

Teaching National History in Secondary Schools: Foreign History Teachers' Experiences in Seychelles

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Abstract

National history education plays a pivotal role in shaping students' sense of identity and belonging. Nevertheless, in 2023, 59% of history teachers in Seychelles' public secondary schools were foreign nationals, individuals whose personal histories often lie outside the national narrative. This qualitative research, using classroom observations and interviews with eight foreign history teachers from four different schools, explored their experiences in teaching Seychelles' history. Findings show that they are motivated to teach in Seychelles by the pursuit of professional growth, cultural exploration and improved financial stability. Adequate knowledge, cultural sensitivity, relevance, language aspect and adaptive teaching strategies effectively contributed to their effectiveness in teaching the national history. The study argues that ongoing professional development to deepen language and cross-cultural communication, immersive experiences and community engagement to foster a stronger sense of belonging and incorporating a multi-perspective teaching approach can enrich national history education. The study highlights that foreign teachers can be regarded as an asset rather than a limitation, enriching the classroom with their diverse perspectives without undermining the sense of national identity building, which remains a principal goal of national history. This study contributes to the broader discourse on how foreign teachers can positively contribute to local educational contexts.

Keywords: History subject; national identity; foreign history teachers; teaching strategies; teaching challenges.

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Introduction

As natives of a country whose history they teach, national history teachers have the role of shaping their students' historical thinking, historical inquiry or historical concepts as well as a sense of national identity. However, a growing number of teachers are relocating from one nation to another due to international mobility of teachers caused by glocalization. Globalization has opened a space for less restrictive personal mobility, increasing teachers' movement which made some countries to experience a severe shortage of the teaching workforce (Sahlberg, 2004).

While globalization has influenced educational institutions to adapt to new global settings, the severe teacher shortage has caused an increase in teacher migration from less developed to more developed countries (Sharma, 2013; Mustapha (2016). Trends show that teachers from small and developing countries migrate to large and developed countries (Bense, 2016). This pattern of migration is quite common in countries with mostly English-based educational systems and countries where English is the primary language of teaching (Sharma, 2013).

The Seychelles, a small island state classified as a developing country, presents a unique

situation regarding the movement of teachers. With a rich history of cultural diversity, in Seychelles' state secondary schools, in 2023, for example, 59% of national history teachers were foreign nationals. Here, a foreign teacher is defined as a teacher who was born abroad, has parents born abroad and speaks a mother tongue other than Creole (Höckel, 2024), and one who accepts offers to fill teacher shortages (Yip et al., 2019). The majority came from African countries, such as Kenya, Uganda, Zambia, Botswana, Ghana, India, Mauritius and Tanzania. This study explored foreign teachers' reasons for moving to Seychelles, how they justify being able to teach Seychellois students their own history, and finally, their experience of foreign teachers teaching national history in Seychelles' state secondary schools. A study of the foreign teachers' experiences not only informs our understanding of the practice of foreign teachers within a national history classroom but also provides further evidence of how foreign teachers can be regarded as an asset by various stakeholders, including students, parents, school leaders, and policymakers, by recognizing their unique value, expertise, and positive influence on students and schools.

Between 2014 and 2022, the number of foreign teachers for all subjects in Seychelles' state secondary schools nearly doubled, increasing from 101 to 232 (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, 2015; Ministry of Education, 2023). During this period, local teachers declined from 387 to 333, which made up a unique composition of diversity within the teaching workforce, highlighting the diversity within the system. Many teachers left the profession to pursue careers in other sectors (Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, 2020). As a result, the Ministry of Education saw a need to hire foreign teachers to fill the gap left by the declining number of Seychellois teachers (Singh, 2014). In response, this study investigated experiences of foreign teachers in Seychelles through classroom observations and teacher interviews.

Literature Review

This section presents the review of related literature and studies.

The Role of History Education

History education plays multiple roles, such as shaping learners' understanding of the past,

fostering critical thinking and promoting values and civic responsibility. While these roles are all significant, this study focused on the function of history education in national identity building. Ortega-Sánchez et al. (2020) point out that schools are considered a significant arena, where the country's shared values are created, making them one of the hegemonic instruments of nation-building. History education also plays a crucial role in shaping national identity by influencing how individuals perceive their nation's past, values and place in the world (Karayianni & Foster, 2018).

History education encourages a sense of identity. According to Shvets (2020), learning and studying the past play a central role in forming national identity. Hence, nationalist content continues to dominate many curricula by forming the national identity (Carretero et al., 2018). Since teachers are heavily involved in portraying historical events (Alesina et al., 2021; Durrani et al., 2022), they also must have a strong identity and, simultaneously, a strong commitment to cultivating a sense of identity in their students (Idris et al., 2012). Building on the role of history education in shaping national identity, the movement of history teachers around the world highlights how these exchanges might influence the way historical narratives are taught and understood.

Previous studies on Foreign Teachers

Previous research has concentrated on migrant teachers, those who relocate to new countries for economic reasons in pursuit of improved job opportunities and financial stability (de Villiers & Weda, 2017). It has also examined ethnic minority migrant teachers in terms of the racial inequality arising from the low number of teachers employed by minority ethnic groups (Tereshchenko et al., 2020; Bradbury et al., 2022). Others focused on language teachers and language-related subjects, such as how schools employ foreign teachers to teach in their native language or to supplement bilingual, trilingual or multilingual instruction (Halicioglu, 2015). Others focused on challenges of migrant teachers, such as how unfamiliarity with the language, culture and educational systems typically accompany feelings of insecurity, inadequacy and a sense of being out of place among foreign teachers (Ennsner-Kananen & Ruohotie-Lyhty, 2022). Similarly, Subedi (2008) investigated the challenging environment

foreign teachers face, the impact of students' racist views, deficiencies among colleagues and perceptions of being less qualified. Yip et al. (2019) highlighted challenges, such as teacher-student relationships, communication breakdowns, organizational and structural changes, culture shock and logistical issues. Additionally, Benson (2019) emphasized the difficulties of encountering microaggressions.

Some studies have shown the benefits of having migrant teachers. Studies (See et al., 2024; Neugebauer et al., 2024) have shown that students from ethnic minorities might perform better academically if exposed to teachers of the same races and ethnicity; for example, the success gap can be reduced and racial inequality can be addressed by diversifying the teaching workforce. Yakovleva (2020) demonstrated that a classroom with a combination of both foreign and local language teachers is essential in promoting collaboration. Ospina and Medina (2020) showed how foreign teachers bring unique perspectives, provide diverse educational experiences, promote intercultural awareness, increase flexibility and cultivate tolerance and respect. Similarly, Benson (2019) discussed how they can contribute diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds to their new teaching environments. With the increasing reliance on migrant teachers globally, there remains a significant gap in understanding their experience in a politically and culturally sensitive subjects like national history, a subject directly linked to national identity building.

Viewing Foreign History Teachers through the Asset Model

There is a need to shift our focus from what teachers lack or need to improve toward recognizing and leveraging the strengths, skills, experiences and knowledge. As Superfine (2021) and Torres (2023) put it, asset-based approaches to education characterize educational methods, concepts or strategies that see knowledge, language, culture and background as assets rather than lacking or deficient. The principles of assets can be adapted to explore how the presence of foreign teachers can enhance students' learning experiences and what benefits they can provide, rather than focusing on what is lacking (ASM, 2023).

Regarding the movement of teachers abroad and past research, little is known about the experience of foreign teachers teaching national history (Sahlberg, 2004). As stated by Sharma (2013), efforts should now be aimed towards bringing forth more differentiated and detailed accounts of foreign teachers' situations by focusing on the experiences of foreign teachers concerning their specific circumstances.

Methodology

A qualitative research approach was chosen for this study. Qualitative classroom observations describe what occurred in the classroom. The interviews looked at the participants' thoughts and opinions.

Population and Sampling

Purpose sampling was applied to select foreign teachers currently teaching national history topics. Eight foreign teachers from four different public secondary schools participated in the study. Schools in Seychelles are divided into five regional zones. Therefore, the foreign teachers were selected from each zone to ensure proper representation. However, Zone 1 had no foreign teachers teaching national history during the research period.

The group consisted of five females and three males, representing nationalities from Kenya, Uganda, and Zambia. Teacher A, a female from Kenya with 16 years of teaching experience (10 years in Seychelles), taught Grade 2 on the topic of Seychelles as a Colonial Society. Teacher B, a male from Uganda with 24 years of experience (16 years in Seychelles), taught Grade 3 on Post-Independence Seychelles. Teacher C, a female from Zambia with 5 years of experience (1 year in Seychelles), also taught Grade 3 on Post-Independence Seychelles. Teacher D, a female from Kenya with 10 years of experience (5 years in Seychelles), taught Grade 2 on Seychelles as a Colonial Society. Teacher E, a male from Uganda with 12 years of experience (6 years in Seychelles), taught Grade 2 on Seychelles as a Colonial Society. Teacher F, a female from Zambia with 8 years of experience (4 years in Seychelles), taught Grade 2 on Seychelles as a Colonial Society. Teacher G, a female from Kenya with 15 years of experience (12 years in Seychelles), taught Grade 3 on Post-Independence Seychelles. Teacher H, a male from Zambia with 6 years of

experience (2 years in Seychelles), taught Grade 3 on Post-Independence.

Instruments

During the classroom observation, the lesson was video recorded, detailed field notes capturing all aspects of the lesson were taken. Following the observations, a semi-structured interview guide was employed to explore teachers' views on the observed lessons, their instructional choices and perceived challenges.

Validity and Reliability

Data triangulation was used by combining classroom observations with teacher interviews. The two were designed to complement each other, providing a comprehensive understanding of the problem under investigation. Peer debriefing was used to discuss and refine findings from both the classroom observation and the interviews by sharing findings and analysis with colleagues, thereby refining the data interpretations of the interviews and observation. According to McMahon and Winch (2018), debriefing is a necessary element of qualitative research as it enhances data quality by identifying gaps in the data.

Data Analysis

Field notes from observations were analyzed using an inductive thematic approach, allowing key themes to emerge. Similarly, interviews were transcribed, organized and analyzed using the same inductive process. This approach enabled the identification of recurring patterns and themes without relying on predefined categories (Lindorff & Sammons, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

Formal permission to conduct the study was sought from and granted by the Ministry of Education, after which respective public schools were informed. Then consent was obtained from all participating teachers. Since students were present during the observed and video-recorded lessons, additional consent was obtained from parents and/ or guardians. All video and audio recordings were conducted with prior notification and were securely stored for research use only. Since Seychelles is a small country with a close-knit community, and with only 37 history teachers (both local and foreign) in the entire public school system, their names have been replaced with letters to

protect participants' anonymity so that they cannot be easily identified.

Findings and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study, guided by research questions with themes that emerged. The discussion of the findings is made through literature.

Research Question 1: What motivates foreign teachers to teach national history in Seychelles?

This research question sought to establish what motivates foreign teachers to teach national history in Seychelles. The findings appear in themes.

Experience and Career Advancement

When asked during the interview what motivated them to come and teach in the Seychelles, experience and career advancement emerged as significant factors that prompted foreign teachers to come and teach history. One teacher reported, "To advance my career, there were few available opportunities to work outside Uganda ... This opportunity came first..." (Teacher E). As teacher E, sought opportunities to teach outside his country, he received an offer to teach in the Seychelles and took it.

Other teachers wanted to explore a new place and find an opportunity to encounter a different culture. For instance, teacher A reported, "This was an opportunity for me to explore other people's lives in terms of culture." Furthermore, the teachers expressed dissatisfaction with their home countries' education systems, due to a lack of resources in schools and limited career advancement opportunities. Therefore, they decided to migrate to gain professional development and career opportunities, including new work experiences, professional growth and exposure to different educational systems. In the host countries, they were exposed to the availability of advanced training, certification, networking and opportunities.

Financial Incentives

Financial incentives also emerged as a factor in the teachers' decision to migrate to the Seychelles. One teacher reported, "The main reason is obviously the money issue, greener pastures..." (Teacher D).

Similarly, literature (Iredale et al., 2015; Soriano et al., 2024) cited poor economic conditions,

low salaries and a lack of bonuses/allowances as reasons why teachers migrate. The foreign teachers therefore, tended to seek better economic opportunities, such as better salaries and improved living standards. These perceptions are supported by the existing literature and studies (Bense, 2016; Soriano et al, 2024). Literature reports other factors as better quality of life with health care facilities as well as safer and secure living environments with recreational and leisure activities and financial incentives like housing allowance, transport subsidies and retirement packages (Soriano et al, 2024).

Research Question 2: What are foreign teachers' experiences when teaching national history in the Seychelles?

This research question sought to establish what are foreign teachers' experienced when teaching national history in the Seychelles. In this research question, several themes emerged.

Content Knowledge

In response to this research question, classroom observation showed that the foreign teachers had sufficient knowledge of the topics being covered. This was reflected in the way the teacher explained the lesson content to their students. It was observed that seven teachers could confidently explain the content of the national history. They were not heavily dependent on the textbook or their teacher's notes while explaining the content to the students. Throughout the explanation, they maintained eye contact with the students. For example, while explaining the content to the students, Teacher D's explanation was similar to the way the content is outlined in the Teacher Information Booklet, the prescribed guide for teachers. For example, her explanation of key historical events as well as the French and British struggle to control the Seychelles, was observed to align perfectly with the booklet, demonstrating her understanding of the structured content she needs to teach.

Another example that was observed was when Teacher C was teaching about the First Republic. As part of the lesson, students were required to analyze the national anthem, the president, the prime minister and the cabinet of the first ministers at that time. After reading the

names of past leaders and discussing the national anthem with the students using the prescribed textbook, it was observed that Teacher C expounded on the textbook content with additional examples by including information about the meaning and significance of the national anthem and made the link between the 1976 cabinet of ministers and current political leaders. This was information not included in the textbook, and because Teacher C was able to make these connections, it demonstrated his extensive knowledge of the topic. Another example was Teacher H, who was able to summarize the content by explaining three main subtopics: the Seychelles coalition government, the Independence Day celebration and the post-independence content, which shows that the migrant teachers generally possessed sufficient content knowledge. Therefore, the foreign teachers were confident with the content as long as it remained factual.

Another observation was that a common strategy used by the foreign teachers was oral questioning to review students' knowledge from the previous lesson, test students immediately after explaining the content and engage students in class discussions. Through this strategy, it was observed that the foreign teachers had sufficient content knowledge to reinforce students' answers. For example, while Teacher E was doing a recap of events, one student gave a wrong year for the event, and the teacher was able to correct it. Alternatively, when students gave Teacher F an incomplete answer to a series of events in a particular year, she could pick up on that and correct the student's answer right away. Alternatively, when the student had a subsequent question based on what the teacher had previously explained, the teacher could answer it correctly. For example, when a student asked Teacher H what the past president did after he lost the election, the teacher could give details to answer the question, showing that the teacher was well informed of past events.

Another key example was when Teacher C corrected students' perceptions of the two deceased presidents' decision on burial location. He elucidated the rationale behind their decision, providing information not found in the textbook but nonetheless accurate. He also emphasized to the students the importance of seeking facts rather than making

speculations, further showing that they did indeed have knowledge of both the topic and current events.

During the interviews, all eight teachers highlighted Seychelles' history as accessible and straightforward, which is why they possessed good content knowledge. The newly recruited Teacher D expressed how she enjoys learning a new history. From her tone of voice, it was clear that she had an interest in understanding the content: "I am learning a lot about the history of Seychelles... It has been a new experience to start reading and learning about the cultures again."

More experienced teachers also did not express any concern when it came to the nature of the history content, as Teacher C expressed, "Teaching Seychelles history is quite an easy task because it is quite a brief history; it is an interesting history." They also felt that its organized nature makes it easier for them to learn and master compared to the histories of their own countries, which are quite complicated and complex; as Teacher G said, "Unlike other countries' history, which is here and there, the history of Seychelles is organized and very systematic; it flows systematically and is not chaotic."

The foreign history teachers' sufficient knowledge of Seychelles' history enables them to teach the subject confidently. Explaining the content correctly and confidently and answering the students' questions about national history and current issues shows that newly recruited and experienced teachers can easily get accustomed to the national history content they teach. This supports the assertion by Ball et al. (2008) that content knowledge forms the foundation for teaching because teachers must possess a strong understanding of the subject matter for effective teaching. Otherwise, without such knowledge, teachers can neither provide inaccurate information or fail to competently address students' questions. Contrary to Yang (2023), who discussed how history is usually seen as a complex and diverse subject involving numerous events, perspectives, and interpretations, the simplicity of the history of Seychelles allowed foreign teachers to integrate quickly and prepare adequately in terms of historical knowledge and content.

Historical Relevance

During the observation, while discussing the coalition government of 1976, Teacher C asked students to compare the structure of Seychelles' past government with that of the current one as well as the structure of Seychelles' government with that of England so that students may identify any similarities and differences, firstly over time and secondly between the two countries. This valuable strategy helps students develop historical concepts such as similarities and differences, continuity, and change. It was observed that Teacher C highlighted the significance of political leaders' collaboration in forming the 1977 coalition government. He used the COVID-19 vaccination campaign at that time as an example, highlighting the collaboration between the newly elected and outgoing presidents, making it relevant to students. The students were engaged by sharing their experiences with former presidents and identifying key societal figures. Teacher C further encouraged students to compare the national anthem of the First Republic with the current version while teaching about them, emphasizing the importance of the national anthems in bringing people together and in singing about shared values that contribute to national pride.

Another example from the observation was Teacher H, who, after discussing the election process during post-independent Seychelles, generated discussions about how and why students should choose a government when they come of age to vote. Teacher H made the content relevant by teaching students in their role as informed and engaged citizens. Another observed strategy was employed by Teacher E while teaching about the governors during Seychelles' colonial period. He asked students to identify locations named after Seychelles' former governors. This activity aimed to connect individuals from Seychelles' history who made a significant impact in the past with the students' present surroundings.

During the interviews, it was revealed that foreign teachers attempted to connect historical content with the present. In a way, they were trying to show students that history is still relevant today. For instance, teacher C explained his strategy by stating, "I want to make history real for them to perceive that they

need history... I try to reconstruct what we are seeing presently comes from the past.” Teacher G further explained, “Students want to learn and ask many questions about the history of Seychelles, and they even start linking it with their own families... once they start hearing names, they start linking it and drawing a family tree.”

Linking national history to contemporary issues involves foreign teachers' efforts to connect the past with the present, creating meaningful learning experiences. Despite being foreigners, the teachers attempted to connect the historical content to the students' personal experiences, making it more engaging and meaningful. This allowed them to think critically about the impact of these individuals on society. It also demonstrates that foreign teachers can acquire and utilize knowledge of the present to connect historical content, rendering it more relevant to the students. These approaches foster a more meaningful understanding of history as a subject that is still relevant today, helping students to view history as a part of their present lives. This demonstrates how foreign teachers, provided they have the proper content knowledge, can make national history relevant and practical by connecting historical content with students' lived experiences. This supports the findings by Van Straaten et al. (2016), which demonstrated that a teaching strategy using analogies that highlight parallels between historical and contemporary events can be employed to teach students how to connect the past, present and future, known as the "then-and-now" approach. Consequently, students found the lessons more engaging as they recognized how history was related to the present.

Fostering a Sense of Belonging

During the in classroom observation, all eight teachers made statements to show their connection to Seychelles by using terms such as “in Seychelles we celebrate,” “in our government,” “when we look at our national flag today, it symbolizes our country”, “do we have a prime minister?”, “Today we have a president”, “in our history”, “our language” and “our society,” demonstrating an effort from all the teachers to show that they, too, are part of the history they teach. During an interview schedule, teacher C explained, this practice is done intentionally:

I do it consciously when I use this; it makes the learners feel I am part of them. This helps to catch their attention. I do it intentionally; it is not that I have forgotten my country, but I do it on purpose. When I do this, it kind of connects you to your learners, if I were to say your country, it will kind of make my learners to think he is not part of us. There are times I have used it over the years, and the students ask, Sir, are you Seychellois now? I tell them, yeah, I will soon become one; this makes the learners confident that what you are teaching you are part of it.

As mentioned by Teacher G,

There is a way, as an expatriate or a foreign teacher, how you fit in easily. You do not have to take a lot of time thinking how to do it; the history gives you a sense of belonging, and you can fit in very quickly.

Teacher A mentioned, “I try to show them the beautiful things that exist and put myself in the picture to make them relate.”

Foreign teachers approached national history with a sense of temporary belonging, which helped them build trust and rapport with their students. Insights from the classroom observation indicated that the foreign teachers tried to bring in a sense of belonging by using possessive determiners, such as “us” and “our”, which are words used to show ownership or possession. This approach helped students relate to historical events and figures, fostering a sense of unity and belonging among them. These intentional approaches helped them build trust and create an inclusive classroom atmosphere.

The foreign teachers' approach to teaching national history in a foreign land develops a sense of belonging to become open and receptive to the new experience of teaching national history in a foreign land. This supports the research by Cutri et al. (2024) on teachers' responses to cross-cultural educational environments in Australia, China and Vietnam; they found that evolving teacher professional identity, evolving pedagogical practices and evolving intercultural practices are significant in teachers' cross-cultural teaching experiences and are influenced by contextual configurations unique to the contexts. One of the keys to building national identity in history education is not always determined by who teach it and how it is taught. Effective teachers, whether foreign

or local, are those who can make history relevant and connected to students' lives. This is supported by Sung and Yang (2009), who indicated that even though teachers' national identities relate to their historical knowledge, they bear no relationship to their methods of teaching national identity. As Rosenfeld and Yemini (2023) express, foreign teachers transfer and adapt their existing knowledge and skills to bridge gaps between different educational contexts, which involves a tendency to modify their roles or teaching methods to fit their expertise better.

Sensitive Narrative

During the observation, some foreign teachers found ways to smooth out uncomfortable topics while others avoided bringing their personal opinions while addressing sensitive issues. From observation, six teachers neutrally presented historical content and facts as outlined in the textbook, without using emotional language. It was observed, for example, that each time Teacher B mentioned something that she felt is somewhat sensitive, she would say "sorry to say this" repeatedly to try and soften what she intended to convey to the students. Some examples she mentioned include mentioning sensitive topics, such as religion, deceased people or physical appearances.

Teacher E mentioned during the interview that his experience of teaching slavery could evoke emotional responses from the students, and the students often resisted associating themselves with certain parts of history. The teacher pointed out that:

You point out some of the names that were given to slaves, and some of these names are still used today. They (the students) look at it as offensive... They ask you, you mean we came from slaves? You mean we are children of slaves? They do not want to associate with it. They say these slaves were different people. We are different people. They do not want to have anything to do with this. They want to hear it as someone else's story.

Teacher H's approach, for example, which is different, would not necessarily allow him to face issues with the students while teaching slavery because he does not approach slavery directly. As he explains:

When you do that, you upset students, and in one way or another, they will be demotivated to listen to you... We should find a way to bring it out without affecting the morale of the students.... By telling students 'you come from slavery', or 'your origins are from slavery', emotionally, you are draining them, and they will never be interested to learn, but I do not do that... When you state that the French brought slaves here... as they live because they are human beings there will be intermarriage... You bring it out in such a way that through intermarriage, this is how we have different races and different people were coming to Seychelles.

Teacher G, although faced a somewhat similar situation to Teacher E, managed to change and adopt a similar approach:

When I mention that most of our ancestors here in Seychelles come from Mozambique, they ask me, 'Miss, are you sure? It cannot be'. Some of them are really hesitant to believe that it is true... Then you have to explain to them right from the first settlement how this and this happened... we give them the entire background... about the inter-marriage... why some people here are really white, some are in between, and some are really dark" (Teacher G)

Teacher D shared her experience based on how she had to change the way she presented the topic because of her experience:

There was one student who was black, (...) when I introduced the topic, this boy threw a tantrum and said no, I do not want to learn about anything to do with slaves... Some of the students have the misconception that a black person is a slave (...). When I introduce the topic, I start from way back when even white Europeans were enslaving others [Europeans] (...) whether you were black or white or coloured, you were still held as a slave. (...) if we start by making them understand that it is not just about a black person... A slave can be anyone despite your skin colour.

Widespread intermarriage in Seychelles has resulted in a population of mixed descent, and even if Seychelles' ancestry can be traced back to Africa, Europe and Asia, the fact remains that a segment of the population has no discernible African ancestry (Choppy, 2019). As we consider the issue from the proper perspective, the Seychellois identity encompasses any

Seychellois, regardless of colour, race, ancestry, or social standing. Historically, there has been a tendency to overlook slavery and colonialism, focusing instead on future progress (Choppy, 2019). While slavery is acknowledged, it might not be widely accepted as a key identity marker, as society prefers to focus on cultural continuity and national unity rather than historical oppression. However, the government does incorporate slavery into heritage, museum exhibitions and national commemorations to ensure public recognition of the past. Slavery within the national curriculum is to get people, especially the younger generation, to accept that African slaves' ways of life did contribute immensely to shaping our society into what it is today. Acknowledging the effects of slavery without deepening divisions encourages students from diverse backgrounds to engage with national history in a manner that fosters inclusion rather than separation. Concentrating on the shared cultural legacies of slavery, such as language, music, food and customs, rather than solely on biological lineage, cultivates a sense of belonging among all members of Creole society, regardless of their origins.

National history has many sensitive and controversial topics. Therefore, foreign teachers must consider the risk of causing discomfort or misunderstanding among students while teaching these sensitivities. Not all foreign teachers may fully grasp how Seychellois people perceive their identity in relation to slavery. As observe, Teacher E, tried to get students to accept their slavery background by directly stating that they are from slave ancestors, as he feels that this is a fact that should be made known to them. A foreign teacher stating 'you are descendants of slaves' to students in Seychelles might be viewed as demeaning, reducing students' identities solely to slavery. That is why some students may feel that this reinforces negative stereotypes since slavery is often linked to suffering and oppression. If not adequately aware and prepared to address these topics, it can lead to disagreements between teachers and students, as was the case for some foreign teachers. Conway (2006) emphasized that teachers' roles are essential as they are tasked with presenting balanced and accurate accounts of history as well as addressing delicate issues and contentious subjects. Regarding the strategies employed by some foreign teachers, this

supports Kello's (2016) assertion that some teachers avoid sensitive issues and discuss them factually without delving into deeper issues to prevent controversy while others who are aware of sensitive topics or problems that can arise attempt to address them apologetically.

Furthermore, some use "smoothing the edges" (Kello, 2016). Therefore, if these issues are not taught using proper strategies, they can hinder deeper learning and complicate classroom management. This contrasts with local teachers, who typically approach the topics with greater sensitivity, recognizing that while slavery is a part of Seychellois history, it does not define the students' identity directly. Therefore, we can conclude that through strategies applied by the foreign teacher to address sensitive topics with the students, despite facing initial challenges, both teachers and students can engage with a troubled past in ways that foster critical thinking, empathy, respect, love, and tolerance for others (Maluleka, 2023).

Language Barriers

It was observed that Teacher F and Teacher D, who only had 1 year of teaching in Seychelles, had difficulties pronouncing some of the terms written in French. In some instances, they were too shy to pronounce the words, and to address this situation, both teachers, rather than saying the words aloud, wrote them on the board and asked the students to read them or assisted them with the pronunciation.

On the other hand, teachers teaching in Seychelles for more than a year were more confident pronouncing French words without hesitation. Teacher A, who has been in the Seychelles for over a year, occasionally used Creole words with the students. She was observed using Creole to reinforce previously given English instructions. She also used it to get the students' attention when they were restless during the lesson and to settle them down as a form of classroom management. Another observation was that the students occasionally spoke in Creole with Teacher G during the lesson. Based on her responses to the students, she clearly understood what the students were saying in Creole; however, she kept her responses to English.

Another observation among all eight teachers is that the students grasped the information when

explaining the content and followed it with interactive questioning. This was evident in how the students participated during class discussions and provided correct answers during oral questioning. Furthermore, it was noted that students do not frequently ask the teacher to repeat what has been previously stated due to challenges in understanding the accents. Through the interview, the teachers shared their views regarding the use of language in the classroom. As teacher D shares her experience, "When I first came, it was a bit difficult because of the cultural shock. Maybe my accent is slightly different from what they are used to, and the language because I can only speak English coming from an English-speaking country." Similar Teacher G shared, "The keywords in that are in Creole, in the beginning it was a challenge. I remember I would mispronounce them, and I would pronounce them in the English way."

However, a more experienced teacher explained how she overcame:

I started listening to the students. I would ask them questions in English, and they would start translating to me... I started learning gradually... Also, one of the teachers used to help me with the pronunciation, especially with the place names and historical sites, and I got a mentor that would help me... Again, I made friends with the students in each and every class that I went... they would come to my rescue and translate, and I began learning... As I started learning, they [the students] realized that I am understanding" (Teacher B).

Colonization profoundly influenced the language of the Seychelles, with the French colonists introducing enslaved Africans and, later, the arrival of Indian and Chinese laborers, all contributing to the development of the mother tongue known as Creole. The British later took over Seychelles, which resulted in the introduction of English under their rule. Therefore, as part of its history, Seychelles features many names, places and key terms in its national history in the French language. According to all eight teachers, French is a language they are not familiar with. However, as a former colony of France, French is regarded as a rather prestigious language (Vel & Kretzer, 2024), compulsory in the national school curriculum and is the primary language spoken at home by individuals aged 3 years

and older in only 0.5% of households (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022).

Despite the language barrier which may sometimes exist between the teacher and the students because of accents, Benson (2019) and Lybaert et al. (2024), state that students exposed to a different accent or speech pattern may develop a sense of learning through watching and listening more attentively. Increased exposure and interaction with time can enhance comprehension and diminish initial biases or negative perceptions. As supported by the study of Arboleda and Garcés (2012), regular exposure and interaction with teachers who have foreign accents over time help students become accustomed to different pronunciations and speech patterns.

The current trilingual society in Seychelles is built on the coexistence of three languages, with Creole being the most prominent, followed by English and then French. According to Vel and Kretzer (2024), a study exploring Seychellois youths' views on Creole revealed that respondents associate the language with their identity, culture and origins. They perceive Creole as a symbol of nation-building in Seychelles, defining the country and emphasizing that Seychellois should protect it. Though some experienced teachers may not openly speak Creole to the students, their ability to understand the Creole language develops a better level of connection. Those who attempt to use Creole occasionally create the opportunity to foster a closer connection with them and the students. Utilizing or showing understanding of the students' mother tongue, even in small amounts, can foster a sense of familiarity and warmth, helping foreign teachers bridge cultural gaps and diminish feelings of "otherness."

Conclusions and Recommendations

In conclusion, foreign history teachers in Seychelles are driven by professional growth, cultural exploration and financial stability. With cultural sensitivity and adaptive strategies, they effectively engage students, making history relevant. Their presence enriches national history education by offering diverse perspectives and fostering a shared sense of identity.

Therefore, the study recommends that ongoing professional development and familiarization

are necessary to avoid oversimplifying the content and to promote a more nuanced understanding of history for the foreign teachers. Consequently, it is important for foreign teachers during their initial induction and throughout professional development programs to actively engage in basic language learning. This can include taking short language courses, identifying and practising the pronunciation of key Creole and French words in the historical content and receiving training in cross-cultural communication. This can be further improved through visits to museums, involving community elders, historians, or cultural institutions to enrich their sense of belonging to the country.

Lastly, adopting a multi-perspective approach to the teaching of national history in Seychelles, foreign teachers can offer diverse viewpoints that encourage critical thinking among students while at the same time maintaining the integrity of national identity-building. As we expect the number of foreign history teachers to grow in the coming years, policymakers should consider more carefully how to utilize these teachers' strengths by adopting an asset-based approach that recognizes their unique expertise in the classroom.

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