Attaining Quality Education in Mauritius at Secondary Level: A Case Study of the Zone 2 (State Secondary) Schools from the Educator's Perspective

by

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Abstract

"Education For All" is the goal which the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, in Mauritius, wishes to attain, based on the recommendations of UNESCO. Mauritius urges for quality education, that is, a world-class education in which each Mauritian child should be given the opportunity to reach high educational success. Education must be the privilege of all and not the sole right of a few elites. This study analyses, from an educator's point of view, the extent to which Mauritius is proficient in reaching quality education at secondary level. It is mainly based on hypothesis-testing. The research process also includes a case study of the Zone 2, for which a self-administered questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 90 educators. The study reveals that Mauritius is heading towards a quantified education rather than a quality education. Mass education can be seen as a better rhetoric for its current educational plan.

Key terms: quality education; content driven education; educator's competency; all-round development of students; hidden curriculum; meritocracy; equal opportunity; gender; ethnicity; mass education

List of abbreviations and acronyms

BEC	Bureau de l'Education Catholique
CPE	Certificate of Primary Education
EOE	Export Oriented Enterprise
EPZ	Export Processing Zone
HSC	Higher School Certificate
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MCA	Mauritius College of the Air
MES	Mauritius Examination Syndicate
MGI	Mahatma Gandhi Institute
MIE	Mauritius Institute of Education
PBB	Programme Based Budget
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
PRB	Pay Research Bureau
PSC	Public Service Commission
PSSA	Private Secondary Schools Association
PTA	Parent Teacher's Association
SC	School Certificate
UNESCO	United Nations, Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNISA	University of South Africa
ZEP	Zone d'Education Prioritaire

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INTRODUCTION

Mauritius is a small democratised country which prides itself on having achieved universal primary education. Since 1976, it offers free education at primary and secondary levels. By democratising education in the 1970s, the government had enabled people from different ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds to have access to free education. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources divides the country into four zones: zone 1, zone 2, zone 3 and zone 4 (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2001a: 24). The island counts 69 secondary state schools in all the zones, while the private secondary schools (including the government aided schools and the non-government aided schools) amount to 111 schools (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment 2008: 4). These private secondary schools are managed by the Private Secondary School Authority (PSSA) (cited in Pay Research Bureau 2008: 348). The country spends massively on education because it recognises the importance of having an educated labour force in this global era. For example, in 2008, the total government expenditure estimates for the financial year 2008/2009 amounted to Rs 8,510 million for education, and 49% of this amount went to secondary education (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment 2008: 1).

Recently, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources has brought certain important changes in education in order to achieve quality education as part of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)'s recommendations. It wants to achieve quality education in Mauritius by 2020 (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education, Culture and Resources 2008a: 19). Various measures (including extra-curricular activities at school, the requirement that new educators have a teaching license, National Curriculum Framework and others) have already been implemented in an attempt to provide Education For All. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources (2006: 1) wants to have a change from the high level

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achievement of a few to the high level achievement by all. Its main policy is to have each Mauritian child educated.

In the same vein, UNESCO (2004: 2) clearly states that, although no clear-cut definition of quality education exists, it must bear two important characteristics: it must take into consideration the learner's cognitive achievement, and education must be seen as a vector of shared values along with creative and emotional development. In the past, various reforms had been introduced, which emphasised quality education, equality of opportunity and cost-effectiveness. For instance, the White paper 1997 (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development 1997: 7) stipulates that Mauritian children are unable to enjoy their young life properly because the education system is too much content driven and less suitable to the creative and emotional development of the child.

Despite the tremendous efforts deployed by most of the past Ministers in education, there are still various issues left unresolved, creating barriers to quality education. For example, rote learning, the chalk and talks forming part of the drill method (cited in Barry & King 1998: 186) and the "jug and mug" philosophy (cited in Bowles & Gintis 1976: 40) are highly prominent at secondary level. Students are seen as being spoon-fed. Various textbooks are outdated. The Ministry of Education is more concerned with numerical academic results than the learning achievement of the population. There is a lack of respect from students towards teaching and non-teaching staff. Educators find it hard to promote ethical leadership in the classroom as well as the all-round development of their students, either because of poor resources made available or because they are pressured to produce good academic grades at the end of the year (especially where higher-form students are concerned).

It was also found that, although education is free, not everyone benefits from the same outcomes, especially not the disadvantaged groups of society and gender. Equal access does not mean equal outcomes. Various costs are associated with this so-called free education. Textbooks, stationery and

uniforms must be bought by parents. Private tuition is more expensive each year, and creates a financial burden for the parents and a psychological trauma for students. These private lessons are part and parcel of the Mauritian culture. The government wants to get rid of the false concept which many Mauritians hold, namely that private tuition necessarily leads to success. These central characteristics of the Mauritian education create important barriers to quality in the system. Bunwaree (1999: 139) believes that "equality of opportunity is a myth" in Mauritius. Therefore, the question that arises centres on whether Mauritius is moving towards quality in education, as it is supposed to do, or is moving away from it. This research project aims to answer to this question.

Thus the main purpose of this study is to gauge the extent to which Mauritius will be able to achieve quality education. It is unfortunate to note that very little research has been done to analyse the Mauritian Education System. This research project aims to find the main elements which may prevent or are preventing Mauritius in achieving quality education at secondary level. Secondary students represent the future labour force in this globalised era where competent labour is the main requirement. This study also aspires to bring about an important contribution in improving the Mauritian education system. It needs to be kept in mind that education is not a privilege but a right. An educated labour force leads to progress and development of a country.

I   Purpose of the study

The investigation is mainly based on hypothesis-testing. The research method which has been used is a self-administered questionnaire. The main units of analysis have been the secondary schools of Zone 2. The questionnaire was administered to 90 educators from ten schools of Zone 2. Since the researcher is an educator herself, it was quite easy to have access to the different secondary schools. It is important to note that the data collected pertains to Zone 2 and cannot be copied to the whole country although that possibility does exist.

II   Research questions

To be able to formulate the different hypotheses, various research questions have been identified: ==Will quality in education be met if the system remains too content driven while emphasing on the achievement of the numerical targets of UNESCO==? Are educators well-equipped (in terms of teaching methods and pedagogical tools used) in promoting the all-round development of the students? Although the Mauritian education provides equal access to education does it ensure equal outcomes in relation to gender and ethnic minorities?

III   Objectives of the study

Hence, based on the research questions mentioned above, the main hypotheses of the research project are the following:

(i) ==the Mauritian Education is too content driven with little attention to the promotion of the emotional and creative development of students, leading to poor quality in education==;

(ii) Mauritian educators lack the required competencies and resources to encourage the all-round development of their students, which leads to poor quality in education; and

(iii) the Mauritian education system does not consider the negative aspects of the hidden curriculum: lack of meritocracy and unequal opportunities in relation to gender and ethnicity, which lead to poor quality in education. (It is very important to note that gender and ethnicity have be analysed according to the educators' views, and I have not taken into account the students' feelings or thoughts. Attention has mostly been paid to what educators think in relation to their experience and how these can affect quality in education.)

IV   Summary of chapters

Chapter 1, "The political history of Mauritius and its education system", presents a background review of the political history of Mauritius as well as a brief exposé of the history of its educational system. It was also deemed important to present the Mauritian educational system in the contemporary society. Therefore, the chapter is divided into two parts: the political history of Mauritius and the education in Mauritius in the 21st century global era. The first part gives the reader an overview, according to different time periods, on how the political system and the educational system had evolved in Mauritius. The second part explains the structure of the actual educational system, a brief description of the Zones, and finally the reforms of the 21st century.

Chapter 2, which is the literature review, provides an in-depth analysis of quality education, based on the works of important contributors in the field of education. The authors quoted range from functionalists to neo-critical theorists who, in one way or another, can be treated as pertinent pedagogical philosophers in the field of education. For example, Freire's holistic approach (1972: 46) to education advocates a libertarian form of teaching, while Bourdieu and Passeron (1990: 72) portray linguistic capital and degree of selection as the main explanations for the unequal academic achievement of children from different social classes. Important documents published by the Ministry of Education, are also analysed, as well as the main recommendations of UNESCO. The examination of the documentation is made according to the hypotheses of the research.

Chapter 3 looks at the methodology of the study. As was already mentioned in the paragraphs above, the research is mainly about hypothesis-testing. The units of analysis consisted of the State Secondary Schools of Zone 2 and the units of observation have been the educators of these schools. These units of observation have been chosen because they are the main role players responsible in delivering the appropriate education to the students. The data was collected through the use of the self-administered questionnaire. A pilot-testing of the questionnaire was carried out with a sample of 10 units in the

population under study. The method chosen for data collection is not expensive and is less time-consuming than methods such as participant observation or unstructured interviews. Systematic random sampling was used to draw a sample of 90 educators from Zone 2.

The analysis of the data follows in Chapter 4. Various pertinent arguments are put forward to answer the question whether Mauritius can achieve quality education in the near future. This chapter attempts to provide an analysis of the educator's profile and an evaluation of the following: a content driven education, the educators' poor competencies and limited resources in promoting the all-round development of students, and the negative aspects of the hidden curriculum in terms of its lack of meritocracy and of equal opportunities. It also includes explanations on parental interest, streaming, different curricula for low and high achievers and quality education.

Finally, recommendations are made in relation to the drawbacks brought to light through the analysis chapter. A conclusion is provided at the end of the thesis.

CHAPTER 1: THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF MAURITIUS AND ITS EDUCATION SYSTEM

"Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" **(French Revolutionary Proverb)**

(cited in Selvon 2005: 173)

1.0 Introduction

Before elaborating on the different literary sources discussing the quality of education, it is important for the reader to have insight into the political history of Mauritius, the historical development of its education system as well as how this education is being delivered during the 21st century. Mauritius, which is a small democratic island in the Indian Ocean, is made up of a multi-ethnic population of approximately 1.2 million inhabitants. According to Bunwaree (1999: 136), the island has a long history of white colonisation. The population of Mauritius had been imported from different regions: Europe, Africa and Asia. The three important words: "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" (cited in Selvon 2005: 173) from the French revolutionary proverb represent important values for which many Mauritians had been struggling for so long. It is also true to say the struggle is not yet over. Education was the tool which helped people from the poorest social strata to move up the social ladder. Therefore, this chapter looks at how Mauritius was populated and the process through which it obtained its independence from the firm colonial grip. The chapter also looks at the history of the education system at different time periods and its current formal structure.

1.1 The political and educational history of Mauritius

According to the Constitution of Mauritius, the population is made up of four different groups: the Hindus, the Muslims, the Chinese and the General population[1] (cited in Amnesty International Mauritius Section 2008: 13). This ethnical diversity is mainly owed to an enriched historical background moulded in different periods of white colonisation, slavery[2], Indian Indentured Immigration and Chinese Immigration. The Rainbow island of Mauritius, which is made up of ethnic groups of different colours, is stratified into different social classes. The Creole population, descendants of the slaves, is the most disadvantaged group of society and is poorly represented in Parliament, while the Hindu community forms the majority of the population and is highly represented in the National Assembly.

The political history of Mauritius is one based on much struggle and hardship to acquire a so-called independence in which fairness and equal rights hope to prevail. This particular section considers four important periods in the political history of Mauritius: the Dutch Period, the French Period, the British Period, and Independent Mauritius. It also gives an appreciation of the historical path of education during those four important eras.

1.1.1 The Dutch period

To be able to have a better understanding of how Mauritius has gained its title of the Rainbow Island, it is important to go way back to the first people who once set foot on the island. According to Selvon (2005: 14), the Portuguese were among the first to discover Mauritius, namely in July 1500. The Portuguese made several stopovers to replenish their stock of food, but these did not last long. In 1598, the Dutch settlers, who started to build on the mercantile capitalism by exploiting the treasures of the East, discovered

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[1] The General population is made up of the Creole and Franco-Mauritians.

[2] The slaves were mainly of African origin.

Mauritius. Contrary to the Portuguese navigators, the Dutch decided to have a form of settlement on the island. Education was mainly informal during the Dutch period. In 1710, the Dutch decided to leave the island for good.

1.1.2 The French period

According to Selvon (2005:79), it was only in 1722 that the French came to settle on the island under the rule of Governor De Nyon. The French decided to call Mauritius "Isle de France" (cited in Selvon 2005: 75). The administration of the island was managed by the French East India Company. The company controlled the stores where the French settlers were forced to sell their agricultural products. The officials of the company were seen as "a sort of local noble class" (cited in Selvon 2005: 141). In those days, the population was well-diversified as it included the French settlers, the African, Malagasy and Indian slaves, as well as Tamil artisans.

According to Selvon (2005: 98), in 1735 the Governor Maupin was replaced by La Bourdonnais, one of the greatest French governors, who launched the Mauritian success. One of La Bourdonnais's main objectives was to make profits through different activities on the island, such as farming the land and raising animals. He also created an aqueduct to provide the colony with fresh water. Since manual labour was required for the development of the island, slaves were brought in to work in Isle de France, especially from India, Madagascar and Mozambique.

La Bourdonnais (cited in Selvon 2005: 99) led the construction of different types of sugar mills. Selvon (2005: 99) argues that in 1750 the country benefited from a sizable profit from sugar production. La Bourdonnais also undertook the development of the Port-Louis harbour to make an important port of call for ships and a principal naval base. A huge hospital was also built to provide the necessary medical care to sick sailors and injured soldiers. Various public buildings including barracks for soldiers, a church, *Hôtel du*

Governement[3] (cited in Selvon 2005: 102) and others were constructed of stone. He also obtained approval to engage the settlers in more liberal trade activities, although the French East India Company was the main opponent. La Bourdonnais is a well-known figure in the history of French colonial power. Although other governors succeeded him, he remained a key player in the development of the island during the French period.

During the 1750s, another eminent personality in the Mauritian history, Pierre Poivre (cited in Selvon 2005: 123), introduced the cultivation of spices (such as nutmeg, cinnamon, pepper and cloves) which he brought from the Far East. He became one of the most important administrators of Isle de France. The famous Pamplemousses Garden in Mauritius was created by Poivre and consists of many different species of plants.

In the late 18th century Isle de France, the governor Decaen took over the management of the island (cited in Selvon 2005: 181). After the French revolution, the Code Napoléon was introduced in Isle de France. Decaen decided to construct the Code Decaen, which included a mixture of the Code Napoléon and the laws of the Colonial Assembly (cited in Selvon 2005: 187). For instance, it included the re-establishment of the judicial system of 1789, the replacement of the elected representative of the municipalities (during the Revolution) by Civil Commissioners chosen from the White colonists by the governor, and many others (cited in Selvon 2005: 187).

During that same period, the Corsair expeditions, necessary to provide the island with the required provisions, could not reach the country because of the line of defence placed by the British ships. It is important to note that Britain and France had declared war on each other and the former wanted to conquer the island from the latter. Unfortunately, France could not provide assistance and resources to the French settlers to resist British invasion, because she was involved in combating several Napoleonic wars at the time. This signalled the end of the French monopolistic rule in Isle de France. In

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[3] It was the residential house of the Governor Mahé de La Bourdonnais.

August 1810, the French fought their first battle of Isle de France with the British successfully – a battle which was known as the Battle of Grand-Port (cited in Selvon 2005: 194). Six months later, the British attacked the island and the governor Decaen decided to admit defeat, and the treaty of capitulation was signed.

As it was mentioned above, slaves were brought from India, Mozambique and Madagascar to work on the land, and they turned the island into an agricultural colony. When the slaves were brought to the slave market on their arrival to Isle de France, they were separated from their companions, friends and close relatives. It is argued that it is due to this separation from their families and cultural identity that the Creole population (the descendants of the slaves) are nowadays unable to have an identity – a reason which justifies why they form part of a minority ethnic group.

The slaves were controlled by a law known as the Code Noir (cited in Selvon 2005: 138). Bernardin de St. Pierre[4] (cited in Selvon 2005: 138) argues that slaves were ill-treated through the most inhumane forms of punishment: they were forced to wear an iron collar; they were chained; they were tortured; marooned slaves, when caught, had an ear and the ligament of one thigh cut off, and suffered various other forms of punishment. During the French Revolution, several militants fought for the abolition of slavery in order to end this "necessary evil" (cited in Selvon 2005: 187). Although the French Revolutionary government agreed to abolish slavery in the different French colonies, in Isle de France it had fallen on deaf ears. Slavery continued here illegally.

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[4] Bernadin de St. Pierre was a well-known writer who wrote the book: "Voyage à l'Isle de France", describing his main observations of the island (cited in Selvon 2005: 137).

1.1.2.1 The historical development of education during the French period

According to Juggernauth (1993: 92), during the French colonialism, the education of the citizens was placed in the hands of private individuals. Under the governorship of Décaen, the *Lycée des Ile de France et Bourbonl* was built to provide the citizens with secondary and military education (cited in Juggernauth 1993: 118). He also had great enthusiasm to build a girls' school but his project was not supported by all. He further constructed two primary schools for the coloured boys because they did not have access to the *Lycée*. Ramdoyal (1977: 31) argues that, following the French Revolution, the Colonial Assembly announced that it would be the responsibility of the state to provide moral and political education to its people. *L'Ecole Centrale* was set up, under the "Plan Lakanal", as an institution providing education to the elite.

The development of education, during the French Period, was not really felt as it was during the British Period. Education was not universal. It was mostly provided based on racial and sexist lines of thought. It was neither meritocratic nor gender-free. The population was too divided and unequal for education to bring about any social change.

1.1.3 The British period

The British Period in Mauritius can be divided into two main eras: the 19th century Mauritius and the 20th century Mauritius under British rule.

1.1.3.1   19th century Mauritius under British rule

In 1810, the British conquered Isle de France from the French after a two-phase battle. The French governor accepted a treaty of capitulation in which it was clearly mentioned that there would be no prisoners of war. The colonists would be able to retain their private property, religious practice and even the some French rules and regulations. However, as researched by Selvon (2005: 194): "the colony and its dependencies were ceded unconditionally with all

their public stores" to the British officials. The French colonists were given the right to leave the island within two years as from the date of the conquest. The island was no more known as Isle de France, but was now called Mauritius.

The first British governor was Sir Robert Townsend Farquhar. Under the governorship of Farquhar, agriculture and free trade were promoted. He also encouraged the replacement of manpower by machines. Farquhar left the colony in 1823.

It is vital to emphasise the fact that the Mauritian sugar obtained its importance during the British period. In 1840, Mauritius was considered to be the most important sugar producer of all the British territories. Various improvements had been effected in different regions of the island. The construction of more sugar mills, the introduction of new sources of power such as steam to run machines, and the establishment of railways were a few examples of development. Due to the high demand for the Mauritian sugar on the market there was an urgent need of labour, following the abolition of slavery. Manpower was brought from India to replace the ex-slaves on the estates.

1.1.3.1.1 Abolition of slavery during the British period

According to Addison and Hazareesingh (1984: 45), the slave trade was abolished by the British Parliament in 1807. By the same token, the coloured population wanted to eliminate the colour bar which represented the discriminatory practices of the white population against them. But Farquhar ignored their request and did not lift a finger to abolish the colour bar. According to Selvon (2005: 197), "the Coloured had to wait 19 years for the abolition of the colour bar and the slaves a quarter of a century for a law abolishing slavery".

The colour bar represented a demarcation line between the white and the coloured population. Although the coloured people were free individuals and

did have the right to possess some acres of land and also slaves, they did not have the right to attend the Royal College[5] or to have the titles of "Mr" or "Mrs", or to be buried in the same cemeteries as the white (cited in Selvon 2005: 197). Only in 1829, the colour bar was formally abolished in Mauritius (cited in Selvon 2005: 218).

After the abolition of the colour bar in 1829, activists against slavery became more optimistic about the abolition of slavery. The British parliament appointed a Protector of slaves to reveal any malpractice on the part of the masters. The slave-owners severely opposed the abolition of slavery and even resorted to a general strike. But the British government was not affected by such revolts.

On the 1st of February 1835, slavery was formally abolished in Mauritius and the slave-owners received compensation for the loss of their slaves; the compensations paid by the British government amounted to a sum of £20 million (cited in Selvon 2005: 225). However, after the abolition of slavery, slaves were not completely free. They had to remain on the estates as apprentices, for a specific number of years, depending on the nature of their work.

Once completely set free, the majority of the slaves left the plantations and started to live on their own. There were those who engaged in various activities such as fishing, agriculture, artisan work and others in order to earn their bread. Nevertheless, an important number of the ex-slaves population were found at the lowest part of the social ladder unable to survive on their own. They lived in extreme poverty and desolation, without the slightest form of education, and they found refuge and consolation in alcohol. Some important religious personalities, for instance, Reverend Lebrun and Father Jacques Désiré Laval tried to provide the newly enfranchised slaves with a religious and basic academic education (cited in Selvon 2005: 224).

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[5] The Royal College was the most prestigious school in Mauritius and only the White had the right to attend. Even today, the Royal College keeps its prestigious title and is attended mostly by the elite of society, that is, those male students achieving the best results at CPE level (cited in Selvon 2005: 197).

According to Selvon (2005: 224), the British government did not care to have a programme aimed at resettling those unfortunate emancipated slaves who had been uprooted from their culture, country of origin and families. Those unfortunates, who were forced to live the man-made atrocity of slavery, had been deprived of their most inner human nature and dignity. It is important to note that nowadays, the Creole population (the descendants of slaves) constitutes the majority of the poor in Mauritius. History, therefore, provides important facts to explain why the Creoles find it difficult to climb up the social ladder.

1.1.3.1.2 The Indian indentured labourers and Chinese immigrants

Addison and Hazareesingh (1984: 55) argue that the planters were already planning for a new pool of labour, in the 1820s, due to the growing importance the British parliament attached to the various movements of the abolitionists. In fact, Indian Indentured labourers were seen as a substitute labour to replace the slaves after the abolition of slavery. The Indian Indentured immigrants were recruited on contract. These people regarded Mauritius as their new Eldorado because of various factors: poverty, rebellion, unemployment and others encouraged them to leave India. Chinese immigrants were recruited at a later stage.

According to Addison and Hazareesingh (1984: 58), the immigration of Indian Indentured labourers was more prominent between 1858 and 1859 because of the high demand for Mauritian sugar in those years. Although there was a protector of immigrants, the Indian Indentured labourers did not receive better treatment than the slaves. Poor medical facilities were provided to the sick. They were forced to work from sunrise to sunset in the sugarcane fields.

Like the slaves, any Indian Indentured labourer caught without a pass outside the limits of the estate was arrested[6]. Agricultural labour was said to be seasonal, but even during the non-harvest period the field labourers were required to clear the land and remove rocks. Many Indian Indentured labourers did not renew their five-year contract and returned to India. Others, after the end of the contract, left the estates to live in villages and work on their own.

However, similar to the plight of the slaves, there were people from the white population who felt a deep compassion for the Indian Indentured immigrants. For instance, Adolphe de Plevitz and governor Gordon fought for the rights of the Indians and the abolition of the "Old Immigrants", despite the fury of the French planters (cited in Addison & Hazareesingh 1984: 63). They were able to convince the British Government to send the Royal Commission of 1872 to investigate the bad living conditions of the Indians in Mauritius. Various recommendations were made to improve the living conditions of these immigrants. For instance, it was mentioned that each estate needed to provide medical care to all its workers. The Indian Indentured Immigration which started in 1834 ceased to exist as from 1923 (cited in Selvon 2005: 277). But it is within this population, as rightly pointed out by Selvon (2005: 277), that there were important political personalities (such as Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, Basdeo Bissoondoyal and others) who eventually led Mauritius to independence in 1965.

From the above it is clear that Mauritius was populated by people imported from different countries. It is of the utmost importance to keep in mind that the Chinese immigration also played a vital part in the Mauritian history. According to Addison and Hazareesingh (1984: 67), Chinese immigration started in the late 18th century and became more significant in the 19th century.

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[6] It was a system known as the "Old Immigrants" whereby only Indians who had completed their five-year contract and who had been re-registered were eligible to have a pass. It was noted by Addison and Hazareesingh (1984: 62) that in 1869, more than 30,000 Indians were arrested for vagrancy.

Similar to the Indian immigrants, the Chinese immigrants were compelled to leave their countries because of various factors: unemployment, poverty, economic crises and others. They were given the responsibility of managing the shops situated on the sugar plantations. Those shops were meant for Indian Indentured labourers to purchase certain basic necessities. The Chinese were mostly concentrated in retail business. Compared to the other segments of the population, the Chinese were able to climb up the social ladder at a quicker pace through their strong dedication to work and education. For the Asian population, hard work and unity were their main tools of social mobility.

1.1.3.2 20th century Mauritius under British rule

In the 19th century, a Council of Government mainly composed of a Chief Justice, a Chief Secretary, a Commanding Officer of the Garrison and a Controller of Customs was set up under the aegis of the Governor (cited in Addison & Hazareesingh 1984: 74). At the very beginning, there was no political movement in which all the different sections of the population were represented. In time, that Council went through various changes in the composition of its members. The right to vote was a privilege which mainly the rich people had. In those days, the Mauritian political sphere was principally dominated by two major political parties: the oligarchs and the democrats. After the election of 1886, the Governor, Pope Hennessy (cited in Addison & Hazareesingh 1984: 76), recognised that the Indians – although in great numbers – were hardly represented politically. He decided to appoint one Indian as Council member. The struggle of the working class started in the late 19th century and at the very beginning of the 20th century.

1.1.3.2.1 The political history of Mauritius

Manilal Doctor, an Indian Barrister who came to Mauritius in 1907, was one of the main initiators to unite the Indian population in their struggle to obtain political rights (cited in Addison & Hazareesingh 1984: 76). Various important

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personalities followed Manilal Doctor in making the first step to accede to Independence. Among various illustrious examples, it is crucial to mention Dr Maurice Curé who founded the Labour Party to militate for the rights of the working class (cited in Addison & Hazareesingh 1984: 84). The Labour Party succeeded in inciting the Government to establish trade unions and to legalise strikes, among others. Various important leaders followed, such as Emmanuel Anquetil, Basdeo and Sookdeo Bissoondoyal, who encouraged the working class to unite and fight against colonialism and repression (cited in Addison & Hazareesingh 1984: 84).

However, among all those who paved the way to Independence and whose contribution should not to be considered meagre, there was one man who stood out. He was Dr Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, a remarkably dynamic leader of the Labour Party, who led Mauritius to independence. His main ambition was to mobilise and unite the Indo-community in Mauritius. He led various campaigns and even set up a daily newspaper known as "Advance" (cited in Selvon 2005: 391). He was elected as member of the Council in 1940.

It was only during the Constitutional Conference of 1965 in London that the Labour Party voiced its wish to obtain the independence of Mauritius from the British (cited in Selvon 2005: 426). The British honoured the Labour Party's request, provided that islands of the Chagos group would be a British territory and that all their inhabitants would be deported to Mauritius. Mauritius obtained its independence on the 12th of March 1968 (cited in Selvon 2005: 436).

1.1.3.2.2 *The historical development of education under British rule*

When the British took over Mauritius, the Colonial Government changed the name of *L'Ecole Centrale* to the "Royal College" (Juggernauth 1993: 118). It is important to note that the Royal College also had its own primary section and therefore the setting up of a primary school on the island was not

necessary. Under the British Colonial rule, education took a new turn. Students, who performed well at the Royal College, were given scholarships to pursue their studies in England. They were also promised administrative posts in Mauritius. To Juggernauth (1993: 119), the Royal College did not only act as an efficient educating body, in the proper sense of the term, but "also reproduced the social and economic inequalities within the colony". As it was mentioned in the previous section[7], it was only when the colour bar was abolished that the free coloured boys had access to the Royal College.

According to Juggernauth (1993: 127), it was only due to the efforts of the Reverend Jean Lebrun, in 1815, that the first free primary schools were built in Port-Louis and in other regions of the island to provide education to the children of the slaves. Only in the 1830s did the government begin to control all educational institutions and their functioning, along with religious bodies including the Catholic and Anglican churches. Juggernauth (1993:129) quotes three educational ordinances of those days, namely the Education Ordinances of 1835, 1836 and 1839, in which the State and Religion took an active part.

With the British being at the head of the colony in the 19th century, Anglicization was imposed on the Mauritian population. Sturgis (cited in Juggernauth, 1993: 140) defines Anglicization as "the diffusion of English language and culture in the diverse British Colonies". Thus the education system was modelled on that of Britain. The most prominent school of the island, the Royal College, had to follow the rule and it moved from French to British structure. Other secondary institutions which came into existence needed to abide with the British organisation. English language superseded the French language in courts of law. At one point, in that same century, the Roman Catholic Church was in conflict with the Anglican Church. There was the process of proselytism in which people (especially dissatisfied people from the free coloured population who wanted to have a job in the civil service)

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[7] Refer to section 1.1.3.1.1

were being converted to Anglicanism. It was due to that threatening process of proselytism that the Roman Catholic Church started its missionary work in education. This led to two types of schools: the government schools and the Grant-in-aid schools. It is important to emphasise the fact that English and French were compulsory subjects in all schools.

From there on, various Education Ordinances were passed which entailed different reforms of the colony's education system. For example, Ordinance No. 20 of 1902 and Ordinance No. 28 of 1904 had to do with scholarships to be offered to the best candidates of the Royal College, to pursue higher education in the British metropolis (cited in Juggernauth 1993: 182). Girls' education grew in importance when, in 1845, the Loreto Irish nuns founded the primary schools for the girls of the colony. In 1847, as explained by Juggernauth (1993: 191), the Loreto nuns built the first secondary school for girls. To Juggernauth (1993: 193), the 1944 Education Ordinance represented a prominent change for the women of the colony, as it included the nomination of the first woman as a member of the Committee of Public Instruction. It is also important to note that in the late 19th century, government was the sole institution catering for the salary of teachers in the form of a fixed salary and result grants[8] (Juggernauth 1993: 201). In those days, a woman did not have the right to hold any certificate.

After much struggle to promote technical, agricultural and industrial education at school, the government finally succeeded in introducing a technical school in 1917 (cited in Juggernauth 1993: 197). The government's main objective was to have a specialised labour force to meet the requirements of the colony. However, this situation created grievances among the population because the elite education, which promoted the cultural reproduction of the British metropolis, was jealously kept within the walls of the Royal College. But the

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[8] Teachers had to go through different examinations to certify their competency. Based on the certificates received, they obtained additional income known as "result grants" (cited in Juggernauth 1993: 201).

government provided the opportunity for children from the lowest part of the social ladder, to have free access to the Royal College through scholarships. According to Juggernauth (1993: 210), there was competition between the different "sectorally fragmented" primary schools to make their students the luckiest ones by obtaining such scholarships. There were six scholarships awarded to boys, while only four scholarships were available for girls. In this way, the privileged position of the rich elites was brought under threat, as access was opened to the modest class people.

At the very beginning of the Indian immigration, education among the Indians was not a matter of great concern. The Colonial government instituted part-time schools for the Indian children, but the parents were mostly interested in sending their children to the fields in order to increase their monthly income. Tinker (cited in Bunwaree 1999: 137) notes that Indian Indentured labourers were viewed as "aliens, a race apart". They were treated as "separate and unequal" by the colonial administration (cited in Juggernauth 1993: 220). Education among Indians got a real boost when Mauritius was visited by the eminent political personality, M.K. Gandhi in 1901 (cited in Juggernauth 1993: 222). He raised awareness that education could be a powerful tool and could provide a gate-pass to participate more fully in the political and socio-economic life of the country. Various Mauritian intellectuals went to India, where they came across the important teachings of Tagore and Gandhi. When they returned to Mauritius, they led the opening of some 300 schools and trained more than 800 teachers of Asian Languages (cited in Juggernauth 1993: 223). They came to realise that they formed the majority of the population and that they were in a position to fight against colonial influence. In addition, they were able to conserve the Indian culture and did not allow themselves fall into the clutches of the Christian and Anglican protagonists.

1.1.4 Independent Mauritius

Mauritius is a developing country which had been able to eschew quite a number of economic disasters. For example, as noted by Bunwaree (1999: 136), the post-independent period was characterised as an era of serious unemployment, enormous balance of payment deficits, overpopulation and others. In those days, Mauritius had a monocrop economy based mainly on the sugar industry. Diversifying into other sectors, such as textiles and tourism, was considered to be an economic miracle. The success of the Export Processing Zone (EPZ) brought Mauritius the title of the "tiger of the Indian Ocean" (Bunwaree 1999: 138). Mauritius has become one of the most important high-class destinations in the world. The island depended on three main pillars of industry: sugar, textile (EPZ) and tourism.

In this global era, the two main pillars of the Mauritian economy, namely the sugar industry and the EPZ sector, are not as successful as they were in the 1980s. The country has lost its European Market as far as sugar is concerned, and has to face giant competitors such as Brazil on the international scene. The Multi-Fibre Agreement Act was a deal established between the European Union and Mauritius in which the latter had the privilege of selling a certain quota of its textile products on the European Market. The Multi-Fibre Agreement Act came to an end in 2005 and at present Mauritius has to face important giants of the textile industry, such as China, on the global market.

Nowadays, the EPZ sector is known as the Export Oriented Enterprise (EOE), and its exports for the year 2008 was assessed at Rs 35,080 – compared to Rs 37,840 million for 2007 (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Finance and Economic Development 2010a: 11). As noted by UNESCO (2006: 20), although there has been an increase in growth rate, there has also been an increase in unemployment. Therefore, the government faces an enormous challenge to provide its citizens with an education which fits the requirements of the labour. It is important to note that Mauritius requires an educated and efficient labour force to meet the demands of a knowledge-based society: a change brought about by the effects of globalisation.

1.1.4.1   *The historical development of education during the post-independence period*

In the 1950s and 1960s, education was paid for in fees and not everyone could afford to send their children to school. According to UNESCO (2000: 19), the movement for free education started in the 1940s, and it was only in 1982 that free primary education became compulsory in Mauritius. In 1976, the government at that time set education free despite the requirements of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to reduce social costs. However, in 1981, the Mauritian government had accepted a loan of £15 million and had to follow the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) (cited in Bunwaree 1999: 137). The SAP argued for a reduction in all social costs, including the cost invested in education. In those days, twenty private schools[9] were closed down (cited in Bunwaree 1999: 137). The SAP had major repercussions for the vulnerable groups of society. Although the SAP urged the government to review its policy of free education, government steadfastly refused.

Various plans and reforms were carried out in order to promote education in Mauritius. The White Paper of 1984 (cited in Parsuramen 2006: 64) enabled the sector to improve in terms of quality, equality, importance and cost-effectiveness. However, to Parsuramen (2006: 64), the Master Plan for Education of 1991 was much better as it made room for short-, medium- and long-term schemes for the improvement of the education system. The plan was based on the World Conference, held in Jomtien (Thailand) in 1990, in which **Education for All** was the main goal to be attained (cited in Parsuramen 2006: 64). Based on the Master Plan 1991, the United Nations Development Programme (cited in Parsuramen 2006: 77) claimed that Mauritius was able to boost its GDP and experienced employment growth due to its education and the various public social services. The plan took into

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[9] These schools were funded by the government and charged no fees.

consideration the multi-ethnic aspect of the country and the acute problem of private tuition which created enormous stress on the students. Equality in terms of access was given priority. In the year 1995 (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Economic Planning and Development 1996: 36), the enrolment of students at secondary level amounted to 44, 270 males and 46,834 females. The percentage of passes at HSC increased 63.3% in 1994 to 66.3% in 1995 (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Economic Planning and Development 1996: ii).

Despite the progress made in terms of massive investments in the education sector (free and universal education, compulsory education, free textbooks at primary level, tertiary courses offered), in the 1990s the Mauritian education system still had important problems to solve. This is why the White Paper was produced in 1997. The Ministry of Education (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development 1997: 7), in those days, identified various defects in the education system: inequalities based on ethnicity, fierce competition for the Certificate for Primary Education (CPE), which created enormous stress among young pupils, overcrowded classrooms, a poor teacher/pupil ratio, teaching based on chalk and talk, limited extra-curricular activities, and many more (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development 1997: 7). The plan was aimed at empowering teachers and motivating them to higher aspirations, the elimination of private tuition, providing more extra-curricular activities, the introduction of new subjects such as Hinduism, Islamic studies and others, reducing classes to no more than 35 pupils, and various other recommendations.

1.2 Education in Mauritius in the 21st global era

After having had a broad view of how Mauritius acquired its independence from the British and how its education system, once thought to be inaccessible, had been made available to all ethnic groups and social classes, it is important at this point to focus on the actual Mauritian formal education structure as well as the reforms developed to achieve quality education.

1.2.1 The Mauritian formal education structure

This section attempts to provide a brief description of how the Mauritian formal education is structured. The formal education system in Mauritius is regulated by the Education Regulations of 1957 and the Education Act of 1982 as well as their various amendments (cited in UNESCO 2006; 19). The Ministry of Education has divided the country into four different zones, which are explained later on in this section. There are 180 schools in Mauritius (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment 2008: 4), including State Secondary Schools[10], privately aided schools (Private Secondary Schools Authority (PSSA)[11] which includes the schools of the *Bureau de l'Education Catholique* (BEC)[12]), and non-aided schools. The Mauritian education system is based on the British model and consists of a 9-year basic compulsory education. The structure involves one year in pre-primary, six years in primary, five years in lower secondary and two years in upper secondary (cited in UNESCO 2006: 21). Education is compulsory up to the age of 16 (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources 2008b: 8). In so doing, Mauritius strives to achieve the much desired Education For All.

Admission to secondary school involves primary students to take the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) examination at the end of the primary level (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resouces 2008b: 3). According UNESCO (2006: 22), students failing the CPE for two consecutive years join the prevocational secondary stream. Prevocational studies provide a means by which students, although unable to adapt to academic studies, can obtain a certificate which will enable them to find a job after school. The policy of the Ministry of Education is to have every student

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[10] These schools are controlled and funded by the State.

[11] These schools are private secondary institutions funded by the State.

[12] BEC schools form part of the PSSA and they are managed by the Roman Catholic Church.

educated, regardless of his or her academic potential. Prevocational students have a different curriculum from those who have passed the CPE (commonly known as the academic stream or mainstream students).

The prevocational curriculum lasts three years (Grades I – III) and afterwards the students may join the training institutions of manual work or they may start working. After completion of the lower secondary level, academic stream students must sit for the Cambridge School Certificate (SC) examination (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resouces 2008b: 3). After the results, they may leave school and find a job or they may proceed to the upper secondary level (that is, a pre-university qualification). At the end of the two years of upper secondary, students are requested to sit for the Cambridge Higher School Certificate (HSC) examination (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resouces 2008b: 3). The HSC qualification permits students to seek a job or to be admitted to university and follow courses of their choice.

It is also vital at this point of the discussion, to consider the contribution of the parastatal bodies to the formal education system of Mauritius. By definition (as cited in Pay Research Bureau 2008: 1), the parastatal bodies are components of the public sector and are seen as legal entities which are independent or partly independent to take decisions or finance their organisations. The government is mostly viewed as a participant in their activities. The parastatal bodies which actively participate in secondary education, include the Private Secondary Schools Authority, the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, the Mauritius Institute of Education, the Mauritius Examination Syndicate and the Mauritius College of the Air.

The Private Secondary Schools Authority (PSSA) was set up in 1976 and is mainly responsible for providing secondary and prevocational education through private schools (cited in Pay Research Bureau 2008: 348). Its main function is to maintain the infrastructure and monitor the various pedagogical areas of the private schools. It also controls the recruitment of staff, promotions and transfers of the teaching staff, as well as the expulsion of

students from private schools. It consists of both grant-aided and non-aided private secondary schools.

The Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) provides secondary and tertiary education. It also favours the research programmes in the fields of both education and culture at different levels: national, regional and international. It is comprised of various departments at tertiary level, namely Indian, Mauritian, African and Chinese studies, fine arts and others (cited in Pay Research Bureau 2008: 125). It also consists of five secondary schools among which there is a prevocational secondary school. It is important to note that the secondary schools of the MGI dispense education to both girls and boys without having gender-segregated institutions, as the State Secondary Schools have. The MGI is solely responsible for the recruitment of its teaching and non-teaching staff.

The Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE) was set up in 1973 and is mostly responsible for fostering research in education, developing the curriculum, providing training to both secondary and primary teachers as well as to the heads of schools and inspectors, among various other services. It offers courses such as Teacher's Diploma, Bachelor Degree in Education, Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) and others (cited in Pay Research Bureau 2008: 188).

The Mauritius Examination Syndicate (MES), which has been set up in 1984, caters principally for the organisation and proper conduct of examinations at all levels (cited in Pay Research Bureau 2008: 174). It also engages itself in research activities pertaining to examination. Further to this, it associates itself with other examination bodies such as the University of South Africa (UNISA). The Mauritius College of the Air (MCA) was set up in 1971. It supports the importance of education, culture, science and arts mainly via the use of mass media and distance education (cited in Pay Research Bureau 2008: 165).

1.2.1.1 A brief description of the Zones – in particular Zone 2

The Reform of 2001 (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2001a: 24) has brought about the division of the country into four different zones: Zone 1, Zone 2, Zone 3 and Zone 4. The Island of Rodrigues (forming part of the State of Mauritius) represents the fifth zone. The major purpose of having the country divided into four zones was to facilitate the admission of students in secondary schools and to have proper school management under the new system of grading at the CPE examination. There are altogether 70 Secondary State Schools in the four zones, and 108 secondary schools in the private sector (that is, the PSSA, the BEC and the other fee-paying schools).

The Reform of 2001 condemns the philosophy of *école unique*, that is, "unique school" (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2001a: 27). Since Mauritius is a multicultural society the private sector has the right to manage its schools the way it intends to do so. In a similar aspect, all the State Secondary Schools are known to be gender-segregated, except for the secondary schools of the MGI. This Institute was set up in 1976 as a joint venture between the Prime Minister of Mauritius and the Prime Minister of India (cited in Pay Research Bureau 2008: 125). The main objective of the Institute is to promote education and Indian and African culture as a whole. It has both its tertiary and secondary departments. There are five secondary schools under the MGI. The schools' population is made up of both boys and girls. Although, the schools have their own systems of management, they nevertheless form part of the State Secondary Schools.

Zone 2 counts 51 State Pre-Primary Schools (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment 2008: 9), 58 State Primary Schools (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment 2008: 11) and 18 State Secondary Schools — including three schools of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment 2008: 19). Each zone possesses a Zonal Education Office and a Zonal Director. Zone 2, like the other Zones, is responsible for the school

infrastructures, an adequate supply of educators, and the necessary equipment and materials required for the good functioning of its schools. It also provides a body of inspectors whose main task is to visit the different schools in order to monitor the educational activities under operation. However, the zones are not authorised to legislate their own policies. They all follow the same policies, established by the Ministry of Education and Human Resources of Mauritius.

1.2.2 The 21st century reforms

This section examines the different reforms undertaken by the Ministry of Education as from the year 2000. For example, the Reform of 2001 (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2001b: 5) in the educational system, is one which had as its main objective the elimination of the "rat race" competition at the CPE level (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2001b: 5). Before the reform, students who had completed the CPE examination were ranked according to their results, which gave them access to prestigious secondary institutions known as "star" schools (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2001b: 3). Students would strive hard in order to be admitted to those very demanding schools. Therefore, the Reform of 2001 represented a cornerstone in the development of the Mauritian education system. However, in 2005, a new government was elected and it has introduced certain changes to the Reform of 2001, because its main aim is to pursue quality education.

The Reform of 2001 was considered a revolutionary milestone in the education system because it wanted to erode that enormous competitiveness (also known as the rat race competition) at CPE level (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2001b: 5). For example, it was noted in 2001 that there were on average 18,000 children who passed the CPE annually (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2001b: 3). From this average, only 4,500 students would obtain the grade "A" (that is, the highest grade) in four subjects, and only these students would

have access to the 1,000 places of the "star" secondary schools (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2001b: 3). Therefore, pupils were directed through fierce "rat race" competition in order to secure a seat in one of those "star" schools (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2001b: 5). Tremendous psychological pressure was exerted on the students as well as on the parents. Private tuition became the problem. The students, who passed the CPE, were ranked according to the total number of marks obtained in their exams. The rank would determine the type of secondary school for further studies.

Consequently, the Reform of 2001 (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2001a: 24) replaced the ranking system by the grading system. This latter system did not involve any ranking or any place in the star secondary schools. The star schools were converted into form VI colleges and permitted students to be admitted to the secondary institutions situated in their geographical areas. This abolition of the star schools was termed the "Parity of Esteem" (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2001a: 26). The rat race competition was eliminated to promote the physical development, team spirit and creativity of the students. Since the island was divided into four different Zones, a child would secure a place in a secondary school nearest to his or her residence. The difficulty of managing a class of pupils of mixed abilities, with a common syllabus, did not raise any concern with the Ministry of Education in those days, and also not with the current one. However, as stipulated by the Ministry of Education (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2001a: 27), the managers of the private schools had the right to reserve half of their places based on their own criteria of attribution. For example, Confessional schools had the right to reserve half of their places to students of the Catholic faith. Where does the concept of parity of esteem lie then? It is a question which lingers in one's mind when one considers that fact. Education became compulsory up to the age of 16 (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources 2008b: 8).

However, after the elections of 2005, there were new amendments made to the Reform of 2001 by the new ruling party. The New Minister of Education did not agree with the grading system because he believed in the maintenance of an elite class. Therefore, he re-introduced the star secondary schools and specified that only the candidates who had obtained a grade 'A+' in four subjects would be admitted to these schools. Education is still free and compulsory up to age of 16. Private schools still have the right to reserve half of the places in their institutions. The question of mixed abilities in a class is still not considered.

Furthermore, the modified Reform argues for quality education, especially at secondary level. In this same aspect, secondary teachers are nowadays termed as educators (secondary). According to an article from the *L'Express* newspaper (cited in Hilbert 2008a: http://www.w3c.org/), the means to achieve the quality education proposed by the Pay Research Bureau (PRB) are as follows: recruitment to the post of educator will necessitate a teacher's licence; educators are expected to eliminate rote learning and promote critical thinking; hours of schooling have been extended to minimise private tuitions; and teachers are required to have more extra-curricular activities with the students. BEC condemns the spirit of private tuition.

It is essential to point out that educators have signed and have been compelled to the recommendations of the PRB (cited in Sooknah 2008: 5), in order to benefit from an increase in their salaries. Before the PRB, educators were allowed to move outside the school terrain whenever they were free, provided they would sign the movement book. At present, they only very occasionally have a 30-minutes gate-pass, with the special permission from the Rector. The workload has increased from 27 periods to 30 periods per week.

All these changes brought about much frustration among educators, so much so that trade unions incited educators to general strikes in 2008, to make the government change its mind. In those days, school was breaking at 15:00 instead of the normal time, which was 14:20 for educators only. The trade

unions (cited in Sooknah 2008: 5) did not agree with the language used by the Ministry of Education to impose those rules. To these activists, educators were treated like slaves. According to an article which appeared in *L'Express* (cited in Sooknah 2008: 5), the Ministry of Education insisted that this additional time was meant for educators to meet parents of students presenting some form of difficulties, or the educator could use this time to prepare their plan of work or to meet students for extra learning time. In fact, the Ministry of Education (cited in Sooknah 2008: 5) wanted to eliminate private tuition, which was usually provided from 15:00 onward. However, no strike took place. Consensus was reached between the trade unions and the government not to extend school hours with more than 10 minutes. But the other recommendations had to prevail.

After the general elections of 2010, a new Minister of Education, the Honourable Vasant Bunwaree (cited in Bhookhun *et al.* 2010: 4), was appointed and various amendments were made to the education system. For example, National Assessment will be introduced for Form III students (the third level of the Lower Form) as from the year 2011 in order to promote quality education (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Human Resources 2006: 21). Until now, Form III students have sat for examination papers prepared by their own schools. Now all the Form III students around the island will sit for the same examination papers, as advocated by the Ministry of Education (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Human Resources 2006: 21). It will judge their capabilities of moving to Form IV in which preparation for the SC Examinations starts. Students will be assessed according to the following: numeracy, literacy, basic science and Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Human Resources 2006: 21).

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources (2006: 21) states that the National Assessment not only judges the performance of students at this level, but it also gives the chance to prevocational students to move to the academic stream. It also provides mainstream students with the

possibility to move to the prevocational stream. Each successful student will receive a certificate as proof of their competency. In addition, new subjects are introduced at Form V level, including 21st Century Science, Physical Education and others (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Human Resources 2006: 13). Students at HSC level will have the choice to choose between Higher School Certificate examinations and International Baccalaureate (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Human Resources 2006: 13). Moreover, the Ministry of Education (cited in Hilbert 2008b: 9) is proposing to mix academic and vocational training in HSC. Students will have the choice to choose either between the HSC or the HSC professional. This new certificate of HSC professional has the same value as the HSC, but the difference implies an additional one year of training to attain completion. The HSC is a two-year programme and contrary to the HSC professional, does not include job placement.

It has to be noted that most of these reforms are more theoretically than practically based. They all present important objectives, but how far have these been achieved and how many remain to be achieved? It is an important question which demands a researched answer.

1.3 Conclusion

The history of education in Mauritius can be seen as a long historical struggle against the iron fist of colonialism. It is now clear, as elaborated on in the previous sections, that the Mauritian population is one which has been imported from different countries and that various important visionaries had toiled almost all their life to build a country where all Mauritians would be able to enjoy the same rights. Education was and remains the only tool which enables mobility on the social ladder. Gaining access to education by the most vulnerable groups of the colonist society was the first victory over colonialism. It also represented a first step to liberation from white supremacy. Most of the reforms presented by the Ministry of Education, prescribe some form of quality education in line with their objectives. But one should not go

astray and needs to keep in mind that one of the country's major aims is to create a pool of educated labour force, although they try to adopt a holistic approach. In this chapter, the reader was presented with an analysis and description of the political history of Mauritius and its education system. The reader should now be in a better position to understand the literary analysis on the quality of education, which is discussed in Chapter 2. It is important to keep in mind the cultural diversity of the Mauritian population, the over-reliance of its Ministry of Education on a content driven education, and its main objective in having mass education.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

Since this chapter pertains to an analysis of the literature on quality education, it is crucial to start with a definition. Although the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organisation (UNESCO 2004: 2) argues that it is difficult to define quality education it nevertheless believes that such an education must be instrumental to the child's full development in terms of cognition, emotion and creativity. Two important factors to quality education are learning the process by which and the speed at which people learn. It is clearly understood that quality education should not focus only on the aspect of achieving good grades at school but it must also consider the creative and emotional development of individuals as well as inculcating them citizenship values. The organisation links the term to the sixth Dakar goal which is "Education For All" (cited in UNESCO 2000: 8). Although UNESCO provides important recommendations to achieve **Education For All**, it nevertheless fails to consider poorly resourceful countries which usually do not have the means to implement those recommendations. Functionalists as well as critical theorists have elaborated much on the issue of education. They brought important insights, which led to various improvements in the education system. The work of these pertinent theorists is analysed in the following sections. **Content driven education** and **hidden curriculum** are significant concepts to be taken into consideration when analysing quality in education.

2.1 Content driven education

Based on UNESCO's (2004: 2) definition on quality education, it is clearly understood that education should not centre only on the content matter of the subjects taught at school. The term content driven education is used to refer to an education which concentrates mostly on the content of the subjects taught at school with little attention provided to the creative and emotional

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development of the individual. According to Jackson *et al.* (1993: 14), "…the curriculum is simply the subject matter of instruction." It tells the educator what needs to be taught and what students are supposed to assimilate. By the same token, Zachariah (1970: 152) uses the term academic education to emphasise on an education which centres mostly on the content matter of the curriculum. He defines academic education as one which is comprised mainly of teaching and assimilation of "humanistic or abstract subjects"; it also consists of textbooks based on particular syllabi; it further involves formal examination where students are assessed; and based on the results obtained in the examination at the final level, it ensures access to university. However, an education which is too much driven towards the content matter of the curriculum will not leave much space for the creative and emotional development of children. It is an education which exerts constant pressure on students to achieve even better grades.

The above definition resumes in a few words the education system in Mauritius. The Ministry of Education in Mauritius strongly believes that achieving quality education can be measured through the SC and HSC examinations. In other words, testing how much students have been able to assimilate. The government has concentrated much energy in building a number of new secondary schools to accommodate an increase in the population of secondary students. The main aim is to provide an Education For All.

Moreover, Zachariah (1970: 152) believes that an education, which is too much based on the content matter of the curriculum, has recourse to rote learning. Prayag (cited in *L'Express* 2008: 9) argues that rote learning was essential for the Mauritian economy during the 19th century, in which a labour force was mainly required for routine jobs in factories. At present, Mauritius requires another type of labour force to suit the demands of a knowledge-based society and a Regional Knowledge hub that it aspires to become (cited in Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources 2008b: 2). It is important to note that in this new era rote learning is considered as an outdmoded teaching approach. As it is rightly portrayed by Cohen (2006:

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201), the objectives of education must not only give priority to a content driven education but also to the development of social, emotional and ethical aptitudes. Educators are expected to use the best pedagogy to be ethical leaders and to promote the all-round development of the students.

It is further believed that rote learning leads students to a passive position, that is, deprived from their critical cognitive capabilities. The work of Freire (1972: 45) becomes important in this particular area of research as it criticises the passivity of students. According to Freire (1972: 46), rote learning views knowledge as a gift possessed by those who are treated as knowledgeable and who are responsible in providing knowledge to those who are not yet knowledgeable. In this case, the teacher can be described as the narrative subject and the students as the listening objects. Students are seen as containers in which the teacher fills in deposits of knowledge. Therefore, the students only receive, file and store the deposits. The fact that the student (in Freire's (1972: 35) words, "the oppressed") is treated to be an ignorant and passive listener and the teacher (in Freire's (1972: 35) words, "the oppressor") as knowledgeable, is seen by Freire (1972: 35) as a form of the pedagogy of the oppressed.

Similarly, Bowles and Gintis (1976: 40) refer to the jug and mug philosophy which also forms part of the hidden curriculum. This philosophy treats the students as empty mugs in which the teachers pour in knowledge. This situation of passivity also leads to the acceptance of the hierarchy in which the students are expected to obey the teachers and other persons assuming authority. Acceptance of hierarchy, according to Bowles and Gintis (1976: 40), is essential for the world of work. Nevertheless, Reynolds (cited in Haralambos & Holborn 2004: 701) condemns the authors for failing to consider the influence of the formal curriculum which shapes the critical thought of pupils instead of teaching them to keep the passive position. Nevertheless, the work of these theorists has brought much development concerning the elimination of rote learning.

Therefore, to eliminate rote learning, Freire (1972: 46) proposes a libertarian education in which students are not seen as passive listeners or objects and

the teachers are not referred to as subjects of the learning process. In fact, students must be encouraged to develop their critical consciousness. To be able to attain libertarian education, the teacher-student contradiction must be eliminated, leaving space for teacher-student reconciliation. For this to occur, Freire (1972: 49) argues that the teacher must leave his or her role of "depositor", "prescriber" or "domesticator" to become the "revolutionary educator", who must work hand in hand with the students in optimising their aptitudes to critical thought. Positive societal changes can only be possible if there are individuals who have a critical mindset of their society. However, the work of Freire (http://education.stateuniversity.com/) has been criticised on a number of issues. For example, the conservatives (http://education.stateuniversity.com/) treated him as utopian and demagogic because of his libertarian view of education. He has also been criticised by the Marxists (http://education.stateuniversity.com/) because of his adherence to the Catholic Church.

A similar point of view on the significance of developing the critical mind of students, is shared by Grauerholz and Bouma-Holtrop (2003: 485). These social scientists view critical thinking as a dynamic, critical and creative investigation which should not be excluded from one's education. They also note that critical thinking is a poorly researched area although many sociologists have exposed its importance. Therefore, it is wise to mention that in this globalised era, students must learn how to be dynamic, critical and creative in order to meet the challenges of globalisation.

In that same regard, it is also essential to consider the work of Barry and King (1998: 181), which emphasises the importance of promoting the student's interest in class. They discuss different teaching strategies which educators normally use in the classroom and they evaluate how far these particular methods really benefit the students or hinder their capacity to learn. Barry and King (1998: 186) refer to the drill method, which consists of the repetition of the lessons in view of requiring a mechanical answer from students. This method of teaching is based on rote learning and is seen as being ineffective if the implementation is dull and boring to students. It can only be effective if

the students have understood the lessons. Methods such as the stimulation strategy or even the group discussion strategy are seen to be much better as they encourage students' participation, creativity and critical thought. If these methods are implemented appropriately, the students' concentration can be favoured and learning can be at its optimum. But educators require training to know how to implement these teaching strategies within the classroom.

At this particular point of the discussion it is wise to analyse the steps taken by the Ministry of Education to achieve quality education in Mauritius. In fact, a strategy plan for 2008-2020 has been developed in order to attain the objectives set by UNESCO, by the year 2020 (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education, Culture and Resources 2008a: 19). It was noticed that the word achievement is often mentioned in the document. Based on another document, known as the Programme Based Budget (PBB)[13] (http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/mof/files/20082009/education.pdf) and produced by the Ministry of Education, the main policy of the plan (namely to ensure quality education) is to upgrade entrance to "broad-based secondary education". It is believed that in so doing, the complete development of the students' capabilities (founded on international standards) is ensured. This improvement will be measured by five points increase in the number of students attaining School Certificate (SC) level from the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) and three points increase in the number of students attaining the Higher School Certificate (HSC) level from SC by 2013. In other words, the Ministry of Education hopes to increase the pass rates both at the lower and the upper secondary levels.

The statistical data presented in the PBB shows that by 2010, the pass rate for SC examination has to increase from 76.8% (which is the pass rate for 2007) to 80.0% (http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/mof/files/20082009/education.pdf). Similarly, the pass rate for HSC examination has to increase from 77.9% (the pass rate

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[13] Refer to Appendix B

for 2007) to 79.0% (http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/mof/files/20082009/education.pdf) in 2010. From these official documents and statistics, it is obvious that the Mauritian education system is optimising too much on numerical targets as academic achievement, which is seen as the best means to reach quality education.

By the same token, if one looks at the School Management Manual (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources 2009: 47) for rectors, quality education is measured through the achievement of the performance indicators of the PBB (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources 2009: 47). Educators are expected to produce the following documents: a scheme of work for each class being taught, a weekly plan of the lessons and a daily lesson plan. There will also be a pedagogical committee to evaluate the performance of students and to decide on what can be done to improve on such academic performance. Moreover, educators are expected to deliver an education which is based on each student's needs. The response to such an argument one might have, as an educator, would be how to apply such a strategy within a class of mixed abilitiy. It is clear that the Ministry of Education surfs vaguely on the issue of quality in education. Up to this point, the so-called World Class Education is merely synonymous to 100% passes at all levels in all Mauritian Secondary Schools.

Goldstein (2004: 7) has examined the concept of "numerical targets", especially those imposed by UNESCO on developing countries. For example, according to UNESCO (2000: 8), by 2015 all children – regardless of ethnic background and gender – must be provided with good quality, free and compulsory education. Goldstein (2004: 10) provides examples of important research works in which it was shown that a rise in test scores usually do not equate to learning achievement. In fact, such numerical targets lead to various dysfunctions. For example, students feel an increase in anxiety about their assessments, especially poor performers, and educators cannot adapt their creative capacity in teaching. Goldstein (2004: 12) also argues that countries poor in resources will seek financial aid from the international financing

institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, to implement programmes and reforms so as to achieve the numerical targets of UNESCO. Although UNESCO provides recommendations to achieve specific targets in education, it fails to recognise the financial constraints of these countries. For example, in some countries, educators require training to be able to use the effective pedagogical tools to promote learning; other countries need to build more schools to achieve compulsory and free education for all, and there are many other such examples.

The Ministry of Education in Mauritius (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Human Resources 2007: 1–11) is already working on developing effective pedagogical tools for educators in order to achieve the numerical targets of UNESCO. For example, it strongly believes in the promotion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) as an important pedagogical tool in teaching and learning processes. ICT is considered to be an important tool which favours self-learning and students' interest, if used appropriately as part of the classroom environment. UNESCO (2005a: 39) acknowledges the integration of pedagogy and technology as part of the teaching process. Integrating both pedagogy and technology is thought to promote the development of the child's critical mind, creativity and skills in problem solving. For example, these skills can be built up through projects, research activities, invention, creative exercises and others made possible via ICT. According to UNESCO (2005a: 39), "Learning becomes constructivist, self-directed, flexible, interactive, deep, collaborative processing of knowledge". ICT facilitates learning for adolescents already familiar and addicted to that virtual world of quick communication and information. They are less and less interested in tangible educational materials such as textbooks. Constraints do exist, nevertheless, especially when the educator is not provided with the required resources to use ICT as part of the learning process.

In addition, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources (2006: 13) is emphasising the importance of science as playing an integral part in developing a knowledge-based society. For instance, it is making General Science (also known as 21st Science Century) a compulsory subject up to

Form V level (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Human Resources 2006: 13). Those students opting for pure sciences as subjects at Form V level will have to add one social science to the list of subjects. This view of making science a compulsory subject in the lower secondary was proposed already way back in 1992. It was suggested at that time to review the content of the textbook and to set up a Science Centre at the Mauritius Institute of Education – MIE – (cited in Ministry of Education and Science 1992: 10).

At HSC level, subjects such as philosophy, travel and tourism, and psychology have been introduced into the curriculum (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Human Resources 2006: 13). The Ministry of Education and Human Resources (2006: 12) has brought many changes at the level of the curriculum, and with the introduction of the National Assessment in Form III it hopes to stimulate scientific reasoning and linguistic competencies (both oral and written) within students. But even with those good intentions, the education remains content driven with an overloaded curriculum. It is a fact which is recognised by the Ministry of Education (cited in UNESCO 2006: 89), because it proposes to institute the formative assessment instead of the actual summative assessment. Formative assessment is thought to promote students' learning, whereas the summative assessment is believed to encourage rote memorisation. The points which can be raised include the way it will be implemented in all schools, whether educators will benefit from some form of training to use this new system, and the response of students towards formative assessment, among others. To have answers to these questions will depend on the time it will take to implement the formative assessment. The Ministry of Education takes time to implement its solutions.

As far as the Ministry of Education is concerned, one can deduce that it is mainly concentrating on trying to meet the numerical targets of UNESCO by imposing its own numerical targets. The literature considered above clearly stipulates that having an education which is largely content driven does not suffice in rendering well-educated and knowledgeable individuals. This is where the all-round development of the child holds its importance.

2.2 The educator's required competencies and the resources necessary in the promotion of the all-round development of students

With a view to implement the objectives of the Reform of 2001, a new curriculum was implemented at primary level. The Ministry of Education and Scientific Research (2001b: 1) felt that students, at such a very young age, could no more be subjected to that degree of academic pressure and stress. New subjects such as physical education, citizenship education, arts and music, among others were introduced to counteract this particular situation (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education and Scientific Research 2001b: 1). Other plans including the strategy plan for 2008–2020 (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources 2008a: 7) were devised in order to prove the commitment of the Ministry of Education to promote the all-round development of the child, which forms part of UNESCO's objectives in achieving quality education. In the previous section, the reader was confronted with the writings of various sociologists propounding an education which must not be solely content driven but which needs to stimulate the critical mind of learners. However, educators find their capacities in doing so constrained, because they are not offered the necessary resources to encourage the emotional and creative development of their students.

Many believe that for an educator to be an ethical leader and to promote the emotional development of a child, he or she needs to consider the moral aspects of his or her own teaching. When trying to reflect on the roles of educators, as being either a subject teacher or an ethical leader or both, one needs to consider the definition of a teacher. According to Jackson, Boostrom and Hansen (1993: 271), teachers can be defined as "… sworn foes of ignorance in all its forms. They are also guardians of our cultural heritage. Those dual obligations commit them to action". In other words, the educator must be the master of all knowledge; he or she must believe in the values and norms that he or she preaches in class and be ethical (that is, to be right and just).

Jackson *et al.* (1993: xi) refer to the importance of the moral dimensions of the school which, according to them, are often left unconsidered. To these

authors, the educator is on a stage and is regularly subjected to criticism by his or her students. In the options that they propose as approaches to teaching, one can find the child-centred approach. It is an approach which implies considering children "… as individuals rather than as walking 'brain boxes' or statistical averages that exist only as abstractions" (cited in Jackson *et al.* 1993: 275). In other words, the educator must consider the thoughts and feelings of the child. For instance, if the child is not able to concentrate in class, the educator must inquire whether there are certain external environmental factors (such as a broken family) which may prevent the child from being serious about his or her studies.

The authors also point to the teacher-centred approach, which refers to the educator as having absolute control of the classroom environment and decisions (cited in Jackson *et al.* 1993: 277). The educator is at the centre of the stage and his or her decisions are the most important ones. The types of moral values and the messages encoded by students may influence their behaviour towards the educator. The third option which they consider concerns the educator giving utmost priority to the teaching of the subject matter. Such an approach cannot consider the child at the centre and thus does not make an educator ethical in nature.

Moreover, Jackson *et al.* (1993: 7) believe that, although students are provided with a list of rules and regulations to be followed, they are also exposed to various messages of a moral nature when they are at school. For example, the graduation ceremony or even the morning assemblies form part and parcel of the moral rituals or ceremonies of the school, and form part of the hidden curriculum. This is very important because they enable the transmission of certain moral values necessary for the all-round development of the child. Certain moral lessons are also taught in subjects such as Social Studies, in which students learn through various examples of accomplishments achieved by fictitious personages or eminent personalities. However, Jackson *et al.* (1993: 7) emphasise the significance of religious classes which bring more in terms of moral education to students. Religious

classes remain optional in all State Secondary Schools compared to the Confessional or Catholic schools of Mauritius.

Furthermore, Jackson *et al.* (1993: 17) argue that the element of "truthfulness" is very important for an educator to be able to maintain discipline inside the classroom. Everyone, including educator and students, must speak the truth. For example, the educator cannot threaten badly behaved students by enumerating a list of punishments, without action being taken. It only encourages students not to be truthful. "Truthfulness" (cited in Jackson *et al.* 1993: 17) adds up to the ethical aptitudes of the educator. These sociologists also urge educators to have what they term the "sympathetic bias" (cited in Jackson *et al.* 1993: 260), in which the educators must identify the best element in their students to promote the latter's achievement. In so doing, educators will be able to look for the expressive qualities in each and every action of their students. It is also advisable for educators to take some time to reflect on what goes on in their classrooms: they can talk with other colleagues, or write in a notepad, or reflect on their own experiences, in order to extract new meanings of what has happened during the day. Otherwise, as it has been warned by Jackson *et al.* (1993: 263), the educators may develop either a too optimistic or a too pessimistic view of the situation.

Likewise, the strategy plan for 2008–2020 clearly mentions the strong commitment of the Ministry of Education to establishing a culture of achievement for the all-round development of the Mauritian child (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources 2008a: 7). Although the plan considers the creative and social development of the child as vital in its education, it does not really explore the ways through which these can be promoted. For instance, it does not explain how educators at secondary level can possibly meet these challenges. The sixth Dakar Goal of UNESCO (2000: 17) to achieve quality education places strong emphasis on an education which needs to enhance the life of students and not only be a tool of knowledge acquisition. It also draws on the essentiality of educators' training in meeting the objectives.

In the millennium national strategy for sustainable development 1999–2005, the Ministry of Economic Development, Productivity and Regional Development (2000: 83) makes it clear that educators must bring about important changes at the level of both their mind-set and teaching methods to meet the objectives of the new reform. The Ministry of Education and Human Resources (2006: 16) pleads for educators who are "imaginative, creative, resourceful, who can go beyond the textbook". Training (such as professional training for trainee educators and continuous professional development for in-service educators) will be provided to meet these goals. How far will the Ministry of Education keep its promises before another government comes in power and changes its opinion? It is crucial to note that, without the necessary materials and training provided to educators, it becomes difficult for them to promote the all-round development of their students.

It is also important to consider the work of Durkheim (cited in Lukes 1973: 111) at this point of the discussion. Durkheim (cited in Lukes 1973: 111) only believes in the all-round development of the child if it benefits society. In fact, he views education as the socialisation of the young and as an instrument used by society to re-create and sustain its own existence. Therefore, for Durkheim (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 13), education is not meant to develop a child's abilities or intellectual potential for his or her own sake, but primarily to meet societal needs. For example, long ago, sciences did not have that much importance for society but today it is of utmost significance to have people with scientific knowledge as part of the labour force. Durkheim (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 21) places much emphasis and importance on inculcating the virtues of science at school. He believes that science will enable individuals to understand why they have to abide by certain moral standards – and consequently rational actions will follow. Hence, the school must be the institution providing scientific and moral education.

Durkheim (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 7) also argues that it is crucial to have discipline at the centre of one's educational structure, because discipline favours society in terms of sustainable order. However, Durkheim (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 20) condemns the use of corporal punishment as a

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means of maintaining order and discipline at school, as it undermines the dignity of human beings, which is an important value. Instead, he advocates the use of consensus, values, norms and morality to control human impulses and actions. He argues that education must socialise individuals to restrain their desires through self-discipline, to quote an example. To illustrate this particular viewpoint, he provides the example of "anomie" (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 14). He explains that an increase in suicides can be explained by the increase in the number of individuals living in a state of anomie (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 7). He believes that anomie occurs when society is not stable and this situation impacts on the individual's personality. The school must be the agency of socialisation which limits one's desires according to one's real capacities.

Durkheim's views on education (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 22) have been criticised to a large extent. It is felt that he provides a too rosy picture of the social reality under study. He sees society's rules and regulations as being sufficient to restrain people's desires so as to avoid chaos in society. He sees society to be over and above the individual, which is not usually the case. For example, Blackledge and Hunt (1985: 22) speak of "the one and the many" in which they agree that a single individual can be influenced by society, but a group of individuals can also influence society and promote changes in terms of interactions. The counter-school culture propounded by Willis (1977: 11) is a good example to show that individuals do not usually accept the values and norms of society but instead revolt against them. Blackledge and Hunt (1985: 23) also note that Durkheim gives most of the times the objectives of education, but not what it really provides to students.

2.3 Hidden curriculum

Haralambos and Holborn (2004: 699) define the **hidden curriculum** as forming part of "those things that pupils learn through the experience of attending school, rather than the stated educational objectives of such institutions". The **Hidden curriculum** is not concerned with the content of the

subjects taught at school, but it is concerned with how teaching is delivered and how the school is organised. Jackson and Marsden (cited in Barnard, Burgess & Kirby 2004: 159) believe that the three Rs (that is, Rules, Routines and Regulations) make up the hidden curriculum. In other words, the hidden curriculum forms part of the school socialisation and it often goes unstudied, unwritten and unnoticed. The students need to cope with the hidden curriculum in order to form part of the school. Since the hidden curriculum encompasses a wide range of social realities, this study takes into consideration the lack of meritocracy and the unequal opportunities as the most important negative factors affecting the quality of education. A debate is provided on these issues in the following sections.

2.3.1 Meritocracy and equal opportunity

According to UNESCO (2000: 14), globalisation is seen as "both an opportunity and a challenge" in meeting quality education. Globalisation is viewed as an opportunity which can foster equity between countries across the world due to their interrelatedness. Living in a global society intertwined within a web of new advanced technologies leads countries to review their education systems in order to have the required labour force to promote economic development and sustainability. However, globalisation can also lead to the widening of the gap between rich and poor countries. Countries with a knowledgeable workforce will do better than countries deprived of such skills. Therefore, UNESCO (2000: 14) argues for "Education For All" so that each citizen is able to cope with the new challenges of globalisation. Exclusion and differences at the level of ethnicity and gender must be eliminated through education. In that same regard, quality education also calls for two vital concepts: meritocracy and equal opportunities. These concepts come into play especially when there is inequality of outcomes based on gender and ethnicity – the negative aspects of the hidden curriculum.

2.3.1.1 Meritocracy

According to the functionalist, Parsons (cited in Haralambos & Holborn 2004: 693), school represents society in miniature and functions according to meritocratic principles in which status is earned on merit. Individuals are given the same opportunities to succeed in life and if they fail to do so, they only have themselves to blame. Therefore, the concept of differential reward for differential achievement stipulates that both high and lower achievers recognise the system to be correct and legitimate because in every situation equal chance of success is provided to each individual.

Parsons (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 74) also insists on the fact that school provides students with equal chances of success but they need to recognise differentiation as reasonable and right. Differentiation is made when assessing students on their degree of achievement: cognitive and moral. If students achieve better on the cognitive side they will be given technical roles to assume, whereas those succeeding in moral achievement will be assigned social roles. Each member of society is expected to take up a role and the school serves as an allocator of roles. In that same respect, Davis and Moore (Haralambos & Holborn 2004: 693) argue that social stratification is essential, as it permits the most talented people to be allocated the most important positions which are necessary for the good functioning of society. Parsons (cited in Haralambos & Holborn 2004: 694) has been criticised on the ground that he does not provide an explanation for the fact that schools are often the epitome of the values of the ruling class.

Other functionalists have debated on the issue of selection which they believe is important for the maintenance and sustainability of society. For example, Turner (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 78) believes that selection becomes important when there is the need to maintain "loyalty" of the masses (non-elites) for the elites. If that loyalty was to disappear then societal order would

be at stake. Society needs to choose between contest[14] and sponsored[15] norms to maintain order (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 79). The masses must think of themselves as inferior in comparison to the elites. Such a mindset must be taught to students by teachers. Hopper (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 82) also shares a similar kind of view to that of Turner. In fact, Hopper (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 82) tries to answer four types of questions: how, when, among who and why selection occurs? He comes to the conclusion that it is society which decides the form of selection, for example, whether to adopt an egalitarian or elitist ideology. Society must decide in relation to its needs.

If one proceeds along the same line of thought as the functionalists, one reaches the conclusion that for these social scientists the individual must accept the current structure of society because it justifies societal needs. Inequalities form part of that structure and they should not be contested. The functionalists, quoted in the previous paragraph, have been criticised on their views of the selection process within the education system. For example, according to Davies (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 85), Hopper's explanation of the selection function of the school is too simple and does not consider the complex role of education within society. It can also be recognised that selection practices of the school do not take place solely in terms of merits and talents, but factors such as social class, gender and ethnicity can seriously ruins one's chances of educational achievement.

When one considers the issue of selection practices at school one should also consider the process of streaming. It is a process of selection at school whereby students are placed in different classes based on their abilities (cited in Browne 2005: 292). Streaming had been adopted in Britain

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[14] It involves the selection of elites based on meritocracy in which all individuals start the competition on an equal footing (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 79).

[15] It involves the selection of future elites by other actual elites (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 79).

comprehensive[16] schools in order to increase the percentage of achievement (cited in Bilton, Bonnett, Jones, Skinner, Stanworth & Webster 1996: 359). According to Ball (cited in Haralambos & Holborn 2004: 753) working-class students were more likely to be found in low-achieving classes which undermines the concept of equal opportunity to a large extent. Streaming has long been viewed as a process which engenders social inequalities and undermines meritocracy at school (cited in Haralambos & Holborn 2004: 753). Although UNESCO (2005b: 15) believes that there is a need to reduce the process of streaming in lower classes (in a view of providing an Education For All), it nevertherless believes it be essential in "higher levels of secondary education". UNESCO (2005b: 15) explains that streaming will not be based only on academic potentials of students but on their talents and capabilities in certain fields and in so doing preparing them for their future professional careers.

2.3.1.2   Equal opportunity

When addressing the issue of quality in education, the main objective of UNESCO (2000:14), Education For All, should not be taken lightly because it carries the important message of equality, diversity and meritocracy made accessible to each and every individual within the education sector. Most of the time differential achievement is observed when there is a lack of equal opportunity spread out to all citizens of a particular country. Burden (1999: 10) believes that "Education For All" has been coined at the Jomtien Conference in order to address the differing needs of the learner population of various countries. She further mentions that education must bear two important concepts: diversity and inclusivity. In other words, education must be made

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[16] Comprehensive schools had been set up in Britian to replace the tri-partite system (which was considered to favour social inequality by ranking students based on their academic results obtained at examinations). Therefore, comprehensive schools were judged to be more appropriate because they would welcome students from different social backgrounds (cited in Bilton *et al.* 1996: 359).

available to all, regardless of disability, race, gender, language and culture (that is, the vulnerable groups of society). This particular aspect takes into consideration the diversity which can exist at the heart of a multicultural society. Such a concept favours the equality of opportunity or, to put it simply, equal opportunity for all.

According to Burden (1999: 18), education should not be based on the principle of elitism but must be the illustration of inclusivity. She also insists on the fact that Education For All is a great challenge and certainly not an easy task to achieve because, despite good intentions, one may still "misinterpret or misdirect the course of events" (Burden 1999: 20) by wrongly applying the policies and falling into elitism again. The learner and the learning approach must predominate in quality education. Although Burden (1999: 22) refers to countries which have implemented the inclusive approach in the education sector and yet were, at the same time, a corrupted system, she does not provide much information on how one can avoid such a situation.

In the same vein, Coleman (1968: 216) brings important insights on the concept of equality of opportunity in education. He believes that the concept "equality of opportunity" is not stable and keeps on changing. In the contemporary society, the concept is now changed from what it was in pre-industrial society: that is, in a society where education was primarily informal. Nowadays, it mainly involves free education, a common curriculum regardless of the children's differing backgrounds, same school for all children and equal opportunity for every locality in terms of support for schools. According to Coleman (1968: 219), equal opportunity is only visible via the effects of schooling. He further points out that differences in the definition of equality are the results of the differences within society. However, he does not elaborate on the differences in society that affect equality.

Moreover, while debating on the issue of equality in education, it is important to consider the work of certain significant conflict theorists. They believe that the school is an institution which breeds inequality at all levels. For instance, Willis's (1977: 1) major query centres on the issue of how middle-class students usually end in up middle-class jobs, and how the working-class

students usually end up in working-class jobs. He finds it difficult to explain the reason which justifies why working-class people do not rise to their feet and fight for their rights: why do they let themselves be managed by others and why they do not question the good fortune of the middle class. He provides a clear insight of how the school may reproduce the main stereotypes of society and how it maintains the status quo.

The work of Willis (cited in Haralambos & Holborn 2004: 702) represents a neo-Marxist view of education. He argues that students of working-class background (commonly known as the "lads") develop a counter-school culture and adopt a non-conformist behaviour. Willis (1977: 11) defines the counter-school culture as a representation of an embedded and individualised resistance to authority. The lads' counter-culture is based on sexism and the down-grading of feminism – attitudes which are usually those of the industrial workers. Within the factory such attitudes form part of the shop-floor culture (cited in Willis 1977: 52). The industrial workers feel proud to take up such male-dominated jobs.

From the study of Willis (1977: 148) it was also found that the lads prefer manual to mental labour. According to the lads, the "ear'oles" (that is, the conformists or hard-working students) are "effeminate", and thus mental labour is mainly reserved for women, compared to manual labour which entails manly physical activities (cited in Willis 1977: 149). By assuming these ideologies, the lads have already prepared themselves for the world of work and have restrained themselves from moving up the social ladder. The very existence of a counter-school culture within school shows its ineptitude at promoting equality at all levels and to influence its students through its own values and norms. Paradoxically, the working-class students have already planned their destiny: to remain at the bottom of the social ladder. Willis (cited in Haralambos & Holborn 2004: 704) has been criticised on the basis of the small sample size of the study, which of course affects generalisations. He has also failed to consider the wide variety of subcultures in any society.

A similar point of view is shared by Apple (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 180), who believes that students in working-class areas develop a counter-

school culture in order to resist the system. Such resistance on the part of students is viewed as a change at the level of culture and a creative response from the students. Although resistance and conflicts subsist within the system, it does not mean that success always follows. Apple (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 179) also argues that working-class students receive the hidden curriculum at school, which teaches them to accept their inferior position in relation to the economic system. Similarly, the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 186) refers to the school as an institution which favours the division of society and the reproduction of class status as far as employment is concerned. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 191) also refers to the equality of opportunity, which should not be regarded only as a tool of social mobility but more specifically as "… an economic goal involving … notions of competition, individualism and the market". In order words, the term 'equality of opportunity' reflects the major characteristics of the modern capitalist society.

In the same regard, it is important to consider the work of the two neo-Marxist theorists: Bowles and Gintis (1976: 120), quoted in the previous section; their theory is usually associated with theories of direct reproduction. They believe that the school serves mainly the interest of the capitalists by producing the necessary labour force. The school encourages what they call "legitimate inequality" (cited in Bowles & Gintis 1976: 11) and rewards good performers by assigning them to important positions in the job sphere. This inequality is seen to be legitimate because it is based on and performed through meritocratic principles. As explained by Bowles and Gintis (1976: 11), there is nothing meritocratic in that process. In fact, students are socialised into norms and values (forming part of the hidden curriculum) which confer them to their positions in the occupational hierarchy, based on their social class, race and gender. They believe that equality of opportunity is an illusion. The school promotes the personal development of students which is well-suited to that of the labour force. The school system reproduces the social relationships of the capitalist economic system.

Also, the correspondence principle was developed on the fact that the same social relationships are developed both at school and at the workplace. For example, Bowles and Gintis (1976: 131) argue that hierarchical relations exist between teachers and students; a similar relationship is seen between the manager and the workers. The formation of an alienated labour force can also be seen at school through the lack of any control by the students over what they study at school. The students are attracted towards external rewards such as good qualifications, similar to subservient workers who are attracted to wages. The division of labour can also be seen at school through the specialisation of knowledge and the fierce competition between students. Pupils are conferred to the rank that they deserve, similar to workers who are placed into low-level and high-level jobs. Resistance management supervision can be viewed through the counter-school culture. Thus the correspondence principle consists of both legitimation and socialisation. Bowles and Gintis (1976: 29) also refer to the school as an institution which was set up for the poor in order to integrate them into the existing social relationships of the capitalist economic system.

According to Bowles and Gintis (1976: 126), the school reproduces the capitalist consciousness via the hidden curriculum by shaping the students' minds through norms and values. Similar to Freire (1972: 46), they believe that the school creates passive listeners through the jug and mug philosophy. For example, creativity and independence are penalised, whereas dependence and consistency are rewarded. The capitalist system must be overthrown in order to eliminate inequalities and to restore equality of opportunity. Nevertheless, Bowles and Gintis (1976: 272) believe that authority is a basic human necessity to control the conflicts between the individual and society.

These Marxists theorists have been criticised on various issues. They have been accused of failing to provide detailed research into the school system and to show that the hidden curriculum influences the personality of the student. Blackledge and Hunt (1985: 145) are doubtful about the evidence provided to support their work. For example, the path diagram and the

statistical calculations presented to prove that economic rewards closely relate to social background are suspect because they are based on data from previous studies and estimates.

2.3.1.3   Language as a determinant of differential achievement

At this point in the discussion, it is essential to note that UNESCO (2000: 17) prescribes the use of the learner's first language as medium of instruction so as to ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds benefit from equal opportunities in education. According to a study done by the Bureau d'Education Catholique (BEC), 82.2% of the 628 primary teachers interviewed and 81.7% of the 208 primary head teachers and deputy head teachers interviewed agreed that Creole must be used at school as medium of instruction (cited in Quirin 2009: 20). The BEC decided to carry out a pilot project in January 2010 in some of its primary schools, based on the implementation of Creole as medium of instruction. It is fair to recognise that one cannot disregard the multilingualism which exists at the heart of the Mauritian society. The use of Creole at school also favours meritocracy and equal opportunity. In this way, the exclusion of working-class students will be alleviated and they will be provided with a better opportunity of assimilating and comprehending the lesson of the day. To the director of the BEC (cited in Quirin 2009: 20), the introduction of Creole as medium of instruction at school will limit failures among the working-class students (mostly dominated by the Creole population). The work of pertinent sociolinguists has been taken into consideration to understand the major implication of language of instruction within the education system.

One of the main contributions in that domain has been the work of Bourdieu and Passeron (1990: 72), who refer to "linguistic (or cultural) capital" to explain the unequal academic achievement of children from different social classes. They maintain that cultural capital is mainly possessed by the dominant group of society and is translated into wealth and power. They argue that the dominant class imposes its authority and culture on the working

class through education. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990: 10) also refer to the concept of "pedagogic authority" which they define as:

"… a power of symbolic violence, exerted within a relation of pedagogic communication which can produce its own, specifically symbolic effect only because the arbitrary power which makes imposition possible is never seen in its full truth …"

In other words, these sociologists believe that education serves those who have power and ensures that they stay in power throughout the generations. Teachers also make the difference while marking the scripts, and complain how hard it is to correct the large number of "mediocre" scripts (cited in Bourdieu & Passeron 1985: 110). Based on a similar line of thought Browne (2005: 292) believes that teachers' judgements can determine whether a child will be a "success or failure". He uses the term self-fulfilling prophecy to explain that when labelling a child (for example, a failure), it diminishes his or her self-esteem and as a result making the predictions of the teachers true (cited in Browne 2005: 292). Usually, the working-class students suffer from the self-fulfilling prophecy because they do not possess the required cultural capital to achieve at school. Therefore education is not seen as a tool of social mobility but rather as a tool which keeps society divided and unequal. It is evident that children from the dominant class will fare better than those of the dominated class, as the former group possesses the necessary cultural capital (acquired through both primary and secondary socialisation).

Furthermore, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990: 115) proceed with their explanation of differential achievement by elaborating on two other important terms: "bourgeois parlance" and the "common parlance". These are known as, quoting the sociologists' words, "the mode of speech" (cited in Bourdieu & Passeron 1990: 115). Those who adopt the "bourgeois parlance" are said to possess linguistic capital, whereas those who adopt the "common parlance" are those from the working class (cited in Bourdieu & Passeron 1990: 115). The school uses the "bourgeois parlance" (cited in Bourdieu & Passeron 1990: 115) to transmit knowledge and thus place the working class in a

disadvantaged position. Therefore, the school reproduces the cultural capital of the dominant class.

According to Bourdieu (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 170), the school does not teach clearly the "master-patterns" to acquire the cultural capital, but certain brilliant students from the working class are able to grasp the essentials and seize this opportunity to succeed. Parental interest and parents' commitment in their wards' education are also brought under analysis by Bourdieu (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 168). He believes that parents from the dominant class inculcate the necessary values which lead their children to educational success, whereas those from the working class (being deprived from cultural or linguistic capital) are unable to inculcate such values in their wards. As a result, the working-class students lag behind in their education. One tends to agree with Bourdieu on this particular argument because, as an educator, one often sees that students who have educated parents obtain better results at examinations, compared to children of uneducated parents. Clearly, the home environment also plays a key role in a child's educational achievement.

However, Bourdieu's analysis of the reproduction of cultural capital and the differential achievements of the dominant class and the dominated class was criticised by other sociologists. For example, Blackledge and Hunt (1985: 172) believe that the theory is complicated and hard to understand. They argue that it is difficult for people, who lack the necessary cultural capital, to understand Bourdieu's style of writing due to its level of complexity. At the same time, such a strategy enables him to camouflage his ideas. Additionally, Musgrove (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 169) thinks that the statistics used by Bourdieu do not support the main ideas of his work.

Similar to Bourdieu and Passeron, Bernstein (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 45) points to two types of linguistic codes which explain the differential achievement at school between the working-class and the upper-class students. These are "restricted" and "elaborated codes" (cited in Blackledge &

Hunt 1985: 45). The "restricted code" which is mainly used by working-class people is obtained through positional socialisation patterns[17], while the "elaborated code" is used by upper-class individuals and is acquired through personal socialisation patterns[18] (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 45). The difference between the two linguistic codes leads to differential achievements. The "elaborated code" (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 45) is the code of language used at school and mostly benefits the upper-class students, to the detriment of those from the working class.

Moreover, Bernstein (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 46) believes the school is shifting from "mechanical" to "organic solidarity". In other words, in "mechanical solidarity", the school is an institution in which individuals have the same beliefs and the same mode of conduct and in which individuals are oppressed through sanctions and in which roles are ascribed (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 46). In "organic solidarity", on the other hand, the school is an institution which is based on achieved status and consists of a variety of ideas in which the teacher becomes the "problem poser" rather than the "problem solver" (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 46). Although Bernstein's theory contains pertinent arguments regarding differential achievements and current changes operating at the level of education, Rosen (cited in Haralambos & Holborn 2004: 741) argues that his explanations based on social class are vague and that the study, overall, lacks support.

When analysing the correlation between languages and the inequalities at school within the Mauritian society, the work of the Mauritian linguist, Carpooran (2002: 75-109), is worth considering. His investigation is portrayed

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[17] Positional socialisation patterns imply working-class parents teaching their children to do what is expected of them depending on certain uncontrollable factors (such as age, gender and status). The children must also learn that the different stages in a person's life (such as childhood or adulthood) are separate from each other (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 45).

[18] Personal socialisation patterns imply upper-class parents to be receptive to their children's development and to change their expectations in relation to the children's development. The children are also taught that the different stages in a person's life are related to each other. It is a continuous flow (cited in Blackledge & Hunt 1985: 45).

at the macro- and micro-levels. He divides the multicultural society into two different classes: the bourgeoisie (including the middle-class) and the working-class. Official statistics noticeably demonstrate that the low-achieving primary schools, mostly attended by the working-class, are found in the most deprived regions of the island.

The Ministry of Education refers to these low-achieving primary schools as *Zone d'Education Prioritaire* (ZEP) (cited in Carpooran 2002: 90). For example, the primary school of *Ecole de Lorette de Vacoas* achieved 100% passes at CPE exams in 1997, whereas the ZEP primary school, *Emmanuel Anquetil Government School*, obtained only 22% passes (cited in Carpooran 2002: 90). According to Carpooran (2002: 98) those working-class students are not able to do their utmost because they cannot grasp the lesson of the day, as French and English are mostly used as mediums of instruction. According to the Education Ordinance of 1957 (cited in Carpooran 2002: 83), it is clearly mentioned that English will be used as the medium of instruction in all secondary schools. It is important to note that the English language occupies a central place in the Education of young Mauritians. All examination papers, except for those for the French and Asian Languages, are set in English. If a student fails in English Language at secondary level, although obtaining passes in all other subjects, he or she fails the whole year. In State Secondary Schools, as noted by Carpooran (2002: 94), English is used in formal situations (that is, orally and written), but in informal situations Creole is used.

Carpooran (2002: 104) further explains that the working-class students, who are mostly Creole-speaking, do not possess any other language skills, compared to the Mauritian bourgeois who may speak two or more languages or have inter-language[19] skills as part of their daily linguistic uses. Therefore, the second group enjoys an important advantage over the first one.

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[19] Carpooran (2002: 104) defines 'inter-language' (my translation of *interlangue*) as *créole-francisé* which means the use of the Creole language including some French words. The use of Creole alone is not always appreciated by the bourgeois class.

Carpooran (2002: 78) also notes that Creole is a stigmatised language: it is regarded as inferior to the other languages. The bourgeois class uses either French or the inter-language as means of communication. Furthermore, the bourgeois students possess materials (such as newspapers, books, music and others) which make use of similar elaborated codes as those used at school. In Mauritius rich parents prefer to send their children to the highly prestigious fee-paying secondary schools such as Le Bocage High School (that is, an English-medium school) or Lycée de Labourdonnais (that is, a French-medium school).

According to Carpooran (2002: 98), Creole as a language occupies the lowest place on the social ladder because of the following reasons: it is not internationally recognised; its association to the non-prestigious local means of communication; its historical origin (that is, emanated from the slavery period); its restricted ability to be dispersed; its lack of codification; its absence of standardisation and literature; and its non-written aspect. The unilingual Creole-speaking group is usually treated as illiterate by the wider society. This is why Carpooran (2002: 75) questions how Creole can be used as medium of instruction at school. It is admittedly true to say that it will help students of the working-class group but it needs to be kept in mind that Creole does not have the same status as other written languages. It is important to emphasise the fact that at one point in time, following the arrival of Indian Immigrants in Mauritius, the Creole language was considered to be superior to Bhojpuri[20] because Creole was needed to be able to occupy important positions (for example, overseers) in the sugarcane fields. According to Neerputh (cited in Carpooran 2002: 80), this is an important reason to explain the erosion of the Bhojpuri language in Mauritius.

In the same vein, the language issue was also addressed by Bunwaree (1994: 108). She argues that the problem had been brought to light way back in 1941 by Ward (cited in Bunwaree 1994: 108), the Director of Education in those

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[20] Bhojpuri was the language of the Indian Immigrants and is still used by some Hindus in Mauritius.

days. He prescribed that French had to be used as medium of instruction and English had to be treated as the second language. He recognised the fact that both languages being taught at primary level, would be to the disadvantage of the Creole-speakers. But, Ward's recommendations (cited in Bunwaree 1994: 108) were to no avail. English became the medium of instruction and French was relegated to the second position. Although Asian languages are also taught at school, nowadays, English remains the main medium of instruction. Bunwaree (1994: 109) quotes Ramdoyal who refers to the Mauritian student as "the linguistically overburdened Mauritian Child", and the political group Lalit which argues that the main ineffectiveness of the Mauritian education system is its reliance on a "prejudiced, colonised language policy".

Bunwaree (1994: 182) further states that "cultural capital is linguistic capital in Mauritius and it is through this, that stratum or class distinctions are made and reinforced through schooling". Therefore, this argument suggests that languages favour social inequality in Mauritius and the school is the instrument which promotes and accentuates this unfairness towards the most vulnerable group of society. According to Bunwaree (1994: 182), success in education is ensured in families where English and French are present in their social environment, whereas in unilingual Creole-speaking or Bhojpuri-speaking families this success is less certain. In the year 2000, from the Census Survey, the Ministry of Economic Development, Financial Services and Corporate Affairs (2001: 84) recorded a large number of Mauritians who speak only Creole or Bhojpuri at home. It is usually observed in any modern society, that the working-class people form the majority of the population. Table 1 (from Appendix A) gives an idea of the Mauritian population according to the language spoken at home.

In a similar view, Carpooran (2002: 109) believes that it is difficult for Mauritius to achieve equality in education if it keeps on privileging elitism while at the same time providing uniformity in terms of the same school calendar, same textbooks, same syllabi and so on to every student. Taking into consideration the different arguments based on inequality and languages, one can deduce

that the Mauritian school is an instrument which serves to form people for the world of work and the world of politics.

However when the meritocratic aspect of the Mauritian education is questioned the concept of free education comes to the fore – a way of reminding the population of the chance they have of benefiting from an education which was once reserved for the colonialists. It is also important to note that free education offers only free access to schooling and does not consider other costs associated to it (for example, the purchase of textbooks). Working-class students often suffer from material factors (such as poverty, poor wages, diet, health, housing and others) affecting their achievement at school (cited in Browne 2005: 287). Ethnic minority group, such as the Creoles, form the majority of the working-class.

The extent to which everyone benefits from the same education leading to equal outcomes is an issue which seems to be a blind spot to the Ministry of Education. According to the Ministry of Education (2008b: 11) the best way to deal with the issue of equity is to provide to all the schools of the island with same facilities (in terms of equipment and trainings provided to educators) leaving the root causes of the problem (that is, ethnic and gender inequalities) untackled.

2.3.1.4 Gender inequality

Bunwaree (1999: 139) argues that, although Mauritius has achieved universal primary education, "equality of opportunity remains a myth". Equal access does not really mean equal outcomes. Accoding to Bunwaree (1999: 139), dropouts at an early age are usually seen among the Creole population, which represents the marginalised and poorest section of Mauritian society. Much has been said in the previous paragraphs on how equality of opportunity is undermined among the poorest of the poor. For example, English as the medium of instruction clearly acts as a barrier for the working class to climb up the social ladder. If one goes deeper into the analysis of unequal outcomes, one will find gender issues being part of the hidden curriculum, obstructing the

path which leads to quality education. Since the 1990s, following the Jomtien conference, girls' education was at the centre of all priorities for achieving development. For example, according to Heward (1999: 5), during the UN conference in 1994, various issues of development and population were questioned. There were different opponents including the Vatican and some Islamic countries and the United States of America, which found girls' education as an effective means to counteract the "pressures from anti-abortionists" and to avoid a "Malthusian apocalypse" (Heward 1999: 5). Thus, girls' education is seen as an important development tool for a country because it promotes a decrease in fertility rates and ensures an improvement in children's health.

"The history of girls' education in Mauritius is one of exclusion" – an observation rightly made by Bunwaree (1999: 139) to explain that Mauritian girls' education is a recent one. Under colonialism, people from African descent or Indian origin as well as the coloured people did not have access to education. It was only the white children who were able to be educated. But the education provided to girls of white origin was "heavily sex-stereotyped" in which they were taught how to develop their feminine traits and how to be potential housewives (cited in Bunwaree 1999:139). It was only in the 1950s that the government (made up of local Indians) took seriously the overall education of all ethnic groups, and thereupon the development of girls' education started. However, education was not free and access was provided only to those who could pay. Privilege was given mostly to boys because they represented the future breadwinners. It is only in the late 1970s that an increase in girls' enrolment at school could be witnessed because education was free.

Bunwaree (1999: 140) argues that free education was "a political bait" proposed by the Labour Party to win the election at that time. In those days, the government had to face serious difficulties with the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), because it did not agree with some of the recommendations proposed, including the abolishment of free education. In

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1976, it was officially proclaimed that education was free for everyone, regardless of ethnic origin (cited in Bunwaree 1999: 140). This government decision brought, as pointed out by Bunwaree (1999: 140), "unintended benefits" for girls' education. Nowadays, although there is parity for both sexes in terms of access to education, it can be noticed that only few women hold top positions in either the private or the public sector.

As noted by Bunwaree (1999: 141), **sex discrimination** in terms of education is still visible in the working population. Consequent dropouts of girls from school are still a reality. Bunwaree's (1999: 141) qualitative analysis emphasises the difference in resource allocation within the home itself, where the daughter's education is disregarded in favour of that of the son. The daughter is believed to leave the home when she will be married, while the son is bound to be a future breadwinner. Evans (1992: 23) shares a similar point of view in the sense that sons are automatically chosen to be sent to school, to the detriment of the daughters of families of low income. She also argues that girls are usually the objects of discrimination perpetrated unconsciously by their teachers. In certain Third-World countries, girls studied a different and lower-grade syllabus than the boys. In Mauritius, the working-class population also dominates the prevocational stream at school. From Table 2[21], it can be observed that the enrolment of prevocational boys largely outnumbers that of prevocational girls.

It has also been found that the gender aspect overlaps with ethnicity. Bunwaree (1999: 143) collected accounts of girls from the Creole population who suffered ethnic discrimination and sexual harassment at school. Moreover, girls from a middle-class background are also discriminated against on the labour market. There are jobs (for example, in the engineering and scientific fields) which are unjustly referred to as male jobs, and therefore all educated and qualified females are ruled out as candidates. Male employers

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[21] Refer to Appendix A.

also seem to be allergic to maternity leave because, as quoted by Bunwaree (1999: 145), it is one of the most pertinent reasons provided to explain girls' exclusion from these sectors. Although education is free in Mauritius, there are still various costs associated with it. It is a burden for both the middle- and working-class families. For instance, the exorbitant tuition fees at both secondary and primary levels, the school textbooks at secondary level, the uniforms, the stationery and many other costs.

Based on the various discussions on gender inequality in the Mauritian patriarchal society, the questions which crop up consider the differential achievements between boys and girls at school. The following bar charts (refer to Figure 1 and Figure 2) give a graphical presentation of how girls out-perform boys at SC and HSC examinations at secondary level. Despite the fact that prejudices still predominate concerning girls' achievement at school, the statistics portray another picture of reality. For example, in 2007, the pass rate at SC exams for female students was 81.2%, whereas that of male students was 71.7% (refer to Figure 1 below). Similarly, the pass rate at HSC exams, in 2007, for female students was 81.8%, whereas that of the male students was 72.9% (refer to Figure 2 below).

Figure 1:   **The percentage pass rates of the School Certificate (SC) for male and female students, for three consecutive years**
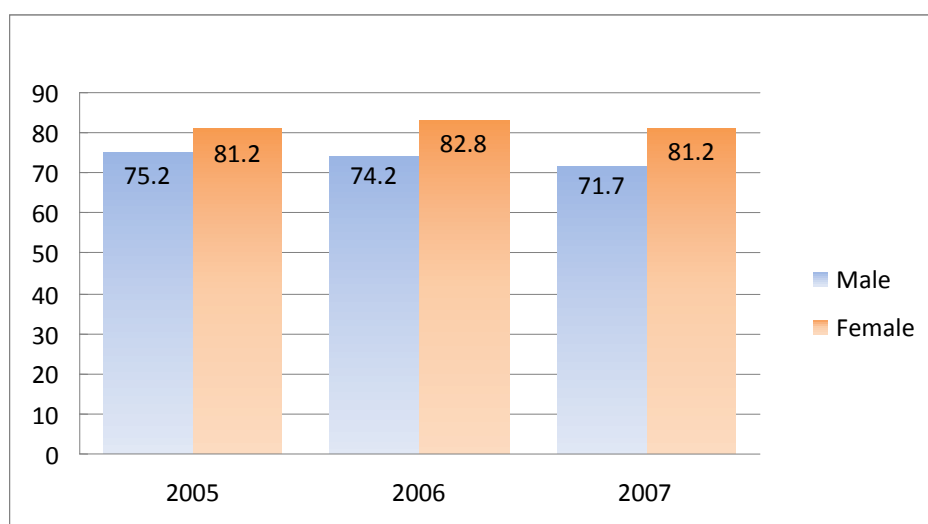
Figure 2: **The percentage pass rates of the Higher School Certificate (HSC) for male and female students, for three consecutive years**
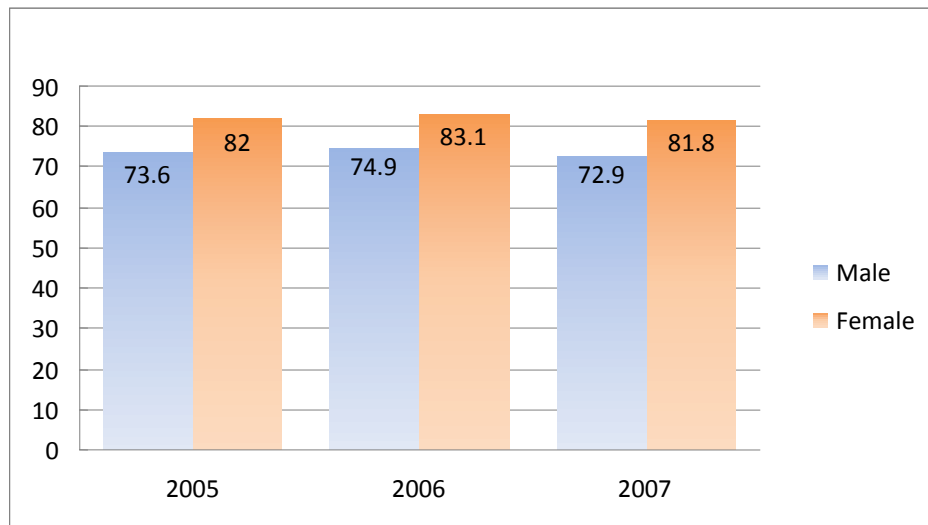
The Ministry of Education (2008b: 12) recognises the importance of providing equal chances to both women and men to achieve their potentials for the welfare of the Mauritian society. It prides itself to have eliminated gender gaps in terms of enrolment in the pre-primary, primary and secondary schools and post-secondary establishments (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources 2008b: 12). To decrease gender disparities at school, the Ministry of Education (2008b: 12) proposes to have textbooks free from gender-stereotyped images and ideas. However, such a proposal seems to be more theoretical than practical.

2.4 Conclusion

The various works analysed in this chapter pertain to quality in education and how the Ministry adapts its educational plan in line with UNESCO's recommendations, to provide the Mauritian human resources with better schooling. What the reader needs to retain of the different discussions provided above are the numerous areas which have not been addressed by

the Ministry of Education – areas which are pertinent in achieving quality education. The Ministry of Education concentrates too much in filling up all the newly built secondary schools, because of the belief that quality education rhymes with Education For All. The Mauritian education is seen to be meritocratic because it offers education to all students regardless of their gender or ethnic origin. In other words, it provides equal opportunities to all and it is up to the students to work according to their potential to promote educational achievement.

However, based on the debate provided in the previous sections, equal access to education does not necessarily mean equal outcomes. One must not exclude the factors, forming part of the hidden curriculum, which hinder the performance of students at school. It is important for Mauritius to have a meritocratic education system to promote social integration and social cohesion among its people. Education is the tool to fight away poverty and social exclusion which bring alongside various ills affecting one's society. The Ministry of Education (2008b: 14) recognises that "there are some drop-out in the system especially at the secondary level" although education is free and compulsory up to age of 16 in Mauriitus. What does the Ministry of Education propose to tackle the issue of drop-out? Will it undertake studies at grassroot level to find the root causes of the problem and at the sametime propose measures to solve the problem of gender and ethnic inequalities? Such questions inevitably trigger one's mind when vague information, based on gender or ethnic inequalities or drop-out from school, is given by the Ministry of Education through the different reports cited in the above sections. It seems that the Ministry of Education is trying to mask the dark areas of the system.

Moreover, every single step of the Ministry carries one and only objective: the achievement of its own established numerical targets (based on the PBB) and those of UNESCO. Again, the rhetoric quantity still resounds.. Educators are the ones who need to tackle and find solutions on their own to deal with those issues of the hidden curriculum. They need to be practical and knowledgeable in different disciplines (for example, child psychology, pedagogy, counselling

and others), but without much training provided. Therefore, where does quality lie within the system? It is a question which has to be addressed with much attention.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY/RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 Research design and data sources

The research is mainly based on hypothesis-testing. The data, for analysis, was collected via the self-administered questionnaire (refer to Appendix C). The units of analysis are the State Secondary Schools of Zone 2. As it was mentioned in Chapter 1, the Ministry of Education in Mauritius has divided the country into various geographical zones: Zone 1, Zone 2, Zone 3 and Zone 4. Since the case study of Zone 2 is founded on the educator's perspective, the units of observation have been educators working in this particular region only. The type of data which was collected is primary data.

3.2 Data collection techniques

To collect the primary data, a survey questionnaire was designed. According to Babbie (2007: 257), there are three ways in which survey questionnaires are given to respondents: self-administered questionnaires, face-to-face questionnaires, and surveys done via the telephone. The type of survey questionnaire selected was the self-administered questionnaire. The self-administered questionnaire used in the study consists mostly of close-ended questions; there are also a few open-ended questions. It includes contingency and matrix-format questions. The questionnaire further contains instructions for the respondents.

A pilot-testing of the self-administered questionnaire was carried out with a sample of 10 units drawn from the population under study. The purpose of this exercise was to test the questionnaire. Overall, the respondents did not experience much trouble to understand the different questions of the questionnaire. However, the question pertaining to up-to-date textbooks was a bit ambiguous to language educators. For these educators, textbooks which had been edited in the 1960s are still in use and they are valid in most of the State Secondary Schools.

3.2.1 Strengths of the self-administered questionnaire

It is important to mention that this method provided various advantages to the researcher, notably:

- The researcher did not have to travel and deliver the questionnaires to each and every respondent herself. Since the researcher works as an educator at a Zone 2 State Secondary School, it was quite easy to have one acquaintance (a colleague) as mediator at each of the different schools (forming part of the research), to have participants fill in the questionnaires. It is a research method which is not expensive and is less time-consuming compared to methods such as participant observation or unstructured interviews. It is a practical means of collecting data.

- Self-administered questionnaire is also suitable because there is little personal involvement on the part of the researcher and respondents feel free to answer questions at their own pace, without being uncomfortable in the researcher's presence – thus eliminating the risk of interview bias.

- Since the self-administered questionnaire consists of mostly closed questions, it was easy to quantify the data. In this way, it was possible to represent the quantitative primary data in the forms of tables and bar charts. By the same token, quantifying the data ensures reliability.

- Moreover, self-administered questionnaire offers the possibility of having a large sample size, which means that better generalisations can be made.

3.2.2 Limitations of the self-administered questionnaire

There are, however, certain limitations in using self-administered questionnaire:

- Since the researcher was not present, it cannot be said for sure that the right respondents answered the questionnaires. It could have been a group giving their diverse opinions to each question and thus influencing the respondents' answers. In addition, without the researcher being present when delivering the questionnaires, it happened that certain respondents had omitted answering certain questions, and they had to be contacted once again.

- The questionnaire contains mostly closed questions which do not allow the respondents to talk at length and thus affect the validity of the research.

3.3 Issues of reliability and validity

Since the self-administered questionnaire is a quantitative method, it ensures a high degree of reliability but lacks in terms of validity. The questionnaire can provide standardised data in statistical form. It has also been devised to test precise hypotheses. Furthermore, the questionnaire consists of a large sample size, which contributes to the reliability of the research. In this way, reliability is ensured and generalisations can easily be formulated. However, quantitative methods usually lead to poor validity, that is, they do not give a true picture of the social reality under study.

3.4 Sampling techniques

Systematic random sampling was used to obtain the sample. The sample frame of Zone 2 is made up of 18 State Secondary Schools. Within Zone 2, there are 6 State Secondary Schools, found in urban regions, while the rural areas count 12 State Secondary Schools. A list of the schools was drawn up, and every second item was chosen, with a random start of 2. After systematic random sampling, 8 schools were selected. The sample is representative of the number of the schools of Zone 2, as it is approximately half the number. Ten (10) educators were chosen per school, as the respondents.

3.5 Hypotheses, conceptualisation and operationalisation of variables

The various hypotheses to the research questions were as follows:

(i) the Mauritian Education is too much content driven with little attention to the promotion of the emotional and creative development of students, leading to poor quality in education;

(ii) Mauritian educators lack the required competencies and resources in encouraging the all-round development of their students, which leads to poor quality in education; and

(iii) the Mauritian Education system does not consider the negative aspects of the hidden curriculum: the lack of meritocracy and the unequal opportunities in relation to gender and ethnicity, which lead to poor quality in education.

An education which is too much content driven cannot promote the emotional and creative capacities of students. Libertarian education does not really exist; there is mostly the cramming up of students' brains through chalks and talks and the drill method (cited in Barry and King 1998: 186). Also, educators are expected to produce results in terms of high achievement at SC and HSC exams. Mauritius wants to attain a culture of achievement by 2020 based on the numerical targets of UNESCO. The objective of the Ministry to raise the passing rate of SC and HSC students does not leave much room for the students' overall development in terms of their emotional and creative aptitudes. Private tuition has become a real business and represents financial constraints for parents to shoulder.

Although educators are fully aware of the benefits of developing the creative and emotional aptitudes of the students, they are nevertheless constrained by the lack of resources and support to do so. For example, the Ministry of Education has introduced an Activity Period of 30 minutes in the school curriculum, but without proper foundation and training for the educators. As a result, educators do not know what is expected of them, and in certain

schools, the Activity Period refers to a time where students linger around the school premises without nothing to do. Therefore, such constraints affect the educators' competency in delivering the goods. In certain cases, it was found that educators failed to deliver moral instruction during classes and they failed to be ethical leaders. Such an attitude leads to a lack of discipline in class.

The educators' competency is also affected because of irregular training sessions offered and ineffective pedagogical tools and teaching methods made available to them. Visual aids such as overhead projectors and team projects are very important in order to stimulate critical thinking. In certain schools, laboratories are not well-equipped. The Ministry of Education argues for the use of ICT in the teaching process in an environment where ICT tools are not available to everyone. The school textbooks for certain subjects are often outdated, for instance in Social Studies, where students are currently living in a society which keeps on changing. These books' last editions vary from the 1980s to 1990s. Therefore, how can the educator be competent and provide quality education without the necessary tools and support to do so? Does the Ministry of Education consider the school to be a factory in which the production of results is the most important? Are educators, therefore, treated as factory workers aiming at producing more and more passes? All these different questions give an idea of how far Mauritius still is from quality education.

The hidden curriculum is also just as important as the formal curriculum. Differential outcomes in education are noted along gender and ethnic divisions because the education is not that fair and meritocratic. For example, English as a medium of instruction clearly disadvantages people from disadvantaged backgrounds. Girls are those mostly affected, especially when socio-economic background overlaps with the gender aspect. The concept of equal opportunity is absent from the system, as all students (regardless of whether they are poor or not) have to pay for books, stationery, uniforms and other items. The textbooks used at schools are loaded with gender-stereotype images. Although Mauritius prides itself on having achieved equal access for

all its citizens to education, it nevertheless does not guarantee equal outcomes. In that same respect, meritocracy and equal opportunities remain a myth. It is very important to note that gender and ethnicity have been analysed according to the educators' views and the students' feelings or thoughts have not been taken into account.

The dependent variable of the study is *poor quality education* and the independent variables are: content driven education[22], numerical targets[23], private tuitions[24], rote learning[25], critical thinking[26], outdated textbooks[27], lack of discipline[28], training of educators[29], teaching tools[30], activity period[31], co- and extra-curricular activities[32], moral instruction[33], teacher-centred approach[34], child-centred approach[35], and lack of meritocracy and unequal opportunity[36]. The independent variables are operationalised using the questionnaire. The different independent variables: content driven education,

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[22] The independent variable is measured in questions 8 (a, c and f).

[23] The independent variable is measured in questions 8 (e and g), 7and 18.

[24] The independent variable is measured in questions 8(b), 20 and 21.

[25] The independent variable is measured in question 9.

[26] The independent variable is measured in questions 9and 27.

[27] The independent variable is measured in question 14.

[28] The independent variable is measured in question 8 (h and l).

[29] The independent variable is measured in question 13.

[30] The independent variable is measured in question 10.

[31] The independent variable is measured in question 26.

[32] The independent variable is measured in questions 8(i) and 11.

[33] The independent variable is measured in questions 28, 29 and 30.

[34] The independent variable is measured in questions 31 and 32.

[35] The independent variable is measured in questions 31 and 32.

[36] The independent variable is measured in questions 15, 16, 17, 19, 22, 23, 24 and 25.

numerical targets, private tuition, rote learning, critical thinking and outdated textbooks are the various elements of a content driven education. Lack of discipline, training of educators, teaching tools, activity period, co- and extra-curricular activities, moral instruction, teacher-centred approach, and child-centred approach are the independent variables from the second hypothesis (that is, the educators' poor competencies and limited resources to develop the all-round development of students). Finally, the lack of meritocracy and the unequal opportunities are the various elements of the hidden curriculum which have been tested.

3.6   Data analysis and interpretation

The data of the questionnaire was quantified through the use of a codebook. The coding process involved attributing numerical representations to answers from close-ended questions, and developing codes for open-ended questions, which were generated from the data collected. The coding categories were based on the variables operationalised above. Afterwards, graphic representations were constructed to have a better insight into the results obtained from the analysis.

3.7   Ethical considerations

In the study elaborated on in the previous sections, the politics of research and ethical issues were respected throughout the study. The research methods proposed involved mainly a questionnaire addressed to educators of the chosen schools. The various ethical issues considered in the study were voluntary participation, harmless research methods and techniques, confidentially and anonymity, politics of research, deception, analysis and reporting of research.

The participants involved in the proposed study were mainly volunteers. No educator was pressurised to answer the various questions. The ethics of **voluntary participation** were respected. In so doing, care was taken **not to**

harm anyone psychologically through the various questions set. For example, in the questionnaire, the questions were set in such a way that the participants would not feel that they have been accused of doing their job wrongly. Questions pertaining to ethnicity were also set in such a way that they would not harm the sensibility of the participants.

In the same way, **confidentially** and **anonymity** were respected. For example, the questionnaire did not ask the name of the participants or their personal address and phone number. The questionnaire made it clear that whatever information they gave, these would be used only for research purposes. If comparisons were made between the answers of, say two educators from different institutions, the names of the schools would not be used. By the same token, the **politics of research** was respected: the researcher explained the main objectives and aims of the project to the participants. The researcher was honest with the participants so as to avoid any **deception**. Moreover, any shortcoming or negative data is communicated to the readers during the **analysis** and **reporting** of the research.

CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter analyses the different responses of educators, being the units of observation, obtained through the self-administered questionnaire. These are discussed in the light of the hypotheses of the thesis and it includes the following sections: a content driven education, the educators' poor competencies and limited resources in promoting the all-round development of students, and the hidden curriculum. It also explains on parental interest, streaming, different curricula for low and high achievers and quality education. Before discussing the main findings of the investigation in relation to the hypotheses, it is important to draw upon the profile of the units of observation.

4.1 The educators' profile

It is crucial for the reader to get to know the profile of the educators who have participated in the study, because it would render a better understanding of the answers provided by the participants. Therefore, in this section, one is provided with a debate which centres on the age dimension, sex, academic qualifications and subjects taught at school.

4.2 Age dimension[37]

Of the 90 educators questioned, 35.6% fall in the age group of 25–30 and 31.1% in the age group of 31–36. 36.7% of the educators have 6 to 10 years of experience[38] in the teaching profession. The explanation which is the most probable to explain why the majority of the units fall in the younger categories

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[37] Refer to question 1 in the questionnaire and Table 3 (Appendix A).

[38] Refer to question 4 in the questionnaire and Table 4 (Appendix A).

is the fact that the Public Service Commission[39] recruits a large number of fresh graduates each year to fill the vacant posts at the newly built schools. Consequently, in most of the schools there is a large group of young educators. It is further crucial to remind the reader that all these educators, junior or senior, are expected to be in the forefront to deliver an education of quality.

4.3 Sex[40]

According to the official statistics, the female teaching staff outnumbers the male teaching staff. In 2010, the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (2010b: 29) records 4,426 women against 3,269 men teaching in the academic stream of secondary schools in the Republic of Mauritius. The prevocational stream also shows a similar trend: 403 female teaching staff against 225 male teaching staff (cited in Mauritius Ministry of Finance and Economic Development 2010b: 29). Likewise, the units of observation consisted of 70 female educators and 20 male educators. Such a trend is visible because of the belief that it is more natural for women to educate children than for men. They possess characteristics such as gentleness and patience, which are usually not the attributes of men. But these are mostly sexist attitudes, which are generally present in patriarchal societies.

4.4 Academic qualifications[41]

According to the definition of the "educator" provided in Chapter 2, it was mentioned that an educator should be perceived as the master of all

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[39] The Public Service Commission (PSC) is responsible for the recruitment of employees in the public sector only. Its main objective centres on the values of integrity, equity and efficiency (Public and Disciplined Forces Service Commissions 2008: 13)

[40] Refer to question 2 in the questionnaire and Table 5 (Appendix A).

[41] Refer to question 3 in the questionnaire and Table 6 (Appendix A).

knowledge. Therefore it is assumed that an educator must be highly educated to be able to transmit an education of quality. The study reveals that 43.3% of the educators in the research group possess an undergraduate degree. 25.6% of the respondents have a masters degree, while 12.3% have a Postgraduate Degree in Education (PGCE). In addition, 6.7% of the educators possess both a masters degree and a postgraduate degree in education. The data show that educators are qualified individuals who have progressed through their career. Only 4.4% of the educators have the HSC as their highest qualification, and 3.3% admit to possess a diploma. In fact, the prevocational stream recruits educators with either the HSC or a diploma in prevocational studies. Other qualifications possessed by educators are Certificates of Computer Studies, Pitman Qualifications, Al Azhar lower and higher secondary school certificates, Training TCP (Tamil) and others. Only one educator has mentioned having an educator's licence. As it can be remembered from Chapter 1, the PRB recommends that new recruits possess the educator's licence as part of the new changes brought about in the education system.

4.5 Subjects[42]

The educators who participated in the survey were mainly from the departments of languages (English, French and Asian Languages), natural and social sciences. Priority has been given to these departments because the subjects are known to be compulsory subjects for the lower forms. It is only at the levels of Form V and Form VI that they become optional except for English language which remains compulsory. In addition, in Chapter 1, it has been argued that the Ministry of Education is placing paramount importance on these subjects because it believes that they will provide the necessary skills that a child requires to adapt himself or herself in this globalised era. The

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[42] Refer to question 5 in the questionnaire.

prevocational stream has not been neglected as it forms part of the secondary schools. Figure 3   below shows a graphical representation of the number of respondents according to subjects taught at school.

Figure 3:   Number of educators per subject under analysis.
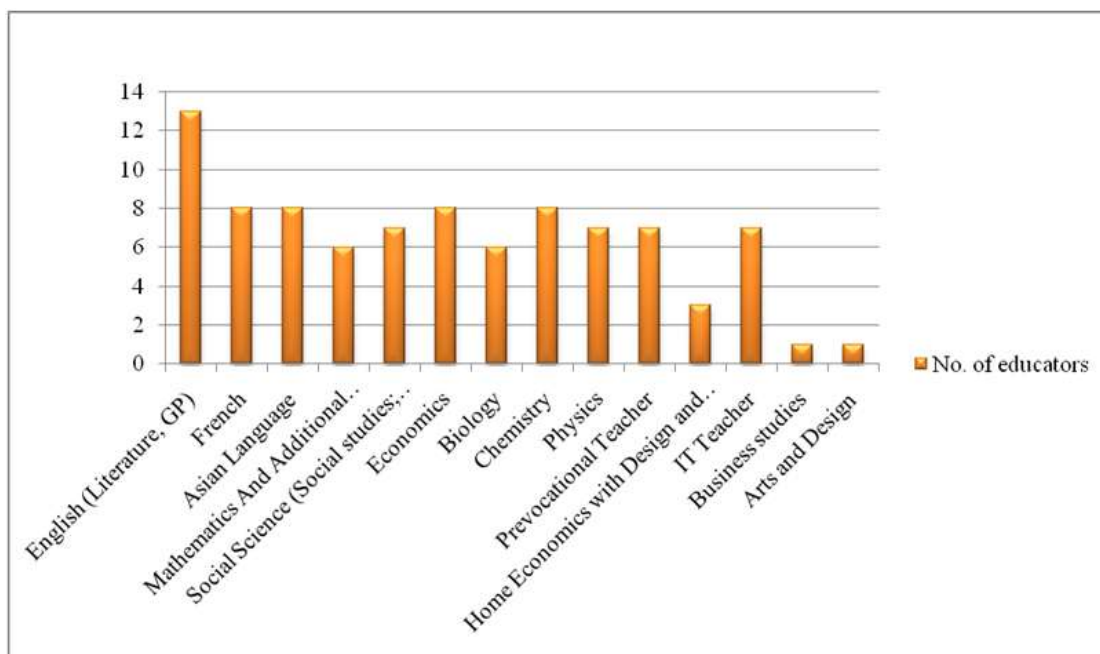
4.6 A content driven education[43]

One of the main hypotheses of this study concerns the fact that the Mauritian education system is too content driven with little attention brought to the creative and emotional development of students. From the study, 50% of the respondents *strongly agree* that the school curriculum in Mauritius is too **content driven** (refer to question 8(f) and Table 7 (Appendix A)). In the same regard, 48.9% of the educators *disagree* that the new reform, based on the PRB report, reflects exactly the needs of the system (refer to question 8(a) and Table 7 (Appendix A)). Moreover, 48.9% of the respondents *agree* that

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[43] Refer to question 8 in the questionnaire and Table 7 (Appendix A).

the new reform in education has created much frustration among the educators (refer to question 8(c) and Table 7 (Appendix A)). In fact, 43.3% of them *agree* that their workload has increased (refer to question 8(e) and Table 7 (Appendix A)) and 50% *disagree* with the statement that trade unions are very effective in defending their rights (refer to question 8(e) and Table 7 (Appendix A)). This section comprises the issues of numerical targets, private tuition, rote learning versus critical thinking, and outdated textbooks which favour a content driven education.

4.6.1 *Numerical targets*[44]

According to the survey carried out, it has been found that 36.7% *disagree* that the **numerical targets** of the Ministry of education is achieving quality education. Those numerical targets exert too much pressure on both the educators and the students. After each internal examination, the educator needs to produce the following documents: the Performance Audit, the Class Analysis and the Programme Based Budgeting (PBB). The Performance Audit and the PBB concern the statistics based on the pass and fail percentages. The Class Analysis as well as the PBB includes the reasons for failure and what could have been done to solve the problem. The question which crops up in the mind of the educator centres on whether these documents are really read or considered at a higher level.

As the years go by, the situation seems to remain static. The only solution imposed by the Ministry of Education has been to increase the workload of educators in order to increase the pass rate in all the schools around the island. It has become a burden and an extreme challenge for the educator to work with a crowded class of students of mixed abilities. How can a single individual be able to satisfy numerous students, each with a different need, within 35 minutes? From the study, 43.3% of the educators *agree* that

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[44] Refer to question 8 (g) in the questionnaire and Table 7 (Appendix A).

teaching as a profession has become a burden instead of a noble profession, because of the extreme **workload and pressure** exerted on them (refer to question 8(e) and Table 7 (Appendix A)).

Similarly, 35.5% of the respondents state that on average there is a minimum of 36 to 40 students per class (refer to question 7 and Table 3 in the Appendix A). It is important to emphasise the fact that secondary educators work with many different grades of students in a day. The number of periods that an educator needs to cover ranges from 25 to 30 periods per week. A period is 35 minutes long and there are eight periods in a day. It means that an educator works with eight different groups of 36 to 40 students per day. The study also reveals that 10% of the respondents are forced to work with groups of 40–45 students (refer to question 7 and Table 8 (Appendix A)). It is important to note that the classrooms do not have the capacity to hold such large numbers of students. The only classes which have a reasonal number of students are from the Asian language and prevocational departments. The official statistics of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment (2010: 139) for the year 2009 present a pupil/teacher ratio of 15 for Zone 2. In other words, based on the statistics, there should have been one educator working with 15 students. But the reality reflects a totally different picture.

Apart from the teaching periods, the educators need to mark copybooks and assessment scripts, prepare their weekly and daily lesson plans and the daily notes. They need to attend meetings and the heads of department have to organise regular meetings. Certain educators also make use of their free periods to coach students participating in co- or extra-curricular activities, or others spend extra learning time with poor performers or are even involved in the Parent-Teachers' Association matters. As a result, due to a lack of time during their working hours, various educators spend a large amount of time marking copybooks or assessment scripts at home. Furthermore, the stress and pressure are more acute for educators working in schools of low achievers.

It is clear that an educator, who is unable to make his or her students achieve above 50% in a particular subject, is doomed as having failed professionally. Therefore, the numerical targets of the Ministry of Education are nothing more than sources of stress and pressure instead of reflecting achievement in quality education. Like Goldstein (2004: 10) rightly points out, the test scores do not equate to an increase in learning achievement, but rather lead to various dysfunctions such as anxiety and stress for students. Thus, in this respect, it concerns also the educators. It has to be noted that 21 (out of 90) respondents questioned have mentioned that on average their students have a quite satisfactory performance compared to 45 (out of 90) respondents who judge the performance of their students to be satisfactory (refer to question 18 and Table 9 (Appendix A)). It all depends on the type of school in which the educator works.

4.6.2 Private tuition

When referring to the stress and anxiety of students, one should not leave aside the issue of **private tuition**: the inescapable path to success. The Ministry of Education is deploying considerable efforts in order to get rid of private tuition, but it seems to be enshrined in the Mauritian culture. To question (20), which asks whether educators give private tuition because they are poorly paid, 54.4% of the respondents responded positively. In addition, 51.1% of the respondents *disagree* that educators are well-paid in Mauritius (refer to question 8(b) and Table 7 (Appendix A)).

11.1% of those respondents[45], who think that salary is not the reason why educators give private tuition on such a large scale, believe that these educators are money-minded and have been trapped into a vicious circle: the more they earn financially, the more they will increase the intake of students.

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[45] Refer to question 20 in the questionnaire in which the respondents were asked to give reasons to justify their answers.

They feel that it is out of greediness that educators give private tuition on a large scale. The fees for private tuition keep on increasing each year, which creates a terrible burden for parents. Nevertheless, 12.2% of the respondents[46] feel that there are educators who give private tuition only for the sake of students. They argue that private tuition is important for slow learners who experience serious difficulties in understanding the lessons of the day at the same pace as other pupils.

In a similar point of view, 74.4% believe that there should be no law to condemn private tuition (refer to question 21). They point out that private tuition forms part and parcel of this society, and since Mauritius is a democratic country it is the right of the educators to give private tuition, and it is the right of students to accept a helping hand[47]. Another important reason provided was that of the individual attention provided to students during private tuition – a luxury which they do not receive at school. It is argued that educators are unable to provide the same attention to each of the 40 students present in a class at school, while private tuition is usually provided to a group of around 10 students maximum. It is true! But it is also true to add that certain educators provide tuition to approximately 40 to 50 students at the same time.

25.5% of the respondents agree that laws should be instituted to condemn private tuition[48]. They argue that students do not pay attention to the lessons provided at school, preferring the same lessons provided during private tuition. Certain students behave poorly in class because they believe that they will catch up during their private lessons. Very often it can be observed that educators, who give private lessons on a large scale, are exhausted. Some often mark tuition copybooks during school hours. As a result, they neglect

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[46] Refer to question 20 in the questionnaire in which the respondents were asked to give reasons to justify their answers. In this particular case, the respondents answered "yes" to the question.

[47] Refer to question 21 in which the respondents were asked to give reasons to justify their answers.

[48] Refer to question 21 in which the respondents were asked to give reasons to justify their answers.

their work at school. How can one refer to quality education if private tuition occupies such a great amount of space in one's educational system? The Ministry of Education must review the salary scale of the educators to give as much recognition as the job deserves. Instituting laws to condemn private tuition may lead to illegal practices. However legalising private tuition does not promote meritocracy instead it ensures the educational achievement of all those students who can pay. In that case, the Ministry of Education must provide private tuition free of cost to needy students to ensure parity and fairness.

4.6.3 Rote learning versus critical thinking

As it was debated in Chapter 2, a content driven education in Mauritius is associated with **rote learning**, which leads students to a passive position. Rote learning was measured according to the **teaching styles** used by the respondents (refer to question 9 and Figure 4 below). The chalks and talks method, which forms part of the drill method, favours rote learning. Against all expectations, only 19.0% of the educators chose the chalks and talks method, compared to 30.8% of the respondents who chose class and group discussions as one of the teaching styles they used at school. Class and group discussions have proved to be valuable in promoting the creativity and **critical thoughts** of students[49]. However, it has been noted that class and group discussions or the chalks and talks method are not the only methods of teaching used by a single educator but a blend of different teaching styles is used.

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[49] Respondents were asked to give reasons for the chosen teaching styles (question 9).

Figure 4:   Teaching methods used by the units of observation.
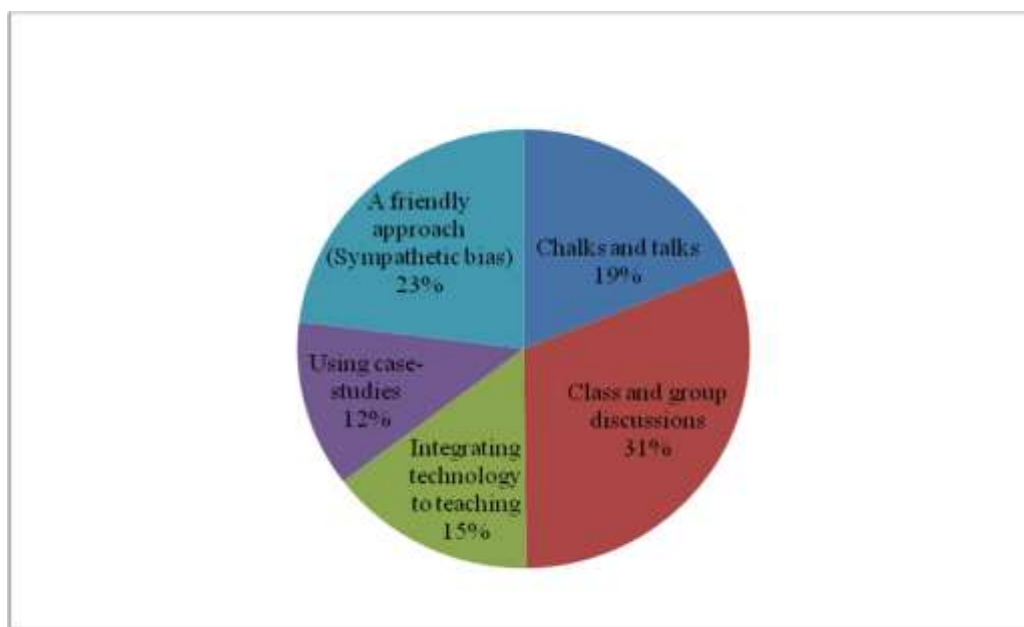
It also worth noting that 23% of the respondents believe in the use of a friendly approach to teaching, and 14.9% of the respondents make use of ICT tools to deliver the goods. A blend of these different approaches is seen by the educators to promote effective teaching and to maximise on a learner-centred approach[50]. Other pertinent reasons provided to explain the methods chosen (refer to question 7) are: for instance, the chalks and talks method is seen as essential in promoting discipline in class, while the friendly approach makes the students feel at ease to voice their opinions. Integrating technology in teaching was seen to be a necessity for the language departments as it fostered the interest of the students in the subjects. Still, the educator must make sure that class and group discussions function properly because in certain cases the majority of the students remain in the passive position without uttering a word, despite various prompts and encouragement provided

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[50] Respondents were asked to give reasons for the chosen teaching styles (question 9).

by the teacher. Such an attitude is usually seen among the lower-grade students – an attitude which has been nurtured since primary school.

To question (27), which asks educators how they manage to encourage critical thinking in their students, 27.8% answered that the use of class and group discussions were effective teaching modes in that domain. They propose methods such as splitting the class into different groups and asking each to reflect on a different topic for a while, and afterwards share their critical views with the class. Others even suggest asking students to read high-level order articles in magazines and then ask them to come up with pertinent issues for discussion in class. 11.1% of the respondents also have suggested brainstorming as being efficient in building critical thinking skills in students (refer to question 27). Other methods were also suggested, such as reading and analysing literature books, carrying out projects, devising experiments with students, and others. Figure 5 below shows the means through which educators promote critical thinking.

Figure 5: Means through which educators promote critical thinking in students.
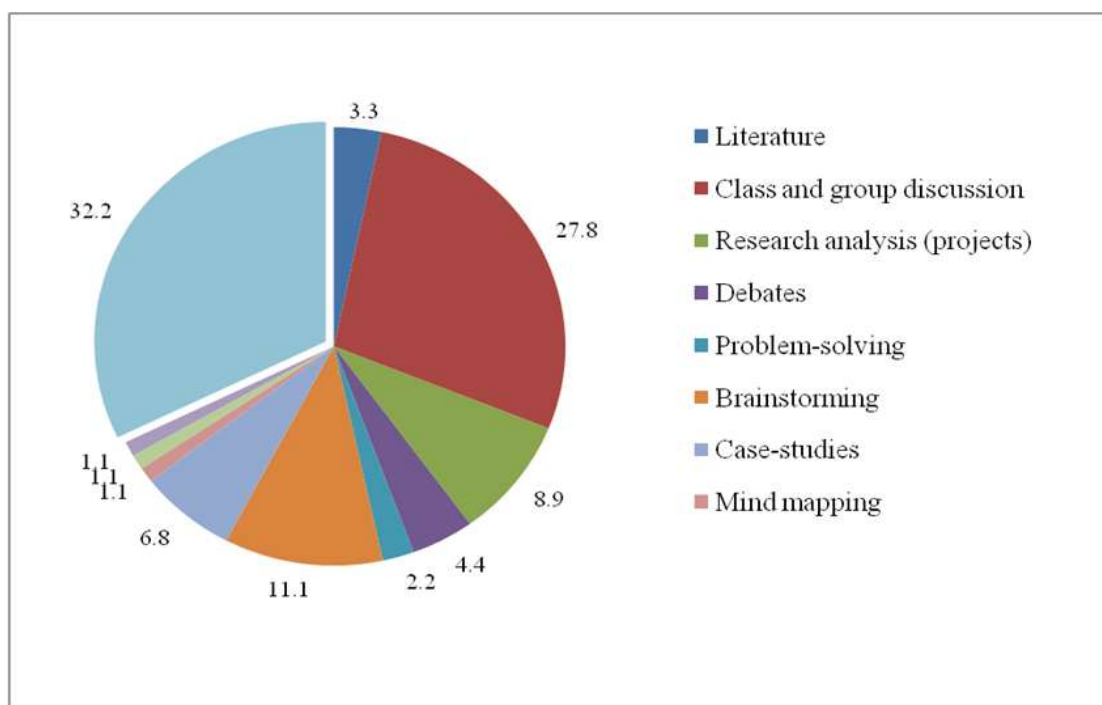
However, it is unfortunate to note that 32.2% of the respondents had no idea about question (27). If they have no idea how to stimulate critical thinking in their students, it means that they regard being critical as not important. They prefer to continue what has always been done at primary level: spoon-feeding. It is revolting to find a large number of educators who still have such an outmoded view of education. They encourage passivity in their students and prevent them benefiting from a libertarian education.

4.6.4 Outdated textbooks

According to the survey carried out, it was found that 62.2% of the respondents stated that the textbooks used at school were up-to-date, compared to 37.8% who argued the contrary view (refer to question 14). In fact, it depends on the subject taught. For example, in the language departments all agree that up-to-date textbooks do not represent a priority as long as the syllabus remains the same. However, for subjects such as Social and Commercial Studies it does make a world of difference. For example, the Social Studies textbook (Form I) was published way back in 1996; that of Form II was published in 1989, and the book for Form III in 1990[51]. This is unacceptable in the 21st century, to continue teaching students that one of the greatest powers in the world is the Union Soviet Socialist Republics or to continue to consider Pluto as a planet when in 2006 the Astronomical Union has declared Pluto to be a dwarf planet. Social Studies is considered to be a core subject in the lower grades, and in the upper grades the subject is divided into three parts: History, Sociology and Geography. The Ministry of Education is insisting on the importance of these subjects and urges students to take these in the higher grades. Therefore, it needs to reconsider the

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[51] Refer to question 14 in which respondents were asked to mention the dates of publication of the textbooks used at school.

content of the textbooks in the lower grades and should try to make them more lively and vivid so as to awaken the interest and curiosity of students.

In the same vein, ICT educators argue that the textbooks of Form IV–V are outdated, and even if there are recent textbooks on the market, they do not fit the content of the syllabus[52]. Likewise, the textbook of Fashion and Fabrics for Form VI students had been published already in 1983. The Economics textbook for Form III was published in 1998. However, a positive note has to be made concerning the textbooks of the science subjects, which have been published as recently as 2003 to 2010.

4.7 The educators' poor competencies and limited resources in promoting the all-round development of the child

The Ministry of Education is highlighting, to a large extent, the importance of having an education which takes into consideration the all-round development of the students. How to make this happen? Which tools are made available for the educators to achieve that goal? The Ministry of Education does not provide answers to these questions or simply it gives the educators the freedom to decide. The point which was raised during the investigation, when dealing with the issue of the all-round development of the child, was the attitudes and behaviour of students today. Are educators able to impose discipline at the level of their class? Are moral values or instruction present during lesson time? How do they manage to make this possible? All of these are questions which this study has looked into.

4.7.1 Lack of discipline

45.6% of the respondents ***strongly agree*** that students are ill-mannered and violent these days, compared to 42.2% who only ***agree*** with this fact (refer to

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[52] Refer to question 14 in which respondents were asked to mention the dates of publication of the textbooks used at school.

question 8(L) and Table 7 (Appendix A)). Young female educators often complain of having problems in dealing with male students, because the latter perceive them as sexual objects rather than as educators. The large number of responses quoted above indicate that there is a real problem of **lack of discipline** at school – a problem which has not yet been addressed by the Ministry of Education. Students are aware of their rights as children and they do not tolerate any abuse on the part of educators.

The government is correct in instituting laws to protect children, but it has failed to also educate its educators in how to deal with the lack of discipline at school. 38.9% of the respondents *agree* that the ombudsperson is right to condemn corporal punishment at school, compared to 30% who *disagree* with this law (refer to question 8(h) and Table 7 (Appendix A)). In fact, those 30% of educators are helpless and they do not know how to maintain discipline in their class without having recourse to violence. The educator is in a better position to have proper class management if the problem of the lack of discipline is solved. Training is recommended in this regard.

4.7.2   *Training and teaching tools*

61.1% of the respondents declare that they have not been on **training** provided by the Ministry since at least 2008 (refer to question 13). Some even argue that they have not had any training since their induction course, and others deplore the fact that they did not have any training at all. Those who have attended training sessions or workshops are from either the Science or the ICT departments. They attended, for instance, the 21st century science workshops, science fairs, Data logging sessions, Microscience project, Performance Management System, Use of PowerPoint for Interactive Whiteboard, and various others[53]. Nevertheless, it is important to note that,

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[53] Refer to question 13 in which the respondents were asked to mention the types and dates of training they attended.

based on the responses obtained, none of the Asian Language educators have had any training so far.

On this point, tributes must be paid to the Ministry of Education because through the different workshops and training offered to the Science and ICT departments, it shows its willingness to make Mauritius a knowledge-based society. However, the question needs to be posed: have all the educators from those departments attended the training, or were the training and workshops given only to the Heads of Departments? Often, training and workshops were mostly for Heads of Departments. How far the Heads of Departments have communicated what they have learnt to the other members of the departments remains another vital question to be investigated.

For an educator to work efficiently, he or she needs to have the **necessary tools** and facilities made available by the school. 22.2% of the educators in the survey state that chalks and blackboard are available at their institutions (refer to question 10). 15.4% of the respondents reveal that whiteboard and markers are offered (refer to question 10). However, among the 9.9% of educators who mention that the whiteboard is present in every classroom, they also ague that they need to buy their own markers (refer to question 10). Others add that the whiteboard is smaller than the blackboard and thus not suitable for use (refer to question 10).

Overhead projectors are provided only to the Science departments, although there is a willingness among other departments to use projectors as part of their teaching tools. In addition, 5.1% of the educators declare that their schools do not have an appropriate projection room (refer to question 10). It is either too small or not well-equipped. Only 11.4% of the respondents indicate having Internet facilities, and only 2.1% of the responses provide evidence for the presence of E-learning at their institutions (refer to question 10). Living in an era shaped by technology and having a government reiterating its wish of making ICT the fourth pillar of the economy, it is shocking to find such a poor number of educators being provided with Internet or E-learning facilities. It may also be that only these 11.2% of educators are aware of the facilities

being provided by their schools, while the rest simply do not bother to make good use of what is in fact made accessible to them. Similarly, there is no proper maintenance being carried out, thus depriving the educators from the ICT tools made available to them. Figure 6 below shows the percentage of responses for question 10.

Figure 6:   Materials   made   available   to   educators   by   the institutions.
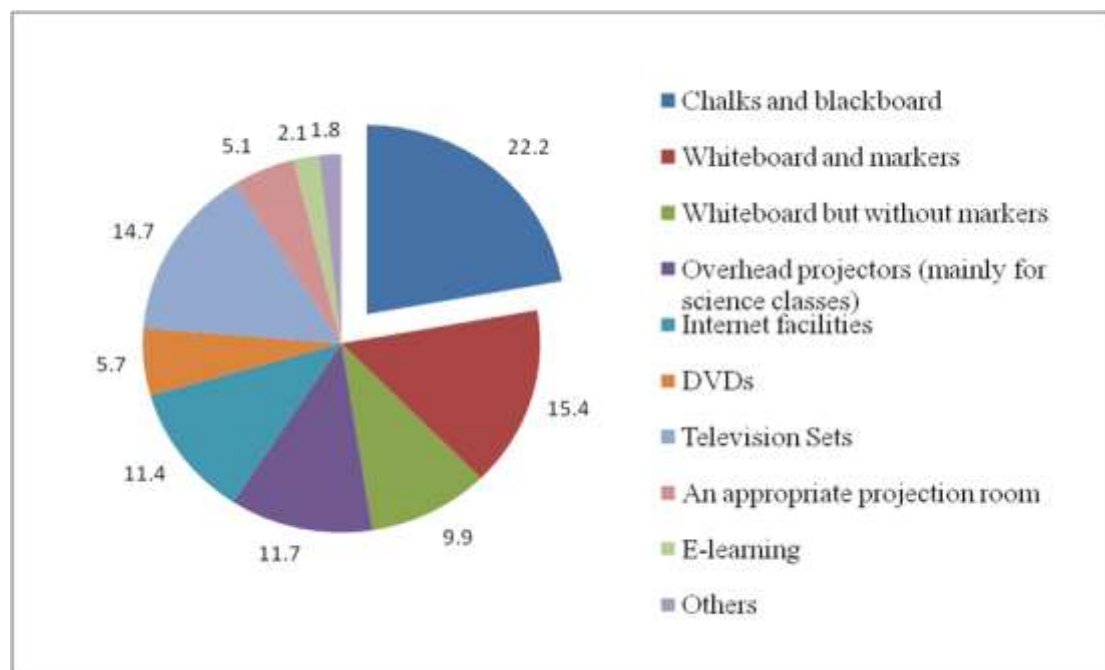
4.7.3   Activity period and co- and extra-curricular activities

The Ministry of Education has introduced another period known as the **Activity Period** to encourage students to participate in **co- and extra-curricular activities**. In so doing, it will presumably reduce the stress and pressure created by academic studies and it will also favour the all-round development of the child. Based on the analysis of the research, 64.4% of the respondents believe that the Activity Period is a waste of time and fails to promote the emotional development and creative capacities of students (refer to question 26).

In fact, the Activity Period lacks the proper structure for it to function properly. Each school is free to establish the number of hours per week to be spent during the Activity Period. A maximum of 30 minutes per day are devoted to co- or extra-curricular activities. Each school must have various clubs (such as the Environmental club, the Health club, the Sports club, the Human Rights club and others), and every club must prepare activities for International Days Celebrations depending on its relevancy with the clubs' values or philosophies. After each trimester, each school must send to the Ministry a list of the activities performed by the different clubs. The Ministry of Education has imposed such rules and regulations to ensure that every student has a chance to participate in an activity of his or her choice. However, it has been reported by various schools that some educators do not have any participation in the clubs, and they remain in the staffroom carrying out personal work during that period while their fellow colleagues are performing the labour of Hercules with students. Such an attitude brings down the spirit of hard-working educators. It was also found that higher-grade students were not interested in the Activity Period. They preferred to shirk classes during that period. As it can be noted from the data of the research, only 9.5% of the educators acknowledge that there are activities organised at the level of the various clubs at school (refer to question 11).

The Ministry of Education also wishes to inculcate the culture of reading and sports in students, by organising various book fairs or inter-college sports competitions among the different schools of the island. 42.2% of the responses obtained **agree** that the Ministry of Education is deploying efforts to promote reading among the students (refer to question 8(i) and Table 7 (Appendix A)). Nevertheless, 36.7% of responses **disagree** with this viewpoint (refer to question 8(i) and Table 7 (Appendix A)). In fact, it is argued that not much is being done to stimulate the child's interest in reading. Youngsters are more interested nowadays in venturing into the virtual world than depending on their own imagination to see or perceive things. There is an absence of colourful books with interactive and amusing activities to inspire youngsters to read books. Only 11.5% of the respondents admit that linguistic activities are

organised at their institutions, and most of them are from the language departments (refer to question 11). It is crucial to emphasise the fact that the question about co- and extra-curricular activities discloses an important fact: the extent to which educators are aware of the different activities organised by their institutions or by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with other organisations such as the National Productivity Council (NPCC). The degree of awareness also reflects the degree of participation. The Figure below shows the number of responses obtained for the co- and extra-curricular activities at school.

Figure 7: Co- or extra-curricular activities identified by educators under investigation.
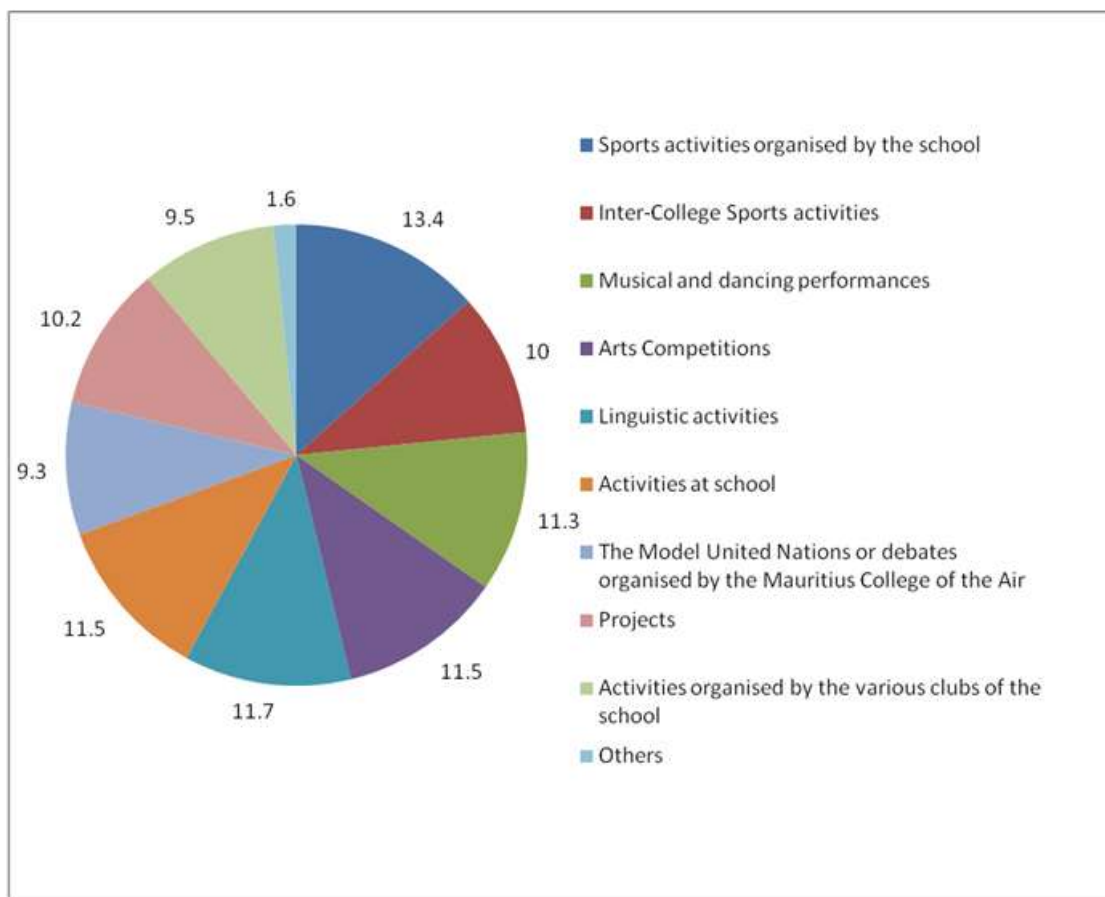
4.7.4   Moral instruction

When trying to promote the all-round development of students, it is important to provide them with moral instruction. Through moral learning students are given the necessary tools to judge what is right or wrong, that is, they acquire the norms and values of society. Moreover, by assimilating the norms and values of their society, the adolescents will be able to become responsible, law-abiding citizens. 91.1% of the educators agree that moral values should be taught along with academic lessons, because they are conscious of their significance for society (refer to question 29).

There are various ways in which an educator can encourage moral instruction in class. In certain subjects such as Social Studies or even the languages, moral instruction is already part of the syllabus. 24.4% of responses obtained assume that educators promote fairness in class, for example, by informing students in advance of a coming test (refer to question 30 and Table 10 (Appendix A)). The element of "truthfulness" (cited in Jackson *et al.* 1993: 17) plays a crucial role in the education of a child. If the educator is ethical towards his or her students they will follow the same example. Being the role model of the students also enables the educator to maintain discipline in class. However, it was found that 8.4% of the educators acknowledged the use of constant warnings given to students without any action being taken (refer to question 30 and Table 10 (Appendix A)). Such an act on the part of the educator discredits his or her ethical status and it consequently becomes difficult to maintain discipline. Similarly, 7.3% of the educators admit that they use metaphors and sayings to communicate opinions and instructions to the students (refer to question 30 and Table 10 (Appendix A)). Metaphors and sayings may capture one's attention but they may also lead to misinterpretation or misunderstanding.

19.6% of the respondents revealed making use of different strategies to discourage cheating among students (refer to question 30 and Table 10 (Appendix A)). It is important for students to know that rules and regulations are meant to be followed and that sanctions exist to punish those who do not

follow them. 9.1% of the educators have also confessed that they regularly remind students of the types of punishment they might be given if they do "this" or "that" (refer to question 30 and Table 10 (Appendix A)). Action must be taken to show students one's commitment in maintaining the school's regulations. Jackson *et al.* (1993: 7) believe in the importance of religious classes in providing moral instruction. However, as the data of the study reveals, religious classes are provided in only a few State Secondary Schools. 31.1% of the respondents state that their institutions provide religious classes in the form of Islamic Studies and Christian Science (refer to question 28).

4.7.5   Teacher-centred approach versus child-centred approach

As discussed in Chapter 2, the teacher-centred approach takes into consideration the educator's opinions, moral values and instructions, whereas the child-centred approach aims at providing individual attention to each of one's students. To be able to maximise on the all-round development of the child, it is important to place the child-centred approach in the foreground. 20.2% of the educators in the study chose the child-centred approach, compared to 4.8% who chose the teacher-centred approach (refer to question 31(i) and Table 11 (Appendix A)).

However, 20.2% of the respondents admit that their main aim is to have a maximum number of students succeed in scoring above 50% at examinations (refer to question 31(i) and Table 11 (Appendix A)). This is essentially the teacher-centred approach in which the objectives of the educator prime. In fact, such an objective is one which the Ministry of Education wishes to achieve in terms of numerical targets, as it is clearly mentioned in the PBB. As it may be recalled, the Ministry of Education acknowledges all those who attain this objective. Very often, it is the educators of the star schools which can attain this goal. 18.9% of the respondents mention that one of their main objectives is to avoid committing mistakes when they are in class (refer to question 31(i) and Table 11 (Appendix A)). Once more, one can find the teacher-centred approach in which the educator presents himself or herself as

a role model. It needs to be remembered that the educator is considered to be on a stage, whereby his or her audience believes him or her to be the master of all knowledge.

30.3% of the respondents mention that they recognise and praise each and every single effort made by their students (refer to question 31(i) and Table 11 (Appendix A)). They believe that praise is an appropriate means to increase the academic performance of the students. This is part of the child-centred approach. Among those respondents, 69.6% consider praising one's students' efforts to be the best means to attain this objective (refer to question 31 (ii)). For example, the educator can praise the students in front of the whole class; words of encouragement such as "well done or keep it up" can be said orally to the students or written in their school journals. Others have proposed rewarding students' efforts by either offering a gift or giving bonus marks, even if the effort is an improvement in behaviour (refer to question 31(ii)). In so doing, such educators are promoting the "sympathetic bias" (cited in Jackson *et al.* 1993: 260). By the same token, 86.7% of respondents reveal that having regular talks and meetings with colleagues, to share one's experiences in the classroom, can promote effective teaching (refer to question 32).

4.8 The hidden curriculum

The hidden curriculum comprises of various important elements which may have either a positive or a negative impact on the quality of the education system. The lack of meritocracy and the unequal opportunities which form part of the hidden curriculum were found to have a negative impact on the quality of the Mauritian education system. These elements of the hidden curriculum are discussed in relation to gender and ethnicity.

4.8.1 The lack of meritocracy and the unequal opportunities

The data obtained from the survey shows that 64.4% of the respondents agree that the education in Mauritius is fair and meritocratic (refer to question 22). They believe that free education offers each citizen, regardless of status or ethnic group, the opportunities of moving up the social ladder. They argue that education is compulsory up to the age of 16: a law which forces all parents to send their children to school. It is further felt that the government provides all the necessary tools and facilities for the students, such as free access to secondary education, free transport to attend school, social aid to needy students, scholarships (for tertiary education) are provided to high achievers and various others. They agree with the functionalist philosophy in which it says that opportunities are provided to all; it is up to the individuals to seize them.

Various relevant points have also been raised by the 35.6% of the respondents who do not believe in the fairness and meritocracy of the system (refer to question 22). They argue that, although access to education is theoretically free, in practice it is far from being totally free: there are various costs associated with it. For example, one needs to purchase textbooks, stationery, school uniforms, school journals and school pads, which are all expensive. Students are also required to pay annual Parent Teacher's Association (PTA) fees of Rs 300. As it was pointed out in the previous section, private tuition is becoming more and more expensive. Therefore, it is generally observed that students of middle-class families are the ones to succeed, as compared to the others from working-class backgrounds, because the parents have the means to satisfy the material needs of their wards. It can be said that working-class students suffer from **material factors** (cited in Browne 2005: 287) as explained in Chapter 2.

Another crucial issue that was raised concerned the elitism of the education system. The system is said to be too elitist. Certain schools have more facilities than others in terms of gymnasium, football fields, well-equipped laboratories, well-conditioned building and others. The star schools have far

better facilities than the "mediocre" schools. Some students are also penalised because of their ethnicity and gender. One's social identity inevitably impacts on one's achievement at school.

4.8.1.1   Ethnicity

82.2% of the respondents admit that the majority of their students come from the Hindu ethnic group (refer to question 23 and Table 12 (Appendix A)). It is important to note that those 82.2% of the respondents teach the academic stream. All of the seven prevocational educators, who participated in the study, agree that the majority of their students form part of the Creole population (refer to question 23).

According to the findings of the investigation, 38.9% of the respondents **agree** that prevocational and academic stream students must be separated (refer to question 8(j) and Table 7 (Appendix A)). In other words, prevocational students must have their own school premises. The reason for this separation is provided by 45.6% of the respondents, who **agree** that prevocational students have a negative influence upon the behaviour of academic stream students (refer to question 8(k) and Table 7 (Appendix A)). Since the school is perceived as society in miniature, the Ministry of Education has brought those two streams under the same roof so as to avoid social exclusion at the level of the school. It is a solution to sensitise young adults to the issues of equality, justice and fairness, but it seems to be much better at providing the prevocational stream with a more individualised education. The most appropriate solution for these students is to separate them from the mainstream students in order to provide them with individualised attention. If they are neglected at this level, they will become delinquents and be the causes of various social ills.

The low achievers are normally seen as attention seekers. They require that extra attention to feel at ease with learning and they also need psychological follow-up and advice on a daily basis. Based on the results of the survey, 88% of the respondents believe that there is a need to have a psychologist or

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school counsellor in all the schools of the island (refer to question 36). Certain misbehaved students (or problem students) require psychological follow-up to improve on their behaviour as well as on their performance at school. At present, educational psychologists meet students with difficulties at school but leave without meeting the educators afterwards. Among the 88% of respondents who agree to have a psyschologist or school counsellor on a permanent basis, 40% believe it to be unacceptable that psychologists do not meet educators during their visits at school. According to the respondents, it is important for educators to know how to handle a problem child in order to avoid any situation which may hurt his or her sensibility even further. However, 12% of the respondents believe that there is no need to have a psychologist or school counsellor on a permanent basis because it will be a waste of money from the government budget.

61.1% of the educators in the survey believe that the majority of the poorly educated people in Mauritius are the Creoles (refer to question 24). At this particular point in the discussion, it is important to point to the fact that the respondents were given the choice to choose one or more reasons from a list provided to explain why they agreed that Creoles formed the majority of the uneducated population. Living in the 21st century, it is surprising to discover how backward and racists certain Mauritian educators can be. 25% of the respondents acknowledge that the Creole people are denied the spirit and culture of success, compared to their fellow brothers of Hindu, Muslim and Chinese faith, in order to illustrate their views concerning the high number of poor achievers within the Creole community (refer to question 24 (i)). It is usually heard from Creole students that certain educators make use of abusive language, stereotypes and wrong labelling towards them as insults in front of the whole class. In the long run, those same students will end up buying into these stereotypes and wrong labelling, and will consequently develop the self-fulfilling prophecy (cited in Browne 2005: 292). However, 23.4% of the respondents answered lack of finance as the main reason to explain the high number of poor performers among the Creoles (refer to

question 24(i)). Figure 8 below illustrates the views of the educators on that issue:

Figure 8: Reasons provided by educators to justify why the majority of poorly educated people are creoles.
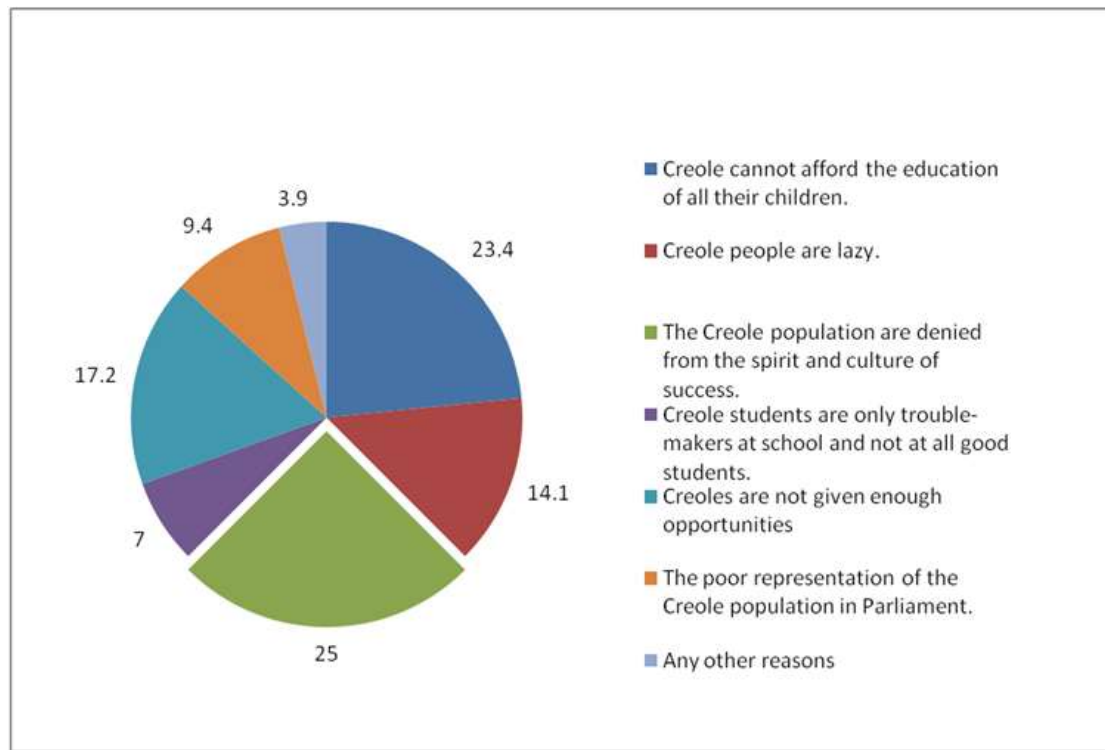
It is also important to note that among the 35 respondents who do not agree that Creoles form part of the low achievers, 64.7% believe that it is a wrong label imposed on these people (refer to question 24 (ii) and Table 13 (Appendix A)). The other reason cited by 2% of the respondents argue that poor performers are also from the other ethnic backgrounds. However, none has mentioned that most of the Creoles are well-educated and occupy top positions. It may be because of the few Creoles who had shaped politics in Mauritius compared to the Hindus or Muslims (refer to Chapter 1).

When one tries to find answers to explain why the low achievers are most often from the Creole population, one can also find unimaginable problems being faced, on a daily basis, by those adolescents. Broken families, alcoholic parents, the loss or suicide of one parent, one of the parents being a prisoner,

serious financial problems leading the child to come to school without lunch, parents being drug traffickers and drug addicts – to cite only a few problems. Based on one's observations it can be said that education for those children is secondary or totally absent from their list of priorities. What they require are available resources to satisfy their immediate needs instead of waiting for years to benefit from the outcomes of education. Being an educator requires one to be neutral and to, once and for all, shed unfounded and harmful prejudices. An educator needs to be attentive to the needs of his or her students; he or she has to guide children towards the right path and not the wrong one.

As was argued in Chapter 2, the official use of English as the medium of instruction at school, does not favour students from the working-class population. In this regard, one refers to the **lack of cultural or linguistic capital** (cited in Bourdieu & Passeron 1990: 72) which hinders the educational success of those students to a large extent. 21% of the respondents agree that the use of English as medium of instruction represents an enormous disadvantage to students from poor socio-economic background (refer to question 16 and Table 14 (Appendix A)). However, 49.2% of the respondents agree with the fact that working-class students will remain poor achievers if they are unable to understand and make use of English properly (refer to question 16 and Table 14 (Appendix A)). UNESCO (2000: 14) makes it clear that globalisation is both "an opportunity and a challenge". Globalisation shapes and moulds one's education system because of the changes it has brought about at the level of the economy and the job market. It is also synonymous with the concept of Englishness, which places English as the most widely spoken language around the world. English has become a quasi-universal language. Since, Mauritius is moving towards a knowledge-based society, it is important that its population is fluent in writing and speaking English.

Various questions are triggered when discrimination and injustices experienced by the working-class people are brought under analysis. For

example, would it be discriminative towards the working-class students if the educator does not consider English as being important for them? What about the middle-class students, who have educated parents well-versed in English? Would they not fare better than those working-class students suffering from cultural deprivation? What about middle-class and upper-class students who speak English and French at home? Would they have better results than the working-class students? All these are external factors which add to the injustices of the Mauritian education system. The whole Mauritian curriculum is in English, and students sit for Cambridge School Certificate and Higher School Certificate examinations. Although, Mauritius has gained independence from the British colonial rule, the latter still has a firm grip on the Maurition education system. Therefore, it will be discriminative towards the Creole population if the educator does not consider English to be important for them, because it will limit their chances of success.

One needs to understand how to use Creole as medium of instruction, while keeping in mind that the students will have to answer in English for the exams. The survey has revealed that educators are able to make use of a blend of the three languages: English, Creole and French. 56.7% of the respondents state that they use those three languages as mediums of instruction (refer to question 17 and Table 15 (Appendix A)). Prevocational educators have also added that they make use more of Creole to ensure better comprehension on the part of their students (refer to question 17 and Table 15 (Appendix A)).

4.8.1.2   Gender

According to the data obtained from the survey, 52.2% of the respondents believe that girls usually perform better than boys in the examinations (refer to question 19). 37.8% of the respondents argue that both boys and girls have similar performance (refer to question 19). Those educators who answered favourably to both boys and girls are from the Mahatma Gandhi schools. Among the different State Secondary Schools, the Mahatma Gandhi schools are the only ones who provide education to both boys and girls. The State

Secondary Schools are known to be gender-segregated institutions. Design and technology, as subject, is offered only at boys' schools, whereas Home Economics (including Fashion and Fabrics and Food and Nutrition) is offered only at girls' schools. It is important to note that the Mahatma Gandhi schools are parastatal bodies and they have their own system of recruitment, but they have to abide by the rules and regulations of the Ministry of Education.

According to the respondents who believe that girls perform better than boys, 39.5% of them believe girls strive harder than boys (refer to question 19 (ii) and Table 16 (Appendix A)). It can be said that girls are more conscientious than their male counterparts. It was one of the most cited reasons which was not given in the list. Another reason proposed to explain this difference is that girls have better writing skills than boys and they are more obedient. Moreover, 38.3% of the respondents argue that statistically girls perform better than boys. There is concrete evidence from official statistics[54] (refer to question 19(ii) and Table 16 (Appendix A)) that this is indeed the case. This also supports the fact that some educators are well-informed about the major changes of the education system.

However, the survey also reveals that 29% of the respondents believe that boys strive harder than girls (refer to question 19). Seven (7) out of 21 Science educators in the survey showed their enthusiasm for boys' interest and aptitudes in dealing with Science subjects, as compared to girls (refer to question 19(i) and Table 17 (Appendix A)). It is a wrong, stereotypical image imposed on girls. Such attitudes place girls as inferior to boys and lead them to buy into the stereotype. In such a way the self-fulfilling prophecy (cited in Browne 2005: 292) is accomplished. But it also important to note that none of the respondents have chosen boys as future breadwinners and girls as future home-makers which explain why the former must be encouraged to strive

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[54] Refer to Figure 1 and Figure 2 in Chapter 2.

harder at schools. It is fortunate to find a slight improvement on the part of educators to get rid of their sexist attitudes and thoughts.

71.1% of the respondents declare that the textbooks they use at school do not contain gender-stereotyped images (refer to question 15). However, the 28.9% of respondents who consider the textbooks they use at school to be loaded with gender-stereotyped images, include the Social Studies educators (refer to question 15). For example, in the textbook of Form I, the chapter on the family shows the son helping the father in the garden, while the daughter is helping the mother in the kitchen.

Moreover, 42.4% of the respondents believe that the enrolment of boys usually outnumbers that of girls in the prevocational stream because parents have the notion that boys are the future breadwinners and girls will stay at home as housewives (refer to question 25 and Table 18 (Appendix A)). Therefore, it is much wiser to educate their sons rather than their daughters. 26.3% of the respondents also state that girls are not typically interested in receiving training in technical or manual fields (refer to question 25 and Table 18 (Appendix A)). The other reason which has been mainly cited by prevocational educators to justify this difference is that the majority of the girls are found in the academic stream (refer to question 25 and Table 18 (Appendix A)). There are more hard workers among the girls than among the boys.

62.2% of the respondents are in favour of sensitising campaigns (on sexism and racism) to be effective means to change people's racist and sexist attitudes (refer to question 37). Mauritians should be encouraged to get rid of prejudices and treat their fellow beings as their equal. 37.8% of the respondents do not believe that sensitising campaigns will bring about a radical change in the mindset of people. For example, they propose that sexual education must be taught at school in a view of eliminating sexist attitudes to a large extent. Citizenship, as a subject, must continue at secondary level. From the 37.8% of respondents who do not believe in sensitising campaigns, 29.4% have noted that there is an absence of

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patriotism among their students which needs to be promoted to eradicate racist attitudes among the Mauritian population.

4.9 Parental Interest

91.1% of respondents agree that parental interest is a must in promoting achievement of students at school (refer to question 33). They believe that the education, provided by educators, must continue at home. Parents must monitor the work of their children by verifying homework, school journals and report books. When the parents are interested in what the child does at school, it motivates the latter to work even harder. Having a certain level of social control at home is thought to deter the child from misbehaving at school. Therefore, parents have a key role to play in the education of their children.

However, 8.9% of the educators questioned disagree in placing parents as major role players in promoting achievement of students at school. They believe that it is difficult to rely on illiterate parents to monitor the copybooks and homework of their children. These parents cannot even read the remarks, input by the educators, in the school journals of their children. Certain parents, when called upon at school to discuss the behaviour or performance of their children, do not even bother to come and meet the educators. Sometimes, those parents do not share the same values as those of the school. For example, encouraging their children to achieve good grades at school is their least consideration because they have to struggle with different home problems such as parental disputes, domestic violence, unemployed husbands and others. According to the 8.9% respondents, parental interest can only have an effect in high achieving rather than in low achieving schools.

4.10 Streaming

Based on the data obtained from the survey, 83.3% of the respondents believe that streaming is a solution to the problem of mixed-ability at school (refer to question 34) although it has been contested by various sociologists

as explained in Chapter 2. The main reason provided, by the respondents, to justify the above stance considers the speed at which students learn and assimilate the lessons of the day. Not all students learn at the same speed and some students feel lost when the educator moves at a quicker pace while others are understanding and following the explanation. By the same token, it is believed that such situation leads to a frustrating environment inside the classroom. The child who does not understand feels frustrated. When the educator takes the explanation again, more capable students feel bored and as a result they are held back by less capable ones. Without streaming, it is difficult to meet each and every child's educational needs. Streaming is seen as a way of eliminating the problem of mixed-ability provided it is done in such a way as to promote the welfare of all students. No child must be left aside.

16.7% of the respondents believe that streaming is not the solution to the problem of mixed-ability instead it will lead to disparity among students. They argue that educators will concentrate only on high achievers and will put aside the low achievers. Streaming will decrease the self-esteem of the low achievers. They also believe that low achieving classes will be made up of mostly ethnic minorities which will promote discrimination and social exclusion.

4.11 Different curricula for both low and high achievers

73.3 % of the educators questioned believe that there is a need to have different curricula for both low and high achievers (refer to question 35). The Maths educators, who participated in the survey, have pointed out that Cambridge Examination Centre proposes two different syllabi for the SC examinations. For example, there is the Syllabus D for more capable students and Syllabus A for less capable students in mathematics. However, in all State Secondary Schools educators must prepare students for Syllabus D regardless of their capabilities in Mathematics. It would be more advisable to prepare students, based on their abilities, for a particular paper than to impose on them.

However, 26.7% of the respondents still believe in the elitist aspect of the Mauritian education system. They argue that all students must sit for the same paper even if not all of them have the capabilities of doing so. It has always been the rule to have examinations to sieve the best talented individuals. Others believe that having two different syllabi will place a tag on the low achievers lowering their self-esteem. They also question the fact that whether having different syllabi may have consequences on the future careers of students. For example, will a student, who has studied Maths Syllabus A, have the same chances of obtaining a seat at University (to follow courses in Maths or Sciences) than another student who has studied Maths Syllabus D? It needs to be well-assessed before taking the final decision.

4.12 Quality education in Mauritius

To the question whether Mauritius is on the right track to achieve quality education, 65.5% of the respondents were pessimistic and answered negatively, compared to 34.4% of optimists (refer to question 33). The main reason provided by the educators refers to an education which is too content driven without leaving much space of creative and emotional development of students (refer to question 38). The curriculum is judged by the educators to be too bulky. It is believed that the Ministry of Education is concentrating too much on competition and is implementing solutions which are unplanned in terms of co- and extra-curricular activities and the Activity Period. For the respondents, the education system does not promote the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual learning of the students sufficiently to be able to speak of quality education. Factors, such as absence of coordination of several ministries, sudden transfers of educators, too many students per class, unavailability of assets and tools, absence of training for educators, lack of motivation on the part of both teachers and students, among others, are obstacles on the road to quality in education. To these educators the system has to be reviewed.

The main reason quoted by the 34.4% of optimists centres on the issue that the Ministry of Education is doing its best to achieve quality in education, and they believe that success will surely follow in the near future (refer to question 33). They agree that, although the different measures taken by the Ministry of Education are not one hundred percent effective, the aims are noble and in the long run, it will be fruitful.

CHAPTER 5: RECOMMENDATIONS

In the different chapters of the thesis, it was argued that Mauritius has an education system which is too content driven without paying much attention to the all-round development of students. It was discussed that the Ministry of Education, instead of lightening the curriculum, is devising numerical targets to attain the objectives of UNESCO. It was also found that such a system creates a considerable amount of pressure on both students and educators. Some opportunistic educators take advantage of that situation in order to make money out of private tuition. In the following sections, certain vital recommendations are proposed with a view to tackle the major drawbacks highlighted in Chapter 4. These recommendations are discussed in the light of reviewing the Mauritian content driven education, improving the educator's competencies through continuous professional development and training, and favouring more meritocracy and equal opportunities.

5.1 Reviewing the Mauritian content driven education

In this section, the following recommendations are made: a less rigid and less content driven education, streaming, adopting different curricula to satisfy the different needs of students of mixed abilities, the abolition of automatic promotion, the move from rote learning to a child-centred approach in the higher primary grades, legalising private tuition, and the publication of up-to-date textbooks.

5.1.1 A less rigid and less content driven education

An education, which is too much content driven, may be seen as an education which does not leave much space for the development of the emotional and creative capacities of students. Instead of imposing numerical targets to be achieved by educators, the Ministry of Education should review the needs of the students and those of the educators. The data from the survey suggest

that in most schools one educator cannot cope with a class of approximately 40 students of mixed abilities. It is humanly impossible to cater for the needs of each and every student in one or two periods in situations where classes are too large. Classes of 40 students must be broken down into two groups: each comprising 20 students. It should be a rule which the Ministry of Education can introduce in all the State Secondary Schools of the island. In this way, it will become more manageable for the educator to meet the needs of the students. The Ministry of Education must keep in mind that quality does not go hand in hand with quantity.

5.1.2 Streaming

Based on the data of the study (refer to Chapter 4), streaming seems to be the solution to the problems of having students of mixed abilities in a class. It is often argued that all students do not learn and assimilate the lesson of the day at the same speed. Having a class of students of mixed abilities disadvantages the low achievers because they are unable to follow at the same pace as the other students. It is vital to emphasise the definition of quality education provided by UNESCO (2004: 2), in which it urges educators to consider the speed at which people learn. Therefore, streaming becomes the appropriate solution to make sure that all students have been able to grasp the lesson of the day. The educators will be in a better position to prepare lesson plans based on the speed at which the class is learning. However, care must be taken by the Rector to make sure that educators work seriously in all the classes, regardless of whether these consist of high or low achievers. It needs to be carried out in such a way that it promotes a sound environment for all learners and discourages any disparity which may hinder the promotion of meritocracy.

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5.1.3 Adopting different curricula to satisfy the different needs of students of mixed abilities

An important recommendation which is deemed essential for the education system concerns the curricula of Form V and Form VI. The grading system, which is done after the CPE examinations, enables the child to secure a place in one of the secondary institutions of the island. Consequently, through the grading system, there are more students succeeding at the CPE examinations compared to the ranking system of long ago which admitted fewer students in secondary schools. However, many of the so-called successful students do not have the capabilities of following the normal syllabus of Form I (lower grade) in secondary schools.

As it was mentioned in the Analysis chapter (Chapter 4), there are schools that consist of a great number of low achievers. In the lower forms, the Ministry of Education proposes the automatic promotion of students, even if they have failed in certain subjects. As a result, those students move up to the next grade without having the necessary skills to cope with higher-order learning. When they reach Form IV and Form V levels, those students end up failing exams. Such a system may give credit to the Ministry of Education in the eyes of UNESCO, because it attains its objective of having a maximum number of students at secondary level, thereby increasing the official statistics of literate Mauritians. On the other hand, increasing the number of literate people bears the risk of not reaching the numerical targets at SC and HSC exams.

To be able to have successful candidates at SC and HSC examinations, the curricula have to be reviewed. It is possible to have two different curricula for high and low achievers. The curriculum for high achievers can enable them to pursue scholarships because of its degree of difficulty. The curriculum for low achievers can have the same content than that of the high achievers, but instead of completing it in two years time, they can complete it over three years. The streaming process will permit the identification of high and low achievers in the lower classes. The school must also permit a certain degree

of flexibility in which low achievers, based on good performance, can move to the high achievers' class. For example, in Catholic schools and even in some schools of the PSSA, certain students complete their SC syllabus in three years time instead of the normal two years. These schools record better results in terms of pass rate at the SC examinations. However, the school must be cautious not to allow the low achievers to feel excluded and become subjects of stereotyping and wrong labelling. The Ministry of Education does not wish to neglect any child at this level of education, but it needs to ensure that the child's educational needs are adequately met. Formative assessment can also be considered instead of the summative one that is normally done.

5.1.4 The abolition of automatic promotion

It is also important to reconsider the automatic promotion in the lower forms; actually, it should be completely abolished from the system. To a certain extent it can be said that the Ministry of Education is right in instituting the grading system so as to minimise the number of dropouts from school after the CPE examinations. However, one should not be totally blinded by the good side of the grading system. With the introduction of streaming and the lightening of the syllabi, there will be no need to have automatic promotion in the lower forms.

5.1.5 The move from rote learning to a child-centred approach in higher primary grades

Rote learning represents an important disadvantage for students in the higher primary grades. A child needs to learn at a very young age how to develop a critical mind. At primary level, practical group projects or experiments can be taught to students. As it was argued in Chapter 2, the Ministry of Education has introduced new subjects at primary level and it has recently started a similar policy at secondary level. Such an attempt is judged as appreciable and it is true to say that new subjects like Philosophy or the 21st Century Science will foster the development of a critical mind in Mauritian students. Therefore, the move from rote learning to a child-centred approach in higher

primary grades is essential. It needs to be inculcated right from the beginning otherwise it will be difficult for students to get rid of this bad habit, which can hinder their capacity in mastering the learning items at secondary level.

5.1.6 Legalising private tuition

Trying to condemn private tuition is not an appropriate solution to the problem. As the study reveals (refer to Chapter 4), private tuition forms part of the Mauritian culture. It would be much more suitable to legalise private tuition. It can be suggested that the government be authorised to restrain the number of students per educator and, most importantly, to control the tuition fees which are presently exorbitant. It can even insist on the fact that an educator must possess a licence to give private tuition. Further to this, it could levy taxes on the tuition fees if educators receive, say more than Rs 14,000 per month. Such actions will discourage opportunistic educators from being profit-makers. To ensure the educational achievement of needy students from the working-class population, the Ministry of education can provide them with private tuition free of cost. In this way, meritocracy is being promoted within the Mauritian education system.

5.1.7 The publication of up-to-date textbooks

It is the duty of the Ministry of Education to bring about changes at the level of outdated textbooks for certain subjects. Instead of proposing the same textbooks each year, recommendations can be made to the Mauritius Institute of Education to issue newly edited textbooks with a complete revision of the contents. Group work and research activities must be included in the syllabus of certain subjects, such as Social Studies or History – subjects which are normally viewed as boring by the students. For instance, one activity could involve a visit to a historical site or how to use a questionnaire (as a research method) in the practical sense of the word. Youngsters nowadays need to live what they learn. They are attracted towards the practical aspects of the

subjects. One should not be traditionally blinded and remain in a status quo. Education is alive and keeps on changing as one's society changes.

5.2 Improving the educator's competencies through continuous professional development or training

This thesis has exposed certain shortcomings in the educator's competencies which require the Ministry of Education to play a key role in their elimination. When considering the use of professional development or training of educators, it ensures that the all-round development of the child will be promoted. This section includes a discussion of the following proposals: the availability of appropriate teaching aids, regular training for all educators, moral instruction: a must in all State Secondary Schools, better structured programmes for the Activity Period, intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, educators as collaborators with the Ministry of Education, and fostering parental interest.

5.2.1 The availability of appropriate teaching aids

Educators require appropriate teaching aids to be able to foster students' interest in the subjects taught. In Chapter 4, the importance of having a well-equipped school was made clear. It is also crucial to add that teaching materials and equipment must be distributed evenly in all departments. For instance, it is wrong to think that only Science educators have the right to use overhead projectors or laptops to deliver lessons. Social science and language educators should also have recourse to the same teaching aids. These subjects are normally viewed as boring to students, but with the use of technology the educators could render the subjects interesting and lively. Students can also come up with projects which can be presented using PowerPoint presentations. At the same time, critical thinking can be fostered and there can be a sharing of knowledge between educators and students.

5.2.2 Regular training for all educators

Regular training must be provided to all educators. Educators must become acquainted with new teaching methods or aids in relation to the advent of new technological tools. Training can be organised by the Mauritius Institute of Education (MIE). New recruits must be taught the issues around good class management. New educators who have been posted in difficult schools (where discipline seems to be the hardest word for students to understand) must be given practical advice on how to maintain classroom discipline. Presently, the induction courses are provided in a disorderly way to new recruits. It has to be recalled from Chapter 4 that some educators have reported never having benefited from any induction course. The courses should not be theoretical only but need to be practical too.

5.2.3 Moral instruction: a must in all State Secondary Schools

By the same token, the Ministry of Education must realise the importance of having moral lessons at school. It has proposed to introduce sex education as a subject in all the different State Secondary Schools but it has not yet been implemented. In Confessional and in some private schools, sex education exists as a subject and has proved to be effective. The significance of having religious classes at school should also be considered as being important vectors of moral instruction.

It is also very important to educate children right from primary school level about the norms and values (including the appropriate gestures of politeness) of one's society through classes of human values. These classes should proceed up to secondary level so that students are able to gauge the importance of being morally instructed. In the same regard, the Ministry of Education must emphasise the significance of the word "truthfulness" (cited in Jackson *et al.* 1993: 17) to its educators. It must guide them in attaining ethical leadership. Whichever approach an educator chooses, that is, either child-centred or teacher-centred approach, he or she must not depart from being an ethical leader. Educators must also be encouraged to develop a "sympathetic bias" (cited in Jackson *et al.* 1993: 260) so that they could detect

the potential in each and every student. Once more, the importance of having regular training can be observed in this section. Having moral instruction at school enables the educator to have control of his or her class and thus to maintain good class management. Educators will not have to resort to corporal punishment in an attempt to restore discipline, because the students would already have assimilated the dos and don'ts.

5.2.4 Better structured programmes for the Activity Period

When referring to the all-round development of students, the Activity Period has to be well-structured. It needs to be the same for all schools. Credit has to be given to the Ministry of Education for including the Activity Period during school hours. Before its implementation in the system, students participating in different co- and extra-curricular activities had to work during recess or the small breaks. Such a work schedule had deterred many from participating in these activities. Due to the implementation of an Activity Period, it can be recognised that it is far better to do these activities with the students without the educator or the participants being penalised during their lunch time.

The Ministry of Education must find ways to make the Activity Period work. All departments must have a list of activities proposed by the Ministry of Education to be carried out by all educators, and not only a small group of educators. All the students must participate. Various activities are found missing from the actual ones proposed by the Ministry of Education. For instance, drama courses, westernised music, swimming lessons, sports activities, among others, might have been interesting activities for students. However, it is important to have educators who are specialised in these fields.

5.2.5 Intrinsic and extrinsic rewards

It is often argued that the best part of the educator's job is the satisfaction one gets when one's students pass their examinations with flying colours. However, this intrinsic reward is virtually non-existent when educators work

with low achievers or with violent and ill-mannered students. Therefore, there is a need to motivate those educators by providing them with anti-stress programmes, for instance. Outings and other recreational activities must be organised for educators so that they could forget about the stressful work environment to which they are accustomed. They will also have the opportunity to talk to colleagues by sharing their experiences or troubles of the classroom. At the same time, team spirit among educators is promoted.

Although the salary of educators has been reviewed by the Pay Research Bureau (PRB), it requires further revision when it is compared with the salary of other professionals (with same qualifications) working in the private sector. Educators are highly educated people and they wish that fact to be recognised. It represents an extrinsic reward which will motivate them to work harder. Intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are the best tools to motivate people to work more efficiently.

5.2.6 Educators as collaborators with the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education must perceive its educators as collaborators and not as "factory workers (working at piece-rate)" who need to be pressurised to achieve the objectives of the system. When processing the data of the survey, the researcher came to realise how the educators' point of view can be useful to the Ministry of Education. Educators are in a better position to understand what students require. The top management cannot have more valuable information than that provided by the educators. In fact, the Ministry of Education must use a grassroot approach in order to bring about changes in education to achieve quality education. It needs to discuss with the educators, and ask them to fill in questionnaires if there is a need to do so, instead of imposing far-fetched rules and regulations. Everyone must work hand in hand to promote quality education.

5.2.7 Fostering parental interest

Another vital recommendation, which is not the least important but which must be considered as valuable as the others, concerns parental interest in their children's education. The educator cannot be the only vector promoting quality education; parents also have a great, if not to say the greatest, share of responsibility in their children's education. Not only should children be encouraged to strive harder to be successful one day, but the education (in terms of values and norms) which they receive at school should continue at home. Very often, parents come to seek the help of the educator because they are not able to control the behaviour of their children at home. Unfortunately, most of the times, the parents are found to be responsible because of the absence of punishment, values and norms at home. What the child learns at school is soon forgotten once back at home. Again, the Ministry of Education must sensitise parents, through regular talks and meetings, on this issue. It needs to consider the parents as collaborators, like the educators. Each one has a role to play in order to achieve quality education. In this way, parents and educators could all work together to promote the well-being of the students.

5.3 Favouring more meritocracy and equal opportunities in relation to gender and ethnicity

Although Mauritius claims to encourage meritocracy and equal opportunities through a free and equally accessible education, inequalities still persist at the level of gender and minority ethnic group, as discussed in Chapter 4. The recommendations made are subdivided into the following sections: sensitisation campaigns against sexism and racism, and employing a psychologist or school counsellor on a permanent basis in all State Secondary Schools.

5.3.1 Sensitisation campaigns against sexism and racism

The Ministry of Education should not allow itself to go astray and believe that gender does not represent a problem, just because there is equal access to education for both boys and girls. It needs to attempt research with its field researchers to determine whether equal outcomes exist. Mauritian society is still patriarchal in nature, although changes have been made with the introduction of free education. There still exist families in which girls' education is of no importance. There are various cases in which parents do not encourage girls in their studies. Instead, they are often reminded that they do not have the aptitudes to study. The Ministry of Education should sensitise people on the issues of gender and racist discrimination.

The term "racism" is used with great caution by the government because it may lead to various political and social problems if it is wrongly understood by people. It needs to be stressed that the government is doing all it can to preserve its social and political image. However, it is high time that the Mauritian people be sensitised on the issues of gender and racism through posters, publicity campaigns on television or radio, advertisements in newspapers and others.

At the level of the school, projects and co-curricular activities aimed at sensitising students on the issues of sexism and racism can be organised. The educator also needs to be sensitised through different workshops and should stop acting like a layperson. He or she needs to be seen as ethical and competent in the eyes of his or her students.

5.3.2 Employing a psychologist or school counsellor on a permanent basis in all State Secondary Schools

From one angle, the Ministry of Education is wrong in saying that educators should by themselves devise the best means to achieve quality education within the classroom by aiming at the all-round development of their students. From another angle, it is true that the educator must possess a certain degree

of autonomy to manage his or her class. It is also wise to focus on the fact that the educator may require external help. Educators working in difficult schools are often confronted with students suffering from some forms of psychological trauma. Such students are usually referred to meet a psychologist from the Ministry of Education. The psychologist visits these students at school without meeting the educators at all.

There are certain questions which an educator does not always have the answers to, especially where troublesome students are concerned. For instance, how to deal with those students when they are in class? What sanctions or punishments to adopt when they misbehave? Which words are to be used or which ones are not to be used? The psychologist is in a better position to guide the educator in approaching these students in a different manner. When trying to satisfy the needs of these students, the class becomes more manageable. In all Mauritian schools, there is an urgent need to have a psychologist or a school counsellor on a permanent basis. If educators are expected not to neglect any child, as the Ministry of Education constantly repeats, such a recommendation must not fall on deaf ears. Then only can the all-round development of the students be met and the problem of the lack of discipline at school may be partly solved. Similarly, the prevocational students must have their own school premises with all the facilities provided. A psychologist should be present on a daily basis because those students are attention seekers and they require individual help.

CONCLUSION

At the very beginning of this thesis, the researcher made it clear that the main objective of the research was to gauge the extent to which Mauritius would attain quality education based on the different changes brought about within the system. The research process was centred on Zone 2 because of limited resources and the time available to the researcher. Hypotheses were formulated to be able to answer the different research questions. A self-administered questionnaire was distributed to 90 educators of Zone 2. Based on the analysis of the data, it can be deduced that Mauritius has been able to climb up various steps with its ambitious project of achieving quality education, but there is still a long way to go before one can say that it has achieved its objectives.

It needs to be recognised that Mauritius has made a remarkable advancement in terms of its education system, compared to certain African countries which are still lagging behind. Although free education had been a political strategy rather than a humanitarian action, it had brought much to people from poor socio-economic backgrounds. It had helped to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor and also the gap between the genders. The labour force nowadays comprises a high number of professionals. Mauritius deserves to pride itself on having made great progress over the years in terms of its education system. Various reforms did materialise and were implemented to meet the primary needs of the students. Over the years, different Ministers of Education have iterated their desire to have quality education. New subjects were introduced at primary and secondary levels in order to foster critical thinking.

Moreover, Mauritius recognises the need to become a knowledge-based society so as to cope with the various pressures of the globalised era. It is promoting students' interest in ICT and science subjects. The advent of the 21st Science Century as subject at Form V level (especially for those not opting for science subjects) ensures that all students, when leaving school,

will have at least a background knowledge of the sciences. Promoting the social sciences among the science students ensures that they develop a critical mind regarding society.

New schools have been built to cater for more and more students. The pre-vocational stream was integrated along with the mainstream to eliminate disparities between those two groups. The Ministry of Education wishes to have every child of the Mauritian society benefiting from one or other kind of education: either academic or vocational. It wants to achieve "Education For All" as propounded by UNESCO (2000: 8).

But how far is Mauritius moving towards quality education? Why does Mauritius possess such a pretension to make people believe that it is moving on the right track to quality education? Is it again a political strategy to deviate the Mauritian citizens away from the reality? The answers to these questions lie in the fact that Mauritius wants to attain specific numerical targets notably to have every child educated by the end of 2015. Actually, it is moving towards a quantified rather than a qualified education. Achieving the numerical targets of UNESCO has become far too important. More secondary schools have been built because there are more students succeeding in the CPE exams compared to previously. It is not that students have become brighter, but that the grading system uses criteria which allow more passes than would have been the case with the ranking system. The educators of secondary schools often complain that certain students are not able to cope with the syllabus of the lower secondary grades. It is difficult to work with students of mixed abilities. The Ministry of Education does not even propose at least one solution to tackle the problem. It prefers to make educators work with classes of approximately 40 students of mixed abilities. In so doing, Mauritius is not moving towards quality education but towards mass education.

Moreover, Mauritius has a policy of interference which hinders its capacity of attaining quality education. The Reform of 2001 was implemented by the previous government in power. The new government is only continuing what

had been proposed by the previous one. In fact, as it was mentioned in Chapter 1, the Reform of 2001 comprised the institution of Form VI colleges and the abolition of the star schools. But the government presently in power did not agree with what had been implemented by its predecessor, and decided to abolish the system of Form VI colleges and to re-instate the star schools, because it believes in an elitist system of education. The grading system included the "A+" to distinguish students who would have a place in one of the star schools from those who would be allocated a place in one of the other remaining schools. All these measures are known to be political strategies. The government apparently does not evaluate the pros and cons of its decisions. Its main objective is to show people that things are being carried out and also to prove that there had been faults in the previous system. A country which is governed by a democratic regime cannot permit its elected representatives to do whatever pleases them, even if this involves the risk of putting the education of the future generation at stake.

By the same token, how can one attain quality education if the education system is too content driven and quantified? The numerical targets, imposed by the Ministry of Education through the PBB, force students as well as educators to concentrate more on the academic aspect of education. It was debated in Chapter 4 that private tuition is part and parcel of the Mauritian education system. It is viewed as the golden route to success. Although private tuition represents an enormous financial burden for parents, it is very difficult to stop this craze. Since the number of pass rates is of paramount importance for educators to achieve, they automatically pressurise their students to work even harder. As a result, private tuition has become the most appropriate means to ensure success. However, private tuition is only accessible to those who can pay.

Rote learning also forms an integral part of the system. Despite the fact that the Ministry of Education agrees that rote learning is not appropriate for the 21st century era, it only scratches the surface of the issue by instituting a few ways supposedly aimed at eliminating rote learning. For example, the

introduction of new subjects both at primary and secondary levels is aimed at encouraging the development of critical thought among students. It is part of the solution but appropriate teaching styles need to be developed in order to replace rote learning. It is also difficult to stimulate the students' interest in subjects such as Social Studies, because the textbooks are outdated and such subjects require fascinating up-to-date content to stimulate the students' interest.

In addition, the Ministry of Education argues for a holistic form of education in which the all-round development of the students is favoured. The majority of the educators in Mauritius do not have the required competencies and resources to promote the all-round development of the children. These educators are mostly talented in providing teaching and coaching in their subject areas only, and it is true to add that elements such as "truthfulness" (cited in Jackson *et al.* 1993: 17), "moral guidance" (cited in Jackson *et al.* 1993: xi), "sympathetic bias" (cited in Jackson *et al.* 1993: 260) and a "child-centred" approach (cited in Jackson *et al.* 1993: 275) are missing from their work. Becoming an educator is not a natural, spontaneous process; it is a learnt process. The Ministry of Education must consider regular training and courses to upgrade the skills of its educators in order to fill in the missing elements. The only means to achieve holistic education has been, for the Ministry of Education, to bring in more co- and extra-curricular activities and an Activity Period per day devoted to these. The Activity Period is not well-structured and educators find it a waste of time, because they do not know how to go about carrying out these activities with the students during that period. In most schools, only a small group of educators is found to be active and committed in working through the activities with the students.

Whatever decisions the Ministry of Education takes, there is no consultation with its educators before or after implementation. The Ministry of Education uses a top-down management style, in which educators do not have a voice. Its philosophy is to comply and then complain – when it is too late to do so. The Ministry of Education also has the bad habit of copying from other

countries' their ways of doing things, without trying to find out whether there are faults in their systems or not.

The concept of Education For All implies an education which is provided to every citizen of a country, regardless of sex or socio-economic circumstances. Since, Mauritius is a multicultural society, Education For All implies equal access and equal outcomes. In theory, such a formula is beautifully spoken, but in the practical sense of the word it becomes Education For a Few. For instance, the Creoles form part of the minority ethnic group. They do not benefit from the same educational outcomes, although it may be recognised that there have been a few exceptions. Their historical background (moulded from the idea that they descend from slaves and their loss of identity) and their poor representation in Parliament have been major reasons to account for their vulnerability within the Mauritian society. It is unfortunate to note that the Creoles also suffer from stereotypes and wrong labelling by the wider population. What is the Ministry of Education doing to help them move up the social ladder? Does prevocational education suffice as something that has been done for them? Equal access to education does not mean equal outcomes, because Creoles still often drop out from school.

In similar vein, gender disparities still exist, although not to the same extent as they had been long ago. Free education had increased the enrolment of girls in schools and had also promoted their education. Gender disparities continue to persist in the form of gender-stereotyped images in certain textbooks. For example, the Social Studies textbook should be neutral because it is a subject which teaches students how their society is structured, and it should not encourage discrimination on grounds of gender. One needs to live with the changes of one's society. The Mauritian State Secondary Schools are gender-segregated institutions and certain subjects are seen to be exclusively for either boys or girls.

Mauritius is said to be moving towards a knowledge-based society (cited in Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources 2008b: 2), but it seems that in reality it is moving away from it. The Ministry of Education overlooks

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the lack of meritocracy and of equal opportunities – two factors which are endangering quality education. If Mauritius is aiming for a gender-segregated education, it is also aiming for a gender-segregated labour force. A knowledge-based society requires professionals, regardless of sex or ethnicity.

Thus, if Mauritius continues to ignore the grey areas elaborated on above, quality education will never be attained. From the analysis of the data (refer to Chapter 4) it is clear that there is a large number of educators who feel sceptical about Mauritius heading towards quality education. Educators can be seen as fieldworkers who toil and struggle every day in order to educate students. They are closer to the students than any official of the Ministry of Education, and they are best suited to state the needs of students. The Ministry of Education must consider their views and requests if it wishes to achieve Education For All. Mauritius still has a long way to go to attain a world-class quality education.

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Table 1: A quantitative representation of the Mauritian population by the language spoken at home for the year 2000

Language	No. of people
Creole	826, 152
Bhojpuri	142, 387
French	39, 953
English	3, 512
Creole and French	33, 795
Creole and Bhojpuri	64, 105

Source: Mauritius Ministry of Economic Development, Financial Services and Corporate Affairs (2001: 84).

Table 2: Enrolment of prevocational students (Grade III) per year according to gender

YEAR	No. of prevocational students according to gender	
	Male	**Female**
2005[a]	1,524	949
2006[b]	1,805	1,084
2007[c]	2,007	1,228
2008[d]	1,680	986

Source:

[a] Cited in Mauritius Ministry of Finance and Economic Development 2008: 160.

[b] Ibid.

[c] Ibid.

[d] Cited in Mauritius Ministry of Finance and Economic Empowerment 2008: 28.

Table 3: The number of respondents according to age

Age Groups	No. of Respondents	No. of Respondents in %
< 25	10	11.1
25–30	32	35.6
31–36	28	31.1
37–42	9	10
43–48	3	3.4
49–54	4	4.4
55–60	4	4.4
> 61	−	−
Total	90	100

Source: Question 1 from the self-administered questionnaire

Table 4: The number of respondents according to teaching experience

No. of years	No. of respondents	No. of respondents in %
< 6	30	33.3
6–10	33	36.7
11–15	15	16.7
16–20	3	3.3
21–25	4	4.5
26–30	3	3.3
> 31	2	2.2
Total	90	100

Source: Question 4 from the self-administered questionnaire

Table 5: The number of respondents according to sex

Sex	No. of respondents
Male educators	70
Female educators	20

Source: Question 2 from the self-administered questionnaire

Table 6: The number of respondents according to academic qualifications

Highest Academic qualifications	No. of respondents	No of respondents in %
HSC	4	4.4
Diploma	3	3.3
Only Undergraduate Degree	39	43.3
Masters	23	25.6
PGCE	11	12.3
Masters and PGCE	6	6.7
PHD	–	–
Others	4	4.4
Total	**90**	**100**

Source: Question 3 from the self-administered questionnaire

Table 7: Responses (in %) of respondents for Question 8 of the self-administered questionnaire (refer to Appendix C)

	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	U	Total
a.	The new reform, based on the PRB report, in education is one which reflects exactly the needs of the system.	–	26.7	48.9	11.1	13.3	**100**
b.	Educators are well-paid in Mauritius.		23.3	51.1	22.2	3.4	**100**
c.	The new reform has created much frustration among educators.	21.1	48.9	18.9	–	11.1	**100**
d.	Trade Unions are very effective in defending the rights of educators.	3.3	22.2	50	16.7	7.8	**100**
e.	The work load and pressure exerted on educators have made teaching a burden instead of a noble profession.	36.7	43.3	11.1	2.2	6.7	**100**
f.	The Mauritian curriculum is too content driven.	50	38.9	7.8	2.2	1.1	**100**
g.	Quality education equates with achieving the numerical targets proposed in the PBB. (E.g. increase % Pass at HSC up to 79.0% in 2010)	14.4	33.3	36.7	5.6	10	**100**
h.	The ombudsperson is right to prohibit corporal punishment at school.	15.6	38.9	30	11.1	4.4	**100**
i.	The Ministry of Education encourages reading among students through	4.4	42.2	36.7	11.1	5.6	**100**

	various activities.					
j.	Prevocational students must be separated from academic stream students.	24.4	38.9	15.6	12.2	8.9	
k.	Prevocational students have a different behaviour from academic ones and the former group usually influences the latter's behaviour.	17.8	45.6	18.9	12.2	5.5	**100**
L.	Students are ill-mannered and violent these days.	45.6	42.2	5.6	4.4	2.2	**100**

Source: Question 8 from the self-administered questionnaire

Table 8: The number of responses (%) based on the average number of students per educator

Average no. of students per educator	No. of responses given in %
< 16	**5.6**
16–20	**2.2**
21–25	**2.2**
26–30	**14.4**
31–35	**25.6**
36–40	**35.6**
40–45	**10**
46–50	**4.4**
Total	**100**

Source: The self-administered questionnaire, question 7.

Table 9: Academic performance of the students of the respondents

Academic performance	No. of responses
Outstanding	–
Very Satisfactory	18
Satisfactory	45
Quite Satisfactory	21
Poor	6
Total	**90**

Source: Question 18 from the self-administered questionnaire.

Table 10: Ways in which respondents promote moral instruction in class

Ways used by respondents	No. of Responses (%)
Discourage cheating among the students	19.6
Punishing students who poorly behave	15.6
Moral instruction is already part of the subject syllabus	16
Promoting fairness in class (e.g. informing students of a coming test)	24
Students are continuously reminded of the types of punishment	9.1
Metaphors and sayings are used to communicate one's opinions or instructions to students	7.3
Constant warnings are given to the students without any action being taken	8.4
Total	**100**

Source: Question 30 from the self-administered questionnaire.

Table 11: Objectives of educators when they are in class

Objectives	No. of Responses (%)
A maximum number of students scoring above 50% at exams	20.2
To encourage hard-working students to strive harder	5.6
Congratulate efforts made by students	30.3
To avoid making mistakes	18.9
Child-centred approach	20.2
Teacher-centred approach	4.8
Total	**100**

Source: Question 31(i) from the self-administered questionnaire.

Table 12: Ethnic background of students

Ethnic groups	No. of responses in %
Hindu	82.2
Muslim	10
Chinese	–
Creole	7.8
Franco-Mauritian	–
Total	**100**

Source: Question 23 from the self-administered questionnaire.

Table 13: Reasons chosen by the respondents to explain why they do not believe that the majority of the uneducated people are the Creoles

Reasons	No. of responses in %
The Creole population is not the most disadvantaged group	33.3
Most of the Creoles are well-educated people	–
It is a wrong label imposed on those people	64.7
Any other reason	2.0
Total	**100**

Source: Question 24 (ii) from the self-administered questionnaire.

Table 14: The statements to which respondents agree the most based on English as the official medium of instruction

Statements	No. of responses in %
English is the international language used in most countries and it will be the advantage of students	49.2
Creole is too informal to be used as medium of instruction	15.3
English language disadvantages students from poor socio-economic backgrounds	21
French must be used instead of English as medium of instruction	8.9
Only Creole must be used as medium of instruction	5.6
Total	**100**

Source: Question 16 from the self-administered questionnaire

Table 15: Medium of instructions used at school by the educators under study

Medium of instructions	No. of responses in %
Only English	11.1
Only French	3.3
Both English and French	21.1
Only Creole	–
Both Creole and French	3.3
English, Creole and French	56.7
Others (E.g. Asian Languages)	4.5
Total	**100**

Source: Question 17 from the self-administered questionnaire.

Table 16: Reasons chosen by the educators (under study) to explain why they believe that girls perform better than boys

Reasons	No. of responses in %
Intelligence is innate in girls	4.9
Girls should be encouraged to strive harder to eliminate gender stereotypes	12.4
Boys are not as intelligent as girls	–
Girls strive harder than boys	39.5
Statistically, girls (at secondary level) do better than boys, but both should be encouraged to aim higher	38.3
Any other reason(s)	4.9
Total	**100**

Source: Question 19(ii) from the self-administered questionnaire.

Table 17: Reasons chosen by the educators (under study) to explain why they believe that boys perform better than girls

Reasons	No. of responses in %
Intelligence is innate in boys.	26.3
Boys are future breadwinners	–
Girls are to become home-makers	–
Girls are not as intelligent as boys	–
Boys strive harder than girls	29
Statistically, boys (at secondary level) do better than girls but both should be encouraged to strive harder	26.3
Any Other reason(s)	18.4
Total	**100**

Source: Question 19(i) from the self-administered questionnaire.

Table 18: Reasons (chosen by the respondents) to explain why the number of boys enrolled in prevocational stream outnumbers that of girls

Reasons	No. of responses in %
Prevocational stream mainly consists of students from poor socio-economic background where parents believe in boy's education mostly	42.4
Girls are not interested in receiving training in the technical or manual fields	26.3
Girls are kept at home to look after younger siblings	23.2
Any other reason(s)	8.1
Total	**100**

Source: Question 25 from the self-administered questionnaire.

PART A: PROGRAMME BASED BUDGET (PBB) STATEMENT MISSION STRATEGY

Ministry of Education and Human Resources – *continued*

(i) Ensure provision of world class quality education and life long learning opportunities accessible to all to meet the socio-economic and sustainable development needs of the country; and (ii) Reinforce linkages with regional and international partners in a fast changing, science-and-technology-based and knowledge-driven world.

The Education and Human Resources Strategy Plan (EHRSP 2008-2020), currently under finalisation, represents the Government's commitment to carry out fundamental reforms in education with the view to providing a World Class Quality Education for all as stated in the President's Address to the Nation on July 29, 2005 and the intermediate targets set in the Implementation Plan for 2008-2011. For too long, the issue of access to education in Mauritius has taken precedence over quality. Today, the challenge for the Government is how to balance access with quality so as to achieve high access and high quality. The only way to do so seems to bring efficiency and accountability into the equation. When implemented, the overall goal of the EHRSP will be to improve the inefficiencies of the current system through:

1. **Confidence in the education system** as a high-quality provider and facilitator of relevant knowledge and skills demanded by the ever-changing needs of the labour market in a vibrant global economy;

2. **Increased flexibility** within the current educational and management structures of the system to allow for improved partnerships and linkages throughout the system;

3. **Greater personal and social responsibility** in the educational process for system improvement and achievements at all levels; and

4. **Provision of high quality educational services for all Mauritians** to enable every Mauritian of all ages to reach his/her fullest potential, with special attention placed on ensuring quality and parity for such provision for: i) those of disadvantaged socio-economic background; ii) those who are physically, emotionally or mentally challenged; iii) those who are gifted and challenged; and iv) those who are isolated geographically.

PRIORITY OBJECTIVES, OUTPUTS AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Programme 424: Secondary Education		
Outcome: Improved access to broad-based secondary education to develop the full potential of students to international standards as measured by 5 percentage points increase in the proportion of students reaching School Certificate (SC) from the CPE and 3 percentage points increase in the proportion of students reaching Higher School Certificate (HSC) from SC, by 2013.		

Priority Objectives	**Outputs**	**Performance Indicators**
PO1: Improved learning outcomes of secondary education through the implementation of a comprehensive strategy to provide a diverse learning experience to students.	O1: Students complete secondary school (Form VI) and are ready for Tertiary education or are streamed to vocational training.	P1: Increase in School Certificate pass rate from 76.8% in 2007 to 80.0% by 2010.
PO2: Ensure all children who enter Form I leave after successfully completing Form VI or a vocational programme after age 16.		P2: Increase the percentage of students passing at HSC level from 77.9% in 2007 to 79.0% by 2010.
		P3: Percentage of students entering Form I and graduating in Form V increases from 51.2% in 2007 to 52.4% in 2010.
		P4: Percentage of students entering Form V and graduating in Form VI

		increases from 29.3% in 2007 to 30.4% in 2010.
PO3: Raise level of performance and proportion of children doing Science and Mathematics to meet international best practice.	O2: All students to take at least one Science subject in 2011.	P1: Increase in overall percentage pass in the three Sciences at A-Level: Chemistry and Physics to reach 75.0% and Biology to reach 70.0% by 2010.
		P2: Increase in overall percentage pass in Mathematics at A-Level to reach 90.0% by 2010.

Programme 425: Technical and Vocational Education

Outcome: Improved choices for learners by providing access to high quality training, developing and strengthening employable skills and increasing the proportion of Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) graduates successfully getting jobs.

Priority Objectives	**Outputs**	**Performance Indicators**
PO1: Enhanced learning experiences of pre-vocational students through an inclusive and adapted pre-vocational programme.	O1: Readiness to enter the TVE sector.	P1: Increase in success rate from 65.0% in 2007 to 70.0% by 2010.
PO2: Expansion of places at prevocational up to National Trade Certificate (NTC) Foundation Course.	O1: Students complete vocational training and are ready to join the workforce.	P1: Increasing the transition rate to NTC Foundation Course from 65.0% in 2007 to 75.0% by 2010.

PO3: Provision of a skilled and flexible workforce through an efficient and effective TVE system responsive to the needs of the labour market.		P2: Increase in percentage of female enrolment at the Industrial and Vocational Training Board from 27.0% in 2007 to 30.0% in 2008, 33.0% in 2009 and 35.0% in 2010.
		P3: Increase in employment rate of vocational trainees from 77.0% in 2007 to 80.0% in 2008.
PO4: Extension of vocational training to tertiary level.	O1: Students complete vocational training and join top-up degree courses and polytechnic education.	P1: Increased access to polytechnics from 7.5% in 2007 to 10.0% by 2011.
		P2: Increased access to polytechnics from 7.5% in 2007 to 10.0% by 2011.

Source: Mauritius (Republic). Ministry of Education and Human Resources. 2008. *Programme Based Budget (PBB)*. Available at: http://www.gov.mu/portal/goc/mof/files/20082009/education.pdf (Accessed on 12/08/09).

Self-administered questionnaire

Title: Attaining Quality Education in Mauritius at Secondary Level: A Case Study of the Zone 2 (State Secondary) Schools from the Educator's Perspective

Units of observation: Educators

Purpose: The questionnaire has been designed in order to gauge the extent to which Mauritius, as a democratic nation, will be able to achieve quality education based on the new Reform.

All the information given in the questionnaire will be strictly confidential and will be used for professional work only. Thank you for your kind cooperation.

1. Age

   ☐ < 25; ☐ 25–30; ☐ 31–36; ☐ 37–42; ☐ 43–48; ☐ 49–54; ☐ 55–60; ☐ > 61

2. Sex

   ☐ Female; ☐☐ Male

3. Please tick the type of professional qualification(s) you possess:

   ☐ HSC; ☐ Diploma; ☐ Degree; ☐ Masters; ☐ PGCE; ☐ PHD;

   ☐ Others (Please specify)

   ……………………………………………………………………………......

4. How many years of teaching experience do you have?

   ....

5. Which subject(s) do you teach?

   ....

6. With which groups of students do you work?

   ☐ Prevocational stream; ☐ Academic stream

7. On average, a minimum of how many students does your institution allow per classroom?

……………………………………………………………………………………......

8. Besides each statement presented on the next page, state whether you Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) or Undecided (U).

	Statements	SA	A	D	SD	U
a.	The new reform, based on the PRB report, in education is one which reflects exactly the needs of the system.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b.	Educators are well-paid in Mauritius.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c.	The new reform has created much frustration among educators.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d.	Trade Unions are very effective in defending the rights of educators.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
e.	The work load and pressure exerted on educators have made teaching a burden instead of a noble profession.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
f.	The Mauritian curriculum is too academically based (content driven).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
g.	Quality education equates with achieving the numerical targets proposed in the PBB. (E.g. increase % Pass at HSC up to 79.0% in 2010)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
h.	The ombudsperson is right to prohibit corporal punishment at school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
i.	The Ministry of Education encourages reading among students through various activities.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
j.	Prevocational students must be separated from academic stream students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
k.	Prevocational students have a different	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	behaviour from academic ones and the former group usually influences the latter's behaviour.					
L.	Students are ill-mannered and violent these days.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. Which types of teaching styles do you adopt in class? (*You may tick more than one suggested answer.*)

☐ Chalks and talks (students are passive listeners while the teacher delivers the goods)

☐ Class and group discussions in which students participate actively

☐ Integrating technology with teaching (for example, using PowerPoint presentation, overhead projection or the utilisation of outside sources such as video, TV and multimedia)

☐ Using case studies in class by focusing the lesson of the day on a real-life situation

☐ A friendly approach in which the teacher is seen as a friend by the students

☐ None of the above *(Please, mention the teaching style used instead)*

Give a reason for the chosen teaching style(s).

....

10. Which of the following tools are made available to you by your school? (*You may tick more than one suggested answer.*)

☐ Chalks and blackboard

☐ Whiteboard and markers

☐ Whiteboard but without markers

☐ Overhead projectors

☐ Internet facilities

☐ DVDs

☐ Television sets

☐ An appropriate projection room

☐ E-learning

☐ Others (Please specify)

……………………………………………………….............................

11. Which of the following co- or extra-curricular activities do students of your institution usually participate in? (*You may tick more than one suggested answer.*)

☐ Sports activities organised by the school

☐ Inter-College Sports activities

☐ Musical and dancing performances

☐ Arts Competitions

☐ Linguistic activities organised by the Oriental, English and French Departments

☐ Activities centred on the World Book Day or the International Day Celebrations (e.g. the International Women's Day or the World Water Day)

☐ The Model United Nations or debates organised by the Mauritius College of the Air

☐ Projects organised by the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council (such as CATs or INNOVED) or by the Ministry of Education

☐ Activities organised by the various clubs of the school: the Environment Club, the Human Rights Club and others

☐ Others (Please specify the activity)

………………………………………………...

12. Is your school well-equipped with all the necessary facilities (such as staff room, pantry, teachers' tables and chairs in each classroom and others) to foster effectiveness in the work of educators?

☐ Yes;   ☐ No

If No, please state why:

....

13. Have you ever been on training via the Ministry recently?

☐ Yes;   ☐ No

If Yes, please state the type of training(s) offered and the date you attended it or them.

....
....
....

If No, please state approximately the last date you went on training and for which particular purpose.

....
....
....

14. Are the textbooks that you used in class up-to-date?

☐ Yes;   ☐ No

For both answers, please, mention the Forms or Grades and dates of publication.

....
....
....

15. Do the textbooks contain gender-stereotype images? (For example, images presenting boys in chemist coats and performing experiments

while girls are passively watching, **OR** mother and daughter cooking in the kitchen while father and son are gardening).

☐ Yes;   ☐ No

16. The official medium of instruction used at school is English. From the list of statements provided below, with which one do you agree the most?

☐ English is the international language used in most countries and it will be to the disadvantage of the students if they are not well-versed in speaking the language.

☐ Creole is too informal to be used as medium of instruction.

☐ The use of English at school represents an enormous disadvantage to students from poor socio-economic backgrounds.

☐ French must be used instead of English as medium of instruction because it closely relates to the Creole language.

☐ Only Creole must be used as medium of instruction, to ensure parity and fairness. Leave French and English to French and English classes.

17. Which medium(s) of instruction do you use in your class? (*You may tick more than one suggested answer.*)

☐ Only English

☐ Only French

☐ Both English and French

☐ Only Creole

☐ Both Creole and French

☐ English, Creole and French

☐ Others (Please specify)

18. What is the academic performance of your students?

☐ Outstanding

☐ Very satisfactory

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☐ Satisfactory

☐ Quite satisfactory

☐ Poor

19. According to you, which group of students performs better?

    ☐ Boys;   ☐ Girls;   ☐ Both boys and girls

(i) If you have ticked 'Boys' (*question 19*), please give **a reason or reasons** from the following:

    ☐ Intelligence is innate in boys.

    ☐ Boys should always be encouraged to move up the social ladder because they will be future breadwinners.

    ☐ Girls, future mothers, should remain at home and look after the household chores.

    ☐ Girls are not as intelligent as boys.

    ☐ Boys strive harder than girls.

    ☐ Statistically, boys (at secondary level) do better than girls, but both should be encouraged to aim higher.

    ☐ Any other reason(s)?

    Please state:...………………………………….............................

(ii) If you have ticked 'Girls' (*question 19*), please give **a reason or reasons** from the following:

    ☐ Intelligence is innate in girls.

    ☐ Girls should always be encouraged to move up the social ladder in order to eliminate gender stereotypes.

    ☐ Boys are not as intelligent as girls.

    ☐ Girls strive harder than boys.

☐ Statistically, girls (at secondary level) do better than boys, but both should be encouraged to aim higher.

☐ Any other reason(s)?

Please state:...................…………………………………………………

20. Do you think that educators give private tuition to students because they are poorly paid?

☐ Yes;   ☐No

If the answer is No, please state a reason:

...……………………………………………...

21. Do you think there must be more severe laws to condemn private tuition?

☐ Yes;   ☐No

Please state a reason for your answer:

....

22. The Mauritian education system is fair and meritocratic, and each and every student is given the opportunity to excel – regardless of his or her ethnic background. Do you agree?

☐ Yes;   ☐ No

Please state a reason for your answer:

....

23. From which ethnic group are the majority of your students?

☐ Hindu; ☐ Muslim; ☐ Chinese; ☐ Creole; ☐ Franco-Mauritian

24. The majority of poorly educated people form part of the Creole population. Do you agree?

☐ Yes;   ☐ No

(i) If your answer is Yes, please **choose a reason or reasons** from the following:

☐ The majority of the poor is mainly Creole and thus they cannot afford the education of all their children.

☐ Creole people are lazy and they do not care about education.

☐ The Creole population does not have the spirit and culture of success as do Hindus, Muslims and Chinese communities.

☐ Creole students are only trouble-makers at school and are not at all good students.

☐ Creoles are not given enough opportunities to succeed and they are always victims of stereotypes and wrong labels.

☐ The poor representation of the Creole population in Parliament (as compared to the other groups of society) can be a reason explaining their unfortunate situation.

☐ Any other reason(s)? Please state:

.............................…………………………………………………

(ii) If your answer is No, please state **a reason or reasons** from the following:

☐ The Creole population is not the most disadvantaged group in the Mauritian society.

☐ Most of the Creoles are well-educated people and they occupy top positions in society.

☐ It is a wrong label imposed on those people.

☐ Any other reason(s)? Please state:

…………………………………………….............................………

25. The statistics show that the enrolment of boys usually outnumbers that of girls in the prevocational stream. Which of the following can be cited as **a**

reason or reasons for this difference? (*You may tick more than one suggested answer.*)

☐ Prevocational stream consists mainly of students from poor social background and thus the main conception is based on the fact that boys will be future breadwinners and girls will remain at home as housewives. Better educate boys than girls.

☐ Girls are not interested in receiving training in the technical or manual fields.

☐ Girls are kept at home to look after younger siblings.

☐☐   Any other reason(s)? Please state:

....……………………………………………

26. The activity period instituted by the Ministry of Education is a waste of time rather than promoting the emotional development and creative capacities of students. Do you agree?

☐ Yes;   ☐ No

27. If you are asked to inculcate the spirit of critical thinking in your students, how will you manage?

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28. Does your institution provide religious classes?

☐ Yes;   ☐ No

Please state the religious classes provided:

…………………………………………...……………………………..………..

29. Do you agree that moral values should be taught along with academic lessons?

☐ Yes;   ☐ No

30. Choose **one or more** of the following ways in which you promote moral instruction in your class?

☐ Using different strategies to discourage cheating among the students.

☐ Punishing students who poorly behave (e.g. lack of respect towards friends or the teacher; not being regular with the homework; chatting while the lesson is going on; school journal not properly filled in and others).

☐ Moral instruction is already part of the subject syllabus (e.g. a topic or essay dealing with the bad effects of cigarette smoking or the immorality of slavery).

☐ Promoting fairness in class (e.g. informing students well in advance of a coming test or how the test will be corrected).

☐ Students are continuously reminded of the types of punishment they may be given if they do 'this' or 'that'.

☐ Metaphors and sayings are used to communicate one's opinions or instructions to students (e.g. 'an infinite spectrum of possibilities' **OR** 'he who opens a school, closes a prison') without much further explanation.

☐ Constant warnings are given to the students without any action being taken. It is only a way of controlling one's class. For example, the threat of a difficult test which will never be carried out or to keep on warning poorly behaved students that their parents will be called upon at school when in reality it is not one's real intention.

31. (i) What are your main objectives when you are in class? Please choose from the following (*you may tick more than one suggested answers*):

☐ To make it a must to have a maximum number of students succeed in scoring above 50% at exams;

☐ To give most attention to hard-working students so that they strive above expectations;

☐ To recognise and congratulate each and every single effort made by students to improve their behaviour or academic performance;

☐ To avoid making mistakes (both at the level of the teaching and at the level of one's behaviour) in order to serve as role model for one's students;

☐ To aim for a child-centred approach in which the child becomes the centre of attention;

☐ To aim for a teacher-centred approach in which the teacher's opinions, moral values and instructions prevail.

(ii) Only if you have chosen 'to recognise and congratulate the effort made by your students' as an objective, how do you manage to do it?

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32. Do you think having regular talks or meetings, to share one's experiences or problems in the classroom with colleagues, can promote effective teaching?

☐ Yes;   ☐ No

33. Parental interest is a must in promoting the achievement of students at school. Do you agree?

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34. Do you think that streaming is a solution to the problem of mixed-ability?

☐ Yes;   ☐ No

Please state a reason for your answer:

....

35. In low achieving schools, it is often observed that students are not able to cope with the normal curriculum of 2 years for Form V and Form VI. Do we need to have different curricula for low and high achievers?

☐ Yes;   ☐ No

Please state a reason for your answer:

....

36. Do you think there is a need to have a psychologist or school counsellor on a permanent basis in all schools of the island?

☐ Yes;   ☐ No

Please state a reason for your answer:

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37. Sensitising campaigns on sexism and racism are effective means in changing the sexist and racist attitudes of people. What are your views?

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38. Do you think Mauritius is on the right track to achieve quality in education?

☐ Yes;   ☐ No

Please state a reason for your answer:

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