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Changing Societies & Personalities is an international, peer-reviewed quarterly journal, published in English by the Ural Federal University. *CS&P* examines how rapid societallevel changes are reshaping individual-level beliefs, motivations and values – and how these individual-level changes in turn are reshaping societies. The interplay of personality traits and sociocultural factors in defining motivation, deliberation, action and reflection of individuals requires a combination of theoretical and empirical knowledge. Since an interdisciplinary approach is needed to understand the causes and consequences of the contemporary world's changing socio-political institutions, moral values, and religious beliefs, the journal welcomes theoretical and empirical contributions from a wide range of perspectives in the context of value pluralism and social heterogeneity of (post)modern society.

Topics of interest include, but are not limited to

- value implications of interactions between socio-political transformations and personal self-identity;
- changes in value orientations, materialist and post-materialist values;
- moral reasoning and behavior;
- variability and continuity in the election of styles of moral regime and/or religious identity;
- the moral bases of political preferences and their elimination;
- social exclusion and inclusion;
- post-secular religious individualism;
- tolerance and merely 'tolerating': their meanings, varieties and fundamental bases;
- ideologies of gender and age as variables in political, moral, religious and social change;
- educational strategies as training for specific social competences;
- social and existential security.

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SPECIAL ISSUE: The Politics and Pedagogy of Religion Education

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EDITORIAL

The Politics and Pedagogy of Religion Education: Policies, Syllabi and Future Prospects[1]

Abdulkader Tayob
University of Cape Town, South Africa

The articles in this special issue emerged from a conference organised at the University of Cape Town in March 2018, through the generous support of the National Research Foundation of South Africa. The initial aim of the conference was to further develop the understanding of Religion Education (RE) in South Africa since it was promulgated in a policy published in 2003. RE has been introduced into the curriculum in two ways. In a general sense, the teaching *about* religion was integrated in compulsory subjects called Life Skills and Life Orientation. Here, learners were appropriately introduced to the diversity of religions in the country and the world. Secondly, a special subject was developed at the senior level called Religion Studies. This subject was an elective and devoted to the study of religions in history and contemporary societies, using the methods and theories developed in the modern study of religions. In recent years, more and more schools were offering this subject for senior learners in the most populous provinces in the country: Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape.

The conference was designed to bring together researchers in Southern Africa to discuss on what had been achieved so far, and how to further develop the subject. As a special feature of the conference, teachers and subject advisers were also invited to present their experiences of introducing the subject into schools. The conference and the papers assembled here demonstrate a model of partnership between teachers and researchers. But RE cannot be appreciated in South Africa without a good understanding of what other countries have done with the subject and the kind of opportunities and challenges that they were facing. It was decided to specifically invite researchers from countries in the

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abdulkader.tayob@uct.ac.za

South to promote a South – South discussion and dialogue on RE. But this discussion would not completely ignore developments in Europe and America, so the meeting was also open to some reflection on RE taking place there as well (Jackson et al., 2007). The conference and the proceedings are a testimony to a global discussion on RE, even though it does not lose its focus on the subject and its future in South Africa.

From the second half of the 20th century, RE has become a norm in many different regions and countries. A few examples illustrate the trend. Sweden, Norway, Denmark and the United Kingdom (England in particular) witnessed early developments in RE in the 1950s. The teaching of religions beyond confessionalism was contemplated in the context of greater democratisation and secularisation. While the dominance of one religion has not completely disappeared in these countries, its teaching as exclusive dogma has progressively waned. As a result of secularisation, religion was no longer considered the main source of identity and values. Moreover, the pluralisation of Western societies from the 1970s by way of immigration further confirmed the need for RE that was not focussed on one religion. In the United States, a court decision in 1963 paved the way for teaching religions in schools and universities in a non-confessional way (Moore, 2007, p. 4). But RE was introduced in policies much later: England (1988), Ontario, Canada (1990), Sweden (1994), and Norway (1997) (Skeie, 2015; Berglund, 2014; Jackson and O'Grady, 2007; van Arragon, 2015). Since the events of 9/11, many Western countries have renewed their commitment to RE for what are perceived as present and future culture wars (Wright, 2004; Jackson, 2010). Diversity in society and school seems to be the main driver for RE. It is not surprising, therefore, to see several experiments in Africa after decolonisation. Zambia attempted to introduce such a policy in 1977, while Zimbabwe has considered introducing RE in schools in the 21st century (Ndlovu, 2014; Mwale and Chita, 2017). Nigeria and Kenya have addressed religious diversity in the classroom by introducing separate programmes for Christians and Muslims (Hackett, 1999).

Researchers were invited to present papers on RE interventions and programmes in various countries. Papers in this volume offer reflections on RE policies and syllabuses prepared for teachers, focussing on their histories, challenges and implementation. The papers and discussions covered South Africa, Zambia, India, Russia and England. Four themes appear repeatedly in the conference and in these papers: values; the politics of RE; the definition of religion; and methods through which religion may be introduced in schools. The themes are closely related, but they may be analysed separately for greater clarity and ideas for further research.

The importance of values flow through all the papers in this volume. More specifically, Ahmed Bhayat has focussed on its transformative role in schools in South Africa. Where schools and societies were segregated in the past, RE now offers lessons and insights on all religions in one classroom. I would like to identify at least three ways that values are manifested in these papers in particular, and the field of RE in general. The most elementary value that is promoted by RE as a subject *qua* subject is greater inclusivity in a school district, region or country.

Inclusivity is probably one of the key motivations for introducing RE in countries. In whatever form RE is introduced or hotly debated, it usually aims to replace mono-religious education as in South Africa, or to re-introduce religion in education as a fundamental aspect of social life once ignored as in Russia (this volume, Stepanova). This gesture, which is often initiated through a public or policy discussion, manifests the value of recognising diversity in every society and its schools. Sensitive and conscientious teachers find it untenable and unacceptable to teach one religion in a classroom with learners from diverse backgrounds. Confessional or dogmatic education becomes even more problematic when the laws and constitutions declare that learners have a right to religious freedom.

The persistence of religion in public life provides another opportunity for developing and manifesting values. RE plays an equally important role in promoting the values of respect and mutual dignity among adherents of different religious groups. Such respect might not necessarily need the development of a special curriculum, but RE offers a deeper foundation for such social and civic values. It exposes learners to the beliefs, practices and narratives that inspire fellow learners and future national and global co-citizens. This deep knowledge and familiarity of religious traditions that share a social space offer a firm ground for living in peace and harmony in a world of diversity and distinction.

There is a third dimension of values that pertains to RE which is often overlooked. In a world in which relations among religious groups are dominated by perceptions of conflict and mutual hostility, it is often forgotten that religions may also be studied for the resources they offer on how to live by values, and which values are important for social and individual well-being. The history of religions offers detailed accounts of how, when and where, and which values are founded, debated and embodied. The pursuit of the good life, in its many different permutations, represents one of the key dimensions of religious life. There are, then, three ways in which values are central to RE: the value of inclusivity that inspires the introduction of RE; the values that support inter-religious relations based on knowledge of the other; and the values that are embraced by religions.

I began with the theme of values because I believe that they are the prime motivation for scholars and teachers working in RE. But values and religions are located in political societies, which are inevitability messier in practice than on paper or in the hearts of learners, teachers and researchers. The histories of RE reveal the politics of introducing the subject in various countries. The papers of Manisha Sethi and Elena Stepanova in this volume show this phenomenon most clearly in India and Russia respectively. They offer valuable case studies on debates about which religions are emphasised, which included and which exclude in RE. There are currently two theoretical models that are helpful for thinking about the politics of RE. At the state level, Talal Asad has put forward a compelling thesis that the secular and religious are like Siamese twins tied at the hip. In his view, modern states engage in a process of religion making through secularisation policies (Asad, 2003). According to Asad's theory, the state would see RE as an ideal opportunity through which to regulate religion. The state does not only make it possible to believe and practice religions, but

also judiciously guides such beliefs and practices. From this perspective, then, which religions are emphasised, included or excluded stand at the centre of state interests.

Asad presents an alternative model to the one that emphasises the separation of religion and politics. Here religion and secular states occupy different spheres, and are bound to oppose each other as they compete over the same interests. Both state and religion want to control and guide populations to the good life. Religions in recent times, according to Lincoln, thrive in the face of weakening states (Lincoln, 1998). According to this model, RE guarantees freedom of religion and also from religious domination. Lincoln's model may inform the state to be wary of any religion becoming dominant, and jeopardise its political and social projects. Whichever theory one finds more appropriate, both suggest that a transformation of RE in a country would lead to competition or conflict between religions, and between states and religions.

A discussion of the politics of RE cannot ignore the role of religion in public life. RE is located in schools but prepares learners and students for public life. Lee Scharnick-Udemans' paper on the representation of religion in state media brings attention to this question. Following Asad's thesis, Scharnick-Udemans shows that the teaching of religion on public television is not innocent of the goals of the state. But one may take a different approach to religion in public life by paying attention to the work of José Casanova (Casanova, 1994). Against Asad, Casanova argues that religion may offer valuable insights and values for public and political life. His model is deeply rooted in the European history of religions, but may be an inspiration for thinking about religion in public life in general. Following Casanova, we may recognise an independent or critical role for religion in public life in general, and RE in particular. Maitumeleng Nthontho's paper in this volume calls for mediation skills for teachers and principals to negotiate this difficult terrain in schools.

The third related theme in RE concerns the nature and definition of religion. The study of religions finds itself between an earlier theological and confessional approach which it rejects, and a postmodernist attack that challenges its foundations. RE, like the study of religions in general, rejects a theological approach that would describe its "religion" as "truth", while others as "false", "heresies", "Satanism" or "witchcraft". From an inside theological perspective, there is nothing to compare between the true and the false. In contrast, RE uses the category of religion to distance itself from this position, arguing that religions are comparable, and that they have as many common elements and functions as they have differences. Postmodernists in the study of religions have questioned this assumption, and argued that the category of religion is not as coherent and stable as it appears. The teaching of multiple religions in a classroom makes a fundamental assumption that is often overlooked. RE assumes that one may compare and contrast the beliefs, practices and values of African Traditional Religions, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and New Religious Movements. It is said that these very different traditions with divergent histories are forced into comparative analysis (for a discussion of postmodern in RE, see Wright, 2004; Raschke, 2012). Against this postmodernist criticism, RE must take the responsibility to identify what religions are in general and how they may be studied. This has not been easy, but there is

a significant intellectual legacy in the study of religions that offers some answers. L. Philip Barnes' paper in this volume puts the issue into perspective, showing how the history of RE in England has engaged with this legacy.

RE in schools seems to work best when it adopts clear models for thinking about religions so that they can be studied together. If religion is regarded as a social value, then religions would be studied from the perspective of how communities are formed around sacred events, how some are excluded and others included, and how new challenges are mediated. This model is derived from the work of Emile Durkheim who laid the theoretical foundations for studying religions in the 19th century (Pickering, 1975). Developing Durkheim's ideas, Mircea Eliade focussed on the experience of the divine that he considered central to the meaning of religions. Like Durkheim, he also worked with the sacred and profane as the building blocks for all religions, but focussed on the special religious experience that was produced in relation to the sacred (Eliade, 1959). Another approach has been promoted by Talal Asad in arguing that religions work like languages which provide adherents the means to think, talk and debate about values and society, but also about power and ideas of the past and the future (Asad, 1993). This is only a glimpse of how the study of religions offers useful insights on how religion works with symbols, practices and narratives. A working model may offer a useful platform for teachers entering the field, caught between the variety of religions on the one hand, and the multiple theories competing for space in universities, colleges and training centres.

The fourth theme at the conference and in these papers concerns practical methods for presenting RE in the classroom and school. We heard several contributions from teachers at the conference who were working with textbooks and various media. The papers of Sibusiso Mgenge and Lee Scharnick-Udemans in this collection offer a glimpse of the opportunities available for teachers, and also the challenges that they face. Media in the form of posters, films and documentaries can bring the subject closer to learners. They can represent religions in a tangible and accessible way. One important way of thinking about media is to recognise its role in the practice of religion. Media are not merely a means to represent religions, but very much part of religions. The materials of religion, from the clothes worn every day or on special occasions, to the food consumed, occupy a central place in religions. In RE, they offer opportunities to discuss and interact with the subject at a concrete level. Where possible, learners may be encouraged to share personal materials that they have at home. A visit to a nearby religious site may open rich opportunities to get close to religions for further reflection and study. In my discussions with teachers, good textbooks and media remain a challenge for making the subject accessible and learner-friendly in South Africa. In this area, we hope that the conference and these proceedings will offer further opportunities for collaboration.

The following papers, then, offer a glimpse into the deep discussion at the conference in 2018 in Cape Town. In this introduction, I have identified four themes that emerged at the meeting and in these papers. And these themes are present in local and global debates on RE. Values occupy an important foundational role for RE, and might be further discussed and debated in specific contexts. The politics of RE

cannot be ignored, as it often occupies a large space in public and political debates that confront the implementation of RE. The politics of RE threatens to dominate, and suppress the fundamental values that may be developed through the subject. The definition or model of religion might seem like a highly theoretical subject left to specialists, but it can provide an anchor for textbooks, classrooms and projects. And finally, in our highly saturated mediascapes, RE may offer an opportunity to appreciate how media works in religions and in life in general.

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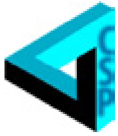

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CONFERENCE PAPER

English Religious Education: Developments, Identity, and Diversity

L. Philip Barnes
King's College London, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT
The aim of this paper is to review the post-confessional history of English religious education. The intention is to be descriptive rather than polemical. Attention is given to the transition of confessional to multi-faith religious education and to subsequent developments. The strengths and weaknesses of phenomenological approaches are considered, and how the focus upon experience that is central to phenomenology was preserved in later educational attempts to further moral and spiritual development through religious education. Finally, attention is given to the reasons for the emergence of citizenship as an important theme in religious education and to more recent issues.

KEYWORDS
confessionalism, experiential approach, John Hull, indoctrination, multi-faith religious education, phenomenological religious education, spiritual development

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to review the post-confessional history of English religious education. This is a controversial and contested subject, for there is no Archimedean point or God's eye perspective from which to gain a fully objective and disinterested analysis and interpretation. For some commentators the historical narrative of modern English religious education is one of untrammelled success and rational progress, a perception that gives little encouragement to retrospective reflection. For others, the historical narrative is a simple recitation of events, debates and personalities, each event completely explicable in terms of its immediate cause or causes. Both approaches are insufficiently critical, for neither is attentive to the influence of historically extended and deeper intellectual movements or to the beliefs

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© 2018 L. Philip Barnes
philip.barnes@kcl.ac.uk

that have shaped and continue to shape contemporary theory and practice. An attempt is made to identify and to interact critically with the beliefs, commitments and values that have determined the form and content of post-confessional religious education in England.

The Transition from Confessional to Non-Confessional Religious Education

The most important development in relation to the history of religious education in Britain, and the development that distinguishes modern religious education from earlier periods, is the transition from confessional to non-confessional forms of religious education in state-maintained (now referred to as "community") schools – that is, schools that are intended to be inclusive of all pupils, of any religious persuasion or none. Up until the late 1960s, religious education was Christian in terms of both content and of commitment. The purpose of religious education was to nurture Christian faith and values on behalf of what was believed to be a Christian society. This orientation was undermined by a range of developments. Economic, social and intellectual influences contributed to create a new cultural situation where traditional authorities and institutions were challenged, including the role and authority of the churches, particularly the Established Church, the Church of England. There was a radical reassessment of the aims of education in general and of the aims of religious education in particular. In the latter case this reassessment proceeded against the background of diminishing numerical support for institutional religion, widespread questioning of traditional Christian beliefs and values (both of which are properly regarded as aspects of the secularisation of society), and, chiefly as a result of post-war immigration from former colonies, a growing awareness of the multi-faith nature of modern Britain. Influential voices were raised against the prevailing orthodoxy. Research had already indicated that the staple diet of bible study and church history, so central to the religious education curriculum, was meeting with limited success in terms of both capturing pupils' interest in Christianity and advancing their understanding and comprehension of basic Christian beliefs (ICE, 1957; Loukes, 1961).

A new non-confessional direction for religious education was suggested in 1971 by a "working paper", aptly entitled *Working Paper 36: Religious Education in the Secondary School*, that was produced under the direction of Professor Ninian Smart for the Schools Council (a government funded body charged with the aim of exploring and developing new curricular ideas) and inspired by the emergence of religious studies as a separate subject from theology at university level. This publication initiated a revolution in British religious education and marked the beginning of the end of Christian nurture in all state and (fully funded) voluntary schools and heralded the advent of multi-faith religious education. The main ideas of *Working Paper 36* can be summarised in the following points:

1. The confessional or, what the document terms, the "dogmatic" approach to religious education is equated with "intellectual and cultic indoctrination". Confessional religious education is presented as necessarily indoctrinatory. Christian nurture should be abandoned in all schools as nurture is incompatible with "educational principles".

2. Moral education should be distinguished from religious education and the former should be studied in its own right independently of religious education. *Working*

Paper 36 followed the philosophical fashion of the time and maintained that religion cannot provide a foundation for morality; consequently, moral education should be taught independently of religion.

3. The view is expressed that a multi-faith, “non-dogmatic, phenomenological approach”, which draws inspiration from the phenomenology of religion should be adopted. It is commended for its “openness” and for its promotion of “empathic understanding” – by virtue of imagination and empathy, human beings are able to transcend their own situations and enter creatively into the subjectivity of others. By developing this form of religious understanding, religious education is believed to promote religious tolerance and to contribute positively to preparing pupils for life in a multi-cultural, multi-racial society.

The descriptive nature of the phenomenological approach and its (purported) neutral stance toward the truth of religion were believed to distance teachers from the charge of indoctrination, while simultaneously securing an educational foundation for the subject.

The Phenomenological Approach to Religious Education

Working Paper 36 provided only an impressionistic account of a phenomenological approach to religion, though its endorsement gave encouragement to scholars of religion and religious educators alike (for example, Eric Sharpe, Michael Grimmitt, Robin Minney, and John Marvell) to explain its distinctive methodology and terminology and to show its relevance in adapting it for classroom use. The fact that the phenomenology of religion had already established its academic credentials at university level, no doubt contributed to its favourable reception by teachers, as did the perception that its approach was the only viable alternative to confessionalism. The vocabulary and procedures of the phenomenology of religion became the currency of religious education and its principles came to be enshrined in numerous textbooks, agreed syllabuses and local education authority handbooks.

The intellectual roots of the phenomenology of religion can be traced to Liberal Protestant attempts in the late nineteenth century to develop a methodology for the study of religion that was descriptive and broad ranging, less driven by Christian polemics against other religions and more conscious of the divisive legacy of religion in the modern world. The professed aim of the phenomenology of religion is to provide an objective account of religious phenomena that is free from bias and distortion. Religious knowledge gives way to religious understanding, for as one learns about religion and enters into the situation of the religious believer, so one comes to understand the universal nature and character of religion. Religious understanding is gained by two hermeneutical steps (or what some call “reductions”). First, attention is given to the religious phenomenon under discussion, with all prior beliefs and assumptions suspended (*epoché*), then in this focussed state, the observer enters into the thought world of religion and intuits (through *eidetic* vision) the meaning of the experience for the believer. Characteristically, in phenomenology, the essential nature of religion is interpreted as experience of the Holy or the Sacred (both words translate the same German term, *das Heilige*): religion is regarded as a unique (*sui generis*)

category of interpretation and knowing. Through empathy and intuition, the essence of the Holy is grasped, and the inner meaning and motivation of religion is grasped. In this way, phenomenologists of religion believed that the "objective" experiential character of religion is laid bare. In broad terms this interpretation (which is sufficiently broad ranging to be regarded as a theory) of religion, was developed and formalised by phenomenologists of religion such as Gerardus van der Leeuw, Friedrich Heiler, Mircea Eliade and others in the early to mid-twentieth century.

The attractiveness of a phenomenological approach to teachers should be obvious. Phenomenological religious education claims to be multi-faith, inclusive, neutral and "objective" – no religion is privileged over another. Formally, the critical evaluation of religious beliefs and practices can be set aside, bracketed out as the phenomenology of religion's methodology demands, yet informally the truth of religion is assumed. Through empathy, insight is gained into the religious world of "the other"; and true to the Liberal Protestant foundations of the phenomenology of religion, the religious world of "the other" is found to be centred on and expressive of the transcendent mystery that lies at the heart of all religion. As Marvell (1982, p. 74) maintained, every religion evokes the "the numinous". On this basis, one of the most controversial issues in relation to religion is overlooked: that of evaluating religious claims to truth and adjudicating between rival doctrinal beliefs. Furthermore, following the demise of Christian confessionalism in education, there was a certain embarrassment with the doctrinal element of religion, and the phenomenological approach provided a welcome justification for diminishing the role of doctrine in religion, and consequently the role of doctrine and beliefs in religious education. Religious education is thus freed from challenge and possible controversy.

This endorsement of religion was important against a background in education and in society where the relevance and significance of religion was often overlooked. Many of the intellectual elite of the time viewed religion as an epiphenomenon that reflected more fundamental economic or psychological realities; in any case commitment to the secularisation thesis predicted that religion was in terminal decline. Against this intellectual background many religious educators in the 1970s and 80s regarded themselves as witnesses to the importance of religion and its positive contribution to society. In a situation where religion was culturally despised, it was natural to underline the similarities between religions and thus present them as collectively opposed to secularism and the cultural disparagement of religion.

Over the next two decades, British religious education became synonymous with a multi-faith, phenomenological approach in which religions were typically studied thematically, with the content of religion organised and classified under generic themes such as founders, sacred buildings, sacred scriptures, and festivals. Pupils were encouraged to set aside their presuppositions, and to enter imaginatively into the religious experience of others. This was the ideal of course, but for many pupils religious education became an uninvolving and superficial journey through a range of different religions and diverse religious phenomena.

The influence of phenomenological religious education in England reached its peak in 1985 when an official British Inquiry into the Education of Children from Ethnic Minority Groups, chaired by Lord Swann, concluded that a non-dogmatic, non-denominational,

phenomenological approach to religious education provided the "best and only means of enabling all pupils, from whatever religious background, to understand the nature of religious belief, the religious dimension of human experience and the plurality of faiths in contemporary Britain" (Swann, 1985, p. 518). Even at the time of Swann's report, criticisms of phenomenological religious education were widely discussed by religious educators. Teachers reported disinterest amongst pupils in a thematically ordered, multi-faith religious curriculum that failed to relate to their "life world" (*Lebenswelt*) and their concerns and interests. Acquaintance with the beliefs and values of minority groups *by itself* will considerably reduce religious prejudice also enjoyed little support from experience. Furthermore, questions were raised about the capability of pupils to enter into the experience of others and to develop a positive attitude to them on the basis of the phenomenological technique of "bracketing out" their own convictions and commitments. A psychological perspective on children's cognitive development suggests that the method of bracketing one's own beliefs and entering into the mind-state and experience of others to gain an appreciation of their beliefs is compromised by the psychological and imaginative limitations of many pupils – limitations that in some case last well into the years of secondary education. There was also the complaint that by setting aside one's own values and commitments and attempting to place oneself in the situation of the experiencing subject tacit support was given to moral and religious relativism; this is because from the perspective of the "insider" everything that is experienced in religion is valid and true. Should religious education not also be developing critical perspectives on religion and religious phenomena?

If classroom experience revealed that phenomenological religious education was less effective in challenging racism and religious intolerance than its first advocates had anticipated, this did not lead religious educators, for the most part, to question either the potential of religious education in this area or phenomenology's underlying Liberal Protestant philosophical and theological commitments. It was conceded that the phenomenological technique for acquiring a positive attitude to religious diversity may be deficient, but ongoing research that identified a link between notions of superiority and prejudice was interpreted by religious educators as confirming their commitment to the experiential truth of the different religions. By challenging religious claims to uniqueness and superiority, religious educators believed themselves to be simultaneously challenging racism and religious intolerance. A straightforward and influential proponent of this position is provided by Professor John Hull, then of Birmingham University and one of the most internationally influential religious educators.

In 1992 Hull introduced the word "religionism", in an editorial in the *British Journal of Religious Education* to refer both to the view that one religion is true to a degree denied to other religions and to the attitude of superiority that expresses itself as intolerance towards adherents of other religions (Hull, 1992, p. 70). Religionism, he affirmed, is rather like racism – there is the racist belief that one's own race is better than others, and there are racist attitudes that show themselves in acts of discrimination against individuals from other races. Belief and attitudes are linked, though strictly speaking, in his view, it is the belief that has priority. With regard to religion, it is the denial of the truth of other religious traditions than one's own that is the cause of religious

bigotry and intolerance. Hull is quite insistent that "[i]t is not enough for religious education to encourage a *tolerant* attitude towards other religions" (Hull, 1992, p. 71, my emphasis). He proposes that, within the educational context, pupils should be taught that all religions are authentic and valid – no one religion should consider itself or be presented in education as *regarding itself* as true in any sense that is denied to other religions. According to Hull (1992), schools should teach that the different religions are not in competition with each other, but rather complement each other. This interpretation should become part of the self-identity and self-understanding of the different religious communities themselves. In a series of influential public lectures, articles and essays, he developed this interpretation of religionism and expounded the positive contribution, he believes, religious education can make to religious and social harmony (Hull, 1993, 1995, 1996, 1999). Other religious educators could be cited that illustrate the same view: a group of prominent religious educators supported Hull's position in a declaration that was widely circulated at the time and was posted on the StudyOverseas.com (www.studyoverseas.com) website on 23 October 2001.

Religious Experience and Spiritual Development

The term "phenomenological religious education" gradually fell into disuse in the late 1980s, to be replaced by "multi-faith religious education". The theological commitments, however, remained the same, as can be briefly illustrated. A number of educators championed what they described as "the experiential approach" to religious education that focussed on the cultivation of the "inner, spiritual experiences of pupils", which they regarded as foundational both for an appreciation of the nature of religion and for later religious commitment, while in part acknowledging that the phenomenological approach had come to amount to little more than a catalogue of religious phenomena without any insight or focus on the experiences that give force and meaning to religious rituals, practices and beliefs (see Hay et al., 1990). In short, the criticism was that phenomenological religious education (originally conceived as a suspension of critical judgement while attending to religious phenomena, followed by an act of intuitive awareness) had confined itself solely to the first procedural step and failed to move beyond external description. The experiential approach aimed to correct this weakness by exposing pupils to the experiential heart of religion and religious life through a range of meditations, guided exercises.

The focus on experience in religious education received further support from the 1988 Education Reform Act, which requires (for this legislation is still in force) schools to promote "the spiritual ... development of pupils and of society" (1988, p. 1). In a multicultural society, it is problematic for governments and legislators (though this does not mean that they preserve moral neutrality about their own chosen "moral" causes) to endorse one religion over others, or even religion over non-religious beliefs and worldviews. It is at this point that the notions of "spirituality" and "spiritual development" become relevant. One important advantage of the language of spirituality over traditional religious language is that the former admits a degree of ambiguity of usage and application that is denied to the latter. Spirituality can be regarded as something

that is shared by adherents of different religions and even shared by non-religious people who are committed to positive liberal values.

The first semi-official statement of what was envisaged by the reference to spiritual development in the act was given in a paper entitled *Moral and Spiritual Education*, which was published in 1993 by the National Curriculum Council. At the outset, it is maintained that "[t]he potential for spiritual development is open to everyone and is not confined to the development of religious beliefs or conversion to a particular faith" (NCC, 1993, p. 2). The spiritual

> has to do with the universal search for individual identity – with our responses to challenging experiences, such as death, suffering, beauty, and encounters with good and evil. It is to do with the search for meaning and purpose in life and for values by which to live (NCC, 1993, p. 2).

Beliefs, a sense of awe, feelings of transcendence, the search for meaning and purpose, self-knowledge, relationships, creativity along with feelings and emotions are then listed as aspects of spiritual education. The framers of the document clearly wanted to distinguish spiritual development from religious development. Spirituality is regarded as something wider and more inclusive than religion, the former focusing on experience, creative awareness and human values, the latter on formal or institutional patterns of religious belief and practice. A number of religious educators had already endorsed the view that spirituality provides the foundation for a broadly progressive, holistic education that focuses upon the child and his or her creative powers (over against a traditional knowledge-based education). Spiritual intuition is believed to lie at the heart of not just religious commitment but of all authentic moral, aesthetic and educational commitments. Moreover, these same writers presumed spirituality to possess an impartial and neutral quality denied to the different religions. Accordingly, it is believed to provide a vantage point from which the different religions can be assessed, while accepted that all religions to some extent expedite spiritual sensibility.

The document also effected a kind of reconciliation between morality and religion in education by placing both within a wider framework of human values which schools were obligated to uphold and to exhibit – I say a kind of reconciliation, and I will return to this point below. Spiritual and moral development are probably linked in the document because it is believed that developing spirituality furthers moral development by seeking to enhance the dispositions of love, sympathy and responsibility that are presumed to provide the mainspring for moral action, while simultaneously refusing to elevate any particular morality or any particular moral stance over others. There is evidence which seems to suggest that at a personal level there is a close relationship between spiritual maturity and perceptions of personal well-being, expressed in terms of mental health, self-fulfilment, perceived contentment and happiness. At a social level, evidence again suggests that the spiritually mature are more likely to make a positive contribution to the community and less likely to engage in anti-social and criminal activities. Thus, by fostering spiritual development religious education can contribute to the moral development of the individual and society.

As said above, this is a reconciliation of sorts between religious education and moral education; yet this reconciliation does not concede much to religion, for a careful reading of the document shows that moral and spiritual values are not believed to need religion for their expression or justification. The view of the document is that both spiritual and moral values are a sub-set of human values and that the latter can be expressed and encouraged in different ways, in religious ways and in non-religious ways.

The identification of spirituality with the "inner life" and with one's feelings, however, opens the door to a subjective and reductionist reading of religion and may in fact undermine the cognitive significance of both spiritual and religious experiences. This refusal to consider deeper religious and philosophical issues is probably prompted by the fear that controversy will be aroused. The tacit assumption is that controversial religious matters are best ignored in the classroom, an assumption, as already noted, that runs back to the emergence of non-confessional religious education. A similar attitude still lies behind contemporary religious educators' refusal to engage pupils in the quest for religious truth or to address the issue of how judgements of truth or untruth in religion are to be assessed and evaluated.

The Emergence of Citizenship as an Important Theme in Religious Education

The linking of religious education with spiritual and moral development in the late 1980s and early 1990s is not unrelated to the growing importance of the social aims of education, which were beginning to coalesce around the modern political discourse on the ideas of citizenship and rights. The ratification of the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights into British law in the 1998 Human Rights Act consolidated the connection between citizenship and human rights and pushed both to the forefront of the educational agenda. A growing perception of the reality of moral and religious pluralism in society convinced some educators that schools did not have the authority to adjudicate on matters of personal lifestyle and morality; instead schools should concentrate on social behaviour. In other words, the view that public education should be concerned with social responsibility and not with the private lives and behaviour of individuals became increasingly influential. One can appreciate how a focus on citizenship and rights served this new interest in social morality: public education should be concerned with the creation of good citizens. A "good" citizen obeys the laws of the land and respects the rights of others. (I have argued elsewhere that there are inherent limitations to what a rights-orientated form of religious education can contribute to the realisation of liberal educational aims.)

A number of religious educators, including Mark Chater (2000), were quick to state that religious education provides an ideal vehicle for furthering the citizenship agenda. In fact, support for the role of religious education in advancing citizenship education illustrates the increasing trend for religious educators in Britain to seek extrinsic or instrumental reasons for the inclusion of religious education in the curriculum. Religious education ought to be studied for the contribution it makes to civil society or as some have argued more recently for the contribution that it makes to challenging religious extremism. Ed Pawson, the then chairperson of the National

Association of Teachers of Religious Education, for example, stated at a conference in January 2015 that "developing young people's religious literacy could help to make them less vulnerable to religious radicalisation"[1].

Recent Developments

The topics of religious education in schools and state funded religious schools continue to be the subject of heated debate. The last two decades have seen a gradual expansion in the number of religions to be covered, and more recently many locally agreed syllabuses have begun to include non-religious worldviews in their provision. In 2013, the Religious Education Council of England and Wales recommended that altogether over twelve religious and non-religious worldviews should be studied by all pupils. Others view this development with dismay and oppose this expansion of content as educationally unsupportable, as it will lead to truncated teaching and superficial learning. It could be contended that this continual expansion of what has to be studied provides evidence to critics of current provision that religious education's efforts to challenge religious bigotry and to gain the interest of pupils are simply failing, for why otherwise is the curriculum subject to constant change. Allied to this expansion, is an increasing focus on the diversity within religions. Influential in this regard has been Robert Jackson's interpretive approach which explicitly challenges the idea that religions are "coherent wholes", and instead focuses on personal appropriations of religious traditions (for discussion and criticism, see Barnes, 2014, pp. 180–217).

Other debates have focussed on the need for a nationally legislated curriculum and for the parental right of withdrawal of children from religious education to be removed. Both measures have been interpreted by liberal groups as imposing further restrictions by the state on personal freedom. Schools with a religious character, which are commonly referred to as "faith schools", also continue to attract discussion and legislation. In some cases, arguments against faith schools are proxy for arguments against Muslim schools, which are regarded as inimical to "liberal" values. In saying this, there is a long tradition in English education of secular and secular humanist opposition to faith schools of any kind; such opposition has more recently espoused the language and concepts of equality and inclusion to make the case against faith schools. All this is against the background of considerable disinterest by pupils and the identification by the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted)[2] of major areas of concern, including low standards of attainment and weak teaching.

Conclusion

A brief overview of post-confessional developments of religious education in England has been provided. The context requires that much has had to be overlooked, for example, the developing legislation that governs the practice of religious education,

[1] As reported by the BBS: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-30989933.

[2] The Office for Standards in Education is a non-ministerial department of the UK government concerned with inspecting and regulating services providing education.

and the work of particularly significant religious educators apart from Ninian Smart and John Hull. Developments have been presented and considered in historical order with some attention given to the beliefs, commitments and forces that have determined or directed debates and how one development connects to another. It has been noted how the phenomenological religious education's emphasis upon religious experience was continued through the experiential approach and then through recent interest in spiritual development, which is then linked to moral development.

At the outset, I acknowledged that there is no God's eye perspective on religious education in England. In keeping with this, it is admitted that my interpretation on the developments presented differs from more positive or conventional accounts. Yet, while all interpretations are personal and partial, it is not admitted that all interpretations and representations of the modern history of religious education in England are equally true and reliable.

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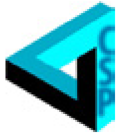

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CONFERENCE PAPER

Religious Education Syllabuses for Secondary School Teachers in Zambia: Catholic Missionaries' Contributions

Nelly Mwale
The University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia

ABSTRACT
Though widely acknowledged that the role of teacher training institutions remains crucial in providing an understanding of the educational basis for Religious Education (RE) and in improving the overall quality of provision in schools, both theoretical and empirical exploration of the syllabuses prepared for teachers in Zambian higher education is scanty. Informed by an interpretative case study on the RE syllabus prepared for teachers at Zambia Catholic University (ZCU), the paper argues that by embracing and revising the syllabus from Nkrumah College of Education, ZCU exemplified the stakeholder interest and missionary contributions in safeguarding that which had been envisioned in teacher education.

KEYWORDS
religious education, syllabus, teacher education, policies, Catholic education

Introduction

Though widely acknowledged that the role of teacher training institutions remains crucial in providing an understanding of the educational basis for Religious Education (RE) and in improving the overall quality of provision in schools through the production of well trained, competent and enthusiastic teachers (Grimmit, 2010, p. 9), both theoretical and empirical exploration of the syllabuses prepared for teachers in higher education in Zambia is scanty.

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nelmwa@gmail.com

This is because the discourse on RE syllabuses in Zambia has been engrossed with the subject at the primary and secondary levels of the education system resulting in a neglect of what was obtained in teacher education. For example, while the RE primary and secondary school syllabuses have been critiqued (see Mudalitsa, 1995; Simuchimba, 2004), little has been done to explore the syllabuses in teacher education. This paper, therefore, investigated the RE syllabuses in teacher education to mirror how teachers were being prepared to teach the subject, and in turn draw lessons for present and future opportunities for RE in Zambia using the contributions of the Catholic missionaries to the subject.

This inquiry is deemed significant to those involved in RE teacher education as the study was an indirect response to the 2013 curriculum reforms which called for study areas in the teacher education curriculum to be linked to school curriculum by providing an understanding of how RE teachers were being trained (Curriculum Development Centre, 2012, p. 50). The paper also indirectly mirrors how stakeholders like missionaries and institutions have safeguarded the place of RE through the RE syllabus in teacher education.

Methodologically, the paper was informed by insights from an interpretive case study based on document analysis and interviews with purposively selected missionaries who contributed to the development of the RE syllabus for secondary school teachers in Zambia. The institution and syllabus were also purposively selected based on some peculiar attributes. For example, unlike other colleges and universities, Zambia Catholic University (ZCU) taught the syllabus as Religious Education and not Religious Studies and was developed by missionary teachers who had contributed to the development of RE in Zambia in numerous ways.

The syllabus was first used at Nkrumah and later revised and adapted by Ben Henze and John Mudalitsa for ZCU where they retired. Henze taught RE for over 15 years in primary teacher colleges and later became the RE advisor to the Inspectorate in the Ministry of Education (Henze, 2000, p. 1). Mudalitsa whose special interests are educational evaluation and religious discernment not only taught RE in secondary schools, but was also a lecturer at Nkrumah, the birthplace of secondary school RE in teacher education in Zambia, for 11 years before moving to ZCU where he contributed to the development of the syllabus under review until his retirement in 2016. Hence, this paper might reflect what some missionaries and educationists involved in the development of Zambian RE envisioned for RE in teacher education and in turn manifest the stakeholders' interest in the subject.

The key research question was centred on establishing what constituted the RE syllabus and what informed the inclusion of the content. The paper argues that the development of the RE syllabus at ZCU was informed by the missionary teacher's quest to synthesise religion and education in a context specific and relevant style that promoted learning about religions and learning from religions. By embracing the syllabus that was once considered as a model in teacher education at a time when all other institutions were transforming to teach Religious Studies, ZCU was a custodian of that which the missionary enterprise had envisioned for RE.

Context of Religious Education in Teacher Education

The birthplace of RE in teacher education is the Christian missionary enterprise (Mwale et al., 2014). RE in teacher education for primary and secondary school teachers is taught in both public and private colleges and universities. It was first taught in the secondary school programme at Kwame Nkrumah Teachers College in the 1970s, which was the first college to offer the RE programme for secondary school teachers (Carmody, 2004, p. vii). At the request of the Senior Inspector of RE to begin a RE department to facilitate the teaching of the RE syllabus in schools, Bro. George Poirier of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart who taught at Nkrumah from 1957–78 initiated the RE teacher education programme. The educational reforms which translated in the introduction of multi-faith RE syllabuses in Zambia and the 1996 Educational policy pointed to the need for a more educational approach to RE (Mudalitsa, 2002). Hence the initial syllabus which was more Christian orientated, was revised in 2000 through a consultative process that the Religious Education Consultative Group was instrumental in.

The revised syllabus was applauded and to be used as a model for other affiliate colleges (Simuchimba, personal communication to Nkrumah Teachers college, 20th May 2002). However, over time, Nkrumah migrated to teaching Religious Studies in the place of Religious Education, a trend noticeable in most institutions. ZCU was therefore of interest because in a context where institutions were moving towards Religious Studies as opposed to RE, the institution had retained and adapted RE as a programme in teacher education.

Conceptualisation of Religious Education in Teacher Education

RE in teacher education is spoken as a curriculum subject with the educational aims of promoting religious literacy or a critical understanding of different religious traditions in Zambia (and the world) and helping to impart important life skills – for instance, critical and analytical thinking, logical argumentation, innovativeness, and respect and tolerance for other people's views, beliefs and values (Simuchimba, 2005, p. 7). This understanding relates to learning about religion and learning from religion when related to Grimmit's (1987) conceptualisation of learning about religions and learning from religions. Learning about religions is a type of RE where teaching and learning have a non-confessional foundation and are based on the academic discipline of religious studies, while learning from religions highlights the potential for personal development through RE touching upon life issues of an existential character and provides opportunities for students to reflect on their views in relation to the various answers religions provide to these questions (Grimmit, 1987; Teece, 2010). The paper sought to show how the RE syllabus at ZCU reflected the quest to promote learning about and learning from religions in teacher education.

The RE Syllabus for Teachers at Zambia Catholic University

As alluded to earlier, the RE syllabus at Zambia Catholic University was developed and adapted on the premise of the synthesis between religion and education. Mudalitsa (2000, p. 10) opines that RE is neither a study of the Bible nor a study of world religions. He advocates for fusing the best of religion and the best of education to produce RE that is capable of contributing towards the integral development of each individual learner and Zambia's brighter future. Mudalitsa (2002) argues that RE needed to be in line with the latest national education policy and related to the context in order to promote the aims and content of the educational policies. Mudalitsa recalls that the courses included in the ZCU RE syllabus were started at Nkrumah in order to enable students to get the best of RE. The courses were developed further at ZCU through the encouragement of Ben Henze (Personal Communication, November, 2017).

In terms of content, the syllabus developed by the Catholic missionaries at ZCU had three major components. The first component was on foundations of RE and covered Introduction to RE; Psychology of RE; Sociology of RE; Science and religion; and Ecumenism and RE (Science and religion; and Ecumenism and RE were new additions to the old Nkrumah syllabus). Introduction to RE was designed to enable student teachers to understand RE in theory and practice by exposing them to what was deemed as RE at its best in the world today. The course also explored the history of RE in Zambia, its strengths and weaknesses, and its vast potential for improvement. Psychology of RE was focussed on helping student teachers to link how RE promoted the full development of the human personality. It addressed aspects such as the complexities of human growth, factors of human flourishing in psychology, religion and tradition, stages of human development in psychology, and religion's transformative power using personality examples from different religious traditions such as Desmond Tutu and Jesus of Nazareth. Sociology of RE was concerned with enabling student teachers to think wisely about social issues and make RE a powerful instrument for social transformation. This was addressed by exploring the overview of social issues in Zambia and Africa, and uncovering ways that fostered positive thinking, fight against corruption, disease and other societal ills and sound interpersonal relationships including leadership skills. Science and religion was aimed at showing how the relationship between the world of science and the "quality of life" challenged RE to update itself critically and creatively (MoE, 1996, p. 5). This was achieved by assessing the world of science and technology, analysing scientific theories and religious beliefs, and discussing intelligently if, for example, the universe came by accident or design, or the life on earth was a product of evolution or creation. Ecumenism and RE was focussed on enabling student teachers to make a dynamic synthesis of all they had learnt in RE and in turn use RE to promote ecumenism and fight fundamentalism. This was achieved by showing the similarities and differences between religions, and distinguishing "good" and "bad" religion to promote the spirit of dialogue and ecumenism, and fight fundamentalism.

Other than these foundational courses, the syllabus also covered four of the religions found in Zambia, unlike the old Nkrumah syllabus which addressed other world religions. These were Christianity, African Traditional Religion (ATR), Islam and Hinduism. The decision to include these religions was informed by the 1977 educational national reforms and the secondary school syllabuses themselves (MoE, 1977). The topics covered under each religion included its history, scriptures and contemporary issues.

RE Teacher Education Syllabus as a Mirror of Stakeholders' Interest in the Subject

The choice of the content and justification for the content manifest not only the developers' interests and perspectives for the subject, but also institutional support for what was deemed as RE that would produce competent teachers. It was also an example of what the missionary enterprise had envisioned for RE in teacher education in recent times.

To begin with, the syllabus reflects the quest for RE to be in line with national education policies because of the understanding that RE is a synthesis of religion and education (Hull, 1991). As such, the syllabus was informed by both international and local education policies, including the principles governing Catholic universities (1965 Declaration on Christian education, the 1990 encyclical on Catholic Universities: *Ex Corde Ecclesiae* among others). For example, with the 1996 *Educating our Future* policy document in place, Henze believed that RE needed to progress within that framework (Henze, White Fathers archives, unpublished manuscript). Henze and others saw an opportunity in the policy's emphasis on life skills for RE to enable learners to grow to maturity through the development of a more life skills-based syllabus and textbooks, and the formulation of a deeper way of examining the subject.

The choice of content was also informed by what was prevailing in the secondary school RE and teacher education. The observations of student RE teachers on teaching practice and surveys of learners' experiences over time manifested concerns linked to the student teachers' inability to teach in a contextualised manner (Mudalitsa, 2002, pp. 13–16). The content itself was also in need of radical change (Mudalitsa, 2002, pp. 23–26). Hence, other than ZCU exposing students to the religions in the school syllabuses, the syllabus was critical of secondary school RE syllabuses in present day Zambia.

Furthermore, the content of the RE secondary school syllabuses influenced the choice of the content. The two syllabuses covered four religions (ATR, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism) based on the 1977 reforms. Mudalitsa affirmed that RE syllabuses being used in Zambian schools and colleges today are products of the Educational Reforms of 1977 when Zambia saw a fundamental reform of the education system in conformity with Zambian Humanism (Mudalitsa, 2002, p. 24). This was an attempt to adopt a multi-faith (although more would have been done to introduce students to many other religions) approach not only in terms of covering the four religions, but also the approach taken to study the religions that promoted religious literacy and

discernment in Zambia's pluralistic society. In addition, the state of RE in teacher education was a factor in developing, adapting and retaining the syllabus at ZCU.

> Even our higher institutions of learning have contributed to the current state of RE in the country. Until early 2000, Nkrumah Religious Education syllabus consisted mainly of Biblical studies... RE for Nkrumah graduates meant a study of the Bible. …University of Zambia (UNZA) does not offer Religious Education but Religious Studies only; as a result, RE for UNZA graduates means a study of world religions. (Mudalitsa, 2000, p. 10)

The stakeholder's interest in supporting the RE they envisioned for teacher education did not only end at developing and adapting the syllabus, but in securing teaching and learning materials. Publications by Fr. Henze and Fr. Mujdrica (Mudalitsa) have proven useful to students studying RE owing to a dearth of literature on the subject in the country. Fr. Carmody's books on religion and education meant for colleges and universities have constituted required reading for students.

Conclusion

The paper explored the RE syllabus in teacher education developed by the Catholic missionary enterprise in Zambia to demonstrate their interest as stakeholders both at individual and institutional levels with reference to Zambia Catholic University. At the inception of ZCU teacher education programme, the old Nkrumah RE syllabus was revised and adapted in pursuit of synthesising religion and education. By this, the syllabus manifested the quest to move from learning about religions to learning from religions as RE not only provided religious literacy, but also provided opportunities for students to reflect on their views in relation to the various religions' answers to the ultimate questions. By embracing and revising the syllabus from Nkrumah, ZCU exemplified the stakeholder interest and missionary contributions in safeguarding that which they had envisioned for RE in teacher education.

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CONFERENCE PAPER

Religious Education in India: Debates and Experiences

Manisha Sethi
Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India

ABSTRACT
Religious education has remained largely absent from school and university curricula in India though its significance has been underlined by a plethora of government committees on education. Its absence can be traced to the imperatives of rule, both in the colonial period, and in post Independent India, and the need to balance competing claims and pressures. This paper shows how, on the one hand, the policy of religious neutrality – and later avowed secularism – and on the other, a desire for inculcation of moral, "spiritual" and "Indian" values tended to favour a natural religion approach. This idea of natural religion though comes to be inflected with a majoritarian bias.

KEYWORDS
Macaulay, religious neutrality, missionaries, spiritual values, natural religion

Introduction

In this paper, I attempt to chart out a tentative history of religious education in India focusing broadly on debates and policies on religious instruction in schools. There are two reasons for this: firstly, I realise that a large number of panellists and participants at this conference were engaged with either teaching, or studying religious education (henceforth RE) in schools, whether its curricula or pedagogy; and secondly, how the universities understood or incorporated – or even expelled – RE in India could not be disentangled from the policies affecting RE in schools. Indeed, it is difficult to distinguish the two, and difficult to understand the experience of RE in Indian universities without the broader background. This broader background consists of many questions about the

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manisha.sethy@gmail.com

nature, content and purpose of education. These were questions being framed and thrashed out first in the context of colonial rule, and then in terms of the vision of a newly independent postcolonial state. Central to this was the distinctive trajectory that secularism took in India. The experience of Partition and the bloody communal violence that accompanied it, also informed it. RE is expressly absent from Indian school and university curricula. Why was this so?

Religious Education in the Colonial Period

The early years of colonial rule in India – especially till 1830s – were marked by the dominance of Orientalists, with a decided interest in Eastern religions and their sacred texts. The British established their own *madrasa* Aliyah in Calcutta in 1792 (which has recently been converted into a university) and a Sanskrit College in Benaras in 1780. These were two of the three educational institutions endowed out of Indian revenues (Lelyveld, 1984, p. 86; Chatterjee, 2011, p. 26). The encouragement to Sanskrit and Arabic was premised partly on the principle that the sacred books of Hindus and Muslims were the sources of law by which the British would govern the subjects.

However in 1835, the notorious Minute of Macaulay – Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay, son of a missionary, and Law member of Governor General's Council – reflected the increasing impatience with the East India Company's policy of Orientalism. In advocating a choking of patronage to the study of Oriental languages and literatures of "Hindus and Mohammadens", Macaulay conjoined both the Utilitarian critique led by James Mills that these studies served no purpose, and the Anglicist demand for a more vigorous Christian policy in the colony. Macaulay's grounds for putting an end to this were manifold: the uselessness of learning these languages which did not prepare the pupils for a career, or even a bare sustenance; the drag on Company funds in publishing Arabic and Sanskrit books (which he called "waste paper" reflecting his prejudice against Eastern learning); the near completion of the project of codification of law which would render unnecessary the aid of *pandits* (Brahmin scholars) and *maulvis* (learned doctors or teachers of Islamic law) to interpret the Hindu sacred texts *Shastras* and *Hedayas*; and of course the falsity of these religions.

The following paragraph from the Minute brings to us in essence what appeared to Macaulay to be innately wrong with the encouragement of "Hindu and Muslim languages":

> It is said that the Sanscrit and the Arabic are the languages in which the sacred books of a hundred millions of people are written, and that they are on that account entitled to peculiar encouragement. Assuredly it is the duty of the British Government in India to be not only tolerant but neutral on all religious questions. But to encourage the study of a literature, admitted to be of small intrinsic value, only because that literature inculcated the most serious errors on the most important subjects, is a course hardly reconcilable with reason, with morality, or even with that very neutrality which ought, as we all agree, to be sacredly preserved. It is confined that a language is barren of useful knowledge. We are

> to teach it because it is fruitful of monstrous superstitions. We are to teach false history, false astronomy, false medicine, because we find them in company with a false religion. (Macaulay, 1835)

The emphasis on English literature, Western philosophy and sciences and its validation as the most valuable knowledge perforce placed Christian mission-run schools in an advantageous position. However, the English were at the same time wary of identifying their government too closely with Christianity. Thus, we see that Macaulay advised abstention from encouraging "those who are engaged in the work of converting the natives to Christianity" (Macaulay, 1835). Following him, the Despatch of 1854 authored by Wood, provided the Company's blue print of education of natives, and established the grant in aid system. It underlined that "good and secular education" would be the criteria for providing aid to schools and not instruction in Bible. The policy of religious neutrality was laid out in the following terms: the masters of government schools were not precluded from giving instruction out of school hours in the facts and doctrines of the Christian religion to any pupils who might apply for such instruction; and in the aided schools, the government would abstain from religious instruction conveyed in the schools, and the inspectors were to take no notice whatsoever of the religious doctrines which may be taught in schools (Wood's Despatch, 1854, par. 54).

Though Macaulay insisted that Sanskrit and Arabic could not claim British support either as "the languages of law" or as "the languages of religion", the consequence of this was not simply an efflorescence of missionary educational initiatives. In many regions such as the Punjab, support for what has been called vernacular Orientalism continued. Elsewhere, as in Madras, the grant support for mission schools and institutions was uneven. In fact, a complaint about the government's parsimony in this regard elicited a 50-page long letter from the Director of Public Instruction recounting the natives' fears about the proselytisation in mission school and the importance of state neutrality in matters of religion. Col. Macdonald also cited a meeting of over 6–7 thousand Hindus and Muslims in Madras in April 1859 who had appealed to the government to stop aid to mission schools and sought protection from religious instruction. The Missions on the other hand interpreted the 1854 Despatch to have provided for "the establishment of local boards of education and board schools financed from local property rates…, purely secular teaching, and grants-in-aid to voluntary societies whether they be Christian, Moslem or Hindu" (Whitehead, 2004, p. 126).

The debates reached a head by the time the Indian Education Commission was instituted in 1882 to review the progress in the field of education since Wood's Despatch of 1854. The question of religious instruction was an issue that exercised many witnesses who deposed before the Commission. A proposal was placed before the Commission that arrangements for religious instruction be permitted provided that a) parents may be enabled to withdraw children from it if they so wished; b) that the inspector and other departmental officer not interfere or examine such subjects; and c) that if there be sufficient numbers of dissenters, separate classes should be established for them. The majority in the Commission rejected this proposal because "religious feeling was so inflammable, and sectarianism so prevalent in India, that it

was **not safe** to depart from the earlier policy" despite the admission of the value of RE on all sides (Indian Education Commission, 1883, p. 129; emphasis added).

But two innovations from earlier policy were made. In the field of primary education, the Commission felt a real threat of retardation of the spread of education because parents loathed to send their wards to schools where religious instruction was compulsory. Such an exigency necessitated a departure from the policy of absolute abstention from interfering in a school's programme of religious instruction. Thus, a recommendation was made that: "it shall be open to parents to withdraw their children from attendance of such instruction without forfeiting any of the benefits of the institution" (Indian Education Commission, 1883, p. 512).

The second innovation was the recommendation to introduce moral education at the college level. But ever mindful of the difficulties of producing a curriculum which might be acceptable to all sides, the Commission urged for the preparation of a "moral textbook based upon the fundamental principles of natural religion" (Indian Education Commission, 1883, p. 307). This, as we shall see, was to become the model later too. Three caveats were added: that there should be no complaints about interference in religious beliefs; the candidates should not be called upon to declare religious beliefs; and no answer be objected on the grounds of it expressing any peculiarity of religious belief (Indian Education Commission, 1883, p. 308).

In a way, both of these departures could be seen as responses to two divergent demands, which played out in the Commission. The first was possibly a concession to the demands for a conscience clause by Indian witnesses, namely, Kashinath Telang, who wrote a detailed dissent note explicating the same. The missionaries and those disposed towards the expansion of missionary education stressed that the government policy of neutrality (or of not encouraging mission schools alone) had been decidedly "injurious from a moral and religious point of view" (Indian Education Commission, 1883, p. 610). The recommendation on moral training in colleges had resulted from the pressure of this lobby. Telang, though unsuccessful in his bid for something akin to Section 7 of the British Education Act of 1870, insisted that there was no way of satisfying the demand for religious instruction. The only tow models, he argued, were either the teaching of common principles under the name of Natural Religion, or instruction in the principles of all creeds, but the practical difficulties in pursuing either of these paths offered secular education as the only "remote haven of refuge for the educationists" (Indian Education Commission, 1883, p. 610). Telang's dissent suggests that the Indian national opinion – or at least a part of it – was on the side of complete severing of any religious training or teaching from secular education.

The dilemma that RE presented to policy makers was this: recognition of the value of religious instruction as a force of morality and virtue; the demands of missions to be given preferential treatment, native fears about widespread proselytisation, the governmental expediency of maintaining communal peace, alongside the aim of massification of primary education. The compromise that resulted from these opposing pulls and pushes was the expulsion of RE from government prescribed curricula, and a sort of laissez-faire to private initiatives of various hues as long as they maintained a certain standard of secular education.

Towards Independence

As the Government of India Act 1919, and then of 1935 paved the way for greater autonomy formation of provincial governments led by Indians, especially the Congress. With the introduction of diarchy which transferred the education departments to Indian ministers, a more nationalist vision of education was put forth. In 1937, Gandhi convened a committee of educationists headed by the then principal of Jamia Millia Islamia, Dr. Zakir Hussain, to prepare a future primary education scheme. Called the Wardha Scheme, it advocated a free, compulsory and universal education for all children. A progressive document, it was adopted by the Congress in its session in 1938 as a resolution on National Education, and its provincial governments began to implement it (with little success though) (Oesterheld, 2007, p. 4).

RE remained an unresolved issue in the Wardha scheme. Of all the national leaders, Gandhi's politics has been spoken of as having a spiritual basis. In 1928, writing in *Young India*, he had said:

> A curriculum of religious instruction should include a study of the tenets of faiths other than one's own. For this purpose the students should be trained to cultivate the habit of understanding and appreciating the doctrines of various great religions of the world in a spirit of reverence and broad-minded tolerance. This if properly done would help to give them a spiritual assurance and a better appreciation of their own religion. There is one rule, however, which should always be kept in mind while studying all great religions, and that is that one should study them only through the writings of known votaries of the respective religions. (Gandhi, 1928)

Nonetheless, the Wardha scheme made no provision for RE. In fact, Gandhi justified the exclusion "because we are afraid that religions, as they are taught and practised today, lead to conflict rather than unity" (in: Oesterheld, 2007, p. 7). At a later stage too, in 1947, he rebuffed the idea that RE could be a state concern, emphasising that it must remain the sole concern of religious associations. He did however underline that fundamental ethics being common to all religions, its teaching was "undoubtedly a function of the State" (Sethi, 2010, p. 10).

Meanwhile two parallel processes were at play. The first was the appointment by the government Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) of a committee to examine the Wardha scheme in 1938, and a separate committee in 1946 devoted exclusively to study the possibility of RE. While no consensus emerged in the first committee, the second CABE committee of 1946, in its Interim Report, recommended "as in Britain, an agreed syllabus, expert teachers, the use of prime hours of instruction and the provision for a conscience clause" (Chatterjee, 2011, p. 197). Its final report, however, deemed RE to be the responsibility of the homes and the religious community to which the pupil belonged – a result, which a disappointed Sargent contemptuously called "a small mouse" (Sargent Report, 1948, pp. 12, 226). The second process focussed on what was happening in the provinces. Many of the ministers in charge of provincial educational ministries, though avowed Congressmen, were cultural

conservatives, or positively majoritarian, subscribing to a Hindi/Hindu/Hindustan model. This deemed India to be a land of Hindus, who spoke a chaste and heavily Sanskritised Hindi shorn of all Persian influences. An illustration of this hegemonic model was the *Vidya Mandir* scheme [quite literally translated as Temples of learning] introduced by the Central Provinces, which was seen widely as a crusade to efface Islamic culture and religious heritage (Oesterheld, 2007, p. 10).

Legislative Debates

The question of RE came up once again when the Constitution was being drafted (29 Aug 1947 – 26 Nov 1949). Article 28(1) of the Constitution, expressly forbids the provision of religious instruction in any educational institution wholly maintained out of state funds. At the same time, however, different articles, namely, 28(2), 29 and 30(1), allow the setting up and functioning of schools and institutions of higher education by religious minorities, and even the receipt of grant in aid from the government, as long as these do not discriminate on the basis of religion in admissions. It is interesting to trace the route through which the drafters arrived at these articles.

Article 28 was originally clause 16 of the Report of the Advisory Committee on Fundamental Rights, which was placed before the Constituent Assembly in August 1947. It read:

> No person attending any school maintained or receiving aid out of public funds shall be compelled to take part in any religious instruction that may be given in the school or to attend religious workshop held in the school or in premises attached thereto.

Clearly, in its original form, it did not envision expelling religion from schools, whether aided or government, only that no one would be compelled to participate in such instructions. There were two sorts of objections to this. The first amendment moved by Purnima Banerjee rued that there were a large number of educational institutions run on religious lines (*maktabs* and *pathshalas*, corresponding to Islamic and Hindu institutions respectively) who impart to students “fanaticism and religious bigotry”, which could only be allayed a governmental control of the curriculum. A state which hoped to stay united (remember the background of Partition) – no matter how secular – required that its children must learn to appreciate the religion of another. Only a syllabus of such a type may be the bulwark against exclusivism (Constituent Assembly Debates (CAD), 5.67). She therefore proposed the addition of this paragraph as explanation, “[a]ll religious education given in educational institutions receiving Statewide will be in the nature of the elementary philosophy of comparative religions calculated to broaden the pupils’ mind rather than such as will foster sectarian exclusiveness” (CAD, 5.46.66). Renuka Ray, on the other hand, sought to bring unequivocal exclusion of RE with her amendment, “[n]o denominational religious instruction shall be provided in schools maintained by the State. No person attending any school or educational institution recognised or aided by the State shall be compelled to attend any such

religious instruction" (CAD, 5.46.70). Ray's proposal received a greater reception and approval from the members whilst Purnima Banerjee's proposal was deemed controversial.

What would be the contours of such a comparative religion – questions raised by members Mahboob Ali Baig Sahib Bahadur – and what would it mean for rights being promised to the minorities to run their educational institutions, and further, what would be the implications of the proposed "unification of all religions" for the constitutional rights of minorities were all questions that were raised (CAD, 5.46.77-80). Another member, K. M. Munshi, also warned that disputes over the precise content and nature of elementary philosophy of comparative religions would lead to litigation, with the courts expected to pronounce whether the syllabus was of comparative kind, or belonged to one specific religion; and further, if such a syllabus would broaden or narrow the outlook of students. Therefore, Munshi cautioned that the adoption of comparative religions as a dictum could never become justiciable, but would only lead to considerable confusion and legal *imbroglio* (CAD, 5.46.83,86-87).

The second amendment, though more popular, was referred to a subcommittee which would report to the drafting committee. When the article suitably amended finally appeared for discussion in the Constituent Assembly, there were several amendments of different shades. On the one hand were those like Shiban Lal Saksena who resented the exclusion of religion on account of protection afforded to minorities. While minorities should not be compelled to have religious instruction against their wishes, the District education boards should not be barred from teaching the children of the majority community Gita and Ramayana, he felt. On the other hand were members like K. T. Shah who thought the provisions against teaching of religion to be too loosely worded and sought them to be made more stringent. B. R. Ambedkar's response to these was threefold: First that the monies generated from general taxation could not be used to provide any particular RE; the second factor militating against the provision of RE was the preponderance of religions and sects in India, and finally, he reminded the house that "unfortunately the religions which prevail in this country are not merely non-social; so far as their mutual relations are concerned, they are anti-social". Thus, he concluded that in "laying down in article 22(1) that in State institutions there shall be no religious instruction, we have in my judgment travelled the path of complete safety" (CAD, 7.68.159-163). [I am not going here into the discussions about aided schools run by religious communities covered under 28(2) now]. In the course of the discussion, Ambedkar distinguished between religious instruction and study of religions, and stressed that it was only the former, which was prohibited.

Nonetheless, the issue of RE refused to disappear. Immediately after the CAD took place, a committee to look into university education was appointed. Headed by S. Radhakrishnan, Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at the University of Oxford, it devoted considerable time on discussing RE. The Radhakrishnan Commission set out the agenda of RE in the following poetic terms:

> We teach religious dogmas not to provoke doubts of questions but to give comfort to the human spirit. To introduce these studies in a University is to make a sharp

> break with the critical methods of inquiry followed in other disciplines of the curriculum. To prescribe dogmatic religions in a community of many different faiths is to revive the religious controversies of the past. To turn the students over to theologians of different denominations for instruction in the conflicting systems of salvation is to undermine that fellowship of learning which defines a college or a university. (p. 256)

And yet, to "exclude spiritual training" would be being "untrue to our whole historical development" and to negate "the beauty and mystery of the universe, the meaning of life and death, the aspirations of the inner soul, that sad feeling of the wistful minded that beyond the world of positive knowledge there is a realm of forces unseen which we can feel but never know completely (Radhakrishnan Commission, 1963, pp. 260–261). It thus recommended that:

> (1) all educational institutions start work with a few minutes for silent meditation;
> (2) in the first year of the Degree course lives of the great religious leaders like Gautama the Buddha, Confucius, Zoroaster, Socrates, Jesus, Somkara, Ramanuja, Madhava, Mohammad, Kabir, Nanak, Gandhi, be taught;
> (3) in the second year some selections of a universalist, character from the Scriptures of the world be studied;
> (4) in the third year, the central problems of the philosophy of religion be considered. (Radhakrishnan Commission, 1963, p. 265)

The issue of religious instruction in schools was first dealt with in detail in the *Report of the Committee on Religious and Moral Instruction* (also known as the Sri Prakasa Committee) submitted to the Ministry of Education as early as in 1960. It advocated an "objective, comparative and sympathetic study of all the important religions of India" (extracted in Biswas and Agrawal, 1986, p. 612). The imperative of the Sri Prakasa Committee in making such a recommendation – as indeed of the other Committees and their recommendations such as the Kothari Commission in 1966 – was the task of "nation-building" and the forging of a "national consciousness". The task of RE could not be left to the home and community alone, the Sri Prakasa Committee argued, as this would result in limited understanding of one's own faith, ignorance of other faiths and blind prejudice towards others. *Report of the Kothari Commission* (1966), mulling over the nature of education that a secular state in a multi-religious democracy may impart, distinguished between "religious education" and "education about religions". It lamented that:

> ...owing to the ban placed on religious instruction in schools and the weakening of the home influences which, in the past, often provided such instruction, children are now growing up without any clear idea of their own religion and with no chance of learning about others". It thus recommended that a "period or two a week should be allotted to education in moral and spiritual values in an organized attempt to develop the character of the pupils and inculcate in them a respect for religions other than their own". (cited in Ayyar, 2017, pp. 299–300)

None of these recommendations were followed. The *81st Report on Value Based Education* (also called the SB Chavan Committee) submitted its report to the Parliament in 1999. "Values" was the locus of the SB Chavan Committee report. Value education was of supremely civic importance, as it would foster national integration and make students aware that the basic concept behind every religion is common. It would repel the overwhelming influence of western culture. But what precisely would these values be: they were indigenous and national values but seen deriving from "ultimate reality supreme power or self-consciousness to which man orients himself" (The 81st Report on Value Based Education, 1999). Ancient *gurukuls* (traditional Hindu educational institutions) were invoked as models of a value based educational system.

The Idea of Religion

Perhaps because the multiplicity of religions and creeds in the country, and the pragmatic need to keep peace, most policymakers gravitated towards the idea of a universal or natural religion. If committees instituted by colonial government identified ethics and morals derived from the common core of religions as the subject worthy of study (though never enforced), we see Purnima Banerjee's proposal not very different. The Radhakrishnan Commission spoke of an "Indian" outlook on religions, which in their view was not inconsistent with Constitutional principles. It held that religion is neither creed, nor emotion nor a ceremony, but a realisation which can be apprehended not by beliefs but "by their fruits". And if religion was a matter of realisation, then its vehicles were to be training, discipline and *sadhna* (spiritual practices).

This received its most cogent form in a judicial pronouncement in 2002. In 2000, the right-wing BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party or Indian Peoples' Party) government had proposed a New Curriculum Framework (NCF) which sought to give prominent place to RE. Again, the terminology was not new – students were to be made aware that the essence of all religions was common. It also proposed a new "spiritual quotient" and placed a premium on the learning of Sanskrit. A group of civil society activists approached the Supreme Court expressing the apprehension that the NCF would pave the way for "saffronisation of education" (a term commonly used by secular and left academics and activists to denote exclusivist communalisation), and that it fundamentally militated against the settled principle inhering in Article 28 (Shah, 2002). The Supreme Court dismissed the petition holding that NCF did not violate the principle of secularism (Shah, 2002; all citations below from it).

What interests me most here is also the definition of religion that emerges from this judgment. Justice Shah approvingly quoted a judgment ([1960] 9 SCC 548), to demonstrate a distinction between religion and *dharma*, "143. Our dharma is said to be 'Sanatana' i.e. one which has eternal values; one which is neither time-bound nor space-bound. It is because of this that Rig Veda has referred to the existence 'Sanatan Dharmani'. 'It is crystal clear', he concluded, 'that the word' 'religion' has different shades and colours. Important shade is dharma (duty). That is to say, duty towards the society and the soul". Here again we find the belief that there is an Indian sense of religion, which is compatible with secularism.

His brother judge, J. Dharmadhikari, insists on distinguishing religious instruction from RE. It is the former, which is prohibited in a secular state – the latter that should introduce pupils to religious philosophies without indoctrinating them, or curbing their independent thinking is to be encouraged. It is an experiment which needs caution and vigil. Though he leaves it to the educationists to frame such a curriculum, its contours are not entirely absent in his judgment. RE would be the "teaching of philosophies of religions with more emphasis on study of *essential* moral and spiritual thoughts contained in various religions" and would have no place for the "teaching of rituals, observances, customs and traditions and other *non-essential* observances or modes of worship" (emphasis added). The identification of morality, philosophy and nebulous spirituality as essential cores of religion and observances as non-essential or peripheral; or the primacy of doctrine over practice, has been a dominant mode of judicial thinking on religion, and we see it being repeated here.

The imprint of Phenomenology of Religions in his fervent hope that RE be premised on Religious Pluralism is obvious. In this conception of religious pluralism, world religions are viewed as embodying "different perceptions and conceptions of and correspondingly different responses to, the Real or Ultimate". Nonetheless as for J. Shah, for him too, the English word "religion" is inadequate in fully conveying "the Indian concept of religion", which is *dharma*. He writes: "Hindus believe in Vedas. The word 'Dharma' has a very wide meaning." Note how quickly the Indian concept of religion elides into a Hindu, Vedic one, and how *sanatan dharma* comes to stand in for natural religion: "Dharma or righteousness is elemental and fundamental in all nations, periods and times. For example truth, love, compassion are human virtues. This is what Hindu call Sanatan Dharma meaning religion which is immutable, constant, living permanent and ever in existence".

Conclusion

Thus, the model of RE in post Independent India remained this: the official banishment of RE from the curriculum; lack of any discussion among educationists on what might constitute a proper RE curriculum, and deriving from it a moral frame tending towards Natural Religion; and finally, despite the exclusion of RE, the cementing and naturalisation of a majoritarian idea of religion, culture and Indian-ness.

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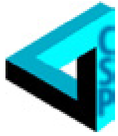

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CONFERENCE PAPER

Religious Education in Russia: Between Methodological Neutrality and Theological Partiality[1]

Elena A. Stepanova
Institute for Philosophy and Law, Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences,
Ural Institute of Humanities, Ural Federal University, Yekaterinburg, Russia

ABSTRACT
Religious education in Russia remains the subject of sharp public debates. The paper briefly observes the history of religious education in the country. Prior to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, religious instruction was an essential part of the primary school curriculum; the imperial system of religious instruction ended up with the Bolshevik revolution, and the subsequent Soviet decree of January 1918 that separated church from state and school from church. In Soviet times, religion had no place in the moral education of children. The fall of the Soviet Union, including its socialist ideals and educational prerogatives, led to uncertainty and confusion in the educational sector. Today, however, religious education is becoming increasingly important. By introducing *Foundations of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics* in public schools and Theology in higher education institutions, the Russian Federation has asserted the state's vested interest in ensuring the moral and spiritual development of its citizens.

KEYWORDS
school curriculum, religious studies, religious education, moral education, "Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics"

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© 2018 Elena A. Stepanova
stepanova.elena.a@gmail.com

Introduction: Religious Education in Imperial Russia and Soviet Union

Religious Education is a fairly new enterprise in Russia. Prior to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, moral and religious instruction was an essential part of the primary school curriculum in the Russian Empire despite the state having never instituted a system of universal public education. Most primary schooling was in the hands of religious communities, from Buddhist monasteries (*datsans*) near Lake Baikal, and Muslim *maktabs* on the middle Volga to the Russian Orthodox church-parish schools across the empire. Although the Orthodox Church was the established one, the empire recognised a number of religious minorities, and every imperial citizen had to have a religion, which was usually determined by birth and recorded in one's passport (Clay, 2015).

The imperial system of religious instruction ended with the Bolshevik revolution and the subsequent Soviet decree of January 1918 that separated church from state and, consequently, school from church. In the 1920s, the Soviet Union introduced compulsory universal, militantly secular, public primary education that was part of the broader Marxist-Leninist project to create a new civilisation and a new kind of human being, the "new Soviet man". In 1929, a new law on religious associations, which remained in effect for the next six decades, drastically curtailed freedom of conscience and placed strict state controls on religious life. In the same year, the Constitution was amended in order to deprive believers of the right to conduct religious propaganda while assuring all citizens the right to engage in anti-religious propaganda. For Soviet authorities, religion had no place in the moral education of children, and their brutal, state-sponsored destruction of believers and religious institutions had a deep and long-lasting impact on those religious communities that survived the Soviet period (Clay, 2015).

In 1961, the new Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was adopted with the "Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" as its integral part. The "Moral Code" was aimed at the moral improvement of the Soviet people; it included the values of the devotion to the cause of communism; love of the socialist Motherland; conscientious labour; high sense of public duty; collectivism and comradely mutual assistance; humane relations and mutual respect; honesty and truthfulness; moral purity; unpretentiousness and modesty in social and private life; mutual respect in the family; irreconcilability toward injustice; and friendship and brotherhood among peoples. Because of the ideological needs of the time, late Soviet ethical theory was supposed to prove the ultimate truth of the communist morality as the highest form achieved through historical stages of the development of morality, and to elaborate the normative ethical programme based on the "Moral Code". Interestingly, today there is a general discourse, reproduced by both believers and non-believers, that Russia has always been Orthodox, and "The Moral Code of the Builder of Communism" is nothing else but a disguised Ten Commandments.

One of the consequences of the introduction of the "Moral Code" was the shift from former "militant" atheism to "scientific" one, which served the purpose of not only criticising religion but also stressing the positive aspects of atheism as part of

the materialist worldview and the source of the elaboration of everyday values. Since 1964, Scientific Atheism as a part of the state's system of "moral upbringing" became a compulsory course in the departments of humanities and social sciences at higher educational institutions in the Soviet Union.

Post-Soviet Changes

After the breakdown of the Soviet Union, the religious situation in Russia changed dramatically. Today, the importance of the cultural-historical and ethical role of religion, especially Russian Orthodoxy, is highly acknowledged by the state. The 1994 Constitution declared Russia as a secular state; nevertheless, in 1997, the influence of the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) in various spheres of social life, including education, further increased with the adoption of the Federal Law on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Associations. Although this law reinforced the secular character of education, it also contained a specific regulation on church-state relations in its Preamble. The Law recognises the special role of the ROC in "the history of Russia, the formation and development of its spirituality and culture", as well as the importance of other religions like Islam, Buddhism or Judaism in Russian history. As a result, these four religions, with Christianity limited to the Orthodox denomination, were officially recognised as so-called "traditional" religions of Russia that later shaped the system of Religious Education in state schools (Blinkova & Vermeer, 2018). Russian Orthodoxy recently experienced its "rebirth" as some 70% of ethnic Russians claim Orthodoxy as their religion (Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe, 2017). However, these figures should be considered with caution, as they include people with extremely diverse degrees of religious knowledge and commitment (Ładykowska, 2012).

Religious Education in Higher Education Institutions

Since the mid-1990s, Religious Studies (RS) in one form or another gradually replaced Scientific Atheism in higher education institutions. RS is no longer a compulsory subject in the humanities and social sciences; rather, it is a specialty aimed at preparing teachers, researches, and PR specialists among others. Presently, the 30 higher educational institutions offer bachelor's degree programmes in RS, while 5 of them also offer master's degrees specialising in RS. The curriculum for both the bachelor's and master's programmes includes Philosophy of Religion; Sociology of Religion; Phenomenology of Religion; Science and Religion; Religious Arts; New Religious Movements; Religious Ethics; Anthropology of Religion; Psychology of Religion; History of Religion; Freedom of Conscience; and History of Freethinking and Atheism.

Today, RS is an institutionalised scholarly discipline that has become an integral part of the Russian higher education structure. It is represented by a number of research centers, professional associations, and specialised periodicals. At the same time, the Russian RS community is highly fragmented and poorly integrated

into the global scholarly community. The origins of RS in Russia is disputed by researchers; some trace the tradition to scientific atheism, while others adopt a critical stance towards the Soviet legacy, citing its high susceptibility to ideological bias and the lack of a developed methodological basis. Apart from the history of RS, the meta-theoretical discourse also focuses on at least three contiguous areas, namely, (1) the issue of demarcation from other disciplines, primarily Theology and Philosophy, (2) the issues of the subject matter of RS, as well as the number and interrelations of the sub-disciplines, and (3) the question of a specificity of the RS methodology (Karpov & Malevich, 2015).

Besides the introduction of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Religious Studies, 39 higher educational institutions also offer bachelor's and master's degrees in Theology. Some of them are departments at state universities while others are sponsored by religious institutions (mostly by the ROC). Theology as an optional discipline is taught in 51 higher educational institutions. In 2015, issuing of the academic degrees (Candidate and Doctor of Science) in Theological Studies by state educational and research institutions was approved by the state authorities upon the initiative of the Russian Orthodox Church and strong public intervention by Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill. Theology was legalised by the Ministry of Education not as a branch of history or philosophy, but as a specific discipline. Olga Vasil'eva, the Head of the Ministry, stressed that there was a need to "make every effort to prepare specialists" in the theological field (Rozanskij, 2017). Many secular academics and RS teachers estimate the implementation of Theology (which in reality is the Russian Orthodox one) as an attempt to replace methodologically neutral RS with a confessional subject. They see the reform as the desire of the ROC to indoctrinate and ideologically mould the country. On the contrary, the ROC representatives refer to theology as "a church science" and consider "spiritual experience" as a precondition for the study of theology.

Religious Education in the State School Curriculum

The implementation of Religious Education in state school curriculum has passed several stages. In 1992, a new Law on Education was passed claiming that "the activity of religious movements and organisations (unions) in state schools is prohibited", thus, strengthening the secular character of education. At the same time, there was a great deal of societal interest in religion and considerable interest by different religious communities, especially the ROC, which wanted to be involved in state schools. Nevertheless, setting the agenda on the curriculum of Religious Education was not an easy task for a long time, and the ROC's calls for the introduction of a compulsory Religion Education (RE) class were not heard on the federal level. Few regions introduced compulsory classes on Orthodox Christianity in state schools in 2006; in some other regions, it was introduced as an optional subject. This gave rise to considerable protest by religious minority groups, atheists and intellectuals complaining about the "clericalization of education" (Köllner, 2016).

Eventually in 2012, a one-year course called “Fundamentals of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics” (FRCSE) was introduced in state schools as a compulsory subject. Schoolchildren and their parents have to select one of six modules – Fundamentals of Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, Orthodox Christianity, World Religious Cultures, or Secular Ethics, – that the learners would study in their fourth and fifth years of school (10–11 year olds). The purpose of FRCSE, as stated in official documents, was to understand the significance of moral norms and values and to behave in accordance with these principles; to strive for moral perfection and spiritual development; to develop primary knowledge about traditional religions of the Russian population (Orthodoxy, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism), its roles in culture, history and the contemporary world as well as in the formation of the Russian state and Russian secular ethics and with regard to the questions of moral choice, to act according to one’s conscience (POOP, 2015). According to 2016–17 statistics, Foundations of Secular Ethics was chosen by 40.5% of students; Orthodox Culture 38.5%; Foundations of the World Religious Cultures 16.5%; Islam 4%; and Buddhism and Judaism less than 1% (ORKSE, 2016–17).

The course remains a rather controversial issue in public perception. On the one hand, Russian officials explain that it would help children to develop their ethnic identity, moral sense and tolerance. Sceptics, on the other hand, point out that the choice of subjects is incompatible with tolerance from the beginning, particularly since the study of Christianity includes only one branch, namely, Russian Orthodoxy; as well as the content of “secular ethics” remains obscure. In general, the introduction of FRCSE was a compromise between the state and the ROC. The state wanted to introduce a non-confessional RE course for all students without dividing them into “groups of interest”, but such a course was rejected by the ROC authorities since they surmised that it might educate children into moral relativism and indifference. However, confessional RE provided and funded by the state is against the Law and the Constitution. Therefore, the state and the ROC reached the compromise that RE, that is, FRCSE, consists of six optional modules (Blinkova & Vermeer, 2016).

The FRCSE should also be seen not only as a source of RE, but in the broader sense as a part of the moral upbringing of citizens through the system of public education, which remains the subject of special concern for the state. Substantial evidence of the continuity between the Soviet and post-Soviet concepts of moral upbringing can be found in the document titled *Koncepcija dukhovno-nravstvennogo razvitija i vospitanija lichnosti grazdanina Rossii* (Conception of the Spiritual-Moral Upbringing and Education of the Personality of the Russian Citizen), adopted by the Russian Ministry of Education as a key standard for public schools (Daniljuk et al., 2009). The document negatively characterises the 1990s as a period of damage toward the spiritual unity of the nation, the appraisal of the type of individual alien to national traditions and values, and uncritically copying the Western style of life. This document regarded religion as the main agent of the spiritual-moral upbringing in Russia prior to the October Revolution of 1917. In Soviet times, the state eliminated the church’s influence over public and private life, and pretended to be a “new ecumenical church”, reducing the meaning of life to the belief in communism (Daniljuk et al.,

2009). At the same time, the Soviet state created a supreme pedagogical ideal – the upbringing of "all-round personality" – which maintained its significance in post-Soviet times as well (Zwahlen, 2015). The document formulated the overall aim of the moral education as the formation of morality through personal recognition of behaviour based on the socially accepted notion of good and evil, exercising of the moral self-control, and accepting national moral values derived from the multinational people of Russia, civil society, labour, art, science, religion, nature, and humankind. The basic national moral values included patriotism, social solidarity, justice, dignity, freedom of conscience, loyalty to family, care of elderly and youth, creativity, tolerance, peace, social progress, respect to traditional Russian religions, scientific knowledge, art and literature, ecology, diversity of cultures and nations, and so on (Daniljuk et al., 2009).

Conclusion

After the breakdown of the Soviet system and collapse of socialist ideals, education, which under socialism was highly respected and intended for the creation of the "new socialist human being", had lost most of its previous prestige. The fall of the Soviet Union, including its socialist ideals and educational prerogatives, led to uncertainty and confusion in the educational sector. The formerly coherent curriculum gave way to a plethora of different and sometimes conflicting approaches. Today, however, Religious Education is becoming increasingly important, with its widespread introduction in state schools and new efforts to re-ideologise it by drawing on so-called traditional religions in Russia, namely, Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and Judaism. Religious Education in state schools has the potential to reinforce the importance of education in general and to bring back the prominent position, which it had under socialism (Ładykowska, 2016). By introducing FRCSE in public schools and Theology in higher education institutions, the Russian Federation has asserted the state's vested interest in ensuring the moral and spiritual development of its citizens. The paradox though is that, at the official level, the state declares its devotion to the freedom of conscience as a fundamental principle of human rights.

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CONFERENCE PAPER

Inter-Religious Cooperation and its Challenges in Schools and Public Life in South Africa

Ahmed Bhayat
KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, South Africa

ABSTRACT
After the collapse of apartheid, South Africa adopted a new political regime in 1994 that promoted democratic values to build a socially cohesive nation out of a fractured past. The post-apartheid state changed its education policies to reflect this democratic framework that recognised, appreciated, and accommodated the diverse reality of the country's population. More specifically, Religion Education was incorporated into the school curriculum that focussed on teaching and learning about "religion, religions, and religious diversity" (Chidester, 2003, p. 262). Religion Studies was a specialised subject for senior learners that formed part of the Religion Education curriculum. This paper will explore how the post-apartheid South African education policies recognise the value of Religion Studies and its role in creating inter-religious cooperation in the country's schools and communities. I will explain the South African Schools Act and National Policy of Religion and Education as two key education policies that underpin the subject Religion Studies. However, while Religion Studies will be shown as aiming to build inter-religious cooperation, I will discuss that this is a challenging process considering that a strong Christian ethos is still promoted by some public schools in the country. I argue that Religion Studies has a transformative role in the South African classroom since it promotes the importance of values in transforming (inter-religious) relationships within schools and outside of them.

KEYWORDS
inter-religious cooperation, policies, post-apartheid, social cohesion, diversity

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ahmedbhayat72@yahoo.com

Introduction

Under the apartheid regime, South African schools and communities were segregated along various signs of differences, including race and religion. With the apartheid government declaring Christianity as the state religion, it ensured that the education system promoted an Afrikaner Calvinist Christian national ethos in the country's schools. This means that regardless of their own religious or non-religious orientations, learners and teachers were obligated to study no other religions other than Christianity. As a result, many South Africans knew very little about other religions. In addition to the lack of knowledge of various religions, the interaction between religious communities was minimal. Both, therefore, contributed towards viewing religions other than Christianity with suspicion and being stereotyped. African Traditional Religion is one example of a religion that many South Africans viewed as paganism, and was in fact not even regarded as a religion, but denounced as a cultural practice.

After the end of apartheid, South Africa adopted a new political regime in 1994 that promoted democratic values to build a socially cohesive nation out of a fractured past. The post-apartheid state changed its education policies to reflect this democratic framework that recognised, appreciated, and accommodated the diverse reality of the country's population. More specifically, Religion Education was incorporated into the school curriculum that focussed on teaching and learning about "religion, religions, and religious diversity" (Chidester, 2003, p. 262). Religion Studies was a specialised subject for senior learners that formed part of the Religion Education curriculum. It was introduced in 2008, and offered as an elective subject to learners in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase (Grades 10–12). It should be noted that in 2015, the subject was also offered to adults (older than 21 years of age) who wanted to complete Grade 12.

This paper will explore how the post-apartheid South African education policies recognise the value of Religion Studies and its role in creating inter-religious cooperation in the country's schools and communities. It will explain the South African Schools Act and National Policy of Religion and Education as two key education policies that underpin the subject Religion Studies. However, while Religion Studies will be shown as aiming to build inter-religious cooperation, I will discuss that this is a challenging process considering that a strong Christian ethos is still promoted by some public schools. I argue that Religion Studies has a transformative role in the South African classroom since it promotes the importance of values in transforming (inter-religious) relationships within schools and outside of them.

Understanding Key Policies

It is important to understand the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) and the 2003 National Policy of Religion and Education as two key education policies that underpin the subject Religion Studies. Both policies promote the constitutional freedom of conscience and religion at public schools. The South African Schools

Act stipulates that provisions for religious observances can be made at public schools on the condition that attendance by learners and staff members are free and voluntary. The National Policy on Religion and Education promotes the teaching and learning of various religions in South Africa and the world. The national policy introduces Religion Education as an educational programme that aims to mould learners into democratic citizens who recognise, understand, appreciate, and engage with different religious beliefs and practices (par. 18, 19). It stipulates that Religion Education is different from Religious Instruction as the former is a non-confessional approach to studying religions and is the responsibility of the school, whereas the latter takes on a confessional approach to teaching a particular religion and is the "responsibility of the home, the family and the religious community" (par. 19, 55). This means that Religion Education neither promotes nor undermines any religion. Instead, it teaches about diverse religions as a social phenomenon, including "the common values that all religions promote, such as the human search for meaning and the ethic of service to others" (par. 18). Religion Education also aims at promoting the "[c]onstitutional values of citizenship, human rights, equality, freedom from discrimination, and freedom for conscience, religion, thought, belief, and opinion" that encourages learners to be participating citizens in an open, inclusive and democratic nation (par. 11). One may, therefore, conclude that Religion Education, including Religion Studies, can be regarded as playing a vital and transformative role in promoting the importance of values of dignity and respect, which can contribute towards creating a space for inter-religious cooperation to take place in a diverse nation like South Africa.

Interreligious Cooperation and its Challenges

Indeed, the South African Schools Act and National Policy on Religion and Education ensures that public schools establish an open and inclusive environment that nurtures inter-religious cooperation amongst learners and teachers. Some schools, for example, make provisions for teachers to take two days of leave per year for religious observances. Another example is that learners who are African Traditional Religion practitioners are permitted to observe initiation ceremonies during the school year.

While the role of Religion Studies is transformative as it aims to build inter-religious cooperation, this is a challenging process considering that a strong Christian ethos is still promoted by some public schools. In rural and township areas, for instance, Christian prayers in public school assemblies are still carried out. Interestingly, Christian prayers are also part of state official District and Provincial functions. Nevertheless, teaching about religious diversity in rural and township schools can be quite challenging given that many individuals had little to no social interaction with persons of other faiths. The example of the 2017 "OGOD" court case also points to the challenging process of building inter-religious cooperation in schools. The *Organisasie vir Godsdienste-Onderrig en Demokrasie* [Organisation for Religious Education and Democracy] (OGOD) is an association that addresses constitutional violations of religion and public schools, and brought a case against

six public schools in Gauteng and the Western Cape that promoted a Christian ethos (Schools should not adopt one religion, 2017). The organisation stated that with these schools promoting only one religion and requiring learners to reveal their adherence to a specific religion, they were in breach of the National Policy on Religion and Education. The presiding Judge Willem van der Linde handed down his ruling that public schools cannot promote one religion, which was a victory for the organisation.

Conclusion

This paper discussed the post-apartheid South African education policies as recognising the value of Religion Studies and its role in creating inter-religious cooperation in the country's schools. The introduction of Religion Studies is a step in the right direction since it aims to build a socially cohesive society that respects and tolerates religious and cultural diversity. This shows that Religion Studies has a transformative role in the South African classroom since it promotes the importance of values in transforming (inter-religious) relationships within schools and outside of them. Yet, while Religion Studies plays an integral role in building religious cooperation, there are still certain challenges, such as public schools promoting a Christian character, that disrupt this process of collaboration. Despite national government adopting policies to create a united nation, proper implementation of them still needs to take place at provincial, district and municipal levels.

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CONFERENCE PAPER

Religion Education and Critical Education: The Case of Barnato Park High School in South Africa

Tlou Russell Choshi
Barnato Park High School, Johannesburg, South Africa

ABSTRACT
This paper uses a case of a South African public school, Barnato Park High, to reflect on if there is a space for religion education and, more specifically, a critical pedagogical approach to teaching the subject at a school that promotes a Christian ethos. I will first define the concepts of critical education and religion education in South Africa, and then move onto providing a brief historical background of the school. The paper will reveal that with the school promoting a Christian character, it may be challenging for it to create an open and inclusive educational environment that exposes learners to religious diversity.

KEYWORDS
religion education, critical education, Christian ethos, learners, Barnato Park High School

Introduction

The question on if there is a space for religion education and, more specifically, a critical pedagogical approach to teaching the subject in a public school that promotes a religious character is important to reflect on considering the current context of a post-apartheid South African government that aims to build an open and inclusive diverse nation. Before this paper will use the case of a South African public school, Barnato Park High, to grapple with this question, it will first define the concepts of critical education and religion education in South Africa, and then move onto providing a brief historical background of the school. The paper will

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© 2018 Tlou Russell Choshi
choshitlou043@gmail.com

show that with the school promoting a Christian ethos, it may be confronted with the challenge of creating an open and inclusive educational environment in teaching and learning about diverse religions that constitute South Africa and the world.

Defining Critical Education and Religion Education

It is important to understand that there is no single definition of critical education. In other words, critical education is a contested term that is constructed in different ways, at different times and in different places. As such, it has been discussed at length by scholars and educators such as Paolo Freire, Henry Giroux, Ivan Illich, Bell Hooks, Michael Apple, and Peter McLaren. Nevertheless, CAMINA (n.d.) provides a valuable definition of critical education by describing it as "striving towards *transformation*: challenging existing social structures and helping us to build greater equality, social justice, environmental sustainability and collective capacity". Here, critical education can be understood as inspiring an attitude of social change from the grassroots level. This means creating safe and supportive schools that encourage learners to develop critical thinking in order to be critically engaged citizens (Griffin, Brown & Warren 2012, p. 160).

However, it is important to note that critical education has its own challenges. While it aims to accommodate diversity, such as religion, race and culture, it seems to not address the ways in which educators can think about how to grapple with, for example, the existence of non-cooperative, difficult or one-sided school code of conducts or constitutions. Critical education also places more emphasis on negotiation than on implementation, which can be problematic in addressing the existence of traditional, non-progressive school leadership and management. This context makes it very challenging for the practice of critical education to take place (Portelli, 1994). In view of some of these challenges, critical education should be regarded as a valuable pedagogical approach to countries like South Africa that promote the spirit of working together between individuals from different socio-economic and political backgrounds.

It is, therefore, possible to infer that critical education formed part of the process of the post-apartheid South African government's re-evaluation of the meaning of education in general, and Religion Education in particular. As such, with the National Policy on Religion and Education adopted in 2003, the government defined Religion Education (RE) as a non-confessional educational programme for teaching and learning about religious diversity (par. 19). RE was also identified as a subject that aims to cultivate democratic and critically engaged citizens. With critical education and religion education defined, we can now turn to exploring the historical background of Barnato Park High School.

A Brief History of Barnato Park High School

Barnato Park High School is a co-educational public school located in Berea, Johannesburg, South Africa. It was first a 1897 stone mansion that was built for the

British diamond and gold mining entrepreneur Barney Barnato (Barnato Park High School, n.d.). However, the construction of it was only completed after Barnato's death under the supervision of his nephew Solly Joel. During the Second Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902), the establishment was used as a British Officers' convalescent home (Barnato Park High School, n.d.). Joel later donated the mansion and its grounds to the Transvaal Department of Education (of the then Government of the Union of South Africa) for a girls' school that was named Johannesburg High School for Girls. After being opened for 102 years, unfortunately the school was condemned, and finally closed in December 1989 (Barnato Park High School, n.d.). Yet in January 1990, Barnato Park High School opened as a co-educational school that welcomed learners and staff members from various racial backgrounds in an attempt to fight against the apartheid (education) system (Barnato Park High Schoo, n.d.). Gradually, the school became a multicultural environment.

Post-Apartheid Barnato Park High School

When South Africa abolished the apartheid regime and became a democratic country in 1994, the government no longer promoted a state religion. As shown in the religion and education policy (2003, par. 1), the post-apartheid government demanded public schools to teach about religious diversity, and not to nurture a single religious ethos like the apartheid regime had enforced. However, this is not the case with Barnato Park High since it promotes a Christian ethos. As a deputy principal of this school, I noticed that this was particularly shown in the following Christian prayer that is said at school assemblies,

> Dear God,
> We open the doors wide of our school and invite you in. Please be in our lessons and help us to concentrate and learn. Fill us with happiness as we discover more about the world. Guide our creativity to express ourselves in the process of learning and teaching. Help us to share, care for and love one another.
> Fill us with spirit of respect as we interact with each other. Watch over us and protect us as we run and play within our school premises. Come and be a part of everything we do today and beyond. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

Although Barnato Park High has a multicultural environment, the example of this prayer suggests that the school is not as inclusive when it comes to recognising and observing religions other than Christianity. Yet, as a way to address this challenge, the school is interested in introducing RE to the curriculum, especially considering that Life Orientation plays a minimal role in teaching learners about religious diversity. This raises the question on if there is a space for RE and, more specifically, a critical pedagogical approach to teaching the subject in this school that promotes a Christian ethos. However, with Barnato Park High still in the process of researching how to introduce RE in a school that promotes a single religion, this can point to an early

indication of the school attempting to create a space to expose learners to other religions. This can, therefore, be viewed as the school recognising the value of inclusivity and the role RE can play in nurturing this.

Conclusion

This paper looked at the case of Barnato Park High School to reflect on the question if there is a space for a critical pedagogical approach to teaching Religion Education at a school that promotes a Christian ethos. It discussed that critical education and religion education both aim to nurture learners to be critically engaged citizens. However, with the example of Christian prayers forming an integral part of school assemblies, this indicated that Barnato Park High was promoting a Christian ethos. This suggests an issue in the school creating an open and inclusive environment for teaching and learning about religious diversity that constitute South Africa and the world. Yet, the school's interest in adding RE to the curriculum can be regarded as it recognising that the subject can play a valuable role in creating an inclusive, multicultural and multi-religious teaching and learning environment.

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CONFERENCE PAPER

The Use of Media in a South African School: A Case Study of Khabazela High School in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

Sibusiso S. Mgenge
Khabazela High School, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

ABSTRACT
Media can be a valuable resource in the teaching and learning of Religion Studies in South African schools. However, many Religion Studies teachers do not have the proper training on how to use media responsibly as an educational resource to make the subject relevant to the learners. This paper investigates what forms of media are used in the teaching and learning of Religion Studies in a South African secondary school. A case study research of four teachers and twenty learners was conducted at Khabazela High School in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. The study reveals that various media in the form of magazines, newspapers, films, YouTube[1] and Facebook[2] were used in Religion Studies classrooms. It also shows that the teachers at the school particularly relied on media as a teaching resource since they had minimal or no training in the subject. I conclude that while the inclusion of media is a valuable resource for both learners and teachers in the Religion Studies classroom, teachers still require more training for the subject especially on how to effectively use media as a teaching tool.

KEYWORDS
religion studies, educators, learners, media material, Khabazela High School

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mlondoss@gmail.com

Introduction

The importance of using media as a resource in the classroom has been discussed at length by various scholars. Some contend that media can be used to achieve educational objectives and increases learners' understanding of the subject matter (McKeachie, 1986; Clark & Starr, 1986; Ayot, 1984). Others argue that being exposed to various media increases learners' motivation and interest in a subject (Mirvan, 2013, p. 62; Brown, Lewis, & Harcleroad, 1973). Brown et al. (1973), therefore, aptly point out that schools should strive to have their own media resource centres that best suits their contexts.

In light of this debate, it is important to think about media as a useful resource that can assist educators with teaching the subject Religion Studies in South African schools. However, many Religion Studies teachers do not have the proper training on how to use media responsibly as an educational resource to make the subject relevant to the learners. This paper investigates what forms of media are used in the teaching and learning of Religion Studies in a South African public high school. A case study research of four teachers and twenty learners was conducted at Khabazela High School in the KwaZulu-Natal province. The study reveals that various media in the form of magazines, newspapers, films, YouTube and Facebook were used in Religion Studies classrooms. It also shows that the teachers at the school particularly relied on using media as a teaching resource since they had minimal or no training in the subject. I conclude that while the inclusion of media is a valuable resource for both learners and teachers in the Religion Studies classroom, teachers still require more training for the subject especially on how to effectively use media as a teaching tool.

Research Methodology

I employed a case study approach to gain a sense of the teachers and learners experiences of using media in the classroom. According to Koul (1997), researchers using the case study approach should investigate an individual or unit in more depth in order to get relevant information. I, therefore, interviewed four educators and twenty learners at Khabazela High School in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Khabazela High is a public school that offers the elective subject Religion Studies for learners who are in the Further and Education Training (FET) phase (Grades 10–12). It is important to note that I am a senior educator at this school and hold the positions of Head of the Department of Social Sciences and Religion Studies teacher.

Research Findings

The study reveals that the teachers and learners used the prescribed textbook *Shuters Top Class Religion Studies* as a resource material in their classes. This textbook is based on the 2003 National Policy on Religion and Education and the 2010 Religion Studies Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS)

document, and provides a detailed guide on how to achieve the policies aims for the subject. It provides details on what topics to cover every week, how to start a Religion Studies lesson, and what to prepare for assignments, tests, and examination papers. Both learners and teachers regard this textbook as a valuable resource to understand the subject material and content. The teachers, in particular, considered the textbook as providing needed curriculum support since they were not qualified in teaching the subject and had minimal to no training on the content material. The textbooks were purchased by the school, however, at the time of conducting the study, not all of the learners were provided with one due to limited funding. Besides the lack of textbooks, the school did not have a library for teachers and learners. They had to use libraries that were in the surrounding areas of the school – namely, in the suburbs of Hillcrest and Pinetown.

Despite the challenges that faced the teachers (and learners) at Khabazela High, they were creative in finding alternative resource materials for the subject. Various forms of media were used in the teaching and learning of Religion Studies. For one, local magazines and newspapers were used especially for the topic Religion and Media in the Grade 12 syllabus. For instance, the Christian magazine *Joy! Magazine* and Zulu language newspaper *Isolezwe* were found as the most popular resources used by the teachers. Furthermore, DVDs, films, and television programmes were used in the classrooms. For example, the teachers found the DVD *In Your Face* helpful in teaching about HIV/AIDS. *The Jesus Film* was regarded by teachers and learners as good film material that explains Jesus Christ as the central figure in the foundational beliefs and practices of Christianity. The local multi-faith children's television programme *Siyakholwa – We Believe* was another resource that teachers found valuable for teaching about religious diversity in South Africa. Finally, technology and online sources were considered as useful materials for teaching the subject. The majority of educators and learners used their personal mobile phones to access online material since personal computers were not available at the school. YouTube and Facebook were examples teachers and learners gave as popular resources that were used. In fact, teachers highlighted that Professor Jonathan Jansen's (a lecturer in the Faculty of Education at the University of Stellenbosch in Cape Town, South Africa) Facebook post about the funeral of the former South African Minister of Education (1999–2004) Kader Asmal was used by the examinational panel in setting the 2016 Religion Studies examination paper. Although the use of various media certainly played a vital role in the Religion Studies classrooms, teachers still need more training to improve their content-knowledge and methods of the subject, particularly on how to effectively use media resources that are accessible to learners.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper is based on a case study that explored what media were used in the teaching and learning of the subject Religion Studies in a South African public school. The study revealed that Religion Studies educators were not qualified to teach the subject, and they had depended on the prescribed textbook as a central

teaching tool and resource in the classroom. While the textbook was regarded as a valuable resource, not all of the learners had access to the textbook due to the school's limited funds. Nevertheless, various media resources in the form of local newspapers and magazines, DVDs, films, television programmes, and online sources were used as alternative materials in the teaching and learning of the subject. Clearly, the inclusion of media in the Religion Studies classroom provided needed curriculum support, however I recommend that teachers still need more training for the subject, especially on how to make various media resources learner-friendly.

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CONFERENCE PAPER

Siyakholwa – We Believe: A Case Study on the Mediatisation of Religion Education and Religious Pluralism

Lee Scharnick-Udemans
University of the Western Cape, Cape Town, South Africa

ABSTRACT
Siyakholwa is the first children's multi-faith programme series to be screened on South African television. The programme foregrounds teaching about "religion, religions, and religious diversity" (Chidester, 2008, p. 278). This paper conceptualises *Siyakholwa* as a product of the 2003 Religion in Education policy, and consequently examines the extent to which the constitutional ideal of religious pluralism is mediated through the content of the programme. This paper argues that the example of *Siyakholwa* presents an opportunity to understand the ways in which religion in public education has been defined and redefined through the constitutional, cultural, and transformational aspirations of the post-apartheid state.

KEYWORDS
religion education, diversity, pluralism, mediatisation, television

Introduction

Siyakholwa – We Believe offers children between the ages of five and twelve years old an introduction to the religions of South Africa, their institutions, myths, festivals, observances, practices, and people. For the past eleven years the programme has been screened once a week on the public broadcast television in South Africa. A programme such as *Siyakholwa* finds a space on public broadcast television in large part as a result of the democratic reformation of public broadcasting in post 1994 South Africa,

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© 2018 Lee Scharnick-Udemans
lscharnickudemans@uwc.ac.za

and reflects a series of wide scale national efforts to include religion in education in schools and other public and commercial spaces (Chidester, 2008; Scharnick-Udemans, 2017).

It is widely accepted that education is not limited to curriculum and assessment criteria that are based on purely intellectual outcomes. On the contrary education in general, in this case Religion Education in particular, whether it takes place in the formal classroom setting or not, is required to respond to national priorities especially with regard to the dissemination of values. According to the Religion and Education Policy of 2003, these values include a constitutional commitment to "citizenship, human rights, equality, freedom from discrimination, and freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, and opinion" (Department of Education, 2003, p. 6). Furthermore, there are constitutional values in education that are highlighted as national priorities and this includes, "equity, tolerance, diversity/multilingualism, openness, accountability, and social honour" (Department of Education, 2003, p. 7). Social development has been earmarked as an outcome of Religion Education. The prospect that Religion Education could result in socially beneficial consequences such as the reduction of prejudice, an increase in toleration, expanded understanding, and an appreciation and respect for difference, although noted as an immense demand from education, form a part of the goals of the national policy (Department of Education, 2003, p. 28; Chidester, 2006, p. 68).

It is self-evident that education is not limited to the school, the classroom, or the interaction between teacher and learner. Education, the act, and process of teaching and learning, both formally and informally, takes place at a number of various sites. The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) is one such site of "public pedagogy", a site for education that is located outside of the institutionalised structures of the school and situated in the institutionalised structures of public broadcasting policy and practice (Giroux, 2004; Chidester, 2008). Mandated, through national policy derived from the 1996 Constitution, the public broadcaster has an obligation to provide educational programming about religion. Viewed in light of a constitutional commitment to religious pluralism and a national recognition of the educational and social value of Religion Education, the SABC through programmes such as *Siyakholwa* has been at the forefront of the mediatisation of religious pluralism in the post 1994 state.

Firstly, this paper will offer a short description of *Siyakholwa*'s content and format. Secondly, a brief description of the mediatisation of religion and religious plurality will be provided. Finally, the ways in which *Siyakholwa* mediatises and affirms the constitutional commitment to religious pluralism that is promulgated as a core constituent of Religion Education will be discussed.

Siyakholwa – We Believe: Religion Education on Television

When the SABC commissioned for the production of a children's multi-faith programme it envisioned a programme that would focus on:

1) teaching about different religions;

2) religious diversity and appreciation for this;

3) multi-religion rights;

4) building positive religious and national pride;

5) creating an attitude of tolerance and understanding between children of different religious backgrounds;

6) facilitating communication between children and peers, parents, and friends regarding topics related to religion. (SABC Call for Proposals, 2006)

Siyakholwa is a studio and live action-based programme, which consists of four segments that together address a different topic every week. The series is filmed both inside a studio environment and outside of the studio in various public places. Each episode consists of three studio-based segments that include interactions between the presenter Thandi and a group of children in studio, a puppet skit where two puppets engage in a discussion about a topic based on religion or a related theme, and story time. The show is anchored by one female presenter, Thandi, and two puppets, Musa and Dudu. Thandi is a young woman who although a church-going Christian has many friends from different religions, she is always interested in learning more about her friends' faiths on *Siyakholwa*. Musa is a librarian and a wise old sage who has a wealth of knowledge on world religions and culture. Dudu is a seven year old girl who spends a great deal of time in the library that Musa runs. She is scripted as having an exceptionally enquiring mind and with her incessant questioning seems to ask all the questions that the child at home might have.

The producers of *Siyakholwa* use both the religious and secular South African calendar in order to determine the content and transmission date of each episode. At the time that my research was conducted, 140 episodes of *Siyakholwa* had been produced and screened by the SABC. Based on the content of each episode and informed by policy provisions, I was able to develop three categories for analysis. The categories are the following: multi-faith, faith-specific, and life orientation episodes. Multi-faith episodes are categorised as episodes that deal with more than one religious tradition. In faith-specific episodes, one religious tradition is explored in detail. However, it is important to emphasise that even in the faith-specific episodes the content is meant to be presented in an educational manner. Drawn directly from the 2003 Policy I found the category of life orientation useful for identifying the episodes that did not have a specific religious orientation.

Under the category of faith-specific episodes, *Siyakholwa* has featured *Judaism*, *Christianity, The Baha'i Faith, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism, Pagan Religions, African Religions, Rastafarianism,* and *Chinese Religions* through basic introductory episodes and more topic specific episodes such as *Prayer in African Traditional Religion*, *Water in Islam*, *Women in Christianity*, and *Companions in Hinduism*. Under the multi-faith category topics such as *Holy Books, Sacred Space,* and *Rites of Passage* have been presented. Life orientation episodes much like the school subject, showcase an eclectic assortment of topics such as *Justice and Fairness, Managing Money, Pets, Hello Winter, My Body,* and *Role Models.*

Mediatised Religious Pluralism

The mediatisation of religion as a concept and theory that is concerned with the multiple ways in which the relationships between religion and media have resulted in an arrangement wherein religion has to some extent become dependent on the logic of the media to ensure its continued presence and relevance in society, has been explored in great detail by a number of scholars working particularly in North American and Northern European contexts (Hjarvard, 2011; Lovhiem & Lynch, 2011; Morgan, 2011; Lynch, Mitchell & Strhan, 2012; Lovheim, 2013; Morgan, 2013). Due to time constraints I am unable to provide an in-depth discussion however, I propose that one of the main weaknesses of the mediatisation of religion theory, which diminishes much of its relevance to the South African context is an over-emphasis on the socio-cultural processes that place media in a position of power over religion, and an implicit dismissal of the politics that play a critical role in regulating the ways both religion and media, interact and operate within the public milieu.

I propose that the particularities of the South African context determine a definition of the mediatisation of religion that is cognisant of the manner in which religion and media have both been reconfigured by the post 1994 nation building efforts. This includes, but is not limited to, the adoption of the 1996 Constitution with its progressive Bill of Rights, the democratic overhaul of the SABC, the establishment of a number of auxiliary state bodies in support of freedom of religion and freedom of expression, and the implementation of regulatory policies. In this view, the mediatisation of religion in South Africa at least as it relates to the most accessible and pervasive form of media, public broadcasting is a profoundly political concept, process, and project.

Consequently, religion's presence in public broadcasting is secured not only through its dependence of media and technological "logic" but also through an extensive network of regulatory policies and practices. Given the close ties between broadcast media and nation building endeavours, the mediatisation of religious pluralism on SABC programming is a constitutional and educational imperative.

While religious diversity is a social fact with which, religious pluralism on the other hand is contested in terms of policy and practices, in both politics and the broader public sphere. According to Beckford (2003, p. 81):

> …Religious Pluralism is best considered as a term denoting a normative or ideological view holding that the diversity of religious outlooks and collectivities is, within limits, beneficial and that peaceful co-existence between religious collectivities is desirable. But even as a positive value, pluralism is complex and variable. It can be politically contentious, especially is the focus on diversity for its own sake distracts attention from the reality of gross imbalances between faith communities in power and access to justice.

Siyakholwa adopts and affirms the state's commitment to both Religion Education and religious pluralism. In order to shed some light on the ways in which *Siyakholwa*

mediatises religious pluralism, the following section discusses how the notion of equity and tolerance as conditions of religious plurality is enacted through the programme material.

From a cursory glance of a list of the 140 episodes that were screened over four years, it is clear that much effort has been made firstly, to ensure that religious diversity is depicted, and secondly that it is depicted in an almost entirely positive light. While the programme has certainly covered the breadth of religions in South Africa, it has also done much work on exploring various topics within religious groups as standalone issues. For instance, while the programme has produced a generic, introductory episode about Islam, it has also produced a number of other episodes about Islam. Including *Water in Islam*, *Ramadan,* and *Identity in Islam* as well as incorporating Islam specific content into multi-faith episodes. Of course, the extent to which the programme effectively meets the educational outcomes set out in the 2003 Policy warrants extensive testing; however, it appears that attempts at providing representational equity in terms of content about, among and within religions have been made. Furthermore, it should be noted that this approach shows great potential for advancing the socially beneficial consequences, such as the reduction of prejudice, an increase in toleration, expanded understanding, and an appreciation and respect for difference that the 2003 Policy and broadcasting policy envision.

Multi-faith and life orientation episodes, in particular, tend to offer a platform for harnessing the social benefits of Religion Education effectively. Similar to the position of the 2003 Religion in Education Policy, tolerance is highlighted as an important outcome of programming according to religious broadcasting policy. In both policies, tolerance is not considered in a superficial manner. Instead, it is seen as a state of acceptance based on the understanding and appreciation of the differences of other people. South Africans are not asked to be tolerant because the constitution mandates them to be, but because they have come to understand and appreciate religions, values and cultures of the "others". The multi-faith episodes deliberatively place religions in conversation with each other, usually about an uncontroversial topic, that there may be divergent opinions on, but that eventually through dialoguing and exploration are found to share more commonalities than differences. This raises concerns about the manufacturing of uniformity in the pursuit of building national unity and the fulfilment of broadcasting and educational policy.

Conclusion

It has been suggested that public broadcasting constitutes a site for public pedagogy for Religion Education and that the mediatisation of Religion Education and religious pluralism as illustrated by the example of *Siyakholwa*, is related to the same project of religion in public education in which the 2003 Policy is involved. In doing so, this paper has hoped to raise questions about the potential and limitations of projects in mediatised religious pluralism when thinking about the state and future of Religion Education.

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CONFERENCE PAPER

Reflecting on the Teaching of Islam in Religious Education Teacher Education Programme at the University of Zambia

Joseph Chita
The University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia

ABSTRACT
The research was aimed at establishing how Islam was taught. A historical inquiry complemented by thematic analysis of the phenomena helped in drawing meanings and inferences. Findings revealed that Islam was descriptively taught (indefinite model) through lecture methods, alongside having (occasional) guest speakers. I argue that while the content introduced diverse aspects of Islam, trainee teachers were not adequately equipped on how to deliver the subject content. This resulted in selective teaching of the content on Islam. The question of who is qualified to teach Islam in a public university remained unresolved. An explicit and responsive teaching model would do.

KEYWORDS
Islam, religious education, teacher education, teaching model, university education

Introduction

This paper reflects on how Islam was taught in a public university as part of the teacher education programme for Religious Education (RE) in Zambia's secondary schools. This is because since its inception, the teaching of Islam in teacher education had not been evaluated despite concerns during student teacher observations that most of them had avoided covering topics on Islam. Mulando (2011) also confirmed the selective teaching of certain topics among teachers of RE. This therefore called for the need to examine what was taught

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© 2018 Joseph Chita
chonochitajoseph@gmail.com

on Islam in teacher education and how it was taught so as to contribute to the quest of producing competent RE teachers.

Reflecting on how Islam was taught in a public university was important given the growing influence of Islam as part of Zambia's contemporary religious history. In a historical overview of the religion in Zambia, Phiri (2008, p. 3) noted that despite "representing a small minority of the population… Islam had become a significant component of both the religious and socio-political landscape of Zambia … its impact on society has opened up new horizons for the understanding of contemporary Islamic dynamism". Statistical reflections of the Muslim population stood at 0.5% in the 2000 National Census representing a minority group of the country's population (ZDHS, 2007, p. 34). The 2016 *International Religious Freedom Report* on Zambia (2016, p. 2) stipulated that of the estimated population of 15.5 million people in the country, the U.S. government estimated that "nearly 2% of the population is Muslim with smaller numbers of Hinduism, Baha'is, Buddhist, Jews, and Sikhs".

Historically, Muslims have made significant contributions in Zambia. For instance, they have supported government's work in areas such as education and health provision. In addition, Muslims have been responsive to social problems in different communities by reaching out to orphans and the vulnerable, and initiating developmental projects (sinking of boreholes for water provision) (Zambia News and Information Services, June 15, 2018). Largely, Muslims have been major players in commerce and trade. As traders, they were among the earlier migrants that entered Zambia in the early 19th century succeeded by another group reported to have been of Asian origin – Gujaratis from north-western India arriving at the beginning of the 20th century. The latter had a dominant role in the economy of the country (Phiri, 2008, p. 5). Although Islam came to be associated with Indians and the Yao traders, the statistics have come to embrace other groups that "include an ever-increasing number of indigenous convert and immigrants communities from other African countries, especially from West Africa and Somalia" (Phiri, 2008, p. 6; U.S. Department of State Report, 2016, p. 3).

Most importantly, other than the growing presence of Islam in the public sphere, public schools also had a good representation of children or learners who were practicing Islam. As such, the manner in which RE teachers handled Islam in their lessons was crucial; hence the inquiry into how the teachers were being prepared to teach the religion. The University of Zambia (UNZA) was targeted for the inquiry because it was the first institution to offer a degree programme that included Islam in its content for teacher education.

The inquiry is based on document review and interviews with UNZA staff members who had been involved in the teaching of Islam in the teacher education programme. The paper argues that what was taught on Islam, how and why it was taught manifested intricacies for RE and trainee teachers. While the content introduced teachers to diverse aspects of Islam, the teaching approach of the subject did not adequately equip the trainee teachers on how to deliver the subject content in schools. This resulted in selective teaching of the content on Islam by

RE teachers. In addition, the guest speaker versus the members of staff handling the content on Islam pointed to the unresolved question of who is qualified to teach Islam in a public university like UNZA. The next segment provides a brief contextual background to the teaching of Islam at the UNZA.

Context of Teaching Islam at UNZA

As the first public university, UNZA was mandated to train teachers for the newly independent Zambia. The need for teachers in RE at graduate level prompted the School of Education to rethink what the University could do to address the shortage of RE teachers in the country. A 1978 situation analysis regarding the teaching staffing positions for RE in 119 Zambian Schools revealed that out of the 348 teachers teaching RE, only 40% (138) were Zambians, while 60% (210) were expatriates. Of the total number of teachers teaching RE, only 165 were qualified RE Graduate Teachers, broken down into 8% (13) Zambians and 92% (152) expatriates.

This background information was used by the *Committee on the provision of Religious Studies at UNZA* to justify the introduction of Religious Studies as a Minor programme for prospective secondary school teachers. Other than the urgent need for RE teachers in schools, the introduction of the new senior secondary syllabus entitled "Christian Religious Education (2044)", which had been approved by the Examination Council of Zambia for implementation in schools pointed to the need for more teachers. Since the focus of the approved Senior Secondary school syllabus focussed on Christian teachings, comparative studies on Islam, Hinduism and traditional beliefs (U.S. Department of State Report, 2016, p. 3), Islam needed to be part of the course content at UNZA. Thus, Religious Studies as a Minor and later as a Major were introduced for secondary school RE teachers.

The programme has a four-year structure which enabled students to study aspects of religion from different perspectives. Under this programme, a Minor in Religious Studies offered courses like Introduction to Religious Studies; Religious Change in Africa; Religion and Values; Religious Studies Methods; Moral Philosophy; Philosophy of Religion; and Sociology of Religion (Flynn, 1997, p. 1). It must be noted that from the onset, RE teacher education at the University was being approached from a Religious Studies standpoint. From the list of courses that were offered, Islam featured as one of the world religions introduced to trainee teachers during their first year of studies, while in their second year, Islam was referred to as one of two religions that brought about change in Africa. In the third year, it was covered under Religion and Values.

In the 1990s, the migration from offering a Minor to a Major after the senate's approval of a proposal to upgrade the Religious Studies programme to a Major in 1992 coincided with the revision of courses in the University to suit the change from term to semester system. The initial courses were split into two semester courses. The Introduction to Religious Studies course gave a broad overview of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Indigenous African Religions. Initially, the course

was designed to enable students to identify the function of religion, explain the historical development of selected belief systems, and illustrate contrasts of interactions between these systems in Christianity and Islam, taking into account changing social and political conditions. Later on, after revision, its objective was to look at religion as a worldwide phenomenon so as to identify its personal and social dimensions in relation to the world today.

Under the revised programme, in the first year of undergraduate studies, Islam was covered under the themes of basic concepts of Islam, an account of the life of the prophet Muhammad, the Quran, and the history and structure of the religion. In the second year, Islam was presented in a course on Religion and Ethics which adopted a descriptive approach of ethics in religions of the world. This course used examples from various religions to provide a comparative and critical analysis of personal and social ethics on topics such as family and marriage, community and work, justice and integrity. At third year level, Islam featured in the course the Impact of Christianity and Islam on Africa. In this course, the impact of two major world religions in Central and Southern Africa was assessed using the concepts of conversion and inculturation.

Over time, the course content on Islam in the Religious Studies programme has not changed apart from the development and introduction of an elective course on History of Islam in Africa, which addresses the geographical and social setting of Islam, the influence of Islam on the idea of the supernatural, the nature and destiny of man, morality, the economic sphere and material culture, the juridical sphere and customary law, the social order, and the life cycle of Islam (Proposal for a minor programme in Religious Studies, paper SE/80/07). There was satisfaction that Islam was adequately covered as the introductory course as it provided full coverage of the religion alongside the additional courses in later years of study.

Reflections on the Teaching of Islam at UNZA

While some participants were of the view that there were no specific pedagogies for teaching each religion's content, the phenomenological and interpretive approaches were deemed favourable because it was thought that beyond these approaches, one would easily slide into the un-educational, confessional zone. For this reason, the lecture method was the dominant method of delivering the content. The lecture method was largely centred on descriptions of different aspects of Islam. Field visit or outings to specific places of interest were rarely used. This could be due to a number of reasons, such as large numbers of students, logistical challenges, and limited time to manoeuvre amidst tight timetabling.

Occasionally, guest speakers were invited to give talks on different topics. This approach was often used before 2005, but it has recently been sparingly employed. The following were some of the reflections from some members of the Department on inviting guest speakers to talk to students about Islamic topics, "[w]e have gone into

slumber, undoing what Flynn and Carmody started… Carmody never minded that, it does not bother me as long as students learn stuff from the horse's mouth… I and Mr. Chanda are not Muslims" (Interview, November, 2017), This statement highlights that the founders of the initial Religious Studies programme invited Muslim guest speakers to class and used them as a teaching tool for students to learn about Islam. However, with time and especially after the Missionary lecturers left, there were some hesitation to continue engaging the guest speakers as demonstrated in the following comment:

> I invited two groups, one looked at Islam while the other looked at Baha'i faith, …I kept on interjecting him [former speaker], he wanted to start promoting the faith. The results were positive though. (Personal Communication with Lecturer, 2017)

Another participant noted that "…Muslims have been calling for a confessional approach claiming that teachers are misrepresenting Islam… We do not teach from a commitment perspective but take an academic view point for all the religions…" (Personal Communication with Lecturer, 2018). These perspectives that show the fear of indoctrination are not a preserve of Islam, but cut across all other evangelising religion. It is for this reason that one participant noted that:

> The choice Islam and all other religions had to make in modern pluralistic societies was whether they want their religious beliefs to be taught in a secular educational manner in public schools or to set up their own strictly private schools where they could teach their beliefs in a confessional manner. (Personal Communication, February 2018)

Though there were such fears of indoctrination, the majority of the participants in the study pointed to the need to reignite the involvement of Muslim guest speakers as shown in the following statements:

> I think it is important to have guest speakers, we just need to guide them by specifying what we want to be covered in their talk… by specifying I mean limiting what they are going to talk about to what is in the course outline/content. (Personal Communication, 2017)

> You need the voice of a practicing faithful also, so I think… (Personal Communication, November 2017)

> If we argue that confessionalists can't teach, then we are missing it. There should be debate on this… Islam is submission to the will of Allah. The teaching must be organized around that… within that submission is doing what is morally correct. So following the dictum of learning about and from religion, that is good source of morality for the learner I suppose… Education indoctrinates, that is

> the bottom line because it aims at changing something in humans… (Personal Communication, February 2018)

It is suffice to note that the methods of teaching Islam sparked off diverse views especially in relation to the involvement of guest speakers. This scenario mirrors the challenges Islam has faced in the public sphere, which necessitated the Muslim-Christian dialogue. Cheyeka (2012) notes that Zambia is one of the best examples in Southern Africa of how well Christians and Muslims relate with one another, a good relationship that is not based on "tolerating" one another, but on ignorance to the point that to many ordinary Zambians a Mosque is "Indian church" or church *yaba Chawa* (Yao chapel).

Conclusion

The paper reflected on the teaching of Islam in a public university in the teacher education programme. As part of the Religious Studies teacher education programme, the study established that Islam was adequately covered in terms of content. The methods of teaching Islam were, however, met with diverse views, which pointed to the big question of who should teach Islam in a public university. This manifested in the divergent views on the involvement of guest speakers, by teaching staff (lecturers).

While their hesitation were associated to indoctrination, the paper has argued that all religions that evangelise are vulnerable to this reality; hence the need for religions to rethink what can be taught and how it should be taught. This hesitation to openly approach religions was in turn reflected in student teachers' selective teaching of RE in schools as observed by other scholars. For this reason, the paper calls for continued Muslim-Christian dialogue in academia so as to foster sound relations based on knowledge and not ignorance.

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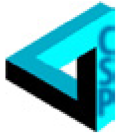

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CONFERENCE PAPER

School Management and Leadership Education for Multi-Religious Schools

Maitumeleng A. Nthontho
University of Pretoria, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Contradictions and contestations with regard to the implementation of religion-in-education policy have become a worldwide phenomenon. An increasing number of costly and protracted court and legislative battles between schools and parents over religion in schools has been reported. In this article, I aim to highlight some of the school management issues surrounding the implementation of religion-in-education policy in some selected South African schools. Based on mediation theory, the study uses individual interviews to gather data from twelve purposively selected school principals to investigate how they implemented the religion-in-education policy in their respective schools. The findings show that despite the implementation challenges of the religion-in-education policy, the majority of the selected school principals displayed the qualities of a transformative mediator. I, therefore, recommend that school leadership programmes for school leaders offer mediation, and transformative mediation in particular, as a leadership and management course. That is, South African universities should consider training school principals on the use of transformative mediation as a strategy they can use to resolve conflicts and handle disputes in schools as it holds potential benefits for fields such as education.

KEYWORDS

conflict resolution, mediation, policy implementation, religion in education, religious diversity, schools as legal persons

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© 2018 Maitumeleng A. Nthontho
maitumeleng.nthontho@up.ac.za

Introduction

In post-apartheid South African schools, the implementation of democratic policies poses serious challenges for school principals, especially in terms of their leadership roles (Hallinger, 2010). Key amongst these is the challenge of interpreting and translating national and provincial policies into school policies. Section 15(1) of the Constitution provides that "[e]veryone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion". Section 15(2) of the Constitution points out that religious observances may be conducted at state or state-aided institutions, provided that (a) those observances follow rules made by the appropriate public authorities; (b) they are conducted in an equitable manner; and (c) the attendance at them is free and voluntary (RSA, 1996a). Section 16(2)(c) of the Constitution further extends respect and protection of the right to freedom of religion, reassuring everyone that they have "the right to freedom of expression", although indicating that such a right may be "limited" if it extends to advocacy of hatred based on race, ethnicity, gender or religion.

The religious freedom guaranteed by the Constitution is reaffirmed in the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) and is further refined in specific policies and regulations. Section 7 of the Act clearly stipulates, "religious observances may be conducted at a public school under rules issued by the governing body if such observances are conducted on an equitable basis and attendance at them by learners and members of staff is free and voluntary". The Act, however, also mandates the establishment of democratically elected school governing bodies, indicating the roles, functions and responsibilities they are to perform.

Paragraph 58 of the National Policy on Religion and Education (2003) specifies that, in accordance with the Constitution, Section 22(1) of the Schools Act and relevant rules made by the appropriate authorities, the governing bodies of public schools may make their facilities available for religious observances in the context of free and voluntary association provided that such facilities are made available on an equitable basis (DoE, 2003). It also stipulates that School Governing Bodies (SGBs) have to determine the nature and content of religious observances for educators and learners. For example, religious observances may form part of a school assembly, but if it becomes an official part of the day, it must be on an equitable basis.

It is worth noting that schools as organs of the post-apartheid state are in no way excluded from the above obligations. Thus, public schools as legal persons become institutions to fulfil the mandate of equipping learners with knowledge of religion, morality, values and diversity. In other words, schools automatically become "legal persons". However, given the different interests of relevant stakeholder groupings, interpretations and translations are bound to differ and, without proper leadership, conflicts generated by these differences end up in courts of law. The case of the religion-in-education policy for schools in South Africa is evidence of this reality. The question then remains: do schools through their governing bodies of which the school principal is the member interpret and understand their roles as legal persons and implementers of legislations and policies discussed above? The next section attempts to answer this question

by first explaining the methodology and methods that were used in investigating this phenomenon. I will then present and discuss the findings on how school principals in this study led the implementation of the religion-in-education policy and the strategies they used to manage conflict and lead the implementation process.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study followed a qualitative research approach that focussed on exploring the ways in which principals mediate religion education in their schools. I had conducted individual interviews to solicit information from the school principals regarding their experiences in implementing the religion-in-education policy in their schools (Saldaña, 2015). Due to the limited work done on the phenomenon described above, the study employed a phenomenological research design because of its seldom use in studying the experiences that shape principals' thoughts, actions and choices of strategies when implementing democratic policies such as that of religion (Grey, 2014).

Sampling

For the study, I purposefully selected twelve school principals as the sample in order to avoid generalised findings. While this sample size may seem small, it is important to note that in a qualitative research approach, the focus is generally not on sample size but rather on sample adequacy. Hence, the adequacy of my sample was justified by my reaching the sampling saturation (Fargher & Dooley, 2012). The qualitative researchers regard that as an indication of quality (Guest, 2006). That is, one occurrence of a piece of data, or a code, is all that is necessary to ensure that it becomes part of the analysis framework. Frequencies are rarely important in qualitative research, as one occurrence of the data is potentially as useful as many in understanding the process behind a topic (Ritchie, Lewis & Elam, 2003). Moreover, qualitative research is concerned with meaning and not making generalised hypothesis statements (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006). The principals were postgraduate students at the University of Pretoria, whom participated in their private capacity, and not as spokespersons of specific schools (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). That is, they narrated their stories as they had experienced the implementation of religion-in-education policy, not as per the expectations of their departments of education. The principals were a) engaged in leadership and management training at postgraduate level; b) had served in the department of education for at least fifteen years; c) exposed to various religion-in-education policies prior to 1994, post 1994 and post 2003; and d) were from various religious orientations, language and cultural groupings.

Although their schools and school administration were not the focus of this study, it transpired during the same study that the principals worked in public and independent schools that were located in the north-western region of South Africa, namely, Gauteng, Limpopo, Mpumalanga, and KwaZulu-Natal. Although the sample is from one region of the country and may appear as a limitation of the study, it provided a detailed perspective into the principals' distinct leadership backgrounds

and experiences. The study was gender, racial and religiously represented. Three religions were represented, namely, Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, and the participants comprised of nine males and three females. However, it must be clear that the participants' gender, province, historical origin and the type of school (secondary or primary) was not central to the selection criterion.

Ethical Considerations

I obtained approval to involve the principals/postgraduate students in the study from the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria. In my position as the Research Assistant in the Department of Education Management and Policy Studies, I had access to the database of postgraduate students, and was able to send invitations to those who were school principals and deputy principals. I considered deputy principals worthy to participate since they carry quite a similar mandate as that of principals. This was a two-week call that was followed by a one-week follow-up. I then directed invitations to ten school principals who indicated their willingness and availability to participate. Realising that e-mail could not produce quite a reasonable number, I had to contact those that I knew, and two more agreed to participate in the study.

Data Collection

Over a period of four to five months in 2012, I used narrative interviews to collect data, with the principals' stories being recorded, transcribed, analysed and interpreted. Religious issues are usually debated and discussed at a sentimental level or are elevated to litigation through the courts, as stated in the introduction. Thus, the subject is rarely explored scientifically. In contrast to this, I made use of narrative inquiry to examine and understand the principals' experiences of religion that were not clouded by emotion or sentiment. Understanding previous religious experiences of school principals in this study allowed me an "insider view" that enabled the illumination of real people in real settings through the "painting" of their stories (Haydon, Browne & Van der Riet, 2018; Wang & Geale, 2015). I was able to further probe the principals' acceptance and/or rejection of the religion-in-education policy (Farrell, 2012).

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness of the Results

I transcribed the tape-recorded interviews and analysed the transcriptions in terms of the categories initially identified, namely, the principals' understandings of their mediating role in the implementation of the religion-in-education policy (Babbie, 2014). From this, themes such as policy development, learner admissions and educator appointment, teaching about religion, and religious observances emerged.

The raw data (tape-recorded interviews), interview transcripts, interview guides, list of participants and their profiles, as well as my field notes, were audited throughout the study period to validate their accuracy and authenticity-using peer debriefing. In addition, I sent transcriptions to participants, asking them to correct errors of fact. This ensured that I represented them and their ideas accurately (Major & Savin-Baden, 2010). Finally, the study went through the programme called 'Turnitin', as per the university's requirements, to ensure its originality.

Findings

The school principals employed diverse strategies to implement the religion-in-education policy in their schools. Some resisted or ignored the policy, some sub-contracted it while others relied on the services of a mediator. Resistance to policy change in this study refers to the act at which change agents may passively demonstrate their resistance to proposed education policy change by either delaying or ignoring it, claiming that schools lack the requisite information on policy reform. Sub-contracting as viewed in this study refers to a phenomenon where the school principal implements the intended educational change according to the wishes of a particular interest group or the Department of Education. In this study mediation implies that the principal negotiates with various interest groups to try and reconcile differences and to find a way in which implementation acknowledges the interests of various stakeholders. The narratives in this study revealed that in most cases school principals did not implement the religion policy as they should have, either because they did not know how to or because the training they received from both the Department of Education and the university did not equip them with the skills to do so.

Their narratives uncovered the lack of skills to be another reason for this challenge, as suggested by one of the participating principals who claimed, "The policies just come and there are no people to unpack them" (*Participant 2*). Indications from the narratives of other participants suggest that they were trained, that is, they were told what was required of them and how to go about doing what they were expected to but they chose to ignore it. The same principal (Participant 2) stressed that the facilitators of the courses they attended told them "everyone has the right to freedom of religion, but practically, when we come to the school, we would want learners to practice Christianity". Another principal stated, "One of the completely strange things to me was the request by parents that we had to release 35 Muslim children to leave for mosque at 12:00 on Fridays" (*Participant 1*).

While allowing learners to leave school early to attend mosque on Fridays was a challenge for some principals, others did not find this troublesome since all they needed was a confirmation letter from the parent that the learner was "a committed Muslim" (*Participant 3*). This practice seems to not accommodate Islam, but also appears to protect the religion. However, a principal pointed out that "releasing learners early on Fridays to attend mosque became a problem in terms of teaching and learning because there was no cover up time in terms of the activities that took place during their absence" (*Participant 3*). In this way, this principal protects and promotes learners' right to education.

I mentioned earlier that tolerance is one of the values religion education aims to promote. This was, to some extent, found to be the case with most school principals in this study. For instance, they allocated a classroom for learners to observe their religions (*Participant 6*), allowed Muslim learners to go to mosque on Fridays, and admitted learners and appointed educators with religious orientations other than Christianity (*Participant 4*). They also worked harmoniously with SGB members from

other religions, thereby demonstrating their tolerance of diversity. This is evident in the following statement by *Participant 5*,

> My previous chairman of the governing body was a Hindu and his wife was a Muslim. He was very happy with the way we dealt with religious matters at school. At the ceremony we would be signing Christian hymns, chorus, Bible reading and prayer. He did not have a problem with that. All he would ask was recognition that was there. He did not insist on anything. The fact that we were sensitive towards different religions, I think that was for him the most important aspect.

However, even though school assemblies observed Christian devotions, learners still had to attend them. One of the school principals admitted, "[w]e would emphasise the point of assembly attendance" (*Participant 8*). Another principal emphasised that "[u]nless there are cases where a parent would tell us that his child must be excused from the assembly, all learners had to attend" (*Participant 10*). Contrary to this open policy, this study discovered that some principals did not make allowances for learners to observe religions other than Christianity. For instance, Muslim learners were not allowed to observe their religions by means of the dress code. One principal said that "if learners would come wearing Muslim hats, we would call and tell them to stop wearing such hats with the aim of discouraging them from influencing others" (*Participant 7*). This quote clearly shows that the principal did not uphold the Constitutional laws that promote the freedom of religion and conducting religious observances in an equitable manner.

It became evident, however, that conflict occurred between the SGBs and the principals who supported the religion-in-education policy's position on making allowances for religious observances in schools. One of them, for instance, advised the SGB that they had to indicate in (the) policy that religious observances should be free and attendance should be voluntary. Yet, the SGB's responded, "No, no, no, wait, what are you actually saying? In terms of our school code of conduct, all learners must attend the assembly regardless of what they and their parents believe in" (*Participant 9*). This quote pointed to some of the difficulties that principals faced when they attempted to negotiate the process of acknowledging the interests of various stakeholders that did not align with the policy's position on religious observances in schools.

When conflicts occurred, the school principals demonstrated their willingness and ability to resolve them in diverse ways ensuring that they do not compromise the smooth running of the school. One of the principals, for example, mentioned, "I have never seen the SGB calling parents for religion policy discussion. The SGB does not mention anything in relation to religion to parents" (*Participant 10*). "The application form does not require religious status of the child" (*Participant 11*). Other schools excused educators from attending and/or conducting morning assembly. One of the principals pointed out that "educators are told when they are appointed at the school that they are welcome to arrive at school five minutes later if they are uncomfortable with the way morning assemblies are dealt with" (*Participant 7*). Similarly, another principal indicated, "[i]f an educator is not comfortable with the conducting of the

assembly, he/she must report. Although his/her name will remain on the duty roster, one SMT member will stand in for him/her" (*Participant 12*). This demonstrates the school principal is able to resolve conflicts by negotiating with various interest groups to try and reconcile differences.

In another principal's school, if they see that the preferred mode of dealing with religious observances has hiccups or bring conflicts, "we bring the matter back in a forum. We re-assess, we amend and then we continue. That is why the policies are not constant but, evolving depending on what is happening to the school" (*Principal 6*). The other principal reiterated this approach, "[w]e once gave the Muslim committee member an opportunity to conduct religious observances at the assembly on the argument that there are also Muslim children in our school, but it was not appreciated by both learners and members of staff. You could just see from their response that they do not enjoy it as they do with Christianity. We then had to discontinue" (*Principal 10*). In so doing, these principals negotiate with various interest groups to try and reconcile differences and to find a way in which implementation acknowledges the interests of various stakeholders. That demonstrates their ability to resolve conflicts.

Based on the preceding discussions, I infer that most of the principals understood and interpreted (a) the aim behind the religion-in-education policy; (b) their mediation role in the implementation process and, more importantly, (c) that as managers and leaders in multi-faith schools, they are obligated to fulfil the rights and freedoms as stipulated in legislation and educational policies. However, more often than not, their previous experiences, and not their theoretical knowledge of policy acquired through training, informed their decisions and practices.

Discussion

It is important to reiterate that the South African Schools Act does not deal with religion in education, religion education or religious instruction in proper detail. For instance, the Act does not specify how schools should respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights contemplated in sections 15(1) and 31(1) of the Constitution. Nor does it define "religious observances", thus leaving the door open to schools (legal persons) and their SGBs (their brains) to give meaningful content to the standards entrenched in national legislation, the Constitution and international human rights instruments.

In discussing the findings of the study, I will map the different ways in which principals conceptualised and approached the implementation of the religion-in-education policies of their schools by paying particular attention to two strategies, namely, sub-contracting and mediation. Sub-contracting, in the context of this study, refers to a strategy in which the school principal implements the intended policy changes according to the wishes of either the Department of Education or any of the stakeholder groupings (that is, parents, educators, and/or learners). The principal as a sub-contractor, therefore, merely forms one more link in a chain that connects policy developers with the educators who have to implement it and the learners who have to "consume" it (Day, 2005).

Mediation, and transformative mediation in particular, refers to a process in which conflict itself is transformed from a negative and destructive interaction to a positive and constructive one (Bush & Folger, 2005). From an education management perspective, this implies that the principal being "an insider" negotiates with various interest groups by trying to reconcile differences and finding ways in which implementation of school reform acknowledges the interests of various stakeholders (Fullan, 2007).

The findings presented above indicate that although most of the principals in this study claim not to have received adequate training from the Department of Education or institutions of higher learning, they performed their roles in such a way that conflict is either eliminated or minimised. In other words, they were able to interpret or understand that as school managers and leaders they have obligations to respect, protect, and promote the freedoms and rights of their followers to a certain extent. Their interpretation and understanding manifested in areas such as policy development, learner admissions, educator appointments, teaching religion, as well as religious observances that will be discussed below.

Policy Development

One of the functions of the SGB, as stated in Section 20 of the Schools Act, is to develop and adopt school policies, including those pertaining to religion (RSA, 1996b). In describing the ways in which policies are developed and implemented in their schools, it is clear that while some principals *sub-contracted* into the national policy, others mediated the policy during their schools' policy development processes. As sub-contractors, these principals became the *appropriate authorities* that drafted the religion-in-education policy of the schools. They drafted the policy either with the chairperson of the SGB or with the School Management Teams – SMT (Naidoo, 2005). Here, they used the "majority" principle to decide on religions that must form part of the religious observances policy of the school. In other words, priority goes to religious orientations of parents or learners in majority. For instance, since the majority of the parents and learners are Muslim, the school ultimately decided to subscribe to an Islamic ethos. In most of the cases, the principals justified their approach by stating that most parents who are SGB members are not educated, and that those who are educated do not have the time or necessary skills to carry out their functions (Xaba, 2011).

Despite facing the challenge of SGB members' lack of the necessary skills to execute the mandate of the Department of Education, some school principals were successful as transformative mediators of the policy (Mncube, 2009). Some of them would do everything to ensure that the conduct of the SGB and provincial education department is lawful, fair and reasonable (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2009). In fact, one of the principals took the initiative to find the right representation (that is, members from diverse religious backgrounds) in the candidates coming through for SGB portfolios regardless of religion while others would adopt some of the clauses from the country's Constitution, the Schools Act and the religion-in-education policy into their school policies. In doing so, such principals demonstrate their readiness and ability to face the complex, ambiguous and uncertain situation they found themselves in, not for their own sakes but for the sake of their schools (Simić, 1998).

Learner Admission and Educator Appointment

The school principals were aware of the religious changes that came about with the country's 1996 Constitution. Some of the changes they mentioned were that schools may not refuse learners' admission and/or educators' appointment on religious grounds (RSA, 1996a, 1996b). Based on these changes, schools with a religious ethos appointed educators and admitted learners despite their faiths. The narratives indicate that those schools that have a Christian character allowed appointees and learners from other religions to excuse themselves from morning assemblies (Van der Walt, 2011). Muslim learners were also permitted to leave school early to attend mosque on Fridays.

It is imperative to note that the principals in this study did not cite religion as the deciding factor on who could play a role in the SGB. It is for this reason that this study revealed that the majority of the governing bodies of schools were religiously represented with diverse religious representatives in leadership portfolios of the SGB (i.e., chairperson) (Naidoo, 2005). Based on these insights, I can argue that the schools led by the majority of principals in this study demonstrated a commendable level of religious accommodation. They played the role of transformative mediators, and as agents of change, they appointed SGB members from diverse religious backgrounds to reflect and reinforce the accommodating nature of their schools (Bush & Folger, 1994).

Teaching about Religion

The principals' narratives indicate that educators in their schools did not give religion education the attention it required. One reason for this was their lack of knowledge of religions other than Christianity. Ferguson and Roux (2003) reminds us that the majority of public schools officially-based religion education programmes on Bible Education (mono-religious Christianity) until 1997. This leaves no doubt that the majority of educators and parents who are members in the governing bodies in public schools are products of schools that exposed them to either one religion only or to no religion at all, with some schools having eliminated religion education from the school's curriculum (Ferguson & Roux, 2003).

It seems that with exposure to either one religion or none at all, educators' would find it very difficult to change their perceptions of and attitudes towards people of other religions. This is true for any person, not only educators, who comes from a predominantly mono-religious and/or mono-cultural background (Roux, 2005). It is, however, pertinent to note that there are principals in this study who admitted that in every religion there is something good, meaning that they can also promote values such as respect (Sulaiman, 2016; Fatima, 2014). Even so, challenges remain. For instance, Christian educators may struggle to teach about religions other than Christianity considering the fact that some of them received their training under the apartheid education system. Thus, although these principals had a positive outlook on differences, they would not be able to help transform the teaching and learning of religion education in their schools because they also lacked knowledge about religions other than their own (Roux, 2005).

Some participants also admitted that each religion is worth learning about. Where their educators lacked skills and knowledge, some principals would either secure supporting material and resources and/or staff development opportunities. As if it was not enough, one of these principals used the sub-contracted clauses to challenge the *status quo* (Franey, 2002). He protected a learner whom the SGB wanted to remove from school because she fell pregnant. Personal values such as respect for others, fairness and equality, caring for the well-being and the holistic development of learners and of staff, integrity and honesty are evident in this principal's vision and practices (Harris, 2010; Bush & Folger, 2005). His transformative leadership values and vision are primarily moral (that is, dedicated to the welfare of staff and learners, with the latter at the centre) and underpin not only his relationships with staff, learners, parents and governors, but also his day-to-day actions (Day, 2005).

However, another group of principals ignored the behaviour of educators towards the teaching of religion education. They admitted that they were having difficulties in imagining the teaching of religions that were different from their own. This correlates with the research by Ferguson and Roux (2003) that discusses exposure to either one religion or none would influence one to find it very difficult to change his/her perception of and attitude towards other religions. Research suggests that such attitudes might lead to a denunciation of some of the religious beliefs and practices and by so doing destroy even the good that prevails in South Africa and the world (Frankema, 2012). The views and reactions of these school principals indicate the need for a careful and proper approach to the implementation of religion-in-education policy in schools. Otherwise, it would be difficult for principals to lead the way to accommodating diverse religions in schools as required by legislation.

Religious Observances

The country's religion-in-education policy defines religious observances as activities and behaviours that recognise and express the views, beliefs and commitments of a particular religion, and may include gatherings of adherents, prayer times, dress and diets (DoE, 2003). The constitutional and the policy provide that religious observances may be conducted at state or state-aided institutions, provided that (a) those observances follow rules made by the appropriate public authorities; (b) they are conducted in an equitable manner; and (c) the attendance at them is free and voluntary (RSA, 1996a, 1996b, 2003).

However, the narratives in this study revealed that the performance of morning devotions (religious observances such as prayer) in some of the schools continued in the Christian way while other minority religions like Islam were marginalised (Van der Walt, 2011). In the former, the schools did not allow learners and educators who subscribed to minority religions to observe their religions, either in terms of dress code or in terms of worship (Alston, Van Staden & Pretorius, 2003). In the latter, schools provided classrooms for learners and staff who subscribed to minority religions to use, and they occasionally permitted Muslims to leave school early to attend mosque on Fridays. They also excused educators from attending or conducting morning assemblies where Christian religious orientations, for

instance, were observed. It is important to point out that in fulfilling the role of transformative mediators, the principals acknowledged the diversity that exists among learners in terms of religious and cultural backgrounds (Tam, 2010). As such, these principals chart a direction that convinces stakeholder groupings that it is time to change (Moloi, 2005).

Conclusion

Despite the practical challenges that school principals encountered in the implementation of religion-in-education policy, they demonstrated confidence, openness and generosity in developing the identity of their schools as legal persons. In striving to maintain this status, they displayed the reasonable amount of integrity, ability or potential to use their past religious experiences to transform the quality and nature of interaction in their schools. Some of the principals portrayed themselves as transformative mediators by becoming spiritual beings having a human experience rather than human beings who may be having a spiritual experience. The danger of this stance, however, lies in the possibility that the interests of the principal might supersede those of the school. If different stakeholders pursue markedly different interests, the main purpose and function of SGBs will be defeated. I recommend proper and adequate training for school principals in order to assist the South African government's attempt to facilitate the implementation of policies fraught with tensions. These policies are meant to bring harmony and promote good working relationships rather than conflict and division. A mutual understanding of policies is therefore of paramount importance. I further recommend that universities offer a course on mediation, transformative mediation in particular, as a leadership strategy for handling disputes and solving problems in schools as it holds potential benefits for fields such as education.

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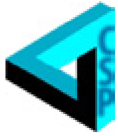

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Not in English	Piaget, J., & Inhelder, B. (1951). *La Genèse de L'idée de Hasard Chez L'enfant* [The origin of the idea of chance in the child]. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France. For transliteration of Cyrillic letters please use the links: ALA-LC Romanization Tables at the web-site of The Library of Congress http://www.loc.gov/catdir/cpso/roman.html
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Organization as author	American Psychological Association. (2003). Title of Article: and subtitle. *Title of Journal*, 2, 12–23. doi:xx.xxxxxxxxxx
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Patent	Cho, S. T. (2005). U.S. Patent No. 6,980,855. Washington, DC: U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.
Map	London Mapping Co. (Cartographer). (1960). Street map. [Map]. Retrieved from http://www.londonmapping.co.uk/maps/xxxxx.pdf
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Факс: +7 (343) 358-93-06
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