy. earth

I literally came across most of my participants by virtue of my work, which exceptionally helped me gain access. Both my professional and social networks helped me reach out to teachers and Headmasters. I contacted all of them by phone, and set appointments followed by formal emails. In a few cases, I interacted with them (either face-to-face or on the phone) to answer their queries about the research, its objectives and the procedures to be followed prior to them giving their consent to participate. They generally agreed to dedicate around two hours per interview despite their respective work and family commitments. Though it would have been most practical to conduct the meetings away from the office to ensure the total concentration of the participants and distraction-free interviews, this was not always possible. To provide participants with a familiar environment to increase their comfort and the likelihood of attaining high-quality information from a relaxed interaction, I went by the choice of venue they proposed. I realised that this choice paid off when I immersed myself into the rich data transcriptions and started analysing the data. My participants also demonstrated professionalism and engagement by dedicating their time and full attention to the meeting.

I expected to elicit thick data from the participants I had selected. In most cases, two meetings were needed because some matters were still not tackled in the first encounter. Our relationship evolved as we developed familiarity with each other as well as with the nature of the topic in a new set-up. I could not afford to miss out on any conversation when so much effort had been dedicated by both the researcher and the researched to generating rich data. After obtaining the formal consent from the participants (Appendix 4), I used a voice recorder to avoid the loss of valuable data. A backup voice recording was kept as a contingency. I noted down the observations and the interactions. The interviews were conducted between May 2019 and January 2020.

Eventually, this study brought together 15 participants who had a significant contribution to deepening the understanding of ICTE policy development in Mauritius. Table 4.1 provides some information on their biographies. It was important for me to prioritise the protection of my participants' confidentiality and privacy, particularly in small and specific contexts where participants may be easily identifiable.

No.	Pseudo name	Participants' profile
1.	Sid	He served as Minister of Education for many consecutive terms. He has been a prominent figure during his tenure of 30 years contributing to policy. He has also served many international agencies in high level positions.
2.	Rajesh	High level administrative bureaucrat with more than 40 years of working experience. He contributes to education reforms since more than 30 years.
3.	Eric	High level technical bureaucrat with more than 25 years of working experience. He has been contributing to various education policies including ICTE policies.
4.	Victor	He started his career as a teacher and retired as a Technical bureaucrat. He worked for more than 40 years, mainly at the Ministry of Education. He has been contributing to policy since 1995.
5.	Perna	She is an ICT expert with more than 20 years of working experience. She is in the educational bureaucracy for more than 3 years.
6.	Virendra	He has around 40 years of working experience starting as a teacher, to a high-level bureaucrat. He is located outside the mainstream policymaking structure but has been contributing to education policies. He is directly involved in the training of teachers and implementing education policy, including ICTE.
7.	Allen	He has more than 25 years of experience in policy development and providing technical advice and support to a range of national and international bodies (including international agencies) regarding educational planning, uses of educational technology and distance education. He provides his services for a range of project activities across several African countries and in Asia.
8.	Krishna	He has been a primary school teacher for more than 35 years and trade unionist for more than 10 years. He has been contributing to education policy for more than 10 years.
9.	Vijay	He is the head of a school after serving for many years as a teacher. He has more than 40 years of working experience. He has never been involved in the development of any education

No.	Pseudo name	Participants' profile
		policy but tries to ensure that the directives of Ministry are followed.
10.	Akshay	He has been leading the implementation of ICTE in schools. He investigates pedagogical uses of hardware and software considering the contextual landscape of schools over the island.
11.	Benoit	He has wide experience in training of teachers and heads of schools to use ICT. He writes ICT textbook for teachers to use in classrooms.
12.	Saanvi	She has around 25 years of teaching experience and is looking forward to being promoted to Head of School. She provides private tuition to students. She has followed training on use of interactive white board but has not been involved in policy development.
13.	Prakash	He has 15 years of teaching experience. He has been contributing to the Tablet and Sankore projects.
14.	Ganesh	He is director of an ICT multinational company since more than 20 years whose head office is located in a developed country and whose main objective is to make profit. He has been the voice of the ICT industry. He is highly active in linking education and industry to have the right skills for enterprises.
15.	Lakshmi	She is the parent of 2 children who are in primary school. She is active as an Executive member of PTA. She trains teachers, develops digital learning resources and designs training for key school personnel.

*Table 4.1: Participants' biographies*

After the interview, the transcriptions of the recording were closely scrutinised and compared with data derived from the review of the ICTE policies. I elaborate on my involvement in conducting the interviews below.

Narrative interviews turned into life-story biographical interviews about experienced moments and individual practices (Scârnecki-Domnişoru, 2013). I basically leveraged the collaborative feature of this method to enable the co-construction of the participants' understanding of ICTE policy development (Miller & Crabtree, 1999). Wengraf (2001, p. 119) describes the "biographic–narrative–interpretative interviewing method" comprising three sub-sessions I used for guidance. Appendix 5 was designed to capture biographical information, namely gender, age, family status, and professional history. This was done prior to the meeting as far as possible.

Firstly, I asked a single initial question about the participant's career journey, picking up responses from the biographical form and their role in policy-shaping. The questions were all formulated in a way to trigger narration and generate data. Semi-structured narrative interviews can be useful for exploring complex or sensitive topics (in this case ICTE), as they allow the participants to share their experiences in their own words and in a way that feels comfortable for them (Riessman, 2008). They can also provide rich, detailed data that can be analysed for patterns and themes. The co-construction was possible when the questions were introduced as prompts that produced narratives rather than following a detailed list of specific predetermined questions to be answered systematically. I opened spaces to critique positions of power and dominant culture in policymaking in an atmosphere of trust. Secondly, following the first narrative accounts, I asked open-ended questions relating to topics that the participants brought up but then did not specifically elaborate upon. The transition to semi-structured interviews was made by building bridges coming from the immanent questions to the questions in the interview guide (Scheibelhofer, 2008). Open-ended semi-structured interview questions in Appendix 6 triggered reflection and a rich description of their perspectives. As a strategy, semi-structured interviews underlay the narrative to ensure the objectives of the research were subtly met within a conversational structure. I kept the questions open and, at the same time, kept the participants orientated to the substance of the phenomenon being studied (van Manen, 1997). At all times, I remained alert to inconsistencies, contradictions and conflicts, as well as changes in emotional tone (intonations and emphasis), body language and avoidances before and after the interviews.

Thirdly, I asked for further stories about the themes tackled in the initial narration, following the order in which they were dealt with and resorting to the participant's words. Other topics of interest emerged, which were then exploited. I consequently picked up areas and themes that arose from the narratives to further explore events around policy development and the social context (Mroz & Letts, 2008). I shared extracts of ICTE policies (Appendix 7) with the participants to refresh their memories. This allowed them to engage deeply in the conversations. A few participants willingly provided the contact details of other people whose contribution, according to them, could add value to this research.

This naturalistic setting brought about a conversational tone to the interactions rather than the monotonous experience of a 'questions and answers' format. The detailed narrative account of the participants' perspectives of ICTE policy development was recorded sequentially as the biographical data assisted in constructing the narrative case study. Narratives emerged in a flexible dialogic naturalistic state (Vandermause & Fleming, 2011). This approach ensured systematicity in not only the method but also fluidity for a narration to yield rich data about the phenomenon under the research lens.

Eliciting narratives tendered participants the space to express themselves, and I went with the flow while also being attentive to my research questions. This technique did not impose strict discourse guidelines on the participants but encouraged them to be the ones who decided what and how to recount (Miller, 2000). During the conversations, policy-shapers were free to choose from an array of issues and subjects they wished to engage with and “create at least an illusion of an opportunity to dodge problematic or sensitive topics” (Gibton, 2016, p. 92). Such open conversations allowed sensitive matters, to a certain extent, combine within other subjects. These were unpacked in the analysis phase. The interviews were illuminating as the participants’ unique detailed, and vivid descriptions were accessed efficiently. This would not have been possible through other research methods and techniques (Scârneci-Domnişoru, 2013).

#### **4.6.5. Use of visual methods to activate participants’ engagement**

Typically, participants high in the hierarchical configuration attempted to shape the agenda of the interviews because they were used to leading meetings. Amory (2007, 2010) explains that it is not about technology but ideology. Accessing ideologies merely through interviews of those policy-shapers, who generally command and control, or those at the other extreme is a challenge. It was, therefore, necessary to mobilise evocative non-textual research strategies, supported by visual methods, to enhance the participatory feature of this research to generate rich data by making space for an interactive exchange for the co-creation of the narrative text. Besides, the use of a mix of methods reflects a rejection of standardised modes of knowledge production. The need to activate the participants’ interest, engagement and motivation was felt. Visual research helped to build rapport, create a sense of trust for the sharing of their perspectives, and produce an active space for participation.

Given the historical nature of this research, visual stimuli are complementary in the sense that they increase recall of past experiences and thereby assist in probing into uncharted territory to access the deeper subconscious aspects (Harper, 2002). They also stimulate latent memory, reducing areas of misunderstanding; eliciting comprehensive accounts of ideas, values and beliefs; and connecting core definitions of the self to society, culture and history (Jordan et al., 2009) – aspects fundamental to this study. The use of visual modes of meaning has been spurred by Linda Smith as one of the participatory approaches to strengthen decolonisation scholarship (Barnes, 2018). It takes reflections to deeper layers of thinking and helps build a rapport with participants, given the complex dynamics at play. My intention was to provide participants with virtual cues to elicit responses to obtain an in-depth understanding of their meaning and make sense of their perspectives. This would lead to a

better insight into the multi-faceted understandings of policy-shaping. I thus resorted to two sources to develop two sets of bricolages.

Firstly, I carefully selected ‘meaningful’ extracts and quotes from the ICTE policies to trigger in-depth discussions about their roles and perspectives. Secondly, I used the Google search engine ‘images’ functionality to deliberately select 10 provocative pictures that I thought would resonate with the participants’ historical narrative experience to bring to the fore interpretations that were based on otherwise-invisible assumptions. I used the schedule for the choice of pictures presented in Appendix 8. I requested participants to choose 3 out of the 10 pictures that resonated with their perspectives of ICTE policies. They described why they selected the three pictures and why they did not select the other seven.

The “narrative methodological position” (Stanczak, 2007, p. 11) of the visual research presented an engaging experience to recall and narrate events, giving attention to the participants’ thoughts and perspectives in a relaxed atmosphere. This technique evoked “information, feelings, and memories that are due to the photograph’s particular form of representation” (Harper, 2002, pp. 13-26). Each participant took an active role in bringing forth his/her own opinions, experiences, biases and understandings of his/her interpretation of the pictures in this set up. While I had thought that I would not encounter intense emotional experiences in my study, one of the participants became emotional when he chose a picture of black children in rags being handed over tablets by a white hand. Another participant was passionate when asked about his role model, whom he indicated was his mother. The use of photos increases participant-researcher interaction (Harper, 2002), giving space for follow-up questions and creating rich narratives that ultimately enhance data quality, validity and research findings (Liebenberg, 2009). These were achieved in my study. Refer to Appendix 9 for an exemplar of Allen’s interview transcript.

#### **4.6.6. Ethical considerations**

I realised that the inherent fluidity and flexibility of this research leave little room for the researcher to anticipate ethical issues. Yet, it is the responsibility of the researcher to predict potential stress or harm that may be caused to participants as a consequence of the research (Schwandt, 2007). I acknowledge that I was privileged to have access not only to confidential information but also entry into the space of policymakers and shapers who trusted me. This would not have been possible without their prior consent. I conducted one-to-one face-to-face interviews, personally acting as an instrument for this study. I recorded the interviews with their consent and transcribed the interviews for analysis purposes. I password-protected my personal laptop. I made it a point to protect the

autonomy of my participants using an informed consent form. They also had the freedom to choose a language they were comfortable expressing themselves in and decide the venue for the meeting at their convenience.

I made it a point not to act or make them act in a way that could diminish their self-respect or cause them to experience shame, embarrassment or regret. Special attention was taken not to expose my participants to questions which may be experienced as stressful or upsetting; not to use procedures which may have unpleasant or harmful side effects; nor use stimuli, tasks or procedures which may be experienced as stressful, noxious or unpleasant. In all circumstances, the interviews remained confidential and ascribing quotes and opinions to specific persons was avoided. Pseudonyms have been used to conceal the identity of participants, especially as most of them (and me too) share the same context.

#### **4.7. Strategies for data analysis and interpretation**

My interest is in foregrounding the perspectives of shapers of ICTE policies and understanding how and why these perspectives emerged in the way they did. Keeping this focus, the analysis was conducted on three levels. Firstly, I developed typologies to categorise policy-shapers as a collective conceptualisation of varied vantages rather than as individuals. Secondly, I grouped themes that emanated from the data. Thirdly, I engaged in the theoretical analysis, which either coheres with or extends or contests the theoretical framework as elaborated in chapter 3. I was systematic in my approach to preparing the data.

##### **4.7.1. Preparing the data**

All face-to-face interviews were transcribed. The interview in Kreol Morisien was translated into English and transcribed. These transcriptions were done verbatim, recording all pauses, emotional utterances and modifications in tone and strength of voice. Each participant had one to two interview transcriptions, for which each question (in bold) and answer (normal font) was neatly prepared for inputting notes. Each transcript was coded for the dates of interviews, the number of interviews, the types of participants (teacher, union, administrator, ...). A separate coding sheet was kept with the details of the codes used. Once the 15 interviews had been prepared in this way, the data was ready for intensive reading and embarking on the analysis phase.

I took steps to become more aware and increase mindfulness of what I counted as knowledge by being more objective to diverse perspectives. I took special care not to discard information that did not conform with my immanent worldview or “constitutive blindness” (Chiumbu, 2017, p. 2) or process knowledge that only confirmed my views, thereby keeping in check any unconscious bias. I engaged in a dialogue with my participants without assuming that others experienced the world as I did and made sense of the world in the same way. I used critical methods to discuss to and fro with my participants to co-construct interpretations and delve deeper into their ideologies.

#### **4.7.2. Untangling the raw data**

This section discusses the inductive and descriptive data analysis process adopted in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The first level of analysis includes the preparation and open and axial coding, where data were regrouped in relation to their similitude of perspectives. This activity embodied different ways of working with the data combined with each other and was iterative until categories were developed (Mey & Mruck, 2011). Chapter 5 depicts the multiple manoeuvres for grouping data and naming the relationships amongst the derived categories.

##### ***Open-coding***

The next step was open-coding on each participant transcript, where the data was categorised according to the themes, issues and sub-categories emerging from the verbatim record. The first interview transcript of the first participant was read thoroughly and recurrently to familiarise myself with the intricate details. Secondly, I meticulously did a line-by-line analysis, highlighting words and phrases, to understand what was going on in the data transcript and to interpret what the participant was saying (Refer to Appendix 10 for Allen’s transcript with notes and thematic colour coding). This detailed reading helped thicken the data by expanding on the semantic and latent meanings, and interrogating it through sensitising questions. The recording and memoing of the emergent sub-categories were done on the transcripts using the ‘comments’ functionality of MS Word software. Thirdly, as I began noting down sub-categories and memos, I also put notes to myself as markers around issues that required corroboration with other transcripts or ICTE policies, items that required clarification or going back to the field. This was done immediately via telephone call, message and email. Once all the interview transcripts were completely open-coded, I made a synthesis of my understandings of the data on each participant separately to grasp the core ideas and make prominent dominant perspectives of the respective policy-shapers. After the information on the transcript was saturated, a similar process commenced on the transcript of the next participant but from a different category. This deliberate crisscrossing of types of participants while analysing the data constantly

disrupted my thinking during this phase. This technique yielded a heightened level of data interpretation. Caution was exercised to recognise the subtle differences in data prior to claiming saturation.

### ***Axial-coding***

Coding is an analytical process used to identify concepts, similarities and conceptual reoccurrences in data (Chun Tie, Birks & Francis, 2019). In this study, the analysis approach leaned towards a comparative and grounded theory approach to analysis. I layered critical theory, my self-created toolbox of decolonial methodologies and grounded analysis as a strategy to listen to all participants' perspectives to bring out the social justice feature of critical theory. The inductive analysis involved drawing conclusions, which indicated patterns, themes and categories of analysis originating from the data, and were not pre-determined or forced on it before data analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Generating possible sub-categories inductively from the data, working backwards and forward to associate and make sense of the data in finding a significant meaningful pattern, and grouping them into broad categories or concepts was intrinsic to this work (Refer to Appendix 11 for an extract of Ganesh's transcript). Similar and related sub-categories were grouped under broad categories. Related phenomena and the trends in causality links underpinned the formation of the axial codes. These axial codes were linked to show patterns across particular contexts, actions and consequences (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2011). For my own understanding and meaning-making, I represented the axial coding in a causal loop diagram with connecting lines that made visible the complex relationships. This was summarised in a table showing all the sub-categories that culminated in broad typologies that transcended (blurred) boundaries.

The policy-shaper typologies emerged from an abstraction of the analysis of the data. It is acknowledged that these typologies were not an *a priori* categorisation established to guide the data production plan. The typologies are a consequence of an analysis of the recurrent thematic clusters that emerged when engaging the understanding of the ways in which individuals exercised their policy-shaping roles. One needs to distinguish the *theoretical sampling* of the field participants which looked at a broad stakeholders' representation (a methodological design issue) which was later refined post the analysis (*ex post facto*) to depict typologies of policy involvement processes of various stakeholders (a data analytical issue). The sample became refined through examination of the typologies related to the phenomenon of the study. This informed the decision to locate the typologies after the methodological design chapter. The development of typologies of policy-shapers is comprehensively discussed in chapter 5.

### **4.7.3. Thematic analysis**

Level 1 analysis underpinned further abstraction of data in three iterative stages. Firstly, the 15 narratives were representative of a newly constructed ‘data set’ and subjected to another form of data analysis. Axial coding was used to identify recurring themes across the descriptive analysis as the data set. I ensured a more comprehensive and coherent understanding of the data collected (Cresswell, 1998, 2005; Cresswell & Poth, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Themes with commonalities and relevant relationships were grouped to enable greater levels of abstraction of the data to answer the research questions. Secondly, similarities in thematic analysis across the cases were grouped to reflect consistencies across the seemingly varied perspectives. However, a third form of analysis was conducted to examine additional information from cases that presented narratives outside the norm. Lieberman (2005) argues that identifying outlier cases can yield a widening of the theory or, perhaps, new theories with broader relevance. Represented with the cross-case and outlier-case analysis was a deliberative form of data analysis for richer meaning-making.

### **4.7.4. Dialogue with the extant literature**

In the final analysis process, the themes were juxtaposed with the theoretical lens (Refer to Appendix 12 for the table on engaging with the theoretical lens). The lens comprised primarily constructs from postcolonial theory and policymaking theories. Overlaps between the theories were noted and are depicted in Figure 3.3 in the previous chapter. This analysis offered an opportunity to identify new aspects of phenomena at a more abstract level set against the extant literature. I then determined whether the new constructs of comparative analysis either confirmed what the literature says or extended it. This led to the construction of appropriate conclusions on the phenomenon under study that illustrates the contribution to knowledge and contextual, methodological and theoretical offerings and insights.

The concept “conscientizacao”<sup>61</sup> had immediate appeal to Freire, that reflected in his pedagogical theory (Freire, 1974). According to Smith, conscientisation is “a developmental process which can be divided into three distinct stages: magical, naïve, and critical consciousness” (1976, p. 41-42 in Roberts (2000)). Immersed in this process, I underwent a movement towards ‘critical’ consciousness. While listening to the interviews, I tended to sympathise with the participants. I also saw policymaking within an existing social system as a major task. In engaging with theory, I grappled with understanding the data through the lens of a transformation from the oppressive social structures

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<sup>61</sup> The original Portuguese term for ‘conscientisation’ is ‘conscientizacao’.

(Freire, 1976 in Gerhardt, 1993). I raised 'above' the data to see more clearly.

#### **4.8. Validity, reliability and rigour across the research process**

As a qualitative researcher, I conducted the study in its natural settings, attempting to interpret policy-shapers' constructions of policy development. However, without rigour, the research would have lost its worth. Also, one of the main issues in qualitative research is the validity of the researcher as an instrument of data generation. I adopted a set of strategies and methods in view of ensuring validity, reliability and rigour in the study. Participation in the study was purely voluntary, and I preserved policy-shapers' anonymity in all circumstances. I explained to the participants that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time. I piloted the instruments. I did my best to refine them to ensure I asked the right questions that captured what was intended. A trustworthy and cordial relationship was built with the participants as they engaged in conversations with commitment and openness.

My dual identification could raise questions about reliability, subjectivity and analytical bias in such a study. However, Patton (2002) supports the notion of the researcher's involvement and immersion in the research. I was nevertheless careful about the ethnographic dazzle (Fox, 1989) tendency, which could have distracted me from embarking upon more subtle comparisons and meaning-making and led to drawing mere simplistic causal relationships. I requested insiders to policy-shaping to verify any judgements before finalising conclusions (Tobin, Wu & Davidson, 1989). I conducted member checks with all the participants to obtain their views about various aspects of the research process and the data set about them. I requested them to verify the accuracy of the transcripts.

To ensure validity and accuracy, I also elicited their thoughts and responses to the interpretations. Iterative questioning was undertaken to locate any discrepancies in the interpretation and obtain clarity. This technique helped the participants recall past events given the study's retrospective nature. However, Louisy (1997) describes tensions concerning being an insider-researcher given that most people know each other. I strictly followed all ethics procedures. I discussed the specifics of audience and confidentiality after data generation, and allowed participants to know what their data would become. Further, I informed them how they would be represented in the final report.

Both Bowen (2009) and O'Leary (2014) emphasise the importance of thoroughly evaluating and investigating the subjectivity of documents and the researcher's understanding of the data in order to preserve the credibility of the research. I employed multiple sources of data, methods, techniques and stages of data production that added to the credibility of the study. The integration of visual data (set of 10 pictures and bricolage of extracts from ICTE policies) provided multiple sources of evidence, and hence strengthened the validity of the study. Moreover, visual stimuli assisted in bringing out those inside voices increased recall of past experiences and encouraged freely sharing anecdotes, thereby allowing me to probe deeper and generate rich data and insights (Harper, 2002).

Transferability of findings is not possible in the paradigm in which the study is located, but interpretation and description are context specific. However, major learnings from this study are evidently transferable to other spaces. The intention was to generate a thick description and understanding, which drills deep into the subject with a relatively small number of participants. Besides, the sources of data and within-method audit trail and acknowledging researcher subjectivity were used to increase the trustworthiness of inferences and confirm the validity of the process. The transcribed interviews and documents were analysed for substantiation and converging evidence to improve credibility (Bowen, 2009). The laborious exercise paid off.

#### **4.9. Methodological challenges and lessons learnt**

In certain cases, I had to contend with inadequate information due to the absence of certain key informants, one because of death and a few others because of difficulty in recollecting past information from memory. In one instance, a participant could not honour his initial commitment to participate in the second interview. I had to discard the interview. However, collectively, the interviews yielded rich insights into ICTE policy development.

The above situations did not lead to restarting the sampling process since I had already identified 19 participants having the potential to yield insights as rich information sources (Patton, 2002). Thus, there was no shrinking of data concerning the possible number of participants. Besides, this method of inquiry does not require quantity but rather quality of data, which I successfully generated.

Reconstructing the past could have led to erroneous results if I had not been cautious about using thoughtful strategies. I ensured that the various participants were involved in developing at least one or two policies. During the conversations, a few participants romanticised their role or own cause as policy-shapers in the position of power and control. Those who felt side-lined demonstrated a reproving attitude towards the ICTE policies and elite shapers. To counterbalance these issues, I

interviewed a range of policy-shapers across the policy-shaping continuum. The use of visual prompts helped to facilitate dialogue for greater involvement of participants, build rapport and trust, build bridges and generate valuable data for meaning-making. It was stimulating to note the interest they derived during the interview and participation in the exercises. The inclusion of shapers who did not consider themselves as shapers of policies brought to the research non-colonial sources that strengthened the research agenda. It helped shift power imbalances because I made the deliberate choice to engage both dominant and alternative views.

The aim of the research was to explore the constructions of policy-shapers' of ICTE policies, which required a clear demarcation of 'lives as lived', 'lives as told' and 'lives as experienced' (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013). This research was concerned with lives as told that were processed through policymakers' own interpretations that shaped policy and were put to text as lives as written (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). Additionally, collective memories of the past are partly determined by present contexts as current beliefs, feelings, experiences, interests and aspirations shape various interpretations and re-interpretations of the past. I was also challenged by the formation of layers of new experiences that could have augmented the body of memory and moulded the shapers' memories of the past (Halbwachs, 1980). A few interviewees faced difficulties with in-depth recollection of what these policy development processes entailed, but I was more interested in their perspectives. The review of policies helpful because it provided a reminiscence of the events. I relied on iterative digging to refresh their memories of the events. The retrospective research could have also faced the challenge of historical presentism whereby the participants might have tended to apply contemporary moral judgements and worldviews to those of the past. Through member checks and thick descriptions, I attempted to approach the past and the present on their own terms.

#### **4.10. Synthesis of chapter**

In this chapter, the research design and methodological approaches were justified and discussed in depth. The critical paradigm and the case study approach linked to decolonised research methods formed the substance analysis that will ensue in the following chapters. Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, collectively constitute Section II of the thesis. The highpoints in the analysis of the data generated through the multiple complementary approaches are discussed in these 5 chapters. The inbuilt flexibility and fluidity in the whole process of data generation and analysis proved to be powerful to reach out to those perspectives of shapers policy who have positions of power and those who are excluded from the policy-shaping processes.

## SECTION 2: VOICES FROM THE FIELD

### Orientation to emergent typologies of policy-shapers

Section 1 of the thesis set out the foundational platform to conduct the research.

Engagement in the field and immersion in the data led to unforeseen revelations and confrontations that underpinned the analysis. Section 2 reflects the participants' multiple perspectives. However, to develop a meaningful and adequate account of the data analysis, in this section, I shift from repetitive reporting on individual participants. Instead, I assemble similar cognate categories of participants involved in this study. These typologies emerged from repeated reading in a cross-comparative analysis of the raw data, noting patterns across groups of participants who shared similar points of views concerning policy-shaping. The initial open coding of the raw data enabled axial coding to identify common trends. These axial codes were then subjected to further abstraction to establish recurring categories in the analysed data. The typologies thus represent an abstraction from the field as part of the grounded analysis approach, remaining true to individual voices from the field, yet aggregating them into comparable synthetic trends (Chun Tie, Birks & Francis, 2019; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). They facilitate the portrayal of the complexities of the policy-shapers' worldviews. The emergent heuristic constructs are represented as 'Negotiators', 'Influencers', 'Legitimisers', 'Enactors' and 'Excluded voices'. While the typologies are abstractions that assist a theoretical exploration of the phenomenon under study, divergences within the category are apparent. This aggregation and disaggregation of the typology reflect the nuanced complex perspectives of policy-shaping. which is captured in these post-fieldwork stages.. It is this complexity of aggregation and divergences within and across the typologies that I aim to capture in representing these overarching typologies. In this grounded analytical approach, I deliberately resist imposing the initial theoretical lens to allow the analysis to be 'data-driven', rather than 'theory-driven' (See further elaboration in chapter 5). I revert to a dialogue with the initial theoretical lens later in chapter 9, noting that grounded theory cannot completely prevent the researcher from being implicated in the codes, categories and themes she sees in the field.

The deployment of an organising tool extended the reading of the narratives from an individual to a collective conceptualisation of different perspectives. Loose, complex policy-shaping issues from the transcripts were knitted together to assist the interpretation of the policy-shapers' perspectives of the making of ICTE policies within the research context. The aim of the typologies is not to pigeonhole the participants' views in categorical terms because the data showed that paradoxes and contradictions exist even within a dominant worldview arising from the participants' values, beliefs, habits, and norms. This means that, in assigning the participants to one category, they are not automatically excluded from others. Indeed, the boundaries cannot be tightly defined. Fluidity, rather than definitive absolutes infuse my analysis.

Moreover, the policy-shaping space is percolated by power and power relations. In such a terrain, ICTE policy-shapers travel checkered multi-layered features of optimism, conflict, uncertainty, ambiguity, contradiction, compromise and marginalisation. Alternative constructs and imaginations are thus required to subvert the dominant discourse of power relations in the policy-shaping space. This supports the notion that power in itself is not a negative force of imposition. It can also be exercised to activate agendas that coincide productively with personal, historical, social, cultural and ideological forces. Furthermore, local and international political and economic forces are reflected within the typologies. This is portrayed by the complexities embedded in the constructs that represent the policy-shapers' perspectives. The typologies thus offer a systematic foundation to organise key concepts, and to compare cases and frame the argumentative analysis in the chapters. The distinctions, overlaps and blurring in the typologies are carried through the entire analysis.

For ease of readability, the typologies are presented separately supported by data in chapters 6, 7 and 8. The order of the chapters replicates the hierarchical top-down order of the current paradigm of educational change in Mauritius and many parts of the world. The analysis questions whether, nevertheless, each typology exercises different levels and kinds of assertive power in different spaces, revealing new conceptions of the conventional hierarchies.

Chapter 5 serves as a 'pre-read' to understand *the typological approach* to represent policy-shapers' perspectives. It acts as a bridge to explain the introduction of the five representational *category holders*: 'Negotiators', 'Influencers', 'Legitimisers', 'Enactors' and 'Excluded voices'.

Chapter 6 features 'Negotiators', 'Influencers' and 'Legitimisers' of policies. It depicts how power is exerted and negotiated to influence and seek legitimation within a dynamic web of interacting forces that transcend macro- and meso-levels.

Chapter 7 describes how ‘Enactors’ act as levers to activate or not Negotiators, Influencers and Legitimisers’ agenda.

Chapter 8 gives a voice to the silenced, weakened and abandoned shapers of the ICT education policy landscape to depict them to a wider audience.

To aid readability, direct quotations from the participants are in italics in the chapters.

While at times I had to include questions I asked in the quotations, to give prominence to the participant’s voice, I grey out my voice. Some quotations have also been condensed so as to emphasise excerpts that illustrate the argument. Bayat (2020) found that elliptical structures improve the reader’s comprehension of narrative text. Therefore, I insert an ellipsis (...) where I use only a quotation section to indicate that some words have been intentionally omitted. This also avoids distracting the reader with less relevant text. In addition, I did not present the pictures and respective participants’ reactions to them as their responses aided in the development and validation of themes and concepts that emerged from the data. The pictures provided a stimulus to activate the subsequent interviews providing insights into the thinking of the participants before the commencement of the interview. Furthermore, the visual methodology also provided an orienting device for the participants to focus their responses on the topics being probed in the subsequent interviews. However, the main constituted data set was the transcripts of the interviews. It is possible that further analysis of the visual data could constitute further separate analysis providing additional layers of information and meaning to the research findings. The visual data could have helped to corroborate the perspectives of participants in a more tangible and concrete way. The validity of the data was achieved through the multiple iterative engagements in interviews with the participants on at least two occasions. However, the richness of the semi-structured interview transcripts provided adequate data for the interrogation of the phenomenon of the study.

# CHAPTER 5

## Typologies of policy-shapers

### 5.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the overarching strategy and instruments employed to produce data on policy-shapers' worldviews through the lens of ICT in education. This chapter discusses the strategy adopted to represent the analysed data. An initial step in theorising is the creation of typologies of phenomena. I chose a typology of abstractions to bring together different groups of participants and present the richness of the fieldwork. The typologies are simultaneously constituted in multiple, nested spaces of varying scale within the policy-shaping context. They embed nuanced elements from each of the different typologies that make explicit the broader philosophical ideas they espouse. The constituencies within each typology are extensively discussed in the five sub-sections of this chapter, laying the foundation for the forthcoming chapters. The following typologies emerged from the aggregation of the fieldwork data through a rigorous process:

- The Negotiator
- The Influencer
- The Legitimiser
- The Enactor and
- The Excluded voice.

Whilst Table 4.1 provided the profiles of the 15 participants (prior to generation of data), Table 5.1 depicts the thematisation and abstraction of policy-shapers that is driven from the field data.

Pseudo name	Superordinate typology and Micro-typology	Characteristics of the typologies abstracted from fieldwork
<b>Promoters</b>		
1. Sid	Negotiators <i>[Political Negotiator]</i>	-Operate at systemic level. -Aim to influence decision-making processes and seek legitimisation from other policy-shapers who are strategically positioned at macro, meso- and even micro-institutional levels.
2. Rajesh	Influencers	-Become early adopters of reform, new technologies or ideas and become almost instant advocates.
3. Eric		
4. Victor		

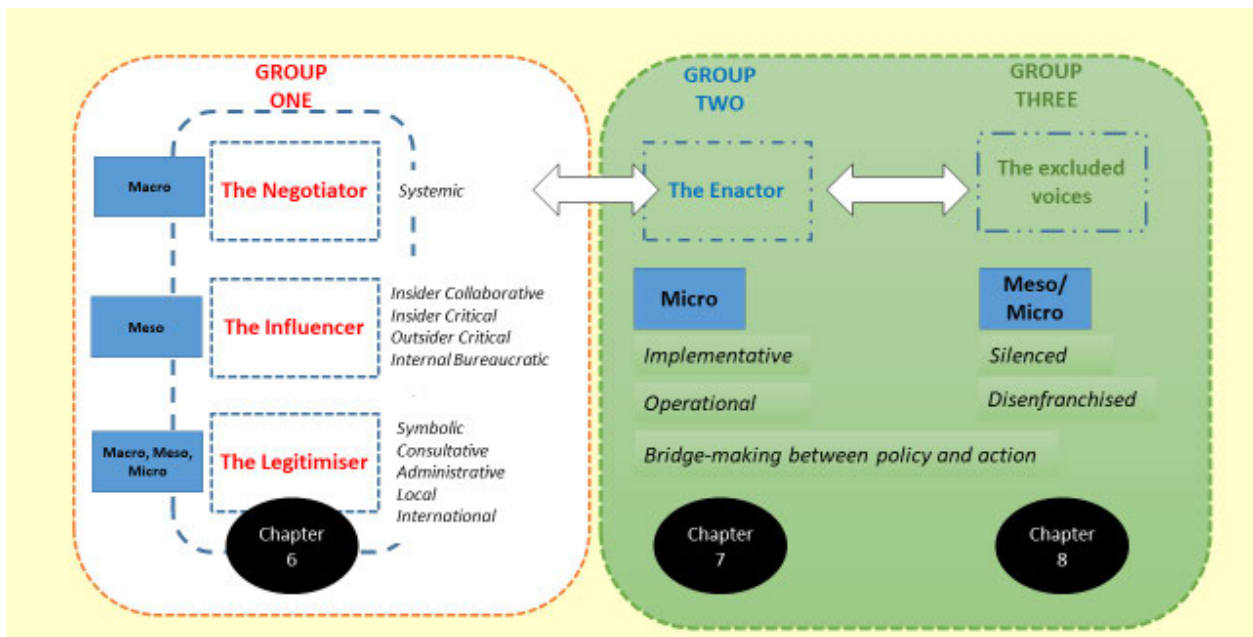
<b>Pseudo name</b>	<b>Superordinate typology and Micro-typology</b>	<b>Characteristics of the typologies abstracted from fieldwork</b>
5. Virendra	[ <i>Insider bureaucratic Influencer, Insider collaborative Influencer, Outsider critical Influencer, Insider critical Influencer</i> ]	-Exert influence to garner support from dominant views to push their agenda. - Direct the nature of the broader ethos of implementation of policy iteration and enactment.
6. Prerna		
<b>Legitimisers</b>		
7. Allen	Legitimisers  [ <i>Symbolic Legitimiser, Consultative Legitimiser, Administrative Legitimiser</i> ]	-Serve to formalise and universalise the ICTE policy. - Do not diagnose or question the assumptions underlying a decision but facilitate implementation by symbolically endorsing it for deployment.
8. Krishna		
9. Vijay		
<b>Enactors</b>		
10. Akshay	Enactors  [ <i>Implementative Enactor, bridge-maker between policy and action, Operational Enactors (non-ICT)</i> ]	-Act as key connections between policy and practice. -Bridge Negotiators' policy expectations to render a policy operational. - Seldom involved in dialogue around policymaking. - Are highly implicated in shaping policy in practice.
11. Saanvi		
12. Benoit		
13. Prakash		
<b>Self-proclaimed Excluded voices</b>		
14. Ganesh	'Excluded voices'  [ <i>Disenfranchised voice, silenced voice</i> ]	-Have a feeling that their voices are disenfranchised from the policy processes or even silenced. -Seldom have resources to enable their voices to be heard on how policies that affect them are shaped, and are considered mere recipients of policy.
15. Lakshmi		

Table 5.1: Reshuffling of the 15 participants according to emergent typologies

The typologies Negotiator, Influencer and Legitimiser, coined as *Promoters* are discussed in one chapter due to the interrelatedness and embeddedness of their emergent constructs about policy development. They share many similarities, and one could also conceptualise them as a single superordinate typology with three facets. Chapter 6 brings together the *complex interplay* of relationships amongst Negotiators, Influencers and Legitimisers.

The typologies *Enactor and Excluded voice* have somewhat sharper boundaries. However, there are major overlapping characteristics between the two. From a different perspective, Enactors have been found to shape policy through their interpretations and practices even though they might have been on the periphery of the formal policymaking space. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, I have an intrinsic ethical responsibility to make visible those excluded as a separate typology to articulate their voices in a post-colonial policy-shaping discourse. Therefore, the Enactor and the Excluded voice are discussed separately in chapters 7 and 8, respectively. Figure 5.1 presents the architecture of the chapters (6, 7 and 8) that follow for the three groups of superordinate typologies.

The microtypologies nested in the data are foregrounded in the diagram.



**Figure 5.1:** A typological approach to representing the analysis

## 5.2. Overview of chapter

This chapter explains how the analysed data will be represented. It is important to make sense of the raw data. The *process of abstracting* the most salient features from their immense detail and complexity is explained in section 5.3. Although this representational strategy underpins the development of a systematic analysis of the phenomenon, it is not free from shortcomings and criticism. These issues are dealt with in the same section. Being aware of these underlying issues, I deeply and expansively define the *characteristics of the typologies* to gain a better understanding of the data analysis.

Lastly, section 5.4 provides a synthesis of the chapter prior to operationalising the five typologies.

### **5.3. Assembling cognate categories for interpretation of policy-shapers' views**

The building block for data abstraction to explain the phenomenon is a presentation of the depth and richness of the qualitative interviews. I teased out constructs from the transcripts of interviews with participants of different origins and perspectives through iterative reading to develop the typologies. Doty and Glick (1994) refer to a typology as conceptually derived interrelated sets of complex constructs. This is done, however, with a theoretical orientation.

Dey (2003) asserts that categorisation through recurring constructs enhances rigour by digging deep to unravel rich findings. Categorisation of themes assists in arranging constructs into multi-dimensional typologies based on their similarities, differences, and relationships to one another determined by or inferred from, their most defining characteristics (Chrisman, Hofer & Boulton, 1988; McKelvey, 1982, 2022). Using a grounded and a priori analytical approach enabled the development of the typologies, allowing the data to speak for itself through an iterative inductive process. The repertoire of heuristic typologies of policy-shapers is central to the study because they lay the foundation for theory building. While working with the large volume of data, discourses of policy-shaping and references to the theoretical frame, were temporarily suspended.

I was in constant conversation with the data for meaning-making with the aim of 'telling the story' and preserving the contextual meaning. The hope was that the rich voices of the significant shapers of policy would be expansively represented through recurrent constructs that are not discreet but overlap and intersect with one another in multiple ways. Stake advances that "what results may be the case's own story, but the report will be the researcher's dressing of the case's own story" (2003, p.144). This typological approach served as an organising frame for grouping policy-shapers irrespective of their positions or the space within which they operate. In line with this approach, I developed thematic categories through systematic open and axial coding that culminated in the development of the typologies.

Gaining familiarity with the data was the point of departure. An iterative process of rethinking, stimulating ideas and developing new lines of inquiry ensued (Dey, 2003). To come up with the set of five typologies, the data was read in an iterative way for fine-grained analysis. Salient, recurrent and poignant responses from participants were identified to make explicit their emergent and dominant characteristics. The analysis was annotated by asking questions about the data to prepare the ground for a more systematic and thorough exploration. In certain cases, features that were essential for analysis were isolated and interrogated by drawing on relevant policy issues, the exercise of power or marginalisation or even what was not said but implied. The answers to the familiar series

of 'who', 'what', 'where', 'how' and 'why' questions opened up insightful avenues to explore the data further with an emphasis on potential themes and topics. Identifying different interpretations of the data was an integral part of the process of analysis. Throughout the analysis, I played around with ideas, trying out possibilities and making judgements. In categorising the data, judgements were made among different ways of organising the data. In linking data, judgements were made about how its varied components are related.

Through deconstruction and reconstruction of the hierarchical ordering of the policy-shapers, the identity of the participants shifted towards a redefinition to determine how they would be represented. In splitting and splicing categories, judgements were made about how categories could be linked and refined (Dey, 2003). In joining categories, alternative ways to integrate the data were explored. Impressions, insights and intuition that offered fresh perspectives for analysis were recorded (Dey, 2003). Using maps and causal loop diagrams assisted me in thinking more systematically, logically, and imaginatively about the data (Refer to Appendix 13). The maps also helped to offset the uni-dimensional character of the text in the transcripts emanating from varied vantage points. Driven by the data, a dialectic was developed amongst the five typologies to show how they co-mingle.

Drawing together the fragmented constructs and categories with respect to their disposition to ICT education policies resulted in the typologies. A fair degree of common sense, pragmatism, and continual adjustments were at play when refining the typologies of policy-shapers. To respect the integrity of the data, care was taken to strike a balance between a too fine-grained and narrow approach so as not to lose contextual information about the data and, at the same time, preserve its overall meaning.

Data that was marginal or not relevant to the analysis did not inform the development of typologies. The complexities of the policy-shaping processes and perspectives of the policy-shapers are reflected in the permeable repertoire of typologies. For example, within the typologies, there are differences in terms of what negotiations mean and divergent ways of thinking about what is being negotiated, whom they negotiating with, and where they negotiate. Iterative and dynamic reflections on recurrent issues around policy-shaping grounded in the data were elevated, and interconnectedness were brought to the fore. Clues were then identified and pursued until the categories under development were saturated.

The various steps taken to develop the set of comprehensive, integrated and broad typologies of policy-shapers were clearly not linear but akin to a spiral which turns through successive cycles, each at a higher level as more evidence was accumulated, and notions and connections were sharpened. Furthermore, some thematic categories were found to be nested within others.

The representation of participants was then layered onto the backdrop of the context of a highly politicised small island developing state environment. It is argued that this contextual space has definitive characteristics (Jules & Ressler, 2017a) which are not entirely deficient nor vulnerable, but also capable of recasting their connectivity with broader international environments. This form of representation thus highlights the individual in relation to a broader social and global terrain of action.

However, in using typologies, the intention was not to obscure the participants' identities. On the one hand, it can be argued that this representational device is a means to prevent any intrusion into their professional lives as part of my ethical commitment. On the other, the representational strategy of typologies allows the focus to shift from the specificity of personalities and personhoods of the fieldwork participants towards an abstraction of how they represent cognate approaches to perspectives of policy-shaping, with specific reference to policy-shaping around ICTE, and to also present an abstraction to elucidate the phenomenon under study. The participants are thus considered as emblematic of a conceptualisation of policy-shapers and policy-shaping on an abstract level. A cursory glance at the constructs could create the impression that they are insulated within these typologies, but they constitute intersecting elements across much more layered, nuanced and blurred boundaries.

For balanced representation, the data was reconstituted through a co-construction (myself and the participants' voices) using excerpts from the transcripts (italicised) to capture their essence and coherence. This enabled a reawakening of the voices of individual participants to allude to any marginalisation from the policy-shaping space. The peripheralisation of shapers was reified when participants attempted to establish how others should construe ICTE policies. By dislocating the insider-outsider binary of policy-shapers, silenced and excluded voices were heard.

The representations have the potential to unfold and deepen in the midst of, and indeed because of, further analysis. Composite characterisation of the participants helped to mediate verbatim 'raw' data threaded through an argument towards theory. The verbatim quotations from the spoken words of the participants and the way they were said were systematically selected using grounded analysis (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007; Bryman, 2008; Bryman & Bell, 2019, Creswell, 2007). The repertoire of typologies is described more fully in the sections that follow.

Whilst the above might suggest a level of detachment from the process of representation, I acknowledge that my personal theoretical lens cannot be completely divorced from the process of reconstruction of the analysis that follows in subsequent chapters. I am also a researcher who has a position and personhood within policymaking, policy-shaping processes. As a researcher, I was consciously aware of how my own perspectives were shifting during the course of the research process. I began the study with the view that my structural position within the bureaucracy of the education departmental structures would be a resource to activate an insider perspective of the world of policymaking. I soon became aware of how the shaping of policy was crafted in more than just the spaces of the bureaucracy within which I worked. I. While engaging with multiple field participants, I learnt more insightfully about from where the different kinds of power were exercised, and on whom. The representation presented below and in subsequent chapters reflects an opening away from a purely distanced reporting of the fieldwork towards engaged co-construction of entering the worldviews of the participants, myself and my wider social context.

The temporary suspension of the theoretical lens assisted in designing instruments to enable the data to drive the study in line with the research questions and beyond. The initial theoretical framework is invoked again in chapter 9.

I now discuss the five main typologies that form the overarching structuring device to report the findings from the field. The aim of presenting this descriptive yet synthetic overview of the typologies is to move the agenda to an aggregate set of typologies, whilst the specific chapters examine how they blur, overlap and co-mingle in their relationships. Figure 5.1 depicts this fluidity in the permeable dotted lines across the typologies. The dedicated chapters that follow provide more detailed references to the specific fieldwork data from which the typologies emerged. This initial representation aims to provide an overview of the range of fluid typologies. Even though it is consciously devoid of attention to the fieldwork data, this bird's eye view is deeply connected to categories that emerged from the field.

### **5.3.1. Negotiations at the political and bureaucratic leadership level**

In the forthcoming chapters, I choose the typology of ‘Negotiators’ to represent those who participate in a larger, on-going policy-shaping process in a dynamic context that transcends national boundaries. Negotiations are, therefore, intrinsic to policy-shaping, as is their influence on localised contextual spaces. The Negotiator is conceived as an embodiment of the spaces occupied by political and bureaucratic leaders. Whilst Negotiators operate at a more systemic level, they aim to influence decision-making processes and seek legitimation from other policy-shapers who are strategically positioned at macro, meso- and even micro-institutional levels. While this typology is associated with power, my analysis explores their potential and limitations in exercising full authority over the final decision-making that characterises the policy-shaping terrain.

Negotiation has the potential to shape policy outcomes and influence which policies are implemented and how. Once policy options have been identified, negotiating the policy plays an important role in identifying the one that will be regarded as legitimate and implemented by the relevant agencies and actors. Not immune from world currents, Negotiators maintain an outward gaze to develop partnerships and collaboration for policy guidance. Such endorsements pave the way for policies to translate ideas into action in the domestic space.

The Negotiator undertakes to drive the policies and mobilise support for them to stymie any potential antagonists. Within small spaces, negotiation often involves a high degree of cognitive complexity, especially when Negotiators’ intentions are hidden. By its very nature, negotiation requires compromise, which means there is no such thing as absolute power in such interactions. Yet, power serves as a central structural feature of every negotiation. More *powerful Negotiators* attempt to control negotiations. Negotiation becomes even more important when Negotiators intervene in order to overcome major hurdles that might stand in the way of realising their policy idea, e.g., prioritising high stake ICTE projects and associated approval of funds. Asymmetric patterns of power, therefore, manifest amongst those involved in negotiations. Thus, the strategies deployed by the Negotiator depend on her/his power and the dynamics of the negotiation stemming from the space within which the Negotiator resides and negotiates. Negotiators' interactions at different levels depend on positional relationships in which one actor’s assertion of control is met with acquiescence on the part of another.

Agendas tend to frame negotiations as interactions with win-win potential. Yet, they also cause trade-offs because Negotiators often find themselves in a situation of interdependence with other parties during the process of constructing policy perspectives and texts.

It is also likely that negotiations will involve intractable conflicts and intertwined problems. Negotiators are challenged in their decision-making when they have incomplete information about the other Negotiators' intentions. Above all, negotiation is a process. It involves uncovering interests, generating options and identifying commonalities between the parties. Negotiators might listen to or anticipate the opinions of easily accessible advisors, high-level bureaucrats or special interest groups. However, special interest groups such as lobbyists or donors may foreground specific interests, and advisors do not necessarily have the data or competence required to fully understand the consequences and complications. Negotiating may therefore require interdisciplinary analyses of complex issues, conditions or systems. The relative power of each party affects their ability to secure their individual goals through negotiations. These deeper forces have the potential to distort the policy process away from 'rational' decision-making or result in sub-optimal policy outcomes.

The next step is defining accountability to constituencies and the structure imposed on the process of dialogue. Negotiators are usually accountable at multiple levels to voters and the public, the media, respective political parties, sponsors and donors. Such accountability may also involve questions of legitimacy. They may also be accountable to competing interests; for example, a major donor may wish to shape a policy in a way that conflicts with the interests or values of other shapers. Besides weighing possibly contradictory interests and values, Negotiators also need to consider that they will be held accountable in different ways by a wide range of constituencies. Different constituents may also have different mindsets, which influence how they perceive and judge the negotiations. Furthermore, a Negotiator may pursue his/her own interests and values at the expense of those of his/her constituencies.

*Political negotiations* have specific characteristics that distinguish them from other kinds of negotiations, such as the primacy of the electoral cycle, which can be a game changer. While they can be symbolic at times, this can be of value to Negotiators. Negotiators in political contexts may benefit from sound performance in negotiations or perceptions thereof in intangible ways. For instance, they may gain political power and capital, receive media coverage, promote their public image or increase the likelihood of being (re)elected. *Symbolic negotiations* can be used to evoke abstract feelings of hope among other actors who are not involved in the negotiations.

### 5.3.2. Power and influence in domestic policy-shaping machinery

Influencers are persuasive policy-shapers who exert influence to garner support from dominant views to push their agenda. The typology Negotiators (discussed above) embeds a range of types. After all, negotiating policy is not restricted to large-scale systemic choices, but also encompasses an intricate series of smaller processes. I choose to label '*smaller Negotiators*' '*Influencers*'. Due to the intricacies involved, they play a role in the policy-shaping process. While, at face value, they do not seem to represent powerful authority, they influence the direction of the shaping of policymaking processes. The policy-shaping space is crowded with different kinds of '*smaller Negotiators*' who have a bearing on ICTE policies and other shapers' involvement.

Negotiation is about compromising and influencing to translate ideas recognised by outsiders so that the concept can be disseminated in local settings. Thus, Negotiators endeavour to roll out ICTE policies in a targeted space. Symbolic consultations are held even though it is unlikely that any views that are forthcoming will be considered. Chapter 6 explores how influential these Influencers are and what they influence.

Influencers may also have to apply their powers of persuasion to argue that the introduction of ICT serves the wider education purpose and is worthy of funding and capacity building. They often draw their legitimacy from shared values with macro '*bigger level*' *systemic Negotiators*. Their relationships with donor agents are worthy of further exploration. Influencing policy legitimation and adoption is the main signifier of the constructs of both the *macro-Negotiator* and the *meso-Influencer*. The interconnected interaction between these Negotiators and Influencers is evident when formal and informal networks are mobilised to limit the number of actors who may oppose the policy throughout the development process. I refer to this interconnected interactivity as an '*invisible*' or '*hidden*' power that is often not apparent to the wider public.

It can be argued that *meso-level Influencers* profess to have the pedagogical needs of pupils at heart but often pursue their own political or career interests. They do not necessarily leave a paper trail. The connection is more amorphous. Notably, the Influencer has the power to effect change without necessarily taking direct action. The power of Influencers causes significant change. They are power players who push through policy proposals, cause ideological changes, affect popular perceptions and play a non-active role, a kind of hidden power.

A distinction needs to be made between those who appear as *overt Negotiators* of policy and those who are *shapers of the policymaking ethos or culture of the environment* concerning the policy terrain. Influencers consider themselves insiders in policy-shaping. They take the stance of a powerful, influential group when they strategise, coordinate and organise policy implementation. Their proximity and accountability vis-a-vis political figures endow them with an authoritative posture towards ‘outsiders’. Internal power dynamics define the political frontiers and draw lines of inclusion and exclusion even within Influencers. However, from the perspective of ‘Influencers’, insiders merely have the authority to devolve power to marginalise or silence other shapers of policies. They perceive themselves as holding sway, ensuring that policy processes (do not) represent the multiple perspectives of other social actors. Influencers see their role as inputting localised and situated knowledges into policy-shaping processes.

The activities and impact of Influencers are felt when ideas are integrated into a broader range of supporting institutions for implementation. Accountability and control mechanisms are established to bind or restrain the set of alternative actions that an actor can consider. The chapter on the *influence of Influencers* addresses how this typology of policy-shapers directs the nature of the broader ethos of implementation of policy iteration and enactment.

An extreme view of the role of the *systemic Negotiator* is that they ensure opportunities for a semblance of democratic dialogue to arrive at a consensus for the successful implementation of a policy. They make a conscious effort to promote inclusiveness in policy-shaping. There are also attempts (orchestrated mainly through the media) to advocate for the scope of the policy to be widened to bring about holistic, positive change for the greater good.

Another kind of Influencer functions from outside the mainstream policymaking structure to continuously negotiate micro-institutional spaces to mediate the policy intent and minimise any misalignment in understanding the expected outcomes of enactment.

These Influencers are typically early adopters of reform, new technologies or ideas and become almost instant advocates. They act as a *collaborative type of Negotiator* to mediate the perspectives of multiple stakeholders to reach a consensus. Such influence strengthens the possibility of legitimation and credibility on numerous fronts, enabling policy changes to be accepted and successfully implemented. The Negotiators speak for a hidden constituency of people who have clear ideas about the policy.

### 5.3.3. Legitimisations of negotiations

The third typology that will be explored is labelled the '*Legitimiser*'. This typology embodies three distinct elements or levels, which are qualitatively different from one another. Despite their many differences in operational terms, Legitimisers share several defining characteristics. They are strategically and spatially positioned and serve to formalise and universalise the ICTE policy by advancing reasons why it is in the interests of pupils and the education system in a particular context. The Legitimiser does not diagnose or question the assumptions underlying a decision but facilitates implementation by symbolically endorsing it for deployment. This helps decision-makers to formulate second-order actions that are required to meet the desired ends because the process is structured and aimed at the task at hand. Legitimisers are aware of the adverse effects of failing to pay sufficient attention to the opinions of different constituencies prior to implementation.

Legitimacy processes are multi-faceted, and legitimators may use *symbolic*, *consultative*, *operational* and *administrative operations* strategies to legitimate a policy.

One kind of Legitimiser mediates international practices to the local context and functions as a political resource. The *foreign Legitimiser* promotes approval of a policy in the local context, assists those who will operationalise it and contributes to its acceptance by practitioners by creating the impression of objectivity.

*At the domestic level*, Legitimisers are tactically sited at meso- and micro level. The former is usually conceptualised as a *democratic form of Legitimiser (consultative Legitimiser)*, and the latter is essentially *administrative*, in proximity to enactment. They are both brought into the process to obtain buy-in, and it is expected that they will promote the policy and motivate practitioners, respectively. Their main aim is to smoothen the implementation path.

The *micro-institutional Legitimiser (local)* has a crucial role in the lowest rung where the policy is enacted, in this case, the school. Legitimisers play an influential role due to their capacity to enact policy, ensure strategic preparation of the school environment, and support implementers. They often appear to favour implementers, in the case of ICTE policy, teachers. However, Legitimisers are expected to ensure that policy statements remain rooted in the day-to-day life of the school. They thus serve as agents of surveillance for macro-systemic levels.

The *consultative Legitimiser* is widely held to be a legitimate voice for Enactors and, in this case, would represent the interests of educational professionals. Although the Legitimiser's role can be conceived of as inherently biased towards the benefits of ICT in education, personal voices can contrast with positional ones within informal spaces. Therefore, it is likely that even within one individual typology, divergent characteristics and viewpoints may be present.

There is a notable blurring of boundaries between the typologies of 'Influencers' and 'Legitimisers' since they share a complex interplay of relationships and practices. They can thus be conceptualised as two sides of the same coin. Their multi-dimensionality requires that they have power and influence that transcend national boundaries. Consistency with international norms reinforces a policy's legitimacy and durability. It also helps to marshal international support for implementation. In summary, whilst the Negotiator fashions an organising framework, the Influencer and the Legitimiser integrate the intended policy into action.

#### **5.3.4. Operationalising policies**

Once a policy has been officially authorised, the next stage is its enactment, which leads to the fourth typology labelled *Enactor*. Enactors are the key connections between policy and practice. They bridge Negotiators' policy expectations to render a policy operational, sometimes enabling different responses to legitimacy crises. However, Enactors cannot themselves enact the policy on-the-ground, and they require a degree of buy-in from the targeted field of operation.

Ground-level implementers are seldom involved in dialogue around policymaking because policy imperatives are dominated by the top-down influences of Negotiators - from the higher levels down to the level of individual Enactors. This is despite the fact that Enactors have the potential to provide locally grounded perspectives that could influence a policy's success or failure. Indeed, change sometimes fails to occur due to the (non)pedagogical reasons discussed earlier. Policies are intended to ultimately change Enactors' practices. However, policy-shapers' decision-making processes take insufficient account of local knowledge, leading to a blurred boundary with the typology of Excluded voices. Enactors are peripheral to the policy process since their knowledge or situated information rarely filters up the policy structure, partly due to the enormous amount of information flooding institutional structures. As such, they frequently become recipients of policy rather than collaborators in its development. Enactors' role is multi-dimensional and, unlike Excluded voices, they are highly implicated in shaping policy in practice.

Refining the overarching goals and logic of the legitimated policy in operational terms is a dynamic and complex process that involves different types of Enactors whose roles complement one another. Given such interconnectedness, enactment entails adaptation not only on the part of front-line practitioners but also specialists in curriculum development and those that investigate the pedagogical uses of hardware and software, taking into account schools' contextual landscape (researchers seeking *socio-scientific legitimacy*). Adaptation to contextual conditions is necessary because the thinking behind the policy occurred in the absence of Enactors.

Besides effective coordination and synergistic efforts by *micro-Negotiators*, other factors are necessary to achieve the policy goals. Different Enactors negotiate the meaning of policy for their existing pedagogic practice, resources and institutional structure depending on where they are situated in the implementation continuum. However, their discretionary power at the micro level enables them to ignore or bend policies in line with their understanding and interpretation of expected outcomes, the resources devoted to their enactment and their personal agenda. Ground-level policy implementation thus has the potential to shift accountability individually or collectively to Enactors to successfully implement policies.

Policy enactment is, therefore, a complex and nuanced process of negotiation and contestation in the interplay of interpretation and translation. In light of variations in multiple Enactors' conceptualisations and operationalisations of policy, one can expect much variation in implementation.

### **5.3.5. Inclusivity and exclusivity of voices**

The fifth typology labelled '*Excluded voice*' brings into sharper focus those voices that are disenfranchised from the policy process or even silenced. This typology is grounded in a discussion of deliberative democracy, social justice and the public sphere. Breaking the binaries of 'up and down' and 'insider and outsider' down into one typology brings to the fore what Excluded voices think and their expectations of ICTE policies.

Ideally, the increasing layers of actors in policymaking and shaping processes should be accommodated. However, current strategies and channels for participation by non-formal shapers remain hazy, and the manner in which participation is conducted appears to be more symbolic than substantive. In a true participatory democracy, there would be ways and means for people who are often hindered by circumstances from having a stake to have a direct voice.

While power is concentrated amongst the *structural forces of Negotiators and Influencers*, they are likely to exclude democratic possibilities for shaping policy. The emphasis on bureaucratic structures is likely to make outsiders overly susceptible to blind spots. Nevertheless, sticking to the traditional and formal policy style could be a strategy to hide systemic, structural issues or avoid any displacement of fixed policy ideas. There have been few attempts to demystify traditional policymaking processes to enable open participation to ensure fair and just policies.

Some voices are not considered worthy of contributing to the ‘specialised’ field of education as they are regarded as having little knowledge and skills in shaping policies. From another perspective, Excluded voices themselves could feel that they cannot make an input on matters concerning education. Thus, their blind spot could be the inner space from which they operate. They seldom have resources to enable their voices to be heard on how policies that affect them are shaped, and are considered mere recipients of policy. Furthermore, they are often disinclined to challenge the discrimination that prevents them from interrogating the policymaking process and its outcomes.

Strategic industry representatives can emphasise their image as outsiders to the extent that they become wedded to disruption for their own sake. Disrupting the centralised power of Negotiators and Influencers could have a negative impact on their electoral prospects. Outsiders also centralise power because they do not trust Negotiators and Influencers or find them ineffective, inefficient, incompetent and even adversarial. Their worldview has the potential to dominate the political process of policymaking, leading to unintended policy outcomes and damaging public perceptions of the government and, thus, its prospects of remaining in office. Keeping such shapers at the periphery guards the centralised core from the consequences of disruptions. Their voices can be neglected and repressed because they are disruptive to the bureaucratic structures and therefore not admitted to the institution of power.

Some subject area experts (internal or external to the bureaucracy) possess know-how that empowers them to challenge and interrogate policies. The presence of experts, such as in ICT in this case is likely to make non-experts feel inept or inadequate. Furthermore, policies with high political stakes are shielded by bureaucracies that sometimes act as autonomous interest groups. These structures thwart experts' voices, leading to a sense of abandonment. The significant obstacles that prevent such voices (be they industry representatives, or ICT or education experts) from being heard in policymaking spaces is likely to cause them to disengage from the education sector. Speaking when no one is listening leads to silence.

### **5.3.6. Lessons learnt: purposive sampling complemented by theoretical sampling**

Prior to data generation, the identification of participants was guided by an analysis of the ICTE policies, a literature review and decolonised research methodologies. The initial categorisation of participants for the purposes of stratified purposive sampling was extended in light of the rich interactions with them. I then chose to reshuffle the participants and group certain actors together since they showed common tendencies and characteristics in their perspectives of ICTE policy development. I borrowed the research procedure from grounded theory sampling where data generation, analysis and development of categories and typologies occur simultaneously (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These stages were not successive but iterative, intertwined and interdependent (Vollstedt & Rezat, 2019). Additional participants, such as researchers in ICT in education and curriculum developers, were identified through snowball sampling and the knowledge gained from the rich interviews. These participants were included based on their potential contribution to the further development and refinement of the typologies. The theoretical sampling yielded new relevant concepts pertaining to policy-shaping in SIDS. While purposive sampling was an important point of departure to identifying participants, theoretical sampling not only supported the abstraction of data for crafting the typologies for the eventual theorisation. It also assisted me in staying true to the tradition of decolonised research methodologies. This was achieved by being critical and reflexive throughout the research process and going beyond discourses and policymaking structures to identify policy-shapers from the society who could have been unheard of or found in blind spots.

### **5.3.7. Limitations of the representational strategy**

Although the typologies appear to provide a simplistic framework to describe the complex phenomenon being studied, this simplicity was achieved by means of complex, intensive and rigorous processes, working with the data in an iterative way. Doty and Glick (1994) state that the most severe criticism is that typologies traditionally have been viewed as classification systems rather than as strategic theoretical devices. In this study, the typologies underpinned the development of theory. One could claim that typologies rely on the assumption that individuals have stable attitudes and patterns and a stable identity. However, my conceptualisation of typologies embeds a fluidity and hybridity amongst them. As advised by Dey (2003), a balance was struck between the development of not too many nor too few categories so as to capture the nuances and patterns in the data. This was expected to reduce the effect on the reliability, efficiency and flexibility of the analysis at a later stage.

### **5.4. Synthesis of chapter**

Characterisation of the participants into a set of five typologies was induced by the multi-layered perspectives of policy-shapers at various levels as well as the wider social, economic or political spaces. Systematic refinement of the raw data to develop common features of how different policy-shapers negotiated their experiences and practices of being involved or not in relation to policy-shaping was key to the development of the set of typologies which overlap and share blurred boundaries. The typologies are themselves a polyglot of positions that embed nuanced elements from each of the different typologies. Mapping the typology of perspectives provided areas of convergence and disjunction in relation to one another, engendering different kinds of Negotiators, Influencers, Legitimisers, Enactors and Excluded voices. It is therefore acknowledged that there are multiple dimensions within the same constituency. The intention is not to homogenise any of the typologies, but rather make apparent other dimensions, contradictions or inconsistencies recurring in the data which will be illustrated in the chapters that follow.

Having discussed the analytical typologies in abstract terms, I operationalise the five typologies supported by data generated from the field. I acknowledge that this above forefronted presentation of the typologies constitutes a device to cohere an advance organiser to assist readability of the complex data analysis from the field that will be presented in the forthcoming chapters. I am conscious that this above chapter 5 is drawn from the in-depth engagement with each of the data sets of the fieldwork. The intention across the chapter 5 and the next chapters is to set up a dialogue of the more fine-grained analysis within the ambit of the overarching presence of the broad synthetic typologies. The chapters that follow are field-driven to add the necessary depth and density to the typologies.

## CHAPTER 6

### Promoters of ICTE policy

#### 6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter provided a structure to categorise participants' worldviews that interweave their confluent conceptions of ICTE policies. As argued in chapter 5, the three (superordinate) typologies, namely, the 'Negotiator', 'Influencer' and 'Legitimiser', also coined as 'Promoters' of ICT, are simultaneously constituted in multiple, nested spaces of varying scale rather than in hierarchical arrangement or as discrete entities. Despite having distinctive characteristics, by nature these typologies are also intimately nuanced, embedded and interrelated. Bearing this interconnectedness in mind, the three typologies are brought together and presented in a single chapter. The aim is to show the dialogical interconnectedness across them as they influence and are influenced by ICTE policy. A comparative structure is adopted to highlight the main issues on which the shapers (dis)agree. This chapter, therefore only illustrates part of the complexity of policy-shapers' perspectives. The chapters that follow address matters related to the 'Enactors' and the 'Excluded voices' to provide a picture of the more holistic, complex and contested worldviews of the variety of policy-shapers of ICTE policies that emerged from my fieldwork data analysis.

#### 6.2. Overview of chapter

Each superordinate typology can be further disaggregated into microtypologies with unique, nuanced versions surfacing in their interaction with one another.

This chapter opens with a description of the microtypologies in section 6.3 to make better sense of the worldviews of the policy-shapers with whom I interacted. The convergences and divergences across the typologies are presented in section 6.4. This comparative intersected structure helps to advance the exploration of the phenomenon under study by identifying patterns and retrieving and foregrounding relations, interplay, differences and connections in the policy-shapers' constructions of ICTE policies. Each superordinate and microtypology is discussed, with a thorough account of how they are relevant within individual participant transcripts.

Section 6.5 provides insights into the recurrent traits of the Promoters of ICTE policy with respect to their worldviews on ICTE policy-shaping. These are also represented diagrammatically. How these interlocking typologies elaborate or contest the original theoretical framework adopted as a lens for the study's methodological approach is explored in more depth in chapter 9.

### **6.3. Emergent sub-categories of the superordinate typologies**

For a systematic reading of this chapter, I chart the multiplicity of kinds of typologies that encapsulate ICTE Promoters' modes of operation, beliefs, actions, practices, perceptions and understanding of their role and participation in policy-shaping. At the end of the chapter the multiple varieties and kinds of Negotiators, Influencers and Legitimisers become explicit. Figure 6.1 summarises the following microtypologies that emerged from the superordinate typology Promoters:

1. The *political Negotiator* (represented by Sid, male) typically seeks legitimation framed by his own political interests and not always by professed public interests. Driven by the political agenda and timing, at times the political Negotiator negotiates decision-making processes at macro, meso- and even micro-institutional levels. He often announces symbolic policies and pretends to move in a new direction to help him muddle through political challenges and be (re)elected.
2. *Insider bureaucratic Influencers* (represented by Rajesh and Eric, males) are *smaller* but nonetheless *powerful Negotiators* who operate in close proximity to political Negotiators. They are generally not critical of their policy ideas and typically support political agendas by means of their bureaucratic proficiency. They use devolved power to influence other smaller Influencers, Legitimisers and Enactors by emphasising the achievement of goals set by Negotiators. Intertwined with these goals, they negotiate and are awarded opportunities for professional acknowledgement and career progression.
3. With students' well-being as a key marker, *the insider collaborative Influencer* (represented by Victor, male) is driven by the agenda of improving the local education system. He benefits from the system along the way but is naïvely enraptured and motivated by what he sees in developed contexts. He, therefore, evokes strategies to influence powerful Influencers and Negotiators to emulate foreign practices in classrooms to elevate the local education system to be on par with foreign ones.

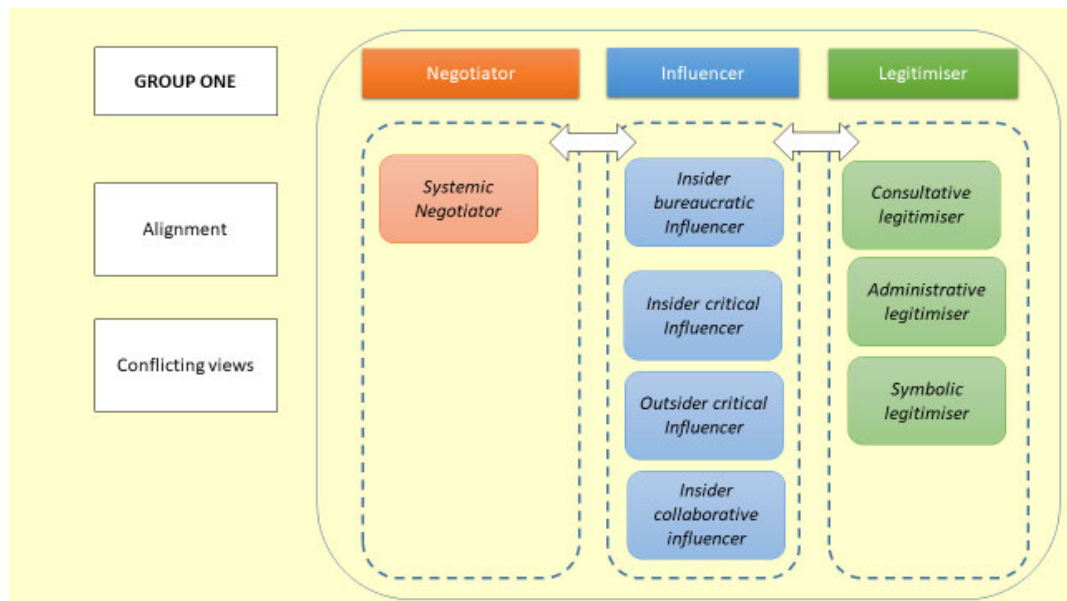
4. The *insider critical Influencer* (represented by Prerna, female) views political Negotiators as driven by powerful political role players to activate their agenda. As part of her job, she advocates for using ICT in schools and believes that it can unleash the potential of young students and promote parity with international standards. However, she doubts that systematic Negotiators aim to and are capable of understanding the ramifications of the goals of ICTE policies they themselves set.

5. The *outsider critical Influencer* (represented by Virendra, male) is located outside the mainstream policymaking structure. He takes on stakeholder organisation, advocacy, awareness building and advisory functions to enact policy and acts directly upon the education system. He advocates for ICT in schools but emphasises the importance of theoretical insights related to pedagogy. He is critical of Negotiators' practices and their allies that he contends drive policy underpinned by common sense and partisan interests.

6. The *symbolic Legitimiser* (represented by Allen, male) is positioned at the interface of international development agencies and *insider Influencers*. His main role is to mediate and legitimise international practices in spaces that are predisposed to adopt ICT in education. A sharp contrast is, however, noted in his apprehension about young students' use of ICT and his scope of work that promotes its use in schools. However, given that his deliverable is bound by the negotiated political agenda of the Negotiator and powerful Influencer, he plays a merely symbolic role in the SIDS space to legitimise the incumbents' goals.

7. The *consultative Legitimiser* (represented by Krishna, male) is supposedly mandated to serve the primary interests of frontline Enactors. Even though his role is seemingly democratic, he is predisposed to accept the legitimacy of the expressed wishes of elected officials and at times, even blames teachers for obstructing development. He projects a self-inflated image to demonstrate the value of his voice in order to promote his special interests.

8. The *administrative Legitimiser* (represented by Vijay, male) embodies the ideologies of Negotiators and Influencers and is strategically positioned at the interface of the Influencer and frontline Enactors. He is located in the micro-institutional space to act as an agent of surveillance of systemic actors. As such, he is held responsible and accountable for ensuring the enactment of ICT in schools.



**Figure 6.1:** Microtypologies of Promoters of ICTE that emerged from the data

## 6.4. Discourses of Promoters of ICTE policy

### 6.4.1. External frame

The formulation of ICT policy in education seemingly has its roots in the international community. The data analysis suggests that the discourses that frame policies have strong linkages with international forums organised by international and supranational organisations. It appears that the ground is prepared by a kind of mental conditioning that seeks to demonstrate the usefulness of ICTE and the constructive and cooperative spirit that drives the international community to assist SIDS in their transformational journey.

Typically, the seeds of policy ideas are planted amongst high-level decision-makers triggered by the agenda of the external frame. The international set-up that generally consists of networks of vendors, strategic decision-makers and other actors, appears to have obvious policy goals and advocacy purposes for ICTE. The powerful internal Influencer (Rajesh), who has often participated in such international events, explains that *“in all international fora, in all major international education fora, ICT was the name of the game. ICT was presented. So, at the level of Ministry, top senior officials, even at the level of the Minister, (...) we had the opportunity to really see things happening, to learn about things. And then, automatically, through bilateral collaboration, we were able to get support, be it from countries, and also share expertise.”* These platforms seemingly act as advocates for specific interests through exchanges and interactions at the macro-level amongst network members. Alongside the need for delicate diplomatic and political balancing, such a space predisposes policy-

shapers to adopt the proposed ideas. This mental conditioning, possibly deflected from an independent perspective, is likely to cascade to the local space where the need to adopt ‘modern’ practices develops into a natural shared goal. The powerful Influencer (Rajesh) shows strong receptivity to proposed policy ideas and bilateral collaboration for negotiating support and expertise. The extract suggests that Rajesh was co-opted into the agenda to participate in high-level platforms by the systemic Negotiator (both the Negotiators are not ICTE experts). This is likely to make them highly susceptible to domination by foreign ‘experts’ in their field and to being seduced by ‘novel’ offerings to shape policies towards technical solutions.

Driven by strong signals of a shared vision of ICT at the macro level, the notion that the value of ICT needs to be harnessed, is likely to become ingrained amongst other policy-shapers. This shared conception of ICT tends to provide a trajectory for substantial financial investment in supposedly overhauling the education system. Access to the entry point to policy is often through negotiated donations and other types of support. Based on the premise that ICT is a prerequisite in schools, the internal Influencer (Perna) argues that *“we know that there's a need to bring technology to school, but the initial decision to do it was as if accelerated, catalysed through this donation.”* This excerpt reinforces the notion of policies being catalysed through donations for a smooth rollout. Donations are intrinsically linked to access to ICT devices, seemingly a profitable move by ICT vendors mediated by international agencies to gain new markets. After crossing the entry point through a few donations, expanding and extending the initiative to all schools becomes expedient. This rollout is likely to be underpinned by international agencies’ ideologies, such as ensuring equity and equality in the education system. Thus, education decision-making takes a market-oriented turn by complying with global prescriptions, apparently with strong local support.

Donations appear to be key, powerful marketing strategies for international vendors to whet the appetite of prospective buyers. However, initial ‘in-kind’ support usually comes with a nest of implications that are often invisible to the recipient. The data analysis suggests that the rollout of infrastructure to all schools is ultimately a resource-intensive undertaking, financed mainly from local funds. Perna proudly talks about one of her achievements: *“there was a massive investment done. (For) primary school, we can proudly say it's done now.”* It is likely that investment in ICT will not be a once-off event. The fact that keeping such projects active in the medium to long term will require the constant injection of local funds is often overlooked. Although such policies enabled the SIDS to expand beyond the domestic realm to adopt modern practices, it is likely that there will be constant pressure to maintain these devices at the expense of other areas requiring more urgent attention.

### 6.4.2. Legitimation and policy tourism

The data analysis suggests that the local system transforms into an agent that actively seeks to borrow ideas from other spaces. The education system is prone to develop in-built mechanisms to attract donors, supposedly aiming at elevating its standards to be on par with international practices. However, because of the relatively short electoral horizon, these concepts appear to be (ab)used in education policymaking to achieve instant, gratifying political outcomes. This could be due to several factors, such as a preoccupation with a success that inhibits shapers from taking risks and formulating their own situated ideas. There could also be a lack of confidence in local capability or even limited time (due to the electoral cycle) to make an impact. The political Negotiator (Sid) travels the world in search of the latest developments and identifies tested models that can be emulated. He explains that *“I look around the world, you know, to glean and see what is that (...) what is happening in this domain and that gives you experience which others have tried, failed, tried. At least I learn from their mistakes. I don't have to commit those mistakes. What Singapore says, ‘we don't have to reinvent the wheel.’ (...) This is the philosophy which I have used for all the major policy decisions, and I believe it is very important (to do it) that way”*. While Sid highlights that there is no need *“to reinvent the wheel”*, this is apparently used to suit his agenda. Such romanticised and clichéd statements generally aim to enhance the legitimisation of policy ideas and add legitimacy to Negotiators' actions. Borrowing ideas that work elsewhere appears to make political Negotiators confident of defending their policy ideas locally and it provides the justification for them to be accepted. This process of establishing legitimacy is, however, often hidden in the discourse. Sid suggests that *“I'm a good opportunist in a sense. I like to take opportunities when things come up, you know, with a vision.”* The predisposition to adopt foreign ideas is likely to serve as a springboard for foreign businesses to flourish in the SIDS.

The data analysis points to heavy reliance on an electorate that accepts Negotiators' policy choices, with considerable weight given to the preferences of the majority. Macro-level processes are launched to authenticate the value of proposals by international institutions (such as the ILO and UNESCO mentioned by Sid). This creates confidence that the policy proposals are credible and promising prior to embarking on a particular project, especially those with high budgets or that imply a major overhaul. The political Negotiator (Sid) states: *“what better reference could we have than ILO and UNESCO?”* At the surface level, macro-level negotiations to develop a strategy appear to be a legitimate exercise. However, they seemingly subtly hide the legitimacy of considerable investments sometimes already made in ICT infrastructure.

The data suggest that investment in ICT hardware and software precedes the drafting of the policy text. Certain topical and leading ICTE policies, such as the provisioning of interactive whiteboards and tablets, were rolled out before appointing an international advisor to draft the policy. The work of the consultant is, therefore, framed by pre-existing policies, leaving the international Legitimiser little to no latitude to propose contextualised and systematically examined solutions. The international consultant (Allen) states that policy development is “*not a carte blanche process.*” Therefore, the strategy is based on an acute understanding of what is already happening in schools and is guided by the client (the Ministry). Allen considers “*it to be very important for me to take guidance from the Ministry as to what their priorities are, not come and try and tell them what they ought to do.*” Although substantial resources are mobilised to develop policy, policy documents often formalise predefined yet sporadic measures and investments. The ICT initiatives appear to be plagued by contestations, critiques, resistances and also scandals<sup>62</sup>. This could explain why the policy document is not made manifest in the public domain but was subtly shelved once the negotiated objective was attained (apparently to silence contestation and demonstrate that systematic work underpins policy development). Allen explains that he “*came into the process after the (World) Bank had already had a discussion with the Ministry of Education in Mauritius about the need for an ICT in Education Strategy.*” This excerpt shows that even the international consultant (Allen) was filtered out of the negotiated objective of his intervention because it only served symbolic purposes. In such circumstances, legitimacy also conceals the excessive wastage of human and financial resources for consultancy and semblances of the policy negotiators. The agenda created by political Negotiators is one of broad consultation and deliberations whilst the decisions were perhaps already pre-defined.

It is noted that in the context of Mauritius, not all policies are legislated as formal gazettes, although they might sometimes go through some form of a formal parliamentary processes. These documents circulate in bureaucratic and administrative structures, while others are appraised only in the form of guidelines and roadmaps. Such documents are casually referred to as ‘the policy’, which does not yet have a formal legal endorsement. One of the implications is that the developers of ‘the policy’ are not deemed accountable or obliged to adhere to their own prescriptions. It is likely that this form of policy suits policy designers and gives them the flexibility to furtively bend policy as and when needed or to even not publish it or implement its goals and processes. Such a ‘flexible’ policy space is likely to reduce Negotiators’ promised or officially agreed-upon accountability.

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<sup>62</sup> “*You know, what is the story of the laptop that they promise? Have you read that? You should read the Director auditor's report, uhh. A contractor was chosen. I know the guy. He's connected. He got the contract. He was given an advance of Rs23 million to start preparing the programme, laptop, tablet and so on and so on. He could not deliver. Then, his company went bankrupt. Then, you know what happened, no? The company went bankrupt, there was no laptop, money gone, went in the drain.*” Sid.

As argued above, the appetite to ‘modernise’ schools, generally appears to develop through high-level officials’ participation in international forums and their predisposition for political tools that could entice the electorate. This outward gaze manifests in other forms, such as lurching from country to country for small glimpses into classrooms and education systems, gleaning and borrowing policy ideas. In this endeavour, Negotiators and Influencers are likely to be attracted to spaces with practices that would prospectively appeal to the local electorate. They are usually on the lookout for ideas that depart from the familiar. The political Negotiator discloses that “*people have seen you for long. What do you propose for them to vote you again?*” Foreign policy ideas that are predominately driven by their own contextual contingencies, political interests, and multiple scales interact in the dynamics through which these policies are negotiated, developed and implemented. However, adopting a policy based on ‘sightseeing’ in foreign schools without interrogating its relevance for localised and situated contexts hints at a kind of ‘policy tourism’. The agenda of these Negotiators of policy is driven by a compelling valuing of policy borrowing. ‘Promenading’ in schools signals a superficial examination of practices. It lacks the depth to understand the policy in its entirety before borrowing it. Policy tourism attracts a marginalised SIDS seeking to appear modern. This can be seen as a kind of hegemonic co-option in the globalisation of ICT practices. It introduces new dimensions to education agendas, compresses time and space in policy processes and revitalises the role and confidence of the international community in assisting SIDS to fulfil their desire to form part of the international community of ‘modern’ schools.

The data analysis suggests that policy tourism is inscribed in the local policy landscape because of extractive engagement with foreign practices. Prerna explains that “*what I understood is that when (the Minister) was travelling in African countries, (the Minister) has seen the very young children, young, very very young (using tablets). So, then they (the Minister and other high-level officials) brought the idea (...) of putting it into grades 1, 2 and 3. (...) A decision also was made that we would address the younger children because the Minister believes that this is where (there is) most of the benefit.*” This excerpt captures how this political Negotiator was drawn to policy ideas that were politically seductive to Ministers. It also signals the highly top-down mode of operation of the political Negotiator who, guided by her personal political leanings, even encroaches on the roles of pedagogues and technocrats to impose how and at whom (lower primary school students) the policy should be targeted, presumably to maximise benefit. It is evident in the data analysis that the political Negotiator herself is the primary beneficiary of the policy that would also provide her with boasting rights. It is likely that as a result of this policy, any enhancement in pedagogy would be incidental. The data analysis suggests that responsive bureaucratic structures willingly accommodate party political preferences and demands. There is co-engagement in overlapping and converging functions,

especially when powerful Influencers are also co-opted into the policy idea often through policy tourism. Powerful bureaucratic Influencers dominate politics as they put their bureaucratic expertise to work and use devolved power to realise policy ideas. They usually form part of an inner policymaking circle.

Policy tourism is likely to influence powerful Influencers on two fronts. The first is the privilege and pride of benefitting from free overseas trips. Rajesh states that he “*visited sometime back a computer lab, the use of ICT in other countries, in Rwanda, in South Africa. It’s there!*.” In this excerpt, the powerful Influencer states that he witnessed ICT being used in foreign schools and became convinced of its pedagogical value, mainly because ICT devices are provided. This reinforces the notion that policy tourism, a form of legitimisation, is profoundly altering the education policymaking landscape, but only superficially.

Secondly, decisions about policies are often influenced by the narrative power of an individual who has been exposed to worldwide education practices. This elevates foreign ideas to the policy agenda for attention and approval. Policy tourism<sup>63</sup> allows for more persuasive arguments when negotiating with powerful elected officials to provide compelling, ‘evidence-based’ policy arguments which become legitimisable. This technique is often tactfully, but relentlessly employed by the collaborative Influencer (Victor) when perceived to be at odds with what decision-makers would endorse. Commenting on his strategy to push a proposal with Negotiators, Victor suggests that “*we were a bit forceful, affirmative. And what we did, we wrote officially how this should be done and backed up with examples and evidences. In England, what we have. In other countries, what we have.*” Victor claims that being assertive backed by ‘evidence’ on developed nations’ practices is an effective strategy to influence political Negotiators to accept ideas. It seemingly has a built-in legitimisation. Policy tourists confidently escalate their ‘learnings’ in support of foreign policy ideas. They learn the rules of the political system and are equipped with persuasive narratives. This is a kind of insider persuasion in response to external pressure (local advocates for international practices). He also adds that industry is usually “*educationally (...) very sound because they produce the educational software*”, conferring epistemic privilege on the industry as compared to pedagogic strategies. This increases the likelihood of funding proposals being accepted. He suggests that “*if you don’t impress them, they are not going to give you money.*” Mediated by Influencers, even the local funding agency is roped into the agenda of the industry that is supposedly (perhaps naïvely) working to enhance

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<sup>63</sup> Victor was a policy tourist in developed and developing countries such as Singapore, India and Cape Verde where he witnessed ICT’s applications in industry, and its use in secondary schools and discovered the origins of the interactive white board (Sankore project), respectively (see section 1.4.1 for information on the Sankore project).

education.

The workings and strategies of the inner policymaking circle, made up of Negotiators and powerful Influencers, do not seem as opaque as one would assume. Behind-the-scenes discourses about political proximity paying dividends can seemingly be seen from the outside, especially by those positioned at the meso-level such as the teachers' union structures. This constituency appears to have an intrinsic need to align itself with the Negotiators' agenda to supposedly serve teachers. To make its voice heard from outside the policymaking circle, a self-elevated image of the union as a political lobbying institution is presented, adding value to its supportive voice for the Negotiator. The union's inflated posture camouflages its need for recognition by political Negotiators as an important Legitimiser of policy. This is because the union seemingly represents the interests of a large segment of educational professionals and is widely held to be their legitimate voice. In his comments, the consultative Legitimiser (Krishna) claims that "*had we (not been) as the major, major stakeholder, had we not stood with the Government, the nine-year schooling (curriculum policy) would never have been implemented.*" The union appears to serve to legitimate Negotiators' decisions rather than acting in the interests of teachers, seriously compromising its independence and influence. However, the union participant speaks mainly as an administrator of teachers on how to systematically organise them to negotiate his relationship and their voice with decision-makers.

Faced with competing agendas, the union runs the risk of being side-lined by political figures and powerful Influencers. In an attempt to overcome his political exclusion and secure access to political life, the union participant (Krishna) evocatively delegitimises Negotiators' attempts to gain attention. He asserts that the "*(political Negotiator) ordered his officers (to go ahead with the project) who just don't care about (the union). And he failed because we were not party to that. I opposed it everywhere. And it had to fail.*" At times, such efforts are made to create counter-effects that undermine Negotiators' reputations.

Despite the union's ongoing quest for influence in the policy arena to prevent its marginalisation, the data analysis revealed no strong tradition of a partnership with teacher unions as decision-makers. The powerful insider Influencer (Eric) claims that "*the role of a (teacher) union is not to shape policy*" but rather to negotiate teachers' conditions of service. This truncated view of the union appears to be deeply-rooted in the mainstream policymaking structure, deliberately marginalising this constituency from having a place in policymaking. Within this worldview, teachers are clearly constructed as policy implementers and technicians of state-driven agendas, with potential long-term consequences for their de-professionalisation.

Legitimacy appears to have a multi-dimensional character. The consultative democratic spirit of the union is subdued by the use of the Negotiator's positional power. The Legitimiser tries to maintain a robust oppositional stronghold outside the government structures, while simultaneously being predisposed to accept the legitimacy of the wishes of more assertive Negotiators. Understanding the need for recognition of the union in the midst of teachers' resistance to ICT use, political and strategic moves are activated, such as quiet offers of a free 'educational tour' to a European country. The trip would cover a visit to a school to appreciate the benefits of ICTE. It co-opts the contender into the legitimacy enterprise. There is a stark contrast between the legitimiser's enthusiasm for ICT use in schools and his claims of being independent of powerful Negotiators' agenda.

Policy tourism in education appears to be an institutionalised practice that has a direct, immediate influence on the tourist. Decision-makers also privilege their supporters and/or select antagonists for such trips to turn them into complicit partners in political agendas. Krishna comments that the *"Ministry calls me and said 'Mr Krishna, there is a team (headmasters and few officials of the Ministry) that is going to England and the Minister wants you to join the team'. (...) So we went to visit a school like that in England. (...) These kids, they do marvels. I was impressed."* This is a clear example of a political Negotiator's attempt to woo the consultative Legitimiser. Ultimately, the union is willingly enmeshed in the inner circle's plan and becomes an agent that promotes ICTE to teachers.

The co-option strategy has also become dominant because it reflects the expectations of the consultative Legitimiser. The policy tourist does not appear to remain neutral. The union participant (Krishna) suggests that *"they (teachers) came out with futile arguments that you know 'who is going to collect, who is going to distribute, who is going to charge, (...) the charger'. As I told them, 'these are very futile arguments'."* The lobbying voice of the legitimiser thus aligned itself with that of Negotiators to the extent that he condemns teachers for their resistance to ICT use. However, while viewing the union as a monolithic entity is convenient for the Negotiator, it will not necessarily win over intractable teachers who seemingly demonstrate passive resistance to policy. The data suggests that consultative legitimisation is not sufficient to obtain support for policy implementation in a space where teachers also enact (indirect) power on-the-ground.

The data analysis suggests a double-edged role of the consultative Legitimiser in relation to union members. On the one hand, roped into the policymaking circle's agenda, he patently advocates for ICTE and its benefits by supporting the political Negotiator. However, it appears that, as the 'official' voice of teachers, the consultative Legitimiser is ignored by the broader groupings of teachers. The net effect is that on-the-ground realities and specificities of schools become marginalised from policymaking spaces through policy Negotiators' co-option of a select few teachers to provide a buffer against alternative views. Krishna explains that "*because these teachers, they are reluctant, they don't want to do it. The Government cannot force (...). It won't work. You can force, it won't work.*"

It seems that the consultative Legitimiser does not have influence over members but shifts between explicit (political Negotiators) and implicit (teachers) power because his credibility with union members is likely to be at stake. Krishna is aware that teachers' power can be buffeted by how they are drawn into policymaking spaces.

Powerful political Negotiators seem to have codified what makes negotiation strategies effective, and they manoeuvre indirectly to accomplish their political goals. In this respect, policy tourism to attractive destinations for legitimisation appears to have gained traction in the policy-shaping space. It is also deployed to bring other Negotiators on board and, as evidenced by Sid's experience, it appears to pay off. He notes that he persuaded his influential colleagues to accept his strategy by organising visits to attractive foreign destinations. The developed countries seem to fascinate, lure and attract local policy-shapers. The political Negotiator comments that "*so they came with me, and they both supported, and I got all the money I needed. Even more money than I expected. (...). And if you read what UNESCO said about that: 'It is the first time where the Minister of Education is coming with the (Minister of) Finance'. It was all strategy for me. I wasn't doing it for pleasing them (local ministers). And Paris is an attractive place. Everybody would like to go. You know. And UNESCO is a beautiful place (laughter)*". Every Negotiator apparently has some power, and there is always some degree of mutual dependence on other Negotiators to approve projects for funding and implementation. Smoothing out complicated and intricate policy issues requires the mobilisation of overt strategies and manipulative tactics to co-opt, engage, lure and negotiate with other Negotiators.

### 6.4.3. Shared visions of Promoters of ICTE policy

The data analysis revealed strongly-held beliefs that ICT-rich environments have significant potential to enhance students' learning. Participants argued that concepts ranging from a volcano to the rainwater cycle, numbers, tenses, history and geography are more engaging for students when ICT-enabled visual aids are employed than when traditional pedagogy is used. Based on such features of ICT, the influential bureaucrat (Rajesh) advances that *“this is the magic of ICT.”* He is apparently seduced by the form (animation) rather than deep pedagogical activations. For the powerful Influencer, ICT enables an in-depth understanding of concepts in an ‘interactive’ environment compared to learning from printed books that seem unfashionable in today’s digital era. For policymakers, the need for such ‘pedagogical enhancements’ justifies heavy investment in devices.

Advocacy for ICT in education is deep-seated in the main policymaking structure, especially when the primary criterion of foreign legitimation is met. ICT is thought to have brought about a revolution in the business world, and it is believed that the education sector should not be left behind. The analysis pointed to a general assumption that the availability of ICT in schools will enhance education. For instance, the powerful Influencer (Eric) believes that *“especially in the context of a 21st century growing technological background, education can happen better through available technologies.”* ICT in education has gained traction due to decisions influenced by the international community. Driven by these macro-level imperatives layered with immanent legitimisation, investment decisions are likely to be underpinned by the highly-touted belief that ICT enhances pedagogy. Success in education is believed to be the result of students’ exposure to ICT in the face of rapid technological change. With the advent of ICT, confidence in and reliance on local pedagogic practices seem to fade.

Politicians are perhaps driven by the need to keep pace with the global digital revolution to attest to their forward-looking outlook. However, this belief is embodied in policy documents (MIE, 2015) and on political Negotiators’ agendas. Those without knowledge of ICT are characterised as digitally illiterate, positioning ICT on par with reading and writing skills. The data analysis suggests a belief that such illiteracy limits one from functioning in today’s digital world. This is captured by the political Negotiator (Sid), who explains that *“technology for me is the answer to empower (a) person with disability. (...) But, I believe that ICT is a very, very important tool. First of all, we have to be attuned with the latest developments in education and so on. ICT was so, so important. It has brought the revolution in the world, in the world of education, knowledge and so on. So we cannot, not take advantage of it, you know. You know, today, without technology, without internet, without these things- ICT, you know, you can’t function. You are illiterate. What they call now by not using*

*technology, you're an illiterate now. Even if you know English or French to read and write, you need the third competency.*” He conceptualises ICT as a powerful tool to bring about pedagogical innovation. He also notes ICT’s benefits for under-served constituencies such as children with special learning needs. In essence, ICT is conceptualised as a panacea to address educational challenges, and one can no longer think about education without ICT.

The relationship between ICT, a knowledge economy, and economic growth is evident in local education policies (MIE, 2015, Ministry of Education, 2016). It is usually phrased in terms of the need to facilitate learning activities that students will encounter in their future workplace. As such, the significant flow of ICT devices in schools is viewed as a typical manifestation of ICT developments around the world. Eric argues that “*in the past 10 years or so, there's been this natural growth of technology in all aspects of education.*” This prompts initiatives by the education system to bring the school closer to growing digitalisation across the world.

All these contextual factors are likely to combine to create a shared vision of placing ICT high on the educational agenda. These imperatives often culminate in significant investment in ICT to improve pedagogy and students’ digital literacy. The aim is for the country to benefit from the social and economic potential of digital technology, and to avoid the unintended consequences of digital illiteracy. Politicians and their followers with a shared set of values and commitment bond in a common cause to meet a common goal. Such notions of a shared vision (although perpetuated by discourse rather than empirical grounding) could be an effective strategy to improve their chances of (re)election even though a political agenda is tied to the common cause. While ICT and the knowledge economy are assumed to be neutral, they can be major conduits for market-oriented policies. Thus, students’ use of ICT is perhaps being shaped by commercial interests rather than pedagogic enhancement.

#### 6.4.4. Commonsensical views

It appears that policy design is driven more by political expediency and networking than theoretical insights. The fieldwork also pointed to a condemnation of political Negotiators who rhetorically support ICT to consolidate their political careers rather than in the public interest. Therefore, policy is often considered to be symbolically rhetorical, without any real intention of implementing it. It is argued that Negotiators side-line empirical research in favour of a political networking agenda. This involves a commonsensical profession of ‘personal’ beliefs that lack theoretical depth. Virendra, the external Influencer, claims that *“the problem in Mauritius is that policy is driven by common sense. Every sector, I think, it is like this. Common sense! Not by research.”* Within these competing agendas, there is the possibility that even the aim of the policy becomes blurred as the Negotiator’s priorities shift. However, Virendra’s positional stance speaks of a hidden constituency of Negotiators. He has a tendency to dismiss the political or social dimensions as being uninformed or sensationalists that speak on behalf of the epistemological academic project on a personal level. He activates the agenda of the Negotiator, and negotiates implementation and resources with the Enactor while driving his own agenda.

In the policy-shaping terrain, ideology seemingly takes precedence over evidence. The data analysis suggests that the policymaking space is overcrowded with political ‘friends’ who swiftly out-manoeuvre experts and empirical evidence that could inform policy. As interest groups, political friends’ objectives are privileged in the political sphere. They work indirectly to either influence or mandate decisions and therefore play a significant role in the resulting policy environment and outcomes. These ‘friends’ enter the policy-shaping space without a naked display of power. Still, they are hidden or exert quiet influences that are bound to reinforce and manipulate one another towards achieving their common objective. In the end, their values and intentions are made legitimate through policies.

Virendra argues that Negotiators also often listen to or anticipate the opinions of these easily accessible advisors and special interest groups while evidence is not firmly supported. He states that *“somebody (a new minister) comes. He has a group of people who have been hanging around him, and they will tell him ‘this is what should be done’, and he comes and says, ‘This is what I am going to do’”*. It is possible that many shapers do not value the ‘academic’ kind of discourse or have not been inducted into the tradition of academic research and therefore do not value it. The expedient rather than the logical drives their agendas. It is also possible that their success was achieved as a result of allegiance to political power. Consequently, they conceptualise empirical knowledge systems as irrelevant in the policymaking discourse. In the end, people with capabilities and evidence

are arguably weeded out to make space for interest groups who support political enterprises.

This approach is said to be so deeply-rooted that it implicitly guides policy decisions. The data suggests that it is more rewarding for Negotiators to go along with “commonsensical” worldviews than research because the latter can obstruct the attainment of their intended goals.

The external Influencer grapples to convey policy ideas directly to the Negotiator. Powerful internal Influencers are presumably the only channel of communication. This reportedly delays processes or even causes misrepresentation of policy proposals because they do not always understand the technicalities of a matter. The external critical Influencer, Virendra, who is often excluded from the inner policymaking circle, strongly condemns this centralised, closed decision-making process that subverts evidence-based policymaking. He explains that *“sometimes, they (internal Influencers) can’t go and convince him (the minister) because they are not themselves aware of what they are up to. If I were to go and convince the minister directly, I would have done it. But it goes through a third person. This is where things get delayed, and things don’t happen.”* From outside the policymaking circle, powerful internal Influencers give the impression that they have complete control over policy and influence the political Negotiator based on their understanding of external proposals. However, it is also likely that even if informed of empirical evidence, the political force rather than the pedagogic rationale dominates policy.

The fundamental need to promote short-term electoral interests rather than the country’s long-term developmental goals prevails in the education policy landscape. The data analysis suggests that elected officials have a limited time horizon to convince the public to (re)elect them. Thus, the introduction of new policies is perhaps aligned with electoral rather than empirical logic. The political Negotiator says: *“I have devised my strategy based on the vision, based on what I want, what I feel good for the country. (...) It helps me also, you know, in a way because of the (n) years as minister, people have seen you for long. What do you, what do you propose for them (electorate) to vote for you again?”* Sid’s strategy was driven by the need to keep the electorate happy with novel ideas so that he is returned to office. Thus, personal goals are intricately couched in policies, and the education agenda is subjugated. Claims that the standard of education is being improved, creating a shared view of the future, conceal political interests.

### 6.4.5. Complicity

When local experts and evidence are replaced by political friends and interests, it is likely that complicity will run deep to safeguard the system. To legitimise it, macro-level players in the local political space are called upon to sell policies to the electorate. It is likely that international promotion of ‘modern’ practices and bilateral collaboration and the need for domestic legitimation require that SIDS forge international partnerships. The international consultant Allen says that his services were sought for this mediatory role only after macro-level negotiations had taken place. He explains that *“there was a process that had taken place already that I was not part of that led to me being approached to provide the technical support to the Ministry. I don’t have any idea what that process looked like or what conversations were happening. As far as I know, the (World) Bank had reached an agreement with the Government to provide technical support in various areas. One of them was in education.”* It appears that his visits and consultations are mere legitimation that involves documenting and providing evidence that a policymaking process is being followed to justify a major investment in already rolled-out ICT devices. These embedded and hidden types of complicity with international negotiations make for a symbolic legitimisation agenda designed to shield decision-makers from contestation and allegations. It would seem that already existing erratic measures are being granted legitimacy through a policy proposed by an internationally valued institution such as The World Bank.

Bureaucratic expertise is the principal source of power for internal Influencers to formalise political processes to legitimate policy. Indeed, even powerful Negotiators appreciate this. This creates interdependence and gives rise to complicity between political Negotiators and powerful internal Influencers. The latter perhaps also rally support for the achievement of ‘shared goals’. Without the support of bureaucratic cadres, it would not be possible for bureaucratic systems to accommodate the political legitimacy enterprise. Strong backing by the powerful Influencer (Rajesh) is evident in the way he describes his role in promoting ICTE and, indeed the entire ICT agenda. He claims that *“I have been privileged to be chairing this steering committee for implementing the programme (...) So then we decided, if we want to do justice to ICT, let us recruit teachers on contract, and this was done.”* This excerpt reveals the powerful Influencer’s dominant role in leading the agenda, presenting ICT as an innovation that will change the face of the local education landscape. However, the goal of the policy is probably more inclined towards education serving ICT rather than the other way round. Complicity, interdependence and complementarity entangle the two powerful decision-makers in making policy look appealing, although in the process an ICT education policy is produced.

Nevertheless, a well-designed policy does not seem sufficient for successful policy implementation. When powerful Influencers support politicians' political projects, they can also, at times, use their power to debilitate powerful elected Negotiators if their dominant role in the bureaucracy is appropriated or undermined. Virendra recalls how the Negotiator seemingly relied on his expertise (the outsider Influencer) instead of involving insider Influencers for the development of a particular education policy. However, during the formalisation of the policy, internal bureaucrats did not endorse it, and it was shelved. Virendra suggests that "*the mistake that he (political Negotiator) made was (that) he didn't involve his administrative staff, his Ministry staff in that directly, and you know what happened afterwards! (...) The policy was never operationalised because of political issues.*" It appears that the political Negotiator is not allowed to stray very far from the power of internal bureaucrats. Linked to this argument, it seems that power does not always reside in a hierarchy but is exercised in bureaucracy in a subtle way. Likewise, insider bureaucrats have the power to exclude outsider shapers and ignore evidence. In this battle to achieve personal agendas, the education agenda is likely to take second place.

As much as they may seem covert, the political moves behind the origin of ICTE policies and the associated mobilisation of suppliers for the purchase of ICT devices are evident. By inhabiting the same inner circle, both political Negotiators and internal Influencers run the risk of facing conflict with industry. The international consultant (Allen) says that, his experiences during his short visits to the SIDS suggest that "*99 times out of 100 an ICT educational initiative is going to have a political origin, not an educational origin (...) Some new private company coming in, promising that they can save the world.*" Allen intimates that the dual notion of political-market driven policies not only renders bureaucrats' parameters to successfully implement policies ambiguous but also makes their working space risky because of Negotiators' deals with industry. He suggests that negotiations with industry "*establish (...) some vague parameters within which the Ministry has to work. Colleague 2 in Mauritius at the Ministry and his team, for example, are aware of this because they're often being having to deal with these political pressures in their work. (Bureaucrats) often have a risk because there's always some new deal going on.*" The direct power of the Negotiator is explicit in developing market-driven education policies. Because of their complicity and complementarities, it might not always be possible for internal Influencers to distance themselves from the deals political Negotiators enter into. However, internal Influencers apparently know how to protect their turf in varied situations even when they function in risky spaces such as negotiations with industry. This is because the bureaucratic system remains in 'balance' and powerful Influencers' position is always firmly rooted. To maintain such stability, it is likely that bureaucrats activate their established bureaucratic procedures to shield themselves from policy capture. They also appear to be in accord with political

agendas rather than demonstrating their ability to act as an independent policymaking force to achieve the goal of education. Allen seems to have been swayed by the victim mentality played out by internal Influencers because he seems to downplay the indirect and hidden power of high-level Influencers and their compliance in political projects.

Internal powerful Influencers are part of a career-based civil service and have tenure. Policies offer opportunities to achieve their desires and ambitions. The data analysis suggests that the heightened status conferred on ICTE is leveraged as an opportunity for career advancement. The international Legitimiser explains that *“what we did (...) which was new was we put in place a series of recommendations for governance structures to oversee ICT in education.”* It appears that implicit collaborative complicity played out between the powerful Influencer and the foreign Legitimiser to set the stage for career progression in the form of governance structures. This could be because, at the text writing stage, the balance of power at times subtly swings away from political Negotiators to powerful bureaucratic Influencers. While new structures could be warranted, the policy appears to have only proposed such a structure as a new addition for ICTE. All other ‘success’ factors were supposedly present for implementation besides sporadic policy development and implementation. Along with education policies, career goals appear to subtly gain international legitimacy. The international consultant Allen says that *“so what we were focusing on in this strategy was providing coherence to what already was happening within the education sector and all the different levels.”* The data analysis revealed that bureaucrats influence what goes into policies, even if they are externally legitimised.

Embracing ICTE seems to hold value for both political Negotiators and powerful Influencers. Both gain by consolidating their career, be it in the short or long term. It is possible that powerful Influencers latch onto policy measures to climb the hierarchical structure. For instance, the powerful Influencer (Eric) places a premium on the centralised governance structure to lead the implementation of ICT in education. His statement also ties centralised governance to the national shared vision of the government, giving it national significance in order for the central coordination system to take hold. The powerful Influencer’s agenda may have un(consciously) induced the international consultant to support the internal Influencers’ route to career progression. Eric explains that *“I think we are fortunate to be a Ministry of Education, where there is always an effort to have a kind of central coordination of what is happening. And that central coordination is through a national vision document. (...) And I think that merit of having one central unit (...) at least for the ICT in education system, is to have that one unit, to have it (in a) kind of **centralised** (emphasis) way and harmonised way”*. This extract reinforces the notion that career aspirations dominate the policymaking terrain and

that this influence is modestly exerted on the work of the international consultant to guide policy text. He also seem to be struggling to conceal the sporadicity of ICT in education.

Following macro-level legitimisation, a surveillance system is required at the micro-level to ensure policy enactment. This system that embodies the role of an administrative legitimator ensures regular reporting on implementation by teachers. However, as argued above, such a multifaceted policymaking space is likely to result in little understanding of the process and its intended outcomes at the execution stage. Yet, at the level of the school unit, the policy is assumed to have been developed in an inclusive manner that involves partners at different levels and stages. In response to a question posed to the head of a school (Vijay) about his participation in ICTE policy development, he speculated that the head office would have certainly involved his other colleagues even though he was not invited to participate. He explains that *“usually, they are involved. All partners are involved at different levels. Educators, headmasters, deputy headmasters. Everybody is involved at a time or another. But I personally, I haven't been involved. That does not mean that headmasters are not involved.”* From this statement, Vijay appears to be deeply immersed in the agenda of the Negotiators and Influencers to whom he reports to present an ideal participatory approach to the policymaking process.

A lack of critical engagement of Negotiators and Influencers' discourses is noted in the comments of the administrative Legitimiser. He appears to be an advocate for ICTE, swayed mainly by political rhetoric rather than his own engagement. Caught up in policy adherence, the school legitimises the policy and follows directives without much understanding of the intended outcomes. The school manager's disconnection from the policy's goal apparently does not deter his drive to legitimise it. The legitimator (Vijay) shares fervent views with decision-makers about the use of ICT to accelerate learning, but his discourse is predominantly on the use of office tools. As someone who is accountable for policy execution, Vijay gives the impression that ICT use is smooth sailing at the school. He suggests that *“scientifically it has been proven that pupils, they learn better with the new technology (...) ICT is being used as a catalyst, it amplifies (learning). It increases their learning, skill. They teach them about word processing, about PowerPoint, Excel and so on and also about how to send mail, how to use the printer. It's a programme, a syllabus, they follow a definite syllabus.”* A culture of compliance, subservience and suppression appears to be deep-seated at the level of the school administration.

The data analysis suggests that the school space is being utilised by ‘bigger level’ political Negotiators to establish electoral connections and reap political benefits. Heads of schools are also seemingly enfolded in the political agenda because of their professional obligation to enact reforms. Despite Vijay’s claim that heads of schools are involved in one way or another, this constituency is reported to have been excluded from the policy development processes because of the urgency of policy execution related to an electioneering agenda. Prerna claims that *“there is not enough consultation done on-the-ground. (...) The bottom-up approach is not there at all. At all (emphasis). (...). There was no HM (headmaster). There were no teachers (in policy discussions). It was done mainly at Zone Director level and admin(inistration) level and IT team at the headquarters. Mostly us.”* The existence of a closed policymaking circle is evident in the data analysis. The small Negotiator (Prerna) also explains how exclusion and unreasonable timeframes create issues for heads of schools in coping with policy and ultimately lead to ‘policy failures’. She suggests that *“maybe this is part of the reason why all the policy (do not succeed) (...). Because then we prepare document, EDLP protocol, EDLP (Early Digital Learning Programme) this and the HM is responsible for this. In this case, we do this and then we find that HM has issues to implement it. No. In fact, we got a very strict time frame. This is another problem. We’ve got a very strict time frame because it’s like a race.”* This statement also suggests that the macro-level consequences of micro level issues are often overlooked in the deployment of ICT in schools premised on purely political reasoning.

#### **6.4.6. Suppression**

Where complicity is not built-in, suppression often takes precedence. ICTE is often deemed to have universal value, especially when there is strong political commitment to its rollout. Within this politically charged space, constituencies such as the media are expected to share similar ideologies with decision-makers in their reporting. This is because controlling public opinion is seemingly essential to avoid contestation, and the media plays a major role in influencing and shaping such opinion. In turn, pressure can be exerted on decision-makers to respond to provocative questions from the public. When the media takes an opposing stance, policymakers condemn them for sensationalist reporting on baseless grounds. The external Influencer (*Virendra*) appears to be unsettled because the media critiques sensitive ongoing policies such as ICT in education. He explains that *“they do it as a sensation. They come, and people will ask some questions, make some media noise<sup>64</sup>, and then just mislead people.”* Although controversial, there seems to be an underlying agenda to suppress the media and control public opinion, undermining the right to freedom.

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<sup>64</sup> KM: *“enpe dibris sipa ki zistwar.”*

In the case of ICT in education, teachers and their union structures are also condemned for resisting reform. This is because it is professed that the reform supports lessening the obsession with examination performance. The examination-based education system has been strongly criticised for fostering a parallel system of private tuition for pecuniary gain by teachers. This informal education system has existed for decades and has seemingly been vigorously protected. Virendra suggests that *“private tuition is the worst business in Mauritius.”* Contrary to the expectations of decision-makers, the union and international agencies, it does not seem to have faded with the arrival of an exogenous device (ICT). Mauritius has long emphasised educational achievement, endorsing rote learning, private tuition and long study hours to propel school children towards examination success (in the White Paper, 1997 and Ending the Rat Race, 2001). Indeed, policymakers are often careful to safeguard the examination-oriented system in any policy development to obtain teachers’ support for enactment. The external Influencer explains that *“probably it was not said openly, but the thing is that if you want reform to take place, you have to keep 6<sup>th</sup> standard examination. You see how you are going to do it but don’t get rid of it, or else teachers will not support you anymore.”* Policymakers seem to recognise the (hidden) power of teachers that controls policy on-the-ground. Virendra explains that, while grappling with enactment, he is confronted by interlocking issues that limit policy options to ensure that teachers’ role is not undermined. He ponders *“how to use IT so that the teacher’s role is still there?”* Buried in his discourse is an attempt to reduce the power of teachers in delivering pedagogy by means of extensive deployment of ICT devices.

ICT has arguably been perceived as a saviour to help policymakers develop a new educational pattern. It aims to address the lingering challenges of the seemingly enduring teacher-centred and their controlled model. From the perspective of the external Influencer (Virendra), ICT has the potential to subsume the central role occupied by teachers. This could also explain why policy discussions are held under wraps and parachuted to schools for enactment.

However, recognising that the successful implementation of any reform is underpinned by Enactors’ commitment and engagement, teachers’ primacy in the education system is foregrounded. Furthermore, one of the premises of ICTE policy development is that teachers will see the same ‘pedagogical value’ as policymakers and adapt their pedagogical skills. Along similar lines, Virendra argues that *“teachers should understand now ‘how am I going to use ICT so as to accelerate thinking, understanding, inquiry skills of children and make them expand their horizon of knowledge also through learning?’.”* These new demands to translate theoretical ideas into reality are perhaps overlooked in the drive to fix pedagogy through ICT. His discourse also embeds a conception that ICT is a shortcut to good education and that the responsibility to make it happen lies with Enactors.

Similarly, he has a tendency to impose his own conception of ICT-driven pedagogy on Enactors, undermining their (contextual) realities and apprehension at the arrival of a ‘competitor’ (ICT).

Despite the fact that policy-shaping is reportedly highly top-down, the critical external Influencer claims that a bottom-up approach is usually adopted. He states that “*You (we) do involve (emphasis). We get a lot of people, a lot of (pauses). When we did the Curriculum Framework, we involved hundreds of teachers who came here and who sat. First, they told us about all the problems that they have, what is it that should be changed, what they would like to see. Even then there was an issue. (...) One union says ‘am not coming because the other union is there’. You call them, they don’t come*”. It appears that under the guise of consultation (after decisions have already been taken internally), the external critical Influencer negotiates policy enactment with micro level actors without whose support the policy cannot be executed. It could be that teachers and unions remain resistant to policy because policymakers’ intentions (such as doing away with examinations, or ICT subsuming the role of teachers) can be sensed from the outside. However, their passive resistance leads to accusations of obstructing policy implementation. The union’s posture suggests that it has accrued benefits by choosing to remain at the periphery of the policy-shaping space. This creates the impression that it supports its members, hiding any complicity with Negotiators.

It appears that not only is policy design kept separate from policy implementation, but policy enactment is also sometimes appropriated to control what is perceived as tangible outcomes for voters. Instead of arbitrating and mediating in the policymaking process, it is contended that the political Negotiator takes on an interventionist role and suppresses experts’ capability by assuming their technical role. The level of autonomy of less powerful Influencers is determined by the political leadership, devaluing their contribution to enhancing the policy. The internal critical Influencer (Prerna) reports a lack of autonomy and space to perform her functions. She describes how she was confronted by demands to execute policy, placing her in a difficult position in increasingly diverse ICTE policy processes. She argues that “*policies are imposed at times, you know. The direction, how we want to do a project, they (Negotiators) impose*”. This causes many educational policies to be stillborn. The pedagogical considerations associated with an ICTE policy recede as political forces and alignment take precedence. However, once policy choices are made, the Negotiator has to act swiftly to ensure that his/her political party’s interests are promoted in the public domain. The electorate is provided with semblances of a new direction of a progressive new political order. This is because, ultimately, it decides the political Negotiator’s fate. The real policy intent is therefore buried under layers of influence, making ICTE highly political rather than having pedagogical leanings.

Not only is policy conception shaped by political forces, but major deviations seemingly also occur between publicly stated political goals to bring about deep change and the complex ‘inside’ realities of competing agendas. The data analysis suggests that students’ interests are secondary in the interplay between Negotiators and powerful Influencers’ plans. Political benefits tend to outweigh pedagogical considerations. Voices that attempt to promote deeper-level change are not heard or are excluded from decision-making. As discussed above, powerful internal Influencers tend to act as gatekeepers and limit access to external Influencers whose intervention could displace the policy from the (hidden) agenda. The outsider critical Influencer’s attempts to replace ideologically-driven politics with theory-driven insights into pedagogy were sidelined. With respect to the tablet project, Virendra claims that he tried to explain the pedagogy behind ICT to internal policymakers: “*we explained to the ministry, we need to have a pedagogical project, it is not a tablet project.*” It appears from the data analysis that political Negotiators strongly supported by powerful Influencers trump pedagogical and theoretical imperatives to make space for political projects. It is likely that ideas captured during brief tourist experiences in foreign countries are grafted onto existing practices in isolation of pedagogy and context.

The data analysis presents Mauritius as a space where planning and research occur, and reports are prepared but are shelved for one reason or another. In this highly politicised terrain, not only is local experts’ advice ignored, but the foreign Legitimiser (Allen) was also sidelined. He comments that “*the fact that it (the policy) hasn't been published for me is (...) a little bit worrying because it suggests that there hasn't been enough adherence to the direction that we charted in that strategy (...). It's not unusual (...) for Mauritian policy development processes to get (a) complete draft and then not (be) taken to the final approval process. So that seems to be something that happens quite often. I'm not quite sure why.*” Allen’s advice was not heeded because consulting him was merely to gain legitimisation of already implemented projects. This supports the notion of symbolic consultation. Non-political suggestions are rejected even if they emanate from an expert in an international agency.

#### 6.4.7. ICT in education

The data analysis suggests a high degree of polarisation between Negotiators' drive to implement ICT in schools and the pedagogical value (to be) gained by such initiatives. On the one hand, technological innovations in schools are often celebrated for their novelty by policymakers and local Legitimisers. On the other, from the perspective of the foreign Legitimiser, *"tablets at primary school is an educational waste of time. I'm not persuaded that there's value to be gained. I think much of it is about either the political gain or the interests of the ICT sector in stimulating markets for their technology."* He is also concerned about exposing children to an adult world through ICT and claims that schools will confront psychological and social challenges as a consequence of such policies: *"when the technology is misused, it becomes an enslaving thing, and that is stressful for children, and that has a lot of negative effects."* What is intriguing is that his positional outlook and personal stance differ. However, he is bound by his scope of work even though the assigned projects contradict his ideologies.

The data analysis suggests that the political context of the SIDS has the power to reduce a techno-pedagogic expert's role to that of a symbolic Legitimiser of Negotiators' agenda. Costly new directions and devices were politically valuable for Negotiators. Allen comments, *"if I was honest, I didn't get a strong sense from what I saw in Mauritius, that the impact that the ICT (...) was having in education was really justifying the investment at that point."* In foregrounding political-market-driven ICTE policy, the education discourse seems to have been marginalised by those who are mandated and profess to enhance education.

On the one hand, ICT is projected as a powerful tool for pedagogical innovation. On the other, it is reported that education is being debilitated by technological distractions. The Negotiator (Sid) is concerned that children are no longer reading books. He asks *"have you seen all the children reading books now? Are they touching a book? I don't see. I see my own grandchildren. Each one of them has a phone. Is it, is it, is it proper education? You know, that distraction with ICT (...). The foundation should be laid."* While it is claimed that ICT opens up new possibilities, he emphasises the addictive distraction for children. Furthermore, it may deepen inequality in the classroom as those who have access to it at home will be more adept at using it than those who do not.

The international mediator is apparently caught in a struggle between self (as a pedagogical agent) and the pervasive political environment of a SIDS. He remarks that *“I’m a little bit jaded about innovations and things that everyone sees are going to transform education because my experiences say that they just don’t work (referring to ICT in education).”* His stance is paradoxical in the sense that, on behalf of an international agency, he legitimises a policy that he does not believe will work, in which case valuable resources will be wasted. Based on his wide international experience in similar contexts, he comments that *“I’m very much less interested in ‘clever’ technological solutions to educational problems because I’ve seen them tried. I have watched them fail hundreds of times over. I’ve seen massive amounts of money being wasted. And I just don’t think these things work.”* He adds, *“I think the things that I would find (...) inspirational would be simple, practical, realistic policies that are just moving forward with a few clear goals and implementing them systematically.”* It appears that Allen’s emphasis on simple and practical proposals rather than adding more devices to the already ICT-loaded system was too ordinary for the political appetite of Negotiators as the policy produced has not been published, but the political intentions continue to be deployed. Policymaking in the SIDS seems to be far from a rational process.

#### **6.4.8. Policy re-directions**

Ultimately policies do not succeed or fail on their own merits. The analysis of the fieldwork data suggests that the education policy sphere is managed in a way that is seemingly directed towards serving the broader public interest. However, it is often driven by an overt attempt to discontinue the policies of those who previously held office. The successor Negotiator typically aims to make space for new visions and directions. This is captured by the internal Influencer, Prerna, who explains that *“when there’s a new minister (who) comes, there’s a new set of direction, a new strategy that can come along, trying to bring change, trying to improve the system. So with that comes new strategy, new policies.”* She believes that the political Negotiator must act swiftly to reap the benefits as the average tenure of political appointees is effectively four to five years, tempting top officials to focus on policy reforms that can be enacted quickly. As a result, the Influencer (Prerna) sees Negotiators as driven by influential political role players to activate their agenda. Their alignment with these relatively temporary forces is expedient.

In the race to meet electoral timelines, a policy can even work at cross-purposes with another one, and the demands of various policies are disjointed. Furthermore, there are contradictions between the ‘urgency’ of enacting new policies and their slow implementation. At times, the political Negotiator appropriates the role of other policy-shapers especially when new policymaking occurs during election campaigns. Prerna explains: *“only this year I felt it. I was very unhappy. At one point we were really fighting. We were almost there, and then, at the last minute, the admin section changed it. And then we felt that we even had a meeting where we fought and fought to defend our idea.(...) But they (Negotiators and high level Influencers) want to do something else.”* This extract illustrates the conflict between pedagogical considerations and ideologically-driven policies that renders the policy-shaping space unstable and open to constant contestation and renegotiation. Pedagogical considerations do not appear to make political sense, nor do political Negotiators appear to change their minds, especially in an election year. Seemingly, they have no real intention of actually effecting change. Within a command and control ethos, political Negotiators and powerful Influencers support each other, and the role of other shapers is reduced to executing directives. The top-down approach to decision-making is a primary cause of conflict in policy-shaping, even internally. Nevertheless, the symbolic nature of such policies enables other shapers to portray the policy as bringing about pedagogical innovation. One of the intended outcomes of symbolic negotiations may thus not necessarily be a specific change; instead, they are used to emphasise common ground and to evoke abstract feelings of hope or goodwill among actors not involved in them.

The data analysis suggests that while there is an intention to promulgate a policy to create the impression of a new political direction, there is a limited intention to implement it. However, symbolic display of policies can be of value to political Negotiators. With hopes for progress, the internal Influencer engages in policy enactment to achieve the stated outcomes, focusing on both long- and short-term horizons. While the announced policy might appear to be innovative, it is undermined by the lack of any intention to implement it or provide the necessary resources. Prerna is concerned about micro-issues such as which technologies to purchase for improved educational impact, while other Negotiators have more than a policy at stake. Prerna relates how she grappled with inconsistencies in selecting ICT devices and pedagogical promises. However, small frontier voices are appropriated by circumstances, which she found to be at odds with pedagogical considerations.

In an election year, the need for Negotiators to make projects visible and tangible is amplified even if they are riddled with operational inefficiencies. As noted by Prerna, piloting projects or conducting feasibility studies are petty considerations in the face of political pressure to meet deadlines. It appears that Negotiators tend to underinvest in policies that yield returns over a longer time horizon as they aim to make a good impression during their relatively short (electoral) tenure and thus exert pressure on the bureaucratic system to produce swift results, bypassing measures that could enhance policy implementation. The critical insider Influencer (Prerna) said, “*the consultant asked us: ‘Why did you do a full fledged project in one go? Why didn't you do a feasibility study? Do a pilot first’.* Then we said ‘*there was no time to do a pilot’.*” The data analysis thus suggests that ICT is used as an advantageous political instrument to send ‘ground-breaking’ and ‘innovative’ signals to voters.

The SIDS can be characterised as a space where ideological contradictions are hidden in ICT devices. Many of the arguments for deploying educational technologies were said to be based on anecdotal proof and discourse about the ‘innovative’ nature of such devices that were presumed to offer substantive learning opportunities. Most importantly, it has been argued that political Negotiators are keen to (symbolically) declare new directions to demonstrate their commitment to helping Mauritius to respond to the needs of the digital economy and the notion of welfare economics. The foreign Legitimiser (Allen) remarks: “*but I think everyone knows that the tablet project is a political project being rolled out to demonstrate the Government is helping the country to respond to the needs of the digital economy (...), but this is not unusual.*” He suggests that this is true of similar (developing country) contexts. Powerful Influencers’ role in safeguarding students’ interests is undermined, especially when they willingly support political Negotiators’ political projects.

Powerful Negotiators and Influencers that seek power appear to undercut certain policies. Political centrality has also been identified as a factor that causes conflict amongst powerful political Negotiators and impacts policy. The local democratic system breeds constant competition among political rivals, within and across party lines. Virendra, the external critical Influencer, gives an example of how power struggles can lead to the ‘premature death’ of an education policy that was believed to have strong validity but was also shelved. He explains that “*when somebody (political Negotiator) does something, and he doesn't get the support of his colleagues in the cabinet (...) it's because he was seen as a person not of a hard-core labour (political party), and the labour people who didn't want him to succeed.*” Thus, political hostility prevents the formulation of a national vision for education. It is also likely that the Negotiator failed to take ownership of the policy or had insufficient knowledge to defend it among other powerful Negotiators. In short, Negotiators’ personal interests lie at the core of the policy, while the professed educational transformation is ancillary or a

fallacy. It is intriguing and contradictory that political Negotiators who project themselves as taking the country in a new direction are major resisters of change.

Responsibility for policy implementation is swiftly and subtly shifted to ground level policy-shapers. Negotiators that are vying for top positions exert pressure on frontline implementers, leading to organisational pathologies. The school landscape is constrained by strict timelines and a lack of resources to respond adequately to expectations amidst resistance by practitioners. Policy caveats give rise to further policies, and ultimately policy becomes trapped in a maze of methodological difficulties such as multiple goals and varying (mis)interpretations, leading to policy failure. Virendra argues that “*education is not happening because of lack of leadership in the schools.*” Ambiguities, tensions, inconsistencies and political interventions produce counter-discourses from Negotiators and Influencers attempting to shore up support for policies by claiming that failure is caused by a leadership crisis at the school level. Perna notes that a leadership programme is envisaged to equip school leaders with skills to manage schools in the midst of reforms. She explains that “*we feel that there's a leadership crisis for the HM. The HM is under pressure. The HM is a bit lost at times. (...) We don't have their buy-in at all (...). There's a crisis and they're (Ministry) going to do some leadership programme in a nice place.*” Presumably, this solution is also seen as an opportunity for some to display work in progress on ICT in education.

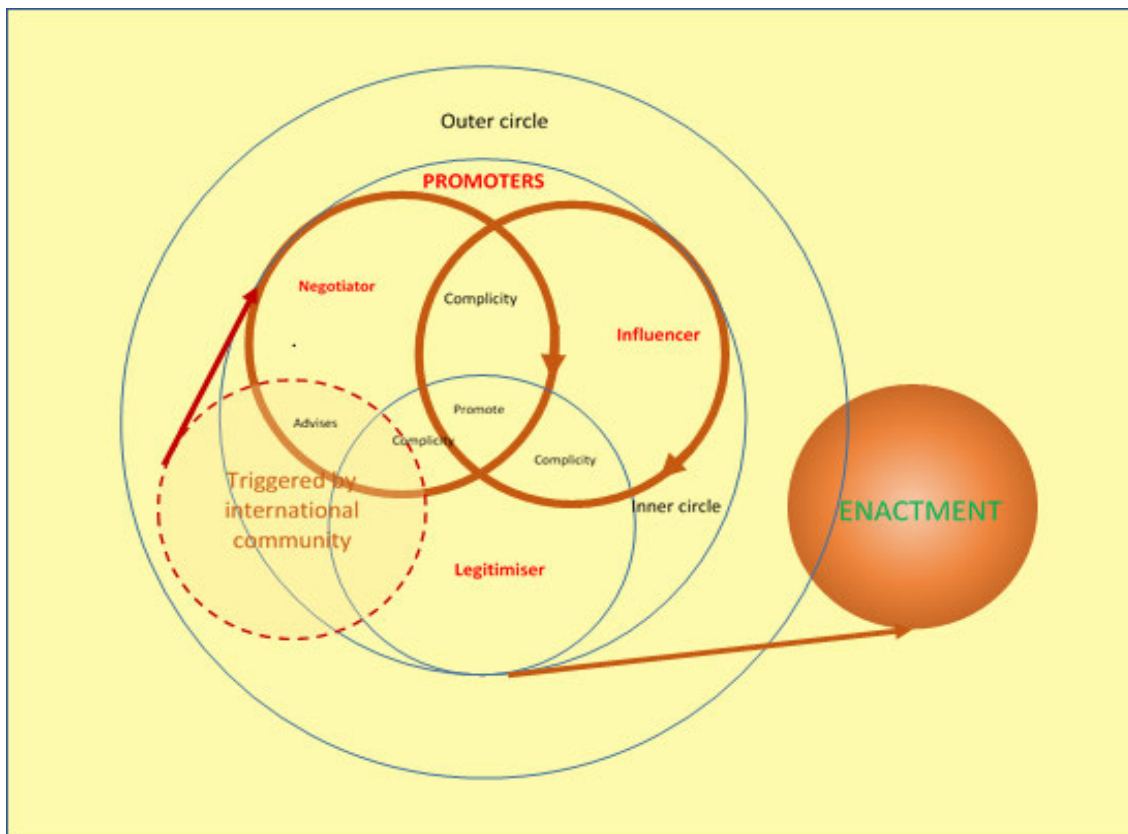
## **6.5. Synthesis of chapter**

Negotiators, Legitimisers and Influencers together coined as *Promoters* of policy are seemingly interconnected and interdependent (see Figure 6.2). They appear to operate within a closed policymaking space layered with different kinds of complicities, complementarities and suppression to advance their careers. Within this politically charged space, Promoters seem to develop policy with an outward gaze influenced by the international advocates to capture new and seductive policy ideas to lure the electorate and remain in power. These political ideas are apparently highly market-friendly, and costly but with limited to no pedagogical value.

Policy development and policy enactment are apparently compartmentalised as a deliberate move to impose political projects and avoid contestation by Enactors. Faced with passive resistance on-the-ground, policymakers strategise to curb contestation, resulting in symbolic policy implementation rather than any real intention to enhance the education system.

Despite contestation, proposals to enhance pedagogy through research and expert knowledge are undermined so as to protect political projects and favour political friends. In the end, there are policy re-directions, and in the complex journey, pedagogy is marginalised by those who profess to improve the education system.

This is a partial view of the policy-shaping space and the workings of Promoters of policies. The following chapter that deals with Enactors adds more clarity to policy development and contributes to an elaborated understanding of the constructions of policy-shapers of ICTE policy development.



**Figure 6.2:** Interconnectedness and interdependence of Promoters of ICTE policies

## CHAPTER 7

### Enactors of policy

#### 7.1. Introduction

The previous chapter unravelled the multilayered, converging and conflicting perspectives of ‘Negotiators’, ‘Influencers’ and ‘Legitimisers’, depicted as ‘Promoters’ of ICTE. This chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter, but deals specifically with the typology ‘*Enactor*’ following a similar comparative architecture. Three distinct types of Enactors of policy constituted the sample based on their respective roles in enacting ICTE policy, notably those: ‘*developing ICT curriculum*’, ‘*installing ICT devices in schools*’ and ‘*using ICT to enact the curriculum*’.

The diverse range of policy Enactors, embodying mental and practical variations across a multitude of situations and practices. This embodiment activates dual policy interpretation and translation processes on-the-ground. There are complementarities in their respective roles because their distinct tasks seemingly feed into one another for enactment of policy. These complementarities are paradoxical and divergent rather than coherent and consistent. They do not represent a stable perspective amongst the participants. This chapter aims to show how Enactors’ varying interpretations of policy create spaces for micro-political (re)negotiations as they shape policy on-the-ground. Each type of Enactor engaged with, as participants, is depicted to reveal unique interpretations of their worldviews on the motives and practices of ICTE in their classroom spaces. While a broader sample of Enactors would yield broader ranges, the selected Enactors are emblematic of the spectrum that exists within the practical operational contexts of schooling in the targeted context.

## 7.2. Overview of chapter

The chapter begins with an introduction to the Enactors and their roles in shaping policy. Section 7.3 describes the microtypologies that emerged from the data analysis. The consolidated data revealed similarities of thought and action with regard to pertinent issues suggested by the Enactors. Section 7.4 sets out the hegemonic frame within which Enactors appear to operate with respect to high-level decision-makers. This space is filled with conflictual relationships among the varied Enactors with little unity in their beliefs, mainly around the logic and pedagogical benefits of introducing ICT in schools. Section 7.5 discusses their lack of a shared vision of ICTE due to hegemonic relationships and multi-vocal perspectives. Section 7.6 examines how policy is enacted in micro-institutional environments in light of Enactors' marginalisation and lack of consensus on the use of ICT. These arguments are supported by excerpts from the interview transcripts. Section 7.7 synthesises insights into the recurrent themes and traits of Enactors supported by a diagrammatic representation.

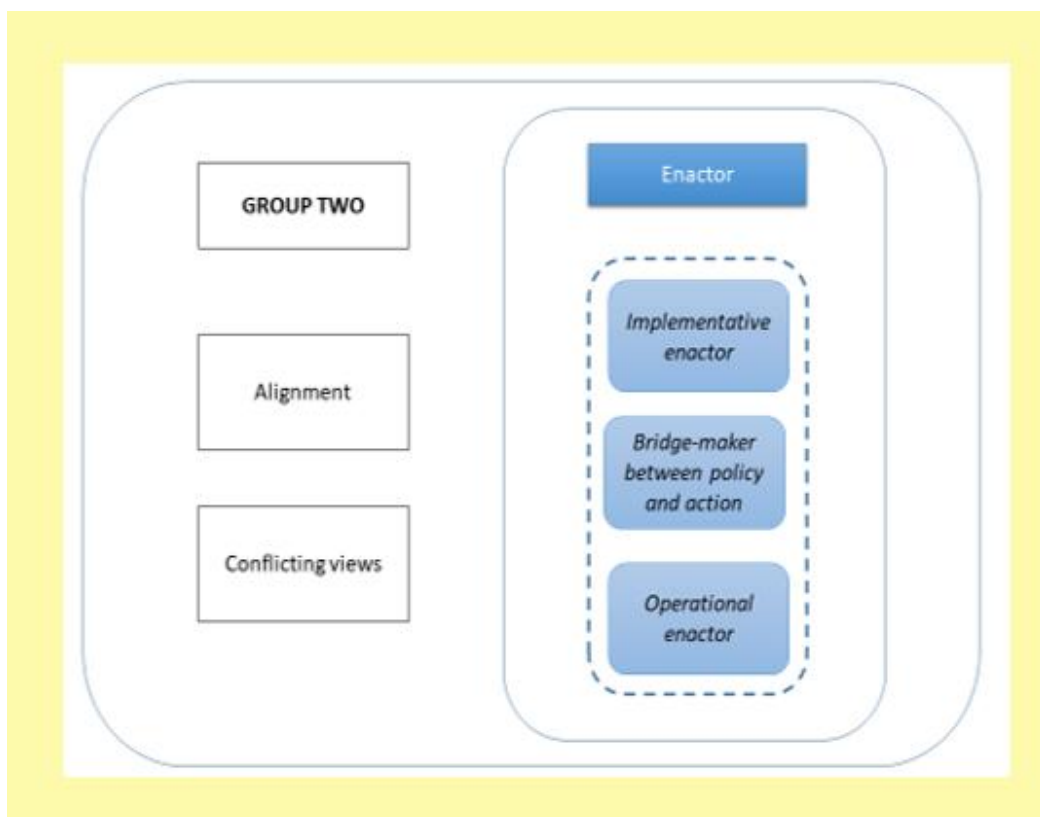
## 7.3. Sub-categories of the types of Enactors

The data analysis revealed a range of types of Enactors. Each outlined how they interpret their role concerning the official declared policy, revealing differences in the conceptions of their knowledge of the policy, and interpretations of how or to whom they are considered accountable. However, enactment does not only depend on a few Enactors' dispositional readiness to use ICT devices or not in light of local conditions and the organisational logic. It is also wrought by other Enactors whose roles are somewhat complementary and interconnected. In light of the data analysis, I represent the emergent typologies as described below and depicted in Figure 7.1:

The *implementative Enactor* (represented by Akshay, male) investigates pedagogical uses of hardware and software considering the contextual landscape of schools. He is an advocate for the use of ICTE and is highly involved in the *implementation of ICT hardware and software in schools*. He is bound to work within the influential forces of Influencers and Negotiators. He, thus, lacks autonomy in the delivery of his tasks. He condemns policymakers whom he presumes work at cross-purposes with the skills that he feels the curriculum should help develop among school students.

The *bridge-maker between policy and action* (represented by Benoit, male) acts as an interface between policy text and policy-in-action. He is driven by an imaginative, projective conception of industry's skills needed to conceptualise his curriculum action. These needs inform his role as an operational Enactor (ICT). In exercising his pedagogical work to *translate policy into curriculum*, he only prescribes curriculum for teaching ICT as a subject and subtly resists pressure to develop curriculum for the use of ICT to teach other subjects.

*Operational Enactors (non-ICT)* (represented by Saanvi, female and Prakash, male) are micro-institutional frontline practitioners who *operationalise policy* on-the-ground in their (non)use of ICT as support to teach non-ICT subjects. They demonstrate passive resistance to using ICT in the classroom. Even if they work under the surveillance of the administrative legitimiser to mediate curriculum, they make their own decisions about which practices they wish to ignore, and which to accept and/or to nudge. They, therefore, profoundly shape policy on-the-ground while maintaining their own (professional) identities and agendas.



**Figure 7.1:** Microtypologies for Enactors that emerged from the data analysis

## 7.4. Hegemonic frame(work)

### 7.4.1. Exclusions, (systemic) oppressions, suppression, subversions

From the analysis of the field data, it appears that there is an inbuilt notion of linear, discrete and distinct stages between policymaking (as text) and enactment. In any event, decisions taken at the top are likely to have a significant bearing on how the policy is enacted. Enactors are reportedly handed their segregated share of work after final decisions are taken by the authorities. These decisions are usually of a highly technical nature, such as the choice and specifications of ICT devices. They also include finetuning of policy mediated by consideration of the financial implications. Policy is supposedly brought to life at the time of enactment. Yet, these policy choices often fail to acknowledge the specific situational, contextual space of authentic classrooms, which could have a major bearing on their enactment. This is captured in the extract by the implementative Enactor (Akshay), who claims to have requested high-performing devices based on issues he previously confronted and whose policy intent (which he regards as a way of feeding back in a bottom-up dialogue with policymakers) is relatively marginalised. Akshay states that *“I am not too happy with the tablets that they are giving us for Grade IV because it's only 2GB RAM<sup>65</sup>, and it's not to the standard of what we want to do. We have requested to have 4GB RAM. Let's see what they will actually give us because we are concerned about the user experience.”* It appears that either information from below does not filter up, or it is not considered in decision-making. Financial constraints caused by severe education budget cuts also impede policymakers' responsiveness. Although the policy text is important because it provides broad directions, the Enactor suggests that policy implementation is often neglected or undermined. Asymmetries in policy intent are also likely to result in serious operational inefficiencies and failure. Ultimately, the Enactor's agency to shape policy from the bottom up is undercut by the imposed policy.

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<sup>65</sup> RAM is a form of volatile memory, which means that it only holds onto data while the chip is powered and erases everything when you shut down the computer. RAM memory is measured in gigabytes (GB).

Driven by the hope created by promises, Enactors develop their own policy intent irrespective of other factors. The Enactor attempts to control policy from the bottom and discounts pertinent issues such as the budget. In the main policymaking structure, choices are made that aim to strike a balance between costs and benefits. Ultimately, those on-the-ground suffer the consequences of the gap between policy promises, compromises and actual outcomes. Instead of strengthening and supporting enactment in light of the constraints, the Enactor is often left to his/her own devices to deal with implementation. Akshay expresses concern about the use of poorly-performing devices: *“we don't want that device to crash. We want it to open seamlessly, and we want the learner to use multiple programmes and so on. But Ministry are concerned with only ‘we have so much cash, and this is all we can do’.”* While the Enactor is held accountable for smooth policy implementation, his/her efforts are constrained by broader factors.

Educational issues are seemingly imbued with superficiality. Little to no consideration is given to contextual needs, and policy appears to be geared at pleasing domestic constituencies such as political partners, parents as voters or international donors. In such a situation, satisfying Enactors' domestic demands is not a priority for powerful influencers and negotiators. (Non)deliberate exclusion of Enactors from the policymaking terrain is likely to neglect both the diversity of actors and the contextual information required for smooth policy enactment. This creates a sense of imposed policy that subverts Enactors' situated knowledge, preventing them from adding value to policy and developing a sense of connectedness to it. In the face of marginalisation from the policymaking terrain, the Enactor (Akshay) pursues policies implicitly, considering that the situation is bound to remain unchanged because of the usual rejection of proposals from the ground, rendering policies merely symbolic. He notes, *“but we sometimes hopefully or hopelessly fight the fact that we do not have a choice but to follow what they (negotiators) say.”* Decision-makers are also criticised for exhibiting the latest ICT devices in their offices to create a favourable impression with influential visitors rather than utilising them as 'productivity tools'.

The Enactors who were interviewed argue that local policies are driven by international players rather than contextual demands. This bolsters the SIDS' dependence on international collaboration as local contexts are caught in perpetual emulation of contexts which often differ significantly from their own. Foreign practices are targeted, and local ones are jettisoned. Fuelled by presumed insecurity or a lack of confidence, political negotiators are arguably legitimising their policy idea. Akshay claims that "*decision-makers (in Mauritius) are so insecure that they always look for things that have worked somewhere else.*" Adoption of foreign 'best' practices is seen as a shortcut to introduce 'novel education technologies'. This appears to be Negotiators' preferred strategy because of the electoral cycle and the need to demonstrate tangible outcomes. On the one hand, limited or no investment is made in research, feasibility studies, or pilot projects which are time-consuming and have no political leverage. On the other hand, Enactors reportedly grapple with misfits in policy enactment, waste time that should be dedicated to pedagogy dealing with operational inefficiencies, and make superficial use of ICT devices that produce few or no pedagogical contributions to learning.

#### **7.4.2. Sense of being eclipsed by legitimacy**

From the data analysis, it appears that local Enactors' marginalisation from the policymaking landscape engenders a sense of devaluation that threatens their self-esteem. They feel less capable than their foreign counterparts and seek recognition of their expertise from influential decision-makers. To assert agency, the Enactor reportedly grapples with powerful influencers and struggles for space alongside international experts to influence policy. Akshay argues that "*(the content is) 100 percent Mauritian. And this is only because Organisation1 resisted, and we make better content than the Indians. They cannot make the content that we actually devise. But if I say that in the Ministry, no one will believe me.*" Resisting this oppressive system has become almost a classic mode of operation because the need for legitimacy from foreign countries is seemingly strongly upheld by powerful shapers. In seeking acknowledgement, Akshay celebrates local expertise that he claims is superior to the model that other institutions (local or international) could have imagined. This promotes dichotomous confrontations between global and local worldviews rather than a conscious, realistic acknowledgement of strengths and limitations on all sides.

The data analysis suggests that Enactors are of the view that Negotiators (see chapter 6) are tethered to macro-level pressure and often submit to donors' conditionalities. This reinforces the pursuit of legitimacy and increasing dependence on corporations as well as international agencies such as the World Bank. Such knowledge presumably eclipses local capabilities. Policy development is thus left in their hands, who seldom consider the views of those whom the policy is intended to develop, that is, students. It has been argued that having foreign Legitimisers do the work of policy development is convenient for Influencers as they cannot be held responsible for policy failure. From the perspective of the Implementative Enactor (Akshay), this explains the demeaning of local competencies and increased reliance on legitimisation from the international community. He argues that *"the model that we have developed has exceeded all advice Ministry could have got from external parties. So where we have reached, it's beyond the model that probably (the) World Bank (...); they (Ministry) are highly dependent on the World Bank; that the World Bank could have advised them to do. And the Indians, they only produce videos. (...) So, we are much much much ahead of the possibilities that Ministry could have identified. So I think they feel insecure that we (Organisation1) are at the top. So they (Ministry) cannot move ahead. So they cannot understand why and how we have reached there. And they do not want to give us that credit. So they feel secure when they receive advice from World Bank or from other parties."* This extract demonstrates the implementative Enactor's attempts to override the occupants of the main policymaking structure and foreign advisors. Simultaneously, he advocates that expertise resides locally that is not given its due acknowledgement. The official structures do not add much currency by acknowledging local contexts, and seek instead perceived better legitimising from international sources.

It has been argued that donors propose to provide technical and financial support to be able to access domestic policy space for intervention. The data analysis suggests that Negotiators compromise and eventually surrender to funders' demands to the detriment of the local education system and its beneficiaries. It was reported that the policies deviated from the intended outcomes. The critical Enactor suggests that the hidden costs of maintaining such sophisticated ICTE devices will mean that it becomes dysfunctional. He suggests that *"they (policymakers) are stuck between those who financed them and those who are in the field. I think they [Negotiators] quite surrender to those who give them money."* Thus, policy enactment is seemingly preferred over the long-term sustainability of project goals. He claims that a *"technological solution has been developed (...) for the locals, by the locals"*.

The data analysis suggests that political and economic issues are often ignored in favour of a more systematic and more responsive approach to policymaking. The Enactor explains that *“we have more potential to go in this direction (local solutions), but it all depends on whether (...) what the Ministry wants to do. For instance, I want to go into use (of) the device to do e-assessment, to do coding and so on. So, Ministry has never had such insights. So they believe that just giving tablets and giving the contents, it's okay.”* The Implementative Enactor is indirectly campaigning for a recognition of local rather than an automatic adherence to international discourses. He demonstrates agency to not accept the tablets that are obviously imposed by policymakers driven by political motives, but offers suggestions that are often ignored. The data suggests a sense of hegemony that enforces prescribed policy. The disconnection between the ground level and the main structure that is evident in the quote is highly likely to engender a gap between policy intent and practice.

The data analysis also suggests that subversion has become thoroughly embedded in the development and enactment of policies. The Enactor (Saanvi) raises concerns about being hegemonised as a micro-institutional Enactor who is unable to speak out about issues or to contribute to improving the education system despite high failure rates. She claims that *“we want to write articles, we want to give our views. But even on Facebook you can't give (your views) whether it is opposed by Defimedia, L'express (local newspapers) or anything. We're not allowed to. How do you call it? I can't give my opinion. I can't tell you. I can't talk about the problems at school. I can't seek help. I can't talk freely about why children are failing.”* The Enactor affirmed that the Influencer and Negotiator are unwilling to establish the reasons for the high failure rate because they are disengaged from the real issues at hand. She states that she is unable to take such concerns into the public domain because of the restrictive conditions governing public officers and fear of reprisals. Silencing of the voices of enactors by the official Negotiators seems to be intrinsic to the hierarchical system.

## 7.5. Lack of a shared notion of ICTE

### 7.5.1. Multiple interpretations of policy and inter-organisational conflict

Although Enactors are generally not included in high-level policymaking discussions, they are connected by policies<sup>66</sup>. However, the objectives of policies are often vague and unclear, and Enactors' interpretations differ. In response to a question on the objective of introducing ICT in primary schools, the operational Enactor (Prakash) presumed that policymakers have a clearer idea, hinting that policy is imposed and centralised and the process is opaque. However, he loosely associated this policy with the need for young students to become familiar with ICT tools. According to him, ICT is also becoming the main pillar of the Mauritian economy. Prakash claims that *“the aim is to introduce ICT, because we are (silenced) (...) our ICT sector is becoming our main pillar now. So, yes, just to make them how to say, have the first contact with ICT tools<sup>67</sup>. Yes, they (policymakers) have their own idea.”* The link between ‘ICT as the main pillar of the economy’ and ‘acquaintance’ is not clearly described by the operational Enactor who presents himself as a recipient rather than an active user of policy. The loose coupling of the objectives of ICT in education and practice reinforces the notion of the operational Enactor’s passivity.

The data analysis suggests that, in general, ICT policies and the willpower of policy-shapers are not adequate to transform education and improve educational outcomes. Other factors, such as a lack of policy coherence, also appear to engender various notions of policy objectives. Some Enactors believe that there are many gaps in the policy itself, which hamper full enactment and implementation. Each Enactor has his/her own subjective perspectives of how s/he will implement the policy, often using the lens of a personalised rather than systemic scheme of work. Policies are broken down into several distinct tasks to direct their own interpretation of implementation in an unfolding schedule of operations. While some tasks are imputed to certain divisions, others are left unattended or forced onto other individuals’ lists of tasks. This was experienced by Benoit, who is responsible for bridging policy and practice through the development of curriculum. He demarcates his specialised role of curriculum development for ‘ICT as a subject’ for which he is responsible in the current organisational set-up. Benoit explains that he is not responsible for developing the curriculum for using ICT as

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<sup>66</sup> The National Curriculum Framework and Cambridge Assessment International Education requirements drive the curriculum.

<sup>67</sup> French : *“avoir le premier contact avec les outils informatiques.”*

pedagogical support for teaching non-ICT subjects. This aspect of ICTE appears to be in a policy void, and he does not want to be held accountable for a role that is not his. Conditions of service for public officers enable them to operate within a specific ambit. Incumbents can thus accept or refuse additional responsibilities. The Enactors tend to lean on the bureaucratic organisational structure to wield their power and exercise agency. The curriculum expert (Benoit) states that *“you know, people confuse between teaching (using) ICT and then teaching ICT as a subject. (...) In fact, you know, we, at the department of computer education we teach the subject (ICT as a subject). (...) But, the thing is that what people (Negotiators, Influencers) want actually that they want ICT to be integrated across the curriculum. They want to teach mathematics using ICT. (...) But this is not our mandate.”* It is argued that Influencers and other shapers with political power do not always recognise curriculum specialists’ authority and tend to mix roles as it suits them.

Rapid developments in ICT can be overwhelming for some shapers of policy, especially when there are conflicting expectations of the policy outcomes. There appears to be an understanding that learners need to learn how to operate ICT devices and use office tools such as Word, Excel and PowerPoint. According to Benoit’s conception of policy, there is an acute need for ICT specialists in the labour market, and ICTE will help to fill this gap. His textbooks apparently provide screenshots of the latest versions of ICT hardware and software he uses. He seems to take screenshots from his own latest version of hardware and software to insert in textbooks for students to follow instructions. As the textbook producer, he is of the view that the devices in schools too need to be upgraded to match his textbooks’ screen capture. His interpretation of policy seems to emphasise material resources rather than pedagogy.

He reportedly grapples with this issue as the Ministry is not able to meet his material demands. This conception of ‘education keeping pace with advances in ICT’ exerts (financial) demands on the institution. Benoit explains how the lack of the latest technologies in classrooms can impede the enactment of curriculum and effective use of prescribed textbooks imprinted with screenshots: *“IT keeps on changing. So you have no choice! You need to revise the syllabus compared to other subjects like Maths, economics, business studies. (...) The thing that they are going to tell you is that ‘you know, write your curriculum, we will take care of the infrastructure, the computer lab, number of computers’. And you know most of the time, the curriculum comes, and these basic, these priorities, requirements are not there. (...) Because the screenshot is not the same. (...) And this is something which happens almost every year.”*

This suggests an interpretation of ICTE that is shaped by industry offerings. Benoit emphasises the fundamental technological equipment required to enact an ICT curriculum, which is seemingly not made available by policymakers.

Such a conception of ICT gives rise to conflicting expectations of the transformation of education and the curriculum. The multiple interpretations amongst Enactors of what ICTE policies should achieve and how, have the capacity to rupture the policy intent. On the one hand, one sub-system is deeply engaged in developing curriculum to enable students to use office automation tools such as Word, Excel, and PowerPoint in the belief that these applications can be used as cognitive tools to support students' learning and enable them to develop creative and problem-solving skills. On the other, another sub-system is of the view that such content clashes with the attainment of primary school students' learning objectives.

Teaching office automation tools in the face of rapid developments in ICT hardware and software was deemed senseless and superficial by the Enactor Akshay, who operationalises curriculum. He argues that children do not need to learn how to type and format documents at the age of ten but need to know how to think from first principles about using ICT in the everyday world. Reflecting on his immediate institutional environment, Akshay, the *critical implementative Enactor* says: *“people believe that office automation is ICT integration. They (pre- and in-service teachers) learn Word, Excel, PowerPoint (...). In primary education, the first thing we should start learning is to code at a very early age.”* He believes that coding is relevant for primary school students to develop a wider repertoire of essential skills (critical thinking, Mathematical skills, problem-solving, innovative capabilities) and behaviours. These skills apparently relate to industry's discourse of the types of skills needed in the workplace. Although Benoit's and Akshay's expectations of ICTE differ, both Enactors' discourse is industry-driven. Essentially, ICTE, as a rubric, embraces various conceptions of what students need to learn and why. In addition, Akshay claims that the curriculum does not seem to do *“justice to the willpower”* of teachers to use ICT. In his opinion, teachers are enthusiastic about using ICT, which is lost in the teaching of superfluous content.

The data analysis suggests that the superficial ICT curriculum is stifling students' potential. It is argued that Enactors are caught between policy adherence by their occupation as practitioner teachers and their subjective interpretation of the policy intent (its goals and rationale which are considered as beyond the scope of their students). The Enactors seem to suggest that the macroeconomic imperatives for curriculum inclusion of subject content are outweighing pragmatic (pedagogical and developmental) considerations of what students in particular age groups ought to be learning or are capable of engaging at their stage of cognitive development. The bridge-maker Enactor (Benoit) is often caught in the middle of the dissonance between policy and immediacy and ends up complying with less 'problematic' practices because students were not scoring good grades in ICT when it was code-oriented. Benoit explains, "*it was not that easy, and the subject itself was not easy. It was quite difficult. It was very code-oriented. There was a lot of programming, and results were not that good. So, students were struggling to get a credit of five and six. (...) then Cambridge has changed the syllabus. The syllabus was less programming oriented.*" The Enactor now ignores higher-order content that demands cognitive reasoning beyond learners' believed capacity. This indicates a passive adoptive implementing role in ICTE policy enactment. For example, he reported that he prescribed Word and Excel because coding was too difficult for students, affecting the pass rate. The Negotiators of policy might interpret this as teachers' failure to fully engage with the scope of the new ICTE curriculum, while the Enactors seem to be suggesting that the policy perhaps underestimates students' capability to create and innovate. Ideological clashes and incoherence in understanding policy outcomes are apparent in all stages of policy implementation. It appears that profound issues and questions were not addressed, such as whose interests the curriculum serves and the values it reflects. A lack of consensus on the foundation of curriculum conceptualisation and the role of Enactors incites other Enactors to take charge of others' roles; for example, Akshay claims that "*I do not hold the power to change the curriculum.*"

There is a strong view on-the-ground that education should be converted to a completely virtual mode. Akshay argues that *“books are still being printed. I don't know if they are printed with the recycled paper. As we are now, we can do away with books in primary schools. Why we're doing it?”* This comment predates the COVID-19 pandemic and was motivated by the need for greater efficiency in the operational schooling context, whilst also being touted as the harbinger of modernity in a new global world order. It ignores pre-existing inequalities in a society where not all students can operate an ICT device with equal ease, or even the reality that not all teachers want to or can use ICT. Despite operating in this space, the Enactor Akshay demonstrates overconfidence or optimism about the usefulness and usage of ICTE that could be disconnected from realities on-the-ground. As an advocate for ICT, Akshay seems to see himself as an usher who will bring about a new world order despite his acknowledgement of the many practical challenges.

Rigid organisational structures and governance were repeatedly brought into the mix of factors that were constraining the proper enactment of ICTE policies. It has been argued that both the weak organisational structure and the way in which education is managed negatively impact the national alignment of ICTE. Thus, ICTE's potential was arguably compromised when the policy was mediated for implementation through dysfunctional national agencies.

Akshay argues that conditions of work within the public sector that offer lifetime job security (and 'guaranteed' career progression) even when officers chronically underperform. The system thus produces *“specialists in failure”*. Public sector human resources policies were critiqued for being too tolerant, and not performance-driven and therefore inefficient in dealing with poor performance to the detriment of successful enactment of policies. Akshay supports a regime of accountability in the public sector and condemns bureaucrats for continually failing policies. He suggests that *“it means that the same people, even if they fail to implement policy, they will get unlimited chances to fail again. It's difficult to move them away from this. So if I use a term in football, they are specialists in failure. (...) People are not taken to task. They are not accountable.”*

The data analysis also suggests that powerful influencers often lean on spaces of policy failure to secure their own careers rather than focusing on the maintenance and sustainability of interventions. They appear to use their authority to embark on new projects, but do not take responsibility for failure. Such individuals have been characterised as “*policy vultures*” who feed on the corpses of failed policies. The strident voice of the Enactor claims that “*some people are only securing their positions in the Ministry. It serves their purpose to have a project fail and a new one starting. So, they are living on that failure. So they are kind of policy vultures and they would feed on the corpse of one project. (...) We had all sorts of programmes. All these have constantly been implemented, failed and some new idea crops up, ...implement, fail. So, this is the issue. So, I cannot see how we will progress.*” Akshay laments that substantial resources are injected into projects, but policies fail due to political issues or flawed conceptualisation of projects by top officials. However, Enactors continue to implement the policies within contextual limitations and somehow become complicit with “*policy vultures*”.

### **7.5.2. Not convinced about ICTE**

General methods of dealing with the use of ICT in class include ignoring or tolerating it and even minimising its use. This implies limited to no adherence to formal ICTE policy stipulations and their intent. The data analysis reinforced using ICT for non-educational purposes as a source of distraction for students. In the extract below, the resistant Enactor (Saanvi) reports that ICT has not been explored to improve grades or to develop problem-solving skills, but rather to break the monotony when lessons are not sufficiently engaging.

Even though one cannot expect the teacher to be active at all times in the classroom, ICT devices are sometimes used to compensate for a teacher’s inability to make lessons more engaging. Saanvi, the Enactor suggests that “*maybe they (teachers) have been exposed to ICT technology, iPhones, laptops, for other things, but not to solve a problem as such. Because up to now, I never as such used technology to enhance learning, I would say, to improve their grades. (...) So I use it as a moment to break monotony. And it works.*” Although a brief distraction could help students to feel more engaged for the rest of the class, the policy intent and associated investment are to contribute to students’ learning rather than entertainment. This extract signals that ICT is not taken seriously by the Enactor and is being used as a costly distraction rather than to enhance teaching and learning.

The notion that ICTE is serving a purpose other than the one proclaimed is reinforced in the data analysis. The discourse suggests that exposing students to ICT devices from an early age hinders their development and thinking skills. The teachers that participated in this study believed that it was not likely that these devices would bring about deep, positive changes among children. Instead, they argued that it creates a false impression that students are learning. The Enactor Benoit observes that ICT delays children's growth and that this is reflected in their academic performance: *"it's not going to be good for their (development) (...), to develop, for their critical thinking, problem-solving skills etc. You get the impression that they are developing it. But, in fact, it is not like this. (...) I think this is one of the reasons of the failure also."*

The data from the Enactors of the ICT policy suggests that the devices are promoted with a commercial interest in selling them to schools. They argue that ICT has no value in education. Furthermore, there are claims that the SIDS has become a dumping ground for rich countries who have come to understand that ICT does not have any pedagogical benefit for students. The Enactor, Benoit, claims that developed countries *"banned technology in their school, and they ask you to use technology."* Education policies seemingly become the channel for this transfer, and schools become sites for the commercialisation of ICT devices, supported by powerful policy-shapers. It was contended that investment is made in devices without adequate systematic research. Prakash claims that *"we are investing massively, but again without research. (...) it is merely for the contract, for money, just that. When we see how it works, the project just stops at once. This is the problem. They (corporations) declare bankruptcy and leave. Then this consolidates the idea [that] merely winning contracts was important. It was all because of money, commission,. This is the problem."*<sup>68</sup> In the absence of empirical findings from local research studies, it is not surprising that such conspiracy theories abound. Suspicion rather than rational research conclusions fuels these perceptions.

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<sup>68</sup> French: "pour le contract, pour l'argent, juste sa, mais toujours quand on regarde comment sa marche, sa s'arrete d'un seule coup, quand c'est la faillites ils partent. Alors, sa consolide notre idee de contract, argent, commission, qu' ils ont."

It was argued that the education system has failed in its mission to better prepare children for the jobs of tomorrow and that students are controlled by technology. The critical Enactor notes that the devices that are being rolled out are limiting students' creative potential. He argues that the imposition of ICT fosters students' learning as passive consumers rather than as creators. His view of the future is turning Mauritians into both consumers and producers, that is "prosumers" but he believes the Ministry is not yet ready for such innovative thinking. Akshay suggests that "*Mauritians: we are hundred percent, (...)200% consumers. So, we are not prosumers. ... that is my vision of ICT. But we are very far away from it. And [the] Ministry doesn't understand that. If I write this, it's going to be too radical for them.*" From a researcher's perspective, it could be argued that not all ICT devices would necessarily enhance students' creative abilities; indeed, they could have the opposite effect. There is a seeming misconception amongst decision-makers that the mere installation of devices such as tablets within the schooling context will support learning, without analysing its pedagogic impact through research. Yet, the Enactor does not feel free to discuss these contentions with higher-level officers.

While in bureaucracy conflicts over the degree of sophistication of tools (hardware) dominate discussions (chapter 6), the ground seems to grapple with more serious issues. Enactors report that policymakers are insensitive to on-the-ground operational issues. They bemoan the view that ICT policies call for increased public spending on ICT infrastructure, ignoring concerns over students' growing indiscipline and declining performance. It is argued that the system does not assist when a child appears to be lagging behind due to emotional disturbances because of family struggles, and other social and economic problems. The front-line teacher is regarded as an agent who is responsible for dealing with practical challenges. This is clearly articulated by Akshay: "*discipline is a more important issue for teachers to deal with other than integration of technology.*" His analysis suggests marginalisation of pressing issues of the students that teachers have to deal with while policymakers are more concerned about ICTE. He analyses this public parade as an attempt to persuade the electorate that political policymaking forces are bearers of technological 'innovations' in schools. This suggests that decision-makers use policies to serve their own interests rather than enhance the education system. Essential issues such as discipline are sidelined.

## 7.6. Policy in practice

### 7.6.1. Passive resistance

In this multilevel, multifaceted policy-shaping terrain, a repertoire of micro-political tactics is deployed when those on-the-ground are confronted with policy ideas emanating from high-level decision-makers. In response, subtle strategies are adopted by teachers at the micro-institutional level, while at the same time maintaining their own (professional) identity and agenda. One manifestation of this phenomenon is an accommodative resistance to the utilisation of ICT devices. Enactors might proclaim that they use ICT as a pedagogical support, but deeper engagement reveals that they are merely giving the impression of doing so. The Enactor (Prakash) supposedly demonstrates a willingness to use ICT in the classroom, but when asked to provide more details, reveals that he is mainly passive about ICTE policies in his practice. He adds that some Enactors ignore policy, regardless of the presence of surveillance systems.

A silo mentality also surfaces at the micro-institutional level, not only concerning the use of ICT in pedagogy but also about the conceptualisation of pedagogy itself. It seems that the choice to ignore policy is restricted to teaching and learning in the classroom. Examinations or assessments, which are also part of pedagogy and have become central in monitoring the quality of a school, seem to engage more compliantly in the use of ICT. Consequently, the school is characterised as a space of widespread ICT access but low use. Despite the national policy that supports its use in teaching and notwithstanding significant on-going investment, ICT is underused and poorly integrated within classrooms. Using timing as an explanation, the passive Enactor (Prakash) attempts to soften the impact of the non-use of the devices: *“when there is a new thing, a change, everyone is a bit (silence) reluctant, a bit afraid. So, I was the one who started using the laptops, the projectors, the interactive projectors. (...) And then I went to <a school > in the year 20(xx). There also no one was using the laptops and the projectors. All were in the cupboards, new, still new (...). The tablets were introduced in year 2017, I think. But again, it was in the third term, so (...) no one used it. (...) Yes. And again, it’s a new project, so they prefer not to use it.”*

Enactors are not repeatedly denied a voice, but it appears that they consistently resist collaborative partnerships with Influencers and Negotiators. However, their resistance could also be a way of coping with political action or signal a lack of faith in bottom-up action. An example is when practitioners' support was solicited for the development of a collaborating platform to share knowledge created by teachers, for teachers and enrich ICT-based lessons. It was expected that this would confer ownership on practitioners and develop their capacity as curriculum drivers to operationalise a content-based platform. However, the practitioner (Prakash) pointed to reluctance to participate in a collaborative endeavour: "*We have followed courses to develop our own resources. (...). And there were other projects to set up other platforms (IT-enabled) to upload all the resources and to share. But I don't think (it worked) (...) (silence) because here in Mauritius we don't like to share. So, developing our resources and keeping for ourselves. (...). We shared some, but I don't know where it went.*" This suggests that Enactors are complicit in their own marginalisation from the policy-shaping space. By remaining on the fence of the policy-shaping terrain and the underlying power relations, they distance themselves from the formal policymaking structure as a form of resistance that is part of their identity construction.

The Enactors offered a number of reasons for non-use of ICT, ranging from fear of exposing their lack of proficiency compared to students, administrative burden associated with custody of the devices, unwillingness to share their work on common platforms, increased workload to accommodate the use of ICT, implementation of ICT coinciding with exams, a lack of support to gain technical skills to a lack of understanding of suitable pedagogies.

Combining ICT with effective pedagogy is presented as a daunting task because this demands that the implementer learns how to use it in teaching. To escape this, administrative processes and operational inefficiencies are represented as not integrating with the devices. However, the tendency to consider ICT in isolation from pedagogy is reinforced in the management of the devices. Saanvi contends that ICT devices are considered as a special artefact by the administrative legitimiser compared to other pedagogical tools and materials: "*with a bit of trust, we are entrusted our laptop to keep in the class. But we don't use (it) as such.*" The status conferred on ICT adds to the administrative burden and accountability of the *operative* Enactor who has to deal with more than the daily sign-in and sign-out of devices.

A silo mentality that regards ICT as distinct from pedagogy in the micro-institutional space is dominant at the school level. A lack of ICT proficiency appears to create another type of tension between the routine workload (not preparing ICT-based lessons) and the use of ICT. The resistant Enactor (Saanvi) expects a 'redeemer' (the saviour mentality) to tell her what to do with the devices and how to balance her work: "*the Ministry has set up Sankore interactive Whiteboard, but up to now they haven't told us what is expected from us, how to go with it, how to balance our work? (...) At the end, everything we do is exam-oriented. (...) Only ten percent of the teachers are using Sankoré (IWB) because the workload is so bulky. We would have the tendency to think that we are losing our time.*" She is complicit in reinforcing her passivity as a professional since she believes that her employers should provide her with the necessary competence to become ICT proficient. Because the policy is usually imposed on teachers, they have been habituated to being told what to do.

The way teachers 'enact' reforms within the organisational setting of the school reveals how local actors both constrain and enable policy implementation, and thereby profoundly shape educational policy on-the-ground. There is a tension between the operationalisation of the ICTE policy and *operational* Enactors' willingness to use ICT. It has been argued that their pedagogical skills were less evident within the technological space comprised of ready-made tutorials but also operational inefficiencies that disrupted the smooth running of the classroom. Saanvi reports that "*after 24 years of career, I'm so slow at using technology, it is not helping me. It's hindering me. Because I'm used to talking. I'm used to talking about moral things, my experience, getting my pupils to laugh, to smile, to know about what is emotion. But I can't feel it when I use technology.*" Remaining faithful to her accumulated, tested experience is a less stressful option. She states that effective schooling has more to do with the quality of human relationships between teachers and students than with the simple transmission of content. She feels emotionally detached from her students when ICT comes in-between, thus questioning the value these devices can add to the pedagogical development of students. However, the unwillingness of the *operational* Enactor to use the devices is evident, and she chooses to ignore the policy. Such ignoring of policies generates new meanings of ICTE policies on-the-ground.

In delineating the Enactors' stances, subtleties and contrasting views surface. Despite her resistance to using ICT in the classroom, Saanvi postulates that those who are unable to navigate the complex digital landscape will no longer be able to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life. However, she declared that, "*the younger generation of teachers, they are more than happy to have this.*" She chooses to resist ICT by maintaining her traditional mode of teaching.

A shift was noted in the debate from micro-institutional politics to the mobilisation of larger political narratives. It is argued that ICT projects are primarily driven by profit and political gain through the allocation of public resources rather than aimed at contributing to the pedagogical development of students. The data analysis also revealed strong views that Negotiators pursue their own particular interests while falsely proclaiming a common goal. The intrinsic purpose of education is overshadowed by the pursuit of short-term personal gain. Consequently, Enactors on-the-ground are not persuaded to use ICT. In the extract below, Saanvi shares that she feels that she is being used as a driver of ICT to attain Negotiators' 'perverse' goals. She notes that political figures need to demonstrate progress ahead of the next election while also seeking opportunities for private gain:

*"these people, they are money makers, those who are selling ICT products and the people who are paying their (...). Those people who are there in the Government for 10 years, 20 years, you know, they don't want to indulge in what will happen in 50 or 60 years because they won't be there. They want to accumulate wealth for themselves and for their family without thinking [of the] long term of the country."* She adds that through such high-level projects, Negotiators inflate their own image and gain political power and capital, receive media coverage, and increase the likelihood of being (re)elected rather than promoting the future of education. This belief often appears to limit Enactors' efforts to use ICT in classroom practices.

### 7.6.2. Exploitation of the micro-institutional space

Macro- and meso-level politics proclaim that ICT devices catalyse learning. However, policies, be they globally diffuse or locally designed, or both go through processes of contextualisation, and appropriation once they interact with local actors. The Enactors' outlook on ICTE causes them to choose to bend policies based on their understanding of the expected outcomes and context. It would seem that misappropriation of the policy occurs at the micro-institutional level. In exercising autonomy in the classroom, there is selective use of those components of ICT policy that render Enactors' task of teaching easier rather than deploying it to enhance the pedagogical development of students. Despite all outward manifestations of using ICT in classroom spaces, many pedagogical practices remain unchanged. Superficial use of visuals, pictures, videos and sound represents subtle accommodative resistance to satisfy the micro-institutional surveillance system and escape accountability. The accommodative resistor (Prakash), advocates for the pedagogical relevance of a projector and interactive whiteboard. Expedient use of ICT devices is likely to render policy outcomes ephemeral and/or marginal for students. The analysis suggests that the introduction of ICT in schools appears to (ab)use students' affinity for ICT as the Enactor can skip more laborious traditional methods of teaching and delegate his/her responsibilities to devices that students are fond of. Prakash notes that *"using interactive resources, interactive materials (...) it was a good experience because chalk and talk (...) nowadays, it's a bit difficult. Chalk-and-talk: they (students) don't have the level of concentration. With the projector and the interactive whiteboard, it was a big extreme. For them, it was very very (...) (students were) very motivated, very excited. And then for us (teachers) also it was very easy to teach science and geography."* ICT devices are seen as a convenient tool for teachers to delegate their responsibility and subordinate their professionalism in the face of surveillance by their institutional managers or the macro-official structures of policymakers.

Certain ICT devices, such as interactive whiteboards, are used to concurrently delegate their responsibilities and maintain control in the classroom. Such devices appear to fit with teachers' traditional role, while tablets (operated individually by students) are regarded as a hindrance. Prakash adds that *“for the Sankoré<sup>69</sup> we had a very good impact but for the tablet (not really). Teachers are not using the tablets as it should be because they are not trained. (...) My head started aching when I was charging 40 tablets with the rack charger in the classroom.”* A preference for equipment that is controlled and manipulated by the practitioner (substituting the role of the teacher) rather than in the hands of students is evident in the data. Interactive whiteboards are associated with whole-class instruction rather than individual student-handled manipulation. *Operational* Enactors seemingly wish to maintain control of the classroom, depicting devices such as tablets as inappropriate.

The data suggests that ICT unsettles the distribution of knowledge and power in the classroom. However, it is portrayed as an impediment rather than a facility. It is claimed that devices disrupt the general disposition and pedagogical routines in the classroom. When confronted with ICT tools, the focus of the classroom shifts from the subject discourse to an ICT technical discourse where the Enactor finds him/herself grappling with technological issues. Given that the teacher has historically been the custodian of all information and knowledge in the school culture, the climate in the new ICT-rich classroom becomes tense when students start taking the lead. The new era could be considered by some Enactors as a space that exposes teachers' lack of competence. The ease with which 'even an average performing student' demonstrated leadership in ICT matters unsettled the practitioner who was interviewed. She felt that her 'central role' as the teacher practitioner was dislocated. The extract below captures the hesitation, fear and hopelessness of the Enactor (Saanvi) as she explains that she resorted to traditional old-school solutions to enable her to function better. Therefore, the teaching practices manifested in her classroom are an outcome of the complex interplay between various beliefs and shifting spatial contexts.

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<sup>69</sup> The interactive white board project on platform Sankoré is explained in section 1.4.1.

The Enactor's first priority is to maintain order in the classroom and establish a controlled learning environment. Adopting ICT is seen as threatening this order. Such Enactors fear ICT, and this breeds scepticism about its value in their students. Traditional methods work because she is comfortable not using ICT. Using ICT makes her vulnerable with students because it shifts power to them, even 'average' ones. Saanvi observes: "*The moment we come into the class we have a certain fear, because we ask ourselves this question, 'will we be able to cope with it? The children, they are in a better position to use it than us'. It's not a (shame), I'm not saying it's a shame. But at one time, I remember I couldn't use the icons on top. One child came forward. (...) He's an average child. (...) And finally, you prefer to revert back to the traditional method. And it works. And it really works. I find it works*". She demonstrates that she is less competent than the 'average' student. The term "average" was used in reference to students' marks in exams.

The Enactor's agenda often dominates policy enactment, especially when career progression is at stake. Despite dissenting views on the use of ICT, the Enactor shows a disposition to use it only when she would climb the career ladder. Saanvi said "*but I want to learn because I don't have a choice. If tomorrow, I'm appointed as a HM (Headmaster), I should know how to make my speech on PowerPoint, use a projector. I can't do otherwise*".

### **7.6.3. Complicity in influencing policy**

Supervision tends to erode policy enactment. It is unlikely that policy would be ignored without the complicity of surveillance systems. The data analysis suggests that those responsible for surveillance are easily impressed and relieved to report some form of compliance with policy to higher-level authorities. The inspector is apparently swayed by the use of animated lessons without much understanding of the pedagogical usage of ICT. This practice contributes to a shady system, implicating inspectors in the Enactor's passivity. The Enactor (Prakash) explains that "*they (inspectors) were impressed (visits by the inspectors on use of ICT in the classroom) (laugh). They are thankful for implementing the project.*" It thus appears that policies are enacted to impress those that undertake surveillance rather than to enhance education.

It is possible that the supervisor (surveillance agent) is unaware of ICT pedagogic approaches and, therefore, not able to assist the frontline practitioner in its use. Saanvi notes that “*up to now, I've never met an inspector who tells me 'Are you using Sankore?' (...) because most of the inspectors, they have come from an era where there was only the talk and chalk method. But still, if one asks you, it's not asking, they advise you, 'It's there in the class, use it'*”<sup>70</sup>. They are very lenient, and they always say “*We believe that whatever method you're using, it will be for the betterment of the child'. They don't impose.*” Thus, surveillance systems reinforce inaction in the classroom and ignorance of policy becomes institutionalised in the informal space of the school. Transfer of policy to practice is diluted, distorted or almost non-existent.

The data analysis revealed that cosmetic policymaking is rife and that, at times, the classroom is set up to convince those responsible for surveillance that the policy is being implemented. This is done out of fear of adverse reports. Benoit, the bridge-maker between policy and action, discloses that “*once you programme a visit, everything is arranged in such a way that everything works perfectly.*”

This practice extends to the level of the Influencer, rendering policy implementation perversely fake and reinforcing deceitful practices across the education system. It is likely the result of complicity between (En)actors on-the-ground and bureaucratic shapers to create a mirage of the ‘perfect classroom’ to extract rewards from the education system. The rewards appear to vary from travel perks to career opportunities. The *implementative* Enactor (Akshay) argues that “*I don't think Ministry people they know really what's happening in schools. When they come to schools, they go to schools where we prepare teachers one week before. So whatever the Minister sees is an ideal situation. So, it's a show. So they go to schools like <primary School S1>, high-performing schools where everything is working perfectly. They don't go to schools where things are actually very hard to work out.*” Political Negotiators also benefit from media coverage and praise of ‘successful’ education policies.

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<sup>70</sup> KM : “*ena li dans klas, servi li.*”

Enactors operate in complex spaces with conflicting institutional and pedagogic demands. They are not only part of the educational system and its organisations, such as the school or the implementing agency, but their reach extends to the broader political system and the community. Through their reading and analysis of a latent system of influence, Enactors have the power to both constrain and (re)activate policy implementation. Saanvi relates how Enactors used social influence to inflame issues, entangling parents who are aware of their influence on policy and manipulating them to resolve a longstanding ICT issue: *“I still remember at my school, two or three of the Sankore interactive blackboards were defective. We got someone to look into the matter only when the PTA members wrote letters. And you know how it happened? Teachers, ICT teachers had no other choice than to instigate parents. Or else it would never have been taken into consideration.”* This example demonstrates that parents can be powerful agents that influence mainstream shapers when they take a stand, sometimes supported by the Enactor.

As a social and cultural space, the school is a powerful political instrument. Networks and complicity are also used to serve personal interests. There is a specious aspect to the parent-school relationship. Informal networks of parents are often exploited to promote personal interests (such as career progression) from a position of strength rather than one of the limitations (Enactor). The data suggests that new forms of relations are constructed in these social spaces, and new spaces are claimed to influence policy. Enactor Saanvi presents parents as powerful constituents that are able to influence policy: *“they have gone to see the, How do you call that? GTU (Government Teachers Union) members. Now they have pressurised so much the Government that they have, everything is frozen now (with regard to promotion of teachers to headmaster position) (...) But you will see if ever parents get involved in this also, it will become (...), it will be realised.”* The policy space that emerges from this negotiation is made up of other distant influences that probably have a greater effect on policies than the ideological content of official texts.

#### 7.6.4. Exacerbating inequality

Children come from different backgrounds with different resources, opportunities, and support outside of school. It cannot be assumed that all students have access to ICT devices (and connectivity) at home, or the necessary support from their parents and that their parents are technologically savvy. The Enactor (Saanvi) discounts socio-economic disparities and engages in a ‘developed’ country kind of discourse to disguise her hands-off approach to ICT when she argues that “*the research work on net could be done at home and (...) sharing in class.*” Such assumptions are likely to exacerbate educational inequality in the classroom.

ICTE policies are often justified on-the-grounds of equity that takes into account not only generic school-level realities but also the characteristics of students from multiple backgrounds. However, the introduction of ICT devices in schools threatens to widen rather than bridge socio-economic divides as access to technology is determined by economic standing. These disparities become apparent when students are exposed to ICT devices in the classroom. Prakash recalls a student who started crying when she was handed a tablet. Contrary to the teacher’s explanation that this was due to fear, it was likely because of humiliation at being unable to use it because she had not been exposed to technology because of her low socio-economic status. The teacher assumed that she was fine because she stopped crying. Prakash notes “*many children have tablets nowadays, but we have a group of students who have never used tablets. So, for them (those who did not access), it was a good experience. I had one girl who refused to take tablet. (...). And when I asked ‘why’ she did not reply, and she started crying. It’s her first time, so she was afraid to use it. But then afterwards, she was fine.*” Teachers sometimes misinterpret the behaviour of poor and minority students because they do not understand the cultures they come from. However, not attending to subtle inequities reinforces them.

Educational reform can be a ‘double-edged sword’ that undermines its own goals of social justice, democracy and equal opportunities. On the one hand, policies are prescribed to reduce competition and promote equity. On the other, reforms could (in)directly reinforce the parallel education system of private tuition by practitioners, seemingly in search of their own professional growth. The reforms seemingly stifle Saanvi’s agency in the micro-institutional space, but she enjoys more autonomy in her personal space regarding what, how and when she teaches. She also illustrates the other benefits of private tuition for parents and students, such as keeping students busy, giving them opportunities for more practice to achieve better results

and ensuring that they are well taken care of because parents do not have time to help their children to learn. However, this service is only available to those who can afford it, reinforcing economic and social injustice. Saanvi explains that “*the afternoon tuition is for consolidation. So there is no need for technology. (...) And you don't have inspectors on your back. We have to admit. One-hour tuition, it suits the parents, the children are well taken care of, and the teacher uses it for practice because at school, you get textbooks from the MIE. You don't have enough exercises in it.*”

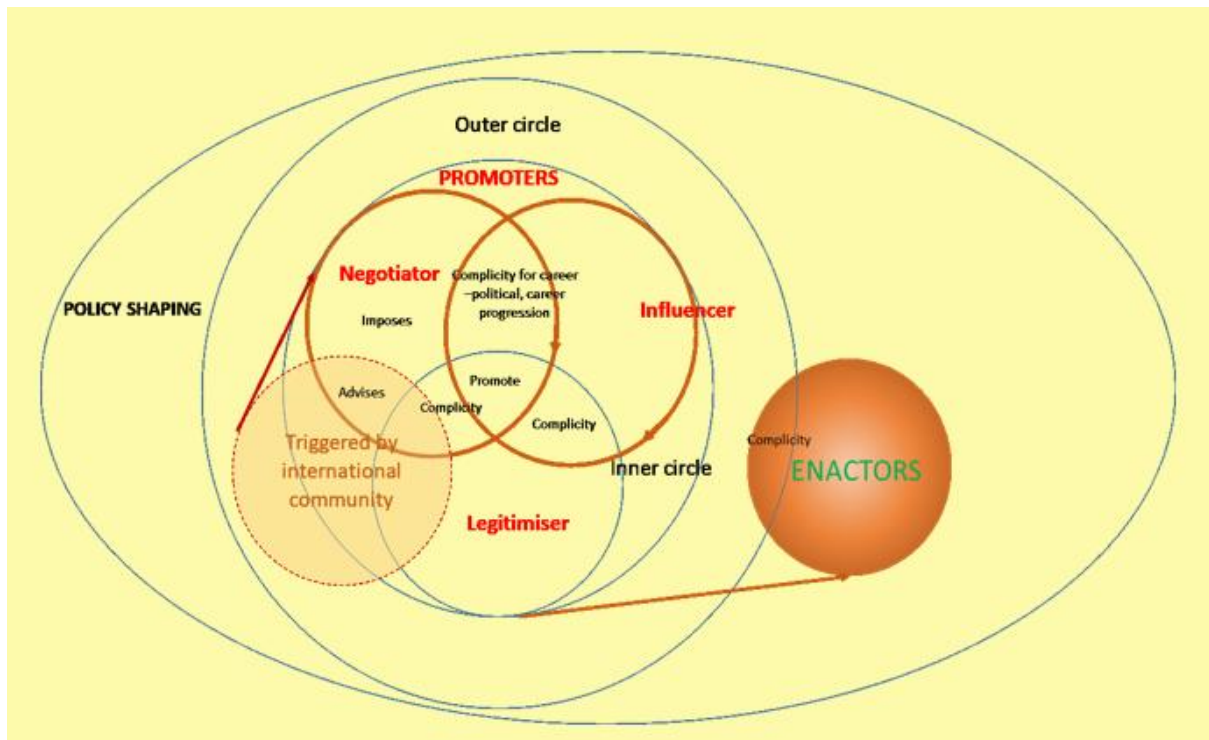
The playing field is not level. The entire state apparatus is stacked in favour of the children of the wealthy, betraying the spirit of free public education. The discourse on private tuition is conducted from a pedagogical vantage point by the teacher rather than from a pecuniary one. The basic tenet of free ‘education for all’ rests on the principle that everybody should have an equal chance to flourish intellectually. The data analysis suggests that the school is presented as a mechanism of meritocracy that promises equity and equality through free public education. However, practitioners and policymakers have become complicit in engendering a divide between the haves and have-nots. Although private tuition has certain benefits, it imposes a considerable financial burden on parents. While the reform theoretically aims to eliminate competition from the system, private tuition thrives on competition. Parents are also implicated because they are seemingly driven by competition to seek private tuition (section 6.4.6).

Teachers publicly express their pride when their students are ranked high in national examinations. However, Saanvi observes that, “*in the beginning what was a motivational factor for us to become a teacher is we got that recognition from parents in the beginning. But now we no longer get that kind of motivation.*” This suggests that ongoing reforms that endeavour to eliminate competition (not explicitly or by law) have caused demotivation.

## **7.7. Synthesis of chapter**

This chapter challenges the notion that ICT is a neutral artefact that is separate from broader political, social, and economic processes. Power play at the site level, which is characterised by conflict, complicity, compromise, resistance and semblance surfaced in various ways in the data.

In addition, practically no common thread connects Enactors despite their being connected by the same policy. Each Enactor has his or her own conception of ICT, or what the ICTE policy should achieve. As such they appear to work at cross-purposes with one another. What is designed in Ministries, debated among academics, incorporated into teacher professional development and school curricula, and taught in the classroom is not the same thing. Enactors tend to enact policy based on their own context and contingent meaning-making. This suggests that policy is that which occurs in micro-institutional spaces. The policy text itself merely has potential for meaning; Enactors translate and reinterpret it in their daily practices in unique and personal ways. However, as depicted in Figure 7.2, the role of the Enactor is disconnected from the inner constructed walls of the Promoters of policy. In the policy discourse of Enactors, there is a sense of discontent with the world of policymakers. A different interpretation might be that Enactors choose to remain on the margins and are therefore complicit in their superficial engagement with the policy reforms. Paradoxically, Enactors' passivity represents a form of active disregard for policy imposition.



**Figure 7.2:** Role of Enactors in dialogic interactivity with Promoters of ICTE

The workings of the inner sphere of policymaking seem to be visible from the outside, yet opaque from the inside. That is, Enactors appear to have a clear idea of what and how policies are developed centrally in official spaces, but Promoters who sit at the decision-making table do not seem to be aware of what and how policy is enacted in everyday situations. Meanwhile, the policy is widely accepted and praised to the outside world due to unwillingness to criticise it or be seen as going against popular opinion.

Nevertheless, the data analysis in this chapter revealed complicity between the Enactors and the Promoters to yield a form of superficial ICT adoption. What occurs on-the-ground seems to be a powerful counterforce that policymakers are seldom aware of.

This state of affairs reflects the literary folktale *The Emperor's New Clothes* by Danish author Hans Christian Andersen, about a vain emperor who is exposed in front of his subjects. Everyone pretended that they could see the cloth because they didn't want to be called fools or unwise, because the weavers told the court that only wise men could see the cloth that they wove.

## CHAPTER 8

### Self-proclaimed excluded voices

#### 8.1. Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted that policy and policy implementation do not necessarily follow the predictable path of consultation, design, development, adoption and enactment. This chapter brings to the fore the worldviews of those shapers whose participation in policy development appears to be thin or absent. They represent voices outside the formal policymaking sphere, whom I have temporarily chosen to label the ‘Excluded voices’. The ‘Excluded voices’ represent the members of industry and parents who were part of the sample. My interest in examining how and why they may be considered ‘excluded’ is driven by my conviction that all members of society have a fundamental democratic right to express their views on education policy. All stages of policy engagement connect directly and indirectly with the broader economic and social context. Voices from the margins may, however, be considered to activate or resist on-the-ground authentic realisation of the designed policy. Thus, this chapter argues that the typology ‘Excluded voices’ could be reinterpreted as paradoxically central in shaping ICTE policies. They may not be central to *making* the policy (the design), but are arguably at the forefront of *shaping* whether it becomes active within community settings (enactment).

Deep engagement in analysing the rich data from the interviews unveiled a range of voices to which my original research design did not pay sufficient attention. In the course of my reflections, I identified different kinds of exclusion. The first is *methodological exclusion* since my initial view of policymaking focused on bureaucratic cadres who produce policy text. Therefore, I initially only approached two participants that I considered peripheral. In this sense, I am equally implicated as the research designer in an exclusionary process that signals how researchers, too, become complicit in a form of peripheralising of participants through (unconscious) bias and selection. This reflection enabled me to consider why my original research design assigned a relatively marginal status to these participants. Secondly, I exercised power because I am located in the bureaucracy of education and skills development policymaking; thus, my contextual position within the inner bounded space of bureaucracy initially privileged those within official policymaking spaces. My misguided original

conception also extended to parents whom I originally conceptualised as distant from the policy. My original positionality tended to believe that bureaucratic management and administrative control could successfully steer policy enactment. The analysis in the previous chapter disrupted these biases as I came to understand that teachers are indeed key shapers of policy in their daily curriculum actions. Could I also have under-estimated the voice of parents in policy-shaping spaces? This might be labelled a kind of *contextualised positional exclusion*. The third form of exclusion I may be considered guilty of with respect to members of industry and parents' voices concerns how different spheres of influence interrelate with one another (C.f. my diagram at the end of the previous chapter). Bounded spatial demarcation in policymaking zones could be considered a kind of *relational exclusion* between the inner circle of formal policymakers and those outside it. Those that are outside perceive themselves as excluded from contributing to the making of education policies (as a formal legislative process). Yet, they renegotiate their 'exclusion' through other forms of policy-shaping. Describing their 'outsiderness', yet the powerful possibilities of them being shapers of policy enabled me to develop a more theoretical exploration of this category of participants.

The commonality between the two sets of voices (parents and managers in the industry) is their perspectives on their exclusion from the policymaking sphere. Yet, they operate in different spaces, have distinct interests and influence formal policymakers in different ways. I, therefore, chose to represent these two voices from their individual vantage points. However, an analysis is also conducted of what they are collectively saying as the 'Excluded voice'. My own analytical voice on their individual or collective vantages is made explicit in the analysis of the fieldwork data.

The chapter explores this typology backed by excerpts from the field data, which provided a rich understanding of the overlapping and contradictory realities of the 'Excluded voices' from conception to design and enactment of policy. Whilst restricted in terms of the number of participants who formed part of the research design, I acknowledge the complexity of this data set by presenting a detailed analysis, acknowledging that future studies should extend the range of participants to enable a broader conceptualisation of this typology<sup>71</sup>.

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<sup>71</sup> I could have re-entered the field to generate more data (which would extend the timeframe), but I made a strategic decision to choose depth rather than breadth. The rich data produced was deemed sufficient for analysis.

## 8.2. Overview of chapter

Section 8.3 discusses the microtypologies that emerged from the analysis of data from the policy-shaping space. This enables an elaborated understanding of the analysis and the multiple varied voices of the ‘Excluded voices’. The excluded shapers of policy share many common concerns but also incongruences. Section 8.4 brings into sharper focus how and why exclusion occurs and who is responsible, exposing contradictory perspectives. It begins with their everyday concerns and then discusses dissonances concerning policy development processes and the policies themselves in section 8.5. These two sections highlight how excluded shapers renegotiate their exclusion in the policy-shaping space. Section 8.6 synthesises the topography of the policy-shaping standpoints (supported by a diagrammatic representation) that are a steppingstone to deeper analysis and further abstraction.

## 8.3. Describing the emergent sub-categories of superordinate typologies

Similar to chapters 6 and 7, this section abstracts and brings to the surface the multiple kinds of microtypologies embedded in the field data. These represent the beliefs, roles and perspectives of ICTE policies extracted from the superordinate typology ‘Excluded Voices’ which is Group three. The following microtypologies emerged as I proceeded with analysis as the two participants regard themselves as excluded from the formal policymaking sphere in that they are not consulted or given a legitimate role at the decision-making table. Yet, they seemingly negotiate their exclusion, not through their physical presence, but indirectly.

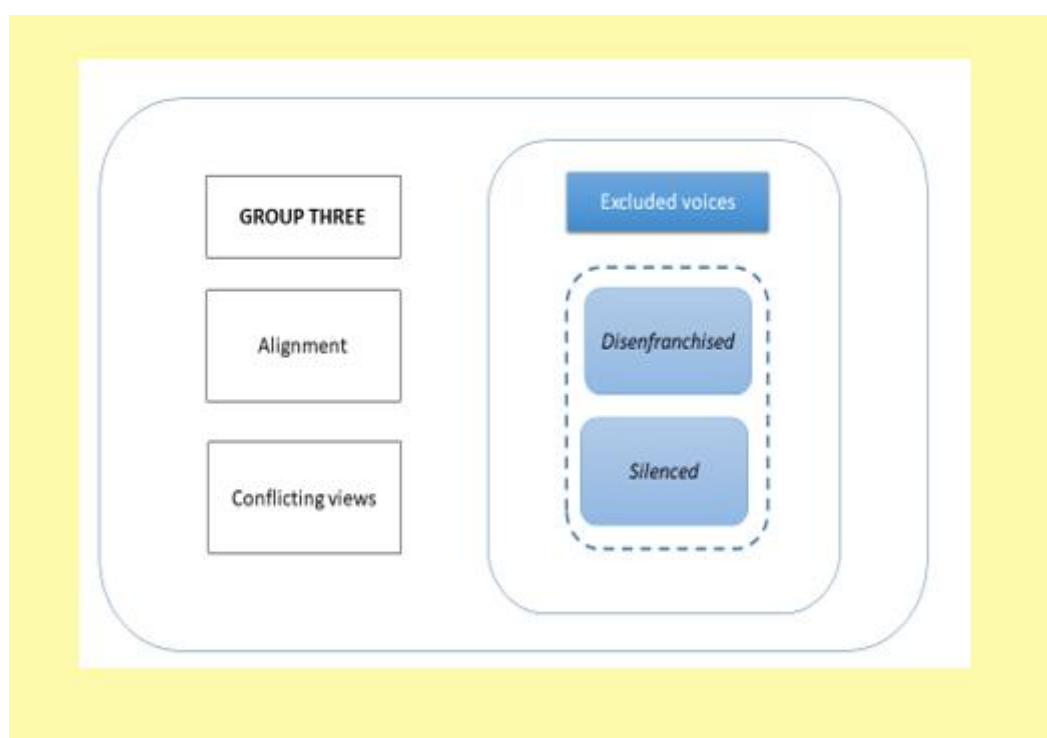
The *disenfranchised voice* (represented by Ganesh<sup>72</sup>, male) represents the industry that has been alienated from making any formal contribution to policy. Even if he operates at the *meso-level*, he has been supposedly pushed to the margins and disqualified from forming part of the formal policymaking process. As such, he feels he is deprived of contributing to policy, although he believes he is an important stakeholder in the education system. He, therefore, has a sense of being locked out of the benefits of this system. He is *strongly critical* of policymakers and their work and *condemnatory* of teachers for clinging to industrial-age pedagogy rather than adapting to the contemporary knowledge economy.

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<sup>72</sup> Pseudonym.

The *silenced voice* (represented by Lakshmi<sup>73</sup>, female) is a parent who is an executive member of the Parents Teachers Association (PTA<sup>74</sup>), the formal *micro-institutional* structure that promotes parental participation in school matters. Though in this research, she represents the voice of a parent, professionally, she is involved in the enactment of ICT in schools. As a member of PTA, she claims that she is not given a chance to enter into dialogue with mainstream policy-shapers to advance her ideas and contentions about policy, more specifically ICTE. While the PTA is established to act as a bridge between parents and the school, Lakshmi feels disempowered when it comes to engaging in policy. The parent is apparently structurally oppressed by powerful policymakers. However, Lakshmi appears to habitually *conform* to policy and *submits* to power.

This chapter elucidates how this synthetic interpretation of these two participants was derived by focusing on their interpretation of their (non)involvement in the policy process. Figure 8.1 depicts the microtypologies and the architecture of the chapter that deals with coherent and conflicting issues around ICTE policies from the vantage point of ‘Excluded voices’.



**Figure 8.1:** Architecture of the typology of excluded voices

<sup>73</sup> Pseudonym.

<sup>74</sup> The PTA is a formal structure that facilitates interaction between parents and the school to assist schools to promote students’ welfare and achieve broad educational goals in a collaborative climate.

#### 8.4. Consonances in the worldviews of the excluded voices

Two participants in this study, the industrialist (Ganesh) and the parent (Lakshmi), struck a common chord of exclusion from the policy-shaping space. Ganesh claims that those inside the policymaking sphere would not stoop to listen to diverse opinions during policy development and implementation. He believes that policymakers are not open to the views of others; “*they talk among themselves basically.*” Ganesh suggests that those involved in policy development create policy blind spots by ignoring how policy intentions and targeted outcomes are translated into enactment. Along similar lines, the parent claims that at PTA level, she does “*not dare raise these issues (decision-making around ICT practices) as these are internal matters to work*<sup>75</sup>.” She regards herself as being on the margins when it comes to influencing school governance and decision-making, and, therefore consciously chooses to remain silent. Those inside the policymaking sphere (at the national or institutional level) appear to control not only what goes into policy but also who can and cannot exert profound influence.

Both participants bemoan the fact that they are not only left out of policy conversations, but their access to the policymaking space is also strongly resisted. Significant concerns are raised by these two voices, who apparently experience perpetual marginalisation and are ‘othered’ by those inside the bureaucracy. From an outsider’s perspective (i.e., the excluded), the education system is perceived as a protected space for policymakers rather than a participatory domain that enables key stakeholders to contribute.

Despite his strong interest in shaping the education system, the industrialist’s (Ganesh) multiple attempts to influence education policy were apparently sidelined by policymakers. He claims that “*none of the proposals (he made) has been accepted. [Interviewer]Why? Why, because if only 30% of people can do HSC*<sup>76</sup> and <Enterprise A<sup>77</sup>> only employs graduates and above, what's our future here as <Enterprise A>. Terrible!” It is evident that his intention is to influence education to produce a workforce with skills, values and ideals that meet the needs of the industry. This perspective is firmly located in the industry’s interests rather than those of the education system or students. He does not foresee a profitable future for his enterprise because the education system is not meeting its needs. It is likely that policymakers view such shapers through the lens of industry’s profit-oriented motive and are of the view that they seek

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<sup>75</sup> KM : “*pa oze ‘raise’ sa ban ‘issues’ la, parski se ban ‘issue’ intern ou travay. Pa kapav ‘raise’ sa.*”

<sup>76</sup> Higher School Certificate.

<sup>77</sup> Enterprise A is where the participant works.

to manipulate policymakers for self-interest and financial gain. While it might be important for policymakers to protect their autonomy by shielding themselves from lobby groups, as they could otherwise be accused of collusion, the industry stakeholder seems to interpret this as jettisoning the industry's voice in policy decision-making.

In his drive to profit from the education system, the industrialist highlights the need to revisit the system and transform teaching and learning. He argues that *“the whole ICT education in school in primary and secondary has to be rethought completely. I mean, we've done what we've done. Let's take a stock on what has worked, what hasn't worked and reform.”* Such radical demands from an ‘outsider to policymaking’ are likely to unsettle the designers of policy and gatekeepers of the education system who have already invested heavily in ICT in schools and mobilised resources. Besides, he seems to be urging policymakers to be self-critical. Ganesh claims that *“our education is a disaster, total disaster.”* Such contentions are likely to make him an undesirable partner that would put policymakers in a difficult position vis-a-vis their constituencies. Keeping the disruptive industry voice at arm's length and constructing their own space for policy development is likely to be a prudent option for policymakers.

The symbiotic relationship between the parent and the school is also apparently disempowered when it comes to policy. Lakshmi complains that *“we don't have any say as Executive members because policy decisions come from above. It is Ministry that decides”<sup>78</sup>.* While parents are included in the legal sense, their views are discounted. Sidelineing other shapers of policies is likely to create the impression that the policymaking space is closed to those outside the main structure.

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<sup>78</sup> KM: *“Nou pa vremen ena bann ‘say’ kouma dir, kouma enn mam exekitif. Parski ‘policy decision’ se depi lao. se minister ki deside.”*

Furthermore, the PTA's mandate is typecast as restricted to prosaic concerns in schools rather than playing a meaningful role in pedagogy or policy. Lakshmi explains that *"when there are activities at school, I collaborate with the staff to facilitate activities. Often when we go to meetings, we find that there is lack of funds in schools. Sometimes parents sponsor for school issues and also help in infrastructure<sup>79</sup>."* As a member of the Executive Committee of the PTA, it would appear that education is led by an inclusive structure that is embedded in the system. However, according to this parent, it is only the case when it comes to securing material resources. It appears that the parent-teacher relationship within bureaucratic structures is a symbolic one that is relegated to marginal roles.

Lakshmi adds that *"on technology side, we don't talk that much. We are just informed about projects in technology for different classes<sup>80</sup>."* It seems that there is a predefined agenda that excludes the PTA from intervening when it comes to ICT. Lakshmi argues that policymakers consider ICTE as a sophisticated domain that utilises academic concepts that are unfamiliar to PTA members and that *"we, as parents and educators have no say, we only have to abide<sup>81</sup>."* As a result, like the industrialist, she is of the view that parents are belittled by bureaucrats. Consequently, she rarely self-constructs as a shaper of policies, which could explain why PTA members do not discuss ICTE.

While an enhanced understanding of micro level issues has the potential to strengthen the complementarities between the macro- and micro level for policy refinement, policy development is apparently disconnected from on-the-ground realities. This is seemingly because one-way communication cascades from the top down rather than engaging in dialogue that could harness knowledge on-the-ground. Lakshmi states, *"sometimes we find that policymakers do not know the context at school. They sit in their office and take decisions. (...). For example, for the EDLP (Early Digital Learning Programme) project for the provision of tablets for Grades 1, 2 and 3 in my school, the existing infrastructure was not relevant for the equipment<sup>82</sup>."* She believes that this is a lost opportunity for policy refinement. She also

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<sup>79</sup> KM: *"Kan ena bann aktivite 'a' lekòl, nou sey kolabore avèk bann 'staff' 'de' lekòl pou 'rendre' aktivite enpe (...) fasilite enn ti pe aktivite. Parski bien souvan, kan nou ale bann renion, nou truve ki 'funds' bien manke dan lekòl. Be lerla tou bann paran, nou sey trouv bann fason kot nou 'sponsor' bann zafer pou lekòl, ek nou 'apporte' nou si nou lide kote infrastrukti."*

<sup>80</sup> KM : *"Me kote teknolozi, se pa 'vraiment' nou, anfen, nou selman 'etre informe' de bann proze teknolozi ki ena pou bann diferan klas."*

<sup>81</sup> KM : *"Nou, kouma paran, nou pa tro (...). Mo panse bann 'educators' osi, zot pena tro le mo 'a dire'. Zot selman bizin 'abide'."*

<sup>82</sup> KM : *"'Quelquefois' nou truve ki kouma dir (...) 'comme si' bann 'policymakers' zot pa konn 'le contexte' bien. Bann 'personne' ki asiz dan zot biro, zot pe pran bann desizyon. Zot pa konn 'le contexte' dan lekòl kouma"*

condemns the deployment of defective ICT devices: “*Children were given tablets which were found to be defective. The swipe pad did not work. There was some sort of rubber which had fallen. It’s not safe for children at all. They can put it in their mouth or ears. We speak of educational technology, but those who are expert in the field should have seen those things*<sup>83</sup>.”

The lack of collaboration thus also has a negative impact on students.

Lakshmi recalls an incident that suggests that parents’ role in protecting their children’s well-being is overlooked or undervalued in the patriarchal policymaking structure: “*There were a few parents in some schools who raised an issue about using projectors in the Sankore project. Parents were concerned about the IR (infrared radiation) rays that could have a negative effect on the health of children. But the parents were informed that the rays emitted from the interactive boards are less than those emitted from the mobile phone*<sup>84</sup>.” Policymakers’ defensive counterarguments signaled that their decisions could not be contested. The response also suggested that parents are complicit in the ICT agenda by exposing their children to ICT devices at home. This patriarchal ethos is likely to deter parents from trying to influence policy and cause them to stick to practical issues at school. Lakshmi confirms this when she comments, “*if the school has taken a decision, we can contest it. But we can’t do anything for decisions taken at the Ministry level (...) We cannot contest even if it is good or not, and it concerns our kids after all!*<sup>85</sup>” Alienating parents from policy development is likely to exacerbate inequity in society as it creates the impression that their views do not matter or their arguments lack substance. She claims that the bottom-up approach to policymaking “*is not in the benefit of politicians and that is why it will never happen.*<sup>86</sup>” It is the opposite that occurs. Decisions taken at the top need to be abided to.

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*‘sa ce passe’. Bann ‘contrainte’ ki bann ‘educators’ zot gagne, ‘load of work’, kantite letan ki zot gagne, ki ‘feasible’ ki pa ‘feasible’ pou ‘enseigner’ pou ‘l’enfant’, infrastruktir ki disponib a lekòl. ‘Comme si’ mo ena lenpresyon zot, zot, moi mo ena lenpresyon, se vre zot pas kone. Gete kouma proze ‘EDLP’ in vini. ‘EDLP’ sa ve dir ‘EDLP’, se proze pou ‘tablet for grade 1,2 and 3’. Kan sa proze inn vini, ena boukou lekòl ki infrastruktir ki ‘existing’, li pa ti enn infrastruktir ki capav ‘accueillir’ sa bann lekipman la.”*

<sup>83</sup> KM : “*Pou ‘grade 1, grade 2’, inn donn zot enn tablet. Ena enn ‘stylus’ ladan. Sa kot ‘swipe’ la inn sorti. Enn zar de ‘caoutchou’ ladan. Ki p fini tonbe. Li pa ‘safe’ pou zenfan ditou. Zanfan capav pran sa met dan labus. Nou koz ‘educational technology’, ban dimun ki ‘expert’ dan ‘educational technology’, zot sipozè ‘consider’ sa bann zafer la.”*

<sup>84</sup> KM : “*Ena dan bann lekòl, ena bann paran inn ‘raise issue’, ki ‘bon’, kan in servi ‘projector sankore’ avek so ‘telecommand’ ek so ‘stylet’. Bann paran ti ena bann dout ki atansyon sa ‘IR rays’ la zot ‘affect’ zanfan. Zot ena bann kesyon apre zot in gagne repons, ki ‘bon’, nou portabè osi li ‘émettre’ bann ‘waves’. Be alor, sanla la li bien minim konpare avek enn ‘portable’.”*

<sup>85</sup> KM : “*si lekòl inn fer enn zafer. Lekòl inn pran enn desizyon. Nou capav konteste. Me seki minis, desizyon minis ki pran, nou pa capav fer nanyè. Sa ve dir tultan, desizyon ‘du’ minis ki ‘primee’. Wi tultan.”*

<sup>86</sup> KM : “*Apre li pa dan lavantaz ban politisien osi, akòz sa li pa pou arive zame (bottom-up approach to policymaking).”*

The data analysis showed that ICT devices are generally assumed to be effective and that it is not rational to question the validity of ICT use in schools. Thus, those who are against the use of these devices often choose to conform to policy dictates by remaining silent. The PTA Executive committee member (Lakshmi) observes that *“if I am against ICT, I cannot say that my child is in grade 3 and I do not want him to use ICT<sup>87</sup>”* rather than envisaging the daunting prospect of challenging powerful policymakers which is likely to lead to an impasse.

The parent’s discourse suggests that her fundamental democratic rights fall away when her child enters the school system. She notes that *“I don’t have the right to say that ‘my child is in grade III and I do not want my child to use technology’.(...) We are just informed about ICT projects for different grades (...) They (policymakers) take decisions, and we have to accept it as it is.”* Given the risk of pushback or a negative reaction, a culture of silence ensues.

However, it is also possible that she conforms to policy to appear rational. A parent, especially a member of the PTA who opposes the use of ICT in schools, could be accused of being opposed to modernisation and could be socially isolated if other members advocate for ICT. Preserving her image vis-a-vis other PTA members is important to retain her position. Lakshmi thus does not act independently in the public space to make her own free choices, signalling a sense of underdeveloped agency in the policymaking landscape. Under such circumstances, the parent is (un)willingly drawn into ICTE policies.

The discourse of the industrialist creates the impression that the education system is yet to deliver on its promise of an equal partnership where everyone has the opportunity to contribute to policy. He alludes to a sense of abandonment, reinforcing the notion of insider/outsider politics (and denial of the chance to influence policy). From the outside, the policymaking sphere is characterised as coercive and cloistered. The disenfranchised shaper of policy (Ganesh, the industrialist) explains that a strong tradition of a closed circle of policymakers is anchored in the bureaucracy to the extent that policymakers’ closed-mindedness is harming the country: *“I think they are very, very, very closed. (...) And yet I think they are so traditional and so closed to the rest of the world. (...) They are doing a disservice to the nation.”* Ganesh argues that policy is determined by the preferences of those that hold the most power, while the industry has limited or no space to express its voice. Insiders are seemingly so well-entrenched that they act on the basis of their own imperatives. Segregating the policymaking space serves the interests of those who reside inside the closed policymaking circle. However,

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<sup>87</sup> KM : *“mo pa gagne droi dir be mo zanfán dan 3eme, mo pa envi li servi teknoloji.”*

the industry's intentions are also far from pure, as it seeks to promote its economic interests rather than those of the broader society.

The industry participant also claims that the Ministry of Education is “*change-averse*”: “*There is a belief in Mauritius that the Ministry, which is more change-averse is the Ministry of Education. (...) They say that the Ministry of Education doesn't want or doesn't welcome change as other Ministries. I don't know why (...) And I think they are very, very, very closed. That has been the reputation not only my observation. I've spoken to a few people.*” Educational change is highly complex and gives rise to tensions and contradictions in various spaces, be they academic or political. The forces that resist change appear to be extremely powerful, and the industry appears to undermine these forces. However, the contested dialogical nature of policy engagement is simplistically interpreted by this participant's statement that the voice of industry has not been taken seriously enough. Embedded in his critique is the view that the Ministry is perhaps afraid of what industry is likely to tell it. Whilst these reflections are anecdotal and have not been empirically tested by the participant, they express his sense of exclusion.

## **8.5. Paradoxical outsidersness in policy-shaping**

### **8.5.1. Macro market forces**

The accusatory voice of the industrialist holds policymakers responsible for sporadically deploying several types of ICT devices without establishing the objectives. Policymakers are characterised as inefficient in implementing projects: “*The way we introduce ICT in schools we say 'let's give them internet, let's give them a laptop or tablet' whatever. But there was no content. We haven't actually established the objectives what are we trying to achieve! (...) Historically, we have been very bad at execution and implementation.*” More fundamentally, he argues that policymakers are not capable of delivering education reforms in a coherent manner and implementing them effectively. He is of the view that they are swayed by the many types of ICT devices that are available rather than implementing projects in a systematic manner to meet a set of objectives.

However, the very presence of ICT devices in policies and their use in schools signals that not only does the industry have a strong presence in schools, but it is also entrenched in policies. Yet, Ganesh sticks to one-sided arguments and holds policymakers responsible for inefficiencies in policy implementation. He does not blame the industry for influencing policymakers by marketing equipment that he claims is irrelevant to pedagogy.

The ICT industrialist discredits the type of ICT devices deployed in schools. According to him, they are inappropriate to develop creativity in students, a skill he deems crucial for the competitiveness of the ICT sector. He suggests that *“you have to give them the right equipment and the right skills, the right skills to create. Remember, ICT is about creation. You get kids to create things. They will create an app. They will create a tool, whatever. And these are the skills that we should have taught them, even before they got the tablet here.”* This implies that the industry seeks to shape policy and adapt pedagogy to build and ensure its talent pipeline.

However, the industrialist claims that ICT devices have diverted the focus of the school from developing critical thinkers and problem-solvers to entertainment that does not promote learning: *“We need to (develop) the basic skills (...). We need to have people to have a critical mind. Yeah, critical thinking is important. Problem-solving is important. (...) Now they've got the tablet, they're playing games. They are just kind of using or consuming technology instead of creating technology.”* He adds that this is turning the future generation into consumers rather than creators of ICT. However, his agenda is subtly hidden in his discourse.

Paradoxically, Ganesh comments that the education system is already a prime outlet for industry. Policy is apparently driven by the industry's agenda of commercialising education by providing multiple ICT devices that it itself acknowledges have little or no pedagogical value. There are network connections between the providers of hardware (the industrialist that derives profit from the sale of ICT devices) and consumers of the hardware (the Ministry acting on behalf of the school system). While neither player is neutral, the policymaker is pulled in two different directions. Ganesh seems to suggest that the choice of hardware does not serve the needs of the industry. Contrary to his views, the industry has already permeated the 'boundaries' of policymaking and resides inside them to inherently influence policy. Yet, he deplores that policymakers are nurturing a consumer society within a narrowly materialistic worldview that conflicts with the needs of industry.

The industry participant condemns policymakers for expecting a major transformation in education by deploying ICT devices. He claims that policies are lagging behind because of the conservative approach to policymaking. He notes that policymakers, policymaking and education policies are grappling with the pace of technological developments and are not capable of identifying the best devices to purchase to meet the needs of the industry. Ganesh's argument is nuanced and is worth reproducing in the original. He suggests that "*the fact that we have tablets, we have PCs, we have all of this, we should not believe that we have transformed education with ICT. ICT, like I said, ICT is a tool, as it is not what educates people (...) I think the speed of change is so fast. And I feel that the policies have really lagged behind because people don't change until we change the policies.*" A deeper interpretation of his reflections reveals a narrow view of education policy whose purpose is to keep pace with the requirements of the knowledge economy. Ganesh positions creative and cultural education as a vital component to fashion the education system deemed appropriate to this economy. With evangelical vigour, he explains that "*how we do business, with who we do business is changing significantly. And yet, the education has not followed (suit).*" Seemingly, the industrialist's concern for education has strong foundations in the corporate community rather than in the purpose of education.

The industrialist claims that ICTE has been wrongly conceptualised by policymakers with a limited or closed understanding of what it entails. One of the differences of opinion is the types of devices that the industry participant claims do not respond to his needs, presupposing that the purpose of education is to meet the changing needs of industry.

Ganesh argues that knowledge and skills are now the key drivers of innovation and change and that economic performance increasingly depends on talent and creativity. In this new economy, education and skills shape individuals' opportunities and rewards. He suggests that, "*ICT in education should be more of a tool that enables the change that is happening in the world, in terms of how we learn things, how we do things different (...). So teaching ICT as the end is not what should be the objective. I think that the world is changing so much. The way we interact with our environment, and the fact that we are very globally interconnected, we have to understand how to do businesses with different cultures. We have to understand this first. And then ICT should be the tools and the platform that enable that change of perspective in education, rather than say, 'okay, now we're going to learn ICT, we're going to learn about the technologies'.*" Ganesh's views on education appear to be attuned to and entrenched in

narrow economic policy options. Within such discourses, creative and cultural education is argued to play a key role in developing the attitudes and skills required to prepare students to take their place as flexible and adaptable employees, but, above all, to be consumers in western capitalist societies. Paradoxically, he hints that one also needs to be “*environmentally aware.*” This multi-vocality is emblematic of the quest to satisfy competing agendas in a complex, globally-connected world.

There are echoes in this discourse of the need to monitor policymakers to render transparent how they take control of policy, thus making them accountable to the industry. The critical voice of the industry claims that policymakers have limited understanding of the new world order because the system is still producing factory rather than knowledge workers. Ganesh argues that traditional policymakers are unable to address the industry’s contemporary realities. He suggests that modern policymakers need to develop a fresh mindset and that policy should be crafted by individuals who understand the new demands rather than by bureaucrats who are still embedded in a factory-based education system. He notes that, “*if you get people who have been in education for 40 years for 30 years, and ask them to change this paradigm shift and you ask them to bring the new ways, they will struggle. You need to bring the millennials. You need to bring the native, the digital natives to participate into how we reframe these policies.*” The rhetoric of “*digital natives*” is, however, dangerous because it falsely assumes that today’s younger generation inherently has the knowledge or skills to develop education policies simply because they are supposedly born in this era of ICT ubiquity. However, technocratic styles of policymaking where the government becomes answerable to industry rather than to representative institutions and the public at large are likely to pose a threat to democracy as they would emphasise macroeconomic stability.

Ganesh also suggests that policymakers enjoy near-absolute job security despite the system being beset with inefficiency: “*They just think that they are the smartest guy. They are controlling the show (...) Now these guys, result is good or bad they stay. Here, they don't have to work hard to keep their job. They can keep their job for life, whatever they want to do.*” The industrialist argues that bureaucratic officials control policy and only care about their immediate self-interests, such as their career, status, and pecuniary gain. In contrast, private sector employees are assessed on results, retained based on their good performance and dismissed for poor performance: “*If you're in a company like, like us or any private company, global company, you're measured on the results. If the results are no good, you go. That's how*

*it works. Now, these guys' result is good or bad, they stay. Yeah. So why do they want to change?"* Top-level bureaucrats are viewed as powerful forces that perpetuate this system. However, a performativity culture in the governance of the education system would likely cascade to curriculum embedded in a performative system, which runs contrary to the goal of education.

It is intriguing that, despite his claim of being outed from the policymaking structure, the industry participant's discourse creates the impression that he can clearly see what occurs inside.

Ganesh does not only condemn policymakers, but holds teachers equally responsible for a seemingly outdated education system. The system is characterised as a regimented, teacher-centred one that produces compliant, docile students, through rote learning (a reference to factory schools). Ganesh argues that *"we're still teaching the same way. We've been teaching (since) the last 50 years. And yet the world compared to 50 years ago is so different. How we do business, with who we do business is changing significantly. And yet, the education has not followed. (...) Our education traditionally has been very much factory-based, industrial-based, where the teacher has all the answers and the students just learn by heart and just write the notes (...) the centre of knowledge is the teacher."* For the excluded voice, the knowledge economy is characterised by the speed of change, suggesting that research and development are at a premium for the ICT sector. Ganesh advocates for a pedagogy that emphasises the centrality of imagination in learning. The industry's agenda is to build students' assets that will enhance the sector's profitability.

The industrialist regards both parents and teachers as lacking judgement on the use of ICT devices because they expect that offering children tablets will bring about pedagogical transformation: *"I think what has happened is that a lot of parents and even teachers, to some extent, made the mistake that 'if I give a tablet to a child, he will just develop ICT skills'. (...) but that's not the case."* The use of inappropriate devices in the classroom is arguably counter-productive. In his view, the introduction of ICT has been superficial, creating confusion among parents and teachers alike.

The industry's voice embodies a view of teachers from a deficit perspective. Ganesh bemoans that rote learning renders the system industrial-based. He even goes so far as to claim that a factory model (rote learning) of education does not need a teacher because information is readily available on the internet: *"I think all of this knowledge can be accessed on the internet by the students and we don't need a teacher to do that."* The industrialist seems to suggest that unless the teacher is resourceful, imaginative and flexible, education will not be transformed. He critiques teachers as agents who merely transfer knowledge to students. This process can be automated, undermining the role of the teacher and pedagogy. Ganesh believes that *"the teacher needs to be able to create this learning environment where people have fun to share knowledge and learn from each other."* He holds teachers accountable for controlling the education system and asserts that the role of the teacher should also adapt in line with industry's future needs. However, he labels teachers as resistant to change and not up to speed on what students need to succeed in today's world.

The disenfranchised critical voice of the industry claims that teachers ignore students' multiple ways of knowing and impose their own. With time, the multiple and unique ways in which students' view the world are lost: *"If I'm in a room, and there are 20 students in the room, I have (an) opportunity to learn 20 different ways of looking at the world. If I'm a student, and there's only one teacher who is trying to teach all of us who are learning only one way, isn't it? I think this is what ... needs to change."* Through the teacher, the system ultimately becomes complicit in inhibiting creativity, emphasising obedience and the reproduction of knowledge.

However, the industry member apparently underestimates the complexity of negotiating classroom pedagogy. This participant has a naïve, simplistic and linear view of managing diversity, differentiation and the multiplicity of voices within a classroom. He appears to ignore the complexities and micro-politics of the school where a teacher is also (dis)enabled by policy and curriculum and is pressurised by parents and the Ministry (sometimes conjointly).

Teachers are apparently viewed by the industry participant as complicit in the *"disservice"* to the system. The critical voice highlights the seemingly suppressive nature of the education system, and teachers are held accountable for developing students who lack employability skills, thus making employment the end result of education. Teachers are represented as obstructive, resistant to change, defensive, archaic and ritualistic. They are also cast as largely 'incompetent' and unwilling to test new education models. Ganesh states: *"I think there is a lot of fear from the lecturers, the professors, the academics. And they don't want to change, just*

*in case it gets out of control. That's the natural fear of change.*" Presumably, they fear that control will shift to students. The industry voice argues that it would not be possible to change an education system without changing teachers' pedagogic practices and embracing disruption. Ganesh cultivates a worldview that the pace of change in the industry should be transposed to the education system and that the purpose of education is to prepare students to join the world of work.

Ganesh is intransigent on this point because the industry's profitability is apparently tied to the outcomes of the education system. The critical excluded voice of the industry calls for a shift from the old paradigm and assumptions to handing control of the classroom to students. Ganesh contends that teachers are often biased against creativity in the classroom, which they fear will be disruptive. He believes that broad access to ICT should have transformed the role of the teacher, putting ICT at the forefront of the education system. However, "*our students what we do with them? We get them to shut up, and they just listen to us.(...) because the teacher wants to be in control. And, and this is what I'm saying, You need to get the students to be more in control.*" He also suggests that ICT should complement teachers to open up new dimensions of education. Students are expected to conform to rules instead of teachers deploying a pedagogy that triggers their thinking and participation. However, in critiquing teachers, the industry participant is not self-critical about the origins of his worldviews, whose interests they serve and where the profit is channelled.

The data analysis suggests a strong predisposition for the industry to influence policy in line with the new skills demands of the knowledge-based economy. Ganesh makes a case for a different education and schooling system that develops students' cognitive processes and transforms their understanding of and relationship with the world. The main proposition is that current schooling and teaching reflect the features of an industrial society, and given that society has shifted to a knowledge-driven economy, the education system should follow suit. The critical voice is strongly condemnatory of academia's (mainly higher education institutions) resistance to change that hinders progress. He uses the popular refrain "*nobody has a monopoly of knowledge*" to emphasise that the education system is lagging behind and that today's students demonstrate more knowledge than teachers. His critique extends to teachers in schools who serve as custodians of their academic training. Ganesh observes that "*the knowledge-based economy compared to the factory based or the industrial-based economy is very different, where nobody has monopoly of knowledge. And in some cases, the*

*students, the young folks have probably more knowledge than sometimes the teachers.”*

The critical voice also condemns the practice of importing textbooks that are disconnected from local realities.<sup>88</sup> *“Very often in Mauritius, we get our textbooks from overseas and most of the times when the teacher is preparing to talk to the students, he will look at this case study in some other parts of the world, and it's not relevant. Yeah, I think it has to be relevant. It has to be meaningful to the students so that they can connect to the situation, and then get them to be more creative. So, get them to be problem-solvers. And then technology would bring, would speed up the solution. And rather than technology is the start of finding the solution, technology should be at the back end, and that the front end should be: we look at the situation and we look at the problem.”*

Whilst overtly seeking local relevance, Ganesh simultaneously accepts that Mauritius should become part of the global village by embracing an economy that is backed by sophisticated technological literacy. He does not question whether these econometric agendas are also externally imposed but insists that the shift from industrial-based education (of the past) to a knowledge-based one (the future) can be accelerated by ICT. However, he is not confident that policymakers and their ICT policies are sufficiently clear on how to steer the economy in this direction.

The data analysis suggests a utilitarian view of the function of education, that is, to produce workers to serve industry. The industry participant presumes that the education system always existed (previously, rote learning suited industry's needs). Docile users of given knowledge created technicians that complied with the agendas of the captains of industry. It seems that Ganesh's critique is driven by an agenda to produce a middle management class rather than a mass base of employees. Consequentially his argument that the relevance of the education system is determined by students' employability subjects the system to market forces. For the industry, the education system is considered a value chain expected to demonstrate improved educational outcomes through adaptation to the industry's needs. Ganesh suggests that *“they (universities) produce students that go to industry and we tell them ‘guys (universities), these guys (students) don't have the skills’ (...) Why do you need to spend so much money on*

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<sup>88</sup> This critique does not acknowledge the role that many higher education (curriculum) specialists, especially in teacher education institutions, are playing in Mauritianising the local school curriculum through the development of local textbooks. Ganesh's comments seem to be informed by adherence to the secondary school exit examinations which he believes represents compliance with an overseas agenda because examination boards like the Cambridge examination system determine curriculum choices. However, there is some latitude with regard to how the international curriculum is activated locally, for example, in the selection of literature.

*education that can't even give you a job? I wish that universities start thinking like entrepreneurs.*” In light of technological developments and globalisation, it is difficult to predict what type of businesses will emerge in the future labour market. The industrialist is a strong advocate for change in line with the entrepreneur’s view that the education system needs to be nimble to meet the changing demands of the knowledge economy. It is argued that one learns by accessing knowledge as one needs it; a just-in-time concept that could dilute the purpose of education. However, there is a tension between the creativity agenda and the performativity culture that the education system navigates. Nevertheless, the industry participant is informed by his interpretation that education and schooling serve a utilitarian instrumental function rather than fostering learners’ creative and imaginative potential. His preoccupation is driven by his belief that universities are not producing ‘work-ready graduates’ and his priority is entrepreneurship.

### **8.5.2. Micro-political forces**

The ‘public position’ and personal conception of ICTE are sometimes at odds for the parent. Advocacy for the adoption of ICT is, however, more prominent. Despite sometimes opposing ICT, from Lakshmi’s perspective, the use of ICT within schools is a driver of innovation in a modern educational approach that advances transformation. She describes how using ICT applications offer innovative opportunities to develop students’ creativity. Features such as animation and videos are presumed to enhance pedagogy by helping her daughter make sense of abstract concepts. She remarks, *“I think she is very happy doing activities on her tablet. There is an app called ‘sketch’. They make drawings that develops creativity of children to some extent. The teacher has shown how to use it (to my child). By discovery learning, they (pupils) learn and do activities by themselves<sup>89</sup>.”* Lakshmi appears to have been seduced by the ‘innovative’ nature of ICT devices. Features such as animation and videos presumably enhance her daughter’s learning.

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<sup>89</sup> KM : *“Mo pense li bien kontan kann fer bann aktivite. Ena en ‘application’ ki servi apel ‘sketch’. Zot fer bann desin. Li ‘develop’ enn tipe kreativite dan ‘l’enfant’. Misye in montre kouma servi sa. Be par zot mem, zot ‘by discovery learning’, zot in eseye. Zot in fer bann ti aktivite.”*

ICT is also projected as an artefact that consolidates learning. The parent (Lakshmi) illustrates this point: *“to show a child a volcano, how it erupts and so on, instead of making simulations using ‘papier-mâché’. With ICT, I have the support of video to help me demonstrate abstract things concretely<sup>90</sup>.”* She also notes that ICT promotes holistic development: *“Holistic teachers should also make use of the devices. Perhaps, they can integrate it with other activities. Most of them are young, and even without training, they are using it, for example, in activities like Health and Physical Education<sup>91</sup>.”* However, it appears that access to information and the use of animation are interpreted as capable of improving pedagogy. The parent appears to associate age rather than experience with applying ICT in learning. She presumes that the more the teacher is at ease with ICT use, the better the learning. Lakshmi suggests that *“when explaining we can bring photos, but with animation, the child understands better”*. She claims that *“young teachers are at ease with technology and find it easy to apply it in class<sup>92</sup>.”* It appears that observers of activities in the classroom are fascinated by teachers’ ease in operating ICT devices. This could create the impression that learning occurs through ICT. The impact of education is, however, protracted, and this is a problematic assumption. While comments about ICT seem to be confined to its form, it is presumed to automatically enhance the substance of learning.

Along similar lines, access to ICT devices is regarded as a basic right for today’s students. Lakshmi comments that, *“as (a) parent I think that we give mobile phones as a facility to children. He watches videos on YouTube. But I think, everything should have a limit<sup>93</sup>”*. ICT devices are viewed as essential and she claims that *“children cannot be deprived of technology<sup>94</sup>,”* but advocates for limited use. However, if she is correct in saying that these devices enhance pedagogy, their use should be maximised. A sense of ambivalence is noted in Lakshmi’s comments. Hidden in her discourse is the acknowledgement of a predisposition to overuse devices to the detriment of other activities. Like the industrialist, her comments reflect the paradoxical, multi-faceted desire-critique agenda of using ICTE.

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<sup>90</sup> KM : *“Mo pou bizin montre en zenfan ‘volcano’. Kouma li ‘erupt’ tou sa. Mo pou bizin al fer avek papier ‘mache’. Fer en ‘simulation’ tou sa. La mo ena ‘support’ de bann video ki permet moi amen sa ki ‘abstract’ pou zenfan ki ‘concretement a travers’ video.”*

<sup>91</sup> KM : *“Bann ‘holistic teachers’ osi bizin zot bizin capav servi bann ‘device la’. ‘Peut-etre’ zot pou capav integre li ensam avec zot bann le zot aktivite. ‘La plupart’ se bann zenn. Me zot pa ine gagne ‘formation’. Zot pe servi li kan mem parski ena bann aktivite ki present dan ‘health and physical education’.”*

<sup>92</sup> KM : *“Bann zenn ki ase alez avec teknolozi, zot trouv li enn fasilite dan zot klas.”*

<sup>93</sup> KM : *“‘comme’ paran mem aster nou trouv sa enn fasilite nou donn enn zanfan enn portabe. Li pe get enn video lor ‘youtube’. Mwa mo pense tou zafer ki ou fer, mem ‘comme’ paran, ‘comme’ profeser, bizin ena enn limit.”*

<sup>94</sup> KM : *“Si nou pou ‘deprive’ nou bann zelev de sa.”*

The PTA executive committee member also notes that “*nowadays when the father and mother are not free, television and mobile phones look after the children*”<sup>95</sup>. It appears that the use of ICT in school and home spaces can spiral out of control.

Lakshmi speaks for other parents when she recounts that parents are pleased when their child is offered a free tablet for ‘personalised learning’. She claims that “*I am PTA executive member of my school for 6 years now, and I have never got any issue on technology. On the contrary parents are happy because children are happy getting tablets.*” Asked how the decision was taken to implement ICT in schools, she is vocal about the political agenda, as she regards such projects as “*eye wash, just to make sensation that students are getting tablets*”<sup>96</sup>.

Lakshmi’s discourse reveals three strands of thought. The first is that parents are pleased that they can delegate some of their responsibilities to ICT devices, and the second is that she associates the provision of ICT devices with political inducement. Thirdly, she feels that exposing students to ICT from an early age prepares them for the world of work. In the absence of ICTE, the student will struggle to find employment. Lakshmi remarks that “*when the child grows up, he will join the labour market, and so he has to use technology. He has, one time or another, he will have to get exposure to technology. The sooner he gets the exposure, I think he becomes more skilful*”<sup>97</sup>. Whilst she argues that ICT is intrinsic to educational development, from an econometric perspective, she also feels that it is essential for their employability in the future.

Besides emphasising employment, parents apparently also favour competition. Lakshmi poses the question: “*If one child has worked well, another one not so well, but both of them get the same college. At the end of the day, we ask what motivation children have to do better?*”<sup>98</sup> For her, motivation stems from one’s ability to secure a place in an ‘elite’ school. Parents seemingly induce their children to compete with others from an early age. This is likely to persuade policymakers, more prominently politicians, to ensure that performativity remains an important pillar of the education system. Thus, ICT skills are regarded as important that would give

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<sup>95</sup> KM: “*Aster si mama papa pa libe, se television ki pe gett zenfan. Se portab ki pe gett zenfan.*”

<sup>96</sup> KM: “*Enn ‘Eye wash’, bizin dir dimun ki inn met tablet. ‘Headline’ se zanfan ‘grade’ 1, 2 and 3 in gagne tablet.*”

<sup>97</sup> KM: “*Zanfan la kan li pe grandi, li pou al dan ‘le marché du travail’ cot pe servi teknoloji. Li pou bizin kouma dir, enn ‘moment’ enn lot, li ‘get exposed to’ teknoloji. Pli boner li expoze, mo pense li vine pli ‘habile’, pli ‘skilled’.*”

<sup>98</sup> KM: “*Nou inpe desi kan nou get sistem la kouma li ete. Mem si enn zanfan inn travay ‘très’ bien, linn fer ‘très’ bien, avek enn lot ki pa inn fer telman bien, tou le de gagne mem kolez. ‘At the of the day’, ou dir be zanfan eski ena enn motivasion pou fer bien?*”

children a competitive advantage when securing a place in privileged schools and achieving long-term success.

Driven by the perceived usefulness of ICTE, Lakshmi is disappointed by the ineffective implementation of policies. She argues that *“sometimes parents think that the internet and the tablet project is not working well. If it is not working, it’s not because tablets are not good for children but because the project has been wrongly implemented”*<sup>99</sup>. While she does not agree that the project was ill-conceived, she is critical of bureaucrats who do not seem to have a clearly articulated plan for managing the ICTE roll-out.

She also strongly criticises teachers for the inefficient enactment of ICTE policies. She claims that teachers resist using devices in their classrooms despite being pressured by the main policymaking structure to do so. She comments, *“when we go on school visits we find that some teachers are reticent, but they have to abide as there is pressure on them”*<sup>100</sup>. Teachers are finally ultimately acquiescent to ICTE.

Lakshmi expects that teachers should know how to integrate ICT into teaching. She suggests that *“technology is a medium, a tool to develop skills for all subjects. The teacher should know how to use it”*<sup>101</sup>. She claims that the teacher should also find the right balance between developing motor skills and the use of ICT. And that because students have an affinity for ICT devices, they are no longer motivated by traditional teaching methods. She argues that *“children are interested in digital, with tablets at home or parents’ smartphones. They won’t have much interest or motivation with the traditional methods only. To attract children and to make them have interest, we have to use technology. They like it, but we have to blend it, giving a balance so that they do not lag behind the technology they have at home”*<sup>102</sup>. The parent seems to believe that pedagogy and teachers should embrace technological developments. She

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<sup>99</sup> KM: *“Paran ‘quelquefois’ pense be tablet ki pa pe marse. Proze tablet pa pe marse. Li pa pe marse pa parski tablet pa bon pour zanfan. Se parski inn mal ‘implemente’ li.”*

<sup>100</sup> KM: *“Dan nou travay nou fer bann ‘school visits’. Be nou ‘school visit’, enn profeser li capav ‘reticent’. Ousa li ‘willing’. Sa pa pou fer tro diferens si. Parski meme sa ki ‘reticent’ la osi li pou ena enn pression lor li. Li pou oblizer servi li.”*

<sup>101</sup> KM: *“Teknolozi li capav enn ‘medium’ pou ‘develop’ tou sa bann ‘skills’ la. Kouma mo dir ou, zis professor la bizin conne kouma li pou servi teknolozi la.”*

<sup>102</sup> KM: *“Bann zenfan, zot bien, zot ‘interest’ trouve enn ti pe bann zafer dizital. ‘Le fait’ ki zot expoze ‘a la maison’ avek zot tablet, telephone, smart phone, zot paran avek smart TV ‘à la maison’, mem si on continue ‘comme ci’ ‘teach’ avek ‘traditional method’ ‘peu être’ nou pou, nou pa pou gagne zot lintere. Ek san lintere, pena motivasion pou apran. Pena ‘learning’ ki ‘take place’. Pou nou atir zanfan, pou gagne so lintere, ‘peut être’ nou bisin servi enn ti pe teknolozi. Seki zot kontan la, nou amen enn ti peu sa mem selman nou ‘blend’ li. Nou trouve balance pou fer ‘les deux comme ci’ ni li pas ‘lag behind’ avek so bann ‘motor skills’ ni ‘comme ci’ li pa ‘lag behind in terms of’ teknolozi ki li ena dan so ‘la maison’.”*

condemns teachers for making excuses that “*parents will complain about not completing the syllabus*<sup>103</sup>.” Lakshmi appears to underestimate the complexity of pedagogy and seems to view teaching and learning and ICT as ‘plug and play’.

Lakshmi blames teachers for not exploiting the opportunity offered by ICT to develop students’ critical, creative, collaborative and social skills. She remarks that: “*children now obtain better opportunities to be more creative because we have subjects such as creative arts, dance, sports, etc. And technology may be a medium to help children to make a presentation in group. Working in collaboration with friends develops their social and communication skills. It also develops critical thinking skills when working on the project*<sup>104</sup>.” But she surmises that teachers do not cooperate with regard to the use of ICT. She argues that “*teachers are passive users of ICT. They are not exploiting the use of technology to the maximum. When asked why they do not use it, they say they lack time*<sup>105</sup>”. The parent, thus, shifts accountability for inefficient implementation of ICTE by teachers. The term ‘creativity’ means many different things to the parent, industry, policymakers and enactors. Given varying conceptions of which skills should be developed and how, as well as what they actually involve, renders incoherence and confusion in policy goals inevitable. Public discourse around basic and more complex technologies often lacks conceptual and terminological clarity. Despite self-constructing as a powerless constituency in relation to policymakers, parents appear to be powerful. They are well aware that policymakers seek their votes, so what they value and believe are taken seriously. Lakshmi notes that in case of the bad behaviour of students, “*nowadays it is the teacher who is afraid of children to lodge a complaint. Parents always have a defensive attitude vis a vis their children*<sup>106</sup>.” Parents’ complaints about teachers appear to be given due consideration by policymakers, more so than their apprehension about ICTE policy. The system appears to hold teachers accountable for policy enactment. Lakshmi argues that while teachers resist ICTE policy despite pressure from policymakers, parents seemingly hold the power in the parent-teacher relationship.

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<sup>103</sup> KM: “*Paran pou ‘complain’. Paran pou dir ki pann termine syllabus.*”

<sup>104</sup> KM: “*Ban zenfan enn ti pe, pe gagne inpe plis locazion ‘etre’ creatif parski ena ‘creative arts’, dans, spor, ‘holistic’tousala. Teknolozi li mem li capav enn ‘medium’ pou fer. Par exempe, mo capav donn enn zanfan enn prezantasion pou fer ‘en’ group. Apres zot vin present li devan. Sa mo pense li pe cree enn ‘social skills’ Li bisin capav travay ‘en’ ‘collaboration’ ek so ban camarad. Plis ‘communication skills’. Li bisin vin cominike. Saken pou bisin prezant enn ti bout dan prezantasion la. Critical thinking, pandan ki li pe fer proze la, peut etre, sa depan ki proze zot pe gagne.*”

<sup>105</sup> KM: “*Pou lemoman, zot inpe ‘passive user’. Zot pa explwat li ‘au maximum’. Kan ou deman zot kifer zot pa pe fer li, zot dir ou zot pena letan.*”

<sup>106</sup> KM: “*asterla se profeser ki gagne per ki kouma dir pou al fer ‘complainte’. Paran la li ena enn ‘l’attitude’ kouma dir touletan ‘sur défensif’.*”

These observations highlight the micro-politics within which teachers operate. Indeed, teachers appear to be the most vulnerable group regarding critique. The teacher is accountable to parents and the surveillance system of the Ministry. As an electoral constituency, issues raised by parents are taken seriously even though they do not have direct access to the workings and making of policy. The fact that parents exert control but also feel excluded is paradoxically a strength and a marginalisation.

Despite the parent's strong advocacy, ICTE is also construed as being driven by political motives. Lakshmi claims that politicians' need to gain political mileage results in implementation issues on-the-ground being overlooked. She comments that "*it is all about politics (...), just to publicly announce that tablets are being distributed. (...). But the constraints are not foregrounded<sup>107</sup>.*" Thus, ICTE becomes symbolic rather than a genuine engagement to bring about change in education. It is intriguing to note that despite complaining about being excluded from the policymaking terrain, the parent is vocal about the political nature of ICTE.

### **8.5.3. Cog of macro, market and micro forces**

The degree of 'change' that is expected from an education policy seemingly contributes to the reputation of politicians in the electoral race. However, rarely change fundamentally restructures sensitive issues in education, as this can undermine politicians' popularity. As short-sighted as it might seem to the Excluded voices, distributing tablets to students is likely to provide instant gratification to politicians. Through demonstrating 'progress', they are likely to be characterised in the broader public domain as 'bringers of progress', and this has political currency.

The desire for progress is seen in the opinions of the parent who criticises teachers who fail to prepare children for long-term economic competition and job prospects. In the parent's understanding, politicians want to be seen as 'do-gooders', but the industrialist finds politicians, government officers, higher education experts and teachers 'resistant to change' (understood in his reference to them not being able to drive economic agendas).

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<sup>107</sup> KM: "*Mo pense tousala politik. (...), bisin dir dimun ki inn met tablet. (...). Me ki 'contrainte' ena, sa li pa pou vin 'en avant'.*"

Although politicians argue that they are bringing about change, such change is not at a deep, but at a superficial level. Thus, politicians are paradoxically interpreted as both bringers of change and change-averse. In the end, fundamental issues that require real, deep-level change endure. The industry participant argues that it is the electorate that is “*change-averse*”, especially with respect to the education system. He intimates that formal policy-shapers follow the electorate’s wishes to avoid becoming unpopular. Education is seen as a sensitive sector in which to bring about subversive reforms. The industry participant is of the view that the policy’s long-term influence is not always at the top of policymakers’ agendas, and that policy reform is not always developed in the interests of the nation. This is despite declarations that such interests indeed drive the reform agenda. He criticises politicians for not disrupting the well-established traditional educational system because it is valued by the electorate and powerful constituencies such as teachers. Being out of sync with the electorate’s worldview could have dire consequences regarding elections. Ganesh remarks that, “*every time people talk about reforming education, they lose election. You see, they become unpopular. (...) They get shot in the press. ‘Oh, this guy what, I don’t know what he wants to do. He wants to reform education. Why do we want to reform? etc.’, and then no reforms. Go ahead. And the same system continues, and it’s been declining, declining, declining.*” Thus, providing devices such as tablets within the ICTE policy enables politicians to gain favour with the electorate, rather than this being based on any profound educational reasoning. ICTE appeals to the electorate that wants the Ministry to offer innovative solutions. Policy is systematised within a narrow precinct that serves politicians’ purposes, with voices that could displace their intent deliberately excluded. The status quo is largely driven by a political rather than a pedagogical change agenda. Reforms are, therefore, likely to be symbolic with no intention of implementation because it is less risky to preserve the status quo than to attempt to bring about deep-level change.

In summary, the development of education policies appears to occur within the orbit of two major influences, namely, the electorate and industry. The apparently distal characteristic of the PTA and the industry does not inform their exclusion from policy-shaping but is somewhat paradoxical. This is because both are significant influencers of policy, parents by being part of the electorate and the industry as the supplier of the latest ICT devices. Policymakers, industry and parents interact and entangle intricately, not upfront but subtly, with the industry acting as the intermediate cog that stimulates the relationship between the electorate and politicians.

## 8.6. Synthesis of chapter

As noted in the introduction to this chapter, Ganesh, the industrialist and the parent, Lakshmi were not initially regarded as a significant group, but the data analysis yielded rich insights into how “Excluded voices” constitute a valuable group to understanding policy perspectives.

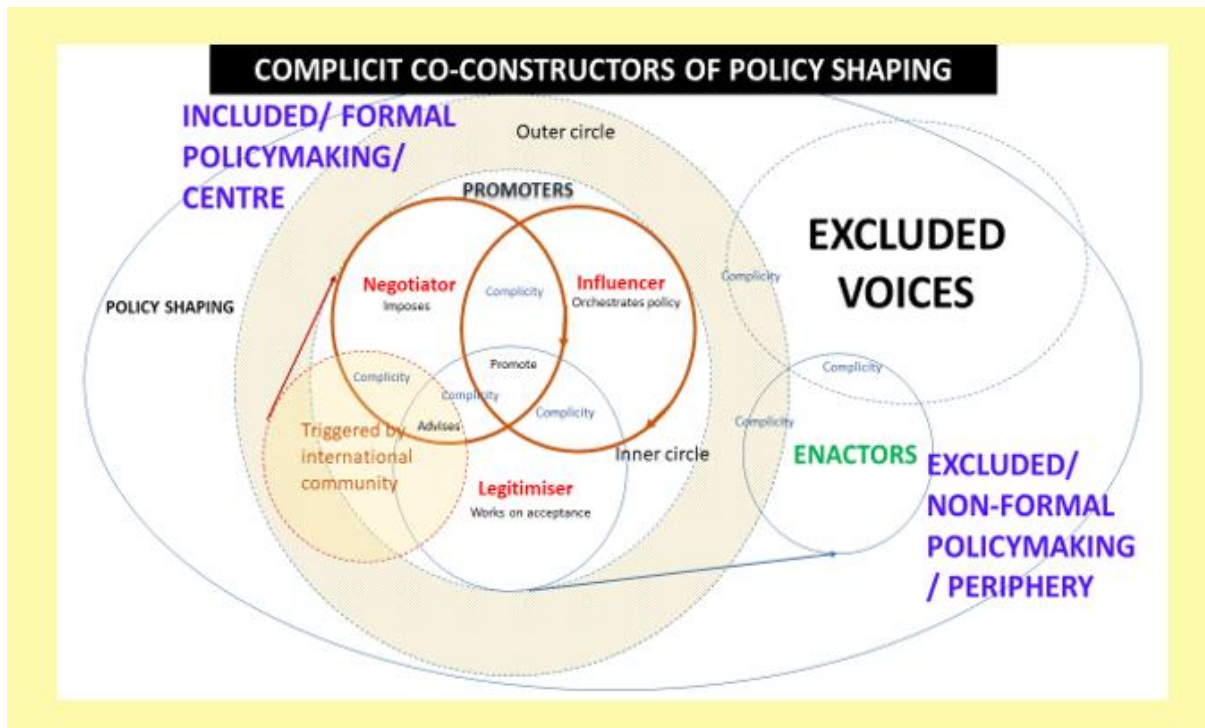
However, as opposed to the self-labelled “Excluded voices” that suggest a singular perspective, the analysis exposes a set of paradoxical entanglements. This categorisation seems to be an oxymoron in that the self-proclaimed Excluded voices were not excluded but infiltrated policymaking decisions. Their power and ability to shape policy only became apparent when I started to analyse the data in more depth and came to understand that they exercise significant power within the policymaking sphere from which they claim to be excluded. Even though the Excluded voices are physically outside the policymaking circle, they appear to dictate what occurs inside. Not sitting at the decision-making table to produce policy text does not exclude the ‘Excluded voice’.

The voice is excluded from the formal process (text making) but is philosophically and conceptually present in the policies and underlying decisions. The complicity that is developed in the co-construction of policy-shaping is also evident in the data analysis. Policy appears to be a complicated intersection between policymakers, the electorate (as parents and their proximate) and industry.

While the inner policy-shaping circle is seemingly closed, it does not seem to be opaque from the outside. Those outside seem to have a clear notion of the inside political workings of policymakers.

Drawing on the analysis in this chapter, Figures 6.2 and 7.2 from chapters 6 and 7, respectively are augmented in the construction of Figure 8.2 to illustrate the complicity amongst the inner policymaking machinery and the powerful influence of the supposedly Excluded voices that control the policymaking space.

The development of education policies occurs within the orbit of two major influences, parents (the electorate) and the industry. These orbits complement each other in the policymaking sphere to exert pressure for transformation to an education oriented towards industry. This alters the patterns of governance in spheres of intersected social actions and, in turn, affects policymakers' decision-making power.



**Figure 8.2:** Complicit co-constructors of policy-shaping developed from the analysis of the three groups: Promoters of ICTE policies, Enactors of policies and Excluded voices

## CHAPTER 9

### **Policymaking and policy-shaping: a postcolonial perspective**

#### **9.1. Introduction**

The insights gleaned from the previous chapters act as a prelude to the organisation of this chapter. My perspective of policymaking and shaping has become more elaborated through a robust comparative analysis cutting across the five typologies of policy-shapers: Negotiators, Legitimisers, Influencers, Enactors and ‘Excluded voices’. This chapter represents the recurring perspectives, patterns and arguments of the various policy-shapers about the ways in which they shape policy.

The data analysis argues that policy-shaping involves a multifaceted sociological, cultural, political and economic set of processes that comprise multiple actors. Policy-shaping extends beyond the dimensions of a simplistic linear relationship between those who design and those who are expected to implement pre-designed plans. Many personal and collective groups of policy-shapers co-exist in the policy space making it a vibrant arena of agendas which compete for supremacy. In this space, where policy is (pre)conceived, designed and enacted, policy-shapers assert and critique their own and other’s powers. They simultaneously inhere intricate interrelations, which include complex processes of formulating and enacting policy texts. This chapter explores the specific roles and inter-relationships amongst the policy-shapers as they engage in shaping policy. This research brought to the fore a multiplicity of voices that add new insights into the prevailing colonialist discourse or represent the current state of ‘postcoloniality’.

This chapter also focuses on how the divergent, competing policy-shapers (politicians and bureaucrats, international agencies, industry, teachers and the wider population) are positioned in different spaces within and outside the dominant officialised structures of policymaking. They each choose to interpret their functions and roles strategically to serve their unique and conflicting interests. Their interpretations of policy-shaping are mapped against the theoretical framework that was established at the beginning of the study.

This mapping does not merely serve to test the hypotheses underlying the original theoretical framework. The current chapter shows how the original lens has potential but can be elaborated on the basis of the data analysis. It extends the analysis of the phenomenon through accented re-readings of policymaking theories through the lens of the postcolonial theory. Such a postcolonial lens was part of the original theoretical framework but is re-emphasised here, supported by the exploration highlighted in the analysis of field data. In so doing, this chapter hints at a superordinate Theory (capital T) for both postcolonial theory and policy studies, which is an emerging field of study yet to be developed into a consolidated and coherent body of knowledge.

The contrastive analysis with the original theoretical framework highlights the policy context as not simply spatial. The policy environment is characterised by highly charged dialogical processes which reflect consistently and competing ideological assertions. The policy development processes have the effect of activating both assertive productive and abusive power (Foucault, 2000), simultaneously embodying affirmation and marginalisation of certain selected discourses. Policy-shapers are considered a microcosm of the complex world we inhabit, which intricately links policy-shapers' constructions of policy development to the temporal and philosophical histories of imperialism, colonial cultures and their structures. These discourses of power percolate into the present day-to-day realities of our everyday world. Postcoloniality suggests that the past, present and future realities of a specific context are complexly intertwined. Time and space coalesce. My analysis serves to explain why policy-shapers' constructions of ICTE policy development emerge in the way they do in these times and spaces. This could be considered a response to this study's third critical question.

## 9.2. Overview of chapter

This chapter reveals that policymakers' constructions of policymaking in post-colonial SIDS are more aptly explained in the light of the distinctive interests, that are of political, personal, cultural, social and economic nature. The recurring themes that emanated from policy-shapers' constructions and their actions are presented in sections 9.3 to 9.6 as the 4Cs, namely 'constrained contextual negotiations', 'continuity of colonialism', 'complexity' and 'contested complicated conversations'.

Section 9.3 puts forth the argument that policy-shapers appropriate and represent their power by adopting invisibility in this process (masking their involvement) *and/or exaggerating their potential (overstating their agency)*. The section explores how this posture of industry is co-opted within the dominant electioneering culture that generates a critical knock-on effect on the policymaking process. Section 9.4 sheds light on the overarching frame within which symbolic policies are developed. It also discusses the nature of symbolic policies that set the SIDS in a vicious circle by relinking the post-colonial SIDS to their former colonisers for continued exploitation. As discussed in section 9.5, such a policymaking landscape is recognised as a highly complex system that constantly reconfigures itself in response to distortions of discourse, uncertainties, ambiguities and volatility. Section 9.6 captures the multiple layers of interactivity and heterogeneity involved in the policymaking processes in contested, complicated conversations across society. A synthesis of the chapter in section 9.7 presents emergent themes emanating from the intricate dialogue amongst the policy-shapers.

Across the chapter, the themes are brought into dialogue with the original theoretical lens established at the onset of the fieldwork. New insights about policy-shaping in ICTE are signaled here in anticipation of the closing chapter of this thesis.

### **9.3. Constrained contextual negotiations**

#### **9.3.1. Silent and invisible campaign of industry**

The silent power of industry and its invisibility are influential in policymaking. However, although the industry claims it is excluded, it does not mean that it is not manipulating the policymaking sphere. The opposite appears to be true. Industry seeks more power to meet its growing economic needs but captures the media headlines by presenting a deficit notion of education policymaking in the SIDS. Moreover, while the industry affirms its willingness to redress its lack of involvement in policymaking by offering educational resource solutions through ICTE, it contends being prevented from doing so. This could be considered as conscious propaganda and exaggeration to displace policymakers from their roles and protect industry's own interest. Industry benefits by portraying itself as marginalised, whilst covertly exerting strong potential influence over the shaping of policy. This research shows that power hidden in its invisibility and silence is more controlling.

The voice of industry, at face value, appears *invisible* at the policymaking table. Ostensibly, it is this invisibility and non-direct form of neocolonial designs that Nkrumah (1965) refers to when he warned against the dangerous stage of colonialism. The pattern in the discourse of the industry exposes industry's two-faced characteristic. It makes its discourse of deficient education policymakers public but not its complicity with them. Nkrumah suggested that, even though colonial powers evacuated the positions of administrative power during post-independence, a continued neocolonial agenda infiltrates through 'new' bureaucrats who sustain the old pattern of privilege and power. Despite the 'new' regimes, patterns of the old colonial agenda persist. Industry's endeavour to remain at the centre of power for decision-making has similarities with the techniques of the colonials, in this case not frontally or overtly. This research has confirmed that the invisible force of the industry percolates into the education system through the powerful policymakers themselves. This continuity with colonialism spans to the present day, several decades after the colonised countries gained 'independence'.

At first, industry appears ‘excluded’ from exerting any influence or involvement in policy. Yet, industry wields *silent power* nested within an *intricate web of relationships* with international development agencies and influential decision-makers within the state apparatuses. Whilst *industry appears neutral* in the policy space, it is drawing the voice of its international and national (economic) partners into the social environment of policymaking. *Co-agendas* of industry rely on the beneficence of relationships with (multi)national *co-operation* from which it derives its resources, often including funding, prospective market access and stability, and prosperity. These economic agendas (whether local or international) are the backbone that drives the intent of policymakers, whose interest in the national state objective is concerned with economic viability, sustainability and the prosperity of the nation. The industry and state agendas coincide, albeit out of the public eye. In doing so, industry achieves its goals, mainly through politicians who act as intermediaries to access and influence the local policy space. Industry is notable in its *silent campaign* to cross over from invisibility to the assertion of its influence over ICTE policy.

In this study, industry tries to convey that it has a more robust understanding of the purpose of education and exclusivity on solutions that guarantee progress. However, the benefits of industry’s discourse about education may be attributed to Northern countries rather than to the recipients. Speaking to the interests of the colonising powers reaffirms a definition of capitalism whereby profit is produced at the margins but benefits the power authorities at the centre. Therefore, industry’s strong interest in education policymaking stands accused of representing neocolonialism (Lassou & Hopper, 2016).

Neocolonialism can possibly explain the new manoeuvres of capitalism of wanting more control over the governance system of education through invisibility. Yet, more nuanced issues are derived from the analysis as to why industry claims its right over education policy. A distrust of mainstream experts (mainly bureaucrats and teachers) underlies industry’s discourse<sup>108</sup> to produce the kind of human resource it seeks in relation to the dominant electioneering space.

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<sup>108</sup> There is one kind of industry that supplies ICTE devices to schools and the other that conceptualises the education system as a just-in-time production line for producing skilled human resource. Both types seek economic gains from the education system.

### **9.3.2. Electioneering and career agenda**

Political combatants promote ideas that play to populist political campaigns. The field data analysis makes it evident how ICTE is used as a rallying populist measure during the electioneering campaigns. This study has found that, in prioritising what is popular over what is important, capitalism and elections go hand-in-hand, as in a symbiotic relationship. Politicians see the ICTE agenda as a valuable means of invoking populist responses, and they choose to present themselves (as prospective policymakers) as being interested in securing the use of ICTE strategies for the educational and broader social sectors. Interestingly, policy redirections related to ICTE coincide with electoral cycles depicting the political nature of proposed policies. It begs the question of whether the interest in the ICTE agenda as a tool for educational growth and development is valued since renewed declarations about ICTE value seem to surface only during the electioneering periods to impress parents, a significant constituency of the public. In any case, votes are a more critical determinant of politicians' reference point than policy (Linde & Vis, 2017).

Industry has also learnt that politicians are generally driven by an electioneering culture and are in search of novelty to signal positive change to electorates. Through this learning, industry has ensured that politicians endure the rigours of campaigns to foster strong electoral linkage. Industry pins down the weaknesses in the local systems (Seth, 2009), and the locals are generally presented as inadequate to address them (Adas, 2018). With an agenda of market access and neoliberalism, industry selects shapers of potential relevance to them (elites as co-opted members who can influence policy or make funding recommendations) and makes them feel that authority and power lies with them. Industry excludes those whom they do not wish to devote their attention or resources (e.g., teachers, for they are viewed as mere implementers of policies with no influence in policymaking). This strategy follows colonial patterns (Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin, 2007), which exclude those who do not serve the agenda of the ones in control. In the pursuit of power, enforcement of hierarchy and superiority over the marginalised can become an integral part of how policies are developed and implemented.

It turns out that propaganda around off-the-shelf ICT gadgets quickly spreads as educational solutions across countries during election times<sup>109</sup>. This process is defined by Shipan & Volden (2008) as policy diffusion in which policy innovations spread from one government to another. Politicians consciously cite their neighbouring contexts and preferred idols to profess a localised adoption of ICTE practices. In this study, electoral cycles appear to be the critical juncture<sup>110</sup> where policy change occurs (section 3.4.2).

My study reveals recurring patterns in which policymaking processes are heavily influenced by the strong currents of the surrounding socio-political and global forces milieu<sup>111</sup>. The four mechanisms of policy diffusion, namely *learning from early adopters*, *economic competition*, *imitation* and *coercion* (Shipan & Volden, 2008) (section 3.4.1), co-exist and overlap in the SIDS policymaking space. The findings also reveal a voluntary miming of early adopters and a reinforcement of hidden coercion in the ways in which policies are induced into the SIDS. Such patterns of neocolonial sustenance are often not visible to the politician, who is drawn into electioneering ventures by serendipitous industry solutions.

Legitimated through *policy tourism* (synonymous to '*verified evidence*'<sup>112</sup> in the political space) as a stage in policymaking, ICT is taken as a natural extension of the education realm (section 6.4.3). These findings show a strong reliance of the local policymaking space on external drives. ICTE, within this imitative and touristic framing, is presented as a universal solution to variegated educational issues and contextual demands. This kind of rhetorical cover-up around ICTE has strongly featured across the policy processes in the form of misinformation and disinformation<sup>113</sup>. Rubin (2019) highlights how the emergence of the 'fake news' phenomenon is making people susceptible to being mis/disinformed. In this study, mis(interpretations) are not only perpetuated by industry which is likely to derive economic benefits from the introduction of imported transactional ICTE goods. It also becomes part of a syntax that characterises *the powerful stories* around ICTE told and repeated by bureaucrats,

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<sup>109</sup> This is noted especially through purveyors (international agencies that have established bilateral agreements to bind SIDS within their structure). Colonialism has morphed into cleverly disguised bilateral spaces supported by international agencies - a premeditated colonial act made to look benevolent.

<sup>110</sup> According to path dependence theory, policies tend to remain static unless at a critical juncture.

<sup>111</sup> Globalisation, technological advancements, fashionable trends and practices in other contexts.

<sup>112</sup> Documented proof by means that are reasonably reliable to establish authenticity.

<sup>113</sup> Misinformation "is the spreading of inaccurate or false information while mistakenly thinking one is sharing accurate information", while disinformation is based on "deliberately spreading false or inaccurate information" (Harsin 2018, p. 7). The "distinction between the two forms of deception is, however, blurred, as a disinformation campaign might willingly produce misinformed people who in turn unwillingly amplify deliberately false information" (Cosentino, 2020).

union leaders, teachers, politicians and parents. Communication about ICTE and its selected positive leverage prospects convey to the unsuspecting wider populace a form of saintly benevolence, which suggests why the communication strategies could be labelled as orchestrating a ‘halo effect’. Parents are generally enticed that their children will have ‘state-of-the-art’ devices, another rhetoric used in education policies.

My data confirms that policymakers derive their authority and confidence (possibly through fakeness in mis/disinformation) from industry products rather than from an expression of autonomous intent and action of local policy-shapers. This is perhaps because the dominant international discourse is about the glorification of ICTE as an exceptional device and a social leveller that promises *prompt benefits* to education and humankind. These dominant meta-narratives stimulated by industry and its allies’ repeated assertions of ICT as a fashionable trend within advanced education systems swiftly entrench local policymakers into the rhetoric (Amin, Dhunpath & Devroop, 2021). Even connections between national development goals and ICT-based education reform are often more rhetorical than programmatic (Kozma, 2005). Addedly, policymakers would not wish to be accused of not making an effort to ‘modernise’ their education system when other countries are following international trends (chapter 2). The side effects of reinforcing continued colonial agendas are oftentimes not adequately scrutinised. Indeed, becoming complicit with the agenda of northern and western worldviews is not adequately critiqued. Rather, a conducive environment for ICT to prosper is endowed to former colonials. Becoming complicit with the agenda of northern and western worldviews is not given adequate critique.

In this research, meta-narratives about ICTE are exaggerated rhetorically as political rivals choose to battle with their opponents. This finding is aligned with Grönlund’s (2001) argument that ICT can become a rhetorical tool in the hands of politicians. The professed discourse around ICTE becomes a tool for democratic enlightenment and the opportunity to exert influence over decision-making processes. The unassuming public citizen is awash with political discourses seemingly about ICTE itself, but insidiously it is about scoring political points. In this case, compliance and rhetoric assimilation thwart creative and critical engagement with these dominant discourses.

Driven by election pressures, policymakers show a preference for coupling with industry instead of academics, or even social actors, for inspiration. This is because the nature of industry practitioners' appeals to the world of politicians, and also because of the financial support for political campaigns. There are added valuable external motivations for why industry might associate itself or align with local power. A potential kick-back from an investment point of view underpins this relationship.

This interdependence between politicians and industry is not new to the SIDS space. Since independence, Mauritius has harnessed its relationship with its former colonisers through preferential trades<sup>114</sup>, technical assistance and donations. The success<sup>115</sup> of Mauritius has been explained by Samuel and Mariaye (2017) in terms of the creative and critical strategies that the small country used to transition into the advanced countries league. By executing similar 'successful' strategies of the small and romanticising the 'partnership' between small and big, 'big' policy ideas are actively drawn from European or Western education models (Jules & Ressler, 2017). It appears that the established relationship predisposes policymakers to look up to developed countries and trust their policy ideas also to raise the level of the local education system. Electioneering exposes politicians' fragility when they exhibit their dependence on industry for 'innovative' policy ideas to connect with electorates. Policymakers' role is limited and sometimes conflictual when, in exchange, they have to fulfil certain obligations for partnering with industry. As argued by Samuel (2017, p. 23), policies are prejudiced by an "outward gaze" to satisfy those from whom concepts, ideas and strategies are solicited.

A behaviour similar to that of politicians is mirrored in the social space where parents actively participate in the 'rising popularity' and ubiquity of ICT devices. Through intensive propaganda and omnipresence, industry has succeeded in diffusing a strong interest in ICTE among people to create consumers for its products. The exposure to newness creates a craving for what is foreign among the population – a kind of anchoring bias, very much like the imitation experienced during colonialism (Bhabha 1994). Industry, through its products, induces parents into the illusion that they are providing their children with the best possible education that compares favourably with the education system of developed nations. Electorates, and thereby parents, are also generally wired to own what is popular and trendy, almost celebrating the pleasures of consumption (section 2.4). In this study, parents perceive

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<sup>114</sup> Sugar protocol was dismantled in 2009.

<sup>115</sup> Mauritius evolved from a colonised island to a model of an evolving productive economy in the Indian ocean.

ICT as an obvious ‘innovation’ brought into the education system for its advancement.

Selzer (2004) claims that international rhetoric usually appeals to the audience’s reason and the deeply held values and emotions of people. Likewise, the rhetoric around ICTE is appealing because the emotive cognitive threads are already present within the electorates. Rhetoric is an integral feature of ICTE policymaking, and the idea of rhetoric points to the necessity of convincing, persuading and communicating efficiently in the context of shaping and implementing public policies (Gottweis, 2006). This is because industry’s products and daily discourse affect people’s everyday lives. The ground is typically confused as to what effectively conventionalised research says since its language and argumentative discourses are not directed to the laypersons but to a selective academic circle. Many research papers and reports bear little import for one’s daily life, and it is policymakers who translate (or ought to) these research findings for electorates. No doubt, the reading of research (if done at all) is interpreted through their own political filters. Decision-makers are usually interpreting research through a variety of pre-existing worldviews and frameworks that create coherence and meaning for the public. Nevertheless, the interpreted agenda of the political officers are primarily connected to their campaigns.

My data suggests that when electorates perceive that their beliefs are understood and supported, a kind of electoral connection and relevance is created with the policy. It, however, often lacks critical thinking and intellectual engagement. Electorates are seduced into believing the positive developmental agenda of their political leaders. This might be the case even when privately (within their inner circles) individuals or groups might offer a robust critique of the agenda of the state.

From a postcolonial perspective, ICTE is found to have a character close to neocolonialism because the demands of both electorates and politicians are instigated by a capitalist agenda (Lane, 1966). This analysis marries well with the notion of ‘electoral connection’ established in the seminal work of Mayhew (1974, 2004), who treats politicians as single-minded seekers of re-election. The politicians’ version of rationality is tied to their desire to be (re)elected. But the effect of changing policy decisions mid-course signals superficiality in education policy development. This is seen in instances where policymakers kept on reversing their own strategy whimsically<sup>116</sup>. The nature of ICTE is episodic, in the form of short-term interventions with

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<sup>116</sup> From one interactive whiteboard per classroom to the distribution of a tablet per student, from ICT as a subject

superficial follow-ups. Propaganda around ICT and its possibilities have exposed policymakers to high levels of uncertainty and unpredictability in education policymaking. It is worth noting that these rationalities and practices of political office-seekers seem to endure despite campaigns for democratising the political space.

Although policymakers express policy in pedagogical terms, their interest is primarily one of legitimisation of a political nature. Policy legitimacy depends on the extent to which the policy's goals and motivations as to why these goals should be reached can be justified by reference to publicly established values and beliefs, mainly those of parents. Legitimation is a critical stage in policymaking<sup>117</sup> because it allows policymakers to implement their preferred policies and be regarded with esteem by the local population. However, in the process of carving out a political career to amass greater power, the actual implementation of the policy itself becomes secondary (section 6.4). While it is expected that the purpose of education remains primal in the debates about ICT, there is an apparent marginalisation of the agenda in the educational domain.

Perhaps policymakers, as elites themselves, are not effectively seeped into the fabric of the macro-level forces but merely extol the potential of ICTE to offer seductive promises. In the layers of analysis in this study, policymakers have been repeatedly found to be negotiating and navigating risks and opportunities related to the assumed policy goals, as well as institutional, personal and professional rewards. They develop virtuous policies but disengage themselves when it comes to their implementation. Guha (1983) posits that the elite did not live up to expectations concerning constructing an authentic nation. The elite merely reproduces many of the colonisers' characteristics. It builds relationships with powers in the local space to bend the rules of domestic governance.

Looking at the familiar in a new way highlights uncertainty and tentativeness in the making and unfolding of policies. Fashionable rhetoric has a better political standing than academic research. Such a policymaking process entangles policymakers into a complicated relationship among themselves. Simultaneously, policymaking agendas, educational agendas, ICT promises and industry prerogatives come together discursively. Out of this complicated relationship, imagined possibilities for ICT devices drive education policies.

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to ICT usage, and ICT as a medium for teaching and learning and so on. However, the pedagogical benefits of these devices are yet to be proven.

<sup>117</sup> In this study, legitimacy takes place after the policy has been implemented to deter contestations.

### 9.3.3. False consciousness

In discussing the findings of this research, another key pattern was revealed: that of false consciousness among policy-shapers. False consciousness describes the state of mind that prevents policy-shapers from recognising the injustice of their current situation. According to classical Marxists (as cited below), such a state of mind prevents the wide range of policy-shapers (be it parents, those on-the-ground or even those inhabiting the formal structure) from combining their efforts and taking measures for a better life than the one they currently have. Though this theoretical concept was explained by the Hungarian philosopher and literary critic György Lukács (1923) (in Meyerson, 1991), its classic Marxist version helps to better understand the social and economic anchors of false consciousness. Thompson (2015, p. 458), for instance, says that one needs the tools of Marxist theory to understand “that the predominant social and cultural institutions and forms of experience that characterise late capitalism are particularly effective in generating the kinds of irrationalism necessary for a pervasive form of false consciousness”. He mentions, in particular, the educational system, new interactive technologies, the media and the culture industry.

Four common threads lead to the phenomenon of false consciousness in this study. First is the ingrained belief that ICT is self-evidently a powerful tool for pedagogy. Second, ICTE is a product of the West, hence superior to local pedagogy and embracing it will lead to progress. Third, ICTE has the possibility of bringing about equity in the world. This is an emotional argument for not depriving students of a technological wonder, especially those of low economic status. Fourth, ICT in education has gained wide legitimacy. These mindsets urge certain policy-shapers to precipitate, bringing their mandate to fruition, thereby enhancing the possibility of their ‘success’. ICTE conditions policy-shapers into thinking that they are contributing to something meaningful. Ground-level players, referred to as *foot soldiers*, apparently act as problem solvers (Samuel, 2016) when they negotiate policy implementation. They roll up their sleeves to enact their commitment to liberate the afflicted (students and teachers), especially when prestige and status are imputed to ICTE. However, they may be driven by a false ideological consciousness that induces them to perform. Indoctrination in the performative nature of the system makes the push for output to seem ‘normal’ but, in reality, is tantamount to invisible coercion.

The colonising European discourse that has associated white with purity, goodness and intelligence seems to still be valid (Fanon, 1952) for, in this research, actors uncritically accept anything that comes from the West. ICTE does not force acceptance on its own but through tacit means. This kind of voluntary servitude restricts the policy-shapers' awareness that they are being oppressed into acting the way they do. Policy actors flex their intellectual muscle to implement what is popular, submerged in the logic of ICTE by prima-facie desires to 'modernise' schools, but unknowingly serve capitalism. Van Zoonen's thesis (2017) is that false consciousness is the result of the media's effect on people. Through the postcolonial lens, this phenomenon appears to be tainted with colonial design as industry also controls social media. However, perhaps the mix of strong positive discourse, stories and media effect around ICTE disarms policy-shapers such that they are unaware of the effects of these strategies upon their reasoning. Their ability to think imaginatively and critically is impaired.

The strong positive 'brand image of ICTE' perhaps affects their view. It lessens their ability to be treated equally as a knower, and they act against their own interest. While it may appear that policy-shapers are acting out of free choice, their alignment with the mainstream 'commonsensical' discourse and values of dominant groups and their propaganda is notable. Driven by commonsensical solid discourses that hide the dominant ideologies, policy actors refuse to see and believe in contrary arguments. They align themselves with ideas that speak to their beliefs or powerful stories, and do not like to be proven wrong.

Along similar lines, to awaken the sense of injustice, Gramsci (1926-1937), in his prison notes, argues that the ideology of the ruling group is powerful because it comes through the stories of folklore, popular culture and religion, and hides itself as common sense or for general interest. Policy-shapers, therefore, subjectively justify ICTE in their social and historical context but may be considered as caught up in a state of false consciousness. In this sense, it is likely that policy-shapers misperceive their real position in policy-shaping. They systematically misunderstand their genuine interest in education and are caught up in an unverified logic taken to be true and normal.

## **9.4. Continuity of colonialism**

### **9.4.1. Evidence**

In this study, the use of ‘evidence’ regarding ICT has been quite elusive. On the one hand, economic viability, politics and persuasion outweigh formal published research while, on the other hand, the stronghold of rhetoric in policy-shaping is more significant than empirical evidence. Ease of handling ICT devices is oftentimes deemed as a sufficient ground to support ICTE. This behaviour counts as equivalent to evidence, or a shortcut to evidence, to align with the dominant discourse of ICTE. Unsurprisingly, the buy-in of electorates serves to establish policy choices out of these dominant discourses.

‘Evidence’ and what is considered to constitute evidence is assembled in the process of policymaking to maximise self-interest. Morrison and van der Werf (2016) aver that educational research is not necessarily factored into policymakers’ analyses throughout the policy development process. In the SIDS political space, where the notion of electoral connection is prime, evidence-based policymaking also relies on tested models of education in European countries. The use of evidence is dependent on how well the ‘evidence’ fits the political agenda. Political, rather than pedagogical agendas, drive the choice of evidence that is brought into the educational policymaking space.

ICTE is also made to align with the electorates’ sense of reason, using logic, facts and statistics rooted in Western discourse for better appeal. These economic and electorate agendas, that is, financial and political expediency, are more valued than educational agendas. In addition, policy ideas from unofficial spaces also tend to feature in post-colonial SIDS. Given the ubiquity, rhetoric and metanarratives about the universality of ICTE, its upliftment in the local education system is seen as commonsensical. Yet, power hidden in anecdotal evidence is invisible.

It is Saïd (1978) who draws attention to how anecdotal evidence and civilising discourses are produced to consolidate colonial power. As Rafael (1993, p. 185) notes, concerning the discourse of benevolent assimilation in colonialism, the allegory of benevolent assimilation effaces the violence of conquest by construing colonial rule as the most precious gift that “the most civilised people can render to those still caught in a state of barbarous disorder”. Likewise, ICTE perpetuates an assimilation of foreign knowledge in post-colonial SIDS. By importing

and praising foreign knowledge systems, the local knowledge system is self-claimed to be inferior, leaving limited to no space to endogenous practices since knowledge production is rooted in the global North (Samoff, 2022; Zavala, 2013). Only compliance prevails. Colonialism overshadows marginalised knowledges and imposes its own knowledge system and ways of knowing (Spivak, 1988). By creating an aura of inferiority around SIDS people and their knowledge, ICTE is framed as the solution to local educational challenges. This allows industry to claim superiority of knowledge over pedagogical experts. This finding is akin to the claim that knowledge production is linked to the consolidation of power (Mignolo, 2003; Saïd, 1978). As Mignolo (2003) asserts, the sites from which knowledges are produced are central to our understanding of those knowledges.

As producers of knowledge, researchers (where they are situated) play a critical role in reinforcing industry's influence on policymaking. They are generally used to legitimise the process of policy development and design as confirmation that a so-called modernising or developmental agenda is indeed the mandate of ICTE policymaking. This study reveals that even if such researchers' personal opinions are in stark contrast with ICTE policies, they officially align themselves with the dominant discourse. Consistent with the discourse of policymakers in this study, Wagner and Kozma (2005) frame literacy and technology as increasingly interdependent and advocate the integration of industry in the governance of education systems. When the origins are essentially epistemological, claims of expertise achieve legitimacy by borrowing the well-earned authority of experts. However, various perspectives display competing rationalities in ICTE policy development. Two main findings emerge from this discussion.

Firstly, as discussed above, research tends to reinforce the links between epistemological assumptions and persisting colonial discourses. This is palpable in academic scholarship. A lack of criticality is noted in examining how (if at all) a colonialist approach could be at the core of ICTE policymaking. Secondly, experts are challenged to deliver anything resembling what the public expects: predictable, reliable, intended, obvious and desired outcomes. Seldom do policy-shapers (including me until now) consciously reflect on the underlying assumptions about how their reasoning informs their arguments.

However, what is seen from this research is that politicians, bureaucrats, researchers and the public are not paying sufficient heed to scholarly work and expertise. The rise of populist politics and the proliferation of unverifiable information, via sources that look commonsensical, are exacerbated by industry that wants to sell its products. This condition underlies the distrust of mainstream experts and reinforces growing political populist measures. A few examples of such experts in this study are the international consultants, internal and external ICT experts, school managers and teachers who are often excluded from decision-making or whose advice is ignored. It would seem that these experts are ‘struggling’ to shape public opinion.

It is perhaps because the nature of the political realm, in most cases, is to resist truths in all its forms. It fabricates its own truth that it passes off authoritatively for others to believe. As a matter of fact, ‘commonsensical’ or fake discourse (that is, based on unverified evidence) has made its ground more solidly among the public and policymakers than scholarly work. This distrust revealed by experts or researchers in this study does not seem unique to Mauritius or SIDS. The digital context provides a conducive environment for mis/disinformation or fake discourses to be more widely accessible and consumed as truth.

#### **9.4.2. Dominant rhetoric**

Along with the enthusiasm that rhetoric evokes for policymakers, the latter also stimulates a sense of urgency and the fear of being ‘left behind’ (dominant in this research), implying that immediate action must be taken. After all, policymakers bear the ultimate responsibility to oversee and enhance the education system while, for political self-interest, they have to defend their stance. This often puts them in a difficult position in which they must negotiate conflicting agendas. This reflection holds true regarding the use of ICT where, despite mixed research findings about its value to education (chapter 1), ICTE has left a strong positive impression on policymakers. Policymakers readily abdicate their leadership role to industry to decide on education policies through an epistemic privilege assigned to industry. From one vantage point, this finding relates to the colonial history of assigning superiority to Western practices, especially in science and technology. For instance, both the proponents and critics of the methods of colonialism have claimed to praise the idea that science and technology are among the gifts of the West to the colonies (Adas, 1989). In the local space, an interactive relinking to former colonisers is happening through (ICTE) policy. Policy appears to be the new vehicle

for neocolonialism. The conditions and processes for this relinking are more sophisticated. Presented as a benevolent and selfless project, the overarching colonial design constituted in ICT slips invisibly in education. The new invisible colonial strands, such as ICTE, work as new variants in the form of rhetoric and symbolic policies to taint policymakers' perspectives of the way they perceive education in an era of globalisation and technological advancement. What is conceived as change is a reinforcement of prevailing performative and surveillance colonial/capitalist ideologies. It is worth highlighting that status quoism represents a continuity of coloniality whereby pre-existing performative and surveillance-based policies are reinforced by glossy ICT devices that cause illusions of change.

The West tends to promote its own deeds to such an extent that its view dominates accepted descriptions, narratives and celebrations imbibed by localised contexts. Francisco López de Gómara, Adam Smith, and Karl Marx (cited in Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) point out how unsettling it is to note that the image of the Western world is premised on the assumption that its sense of totality is the same for everyone else. The 'totalitarian' rhetoric is the kind of legitimacy that drives ICTE deployment, rather than a critical analysis of impending issues with the universality agenda. Its purported universality conceals power relations and distracts people from its neocolonial consequences. Bhabha (1994) and Spivak (1988) note that compliance with power domination is inevitable, given that knowledge has been tainted by the interest of those with a power that is often invisible. Also, the current education system is a legacy of colonials. It still complies with their ideals (even after 50 years of 'independence') despite many contestations and the government's apparent bid to relax the structural competitive system (section 1.3.3). One example of how overt agendas become redirected (and reinforced) within the private world of schooling is the dominance of shadow education within the Mauritian context. The private tutoring of students to gain access to the competitive secondary schooling system reinforces the very policy attempts to deflect the schooling system away from performativity 'rat race' cultures. The performative education system has mutated into shadow education that is highly protected by both teachers and parents (Bray, 1999, 2007, 2011). The 'invisibility' of competitive public education policy agendas becomes blatant in the shadow schooling agenda<sup>118</sup>.

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<sup>118</sup> Whilst education is professed to be free and accessible in Mauritius, those with financial resources can afford private tuition classes and would potentially score higher quality grades (Samuel & Mariaye, 2021).

In parallel, as revealed by the field data in my study, there is an assimilation of rhetoric that presents ICTE as a rationalising tool by which teaching and learning can be made effective. Despite being influenced by the rhetoric, teachers complain about the declining performance of students (despite ICT investments and their self-managed shadow education).

The rhetorical discourses promoted by industry and attuned policymakers' announcements may only be empty statements or signifiers (Amin, Dhunpath & Devroop, 2021) about ICTE that have little to no pedagogical value. However, framed by consistent advocacy of ICTE, it is almost inevitable for one to be swayed by or fall prey to powerful rhetoric, especially when discourses are underpinned by claims based on evidence from the West. Besides, an uncritical outlook can cancel out the possibility that international discourses may merely be hollow statements with manipulative intent serving purely commercial interests.

This finding resonates with Gramsci (1948), in an analysis of his prison notebooks by Fusaro, Xidias and Fabry (2017), who argues how the powerful deploys a combination of force and manipulation to convince most people that the existing system is logical and in their best interests, even when it is not. For example, an examination-based education system is widely accepted as being in the best interest of students, whereas it has been found to further exacerbate existing socioeconomic inequalities<sup>119</sup> and injustices across the system (Samuel & Mariaye, 2019). Rhetoric often does not question its compliance with irrelevant externally constructed worldviews, and policymakers choose iniquitous options (Spivak, 2016). Rhetoric and truths easily become indistinguishable, subsumed under the internal logic of being conducive to the political environment and the constant expectations for 'evidence' of their professed choices. As such, the official education policy capitulates to a policy of outward expression while having, in many instances, limited concerted intent of implementation or being enacted in sustained long-term action and practice. It might be useful to conclude that declared policy itself is never wholly intended to be implemented.

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<sup>119</sup> While policy documents profess that ICT will reduce inequality in line with the globalisation discourse, this study has found that a form of symbolic violence that widens inequality is at play in the micro-institutional space. Access to ICT devices in the home for those who can afford it brings to the fore economic disparities. Symbolic violence goes unnoticed or is dismissed as unimportant in micro-institutional spaces. This was evident in an instance where a student from a poor background feared being stigmatised. This resulted in low self-esteem. Such symbolic violence can inculcate a culture of oppression in classrooms. ICTE is reiterating colonial boundaries in both classrooms and boardrooms. The privileged contribute and perpetuate global inequality.

### 9.4.3. Symbolic policymaking

In this study, ICTE policies are professedly driven by a strong need to break from the examination-driven education system. In practice, ICTE policies announce change, but these are only symbolic. At the core, there is no change or change intent, ‘change, but no change policy’; hence, the policy remains largely symbolic. This notion of symbolic policy is not derived solely from the data, but also from previous theories of policy studies (e.g., Sayed & Jansen, 2001), which proffer the argument that, paradoxically, policy speaks to its own demarcated zones of influence and the pragmatic contextual issues are not necessarily at the foreground of the policy intention. The literature on *policy implementation analysis* is thus relevant to my study. In congruence with Jansen (2002), people get duped, deceived or led to believe that change is about to come in substance while, in fact, politicians are searching for legitimacy to deploy their political projects. There are various other interconnected and overlapping background factors that lead to the development of symbolic policies. They range from concealing a capitalist agenda to maintaining the performative culture.

Despite professing change through ICTE, politicians and powerful bureaucrats themselves paradoxically become the major resisters of education change. The findings of my study tend to move away from the view of sustained rationality<sup>120</sup> in education policymaking processes. It appears that policy actors revert to habituated rituals as if educational choices are a-contextual or timeless. A path dependence theory or historical institutionalism (Immergut, 1998; Pierson, 2000; Skocpol, 1992) gives a too-simple explanation of policy inertia. This theory upholds the notion that previous policy decisions become highly institutionalised and therefore set limits to the development of innovative contemporary policies. The theory assumes that the performativity system protectors will benefit from the status quo even if the existing policy is suboptimal. Despite many reforms, the only ‘policy’ that persists is that of performativity. Numerical representations of educational attainment appear to have remained constant in the worldview of electorates.

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<sup>120</sup> Policymaking theories (such as Advocacy coalitions Framework, Kingdon's notion of policy streams, Rational-choice theory) explain part of the nuances but through stable factors (such as coalitions, high common purpose, evidence-based policymaking, beliefs of actors).

These representations are apparently produced with the strong support of teachers. It is likely that the general populace benefits from the rationale and logic of performativity, which indeed yielded the professed claims of individuals benefiting on a wide scale. From another vantage point, a performative culture might be a possible avenue to escape poverty, a sustained processibility for large sectors of the population. This argument joins the discourse in favour of ICT, namely that it prepares students for the world of work. Keeping in mind this ingrained belief, the intention to disrupt the pre-existing performative education model can be superficial.

It is possible that policy actors retreat into nostalgia, believing that the successes of the past are tried and true, and should not be ignored even if, upon critical examination, these were not so successful. This fallacy is particularly seductive in the political context when sensitive policy fields (such as education, in this case) are condensed into easily communicated numbers that justify a particular policy decision. Also, politicians do not venture into making overhauls in the education system, especially when the population itself, in general, is mired in status quoism<sup>121</sup>.

The paired notion of ‘performativity’ and ‘less risk’ is in line with the claim of Adamson et al. (2017) that politicians provide narratives that are responsive to constituents’ demands. According to Gustafsson (1983), politicians often have to make decisions even when they are unsure of what to do and pressured by a lack of economic resources, time or relevant knowledge. He claims that policymaking in welfare democracies, more generally, is characterised by an increase in symbolic policies, i.e., decisions which are not intended to be fully implemented, and/or pseudo policies. He sees this as a response to the trend towards the diffusion of power. He also adds that symbolic policies are strongest in newly established areas like environmental studies because, firstly, there is a degree of uncertainty about how to deal with the situation at hand. Secondly, policymakers do not know for how long new demands will be expressed. Thirdly, they find it challenging to judge the effectiveness of policies. These factors apparently push politicians to buy some time, which in turn generates symbolic decisions.

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<sup>121</sup> The population upholds the highly protected competitive education system.

My analysis of activating spaces around the ICTE policy-shaping processes in the Mauritian context reveals that symbolic policy is a common feature in education, and the local knowledge systems are undercut by the harsh rhetoric of the colonial “civilising mission” (Seth, 2009, p. 373). Structurally, the ‘virtuous’ symbolic policies overshadow teachers’ accumulated knowledge and make it look of less value. The analysis suggests that ICTE policymaking in the post-colonial SIDS is a classic example of the *‘implement policy first, develop the symbolic policy later and shelf the policy’* syndrome. On the ground, there is no such thing as policy per se, but continual improvisation of what possibly is expected.

Notably, even such symbolic or pseudo policies are legitimated in the SIDS space by international agencies. This signals superficiality, not only in the process but also in policy legitimisation. As discussed earlier, this study has found that, for symbolic education policies to ‘sink-in’ on-the-ground, policymakers frame them in compelling ways and have them endorsed at the international level. Such a seal of approval is valued in the local context and functions as a political resource. It is a fact that cross-border collaborations can potentially widen the outlook on developing education policies (Jules & Ressler, 2017b). But literature is also laden with the ‘goodwill’ of international development agencies as purveyors of the international expansion for industry products. Their legitimacy is considered reliable, and a blind eye turned to their partnership with industry in the policymakers’ discourse, as if it never existed. This is because the agencies have been self-proclaimed as having expertise in education and being systematic and rational in their approach. They usually employ strong, persuasive and ‘evidence-based’ discourse (section 2.4.1). They are credible in the eyes of policymakers as their role is portrayed as purely benevolent for the common good. Through their rhetorical underpinnings, international agencies have developed into requisite collaborator that ostensibly offsets local limitations in education policymaking. Epistemic control, as such, resides within the realm of international agencies or industry (Amos-Williams, Sayed & Singh, 2022).

The symbolic policies are also emblematic of industry's interference with the education system in accord with its neoliberal agenda. The current symbolic policies conceal a policy of aggressive performativity and give the impression of advancement. Symbolic policies are superficially linked to global policy practices or policies to create illusions of change<sup>122</sup>. Perhaps the non-enforcement of policies is a safe strategy to pursue amid multiple constraints and conflicting signals of resistance from the ground. Moreover, it would be complex and contradictory to implement ICTE when the intention to implement it is not there at all.

The above argument reinforces Nkrumah's (1965) view about the invisibility of neocolonialism (Nkrumah, 1965) which operates in the form of symbolic policy and illusion. As a matter of fact, be it parents, teachers, unions or formal policymakers, they all seem to have been profoundly manipulated and under the illusion that young students' sheer usage and handling of ICT is a symbol of advancement. *Change itself appears to be illusory and made up of fabrications and subterfuges*. The effects created with ICTE only give an impression of change and stand as a marker for 'growth' rather than growth itself. This constitutes just 'faking' the policy (Legvold & Wilson, 2005). ICTE too portrays an illusion, signifying its fakeness.

Drawing from the above seminal works from postcolonial theory, my data analysis reveals that the deployment of ICT also generates a critical knock-on effect in the education system to produce a kind of dependency. This is a colonial feature inbuilt into the nature of ICTE by way of constant need for maintenance, upgrades, licenses and replacement behind the veil of capitalism/colonialism. Illusions and symbolic policies are new mechanisms that cloud dependence of post-colonial countries on developed ones. ICTE policies<sup>123</sup> that initially appeared to be farfetched, not even thinkable or doable in the local context, made inconspicuous entries into educational discourse and policy and were ultimately made to look obvious and even necessary (Ball, 2016). Even if ICTE devices remain expensive for a SIDS, the cost of ICT devices is nowhere referred to, in the data from this study, against the benefits. The absence of this subverted agenda speaks volumes. Calculated moves of the former colonials appear interwoven within ICTE and are religiously being employed as an ideological

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<sup>122</sup> Current use of ICT in classrooms gives the impression that learning is actually happening, engendering a kind of *illusory trap*. These practices can become guarantees of ICTE 'success', even from vague policies. Of capital importance, in this regard, is that the illusion of educational enhancement created by ICTE has the potential to make inhabitants of SIDS think they are advanced, whereas they are in fact being pushed to the margins. Even the subalterns, in a sense, are complicit in not only creating images of a 'modern classroom' but also of hegemony.

<sup>123</sup> Policies such as installation of interactive white boards in classrooms, PCs, Internet connection and one tablet per child and so on.

apparatus (Althusser, 1971). Himona (2000) states that ICT is being used to reinforce the old hegemonies of the old colonial powers and their cultures, concepts and values despite the 'decolonisation' process. As a matter of fact, ICTE is not merely a seductive policy measure for both policymakers and parents, who stand of the electorates, but an irresistible one too. Since it is generated by the industry, it is inseparable from it and will retain its power as long as the industry retains its power.

This study, through the lens of ICTE, has highlighted the invisible power of industry that has infused pre-designed daily policy-shaping practices. Policy-shapers' own subservience to the colonial system appears to permeate policymaking processes. In congruence with Ball's (2016) argument, Ahmad (1995) claims that modern electronics have given corporate capital unprecedented powers to penetrate spaces that had hitherto remained relatively unreachable. What is garnered from the analysis is that former colonies have become the new terrain for merchants of technology (Harding, 2011). These merchants are apparently working in the same mode as former colonial entities but enhanced the earlier channels to improve the flow of Western knowledge to post-colonial SIDS. However, mistaking co-option in the capitalist world-system to mean 'friendship', an elevated status (compared to the colonial relationship) is pursued as a fantasy. Through renewed connectivities (in a sphere of exchange) (Mariaye & Samuel, 2019), Mauritius, as 'friends' with the colonials, is supposed to act as a model to showcase ICTE. However, Bhabha (2020) finds it paradoxical that, within the profound asymmetry that exists between the periphery and centre, there is an impulse towards affiliation. Possibly, the wish to become like the centre dominates this renewed relationship – the marker of a postcolonial condition.

The complicity of the SIDS in conceptualising progress as inseparable from the Empire (Dube, Seth & Skaria, 2020) is seen in the unthoughtful acceptance of the colonials' motivation behind 'favours' extended. SIDS is both dominated by the centre and complicit in its own exploitation by the impulse in colonialism to reform. All this while harbouring a mental image of making inroads to the centre, is state of fantasia (Molnar, 1965). It is noted that postcolonial desire is an essential part of the postcolonial condition (Kramer, 2008; Sedgwick, 1985).

## 9.5. Complexity

### 9.5.1. Distortion of discourse

Both industry and parents (re)package their public discourse to conceal a more layered set of foundations to support ICTE. One example of this is the way in which industry wields its expertise and control whereas the parent also declares a deficient image of education, teachers and policymakers. However, the parent is assigned with non-ICT related concerns at the school unit and complains of being deprived of exercising a meaningful role in policy. Paradoxically, the self-proclaimed excluded voices are already well present and also infused into the inner policymaking sphere and the education system. To gain added [s]p[ll]ace and attention, they engage in an exaggerated public discourse of being excluded by the official structures. The complaints expand on how their functions and roles are neglected by the inner policymaking sphere. Their critique is often condemnatory and harsh against policymakers (section 8.4). Industry's and parent's resentment (an oft-voiced complaint) toward the current education system is easily framed as evidence of policymakers' negligence, irresponsibility or ineptness. Industry constructs policymakers as inferior, lazy and incapable of self-determination. In doing so, industry establishes its superiority as a saviour to protect the interest of education and society (Adam, 2019). This characterisation echoes Spivak's (1988) notion of subalterns. Similarly, in his pivotal book *Orientalism*, Saïd (1978) explains how, through colonial discourse, the 'Orient' was constructed as diametrically inferior to a European equivalent. The conscious intentionality of industry is to present a dark image of those who control education (policymakers and teachers) to hide its own economic interest. In doing so, industry justifies its political domination and economic exploitation. This representation apparently legitimises its repression of the colonised (Seth, 2017).

Industry engages in a unifying discourse of quality, skills and competences tailored to its needs as the indicator of students' employability. The data analysis revealed how policy initiatives conceptualise education as one that can be manipulated, acquired and transformed to fit the economic needs of a particular constituency. Seduced by the sophistication of ICT devices, parents become hopeful as they associate this with the success of their children. Success is also shaped by the ideologies of industry, which implies the development of skills that will eventually make students competitive in the labour market. ICT is presented as the bridge between school and the world of work. ICT is also perceived as accelerating the learning

process and keeping students up-to-date with industry's products. From this perspective, teachers have been presented as barriers to their success. The condemnation of teachers not being able or being unwilling to integrate ICT successfully in pedagogy dominates parents' discourse. The electoral system and industry's discourse appear to have permeated the education system by influencing parents' perspectives of success.

In this study, to attain its objectives, industry's approach is that of misrepresentations or fabrications with capitalist motives. Consequently, the parents' goal is to have amenities similar to those enjoyed by developed countries. Ahmad (1995) argues that the contemporary phase of capital involves unprecedented scales of movement, not only of capital and commodities but also personnel. This is aligned with industry's discourse about producing human resources customised to fit its changing demands in light of global competition and technological advancements.

In this study, this debate is led by both industry and the parent that construe the education system as a complete failure due to policymakers and teachers. The education system is characterised as being change-averse and closed to the rest of the world (section 8.4). When taken together, the criticism of industry and parents invokes a fear of being labelled backwards and deficient compared to the modern and fully developed West. Notions of modernity appear to be deeply entrenched in a colonial way of seeing the world. It shows that the idea of ICTE is pedagogically attached to concepts of development and progress. This is because progress has apparently already taken place in the West (Seth, 2009). It would appear that defining the notion of progress for SIDS has been bestowed on industry (Seth, 2009). In the state of insecurity, policymakers do not always have practical political levers at their disposal to become agents of change by themselves. They tend to become subservient to the self-proclaimed agents of progress. This research has shown that the SIDS policy space has fallen prey to neocolonialism through its continued dependence on developed countries to progress. This is because it is driven by industry's propaganda which has also enticed parents and the population at large. Propaganda by the West about its 'benevolent acts' distorts many realities, and, generally, people are inclined to believe in its discourse rather than that of others. McGuigan (2012) reinforces the argument that ICT is persistently extolled in advertising, especially in the technologically determinist propaganda that is a prominent feature of the neoliberal political economy. Quijano (2000) emphasised a Eurocentric mirror that always distorts the colonised image and gives a different image of what it is not. Industry's dominant

propaganda impedes people from critically analysing facts and fabrications.

Industry surmises that it can address the weaknesses of the ‘failing education system’. According to industry and the parent, policymakers and teachers do not know how to deal with contemporary educational issues. In their eyes, local policy-shapers are inferior in every way and require guidance on what to do. This reflects the condescending nature of colonials (Rattansi, 1997). Indeed, industry's intention to distort the discourse is similar to Saïd’s thesis of European’s characterisation of the East as lazy, deceitful and irrational (Saïd, 1978). In trying to ‘fix’ the “broken” education system (Weller, 2014, p. 188), industry seeks a reconfiguration of education adapted to the same business models of inputs and outputs typically associated with the private sector. The parent seems to have built more trust in industry than local policymakers. This strategy matches the diverse set of mechanisms of neocolonialism that comprises a multitude of forms of dependence and interference. The emphasis on skills itself is an expression of neocolonialism, that is, producing people only to be functional for industry rather than to fulfil the purpose of education.

Another aim of industry’s distorted discourse concerns how others perceive its policy-shaping role. It appears that the parents (due to their vulnerability to industry and ensuing perception that education should be designed to prepare for employment in industry) have entrusted the future of their children to industry due to the unifying language that aligns them with industry. This study reveals how the distortion of the voices of the marginalised results in a romanticised and misconceived notion of their role as a victim in policy-shaping. As the data suggests, they exert a powerful presence in enacted and experienced policy at many levels, namely in schools, in public opinion on the training of teachers, and the kinds of reactions displayed in the privacy of their homes with their children. It seems that this is conscious propaganda by industry and parents with manipulative intent. Both industry and the parents embody a victim mentality attempting to distort the discourse, perhaps to gain even more attention and space in policymaking (section 8.4). They make statements that create a distorted worldview of the other group (that is, formal policymakers) in the public space.

Industry is claiming a louder voice for itself by crossing over invisibility to directly impact policy, while parents cannot now imagine education without ICT, that is industry's products. Industry, through people in general, intends to expand its influence and encroach even more on the policy sphere to bring about structural changes that will advance its economic interest. As such, it strategically chooses to represent itself as excluded from the public domain. Unless it exaggerates its public discourse about policymakers, teachers and education, as a strategy, it cannot legitimise its influence on policy. Under this overarching dominant frame, industry engenders a fake climate of urgency and instability around education to the extent that it becomes difficult for policy-shapers to distinguish between facts, fabrications and subterfuges. Also, its discourse often spills over to issues such as efficiency, more severe surveillance, and the accountability of policymakers and teachers alike. This phenomenon is not unique to Mauritius, but the forces are more evident in this '*small laboratory*' where interconnections, overlaps and negotiations of intimacy are so much in the face.

### **9.5.2. Constant negotiations and dialogicality**

This research has shown that 'truth' obtained through centralised legitimacy weakens scholarly research. It is intriguing how policy is not based on evidence but is the outcome of propaganda from varied sources, with the concealed interest of those who initiate (industry) and fuel (international agencies, politicians) the propaganda about ICTE. This means that truths derived from systematic research are considered irrelevant in decision-making and not an essential component or step to enrich policy decisions. Perhaps the value of formal research differs in varied (micro)contexts. Through international discourses underpinning ICT, education policymaking processes are conveniently taken to be pristine, and limited effort is put into uncovering biases or verifying sources of information. However, policymaking is complicated, and what seems true is actually often not. This study has shown that politicians develop their own notions of truth to project the requisite image to attract votes from the public. Aligned with the dominant international discourse and rhetoric legitimised internationally, heavy emphasis is placed on ICTE without going beyond surface appearances. ICT in classrooms has become totemic as the symbol of modernity and party to the ICT revolution. The study has shown that, driven by the legitimised discourse, there is a disregard for truth across the spectrum of local policy-shapers. As Porpora (2020) argues, the belief that empirical evidence is the sole criterion for truth is a slippery slope for politicians, and their allies go for the kind of 'evidence' that supports their pre-conceived ideas. It also happens that a lack of consensus

regarding the impact of ICT in education prevails among researchers. An erroneous view of science and knowledge construction can have disastrous consequences for education policy decisions.

The data analysis has found that such propaganda is based on information of a biased or misleading nature and is used to promote the view that ICT is beneficial to education and students. Such massive dissemination through international networks and ‘evidence-based’ arguments appears to be fabricated facts and ‘truths’ that are strategically infused in the public domain to deliberately influence everyone around ICTE. The propaganda favouring ICT is fashionable (that by definition keeps on changing) as a policy idea to achieve the economic end of industry and political interest. Fear is created among people, and preconceptions developed that, without ICTE, employability skills would be compromised. In truth, the education system is being influenced to develop skills, the benefits of which are ((in)directly) channelled to the capitalist economy.

Invisibility, inclusions and exclusions from the policymaking processes appear to fit industry and political activists’ propaganda purposes in drawing attention to positive images of ICTE. Policies are anchored in propaganda more appealing to the common people than objective facts. Research-driven facts are less influential in shaping public opinion that have a bearing on policies, given the political nature of education policies. The nature of ICT (constantly changing, ubiquitous, open, seemingly democratic) has led to a complex commingling of people’s opinions and policymaking processes that are made to appear rational through the representations of truths from political leaders.

This emerging phenomenon is symbolised as Post-Truth, although the terms ‘post-factual’ or ‘post-reality’ also appear relevant according to Vacura (2020). The term Post-Truth has been defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief. This is only a limited view for a conceptual analysis of Post-Truth but, as argued by Bufacchi (2021), it provides a helpful starting point. Bufacchi posits that the prefix has a more profound meaning than only being a temporal marker in which the specified concept has become irrelevant. Furthermore, the prefix ‘post’ is not a chronological reference to something that occurs ‘after’ truth; “instead it is a statement about the fact that truth is no longer essential, that truth has become obsolete, and that truth has been superseded by a new reality” (p. 348). ‘Post’ can also denote the absence of truth or the removal of truth. This study has

found that this phenomenon has intricately permeated the education policymaking space which is now characterised by fakeness, propaganda and mis/disinformation. Policy has, without any doubt, become a product of the post-truth world.

Malcolm (2021) locates post-truth as an emergent form of knowledge contingent upon new forms of communication, a re-structuring of social interdependencies and changes in modes of thinking. On the surface, one could conceptualise post-truth as democratic, as in an era of post-truth, individual emotions and personal beliefs easily influence powerful institutions (Crilley, 2018). However, on the structural level, the alleged ‘openness’ and ‘freedom’ of social networks are, as a matter of fact, neither open nor free. Instead, they are used by corporate and political agents to collect data from users, manage and manipulate the flow of information and influence voters and consumers (Zotzmann & Vassilev, 2020).

In his influential work, Keyes (2004) defines the post-truth era as a time when the boundaries between lying and telling the truth are blurred, as are the lines between facts and fiction. Pomerantsev (2016) characterises a post-fact or post-truth situation as the one where politicians not only lie, which they have always done, but where they do not care whether they lie or not, displaying a kind of brazenness. In a similar vein, Mair (2017, p. 2) points out that, while post-truth is an ambiguous term, it is nevertheless possible to characterise a post-truth situation as “qualitatively new dishonesty on the part of politicians”, who no longer treat the truth merely "economically", but seem to “make up the facts to suit their narratives”. They manipulate facts and try to mask their worldview and represent truth in a way that meets their interests. Similarly, Lockie (2017) argues that, while former politicians cherry-picked relevant facts, used questionable interpretations and avoided unpleasant questions, post-truth politicians are now creating their own facts, claiming anything that is in their interest and they continue to do so even when there is substantial evidence against their claims. Archer (1995) finds that these varieties of beliefs, ideas and theories are not only disconnected from considerations of truth but also become more and more institutionalised, thus pre-dating and pre-structuring future interaction and beliefs.

The nature of ICT cannot be undermined in the post-truth era. It is argued that technological developments have undercut and weakened mainstream media and created greater fluidity in public communication (Waisbord, 2018). Post-truth is about an ongoing power game (Fuller, 2018) and shifts in the relations between knowledge elites and the public. In post-truth societies, knowledge-producing subjects have been turned into the objects of study – the news creators have been turned into news, and the work of scientists has become subject to empirical questioning (Malcolm, 2021). This study has found that, across the policy-shapers, propaganda is given a higher status than empirical evidence. Through massive propaganda, particular interest groups, such as the ICT industry, feel justified in creating their own ‘truths’ and declaring any scientific research that does not serve their interests to be ‘fake’. In this way, they attempt to silence local knowledge systems, teachers who have on-the-ground knowledge, and experts who disagree with their party-line. Post-truth politics thus endangers both democracy and social justice.

This study has shown that media and the nature of ICT, industry’s interest, the paradox of power (a kind of power game where the powerless exerts lots of power while the powerful people do not have as much power as they claim to have) are constitutive of post-truth policymaking. The truth about policy is being judged not by evidence but by consistency with peoples’ existing beliefs and values. People reading the policy environment are not particular about the representations being presented to them when producing data. Vacura (2020) argues that post-truth is not a characteristic limited to the political sphere, though it may be more visibly manifested in such discourses. He argues that the sources of post-truth politics can be found in three spheres, namely the media (primarily decentralised social networks), the economic sphere (especially phenomena related to globalisation) and the social sciences (in the influence of postmodern thought). There is, as yet, very little scholarly literature that engages directly with the concept of post-truth policymaking.

## 9.6. Contested complicated conversations

This study has shown that policy as text is neither legislated nor formally stipulated but is in a state of constant negotiation with industry, politicians, electorates' (namely parents) interests. Policy is continuously in the process of making and shaping. It may be argued that an organic and dynamic network prevails across constructors of policy, consumers of policy and those negotiating its reinterpretation and implementation. The policy is highly influenced by invisible shapers who are not present at the policymaking table and are authored by bureaucrats in the form of guidelines. The same policy is (mis)(re)interpreted and (re)negotiated when it transcends the boundaries of a centralised policymaking structure. Those who appear to have been marginalised, such as teachers, curriculum developers and school managers, assert new authority as they choose what to implement and how to do so in their varied school contexts. All this even though (symbolic) policy is shaped by fashionable international discourse, illusion and strong rhetoric that influence everyone, rather than inspired by evidence and endogenous knowledge systems. This study has found that ICTE policy is complicated and is in constant conversation within the space it is present. It cannot be fully defined because of (in)visibilities and permeated contexts. This conception of policy surpasses makers of policy to englobe everyone as shapers of policy. Shapers, therefore, embark on a series of conversations with intricate interconnecting elements that make the policy. Policy and policy-shapers constantly interact with each other in complicated conversations. They are all intertwined with each other, mutually informative and constitutive. They are threaded by the same policy in nuanced contexts and the multiple worldviews that permeate policy. Such a policy is in dialogue with shapers in the context within which it is being (de)formed. Policy, as a complicated conversation, takes people far beyond the conception of policy as simply a set of texts separated from the influence of industry, parents, teachers, politicians and bureaucrats – who, in reality, shape it. Policy as a complicated conversation emphasises the ongoing shaping of policy imbued with the subjectivities and interests of policy-shapers.

This complicated conversation is equally being continuously contested by everyone and no one at the same time. ICTE policy is complicated because everyone in the society appears to flirt with the latest ICTE designs of industry. On the one hand, this same policy is contested by parents and industry, that claim being excluded yet are at the core of policymaking. On the other hand, the study suggests that teachers and school managers are excluded, yet demonstrate an ambivalent relationship with ICTE. ICT is condemned, contested and complicated due to how opaque centralised policymaking is and policymakers are, to themselves and others outside the policymaking structure. It is a contested, complicated conversation between the historic backdrop of the country, industry's economic agenda, the nature of the policy itself and the interactions and encounters of policy with context (verbal and non-verbal) and with other existing policies (textual or non-textual); with shapers; and the subjectivities, beliefs and worldviews of policy-shapers as well as resistances and contestations. The relationship is also one of resistance and ambivalence. This is the kind of context within which policy is constantly being shaped.

This journey from policymaking to policy-shaping has been guided by the theoretical contributions of Pinar (1975). It draws from 'Currere' (Pinar, 1975) and its unfolding by the methodological-theoretical concept of complicated conversations (Pinar, 2012; Süsskind, 2014 in Süsskind & Nascimento, 2019). The currere method seeks to understand the interaction between academic study and life history in the interest of self-understanding and social reconstruction (Pinar, 2019). According to Pinar, conversations are complicated because people are talking to each other. Teachers talk, not only to their students but also to their own mentors, their own experiences and their course contents, because the contents themselves are conversations. Such conversations are also complicated because they are, of course, informed by what occurs and occurred outside the classroom, such as in the students' families. The conversations are complicated because they happen between everyone in society (Süsskind, 2014). Policy has a similar trajectory and is elusive. It is shaped by everyone in society, transcends local boundaries and is distant from local knowledge systems. Policy is also highly contested.

It is argued that policies are contested complicated conversations (like Pinar's (1975) conception of 'currere') because it brings local and global into dialogue with influences of histories, industry, globalisations, periphery/centre dichotomy, capitalism/neocolonialism, oppressions, condemnations as well as resistance. Policy is multi-layered and, in a post-colonial SIDS, is exposed to multifold influences. It is predisposed to outside interference (closer to the economist model of industry), and to inside receptivity and susceptibility. Policy is contested and complicated because SIDS are constrained in their ability to write their own future. The strong presence of foreign policies steer the direction towards SIDS decision-making being capitulative to Western ideologies. This study suggests that local policymakers are under the illusion that they are fully in charge of local policymaking when, in reality, they dovetail with industry for mutual benefits. To foreground these worldviews, multiple voices are marginalised while others are centralised in the process of policy-shaping. As such, policy is not only a political, ideological and theoretical struggle, but also a struggle of the representation of the marginalised or centralised voices. The issue remains whether SIDS can assert autonomous agency.

### **9.6.1. Maintenance of power**

Naïve aspirations, a sense of inferiority and the desire to be at the centre among policy-shapers are the drivers that maintain policymakers' manipulation by industry. The analysis conveys the general impression that similar benefits in developed countries will pan out in the local context. Imputing superiority to foreign knowledge implies neglecting local knowledge systems. This inferiority led the colonised to attempt to replicate the colonisers, which triggered the loss of culture and pre-colonial African knowledge (Guha, 1983). While high-level decision-makers have been led to appreciate the value of ICTE through a complex relationship with the West, teachers are perceived as relatively backward.

Positioning the West as the primary source of knowledge not only underplays locally developed pedagogy but also portrays their knowledge as lacking (Seth, 2009). It justifies colonial dominance (Prakash, 1999; Seth, 2009, 2017). Ironically, from the perspective of industry, both formal policymakers and teachers are seen as subalterns (section 9.5.1). From the point of view of policymakers, teachers are in a subaltern position in terms of the division of labour (Spivak, 1988). They are also a low-ranked category that do not participate in history and is denied agency in policy (Gramsci, 1971 in Green, 2011). They are those subalterns who need to be

surveilled to handle exceptional devices from the West (section 7.6.1). ICTE is regarded as sacrosanct, which is too valuable to be interfered with by ground-level actors. Systematic exclusion of such constituencies from policymaking deflates their worth, leading to epistemic injustice. The cumulative impact is an erosion of teachers' status as professionals, as noted in the analysis (section 7.6.4). An urge to control teachers and their work is brought out in the analysis. Greater emphasis on control and stress on external sources of knowledge has consequently turned classrooms into sites of resistance, regardless of the tighter central or in situ surveillance system. Perhaps policy-shapers outside the policymaking structures are seen as those needing to be enlightened, educated and conquered.

The inherent critical dependence of the education system on teachers is apparently seen as a threat to the power exerted by formal structures. This is because only teachers apparently have the 'power' to 'prove' policymakers' decisions right or wrong in how they choose to enact policy or not. Perhaps they are left out because they could have voiced contradictory arguments that could endanger policymakers' privileges and positions. The move to 'shift' teachers' pedagogy to ICT-enabled 'pedagogy' could be sensed in data analysis. Not only is there a general perception that the teachers' role is interchangeable with ICT devices, but these also create 'technological unemployment' for teachers (section 7.6.2).

Interestingly, in this study, power is exerted even in powerlessness. This research has shown that teachers are not helpless agents but powerful policy players. They have been found to protect their professional practices from external influences, thereby challenging the dominant discourses of ICTE even within the boundaries of their schools. Teachers describe the devices in terms of their own expediency rather than a pedagogical innovation.

They engage in self-exclusion to maintain their autonomy. Teachers give the impression that they are powerless vis-a-vis formal structures while they are powerful in how they choose to shape policy. This finding is in contrast with extant literature. For example, Shieh (2021) characterises teachers as helpless agents. They are somewhat like the subaltern without a voice (Spivak, 1988) – the subaltern missing from a historical account because of active exclusion, omission and suppression, similar to the status given to the colonised subject (Guha, 1982). However, they resist imposed policy by ignoring it or appropriating it.

In this research, teachers' resistance to ICTE is not always an innocent move. Teachers allow themselves the latitude to ignore policy to enact their 'own' policy nested under conditions of political control or even repression. It would appear that teachers subtly defy policy in the face of dominant rhetorical devices and appropriation of their spaces by ICTE policy. As Wildavsky (1979) put it, teachers, who are constrained by 'power', engage in their ongoing quest to keep speaking truth to power in their own situated contexts and ways. This is in congruence with the genealogical works of Foucault, which do not characterise power as only hostile and repressive but also as productive and enabling (Foucault, 2000). In this case, the kind of power exerted by teachers, despite their exclusion, appears to be liberating and empowering for them. This study has shown that colonial power is not always absolute, as there are sites of resistance within colonial relations of power (Fanon, 1961, 1963; Bhabha, 1994; Mignolo, 2003). Therefore, the colonised have the power and discourse to resist colonial relationships (Cooper & Stoler, 1997; Fanon, 1961, 1963; Samuel & Mariaye, 2017), especially those shaping policy from the ground.

Despite their sense of empowerment, on-the-ground policy-shapers can still be conceptualised as subalterns in the way Bhabha sees the term, whereby the subalterns simultaneously express their subservience to the more powerful policymakers and subvert that power by making mimicry seem like mockery (Bhabha, 1994). Yet, as Ahmad (1995) argues, everyone gets the privilege. The subaltern gets the privilege to mock the colonial's devices in its own space. Embedded in this mockery is the interest of the empowered subaltern to maintain the status quo of the pre-existing policy that lies beneath symbolic ICTE policies.

### **9.6.2. Top-down policymaking**

This study has established policymaking within a context that has primarily not been decolonialised. While policy is driven by the propaganda of the capitalist society and politicians who control the post-truth society, policies are bound to have a top-down flow. Nevertheless, it is at the centre, among formal policymakers and their allies, that the legitimacy of 'the truth' of ICTE policy is established. Propaganda about ICTE is used to shape policies in place of expert knowledge and evidence in pedagogy. Politicians have come up with their own sciences and expertise to advocate for their scientifically mediated version of education. Truth is now the possession of a highly centralised policymaking structure, lacking transparency about the nature of the internal legitimacy- the building of the fabricated truth.

Porpora (2020) argues that the academic circle has its own preconceived notion of people who, according to academicians, are unwilling to negotiate on the basis of facts. The void created by the disconnection between evidence and expertise is widening with new developments in ICT, politicians' propaganda and industry's discourse. The prevailing canons or regimes of truth remain confined to themselves, leaving people with no choice but to abide by alternative facts bearing no epistemic warrant (Porpora, 2020).

## **9.7. Synthesis of chapter**

This study opened a broader perspective of how to conceptualise policymaking and policy-shaping. It provided a multi-dimensional way of understanding policy. This research, conducted through a dual lens of policymaking theories and postcolonial theory, has shown that the policymaking process embodies two main strands that are not distinct from each other but, rather, intertwined with the local, global and economic environment.

Firstly, policymaking is seen as highly impacted by the lack of decoloniality in the SIDS. The above sections have demonstrated that the post-colonial SIDS is a conflation of spaces (as a consequence of colonialism) where several colonial-like characteristics endure. This study shows how the dominant neoliberal discourse plays a significant role in shaping education policies in the industry's interest.

Industry's ingenuity obtains worldwide attention, transcending time and space. To become more powerful, industry claims expertise in education (more than experts in the field) to be at the heart of education policies. The study has shown that this is done by nurturing historical links with the economic powers and ongoing political interdependencies that interact with each other. The most consistent pattern in the analysis is how SIDS are caught with nuances of negotiating a presence on a world stage.

Since ICTE is rumoured as being advanced since the West develops it, it automatically fosters hope for spectacular pedagogical enhancement as though it is a turnkey solution (or shortcut) to education. However, at times, shapers have also been found sitting on the fence about ICTE so as not to appear as opposing 'progress' or just to look advanced. A complex mix of attraction and resistance to ICTE is embedded in its use (a nuanced relationship of ICT with policy-shapers). In a way, policy-shapers are implicated in the ambivalence of colonial discourse. The relationship is ambivalent because the colonised subject is never simply and completely

opposed to the coloniser. Rather than assuming that some colonised subjects are ‘complicit’ and some ‘resistant’, ambivalence suggests that complicity and resistance exist in a fluctuating relation within the colonial subject (Bhabha, 1994).

A theme running through the analysis is the complicity in the *co-creation of illusions*. Different kinds of illusions have been identified during the data analysis, namely that colonial products can be equally mastered by the margin. With too much ease, educational enhancement through ICTE, friendship with former colonials, SIDS are represented as progressing to the centre. An illusion is fostered that SIDS can be interpreted as modern and fashionable through their use of ICTE. SIDS students and teachers are presented positively in mastering a colonial tool, with the support of powerful policymaking structures, but still teachers are presented as powerless. Another illusion is that ICTE is presented as evidence of innovation being present in schools, that it is bringing about social justice. The view is presented that ICTE is indicative of SIDS enacting a postcolonial agenda. This masks the mythological basis of many of these illusions.

There is compelling evidence in the data analysis depicting how policy around ICTE creates an illusion of change and dictates how one views the world. ICTE, which is sometimes not even promulgated as an official policy in the SIDS context, has become an important conduit for a centralised notion of what is targeted to be achieved (driven by the worldviews of industry that develops and cultivates the tastes and habits of prospective consumers).

The illusions created by both the centre (industry/capitalist) and those at the margins (SIDS policy-shapers) are a rare manifestation of colonialist design. It is not a unidirectional phenomenon coming from the centre only. As such, peripheries become complicit in their own oppression and co-opted to engender the illusion. This implies that local policy-shapers are equally responsible for their marginalisation. This reverses the dominant discourse of coloniality. Post-colonial SIDS, when embracing ICTE, reproduce a core feature of colonial rule: control over education policy secured by payment to industry for purchasing expensive ICT devices and dependence.

Secondly, a distinctly dialogic perspective is taking shape. Its core insight is that policy development is a confluence of the four drivers: constrained contested negotiations, continuity of colonialism, complexity and contested complicated conversations characterised by dialogicality and heterogeneity (These constructs will be elaborated on in the concluding chapter). Policy can be conceptualised as a '*contested complicated conversation*' with the political, cultural and social context. This discourse does not seem particular to the post-colonial SIDS (second generation SIDS research) context but is present in the wider network of social practices (the interplay of social constructions created within texts to represent social reality). The shifting of SIDS to third generation research as it moulds its own development in relation to wider discourses is prominent in this study.

ICTE is the melting pot where the diverse policy-shapers, expressions of policy, politics, capitalism/coloniality are forged into a formidable casting, despite their theoretical foundations being varied and not always coherent. **ICTE as a phenomenon** has been able to spotlight other issues that even postcolonial theory, to some extent, falls short of explaining. The study has found that the infusion of ICT in the education system is linked to an illusion of being modern and the marginalised being engaged in its own marginalisation. This is because ICTE, by its very colonial nature, gives the impression of reducing inequality and enhancing access to knowledge. In fact, ICTE is driven by the agenda that the use of technologically modern gadgets improves the level of education. The 'impressiveness' of the policies is fuelled by propaganda about a kind of world that is underpinned by debates disconnected from the details of policy and education.

This epistemic work has viewed policymaking from the lens of seminal and current policymaking theories and postcolonial theory. However, my study has expanded beyond these original lenses to show how these theories operate within a post-truth society. It has been argued that the dominant econometrically motivated sectors of society now reinforce globalised hegemonic discourses. They infiltrate ICTE policymaking which becomes complicit in bolstering media content to activate the support of the expanding continuities of coloniality. The elite has taken control of the truth apparatuses that are driving the unsuspecting public to abide by the uncontested primary truth of the beneficence of promoters of ICT. These truth-making strategies often bear limited epistemic or evidence-led research warrant. Politicians immersed in this kind of propaganda project images of truth for representation, told repeatedly until people become convinced it is the truth. Evidence and experts are losing their status; they

are being declared fake, and fake is consumed as truth. Who will tell the Emperor that he has no clothes?

In the next chapter, I will elaborate on how fake interpretations can profoundly influence policymaking in the emerging Post-Truth world.

## SECTION 3: FROM POLICYMAKING TO POLICY-SHAPING

### CHAPTER 10

#### Post-truth policymaking

##### 10.1. Introduction

This final chapter presents concluding thoughts and recommendations following the in-depth analysis of policymaking processes in the post-colonial SIDS based on policy-shapers' perspectives. The data analysed using two theoretical lenses (postcolonial theory and policymaking theories) yielded a set of findings that, to a certain extent, challenge both the literature and my original theoretical lens.

This chapter discusses the intersected factors that influence policymaking in a post-truth world. It explains how interpretations underpinned by manipulation of facts dominate the post-truth society. The influence of this post-truth engagement on policymaking is theorised as a possible conclusion to the thesis report. Policymaking located in the discourse of **post-truth society** reflects the multiple projections of truth by varied players, yielding many truths that vie for representation. Key policy-shapers protect their (self)interest not just as an extension of their personal but structural systemic interests. The emerging thesis developed in this chapter is not unique to the post-colonial SIDS but could be helpful for a broader interpretation of policymaking in general. It presents methodological, conceptual, personal and professional reflections and learnings.

This study disrupted my pre-existing worldviews about ICTE policy and policymaking. It initiated and oriented me to a rich set of ideas, insights, concepts and theories. I close the research by exploring this journey's influence on my emerging insights about myself and my location in the policy space.

## **10.2. Overview of chapter**

This final chapter presents a synthesis of the key findings. Section 10.3 depicts how power is wielded amongst policymakers and policy-shapers. Section 10.4 summarises the answers to the critical research questions and outlines the study's final conclusions against the backdrop of the original lens, examining the constructs that were confirmed, rejected, or extended and thus paving the way for new theory development in future research. Section 10.5 elaborates on the interacting factors that shape post-truth policymaking in light of the constructs that emerged from the data analysis. The study's implications are discussed in section 10.6 to reflect on theoretical, contextual, political and practical innovations. A contextual, theoretical, and methodological pushing back of the boundaries is then presented in section 10.7 which discusses how these findings relate to the broader literature while focusing on the study's contribution to knowledge. My reflection on my personal growth journey is discussed at section 10.8. Finally, the limitations of the study, recommendations, future research, and policy and practice directions are presented in section 10.9. The synthesis of the chapter is presented in section 10.10.

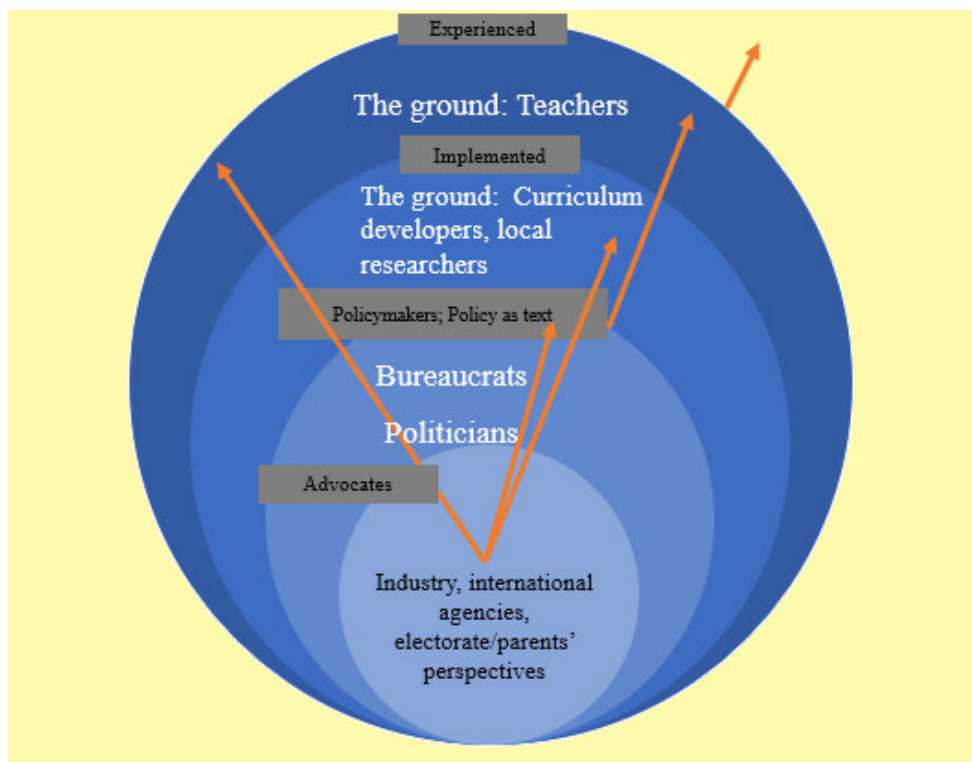
## **10.3. Re-configuration of policymakers and policy-shapers**

In this study, I have broadened the conception of who is a policymaker and policy-shaper. My perspective of what policy is and who a policymaker and shaper has shifted. Policymaking is more complex than I imagined, even as a senior officer in policymaking within an official government department involved in education.

In my data analysis, I created new labels for policy-shapers as they emerged from the data. Policy-shapers were categorised as Promoters (the superordinate typology that comprised Negotiators, Influencers and Legitimisers), Enactors and 'Excluded voices'. The study's findings disrupted the initial understanding of policymaking and policy-shaping as a process embodying a certain extent of systematism, planning and organisation.

Figure 10.1 depicts my new understanding of the configuration of policy-shapers and makers and the ways in which they influence policy or not. As discussed in chapter 9, industry and the electorate are the primary beneficiaries and policy advocate although they claim to be excluded from policymaking. They reside at the inner core of the policymaking space. Politicians and bureaucrats write policies (as advocated for by industry and the electorate) to satisfy their

demands to maintain political power. They produce policy texts that are parachuted to the ground for enactment (second layer). The penultimate layer comprising curriculum developers and local researchers operate on-the-ground to implement policy. The extreme end comprises teachers who also operate on-the-ground and deal with imposed policies in their varied spaces. Ultimately, it is teachers who decide how the policy will be enacted based on their own agenda. Policy that is experienced is filtered out of teachers' conceptions and agenda, making them powerful shapers of policy. My study has shown that across the layers, power is exercised by all shapers in their own spaces in varied ways to fulfil their own agenda. The policymaking process is thus infused with matters of power and advocacy. Power in policymaking is multi-dimensional and in constant flux. All forces exert some kind of power, both abusive and affirmative, as well as contradictory.



**Figure 10.1:** The constant flux of/in power and advocacy in policymaking and shaping: A multi-perspective view

#### **10.4. Responding to the critical questions**

This study was based on the three critical questions that guided the research process (see section 1.4.4). Each critical question has multiple and nuanced answers. These multifaceted answers arise in response to a depiction of policymaking as being continuously interpreted, re-interpreted, subverted and reimagined. Further discussion ensues to elaborate on the constructs that emerged from this study.

My study revealed that, framed by dominant global discourses, policy-shapers have developed many expectations of ICT in terms of enhancing pedagogy and improving the country's global standing. ICT is overtly paraded as a hallmark of advancement and is characteristically used to impress, fuelling perceptions that its adoption is evidence of a highly innovative education system. It is used to signify local pedagogy as outdated and needing upgrading to align with the evolving digital world. Against the backdrop of globalisation and rapid technological change, formal policymakers have made it their mission to participate in the global race. ICT is perceived as a privilege granted to the SIDS space and an obvious step to expose students and teachers to 'state-of-the-art' technology.

Policymakers (especially those within the marginalised contexts on the periphery of global hegemonic forces) derive power when they gain insights and ideas from external developed countries that are elevated as 'advanced' targeted benchmarks. Gaining legitimacy from credible international institutions becomes part of maintaining the local political agenda. At the confluence of these factors, ICTE policy is developed that serves political and bureaucratic career interests in the local space while on the international level meets profit-making agenda of corporations. The policymaking spaces are rife with illusions of disempowerment, yet paradoxically are implicated in asserting powerful control over policy decision-making in practice. For example, whilst industry creates delusions that mask its influence on policy decision-making, it continues to extract economic benefits. Similarly, teachers who are not officially present in the construction of policymaking, nevertheless exert powerful enactments of sustaining and upholding policy intentions. This is despite their professed critique of the limitations of the policy propositional content. Their classroom and pedagogical actions (inside public and private schooling spaces) help to shape their maintenance of the policy goals.

Policymakers (predominantly those who officially draw up the texts that are regarded as official policy) are driven by robust propaganda around ICTE that creates an impression of change and enhancement. This appears to be the consequence of uncritically accepting seductive global rhetoric as its propositions seem fashionable and modern. There is a (conscious) failure to critically examine the underpinning logic of whose values of innovation and advancement are being conceptually supported. Local pedagogical practices are made to look deficient by those who would accrue benefits from such a portrayal. This includes powerful industry actors who usually also represent themselves as relatively marginalised from policymaking processes. However, this professed deficiency is a conscious strategy to promote reliance on industry to rescue the 'failed society', opening up the economic space for its intervention.

Furthermore, ICT is presented as the only 'innovative solution' that would apparently offset local 'deficiencies'. While policymakers prefer discourses that are congruent with their political motives, unofficial spaces (for direct interaction of national and private interests, the flow of funds and so on) comprising international institutions, industry and politicians have been found to have more influence on internal policymaking processes. The official policy actors (who are the text writers of policy) are characteristically responsive to the gaze of the powerful and depend on their support.

While teachers are sidelined because of the risk of displacement of agendas, power shifts back to them through how they choose to enact policy and empower themselves in the ways in which they choose to appropriate or ignore policy.

This forms the backdrop as the external frame that drives policymaking. The non-legislated policymaking system accommodates fashionable imported rhetoric as ICT also keeps changing. This leads to substantial sums of money being spent on expensive hardware and software that create dependence on industry, subtly siphoning resources from developing nations for wealth accumulation in developed ones. In the form of 'seductive' ICT devices that aim to impress, symbolic policies are developed that announce change with no intention of changing. Thus, ICTE policy is superficially layered on the pre-existing policy of performativity that continues to prevail. This status quo aligns with the general preferences of the electorate, teachers and the population in general. Industry's economic ideological interests, nevertheless, lurk in the shadows. Dependency and performativity are colonial features, that continue to dominate the education system of the post-colonial SIDS through novel schemes. Colonial power in the rhetoric and symbolic policies is invisible to an uncritical eye or those

already tainted with colonial ways of operating. The veneer of collegiality between developed and developing countries hides the centering and peripheralising of worldviews, interpretations, and theoretical insights.

My study has shown that policymaking is fuelled by distorted, fabricated, illusory, and exaggerated arguments rather than scholarly research and evidence. As such, it is difficult to distinguish between evidence and fabricated claims. Elections expose the fragility and vulnerability of politicians that fear losing power. They thus capitulate to macro forces that support electioneering campaigns. This march towards politically beneficial projects is keeping coloniality alive through continued interference by capitalists. ICTE is serendipitous in the local context in the sense that it fits a political as well as an economic agenda. It is a valuable artefact that has seduced many in its own design. While it is beneficial to politicians and developing nations, it also made to appear beneficial for students and the education system. Policymakers' compliance with and reliance on partnerships with industry results in official writers of policy's emasculated powerlessness about what goes into policy. Paradoxically, teachers control policy from the micro-institutional space, which is generally considered too weak to leverage against the macro level. Some teachers find self-empowerment in the ways in which they choose to ignore policy. They enact their own policy-shaping choices based on their reading of the broader social environment. In the process, the prime spot in education is taken away by formal policy writer actors who struggle for advantage. However, this study moves away from the depiction of 'strong and weak' actors as essentialist dichotomous categories. Both strong and weak are simultaneously weak and strong.

### **10.5. Interacting factors in post-truth policymaking**

In this research, I came up with a new understanding of policy, policymaking, policymakers and policy-shapers. Policymaking can be construed as a set of interrelated forces that are dynamic and complex, that interact with one another and are deeply interdependent. The following three competing and intersecting factors (3Ps) coalesce to influence policymaking, and policy:

- 1) Perpetual/continued colonialism
- 2) Political rhetoric, in contrast to pedagogical reasoning
- 3) The Paradox of power

In conjunction with the constructs of policymaking theories and postcolonial theory discussed in chapter 3, my study has shown that policy development is mediated by the following key interrelated contextual constructs:

- 1) Complicity and legitimisation
- 2) Vulnerability and invisibility
- 3) Electioneering timeframes
- 4) Evidence is no longer essential
- 5) Dominant illusionary information
- 6) Accelerated by ICT globalisation and intensive marketing propaganda
- 7) Under-scrutinised global discourse
- 8) International benchmarks prioritised over local relevance

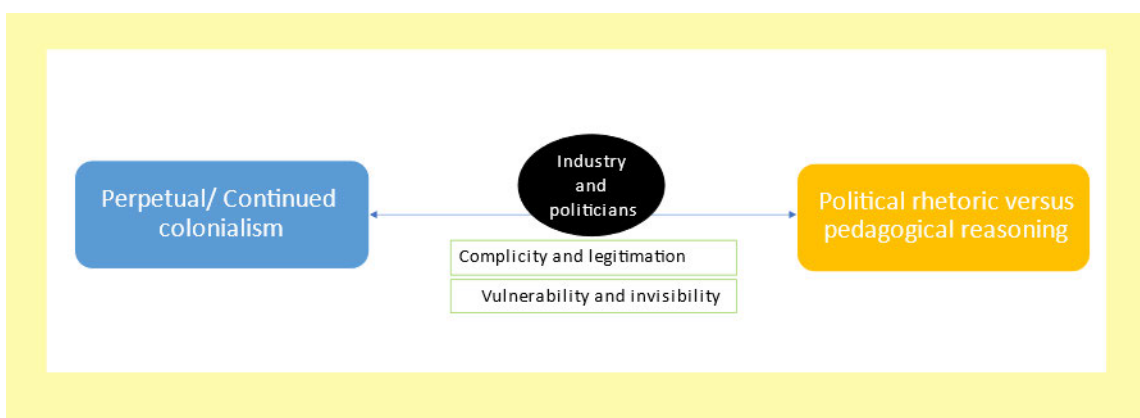
The following discussion examines these constructs against the backdrop of the theoretical lens presented in chapter 3.

### **10.5.1. Perpetual/continued coloniality and political rhetoric versus pedagogical reasoning**

The strong urge to stay up-to-date with fashionable trends reinforces international rhetoric around the necessary coupling of ICT and education. This study found that rhetoric constitutes a kind of hegemonic power that is operative through complicity with and legitimisation of foreign knowledge systems. Complicity takes the form of coalitions with multiple layers of communication amongst politicians and industry to serve their self-interests using education policy so that even the education agenda is refracted in foregrounding the political agenda. Castree (2021, p. 3) argues that “capitalism is not so much an ‘economic system’ as a way of life: it takes hold of people, places and the non-human world via the ostensibly ‘free’ agency of entrepreneurs and governments.” The permeation of industry in policymaking processes is subtle or almost invisible. However, policy-shapers’ failure to realise their degree of complicity with the overarching colonial/capitalist design is notable.

Complicity, politicians and industry fabricate a kind of ‘truth’ that they legitimise and publicise extensively for acceptance by the electorate and the population in general. This rhetoric is expressed in pedagogic terms that influences the electorate by strong propaganda to embrace industry products. Such strong *political rhetoric* intricately intertwined with *pedagogical reasoning* easily filters down policymaking processes, shepherding the electorate into a shared vision of modernisation. This ‘appropriated pedagogical reasoning’ is mainly used for political gain rather than a more ‘robust pedagogical reasoning’ (used in the interests of activating and deepening the quality of teaching, learning, assessment and the development of learners). The former is a superficial nod to theoretical statements about education, whilst the latter is usually informed by systematic inquiry, reflection, theoretical reasoning and research. A ‘robust pedagogical reasoning’ would be driven by an interest in enhancing the quality of learners’ growth. The ‘appropriated pedagogical reasoning’ is driven by political expediency.

Under the lens of policymaking theories and postcolonial theory, ICTE policies expose politicians’ *vulnerability* to the silent power and *invisibility* of industry. Perpetuation of coloniality through complicity with the invisible hand of capitalism influences policy. Politically, it would be difficult to backtrack on such an (uncritically) widely accepted strategy to modernise the education system, because it can impede politicians’ careers. Politicians’ complicity with industry in their own peripherisation is apparent. As depicted in Figure 10.2, mediation among the colonial constructs and interactions between ‘continued colonialism’ and ‘political rhetoric and pedagogical reasoning’ give rise to some ‘*regimes of truth*’ that profoundly shape policy. However, complicity between who is considered the oppressor and who the oppressed is in perpetual flux.



**Figure 10.2:** Mediating constructs between Continued Colonialism and Political rhetoric versus Pedagogical reasoning

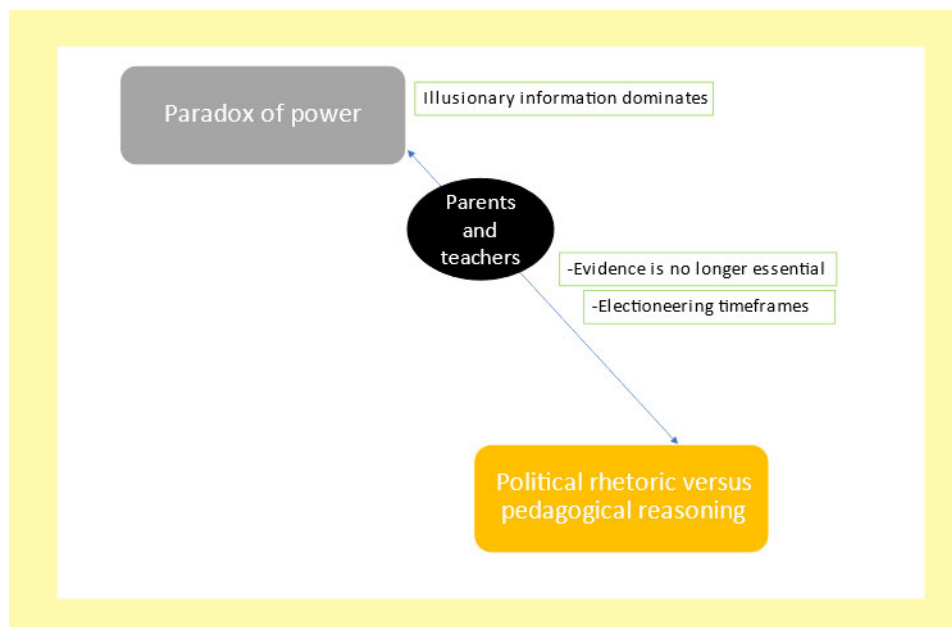
### **10.5.2. Political rhetoric constitutes pedagogical reasoning and the paradox of power**

The *electioneering agenda and timeframes* subvert evidence in policymaking. In a space where electioneering timeframes and international rhetoric have a stronghold among policymakers and the population, respectively, scientific *evidence is no longer essential* in policy development. ‘Commonsense’ caused by the ubiquity and ease of handling ICT devices is considered adequate ‘evidence’ to purchase expensive ICT devices. The crisis of scientific rationality and the rise of a new culture of uncertainty further emphasise the development of policy based on practical levers at hand.

My study suggests that political and capitalist agendas are clouded by the illusion that ICT will transform education. As seductive as this notion can be, this kind of ‘evidence’ creates the *illusion* for parents and teachers that education is being enhanced. The illusory discourses that ultimately dominate policymaking and policy-shaping in the post-colonial SIDS are considered the truth, kind of no truth but one truth, a fabricated one. Illusion is a new construct that emerged from the study that intricately shapes policy.

This study found that policymakers have an inflated, grandiose sense of power as they choose to include industry and exclude players operating in the micro-institutional space from the policymaking space. Having power renders policymakers impulsive, and they accept easy solutions but are poorly attuned to ground-level issues. While they try to wield their power by dominating others and prioritising their own interests, the main policymaking structure is characterised by powerlessness. This is because at the macro-level, politicians’ complicity with industry weakens them. At the micro level, parents and teachers are driven by the illusion of educational enhancement and their agenda to strongly protect their preferred performative system of education. These forces reverse the notion that power resides with the main policymaking structure. Eventually, only symbolic policies that appear virtuous are layered on the performative education system. Symbolic policies are a functional answer to the dominant rhetoric, political electioneering and, most importantly, fashionable ‘evidence’ that shapes policies. The credence and support endowed on the production of policy itself by politicians and the public, rather than its implementation, is discussed by Jansen (2002). While ICT has been touted as an essential tool to achieve globally agreed-upon goals, it has also been identified as a significant driver of inequality among SIDS students.

In a way, the interaction between *preference for political rhetoric over pedagogical reasoning* and the *paradox of power* inclines parents and teachers to endorse an illusory discourse for a better life and education with scant regard for the truth (Figure 10.3). As Harari (2018) puts it, today, truth is defined by the top results of a Google search. In this study, these types of fabricated truths from non-scientific discourses influence policy. While local policymakers appear to have power in deciding what goes into policy, their power is subverted by the groundswell within schools (teachers, managers and parents). Furthermore, industry asserts its own embargo on the kinds of power and truths it perpetuates, rendering the policymaking and policy-shaping space characterised by fluidity and questioning of what constitutes any semblance of truth. This ambiguity is a feature of a post-truth society that defies linear causality-and-effect analysis.



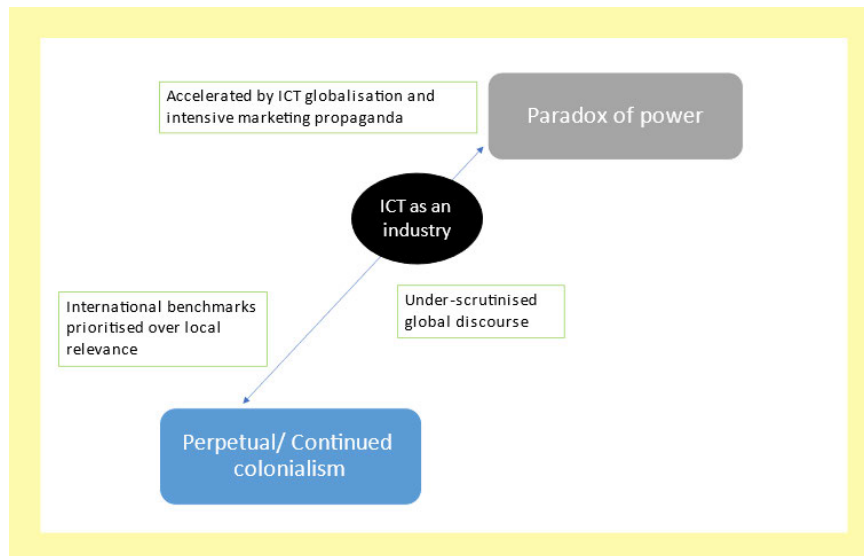
**Figure 10.3:** Mediating constructs between Political rhetoric versus pedagogical reasoning and the Paradox of power

### **10.5.3. The paradox of power and perpetual/continued colonialism**

Industry's infiltration of education policy is accelerated by ICT globalisation and intensive marketing propaganda by the ICT industry motivated by profit maximisation. Immersed in illusory discourses stoked by rhetoric and propaganda on the benefits ICT offers education, global discourse is under-scrutinised, is substituted for evidence. This is used as "evidence narrative" on which to base policy (Shaxson & Boaz, 2021, p. 519). The ICT industry is powerful in the ways in which it influences beliefs of people about the location of knowledge systems.

Unofficial spaces influence and control policy, and international benchmarking are viewed as a source of inspiration that exhorts policymakers to act in the way they do in exchange for political power, for industry appears to exert more control on electorates. Most rational evidence that counters industry's agenda is avoided. It thus serves industry's agenda to support a view of local knowledge systems as deficient. As such, international benchmarking is prioritised over local relevance to create the impression of an advanced education system on par with those in developed world contexts. While teachers are prevented from contesting their power, they develop self-empowerment to decide how and what to enact. This feature of policymaking reverses the hierarchy of power in policy-shaping. This finding supports the notion of the subterfuges of power and disempowerment that simultaneously play out between various actors in the policy space.

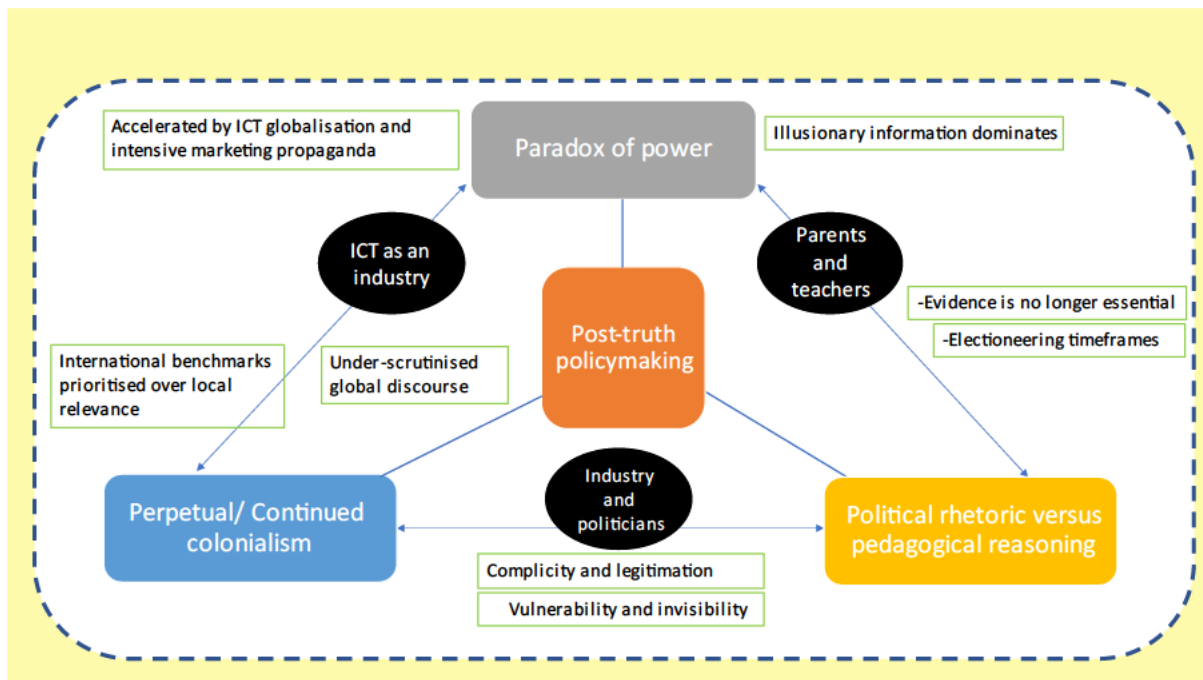
Industry's pursuit of power is characterised by manipulation, distortion, intimidation and coercion. As represented in Figure 10.4, by way of education policies, developing states are inching closer to continued colonialism through an acceleration of ICT globalisation and intensive marketing propaganda, international benchmarks' prioritisation over local relevance and under-scrutinised global discourse.



**Figure 10.4:** Mediating constructs between the Paradox of power and Perpetual/continued colonialism

#### 10.5.4. Post-truth policymaking

The three main forces (3Ps) that shape policies culminate in post-truth policymaking as depicted in Figure 10.5. In post-truth policymaking, policy is shaped by a concentration of power and fake news, propaganda, mis/disinformation, and myths gathered by private mechanisms, focused on a small group. This emerging phenomenon is not particular to the post-colonial SIDS, but within the broader policymaking space, such that the public, in general, might think that post-truth policymaking is serving a higher truth for the benefit of all, even when this might not be the case. It would appear that the education system is being dismembered and that classrooms are detached from realities, creating ‘fake classrooms’ to mask illusions and legitimise the capitalist toolkit. It is possible that developed nations are staging mock usage of ICT devices to justify their use in developing ones. Local knowledge and teachers are conveniently ignored. Policymakers’ and shapers’ right to access information grounded in science and truth, and analysis rooted in authority and integrity is denied by self and the pre-conditions created by industry, the powerful group occupying an increasingly prominent place in policymaking. This is leading to post-truth policymaking.



**Figure 10.5:** 3Ps - Interacting forces in post-truth policymaking

## 10.6. Implications of the thesis

Many categories of phenomena emerge from this study of policymaking. Education policymaking is increasingly relying on fiction and fake propaganda. The same fictional story is told repeatedly until people become convinced it is the Truth. Exaggerations are leading to premature, emotion-driven decisions and policy-shapers start exhibiting the characteristics of walking next to the education agenda. This research finds a clash of paradigms between evidence-based policymaking and that enacted out of impulse driven by dominant global discourse, and international perspectives.

I argue that the building blocks of education and policymaking, such as evidence, expertise are in danger of being overwhelmed by populist politics, strong international rhetoric, neoliberalism and a communications revolution (i.e., the rise of social media, a crisis of scientific rationality, and the rise of a new culture of uncertainty). ICT accelerates the spread of dis/misinformation and dubious unverified, under-scrutinised claims. Policies are thereby dominated by a discourse of economic liberalism that encourages commitment to competition, deregulation and private sector involvement, which is a point of friction in policymaking processes.

## **Implications for SIDS research in policy studies**

This research may have implications for large contexts as Jules (2012) argues that larger states also embody the necessary elements of smallness and thus qualify for small states research. As such, insights gained from this small island research context has demonstrated its potential to offer fresh ways of looking at macro-level level issues (Samuel, 2016). Nevertheless, SIDS are not isolated entities but rather integral parts of the global community, and the policies and challenges they face are often intertwined with broader global dynamics and have implications for contexts other than SIDS. Therefore, relationality and dialogicality between “small and big” will be particularly useful in policy studies. This study therefore contributes to research within the third generation SIDS research agenda where policymaking is construed as a set of interrelated forces that are dynamic and complex, that interact with one another and are deeply interdependent that span beyond SIDS contexts.

The SIDS 3<sup>rd</sup> generation studies consciously attempts not to exoticise the insularity of categories of big and small (or vulnerability) towards the depiction of an entangled relationship between, for instance, colonisers and colonised, rich and poor countries, developed and developing world contexts. SIDS policy studies can contribute to the development of well-informed and contextually appropriate policies.

## **10.7. Pushing back the boundaries**

### **10.7.1. Contextual elaborations**

The findings of this thesis have relevance for Mauritius in different spheres, such as in government bureaucracies, schools, teacher unions, and private-public partnerships, and more generally for the future of the relationship between education and other social systems. This study examined the current policymaking processes from multiple perspectives that are usually unspoken or untold. In dialogue with each other, hidden meanings of policies are uncovered.

*Expand the boundaries to the policymaking process and enhance inter-system interactions*

Policy problems cannot be understood without the involvement and contribution of those affected by the policies. Understanding the views of internal and external experts, unions, teachers and how their exclusion puts policy implementation at risk is vital for government

bureaucracies. Communicating with them and involving them in policy design in a democratic, transparent manner could free policy and processes from superficially constructed boundaries to establish coherently for whom the policy is being developed. Teachers' unions, experts, the private sector and bureaucracies could collaborate closely to maintain focus, seriousness in their respective roles and make conscious moves for educational enhancements. In a bid to face the political phenomenon of post-truth, Fischer (2021) calls for policy analysts to focus on the social and political contexts and on the many shapers involved in policymaking processes, as they are the ones who give meaning to the facts. By bringing diverse actors in policy discussions could provide multiple perspectives and interpretations. They could engage more critically with policies to develop endogenous practices and policies of local relevance. Policy implementation cannot be interpreted as distinct from policy development; they must occur side by side (Hill & Hupe, 2009). Initiation of dialogue and discussion with officers operating on-the-ground will undoubtedly make policy more meaningful. Reflections on a shift in mindset on the (ab)use of power are essential because all spaces embed elements of power negotiations. It is about how to appropriate that power in a non-abusive manner to affirm all voices (Appadoo-Ramsamy, Samuel & Ankih-Gangadeen, 2022).

### *Dealing with information overload*

Because there are many interest groups, each interprets policy in its own way based on its worldviews and interests. These many (conflicting) interests find their way to the political space for influence. As found in this study, ICT's nature adds complexity to policymaking processes (See further discussion below in 10.7.2). The information required to understand problems is also highly disjointed and dispersed, making it challenging for policymakers to make sense in the making of policy.

### *Demarcating between the education and political spheres*

A clear demarcation between the education and political spheres by bureaucrats by virtue of their duties could protect policy from influence. Bureaucrats ought to deal diligently with the multiple sources of information that flow to the central bureaucracy. Processes of sense-making are required to understand the policy problem and possible action, which enables steps to be taken towards developing the policy. However, particular care needs to be taken that their policymaking role is not subsumed by bureaucracy, mere compliance to political drives and self-interests.

### *Build expertise and trust in SIDS research*

This research has shown that scholarly evidence is sidelined in favour of propaganda, fakeness and illusions as sources for policy ideas. Because of the limited evidence to back policy in the local context and lack of a research culture and evidence-informed policymaking, policymakers tend to depend on dominant international discourse to develop policy. The need for researchers and policymakers to activate and promote a research culture for informed policymaking is emphasised. The research skills of the local SIDS population can be uplifted in areas that are relevant to the future development of the country. Local researchers can enrich exchanges and develop expertise to benefit both developing and developed countries

### **10.7.2. Theoretical elaborations**

Policymaking in post-colonial SIDS cannot be fully explained by the constructs of policymaking theories and postcolonial theory. This is because policymaking theories have generally been found to eschew instances of colonialism when explaining policymaking processes. Perhaps policymaking theories, themselves are rooted in western episteme or perpetuate a rational econometric logic of measurement of inputs, processes and products in mechanistic factory-like interpretations of the 'productivity of systems'. Most of the theories also avoid the complexities of a post-colonial SIDS and emerging new phenomena such as ICT, avoidance of true scientific evidence that influence policymaking processes.

Indeed, this study reverses some notions of these theories that, to a certain extent, undermine the theoretical lenses. Furthermore, policymaking also manifests in new emerging phenomena. A fine-grained analysis of the phenomenon in conjunction with the literature and the theoretical framework identified new constructs that can explain policymakers' constructions of ICTE policy development to a certain extent.

*Illusion*, which emerged as a new construct from this study, appears to be a prominent driver of policymaking processes. One of its variants is the illusion of *pedagogical enhancements* in policymaking and shaping space. The handling of 'exceptional' ICT devices by relatively young learners (who are usually intrigued by the entertainment value or novelty offered by ICT) is taken as evidence that the education system is being advanced. How this advancement is understood is relatively under-researched. This 'evidentiary' illusion is *created by both the centre and the margin*. Postcolonial theory, in congruence with the literature, has confirmed the agenda of the centre to keep post-colonial countries at the margins. At the local level, the main policymaking structures claim to be in charge of policy, but they have been found to be emasculated not only *vis a vis* the international community but also the micro-institutional space. Those on margins (ground-level actors who operate in the micro-institutional spaces) create an illusion that the centre (formal policymakers) has more power than it actually does. While the former exert power from the bottom, they also create an illusion that they are powerless. This works to their benefit. Policymaking and shaping are characterised by illusory caricatures in ways in which power is conferred on formal policymakers by the self-proclaimed powerless. It is believed that power lies in this flipping. Both the so-called powerless and powerful embed elements of each other in their respective concealed power in powerlessness at micro-institutional spaces and power in the form only derived from formal structures.

Policymakers' constructions of policy development are fuelled by a rhetoric that disrupts the policymaking processes. In addition, industry's proximity to policymaking processes influences policy in 'unofficial' spaces. Symbolic policies are shaped by international rhetoric and the political environment shapes policy. For example, meeting the fundamental objectives of the policy itself becomes secondary, as underlying agendas predominate. The core pedagogical and educational agenda is relatively underplayed in these discourses, and policymakers are more concerned about their own positionality in the policymaking space and the benefits that could accrue to them. It appears that the policy is not about ICTE per se; rather, the education system is the arena in which their interests play out. Policy development does

not seem to be a planned and systematic exercise. It is more influenced within ‘unofficial’ spaces, while official spaces orchestrate policy implementation. In the local discourse, home-grown education policies and Mauritianising of the curriculum are at the forefront of their agendas. This suggests that local policymakers are reacting to the assertion of power from external influences. However, beneath these agendas, that very identity is being marginalised by more assertive and abusive forces.

Thus, policymakers are driven by megatrends, political agenda and the impact of globalisation. They establish their own version of the truth rather than considering scholarly evidence. There is a tendency to capitulate to fashionable rhetoric rather than make conscious long-term educational choices. When policymakers take on a particular agenda, education is driven by the political rather than the pedagogical character, and in the process, pedagogy recedes to the margin. This is also confirmed by Khavenson & Carnoy, 2016. An impression of modernisation and an illusion of change is created, but no change occurs in reality.

The initial framing theoretical lens represented constructions of policymakers connected to the country’s colonial legacy. In retrospect, it could be argued that this earlier representation depicted the policymaker as a static decision-maker, suggesting that policymakers are at the mercy of developed countries and international agencies. Policymakers are following the current discourse of fakeness, searching and negotiating for alignment to take centre stage. Yet, their compromised position suggests that education is veering away from its purpose. It generates a state of fantasia and illusion to create the impression that the goals of education are being met in enhanced ways. The electorate is seduced by industry’s global discourse. Such an industry-driven space renders policymakers vulnerable, especially during election season. The analysis starkly highlights that local policymakers’ complicity with foreign discourses produces fake policies. The political dividend to be extracted is privileged above any consideration for truth or evidence. Being driven by global discourses is a less time-consuming, and easy method to reach out to the electorate for immediate impact. Clearly, this form of fake discourse is a fundamental form of political speech, but it gives rise to parody and satire. Many believe these parodies to be true, making them highly powerful in education policies.

### **10.7.3. Methodological reflections**

In as much as the research design was developed based on a set of design principles, an unfolding evolutionary methodological process emerged from the research process. Using a qualitative approach with a set of heterogeneous participants ranging from politicians to bureaucrats, teachers and parents required a degree of flexibility in generating, making meaning of and analysing data. I had to be open-minded and mindful of who else could be a policy-shaper for more global understanding of the policy-shaping space and processes. I had to include more participants through snowball sampling and was theoretically guided to check for any blind spots so as not to marginalise any policy-shaper as an ethical responsibility in conducting this research. This exercise was not without rigour. However, I am cognisant that the list of expanding policy-shapers engaged in my study is not exhaustive. My demarcated final sample is thus illustrative of further kinds of explorations that are needed with other social actors who may also exercise policy-shaping influences.

Data production was mainly driven by adult groups (section 4.5.2). Nevertheless, the study suggests that everyone is implicated in policy and shapers of policy include students who are equally shapers of policy enactment, and other members of the wider community. They could all have been considered in the design. I did not possess this visibility at the beginning of the study to consider such a wide range of policy-shapers in the initial design.

In addition to above, the thesis makes the case that policy is better understood beyond only the official declared texts. Instead, policy could be depicted as that which occurs and is experienced in the practice contexts which the officialised worlds aim to regulate. The set of 3 ICTE policies discussed at section 4.5.1 are in fact a compilation of ICTE measures over the years. There could be other (non)educational policies and initiatives having implications for education.

## **10.8. Personal and professional reflections**

When I started this study, I was expecting policymaking to be a systematic process undertaken by formal policymakers, through consultation with a wide array of key stakeholders. I also thought that formal policymakers exercise greater agency in the bureaucratic space of policy development to bring to fruition the plan that they developed, having invested many resources in its development. This perspective has shifted. This research has put in motion a process in my own way of thinking that has enabled me to continue to become aware of the multitude of ways in which policy is shaped. I was not aware that I was setting out on an adventure of self-discovery. My learning has been progressive throughout the journey, which has definitely not come to an end. This research has disrupted my own conception of policy and has helped me shape a better understanding of the local space, and my character-building and unfolding, not just policymaking.

This study has been enlightening not only in terms of its findings. I came across numerous concepts from postcolonial theory and policymaking theories that I was not familiar with. I also became aware of the loose usage of the concept of decolonisation, mainly in political discourse. By way of this study, I immersed myself in the concepts to understand them. I read Saïd (1978), Spivak (1988), Bhabha (1994), Gramsci (1971), Nkrumah (1965) and recent scholars, such as Gandhi (2019). Through their lenses, policymaking and shaping were viewed in a new light. They put forward what were, for me, complicated concepts that, at times, I could not relate to the field of ICT. However, the nature of the questions I asked in this study led to me reading these ‘new’ concepts. The more I immersed myself in the research, the more I realised that I also encounter and, at times, unconsciously become complicit with neocolonial schemes. I have to be consciously aware in my systemic engagement with industry (by virtue of my interfacing role) and international discourse in designing policies to try to delink my space from the ideological underpinnings of ‘normalised’ policymaking processes. The iterative process worked as a cleansing of rooted beliefs to reread the space I inhabit because I could question what I was and what I am doing and conscientise my space. I was not passive before, but I have become more aware of the nuances and implications of these concepts.

I also grappled with distancing myself from the policymaking space while being immersed in it in my everyday working life. This study disrupted my own views about the power of formal policymakers and external influences in local policymaking. Expressions of power in ‘powerlessness’ came strongly to the fore in my study, and it was revealed that this covert power also offers benefits. Engagement with the theoretical concepts brought to light why those who profess to be powerful are indeed powerless, while others benefit from being perceived as powerless. However, I realised that policymaking is more complex than just explaining it through the construct of power.

One of the most important concepts I encountered in my study was complicity. Policy-shapers have been found to be complicit in their own and SIDS’ peripheralisation while longing to take centre stage in the spatial structural relationship between capitalist and developing societies. How I interface with industry and other stakeholders have evolved from being a government officer to a critically conscious inhabitant of the Global South who does not allow dominant discourses to dictate my work. Every perspective has value and is worth listening to. I have choices, and I can be aware of where these choices come from and the influence they are likely to have on others in my immediate and wider worlds.

I did not see illusion coming as a scheme of neocolonialism in my study. While policy borrowing seemed to be a naïve strategy to bring about novelty in the periphery, it embodies subtle coercion. Oft-used axioms<sup>124</sup> in the policymaking space are usually normalised in the local discourse and made to appear logical. These axioms intrinsically show the inferiority of the periphery that longs to be at the centre but is more peripheralised by itself and the centre. A semblance of policy redirections, consultations, legitimisation, the illusion of pedagogical enhancement, and a semblance of benefits generate fake policies. Such a shift in policymaking processes is not happening at the margins. It is a massive structural change that is transforming how policies are developed.

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<sup>124</sup> Axioms in the policymaking space are ‘not being left behind and ‘not reinventing the wheel’.

## **10.9. Concluding thoughts**

The fundamental purpose of education is to enhance students' learning and support them to become autonomous learners. However, the study's findings reveal that the purpose of education policies rarely serves the fundamental purpose of education. This section concludes with recommendations arising from the study's findings.

### **10.9.1. Recommendations**

Various recommendations emanate from the study's findings about policymaking and policy-shaping.

#### *Consider the expertise of experts and evidence*

Firstly, policymakers are influenced by many factors when developing policies. On the one hand, they are subject to information overload, especially with the advent of the Internet, where unverifiable published information is often taken to be true. On the other hand, my study illustrated that increased trust in teachers' experience and researchers' evidence might lead to self-efficacy, enabling more potent collaborative platforms for policymaking. Leaving implementation to enactors to use their ingenuity to determine the policy intent is placing teachers outside a system they help to operate. Policymakers need to listen to other worldviews even if they disagree with them. They need to actively seek different viewpoints and evidence that challenge them rather than who merely comply. Power is most effectively wielded when it is used responsibly by people who are attuned to and engaged with the needs and interests of others.

There is a need to recognise the leadership and professional role of teachers and principals at the school and system levels. There is also a need for value-based research and recognition and acknowledgement of the position, representation and dissemination of academic knowledge in the public sphere. The potential and scope for applied research to generate solutions to real-world problems should be expanded.

### ***Enhance synergy between policymaking and the research space***

Similar to the policymaking space, the academic circle is closed and opaque. These realms operate separately, and their work and discussions are not accessible to each other. They need to synergise around the common purpose of education and an established structure to maintain people's trust and credibility mutually. Research findings usually lack mass appeal and predominantly reside in academic spaces. Within the context of the social, historical and political elements of academia reside policymakers, government and society at large, all of whom are affected by policy, and whose lives policy purports to improve. Similar to the *Ubuntu currere* proposed by Hlatshwayo, Shawa and Nxumalo (2020), policy research and design can also be thought of as dialectical, inclusive, and democratic with no epistemic closure.

There is also a need to make researchers' work accessible to enable the population to appreciate the value of evidence and to identify strategies to facilitate the uptake of research in policy. Scientists could be more engaged in public debates and make their voices heard. The public needs to be inducted to read research findings critically. Policymakers need to build trust in researchers and experts, as well as academic peer-reviewed publications. Policymakers and researchers need to synergise for cross-fertilisation of ideas rather than relying on imported policy ideas. My research findings will help policymakers use information and balance economic, cultural and political decisions in critical ways. As Fischer (2021) says that policymaking is more than science and expertise. When policymakers are driven by mis/disinformation, they are persuaded they already know what they need to know. But evidence will prevent them from being driven by mis/disinformation. Breaking down colonial hierarchical structures to work in partnership with experts (local and international) could go a long way in improving education and promoting an agenda of inclusiveness. The media has a significant role in engaging in outreach and informing the public about verified information. Parents and the public need to read consciously and critically. They should not go by prima-facie information or easily seduced by what seems fashionable and seductive. They need to move away from handpicking any study that supports their beliefs.

### ***Keep the purpose of education in mind***

To move away from sporadic policy development influenced by uncertain and under-scrutinised information, there is a need to bring more structure to how policies are developed. Legislating education policies might seem extreme. But with this kind of structure, the purpose of education will remain solid even in the face of neoliberal and politically-driven agendas. The focus of the policymaking process needs to shift from a short-time horizon<sup>125</sup> to the long-term benefits to the country. There will be an obligation to operate transparently, publish any policy developed to make it accessible to all and ensure implementation. This will facilitate a shift from fabricated information, pseudo-consultations and symbolic policies. Investing time and effort in uncovering biases and verifying sources of information should be part of policymaking processes.

### ***Emphasise critical thinking in curriculum***

For the population to develop a more critical outlook on what is presented to them, the curriculum needs to emphasise the development of critical thinking among students. Instead of being subservient to their environment, the agentic potential of the SIDS population needs to be nurtured. Education programmes should prioritise human values and the common good. Such an approach is fundamental in contemporary post-truth societies because of the key roles educational institutions play in knowledge creation, conducting research, criticality and teaching and liberating the new generation from post-truth and more actively supporting the flourishing of society.

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<sup>125</sup> Currently policymaking process is aligned with the electoral cycle and economic benefits

### 10.9.2. Contribution of the study

The case study is anchored in the complexities of ICTE policymaking and the post-colonial SIDS context. The study's contribution is primarily theoretical. It embraces theoretical innovation by introducing a hybrid framework to explain ICTE policymaking and the worldviews of policy-shapers as well as the roles they play in the post-colonial policymaking landscape of a SIDS.

Postcolonial theory positioned in the distinct theoretical framework enables the disentanglement of hidden power relations in ICTE policymaking. This theory challenges several commonly held beliefs and assumptions of policy actors regarding the use of ICT in schools. It also offers an alternative outlook from which to view ICT in education. The study is therefore rooted in a postcolonial epistemic perspective, that is, scholarship centred on new ways of knowing the world to gain a deeper understanding of the systems involved. A more detailed theoretical framework for this study is presented in chapter 3.

ICT in education may be understood by policymakers as the various ways in which it is portrayed by evidence rooted in Western ideological perspectives. It is possible that these representations are neither value-free nor are they products of disinterested perspectives. They have the capacity to shape and influence people's understanding of what ICT in education can (or cannot) do. This study thus brings a fresh perspective to the debate on the domination and exploitation of the Global South<sup>126</sup> as it explores the subtle workings of hegemony in improbable novel situations. It also seeks to expose any manifestations of power and to give a voice to actors who could have been purposefully omitted or disregarded in the process of policy development. Another inherent outcome of the research is my conscientisation as well as that of the participants of this study.

Qualitative research is centred on the notion that meaning is socially constructed by individuals in interaction with their world. Leaning on postcolonial theory and detaching from the notion that Western research is applicable in non-Western contexts, decolonising methodologies underpin this research as a purposeful and deliberate move to challenge taken-for-granted ways of organising, conducting, and disseminating research knowledge (Smith, 1999, 2006, 2012). Reality is context-specific, and not universal, fixed or single, but multiple and changeable over

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<sup>126</sup> denotes regions outside Europe and North America, mostly (not all) of low income and often marginalised politically, economically or culturally (Dados & Connell, 2012).

time (Abdul-Razzak, 2019; Vidich & Lyman, 2003). Based on this fundamental premise, I aimed to understand policy-shapers' constructions of ICTE policymaking at a particular point in time in a particular context (Merriam, 2002). Embracing Mignolo's philosophy of epistemic disobedience or de-linking (confronting global designs) (2009, 2011a) and Smith's decolonised methodologies (2012), the methods speak to the realities of SIDS and are participative in nature, highly interactive, ethical and emancipatory.

Policy-shapers' perceptions, values, beliefs and experiences are of primary importance as they define the construction of policies and elucidate how they emerged. Besides making a strong contribution to the academic debate on the application of policymaking theories and a postcolonial lens, this study will hopefully encourage those who engage in education policy debates to develop responsive education policies. The research will also contribute to the decolonisation movement of the Global South theoretically and philosophically. In addition, it has the potential to inspire policy actors to activate their agentic potential towards a decolonised policymaking space.

### **10.9.3. Limitations**

Although I have been self-critical and self-reflexive of earlier design in the course of the study, I recognise that I had only one participant whose worldview was chosen to present the diverse set of opinions that are most likely to exist within the complex world of industry. I acknowledge that in the sampling process, as I stepped into this study, I could not anticipate the findings.

The choice of the sample focus and the scale of the focus on multiple stakeholders could have been expanded. I chose two 'Excluded voices', the parent and industry. I could not anticipate the value of these sources since it was only in the analysis that they emerged as powerful players in the policymaking arena. While I generated sufficient rich data to an acceptable saturation level for analysis and theorisation, this could be considered a structural limitation of my original study design. However, I was originally unaware that the 'Excluded voices' could be the locus of the policymaking discourse. I could have expanded the sample to include all the people who were not essential categories at the time I was undertaking the sampling exercise but have potentially important data. I could have added participants such as learners, designers of textbooks, school inspectors, bureaucrats from other ministries who deal with education and local and international researchers. My original view of policymaking as the

responsibility of officials and the implementers guided the research design. Therefore, my original research design foregrounded these sources. Future research needs to include that which I omitted.

I could also have gone further in my use of decolonised research methodologies to promote a more culturally appropriate research practice, such as conducting all interviews in Kreol Morisien. However, in the unfolding of the interviews, I went with the flow that focused on producing rich data. Informal conversations before and after the interviews helped to add richness to the data and analysis. Keikelame and Swartz (2019) believe that the transformation of research can occur when the researched and the researcher are involved in all phases of the project<sup>127</sup>. Although there is potential to engender higher levels of conscientisation among participants to bring about change in policy practice, I had to be pragmatic in my undertaking not to invade the space of my participants. I am also not aware of the extent to which such an approach can produce authentic data from participants.

This study also lacks a focus on the possible influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on my phenomenon. However, as data was already produced by the end of January 2020<sup>128</sup>, this issue is outside the scope of my data production fieldwork. Comparing the same phenomenon before and after the outbreak might be an area for future research.

#### **10.9.4. Further research**

My fieldwork pointed to the need for more detailed research to further probe the grouping of ‘Excluded voices’.

I chose to conduct an in-depth representational analysis of these two participants, yet a broader study might be necessary of these voices. As noted previously, only two categories of participants are considered – industry and a parent. It is recognised that this is an area that requires further probing. A wider range of participants from the ICT industry involved in the sale of hardware and software in both local enterprises as well as multinationals could be explored. The views of parents from varied economic classes could also be solicited, and primary and secondary schools in urban and rural could be investigated.

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<sup>127</sup> The phases comprise the identification of the research problematic, the development of the research proposal, design and methodology and implementation.

<sup>128</sup> Data was produced before the worldwide outbreak and first confinement in Mauritius in March 2020.

This research has opened another line of enquiry of those shapers (resistors of policy) who could be overt about their resistance to policy in the policy space. The participants of this study principally represented themselves as civil servants who were policy-compliant and respectful of management discourses. Their positionality was mostly aligned with their professional duty and stance as a civil servant as they did not overtly resist but ‘complied’. Future research can focus on those who overtly or subtly resist policy. This warrants an analysis of policy - complacency which perhaps masks more critical and resistance perspectives that lurk below the surface. This requires further research in a systematic form.

Another area of research could include Foucauldian discourse analysis (Foucault, 1975), or Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992) or other methods of the ICTE policy texts. Such approaches could uncover other underlying assumptions, ideologies, and power relations that are embedded in discourse.

Other areas for further empirical work can build on the development of the postcolonial lens, augmented in this thesis. Policymaking processes on a broader range of policy domains other than ICT could be examined, including international comparisons. In this way, the theoretical lens could be further refined to become more robust and valuable.

It is also acknowledged that there is a rich vein of policymaking theories in literature. However, many of the dominant theories in policy analysis and policymaking are rooted in Western perspectives and experiences. Nevertheless, I have chosen to deploy policy streams (Kingdon, 2010), policy diffusion (Shipan & Volden, 2008), incremental policy change (Lindblom & Cohen, 1979), historical institutionalism (Pierson, 2004), path dependence (Pierson, 2000) and punctuated equilibriums (Baumgartner & Jones, 2013). The constructs of the theories were deemed sufficient to develop the theoretical framework that was complemented by postcolonial theory. Incorporating diverse theoretical perspectives and frameworks in future research can provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of policy processes. The theoretical lens could also be augmented by deploying more policymaking theories.

Ongoing investigation and development of methods to research policymakers (elites) in small contexts is also recommended given the challenges faced, building on the approach in this thesis to further understanding of policymaking processes.

As discussed above, my journey through the maze of policymaking processes in the post-colonial SIDS has had a major influence on my emerging insights about myself and my location in the policy space. This will hopefully enable me to find my way into this space with a fresh perspective where I can continue to rethink research methodologies, policy, policymaking, policy-shaping and the kinds of research directions I would follow.

### **10.10. Synthesis of chapter**

The post-truth world has established itself in the policymaking realm. The rise of a new culture of uncertainty and equating evidence with fiction and propaganda engenders increasing complexity in policymaking settings. Access to and believing in fake information is accelerated by ICT. This study focuses on ICTE, but the nature of ICT by its sophistication appears to be an integral part of the modernist plot. Branding, distortions, exaggerations, propaganda and fiction are new mechanisms binding people together to generate and believe in a single truth that underpins decision-making. In such circumstances, policymakers will continue to navigate spaces that arise at the intersections of ICT, education, and the economy. How much depends on more and better science, louder exhortations to trust science, or more robust condemnations of denial of science is also uncertain. Yet, there is a need to emphasise creating a space to deblur the line between reality and fakeness towards truth-seeking for meaningful action.

## *Epilogue*

### **The Grand Politician's new clothes**

Once upon a time, there was a Grand Politician who was only interested in good clothes. He was so in love with this finery that he did not care much about anything else. One day a few con men appeared and told him that they were excellent weavers and that they could make the most beautiful fabric in the world. These entrepreneurs were members of the corporate world who saw the possibility of becoming rich by aligning themselves with the Grand Politician's worldviews.

It didn't take long to get the Grand Politician's attention. They told him they made a fabric of wonderful texture and that their colours had specific features. They knew that the Grand Politician was primarily interested in being re-elected as a member of the royal politician's circles in Parliament. The corporate entrepreneurs also told the Great Politician that he could introduce a new fashionable trend in the schooling system where most of the Grand Politician's subjects sent their sons and daughters to be educated. Sweeping across the world, far and wide, was the view that new communication technologies such as cellphones, tablets, computers and Whiteboards were the solution to the problems in education. Technologies were a shiny new weave to impress the electorate. Moreover, the new technologies were said to be a sign of a modern state. The con men celebrated with the Grand Politician the possibility that he would be seen as the bringer of the new era to the local context.

However, the entrepreneurs did not tell the Grand Politician about the range of other stories that questioned whether the new technologies would actually resolve educational problems. Instead, they created the spin that those who could not see the value of technologies were either stupid or incapable of doing their job.

Yet, the cloth itself was invisible: it had no enduring substance.

"But, the Grand Politician did not need to know all this controversy," thought the entrepreneurs.

The con men ordered some of the finest technological materials. They imported the goods and quietly traded them in the marketplace, and the money rolled in. To deflect the Grand Politician and his servants from how rich the con men were getting, the entrepreneurs started to weave a new cloth: a web which repeatedly reported the positive impact of the new technologies until many uncritically believed in its value.

In truth, the new cloth only existed in the minds of the advocates who themselves only spoke about its value and its shine.

But there was nothing really there.

The Grand Politician sent his most loyal servants to check up on the other advocates of the new cloth in far-off lands. The corporates sponsored the servant's trips to these foreign lands, which were so different from the local kingdom. The con men ensured that the servants came back feeling that they had to borrow the worldviews of the lands they visited. They too, came to argue that the cloth was indeed a gift from abroad and that the local kingdom should be grateful for the generosity of the foreign legions. The servants were scared to reveal that they could not see the fabric. "Why should I look stupid or backward," said the servants. "My boss is likely to fire me if I exposed that I could see very little that was worthwhile in the new cloth." When they returned home, they announced magical fabrications about the clothes and its solutions to all educational problems.

But there was nothing really there. The cloth was all in the minds of the advocates.

Secretly, they knew that the foreigners who sold the technologies were likely to benefit much more than the children in the kingdom's classrooms.

In the end, the Grand Politician decided with many fellow politicians, some principals and some teachers, to examine the fabric and see how the weavers' work was going. Everyone who accompanied him was afraid to come off as a stupid person. So, they admired the fabric that wasn't there. They even advised the Grand Politician to put on the invisible clothes himself. The con men showed him the cape, pants, and coat. They draped the fabric around the Grand Politician, remarking how wonderful he would look if he wore these clothes in public.

But the dressers were actually empty-handed.

The Grand Politician took off all his clothes himself, and the con men dressed him in the invisible clothes. The Grand Politician ordered a procession in his homeland where his servants walked behind him with their hands raised to hold the cape. Everyone admired him and his new clothes. The parents nodded approvingly, “He is indeed making our kingdom a modern state. He should be re-elected.” The principal managers seeking promotion called out as he walked by, “Hail, Grand Politician. I will elect you again in the next elections.” The teachers stood at the back of the crowd, wondering how to react to yet another spectacle of the Grand Politician. They had seen other parades like this before, but they remained silent.

And then out of the blue, a little girl who worked in the office of the Grand Politician ran to the front of the crowd, “Hey, look, look, everyone. The Grand Politician has no clothes.”

The music of the parade paused for a moment. A silence fell upon the crowd.

A few giggled. A few asked questions amongst themselves.

But their questions were drowned out as the conductor ordered the band to play louder, and the Grand Politician strutted forward.

The little girl started to write down all she had seen and heard. She was not going to give up. She began writing “The most beautiful fabric in the world...”

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# APPENDICES

## Appendix 1

### Ethical clearance from University of KwaZulu-Natal Ethics Committee



28 November 2018

**Ms Premlata K Ramtohol 218046898**  
School of Education  
Edgewood Campus

Dear Ms Ramtohol

Protocol reference number: HSS/2063/018D

Project Title: Policymakers' constructions of Information Communication Technology in primary education: A case study of Mauritius.

#### Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application dated 09 November 2018, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Prof S Singh

/px

cc Supervisor: Professor Michael Samuel  
cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Simon B Khoza  
cc School Administrator: Ms S Jeenarain, Ms M Ngcobo and Mr SN Mthembu

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Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Professor Shenuka Singh (Chair)

Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000

Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4809 Email: [ximbap@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:ximbap@ukzn.ac.za) / [snymam@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:snymam@ukzn.ac.za) / [mohunp@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:mohunp@ukzn.ac.za)

Website: [www.ukzn.ac.za](http://www.ukzn.ac.za)



Founding Campuses: Edgewood Howard College Medical School Pietermaritzburg Westville

## Appendix 2

### Template: Letter to gatekeepers for access to schools and for interviewing staff

30 July 2018

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Pont Fer  
Phoenix

Dear Sir

RE: Application for permission to conduct research at the [REDACTED]

I, Premlata Kooshmi Ramtohul, am a PhD candidate at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and also employee at the Human Resource Development Council (HRDC). I plan to conduct a research in the field of education at primary school level.

The proposed research title is: *Policymakers' constructions of Information Communication Technology in education: A case study of Mauritius*. The purpose of this research is to learn understand from those who participate in the policymaking process, particularly with regard to ICT education policies. I am therefore making an application to conduct interviews with officials at your respective organisation and teachers at primary schools.

The study will engage a purposively sampled group of five (5) [REDACTED] at the [REDACTED] who have directly or indirectly, contributed to/shaped ICT policy development at the primary education level. Additionally, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted individually between February 2019 and May 2019. A preliminary list of semi-structured interview questions is at Annex for your kind consideration.

All considerations pertaining to ethics of consent, anonymity, right to withdraw, safe keeping of all research records and for the disposal of information are covered by the UKZN Ethics committee requirements which are available for inspection on request. All participants will be issued consent forms outlining the research focus and the necessary clauses that address their constitutional rights pertaining to privacy.

For further information about the study, you may wish to contact me at leena20@gmail.com or my supervisors, Dr Tejwant Mohabeer at t.mohabeer@mieonline.org, Professor Michael Samuel at samuelm@ukzn.ac.za or the UKZN Research Office at hssrechumanities@ukzn.ac.za.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Premlata Kooshmi Ramtohul  
PhD Candidate  
Student No: 218046896

Postal Address

[REDACTED]

University of KwaZulu-Natal  
School of Education  
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UKZN Research Office contact

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hssrecHumanities@ukzn.ac.za

## Appendix 3

### Categorisation and selection of policy-shapers per policy

			POLICY 1 MaurITprime 1990s	POLICY 2 The School IT Project (SITP), 2002	POLICY 3 National Curriculum Framework – Nine- year continuous basic education, 2015	POLICY 4 IT Strategy for schools in Mauritius, 2018	Other	NOTES	Yield/Targeted number of participants
							Snowballing		
<b>A</b>	<b>GROUP A OFFICERS</b>								<b>8/9</b>
1	Ministry of Education		√			√		-Policy 1 dates back to 90s -Consultation for policy 4 has recently been conducted by the Min. of Education	5/5
2	Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE)		√		√	√		-Teachers/IT Support Officers are trained by MIE wrt policies 1, 3 & 4. -MIE develops digital curriculum for primary schools	3/3
3	<i>Other</i>	<i>Snowballing (Curriculum developers)</i>	√					-Unless saturation point is reached, through snowballing any other respondent can be selected	0/1
<b>B</b>	<b>GROUP B CONSULTANTS</b>								<b>1/2</b>
4	World Bank (WB)					√		Technical assistance of WB is been sought	1/1
5	<i>Other</i>	<i>Snowballing</i>						-Unless saturation point is reached, through snowballing any other respondent can be selected	0/1
<b>C</b>	<b>GROUP C SCHOOL TEACHERS/ Managers</b>								<b>4/5</b>
6	Teachers			√	√	√		3 primary school teachers who began teaching as permanent teachers	2/3
7	Teacher Unions			√				A representative of the a primary school teachers' union	2/1

			<b>POLICY 1</b> MaurITprime 1990s	<b>POLICY 2</b> The School IT Project (SITP), 2002	<b>POLICY 3</b> National Curriculum Framework – Nine- year continuous basic education, 2015	<b>POLICY 4</b> IT Strategy for schools in Mauritius, 2018	<b>Other</b>	<b>NOTES</b>	<b>Yield/Targeted number of participants</b>
							Snowballing		
8	<i>Other</i>	<i>Snowballing (Headmaster)</i>						-Unless saturation point is reached, through snowballing any other respondent can be selected	0/1
<b>D</b>	<b>GROUP D OPINION LEADERS</b>								2/3
9	Parent Teacher Associations (PTA)				√			The representative of a PTA	1
10	ICT industry/ Donors of ICT resources				√	√		A representative of an ICT industry association or an ICT enterprise	1
11	<i>Other</i>	<i>Snowballing</i>							1
								<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>19</b>

## Appendix 4

### Informed consent form for participants

# UKZN HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (HSSREC) APPLICATION FOR ETHICS APPROVAL For research with human participants

#### Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: 24 September 2018

Dear Colleague

My name is Premlata Kooshmi Ramtohul. I work at the Human Resource Development Council as Senior and Research Development Office (My contact details: [REDACTED], email: [REDACTED] or [pramtohul@hrdc.intnet.mu](mailto:pramtohul@hrdc.intnet.mu)).

You are being invited to consider participating in a study that involves research to understand the interpretation of those who participate in ICT in education policymaking processes at primary level. My research is entitled: **Policymakers' constructions of Information Communication Technology in primary education: A case study of Mauritius.** The aim and purpose of this research is to understand how policymakers construct understandings of what they are aiming to achieve in decision-making around ICT education policies. Narrative interviews of 20 participants in total will be conducted comprising officers from the Ministry of Education, teachers, opinion leaders and consultants. It is planned that once you accept to participate, that you will, by prior arrangement with the researcher, be invited to hold discussions based on a narrative interview setting and photo elicitations which will be audio recorded. The meeting may take place outside of employment hours to ensure that recording opportunities are conducted in a peaceful and quiet location to be mutually agreed upon. The duration of your participation if you choose to participate and remain in the study is expected to be around 2 hours and we will hold 2 meetings.

There is limited risk to you in taking part in this study as the research will be conducted with 20 policymakers, so there little chance that you can be identified as a respondent. However, the name of the respondents and institutions at which the study is conducted will be anonymised. We will benefit from this study because it will contribute to the Mauritian ICTE policies research terrain and possibly positively influence the development of more responsive education policies in the field of ICT.

This study has been ethically reviewed and approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (approval number\_\_\_\_\_).

In the event of any problems or concerns/questions you may contact me on 52553603 or email at [REDACTED] or [pramtohul@hrdc.intnet.mu](mailto:pramtohul@hrdc.intnet.mu) or the UKZN Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee, contact details as follows:

## HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus

Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001

Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)

If you experience any discomfort or unhappiness with the way the research is being conducted, please feel free to contact me directly to discuss it, note too that you are free to contact the research office indicated above.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you are under no obligation to take part in this study. If you do choose to take part, and an issue arises which makes you uncomfortable, you may at any time stop your participation with no further consequences.

Please note that there is no remuneration attached to participation in this study.

The following steps have been taken to protect you from identification:

- your credentials (academic and professional, biographical, language, school, doctoral and current study and previous experience) will be inserted in a data production sheet and you will be referred to by a code known merely to the researcher;
- the coding and your data will be kept separately and the credentials will be placed in a secure location;
- in the data analysis and report writing phase of the research, you will be presented with the opportunity to view your data and interpretations made by the researcher; there will be the opportunity to check meaning and accuracy of both;
- all audio material will be stored securely and will be solely used by the researcher and may be viewed by the supervisor and external moderator on request (all parties are bound by confidentiality clauses at their institutions);
- all data collected in the research will be disposed of by means of the methods indicated to the ethics committee at UKZN.

Thanking you for your kind collaboration.

Kind regards

Premlata Kooshmi Ramtohul

-----

**CONSENT (Edit as required)**

I (Name) have been informed about the study entitled (provide details) by (provide name of researcher/fieldworker).

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study (add these again if appropriate).  
I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher at (provide details).

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

**HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION**

Research Office, Westville Campus  
Govan Mbeki Building  
Private Bag X 54001  
Durban  
4000  
KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA  
Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609  
Email: [HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za)  
Additional consent, where applicable  
I hereby provide consent to:  
Audio-record my interview YES / NO

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Signature of Participant**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## Appendix 5

### Form to capture biographical information of participants

Dear Participant

\_\_\_\_\_ academic and professional records indicate the details of your career and professional journey as shown in the table below.

Kindly confirm all details; you are welcome to amend the data if found incorrect. In accordance with the Letter of Consent, all data will be assigned anonymously or by pseudonym and treated with upmost confidence at all levels of research including in the process of disposal.

If any area of the form is unclear, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Many thanks for your effort and time.

Regards

Premlata Kooshmi RAMTOHUL

Email: [REDACTED]

Mobile: [REDACTED]

#### Respondent Academic and Professional Data

Initials	Code	Dips/Certs/ Degree	Age group	Nationality	Years of service	Institution	Profession now	Profession at time of ICTE policy development

## Appendix 6

### Open-ended semi-structured interview questions

#### Narrative interview ‘generative’ question

I would like you to tell me how your professional life story has unfolded which can/not have links with your personal life, family history. The best way to do this is to start with your birth, siblings, childhood-parents, schooling (school name, teachers, role model (person/country) if any and why, who is your inspiration) and university and then to recount all things that have happened one after another so far, your values, your personal philosophy, how you got involved in your profession (what/how has been your career journey?), what have been your contributions/choices (major/minor according to you in the field of ICTE at primary school level, why), deceptions (something you would have liked to happen but it did not) (if any), challenging moments and happy moments, achievements, if you are/were free to express your ideas and thoughts and were they taken into consideration. Anything you can remember. There is no need for you to rush, please give details, because I am interested in everything important for you.

*[I will ask questions as and when applicable with a view to engage in a conversation with the participant to have an authentic account of the person. I might have to reveal elements of my lived experience at some instances as the conversation will unfold while focusing on the participant's story].*

*[Duration: Approximately 1 hour]*

#### **Part 2**

*This part of the interview aims to reflect on how the participants view the measures within ICTE policies (Table 2, Appendix 11) and understand the nuances and complexities of their beliefs with regard to ICTE at primary school level. The 5 policymaking contexts (text production, influence, practice, outcomes, political strategy) will be discerned from the list of questions complemented by the photo elicitation to activate reflection (See **Appendix 9**).*

#### Collage artefact stimulus **Activity 1**: Collage of policy quotes (Appendix 9)

- The following collage represents extracts from a few ICTE policies as from 1990s (to help prompt discussion, reflection and recollection of historical data).
- Did you have a role/say/contribution in any of the policy/ies? Did you collaborate with other stakeholders? Any other person shared your views on this matter?
- Which of these quotations do you most agree/ disagree with? Why?
- What are your thoughts and feelings about these statements even if you have/not had any opportunity to provide any contribution? Please elaborate.
- Additional/clarification questions will be asked in line with participants' responses on the spot to develop and deepen those events, phenomena, thoughts and ideas tackled.

#### List of interview questions (as applicable)

- What do you know about the development (the how and why) of ICTE for primary schools?
- What would you say are the main shifts in ICTE policy (in general) for primary school students? Why?
- Can you please describe the process of policymaking you have been involved? (Probe: Would you give me an example). In which capacity? (Probe: decision-making status)
- Which other individuals, groups, or organisations are important in the decision-making process? [Probe: ministers; legislature; officials; networks; professional groups; advocacy groups; academics/researchers; specific research centres; international organisations; industry; NGOs; political parties; religious leaders; mass media; the public]
- How have you influenced/not the development of any policies? Which policy/ies?
- Do you take advice from other people whose values you greatly trust? Why them?
- Did you use research findings to help make decisions? (Probe: Which sources do you use?)
- What type of information do you consider most important when considering the addition or removal of a measure/policy?
- If you never had the opportunity contribute, why do you think it is so?

- Where do you think the government priorities were/are in terms of ICTE in primary schools?
- Is it your impression that there is too much/too less investment/emphasis for ICTE for primary schools? If so, why do you think there is too much/too less investment? Who might have been influential in this venture and what are your ideas as to why?
- Do you think there has been influence/pressure of interest groups (local/international) that have impacted the policy/ies?
- What were the expectations from the implementation of the ICTE policies according to you?
- Which ICTE policies do you believe have had the most impact in primary schools? In what ways?
- Which are the major ICTE policies had the most positive/negative effect on students' learning?
- Has there been a situation when you would want to include a measure/policy but you could not? Why?
- Has there been a situation when you were not willing to include a measure/policy but you could not refuse? Why? (Probe: Can you think of an example of a particularly difficult decision that was made?
  - Have there been power struggles/discussions/disagreements when making decisions with respect to the ICT measures in primary schools?
- To which ways of communicating or discussing the information with other members of policymakers were you most receptive, or found most useful.
- How well equipped were the committee members to take decisions? [Probes: how knowledgeable were they in the field; the willingness to participate in official committees of policymakers]
- Have the ICTE policies reconciled the diversity of needs and interests, the policy context as a whole in terms of values (identity, power struggles and so on).

**Activity 2:** Give examples of real events and elaborate (Appendix 9)

Collage artefact stimulus **Activity 3:** Collage of policy quotes (Appendix 9)

- The following collage represents extracts from a few recent ICT measures in primary schools.
- Which of these quotations do you most agree/disagree with? Why?
- What are your thoughts and feelings about these statements? Please elaborate.
- Additional/clarification questions will be asked in line with participants' responses on the spot to develop and deepen those events, phenomena, thoughts and ideas tackled.

List of interview questions (as applicable)

- Is integration of ICT a necessity in primary schools?
- Do you think Mauritius is lagging behind other countries in the integration of ICT in primary schools?
- Any particular country you think we have/need to be inspired from? Why?
- How many people/institutions were represented when developing the policies? Who were they? Individuals/institutions?
- What/who were the sources of the measures – local or from international organisations/or people? Were they discussed and there was unanimous agreement? How consensus was obtained? How was ownership obtained? Or was there any measure that was imposed to practitioner policymakers/teachers? If yes, why do you think so?
- Do you think there is a preference to solicit the assistance (financial/technical) from African countries or European countries to help develop policies/integrate ICT in schools? Do they think of our benefit or there they have an agenda?
- Do you think our education system is until based on the British system? What are your thoughts? Do you think we need to/have disconnected from our colonial legacy? Are there positive/negative impacts?
- Do you think ICT in primary schools is making us dependent on European/western countries? Are they enriching us or vice versa? What do you think about it?

- How far do you think locals have the capacity to develop ICT policies? Why? Why do we need support from international organisations?
- What do you see as the biggest gap between government officials making policy and practitioners working on-the-ground? Are there collaborations and consultation between government and other stakeholders? If so, in what ways? How far do you think the policies are being implemented by practitioners? Why? What are the constraints/opportunities?

*[Duration: Approximately 1 hour]*

*Activating the agenda of the narrative interviews: This part of the interview aims to decipher and understand the nuances and complexities of policymakers' beliefs with regard to ICTE at primary school level. A set of visuals will be used. The participants will be requested to choose 3 out of 10 photos which resonate to their narrated view of ICT in primary schools in interview 1. The choice of the visuals function as signposts to set the stage for the conversations or follow up to activate reflection. The visuals will also be used as facilitation techniques throughout the interview process wherever applicable.*

Concluding questions (as applicable)

- Do you think there is global inequality today? Or the international organisations are doing their best to assist post-colonial countries and assisting us in this endeavour. ICTE in schools is helping to curb this inequality?
- How do you think ICT in primary schools are helping to develop those skills that we need for tomorrow's citizen?
- What type of citizen do we need in the future? How have you contributed to shape the policies (directly/indirectly) to prepare them for the future? How do you think ICT in schools is helping them in this endeavour? Have you faced any issues with other pressure groups to insert certain measures unwillingly? What type of decision-making do you promote? Who do you consult? What do you think as the ultimate objective when making a decision of integrating ICT in schools? What comes to your mind?
- Do you think Mauritians can ever be first movers? Making breakthroughs? Or we will always be followers?
- How have the ICTE policies impacted educational goals of primary level students?
  - How have the ICTE policies upheld the educational goals of primary level students?
  - How far do you think ICT is helping to enhance the students' cognitive, social and pedagogical learning development? What are your thoughts?
  - How far ICTE is assisting teachers in this endeavour? What are your thoughts?
  - How have these changes affected the learning of the students, according to you? Positive/negative? Why?
- What do you think could have been done differently?
- What do you think the future ICTE policy direction should be in primary schools?
- If you could describe the "perfect classroom and pedagogy" and students coming out of primary school ready for the 21st century, what and how will it be?
- Is there anything else that you wish like to add?

## Appendix 7

### Extracts of few ICTE policies

**Task:**

- Reflect on and interpret the following collage of extracts from a few ICTE policies as from 1990s.

2015: Ensure that the use of ICT

- brings qualitative change in the classroom by enhancing educational practices through digital educational resources
- creates opportunities to enhance authentic learning
- gives access to a broad range of resources and sources of information
- offers learners a broad range of tools to store, organise and present their learning
- develops conceptual understanding
- supports learners in their inquiries
- allows communication and access to a wide audience
- reduces the digital divide with respect to learners of disadvantaged backgrounds and those with disabilities/special needs
- provides opportunities for rapid feedback and reflection

2002:

ICT is almost inexistent at primary school level and there is an urgency to introduce ICT at that level as the Primary School Curriculum Renewal Project states that ICT would be introduced in all primary schools and taught as a subject

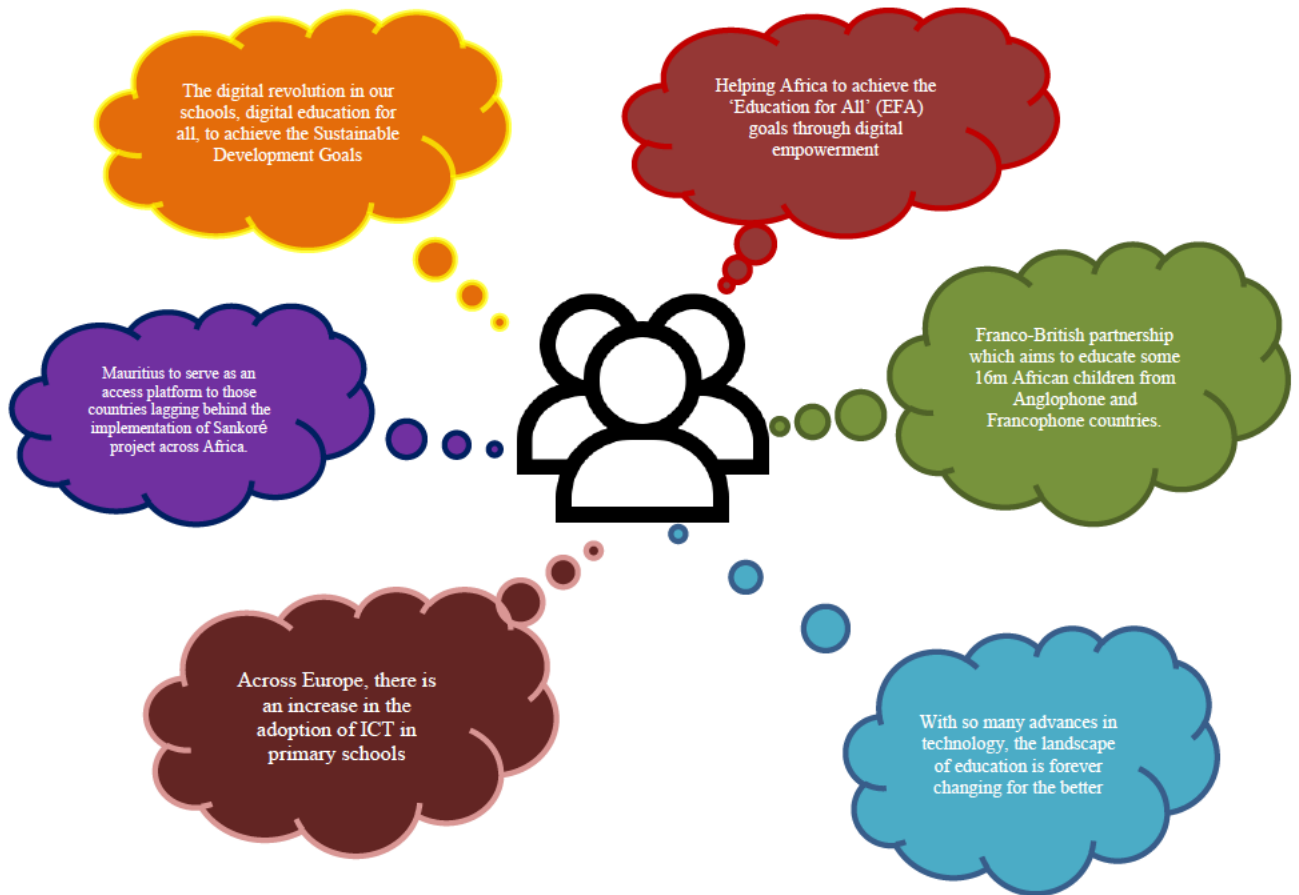
1990:

It is the use of information and communication technologies that will enable our students to become active, productive learners in our global community and empower our workforce.

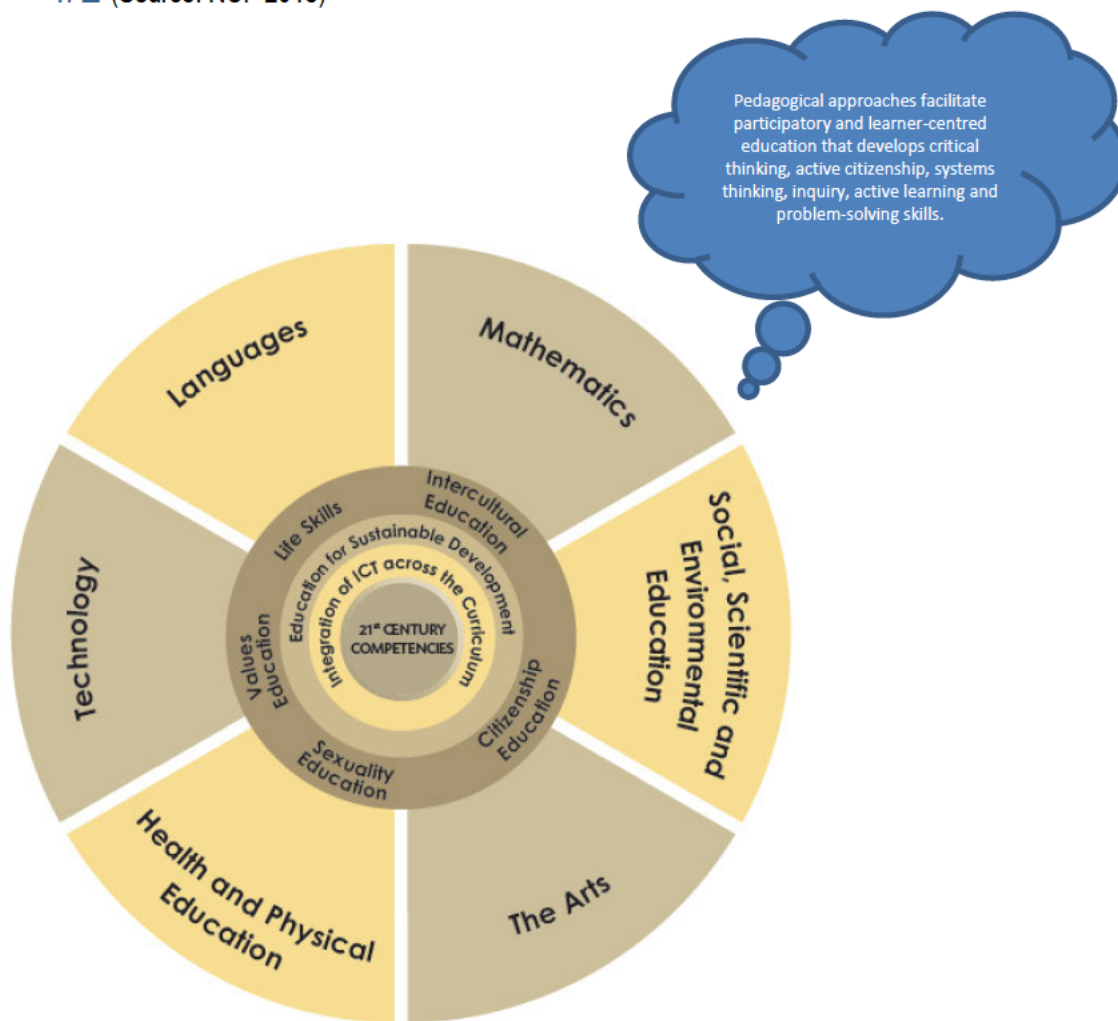
**Task:**

- Reflect on and interpret the statements that emanate from ICTE policies in Mauritius.

**#1**



#2 (Source: NCF 2015)



Reflective questions:

- What are your thoughts and feelings about these statements? Please elaborate.
- Additional/clarification questions will be asked in line with participants' responses on the spot to develop and deepen those events, phenomena, thoughts and ideas tackled.

## Appendix 8

### Schedule for the choice of pictures

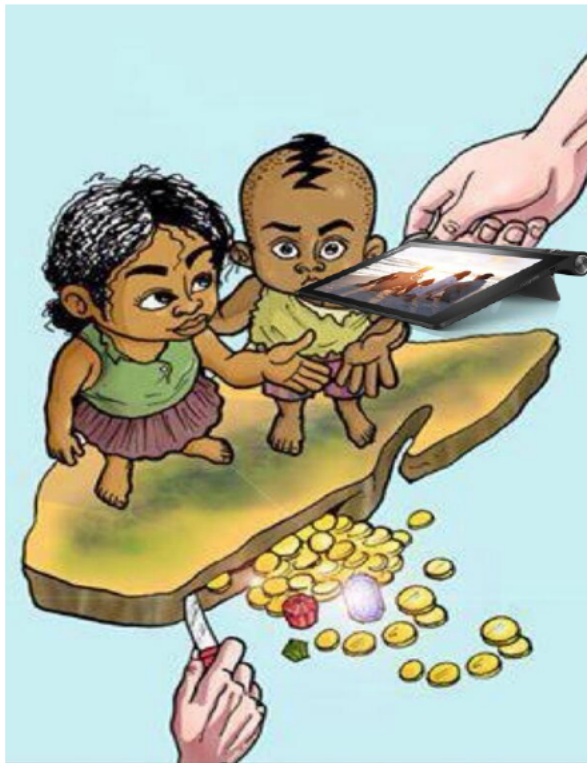
#### Task:

- Choose any 3 pictures from the 10 pictures that in your view demonstrate ICT and primary school/students currently in Mauritius and resonate with the narrative experience. Reflect on them and please tell me why you have chosen them. Are there any that you think are irrelevant and why?

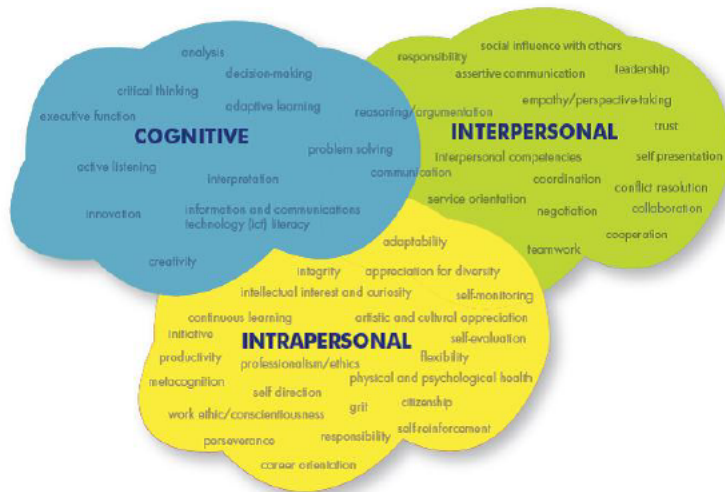
#1 (Source: <https://it.123rf.com>)



#2 (Source: <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/4433299608527806/?lp=true> - amended)



#3 (Source: [P21.org](http://P21.org))



#4 (Source: <http://www.nyut.am/?p=135914&l=ru>)



#5 (<http://thealternativehypothesis.org/index.php/2016/04/15/colonialism-did-not-make-africa-poor/>)



#6 (Source: [pacte-contre-hulot.info](http://pacte-contre-hulot.info))



#7 (<https://www.fifa.com/about-fifa/photos/galleries/y=2013/m=5/gallery=kids-playing-football-mauritius-2086135.html>)



#8 (Source: [123rf.com](http://123rf.com))



#9 (Source: <http://www.padmada.org/2016/09/is-neo-colonialism-modern-form-of.html>)



#10 (Source: <https://xenlife.com.au/are-we-being-too-dependent-on-technology>)



## Appendix 9

### An exemplar of Allen's interview transcript

#### I-Yeah

P-(...) So, the, (...) in all of these processes, my preference is to not try to dictate upfront what I think the consultation process ought to look like, but rather, I find it easiest just to arrive in the country and have various conversations with people, work out what an appropriate strategy might look like. And then kind of take it from there.

I'm afraid I can't remember the exact shape of that, but basically it comprised two rounds of consultation, which in my case was two separate visits to Mauritius. Obviously, I'm based in Country 1. So, when I was doing consultation in Mauritius that was all being packed into a weekly schedule. Colleague 2 and his team were aware of my arrival. They put together a bit of a schedule for me. I could see whether I have it. Unfortunately, the details are too long ago, so I can't remember the specifics of who I saw, but I think it's all documented.

And what will happen under those circumstances in general, is I will receive a lot of documents from the (World) Bank as well as from the government counterpart in this case it was Colleague 2, and his team. I think his team also played a role in supplying all of those documents.

I will read through all of those documents before I get into the country to make sure that I am conversant with all the various issues and that I've looked at the policy documents as they exist, whatever drafts, whatever background information is available. In the case of Mauritius, compared to other developing countries, there was quite extensive documentation. So by the time I got to Mauritius, (I) already had a reasonable handle on what the current state of planning was with respect to ICT into the schooling system.

And because I've also visited Mauritius quite a few times in the past, helping with the development of other aspects of policy and working with government in various forms, I had the advantage of at least understanding a little bit about the Mauritian education system and have visited some, the Open University the University of Mauritius and so on.

So that obviously makes it easier for me to get going with the work. Then I would guess that the first step to engage obviously would have been to sit with the colleague 2 and his internal team. They took me through the proposed schedule. I asked some questions. We discussed if there were any additional people that I needed to see over the course of the time that I was there. This is obviously for the first trip. So, I'm just looking in my diary here, the first trip as far as I can see was in November 2017.

#### I-Okay

P-And those meetings were really all information gathering and asking questions. Trying to understand what would be the best thing to do with a mission and with the policy or strategy, exactly what form it should take, what content it should include, and so on and so forth.

I'm just trying to see here. I can see I've got a schedule for my second mission, but I'm struggling to find the one for the first mission. I don't know where it got to because there was definitely one.

So, obviously I spent, I think, it would have been one week engaged in intensive consultations with a wide range of stakeholders, as well as undertaking some visits to schools to see some of the ICT initiatives in action. I was also having conversations with the principals and the teachers in those schools to learn more about what they were doing. I would have had a bit of engagement with a few of the students in the schools while I was there. Again that obviously was notional, just to get a sense of, of things going on. So the kinds of organisations I would have seen, I would have gone to the universities. Definitely I would have gone to the University of Mauritius and to the Open University there.

Obviously within the Ministry, I would have met a number of different entities: the primary director,

the secondary director, quality Assurance, tertiary director. I also was at a meeting with the Higher Education Council and Higher Education Association, or whatever is equivalent, statistics unit (and so on).

**I-Yeah**

P-The MIE, you know all the different organisations. And I felt when I look at the original schedule that we had a reasonably comprehensive coverage. But as I went around, I did pick up one or two additional people that I ought to speak to. So we had planned to have some exchange of views beyond the schedule. Then, the way in which that mission concluded, with colleague 2 at the Ministry, there was a meeting where all of the stakeholders came together and I presented an overview of my findings and a set of recommendations about the way forward. And we had some discussions about some of the substance of a proposed ICT in Education Strategy as it was emerging from those discussions. So that provided me a first opportunity for doing some consultation and engagement with people. From there, we wrapped up the mission. I would have gone back to South Africa.

If I remember correctly, I went back on the Saturday. I remember bringing my bicycle with me to Mauritius and I went for a long bike ride on the Saturday morning, before I left. And then the next step in the process was to draft some positions, things for a draft strategy. You've already seen the strategy so you have a copy of the draft.

**I-They have not published the strategy. I haven't seen a copy of the draft. The Minister presented the strategy with some... a few of the stakeholders... main stakeholders. And only some bits and pieces are there on the internet (... when the Minister presented. Otherwise, I asked for a copy. So they said they haven't published it yet. Yeah. I am a stakeholder as well. I work at the HRDC. But they did not give a copy to HRDC. They have it themselves, but they haven't shared it.**

P-Ah..ah. Okay, well anyway, I mean, so, obviously I don't know what the reasons for that all. Anyway I prepared a draft of the strategy which obviously contains all the different sections that I thought we should cover in the strategy of this kind. I did try to make sure that the strategy would be relatively (...) durable because developing a strategy takes time. I can't provide information on the strategy. If they are not sharing it, I think it's probably inappropriate for me to share it with you.

**I-Yeah**

P-We sort of identified what the key strategic educational priorities would be in relation to ICT. I developed a theory of change about what contribution, what problems ICT was trying to solve, how that would help and what the impact was likely to be. (We looked at) a range of cross cutting competencies that we needed to start integrating into the curriculum, and then started making strategic statements about infrastructure and connectivity, looking at the role of ICT for teaching and learning.

Looking at issues like content, licensing and open source, OERs (open educational resources), EMIS, the importance of capacity building and also presenting a governance structure, as well as describing the process of financing the ICT in Education Strategy. We came up with quite a lot of ideas there. And then, in addition to the strategies, assembled what I would call a logical framework or results framework where we had some very specific targets for each of the areas of work, specific indicators of success, and then identified what we wanted to see achieved by 2018, 2019 and 2020.

## Appendix 10

### Extract from Allen's transcript with notes and thematic colour coding

The screenshot displays the Microsoft Word interface with a document titled "1 (Leena)-Allen transcript-international c...". The ribbon is set to "Home", showing font (Calibri, size 11) and paragraph settings. The document content includes a timestamp "Time: 3:32hr" and several paragraphs of text. The text is color-coded: pink for the first paragraph, purple for the second, and grey for the third. Comments by "Ramtohul, Premata" are visible on the right side, with the first comment dated "05 April 2020, 21:49". The status bar at the bottom indicates "Page 3 of 21", "9763 words", and "English (United States)".

**I-Yeah**

Time: 3:32hr

P[...] So, the, (...) in all of these processes, my preference is to not try to dictate upfront what I think the consultation process ought to look like, but rather, I find it easiest just to arrive in the country and have various conversations with people, work out what an appropriate strategy might look like. And then kind of take it from there.

I'm afraid I can't remember the exact shape of that, but basically it comprised two rounds of consultation, which in my case was two separate visits to Mauritius. Obviously, I'm based in Country 1. So, when I was doing consultation in Mauritius that was all being packed into a weekly schedule. Colleague 2 and his team were aware of my arrival. They put together a bit of a schedule for me. I just see whether I have it. Unfortunately, the details are too long ago, so I can't remember the specifics of who I saw, but I think it's all documented.

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I will read through all of those documents before I get into the country to make sure that I am conversant with all the various issues that I've looked at the policy documents as they exist, whatever drafts, whatever background information is available. In the case of Mauritius, compared to the other developing countries, there was quite extensive documentation. So by the time I got to Mauritius, (I) already had a reasonable handle on what the current state of planning was with respect to ICT into the schooling system.

And because I've also visited Mauritius quite a few times in the past, helping with the development of

**Comments:**

**Ramtohul, Premata**  
Allen C3- Despite the fact that he claims a field-driven approach, he appears to know already what would be his strategy because later he in this conversation he says that the policies are

**Ramtohul, Premata**  
One week per visit appears to have been unrealistic in terms of # and depth of consultations. Consultations appear to be mere formalities to legitimise his strategies or merely test on the ground how the strategies will work/not. The information cannot be triangulated because the strategy is not published, but only the main ideas/recommendations were presented by the Minister.  
05 April 2020, 21:49

## Appendix 11

### Extract of Ganesh's transcript for broad categories and main ideas

SI19/OL3/18/06/19/M14x2

1

2 **Semi-structured interview: SSI**

3 **19<sup>th</sup> interview**

4 **Two interviews held on: 05 and 26 November 2019**

5 **Category D policymaker Opinion leaders: Industry**

6 **Gender: Male**

7 **Third male: M14**

8 **Age: 50 years**

9 **Venue: His office**

10 **Duration: Approx 1 hour each**

11 **I: Interviewer**

12 **P: Participant**

13

14 **MAIN IDEAS FROM THIS CONVERSATION:**

15 1. He is of the view that policymakers are closed in their approach to decision-making (lack of

16 consultation from other constituencies, they talk among themselves).

17 2. He strongly condemns the teaching strategies employed by teachers to engage students in

18 developing their creativity skills. The quality of teaching is deplored that could also hint at the quality

19 of teacher training. He demands a qualitative change in the strategies/practices of teachers.

20 3. He is of the opinion that the classrooms are not equipped with the right ICT tools that could develop

21 creative skills. Not enough has been done to explore the variety of tools, and which told could

22 potentially engender the required skills set.

23 4. The above could be a reason of policymakers not knowing the objectives they wished to achieve

24 through the deployment of the ICT tools.

25 5. Additionally, he thinks that the technology is thought of first, and then discussion followed about

26 the possibilities the technology can offer. He also thinks that the basic skills needs to be developed

27 first and then students subjected to technology which implies that not enough thought has been

28 given to the technologies that could be used.

29 6. He believes that policymakers are not aware the pedagogical innovation the ICT is supposed to bring.

30 But he thinks that there is an underlying assumption that through use of ICT pedagogical

## Appendix 12

### Thematic analysis grid to engage with initial theoretical lens

	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 9					CHAPTER 10
	ORIGINAL THEORETICAL LENS FOR THE STUDY	RECURRING THEMES AFTER FIELDWORK					
	Key constructs	Key constructs	CONFIRMED	REJECTED	NEW	SURPRISING	SO WHAT? Implications for future policy, practice, research, the specific and more wider contexts
1.	<p><b>Status quo</b> [Path dependence, Historical institutionalism, Incremental policy change]</p> <p>[Postcolonial theory- status quo (former colonisers still controlling knowledge systems of post-colonial SIDS, continuous intervention and interference with governance and policy matters)</p> <p>Local factors influence policy</p>	<p>Emphasis on past decisions, policy inertia: -policies are resistant to change -Status quo -actors protect the existing exam-based education system -less risk Symbolic policy -Exaggerated discourse of policy distortion</p>	<p>-Policy continuity (of performativity) is more likely than policy change. -Even if exam-based system is highly condemned, policy actors are protective of the prevailing model. -Emphasis is on the ways policies are usually developed – guided by/follow the trail of ‘European standards’ considered as superior. -Critical juncture for policy change is during electoral cycle.</p>	<p>-Maintaining status quo is not triggered by local policymakers but exaggerated market forces. -Fakeness of policy – Symbolic policy -Because there is no backtracking of existing policy, ICTE is only superficially layered on existing policies to give an impression of improvement in pedagogy.</p>	<p>-External macro level forces exert pressure on the local policies/ shapers to maintain status quo. -Interests of teachers, politicians, bureaucrats and industry being served, that is why they tend to protect existing education model (promote exam-based education system). -More inequality in the system/ society -Pathology-Nostalgia, a belief that the successes of the past are tried and true and</p>	<p>-Policy is symbolic (no intention to bring any change). -Extraction of benefits from status quo (explains suboptimal policies). -New policy only gives the impression of change, faking policy. -Change is illusory. -Creating fabrications, subterfuge. -ICTE is illusory of pedagogical enhancements. -Majority of policy actors entrenched in performativity culture and extract benefit from it. There is predisposition of local</p>	<p>-Move away from evidence-based policymaking in favour of previous decisions/ ways of developing policy. -External (invisible) market factors are causing status quo -Symbolic policies layered over existing policies to give rise to status quo -Perpetuation of market-driven policies -Policymaking is colonised by both local and international actors. -ICTE is only a veneer that is subtly hiding the invisible. <b>Post-truth society/world</b> Now what Decolonise policymaking and decolonise research(ers) in SIDS: - more critical approach to deal with evidence for policymaking to detect any</p>

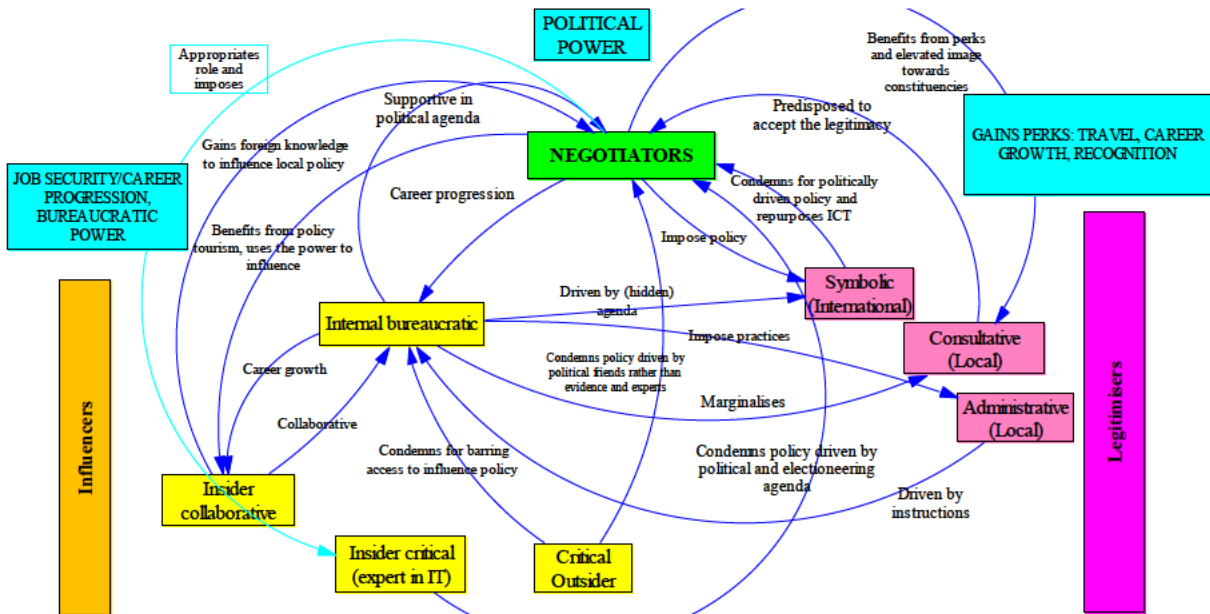
	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 9				CHAPTER 10	
	ORIGINAL THEORETICAL LENS FOR THE STUDY	RECURRING THEMES AFTER FIELDWORK					
	Key constructs	Key constructs	CONFIRMED	REJECTED	NEW	SURPRISING	SO WHAT? Implications for future policy, practice, research, the specific and more wider contexts
				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-When ICTE 'gains terrain', there is no backtracking again.</li> <li>-Irreversibility of policy has also to do with meta-narratives (the benefits of ICT in education for catalysing/ enhancing learning) and political agenda.</li> <li>-Therefore, policy is symbolic. Because of the mix of factors and drivers that influence policy, it appears that the intention to make any change is diluted/</li> </ul>	<p>should not be ignored even if, upon critical examination, they were not so successful.</p> <p>-The pathology inertia - a kind of a reverting to habituated rituals as if educational choices are a-contextual or timeless.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>policy actors to be influenced by foreign knowledge systems and accept them as superior.</li> <li>-The timing for symbolic policies aligns with electioneering agenda and policy redirections.</li> <li>-Symbolic policies pay off.</li> <li>-Status quo (in terms of performativity) demonstrates the presence of market-driven policies.</li> <li>-Status quo is keeping coloniality alive.</li> <li>-External frame controlling domestic policy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>manipulative methods of infusing colonial education systems</li> <li>-SIDS/developing countries to conduct more research and take a critical stance rather than being advocates to Western ideals.</li> <li>-Researchers have an important role to play to publish evidence (in simple and accessible way), active participant in policymaking, make their voice heard in the policymaking sphere and beyond.</li> <li>-Policy actors not taking education and education policymaking seriously.</li> <li>-Cannot hold one constituency responsible because each stage of policymaking is being subverted, reimagined.</li> <li>-Conscientisation is essential else education will be locked within the principles of performativity.</li> </ul>

	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 9				CHAPTER 10	
	ORIGINAL THEORETICAL LENS FOR THE STUDY	RECURRING THEMES AFTER FIELDWORK					
	Key constructs	Key constructs	CONFIRMED	REJECTED	NEW	SURPRISING	SO WHAT? Implications for future policy, practice, research, the specific and more wider contexts
				influenced by forces (political domestic and macro level), that is why status quo prevails. At the end, it is the interest of developed nations that is being served who thru policies make the SIDS policymakers who accept a position of subservience (un(consciously)) / capitulate to the foreign forces because they assist them to maintain their position – who preserve status quo. No-one’s agenda is			-Continuously disrupt status quo and come out of the comfort zone.

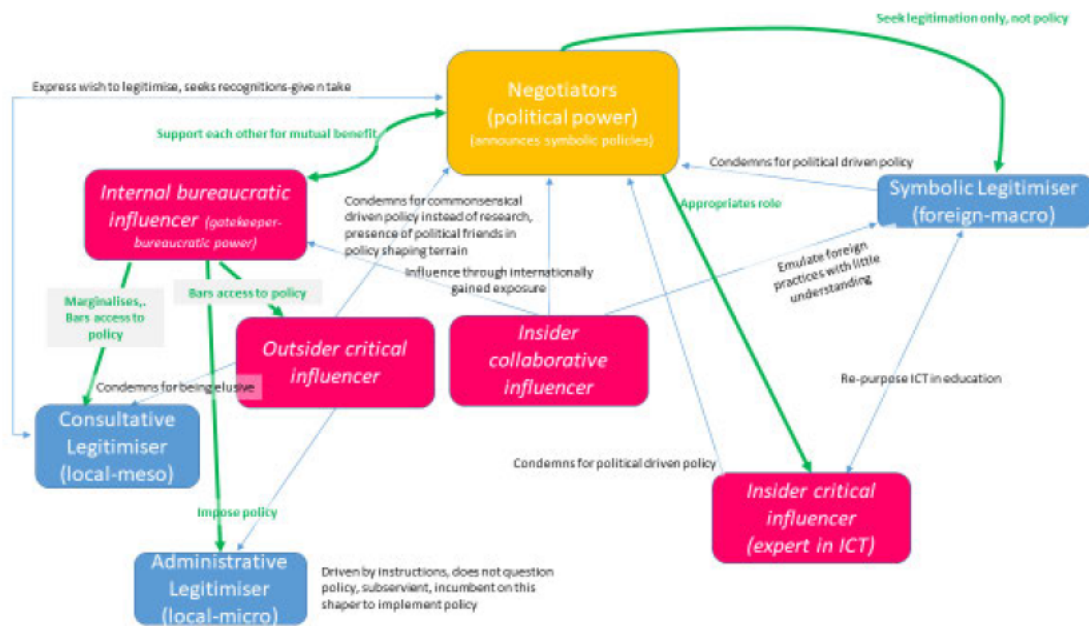
	CHAPTER 3	CHAPTER 9					CHAPTER 10
	ORIGINAL THEORETICAL LENS FOR THE STUDY	RECURRING THEMES AFTER FIELDWORK					
	Key constructs	Key constructs	CONFIRMED	REJECTED	NEW	SURPRISING	SO WHAT? Implications for future policy, practice, research, the specific and more wider contexts
				neutral because the shapers (across typologies except from (external influencer) when it concerns teachers extracting benefits from performativity) -Teachers are stereotyped to extract benefits from exam-based edu. system.			

# Appendix 13

## Causal loop diagram



### Conflicted and aligned relationships across Promoters of ICT in education



## Appendix 14

### Turnitin report

#### Submission details

Submission author:	Premlata Kooshmi Ramtohum
Assignment title:	Thesis
Submission title:	Co-constructors of ICT education policies: A case study of M...
File name:	Thesis_Leena_Premlata_Ramtohum__29Nov_2022.docx
File size:	1.4M
Page count:	255
Word count:	99,992
Character count:	567,010
Submission date:	01-Dec-2022 03:11PM (UTC+0400)
Submission ID:	1955626919

## Originality report

### Turnitin Originality Report

Processed on: 01-Dec-2022 15:13 +04

ID: 1955626919

Word Count: 99992

Submitted: 3

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[Pyneandee, Marday.. "The adoption of Web 2.0 tools in teaching and learning by in-service secondary school teachers: the Mauritian context.", 2018](#)

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[Dlamini, Rejoice Khanyisile.. "History teachers' experiences of the implementation of the Eswatini \(Swaziland\) general certificate of secondary education \(SGCSE\) history curriculum.", 2019](#)

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[Vacura, Miroslav. "Emergence of the Post-truth Situation: Its Sources and Contexts", 2020](#)

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## Appendix 15

### Letter from copy editor 1 excluding Chapters 2, 4 and 9

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16 November 2022

This serves to confirm that I have edited the thesis, “Co-constructors of ICT education policies: A case study of Mauritius”, excluding Chapters 2, 4 and 9, by Premlata Kooshmi Ramtohol, student number 218046898.

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Yours sincerely,

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of Deanne Collins.

(Ms) Deanne Collins (MA)

## Appendix 16

### Letter from copy editor 2 for Chapters 2, 4 and 9

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14 November 2022

This serves to confirm that I have edited chapters 2, 4 and 9 of the thesis “Co-constructors of ICT education policies: A case study of Mauritius” by Premlata Kooshmi RAMTOHUL, student number: 218046898.

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Yours sincerely,



Dr Aruna Ankiah-Gangadeen, Associate Professor  
Head for Curriculum Development, Implementation and Evaluation  
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