Engaging with Human Rights and Gender in Curriculum Spaces: A Religion and Education (RaE) Perspective

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Abstract

The introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and how it positions religion in the curriculum requires rethinking. This article first argues that Religion and Education (RaE) has the propensity to engage a broader perspective than Religion in Education (RiE) in curriculum inquiry. The opportunity to engage in RaE in curriculum spaces has its origins in debates on religion as private or public domain. The article explores how adolescent girls from diverse religious and cultural contexts experience gender issues in their communities and society. We report on adolescent girls' voices, their experiences and how they value gender in their own religion and culture, as well as in that of others. This viewpoint is significant for RaE for two reasons. Firstly, using gender as the research focus provides an alternative form of inquiry to create a discourse in and around RaE. Secondly, we consider how theoretical underpinnings of human rights, namely universalism and particularism, can inform thinking about RaE epistemologically. This article argues that one needs to think differently about RaE, to consider human rights and gender theories in order to prevent voices being silenced, curriculum restricted and oppression continued.

Keywords: RaE, curriculum spaces, gender, human rights, CAPS

Introduction

The role of Religion in Education (RiE) in public schools is envisaged to be consistent with the core constitutional values embedded within the constitutional framework of democratic South Africa (Chidester 2002:91). These core constitutional values include, amongst others, freedom of religion, conscience, thought, belief and opinion, equity, equality, and freedom from discrimination. Underpinning this foundation is the intention that RiE should 'promote empathetic understanding and critical reflection on religious identity and difference…to increase understanding, reduce prejudice and expand respect for human diversity' (Chidester 2002:92). This article strives towards this normative ideal, however it looks at the potential in Religion and Education (RaE) to foster these attitudes. We propose to elaborate on the distinction between RiE and RaE with discussions on how human rights discourses can come into dialogue with RaE, since human rights have an intertwined relationship with RaE (Department of Basic Education, 2011b; 2011c; 2011d). More specifically, the aspect of gender will be elaborated on because of the authors' interest in unlocking the experiences of girls within their community and thus in their religion and culture. RaE will benefit from engaging with gender to generate a discourse for how teachers can create curriculum spaces as 'safe spaces' (Roux 2012) where voices should not be ignored.

Perspectives on Religion in Education (RiE) and Religion and Education (RaE)

RiE has been positioned as part of the education environment since 1994, in school education and subjects/modules in teacher-training institutions (Roux 2009; Potgieter 2011). This position of RiE recognizes that official policies (Department of Education 2003) offer two often distinct positions. These are 'religion studies as an academic subject in which students (neutrally, formally and objectively) contrive to come to grips with the generics and commonalities of religion as a phenomenon' and the position which regards RiE as providing 'equitable observation of religious practices' (Potgieter 2011:402). With the introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), another position is put forward in our observation that

the notion of religion is now the peripheral circle for other sections in the curriculum, through subjects like Life Orientation, to promote values, respect, morality, citizenship and ethics (Department of Basic Education 2011b; 2011c; 2011d). Life Skills for Grades R - 6 (the Foundation and Intermediate Phase) and Life Orientation for Grades 7 - 12 (the Senior and FET Phase) are mandatory subjects in which RiE and religious content is only introduced through Life Skills from the Intermediate Phase (Department of Basic Education 2011b). Themes engaged with in Life Skills from Grades R - 3 are related to five specific aims (Department of Basic Education 2011a:8):

> (1) physical, social, personal, emotional and cognitive development; (2) creative and aesthetic skills and knowledge through engaging in dance, music, drama and other visual arts activities; (3) knowledge of personal health and safety; (4) understanding of relationships between people and the environment, and (5) awareness of social relationships, technological processes and elementary science.

This has led us to question why religion only surfaces from Grade 4 onwards (Intermediate Phase). Do school children only begin to think, act, behave and question religion (their own and/or that of others') from this age or stage of their social and cognitive development? Do these five specific aims of Life Skills in the Foundation Phase have nothing to do with religion?

Moreover, of concern to us as religion educators and researchers, themes related (implicitly or explicitly) to religion in the CAPS document from Grades 4 - 12 are only sub-themes of other themes on social responsibility (Department of Basic Education 2011b), constitutional rights and responsibilities (Department of Basic Education 2011c) and democracy and human rights (Department of Education 2011d). The CAPS therefore redefines RiE completely. RaE positions religion as the sub-set, as one or more factors within generic local, national and global priorities and concerns, or more specifically, what the CAPS regards as priorities and concerns. As already stated these are social responsibility (Department of Basic Education 2011b), constitutional rights and responsibilities (Department of Basic Education 2011c) and democracy and human rights (Department of Education 2011d).

We acknowledge that there are different attributes contributing to RiE. Roux (2009:18) argues, '[h]ermeneutics, social construct, multiculturalism, social justice, human rights values and praxis are important issues in RiE'. The question to be asked is why RiE, as understood in the curriculum, should be reconsidered to position itself as part of the peripheral understanding of 'social justice, human rights values and praxis' (Roux 2009:18). When a new paradigm needs to be investigated in order to meet demands in curriculum inquiry, it is possible to extend the paradigm. Roux (1999) however contends, 'a new paradigm is based on new, fundamental theories and applications.' Kuhn (2003:9) also argues that 'there can be an overlap where previous problem areas between the old and the new paradigm or model can be overcome'. We propose that RaE brings a new application to the position of RiE to the fore, which proposes that different ways of thinking need to evolve (Roux 2012b). Evidently, RaE is broader than teaching-learning, school curricula and classroom praxis. RaE, as a position of religion within other subject matters (e.g. human rights education, social justice and values), and in which the deconstruction of the broader social milieu in which the learners exist, is underpinned. With these underpinnings of RaE we regard it pivotal to understand this new trend set by the curriculum, and through this understanding develop strategies and curriculum spaces to recognize the place of RaE in education including in ethnically diverse schools of South Africa. We argue thus for the broadening of the composition and boundaries of RiE.

The position of RaE as a broader component extending the composition and boundaries of RiE, was the consideration for the research question posed in this article. The research question has two intertwined sections: How might gender be perceived through theoretical underpinnings of human rights (universalism and particularism) and how does this provide different perspectives for thinking about RaE?

Theoretical Framework for Putting the Research Question

Human rights and religion are interrelated (Gearon 2002). More eloquently, human rights can present different perspectives of understanding gender within RaE. The interplay of the notions gender and human rights presents fundamental arguments for RaE as these notions provide a different way of

thinking about RaE in a manner that may disrupt our ways of knowing (Du Preez & Simmonds 2011:327). The principle underpinnings of two particular avenues of human rights are considered as epistemological viewpoints for considering gender from RaE perspectives and themes. The first avenue provides arguments from a universalistic human rights perspective and the second avenue positions arguments from a particularistic human rights perspective. Keet (2009:219) states, 'reconceptualizing the interplay between the universal and the particular…requires a critical thinking of pedagogy in general'. This article attempts to (re)conceptualise how gender relates to human rights as well as how the epistemological underpinnings of universalistic and particularistic human rights can be used to (re)consider gender, to create ways of thinking about RaE.

What do Human Rights Have to Do with It?

The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a Western declaration developed to protect the integrity and dignity of all human beings. Embedded within human rights policy (such as the 1948 UDHR) various constituencies, such as gender, religion, culture, class, sexuality, ethnicity (Keet 2009:215) are at play and are intersected. This article considers gender as a constituency dependent on human rights and indispensible to discourse on RaE. This position is further enforced by Keet (2009:217), when he maintains that quality education is linked to human rights imperatives and these are often displayed in education through multicultural education, peace education, democracy education and citizenship education. We acknowledge that human rights imperatives include gender, and we also acknowledge Agosín's (2002:1) argument that human rights cannot be seen in isolation from gender. She advocates for women's rights and points out that oppression of women's human rights, regardless of culture and religion, often 'reflect a systematic and universal pattern of abuse' (Agosín 2002:3). Reasons for human rights abuses are many. Fraser (2002:18) refers to literacy and shared responsibility of men and women within the home and in the care of children. Being literate means that when women can articulate their views of life they are able to know and strive for their rights. Shared responsibility means that through education women can think for themselves as citizens and also as wives and mothers.

Thus, only through literacy and shared responsibility, can women then reap the benefits of human rights (Fraser 2002:58). Gaer (2002:99) presents another view and argues 'the greatest struggle has been simply to make the human rights of women visible'. Following the 1995 *United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women,* held in Beijing, an initiative to address the concern that women's rights are being undermined as human rights, was approached through the notion of 'gender mainstreaming' (Gaer 2002:98). The three elements comprising the notion of gender mainstreaming are building awareness, increasing participation and expanding coordination of human rights among men and women (Gaer 2002:100).

The dilemma, however, lies not only in the interrelatedness of gender and human rights but rather in the theoretical positioning of human rights in this constituency. In other words, how might gender be perceived through theoretical underpinnings of human rights (universalism and particularism) and what perspectives does this initiate for thinking about religion and education?

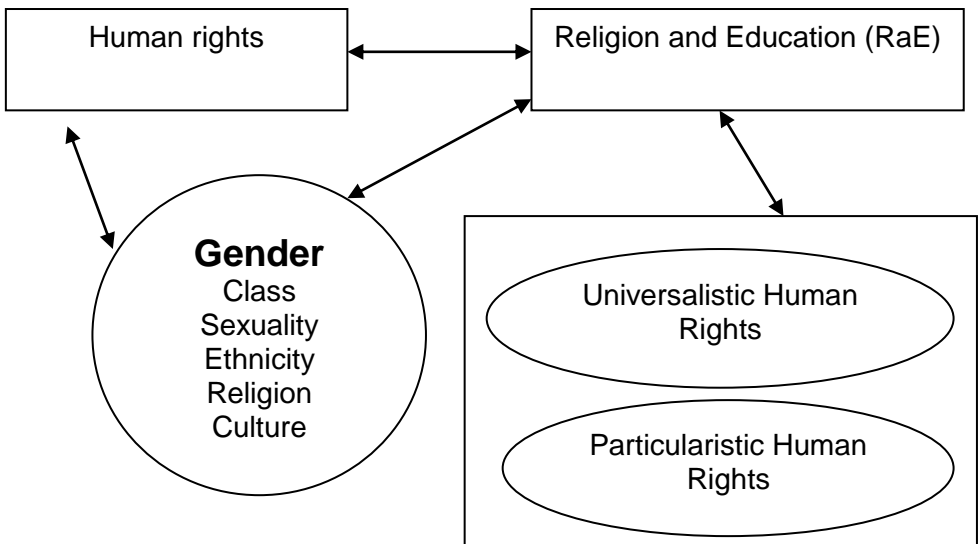Schematically we display this association in Figure 1

Figure 1: The interrelatedness of human rights and gender in the context of RaE

(Re)conceptualizing RaE: Gender in Universalistic and Particularistic Human Rights Perspectives

Chidester and Settler (2010:214) claim that RiE contributes to an emerging sense of citizenship in a democratic South Africa because it is framed in terms of constitutional principles and human rights values. From the stance of 'constitutional principles and human rights values', RaE posits the same ideal but from a different perspective (as highlighted above). Bentley (2003:2) warns against assuming that all human rights directives will lead to democratic outcomes because human rights have interests that generate them, and conflict often resides within and between these interests. A reason for this conflict has its origins in globalization, which has 'both homogenized and sharpened national and cultural identities' (Ishay 2007:389). As a result, we have found it necessary to explore gender from theoretical underpinnings of human rights, in order to consider how this might inform our arguments about RaE. First a discussion on gender from human rights as a universalistic position, and then human rights as a particularistic position will be presented. Thereafter, a discussion on what this might entail for RaE follows.

A Universalistic Perspective

Universalist human rights takes into account the tenets of universalism. Dembour (2006:177) argues that universalism connotes that human rights exist everywhere and for every human being. Moreover, the 1948 UDHR (Article 2) expresses universalism as embracing all people 'without distinction of any kind such as, race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or status'. as being entitled to human rights. Constituting human rights as a universalistic approach such as this has implications for gender and thus for RaE. Perceiving gender equity as the same for all people can adequately be explored through Fraser's (2007:22) elucidation of gender redistribution. Gender redistribution acknowledges the political and economical equality between males and females through, for example, equal involvement in voting and equal opportunities in the workplace. One of the main propositions of redistribution of gender is the use of anti-discrimination policies to address patriarchy and hierarchy (Fraser 2007:24). Sivasubramanian (2008) refers to this stance as 'gender parity', as it too

illustrates equal access of all genders to opportunities and involvement.

Dieltiens, Unterhalter, Letsatsi and North (2009) put this in the context of education in general and curriculum in particular. Curriculum is 'blind' (Dieltiens *et al.* 2009) when it ignores factors such as gender, language, academic barriers to learning, culture, religion and socio-economic status. A gender-blind curriculum thus stipulates that 'education is distributed equally' (Dieltiens *et al.* 2009:368) and both genders are offered the same learning opportunities. An ideology of sameness is prominent in the redistributive position of gender (Fraser 2007) and the blind conception of curriculum (Dieltiens *et al.* 2009). With regard to RaE a human rights position such as this poses two questions. Should sameness of gender be advocated for in RaE? How will we come to know the other and embrace diversity of genders from a perspective of sameness?

A Particularistic Perspective

Particularistic human rights draw on the principles of particularism. The nature of particularism considers that, because human beings are interpreted differently in different situations, it is not possible to contextualise human rights as a general set of principles (Dembour 2006:177). Particularism is linked to the philosophical notions of relativism. Relativists draw on the perception that 'what is good and what is bad for a particular human being always depends on something about [their] context or situation, something that is never true about every human being or about the situation of every human being' (Perry 1998:61-62). Therefore particularism argues that the local specificity of human beings shapes the application of human rights. From a gender standpoint, Fraser (2007:21) draws on the concept of 'recognition' as a means to illustrate that gender becomes more than an act of equal political and economic treatment among genders. Recognition is deeply embedded in social factors in which the economic becomes socio-economic, taking into consideration housework, sexuality and reproduction, for example, and as a result the political becomes personal (hooks, 2000). The recognition approach to gender 'opened gender studies to many new voices' (Fraser 2007:23), by not only taking social factors into account but also by considering what they mean to people from different ethnic, class, gender, culture and religious contexts (hooks 2000).

Dieltiens *et al.* (2009:369) argue that curriculum has the potential to embrace diversity with regard to gender, culture, language, academic barriers to learning and socio-economic status. However, they issue a caution that any attempts at achieving this can resort in a 'lite' (Dieltiens *et al.* 2009) curriculum where the moral worth of diversity is recognized but fails at being transformative. Dieltiens *et al.* (2009:372) give the example that a 'gender-lite' curriculum advances girls so that they can take part in equal numbers with boys but without changing their status in participation, therefore a stigma of girls participating as girls in boys' activities results. What this perspective might entail for RaE is that the ideals of difference and diversity also present complexities. But simply increasing the voice and presence of gender will not necessarily bring about transformation that embraces principles such as respect, care and understanding for gender in various religions and cultures.

Dembour (2006:180) states that the conundrum within universalism is its arrogance through action by allowing intolerance to surface when tolerance is called for. Particularism also poses challenges, as it is inherent in indifference. Such indifference could warrant inaction by embracing tolerance when intolerance is called for (Dembour 2006:180). Dembour (2006:179) further proclaims that universalism and particularism are best conceived as encompassing each other because unity cannot be achieved without accommodating diversity. Brown (as cited in Dembour 2006:179) articulates this position further by stating that the different ways there are to be human need to be explored, but this exploration must involve the exercise of judgment. This position is supported because we acknowledge the intricate dilemmas emerging from human unity (universalism) and diversity (particularism) in RaE (cf. Du Preez & Roux 2010). Being conscious of this dichotomy could create 'safe spaces' (Roux 2012a) for dialogue in RaE and encourage different perspectives for viewing and approaching constituencies (such as gender) in RaE.

Adolescent Girls' Narratives: The Research Process and Data Analysis

This research study was conducted in 2011 as a pilot study for a larger research project (Simmonds 2010). The larger research project required that

a pilot study be conducted to ascertain whether the participants understood the language of and concepts in the questions they were asked. Doing a pilot study was valuable as it clarified the usefulness of the questions asked and provided the confirmation needed to conduct the larger research study, which took place at the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012.

The research study investigated how culturally diverse adolescent girls perceive gender, more specifically how their culture and religion as well as their school curricula have shaped how they understand gender in their community and society. Cary (2007:1-2) further emphasizes this imperative when she argues that:

> It is time to call upon educational researchers to work to understand that the way they know what they know also impacts the lives of those they study and/or teach…. the way we know what we know is a curriculum issue – a curriculum space.

Cary (2007: 3) states furthermore that such curriculum spaces involve getting to know others in different ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality spaces. These spaces are influenced by historical, social and cultural 'knowledges'. This approach is highly necessary if RaE curriculum spaces are to be contested epistemologically.

The study took place at a secondary school in the North-West Province, Potchefstroom region. Three adolescent girls (aged thirteen to fifteen) were purposefully selected by the researcher and school principal to be the participants in the study. Ethical consent for these participants voluntary participation was also gained from their parents/care givers. These participants speak English, Afrikaans, Korean and Yoruba as first and/or second language and are all South African citizens but have family of Korean and Nigerian descent. They speak these languages at home but their medium of instruction at school is English. One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants so as to explore how they make meaning. A context such as this provided an opportunity for girls to share their opinions and experiences in the form of a narrative (Ayres 2008:811). Narratives provide a platform for individuals to voice their views in a manner that espouses discourse, which is liberating for the research and the researched (Clandinin 2006).

The researcher asked the girls open-ended questions about what it means to be a girl in their specific religion and culture, and then the girls responded with stories of their experiences and perceptions.

Fairclough (1995) speaks of different domains of interest that are principle when analysing discourse. These are the societal, the institutional and the personal. We consider these domains of interest as curriculum spaces. In discourse, curriculum spaces present different ways of knowing how to guide our search for meaning. A conscious effort to interrupt, extend and redefine how we do research, how we know ourselves and our participants (Cary 2007:55) will enable us to arrive at pertinent questions in and for RaE in such curriculum spaces. In exploring the data, Fairclough's (1995) principle discourse domains were taken into account from a critical discourse analysis approach. Critical discourse analysis is a critical approach, position or stance for analysing text and speech commonly employed in the dynamics of social relationships of class, gender, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, language, religion, age and/or nationality (Van Dijk 1995:17-18). This was done firstly, by identifying the main discourses in the narratives, secondly, by interpreting these discourses in the light of hegemonic issues in society, thirdly, contextualising the narratives with theory, fourthly, disrupting essential notions in the narratives and lastly, by giving consideration to how the narratives disrupt our own ways of thinking about RaE (Du Preez & Simmonds 2011:327).

With this in mind, the following themes emerged from the data:

- Religion, culture and gender equality
- Curriculum and gender
- Lived stories: concern and conflict

Each theme, with the verbatim responses of the participants, will now be explored, followed by reflections of these main findings to reflect on RaE curriculum spaces. The three participants' verbatim responses have been labeled P1, P2 and P3, to give an individual voice to each of the participants.

Religion, Culture and Gender Equality
From the girls' responses it became evident that their perceptions of gender

were greatly shaped by their socio-religious and cultural context at a community level (Fairclough 1995). This curriculum space displayed their reference to culture – their own culture and their perception of the cultures of others. Reference made to cultures other than their own includes the following comments:

I think it also depends on your culture and where you come from, cause if they've [referring to, your culture] installed the thing that women are less than men then you wouldn't fight for gender equity. I think because they [referring to, women] provide the food, they provide the love and the care in the family, so I think they're [referring to women] a very important part of the family and girls, also, they keep the house clean and they, you know, not that boys can't do the same, but like, we provide the feelings, you know, the homey atmosphere in the house. (P1)

Look I don't know which tribe it is but I heard that a tribe from Africa, the woman does all the work and stuff like that, so in their point of view, they might think that women are more important than men, and then like from the modern society we might think that we're just all equal, and like both men and women do everything together. (P2)

It's not that women only do it, it's that, uhm, what's the word now that, uhm, ja, they [referring to men] would appreciate it. And it's not that women are the only ones doing it, men do it too nowadays, it's just that women would, uhm, they're, more ready to do it. (P3)

Girls are inclined to refer to domestic duties and caring of children when they express what gender equity connotes in cultures other than their own. Prominent is the recognition of equality where men and women both do domestic duties in a manner that Fraser (2002:58) refers to as 'shared responsibility'. However, the motivation towards women-dominated roles in the home is also highlighted when the girls make remarks such as: 'we provide the feelings, you know, the homey atmosphere in the house' (P1) and 'its just that women would, uhm, they're, more ready to do it' (P3). These remarks are significant because they insinuate that women are portrayed

universally as caring and even though men can be involved domestically, women play a more prominent role. The response of P2 brings another dimension to the argument. She speaks of 'modern society' being more inclined to have shared gender roles. However the first comment by P1 places stress on the cultural gender hierarchy because she states that if the culture portrays 'women as less than men' then gender equity will not be advocated for. This could reside in the pertinent influences of globalization that create hierarchical dichotomies (Ishay 2007:389).

These participants' responses lead us to inquire why girls' shared experiences and perceptions of gender predominantly from a cultural perspective, when they voiced what they believed to be pertinent practices and norms for girls within this curriculum space. This is relevant for RaE because it acknowledges that when the present generation of girls, share experiences and perceptions about gender they tend to prioritize or reason from a cultural point of departure and sometimes even regard culture as religion. This might be because these girls regard gender as intertwined with religion and culture. Whatever the reason, the task of RaE is to recognize the intersections of religion within other social issues such as culture, gender and human rights for example, to explore the hegemonic issues that exist and what these might connote for religion.

A girl participant also made comments about her own religion:

Uh, nowadays in religious aspects, you get woman preachers as well as male preachers. Uhm, in my religions one of my teachers with the teenage section of the church is female… And about a hundred years ago, they weren't allowed. (P3)

From this curriculum space, this participant refers to her religious leaders when she refers to female teachers in 'the teenage section' of her church. She is reflective in her thinking as she draws the conclusion that female religious leaders connote that there is gender equity in her religion because 'a hundred years ago' women were not allowed to be religious leaders. These responses present the interplay of gender and religion over time. This might further accentuate the need to, and challenge for RaE to consider the theoretical underpinnings of both universalistic and particularistic epistemological positions (Dembour 2006:179).

Each participant's comment is primary to the experienced curriculum they encounter on a societal level. These experiences become a curriculum space where learning takes place through the perceptions, reflections and opinions formed during everyday life (Cary 2007). This curriculum space also becomes disrupted as these girls question culture as religion, their own culture and religion as well as the religion and cultures of others and within and across different times and places.

Curriculum and Gender

The classroom and curriculum is only one of the many curriculum spaces where girls can gain and share experiences. This curriculum space is an example of what Fairclough (1995) refers to as the institutional domain. Girl participants drew on the following experiences:

It was, oh yes, yeah I know, it was about sports, there was this story in the textbook saying that there was a good soccer player but she was a girl and then when she asked to join the soccer team they said no because she's a girl and that it wouldn't look right if she's in the team and playing with an all boys team. That they had to campaign and for her to get into the team isn't gender equity and they used the Bill of Rights and things like that to…motivate that she should be allowed… It was LO… Then we can use things that we've learned at school to say like, no but it's gender equity now it's not the olden way of doing things...where boys have preference over everything. (P1)

I've learned that, for the rights, both gender have the same rights, and then both genders learn the same things, they both do the same things, and sometimes it's not necessarily that the male does something better than the female and then the female does something better than the males. For example the world's famous chefs would be males not females and then the world's most famous and best furniture maker would be females. I learned it at my primary school. It was in Life Orientation. (P2)

Last year when we did LO we did gender equity and then we did

stereotyping and then also in art we did that and then they said like, if they give an advert of a perfume or something that, like normally would be a young man then they would say like general point of view, young men should only use perfumes or make ups and stuff like that. But I think that it doesn't matter how old you are or what culture or which, what gender you are, I think that it's just everybody is equal. (P2)

We learned about the unfairness of the past, and what people are doing nowadays to prevent, gender inequity. It was in Life Orientation and Social Sciences. We, we did a poster and we did an assessment. We had to take an example of everyday life and then put it on the poster and I think I did something about sports, about golf in particular. There was a managerial one and then there was one where like home, the domestic environment and so. (P3)

One of the girls commented on what she would still like to learn about gender equity:

I think I'd like to learn from a cultural aspect, like other cultures. Learn the differences and, like I know for the Arabian cultures, the women are expected to respect the men a lot. And so they have to wear those shawls and stuff. And I think I'd like to learn more, also about mythology and the cultural aspects of the different genders. (P3)

It is evident that the participants have also been exposed to gender equity at school. What is significant is the constant acknowledgement of Life Orientation as the context in which gender was explored through topics related to sport, management, social behaviour and careers. The fact that participants referred to Life Orientation has led us to reflect on why religion, tradition, culture and/or worldviews did not feature in their responses. Only when one of the participants responded to what she would still like to learn did she mention that she would still like to learn about gender 'from a cultural aspect'. These findings reiterate Jansen's (2011:40, 108) low expectations for Life Orientation and his discontent with Life Orientation as a subject/learning area, which does not prepare individuals for tertiary

education. This made us ask the questions: Why do the participants not engage with gender in religion through Life Orientation? Is it not a topic in the curriculum that they have been exposed to?

The representation of gender equity presented here is what Dieltiens *et al*. (2009) refer to as a 'lite' curriculum. Gender issues are recognized but in some instances are not transformative, as demonstrated in P1's response where she interprets the Bill of Rights as allowing girls to play soccer with boys. She does not consider that in this context she might in turn be perceived as a girl participating in a boy's sport. It is deemed necessary for this type of power play to be deconstructed in and through RaE as it could - to use the response of P1 as an example - consider the extent to which tolerance is embraced when intolerance is being displayed (Dembour, 2006:180).

Lived Stories: Concern and Conflict

The personal becomes the lived stories of how individuals perceive gender in their community and society. This curriculum space illustrates the narratives of two girl participants. One of the girls (P3) shared a story of concern when she took the time to speak to her younger sister, older brother and his friends about gender, in an attempt to explore how they understand gender, so that they may develop different gender 'knowledges'. One of the other girl participants (P1) shared a personal story of gender discrimination and her reflection thereof.

Concern

I asked them what it [referring to gender equity] was and they didn't understand the concept fully so they guessed at it and sometimes they did guess correctly but the younger generations, who I think we should teach more…of gender so that they can somewhat get the gist of being equal and all, they didn't understand. My younger sister who's now ten in about a month, she didn't understand so then I sat down and I told her, and I think everyone should do that because then everyone from a young age has a clear understanding that everyone is human

and that no one is perfect. I tried to teach my younger sister that she cannot be expected to be treated less or better than a male or any other female because everyone is human. No one is perfect. And we do make mistakes and sometimes we have to learn from them and we also have to see that other people are equal. They're human. We are just as fragile as they are. And it doesn't matter if you're male or female, you're a human and you have human emotions. And my brother, he's about eighteen and his friend is seventeen and they understood it but I don't think they understood the importance of it. They were chauvinistic. My brother spoke about it but, the way he spoke about it, it was like, textbook answer, it had no emotion. He had learned about it, but he did not understand it, the concept behind it. And he knew what it was, but back to the understanding, he didn't understand what it meant to people that do have the unfairness in their lives. They would say something very blandly along the lines of, it's when male and female are treated as equals. And then they wouldn't have an understanding of, like, how, they were unequal and how women were seen as, lower sometimes, and higher sometimes as men, and I don't think they grasped the concept of how important it is. (P3)

This narrative is illustrative of Dembour's (2006:179) statement that unity cannot be achieved without accommodating diversity. This statement amplifies that this girl's narrative displays her discontent in settling with only one perspective of understanding gender but at the same time not accepting any perspective or understanding of it. In this curriculum space she recognizes what she calls 'textbook answers' when she states what her family and friends know about gender equity, and thus that they do not grasp its importance. This position illustrates her empathy with the topic and her passion to teach others and learn about the topic. This might relate to what Yuval-Davis (2011) states as a feminist ethics-of-care approach. An approach such as this 'does not ground its ontological base in membership in specific national, ethnic or religious communities but on transcending familial relationships into a universal principle of interpersonal relationships' (Yuval-Davis 2011:11). As such, RaE promotes a caring learning platform where different people (of different gender, class, race, ethnicity) can come to better understand socio-political discourses underpinning RaE.

Conflict

> *We went to a hockey match in Klerksdorp on Tuesday and after our hockey matches we're just sitting around, waiting for the other teams to finish their hockey matches and there were these boys playing soccer. And when we asked to join, they said no. So I also believe that was not gender equity cause they believe that, no girls can't play soccer. They said, 'no because you're girls.' We just left them but we should go, we should tell them about the Bill of Rights and that girls are allowed to, we're supposed to be equal cause girls are always taught to keep, you know, girls are supposed to be more gentle and say 'okay fine, let's go', that's how we're taught at school…so we just said okay let's do that and leave them to play their soccer. Just accept. Because if we do say anything, we're gonna be giving our school a bad name. (P1)*

The narrative told by this girl (P1) illustrates her frustration at not being able to play soccer with a group of boys. She refers to the Bill of Rights as proof that she should be allowed to play soccer with the boys. However, she does not retaliate and reasons that this is how her school has taught her to behave as a girl and thus she fears she will be accused of ill-representing her school if she retaliates. Gaer's (2002:100) concept of gender mainstreaming further demonstrates how awareness, participation and co-ordination are fundamental for achieving increased opportunities for men and women. Thus it is not about being equal as articulated through redistribution (Fraser 2007:24) but rather to change the status in participation of men and women in particular activities (domestic duties, sports roles, care, etc.) in a transformative manner (Dieltiens *et al*. 2009:372). The same underlying principles could apply to RaE because hegemonic issues (for example, discrimination, inequity and oppression) can begin to address the challenges of time if they strive to be transformative.

Discussion

As opposed to previous National Curriculum Statements (Department of Education 2003), religion has shifted to the periphery as a sub-theme in more

generic or overarching themes such as social justice. In effect, this shift has necessitated a move beyond a RiE perspective to a RaE perspective to be in line with the CAPS. As it is required of teachers to teach according to CAPS, it is the function of researchers and educators to consider how they will implement the curriculum. To design, develop and implement curriculum pertaining to religion (as envisaged by the CAPS) requires that religion be taught within and through discourses of the broader social milieu in which learners exist. For the arguments put forward in this article, broader social milieus are illustrated through human rights and gender discourses.

To achieve this perspective of RaE, we argue that curriculum spaces need to be acknowledged. Curriculum spaces means that the curriculum needs to take into account that the 'knowledges' of individuals are multi-faceted. Drawing on curriculum spaces as societal, institutional and personal (cf. Fairclough 1995) we propose that the RaE curriculum take cognizance of these spaces. Each of these spaces necessitates a curriculum stance:

- The societal curriculum space can adopt an unconscious curriculum stance (Gordon 2006). This type of curriculum unconsciously integrates human rights, gender and religion into the everyday life of individuals through the socio-cultural context of their beliefs, attitudes and values, and often the influence of their community and society upon it. Since this form of curriculum is unconscious, it forms part of who the individual is and how they behave and reason both within and outside of the school environment.

- The institutional curriculum space is the explicit curriculum (Wilson 2005). An explicit curriculum is the formal and enacted curriculum dictated by policy, which stipulates what is in the national curriculum. Thus, what content policy makers and the Department of Basic Education regard as necessary for RaE teaching-learning in schools and classrooms. In this context, individuals often receive a theoretical or content-based perspective of human rights, religion and gender.

- The personal curriculum space is received as the experienced or lived curriculum. Greene and Hill (2005:4) argue, 'those who

experience are conscious of being the subject of a state/condition or the effects of an event'. Thus the experienced or lived curriculum is different from the unconscious curriculum and the explicit curriculum because the experience of the individual is consciously realized with emotion and thus its effects are different. How individuals experience human rights, gender and religion can contribute to the ways in which they make meaning thereof.

To embrace RaE as underpinned by broader social milieu, semi-flexible boundaries that welcome multiple intersections of the different curriculum spaces (societal, institutional and personal) must be advocated for. This stance requires that RaE engage with various curriculum spaces during teaching-learning so that RaE can accompany 'learners to a deep understand of the nature and scope of religious differences that they in future will have to engage with as adult citizens' (Potgieter 2011:404).

Conclusion

As CAPS reaches its final stage of implementation (Department of Basic Education 2010), we argue that researchers need to theoretically engage in discourses on this matter. Thinking about and positioning religion education in terms of RaE, requires further conceptualisation and empirical research with the teachers and learners living this notion. Until such time it is a priority for us, as religion education researchers and educators, to think differently about the position of religion in the curriculum and to embrace these inquires as a search for meaning and to challenge epistemologies that the CAPS document reveals. For Apple (1995) 'recognizing the temporary quality of our work and knowing that it may not be possible to have certainty about a 'correct' politics needn't (and mustn't) keep us from such activity', because our work is not static but rather 'formed and re-formed by the supportive and critical comments it continues to generate'. Therefore, rather than describe what has changed in religion education curriculum, this article has argued that a new discourse be generated. Initiating a RaE discourse is our perspective toward embracing the complex interactions of human rights, gender and religion as we witness these to have emerged in three particular curriculum spaces. Moreover, these curriculum spaces and their interactions

with human rights, gender and religion, initiate a timely discourse that offers prospects for a multi-, inter- and trans disciplinary approach to RaE in terms of its curricularization.

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