ALTERNATION

Research in Religion and Education

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ARTICLES

Editorial: Religion and Education

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Our religions constitute one of the most important sources and resources for general human wellbeing, spirituality and human development, education, and social behavior. This is recognized and explored by researchers in a wide diversity of contexts and social spaces worldwide. Internationally, critical reflection and dialogue on our religions also occupy a central position in educational theories and practices. In post-apartheid South Africa, the situation is not different. With Prof Kader Asmal's official launching of the Government-sanctioned National Policy on Religion and Education (2003), our South African government recognized the important role our religions play in education, in our communities as well as the country at large. It is also seminally recognized that even though it is not indispensable, religion forms a seminal part of education in many environments (Sachs 1990).

Government also created the conditions of possibility for the contributions of the scholarly community and researchers in the developing of the requisite ideas, theories, paradigms, discourse and related practices (cf. Smit & Chetty 2009:331 - 353). The developing and fostering of integrated approaches in education, and teaching and learning about religion and the wide variety of denominations and orders we find in South Africa have taken a central position in our academic endeavours. It is in this wide arena that this volume of Alternation is making a further contribution and taking further our critical reflection and research[1]. It provides an opportunity to critically

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[1] Cf. the seminal volumes by Wanda Alberts on the *Challenge of Religious Education for History of Religions* (*Numen* 55 of 2008); Smit and Chetty's *Religion and Diversity* (*Alternation* Special Edition 3 of 2009) and Tayob, Niehaus and Weisse's *Muslim Schools and Education in Europe and South Africa* (2011).

reflect on some of the seminal topics and issues which have come to the fore during the ten years since the launching of the policy. As such, many of the issues and concerns also constitute central aspects of the future developing of the critical discourse with regard to religion in the public domain, especially in our schooling and higher education systems[2].

In the first essay, Federico Settler engages some of the seminal concerns about our National Policy on Religion and Education and some of the critical interactions around it. Crafted to provide a framework for the regulation for teaching and learning about religion in public education, the policy has been widely criticized and condemned by groups who fear the erosion of religion education in public schools. Despite the sustained contestation and challenges to the policy, many believe that the policy created a space for a non-sectarian and non-confessional treatment of religion in the public domain. The National Policy on Religion and Education is however also ambivalent about the value of religion, and the limits of enforcement has left it vulnerable. Settler argues that it is precisely through its vulnerability that we might find its most profound contribution to Religion Education in South Africa. He suggests that through a range of legal challenges to the policy framework and its proposed implementation of Religion Education in public schools, and at levels of School Governing Bodies, the policy has sparked vibrant and necessary public debates concerned with the effective teaching and learning about religion in public schools.

In his contribution, Cok Bakker develops an argument concerning the articulation of religion, education and citizenship education. He primarily focuses on three main points, *viz.*: the deductive mode of argument for religion; that this mode of argument is patently wrong in the light of empirical relevance; and the paradigm shift which this mistaken approach requires. So, firstly, he reflects on the link between religion and religious tradition(s) on the one hand and school and education on the other. In his reflection on the reasoning strategy to make sense of this link, he argues that people seem to tend strongly to think, argue and reflect in a deductive mode.

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[2] Cf. especially the curriculum summary for Religion Studies in Smit and Chetty (2009:337 - 339). The topics, especially those highlighted, directly link to the undergraduate and postgraduate curricula at University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College campus.

Secondly, considering the religious claims people make concerning the impact of religion on the day-to-day educational practice, it is, empirically speaking, apparently wrong to take this deductive reasoning serious as a road to undisputable and unambiguous links between claims and practices. Given that it appears that deductive reasoning is wishful thinking or functions as a supposed but inadequate religious legitimatization of educational practices, which – which is demonstrated by the empirical educational praxis itself – Bakker raises the question as how educational practices could be understood in their connection to religious beliefs anew.

Focusing on the Values in Education Initiatives in the South Africa, Marilyn Naidoo provides a descriptive review of the literature, and considers and traces recent developments in terms of policy implementation. A central assumption in the policy initiatives is that religion and religious content play an important and supportive role in helping to nurture democratic values, political literacy and nation building among the youth. In considering the teaching of Religion Education and its role in facilitating values education, Naidoo focuses on the conflicting claims related to of religious identity. She shows that problematising these contested issues in the context of current debates makes for more relevant and effective learning about democracy within Religion Education than the abstract and idealised exposition of democratic values. Religion Education must be an integrated dimension of students' perceptions, experiences and reflections that need to form part of the discussions. As such, it will allow explorations of new content as well as dialogue where differences and contrasting ideas are deliberated. Such an approach, she argues, will enhance the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary to equip the student to function in an open and democratic society.

In their contribution, Shan Simmonds and Cornelia Roux argue that the introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) and how it positions religion in the curriculum requires rethinking. They point out, firstly, 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 functioning in either the private or public domain. For their argument, they primarily draw on research focused on how adolescent girls from diverse religious and cultural contexts experience gender issues in their communities and society. They 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, they consider how theoretical underpinnings of human rights, *viz.* universalism and particularism, can inform thinking about RaE epistemologically. For them we need to think differently about RaE, to consider human rights and gender theories in order to prevent voices being silenced, curriculum restricted and oppression continued.

Given the biased history against democracy and diversity in South Africa, René Ferguson focuses her research on the issue of how teachers should learn in ways that would inculcate democracy and appreciation of diversity. While teachers in South Africa have attended in-service development programmes, little seems to have been achieved regarding the development of the complex knowledge base that enables classroom practice specifically for democratic citizenship education and religion education in Life Orientation. One main stumbling block is the influence of the teacher's own frame of reference. If there is to be effective mediation of learning of religious and cultural diversity, these often controversial focus areas in the classroom, cannot be ignored, she argues. More specifically, to develop a practice for democratic citizenship education and religion education, teacher development should occur through participation with other teachers in communities of practice. Communities of practice theory, transformative adult learning theory and perspectives on deliberative democracy are synthesised to create a theoretical frame for teacher development in communities. The article outlines this approach by drawing on a mixed method research project in which this theoretical framework was implemented amongst a sample of secondary school Life Orientation teachers in the Gauteng Province. It reports some of the findings from the data elicited from a survey and an action research phase. It concludes with an evaluation of the communities of practice concept for teacher-learning for democracy and diversity.

Departing from the assumption that Religion Education in South Africa refers specifically to a diversity of religions and beliefs Janet Jarvis points out that the Religion and Education Policy (2003) requires teachers to adopt a multi-religious approach to Religion Education. This presents a challenge to Life Orientation student teachers given the religious diversity in

South African classrooms. Given this challenge, her article draws on research focused on final year Life Orientation student teachers, in the School of Education at a South African university. Once qualified, these student teachers will be expected to facilitate Religion Education as part of the Life Orientation curriculum. She explores their understanding of religious freedom as a constitutional right and how their religious identity influences their approach to Religion Education. This qualitative case study, also draws on the theory of identity negotiation, and shows that, to varying degrees, the students struggle to adopt a multi-religious approach to Religion Education. She contends that Initial Teacher Education Life Orientation modules need to create space for student teachers to explore and negotiate their religious identity. This is necessary for the effective implementation of the Religion and Education Policy (2003) which expects teachers to encourage learners to grow in their own religious beliefs while also empathetically respecting the religious beliefs of others in society.

In her article, Hui-Xuan Xu reports on a qualitative study on pedagogies that foster intercultural sensitivity development in a general education course in a tertiary institution in Hong Kong. Interventions drew on Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of cultural differences, i.e., power distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long term and short term orientation. In order to stimulate undergraduates' intercultural sensitivity development, the study also employed multiple teaching strategies, such as narrative writing, group learning, and movie watching. Undergraduate's self-reported learning out-comes and their perceptions of the impact of the teaching strategies were collected through individual interviews. Findings are that 1) these interventions have resulted in a higher level of intercultural sensitivity among undergraduates; 2) narrative writing is an effective teaching strategy to encourage under-graduates to reflect on their own cultural values and essay writing is very useful in stimulating students to think deeply and actively on cultural difference issues; 3) the intentional combination of strategies in the stage of minimization and acceptance is imperative to motivate students' development.

In his study, Denzil Chetty provides convincing and insightful arguments for moving beyond some the seminal paradigms in vogue in Educational circles currently. Over the past decade, we have seen the advent of technologies (more especially Information and Communication

Technologies) transforming the higher education landscape. One of the critical challenges emerging within this new landscape has been how to position the integration of technology within an appropriate learning theory. The three 'traditional' learning theories most often utilized in the creation of instructional environments, namely behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism, have come under much criticism in the design of learning spaces for the twenty-first century learner. One such theorist coming to the fore challenging the presuppositions and relevance of the above three learning theories and offering an alternative approach has been George Siemens with his notion of 'connectivism'. Siemens' connectivism posits that knowledge is distributed across networks and the act of learning is largely one of forming a diverse network of connections and identifying the connected patterns. Hence, my aim in this paper is to ascertain the core principles of Siemens' connectivism, and probe the prospects for a technology-centered pedagogical transition in religious studies. In so doing, Chetty proposes the redesigning of learning spaces, where learning is no longer an internal, individualistic activity but an actionable process of gaining knowledge through connecting with specialized information sets that reside within networks of other people, organizations and databases.

Given the vast array of religious phenomena, as well as constantly emerging novel forms and expressions of religious life they also actualize a whole range of issues as part of the social sciences, education, and teaching and learning. In her contribution, Maheshvari Naidu approaches teaching and learning through the hermeneutic of 'engaged pedagogy' as put forward by the noted feminist writer bell hooks, and uses Kainon New Church School as a case study for what engaged pedagogy means in the context of teaching within a religious school. The research suggests that such engaged teaching aims at accruing a particular kind of 'social' or 'religious capital' for the learner. Social capital itself is a reference to the resource embedded in the connections within and between a network and nodal actors in the network, and religious capital is defined as consisting of an acquirement of 'power and level of embeddedness into this or that religious culture' (Finke 2003:3).

The research seeks to illustrate that Kainon School is part of a small networked community comprising the School, the Church, and the Congregational community (who are in many instances also parents at the school) and argues that teaching and learning occurs within these

communally overlapping fields, similarly embedded within a particular religious culture. Methodologically, the paper is positioned within a qualitative framework where the experiences and reflections of teachers and learners are captured through personal interviews and sustained observation.

Ephraim Taurai Gwaravanda, Erasmus Masitera and Prosper Muzambi focused their research on philosophy of education and argue that the Zimbabwean Ordinary Level Religious Studies syllabus is inadequate and insensitive to the virtue of religious respect in the globalised world. Firstly, ordinary level Religious Studies is based on either the synoptic gospels or a combination of Luke and Acts which are only part of the scriptures of one religion namely Christianity. Secondly, the syllabus is designed for a multi-faith society as reflected in schools yet other religions like ATR, Islam, Buddhism, Baha'i and atheists among others, are excluded from the syllabus. Thirdly, the virtue of respect for other religions remains elusive to the syllabus because there is no comparative analysis from other religions to give an appreciation of interfaith dialogue. Fourthly, the syllabus does not foster flexibility and open-mindedness that is needed in the globalised world because the method used requires the pupils to be descriptive rather than analytical. As such the research provide some critical reflection on the syllabus and concludes with some recommendations on how to improve the syllabus.

Patricia K. Chetty and Irvin G. Chetty investigated the factors influencing the choice of Religion Studies in Grade 10 by the learners, educators and principals. The subject has been phased in from Grade 10 in 2006, Grade 11 in 2007 and Grade 12 in 2008. Minimal research has been conducted on the factors influencing the choice of this subject in Grade 10 by the learners, educators and principals. Is their choice of the subject by the learners motivated by their vocational and career goals? The issue of the learner's choice deserves some detailed explanation. In the National Curriculum Statement when the learner reaches Grade 10, four compulsory subjects must be offered: two official languages, Mathematics or Mathematics Literacy, and Life Orientation – out of seven subjects. The learner has to then choose three optional subjects offered by the institution. Not every approved subject is offered by every school. Schools chose to offer subjects from an approved list which can include commercial, technical, humanities or specialist arts subjects. Religion Studies is one of these optional subjects. Some of the seminal questions that the research sought to answer are: What

do learners expect from this subject? Why are they offering this subject? Is the principal's choice of offering this subject in support of the learner's career goals? Are the learner's choice correlated with the intention of the policy makers? Are the educators also in support of the learner's vocational goals? What are the factors that have influenced the choice of Religion Studies as a subject in the FET Band by all the key stakeholders?

Johannes A. Smit and Beverly Vencatsamy report on an analysis of a sample of the modules offered in the discipline of Religion at the University of KwaZulu-Natal – introduced in 2005 at Howard College campus. Founded in 2000, the programme was conceptualised in a consciously positioned postapartheid paradigm. The article provides a brief background for the programme, and then proceeds to analyse a selection of the first and second level modules, focusing on the steady growth experienced, 2005 – 2010. This is followed by an analysis of the home disciplines of students and the reasons why they enrolled for RELG101 and RELG106. Finally, the article deals with the interdisciplinary potential this focus on the programme in Religion reveals. The assumption is that such analyses reveal observable trends that need to be taken into consideration in the further offering and developing of the modules – as well as the programme more broadly speaking.

Stephen F. Bigger's article discusses the nature of criticality for religious education curriculum and pedagogy, with a particular focus on marriage in Hebrew Bible (Old testament or OT) texts. First, 'criticality' is defined in historical and literary terms, asking questions of what the Bible writers meant and intended. Secondly, the use of Bible texts is explored through the prism of 'critical theory', in which social critique particularly emphasises notions of justice, equity and democratic 'voice'. The presence of secular Jewish thought within the Frankfurt school of social-critical thought suggests some influence from the ancient Jewish prophetic call for everyday justice. Thirdly, he explores synergies between critical theory and the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*, 'practical wisdom' on effective living, as developed by Bent Flyvbjerg and colleagues. Through these lenses, the he then assess the way marriage is discussed and taught in religious education in Africa and elsewhere. He concludes his study by providing some pointers as to the broader potential for this mix of Critical Theory and *phronesis* for education more broadly speaking.

Finally Suren Naicker studies the metaphors employed by Swami

Vivekananda to explain otherwise abstruse philosophical principles within the Hindu school of thought. He mainly focuses on the *Advaita Vedanta*, which maintains that there is no duality of existence despite the appearance of such. Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory as a framework, and Corpus Linguistics as a tool, the article explores Vivekananda's complete works. It con-cludes that, unlike mainstream Western religions, which employ primarily the FAMILY frame to conceptualise God, this is not so within Vivekananda's Hinduism. Even though he does use this frame, he more often than not draws on the WATER frame to explain concepts, thereby providing an alternative conceptualization.

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Legal and Civic Contestations over Tolerance in South Africa's National Policy on Religion and Education

Federico Settler

Abstract

It has been 10 years since the late Minister of Education, Kader Asmal introduced the National Policy on Religion and Education. Crafted to provide a framework for the regulation for teaching and learning about religion in public education, the policy has been widely criticized and condemned by groups who fear the erosion of religion education is public schools. Despite the sustained contestation and challenges to the policy, many believe that the policy created a space for a non-sectarian and non-confessional treatment of religion in the public domain. However the National Policy on Religion and Education's ambivalences about value of religion, and the limits of enforcement has left it vulnerable. In this article I propose to argue that it is precisely through its vulnerability we might find its most profound contribution to religion education in South Africa. I want to suggest that through a range of legal challenges to the policy framework and its proposed implementation of religion education in public schools, whether about a nose-stud or head covering, a goatskin bracelet, about meditation or the limits and liberties of School Governing Bodies, the policy has sparked vibrant and necessary public debates concerned with the effective teaching and learning about religion in public schools.

Keywords: Religion education, law, policy, religious freedom, tolerance

Since the late-Apartheid period the public school classroom in Southern Africa has been a site of contestation over the role and place of religion. The

advent of democracy marked not only the introduction of more equitable and inclusive social practices, but also significantly saw the removal of Apartheid practices and policies that privileged one worldview over another. These social and political changes marked a break with not only segregationist public education but also extended itself to more inclusive ways of teaching and learning about religion.

The 1976 student protests were punctuated with the assertion 'equal education for all' and this ideal was always underscored by the conviction that the classroom is a site of struggle (Kraak 1998: 2). Similarly, while in the post-Apartheid South Africa the obvious institutional obstacles to an equitable education have been removed, the nature of the classroom has remained much the same - a site of struggle - where many issues of difference, inclusion and identity have been thought out and worked out. Religion education has been one such contested subject. Parents, pupils and principals have variously been embroiled in legal and religious challenges anticipated by the *National Policy on Religion and Education*. These challenges have included expulsions, suspensions and withdrawals of learners from schools for issues ranging from wearing headscarves, or nose studs, religious assemblies to dreadlocks or a goatskin bracelet, to name a few. These have often ended up in court where either parents or the School Governing Body (SGB) sought an intervention from the court.

In this article I will consider the tensions between the policy and the practice of religion in public schools, and in particular I will consider recent challenges that have been posed by, and in opposition to, the *National Policy on Religion and Education*. To do this I will consider the various case law and recent public debates pertaining to religion in public education. I will illustrate how opponents and critics of the current multi-religion approach are using some of the ambivalence in the legislation to justify their reluctance or refusal to implement the above policy. Despite the opposition, it appears that challenges by various faith communities for broader inclusion indicate the success of the policy insofar as it reflects the emergence of a school culture where all religious and non-religious traditions are considered with equal regard. I will argue that increasingly diverse debates on the policy will ultimately validate the current policy as both constitutional and in the best interests of learners regardless of the religious, moral or cultural community that they are part of.

Federico Settler

The contestation between supporters and critics of the *National Policy on Religion and Education* concerning its implementation, monitoring and enforcement seems quite significantly to be an issue of social contract. Enlightenment philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau asserted that legislation find its meaning and validity through civic participation. He argued that executive administration is flawed when it regarded itself as superior to those they manage and that it would result in inevitable conflicts of agendas and interests. In his book *The Social Contract* originally published in 1762, Rousseau explains that voluntary and willed consent is the foundation for people's obligation to obey legislation. He goes on to explain that

> the people being subject to the laws, ought to be their author: the conditions of the society ought to be regulated solely by those who come together to form it (Rousseau 2005: 41).

Accordingly those entrusted with the executive power to uphold the *National Policy on Religion and Education* are facing challenges on based on the conviction that this policy does not represent civic interest, and supposedly fails, does not reflect the will of many people.

South African debates on religion education has varied from militant *denialist* assertions that Christian education must form the foundation of moral and civic education, to *secularist* demands that religion should be removed from the national curriculum for public schools altogether. Though some feared the retreat of religion from the public arena, what we have instead witnessed is the increased visibility of religion, through provisions in Section 15(1) of the Constitution which recognizes the 'right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion'. Where previously, Christianity was privileged over other religions, the new multi-religion approach has for example made possible the mainstreaming of African indigenous traditions into learning and teaching about religion (Kwenda 1997) as well as a wider recognition and more equitable celebration of diversity in religious observances at public schools.

As a response to the tension raised by the national policy proponents and critics of the new policy have variously sought to utilize legislation as a way to promote their respective religious or non-religious interests. For example, there are those who fear that the new policy on religion and

education, together with the South African Schools Acts, and the Prevention of Discrimination and Promotion of Equality Act, amount to too much interference by the state in religious matters. Accordingly a coalition of interfaith leaders came together in 2008 to draft and promote the *South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms*. Drafted by representatives from twenty-one Christian denominations, African Independent churches, as well as from Muslims and Jewish religious communities, and SA Tamil Federation, this Charter seeks to roll back what they perceive to be the erosion of religious rights under the then political administration. I mention the Charter because, despite the religious diversity of its promoters, a close reading of the Charter reveals a conservative fault line.

The Charter contains fifteen clauses that deal with the issue of religion and education, most of which stand in direct opposition to the current policy on religion education. Thus, like those who seek to use minority rights legislation to promote the practice of single faith schools, the coalition also asserted in its charter that:

> … no person may be subjected to any form of force or indoctrination that may change or compromise their religion, belief or worldview (s 2.5).

> … every person has the right to conduct single-faith religious observances, expressions and activities in state or state-aided institutions … (s 4).

What this illustrates is that the role of religion in public education remains hotly contested despite the *National Policy on Religion and Education* being in effect for a decade. Interestingly, the 2010 Pew Research Forum on Religion and Public Life released a report, *Tolerance and Tension: Islam and Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa*, which suggested that despite widespread adherence to religion, South Africa continue to suffer from a high rate of religious illiteracy. According to the report 76% of Christians in South African say that they don't know very much about Islam, and yet this does not preclude them from drawing conclusions about other religions. For example, 63% of Christians say that despite not knowing anything about

Islam, they believe Islam and Christianity to be different (Lugo 2010). This religious illiteracy together with the report finding that 66% of Christians in South Africa would like the Constitution to be replaced by the bible as the official law of the land (Lugo 2010), not only indicate that learning about religion in public schools are critical but also that it will continue to be highly contested terrain for some time to come.

Central to the South African Constitution is the principle for equality, and as such it allows for the celebration and recognition of all religions in South Africa, and the simultaneous protection of all citizens from religious coercion or discrimination. However, this provision essentially addresses the roles and responsibility of the state insofar as it concerns religion, and for our purposes religion education. South African law seeks to maintain a balance between promotion *of*, and protection *from* religion (Currie & De Waal 2005: 338). This approach to religion in the public domain is particularly evident from the state's simultaneous recognition of, and the limitation of the rights of Traditional Authorities in the post-apartheid era. The post Apartheid state raised the profile of indigenous belief and practices by granting it renewed and legitimate status. By the process of removing it from the charismatic realm and institutionalizing it with the establishment of the House of Traditional Leaders the state succeeded in limiting the political force of traditional authorities (Settler 2009).

But the state has not always been successful in containing the organic and charismatic forces of religion, because while it contained the volatile potential of African traditional religion through its *recognition* of traditional leadership practices and customary laws, it has not been so successful in allaying the anxieties of those linguistic, religious and cultural communities, who believe that the state's integrationist policies threatens to erode their religious and cultural values. For example, Afrikaners groups who feared the wave of political changes that came about after the end of Apartheid invoked Section 185 and 186 of the 1996 Constitution on the grounds that as a minority group they should be entitled to the protection of their language, religion and culture practices. As such, they argued that their religion, cultural and religious values needed to be given special consideration. For example, Constand Viljoen of the Freedom Front, as early as the late 1990s invoked minority rights legislation to argue for the need to make provision for single-medium schools for minorities who wanted them.

He went on to suggest that such schools would be staffed by teachers of the same cultural (religious) group, and that the school governing body (SGB) should be run by parents of the same religious, cultural and linguistic background (Viljoen 1997). Likewise, in the case of *Christian Education of South Africa vs Minister of Education* (2000), this association of 196 independent Christian schools felt that the South African Schools Act's prohibition of corporal punishment was a violation of their rights to freedom of religion. In his finding, Judge Albie Sachs argued that the Schools Act's prohibition did not interfere with the Christian character of the school and that parents were not being asked to choose between following the law and following their conscience, and as such the court felt that parents could not instruct teachers to inflict corporal punishment in the name of their religious conviction.

However, UN Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief a child may have access to education and to matters of religion and belief but it declared that a child may not be compelled to receive teaching in religion and belief which goes against the wishes of the parents or guardians (UN GA Res. 36/55). In a similar tone van der Vyver reminds us that the Constitutional court in *Christian Education South Africa vs Minister of Education* did recognise that

> parents have a general interest in living their lives in a community setting according to their religious beliefs, and a more specific interest in directing the education of their children (Sachs 2000).

Despite the fact that it is widely recognized that in South Africa Christians constitute the majority and Muslims are a meaningful minority (Niehaus 2002: 121), in a 2010 blog discussion, on Pierre Vos' *Constitutionally Speaking* when he discussed 'do we have freedom of conscience and religion at public schools?' one commentator dismissively asserted that Muslims represented a small minority of the population, while another insisted that the new religion education policy created a situation 'where sensitive minorities land up dictating to the majority what they may or may not do'. However, the late Minister of Education, Kader Asmal argued that 'despite the wish of a majority of parents for different brands of

religious education' such a model would not likely be put in place because religious instruction or indoctrination has no place in public schools and should be addressed at home by parents or by religious bodies (Dickson & Von Vollenhoven 2002: 15). Nonetheless, Christian leaders, in a statement entitled 'Freedom of Religion in Education' and signed by fifteen of the country's leading Christian denominations criticized the policy on religion and education by arguing that, (1) a multi-religion approach discriminated against their belief insofar as learners will be expected to 'uphold values and beliefs that are in conflict' with their faith, for example the suggestion that all truth claims are equally valid; (2) that a multi-religion approach is not free of dogma because it promotes a state-driven secularism, a position they do not regard as not neutral; (3) that the policy is unconstitutional in that it sought to override and erode the rights of school governing bodies to decide a school's position on religious observances (Coertzen *et al.* 2009: 2).

While they argued that religion education can make 'a key contribution to the moral and spiritual maturity of a person' their primary objection was to 'a pure comparative multi-religious approach as the only option' for public schools. Although Christians were not the only ones to raise these objections to the policy, they remained the most vocal of all the faith communities. David Chidester (2006: 63) suggested that the anxieties of faith communities about the policy on religion education rest in the failure or refusal to recognize 'the difference between religious, theological or confessional interest, and the educational objectives of religion education'. Some scholars have argued that religion can act as a development asset but they distinguish between religious involvement in education and religiosity (Bosacki 2010). Such distinction rests on the conviction that while religious involvement in education can help young people choose healthy paths and make wise decisions, religious participation in faith communities may help to mitigate against undesirable behaviour.

In South Africa the debate is located at the intersection of official discourse and civil society concerns. In their article *Advancing Religion Studies in Southern Africa* Smit and Chetty (2009: 332) offered a critical discussion of Albie Sachs' five constitutional options which ranged from the theocratic to the secular, to demonstrate the salience of, and appetite for religion in both legal and civic domains. We must therefore ask whether these challenges should be regarded as crippling contradictions as some

critics of the policy might have us believe, or if these debates indicate a necessary and creative tension. Despite the fact that it is not a religious state, in terms of 'public education, South Africa remains favourably disposed towards promoting spiritual values in the minds of young people' (van der Vyver 2007: 94). For example, Section 7 of the South African Schools Act is consistent with Section 15 of the 1996 Constitution insofar as it makes provision for the religious observances to be conducted in schools, provided that they are voluntary and free, and finally, based on the principle of equality wherein no religion will dominate over others. South Africa's education reform sought to give recognition to those religions, languages and cultures that were previously marginalized, while at the same time offering safeguards to protect minority groups. This provision extends also to the white Afrikaner religious, linguistic and cultural minority despite the fact that such protection might be regarded as an entrenchment of white privilege (Mothatha & Lemmer 2002: 101). However, these debates have reflected not only the interests of Afrikaner minorities but also the interests of those who wished to school their children in religious, cultural and linguistic traditions which they feel are not given adequate provision in current public education. These include groups as diverse as the Freedom Front, the Hindu Association of the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape Council for Aborigines, amongst others (Mothatha & Lemmer 2002: 108). Such groups have variously sought recognition for a separate provision for their languages, religions and cultures in general and in public schools.

The 1992 National Education Policy Investigation's committee argued that any form of religious education that privileged one tradition above another was likely to lead to religious discrimination or coercion (Chidester 2006: 66). Elsewhere Chidester (2003) concluded that

> religious opposition or support, however, cannot determine national policy for religion in public education. Instead, as the new policy insists, the role of religion in the schools must be consistent with constitutional provisions for freedom of religious and other beliefs and freedom from religious and other discrimination.

The underlying assumption underscoring the *National Policy on Religion and Education* is that the more we learn about one another, the more

likely we are to embrace difference. However, in a context wherein schools and educators have not only privileged Christianity, but also taught learners about African indigenous religions as animism, magic and superstition, religious tolerance would prove challenging for a long time. In her article *Children's Spirituality in a Social Context* Cornelia Roux argues that Christian national education 'alienated many South Africans from different religious and cultural groups' (Roux 2006). However, the challenge for South Africa was not simply to reverse alienation but to create a culture where learners can learn *about*, and *from* other religions.

As I have suggested, despite their embracing religious diversity, the leaders of various faith communities continued to advocate a multi-single tradition approach to religion education (Coertzen *et al.* 2009). This model operated on the assumption that faith traditions existed as separate entities or institutions and that religion education was only partly about learning about other religions. Historically, many teachers taught religion education in terms of the values and morals of a religious society where Christianity is privileged and other traditions are tolerated (Roux 2006: 152). Thus Christian leaders, in the early 1990s appealed to government that schools be offered a range of options to how the learning and teaching about religion should be conducted, so as to avoid animosity or antagonism towards other faith traditions (Kitshoff 1994: 320).

In considering the response of religious leaders to the new policy, I want to revisit the World Conference on Religion and Peace that was held in Cape Town in July 1992. At this meeting Muslims, Christians, Jews and Hindus negotiated a framework for the free exercise of religion in the new South Africa. Not only did they seek to define the role of faith communities in relation to the state, but they also explicitly outlined their position on religion education. In the *Draft Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Religious People*, the conference took the following position on religion education:

- The objective of all religious education shall be to engender understanding, appreciation and tolerance of all religious traditions and to promote the national goals of a nonracial and nonsexist South African society.

- Children shall enjoy the right to education in religion or belief in accordance with the wishes of their parents or guardians and shall not be compelled to receive any such teaching against the wishes of their parents or guardians.

The conference reflected a clear preference for a multi-religion approach to teaching about religion. However, there remained a strong assertion that faith development should remain the responsibility of the home because the role of public education is the development of a better society. However, what is striking about the declaration is that delegates regarded themselves as partnered with the new state, in promoting 'the national goals'. Thus Kitshoff (1994: 321) concluded that for the delegates of the 1992 conference 'religion education must be geared to nation-building in general and not faith-building in particular'.

More recently, that mood of optimism and tolerance, previously enjoyed by faith communities has been replaced by practices and feelings of alienation. As I have suggested above, this is evident from the 2008 meeting of religious leaders who drafted the *Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms*. This coalition consisted of all the main religious traditions but also representatives of minority groups not previously represented. The 'continuation committee' included among others Prof. Rassie Malherbe, a long-time conservative advocate for Christian education in public schools as well as Dr Nokuzola Mndende of the Icamagu Institute for African indigenous religions, who had previously campaigned for a multi-religion approach that included African religions. Despite the diverse religious and political interests of the coalition members, earlier ideals of a nation-building partnership with the State were now being replaced with assertions religious of independence. Their assertion of independence was evident in the framing of the document insofar as it sought the practice religion in schools free from the control of the state. Among the clauses within the coalition's Charter it states that:

- Every person has the right on the grounds of their conviction to refuse (a) to perform certain duties, or to participate or indirectly assist in certain activities, such as those of a military or *educational* nature (clause 2.3)

- Every person has the right to conduct single-faith religious obser-vances, expressions and activities in state or state-aided institutions, as long as such observances, expressions and activities follow the rules made by the *appropriate public authorities* are conducted on an equitable basis and attendance at them is free and voluntary. (clause 4.4)

Apart from the evidently proselytizing intent of the above statement, which has some relevance to public education, the Coalition drafted a Clause 7 to specifically address their concerns about religion in public schools. The clause states that:

- Every person shall have the right to be educated or to educate their children, or have them educated, in accordance with their religious or philosophical convictions

- The state, including any public school, has the duty to respect this right and to inform and consult with parents on these matters. Parents may withdraw their children from school activities or programs inconsistent with their religious or philosophical convictions. (clause 7.1)

- Every institution may adopt a particular religious or other ethos, as long as it is observed in an equitable, free, voluntary and non-discriminatory way, and with due regard to the rights of minorities (clause 7.2)

- Every private educational institution established on the basis of a particular religion, philosophy or faith may impart its religious or other convictions to all children enrolled at that institution, and may refuse to promote, teach or practice any religious or other conviction other than its own. Children enrolled at that institution (or their parents) who do not subscribe to the religious or other convictions practiced at that institution waive their right to insist not to participate in the religious activities of the institution. (clause 7.3)

Now, despite the fact that this charter appears to stand in contradiction to the *National Policy on Religion and Education*, it also seeks to create a proselytizing culture within public schools. Interestingly, despite the divisive nature of the proposed charter, it was nonetheless signed by many who claim to be opposed to religious discrimination. Unlike the 1992 *Declaration on the Rights and Responsibilities of Religious People* which sought to align religious interest with nation-building interest, the 2009 *Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms* clearly asserts the independence of religious interests from the programmes of the State. In particular, the Charter asserts the right of religious parents or their children to not participate in educational activities that are in opposition to their convictions, and yet the signatories to the Charter at the same time paradoxically wish to retain the right to proselytize or impose their religious views on others.

The drafters of the Charter invoked a statement from former constitutional court Judge, Albie Sachs as a motivation for them drafting the charter. In this statement, reminiscent of Rousseau's *Social Contract*, Sachs suggested that,

> ideally in South Africa, all religious organisations and persons concerned with the study of religion would get together and draft a charter of religious rights and responsibilities … it would be up to the participants themselves to define what they consider to be their fundamental rights (Sachs 1990: 46-47).

The drafters go on to suggest that in a democratic society it cannot be left to the state alone to determine the rights and limitations of religious communities, in matters that 'they have a direct interest and of which they have intimate knowledge (Coertzen *et al.*)'. This Charter has not been welcomed by all, and one observer who sees it as an essentially Christian initiative, remarked that 'no matter what we do or achieve the same matter will always appear. Christians will always try to force themselves on us' (Coertzen 2010).

Thus it would appear that, despite some continuity with the 1992 *Declaration on Rights and Responsibilities of Religious People*, faith communities have become skeptical about a nation-building partnership with

the state. Instead of seeing the *National Policy on Religion and Education* as the recognition of, and protection from religion, religious communities appear to regard the policy as the restriction of religious rights and as the State's the over-regulation of religion in public schools.

While the first post-apartheid religion education policy was focused on the departure from Christian dominance of religion education towards a multi-religion approach, the Revised National Curriculum Statement of 2002 was clear in its view of religion education as being of critical educational value, as opposed to religious value. It stated that:

> Religion Education … rests on a division of responsibilities between the state on the one hand and religious bodies and parents on the other. Religion Education, therefore, has a civic rather than a religious function, and promotes civic rights and responsibilities. In the context of the South African Constitution, Religion Education contributes to the wider framework of education by developing in every learner the knowledge, values, attitudes and skills necessary for diverse religions to co-exist in a multi-religious society. Individuals will realize that they are part of the broader community, and will learn to see their own identities in harmony with others (Department of Education 2002a; 2002b).

The earlier administration, under the direction of the first post-1994 Education, Minister Sibusiso Bengu (1994-1999), sought to forge a negotiated agreement on religion education with representatives of various faith communities, hoping that learning and teaching about religion would produce such social benefits as increased tolerance and understanding of diversity. Later, under the administration of the then minister of education, Kader Asmal, we saw the reconfiguring of religion education in terms of the human rights principle of equality. In shifting the focus towards human rights and constitutional values the minister achieved a decisive shift away from previous debates about religious education towards a focus on the educational benefits of learning about religion and traditions other than one's own.

Both the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (2001) and the *National Policy on Religion and Education* (2003), developed under the Asmal administration, was met with significant opposition. The two key

issues that provoked concerns from faith communities, parents and educators related to the issue of religious observance in schools, and that of learning, and teaching about religion. At that time, it was widely held that religion remained a valued aspect of school life that contributed to the social and moral development of learners. In October 2003, the then Premier of the Western Cape, Martinus van Schalkwyk (2003), during a meeting with the Full Gospel Church of Southern Africa observed that:

> Religion is becoming an increasingly important anchor in the lives of young people who live on communities under siege from drugs, prostitution and gangsterism. When we met recently with principals from schools across the Western Cape in formulating our response to the National Department of Education's initial proposals to eliminate religious observances in our schools, one principal after the other underlined the importance of the 20 minutes or half an hour of religious observances at school assemblies as anchors in the lives of our young people - especially in our most violent communities. We received the same message from learners, parents, community leaders and religious leaders from across the spectrum.

The Premier reported that principals found that the new policy was more disruptive than remedial, and that 'we shouldn't try to fix what is not broken ... but trust governing bodies at the schools to deal with this' (SAPA 2003). In his ministerial foreword to the policy, Kader Asmal was explicit in stating that in public schools no religious ethos should be dominant over, or suppress another. As if anticipating the concerns of the critics of religion in schools, the late minister stated clearly that 'we do not have a state religion. But our country is not a secular state' (Department of Education 2002: 2). The policy thus addressed religion education, religious instruction and religious observances as it relates to public schools.

It seems that an instrumentalist view of religion education predominated at this point. Despite the fact that critics of the current policy objected to the fact that as Mestry (2006: 61) argued 'religion education has a civic duty rather than a religious function, and promotes civic rights and responsibilities', they also sought to deploy religion or religion education in restoring a certain moral and ethical order, as was being suggested by former

Premier van Schalkwyk. Although many of critics of the state-led approach to religion education do not adhere to any form of religious tradition (Rousseau 2010), they do share, with the leaders of faith communities, a general anxiety that religion education might become a conduit or instrument of state-led agendas, thus undermining the interests of faith communities, and civil society in general.

But as the various stakeholders began to debate the merits of a single- or multi-faith tradition at a policy level, teachers, parents and school administrators sought to work out what this meant in practice. As such, I will highlight a number of court cases from the post-Apartheid era that illustrate the relative success and usefulness of the debates that have emerged as a result of the policy change. What these cases demonstrate is that the policy merely provided a prescriptive framework for learning and teaching about religion, and religious observances in schools, and as such it is the classroom that continues to be the site of struggle, the site where learners will learn to assert their voice and conviction, learn to listen and appreciate other ways of seeing the world, all the while learning to practice tolerance and equality.

In another debate on religion education prompted by Pierre de Vos' blog *Constitutionally Speaking* one contributor argues that 'religion does divide us' and he recalls an episode at Newcastle High School, in KwaZulu-Natal where the school governing body (SGB) succeeded in changing the school's Christian tradition of praise and worship at morning assemblies and proposed that it be replaced by a more inclusive moment of silence or a universal prayer. This provoked an angry response and in 2007 the Christian Parents Initiative took the SGB to Court. Despite the fact that the SGB won the case, the school continued to be plagued by factionalism. In a subsequent newspaper article Alec Hogg (2008), a former pupil from the school, suggested that the Christian-dominated school is being held to ransom by 'a relatively small group of Indian parents'.

In 2005 a KwaZulu-Natal parent sought relief from the court when her daughter, who was a learner at Durban Girls' High School was deemed to be in violation of the school's code of conduct for wearing a nose stud. The nose stud was in keeping with the family's cultural traditions and the family felt that the school's request amounted to a violation of her daughter's constitutional right to practice the religious tradition of her choice. The Durban Equality Court found in favour of the MEC for Education and the

school governing body (SGB), and the learner was instructed to adhere to the school's code of conduct and to remove the nose stud. However the Constitution court would eventually find in favour of the plaintiff citing the school failure to provide 'reasonable accommodation of religious and cultural deviation' (De Wall *et al.* 2011: 73).

The above cases dealt with the role and independence of school governing bodies, whether they seek to introduce a multi-religion approach, or whether to ensure uniformity in their practices as they relate to religious observances or conduct. Similar challenges are being worked out in South African schools on a daily basis. SGBs are tasked with developing a 'mission statement, as well as a code of conduct for the school, presumably including the particulars of religious worship, observances and exercises to be conducted within the school'. At one Johannesburg school Muslim learners had to deal with challenges to their right to wear a headscarf with their uniform (Rondganger & Govender 2004), while at another school another learner was instructed to remove is goatskin bracelet (*isiphandla*) because it was in violation of the school's jewellery code despite that fact that this is not how it was being worn (Monayi 2007). Though there are countless incidents of students having been suspended for expressing religious views or violating the school conduct as a result of wearing religion-specific attire, school governing bodies are wrestling with finding a balance between changing the culture of South African schools and the consistent application of an equitable policy on religious diversity. Following the Antonie case at Settlers High School in Cape Town, wherein the scholar sought relief from the court following a suspension from school for wearing dreadlocks, the court found that in favour of the scholar and asserted that

> freedom of expression is more than freedom of speech. The freedom of expression includes the right to seek, hear, read and wear. The freedom of expression is extended to forms of outward expression as seen in clothing selection and hairstyles. However, students' rights to enjoy freedom of expression are not absolute (Van Zyl 2002).

Public schools not only bring together learners from different racial and economic backgrounds, but significantly also bring together learners from diverse religious and other households. Although van Vollenhoven and

Blignaut (2007: 5) identified these challenges as problems which they believe to be the result of a dichotomy between Western and Muslim rights discourses, it seems to me that it is precisely this diversity that has afforded South Africa the opportunity to work out a co-operative approach to religion education. In particular it makes possible the resolution of the tensions and ambivalence that have undermined the relative independence of School Governing Bodies to determine the culture and policies of the school, and which plagued the consistent implementation of the *National Policy on Religion and Education*.

Another major concern from critics of the *National Policy on Religion and Education* is that it infringes on the rights of parents to determine the kind of religious values and education their children should receive. This debate was in part reflected in the 2000 court case between Christian Education South Africa and the Minister of Education, a case which centred on the constitutionality of the South African Schools Act's prohibition of corporal punishment in independent Christian schools (South African Schools Acts 1996). Christian Education South Africa representing 196 independent Christian schools argued that the prohibition violated the right to self-determination afforded religious communities. The group argued that 'its member schools operated within an active Christian ethos and that corporal punishment was an important part of that ethos' (Mestry 2007: 60). However, the court found that the South Africa Schools Act did in fact credibly limit the schools right of freedom of religion. Thus the argument that corporal punishment as part of a Christian ethos could not be upheld whether at a public institution or at an independent Christian school. The court found that corporal punishment – motivated by a religious belief – violated a learner's right to human dignity because 'flogging children has been designated in South Africa, and elsewhere, as a cruel and inhuman (degrading) punishment' (Van der Vyver 2007:97). In ruling of constitutional court Judge, Sachs (2000) stated that:

> Believers cannot claim an automatic right to be exempted by their beliefs from the laws of the land. At the same time, the state should, wherever possible seek to avoid putting believers to extremely painful and burdensome choices of either being true to their faith or else respectful of the law.

Not surprisingly, public schools currently assume a position of neutrality or expulsion of religion education, which the critics of the *National Policy on Religion and Education*, such as Malherbe (2004: 48), regarded as not neutral because it compels learners to look at matters of faith from a particular point of view. These critics held the opinion that such critical learning about religion(s), including their own, ultimately served the interests of the state and not that of personal salvation nor that of a confessional community. They believed that since the majority of South Africans are Christians, religion in public schools should reflect this demographic. In 2004, thirteen-year old Lamiah Khan was instructed by her principal at a Gauteng school to remove her headscarf because it was not part of the schools uniform. This echoed some of the peculiar reasoning advanced in 1989 when a learner at a German School in Pretoria sought the right not to attend religious observance, but the court – like Lamiah's school principal - found that she and her parent waived the right not to attend religious observances because by voluntarily enrolling at the school she subjected herself to its rules and regulations. However, despite that fact that the 2003 *National Policy on Religion and Education* were constrained in its prescription regarding religious character of independent religious schools, it requires that all teaching and learning of religions be measured by the same educational outcomes.

Notwithstanding, these cautionary provisions and limitations in the *Policy on Religion and Education*, the case history suggest the emergence of a worrying trend whereby the onus is put on learner to seek relief from the court in cases of overt discrimination or limitation of their rights. In most of the cases cited above it was the scholars or their parent/ guardian who sought the intervention of the court in opposing a School Governing Body policies and practices which tended to uncritically uphold protestant Christianity as the legal and social norm. More significantly, School Governing Bodies end up perceiving their role as maintaining the status quo rather than to create the educational environment, which is not always perceived as 'traditional character of the school' but an environment where a learners' dignity is upheld and he/ she is (for our purposes) protected from, or enacting religious discrimination and coercion.

In discussing *Beyond Policy Options* Chidester *et al.* recalls a lecture by Albie Sachs in which he suggests that the relation between state and

religion ultimately, can only be best managed through cooperation or a cooperative model, which he also advised for religion in public education. However, that was in 1994, and although the idea of a cooperative model characterises the current National Policy on Religion and Education through which the state seeks greater access to religious capital in the building of a moral and civil state, civil society – and faith communities in particular - appear to use religion education as a means to assert and guard its independence from the state. Of the cases and examples discussed above it would seem that the *National Policy on Religion and Education* has provoked a necessary and healthy debate, which should be viewed as an indication of a healthy democracy instead of seeing it as an internally coherent policy. Ultimately, the policy provides a broad framework that makes provision for religion education which is free from discrimination, or coercion, and it limits the infringement on the religious interests of different faith communities or those who hold non-religious beliefs and opinions. However, without the legal and civil society challenges to the policy, whether in support or opposition, religion in public education will become discretionary and likely to continue to serve implemented to serve the interests of hegemonic, and normative groups. Thus I conclude with a final word by Jean-Jacques Rousseau on civil religion:

> If it is asked how in pagan times, where each State had its cult and its gods, there were no wars of religion, I answer that it was precisely because each State, having its own cult as well as its own government, made no distinction between its gods and its laws. Political war was also theological; the provinces of the gods were, so to speak, fixed by the boundaries of nations.

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Religion, Education and Citizenship Education: The Challenge of Turning Religion Upside Down

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Abstract
Reflecting on the link between religion and religious tradition(s) on the one hand and school and education on the other, and reflecting on the reasoning strategy to make sense of this link, people seem to tend strongly to think, argue and reflect in a deductive mode (this point is elaborated in par. 3). This part of the argument is followed by considering the religious claims people make concerning the impact of religion on the day-to-day educational practice, it is, empirically speaking. It is apparently wrong to take this deductive reasoning serious as a road to undisputable and unambiguous links between claims and practices (this point is elaborated in par. 4). Having identified deductive reasoning as wishful thinking or as a supposed but inadequate religious legitimatization of educational practices, which is demonstrated by the empirical educational praxis itself, the final part of the article deals with the question that arises again and anew, viz. how educational practices could be understood in their connection to religious beliefs (see par. 5). Here a paradigm-shift is needed.

Keywords: Religious Education, Religious schools, Diversity, Pillarization, Dutch Educational system

1. Introduction
Once I was observing an RE-lesson of a student-teacher. The lesson was about the Islam tradition and the student was doing well in explaining 'the five pillars of Islam' (the credo, the daily prayers, almsgiving, fasting and

pilgrimage) and the way these 'five acts, considered obligatory by believers, function as a kind of framework for worship and a point of reference for sincere commitment to Islam'.

Sitting in the back of the classroom I got the impression that the student was relatively successful in presenting a clear explanation of Islamic beliefs and practices, and in a way that the learners got involved. The interesting context of this lesson was a school with a formal Christian and with a mixed school population, located in a multi-cultural area in Rotterdam, the second biggest city in the Netherlands. The mixed population of the area was mirrored in the composition of the class room group. Many learners came from ethnic minority groups.

A very interesting moment was created by a boy who made clear to be a Muslim, but who apparently did not recognize very much from the contents of the lesson about 'the five pillars of Islam'; let aside that he could show and 'proof' to fellow classmates that he was a committed Islam-believer by means of the frame of reference that was just presented by the teacher.

Reflecting on the lesson afterwards, we discussed the question how to evaluate this incident. Was this a satisfying lesson on Islam? The contents, were they alright? After all, who is in charge to determine the contents of a RE-lesson? Is it 'the curriculum'? If so, then the question is transferred to another level, but essentially the question remains the same. But also, if the curriculum is in charge, the question is how dominant it should play a role in the topical development of the teaching process. And of course, how would the Muslim boy evaluate the lesson? And as the underpinning of an answer: whose claim about commitment is most valid, the boy's (as a believer) or the teacher's (as the outsider, but expert in religious studies)?

2. The Dutch Background of a 'pillarized' Educational System

Writing in an international (and so inevitably comparative) context, for a better understanding of the proposed shift in thinking, some background information about the Dutch national educational system is needed. In the Netherlands, the debate on the 'identity of a school' is influenced by the long

and dominant history of a close link between religious traditions (mainly the Christian tradition) and the design of the national school system. For almost 100 years now, most schools, formally speaking, are so called Christian schools. This is not an accidental adverb that is used to indicate some of the Dutch schools, but it is a specific indication for a certain grouping of schools ('pillars'; Dutch: 'zuilen') and it has a strong juridical basis. In any discussion on the relationship between religion and education, it is important to see the Dutch situation in the light of an educational policy that is strongly determined by *Article 23 of the Constitution*. This Article proclaims the right of all people to establish a school by themselves and to organise and provide education. Of course, such a right is restricted by basic criteria of quality and quantity, but in principle, everyone is free to set up schools by private initiative. Apart from this, the State provides public education. It is important to know that in a highly secularized and religiously diverse country, public schools account for only 25% of the schools; the rest is composed out of different types of private schools, providing education from a specific religious background or a specific pedagogical or philosophical concept. Examples of these schools are Roman Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, Jewish, Hindu, Montessori, Jenaplan, Waldorf schools (in Dutch: 'Vrije Scholen') and others. Remarkable is that about 30% of the total number of Dutch schools is Roman Catholic and roughly another 30% is Protestant. Of the 15% of private schools left, some only have a specific pedagogical or philosophical background, and some in combination also regard themselves as 'Christian'. After all, this means that about 65% of the schools in the Netherlands are formally speaking Christian schools (Ter Avest, Bakker *et al.* 2007: 203-220; Vreeburg 1997).

This dual system could be seen as the rather common distinction between public schools (*'openbare scholen'*) and private schools (*'bijzondere scholen'*). However, in comparison with the situation in other countries, it is important to realise that the State pays the full costs of running all schools, which is a crucial difference. Nearly one century of this educational policy[1] has led to a rather rigid 'pillarized' educational system

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[1] The freedom of education, including the equalisation of the financial treatment of public and private schools, has been guaranteed by law since 1921.

(*verzuiling*): education is organised on specific philosophical, religious and/or pedagogical foundations; schools with the same affiliation are clustered in separate and rather isolated 'pillars'. In the past, even the recent past, these pillars used to function largely independent from each other.

In former days this picture of a fragmented society was not only true in education, but the whole of Dutch society was organised in 'pillars', creating sub-societies with their own unions, newspapers, political parties, health care systems, and so on. Homogeneity within a specific pillar was a common good. The religious orientation of the various 'domains-of-living' (family, church, school, work, union, newsmedia) was more or less similar, so there was a close relationship between the religious orientation of the family a child was raised in, the church the family belonged to and the school the children attended. This was, sociologically speaking, supported by sets of life-styles and conceptions of the good that were not questioned and were shared by all those belonging to the pillar. It is since the sixties that society has changed fundamentally (no more traditional 'pillars', only some remnants here-and-there), but it is only in the last decades that some fundamental questions have been raised related to this pillarization in education. Despite this questioning *Article 23* is still there (Onderwijsraad 2012; Ter Avest *et al.* 2007).

Let us say, 'de-pillarized', and highly secularized and religiously diverse, Dutch society 'still' features a pillarized system of education all along the confessional dividing lines. This has important implications for the way education in general and Christian education in particular is shaped in daily practices. More than 1.3 million inhabitants out of 16 million have their roots in other countries and cultures. A small number of them are born in other Western countries, but the majority come from or have their roots in countries with other cultures. This very often implies that they belonged or belong to other religious traditions. In most cases, this means a tradition other than Christianity. Most of the ethnic minorities come from Morocco and Turkey and have an Islamic background. The second largest group is the people from Surinam with respectively a Hindu, Islamic or a Christian background. Next to this important tendency of an increase in ethnic, cultural and religious plurality there has been a strong turn to secularization. The statistics show that only 25% attend services on a regular basis (once a month or more; SCP).

Remarkably, still 65% of the schools are Christian schools. One can expect that since the sixties and parallel to developments in society a tension has developed between the formal that is denominational corporate identity of a school (the identity-on-paper) and the actual identity of the school (the identity-in-practice). Secularization, the increase of cultural and religious pluralism in society, combined with an open admittance policy in Christian schools, have not left the schools untouched. So, societal developments urged teachers, school directors, governors, but also the parents to reflect anew on the religious affiliation of a school (TerAvest 2007; Onderwijsraad 2012).

Today, a Christian school in most of the cases will have a plural school population, not at least also religiously speaking. So, no longer, there is a big difference to see between a Christian (private) school and a state (public) school. It is important to realize that the variety in religious and cultural plurality differs from school to school in general and also from Christian school to Christian school. At least the conclusion is undisputable to draw that the times of the religious homogeneity within a particular pillar are over (Braster 1996; Faber 2012; Ter Avest & Bakker 2009). In total 7.5% of the total Dutch school population comes from a non-Dutch background, and already in the beginning of the nineties a majority of the Christian schools have students from ethnic minorities, that is 53% in Protestants schools and 72% in Roman Catholic schools. Most of these students have a Muslim background (Ankersmit 1992).

The tendency towards secularization in society is reflected in both state and denominational schools. What is true for society in general is also true for children and their involvement in church life. So there are the Christian schools where – on an average – only 25% of the children/youngsters attend church services on a regular basis (Vreeburg 1997; SCP). This corresponds with the overall picture of society. Given this average, a huge variety is the daily reality, even to the extremes. Examples of this can be found in the big cosmopolitan cities in the midst or the western part of the Netherlands, where students from ethnic minorities form 80 or 90% of the school population, which is true for both public and private schools. In a research done by the Utrecht research group in the school year 1998-1999 the researchers came across a Protestant elementary school where only 11% of the parents identified themselves as Christians, 48% were Muslim, and 17%

were Hindu. A further 24% indicated that they had no specific religious background. Remembering the rigid segregation between the pillars in the recent past, it is also relevant to mention that among this 11% of Christians a number belonged to a Chinese church and that the majority belonged to the Roman Catholic Church due to their descent from the Cape Verde families (Ter Avest *et al.* 1999). A subtle marginal note would be than to realize that 'Roman-Catholic' is not the same as 'Protestant' and that Chinese churches have developed in their own ways, far away from Protestantism in the West ....

At the same time, it is good to realize that in the pillar of Christian schools there are 'still' the rather conservative schools with a strict and precise admittance policy, where one could expect a high grade of homogeneity. So, as said, there is a huge diversity within the pillars, originally designed with the opposite intention (Bakker & Rigg 2004).

In this changing landscape Christian schools react in many different ways. They could either passively undergo these changes or could pro-actively try to develop a policy by which they could adequately deal with the changed and still changing circumstances. However, how they react finally, the preceding and crucial question is if and how involved stakeholders reflect on the link between a religious tradition and the organizing of education.

3. Linking Religion and Education: The Default is a Deductive Way of Reasoning

Because of and against the background of the pillarized system of education teachers, school directors and school board members feel themselves obliged to legitimize why their school is called a Christian school and how their school could be distinguished from schools who function as pillars. Of course, this is not the daily concern of the teacher or school director (Bakker & Rigg 2004), but as soon as the issue about the 'identity of the school' is raised then an explanation seems to be expected. It is interesting to observe the kind of reasoning mechanism that is triggered to explain a school's position. Very often it is a rather naïve, deductive way of reasoning (Bakker 2002: 97-124; Bakker & Rigg 2004).

In the mechanism of a deductive reasoning a specific concept precedes the development of educational processes in the school. In other

words: one reasons from the general concept to the concrete practice(s). The ideal is that the daily practice is cultivated and modelled by the concept. The central and leading principles and concepts of the school (and/or its overarching foundation) are perceived more or less independently from the daily practices in the school. Is the school formally speaking a 'Christian school', which is formally articulated by its position in the Dutch educational context, then daily practice is supposed to be shaped by, translated from, derived from the Christian identity concept. Implicitly, without doubt, there will be a mutual influence between the dynamics of daily practice and the position and impact of the steering principles and concepts, and this will have its own effects, but when it comes to *explicit* reasoning and debate the default seems to be that this is not primarily taken in account. The concept concerned could have all kind of contents and shapes: it could be a specific Dutch-reformed theology, a concept of open catholic education, or the concept of 'active plurality' as it is proclaimed in the 'pillar' of the Dutch public schools. It could be a Hindu educational concept based on the Karmavidian tradition or a specific pedagogical concept (like e.g. Maria Montessori's). All these concepts are – in deductive reasoning mechanisms – perceived, experienced and very often cherished as absolute values. They are perceived by the stakeholders involved as good guarantees for good or even the best education. Once such a specific concept is chosen, the next job is to elaborate the concept and to translate this into good daily practices (Bakker & Rigg 2004).

Most easy this reflection process could be observed when it comes to explicit religious topics, like the policy making about school prayers, the objectives and contents of Religious Education or the ways religious feasts are expected to be celebrated. One could possibly presume that the more conservative and orthodox schools have a stronger inclination to reflect deductively like this, but in our observation this is not true. The more conservative argument that it is obliged for every child, whatever his background might be, to celebrate Christmas, because (!) the school is a Christian school, is as much a deductive way of reasoning as another Christian school where the team decides from (!) a more liberal theological point of view to cherish their concept of being good hosts and to organise *Id-ul-Fitr* (the breaking of the fasts), because of the many Muslim children that take part in the school population. Rather independent from their theological

position both schools reason from a certain general concept and interpretation of being a Christian school to the more concrete level of policy and decision making (Bakker & Ter Avest 2010; Faber 2012).

More difficult to recognize is this same pattern concerning the non-explicit religious practices. School culture, pedagogical concepts of childhood and cognitive development, a shared understanding and practice of 'good' (!) education, are without doubt somehow related to the leading concept and identity of the school. But how? And how do teachers reflect on this relationship?

Let me start wit an anecdote: to my surprise, but also what made me intellectually very much involved in these school ethos issues, was the following discovery. In 1998 I was asked to design a 2 year course for the teaching team of a primary school in the West of The Netherlands, downtown Rotterdam). The Christian identity of the school was frequently debated because of the high percentage of children with a Muslim background. After some time the discussion has got bogged down and people got frustrated. It seemed to be a good management decision to create time and space to renew the discussion and to ask 'someone from outside the school' to facilitate such a project, asking this person to monitor the talks and present some new ideas how you could possibly cope with dilemmas without clashing all the time. The leading question was: 'what does it mean to call your school a Christian school, given the Rotterdam context, and taking this context (in all its diversity) seriously for the full 100%?' We were already on track for some months when I discovered that many members of the team were participating simultaneously in an external course on 'Norms and Values; And how to take responsibility for this in the daily educational praxis'. Remarkably, reflection on the Christian identity of the school and the issue of 'Norms & Values' were not linked; not to say, was not seen as the same topic. It is an illustration how easily a gap could come up between the talks on the religious affiliation of the school and other practices in school. Or may be better put: there is a risk of an isolated talk on school identity.

Between 1999 and 2006 some of our research team were involved in a course module with the title 'The identity of the school'. This module was constituent part of a nationally organized 2-year course on school leadership. In the Netherlands, newly appointed school leaders were expected to attend this course (1 day a week) in order to be better prepared for their complicated

jobs. Besides all kind of managerial themes the students had the assignment to reflect on the question how they were leading the development of their school as an organisation. What did they do to have their teams involved in formulating a mission?, how do they act as critical discussion partners, both leading and compassionate?, and how would they put on the agenda the issue of school ethos and religious affiliation? For this assignment they wrote elaborate papers. We made a connection between the course (and how we were involved in this and our research programs). So, the written papers functioned in a twofold way: they were the students' input in the course with the ambition to discuss, to evaluate and finally to assess as well as the empirical data of our research project. Parallel to the courses we made an extensive analysis of the way school leaders reflect on the link between religion and their educational practices and we published on this afterwards (Bakker, Miedema & Van der Kooij 2007).

Also in this research project (as we had seen already in other research projects; Bakker & Rigg 2004) the conclusion was confirmed strongly that if a school leader is explicitly asked to reflect on the religious affiliation of his/her school, they start to reason deductively. We discussed this already before. In addition we made up the following conclusions:

First, the observations, reflections and perceptions of the principals are reported in 'the verbal mode'. Precisely because we notice that so much complexity and emotions and also biographical complexity is part-and-parcel of the identity-debate, we can be sure that many is lost in the verbalizing of the experiences. So, concerning the school leader as a person as well as the empirical praxis in school, there is much more dynamics and divergent complexity than what could ever be represented in a verbal reflection. Verbalizing is just a poor aspect of what is 'really' going on.

Secondly, theorizing and making analyses of these complicated matters with the help of theoretical distinctions (by using theory as analytical instruments), is a difficult exercise for the average principal. Going to and fro theory and praxis, the praxis often dominates theory. Not primarily because of difficulty of the intellectual effort or a lack of fascination, but just because of the high pressure of daily activities. Too less time for reflection. Very often it is experienced as a too demanding issue in policy-making to create time and space to make reflection possible, both at the individual level and the collective level (Bakker & Rigg 2004)

Nevertheless, thirdly, if a principal decides to create this time and space for reflection in the school's diary anyway, ambivalence is easily created. This ambivalence is related to the unclearliness where identity considerations should focus on. Is it only about explicit religious issues? Very often identity talks are interpreted in that direction, which quite easily suggests that school identity is restricted to the explicit religious domain and is going to be discussed isolated from other domains. The pitfall might be, again, that the average teacher is not aware of a broader interpretation of the school's identity by neglecting the daily decision-making, class room management, the assessment of learners' performances, etc. as if these issues were not at stake.

Finally, once the more this study makes clear that in Dutch education the homogeneity of the pillars in the educational system is of bygone times. The high number of principals that claim to work at a school with a specified and contextualized own program is the most explicit prove for this. At the same time we observe that the form and the formality of the pillarized system still exist, influencing the debates on the school's identity, be it in a varying way and intensity (Ter Avest, Bakker & Miedema 2008; Bakker & Rigg 2004; Bakker 2006). The challenge is to mobilize the 'thinking-power', the reflexivity of teachers and principals, to re-define the connection between (religious) commitments on the one hand and educational practices at the other. The reward for this will be *a more authentic narrative* on how one believes in the Christian, or the Muslim, or the Humanistic identity of the school.

Thus far I have focused very much on the 'meso-level' of school policy. On other levels we could distinguish similar reasoning schemes, e.g. on the micro-level of classroom teaching. The inclination to reason deductively is correspondingly demonstrated by the example at the beginning of this article. In this particular case deductive reasoning is at hand on two different dimensions. The first is how we are dealing with a curriculum itself, understanding the curriculum as if this determines the expected and provoked learning outcomes, which is an illusion to some extent (Hargreaves XX). A lot more could be said about this, but this is not our theme at the moment, because it is not about the explicit link between religion and education. The second dimension of deductive reasoning on the micro-level is how religion (in this case: the Islam-tradition) is represented in school. The concept is

clear: 'Islam = 5 pillars', and this concept is leading for the teaching process. In other words: these contents are expected to be communicated to the class. But what if in the it comes out that the concept itself seems to be questionable, or at least ambivalent? Do we work with a 'codex' of the characteristics of religions, aiming to teach this to children? Of course, one could criticize this by discussing the aspect of 'power'. Who is in charge to tell what the codex should be? In my eyes this would be a discussion to be warmly welcomed, but it is not exactly the point of this contribution. The heart of the matter is if we approach religion as if one representation of a religion is the indisputable concept that could be applied to teaching practices.

Parallel to the writing of this article I was busy with another article quoting a teacher who reasons as follows: 'my school is a Christian school which means that we cherish Christian values'. Apparently, this looks like a sound elucidation, and the problem probably is that it sounds so convincing that hardly no one would ask what he actually means by this. Because if he would have been asked – which was actually done in the research project he was participating in – it came out that he hardly could manage to give illustrations of these concrete, so called Christian values; let alone, the confusion that came up discovering that the values that were expressed ('respect for all that lives') could as easy also be typified as humanistic, Muslim or Hindu values.

4. Religious Claims and the 'Empirical Mis-matches'

In the text above, the radical deductive approach in applying a religious concept to the educational praxis of a school is initially already criticized, be it sometimes between the lines. It is a quite simple but effective observation: two schools with an identical 'concept of their religious affiliation' could quite easily differ in culture and the way concrete education is developed. Entering the two schools, talking to the teachers and students, all kind of differences could be observed and experienced from the very first minutes on. How is this possible? Quite an easy question to answer. Is it not true that one would be more surprised if no differences would occur at all? Apparently, there is more at stake than just the concept of good education and the formal commitment to a certain religious tradition. If and how this

concept is of any influence depends on the awareness and interpretations of every single actor involved, and besides these influences, also many other influences are there and play their roles, like the individual commitments of teachers, their passions, ambitions and frustrations, the configuration of the (religious) backgrounds of the children (believe it or not, but in the Netherlands schools are labelled as 'white schools' and 'black schools'), the housing of the school, the atmosphere of tidiness or disorder, the well-mannered children we have (or not), the individual and without doubt differing interpretations of the daily news, of the family lives in the local district and of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and not to talk about the external expectations of the professional, communal or governmental field.

Having said this, I would like to bring up our own policy when developing our research and consultancy projects: we presume that the formal identity of religiously affiliated schools does not precede the thinking and acting of the teacher, but that the topical identity and ethos arise from and receives its shape from the decision-making and acting of the teachers of that very school. It is 'identity-*in-actu*'. In the acting actual identity is generated continuously, to be distilled from practice. This identity formation includes continuous verbal and non-verbal communicative processes. The formation of identity does not work only deductively, but emphatically features an inductive mechanism: 'Morality arises from the lasting interaction between the members of a specific and concrete community' (Taylor 1994; Wenger 1991; 1998; Klaassen 1996 (referring to Durkheim); Baumann 1999; Ter Avest & Bakker 2009).

Let me elaborate on this by making this position more concrete in line with some of the examples and cases that come across in the earlier paragraphs of this contribution:

> – We expect the committed Muslim boy (at least claiming to be a Muslim himself) at the beginning of this article, not to be disqualified as a Muslim by the non-Muslim teacher, even if he is teaching that the concept of the 5 pillars of Islam is the most important frame of reference. Even though the teacher's initial concept is clear, it is in the practice of that very moment that it is decided what will be the concrete and final impact of the official

curriculum and to what learning effects this will lead. At that very moment, the teacher is about to make crucial decisions, on the spot, and in 'split seconds' (Doyle & Ponder 1978). To take this to the extreme and to put it bluntly: the realised practice of the teacher's decision-making is generating the school's identity for this boy: is his belief-claim disqualified or not?

– We met the case of the two schools, both serious in interpreting their formal Christian identity with the eye on a decision how to deal with religious feasts. In the complex daily reality and against the biographical, historical and contextual background of the school as a organization and of all the team members individually, the one school decides to celebrate Christmas only (because ...) and the other school decides to celebrate both Christmas and Id-ul-Fitr (because ...). Realizing all the additional factors that are coming in, the moment a team prepares the decision, it is self-evident that there is not just one, logically sound deduction from the formal Christian identity.

– And to give a third illustration, referring to the case of the school principals: in a sound way one could describe the school's identity, but at the same time one could have the feeling that the wording and the documents do not really cover what really makes the school into just this school. Or, as a principal, one could trigger an internal discourse on religious ideals and principles, that is finally experienced to be set up rather isolated from the more essential and topical discussions in the school and the team (cf. the school leaders and the anecdote of the Norms and Value project). Or one could paint a sound and clear picture of the school's religious profile ('This is a Christian school..., so Christian values') and be that convincing and persuasive (or friendly selling this story) that no one takes the initiative or even dare to question and interrogate.

5. A Paradigm Shift: Moving Away from a Deductive Way of Reasoning

In some respect and for several reasons it might look rewarding not allowing the complexity of the empirical reality to come in. More easily it leads to clear patterns, grip and control on processes, etc. But our analysis before, reveals the simplification of reality that is imbued with this. Opposed to this, the challenge is not to start with an essentialized image of religion and religious identity (cf. Baumann's notion of the *reification* of religion, culture etc.; Baumann 1999) and to overcome the suggestion as if we reason with a single, undoubted interpretation of a tradition, religion or culture.

The variable 'religion' in an educational context is never on its own, but always related to a bigger or smaller number of other variables inside and outside the school (Taylor 1994). In this sense, realizing this, religious claims need to be de-constructed all the time and need to be seen in its interrelation with other variables (see above). As a first step of reflection.

But let us realize that school never is neutral in its program and acting: commitments (even if they are fragmented and diffuse), passions and ideals are playing important roles in the day-to-day decision making of the teachers (and other actors) in the school. It is in these dynamics that the school will get a specific 'colour' and profile. Through the daily processes, although they are complex, and very often implicit, the school unavoidably will have its own characteristics. In addition to the first step of de-constructing claims, there is also the challenge to make this integrated process of identity formation explicit and to reflect on this individually and collectively.

My impression is that the so often obligatory talks on religious identity of schools – that is so easily detached from the experienced practices – would benefit greatly from the paradigm-shift we are discussing now. On the one hand, it might be seen as a big step forward that we do not keep on asking again and again to put the religious identity item on the agenda, knowing the different types of aversion it might evoke (Bakker 2004; Versteegt 2010). In other words: we do not burden teams with this heavy stuff anymore. On the other hand, in line with the proposed paradigm-shift, we start with reflection on the daily practices, wondering who we are, what we do, how we evaluate the quality of what we do, and how we could

improve. Professionality implies the intention to reflect like this (Schön 1987; Wenger 1998). This latter approach, in my view, would lead us finally also to a talk on worldview, views on life and the meaning of life and beliefs and (eventually!) also on religious beliefs. It is important to stress that we organize the discussion in this order (so, not starting with the 'given fact' that the school has a religious affiliation in some way, but to trigger profound reflection on daily practices).

Besides the more powerful and stimulating approach of this strategy to overcome frustration and alienation, the strategyt also seems to match with the spirit of times, both broader in society and more specifically in education, that offers appropriate starting points for the proposed strategy. I will mention some of them in the following.

First, in Dutch society, in the academic world as well as in education there has been a growing awareness that neutrality as such does not exist. Even the academic world has agreed that academics do have their own stances and work with and from their specific premises and paradigms (cf. Kuhn's theory on scientific revolutions). And so it is in education: whether a school is a Christian school or a public school, a school is never neutral and has its own profile. To some extent this profile is explicit or could be made explicit, but characteristics mainly remain implicit. Besides this, people have their images of a school anyway. The eventually formalised religious affiliation of a school, e.g. the claim to be a 'Christian school', is an explicit statement, but many more explicit and implicit variables actually give profile to the school and helps people to create, to construct their images (plural!) of this very school.

I will not elaborate on this here and now, but interestingly in the Netherlands also public schools (originally perceived as 'neutral') have started to reflect on how they deal and should deal with life-questions, life themes and also philosophical and religious themes (Bakker 2010). Or to put it in the terminology of this article: also a public school has a specific identity (Braster 1996).

Secondly, there is a growing awareness that the professionalism of the teacher is not just an *instrumental* professionalism, but that individual characteristics of the teacher are crucial in the ultimate processes in which professional behaviour is shaped. In spite of the many standardized protocols, the agreed lists of teacher competences and pupil performance

measuring instruments, which are not to be disqualified, there is also the individual biography of the teacher and the subjective interpretation of all the 'instruments'. It is hard to measure the quality of an 'understanding attitude' as a teacher, but safely we could assume that this attitude will have an effect in teaching processes. This *subjective* and *normative* dimension of professional behaviour, and the growing awareness of this, opens the door for another type of reflection on the identity of the profession and finally also on the collective identity of the team of professionals of a certain school. The real professional also reflects on the normative dimension and the meta-level of his/her professional acting. An exchange of these reflections in a team quite easily could be characterized as a collective reflection on the identity of the school, without the risk of alienation when starting in the deductive mode (Bakker 2013; Schön 1987; Klaassen 1996; Weggeman 2007).

A third consideration regards the primary task of the school. In Dutch schools it is a popular saying: 'A school is not a church' (very often said when identity considerations get stuck). And indeed, in the deductive mode, the pitfall always will be to end up in theological debates and an unsolvable polarization. A school primarily is seen as a pedagogical institution. This implies that there is an appropriate pedagogical concept and a vision how to realise educational goals. It is about the answers on the value loaden questions: to know about *good* education, and to know how to be a *good* school themselves; but also evaluating yourself continuously, and striving to develop into a *better* school. The notions of 'good' and 'better' presuppose premises and references. Inevitably these processes are at stake in all schools. This is inevitably related to a philosophy of life at least, and probably it is also about religious beliefs, but, let us say, in an integrated way. Whatever answer is given, it is value-loaden.

We could wonder if this is also true for schools where the professionals just do their work and are not that much those reflective practitioners as we as a academics would like them to be. It is interesting to develop an answer to this question by realizing, that even if no one explicitly reflects on 'good education', teachers still make decisions all the time and that in this decision-making certain patterns could be observed, related to an implicit idea of good and bad. In the series of acts and decisions, the teacher implicitly contributes in a certain way and direction (!) to the specific profile of the school.

Recent research among the Dutch population (done by *Motivaction*) has shown that 26% of the Dutch would characterize themselves as 'unaffiliated spirituals'. An interesting finding, if we realize that modern professionals are probably not that much interested anymore in the formal affiliation of a school (as a manifestation of institutionalized religion), but that this does not mean that religiosity and/or spirituality are out of sight (Berghuijs 2012).

Finally than, we come to the issue of Citizenship education. 'Only now, in this stage?', one could wonder, realizing that it is an explicit notion in the title of this contribution. An easy reaction could be (but still totally true in my eyes) that all that has been said thus far, was already about citizenship, in the sense that we have explored how we could understand religion as a feature of a modern society. Apparently, how we perceive religion as a relevant factor in the public domain is one of the highlighted elements of Citizenship education (cf. Jackson 2003; 2004).[2] What we did, on the one hand, is to tone religion down, and try not to see religion as avariable that dominates other variables. Religion is better to be understood as an 'interrelated and interdependent variable', together with other variables like cultural background, ethnicity, gender, language, socio-economic status, etc. On the other hand, when religion is seen as being integrated in daily practices, as a dimension, it is always there, be it more or less influential, and more or less explicitly. Reflecting on these practices could make professionals more aware of the normative dimension and could bring this to the surface.

All along this nuancing and integrating, we learned that religious claims probably could be deconstructed by academics, but that reified representations of the truth at the same time still could stay powerful. They might seem to be unreal or untrue in their deconstruction, but for many they still can stay real. Real or not, justifiable or not, at least religious claims are real in their consequences.

So, even if this 'easy answer' might satisfy, there is more to say. In the Netherlands, but also broader in Europe, Citizenship Education (CE) is an excellent example of the integrated way religion could be discussed in

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[2] Also see The European Wergeland center on Citizenship Education (www.theewc.org).

education, not starting in the deductive mode. CE is seen as a very important issue in educational politics and many initiatives are taken to develop CE. After the 9/11 attacks (on the global stage) and the murder of the famous Dutch movie maker Theo van Gogh by a Muslim extremist in 2004 and the murder of the Dutch politician Pim Fortuyn in 2002 (on the national stage), an urgency is felt to take care for safety in our society. With this aim a heavy agenda is put on education. And, of course, elaborating this for CE it is already soon not only about safety, but also about the issue how to deal with differences. The climate in the Netherlands, but also broader in Europe, is one of urgency and has led to an important trend to develop CE further.

So, in the Netherlands it is agreed to have CE and quite a lot of energy is invested to organize the subject. Poor attention however is paid to the presupposed leading ideas of 'the good citizen' and 'the ideal society'. What kind of picture do we see? On what arguments and vision do we develop our ideas how we could ever live together harmoniously and how we could deal with conflict and differences. We need to have an answer on these questions before we could explore the ways we could educate our children to become that 'good citizen' and to contribute to society in a way that they (co-)create the good society (cf. Jackson 2004).

Coming to the end of this contribution, I would mention Citizenship education as a perfect illustration of the type of talks we need to have in our schools. In order to develop a subject we think we should have in every school, fundamental talks are requested, with the highest urgency. Independent from a religious affiliation, every school has to reflect on 'the good citizen' and 'the ideal society', and inevitably, sooner or later, ideals, beliefs and probably religious convictions are at the table. Quite a secular starting point (in bigger words: a talk and exploration of the good life), but also a space where professional teachers, children/students and eventually also their parents are invited to be explicit about their premises, ideals and beliefs.

6. Finally

In Christian schools, in public schools, in Muslim schools, do we dare to turn religion upside down, in the sense that we do not start our talks on the identity of the school with the self-evident claim that the religious affiliation

is 'translated' somehow into educational practices, but just to start with a focused and fundamental reflection on the educational practice itself?

If we do, we could avoid the problem of different interpretations of religious believing as such, we do not have to solve the pillarization problem anymore (every school has a unique profile / identity), and we could prevent ourselves from the often experienced frustration when it comes to identity considerations.

The agenda is to start the open talks in the schools, individually and collectively reflecting on daily educational practice. It takes courage to do so, because principally it is left open if and how religion will come in and, if it comes in, we cannot be sure in advance that it will be in the easy to recognize and ready-made patterns and schemes. But when it comes in, we can be sure that it is sized down to the level religion is actually and authentically interpreted and making sense.[3]

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[3] My experience is, leading these type of talks in schools and looking at our research findings, that very often and rather easy life issues, world view, ideals, also religious beliefs are discussed very soon (cf. Bakker & Ter Avest 2010).

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Religion, Education and Citizenship Education

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Engaging Difference in Values Education in South African Schools

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Abstract
This article, based on a descriptive review of the literature, considers the Values Education Initiative and traces recent developments in terms of policy implementation. Religion and religious content play an important and supportive role in helping to nurture democratic values, political literacy and nation building among the youth. In considering the teaching of religion education and its role in facilitating values education, by using an example of difference, such as the conflicting claims of religious identity, this article shows that problematising these contested issues in the context of current debates makes for more relevant and effective learning about democracy within religion education than the abstract and idealised exposition of democratic values. Religion education must be an integrated dimension of students' perceptions, experiences and reflections that need to form part of the discussions, which allow explorations of new content as well as dialogue where differences and contrasting ideas are deliberated. This will enhance the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes necessary to equip the student to function in an open and democratic society.

Keywords: values education, religion education, religious identity, difference

Introduction
Restoring the value system and moral fibre of society is a challenge of the highest priority for South Africans in general and the education sector in

particular. One wonders about the Department of Education's major cultural project, the Values in Education Initiative, and how its implementation has developed since its initial launch on 23 August 2001. This is important to establish as the still recent transition to democracy and the radical break with the past mean that South Africans do not yet have a settled conception of citizenship to draw on (Enslin 2003:73). In divided societies like South Africa people identify more readily with one of its ethnic, racial or religious components than with the society as a whole (Mattes 2002). Although the new South Africa provided something of a model for democratic values and peaceful transitions, the recent ministerial report by Craig Soudien on *Transformation and social cohesion and elimination of discrimination in public higher education institutions* (DoE 2009) is just one of the many examples indicating the persistence of racism and the lack of a transformation ethos. This has led to renewed calls for civic education or values education in a society entangled in civic strife.

'Values education' is commonly understood as placing a particular emphasis on civic and moral values (Halstead & Taylor 2000). Civic education is commonly understood to be concerned with the promotion of effective and active citizenship and the preparation of the youth of a country to carry out their role as citizens. Current debates on citizenship education are focused on the tensions between diversity (the needs of the individual, or group) and the education for democratic ideals (the needs of the nation-state). Some would argue that the enterprise is fundamentally flawed and that it rests on the myth of the homogeneous 'citizen' or 'nation' (Mason 2007). In the real world the nation state is 'an imagined community' constituted 'to make culture and polity congruent' and bring all participants 'under the same roof' by 'papering over the cracks' that divide the citizenry in terms of race, gender, class, religion and ideology (Mason 2007:177). Once those issues are engaged with through real political debate and contest it is very difficult to find substantial common ground for a curriculum programme on 'citizenship' which is intellectually coherent and sustainable (Kallaway 2010:17). Civic education is not simply a matter of teaching children 'good values' for the simple reason that it is always difficult to arrive at an adequate social consensus regarding what values to prioritise. What is often neglected in debates of this kind is the question of whose values are to be taught and whose interests those values will serve. At the same time is it possible to

have values education abstracted from the real political and ideological issues that divide the society? Is it possible for teachers in the context of ordinary classrooms to deal with the complex and divisive political topics without transgressing the line of teacher neutrality? Will it simply lead to indoctrination as it did under apartheid? What is undeniable is that values education is a real problem for the school curriculum.

In South Africa public pedagogy has been criticised for creating an artificial uniformity in which difference, disagreement and debate are buried under scripted narratives for creating consensus (Teeger & Vinitzky-Seroussi 2007). This in turn may force the curriculum for religion education to stress the underlying similarity of all religions in forming personal identity, transmitting moral values, and facilitating mutual recognition in a shared society (Smith 1988). In the process, creative and critical thinking about the multiplicity of religious identities and the negotiation of religious differences might be subsumed in the artificial manufacture of consensus or subordinate to the 'greater good' of the nation at large. This article will trace recent developments in values education focused on the teaching of religion education. This article will show that problematising contested issues of religious identity, in the context of current debates, causes more effective learning about democracy than the abstract and idealised exposition of democratic values.

Effective citizenship implies civic responsibilities, not the least of which is the recognition that the individual is part of a larger social fabric. Everyone is also a member of a smaller community which is defined by certain basic values that may exhibit real and potential value differences on some of the larger fundamental social issues. Core values will always be understood and interpreted according to the particular worldview and religious identity embraced by the individual. As British educator Robert Jackson states that with increasing inter-communal, inter-religious tension, religion is no longer a private matter but has become a public concern, and that society benefits 'if pupils in our society are conversant with its language' (Jackson 2004:139).

While some may criticise the interaction of religion and state, in South Africa the majority of the population belong to a religion and religious resources have been central to nation-building. Part of the long road to citizenship in South Africa has been redefining the relationship between

church and state, faith and democracy (Swartz 2006:564). In liberal-democratic societies, according to Habermas, mutual learning processes and dialogue between religious and secular citizens should flourish (in Calhoun 1997:34). The state needs to take a positive stance towards the contributions of religious communities and persons in the public domain because they can provide secular society with important and necessary sources for attributing and creating meaning. South Africa is both a religious country and a democratic one. So while the Constitution guarantees religious freedom, the state has been at pains to emphasise that freedom *of* religion does not constitute freedom *from* religion, especially where religion can be a national asset in shaping public moral values. The real test of religious pluralism and the affirmation of diversity in South Africa lie in the effective balancing of national unity on one hand and religious and personal laws on the other. Thus it is important to note the relationship between religion and citizenship – for this article the importance of the focus on religion education as it moulds citizens and in this process ways of negotiating and overcoming difficulties of difference (Crick 1998).

To begin, it was clear that after the democratic elections of 1994 that the traditional role and function of teaching religion education within the prevailing doctrine of National Christian Education (CNE) would inevitably change. The idea the CNE was the sole bearer of beliefs and values of an open and democratic society could no longer meet the needs and challenges of the multi-religious South African society. Knowledge of different beliefs and values became a prerequisite for facilitating learners within the open school system.

In South Africa values education was advocated in two important policy documents from high-powered committees under the chairmanship of Wilmot James, established by the *Ministry of Education: report on the values and democracy in education* (DoE 2000) and *Manifesto on values, education and democracy* (DoE 2001). The first report highlighted six qualities the education system should actively promote: equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability and social honour. The *Manifesto,* recognising that these values are not fully operational in South Africa, identified ten values that should be promoted in schools: democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism, non-sexism, ubuntu (communalism), an open society, accountability, rule of law, respect and reconciliation. The

challenge was recognised of how to ensure that teachers were an embodiment of these values in order to 'infuse the classroom with a culture of human rights' (DoE 2001:33). The *Manifesto* is based on the assumption that instilling in learners a broader sense of values would enrich the individual and by extension enrich the society as well. The difficulty is that it accomplishes this by marginalising the personal. This is perhaps understandable in a context as culturally diverse as ours, but it is precisely on matters of personal that the traditionalist interpretation is so dangerous (Pendlebury & Enslin 2007). The *Manifesto* also outlines educational strategies, predicated on the notion that values cannot be legislated but merely promoted through the educational system (Department of Education 2001).

Pursuant to the ten principles above, the Ministry of Education offered religion in public schools where multi-religious education is promoted, using a phenomenological approach, with the emphasis on teaching students *about* religion rather than promoting specific religions or religious beliefs. South Africa's *Policy for Religion and Education* (DoE 2003) was linked to a broad range of initiatives, celebrating linguistic, cultural and religious diversity. Despite the concern that studying religion from a neutral perspective negated the notion of remaining impartial, the National Policy was seen as important for furthering nation-building, a process that called for religion education to reach specific outcomes and relay values that the state had identified as desirable. Religion education became the bearer for understanding different belief systems, gaining religious content and adhering to moral obligations in public and private schools. Religion education was introduced into the curriculum as an integral part of the subject field Life Orientation and Religion Studies. Life Orientation is a compulsory subject for all learners and is made up of learning areas that promote the teaching of life skills including democracy and human rights (DBE 2011:8). A main aim of Religion Studies is religious literacy and citizenship education; it should 'enhance the constitutional values of citizenship' (DBE 2011:8). An outcome in these learning areas is that learners will be helped to exercise their rights and responsibility. Another is active participation in the promotion of a democratic, equitable and just society.

Policy Implementation and Challenges

The nature of Curriculum 2000 and the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (DoE 2002) was framed by notions of redress, inclusiveness, progressive pedagogy and local governance. The RNCS describes how schools are expected to develop critical, active, responsible and active citizens. The most recent curriculum review of the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements* (DBE 2011) articulates a framework for values in education which continues to focus on citizenship and the constitution. According to the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (DoE 1996) each secondary school is also required to have a representative council of learners (RCL), a student-only council to aid democracy and student voice; and two students are also to be full and equal members of the school governing body (SGB). Despite the array of policy around citizenship, schools have been given little guidance on implementation (Hunt 2010).

In implementing these values across the religion education curriculum, legislators have made the assumption that teachers will un-problematically adopt a multi-religious approach but teachers have to be sensitised to the different values embedded in each belief system and cultural orientation and have to be equipped to facilitate these values (Green 2004). This requires highly skilled teachers who are provided with a great deal of curricular guidance and institutional support. But scholars argue that teachers have received little guidance or special training (Chrisholm & Leyendecker 2008; Bantwini 2010; Mattes 2013). Prejudice towards diversity in school and society still prevails (Pratap 2006) and can be counterproductive to the implicit value system of the education process. Teachers teach from a mono-religious perspective, although in a multi-religious school environment (Roux & Du Preez 2006; Hunt 2010:54). Teachers in training, especially those who come from homogeneous environments, are not necessarily literate in religious diversity and often display signs of fear or discomfort when placed in a religiously diverse environment (Roux, Du Preez & Ferguson 2009). The organisation and understanding of religion education is a construction of the teachers' own frame of reference with an interpretation of the religious content, its morality and spirituality. There are tensions between teacher's personal religious identity and their professional identity. This position might bring teachers in conflict with the insider/outsider position of facilitating religion education. This 'identity conflict' needs to be

explored and negotiated in order for the *Policy for Religion and Education* (DoE 2003) to be successfully implemented (Zinn & Keet 2010).

The outcomes based curriculum which was supposed to promote a series of values conducive to democratic citizenship, has as of yet failed to effect attitudinal change. Some argue that the intended values outcomes, including democracy are simply too implicit in the curriculum for most students to appreciate (Chikoko, Gilmour, Harber & Serf 2011). There is no specific place for the explicit teaching and discussion of democratic government, let alone the value and superiority of democracy as a form of government (Allais 2009). Currently values education is understood as procedural knowledge and is thus incongruent with the Constitution's expectation of generating an active, critical citizenry (Solomons & Fataar 2011:230). Solomons and Fataar argue that the school curriculum should be conceptually aligned to a broader conception of values that combines propositional, procedural and dispositional knowledge orientations (Solomons & Fataar 2011:230). In addition although teachers supported the principle of the recent curriculum reviews, the nature of the changes sorely taxed teachers' sense of what could and should be done in the classroom. Not only were the language and expectations of the curriculum obscure and jargon-filled; they also found the assessment expectations burdensome and the pedagogical prescriptions difficult to implement which resulted in an increased workload (Bantwini 2010).

It seems the practical principles of the *Manifesto* may be elusive for the many teachers trained in an authoritarian and non-expansive tradition, and under severe pressure from constant demands of ever-changing policy. The guide on *Values and Human Rights in the Curriculum* (DoE 2005) recognised this difficulty and provided a detailed interpretation and useful examples of how to use the principles to guide practice, but this also added to the intensification of teachers' work leaving little time for reflective engagement that the *Manifesto* and its strategies requires.

Chrisholm and Leyendecker (2008) examined the gaps between policy and practice in curriculum change and state that while there is agreement on the aims of reform, there is evidence of divergence in practice. They argue that in practice ideas are re-contextualised and displaced, and are often unable to meet the social development goals demanded of them (Chrisholm & Leyendecker 2008). In a society undergoing transition,

teachers themselves have different views on the meaning of democracy and democratic practices. Evidence from research conducted by Harland and Kinder (1997) indicates that lasting professional change comes only when there is value congruence between the policy message about 'good practice' and the teachers' own codes of practice or values; when policy intentions and teachers' beliefs about good practice or values coincide. In Hammett and Staeheli's (2011) research, respect and responsibility emerged as core concepts and are bound up with the assumptions regarding power relations and the authors argue that respect is often unequal instead of reciprocal between educators and learners. They point out that the conditions of work and learning have a 'serious impact on the quality of and achievement in education in South Africa' (Hammett & Staeheli 2011:275). Similarly Pillay and Ragpot (2011) show through research in Gauteng schools that the proper management of the processes for implementing the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* as applied in the classroom are lacking. Because rights have remained at the rhetorical level and not part of praxis, neither the public engagement nor continued values or civic education has had the intended impact of wide-scale social transformation or addressing racial tensions (Spreen & Valley 2012).

Critics have wondered whether the utopian discourse of the education policy is not shooting policy and its implementation in the foot (Mattes 2013:135). Policy documents should establish achievable, defined concepts rather than further turning controversial terms, such as 'democratic' and 'literate, creative and critical citizen' into rhetorical buzzwords or 'magic-bullets' that lose their distinctive meaning through their close proximity with the rhetorical use of 'social hope poetry'(Unterhalter 2000:70; Chrisholm & Leyendecker 2008). It is a conceptualisation that avoids engaging with social complexity and any notions of difference. Critics suspect that an uncritical consensus is demanded that demonises and discredits dissent (Kraak & Young 2000; Sayed & Jansen 2001:275; Fleisch 2002). This reduces the space for debate and contestation about possible outcomes of the transition and the nature of South Africa democracy. The creation of such 'national unity' perpetuates and masks continuing inequality and thus constitutes a very real threat to the consolidation of democracy (Moodley 2010). Under these conditions, the space for different voices within groups to express who they are becomes constrained.

Contested Issue: Religious Identity

Within schools learners may possess a range of interlocking identities, which vary through time. These identities are shaped by the schooling contexts, the social relations of the schools and the agency of individual and groups. With identities of South Africanness and common citizenship emerging, there are indications of greater assertions of self-chosen new group identities, which may potentially challenge a common citizenship. For example, the reconstitution of identities of whiteness in schools are making for increasing exclusive enclaves of Jewish, Greek or Afrikaans children who attend circumscribed schools (Carrim 1995). It is important to understand how different identities attend to social cohesion. Alexander explains that 'difference, instead of constituting a bridge toward understanding the intrinsic value of diversity – biological, cultural and political – becomes a springboard for xenophobic stereotyping and latent social conflict' (Alexander 2002:6). Viewing difference, identities and values in the light of growing discontent and alienation one can easily see 'the other' as the enemy. Stronger individual religious identification may result in enhanced group solidarity, cohesion and collective identification. At the same time, visible demonstration of a minority religious identity may provoke hostility and discrimination from the dominant group. The formation of group identities is a factor that warrants more careful observation, study and research.

Religion is the source of values that speak to a wide range of societal issues impacting on schools. Public schools are microcosms of the societies in which they function and thus, the school must face the same problems of drugs, violence, intolerance and lack of respect for diversity that are part of society at large. In declaring and enforcing appropriate standards for learner conduct, schools struggle to create a culture in which all learners have a shared sense of values. Creating that shared culture can be difficult where rules are simply propagated without considering underlying religious beliefs. Members of a particular culture may view all value-related issues (especially social, economic, political and moral) exclusively in terms of their personal (and group) ideals and aspirations, perspectives and interests. Even as values may be moral, non-moral or immoral, there still arise situations in which people differ about whether social issues are moral, traditional, customary or social conventions (Birch & Rasmussen 1989).

In the public school environment, we not only encounter different value systems in each religion but each learner also bears within himself or herself a religious identity. Religious identity reflects a dynamic process in which religious 'data' in the form of texts, rituals, symbols, values, and the like are evaluated and related to the concerns of everyday life (Ziebertz 2008:34). Individuals or communities deem certain beliefs and practices significant to the extent that they label themselves a religious individual or community. Religious identity is made up of ideological, ritual and institutional identity (Van der Ven 2003:480). It is expressed in the never ending tension between stability and change, tradition and innovation (Ziebertz 2008:34). There are societies in which religion either serves as the source of collective identification, or rises in that meaning as 'the flip side of secularization' (Jones & Smith 2001:47), and globalization. Without denying the signs of a greater fluidity of religious collective identity in the global context, the basic assumption is that even in modernity religion may be important for people's collective self-understanding, and not only for individualized forms of religiosity, and/or religious extremism and fundamentalism.

Religious identity necessarily involves a rejection of the view, which some citizens may hold, that religious attachments are more important than political ones as a source of identity. What is more, its longevity over time gives religious identity a perennial credibility, surpassing the contingencies that appertain to biographical, political or other immanent notions of identity (Van der Ven 2003:480). This strongly felt credibility may lend itself to emotional or ideological support for better or worse. Religious identity is not a form which can be tacked on as an extra component to their citizenship, but is something which they believe permeates the whole of life. Hence the desire for separate schools, which has been described as a form of 'voluntary apartheid' (Halstead 1995), and which religious believers see as the only way to provide their children with a sound education in a secure and stable environment where the beliefs and values of the school are broadly in line with those of the home. Thus one of the problems of religious identities in a multi-religious world is the exclusiveness of religious claims, the view that 'my religion' is in some way more unique, superior, normative and absolute (Knitter 1985). Although religious identity is more than this, its holder cannot escape the question of the 'other,' of other religions in a religiously

plural world (Hermans 2001). For example, Christian opponents to the education policy opposed religion education by alleging that it established a uniform multi-religious religion or, alternatively, that it established a uniform anti-religious philosophy of secular humanism (Chidester 2006:73) and thereby undermined the decentralised role of local schools in determining their own particular and distinctive religious ethos. So while religious communities offer identity to people, in many cases this identity is exclusive. In schools, nurturing learners to become responsible, effective citizens grounded in their worldview and identity may conflict with their developing religious identity which could pose a problem in realising the democratic vision. It is important to note that there is an inescapable link between a person's religious identity and his or her attitude towards adherents of other religions or religious diversity, since core values will always be understood and interpreted within the particular religious identity embraced (Dreyer, Pieterse & Van der Ven 2002). As a consequence, the reconciliation potential of religions is not self-evident and they can become part of the problem. Religio-centrism derived from a religious identity is not perceived in a fully conscious way, but nevertheless provides a filter of reality that can detract from what is being taught or studied.

However much a model of citizenship seeks to avoid narrow forms of nationalism or ethnocentrism, it cannot avoid other more subtle forms of inequality or cultural domination. If values are not dealt with directly, they will still be embedded in the teacher's worldview and will be part of the hidden curriculum (Halstead 1996:4). Consequently, one has to consider the criticism of implied neutrality with regard to the religious convictions or religious identities of both the teacher and the learner (Hermans 2001; Sterkens 2001). This concept of 'enlightened neutrality' holds up an ideology of mutual interdependence as it expels religion from the public to the private domain (Ziebertz 2008). All too often liberalism is misguidedly thought of as a neutral alternative to religious perspectives rather than a specific ideological vision (Pike 2008:115). Religious parents and groups might well argue that the state is failing to pay due respect to their rights by imposing the current values on the education curriculum, when being a good citizen can be 'perfectly compatible with unswerving belief in the correctness of one's own way of life' (Glaston 1989:99). Pluralism is considered by liberals, to be the most rational response to diversity, but this can

discriminate against those who sincerely believe that some ways of living are morally acceptable and others are not (Pike 2008). The tension between the liberal assumptions of citizenship education and such religious perspectives should not be underestimated because privileging autonomous rationality may exclude any theonomous alternative (Pike 2005:115). Seeing reason and revelation as incompatible has been challenged by authors such as Pike (2008), but we are, perhaps, more aware now than ever before that reason alone can be inadequate, given the nature of our lives and the way in which we actually live.

Taking Difference Seriously

If religion education is to be worthwhile for all learners, it cannot be based on the assumptions which undermine the beliefs, values and commitments and identity of some. Schools need to create space in religion education for ways that recognise, affirm, and explore, creatively and critically, possible invented, emergent and contested identities. Understanding why these identities and worldviews differ so radically in some of society's most controversial issues might be more fruitful than glossing over or dismissing those differences. Essential to the pedagogy informing critical citizenship is the praxis, agency and voice of those who confront marginalisation, injustice and inequality.

A more modest goal of values education requires cognisance of the role of different identities, as well as the significance of conflicting moral claims (Adam 2000). Citizenship education should be expanded to include rights from diverse racial, cultural, ethnic and language groups to help students to acquire the values needed to work for equality and social justice (Banks 2008:129). Since both personal and civic values have owed their origins to personal principles derived from religious worldviews which have influenced decision-making and shaped actions and attitudes. An example of this in classroom practice is the strong Christian ethos among South African teachers and schools especially in the area of evolution and creationism (Chikoko *et al.* 2011:11). In another example in South Africa, the KwaZulu-Natal Equality High Court handled the case of a mother who contested a school Code of Conduct which prohibited learners from wearing any jewellery except earrings and a watch. This court came to the conclusion that

the school's Code of Conduct had failed to rid itself of existing discrimination by insisting on uniformity and disallowing the respondent's daughter from using a nose ring. The learner's religious values supported by constitutional rights to human dignity and expression, overruled the school's values reflected in its authority to make and enforce a consistent dress code throughout the school (quoted from De Waal, Mawdsley & Cumming 2010).

An effective way to engage values education will be to handle the underlying motivations of contending groups. Teachers need to recognize and acknowledge differences between their learners and then to go further and interrogate issues that arise from that difference. It involves more than a sense of awareness of cultures and promoting a sense of acceptance and tolerance, as with this kind of acknowledgement comes a sense of stereotyping and patronizing attitudes. The kind of diversity embedded in the classroom points to the need for teachers to have in their awareness not specific knowledge about cultural and religious difference of their students and how to educate others about the, but cognizance that one cannot predict how these influences have shaped learners' consciousness and praxis. Structural, cultural, personal and religious aspects are important to analyse and be aware of as these are part of the fabric of society with interlocking patterns of power and influence and of course are at play in the classroom. Hence values education can contribute to citizenship by 'providing opportunities for pupils to see how individuals, group and political choices, policies and actions, e.g. human rights, are inextricably linked with and influenced by religious and moral beliefs, practices and values' (Pike 2008:116). Religion education can contribute to countering misinformation on religious issues in private and public space. The meaning and core ideas of many religious issues, moral, values and perceptions visible to society in other subjects and disciplines should be explored. The aim of this deliberative attitude towards learners' learning is to empower them with thinking tools to make sound moral decisions and engage in moral behaviour. Issues of citizenship, morality, ethics and social justice in which religion can have an input can help to strengthen and support a religiously just society with a respect for diversity.

At the same time creating safe spaces for student's citizenship are important in shaping how students engage. A recent study (Hunt 2010) found that how schools engaged with citizenship in the past, continued to influence

citizenship practices; students from non-traditional religious groups were expected to assimilate into the existing culture of the school. Without safe spaces for citizenship to be practised, cultural and religion difference appeared to exclude further an already largely disengaged student populace. Having access to a 'rights agenda' gave many students a language to express a citizen identity, but without the agency or safe spaces to take it further, for many it remained a rhetoric of citizenship, as opposed to a practice. Socio-historic contexts of the schools, racial/cultural hierarchies and staff-student relations all influence how (and whether) citizenship identities were produced (Hunt 2010). Only through a critical exploration of how democracy functions in the everyday reality of the political community in which learners live, can learners be motivated to narrow the gap and become active, engaged citizens.

The aim of values education should be to develop a culture of human rights in schools based on respect and dialogue between teachers and students, but with frank admission that teaching values in schools is both risky and important. Democratic values and skills are not genetic, they are learned and in a democracy young people need to develop the ability to analyse and discuss controversial issues in a peaceful manner based on mutual respect. Part of the challenge for authoritarian and reproductive preparation in teaching is the reluctance on the part of teachers to 'pay attention to their own pedagogical reasoning and reflective practice' (Chikoko *et al.* 2011). A study (Buthelezi, Mitchell, Moletsane, De Lange, Taylor & Stuart 2007) has found that many teachers in South Africa see school knowledge as safe and uncontested and shy away from values and controversies even though these are key aspects of life in a democratic society. This problem is particularly significant where HIV/AIDS (a highly controversial issued based on personal values) is a threat to social well-being and where teachers are reluctant to tackle sexual issues in the classroom. Teachers need to be made aware of their inherent power, responsibility and autonomy to make a difference in their own classroom practice and communities by exemplifying sound values. The correct facilitation and active engagement with the content and specific learning outcomes has the potential to promote strategic outcomes (communication, investigation, and problem-solving) with the implementation of the acquired skills in the larger social discourse (Smit & Chetty 2009:349).

Identity, social life and morality are seen as inescapably social and cultural processes, which are constructed and reconstructed in everyday social interactions (Thornberg 2008:53). The hidden curriculum is critical as it relays the implicit assumptions of teachers and other school agents that silently structure social discourse and educational praxis. Values in the classroom can be sabotaged by other school practices and has far-reaching effects without being noticed (Giroux & Penna 1983). Inconsistencies and perceived injustices in teachers' interventions, implicit moral constructions of the school rules and school life result in negative attitudes among students (Thomson & Holland 2002:93) who are not passive recipients but active agents in the socialisation process. As Waghid suggests our current understanding of values education might be impoverished and too narrow, and could potentially be extended beyond the simplistic expression of rights and responsibilities to dealing with how we treat and behave towards others (2004:44). Such a goal has a greater chance of success than the expression of moral indignation and normative educational endeavours shared only at a very abstract and superficial level.

Given that in South Africa the formation of religious identity is primarily the responsibility of families and religious communities and not the public school, it is important to understand how religious identity, shaped by religious socialisation influences learners' attitudes in supporting citizenship education in schools. Religious communities need to foster the identity formation of their children and young people with an eye on their participation in social and public spaces. Values education may fail to engage with the ways in which religious communities, families and civil society are sidelined in the project of building national democracy and in this way may indeed undermine some of the values of tolerance, equality and justice, which values education itself seeks to inculcate. In this process educators will need to bring together home and school more effectively in a concerted effort to enhance the quality of education.

More research is needed on the politicising of religious environments and traditions within education. The links between religious identity, ethnic identity and national identity are often only examined when the ethnic minority demands or maintains a separate state based on religious identity. In such a scenario, religious nationalism has been interpreted as an instrumental tool for nation-building (for example, the nation of Israel). Much of the

research in South Africa with regard to questions of race and desegregation is pessimistic about the nature and types of changes that are being effected in schools (Vally & Dalamba 1999) but work on with teachers and learners regarding the complex questions of identity, citizenship and difference has not yet been done. Teachers need opportunities to explore how their religious values may influence their responses to multi-cultural difference and religious diversity. Little attention has been paid to how religious identity intersects with other forms of social difference, such as race and gender in the schooling experience of minoritized youth. Individual rights and practices of religions as well as traditional cultural practices are increasingly being discussed (Gearson 2002) in order to promote dialogue and discourse between world opinions, religions and cultures. Research of this nature will provide nuanced insights into the complex role religion plays in promoting particular value systems and could show how religion in education can be levered to change discriminatory and harmful value systems.

Conclusion

Values, attitudes and skills associated with democracy are influenced by many factors, including the media, interaction with one's family and friends and everyday lived experience.

Religion and religious content play an important and supportive role in helping to nurture democratic values, political literacy and nation building among the youth. Educators need to seek in the whole school curriculum ways to foster humane values within the different ethnic and religious communities. Since religion education is to be an integrated dimension of students' perceptions, experiences and reflections it will be helpful to allow explorations of new content as well as dialogue where differences and contrasting ideas are deliberated. Democratic ways of conflict resolution rather than the idealistic clamouring for unifying national values become more salient.

The growing challenges between policy orientations of government and the lived reality in schools must be dealt with if learners are to be helped to actively contribute to the common good. Whether schools will succeed in the ambitious task of creating transformed citizens will depend on how the powerful resource of religion in South Africa is accessed. The challenge for

religion education will be to include religious plurality in educational practice and public discourse rather than contributing to religion being pushed back to the private by treating it as a purely informational subject.

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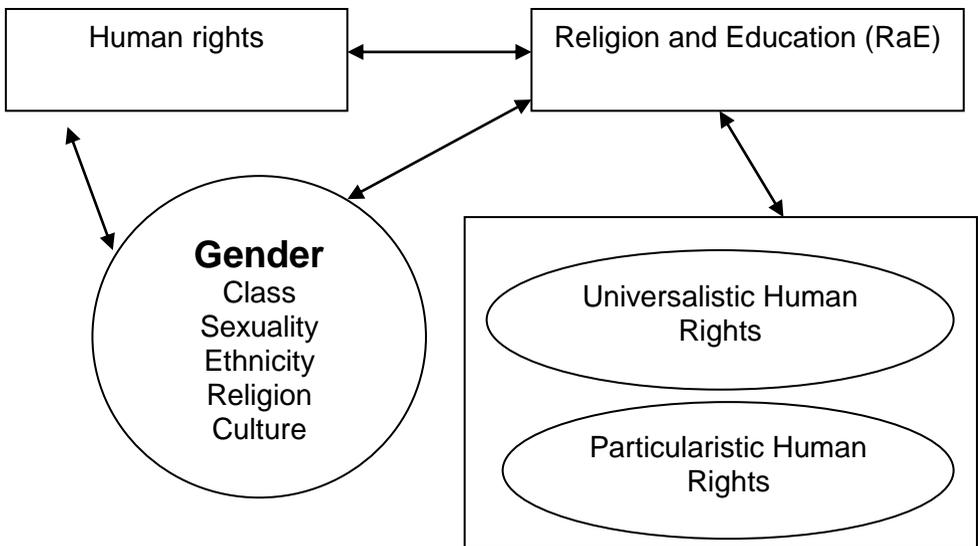
Figure 1: The interrelatedness of human rights and gender in the context of RaE

(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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Teacher Development for Diversity: Citizenship Education, Religion Education and Learning through Participation in Communities of Practice

René Ferguson

Abstract

How should teachers learn for democracy and diversity in a society with a history of discrimination towards diversity? While teachers in South Africa have attended in-service development programmes, little seems to have been achieved regarding the development of the complex knowledge base that enables classroom practice specifically for democratic citizenship education and religion education in Life Orientation. The influence of the teacher's own frame of reference cannot be overlooked where learning religious and cultural diversity are concerned if there is to be effective mediation of these often controversial focus areas in the classroom. This article argues that to develop a practice for democratic citizenship education and religion education, teacher development should occur through participation with other teachers in communities of practice. Communities of practice theory, transformative adult learning theory and perspectives on deliberative democracy are synthesised to create a theoretical frame for teacher development in communities. The article outlines the mixed method research project in which this theoretical framework was implemented amongst a sample of secondary school Life Orientation teachers in the Gauteng Province. It reports some of the findings from the data elicited from a survey and an action research phase. It concludes with an evaluation of the communities of practice concept for teacher-learning for democracy and diversity.

Keywords: teacher development for diversity, democratic citizenship educa-

tion, religion education research, learning to teach religion in communities of practice.

Introduction

Teacher development for practice related to democratic citizenship education with a particular focus on religion education was the subject of an empirical study conducted with teachers in secondary schools in Gauteng from 2007 to 2008 (Ferguson 2011a). Given South Africa's turbulent history, characterised as it was by racial and religious segregation (before democracy in 1994), and the present day ongoing instances of social violence, many of which are linked to xenophobia, homophobia and other aspects of diversity, the challenge for teacher development lies with how well teachers are prepared for practice that manages the complexities and tensions associated with democracy and diversity (Ferguson 2011b). This article argues that as teachers are situated in their personal biographies (Amin & Ramrathan 2009: 70), their particular beliefs and perspectives are likely to influence how they deal with diversity and its many intersections (Arnesen 2010; Ferguson 2011a: 66; Jarvis 2009; Ter Avest & Bakker 2009). For this reason the research focused on teacher development through communicative learning (Mezirow 1991: 64, 2000: 8), operationalized as communities of practice, to develop and transform the teacher's knowledge base for more effective practice for democratic citizenship education and religious diversity.

In this article, a sketch of the context and background to the research is provided. Thereafter a critical analysis of the theoretical framework that guided the research is presented. I argue that to develop practice that furthers the aims of *democratic* citizenship education inclusive of religious and cultural diversity, teachers need to learn the principles of democracy through participation with other teachers in learning communities, or communities of practice (Wenger 1998; online 2006/2013; Ferguson 2011a; Westheimer 2008). Thereafter, the research design and methodology are outlined, followed by some of the findings of the research as these pertain to the efficacy/ inefficacy of a community of practice approach to teacher-learning for democracy and diversity. Finally, conclusions pertaining to the findings are drawn and recommendations made for future teacher development and possible implementation.

Concepts Used in the Research

Given the contested nature of some of the concepts used in conceptualising the research, brief explanations of how these were interpreted are now provided.

'Citizenship' is one of these contested and complex concepts. As Enslin (2003: 73) has argued, "conceptions of citizenship are best understood in context, especially in divided societies". Hence in the South African context, democratic citizenship *education* would entail acquiring knowledge and learning tolerance and acceptance of the 'diversities' in South Africa. The outgoing South Africa national curriculum (DoE 2003a) which gave impetus to this research, named 'Citizenship Education' as one of four focus areas in the subject Life Orientation. 'Religion Education' as the study of different religions and beliefs formed a component of Citizenship Education.

In recent curriculum developments (DoBE 2011a, b), the focus area 'Citizenship Education' has been subsumed under the 'Topics', 'Democracy and Human Rights' in the Life Orientation Grade 10-12 curriculum, and 'Constitutional Rights and Responsibilities' in the Grade 7-9 curriculum. Religion Education remains a focus of these Topics. From this development one could infer that the responsible citizen is one who understands the workings of a democracy and values the rights and freedoms of the diverse ethnic, cultural and religious groups who reside in South Africa. The term 'citizenship/religion education' is used in this article to draw attention to the integration of religion education with democratic citizenship and human rights education (Gearon 2010: 190; Jackson 2007: 28ff).

'Democracy' is also a complex concept. The preferred model in the context of this research, is a deliberative and communicative model that, after Young (1996: 120; Enslin, Pendlebury & Tjiattas 2001: 125), places greater emphasis on egalitarianism, inclusivity and communication than those conceptions that focus on reason and primarily critical argument. Furthermore, Young's view that there is transformative potential in participation, in presenting one's claims, in listening to others with the purpose of learning to understand their claims, has influenced how I have augmented Wenger's mutual engagement dimension in his conceptualization of communities of practice, discussed further along in the article (Ferguson 2011a: 90). In addition, Young's perspective on difference as a "deliberative resource", as having the potential to contribute to rich democratic discussion

(Young 1997: 385; Enslin *et al.* 2001: 128), has also influenced the way in which deliberative democracy has been interpreted for this research (Young 2000, 1997; 1996; Enslin 2006). I do not dismiss critical argument as an element of deliberative democracy, since it is necessary for teachers and their pupils to develop critical argument as a democratic skill.

Context and Background to the Research

The backdrop to the wider research on which this article is based, is the curriculum reforms in South Africa since democracy in 1994. The introduction of democratic citizenship education inclusive of religion education to the national curriculum formed part of the curriculum reforms to counter discrimination and to promote responsible citizenship, diversity and inclusivity. With this historical background, these reforms were absolutely necessary, but the question remains whether, after almost twenty years, teachers are suitably prepared to mediate the complexities associated with such reforms effectively in the classroom (Ferguson 2011a). Bransford, Darling-Hammond & LePage (2005: 14) have argued that curriculum reform requires that at the very least teachers need to rethink the knowledge base relating to their disciplines and the pedagogical skills needed to provide productive and meaningful learning experiences for pupils from all kinds of backgrounds (Nieto 2000). But some educationalists argue that more than this is required for learning and teaching in a multicultural society. Cochran-Smith (2004: 145) stresses that "what teachers need to know *about* the knowledge base and *what else* they need to know, including attitudes, knowledge and beliefs to teach diverse groups" (e.i.o.) is necessary. This supports Nieto (2000) and Banks, Cochran-Smith and colleagues' (2005) argument that teachers need to develop an understanding of the diverse groups to which their learners belong in order to affirm diversity in schools and in the classroom (Amin & Ramrathan 2009). Being able to open up to multiple perspectives is often problematic since many teachers may continue to harbour exclusivist worldviews, opposed to learning about the religions and worldviews of others. There is evidence from other research initiatives conducted in South Africa that show that the liberal and secular underpinnings of the national curriculum are at odds with the conservative religious or cultural perspectives of many teachers. Such conservative views

inhibit teachers including topics on religious and cultural diversity in the classroom (Mattson & Harley 2003; Ferguson & Roux 2004; Rooth 2005; Du Preez 2008; Jarvis 2008; Ferguson 2011a). This reality cannot be ignored if teachers are expected to be contributors to learners' understanding of such contested concepts as democracy, citizenship, diversity and human rights, as well as those values or virtues for citizenship education to be effective (Enslin 2003: 78; DoE 2001; Gould 1988). Furthermore the way in which religions and cultures continue to be misrepresented in the national curriculum (DoBE 2011a) and in textbooks is problematic and will persist if curriculum and textbook writers and teachers do not recognise that under- or mis-representation leads to negative reification and stereotyping. Misrepresentations of religions and cultures in the classroom are clearly related to a lack of knowledge and exposure and do little to infuse respect and dignity as core values of democratic citizenship education (Carrim & Keet 2005; DoE 2001; Jackson 1997: 125).

Yet, various Department of Education initiated In-Service Teacher Training (INSET) programmes conducted from 1995 to the present in Gauteng, supposedly designed to 'retrain' teachers for the political paradigm shift and radical curriculum reforms in South Africa, have hardly exposed teachers to substantive content knowledge, or to developing appropriate pedagogies for democracy and religious and cultural diversity (Ferguson 2011a: 140; Rooth 2005: 236). This oversight is odd in spite of the unequivocal references to diversity and inclusivity to promote human rights in various policies, the national curricula (DoE 2003a; DoBE 2011c) and the *National Policy on Religion and Education* (DoE 2003b), amongst them (*cf.* Chidester 2006; Carrim & Keet 2005).

On these grounds I contend that to develop teacher capacity for a just democratic culture, that is affirming of diversity, teachers need to be participant in ongoing discussions and dialogue with other teachers to acquire the knowledge and skills for education in the workings of democracy, human rights and religious and cultural diversity (Ferguson 2011a: 84; *cf.* Westheimer 2008). Since religions and cultures present different truth claims, it is necessary for teachers to acquire as Young (1996) put it, "appropriate deliberative dispositions, particularly of listening, and a capacity to value difference …". It is for this reason that I propose teacher-learning in communities of practice for citizenship/religion education. The

theoretical framework that underpinned and guided the research is outlined in the next section.

Teacher Development for Citizenship Education/ Religion Education: A Theoretical Framework

In developing the theoretical framework that would contribute to conceptualizing this research I drew from the following: Wenger's theory of communities of practice (Wenger 1998; 2006/2013; Wenger *et al.* 2002); Mezirow's (1991; 2000) transformative adult learning theory which provided the means to understand how the personal histories or frames of reference of teachers influence their understanding of cultures, religions and religious diversity; various perspectives on deliberative democracy, for their emphasis on communication, participation and inclusivity, necessary prerequisites for communities of practice to develop teacher capacity for critical reflection on democratic culture (Young 1996; 2000: 23; Gutmann 1996; Enslin *et al.* 2001); and critical multicultural education, the work of Banks (1997; 2001) and Nieto (2000) in particular.

The term 'communities of practice' was originally coined to refer to groups of people who join together to engage in a process of collective learning about a subject to deepen their knowledge and expertise in relation to this subject, which becomes the shared domain of interest (Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998; 2006/2013). The literature abounds with conceptualisations of professional learning communities (Westheimer 2008; Cochran-Smith 2004; Zellermeyer & Munthe 2007), but what distinguishes communities of practice from other kinds of professional learning communities are three dimensions of 'practice', viz. a shared domain of interest, or, the particular body of knowledge to which members of the community are committed; mutual engagement, which embodies the learning activity in a community of practice; and, a shared repertoire which includes the discourses, concepts, stories and concrete materials that a community produces in the course of its existence, relative to the domain of interest (Wenger 1998: 82ff; Ferguson 2011a: 86, 2012a: 138). These dimensions of practice are inextricably linked and together define the internal dynamics of communities of practice.

In conceptualising this research, the homogenising tendency of the

'community' concept was deemed to be problematic for how religious and cultural differences, with the increased likelihood of conflicting worldviews, would be managed (Wenger 1998; Jewson 2007: 69). Given the sterile corporate context in which Wenger (1998: 45ff) developed communities of practice theory and consequently how the mutual engagement dimension was envisaged as a tool for knowledge management in the corporate world, I found that the communities of practice concept did not provide adequately for how disagreement and conflict arising from differences in religious or cultural worldviews would be resolved (Ferguson 2011a: 98; Wenger *et al.* 2002; Roberts 2006: 629; Hughes, Jewson & Unwin 2007: 172). Wenger did not work specifically with teachers and curriculum developers on *learning about* religion and belief, culture and ethnicity in a multicultural society, or to transform how people perceive human difference. For this reason I have drawn on Mezirow's transformative learning theory, especially his formulation of "discursive communities" (Mezirow 1991: 207) to enrich Wenger's conceptualisation of mutual engagement. Mezirow's theory provides insights into what transformative thinking means in adulthood, how a person's frame of reference is constituted and transformed (Ferguson 2011a: 70; Taylor 2009: 4). Mezirow contended that discursive communities should foster transformative learning with regard to democracy and diversity which entails promoting values such as freedom, equal opportunity to participate, openness to alternative perspectives or worldviews and mutual respect, since these values are requisite for transformative learning in adults to occur (Mezirow 1991: 77, 78; Ferguson 2011a: 77). Further along in the article it becomes evident, with reference to the qualitative data, why a citizenship/religion education community of practice needs to function from a platform of democratic values. While Wenger advocated for mutual recognition of the ability of participants to 'negotiate meaning' in a community of practice, I argue that mutual recognition must extend beyond mutual *ability* to negotiate meaning in relation to the domain of interest (Wenger 1998: 99), to include an affective or moral dimension (Waghid 2009; Enslin *et al.* 2001). What this implies is that in order for a citizenship/religion education community of practice to be effective, members need to accept one another's (human) differences unconditionally, to enable equal opportunity to participate and hence to contribute to the domain of interest (Ferguson 2011a: 99).

Transformative learning theory as defined by Mezirow (1991) is a theory of learning that analyses and explains how adults learn to make meaning of their life-world. The appeal of transformative learning theory for continuous teacher development lies with its potential to explain how teachers as adult learners transform the beliefs, attitudes, opinions and emotions that constitute their meaning schemes (points of view or habits of mind) and meaning perspectives (frames of reference) (Mezirow 1991: 223). These concepts, central to Mezirow's theory, were significant in this research for explaining how teachers as adult learners may think about and approach learning for democratic citizenship and diversity given South Africa's history of segregation. Mezirow (1991: 1) maintained that adult learners are "caught in their own histories" and in order to make sense of their backgrounds and beliefs need to start with what has been acquired through prior learning and socialization. On these grounds one could argue that the teacher's frame of reference should not be overlooked where learning and teaching about diversity is concerned (Mezirow 1991: 46). It is likely that a teacher's frame of reference or worldview (Mezirow 2000: 16; Merriam 2004: 61) will influence her/his perceptions of diversity and disposition toward the liberal values espoused in the Constitution (of South Africa), other human rights declarations and the national curriculum. Transformative learning depends on social interaction in discursive spaces so as to maximize opportunities for teachers to learn inclusivity, toleration, respect and acceptance of differences for developing a *practice* that mediates learning for democratic citizenship in the classroom (Mezirow 1991: 167; Ferguson 2011a: 90; Ferguson & Roux 2004). I agree with Jansen (2009) that transformative thinking in teachers is integral to the development of young people who are able to think critically and behave responsibly as engaged members of society.

The extent to which teachers have been exposed to diversity and education for democracy and the efficacy of learning through participation in communities of practice is the focus of the research discussed in the following section.

Research Design: Mixed Methods Using a Sequential Transformative Strategy of Inquiry

The research as a whole was conducted using a mixed methods sequential

transformative strategy of inquiry (Ferguson 2011a: 106; Creswell 2003: 212). This means there were two distinct phases of data collection: a cross-sectional survey (quantitative/qualitative) followed by a phase of participatory action research (PAR) with ethnographic elements (qualitative) (Ferguson 2011a: 103ff.). The reason for sequencing the quantitative and qualitative data collection in this way was to gain an understanding of the extent of teacher knowledge of Life Orientation in general and the participant teachers' relationship with citizenship/religion education more specifically. The intention was that the findings in the survey should inform the design of the PAR phase. This second phase allowed for time in the field to investigate the efficacy of communities of practice for teachers to learn content, pedagogy and democratic skills and values for citizenship/religion education (Ferguson 2011a: 115ff.).

The bulk of the survey was designed to elicit YES, NO or UNSURE responses from the respondents with qualifying statements (hence quantitative/qualitative).

The Context of the Study: Cross Sectional Survey
The study was positioned within the secondary school sector. Sixty secondary schools in the Gauteng Province were selected to participate in the survey. A purposive sampling strategy was implemented since the respondents needed to be Life Orientation teachers, or at least teaching Life Orientation at the time that the study was conducted (Ferguson 2011a: 109). The schools were also purposively selected to include inner-city, suburban and township schools as it was thought that differently situated schools would view religious and cultural diversity differently.

Participatory Action Research Phase
Participatory action research (PAR) opened up the opportunity to work collaboratively *with* teacher participants to investigate the responses to the survey questionnaire in more depth (Heron & Reason 2006: 144). A community of practice was constituted with the teacher participants as the unit of analysis in the PAR phase of the research. In my dual role as

researcher and "empathetic provocateur" or mentor, a term borrowed from Mezirow (1991: 206), I was able to simultaneously investigate the problems associated with learning and teaching religion and religious diversity and observe the teachers' engagement in the community of practice, as well as with their learners in their classrooms (Ferguson 2011a: 105ff.). The PAR phase was conducted in six cyclical stages allowing time for dialogical engagement in the community of practice, time to put learning into practice in the classroom, and time to reflect on classroom activity when we regrouped every few weeks (Ferguson 2011a: 118). The extent of the teachers' knowledge base concerning school policy on religion, content and pedagogical knowledge of religion and religious diversity, as well as their disposition towards including topics on diverse religions and beliefs were explored. In addition, informed by principles of transformative learning theory, this phase of the study enabled me to discover *how* the 'situatedness' of the participants with their personal histories and experiences of religion, culture and worldview gave meaning and scope to classroom practice (Ferguson 2011a: 178, 185). Data elicitation methods included focus group interviews and discussions, classroom observation and semi-structured interviews.

Three teachers constituted the community of practice in the PAR phase of the research, two women and one man. All three were resident at schools in the same district in Gauteng and had participated in the cross-sectional survey. These schools are located in different social-economic and cultural contexts. One of the schools is situated in a township and attended by black children only (School B, Phumzile). Christianity and African Traditional religions are the majority religions. Another of the schools is situated in an area that was designated 'Coloured' during the apartheid era and is still attended mainly by 'Coloured' children (School A, Rochelle). Christianity is the majority religion with a small number of Muslim pupils. The third school, located in a farming community, was formerly a white school before 1994, but is now multicultural (School C, Tlaletso) (Ferguson 2012b: 204ff.). Christianity is the majority religion in this school. Some of the pupils come from neighbouring African states, including Botswana, Zimbabwe and Malawi. To maintain the anonymity of the participant teachers, the names used to identify them are pseudonyms (Ferguson 2011a: 176).

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Cross Sectional Survey: Findings Pertinent to the PAR Phase

Some findings from the survey will be presented as these were important for constructing the domain of interest in the community of practice in the PAR phase. The survey was designed to elicit biographical details of the respondents, including age, sex and home language; information regarding their original teacher qualifications; knowledge of policy on religion in education; the focus of INSET programmes regarding learning about citizenship and religion education; disposition towards including topics on diverse religions and cultures in their Life Orientation programmes; teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and skills to include diverse religions and cultures in their classes (Ferguson 2011a: 149).

Of the 60 questionnaires distributed to Life Orientation teachers, 62% (n=37) completed and returned the survey questionnaires. The 62% return provided adequate information to construct a "snapshot" (Cohen, Manion & Morrison 2000: 175) of the trends or patterns in teachers' approaches to citizenship/religion education in the Gauteng Province at a point in time (Ferguson 2011a: 129ff).

Biographical Details

For the purposes of this article, only the age group categories are reported. The survey indicated that 57% of the respondents were older than 39 years at the time of the completion of the survey and fewer than 20% younger than 31 years. The age group categories included in the survey, viz. 21 to 30 years, 31 to 39 years, 40 to 49 years and 50 years and older, were calculated to determine the age of respondents at the time of South Africa's democratization in 1994 from the time that the survey was conducted in 2007. The reason for creating the age group categories in this way was to determine if the age and socialization of teachers would influence how they related to the contents of the Life Orientation curriculum concerning democracy, citizenship and religious diversity (DoE 2003a: 11; *cf*. DoBE 2011a, 2011b). An assumption at the outset of the study was that the older the respondents, viz. over 35 years of age at least, the more likely it would be that they would *not* feel prepared to teach citizenship/religion education, because teachers would have been subjected to the influences of Christian

National Education in their initial qualifications. Their professional qualifications would in all likelihood also have included Christian Religious Education and/or Biblical Studies. The younger the teachers (age group category 21 to 30 years), the more likely it is that they would have experienced religious and cultural diversity from childhood and that their courses in their teacher education qualifications would have included democracy, human rights and diversity topics (Ferguson 2011a: 136ff).

Teachers' Undergraduate Courses in Religion

The survey data indicate that more than half of the respondents qualified as teachers before 1994 when Religious Education was defined by Christian Nationalism (Rose & Tunmer 1975). Eighty nine percent of the teachers who participated in the survey are Christian, representing at least eleven different denominations of Christianity, including Anglican, Methodist, Roman Catholicism, as well as various African Independent Churches (AICs), viz. the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) and the International Pentecostal Holiness Church (IPHC) (Ferguson 2011a: 131). Hence in this sample there was greater evidence of diversity in the Christian backgrounds of the teachers than diversity as adherence to different religions. Approximately 57% of the respondents indicated that their undergraduate qualifications had included religion in some way. These courses included Biblical Studies, Religious Education (Christian), Philosophy, Sociology and Comparative Religions. However, when asked if these courses had prepared them to teach diverse religions and beliefs, 46% said NO (32% said YES). Teachers who felt they were neither informed nor skilled to manage teaching and learning about diverse religions and worldviews as a result of their pre-service qualifications were in the majority in this sample (Ferguson 2011a: 148).

Teachers' Knowledge of Policy, Curriculum and Teacher Development Programmes

In answer to a question on DoE INSET programmes, 81% of the respondents indicated that they had attended such programmes, but that technical or structural aspects of the curriculum mainly had been covered with minimal

reference to the inclusion of diverse religions and cultures (Ferguson 2011a: 139, 142). Thirty five percent responded that facilitators had included a section on diverse religions, covering Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, African Religions; issues pertaining to diversity; issues around multiculturalism, meanings of inclusivity and "anti-bias" (*sic*). The 37% who indicated that diverse religions, cultures and beliefs had been included in the INSET programmes that they had attended indicated that content had been "brief", "in no detail", "only mentioned", and in one case, "we were given a lot of posters to explain different religions" (Ferguson 2011a: 140).

Forty three percent indicated that INSET programmes had not included content on diverse religions and cultures and 19% did not respond to this question at all. Respondents pointed out that there had been time only for some background on religions, but none had been studied in any depth (Ferguson 2011a: 143). These numbers indicate that 62% of the teachers in this sample were required to teach a section of the Life Orientation curriculum without meaningful training. A range of random topics, which some teachers indicated were not particularly useful for enhancing their understanding, had been included. Sixty percent of the respondents indicated that they had minimal or no knowledge at all of the *National Policy on Religion and Education* (Ferguson 2011a: 138) and it appears that the INSET programmes that this cohort had attended did little to change this situation.

Teachers' Partiality towards Including Topics on Diverse Religions and Cultures

It is significant to note that in spite of the limited exposure to religious, cultural and other diversity related issues in their professional qualifications and in INSET programmes respondents were generally accommodating of religious diversity. In an open question on how respondents felt about including topics or themes on diverse religions and cultures in their Life Orientation programmes, 83% of the respondents were affirming of the pluralist reality of South African society (Ferguson 2011a: 144ff). The language used by teachers in their responses indicated that they do understand the relationship between democratic citizenship and religion education. In their responses to this particular question the respondents

referred to the "right to freedom of religion", "respect" for the "values, cultures and rights of other citizens", "sensitivity towards others", "knowledge and understanding of others". These respondents pointed out that a teacher's knowledge is important as it influences what happens in the classroom (Ferguson 2011a: 146ff).

In a few of the cases respondents were positive and affirming towards including different beliefs in their lessons, while others seemed wary about including material on certain religions. Responses included:

- I feel good because you learn to deal with people of different cultural backgrounds and religions.
- General information is good, but it is not fair to teach from a faith perspective.
- I don't really mind, but as a committed Christian I don't have much passion for teaching about Hinduism and Buddhism.
- I prefer [teaching about] culture because the youth are not practicing their cultures, specifically their beliefs, norms, ethics. They tend to imitate western style. African cultures should be taught in multiracial schools not only township schools.

Another of the questions asked if teachers thought they had the knowledge and skills to include topics on diverse religions and cultures in their classes (Ferguson 2011a: 150). Sixty eight percent responded affirmatively, while 32% were either NO or UNSURE. Explanations of the positive responses included:

- I have knowledge, even if limited as a result of self study, reading and research.
- Knowledge is gained from speaking to religious leaders and colleagues.
- My knowledge was gained from teaching in a school with different religions and cultures.
- With internet access and all the materials I have it is possible.

Although this question yielded a 68% YES response, only 49% (n=18)

actually answered the question. In some cases teachers responded from the learners' point of view, what learners should know, rather than if the teacher him/herself felt equipped to teach diverse religions and cultures. So while 83% of the respondents were positive towards the inclusion of religious and cultural diversity in Life Orientation, it appears that not as many were convinced that they had the knowledge base to facilitate this inclusion effectively (Ferguson 2011a: 150).

One of the NO responses is worth noting in that the respondent said that "he could not explain in detail other religious cultures, and made explicit reference to "Shembe[1], IPHC[2], the ZCC".[3] For some teachers and their learners the AICs are a far greater reality than the 'major religions' which take precedence in the national curriculum and in textbooks. Resources on the AICs are also not as easily available for teachers as are the resources on 'major religions'. Either they are not mentioned in textbooks and learning and teaching resources, or they are touched on only briefly, often inaccurately (Ferguson 2011a: 154). Membership of the AICs is particularly evident in the larger cities in South Africa and surrounding smaller towns. To be truly inclusive I maintain that the AICs should receive specialist attention in teacher development programmes (*cf.* Ferguson 2012b). The question begs why teachers do not simply search for the relevant information on the internet. While this may be a valid question for researching 'major religions', in my own research of online resources on the AICs, I maintain that these are not necessarily written for the novice to religion education and moreover require an expert tutor or mentor to assist teachers to make sense of the AICs in the history of Christianity in South Africa. This point will be returned to in the discussion of the PAR phase further along in the article.

In a question in which respondents were asked if they had included, or planned to include topics on diverse religions and cultures in classes, 81%

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[1] Shembe, or the Church of the Nazarites, whose founder was Isaiah Shembe.

[2] IPHC is the acronym for the International Pentecostal Holiness Church. The present leader is Glayton Modise and the church's headquarters are at Zuurbekom, south-west of Johannesburg (*cf.* Anderson online).

[3] The acronym for the Zionist Christian Church whose leader is Barnabas Legkanyane. The headquarters are at Moriah, outside Polokwane, Limpopo Province (Chidester 1992).

responded that they had or would be doing so later in the school term (Ferguson 2011a: 159). This set of responses was significant considering that in a previous question only 49% indicated that they felt academically prepared to include topics on diverse religions and cultures. Sixteen percent of the respondents clearly said they avoid topics on diverse religions and cultures. In addition, none of the respondents mentioned any other religions or movements than those referred to as 'major religions' in the national curriculum (Ferguson 2011a: 160). This implies that minority religions, which are protected by the Constitution, could be avoided in the classroom by teachers who have no knowledge of them or are negatively influenced by the media hype that often surrounds them.

Respondents were asked if they thought they had the knowledge and skills to handle discussions or debates on controversial religious or cultural issues in their Life Orientation classes (Ferguson 2011a: 155ff). This question was included in the survey since democratic citizenship education in the Life Orientation curriculum requires teachers to demonstrate religious tolerance and respect for difference and the pedagogical skills to mediate critical discussion or dialogue in the classroom should controversy arise. Fifty seven percent of the respondents said they could, while 14% said NO and 24% said they were UNSURE. With regard to the positive and UNSURE responses only three of the respondents mentioned that teachers are able to handle controversial issues on religions and cultures because they have been trained to do so; only one mentioned that she is able to handle the debates because of the diversity evident in her working environment; and only one mentioned that it all depends on what religion one is talking about. Interesting that Satanism was singled out as something this teacher would not be able to talk to in any depth (Ferguson 2011a: 157).

Teachers who said NO did so on the grounds that their knowledge of other religions and cultures is "scanty" or as one teacher said: "I avoid being controversial on issues concerning religion" (Ferguson 2011a: 157). These responses raise questions about the preparedness of Life Orientation teachers in general to do justice to citizenship education themes. Diversity topics in the classroom are likely to engender conflict. Various researchers have commented that in order for young people to learn tolerance they need to learn about conflict (Barnes 2009; Gearon 2004: 14). If teachers are averse to including topics on conflicting religious views or beliefs, either because they

do not believe they are sufficiently knowledgeable to do so, or because their own personal convictions inhibit them from doing so, then one has to ask how else learners will acquire the political and religious literacy skills integral to democratic citizenship education (Roux 2010: 998; Gearon 2010: 185ff; Robertson 2008: 32; DoE 2003b).

Discussion of the Findings in the Survey Data

The survey indicated that the teachers in the sample were generally affirming of religious diversity and were willing to include topics on religious and cultural diversity in their Life Orientation programmes in spite of limited exposure to Religious Studies in their qualifications. However, the data betray a lack of teacher content knowledge about religion and religious diversity in South Africa as well as limited pedagogical skills, suggesting that enthusiasm alone is inadequate. This lack of content knowledge leaves teachers unable to deal informatively and critically with the 'one-size-fits-all' and possibly 'bounded' approach to religion in the national curriculum. Over emphasis of the major religions results in minority religions including the previously mentioned AICs as well as the Nazarite Church (Shembe), and by extension the Bahai Faith, Rastafari and Wicca/Paganism going unnoticed and even misrepresented by teachers in the classroom.

The affirmations of diversity displayed by the majority of respondents in this sample served as a starting point to encourage further learning in this field in the PAR phase. The responses were analysed using narrative analysis (Elliot 2005; Gubrium & Holstein 2009) with thematic content analysis, and discourse analysis (Taylor 2001). The key themes identified formed the basis of the interview guides for the focus group interviews and discussions that defined the PAR phase (Ferguson 2011a: 122).

Teacher Development for Religious Diversity in Communities of Practice

In this section the three dimensions of the community of practice are discussed in terms of how these were defined and refined for citizenship/religion education. Many of the views expressed in the survey

questionnaires on religious and cultural diversity were examined more specifically in the PAR phase in the contexts and experiences of the three participants. The participants provided useful and relevant narrative accounts of religious and cultural diversity in their neighbourhoods and/or from their interactions with learners in the classroom. Such accounts will be included in the ensuing discussion as evidence of the value of face-to-face dialogical communication to confront difficult issues as these were produced by the teachers' contexts. What also emerges is how context produces or generates knowledge relevant for developing the domain of interest for a particular community, rather than being imposed in a reified 'once-size-fits-all' format in textbooks or as vertically transmitted in INSET programmes (Ferguson 2011a: 172ff). Details of some of the narratives have been published elsewhere (Ferguson 2012b), hence are referred to only briefly here.

The shared domain of interest for this community of practice is citizenship/religion education. As previously mentioned, the domain of interest is the particular body of knowledge that motivates the community of practice. Ideally the domain is shared since the teachers should all participate in constructing it. It is also potentially generative as participants raise issues from their own experiences in the classroom, analyse, discuss and 'negotiate' meaning through critical reflection (Wenger 1998: 77). 'Negotiation of meaning', a concept from Wenger's theory was deemed essential for dealing with tensions or dilemmas associated with religious diversity and questions about truth (Griffiths 2001: 19) in this community of practice. 'Negotiation of meaning' could be explained as the process that participants in a given context go through in order to understand each other. For this research 'negotiation of meaning' as it is in Wenger's theory was augmented by drawing on Mezirow's 'communicative learning' which requires critical reflection and dialogue by participants in a discursive community (Mezirow 1991: 76, 199). Both Mezirow (1991) and Taylor (2009: 4) have argued that these two elements of communicative learning are necessary for critical inquiry and problem-solving for transformative thinking in a learning context. Whilst 'negotiation of meaning' could suggest that interlocutors should reach a settlement or agreement, in this research, 'negotiation of meaning' was taken to mean that interlocutors would need to keep an open mind and mutually accept critical evaluation of their own and others' frames of reference (Ferguson 2011a: 74; Mezirow 2000: 31). It is possible that

given the dilemmas associated with religious and cultural diversity that participants might not reach agreement. However, one could equally argue that disagreement should not deter teachers from full participation in the community of practice activities, as difference could be a resource (Young 2000: 24, 81).

An instance from the qualitative data to demonstrate how these dynamics played out in reality came from the participants sharing their particular areas of interest, or issues that they found difficult to mediate in the classroom. Tlaletso (School C) shared that some of the learners in one of her classes knew about Wicca. She narrated how two boys claimed that they were witches (Ferguson 2011a: 207). They had shown her some disturbing pictures of animal sacrifices stored on their mobile phones, claiming that these sacrifices had been performed by witches. Rochelle (School A) told how she had objected to her daughter having to learn about "worshipping the moon", which we (the participants in the community of practice) concluded had been about Wicca or Paganism (Ferguson 2011a: 234). The problem highlighted in this case is that many teachers who are either deeply steeped in their faith traditions or hold particular views on witchcraft may not be inclined towards teaching about Paganism/Wicca because of long held misconceptions and prejudices (Leff, Fontleve & Martin; Mezirow 1991:44; Cranton & Roy 2003:88). The responses to the age group categories in the survey questionnaire, as well as to the question that asked teachers if they had completed any courses on religions in their teacher education qualifications are relevant here. Since 43% had indicated that they had not studied religion in any way, and more than 35% said they had completed courses in Biblical Studies, it is not difficult to see why minority religions, especially those that already have a prejudiced track record, are not likely to be well received by teachers who have not had opportunities to reconsider their own beliefs and prejudices in development programmes (Ferguson 2011a).

The teachers' responses in the focus group discussions in the community of practice indicated how necessary it is for teachers to engage in person with colleagues on controversial or difficult issues of belief that arise in the classroom. Tlaleto's narrative, in which she related the boys' claims to being witches, indicated that teachers may not always have the knowledge to turn provocative claims or questions from learners into learning opportunities. Meeting as a learning community provided opportunities to

confront controversial topics such as witchcraft and to put some of what the boys were claiming into perspective (Ferguson 2011a: 207). It was clear that Tlaletso did not have prior knowledge of Wicca to allow her to respond to the boys, especially the disturbing photographs of animal sacrifice that they had shown her. Investigation of the literature will show that animal sacrifice does not feature in Paganism/Wicca (Gallagher 2005), information that Tlaletso will not have acquired without studying the key tenets of Paganism/Wicca.

This incident also shows that the construction of the domain of interest is dependent on mutual engagement through which participants not only share knowledge and experience, but also deconstruct inaccurate views, in this case of Wicca, held by the boys (Wenger 1998: 55; Ferguson 2011a: 84). Teacher development for citizenship education should allow teachers to foster understanding of religious and cultural difference by interrogating the reasons for them, particularly from the perspective of teachers' and learners' frames of reference, rather than pushing them aside (Ferguson 2011a: 231; Mezirow 2000). If one takes into account the sensitive nature of the particular issues raised by the teachers in the focus group discussions in this research, it would not have been possible to examine or resolve them in INSET programmes where vertical transmissions of information occur, often in fragmented ways (Ferguson 2011a: 188; *cf.* Wenger 2006/2013; Cochran-Smith 2004: 15). The exchanges that took place amongst the teachers in the focus groups are indications of the kind of horizontal dialogical/reflective interaction required to shift teachers in their thinking, as theorised by Taylor (2009: 9) and Mezirow (2000: 10). However, vertical input from some more knowledgeable person is sometimes necessary to inject new learning and new ideas into the community of practice and to encourage teachers to critically examine their own frames of reference, to assess the assumptions underlying their own beliefs (Ferguson 2011a: 74, 207; *cf.* Mezirow 2000: 10; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder 2002: 139). Witchcraft is differently understood in different religious and cultural groups in South Africa. In traditional African beliefs and in Christianity, witchcraft is negatively understood and aligned with evil. In Paganism/Wicca however, witchcraft is a positive and life affirming practice (Gallagher 2005; Leff, Fontleve & Martin online), a 'truth' that may well escape teachers without some kind of face-to-face discussion with more knowledgeable others.

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A further instance of such an interaction occurred after I had observed one of Phumzile's Grade 12 classes in the Observation cycle of the PAR. The teacher asked the learners to list the religions that they knew of. One learner responded with 'Indian', another 'Ghandi' (Ferguson 2011a: 223). The teacher did not try to correct the learners that neither 'Indian' nor 'Ghandi' are names of religions. The teacher then asked the learners if African tradition is religion. The class did not answer – everyone remained silent. When the teacher and I discussed this incident afterwards, he pointed out that he did not know enough about religions to ask probing questions to guide the learners' thinking (Ferguson 2011a: 224). This response was quite disconcerting since the observations took place well into the PAR cycles. The participants had been issued with material on religions practiced in South Africa to start them off, but evidently this teacher had not read the material. This instance drew attention to the possibility that not all of the participants in a community of practice will necessarily take responsibility for mastering knowledge and therefore for contributing to the domain of interest, leaving them floundering on the periphery of the community of practice (Wenger 1998). Ironically, this particular school could contribute significantly to the domain of interest where African Traditional Religions and the AICs are concerned, but the teacher needed to be shown the possibilities and to gain the confidence[4] to take on more sophisticated aspects of religious and cultural diversity in the classroom (Ferguson 2011a: 210). Graven's (2004: 179) finding from her research with Mathematics teachers, that *confidence* is an "additional component of learning" and necessary for teachers to move from the periphery of a community to full participation, is relevant here.

A shared repertoire develops through mutual engagement in relation to the domain of interest (Wenger 1998: 82). In the case of citizenship/religion education the shared repertoire could comprise a positive rights discourse germane to the diversity of religion and beliefs (Ferguson 2011a: 88; 2012a: 132). In order to become an insider to the practice of the community and to be able to participate fully (*cf.* Graven 2004), a teacher needs to learn the discourse of citizenship/religion education, including the

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[4] On confidence as a fourth dimension of a community of practice, see Graven (2004).

reifications (terms, concepts, theories) of the domain (Wenger 1998: 58; Ferguson 2011a: 91). The repertoire may also comprise personal histories and experiences of religion or belief of teachers, learners and their parents, examples of situated experiences of religion and culture, rituals and customs. The shared repertoire is potentially a rich 'basket' of resources generated from practice and participation in a teacher-learning community (Ferguson 2011a: 194ff; Wenger 1998: 55). With regard to citizenship/religion education, the repertoire is likely to be different for each community depending on the social context/s. For example, Phumzile narrated that he had attended the wedding reception of friends who had married in the IPHC. He had witnessed that many couples from the church had married *en masse* on the same day. A personal story such as this one is of great relevance and interest to this school community, since the IPHC headquarters are located not very far from the school, but is open only to members or invited guests (Ferguson 2011a: 202; *cf.* Anderson online). Recognition of these firsthand accounts of rituals and ceremonies as experienced by teachers is invaluable for developing the repertoire and the citizenship/religion education domain of interest.

'Negotiation of meaning' is also integral to developing the shared repertoire as the means to actualizing mutuality and respect, democratic values integral to the discourse of the community of practice (Ferguson 2011a; Gould 1988). The reason for this becomes obvious when conflict arises in communities born out of theological differences between denominations or sects of a particular religion, in this case Christianity. To substantiate this claim, I share a narrative that emerged in the data related to a particular experience of one of the participants. Tlaletso often spoke about Zionist Apostolic Christianity in her home environment and theological conflict between different 'mainstream' denominations of Christianity in her school environment (Ferguson 2011a: 236). The sources of these theological conflicts were related to differences in interpretation of the Biblical text between denominations and were consequently sources of tension amongst her colleagues in one instance, and between learners in her classes, in another. She was concerned that the theological tensions between herself and her colleagues might jeopardise the life of the community of practice at her school. For all three participants, the community of practice afforded opportunities to engage meaningfully with colleagues on the difficult issues

about and between religions in their immediate environments. However, the responses from these participants indicated that unless teachers are willing to exercise critical thinking skills to explore the tensions associated with diversity, as well as the democratic values to manage diversity, they are unlikely to introduce such debates in their classrooms, hence denying their pupils opportunities to engage meaningfully with diversity, an objective of democratic citizenship/religion education (Gearon 2010: 196; DoBE 2011b: 5).

Final Reflections on the Research Experience

From an analysis of the data elicited for this research, both survey and from the PAR phase, it is evident that learning through participation could mean different things in different contexts. Whilst INSET programmes could be interpreted as learning through participation, the survey data indicate that teachers of Life Orientation did not acquire deep knowledge and understanding (*cf.* Biggs 2003) of democracy, citizenship and religious diversity from such programmes in order to contribute effectively to the development of the political, religious and human rights literacy of their learners. INSET programmes attended by the respondents to the survey tended to convey limited information about these key concepts which led to some teachers feeling frustrated. The research was consequently taken to the field in a PAR phase in which a small sample of teachers were given opportunities to engage directly with others who are interested in teaching and learning citizenship/religion education. Through this field work, teachers were observed as they participated in the activities of a community of practice. It became evident over time that mutual engagement, as dialogue and critical reflection on dilemmas of diversity of belief, practice and lifestyle, is integral to teacher development for the finer nuances of diversity, necessary to contribute meaningfully to learners acquiring the political and religious literacy alluded to in the national curriculum and policies.

Moreover, since many teachers do not have formal Religion Studies backgrounds (survey findings, Ferguson 2011a: 134ff) to enable them to address diversity of religion and belief in an informed and inclusive way, learning through participation in decentralized communities of practice I maintain, is a solution to acquiring and generating knowledge of multiple

perspectives on religion and belief not only globally, but also to raise awareness of 'situated' experiences of religion and belief, particularly groups who are marginalized due to misunderstanding and stereotyping (Young 2000: 73ff). This research indicated however, that teachers need to be prompted to tell their stories of their own 'situated' experiences of belief and practice, to speak openly about their experiences of conflicting dogma in the classroom as a way of reflecting on their own frames of reference, and to find ways to resolve them in the classroom context. Working in a community of practice with these three teachers over many months provided a glimpse into the worlds of the teachers, their learners and their communities. The personal beliefs and values of the teachers and how these influence their relationships with their learners could only be expressed in a decentred learning space, in person, with trusted colleagues (Ferguson 2011a: 229).

Communities of practice however, by Wenger's own admission (Wenger *et al*. 2002), are at risk of becoming hegemonic if participants reject religious, cultural or lifestyle differences, because they cannot transform their thinking about others and therewith become self-serving. Constant stimulation of the practice therefore is required by a more knowledgeable mentor (Mezirow 1991: 207) to ensure ongoing negotiation amongst participants, including critical reflection on their own socially constructed assumptions and some form of inter-ideological dialogue or discourse (Ferguson 2011a: 256; *cf.* Roux 2007).

Learning   to teach for diversity is an ongoing responsibility for teachers of citizenship/religion education as more and more refugees and asylum seekers migrate into South Africa adding to the complexity of diversity. More research is required however to determine how teachers learn about the dynamics of diversity, whether in communities of practice, or other conceptualisations of teacher learning communities, in different contexts and regions. A problem that remained unresolved in this research was how to sustain the community of practice beyond the life of the research project (Ferguson 2011a: 256). This problem would also benefit from further research. When I set out to conduct this research I assumed that much time would be spent attempting to 'transform' the teachers' thinking to accept and appreciate religious diversity. However, it turned out that these teachers remained committed to the project, because they had a genuine interest in learning about citizenship, democracy and religious and cultural diversity

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(Ferguson 2011a: 257). Nevertheless, the teacher's propensity to accommodating and conceptualising participatory forms of democracy in the classroom and therewith for mediating deeper knowledge of religions and beliefs could also be researched in communities that are more religiously, culturally and ethnically diverse than the community where this research was undertaken (*cf.* Peck, Thompson, Chareka, Joshee & Sears 2010). A final recommendation therefore is for other researchers for whom citizenship/religion education is a domain of interest, to replicate this research in other contexts in order to refine it and extend it, with the intention of serving the interests of social justice and peaceful co-existence (Ferguson 2011a: 256; Young 2000: 27).

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Paving the Way to Transformation: Student Teachers' Religious Identity and Religion Education

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Abstract

In South Africa, Religion Education refers specifically to a diversity of religions and beliefs. The *Religion and Education Policy* (2003) requires teachers to adopt a multi- religious approach to Religion Education. This presents a challenge to Life Orientation student teachers given the religious diversity in South African classrooms. This article focuses on final year Life Orientation student teachers, in the School of Education at a South African university. Once qualified, these student teachers will be expected to facilitate Religion Education as part of the Life Orientation curriculum. I explore their understanding of religious freedom as a constitutional right and how their religious identity influences their approach to Religion Education. This qualitative case study, which drew on the theory of identity negotiation, showed that, to varying degrees, the students struggled to adopt a multi-religious approach to Religion Education. I contend that Initial Teacher Education Life Orientation modules, need to create space for student teachers to explore and negotiate their religious identity. This is necessary for the effective implementation of the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003) which expects teachers to encourage learners to grow in their own religious beliefs while also empathetically respecting the religious beliefs of others in society.

Keywords: Religion Education; religious freedom; religious identity negotiation, empathetic-reflective-dialogue

Background to the Study

In this article I contend that the religious[1] identity of Life Orientation[2] student teachers[3] can either entrench religious discrimination or promote religious dialogue in the classroom. Religious identity in this article does not refer only to formal institutionalised religion but also includes belief or worldview, whatever it may be. The 'policy image' (Jansen 2001) that is depicted by the *Religion and Education Policy* (Department of Education 2003) requires teachers to show an appreciation of, and respect for, people of different values, beliefs, practices and cultures. Student teachers, therefore, are expected to acquire knowledge of the principles and practices of the main religions represented in South Africa. Samuel and Stephens (2000: 478) contend that teachers

> walk a tightrope in both developing a personal [religious] identity which sits comfortably with their own sense of self and maintaining a balance between satisfying the requirements of state and society and providing the source and impetus for change.

Such a requirement could conflict with the student teacher's personal religious identity. There is a need to juxtapose the policy image and teacher personal religious identity and to explore the interrelationship between these identities. I recommend that space should be made in the Initial Teacher Education Life Orientation modules to explore this possible identity conflict. By doing so, it is reasonable to anticipate that student teachers will be better equipped to manage their religious identity and implement the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003).

As part of the Life Orientation module that I teach to a combination of 3rd and 4th year student teachers who are preparing to teach in the General

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[1] By referring to the religious identity of student teachers I also include those who perhaps have no religious persuasion and who might consider themselves to be atheistic or agnostic.

[2] Life Orientation is a compulsory subject in the South African school curriculum. It focuses on the personal, social and physical development of learners.

[3] Student teachers are also known as pre-service teachers or teacher trainees.

Education and Training (GET) band, I focus on Religion Education[4] as it falls within the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* (CAPS) (Department of Basic Education 2011) Life Orientation curriculum.[5] Student teachers deliberate the notion that religious freedom is a constitutional human right which finds expression in the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003). It is reasonable to assume that if a student teacher understands the human right to freedom of religion or belief within a context of religious diversity, s/he would understand the need for a policy such as the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003) and the implementation thereof. It is therefore my contention that for student teachers to implement the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003) wholeheartedly, they have to first understand and own the human right to freedom of religion or belief in order to enable them to facilitate the teaching-learning[6] about the diversity of religions and beliefs represented in South Africa. The *Religion and Education Policy* (2003: 2) promotes a co-operative model for schools and recognizes religious diversity while protecting learners from 'religious discrimination and coercion'.

Together, the student teachers and I considered the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003) and the implications for Religion Education as part of the Life Orientation curriculum. Discussion and debate centred on the context of religious diversity in South African schools and the challenges in implementing the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003). Emerging from the debate was the tension between policy image and personal religious identity. This led me to problematise the issue of religious identity. Guided by Goodson (1992: 10) who advocates that it is critical to know about 'the

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[4] Religion Education in South Africa has its beginnings in the work of 1970s South African exiled academic, Basil Moore (Moore, 1991).

[5] In the GET intermediate phase (Grades 4 – 6) Life Orientation is referred to as Life Skills. Religion Education is a topic embedded in Life Skills. In the GET senior phase (Grades 7 – 9) Religion Education falls within the broader topic "Constitutional rights and responsibilities". In the Further Education and Training band (Grades 10 -12), Religion Education falls within the topic "Democracy and human rights".

[6] This term implies that both teaching and learning are equally important if the classroom experience is to be successful (Jacobs, Vakalisa, & Gawe, 2011).

person the teacher is', I facilitated a discussion in which it emerged that student teachers, in addition to becoming practitioners, are individual persons with a unique history and identity which will impact on their work. Together we explored the notion that their religious identity could have a direct bearing on their teaching-learning of Religion Education.

In support of this notion I referred the student teachers to research (Jarvis 2008) which took place in selected KwaZulu-Natal primary schools. This study showed clearly that in-service teachers of Life Orientation who were not formally trained Life Orientation specialist teachers had to negotiate their religious identity when it came to teaching-learning Religion Education. It became apparent that these teachers had not had the opportunity to engage in any training or preparation for the shift from a mono-religious to a multi-religious approach. Neither had they had the opportunity to engage with any religious identity negotiation (Nias 1985; 1989) as they grappled with their personal religious identity and the *Religion and Education Policy (2003)* expectations to employ a teaching-learning approach that included religions or beliefs other than their own. Research conducted in South Africa (Jarvis 2008; Mitchell, Mndende, Phiri & Stonier 1993; Roux 2005) has shown that teachers who are deeply committed to a particular religion, especially if it is exclusivist in nature, experience discomfort when teaching-learning Religion Education. They consider a multi-religious approach as a betrayal of their particular religion and a difficult paradigm shift to make.

Against this backdrop, it was collectively agreed by myself as the lecturer and the student teachers that they would be given the opportunity to explore their own religious identities and the 'understandings that [they] hold of themselves in relation to official policy images' (Jansen 2001: 242). I anticipated that this exploration could possibly mark the first step in the process of reconciling policy image with personal religious identity.

Theoretical Framework/ Literature Review – Religious Identity Formation

In order to conceptualise how student teachers construct their religious identity, and how this impacts on their approach to Religion Education, I

drew on identity theory as a theoretical framework. In particular I focused on certain key ideas, namely the notion of multiple identities (Giddens 2002) and identity negotiation (Nias 1985; 1989) to explore how student teachers formed their religious identity. Underpinning these principles is the view that identities are not fixed over time and space but rather, that they are multi-faceted and dynamic (Baumeister 1997; Kearney 2003; Randall 1995) consisting of membership of social groups (Newman, 1997) or organizing principles (Wetherell 1996). These organizing principles (Wetherell 1996) include nationality, ethnicity, class, occupation, gender, race, sexuality, age and religion. Each of these intersects and interacts with the other. Individuals identify with specific groups that they perceive themselves to belong to, thereby bolstering their self-esteem and sense of identity. Postmodernists like Harro (2000) describe how socialisation begins from birth when individuals are shaped into particular identities by already existing structures such as history, traditions, beliefs, prejudices and stereotypes, and influenced by powerful social, religious and cultural agents like schools and religious institutions. I find these identity theories helpful in understanding how student teachers who are possibly rooted in a particular religion, and who constitutionally have the religious freedom to do so, could well have to negotiate the management of their own religious identity as they approach Religion Education in a context of religious diversity.

As student teachers move between the private and public domains of their life they are required to distinguish between their personal and professional self. I draw on Giddens (2002) and Bendle (2002) who speak of 'multiple identities' when describing how student teachers have to decide which of these identities is appropriate, depending on the social context. While some student teachers may be comfortable teaching-learning Religion Education, I contend that there are student teachers who may experience what Jansen (2001) describes in this context as an identity conflict. They are South Africans bound by the constitutional emphasis on freedom of religion or belief with the expectation to adopt an inclusive, multi-religious approach to teaching-learning Religion Education. However, they may simultaneously be adherents of a religion which is exclusive in nature, exhorting them to disregard any religion other than their own (Jarvis 2008; Mitchell et al. 1993; Roux 2005). It is my contention that student teachers will have to manage these multiple identities as they move in and out of a variety of social

contexts, not least their religious community and the religiously diverse Religion Education class. Individuals choose the identity they wish to embrace as they move from one context to another. The possible conflict between their professional and personal religious identity could impact on their classroom practice. Student teachers may struggle with Religion Education because they could well feel that they are compromising their own religious identity. Religion Education teachers are required to put into parenthesis their own religion or belief while not necessarily undermining this (Jackson 1997; Jarvis 2008). In order to do so a process of religious identity negotiation would have to take place (cf. Nias 1985; 1989).

While student teachers may have inherited sets of paradoxes and ambivalences their identities are not fixed or predetermined, but rather a self-reflective project, always in the process of formation thereby making identity negotiation possible (Giddens 2002; Kearney 2003). Drawing on Wetherell (1996), making the distinction between the collective identity or social message and the individual identity, I maintain that while student teachers are born into specific religious contexts, each individual has the power to design his/her own religious identity. It is my contention that when organizing principles such as religion, are addressed in Religion Education as part of the broader Life Orientation curriculum, it is reasonable to assume that if student teachers have not engaged in self-reflection and negotiation of their own religious identity, there is the potential to create less than the intended outcome as expressed in the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003).

Roux (1998) posits the notion of paradigm paralysis, paradigm paradox and paradigm flexibility as lenses through which the teaching-learning of Religion Education is approached. Her conclusion is that it is unhelpful to look to the future through the lenses of old paradigms such as a mono-religious approach to teaching-learning Religion Education. She conceded, however, that replacing a well-worn, comfortable paradigm is not an easy matter. In order to embrace a new paradigm, namely a multi-religious approach to teaching-learning Religion Education, teachers need to exercise paradigm flexibility. I have modified, applied and extended this notion to analyse the data emanating from this study. Student teacher responses will be organised according to those who experience religious identity paralysis, religious identity paradox and religious identity flexibility (Jarvis 2009).

Methodology

The qualitative, empirical study, using a case study approach, within an interpretivist research paradigm was conducted within the School of Education at a South African university. The purposively selected participants were 3rd and 4th year student teachers who were registered for an initial teacher education module called Life Orientation, preparing them to teach in the GET band. I obtained informed consent from these students after explaining that their anonymity would be protected and that their responses would be used to further inform teacher development in the domain of Life Orientation. They were required to complete a self-administered questionnaire containing both closed-ended questions (biographical detail) and open-ended questions. The latter allowed the student teachers to respond freely as they expressed their understanding of religious freedom, the impact which they thought their religious affiliation would have on their approach to teaching-learning Religion Education, and the reasons why they either did or did not feel equipped to teach Religion Education. The responses to the survey allowed me to explore themes that emerged. I then selected those student teachers in their 4th year, as they would be teaching-learning the following year, and conducted a semi-structured focus group interview with these student teachers during which I was able to probe further their responses to the self-administered questionnaire.

After reading through the data collected from the self-administered questionnaires and from the semi-structured focus group interviews, I organised the data, looking specifically for responses that would demonstrate how the participants negotiated (or failed to negotiate) their religious identity in response to the expectations of the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003). The participants' responses were organised into the following categories: religious identity paralysis, religious identity paradox and religious identity flexibility.

Student Teacher's Responses
Religious Identity Paralysis

Religious identity paralysis refers to the inability to even consider any form of religious identity negotiation. Student teachers who fell into this category

were those who came from mono-religious environments and who displayed signs of fear or discomfort at being placed in multi-religious environments where they would have to facilitate lessons about belief systems and values which were not part of their religious and spiritual traditions (Jarvis 2008; Roux, Du Preez, & Ferguson 2007). They were student teachers who were bound by their biography and membership of certain social categories and who, when approaching Religion Education in a context of religious diversity refused to negotiate their religious identities. For fear of compromising their own religious identity, they chose not to accept any religion other than their own and chose to teach using only a mono-religious approach. These student teachers experienced difficulty as they struggled to reconcile their own religious identity with the religiously diverse context in which they would be teaching-learning. Their responses, seen below, reflected the desire to engage with their religion only and an unwillingness to accept religious diversity and a need for change.

> Maya[7]: Not everyone is open-minded and believe[s] in other religions …. I believe the religion I follow is the best and that's the only God that exists.

> Farida: In my belief I am supposed to promote only Islam. That is the basic requirement for any Muslim. How can I go against that? It will go against everything I believe in.

> Sipho: I can't compromise with something, especially not with my religion.

> Simon: I will stick more to what I believe!

These students had all embraced the religion with which they had been raised. While they were able to describe religious freedom as a human right they clearly expressed that they were not prepared to negotiate their religious identity. Farida went so far as to say that if she was forced to promote religious freedom she would give up her job.

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[7] The names used in this article are pseudonyms to protect the identity of the student teachers who participated in this study.

Religious Identity Paradox

Student teachers who experienced something of a religious identity paradox were those who felt bounded by their own religious identity but who, unlike those in the previous category, desired to negotiate their identities in order to embrace a multi-religious approach to Religion Education so as to be more inclusive. However, this would not be without difficulty and they felt that they would be unable to do so. This position would render them ineffective in moving towards a multi-religious approach to Religion Education. These student teachers would be unable to successfully negotiate their religious identity and while they experienced a measure of discomfort at the marginalisation of religions other than their own, they expressed an inability to promote religious freedom as is illustrated by the following cameos.

Julie, a committed Christian, believes that her religion is 'right'. She expressed an identity paradox when she said:

> Although I believe there is only one truth/way, I can never force my belief on others because that will discriminate against other learners.

While expressing the view that her religion should not be imposed on the learners, she nevertheless expressed the concern that by adopting a multi-religious approach she would be compromising her own 'essence and [religious] identity' and she was not prepared to do so.

Sandile expressed a similar sentiment saying:

> I shouldn't discriminate [against] others in order to make them feel uncomfortable and not accommodated.

Having acknowledged this, Sandile still did not see his way clear to adopting a multi- religious approach to Religion Education, adding that 'all these new ideas are confusing us more'. The 'ideas' he was referring to are the expectations of the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003).

What became evident in the interview was that these students, aware of the religious diversity in schools and the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003) directives to adopt a multi- religious approach to Religion Education, were visibly uncomfortable with promoting a mono-religious approach to

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Religion Education. However, taking the step towards negotiating their religious identity was considered too much of a compromise, and so they maintained their position.

Religious Identity Flexibility

Religious identity flexibility refers to the ability to consider religions other than one's own without feeling compromised or threatened. Student teachers who expressed a measure of individual agency were prepared to exercise religious identity flexibility. They expressed the view that while adopting a multi-religious approach to Religion Education, they could still remain committed to their personal religious identity. By and large these were student teachers who had been raised in homes that were tolerant of religious diversity and whose personal religious identity included a respectful attitude towards religions other than their own. These students did not experience discomfort when adopting a multi-religious approach to Religion Education. They made the following comments about their position:

> Nosipho: Every individual or religious group should be free and do what their religious group says. They should follow their own principles which are being said by their God.

> Jabu: Everyone has the right to speak about what they believe and should not be threatened. Learning from views and practices of other religions does not mean one would stay away from their own religion.

> Ncami: I will be able to facilitate Religion Education because I am not compromising my salvation, but merely educating learners about the different religions of the world and South Africa.

> Angela: My religion…won't cause me to compromise what I know to be truth or try to enforce my view on others.

Angela went on to say that she would approach Religion Education in such a way as to,

expose learners to all views so as to promote diversity and acceptance/tolerance of others without causing them to fear or conform to a specific way.

Several student teachers in this category indicated that while they wished to do so, they felt ill equipped to facilitate a multi-religious approach to Religion Education because of a lack of knowledge. They expressed the need to become religiously literate, by acquiring knowledge about various religious traditions and practices.

Bheki said:

I need more information and resources to facilitate Religion Education in the classroom.

This comment was supported by Rose who indicated that there were some things in certain religions with which she was unfamiliar. Priya stated that she knew very little about religions, including her own, and expressed the need to engage in research about different religions.

It was my observation, after having probed these student teachers further in the semi-structured focus group interview, that, by and large, while they were comfortable with adopting a multi-religious approach to Religion Education, they did so primarily for the purposes of being constitutionally correct. By doing so they could satisfy themselves that they were meeting the directives of the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003). This could however lead to a superficial approach to Religion Education. Although the students expressed an interest in learning about different religions, this could simply translate into little more than marking every religious holy day and special event, and simply teaching-learning *about* (my emphasis) religion. For the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003) to be implemented effectively, meaningful, empathetic inter[8]- and intra- religious[9] engagement needs to take

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[8] To broaden knowledge about different religions when individuals of different religious traditions are in contact with one another within the same context.

[9] To allow for critical inquiry and interaction between groups/denominations of the same religion.

place within the ambit of Religion Education. For this to happen, I argue that student teachers need to negotiate their personal religious identity and adopt an empathetic[10]-reflective-dialogical[11] approach to Religion Education.

Religious Identity and an Empathetic-reflective-dialogical Approach to Religion Education

Student teachers who adopted a position of religious identity flexibility were satisfied to simply know *about* religions other their own and adopt an inclusive, multi-religious approach to Religion Education. I argue that this approach would not necessarily deal with prejudice, suspicion, fear and stereotyping in the Religion Education classroom. In order to do so student teachers would need to be rationally and emotionally mature enough to engage with religious systems other than their own without compromising their own personal religious identity. It would mean being comfortable with their own religious identity and their own religious discourse and sufficiently secure therein so as to be able to empathically investigate the practice and traditions of other religions represented in their classrooms and in society as a whole. While not having to compromise their personal religious identity, student teachers should be able to take account the rights of others to hold different religious identities which, while different, are of equal value to those who hold them. It would necessitate the ability to dispel a 'belief in the superiority of a particular [religion] leading to prejudice and antagonism toward people of other [religions]' (Baez 2000: 330). It would mean being able to approach a religion other than their own respecting that this is sacred ground to those who are adherents/devotees/believers/followers in that particular religion.

It is my contention that Initial Teacher Education Life Orientation modules preparing student teachers to teach Religion Education can play a

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[10] Empathy is described by Abdool and Drinkwater (2005) as more than just knowledge about another person's religion. It is the capacity to understand and respond to the religious experiences of another person with an increased awareness of that person's thoughts and feelings.

[11] Roux (2007).

pivotal role in equipping student teachers to adopt an empathetic-reflective-dialogical approach to teaching-learning Religion Education. Safe spaces (cf. Roux 2012) could be created within Life Orientation modules for student teachers to interrogate their own biography with regard to religion and to identify the practices and traditions which influence those beliefs. The opportunity could also be provided for student teachers to reflect on their attitudes towards those who hold beliefs that are different to their own. By doing so they will be afforded the opportunity for the expression of their own opinions as well as taking into consideration the ideas of others. This dialogical approach, as students share their personal religious narratives, should be about searching for meaning and understanding (Allen 2004). It should be about recognizing that each person has 'something of value to contribute; it is opening [up] to the possibility of learning from the other' (Ipgrave 2001: 7). Even amongst those that share a common religious identity there could well be differences in interpretation and practice. Dialogical activity recognises the individuality of religious thinking and provides an opportunity to explore this.

MacIntyre and Dunne (2002) introduce the notion of narrative unity. This takes place when student teachers meet each other simply as individuals and not as representatives of one religion or another, and listen to one another's stories and grow in understanding of their own and of one another's traditions. Interaction of this nature provides the opportunity for student teachers to put their own beliefs into parenthesis (Jackson 1997) so as to adopt an impartial yet empathetic approach to the beliefs of others. If, as maintained by Allen (2004), dialogue has the potential to be emancipatory and transformational for those involved, then student teachers emerging from it are likely to be less fearful of compromising their own religious identity (often the root of religious identity paralysis or religious identity paradox) and more able to engage with confidence in situations of religious diversity. This process begins with the acceptance of diversity (religious identity flexibility). However, this needs to progress to a place of being open to diversity and willing to engage with difference and learn from others.

I advocate that when student teachers have successfully negotiated their religious identity they are able to employ an empathetic-reflective-dialogical approach in the Religion Education classroom that will provide learners with safe spaces in which to express their own beliefs, as well as

empathetically take into consideration the beliefs of other learners. It is at this point that meaning will be added to any multi-religious approach to Religion Education as advocated by the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003).

Religious identity paralysis and religious identity paradox are ineffective and even religious identity flexibility is not the ideal. The prototype Religion Education teacher is the one who has undergone a process of religious identity negotiation. According to my reading and analysis of the data there were no student teachers in this study who fell into this category. It is my intention to revisit the Life Orientation module that I teach and to provide the opportunity for student teachers in the future, to reflectively and dialogically engage with their religious identity.

Conclusion

In the domain of religion, the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003) has presented both challenges and opportunities with regard to policy image and personal religious identity. Initial Teacher Education Life Orientation modules need to create safe spaces for student teachers to explore their own religious identity whilst also developing a religious literacy and religious empathy that will enable them to engage with a context of religious diversity. Various aspects and issues of religions can be brought into a mode of critical dialogue. However, for this to be successful, student teachers need to acquire the necessary skills and be encouraged to think reflectively and critically about their particular standpoints and positions in respect of religious diversity, as they negotiate their religious identity. They need to be given the time and safe spaces in which to explore their religious identity 'baggage' (Samuel & Stephens 2000: 488). Drawing on Samuel and Stephens (2000) I suggest that what Life Orientation student teachers, soon to be first year in-service teachers, carry with them into the classroom, verbally and non-verbally, formally and informally, will contribute to the Religion Education experiences of future generations.

The religious identity of student teachers can play a pivotal role in their classroom practice as they either entrench discrimination on the basis of religion or promote religious dialogue as advocated by the *Religion and Education Policy* (2003). The opportunity for student teachers to reflectively

and dialogically engage with their religious identities in Initial Teacher Education Life Orientation modules could well pave the way to transformative teaching-learning of Religion Education in which student teachers encourage their learners to not only grow in their own religious beliefs but also to empathetically respect the religious beliefs of others in society.

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Pedagogies that Foster Undergraduate Students' Intercultural Sensitivity Development: A Case Study in Hong Kong

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Abstract

This paper reports on a qualitative study on pedagogies that foster intercultural sensitivity development in a general education course in a tertiary institution in Hong Kong. Interventions of Hofstede's (2001) five cultural dimensions and multiple teaching strategies, such as narrative writing, group learning, movie watching, etc. were applied to stimulate undergraduates' intercultural sensitivity development. Undergraduate's self-reported learning outcomes and their perceptions of the impact of the teaching strategies were then collected through individual interviews. It was found that: 1) these interventions have resulted in a higher level of intercultural sensitivity among undergraduates; 2) narrative writing is an effective teaching strategy to encourage undergraduates to reflect on their own cultural values and essay writing is very useful in stimulating students to think deeply and actively on cultural difference issues; 3) the intentional combination of strategies in the stage of minimization and acceptance is imperative to motivate students' development, so is the sequencing of strategies based upon Bennett's model (1993).

Keywords: Intercultural Sensitivity Development, Undergraduate, Pedagogies

Introduction

We are living in a multi-cultural society where people from different cultures have diverse social norms, values, religions and ways of thinking, etc. At the same time, communication and exchange among people from different cultures should be regarded as 'intercultural', meaning that 'differences and similarities are taken in consideration, brought into contact and bring about interaction' (Portera 2008). The research on intercultural sensitivity development is exactly responding to the issue of interaction among different cultures. Intercultural sensitivity is defined as 'the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences' (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman 2003) and is associated with greater potential for exercising intercultural competence, i.e., the 'ability to think and act in inter-culturally appropriate ways' (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman 2003).

Different ways of conceptualizing intercultural sensitivity have been recorded in the literature (Helms 1984; Bennett 1986; Lopez *et al.* 1989; Helms 1990; Bennett 1993; Banks 1994; Chen & Starosta 2000) and measurements based upon these conceptions have also been developed to probe into the status and development of people's intercultural sensitivity. For example, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is a broadly used instrument, which is developed based on Bennett's Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman 2003). In contrast to the abundance of studies conducted on the status and development of people's intercultural sensitivity, only a few studies reported the factors that influence the development of intercultural sensitivity (Ukpokodu 2002; Yuen & Grossman 2009; Ukpokodu 2009). The current study attempts to fill this gap by examining pedagogies that stimulate students' development of intercultural sensitivity, and provide views from the 'demand side' of such pedagogies, i.e., undergraduates.

Intercultural Education in Hong Kong

Hong Kong was formerly a colony of the British Empire. Despite her colonial status, the education system had remained 'mono-cultural within its own distinctive identity' (Yuen 2004). Intercultural education became an issue only after the transfer of the sovereignty of Hong Kong from Great

Britain in 1997 when she became a Special Administrative Region of China. Since then, Hong Kong schools have been admitting an increasing number of newly arrived students (NAS) from Mainland China. Although NAS and Hong Kong students are of the same race, they are endowed with very different regional cultural values (Yuen 2004).

Most of the existing studies on intercultural education in Hong Kong focus on student teachers' or in-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity status. For example, a survey on pre-service teachers from Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Singapore found that student teachers in these three cities tend to 'see just one community rather than multiple cultural communities', and in comparison, student teachers from Hong Kong showed the least sensitivity to cultural differences (Yuen & Grossman 2009). Studies on in-service teachers reported similar findings in which Hong Kong-born Cantonese-speaking teachers were found to have little interest in and are resistant to cultural pluralism (Yuen 2010). Some teachers of immigrant students were even found to deny that cultural differences exist in education. They are 'resistant to the adoption of effective pedagogical practice in diverse classrooms, and tend to block innovations in teaching' (Yuen 2010).

Facing the challenges of an increasingly diverse student population and a teaching force with a level of intercultural sensitivity that leaves much to be desired, there is a pressing need to discover solid knowledge on how to develop teachers' intercultural sensitivity.` Yet, few teacher education programmes in Hong Kong contain intercultural education components in their curricula. This reality has necessitated the development of culture-related courses that are designed to equip prospective and in-service teachers with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for successfully working with diverse student populations.

Trends in the Literature
Models of Intercultural Sensitivity Development
Different approaches were used by scholars to depict and conceptualize the development of intercultural sensitivity. Chen and Starosta (2000) developed the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale to examine status of individuals' intercultural sensitivity. The scale consists of five dimensions: (a) interaction engagement, (b) respect for cultural differences, (c) interaction confidence,

(d) interaction enjoyment, and (e) interaction attentiveness. On the other hand, some other conceptions of intercultural sensitivity are guided by a developmental perspective, which tend to view individuals' intercultural sensitivity as a number of developmental stages. For example, Lopez, et al. (1989) had developed a four-stage framework on psychotherapist's intercultural sensitivity, and Helms (1984; 1990) focused on stages of race-specific development. Also, Banks (1994) constructed six stages of ethnic development of people's intercultural sensitivity and align his work with schools and curriculum in multicultural education.

These developmental approaches have the strength in providing a frame to examine and evaluate the growing complexity of intercultural sensitivity. Indeed, one's intercultural sensitivity is not static and the progression into subsequent developmental stages often suggests possible personal growth (Mahoney & Schamber 2004). However, it is quite difficult to apply some of these models to other societies and cultures. For example, Lopez and others' model is profession-specific, Helms' terminology is race-specific, and Banks' model is centered on the broadening of ethnic identity. Unlike these models, Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) was selected as the analytical framework of the current study for it is an appropriate tool that is applicable to different cultures (Yuen & Grossman 2009).

In the DMIS, Bennett (1993) had constructed a continuum of increasing sophistication regarding how people deal with cultural difference, moving from stages of ethnocentrism to stages of greater recognition and acceptance of difference referred to as 'ethnorelativism'. In order of increasing awareness of the difference, the three ethnocentric stages are: 1) Denial; 2) Defense; and 3) Minimization while the three ethnorelative stages are 4) Acceptance; 5) Adaptation; and 6) Integration (see table 1). In the first stage of denial, people repudiate the existence of cultural difference. People in the defense stage differentiate three forms of polarized perceptions of 'us versus them', i.e., denigration, superiority, and reversal. In the minimization stage, people maintain that 'human similarity seems more profound than cultural difference' (Bennett 1993). Moving on to the ethnorelative stages, people in the acceptance stage recognize that 'one's own worldview is just a relative cultural construct and also begin to see alien behavior as indicative of profound cultural difference' (Bennett 1993). In the stage of adaptation,

people develop skills for relating to and communicating with members of other cultures. Finally, in the integration stage, people engage in the dynamic process of constantly redefining their cultural identity through integrating different cultural patterns into a new whole while remaining culturally marginal (Bennett 1993).

Bennett' DMIS has been broadly applied in various contexts to investigate the levels of intercultural sensitivity of participants. For instance, how students change their intercultural sensitivity when they study abroad (Anderson *et al.* 2006; Bennett 2009; Barron & Dasli 2010; Pedersen 2010) , how principals experience and interpret issues of difference and diversity in schools from the perspective of DMIS (Hernandez & Kose 2012) , how pre-service teachers perceive cultural teaching in the language curriculum (Cubukcu 2013) and develop their intercultural competence (DeJaeghere & Zhang 2008), what is the relationship between leaders' levels of intercultural sensitivity and followers' ratings of Leader-Member Exchange (Matkin & Barbuto Jr. 2012). In order to explore the impetus of intercultural sensitivity development, the impact of service-learning (Westrick 2004), classroom training (Rahimi & Soltani 2011), religious affiliation (Ameli & Molaei 2012) etc. are discussed in the literature.

Pedagogies Adopted in Intercultural Education

Pedagogy, as 'the integration in practice of particular curriculum content and design, classroom strategies and techniques, a time and space for the practice of those strategies and techniques, and evaluation purposes and methods' (Giroux & Simon 1989), is crucial to the successful development of students' intercultural competence (Ukpokodu 2009). There is abundant literature that discusses equity pedagogies or culturally responsive teaching in the school setting. Numerous studies have also been conducted to probe into the characteristics of effective teaching methods commonly used in intercultural education, for instance, reflection (Banks 1994; Jenks, Lee, & Kanpol 2001; Ukpokodu 2009), role-playing (Mahoney & Schamber 2004), community inquiry or provision of opportunities for self-generated knowledge (Tatum 1992; Mahoney & Schamber 2004), group and cooperative learning (Volet & Ang 1998; McAllister & Irvine 2000; Slavi 2001; Banks 2003; Ippolito 2007), dialogical relationship or small group discussion (Mahoney &

Schamber 2004; Ukpokodu 2009), narrative writing (Ukpokodu 2009), experiential activities (Ukpokodu 2009), positive learning environment or climate (Tatum 1992; Ukpolodu 2002; Mahoney & Schamber 2004), and cultural therapy (Bennett, 2001), etc. Although most of these studies were conducted with the intention of promoting school students' intercultural sensitivity and competence, they could nonetheless serve as good reference for devising strategies that nurture and promote intercultural sensitivity among pre-service and in-service teachers.

These pedagogies, when guided by process-oriented models that describe how people progress in terms of their cultural identities or worldviews, can assist educators in three areas, they are: 1) understanding teachers' behaviours; 2) sequencing course content; and 3) creating conducive learning environments (McAllister & Irvine 2000). The DMIS is one of these models. Bennett (1993) suggested developmental principles and strategies on organizing teaching activities to promote students to subsequent levels of intercultural sensitivity (see table 1).

Table 1. Principles and development strategies in various stages of the DMIS (Bennett 1993)

Stages of Intercultural sensitivity		Sub-categories in each stage	Principles and developmental strategies to promote to subsequent stages	
			Principles	**Strategies**
Ethnocentric Stages	Denial	1. Isolation 2. Separation	To create more differentiation among general categories of cultural difference and to avoid premature discussion of really significant cultural differences	Cultural awareness activities such as international night, multicultural week, history lectures, discussion of political topics
	Defense	1. Denigration 2. Superiority 3. Reversal	To emphasize the commonality of cultures, particularly in terms of what is generally good in all cultures (to discover that everyone is just human)	Rope course

	Minimization	1. Physical niversalism 2. Transcendent Universalism	To generate cultural self-awareness through discussion, exercises, and other modes of discovery	Simulations, reports of personal experience, use members of other cultures as resource persons
Ethnorelative stages	Acceptance	1. Behavioral Relativism 2. Value Relativism	To emphasize the practical application of ethno-relative acceptance to intercultural communication, to add personal relevance and usefulness, and to put ethno-relativism into action	Cross-cultural simulations
	Adaptation	1. Cognitive Frame-shifting 2. Behavioral Code-shifting	To provide opportunities for interaction, activities should be related to real life communication situations, to bring on an identity crisis by the internal culture shock generated by multiple worldviews	Dyads with other culture partners, multicultural group discussions, interviewing people from other cultures

In the current study, the course lecturer attempted to organize her teaching based upon the DMIS and focus on using Bennett's suggested developmental strategies to promote students' cultural sensitivity. Both strategies of reflecting on individual's cultural values and those of investigating other cultures were adopted, which were used as a mirror to look into the self and others.

Methods

The study was situated in an education-focused tertiary institution in Hong Kong, in which most of the graduates will take teaching as their future career. The researcher taught a general education course entitled 'Ideas, Behavior, and Identity - Intercultural Comparison'. The course lasted for one academic term (around 4 months).

In order to nurture student teachers' intercultural sensitivity, structured interventions in terms of course content and pedagogies were applied. For the intervention on content, Hofstede's (2001) five dimensions of cultural differences, i.e., power distance, individualism and collectivism, masculinity and femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long term and short term orientation, are introduced as a frame to compare and contrast cultural difference. Going beyond mere awareness and general recognition of the fact that nations and ethnic groups have different values or express similar values in various ways, detailed information about the cultural characteristics of specific nations and ethnic groups and related historical and social backgrounds are supplemented. For the intervention on pedagogies, the following teaching strategies were intentionally adopted by the researcher: case studies of cultural conflict events, movie watching and discussion, narrative writing, group presentation, and essay writing. The arrangement and sequence of strategies correspond to the developmental stages of Bennett's DMIS model.

The current study is reporting on the study of the third cohort of students and the interviews were conducted in the summer of 2011. When the course grade was released, the researcher invited all students of the course to take part in the interviews. Eight students gave favorable reply (see table 2). These students were also representative of the student population in terms of sex and regions[1]. All eight students had not taken any courses on cultural difference prior to the current course, and some of them have travelled overseas in the past.

Table 2. Gender and origins of the 8 interviewees

1.	Tin	Female, from Hong Kong
2.	Yu	Female, from Hong Kong
3.	On	Female, from Hong Kong
4.	Cheng	Male, from Hong Kong
5.	Xu	Female, from Mainland China

[1] In the third cohort, 36 students (2 males and 34 females) took the course. 10 of them were from the Mainland and received their basic education there. The remaining 26 are Hong-Kong-born students.

6.	Wang	Female, from Mainland China
7.	Yang	Female, from Mainland China
8.	Chen	Male, from Mainland China

The researcher captured participants' perceptions on their personal intercultural sensitivity development and the interventions mainly through individual interviews after the course. The interviews were semi-structured and were guided by the following questions:

1) What have you learnt and achieved in the course? How do you evaluate your awareness of and attitudes to culture's difference before and after the course?

2) If your views on cultural difference have been changed, what are the influencing factors? How have the course content and teaching strategies brought about the changes?

3) Which part(s) of the course do you think the lecturer need to improve in future so as to better promote students' awareness of and attitudes towards cultural difference?

Six individual interviews and one group interview with the two remaining students were subsequently arranged and each lasted for 60 to 90 minutes. The interviews were well-recorded and transcribed verbatim by research assistants.

Findings
Development of Students' Intercultural Sensitivity
Students reported that their views on cultural difference have changed after the course. Before the course, all eight students showed an orientation to the stage of denial. After the completion of the course, five demonstrated a change to that of acceptance, two of them manifested an understanding of cultural difference at the minimization stage, and one participant showed a strong orientation to the defense stage.

Prior to the Course

Before committing to the course study, all eight students manifested similar patterns of viewing cultural difference and were lack of knowledge of that difference. They either paid little attention to cultural difference issues, identify cultural difference superficially, or only hold broad categories of cultures. For example, student Yu told the researcher, '*I always had no special views on cultural difference issues and I used to think that it was very common that different countries and societies owned diverse cultures*'. Meanwhile, student Cheng and On maintained wide categories of cultural difference. '*Before making in-depth investigations into Japanese and Korean cultures, I thought both of these countries and China shared common philosophical values rooted in Confucianism, so people from the three countries should hold very similar worldviews*'. (On)

Given that they grew up in a homogeneous culture (either Mainland China or Hong Kong) and are used to the mono-cultural school life, it was understandable that all of these eight students hold views corresponding to the developmental stage of denial. As Paige *et al.* (2003) explained, 'persons in the denial stage have generally grown up in culturally homogeneous environments and have had limited contact with people outside their own culture group'. Indeed, though locally-born participants have easy access to information about different cultures, they seldom have direct contact and communication with people from other countries in their family and school life. As student Tin stated, '*I had no chance to interact with Mainland students directly and had no concrete ideas about them*'. Even if participants had ever studied with classmates from other regions in China, they were not well-informed about how to properly deal with cultural difference issues. Student Cheng told the researcher, '*I did not attach much importance to cultural difference between local and Mainland students though some of my classmates are from Mainland China*'. This finding is also consistent with Yuen and Grossman's (2009) study on pre-service teachers' intercultural sensitivity in Hong Kong.

After the Course

It is observed that the course learning has made a difference to all eight

students and students' awareness of cultural difference and intercultural sensitivity was enhanced.

Five out of the eight students showed their advancement to the acceptance stage and they had learnt to consider 'alternative beliefs about what exists in reality and the value which may be attached to those phenomena are respected' (Bennett 1993). For instance, student Xu told the researcher, '*after completing the course, whenever I observed and thought of cultural difference phenomena, my first response had been why it was happening instead of whether I liked it or not*'. In addition, she started to consider cultural difference issues with reference to their specific social and historical contexts. For student Cheng, it was more important that he now distinguished finer categories of cultures and was more aware of the existence of diversified cultures. '*I used to classify cultures as either of the East or of the West, now I have more specific categories and I think smaller cultural groups should not be ignored*' (Cheng). These favorable changes are believed to be brought about by the introduction of a large number of examples about different cultures in the course, including minor cultural groups in remote areas whose particular cultural values and practices have been preserved. For Cheng, 'the existence of difference has been accepted as a necessary and preferable human condition. (Bennett 1993)', and he started to acknowledge and respect cultural difference internally.

On the other hand, students Wang and Yang intended to look for similarities or to construct commonalities among various cultures. '*I like reading Japanese comics, US movies, and Taiwanese TV dramas. In the past I only knew that they present their stories with different focuses, but I didn't know why they produced TV, movies or comics that way. Now I understand that they are influenced by their underlying cultural values* (Yang)'. Instead of exploring specific differences and the profound origins of movies and dramas produced in different countries, these two students expressed an orientation to minimize the difference by explaining it in terms of 'culture'.

In contrast, student Tin's first ever direct encounter with Mainland students in the course had left her so disappointed that she subsequently avoid taking courses that Mainland students love to enroll. It is clear that when Tin was exposed to an environment where a different behavior pattern was exhibited by others, instead of standing aside and analyzing possible reasons, she expresses overt hostility, demonstrated denigration and inten-

tional separation toward others with a different cultural background.

Impacts of Pedagogies

Effective Teaching Strategies Identified by Students - Narrative Writing and Extended Essay

Narrative writing was recognized by the students as an effective strategy to promote their cultural self-awareness. In this study, students were first required to narrate their personal stories, and then find meanings of these stories through the lens of Hofstede's concepts and dimensions. They were also asked to interpret the reasons behind such meaning within a micro context and explore their origins within a broader social and historical background.

Engaging students in narrative writing in this study were found to have positive impact on them in the following ways. Firstly, students were prompted to re-examine common social phenomena and norms and make sense of personal experiences such as personal roles in family and school, rituals in daily life, communication styles, power relationship with parents and teachers, etc. Secondly, students learn to interpret their experience by asking what these experiences are and how they were shaped. Some even trace their current experience back to their childhood, school life, peer relationship, media influence, etc. For example, during the interview, student Xu told the researcher, '*since writing stories about unequal power relationship between my parents and me, I have started to understand why similar incidents happened again and again in my family*'. Thirdly, by sharing personal stories with other students in class or online, students realized that what they personally experienced is shared by many others. Their personal experience is thus representative of that of others in the group, and culture is a commonly shared experience. For example, student Cheng reported that narrative writing had urged him to reflect on his identity as a member of a community, as he stated, '*my own worldview is only a relative cultural construct*'. Lastly, though these stories were experiences of the past, the process of giving meaning to these experiences helped students construct their life meaning in the future.

As far as the process of the change from ethnocentric to ethnorelative stage is concerned, Xu said, '*it seemed that you understand what and why something happened all of a sudden. Actually I have begun to observe cultural difference events from the perspective of an outsider unexpectedly*'. The sudden broadening of horizons reported by Xu represents a stimulation of perspective transformation, which is the process of becoming 'critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about our world' (Mezirow 1991).

Gaces (1982) pointed out that comparing to teaching strategies that focus on stimulating students' understanding of other cultures, the simultaneous use of reflective appraisal and social comparison can help students formulate the concept of the self and develop the ability of self-judgment during their investigation of issues of cultural difference. The current study has proved that by telling and analyzing their own story and experience through narrative writing, students could figure out how their past life experience had shaped the person he or she is today. During the process, students examined his or her personal history from a different perspective and past experience looks different now and personal stories thus became a mirror to construct their personal identities. (Ford 1999; Kerl 2002)

Apart from narrative writing, writing extended essay is also regarded by all participants as a very effective strategy to explore cultural difference issues deeply. Students were instructed to prepare for their essays independently. They searched for relevant literature and engage in dialogues with authors holding various views, and finished the essay by themselves. As student Yu said after she wrote a paper on employees' behavior in Jewish corporations, '*essay writing was very helpful, because I need to know some historical and social background of Israel, and the relationship between Jewish cultural values and their success in business. I even need to relate their success to people's behavior and ideas in a corporation*'.

When the students began to work on the essay, they were allowed to freely select a topic that matches their personal interests. Then they immersed themselves in the relevant literature and information that they had searched for and engaged in dialogue independently with the literature. The flexibility of topic selection, the choice of an essay topic that matches with students' personal interests, and their immersion in the independent dialogue

with the literature all contribute to successful learning during the process. As student Chen mentioned, '*I like essay writing because it was flexible for me to choose a topic, which matched with my personal interest and my motivation was also a little stronger then*'. Some also noted on the benefits they got from independent learning. As student Wang said, '*when I was working on the individual paper, I had to depend on myself, searching for materials, considering the analysis and organization, clarifying confusions, etc. The more responsible I am with my own learning, the more learning I could achieve*'.

From the observation of the researcher, there is another reason why essay writing could promote self-regulated learning: the weight of the essay towards the final grade. The essay was a high-stake task which contributed 50% of the final grade. From the knowledge of the researcher, Chinese students always display a performance-based orientation and attach more importance to and invest more efforts in high stake tasks.

Perceptions of Strategies Used to Present Cultural Differences

Movies and cases of cultural conflicts were presented in class so as to enrich students' knowledge about other cultures and the realities of cultural conflicts.

Using movies is a common practice in intercultural and multicultural teaching. Movies in the course in this study were selected according to three principles. Firstly, the movie should demonstrate concepts and cultural dimensions introduced by the lecturer, for instance, concepts like power distance, individualism, etc. Secondly, the movie is culturally typical. Thirdly, a number of diverse cultural groups should be introduced in the movie. Students' comments proved that these principles are crucial for their learning.

For example, student Chen expressed the importance of presenting typical cultural characteristics with reference to Hofstede's dimensions, '*I think the movie 'Happy Wedding' was wonderful, because cultural difference and conflict between Chinese and American cultures could be easily identified in terms of power distance and individualism or collectivism*'. In addition, the inclusion of unfamiliar cultural rituals and practices could

stimulate students' curiosity and active thinking, as student Tin talked about her response to a movie, '*I was shocked to get to know the sexual culture of the Sambia through the movie. I was impressed by the presentation of their sexual rituals and the construction of masculinity, which is so different from that of Hong Kong*'.

Cases of cultural conflict were also presented to demonstrate substantial cultural differences and to help students understand the consequences of intercultural misunderstanding.[2] Student Chen stated, '*I think the case studies we discussed in class are very typical, they informed possible consequences of cultural conflict when the difference hadn't been well aware of*'. Similar to the selection criteria of the movies, it is crucial that the cases should be illustrative of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. In addition, since the cases reported what has actually happened, students' were instantly attracted to inquire into the issues involved.

It should be noticed that not all students held positive comments on the strategies of movie watching and case study. Four of the students reported that they were not impressed by these activities. As far as cultural conflict case studies are concerned, it is also interesting to note that the four Hong-Kong-born participants just regarded case study as an ordinary teaching practice, while the four Mainland students commented favorably on the strategies.

Mis-arrangement of Issues-based Discussion

Controversial issues, in particular those that highlight the disagreement between Hong Kong and Mainland China, were presented in class. They were used by the lecturer to illustrate different standpoints. Students were encouraged to discuss the underlying reasons behind the controversy that involve different cultural values and reflect on their own hidden beliefs.[3] It was observed that locally-born students and students from the Mainland hold very different opinions on the impact of this strategy. To the Hong Kong

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[2] For example, Gladwell, M. (2008). *Outliers: the story of success*. Ch7. The ethnic story of plane crashes. New York : Little, Brown and Co.

[3] For example, national identity of Hong Kong people, the June-fourth event, etc.

students, however, this discussion was not at all impressive. In fact, only one of them gave moderately positive comments for the activity.

The four Mainland students highly appreciated the approach and were deeply engaged in the class discussion. For them, discussion on controversial issues motivated their thinking and deep involvement. One of them (Yang) stated, 'd*iscussions on controversial issues stimulated my thinking. When I heard a viewpoint from other classmates, it was natural for me to offer my comments. It is from these discussion and exchange that I develop my own views*'. Besides, student Chen identified substantial differences between Hong Kong and Mainland students through the discussion. He mentioned, '*if we had never discussed those issues, I have no chance to know what Hong Kong students truly think, which was so different from Mainland students like us. I think this is very important because it is a mirror for us to get to know the Hong Kong society and its values*.'

On the contrary, three of the four Hong Kong students had no particular feelings about issues-based discussion. Tin actually told the researcher her bad impressions on Mainland students. '*I am strongly impressed by their desire to express their personal views. They always insist on their own standpoints and do not show respect for different viewpoints. They will not change their views after listening to others*'. Subsequently, Tin tried to keep a distance away from Mainland students.

Several reasons may explain Tin's disappointment. Firstly, the lecturer did not properly control the progress of the discussion. Discussion was still allowed to go on even if the discussants had wandered off the topic. '*The instructor should have stopped the discussion and gone to the next topic*', said student Yu. '*I have a feeling that the instructor didn't intervene in the discussion. It seems that the discussion had not been controlled well*', mentioned student Tin. Secondly, the timing of using the issues-centered approach should have been better planned. In the current study, issues-based discussion was introduced twice to stimulate students' learning interest in the first and fourth sessions. However, it is quite risky to introduce discussion on controversial issues in the initial sessions of an intercultural course when students are underprepared for such discussion. On the one hand, it could motivate students, such as Xu and Chen, to learn, but it could also stimulate ill-feelings among discussants as Tin has demonstrated. It is imperative to consider students' developmental stage when planning such discussions.

They should be introduced at a time when students have already constructed basic ideas of cultural difference and know how to avoid making value judgment before deliberation.

Limited Impact of Group Learning

Group learning is widely recommended as an important approach to help students develop intercultural sensitivity in the literature (Volet & Ang 1998; McAllister & Irvine 2000; Slavin 2001; Banks 2003; Ippolito 2007). In the course in the current study, the researcher intentionally asked students to present in groups to provide thick description of one or two cultures and compare them with their own. Group learning has the advantages of reducing individual member's workload, inspiring more ideas during group work, and encouraging students to analyze cultural characteristics of individuals, such as other group members, during the close collaboration with one another.

Positive impacts of group learning were reported. For example, student Wang said, '*you need to have a clear concept about which dimensions would be used, select appropriate behavior and ideas in one or several cultures, and think about how to conduct an analysis logically, critically, and accurately. I think this process do help me learn something*'. Another student opined, '*When I searched for cases and examples, I got to know more about other cultures* (Chen)'.

However, the expected collaboration among group members was not evident. Students were found to simply distribute the task evenly among group members and reported on individual parts when presenting their findings. This distribution of tasks destroyed the wholeness of learning and it is impossible to achieve the original goal that students may develop more specific and deeper understanding of group members through close observations and collaboration, in particular the understanding of the difference between Hong Kong and Mainland students.

Though group learning was conducted outside the classroom, the researcher provided the following facilitations to help students achieve the learning objectives: 1) She provided students with instructions on the presentation, such as a list of appropriate topics, and examples of past student assignments; 2) apart from providing instruction on the tasks, the

lecturer helped students form groups and let them sit closely during discussion so as to encourage them to get familiar with one another ; 3) she offered consultation for the groups one week before the final presentation. Students reported that the consultation was very helpful in terms of providing useful comments on the draft work, clarifying the concepts, helping with the organization of the presentation, and pushing group members to work together.

Conclusion and Implications

As there may be a relationship between the type of intervention and the changes in participants' attitudes, behaviors, and knowledge, the structure of the interventions, such as the content and pedagogy, must be more closely examined (McAllister & Irvine 2000). The current study applies Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions as content intervention and uses multiple teaching strategies structured upon the DMIS as pedagogical interventions. The findings show that it is possible to promote the growth of students' intercultural sensitivity from the ethnocentric stages to ethno-relative stages within a short period of four months through a synergistic use of content stimulation and multiple teaching strategies which were intentionally designed corresponding to the stages of minimization and acceptance in the DMIS. This paper mainly reported on the impacts of multiple teaching strategies.

For the teaching strategies, the intentional combination of diverse strategies in the stages of minimization and acceptance is imperative to stimulate the development of students' intercultural sensitivity. Bennett (2003) suggested that teaching strategies should focus on understanding the self and culture that he or she owns if a person is in the stage of minimization. In the current study, narrative writing is used to encourage students to investigate their self cultural awareness. As reported, this strategy was well recognized as an effective approach to encourage students' learning. It is also imperative to consider students' development stages when arranging teaching methods and presenting academic content.

According to the developmental principles at the stage of acceptance in the DMIS, strategies should 'provide a substantial amount of information regarding subjective culture and its categories (particularly value

orientations), cultural context (situation, time, place, persons) and how it shapes cultural choices and decisions' (Bennett 1993). In the current study, these aspects were explored by students in such teaching and learning activities as case studies, movies, group presentation, and extended essay. Essay writing is found to be the most useful activity for the students to promote their learning.

In sum, the synergy of using multiple strategies to inspire self cultural awareness and to engage students on deep exploration of other cultures is found to be an effective strategy to stimulate students' intercultural sensitivity development and promote it to the stage of acceptance within a short period of time.

For the organization of multiple strategies, in the current study, some strategies were arranged as classroom activities and the others were planned as assessment tasks for grading. The sequencing of the three assignments, i.e., narrative writing, group presentation, and extended essay, reflects a progressive strategy of first developing students' self cultural awareness, then their understanding of other cultures, and finally their ability of independently investigating cultural issues. This sequence echoes on the developmental sequence in the stage of minimization and acceptance as proposed by Bennett (1993). From the observation of the researcher, narrative writing helps students clarify key course concepts and the various cultural dimensions (Hofstede 2001) and to conduct an examination of the self cultural awareness. Based upon this, students also conducted a study on the other cultures and made a comparison between their own and other cultures. The results were presented in groups. The final assignment tests students if they understand social events or cultural difference issues with an ethno-relative disposition. This sequence is important to help broaden the horizons of students.

On the other side, classroom activities are sequenced in line with the developmental stages of Bennett's model. For instance, warm-up activities were always coming first to stimulate students' consciousness[4] that cultures

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[4] For example, in the session of Individualism and Collectivism, two psychological experimentations were used to differentiate students' orientations; in the session of uncertainty avoidance, several unexpected situations were presented to test students' preference.

are different (development principles at the stage of denial), then the lecturer started to introduce concepts and use examples to illustrate the meaning of content knowledge (at the stage of defense). In addition, one or two case studies are arranged for students to apply the new learnt concepts into concrete situations, which require students to interpret social phenomena or to investigate a culture deeply (at the stage of acceptance). This sequence reflects a growing development of intercultural sensitivity at the stage of denial during warm-up activities to a combination of minimization and acceptance stages at the end.

The current study is a trial to nurture student teachers' intercultural sensitivity in a university general education course. It echoes to the research on the intentional intervention to promote students' intercultural sensitivity, such as Rahimi and Soltani's (2011) findings that students' intercultural sensitivity can be enhanced with intentional training. This study also confirms the importance of learning cultural knowledge (Paige & Madden 2013), i.e. Hofstede's construct. This timely study will provide implications on the course and teaching development of intercultural education in Hong Kong, where it is underdeveloped in the literature about intercultural education in the Chinese society. In addition, the discussion on the Bennett's developmental principles may provide reference to intercultural education in other places.

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Connectivism: Probing Prospects for a Technology-Centered Pedagogical Transition in Religious Studies[1]

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Abstract

Over the past decade, we have seen the advent of technologies (more especially Information and Communication Technologies) transforming the higher education landscape. One of the critical challenges emerging within this new landscape has been how to position the integration of technology within an appropriate learning theory. The three 'traditional' learning theories most often utilized in the creation of instructional environments, namely behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism, have come under much criticism in the design of learning spaces for the twenty-first century learner. One such theorist coming to the fore challenging the presuppositions and relevance of the above three learning theories and offering an alternative approach has been George Siemens with his notion of 'connectivism'. Siemens' connectivism posits that knowledge is distributed across networks and the act of learning is largely one of forming a diverse network of connections and identifying the connected patterns. Hence, my aim in this paper is to ascertain the core principles of Siemens' connectivism, and probe the prospects for a technology-centered pedagogical transition in religious studies. In so doing, I propose the redesigning of learning spaces, where learning is no longer an internal, individualistic activity but an actionable process of gaining knowledge through connecting with specialized

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information sets that reside within networks of other people, organizations and databases.

Keywords: Learning theories, connectivism, technology-centered pedagogy, lived-experiences, networked, contextualized knowledge creation.

Introduction

In recent years, we have seen the advancements of technology set the tone for pedagogical progress within the higher education sector. The integration of technologies, particularly Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), have challenged and transformed traditional teaching and learning environments from single instructional modes to multiple instructional modes, leading to an exponential growth in the acquisition of knowledge, strengthening the relevance of education, raising the quality of education, and fostering a more engaging and interactive learning environment (cf. Eileen, Conole, Clough & Blake 2013; Slade & Prinsloo 2013; Price & Marshall 2013). While many of these optimistic benefits have come to the fore, the use of technology to enhance the educational process involves much more than merely learning how to use specific types of hardware and software. According to Diaz and Bontenbal (2000) it requires an understanding of 'pedagogical principles that are specific to the use of technology in an instructional setting'. This is further substantiated by Sangra and Wheeler (2013) who contend that while technology is making considerable advancements in education, many contemporary educators lack comprehension of the critical role that learning theories play in the design of learning spaces and in the selection and use of appropriate technology. In addition, the presence of many learning theories that have been formulated in a pre-digital age still dominate the higher education landscape, with the aim to facilitate teaching and learning effectively within a technologically-mediated environment (Sangra & Wheeler 2013).

However, as technologies begin to dominate and transform the higher educational landscape, many new theories that seem appropriate as explanatory frameworks for teaching and learning in a digital age are coming to the fore. Some of these noteworthy learning theories are 'heutagogy' (self-determined learning), 'paragogy' (collaborative learning with peer-to-peer)

and 'rhizomatic learning' (a post-modernist approach based on acknowledging the varying contexts of learners and multiple paths of learning)[2]. This paper focuses on the latest contender in educational theory, namely George Siemens' 'connectivism'. Hence, my aim in this paper is to ascertain the core principles of Siemens' connectivism, and probe the prospects for a technology-centered pedagogical transition in religious studies.

In order to attain the above, this paper begins with an analysis of the current trends in designing learning spaces, followed by a brief discussion on the limitations of learning theories formulated in the pre-digital age. I then provide an exposition of Siemens' connectivism, foregrounded in a discussion of its definition, epistemology and ontology of learning, core principles, and criticism. I then reframe four of Siemens' core principles as a potential framework for religious studies. I finally conclude with some critical thoughts on the broader implications of the connectivist approach for teaching and learning.

Current Trends in Designing Learning Spaces

Learners of the twenty-first century have changed radically from their predecessors. As 'digital natives' (i.e. native speakers of the digital language of technology) they think and process information fundamentally differently from earlier learners (cf. Prensky 2001). Therefore, the designing of learning spaces for the contemporary learner is immensely complex and multifaceted. Keppell and Riddle (2011: 5) define 'learning spaces' as spaces where both the educator and learners 'optimize the perceived and actual affordances of space' that 'promote authentic learning interaction'. The 'process' of designing learning spaces, according to Underwood and Luckin (2013: 67) 'is the point at which theory meets practice and the partnership must be operationalized in order to enable implementation'. In addition Cross (2007: 41-45) posits that the designing of learning spaces have both opportunities and constraints and must take into consideration three important variables, namely the learners, the context, and the expected learning outcomes.

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[2] For further discussions on these learning theories see Beishuizen (2008), Corneli (2012) and Cormier (2008).

Against the above theoretical postulations, this paper explores three critical trends in designing learning spaces, which offer a conceptual framework for the discourse being articulated in this paper.

(1) Designing with Meta-Cognitive Interface Elements

The first trend I highlight focuses on the integration of meta-cognitive interface elements in the designing of learning spaces. By 'meta-cognitive' I refer to the exclusive process of 'reflecting on' and 'regulating' one's own thinking – i.e. 'thinking about thinking' (cf. Kay, Kleitman & Azevedo 2013: 124). The main goal of this process is to increase insight into what the learner understands and can do, and the learner's ability to regulate his/her learning process effectively. This is a significant process in many learning contexts and particularly where individuals are independent life-long learners. Some of the activities involved in the meta-cognitive processes are: (a) monitoring activities including feeling of knowing; (b) content evaluation – identifying the adequacy of information; (c) hypothesizing, coordinating informational sources, knowledge elaboration; (d) handling task difficulties and demands, control of context, time and effort; and (e) interest in the task or the content domain of the task (cf. ibid.). One of the critical elements of the meta-cognitive process is the degree of certainty (i.e. level of confidence) about the accuracy of one's own performance. According to Gilovich, Griffin and Kahneman (2002: 248) based on the premise that 'confidence controls action', measures of confidence in one's own knowledge, opinions and answers have proven integral in real-life domains, such as decision-making and problem-solving.

The types of meta-cognitive interfaces used to facilitate the design of these learning spaces depend largely on the instructional modes of the higher education institutions (i.e. distance learning or face-to-face). While the integration of tutors or teaching assistants have dominated much of the traditional face-to-face institutions, contemporary advancements in technology have brought to the fore critical technologically-mediated spaces such as online discussion forums, blogs and wikis that serve to facilitate the meta-cognitive processes in both distance learning and face-to-face institutions. These types of platforms, which come to the fore as Personal Learning Environments (PLEs) serve to create a 'personalised'/ 'tailored'

learning space, where learners can reflect on their individual learning processes and gain feedback from their educators, tutors and peers to increase levels of confidence.

(2) Designing with Web-Based Technologies

This brings me to the second current trend, which focuses on the integration of web-based technologies. The emergence of affordable and robust web-based technologies have fostered immense opportunities for innovative learning and pedagogical practice. An ideal example of this is the integration of Web-Based Lecture Technologies (WBTL) that are designed to digitally record lectures for delivery over the web (e.g. Lectopia or also known as iLecture). These technologies have challenged the long-held teaching traditions, such as the 'role and style of lectures', the 'nature and delivery of learning content', and the 'way the learner interacts with the educator' (cf. Ke and Zhu 2013: 358). In addition, they 'blur' the boundaries between face-to-face and distance learning. This is substantiated in the example articulated by Sköld (2012: 2-3), who contends that the emergence of web-based virtual reality platforms are turning distance learning education into an 'immersive social-present teaching and learning experience' by enabling the construction or embodiment of three dimensional (3D) identity presence (i.e. through the construction of avatars)[3]. An example of a web-based virtual reality platform is 'Second Life', which is a 3D virtual world where users can socialize and connect using avatars over voice and text-interactive chat. Second Life is used as an education platform by many institutions, including: University of Cincinnati, Oxfordshire, University of the West of Scotland, Washington University, University of Sheffield, etc. I will discuss this further in the latter part of this paper.

Three important elements come to the fore in designing learning spaces with web-based technologies, namely: (1) '*Cognitive Presence*' - which refers to the affordance of the environment in supporting the development of meaning-construction and sustained critical thinking among learners; (2) '*Social Presence*' – which refers to the establishment of a

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[3] *Avatars* = a graphical representation of the user or the user's alter ego character.

supportive environment, in which both the educator and learners can project their identities into the class community and thereby presenting themselves as 'real and functional people'; and (3) '*Teaching Presence*' – where the educator facilitates the learning process and provides direct instruction when needed (cf. Ke & Zhu 2013: 359ff.). Research of Ke (2010) and Garrison, Cleveland-Innes and Fung (2010) contend that teaching presence influences social and cognitive presence. In essence, teaching presence directs the cognitive and social processes for the primary purpose of achieving meaningful learning outcomes. Thus, the structure and organization of facilitation associated with teaching presence creates the environment where social and cognitive presence can be cultivated.

(3) Designing with Collaborative Learning Elements

This brings me to the third trend, which focuses on the design of learning spaces with collaborative learning elements. According to Cress (2013: 416) the integration of web-based technology in education not only gives the learner access to vast amounts of data, information and knowledge, but it also posits a distinction between 'consumer' and 'producer' of knowledge. Web-based technology (more explicitly Web 2.0 – socially-mediated and collaborative tools) provides learners with the opportunity to contribute information, which might be a small portion, but nevertheless relevant in the collective development of knowledge[4]. Cress briefly explains this collaborative knowledge production process in the following:

> When people contribute information others might rely on it, link it to other contributions or even modify it. In an interactive process, the collective can make use of anybody's contribution and shape it in such a way that it fits the needs the community. Through such collaborative processes the community can enhance its knowledge base and build new knowledge. But it is not only the community that learns, it is also the individual that benefits and whose knowledge is expanded. In mass collaboration with Web 2.0 tools these individual

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[4] A common platform for these types of collaborative engagements are Wikis, Twitter, and file sharing platforms such as Google Docs.

and collective processes of learning and knowledge building are greatly intertwined (2013: 416).

In terms of the design of learning spaces with collaborative learning elements, two levels of analysis needs to take place. On the 'individual level', analysis occurs with a focus on the 'internal processes of learning' – i.e. how much content has the learner produced, and how many contributions from others has the learner read? On the 'community level', analysis occurs with a focus on the 'external processes of learning' – i.e. the liveliness of the community, its ability to bind its members and stimulate relevant activities, and the broader quantitative (external assimilation) and qualitative (external accommodation) developments.

Thus, for Held, Kimmerle and Cress (2012: 39) with the integration of social software tools in the design of learning spaces, the collaborative product is 'not a linear text, but a network of references'. In addition each learner brings to the learning space their own experiences and frameworks of interpreting that experience, which is then enhanced within the collective through their own experiences and frameworks of interpretation (cf. Aviv, Erlich & Ravid 2003). This shift in the design of learning spaces from 'individual' to 'collective' vis-à-vis 'personal' to 'collaborative' posits an ideological and pedagogical shift in the adaptation of learning theories.

Limitations of '*Traditional*' Learning Theories

By using the term '*traditional*' I refer to those learning theories formulated in the pre-digital age. In this section, I want to briefly discuss the limitations of such learning theories for the digital age. Hence, I explore the complexities of the three epistemological traditions that have dominated the education landscape, namely *behaviourism*, *cognitivism* and *constructivism*.

(1) Behaviourism

Behaviourism is an ideological position, which sees the process of learning as a 'mechanical process' of associating stimulus (incentive) with response (cf. Ertmer & Newby 1993). The learner is regarded as a 'clean slate' or 'essentially passive', with the process of learning shaped through positive or

negative reinforcements[5]. The behaviourist perspective is largely associated with its proponent Burrhus Frederic Skinner (1974) who posited that the mind at work cannot be observed, tested or understood, and hence the focus on 'actions' (behaviour) becomes imperative in the process of knowing, teaching and learning[6]. For Gredler (2005) the behaviourist approach to learning is based on three assumptions: (1) observable behaviours is more important than understanding internal activities; (2) behaviours should be focused on simple elements – specific stimuli and responses; and (3) the process of learning is defined by behaviour change. Hence, behaviourists emphasize change in behaviour due to the influence and control of the external environment, rather than the internal thought processes of the learner (cf. Merriam & Caffarella 1999).

The behaviourist approach to teaching and learning relies on so called 'skill and drill' exercises, which provide the consistent repetition necessary for the effective reinforcement of response patterns (cf. Wray 2010: 44). Behaviourist teaching methods have proven most successful in facilitating mastery of content (i.e. memorization) and more especially where the learning environment is time conditioned. Pedagogically, this would include giving the learner immediate feedback, breaking down of tasks into smaller steps, repeating instructions as many times as possible, giving positive reinforcement, etc. However, the limitations of behavioural theory is that it tends to diminish the possibilities of human learning, and does not take into consideration the effect of the broader environment in shaping the behaviour of the learner (Wray 2010: 44). This does not suggest an absolute rejection of behaviourism but, instead, to question the means rather than the ends.

(2) Cognitivism

One of the major proponents of the development of cognitivism was Jean Piaget (1952) who contended that the behaviourist approach failed to account for high order thinking skills and the critical position of the mind in the learning process. Hence, cognitivism acknowledges the associations establi-

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[5] Positive reinforcement is the application of a stimulus and negative reinforcement is the withdrawal of a stimulus.

[6] Cf. Spillane (2002: 380) for a more elaborate analysis of Skinner's thesis.

shed through 'contiguity and repetition' and 'reinforcement', but view learning as 'involving the acquisition or reorganization of the cognitive structures through which humans' process and store information' (cf. Good & Brophy 1990: 187). This implies that the process of learning is defined as a change in the learner's *schemata* (an internal knowledge structure). Hence, learning is seen as an internal process, with the amount of learning dependent upon the processing capacity of the learner, the depth of processing, and the learner's existing knowledge structure (cf. Ally 2008 :19). The cognitivist approach to teaching and learning involves memory, thinking, reflection, abstraction, motivation, and meta-cognition. According to Ertmer and Newby (1993: 56) knowledge acquisition is described as 'a mental activity that entails internal coding and structuring by the learner', with the learner being 'an active participant'. In addition, the learner's thoughts, beliefs, attitudes and values are considered to be valuable in the learning process (Ertmer & Newby 1993: 56).

Cognitivists strive to make knowledge more meaningful by helping learners link it to existing knowledge. Some of the techniques employed in the cognitivist approach are: (1) emphasis on the active involvement of the learner in the learning process; (2) use of hierarchical analysis to identify and illustrate prerequisite relationships; (3) emphasis on structuring, organizing, and sequencing information to facilitate optimal processing; and (4) creating learning environments that allow learners to make connections with pre-existing knowledge (cf. ibid.). The limitations of cognitivism is that learning is teacher-centred and information must be presented in an organized manner in order to achieve the most efficient learning, which may by default position the learner as a passive participant. Furthermore, due to learning being very structured, it becomes difficult for the learners to adapt to changes in what has already been processed and learned (cf. Ertmer & Newby 1993: 56). Also, since working memory has limited capacity, information needs to be organized in appropriate sizes or 'chunks' to facilitate effective processing (cf. Ally 2008: 22).

(3) Constructivism
In the past decades, we have seen a major shift towards the constructivist approach. According to Merriam and Caffarella (1999: 260) constructivism

is an assimilation of both behaviourist and cognitivist ideals. The constructivist approach positions learners as active rather than passive. The learner is seen as part of a process where the attaining of knowledge is seen as a function of how he or she creates meaning from his or her own experiences (Ertmer & Newby 1993: 63; Merriam & Caffarella 1999: 260). This implies that knowledge is not received from the outside or from someone else, but through the individual learner interpreting and processing what is received through the senses in order to create knowledge (cf. Ally 2008: 30). However, constructivists differ from the behaviourists and cognitivists in that they do not believe that knowledge is 'mind-independent' and can be 'mapped' onto the learner (cf. Ertmer & Newby 1993: 64). A critical proponent of constructivism, namely Jerome Brunner (1985), posits that learning is a process in which the learner is able to build on present and previous information. Hence, learning within the constructivist approach is learner-centered, where the learner is at the center of the learning process, with the educator acting as an advisor and facilitator. Another major emphasis of the constructivist approach is that it is 'situated-learning' – i.e. regards learning as contextual (cf. Ally 2008: 30).

While constructivism dominates much of current pedagogy, there are also known limitations in its applications. Firstly, learners create meaning as opposed to acquiring it. Since there are many possible meanings to acquire from any given experience, Ertmer and Newby (1993: 63) contend that a predetermined 'correct' meaning cannot be achieved. Secondly, there are implicit assumptions that self-directed learners have sufficient prior knowledge and skills to engage effectively and productively with their learning activities (cf. Rowe 2006: 101). Thirdly, it demands curriculum outcomes that are identical to the behaviourist and cognitivist approach – i.e. a demonstrated ability to perform by applying appropriate procedures to a given situation, in order to arrive at a correct result according to agreed conventions (cf. Klinger 2008: 199).

(4) Limitations for Application in a Digital Age

It is not the intention of this paper to discredit the above learning theories, as one can argue that each of the above theories have a significant place within religious studies. However, my intention is to simply highlight some of the

limitations of the above theories for the digital age. In order to do so, I now turn to one of the leading educational theorists of the twenty-first century, namely George Siemens.

Siemens' critique of the above three learning theories is largely premised on his thesis that the linear models of learning (process) and knowing (state) is not conducive for learning in the current digital age (2005: 3). Siemens (2006) contends that the exponential developments in knowledge production and the increased complexities of a technologically-mediated society have brought to the fore a paradigm shift, causing educators to rethink what constitutes knowledge. Thus, what was traditionally embraced as the constitution of knowledge, has been altered with new epistemologies and ontological theories coming to the fore within the digital age (cf. Siemens 2006: 3). Siemens (2005) articulates the limitations of behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism with the following three assessments:

a. Firstly, behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism holds an intrapersonal view of learning, which is based on the domain of the individual and necessitates his/ her physical presence (i.e. brain based) in learning.
b. Secondly, it fails to address that learning can also occur outside of people (i.e. that learning can be stored and manipulated by technology).
c. Thirdly, behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism focuses on the actual processes of learning and not with the value of what is being learned.

In addition, Siemens (2005) contends that while many of these theories have been revised and recontextualized with several modifications, there comes a point where modification is no longer sensible and a new approach is needed. Thus, Siemens (2005: 4) posits that any learning theory coming to the fore in a digital age, must consider the following:

a. How are learning theories impacted when knowledge is no longer acquired in a linear manner?
b. What are the adjustments that need to be made to learning theories,

when technology performs many of the cognitive operations previously performed by learners (i.e. storing and retrieving information)?

c. How does the learner stay current in a rapidly evolving information ecology?

d. How do learning theories address the impact of established networks on the learning processes?

Connectivism as an Alternative Learning Theory

As a proposal to address the limitations of behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism, Siemens proposes 'connectivism' as a learning theory for the digital age. But what exactly is connectivism?

(1) Defining Connectivism

Let me begin by providing a working definition. In its simplest form, connectivism asserts that in a digital age, 'knowledge is distributed across networks and the act of learning is largely one of forming a diverse network of connections and recognizing attendant patterns' (cf. Siemens 2008: 10). For Siemens, 'networks' are connections between entities, which he calls 'nodes' and defines it as 'individuals, groups, systems, fields, ideas or communities' (Siemens 2008: 10). In proposing connectivism as a learning theory for the digital age, Siemens borrows largely from the science of complexity, which includes chaos theory, networking and self-organization (cf. Klinger 2008: 159). Siemens' postulation of connectivism, differs from the behaviourist, cognitivist and constructivist approaches, in that while these approaches focus primarily on human activity, connectivism embodies both human and non-human material objects in its symmetric analysis (cf. Bell 2010: 529).

(2) Epistemology and Ontology of Learning

For Siemens (2006) 'knowledge' within the current digital age is seen as decentralized and too diverse and rapid flowing to be held in the human

mind. Hence, the production of knowledge within the connectivist approach draws on Snowden's four ontologies of knowledge, namely (a) simple; (b) complicated; (c) complex; and (d) chaotic (cf. Siemens 2006)[7]. In addition, Cormier (2008) contends that Siemens' connectivism also draws on 'rhizomatic' knowledge, which is 'negotiable community-based'.

Connectivism is also largely based on a 'pluralist' epistemology, which entails acknowledging diversity of opinions as in constructivism (cf. Bell 2010: 529). However, connectivism differs from constructivism in that that the objective of connectivist learning is to produce accurate and up-to-date knowledge (cf. Siemens 2005). This distinction is further enhanced with Downes (2006) who posits that ontologically connectivism brings to the fore the critical skills of dealing with diversity, autonomy, openness and emergent knowledge. Bell (2010: 530) draws from his personal experience as a learner within the connectivist teaching approach and posits that connectivism has the ability to foster 'creative dialogue', with learners 'strengthening their links with resources, and more especially with each other, as they begin to cite other learners' contributions and engage with online collaborations'[8].

It should be noted that the characteristics highlighted by both Downes and Bell are integral to the learning processes of religious studies.

(3) Core Principles of Connectivism
As a result of the exponential developments in knowledge production over technologically-mediated spaces, the learner within the connectivist approach is continually confronted with new information that is gained through his/her established networks. Hence, for Siemens (2005: 6) the learner must achieve the critical ability to 'draw distinctions between important and unimportant information' and 'recognize when new information alters the landscape based on previously made decisions' (Siemens 2005: 6).

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[7] For a further exposition of Snowden's four ontologies of knowledge cf. Kurtz and Snowden (2003).

[8] For a good example of the connectivist approach see the online course offered at University of Manitoba, namely CCK08 "Connectivism and Connective Knowledge", which details the transformational aspects of learning technologies and the needed change.

Pollard (2008) illustrates some of the core principles of connectivism by asserting that the learning process within connectivism is about making connections, which can be defined as (1) neural – 'know-what'; (2) conceptual – 'know-how'; and (3) social – 'know-who'. The establishments of networks (or the 'loci of knowledge') is found in online communities – i.e. those with shared knowledge and shared learning interests.

Siemens (2004) further posits eight core guiding principles within the connectivist approach, which I summarize in the following:

a. *Learning and knowledge rests in diversity of opinions*: implies that diversity exists in the sources that inform the learning process as well as in the forums and other socially engaged online platforms where people interact and collaborate.

b. *Learning is a process of connecting specialized nodes or information sources*: learning occurs through learners connecting themselves, their writings and their sources.

c. *Learning may reside in non-human appliances*: implies the incorporation of inter-networked technologies such as Web 2.0 products and services.

d. *The capacity to know more is more critical than what is currently known*: as a knowledge network, the objective is for the learner to increase his/her capacity in related but unexplored areas, through boundary crossing-activities.

e. *Nurturing and maintaining connections is needed to facilitate continual learning*: this implies the critical skills to manage the tension between extending networks, maintaining networks and managing information overload.

f. *The ability to see connections between field, ideas, and concepts is a core skill*: implies the ability of the learner to use information over a wide range of disciplines.

g. *Currency in the form of accurate and up-to-date knowledge is the intent of all learning activities*: this implies the ability to balance information researched over open platforms as well as traditionally published data that is available via online publishing houses.

h. *Decision-making is ultimately a learning process*: the act of choosing what to learn and the meaning of incoming information is

seen through the lens of a transitioning reality. This implies that while it may be a correct answer today, it may be a wrong answer tomorrow due to the alterations by new information affecting the decision.

(4) Criticism of Connectivism

At this point, let me briefly underline some of the critique against connectivism, before proceeding to advance a discourse on a connectivist approach for religious studies. For Vehagen (2006) one of the emerging challenges is whether connectivism can be perceived as a 'learning theory'. Vehagen contends that generally learning theories are complementary, while in connectivism there is no scope for the enlarging of existing principles with other theories (Vehagen 2006). Thus, for Vehagen, connectivism should be regarded as a set of pedagogical skills rather than a learning theory. However, Merriam, Caffarela and Baumghatner (2006: 52) challenges Vehagen's thesis by contending that learning in connectivism is a 'process' rather than an 'end-product'.

For Sahin (2012: 439) as a learning process, connectivism is dependent upon resources, such as institutional infrastructure and access to the internet for both the educator and learner. However, in some institutional environments this can be problematic. This certainly emerges as a critical issue for higher education institutions in Africa, who render services for underprivileged learners.

Bells (2010) contends that a critical factor in connectivism is the issue of 'control'. Within the connectivist approach control is reduced and the educator is placed on the periphery of the learning process.

For Downes (2013) some of the major challenges facing connectivism are: (a) cognitive overload resulting from excess information, which compromises the learner's ability to successfully 'retain' and 'process'; (b) the failure of educators to nurture the meta-cognitive elements in learning; and (c) the failure to be a node or the failure to connect.

Similar to the traditional learning theories that I discussed earlier, connectivism also has its known limitations. However, Boitshwarelo (2011) contends that despite these limitations, it is clearly a 'fresh' way of looking at learning.

## Towards a Connectivist Approach in Religious Studies
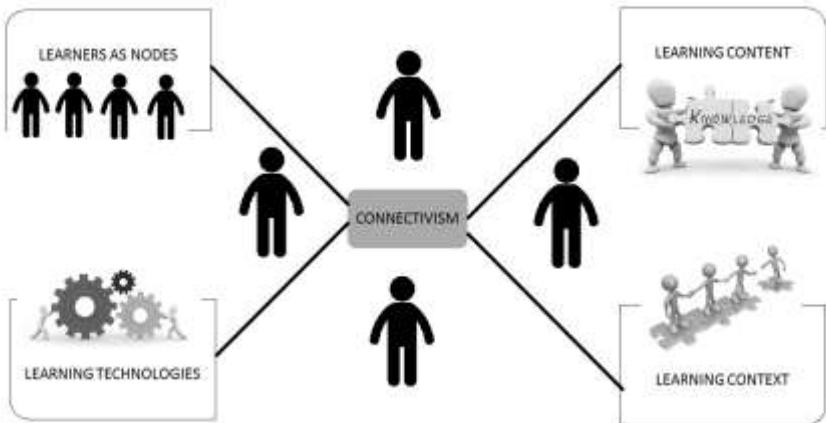
Figure 01: A Connectivist Framework

The advancements of technology in education has certainly not left religious studies unabated. In retrospect, its integration in education has created much more innovative prospects for the facilitation of religious studies in the twenty-first century. The integration of technology has the potential to expand the current knowledge base, with critical insights and up-to-date knowledge on global events intertwined with religion, as well as stimulate critical reflection between learners and between learners and the educator. Nevertheless, discourses on pedagogy in religious studies have often given way to discourses on method and theory in the study of religion. Hence, it is my aim in this paper to refocus some of the attention on pedagogy by putting forward a proposition for a technologically-centered pedagogical transition in religious studies, which is based on the core principles of connectivism (as discussed earlier). In order to do so, I propose a discussion of four critical theoretical constructs (cf. Figure 01), namely (1) learners as nodes; (2) learning content; (3) learning context; and (4) learning technologies.

(1) Learners as Nodes

Learners enter the connectivist approach as single nodes (a single entity). Each learner emerges as a point of information containing personal knowledge, which is shaped by their own experiences, ideas, feelings, opinions, etc. Thus, each learner maintains their own unique identity. According to Siemens (2005: 7) the aim of each learner is to expand their personal knowledge by connecting to other nodes (i.e. other people, data, ideas, etc.)[9]. This process of 'connecting' is the central metaphor for the learning process. The ultimate goal is to establish multiple connections, which then culminate with a 'network'. This process describes the social, interconnected and community-based characteristics of learning in contemporary times, and mirrors ways in which people engage in socialization and interaction online. Thus, learning within the connectivist approach can be seen as intensely social, where knowledge is generated in contact with others in the community through mutual exchange, contribution and sharing of ideas. Shared motives and common interests become the critical factors in maintaining and expanding these networks.

With the current advancements in information and communication technologies, the notion of a 'networked-community' is becoming much more dynamic with local and global participation. As learners begin to extend their networks and immerse their responses and contributions within these dynamic communities, it provides them with valuable feedback and reciprocity, which enhances the intellectual processes of learning (cf. Owen Grant, Sayers & Facer 2006). Hence, this brings to the fore the core principle of connectivism, which highlights 'diversity of opinions'.

For religious studies, connectivism offers much opportunity for the transitioning of contemporary religious studies to a 'lived religion' approach. In connectivism, learners maintain their own unique religious worldviews and are able to network with other nodes (learners and other sources of information) both locally and globally. These interactions can be further enhanced by learners expanding their networks to include learners of different religious traditions, in order to gain insight into their beliefs, rituals, festivals, morals, etc. This process of interaction helps learners to expand

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[9] Downes describes this product as "connective" or "distributive" knowledge (cf. Downes 2012: 15).

their knowledge on world religions, and encounter traditions, which they may not necessarily be exposed to within the classroom context (for example interaction with an adherent practicing Candomblé – an Afro-Brazilian religion practiced mainly in Brazil comprising a mixture of traditional beliefs originating from different regions in Africa). It further assists learners to engage with other nodes on global issues that are intertwined with elements of religion, and through processes of contributing to discussion forums and other socially-mediated platforms, they are able to gain insights into the broader thought processes of local and global participants.

Connectivism, thus offers a pedagogical shift to a space beyond the traditional lecture hall.

(2) Learning Content

Content is a critical issue in any learning process. The critical question is what constitutes 'legitimate' knowledge? Traditional approaches to teaching and learning are typically based on pre-selected teaching materials. Educators position themselves as the custodians of knowledge by stipulating the content that feeds into the curriculum (which more often than not is ideologically based). Religious studies is no stranger to such discourses, educators in religious studies also frame curricular within specific approaches – i.e. historical criticism, literary criticism, phenomenology, etc. In addition, content embodied in selective prescribed books also serve to expose students to 'selective' scholarship (i.e. schools of thought).

The reality, however, is that contemporary learners perceive little value in the absorption or learning of information embodied within traditional prescribed materials (cf. Berg, Berquam & Christoph 2007). With the advancements of technology in education, students are being exposed to diverse content, in the forms of Open Educational Resources (OERs), online journals, wikis, Google search engines, etc., which serve to expose students to different schools of thought. Drawing from personal experiences, this is clearly evident with students plagiarising online content with little focus on what is contained within the prescribed reading materials.

Adding to this complexity, connectivism brings to the fore a new type of knowledge - i.e. 'connected knowledge' (cf. Siemens 2005: 8). As members of open online spaces, learners are finding new ways to contribute,

communicate and collaborate, using a variety of accessible tools that empower them to develop and share ideas. As a result of these developments, learners are now constructing their own knowledge. There is a general transition from being mere 'consumers' of knowledge to also 'producers' of knowledge (i.e. 'prosumers'). Thus, for McLoughlin and Chan (2008) as new comers to a community of practice, learners not only engage in 'legitimate peripheral participation' to develop their own mastery of knowledge, but also have a responsibility to take part in the continued advancements of the community's existing body of knowledge, as they move towards full participation as 'curators' in a knowledge building community. This inevitably leads to knowledge being produced and consumed that are up-to-date, which is essentially a core principle of the connectivist approach.

Thus, this posits a refocus on designing of learning content, which moves the religious studies educator from the position of custodian of knowledge, to a guide in the construction of 'connected' knowledge.

(3) Learning Context

Learning context is understood as the 'set of circumstances that are relevant when someone needs to learn something' (cf. Figueiredo 2005: 127). Literally, this implies the learning activities, situations of learning and teaching, theoretical learning, concept learning, skill learning, practice learning, learning through real situations, etc. (cf. Figueiredo 2005: 127). Two of the emerging trends in designing learning contexts are 'collaborative learning' and 'simulation'. I have focused much on the issue of collaborative learning in my earlier discussions under 'current trends'. In this section, I want to expand on the significance of 'simulation' as a learning context for religious studies within the connectivist approach.

Simulation attempts to copy various activities from 'real life' and position them in a virtual environment (cf. Figueiredo 2005: 132). Typical examples of these are flight simulation, war games, business games, and role play simulation. One of the major simulation platforms dominating the higher education environment is 'Second Life'. As noted earlier, Second Life is an online virtual world, which enables users to interact with each other using avatars. Avatars can then explore virtually constructed worlds, meet other avatars, socialize and participate in individual and group activities.

Second Life is built on 3D modelling software that is purposed to simulate real life environments. In terms of religious studies, Second Life already hosts an array of environments such as 'Library of World Religions', 'Spirituality and Belief', as well as virtual sacred space such as synagogues, mosques, and churches. Some of these sacred sites are designed in such a way that it replicates the experiences of visiting the actual physical site. In addition, Second Life hosts an array of 'spaces', where learners can enter and engage in critical discussions with other learners, as well as educators that are internationally based. Thus, Second Life offers an immersive experience for learners within religious studies.

A pioneering example of teaching religious studies in Second Life is that of the University of Southern Queensland (Australia). It hosts an island (space) situated in the New Media Consortium educational precinct and comprises a number of religious buildings including a church, a mosque, a synagogue, an ancient Greek temple, a Freemasonic lodge, a Zen Buddhist temple, and a Hindu temple dedicated to Ganesha. According to Farley (2010) these simulated spaces allow students the exposure of other religious traditions and the ability to engage and interact with its adherents. Hence, it fosters empathy to different religious traditions and provides the basis for religious tolerance, which translates to the real world (Farley 2010).

Platforms such as Second Life offer much scope for innovative as well as contextualized learning experiences.

(4) Learning Technologies

Learning technologies are critical in the expanding and shifting of spaces and structures for a new learning approach. The acquisition of knowledge and skills by the modern-day learner and educator is immensely influenced by technology (cf. Selwyn 2011). The rapid advancements in technologies over the past two decades compels the education sector to be abreast the many developments that can contribute to more sustainable, relevant and productive educational practices. The 2011 Horizon Report (cf. Johnson, Smith, Willis, Levine & Haywood 2011) identified six emerging technologies that will mostly likely dominate the education environment and contribute to a paradigm shift within the next 5 years.

The first technology is 'Cloud Computing' – web based tools, where

learners and educators can collaborate online at affordable rates and minimum resources.

The second emerging technology is 'Mobile Technology' – mobile devices such as cell phones, smart phones, android tablets, etc. that are less expensive than most laptops and require lesser infrastructure to support them.

The third emerging technology is 'Gaming and Simulation Software' – where the productive role of play and simulation allows for experimentation, the exploration of identities and even failures (e.g. 'Second-Life' and 'Open Simulation').

The fourth technology refers to 'Open Content' – a type of technology that has evolved away from the idea of authoritative repositories of content towards the broader notion of content being freely available (such as OERs).

The fifth emerging technology which is speculated to dominate the education sector within the next 4-5 years is 'Learning Analytics'. It harnesses the power in data mining, interpretation and modelling to help educators design systems and approaches to better measure student outcomes and faculty developments.

The sixth emerging technology, which features highly noticeable in the current era, is 'Personal Learning Environments' (PLEs). PLEs which are largely constituted by social software (i.e. Facebook, Twitter, E-Blogger, YouTube, Flickr, etc.) offer an alternative technology and approach (from the traditional Learning Management Systems) that is individualized by design, and hence different from person-to-person. PLEs also function as 'open' spaces beyond the traditional institution firewall and are often unregulated or 'minimally' regulated.

In addition to the above six emerging technologies, we also witness an advancement in traditional Learning Management Systems from general administrative systems to much more interactive and collaborative open environments (such as the new developments in Sakai, Blackboard and Moodle).

The above trends reflect the realities of the time, both in the sphere of education and the world at large and offer an innovative space for developing a connectivist approach in religious studies. One of the critical challenges facing our higher education institutions is the lack of exposure to such developments and its relevance for adoption to the African context.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the numerous advancements made in technology is challenging the way we 'do' education in Africa. The integration of technology in education is offering new and innovative ways to teach and learn. However, this integration also calls for a revising of traditional pedagogical practices that have dominated the educational landscape for decades.

This paper focuses on probing the prospects for a technology-centered pedagogical transition in religious studies. In order to do so, I began this journey with a look at the current trends in designing learning spaces within the digital age. Three trends came to the fore, namely (1) designing with meta-cognitive interface elements; (2) designing with web-based technologies; and (3) designing with collaborative learning elements. These three current trends are an indication of how the current educational landscape in Africa can be transformed to meet the demands of the digital generation of learners. However, in order to make this transition, we need to understand some of the limitations of the 'traditional' learning theories that have dominated our learning spaces. Hence, I attempted to discuss the complexities of behaviourism, cognitivism and constructivism. Moreover, using one of the leading twenty-first century educational theorist, namely George Siemens, has a point of reflection, I highlighted the limitations of the above theories for the digital age.

In response to these limitations, I note that there are many other theories, however, my focus is on Siemens theory of connectivism which comes to the fore as one of the most leading theories contesting for legitimacy alongside the traditional behaviourist, cognitivist and constructivist approaches. Siemens theory basically posits that learning takes place when the learner establishes connections with other learners, communities, data and ideas to establish a 'network'. The process of learning than takes place when the learner expands these networks to gain more knowledge. However, the learner is not passive and also takes the role of constructing knowledge. In order to expand this discussion further, I focus on the epistemology and ontology of learning within connectivism, its core principles, and some of the critique coming to the fore to highlight its limitations.

Following this, I then turned my focus explicitly to the pedagogical practices within the study of religion. It was noted that the advancements made in technology have certainly ushered a new and innovative

environment which religious studies could tap into. In order to further a discourse on possibilities for a pedagogical transition to a connectivist approach in religious studies, I highlighted four areas, namely (1) the learner as a node; (2) the learning content; (3) the learner context; and (4) learning technology. All four areas provide a scope for the advancements of religious studies into a technologically-mediated learning environment.

However, my intention in this paper is not to propose a 'model' or 'framework' for such transition. The intention of this paper was to probe the prospects for a transition to a technologically-mediated pedagogy. In doing so I looked at connectivism as one possible learning theory. My conclusions are:

a. Connectivism offers much potential for a transition, especially if one intends on engaging with religious studies within a lived religion approach, where individual experiences become fundamental in the learning process.
b. Connectivism in itself offers much potential for educators to legitimize what they are doing with the integration of technology through immersing themselves within communities of educators.
c. Connectivism offers a creative platform for learners to contribute to the knowledge base by producing their own content based on their own lived experiences in religious studies, thereby becoming both consumers and producers of knowledge.

Against the above background, I offer this paper as a work in progress to open a discourse on pedagogical practices for religious studies in a digital age.

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Pedagogies of Belief: Teaching and Learning in a Small Christian School

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Abstract

A vast array of religious phenomena, as well as constantly emerging novel forms and expressions of religious life have actualized a whole range of issues as part of the social sciences, and education, teaching and learning is embraced within this. This article approaches teaching and learning through the hermeneutic of 'engaged pedagogy' as put forward by the noted feminist writer bell hooks, and uses **Kainon New Church School** as a case study for what engaged pedagogy means in the context of teaching within a religious school. The article suggests that such engaged teaching aims at accruing a particular kind of 'social' or 'religious capital' for the learner. Social capital itself is a reference to the resource embedded in the connections within and between a network and nodal actors in the network, and religious capital is defined (Finke 2003:3) as consisting of an acquirement of 'power and level of embeddedness into this or that religious culture'.

The article attempts to illustrate that Kainon School is part of a small networked community comprising the School, the Church, and the Congregational community (who are in many instances also parents at the school) and argues that teaching and learning occurs within these communally overlapping fields, similarly embedded within a particular religious culture. Methodologically, the paper is situated within a qualitative framework where the experiences and reflections of teachers and learners are captured through personal interviews and sustained observation.

Keywords: pedagogy, engaged, New Church, spiritual

Methodological Entry

I have always felt that it does not make for overly scintillating reading to begin an article (even an academic one) with the 'nuts and bolts' of methodological design and approach. Such an opening does however, aid in locating ones reading in terms of getting a 'grip' on how the researcher 'enters' and gains insights from a field site. This is of course important to us in situating our own critical understanding of the communication and analysis of the ethnography that is said to emerge from the research 'turf'.

That said, for this particular study, the qualitative case-study approach was found to be well suited as it often is for studies that involve understanding social phenomena through what people say and what people do, allowing us as it does, to privilege the rich narratives and stories that the participants are able to share with the researcher. 'Thick' attention (beyond statistical analyses) can be paid to the nuances of behaviour and the experiences of teachers and the learners, who are the primary participants in this study. Thus methodological validation for the qualitative approach can be found in the opportunities it organically presents for gaining an insight into the intricacies of social processes (see Donnelly 2000: 138). To this end semi-structured interviews (with open ended questions) were carried out with teachers, the Headmistress, the Pastors as well as the school secretaries at Kainon School. The learners across the grades 3 to 7 were also interviewed after consent was gained from both the teachers and the parents of the child. Interviews lasted anywhere from 45 to 90 minutes and were designed to be face-to face and on a one-to-one basis, allowing space for conversation beyond the defined parameters of the question to occur, should the participant feel inclined to wish to continue to 'talk'. The interview questions with the teachers sought to elicit the participants' beliefs about what they perceived to be 'good teaching' in general and their particular philosophical and pedagogical approach at Kainon in terms of their own teaching practice. The questions ranged from general questions about the participants' educational background and teaching experience to more specific questions probing what they believed was the aim of teaching, and how they understood the teaching process and the children they taught.

Such conversation (with the adult participants) would often organically lead into scheduling follow-up meetings or extending the conversation beyond the allocated time. This is a methodological and

disciplinary prerogative often employed by anthropologists who see value in 'conversation' as interviews. The conversations were recorded in many instances and all interviews were transcribed. These fluidly shaped interviews were in turn enriched and complemented with non-participant observation of congregational gatherings and worship, as well as gaining familiarity from literature about the numerous programmes held through the Church. Various Kainon School functions and events were attended which afforded wonderfully rich opportunities to observe teachers and learners, and the dynamic processes of teaching and learning outside of the formal classroom context. Consent to conduct research and interviews at the school, was obtained through a formal application presented to the Headmistress and school governing body. While the teachers indicated an interest in seeing the completed article, there was no compulsion that anything written, had to be vetted by them[1]. The non-participant observations were carried out in 2010/2011 and the 'formal' interviews were scheduled during the second half of 2011. Narrative and thematic analysis (Denzin 1989) was used in understanding the transcribed interviews and in identifying particular strands of belief patterns and teaching approaches that emerged from the participants.

Introducing Kainon

Kainon New Church School, in the leafy and rather picturesque suburb of Westville North was founded in1932 and is intimate[2], in both spatial scale

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[1] I would like to formally thank Mrs. Jane Edmunds, the Headmistress at Kainon School as well as all the teachers and staff, who made time and set aside space in their obviously full teaching day to accommodate the research. An especially appreciative note must be added as they were exceedingly warm and welcoming.

[2] In late 2010 and into 2011, an extensive 14 million rand upgrade was planned and executed with the aim of increasing infrastructure and capacity to about 120 children or approximately double the previous capacity (in single as opposed to the previous multi-grade streams). However, the emphasis was still on maintaining a 'small school' ideology and learning intimacy.

and design[3] as well as the student population, which has consistently numbered over the last decade, an annual average of 50-60 children across the spectrum of Grade R to Grade 7[4]. Tucked away from main arterial roads and further nestled off Perth Road itself, it sits somewhat embedded into the suburban surroundings with residential homes bordering and framing the one side and the Palmiet Nature Reserve offering a rather lovely eco-visual backdrop.

The material on the official website (echoed and variously articulated by the pastors and the teachers in the face to face interviews) points out that Kainon School was founded as a New Church school and that all teaching is from this religious perspective. It is claimed that 'the New Church draws its teachings from the Bible, and emphasises a value centered life and acceptance of all people who strive for such a life'. We are told that New Church teachings 'offer answers that build a foundation of a deep spirituality and at the same time are immediately practical' (Source: Kainon Website).

Kainon School as a limb of the Kainon New Church in Westville is moreover part of a large international (religiously aligned) educational academy. The Academy is said to host primary and high schools, offering 'Kainon education' in multiple sites in Pennsylvania, USA, and with an additional two schools in Kenya and Ghana and a College offering 'Kainon education' for (general) college students as well as those wanting a more specialised post-graduate degree in New Church Theology. The Academy is described as having been a center for New Church education since its founding in 1876, 'looking to the Lord in the light of the Old Testament, the

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[3] The architectural firm commissioned describes their brief having factored in that, 'Careful consideration has been taken in retaining the spirit and architectural character of the original complex while simultaneously infusing a clean, contemporary aesthetic with new, state of the art facilities'.

[4] There is also a kindergarten school, Kainon Pre-primary School which, while very much a part of 'Kainon Schools' in vision and philosophy, operates independently with its own Headmistress Mrs. Daphne Plug. The pre-primary school children had daily classroom worship and fun Bible stories and enactments, but of course a much more informal learning pedagogy and no formal taught doctrine which was part of the upper or senior primary school curriculum.

New Testament, and the Heavenly Doctrine' (www.kainon.co.za/).

Finke (2000:5) tells us that most religious groups outline a set of core teachings and practices embedded in a unique history, and are typically supported by sacred texts, narratives, divine revelations, and writings from their respected and charismatic leaders. This is certainly true as the theology of the New Church is patently positioned as a 'new Christianity', or 'distinctly new religion' claimed as 'the next step beyond the traditional Christian church teachings'. We are told that The New Church accepts the Old and New Testaments as the Word of God, but is however, distinctive from other streams of Christianity, as it is further deeply rooted in the particular exegetical and core interpretive writings of the theologian Emanuel Swedenborg. The New Church differentiates itself by basing itself on the words and theological thoughts claimed as revealed to Emanuel Swedenborg. The Church erects its philosophy around ten basic inspirational tenets that it sees as intrinsic to spiritual growth; *The Lord Jesus Christ, The Lord's Word, Heaven and Hell, Marriage, Charity, Worship, Prayer, The Church, Spreading the Good News and Trust in Providence.*

Kainon School sees school as an extension of the home and articulates that its mission is to educate the heart and mind of each child for a life of service to the neighbour and the Lord Jesus Christ. Psalm 25:5 is put forward as a kind of teaching signature*; 'Lead me in your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation'.*

Positioned thus against the religious landscape of the New Church, it is of course wholly understandable, *predictable even*, that Kainon School feels strongly about teaching children (religious) values and skills that the school believes the child needs for a successful and happy life. It claims to do this by 'building the community around family values that help children grow to be confident and kind' (Source: Kainon Website). Kainon School proudly 'sells' itself as caring profoundly about every aspect of the child. The school is advertised as aiming 'to nurture the spiritual, moral, academic, social, athletic and artistic well-being of each and every child'.

The blurb on the Kainon website advertises '*an independent co-educational Christian Primary School'* and continues by describing that:

> Kainon School is an English Medium Primary school and a memberof ISASA (Independent Schools Association of SA). The

school caters for Grade R-Grade 7. Kainon focuses on a high academic standard in line with the national curriculum, embedded with strong Christian morals and values (Source: Kainon Website).

It is of course the last sentence in an otherwise ubiquitous statement (that one may well find attached to numerous other independent or private schools) that comes under our lens, the embedding of an otherwise nationally generic curriculum, with 'strong Christian morals and values' that is of special value to us. For Kainon School, as they put it '*Religion is a part of this balance in everyday life*'. While the aim of effecting this balance is through a religious community and congregational group grounded in New Church theology for the adult members, for the children this balance is aimed at being ushered in and nurtured through a particular pedagogical approach within the school curriculum, which I argue can be seen as a resource of religious capital afforded to the learner.

When teachers in a public school hold particular overt and pronounced personal religious views, there are of course implications for how their particular pedagogical 'signatures' might be articulated in concert with or against questions of the learners' religious identities, lifestyle and learning. However, in a private school itself positioned within a communal ideological and theological worldview, the critical question shifts to what form the pedagogical praxis takes, as the assumption is that the parents here have willingly and knowingly sought out such a learning milieu for their child.

Religious Capital as a Form of Social Capital

Social capital[5], as a sociological concept, has emerged as something of a trendy label in the social sciences. Portes (2002:2) points out that the original

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[5] The concept of social capital has also accreted to itself much conceptual opaqueness that in some instances, clouds the term because of the mutable and varying definitions imposed by different scholars (see Putnam 2000; Portes 2000; Schuurman 2003). The paper however, takes as its starting point that social capital is to be understood as working on the level of the individual and small group.

theoretical development of the concept of 'social capital' by the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1984) and the American sociologist James Coleman (1988) centered on *individuals* or *small groups* as the units of analysis, and on the benefits accruing to individuals *because of their ties* with others. These theorists defined social capital in terms of a *resource* to which an individual has access to, and is able to use for his or her benefit. Simply put, social capital is a reference to the resource embedded in the connections *within* and *between* social networks. For a community, frequent cooperation by its members leads to tighter social linkages and increased trust in one another, described as a 'virtuous circle' of participation and trust (Janjuha-Jivraj 2003:32).

Kainon New Church School, I suggest, sits within such a virtuous circle and religious community. At the time that the interviews for this study were being conducted[6], a large numbers of the learners were from families that were members of Kainon New Church[7]. The Pastor that taught religion and doctrine to the senior primary learners was also the officiating Pastor who had general pastoral duties for the larger Kainon New Church

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[6] The interviews were conducted over the period September to October 2011, although earlier informal work and sustained non participant observation, attendance of school and Church meetings etc were carried out through many months in 2010/2011.

[7] The website seals the invited parameters of the knitted community by stating 'We are looking for families that have a similar approach to parenting and life, so that together we consistently teach our children the spiritual values. We invite you to look at what we stand for and to contact us should you be interested in viewing our school'. That said, there are children at Kainon that are not New Church followers, and a few that are not followers of Christianity, although these children are in the minority. The interviews with the families of these children reveal that while the New Church and Kainon School are not discriminatory or exclusionary, the School management had communicated that it needed to ensure that the difference in religious worldviews would not be disruptive for either the Kainon children or to the newly enrolled learner. The School makes it clear that the enrolled learner would need to join and be part of all worship and teaching and learning activities directly related to the New Church Christianity.

congregation. Indeed the sacred space for the school's (i.e. learners') daily worship and congregational weekly worship overlapped and ensued in the same Chapel space. Many of the teachers were members of Kainon New Church and several parents who had their children attending the school, had themselves attended Kainon in their childhood years. The children also in many instances quaintly shared that their 'older brother' or 'older sister' or 'cousin' had also attended the school.

Farr (2004) states that putting together the various elements, social capital is complexly conceptualized as the network of associations, activities, or relations that bind people together as a community via certain norms and psychological capacities (Farr 2004: 8-9). The paper argues that the teaching at Kainon School is positioned within such a (religious) community and the pedagogical approach at Kainon is one of affording a resource of religious capital to the learners. The learners are, by and large, embedded in a compounded web of relationships with their school and church community, and with their teachers and parents, all of which cohere to socially cement and bond them together. Such an embedding recalls for us, some of the Russian scholar, Lev Vygotsky's (1978) theories on children's cognitive growth, and its development within a socio-cultural context, and 'practice' within a social environment.

Tangible or what I would call 'hard' resources such as finances, labour, information and other forms of support are often cited as examples of social capital that can be available to people. However, later scholarship (see Ammerman: 1997; Cnaan et al.: 2002) has also revealed that social ties are developed through religious participation (Lockhart 2005: 47) which often crosses status barriers and helps cement community cohesion. To me these are 'soft' resources, but no less vital and meaningful. Closely knitted social networks can thus be seen as pools of popular agency and are embedded in popular relations of solidarity and reciprocity. Kainon School is embedded in such a pool, and the teaching pedagogy articulates from *within* such a stance. Insight on pedagogical style is drawn from the interviews with teachers, who self-identify as Christians, or rather Kainon New Church Christians, to explore teaching beliefs with respect to their pedagogical engagement.

bell hooks, *the favoured non de plume of Gloria Watkins* was intensely consumed by what she saw as a 'relationship between teaching and learning'. Her first major book on education, Teaching to Transgress (1994)

is a collection of essays that explore her inspired and prodigious ideas on the meaning of teaching and learning. Her style is personal, often anecdotal and clothed in an experiential aura, and grounded in her own experiences, all of which lends itself to wonderful reading for the anthropologist interested in the value of the personal. She argued for a progressive and holistic education and an *engaged pedagogy*. To bell hooks,

> [The] learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin (hooks 1994: 13).

For bell hooks, 'an aspect of the teaching vocation was sacred' and to her it was critically vital to teach in a way that both respected and cared for the 'souls' of those taught if one wanted to create the conditions necessary where learning can be deeply intimate. To bell hooks, this location in the sacrality of 'teaching' allowed what she refers to as 'engaged teaching'. None of the teachers interviewed at Kainon used the word '*engaged'* in reference to the manner in which they taught, however their narratives of *how* they taught and *why* they taught emerge as windows into the kind of 'engaged pedagogy' that they employed *sans* the theoretical label.

The Teachers

Gail Mitchell has been teaching for sixteen years, spending four years at Gordon Road Girls School (a government or public school). She has thus been teaching at Kainon for twelve years, having qualified at Edgewood Teacher College in 1984. Garrulous and wonderfully vivacious in class (and certainly in the interviews!), she enthused that she 'loved children', chuckling that she was able to enjoy their sense of humour and sharing that she felt:

> [T]eaching is kind of sacred ... the essential purpose of education is to equip children for life, not only academically but more importantly spiritually- to become decent human beings who are able to interact with anybody else, of any colour or creed. It is vital to equip children in becoming self-sufficient that they are able to research information and apply that knowledge without fear. Education is all about order, teaching children about the law of the Lord, striving for a spiritual life that is uncluttered.

This understanding of teaching and the education process as having its roots in the 'spiritual' is repeated by Angelique Swain who has had six years of teaching, the last three at Kainon. Angelique demurely tells me:

> The best thing about teaching is seeing a child progress academically and spiritually throughout the year.... and being able to know your learners personally and not just as another child in your classroom is a definite bonus. This has enabled us to really understand our learners and they feel comfortable asking for more help in the classroom. The staff is also very close and your colleagues don't only become your friend but also a family member and we offer worship together. This also makes working together more enjoyable.

Sandra Watkins is known to her learners as the 'wonderful but strict teacher'. She has been teaching for twelve years, with some of those years as a teacher in UK and the last five years at Kainon. She is known for introducing many innovative teaching techniques that paid attention to the emotional well being of her pupils, most notably the weekly 'family circle' where each learner was invited to communally share something 'big' that was going on with them at that time, whether celebratory or traumatic, in a safe, non judgemental space of peers. From what many children shared with me, the children appeared to feel safe to unburden issues that might otherwise weigh heavily on them. For her the most enjoyable part of being a teacher was getting to 'enjoy the children at that age' (she taught the 12-13 year olds) and building up a relationship with different children and the staff members. She shared that the most heartening aspect of teaching in a small school was getting to know every child's name, and being able to give more attention to

learners. Sandra felt that 'teaching children to be unique, to find their own way to (spiritually) shine' ... and focusing on 'out of the box thinking'... was critical for her, as she felt passionately that 'the most vital part of education was that children need to get to know themselves as spiritual beings and appreciate themselves'.

For her, the purpose of education was the development of the 'whole' child which she perceived as being holistic and 'more than just skills education', and about getting the child to, 'participate in the spectrum of activities that the school offered', sharing that … '[T]his teaches the child that they can do anything in the world and shows them that nothing is impossible and encourages them to make use of the opportunities that the Lord has presented to them'.

For Sandra and indeed for all the other teachers interviewed, 'whole child' did not just reference their intellectual, emotional and physical well-being but included the critical index of 'spiritual well-being'. For many of the teachers, the emphasis was on being a 'better person' (Kainon New Church terms). This included not only those they taught but themselves as teachers. Such purposeful reflective practice appeared to integrate the many dimensions of teaching for the teachers (see Kane *et al.* 2004).

bell hooks stresses the demands this kind of approach places upon educators in terms of authenticity and commitment. As a vociferous black American feminist and educational practitioner whose own history was entangled with that of an ideologically and racial imperialist American history, bell hooks' conceptualisation of an 'engaged pedagogy' spoke to an emancipatory activism, a 'transgression' and interrogative overthrowing of the oppressive class, gender and race regimes that bore down on the educational system of her time and on the student within such a system. However, while complexly conceptualised, simple strands of 'engaged pedagogy', can be productively unravelled and these strands offer the core of bell hooks' belief that engaged pedagogy encompasses 'transformed relationships with others having key roles in the lives of children' (Glass & Wong 2003: 73) requiring that teachers grasp the lives of their students in both 'intimate detail and broad outline'. Learning becomes about engendering 'better people' (Burke 2004), not only about teaching the skills necessary for students to generate knowledge (howsoever that 'better person' might be conceptualised). This kind of teaching speaks to rejecting what

Paulo Freire (1970) spurned as the banking concept of education and elevates students' well-being and emerging religio-cultural and spiritual identities to the status of the core curriculum.

Glass & Wong (2003:73) identify three critical aspects of engaged pedagogy and curriculum development, claiming that;

1. Engaged pedagogy addresses teachers' own processes of self-actualization and identity formation.

2. Engaged pedagogy involves deepening knowledge creation and more critical curriculum construction and selection.

3. Engaged pedagogy involves continuous critical reflection and professional development, linked to classroom and school-level reform.

At Kainon School this (1) process of self-actualisation and identity construction appears to 'happen' fluidly and seamlessly and reciprocally across the domains of church space and classroom space, in spatial as well as ideological terms. The (3) continuous critical reflection for the teachers is also a spiritual reflection that links back to the classroom and pedagogical praxis.

The teachers share that,

> As teachers we are examples to our learners, we spend so much time with the learners, it is important that we know who we are and what God wants us to do. We acknowledge that learning is useful and should be useful for development. By learning more we are able to distinguish what role God has for us in the world.
> We have Christian worship and church with the whole school. You are able to freely encourage learners to do God's will and I can practice my own faith comfortably with learners and staff.

The teachers, many in casual jeans and very visibly comfortable in their (theological) skin came across in the first instance as passionate teachers rather than overly zealous New Church followers. Likewise all observations

of their interactions with the children over several months and across many situational contexts (school events, Church gatherings, at worship and during classroom teaching) saw them relaxed and typically behaved with the children, in the sense that, as the occasion and context dictated they were either, friendly or stern, loving and encouraging, or disciplinary and admonishing. For the teachers at Kainon, the learning appeared to take place in both the classroom and in the Chapel. Curriculum is informed by New Church theological worldview which they in turn trace back to the (New Church) Lord. The headmistress, Mrs Edmunds shares in her typical gentle style,

> The learners learn Christian values and especially New Church values with an emphasis on a stable family life which is really useful in today's world. Children are exposed to so much in high school and in the world around them now that many of them get caught up in sex and drugs for example. We bring Christian values into what we teach and learn in the classroom.
> Learners are taught according to their spiritual development. They begin learning about the development of themselves as young children are generally self-centred e.g. how we can be a better person for God ... as they get older they learn they learn to distinguish the Lord's work in the world around them and how it can affect who they are as children of God.

One of the teachers tells me,

> I think the main difference in this school is that the children are taught that the Lord is a loving God who leaves you in freedom to choose. Some other (religious) schools I have visited tend to err on the side of brainwashing children in the hope of achieving some kind of salvation instead of realising that Christianity is a process.

Another teacher shares with me that, 'as a teacher you get to practice your own faith and know children on a spiritual level'.

Thus as nodal actors in both the Church and the classroom, the teachers teach to 'spiritually empower their learners'. Gail narrates that,

> Daily worship in the Chapel comprises 15 minutes a day for the grades 4-7. The Junior Primary or grades 1-3 also has a 'worship circle' in their classrooms after the main worship to explain in more 'babyish' terminology what was covered in Chapel. Worship is an integral part more of social and emotional side of the day at school where we remind the children of lessons learnt and the pastor takes 'a very hands-on way' of worship. There is always a life lesson taught each day that is often a useful tool for both adults and children alike to employ in their everyday dealings. Once a week, on a Friday there is a longer 30 minute worship and the older kids get to escort and chaperone the little pre-primary school kids into the Chapel.

Her narrative is a reminder that the Pastor, whom the children also see at the weekly congregational worship, alongside their parents, is also the Pastor that they listen to before the beginning of each school day. He (along with the assistant pastor), also teaches them (grades 4-7) religion and doctrine.

All the teachers were able to articulate how they felt the Church and New Church teachings and values integrated into school life by sharing that,

> New Church teachings are brought through everything, they are brought out in all areas, basically linking the teachings in one's whole life, continuing that, Yes even with subjects such as Maths…when it comes to things like division… we encourage children to share things as the Lord commands. It's a part of everything, we integrate religion with everything that we do…even in interaction with one another.

Maria Gibb, well-loved for her manic Welsh sense of humour and style, in explaining this integration in her grade 2 class tells me,

> We try to bring Christian values into what we teach and learn in the classroom. For example if we look at how animals hunt we discuss how God designed the animal for that purpose etc.

Gail Mitchell who taught Afrikaans and Zulu to the grades 3-7 went into greater detail by sharing that,

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> New Church teachings are integrated into the curriculum through an intricate series of developmental steps… we start with where the child is at spiritually, and from grade 1 upwards, themes are then developed according to the child's spiritual development. We then have the added challenge (in a positive sense of the word) of dove-tailing the New Church curriculum with the government's [curriculum]. However, with flexibility and creativity, this is not a difficult task.
>
> ... So it's mainly how we approach the material that we teach. We try to bring Christian values into what we teach and learn in the classroom. The learners are not different, only the learning experience is different ....The learners learn Christian values which is really useful in today's world.

The Learners

The learners observed over many school visits, all appeared in many ways very 'typical'. Polite and charming, they could instantly metamorphose into bickering and teasing, and well, become typical kids on the playground. In other words normal well-adjusted school children! Having spent time at the school and having been seen many times by them, I was not a stranger. They were polite in their exchanges with me, but the acquaintance meant that they could be relaxed in the interviews with me. This was evident in the way Evan greeted me, with both a polite 'Good morning Mam', as well as a Hi 5!

Evan (grade 7) felt that if other schools had a Church as part of the school 'they too can learn about the Lord and how they can treat each other with respect and how to let their life shine like we do'. Not being shy to volunteer his thoughts even before being asked, he was happy to share that the 'worship reminds us of the love of the Lord and that we can do all things with him on our side. I don't think it's the same for other schools as they don't have prayers like we do and they don't do religion like we do'.

The word 'relax' cropped up more than once as both Evan and Ethan (also grade 7) tell me separately that they get to 'relax and focus on the Lord'. Ethan adds his own 'take' on the matter by stating rather quaintly that 'it's important for our teachers because they have a lot of work and when they get home they have to work more and they don't have time for the Lord'.

Shivani (grade 6) was one of the few non Christian children at Kainon and I knew her parents to be practicing Hindus. Even she showed how comfortable she was at Kainon and tells me that she 'went to a different school before coming here and I like it here because we all respect each other. I think it's because of the church'. Shivani added that 'worship is nice because we get to relax[!] and listen to pastor and he teaches us the importance of respect and if my other school had worship like we do, the people there wouldn't be such bullies'.

Cameron (grade 5) shyly confided that **'**Our school is small, unique and we learn about the Lord according to New Church which is nice because we are the only school around that does that. Other schools learn about the Lord in general but we are special because we follow New Church and its curriculum'.

He was less shy about looking up and telling me that having a Church at school and having worship would help them [other children] have faith in God and teach them to read the bible like the pastor encourages us to do'.

The Pastor's narrative speaks directly to how he perceived the place of religion in the school;

> It's essential to have religion in all schools as it helps the child to grow in all aspects and without religion it's impossible to control or teach a child to behave. It is through religion that children learn what is right and wrong and God's expectations from them. Christian schools have a major role to play in the lives of learners as the learners are able to connect to their spiritual selves from an early age.

He claimed that the church breeds leaders and felt that, 'it's best to teach children religion at their tender age as its when most foundations in their lives are laid'. Religion is important in the home and the school ... Kainon is different from other Christian schools as we allow children of all religions and they value learning of other religions'.

The Pastor felt strongly that this effort of allowing other religions in their school, 'allowed the child to grow up knowing the different religious options that are there for them to choose from. He told me that that 'parents

voluntarily send their children to their school hence they know that the church's foundation and principles are based on the New Church philosophy, so we (the school) have the responsibility of ensuring that children learn it and are able to apply it in their lives'.

The pastor added that the assistant Pastor held weekly Youth meetings and regular socials and retreats to which many of the (older) ex Kainon children now in high school were invited to and regularly attended.

Gail, in a follow up interview felt comfortable in telling me that she thought,

> [C]hildren who are not brought up in a Christian home are often less observant of their manners, and the way in which they speak to others, and deal with others. I firmly believe that we at Kainon are very sheltered in this regard as our children in general are very aware of these behaviours and thus are well mannered and kind towards others. Part and parcel of belonging to a Kainon philosophy is to be considerate of others and keep in mind the mantra 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you'. We have a particular ethos here you know...

One of the younger teachers echoed what many teachers articulated during their own interviews that,

> ... everything at Kainon revolves around happiness in a useful life in our school … it's important that we remind ourselves as teachers, and remind the children their purpose on earth and that God loves us all.

This was said to be encapsulated in the school ethos and said to find expression in the Kainon School slogan.

> In Usibus Felicitas (Happiness in a useful Life, in all we do).

The importance of conceptualising and understanding what ethos is lies in what it can reveal about social processes and structure. Donnelly (2000: 134) however, reminds us that 'ethos' is a fashionable but imprecise and 'hazy'

term often employed by organisational theorists (and as in this context, educationists and theologians) 'to describe the distinctive range of values and beliefs, which define the philosophy or atmosphere of an organisation' and that it is somewhat resistant to empirical study.

However, although not quantifiable, like Donnelly, ethos for me is observable as the intangible yet discernible something that emerges from social interaction and process. For Donnelly (2000: 13) ethos emanates from individual and group interaction and is not so much something formally documented, but is rather a process of social interaction. To Donnelly, and clearly discernible amongst the Kainon teachers and learners 'it is not independent from' the organisation or network 'but inherently bound up within it'. Social network theory unveils how nodes or the actors in the organisation and networks and ties or relationships between the actors function within various networks. Closely knitted (small) social networks are seen as pools of popular agency and are embedded in popular relations of solidarity.

Iannaccone's (1990) argument was that just as the production of household commodities was enhanced by the skills known as human capital, the production of religious practice and religious satisfaction was enhanced by religious human capital. Fink (2003) explains that Iannaccone defined religious human capital as 'skills and experiences specific to ones religion, religious knowledge, familiarity with church ritual and doctrine, and friendships with fellow worshipers'. Thus, knowledge, familiarity, and friendships specific to a given religion helped individuals to produce religious commodities that they defined as valuable (Fink 2003:2). All the teachers claimed to have experienced being socially and religiously supported with the ongoing spiritual programmes run by the Pastor as part of their teacher development. This seemed to clinch their small teacher community and many shared how close they felt to the group as a whole and pointed out their tighter bonds with one or more teachers. This appeared to be echoed amongst the parents and children. Many parents from the congregation socialised regularly with each other outside of Church events, and although the children spent social time with children from other schools and faiths, many pointed out that their 'closest' friends were also children they met up with at weekly congregational worship.

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Conclusion

The foundational ideas of religious capital stem from social and cultural capital theories and theorists (Bourdieu 1984; Coleman 1988; Lannaccone 1990; Putnam 2000; Finke & Dougherty 2002; Finke 2003). Adler and Kwon's (2002) discussion on social capital raises many important points which I believe holds true for religious capital. The foremost being the point that capital is encapsulated in 'solidarity' and lies, according to Adler and Kwon (2002:18) in the social structure within which the actor is located, and is the resource available to actors as a function of their location in the structure of their social relations. In the context of Kainon School, the primary actors are the teachers and learners and this social structure is stitched into place by the structure of the New Church theology (with its Congregational limb), and offers the embedded matrix from which teaching and learning takes place across the multiple domains of class, church and congregation and by the teachers and learners who straddle these domains. As recipients of a particular kind of 'engaged pedagogy' the learners are afforded what can be described as a form of religious capital that is aimed at nurturing the (spiritual) student.

Religious capital itself consists of the degree of mastery and attachment to a particular religious culture (Stark & Finke 2000: 120; and Finke 2003:2). According to Finke (2003:2) the 'mastery of' refers to the knowledge and familiarity needed to appreciate a religion. Finke goes on to make the more powerful point in my opinion by adding that 'to fully appreciate' a religion 'requires emotional attachments and experiences that become intrinsic to one's biography'. This is a wonderfully visceral way to put it, 'become intrinsic to ones biography'. The time spent at Kainon with both the teachers and learners lays bare that New Church had become intrinsic to their biography. Therefore religious activities such as daily worship prefacing the school day and weekly congregational worship, punctuated by formal lessons in doctrine all embedded within the canvas of the overall learning curricular experience served to not only, to quote from Finke (2003:3) contribute to 'increasing confidence in the truth of a religion', but also 'strengthening emotional ties to a specific religion' in this instance 'New Church'. It is these emotional attachments and the 'mastering' of a religion that are to be understood as investments that build up over time and constitute religious capital.

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Religious Studies[1] and Globalisation: A Critique of Zimbabwe's Current Religious Studies Ordinary Level Syllabus

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Abstract

The research is rooted in philosophy of education and it argues that the Zimbabwean Ordinary Level Religious Studies syllabus is inadequate and insensitive to the virtue of religious respect in the globalised world. Firstly, ordinary level Religious Studies is based on either the synoptic gospels or a combination of Luke and Acts which are only part of the scriptures of one religion namely Christianity. Secondly, the syllabus is designed for a multi-faith society as reflected in schools yet other religions like African Tradition-al Religions (ATR), Islam, Buddhism, Baha'i and atheists among others, are excluded from the syllabus. Thirdly, the virtue of respect for other religions remains elusive to the syllabus because there is no comparative analysis from other religions to give an appreciation of interfaith dialogue. Fourthly, the syllabus does not give flexibility and open-mindedness that is needed in the globalised world because the method used requires the pupils to be descript-tive rather than analytical. As such the research will attempt to critique the syllabus and give recommendations on how to improve the syllabus.

Keywords: Religious Studies, Globalisation, Multi-faith, Christocentric, Ordinary Level Syllabus, Zimbabwe

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[1] In Zimbabwe the term 'Religious Studies' entails the intellectual study of 'religion,' while 'Religious Education' means faith-based instruction from a denominational point of view.

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Introduction

The study examines the Ordinary Level Religious Studies syllabus in the light of globalisation. The global world makes the respect of other religions imperative. The teaching of religious studies at Ordinary Level in Zimbabwe dates back to colonial times. After independence in 1980 the government of Zimbabwe continued with a syllabus that is Christocentric in nature. Non-Christian scholars and religious people from other faiths have objected to the nature and scope of the Zimbabwean religious studies syllabus on several occasions but these objections have not resulted in any shift of the syllabus. This scenario is partly due to curriculum planners who are products of Christian missions in terms of their education and partly because the costs involved in syllabus change have remained prohibitive to the government of Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean Ordinary level syllabus indicates a continuation of the colonial legacy that saw missionary denominational catechetic focuses - i.e. Roman Catholic, Anglican, Reformed, Lutheran and Methodist – being turned to a more universal Christian teaching through a Christian-oriented syllabus.

The study of religion at Ordinary Level has several implications to pupils that include positively shaping life perception of religion because most pupils do not take up the study of religion beyond Ordinary Level. In addition, any biases or prejudices against other religious beliefs will be difficult to undo if pupils end their intellectual study of religion at Ordinary Level. The research argues for the broadening of the Ordinary Level Religious Studies syllabus because this will give a global shape to the phenomenon of religion. In Zimbabwe, the following statistics indicate the multiplicity of religion in society and this makes a multi-faith approach to the study of religion imperative; syncretic (part Christian, part indigenous beliefs) Christian 81%, Baha'i 0. 32%, Muslim 0.73% and other 0.42%, Ethnoreligions 15.86%, and Agnostics 1.01 (Association of Religion Data Archives: 2013). Even if the category of unspecified other religions constitute 1%, it does not necessarily follow that they are unworthy of study because in the contemporary global migration patterns, there is a high probability of mixing with people from other religions. The syllabus, as it stands, is unfair to other religions because non-Christians complain that their children are being Christianised. The syllabus also poses challenges to advocates of Africanisation because it is alienating to the pupils' own

cultural religious values and experiences. The syllabus is therefore foreign to the experiences and values of Zimbabweans especially as enshrined in African Traditional Religion.

Brief Background to the Zimbabwean Ordinary Level Religious Studies Syllabus

Any given curriculum is shaped by a number of forces that include historical, ideological, epistemological, religious, economic and sociological factors (Zvobgo 2004; Ndawi & Maravanyika 2011:11). In line with the above observation, the current Ordinary Level religious studies syllabus in Zimbabwe does not exist in a vacuum but it is shaped by a number of factors. The current Ordinary Level syllabus was inherited from the British colonial government specifically from the Cambridge overseas examination syllabus. Ndlovu (2004:105) argues that the joint influence of Christian missions, colonialism and westernisation makes it difficult for many people to reveal their identity with African Traditional Religions (ATR). Christian mission schools that include Roman Catholic, Anglican and Dutch Reformed churches teach religious instructions to its pupils. This creates an alienation from ATR and a dislike for other world religions such as Islam, Hinduism, Baha'i, and Buddhism and related religions. Colonialism fairly succeeded in making the African denounce his or her own religion as extremely evil and cruel in favor of Christianity which is seen as holy and righteous. This has resulted in 75% of the Zimbabwean population claiming to be Christian (Wakatama 2011:10). However, of the 75% who claim to be Christian, 50% lie in the intersection of both ATR and Christianity. The force of westernisation results in the embracing of modernity and Christianity is viewed as an expression of modernity which stands in sharp contrast with ATR which is by definition traditional. This dualisation of religions resulted in some form of religious imperialism from the west. Another powerful force that has shaped the current syllabus is the *ad hominem* fallacy that has been used against curriculum planners. When the multi-faith approach to the study of religion is suggested, an *ad hominem* argument that accuses planners of trying to undermine Christian education to which the planners are *de facto* beneficiaries is laid. This fallacy has the psychological effect of making the

planners look guilty thereby diverting them from the rational and logical task of syllabus transformation. In addition, education in Zimbabwe has been underfunded since the year 2000 following restrictive measures and isolation from western countries (Bond & Manyanya 2002). Syllabus transformation has serious financial implications that planners fear to commit themselves to because the current scenario requires the use of cheaply acquired or donated bibles and a few commentaries yet a transformed syllabus would need more scriptural texts and more commentaries. The resultant effect of the above forces is that talk of syllabus transformation is now part of rhetoric rather than a practical exercise.

The Zimbabwean Ordinary Level Religious Studies Syllabus

The Ordinary Level syllabus is made up of subject **A** (2042) and subject **B** (2043). Subject **A** consists of the life and teachings of Christ according to Matthew, Mark and Luke. On the other hand, subject **B** consist of two books namely Luke and Acts of the Apostles (Dembetembe *et al.* 1994). The above components constitute what is known as Bible Knowledge although it appears as Religious Studies in the curriculum. The syllabus aims at helping pupils to develop (1) a critical approach towards the study of religion, (2) an insight into the religious and spiritual areas of experience (3) an awareness of the contributions of religion to development (4) a consistent set of beliefs, attitudes and practices that lead to religious growth (5) the ability to investigate, analyse facts and draw conclusions out of religious issues [Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC) Syllabus, 2008-2011]. These aims and objectives, however, do not correspond to the content of the present syllabus. The content as highlighted earlier on is largely Christian and exclusive of other religions. The aims and objectives are all encompassing, that is, they do not speak of one religion. Therefore, there is a mismatch between the aims and the content of the syllabus.

In its assessment objectives (or the examination questioning and answering), the syllabus requires pupils to recall, select and present relevant factual information in an organized manner. In addition, pupils are expected to show an understanding of the language, terms and concepts of Religious Studies. They are also expected to understand the principal beliefs of the

religions being studied and the way these beliefs are related to personal and corporate expression of religion. This is further compounded by the fact that the teaching method and content of the syllabus is contrary to the ZIMSEC expectations. As stated in the ZIMSEC syllabus, the teaching should involve, (1) the use of pupils' background experiences that are real to them; (2) group discussions that result in sensitivity and openness towards other religions; and (3) use of texts such as the Bible, Quran and Vedas. Yet, the content of the syllabus is summarized as the (A) the life and teaching of Christ as contained in the synoptic gospels and (B) the life and teaching of Christ as contained in the gospel of Luke and Acts of the Apostles.

Globalisation

The importance of globalisation to matters pertaining to religious education cannot be underestimated. Generally, the term globalisation refers to the reduction of spatial and temporal dimensions of human life. That is reducing and connecting the world into almost one village that is doing away with all constraints be they physical, spiritual and/or intellectual. Walters alludes to this by saying that globalisation is,

> A social process in which the constraints of geography on economic, political, social and cultural arrangements recede, in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding and which people act accordingly (Walters 2001:5).

The idea that Walters forwards emanate from the fact that globalisation is an integration process or a process whereby the spatial limitations are put at bay. In some sense, one can argue that the globalisation process is a way of amalgamating, interacting, assimilating and joining different forms of life (be they geographical, political, social and economic) and creating an acceptable way of living in a global village (Masitera 2010: 3). There is therefore, a sense in which people get involved in conscious and unconscious interaction, the interaction inevitably results in alteration of people's lives. Thus, globalisation marks the end of 'mono-cultures' and also marks the creation of 'multi-cultures' or co-existence. Co-existence and multi-existence of cultures is what characterises the modern world.

The early manifestations of globalisation were however characterized by unintentional and intentional non-recognition of others. In the ancient period up until the year 1500 C.E., the interaction was basically based upon agreed upon terms for exchange of goods or trade (Ellwood 2001:12; Waters 2001:2; Steger 2003:19). In the second phase there was now the idea of domination. Globalisation thus, in the early stages aimed at economic dominance under the guidance of capitalism. Not only did it end as an economic adventure and domination, the dominance eventually pervaded into other spheres of life such as political, social, and cultural spheres (Gelanis 2000:6-10). As such, it is plausible to argue that the dominance eventually turned into colonialism. Thus, the early interaction became one-sided.

Through colonialism and imperialism, the domination of one culture and civilisation followed. Imperialism as defined by Johnson (2000:375) is "the creation and/or maintenance of an unequal economic, cultural, and territorial relationships, usually between states and often in the form of an empire, based on domination and subordination". Furthermore, the term can equally be applied to domains of knowledge, beliefs, values and expertise. As such, it is easy to perceive why in colonial times there was the creation of certain cultural dominance. In certain incidences, forced adaptations follow especially on the part of the conquered. For example, in Zimbabwe the black natives were forced to adapt the British lifestyle. By lifestyle, the reference is on the way of living that the people follow – as such the native black were to learn the British culture, civilisations, and traditions. By culture the idea of education, dressing and food, form of governing, etiquettes, superstitions, language and even history among others are advanced. It was these British cultural and traditional aspects, which helped in destroying and distorting the natives' own perceptions of life. However, the crux of the matter is to divulge the extent to which imperialism and colonialism advanced mono-cultural aspects of the colonisers over that of the locals. The idea still is that it was only the thinking of the 'powerful' imperialists and colonisers that became dominant. There was in a sense non-acceptance of any other culture and/or tradition, it was only the British civilisation, or that of the imperialist or colonialist that was to take the centre stage in peoples' way of life.

The legacy of imperialists and colonialism still strive today albeit the claim of having three decades of independence in Zimbabwe. The words of Lord Lugard find their fulfillment in religious circles:

As Roman imperialism laid the foundation of modern civilization, and led the wild barbarians of these islands (Britain) along the path of progress, so in Africa today we are repaying the debt, and bringing to the dark places of the earth- the abode of barbarism and cruelty- the torch of culture and progress, while ministering to the material needs of our own civilization… we hold these countries because it is the genius of our race to colonise, to trade, and to govern (Lord Lugard, *The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa,* 1922, Quoted by M. Carnoy, unpaginated second page).

Part of the so-called 'torch of culture and progress' is without doubt the imposition of the colonisers' way of life and with it the Christian civilization on the colonised. Christianity thus became part of people's way of life and also in the educational circles. Education, modeled along the coloniser's thinking, therefore becomes an enforcer of cultural imperialism. Once again, the words of researchers of yester century still hold water,

The public school system is a powerful instrument for the perpetuation of the present social order…. The child… is trained to submit to authority, to do the will of others as a matter of course, with the result that habits of mind are formed which in adult life are all to the advantage of the ruling class (Kelly, *The Modern School in Retrosect* 1925; Quoted by Carnoy).

In the same vein, colonial education followed the pattern of the colonial or occupying forces. Religious education in particular, in Zimbabwe, became more of catechetical teaching and also biblical teaching alone. The main intention of the religious education was mainly to ensure that Africans lose their religious identity and follow or adapt the European Christian view. It thus meant that in the general outlook, the Christian thinking was to overshadow any other form of religion and in some quarters it has been argued the aim of Christian thinking and religion was advanced to locals so as to ensure that they become submissive to the powerful imperialists and colonisers.

However, though that was the case in the early versions of globalisation, the modern version of globalisation is not exclusive in nature

but inclusive. It aims at establishing enabling environments that support multiple existence and ultimately recognition of all people. It is the modern thinking which argues that inclusivity and recognition lead to better and acceptable societies, such a scenario is achieved through discussions, recognition, acceptance and tolerance of other religions. What this essentially means is breaking down those barriers that do not enable multiple cultural existences. Kale (2004:95) summarises the whole idea of globalisation as including (1) the integration of markets, nation-states, and technologies; (2) the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world in its entirety; (3) a reduction of geographical constraints on the world's social and cultural issues; (4) the dissemination of practices, values, technology, and other human products throughout the globe; (5) a process through which sovereign national states are crisscrossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities, and networks; (6) and a historical transformation in the economy (of livelihoods and modes of existence), in politics (a loss in the degree of control exercised locally), and in culture (the devaluation of a collectivity's achievements). As such there is a conscious process of integration taking place (Ellwood 2001:12), the conscious integration that is guided by mutual sharing and enrichment that emanate from respect, recognition, toleration and engagement of each other among members of the universe. Through engagement and the like, some scholars have theorised that there are greater chances of advancing autonomy and freedom among members of the world (Hemming 2011: 1063). The process is meant to be enriching rather than manipulative and exploitive. The process also aims at forming a shared value, belief and practice system that is acceptable and respected by all; the process thus also aims at promoting positive values especially those that respect diversity *(*Hopkins 2007; Sergiovanni 1994 cited in Hemming 2011: 1064*)*. It therefore follows that the imperialist and colonialist-led globalisation (as well as educational Christian education) is of no relevance in the modern version of globalisation which encompass a multi-cultural approach.

As noted before, the religious education system during the colonial period was one-sided, myopic, manipulative and exploitive in outlook, yet the same kind of religious education system has continued in the Zimbabwean post-independent curriculum. Reference is not only on the issue

of independent Zimbabwe but, to Zimbabwe in the modern globalised society. The Zimbabwean situation is one coloured by myopic and restricted Christian thinking. By briefly analysing the meaning of the terms religious or religion and education will certainly aid in advancing the main argument of the paper that there is certainly limitation and non-recognition on continual using of Christian religion as the basis of religious education.

Religion as a Common Phenomenon

Scholarship alludes to the fact that there are various definitions of religion. As early as 1912, Leuba was able to catalog forty-eight definitions of religion. Without doubt one can list many more today. This is affirmed by the widely acclaimed position that religion as an ontological reality can be approached from various social disciplines. *The Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion* (Reese 1999: 647) offers the following explanation for religion: Religion – from the Latin *religare* (to bind back) – typically refers to an institution with a recognized body of communicants who gather together regularly for worship, and accept a set of doctrines offering some means of relating the individual to what is taken to be the ultimate nature of reality.

Davies (1988) propounds that there are anthropological, sociological, historical, theological, philosophical and psychological approaches to the definitions of religion. He offers the following descriptions:

* **Anthropologists** describe religious beliefs and practices as they find them in living communities. Religion helps them to unite people in a shared experience and explanation of life. It provides a pattern of human behaviour, often in response to the hazards of life.

* **Sociologists** stress the social dimension of religious ideas. Religion provides a way of looking at the world. It gives the individual a sense of purpose and meaning.

* **Historians** describe religion in terms of events resulting from beliefs (Davies 1988:10 - 11).

* **Psychologists** try to understand, predict, and control the thoughts, words,

feelings, and actions of persons when they are acting religiously. And to act religiously can be better understood by appealing to the explanation given by William James (1902) when he said "Whatever men do in relation to that which they consider to be divine" (James 1902:42).

* **Philosophers** understand religion as a collection of cultural systems, belief systems and worldviews that establish symbols that relate to spirituality and moral values.

* **Theologians** are concerned with the beliefs themselves, the question of whether they are true or false, and with people's response to them.

The different approaches are valid in different ways and within their own limitations. The basic difference is that of standpoint: there is the way of the scholar and the way of the believer. In Zimbabwe today Ordinary Level students are disadvantaged by the content of the prescribed religious education they are offered. Living in a context coloured by religious diversity, it is expected that the recommended format of a multi-faith approach be the norm rather than an exception in a classroom setup offering religious studies. Instead, they are coerced to imbibe the religion of the Western scholar and believer, namely Christianity. The syllabus pays no attention to the fact that the learners have a religion of their own. The attitude is a clear denial that

> no human face is exactly the same as another human face, but it is like many others in having two eyes, a nose, two lips, and two ears. In the same way, no two people ever respond to God's presence in exactly the same way. Each person's prayer is personal to himself, and each person's response to God has its individual quality and characteristics (Brown 1975:8).

An attitude that denies learners access to their familiar religion at Ordinary Level has far-reaching consequences. Among them are religious intolerance, negation of the spirit of ecumenism and the systematic promotion of ethnocide. To this list Carnoy (1974: part of book title) adds "Cultural imperialism".

Zimbabwe as a country constitutionally embraces religious pluralism by virtue of categorically pronouncing freedom of religion. Religion is part of the indigenous person's life system from birth to death. In this vein Schmidt argues that "since religion is so characteristically human, scholars in a number of fields have argued that it is appropriate to think of human beings as religious animals" (Schmidt 1980:7). Jung (1996), a psychologist, argues that religion is a common phenomenon that is justified by his positing what he terms the 'collective unconscious'. Mbiti (1990), a prominent scholar of African Traditional Religion pronounced that Africans are "notoriously religious". Therefore, just as Aristotle had defined man as a "rational animal", Jung (1996), Schmidt (1980) and Mbiti (1990) give another dimension in regarding man as a 'religious being'. In line with this assertion, it augurs well to argue that man is inherently religious, an indispensable definer of what man is. Be that as it may, this does not necessarily translate to an acknowledgement of only the Judeo-Christian God as we are made to think by the contents of the Ordinary Level syllabus. Indeed human beings are a 'world-building' animals' who besides being endowed with a biological nature "also create a 'second nature' that is, they create culture, a complex of meanings and social relationships" (Schmidt 1980:9). This 'second nature' is not the preserve of a minority few. Rather, the entire human race is endowed with it, and should be allowed access to it within the confines of the classroom.

Religion basically refers to the relationship that exists between people and the supernatural being. In other words it is the expression of people's faith in accordance with the beliefs' expectations (Cox 1992:5). Being religious then means carrying out the expectations of the religion. Though there seems to be limitation to what the term refers to it is important to note that the term also has the idea of including others, as in the case with the spreading of the faith. As such there is incorporation of people who would formerly not be part of the religion, the incorporation though demands renunciation of, if any previous beliefs. Though this must be the case, in contemporary religious systems there is a move to try and destroy certain religious barricades and hindrances to co-existence. In a sense, there is now the move and attempt at inter-religious dialogue that aim at understanding differences and fostering better relations in order to ensure acceptable forms

of living together. This has been done through inter-religious dialogue and through inculturation.

Globalisation and Religion

Some religions seem to respond to the phenomenon of globalisation positively, accepting or endorsing religious pluralism, for example, some Christian ecumenical movements and Baha'is (Haynes 2011:1). Other groups emphasize differences in the global sphere, seeking to preserve their particular values from being 'eroded' by globalisation particularly Muslim, Jewish and other 'fundamentalists' religions. Sometimes radical religious ideologies have become the vehicles for a variety of rebellions against authority that are linked with myriad social, cultural, and political grievances. Presently, however, circumstances of globalisation dramatically undermine the notion that all members of a society must necessarily hold the same ideas in relation to religion. The positive religious implication that is brought by is that globalisation encourages idea that religion is a matter of individual choice. This is necessitated by the western notions of religious practice and the mixture with other cultures demonstrates a flexibility towards religion that detaches religion from paternalism that subordinates the religious wishes of individuals. Globalisation helps individuals to see religion as a right through the universal declaration of human rights which asserts,

> Everyone has the right with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. To freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community (Article 18, United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

The social role of religion in developmental issues is seen in the way religious organizations try to solve conflicts and build peace. Haynes (2011: 2) argues that religion can be used as a vehicle that protests the harmful side of globalisation. Globalisation has challenged religion to be more relevant to diversity since migration and technology expose people to a diversity of

religious beliefs. It has questioned religious doctrines with respect to the validity of the information purported to be supreme and absolute truth. It has also raised objections that require religion to demonstrate respect of alternative perspectives as valid conceptual schemes. Ideally, the manner that people trust in God in Asia, in Europe and in America is very well known: but let us know if it is possible to put together the African and the other systems of religion in the world. God is not African, Asian or European, God is Global. This global view of belief makes globalisation relevant in revisiting and reassessing of religious positions that are intolerant and disrespectful of other religions. Globalisation encourages religious openness and flexibility as opposed to fundamentalism and rigidity.

A Historical Survey of Religion and Education in Zimbabwe

Between 1500 and 1900 most of the world was under the control of Europeans. Only a few societies such as China and Japan were able to resist colonization. Two kinds of traditional colonies emerged in this period: European settlements*,* where the immigrants conquered the natives, took their land, and developed the country for the enclave European community; and occupied and administered colonies, where a few European colonists, primarily traders and soldiers, controlled the colony for the home country (Carnoy 1974:78). Zimbabwe qualifies under both kinds as realized by events that transpired since 1890. Worse still, a systematic way of bringing its religion and culture was crafted and made use of in the school system.

Ndlovu quoting Makuvaza (1996:66) says that religious education was initiated and started by the clergy. However, for the colonial government the teaching of Religious Education was primarily a strategy to 'wipe out' all African values and beliefs, and to inculcate Christian values and beliefs to the African in order to among other things bring 'enlightenment' and 'civilization' to the 'dark continent' (Ndlovu 2004:58). This was in line with David Livingstone's 'Triple Cs' (Christianity, Civilization and Commerce) for the natives. In the early years, 1899 to 1942, African learners were taught what was known as Scripture or Religious and Moral Instruction. These were biblical scriptures with a lot of emphasis on the Old Testament. Religious Education during these years did not did not provide for an open and

academic exploration of religion. The subject remained dogmatic, confessional and biblical as it aimed at promoting Christian values and beliefs only. The fundamental aim of the subject was therefore to convert as many Africans as possible to the Christian faith.

Makuvaza (1996:68-69) asserts that "from 1942 to 1980, the greater part of the colonial period, Religious Education at Ordinary Level was known as Bible Knowledge or Religious Knowledge". Formal Religious Education teaching and examining in secondary schools in Southern Rhodesia started in 1942 with respect to the Ordinary Level following the Cambridge Certificate Syllabus. The content was still heavily bibliocentric and aimed at promoting Christian values and beliefs only. The repercussions are plenty. The system restricted the enquiry into religion as a human phenomenon. It was non-tolerant and highly discriminatory in that non-Christian religions were considered irrelevant. It ignored the fact that the majority of the learners were Africans and where by virtue of birth and origin adherents of African Traditional Religion and culture. It paid no recourse to a religion like Islam which is regarded as the oldest foreign religion in Zimbabwe (Humbe 2005:1). Islam came to Zimbabwe by the early Arab traders in the 15th century. Surprisingly, it has not been accommodated in the Religious Studies Education at the level under scrutiny.

With the last point in mind, there is a sense in which, the word religion implies and is part of a process of establishing a global village. A village of recognition, acceptance, understanding and respecting cultures and religions that are different from each other. By implication, one would think that the same thinking and practice would apply to the teaching of religious education. However, this is not the case; the Zimbabwean 'O' level Religious Education Syllabus is by and large basically and essentially limited to Christian and biblical teaching. There is therefore, inconsistence in the aims of religious practice and the way religious education is being taught.

To complement the noted facts, it is plausible to argue that education also plays an important role of advancing interaction and engagement among different people of different cultures. Education according to Dewey is socialization endeavoring to intellectual development (Dewey 1961:81-82). Further, in Education there should be "a large variety of shared understanding and experience" (Dewey 1961: 84). In addition, Peters (1965) says education is the transmission of that which is worthwhile in an

acceptable manner. As a way of explaining the views of the two philosophers, one would argue that the essence of education is to share and formulate, as people of different cultural views, an acceptable way of living together. Thus in globalisation, a worthwhile exercise would aim at creating an enabling environment for multiple cultural existences. In some sense through education, people are molded into better citizens who acknowledge differences and respect each other.

There is ample evidence that schooling increases the incomes of those who go to school (a fact challenged by the immediate past decade of Zimbabwe's run-away inflation) and also increases their ability to function in a modern, complex and globalised society. From the standpoint of material advancement these are positive effects of schooling on individual material welfare (Carnoy 1974:6). When the individual goes to school, he or she has access to a larger slice of the economic and social pie (provided that everybody else has not gone to school along with him or her). The school is a society in miniature and the material absorbed at school more often than not, determines the way one behaves in the later years of life. A dosage of particular religious tenets will also shape an individual's appreciation or lack of it of other religious and cultural systems.

In Zimbabwe, attainment of Ordinary Level education for many is the ceiling of their academic journey. It is a qualification that enables one to start seeking a professional career. Such being the case it becomes a categorical imperative that before unleashing learners into the world, a survey of other belief systems be proffered to them. This is a way of curbing religio-cultural intolerance and an encouragement to accept the reality of globalisation.

Thus the idea of globalisation, religion, education and religious education somehow emphasize the thinking that there is need for understanding in or and in interchange of ideas including varying lived experience (Chifunyise 1997:14). Ultimately, the development of respect and recognition will necessarily follow from understanding and interchange of lived experience. Wherever respect and recognition exist, Steger would argue that such a system breeds the necessary character for interaction and interdependence which inversely are the necessary pillars in a globalised world (Steger 2003:13). The interaction has the aim of establishing an enabling environment for co-existence and multi-cultural existence.

Ultimately, globalisation, religion, education and religious education should help in the cultivation of diversity rather than ensuring uniformity, inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness, sharing and acceptance of diversity, instead of rigidity and fundamentalism.

Problems with the Zimbabwean Ordinary Level Religious Studies Syllabus in the Light of Globalisation
Epistemological Problems

The ordinary level religious studies syllabus is epistemologically narrow in the light of globalisation. The study of religion should take a global approach. According to Dancy (1999:1), "Epistemology is concerned with the origin, nature and scope of human knowledge". Human knowledge is based on both the principles of reason and empirical observations. The study of religion should include both rational and empirical perspectives if it is to be adequate. According to Crittenden (1993:14), "liberal education should be preoccupied with rational intellectual development". For Crittenden liberal education should introduce both empirical and rational forms of knowledge. In line with this, Religious Studies should be looked at from both rational and empirical grounds. The empirical perspective, which is inductive, is both phenomenological and scientific and it sources from religions on the ground. Through observations, the nature and practices of religions are obtained. The rational approach uses insight and creativity to deduce the connectedness and principles underlying observed religious phenomena. Carr (2004: 52) in fact, posits that given that the intellectual and spiritual import of religious narratives and myths is no less aesthetic and affective than cognitive, it seems difficult to see how pupils might have full access to such meaning in the absence of practical and emotional exposure to such symbolic resources.

Following the above approach, an intellectually honest study of religions at Ordinary Level reveals that each religion constitutes an area of rational inquiry in which there are distinctive concepts of expressing truth claims. All major religions should be studied so that pupils get a chance to compare and contrast truth claims of several religions in the country. To select components of Christianity at the expense of other religions is to undermine the point of respecting the fact of religious pluralism in

Zimbabwe and globally. A diversified study of religion should spring from the religious multiplicity on the ground. If truth claims of several religions are taught, then pupils are encouraged to appreciate religion without attempting to promote commitment.

Hirst (1970:33) maintains that, "if several religions are part of the syllabus, and then it will be possible for schools to teach about religion rather than teaching to be religious". For Hirst to teach about religion implies a rational, public and objective enterprise whereas to teach to be religious entails an emotional, private and subjective approach. According to Phillips (1970:67), "[in schools]… religion should be elucidated and not advocated". If Phillips' observation is accurate, then a proper elucidation of religion entails recognition of the fact that religion is a diverse phenomenon and this diversity cannot be swept under the carpet in the teaching of religion.

Epistemologically, 'true' in religious discourse has a different meaning from 'true' applied to factual claims. Due to the fact that religious claims are trans-empirical and therefore unverifiable observationally, it does not make sense to ask whether religion as such is true or false. For Zimbabwean O' Level pupils to genuinely recognise and appreciate this point, it is necessary that they study several religions simultaneously. There are, therefore, no logical grounds for discrimination on religions and it does not make sense to leave out other religions. According to Aquinas (1952:24) " a distinctive function of intellectual knowledge is the ability to grasp the essential qualities common to a number of individual things". If Aquinas' observation is applied to religion, then young minds can grasp the common qualities of religion like belief in Supreme Being, moral doctrines and scriptures if the religions are multiple.

The epistemic hazard of teaching a component of one religion is that indoctrination becomes inevitable. Logically indoctrination implies a doctrine. According to White (1987:18), "a doctrine is a belief forming part of *religious*, scientific or political system" [the emphasis is ours]. When teaching the scriptures of one religion there is no room for comparison with the perspectives of other religions. Indoctrination involves three elements, that according to Short. Short (2003: 334) actually asserts that the first involves content in the form of beliefs that are contested and which are neither demonstrably true nor false. The second is an intention on the part of the indoctrinator to establish an unshakeable commitment to those beliefs

and the third relates to the method of instruction in which non-rational, a consequence of setting out to instill an unshakeable commitment to propositions the truth of which cannot be proven (Short 2003:334). As such indoctrination is the attempt to fix in the learning mind any doctrine; social, political or religious to the exclusion of contrary doctrines in a manner preventing serious comparison and evaluation. Epistemologically, teaching one religion in schools is methodologically negative in the sense that there is no regard for pupils' rational autonomy. Atkinson (1988:114) argues that, "no search for truth in knowledge can be regarded as valid unless it provides opportunity for disagreement and the expression of contrary views". If Atkinson's contention is accurate, it follows that the study of plural religions should be captured by the syllabus so that innocent minds can learn the contrary views of other religions. Truth or falsity should be based on reasoned debate of honest and critical minds.

Another danger of the exclusive study of either the synoptic gospels or Luke and Acts is that drill becomes the easiest method to use. Atkinson (1988:114) observes that drill does not give room for understanding facts and principles. When applied to the present discussion, the well-drilled pupil can accurately narrate the biblical stories without any grasp of the underlying principles. The current O' Level religious studies syllabus largely requires the narration of stories (about 90 %) and only 10 % requires critical analysis, comparison or evaluation. If the syllabus captures more religions, then focus necessarily changes from a banking knowledge system to comparative analysis and evaluation.

Still, another teaching method, which easily creeps in if the syllabus remains untransformed, is narration. According to Freire (1972:57), "in narration the teacher talks of reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalised and predictable". Religious phenomena cannot be seen as static given the continuous changes on the ground in Zimbabwe. The narrated content, Freire argues, is completely alien from the existential experience of the pupil. Why should Biblical scriptures be narrated to pupils when the religious phenomenon of African Traditional Religions can easily be observed? Narration negates critical consciousness among Ordinary Level pupils. For Freire (1972: 60) "the more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world".

Instead of narration, Freire advocates for a problem solving approach. Freire's critical views can only be applicable to the Zimbabwean Ordinary Level study of religion if and only more religions are studied. The plurality of religions is itself a problem that boggles the minds of Ordinary Level students and is worthy for examination by pupils. Sweeping the problem of religious pluralism while focusing on one religion produces uncritical minds which are part and parcel of colonial mentality and therefore unsuitable for postcolonial Zimbabwe which requires comparison and evaluation.

Ethical Problems

Although the status and interpretation of morality as an ingredient of religious traditions vary, most religions have in fact given a significant historical place to moral ideals and practices. Crittenden (1993:14) argues that religion should inform the core values of social morality such as justice, truth telling, honesty, concern and co-operation. Honestly, these core values of social morality cannot be a monopoly of Christianity. Pupils should be given a broad spectrum from which moral values are sourced and this entails the study of several religions. Ordinary Level pupils cannot adequately understand the present situation of morality in our society without appreciating the historical affiliations to religion and exploring the nature of the connection between them. A non-abstract and open appreciation of morality can be obtained if the moral teachings of several religions are exposed to pupils.

"Moral standards can be rationally assessed by appealing to the common needs and capacities of human beings, to the characteristic conditions which human flourishing depends and to human experience viewed on the broadest possible scale" (Crittenden 1993:148). Deductively, a broad scale of religious morality depends on the number of religions under analysis. It is morally imperative, therefore, to broaden the number of religions in the current Ordinary Level syllabus.

Religious Studies is ethically sound because it introduces morally appropriate elements. There are elements in morality and related conditions of human life that escape the full grasp of knowledge such as the mysteries of good and evil, suffering and death, existence of the universe beyond the reach of scientific explanation and the basis of the respect of all human

beings as moral agents. In all these, the practice of morality depends on awe, wonder and reverence that are akin to religion. Diverse religions can offer an open and flexible position about the said existential situation to Ordinary Level pupils. The study of several religions becomes morally imperative if the syllabus in question is to be ethically sound.

The study of one religion is seemingly unethical because it implies intellectual intolerance or bias. Section 60 of the new constitution of Zimbabwe states that

> (Subsection 60. 1)Every person has a right to freedom of conscience which includes (a) freedom of thought, opinion religion or belief and (b) freedom to practice and propagate and give expression to their thought, opinion, religion or belief whether in public or in private and whether alone or together with others.

> (Subsection 60. 2) No person may be compelled to take an oath that is that is contrary to their religion or belief or to take an oath that is contrary to their religion and belief.

> (Subsection 60. 3) parents and guardians of minor children have the right to determine, in accordance to their beliefs, the moral and religious upbringing of their children, provided they do not prejudice the rights to which their children are entitled under this new constitution, including their rights to education, health, safety and welfare.

In principle, the constitution is tolerant of other religions. The current Ordinary Level religious studies syllabus is based on one religion and therefore inconsistent with the ethically sound provisions of the constitution. Plurality or tolerance should not merely be constitutional but it should permeate to the education system of the country. In selecting the content of the current O'Level religious studies syllabus, regard should be paid to all religions and to the presence in the school of groups of pupils belonging to particular faiths. "Pupils need to acquire a general knowledge of the main questions with which religions deal, the answers they give and the moral guidance they give and the differences and similarities between various religious commitments to non-religious ideologies" (ter Haar 1990:142).

Furthermore, learners at Ordinary Level who do not ascribe to the Christian faith are being unfairly treated as non-religious. It is as if we are still holding onto the archaic and non-progressive notions of the earlier evolutionists who postulated that there had been an original non-religious phase in human history. This is the line of Sigmund Freud who argues that religion is a creation of man in his famous expression of the "Oedipus Complex" and also his explanation of the origins of totems. Karl Marx, following the evolutionist path also dismissed religion as also the creation of man that serves as a tool to lull the minds groaning in the pains of the harshness of the world. On the contrary, there information, as argued by Ake Hultkrantz, "has, however, proved to be false" (Hultkrantz 1982:22). All we can say is that some groups, for example the Maasai in Kenya, appear to lack a belief in life after death in contradistinction to say the Shona in Zimbabwe who have a belief in life after death as realized in their acknowledgement of *Nyikadzimu (*the aboard of all the dead souls) (Mazambara, interview, 20 October 2011). The lack of some attribute of religion of a given societal belief and practice should not be translated to denote lack of religion. Hultkrantz further contends that some scholars of religion "consider that man's religious consciousness was born during the time when man first appeared" (Hultkrantz 1982:22). No people or person can be treated as of a religious *tabula rasa* (blank slate); this idea even applies to atheists. It is important to note here that, an atheist is religious in some sense, the atheist holds certain beliefs not of the super-natural being, but a particular way of life. Archeological findings have shown artifacts that reveal that religion has been part of man since time immemorial. Ninian Smart concurs with the views of Hultkrantz in his assertion that "… religion has permeated human life since early and obscure times" (Davies 1988:11). It is therefore, tenable to propound that it is a cultural crime to treat the young minds as if their background is characterized by a religious void only to be filled by the Judeo-Christian religion at Ordinary Level. This is a clear continuation of a loathsome colonial legacy that dismissed Africans as irreligious and lacking the capacity of conceiving deity since 'deity' is a philosophical concept which 'savages' (Africans) can hardly comprehend (Emil Ludwig). This again was a blatant attack of the African of being regarded as non-philosophical besides being viewed as non-religious.

The current phenomenon of Globalisation entails that people migrate from one country to the next. This means that pupils will meet individuals of diverse religions locally and there is a likelihood of them migrating to foreign countries where they will mix with other people of different religions. The virtue of tolerance will be required in a global context, which is religiously plural. It will be difficult for pupils to tolerate other religions at a global scale if these religions do not constitute what they are studying. Morally, there is a danger of intolerance since pupils are likely to view Christianity as the only religion. Discrimination of other religions is both logically and ethically unsound and practically it is not very different from other forms of discrimination such as racism, tribalism, regionalism, gender bias and other forms of discrimination.

Logical Problems

While the current ordinary level syllabus in Zimbabwe wishes to allow pupils to draw logical conclusions and think critically out the study of a diversity of religious experiences, this objective may remain elusive as long as there is a study of a single religion namely Christianity. Siegel (2006:6) argues that a student is a critical thinker with respect to inductive conclusions if and only if she had the necessary skill for the mastery and application of the complex set of criteria for correctly assessing the warrantedness of inductive conclusions. Critical thinking about religion in the global context is enhanced if pupils are exposed to a number of religions in which they can draw similarities and differences. The study of one religion pacifies the curious young minds with respect to the global and complex nature of religions. Laudan (Siegel 2006:30) asserts,

> At its core, rationality…consists in doing and believing things because we have good reasons for doing so…if we are going to determine whether a given belief is rational, we must ask whether there are sound reasons for it.

Reasons assessment is based on the ability of reasons to warrant beliefs that require proper inductive inference, avoiding fallacies and proper deductive

inference. The assessment of reasons in the context of religion is possible if and only if a multiplicity of religions is studied. A Christian-oriented approach will not only negate critical thinking but may inevitably result in the use of the narrative approach to learning because there is no room for cross cultural comparison of religion.

Exposure to a plurality of religions enables pupils to reason out clearly and draw conclusions regarding the belief systems of several religions. Pupils get to appreciate the fact that not all religious persons use the Bible, and even among those who use the bible, not all of them read the entire bible. In addition, pupils get to appreciate the existence of non-christian texts such as the Muslim Koran. Further, pupils will learn that in African traditional religion, there are no written scriptures and to appreciate that absence of written scriptures does not necessarily entail absence of religion. This wide spectrum of reasoning enables pupils to be global in approach and this allows them to fit well in the globalised world of religion.

Unreasonable prejudices are dropped when pupils are exposed to the practices of several religions and this enables them to logically appreciate religions which are not necessarily theirs. Mwesiga (2009:59) argues that exclusive religious education creates a superiority attitude among pupils of a particular religious tradition against others and this leads to classification of people in relation to their religious identity. This entails that pupils are likely to think that just because their religion is being taught in schools, then it is the most important. This fallacious thinking is more dangerous in the world of ordinary life because it may result in fundamentalism and religious conflicts. A global approach to religious education has to be appreciated from the point of view of phenomenology of religion where there is an attempt to understand another person's religious life "through laying aside one's own presuppositions, and through empathizing with the insider experience" (Jackson 1997:14). A multi-faith approach to the study of religion enables pupils to think about religion without being passive recipients of religious doctrines because there is a basis for comparison, dialogue, openness and flexibility. The active participation of pupils in reflecting other religions allows them to draw logical and independent conclusions on the basis of religious diversity (Holley 1978:19; Watson 1993: 42). The Christian-oriented approach that is in the current ordinary level religious studies syllabus may result in logical challenges to the idea of

unity and ecumenical spirit among pupils during and after schooling because the concept of unity in diversity is undermined in the present approach to the study of religion.

Recommendation and Conclusion

The study recommends that a new and broadened ordinary level religious studies syllabus should be designed on the basis of the following issues:

- A comprehensive Zimbabwean religious education policy that is non-discriminatory, non-exclusive but accommodative and global in the approach to the study of religion. The policy will be a theoretical guide to the review of the syllabus because the current scenario enables planners to take advantage of lack of policy and protect their personal interests and inclinations in the study of religion.

- Consultation based on a variety of stake holders that include members of African traditional religion, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism and Judaism among others.

- Funding and provision of new textbooks that are consistent with the multi-faith and global approach to the study of religion.

- Provision of workshops to religious studies teachers so that they can be familiarised with the new syllabus in line with the new content, objectives and methods.

The research sought to discuss the relevance of the Ordinary Level Religious Studies syllabus in the light of the global nature of the phenomenon of religion. It has been shown that the religious studies syllabus does not prepare pupils to respect religions which are not necessarily their own because the syllabus is currently narrow and exclusive of other religions. To make the syllabus more appealing and relevant, it has been argued that the syllabus should be transformed to include other religions. This entails the broadening of the broadening of the syllabus. To this effect, philosophical

justifications have been offered for the inclusion of African Traditional Religions, Islam, Hinduism, Jainism, Confucianism and other religions so that the subject becomes a stimulating area of study, which is epistemologically objective, ethically desirable, ideologically unbiased and methodologically flexible. It is hoped that the transformation of the syllabus would accord the subject an important place in preparing the pupils to the reality of religious pluralism with an open and flexible mindset that avoids the pitfalls of religious intolerance, religious disrespect, religious fundamentalism that are the roots for religious conflicts in Zimbabwe and elsewhere.

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Factors Influencing the Choice of Religion Studies as a Subject in the FET Band

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Abstract

This paper investigates the factors influencing the choice of Religion Studies in Grade 10 by the learners, educators and principals. This subject has been phased in from grade 10 in 2006, grade 11 in 2007 and grade 12 in 2008. Minimal research has been conducted on the factors influencing the choice of this subject in Grade 10 by the learners, educators and principals.

Is this choice of the subject by the learners motivated by their vocational and career goals? The issue of the learner's choice deserves some detailed explanation. In the National Curriculum Statement when the learner reaches Grade 10, four compulsory subjects must be offered: two official languages, Mathematics or Mathematics Literacy, and Life Orientation out of seven subjects. The learner has then to choose three optional subjects offered by the institution. Not every approved subject is offered by every school. Schools chose to offer subjects from an approved list which can include commercial, technical, humanities or specialist arts subjects. Religion Studies is one of these optional subjects. What do learners expect from this subject? Why are they offering this subject? Is the principal's choice of offering this subject in support of the learner's career goals? Are the learner's choice correlated with the intention of the policy formers? Are the educators also in support of the learner's vocational goals? What are the factors that have influenced the choice of Religion Studies as a subject in the FET Band by all the key stakeholders?

Keywords: Religion Studies, Religious Education, Education in Religion, Religion

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Introduction

In 2008 Religion Studies emerged as an optional subject for matriculation purposes. Religion was previously studied in the form of various subjects devoted to furthering the interests of different religions. Biblical Studies was introduced within the context of Christian National Education. During this period Islam, Hinduism and Judaism were also accommodated. After intense research, heated debates and consultation in the 1990s, consensus was achieved on an approach that would treat all religions impartially and for the common good. This consensus was not an easy feat. This issue of education in religion became a highly contested terrain. An influential sector shared strong views that state schools had to be secular and by definition, not teach any religion at all.

Apart from Christianity, other religions, especially African Religion, Judaism (Hebrew/Jewish Studies), Islam (Arabic Studies), Buddhism and Hinduism play a significant role in the lives of millions of South Africans, as they have done for centuries, and as they will in future (Prozesky & de Gruchy 1995:1). The National Policy on Religion and Education (2003) provided the policy framework for this new approach. The learning area Life Orientation in the NCS Grade R to Grade 9 and the NCS Grades 10-12 developed the necessary platform. The new subject in the FET Band, Religion Studies, gave full expression to this novel approach (Learning Programme Guidelines: Religion Studies 2008:7).

This study focuses specifically on the factors influencing the choice of Religion Studies as a subject in the FET Band by the principals, educators and the learners. It should be noted that the rationale of subject advisors, with respect to Religion Studies is surely of a very different nature from the kind of choices made by learners, educators and principals.

A Brief Overview of the History of Education in Religion in South Africa

Education in religion in South Africa has been designated in the past by a number of terms such as Religious Education, Religious Studies, Bible Instruction, Biblical Studies and Religion Studies. As was the case with the wider educational programme, Whites designed this religious facet of education for White learners during an era when Blacks were marginalised politically. The

majority of the White population claimed a Christian affiliation. Given the fact that South Africa was then ruled by a White, Christian government, religious education in South Africa was restricted to 'education' in the Christian faith. Furthermore, since the majority of the 'ruling' White community subscribed to a Reformed expression of Christianity, Religious Education quite predictably also took this bias. Coupled with definite philosophical presuppositions, Religious Education, in particular, bolstered the enigmatic Christian National Education programme (Chetty 1995:57).

A New Direction for Religious Education in South Africa

The *de facto* situation in South Africa is one of religious pluralism. Therefore, says Chetty (1995:59-60) 'any Religious Education programme in public education has to have religious diversity as a starting point.' The planning, design, implementation and evaluation have to include all stakeholders, *inter alia, parents, learners, educators, religious representatives, governing bodies, media, religious leaders,* (italics mine) etc. Input should be as broadly based as possible (Chetty, 1995:59-60).

After feedback from the different stakeholders, it was the Institute for Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (ICRSA) that presented the three revised models which became the framework for the nation-wide discussion on the future of Religious Education in 1993, as South Africa prepared itself for a change in government. These were the single-tradition approach, multiple single-tradition approach and multi-tradition approach.

The Role of Religious Education in the Post-apartheid Curriculum

Since 1994, the desired intent for a new and relevant curriculum which will address the requirements of all learners in South Africa was established in numerous documents and various publications of the National Department of Education. Eight different learning areas were identified for the South African Education System by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) (see National Department of Education 1997a; 1997b). Learning Areas Committees (LACs) were established and an Outcomes-based Education system was developed for South Africa (Roux 2000:173).

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Redefining the Role of Religious Education in South African Multi-cultural Public Schools

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) funded a research project to address the problem areas discussed above (Roux 1997). There was a desire by the HSRC to assist educators to overcome fears and negative perceptions of the study of religions, and to make them aware of the diversity of religions in their school environment. The new outcomes-based education model also put pressure on educators to rethink the suggested outcomes and skills. The aim of this project was mainly to redefine the role of Religious Education in a multicultural school environment.

The results of this empirical research indicated that there are many problems within the diverse South African school environment (Roux 1997:102-107). More than 95% of the respondents had no knowledge of the different religions in South Africa, and only 30% of the educators had specific training in Religious Education at tertiary level. Little indication was found of professional didactic approaches, or the implementation of creative didactics. Teachers adopted a confessional approach, and the worshipping element seemed to be the main activity. Teachers from rural areas had no access to resource centres like libraries, which could provide extra information on Religious Education. The only source of information was the religious leaders in the community. In this sort of situation, the adoption of a confessional approach becomes an easy solution. Creative educational approaches are not even considered. Therefore the need for training in educational approaches is clear (Roux 2000:178).

The Emergence of Religion Studies

Interestingly, in 2006, a new subject, Religion Studies, was introduced in Grade 10 as an optional subject. It represents a major paradigm shift in the education of religion at the public school level. Before the emergence of this new subject, the study of religion was diverse and often furthered specific religious group interests. It has already been noted earlier that the subject, Biblical Studies, also functioned within the context of Christian National Education. After much research and consultation in the 1990s, a consensus was reached on a new curriculum. The National Policy on Religion and Education (2003) provided the policy framework for this new approach. The compulsory Learning Area Life

Orientation and the optional subject Religion Studies emerged within this new context (Learning Programme Guidelines: Religion Studies 2008:7).

Literature on Religion Studies in South Africa

As mentioned in section one, Religion Studies is a new subject that has been offered as an option since 2006 for FET Phase learners only. The first cohort of Grade 12 learners materialised in 2008. Little has been written on this focussed area of research. The collaborative research of Smit and Chetty entitled 'Advancing Religion in Southern Africa' (2009) and that of Naran Rajbansi entitled 'Prospects and Challenges in the Implementation of Religion Studies in the School Curriculum' (2009), are important contributions in this field.

Smit and Chetty highlight the issues of religious diversity, learner recruitment, educator competence and career pathing as factors influencing learners' choice of Religion Studies as a subject. South Africa offers the ideal case for analyzing the shifting paradigm from a religion-specific curriculum to a more inclusive curriculum representing the religious diversity present in the country (Smit & Chetty 2009:340). Religion Studies is still perceived by many as Biblical Studies, Religious Instruction or some other religion-specific subject. It is also misconstrued as an easy subject (Smit & Chetty 2009:346). There is also a negative perception construed by parents: that if their children opt for Religion Studies, it will inevitably affect their spiritual grounding in their specific religious tradition. These issues have had a negative impact on recruitment. Many teachers who are currently teaching Religion Studies do not have the necessary skills and the knowledge of Religion Studies needed to fulfill the curriculum requirements. There needs to be a change of focus from regurgitation of facts to critical engagement.

Rajbansi (2009: 4) examines some of the fundamental issues related to the inclusion of Religion Studies in the school curriculum in the FET phase. He also explores the many prospects and advantages Religion Studies will provide for learners as well as for educators. Finally, he examines models of Religion Studies that can be used to help with its implementation. Rajbansi offers the following recommendations: the resource materials must be more accessible and well-balanced; and educators need to be trained and unbiased.

Both these studies do not consider the factors influencing the choice of Religion Studies. The concern of the researcher is to investigate why Religion

Studies, as a subject, has been chosen by learners? Also, what factors have inclined educators to choose this subject to teach; what are the factors that have swayed principals to offer this subject as part of their school's curriculum; and what was the rationale for Religion Studies in the view of the curriculum planners and designers? All of these questions revolve around choice, so it is appropriate to explore theories that attempt to help us understand human choice and what influences it.

Influences on Subject Choice

The literature on subject choice tends to focus on aspects of peer influence, self-efficacy, utility value, motivation, teacher factors and family.

Peer Influence

A peer group may create either a positive or a negative social influence (Boaler *et al.* 2000). Peer views on Religion Studies would play a critical role in the choice of this subject. If peers considered Religion Studies in a negative light, this would dissuade many learners from taking this option. While a positive peer estimation, on the other hand, would open the way for this subject choice.

Self-efficacy and Utility Value

According to Bandura *et al.* (2001: 187-206), self-efficacy is seen as people's judgement of their competence to organise and implement courses of action in order to achieve chosen levels of performance. People act in a certain manner because of anticipated results (Bandura *et al.* 2001). When people become convinced that they are self-efficacious, they act eagerly. This is particularly pertinent in the school situation, as it would mean that learners would become cooperative and actively involved when performing activities that they both enjoyed and about which they were certain of positive results.

Schunk (in Zimmerman, Bandura & Martinez-Pons 1992:665) aver that students with a high degree of self-efficacy show perseverance, determination and an inherent interest in learning. The performance level of self-efficacious learners is therefore high. Religion Studies, like any new subject, would be

approached with a degree of uncertainty. Learners with high self-efficacy will be likely to do well as they will tend to persevere, even if they feel that the subject is difficult.

Parents may have high goals for their children, but without consideration of their children's aptitudes. In some cases parents want their children to follow in their paths, or in the paths that they did not manage to follow themselves.

When learners with good grades go to high school and they associate with highly academically orientated learners, they usually achieve better results than learners who associate with less academically orientated peers (Schunk & Pajares 2002). Despite this sense of group-belonging, learners need autonomy so as to enable them to make their own decisions. In a Religion Studies class, positive peer pressure may be an advantage as, at times at high school, there is less attention from the teachers.

If a person believes that a direct benefit will ensue from the task he / she is performing, there is a higher probability that he/she will attempt to execute the task well. Even at primary school level, learners are happy when they are involved in activities which they enjoy. Utility value refers to the degree of perceived helpfulness of the current task to the achievement of future goals. Learners will assign a high value to certain activities if these activities are a means to preferred goals. Utility value is, thus, determined by 'how well a task relates to current and future goals' (Pintrich & Schunk 1996; Eccles & Wigfield 2002:12).

A task may have positive value for an individual because that task enables the realisation of important goals such as career objectives. This may be true even if the individual is not interested in the activity for its own sake and does not experience intrinsic fulfilment in performing the task (Deci & Ryan 2000).

Utility value is also a predicator of academic achievement (Eccles & Wigfield 2002). Weiner (2009:7) argues that expectations of long-term success greatly influence an individual's subsequent achievement. This may also play a role in the selection of Religion Studies as a subject.

Teachers have a pivotal role to play in respect of learning. This is borne out by Anderman, Eccles and Wigfield (2000:220) when they state that 'a quality teacher-student relationship provides the effective underpinnings of academic motivation and success.' The role of the teacher thus affects the future

ambitions of learners and the way in which they perceive education. When teachers have high expectations of their learners and the learners in turn perceive these expectations, these learners tend to achieve more and also to develop a greater sense of competence (Eccles & Wigfield 2002). This is surely applicable to Religion Studies. If a teacher has high expectations of Religion Studies learners, it will be relatively easy to be passionate, and this passion will spark the learner's own passion. A high sense of teacher efficacy will enhance the belief of the learners in their ability to master the subject while, conversely, low teacher efficacy will result in feelings of incompetence on the part of the learners (Anderman, Eccles & Wigfield 2000:220).

Motivation

Reiss (2004:179) states that motives refer to the reasons people have for initiating and performing voluntary behaviour. According to Pintrich and Schunk (1996:5), motivation is the process whereby goal-directed activity is prompted and continued. Pintrich and Schunk (1996) argue that it is not possible to observe motivation directly, but that motivation may be inferred from such behaviours as choice of tasks, labours and perseverance in terms of the work being done. Aristotle (in Reiss 2004) divided the motives for performing a task into two entities, that is, ends (intrinsic motivation) and means (extrinsic motivation).

Intrinsic motivation refers to the motivation to participate in an activity for its own sake (Pintrich & Schunk 1996). Hunt (in Pintrich & Schunk 1996:248) argues that intrinsic motivation gives rise to exploratory behaviour and curiosity. Deci and Ryan (in Bateman & Crant 2002:3) further adduce that intrinsic motivation, which derives from within a person or from the activity itself, has a positive effect on behaviour, performance, and well-being. Intrinsically motivated people demonstrate greater interest, excitement, and confidence, which, in turn, manifests as enhanced performance, persistence and creativity (Deci & Ryan 2000). Learners who are intrinsically motivated work on tasks because they find these tasks enjoyable.

Extrinsic motivation is demonstrated when an individual embarks on a task in order to gain a reward or to avoid punishment (Yang, Zhang & Wang 2009). When students study Religion Studies merely in order to obtain high

marks, they may be said to be extrinsically motivated. Deci and Ryan (2000:71) concur as they define extrinsic motivation as the performance of an activity in order to attain some separable outcome. Pintrich and Schunk (1996:245) describe extrinsic motivation in terms of a person engaging in an activity as a means to an end. If learners study hard in order to avoid reprimand or in order to receive either a reward or praise from the teacher, they may be said to be extrinsically driven (Yang *et al*. 2009).

Teacher-related Factors

As with the influence of teachers and parents on learners to choose science subjects, some learners chose Religion Studies because they are advised to do so by their teachers and parents (Fenemma 1990; Hoffmann-Barthes *et al*. 1998).

Kiefer (2004:1) reports that learners choose certain subjects because their teachers make it interesting and their teachers put a lot of effort into teaching. In Kiefer's report on science subjects, one learner commented: 'I have a very good teacher who makes it fun, and he helps to explain problems to the students individually and works with them until they understand.' In view of the fact that learners regard their teachers as role models, it is not startling that teacher attitudes impact on learner preferences for a particular subject.

RS teachers should ensure that they facilitate their learners' critical thinking skills, creative thinking skills and problem-solving skills. Learners would then appreciate the value of Religion Studies for broader challenges in life. More often than not, Religion Studies, like some other subjects, is still teacher-centred, with formal pencil-and-paper testing as the principal method of assessment, mainly at secondary school level (Boaler *et al*. 2000). In many cases educators in South Africa may be the victims of their own education, and they may teach in the manner in which they were taught (James, Naidoo & Benson 2008: 2).

In order for teachers to know how to teach Religion Studies, it is essential that they undergo professional development in the form of in-service training. Quality Religion Studies educators will result in more students entering the field of Religion Studies at a tertiary level. Teacher professional development may take various forms, including individual development, continuing education, peer-coaching and mentoring. During professional

development, teachers may be given the opportunity to learn new teaching techniques in line with the new curriculum (NCS).

To summarise, there are various factors that influence the decisions of learners to opt for Religion Studies. Peer influence, self-efficacy, utility value, motivation and teacher factors also have an effect on the learner's subject choices, especially in respect of Religion Studies.

The literature on subject choice also tends to focus on the family as an important factor.

Economic and Cultural Capital of Families

Van De Werfhorst, Sullivan, and Cheung, using a framework that integrates rational choice perspectives and cultural reproduction theory, contend that 'children take their parents' social position as a reference for their own choices, and are guided mainly by the amount of economic and cultural capital that is available within the family' (2003:41-62). In support of this assertion, Van De Werfhorst *et al.* show that 'children from higher social class backgrounds achieved a higher standard in both humanities and scientific subjects in primary and secondary school. Furthermore, children of the professional class were relatively likely to choose the prestigious subjects of medicine and law in university, independent of ability' (2003:41).Subject choice is thus influenced and 'reproduced' by economic and cultural factors.

The present study notes the relevance of this line of research on the impact of parental background, i.e. social class, economic and cultural capital, on the choice of subject in secondary school education. The shortcoming of any theoretical framework for studying subject choice lies in it only linking rational choice perspectives with cultural reproduction theory. It is also essential to expand the discussion to examine other factors, inclusive of peer influence, self-efficacy or ability, utility value, motivation and teacher factors on subject choice. Prior attainment is likely to influence the choice of subjects. From previous studies examining family background influences on subject choice, only that of Davies and Guppy (1997) incorporates consideration of students' ability. As ability is associated with social class, one must ask whether the effect of parental background on students' choice of subject found in previous research is in fact due to the transmission of tastes and interests from parents to children.

Cultural Reproduction Theory

According to Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron 1990), the explanation for social class inequalities in educational attainment lies in the social distribution of 'cultural capital'. Bourdieu states that cultural capital consists of familiarity with the dominant culture in a society. The possession of cultural capital varies with social class, yet the education system assumes the possession of cultural capital. This makes it very difficult for working-class pupils to succeed in the education system. Moreover, according to Bourdieu, educational reproduction leads to social reproduction, and the crucial role played by the education system in allocating occupational positions legitimates social inequalities. During the twentieth century, educational credentials have become a key mechanism for allocating occupational positions. This has led to an increase in the importance of cultural, as opposed to economic, capital in the transmission of privilege. On the other hand, the direct transmission of economic capital has remained extremely important. This can be seen as resulting in a two-dimensional space of social status; one based on economic capital and one based on cultural capital. It can be argued that two distinct elites have emerged, one that is strong on cultural capital but not on economic capital (e.g. journalists, scientists, public sector employees, artists and vocations aligned with Religion Studies), the other strong on social class, ability and choice of subject which focuses on economic capital but not on cultural capital (e.g. managers in private companies, executives).

A body of theory that has developed chiefly within the realm of economics is rational choice theory. It one of *several* theories that may be used to shed light on the choice of Religion Studies as a school subject,

Rational Choice Theory

Rational choice theory has been used by some social scientists to explain human behaviour. The approach has been widely used in the field of economics, but more recently has also been used in the disciplines of sociology, political science, anthropology, religion and education (Becker 1976; Radnitzky & Bernholz 1987: Hogarth & Reder 1987; Swedberg 1990; and Green & Shapiro 1996).

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According to Green (2002:4), rational choice theory commences with an analysis of the 'choice behaviour of one or more individual decision-making units.' In this study these 'units' are learners, educators and principals. Once the elements of individual behaviour are established, the exploration moves on to scrutinize how individual choices act together to produce outcomes (Swedberg 1990). Green further contends that rational choice analysis presumes that some agent is 'maximizing utility' and that 'another important element of the choice process is the presence of constraints' (2002:7). One feature of rational choice theory is that it makes the 'trade-offs' between alternative choices very explicit. In this study one of the constraints is the limited choice of subjects in the FET band that are offered at schools.

In rational choice theory, Green (2002:13) avers that 'behaviour follows from the pursuit of objectives, so preference specification is crucial.' Frank (1997:18) describes two general approaches. The 'self-interest' standard of rationality 'says rational people consider only costs and benefits that accrue directly to themselves.' The 'present-aim' standard of rationality, on the other hand, says that 'rational people act efficiently in pursuit of whatever objectives they hold at the moment of choice.' Frank contends that neither approach is obviously satisfactory. Many people would seem to care about more than just their own material well-being. According to Green (2002:14), the 'present-aim' standard has also been used in rational choice models, but not as widely as the use of the 'self-interest' standard

According to Green (2002:46), ''rational' in rational choice theory… means only that an agent's choices reflect the most preferred feasible alternative … that is, choices reflect utility maximization'. Also, a 'rational' choice has, of necessity, to be grounded on reason or rationality.

Integrating Rational Choice and Cultural Reproduction Theories

The two approaches should be seen as complementary rather than competitive with regard to the question of subject choice. The rational choices which people make in pursuit of social mobility (or stability) may be recognised without neglecting the cultural influences that help to form people's preferences.

Within the post-*Apartheid* context, some parents with social and economic capital, in keeping with the notion of relative risk aversion, have opted to send their children either to private or former Model C Schools. Their main concern is to avoid social demotion or downward mobility. A unique feature in South Africa among some families with very little or no economic and social capital is that they have also made the ambitious and giant leap, to sacrificially follow those families with social and economic capital and enroll their children in either private or former Model C Schools. These families from the working-class have dared to span the huge social distance to be travelled with the successful completion of a prestigious course. They have weighed the costs of such a move against the benefits of the eventual potential gains of their children in terms of cultural and economic capital. The theory that best explains this action of parents and students, which form a minority, is perhaps rational choice theory.

Nonetheless, it is quite well-known that disproportionately high numbers of African learners in South Africa (many of whom represent working class or other underclass backgrounds) tend to enrol for social sciences and humanities subjects like history and languages in their degree programmes. It is widely argued that not nearly enough gravitate to technical learning paths. Biblical Studies was also chosen as a 'soft' option' in the past. We have already noted at the outset of this chapter that a misperceived association with Biblical Studies has negatively impacted on learner recruitment into Religion Studies (Smit & Chetty 2009). Furthermore, the issue of limited career options associated with Religion Studies has been identified by Rajbansi (2009).

According to Adey and Biddulph (2001), both the subjects Geography and History suffer a similar plight to that of Religion Studies. Many learners in their study believe that there is relatively little purpose in pursuing the subjects Geography and History at tertiary level. Their understanding of the relative 'usefulness' of both History and Geography in their future lives is limited to direct and naïve reference to forms of employment. Their understanding of the wider contribution each can make to their future lives is disappointingly uninformed. Adey and Biddulph (2001) aver that this 'limited understanding has an impact upon option decisions: if pupils cannot perceive any short term and longer term appreciation of the value of each subject, then they are unlikely to want to pursue it in further study'. Similarly, the range of career pathings that

Religion Studies could open should be made explicit to expand learner recruitment.

Research Methodology

A qualitative case study approach was used. Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain qualitative responses from learners, from principals and educators whose schools are offering Religion Studies, and from subject advisors with oversight of this subject. The semi-structured interview, which is a flexible tool for data collection, enabled multi-sensory channels to be used: verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard. These interviews enabled participants to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regarded situations from their own point of view.

Sampling

This study focused on two schools within one of the districts in the Eastern Cape. This choice was made purposively. The schools offered religious studies to male and female students from a low- to middle-income demographic. An attempt was made to obtain an information-rich, representative sampling of responses from these two schools. Special measures were taken to be inclusive with regard to gender. Class lists were stratified according to gender, and five learners each from both the males and the females were randomly selected. Such a sampling also increased the external validity of this study. One set of interviews were conducted with ten learners from each of the two schools. This study therefore elicited the responses of a total of twenty learners.

Separate interviews were additionally conducted with the subject advisor for Religion Studies from the Eastern Cape Department of Education, the principals of the two schools studied, and the Religion Studies educators from each of the selected schools. The next section will offer some conclusions and advance some recommendations on the findings of this study.

Conclusions to the Study

Learners did not have a *real* choice but were led to believe that Religion Studies

was compulsory. The school has an influential role on learner's subject choice. Parental participation fluctuated from active to passive guidance. Learners saw Religion Studies as an easy subject and an aggregate booster. The school community both informs and influences the subject choice of learners. The peer influence of friends and fellow learners also feature in subject choice.

RS teaches about religion and culture, respect, catalyses moral development and is enjoyable, easy to study but requires extensive reading. The limited diversity in Religion Studies classes did not allow for this respect to be tested. Religion Studies can catalyse the development of moral values. Despite this subject being an aggregate booster, learners enjoy Religion Studies and therefore do well.

After balancing the 'costs and benefits', according to rational choice theory, learners choose subjects with a utility value for their career pathing. Religion Studies opens the possibilities directly and indirectly. The majority of learners said that Religion Studies will assist them in their career path, not only narrowly in religious and pedagogical vocations but also more widely. Religion Studies could assist in careers with constituencies of religious diversity, in the medical field, human resources and journalism.

The attitude of the educators has a substantial bearing on learner subject choice and performance. Religion Studies educators have substantial general teaching experience. These educators have been teaching Religion Studies since 2006. All Religion Studies educators have a background in Religion Studies. Despite subject advisors also giving some orientation to the new Religion Studies educators, continual retraining is still needed.

RS fosters citizenship, non-discrimination and the rounded development of the learner and these objectives have attracted educators to teach Religion Studies. Learners enjoy Religion Studies, have self-efficacy, their performance ranges from good to well and see some utility value for their future career path. Educators have a positive view of Religion Studies and contend that Religion Studies fosters respect, analytical, critical, constructive and lateral thinking. These outcomes for Religion Studies will open up many career paths even outside of religion and education.

Resources are one of the other challenges for Religion Studies. Parents, the community and the SGB are not well informed. Fully informed stakeholders will have no reason for misconceptions and this would eliminate the ensuing mistrust.

Principals were introduced to Religion Studies when it replaced Biblical Studies and much confusion of the two has ensued. Religion Studies is inclusive and also catalyses the development of morals.

The process of offering Religion Studies involved learners, educators, parents, SGB and the community. The policy guidelines were consulted. The depth of knowledge of Religion Studies by all stakeholders is insufficient. Trained Religion Studies educators had about 40 learners each.

The process of introducing Religion Studies as an optional subject followed the Departmental guidelines. Subject choices were restricted by the number and competence of staff. Religion Studies was one of the optional subjects.

Principals emphasised the ongoing need for retraining by refresher courses, workshops and seminars and an involved role of the Department. Retraining would prevent the Religion Studies educators from being '*ad hoc teachers*'. The Department has failed to act proactively in the introduction of Religion Studies as a new subject.

The lack of diversity in the school cannot dispel the uneasiness towards other religious leaders. Continual debriefing will correct inaccurate information about Religion Studies.

According to the subject advisor the aim of holistic development is the specialty of the new Religion Studies that merits inclusion in the FET Band. Cultural diversity is a new South African feature. That Religion Studies fosters citizenship, analytic, critical and constructive thinking is reverberated by the subject advisor.

These broad outcomes open up wider career paths in several fields. Religion Studies is marketed with school presentations to clear false impressions about Religion Studies. More information has to be commonly shared by all stakeholders.

Matriculation results have improved with two schools obtaining a 100% pass rate. Results ranged from good to outstanding results. Most schools do justice to the principles of the NCS. Adequate coverage of all learning outcomes and assessment standards has been noted. This assertion is problematic given the confusion between Religion Studies and Biblical Studies. There is the perennial danger of Religion Studies being usurped for a spiritual formative role.

Challenges lie in the integration of learning, essay writing skills and developing good model assessment tasks. Understanding Religion Studies

terminology, confusion of Religion Studies for Biblical Studies, a shortage of resources, the vast content and subject related methodology of Religion Studies are other concerns. All the stakeholder groups confirm this misperception. Researchers also concur with this finding. Biblical Studies educators have no advantage in teaching Religion Studies but rather also necessitate retraining.

RS, as a new subject with low intake, was not afforded all the requisite support. The number of schools offering Religion Studies is static. Provincial officials also reflect confusion of Religion Studies and Biblical Studies. The lack of staffing of the subject specialist at the National or Provincial level office is perturbing.

Recommendations

Based on this study of the factors influencing the choice of Religious Studies on the FET Band we make the following recommendation:

- Steps should be taken to ensure that learners be given a *real* choice
- Detailed information about the unique nature and outcomes of Religion Studies including its critical engagement should be shared
- Informed stakeholder groupings e.g. parents, educators, principal, SGB, community, Provincial and National Department of Education should not abuse their influential role of support by either overt or covert compulsion
- There is a need for clarity between spiritual formation and catalysing moral development
- Educators should continue to foster learner enjoyment of Religion Studies
- Steps should be taken to facilitate the integration of learning, develop essay writing skills and encourage good assessment tasks
- Diversity should be increased in classes so that respect can be tested
- More information should be given about direct and indirect career pathing
- There is a need for continual re-training through refresher courses, workshops and seminars
- Steps should be taken to address the inadequate resources of Religion Studies

- Despite the 'flattering' results for Religion Studies, efforts should be taken by all the stakeholder groupings to ensure that learner's competencies become a means in which Religion Studies markets itself
- Concerted on-going effort should be made to clarify the confusion between Religion Studies and Biblical Studies
- The Department should assume a more engaged role in Religion Studies
- Steps should be taken by all the stakeholder groupings to encourage religious diversity in the Religion Studies class
- The National Department of Education should staff both the National and Provincial Offices with well-equipped and highly motivated leaders.

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Religion in the Humanities[1]

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Abstract
Founded in 2000, and conceptualised in a consciously positioned postapartheid paradigm, the relatively new undergraduate Programme in Religion at the University of KwaZulu-Natal has been offered at the Howard College campus since 2005. This article provides a brief background for the programme, and then proceeds to analyse a selection of the first and second level modules, focusing on the steady growth experienced, 2005 – 2010. This is followed by an analysis of the home disciplines of students and the reasons why they enrolled for RELG101 and RELG106. Finally, the article deals with the interdisciplinary potential this focus on the programme in Religion reveals. The assumption is that such analyses reveal observable trends that need to be taken into consideration in the further offering and developing of the modules – as well as the programme more broadly speaking.

Keywords: Programme in Religion, first and second level modules, home disciplines, electives, newly constructed BA major in Religion

Following the government decision to merge institutions of Higher Learning on 9 December 2002[2], the former Universities of Durban-Westville and Natal in the province of KwaZulu-Natal started with preliminary discussions on the

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[1] The first draft of the paper was delivered at the Thirty-second Annual Congress of the Association for the Study of Religion in Southern Africa, Unisa, Pretoria, 2010.

[2] Cf. 'Terms of Reference and Approach' in the Council on Higher Education (CHE) document, *The Governance of Merger in South African Higher Education* (Hall, Symes & Luescher 2004).

merger in 2003. The major cross-site relocation, movement and merging of departments and disciplines took place in 2004 – 2006, with final post-merger consolidation of disciplines in 2008[3]. One of the major decisions was to make the main campus of the former University of Durban-Westville, the campus that would specialize in Information Technology, Management Studies, Business Administration and Science. The campus of the former University of Natal, Howard College campus, Durban, would house all the Humanities disciplines, Engineering, and Law. This meant that the Faculty of Humanities of the former University of Durban-Westville would merge with its equivalent at the former University of Natal and as a whole move to the Howard College campus site. This move would also for the first time bring the Religion discipline with its programmes and modules as options to the Howard College site[4].

Approved by SAQA in 1999, the Religion discipline is founded on social science approaches to the study of Religion. It was offered at the former University of Durban-Westville as part of the programmes in the newly-founded School of Religion and Culture in the then newly-founded Faculty of Humanities (2000 – 2003). A few years later, the programme[5] was moved to the Howard College Campus and established amongst all the other

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[3] Four new institutions came into being with effect from January 2004 (Cf. Hall, Symes & Luescher 2004: iv): KwaZulu-Natal University: From the former University of Natal and the University of Durban-Westville; North-West University: including Potchefstroom University for Christian Higher Education and the University of the North-West; University of South Africa: Including the former UNISA, Technikon SA and Distance Education Campus of Vista University – as a dedicated distance education institution; and Tshwane University of Technology: From the former Pretoria Technikon, Technikon Northern Gauteng and North-West Technikon.

[4] A secular Jewish Studies programme with religious components was offered during the 1980s and 1990s.

[5] For a cursory overview of a selection of the rationales as well as the nature and systems related to the three main programmes in Religion – the undergraduate Programme in Religion and the two postgraduate programmes, the Programme in Religion and Social Transformation and the Programme in Religion Education – cf. Smit ([2014]).

Humanities disciplines and their qualifications in the new Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (HDSS). By 2005, it has phased out its offerings at the Westville campus while having started its offerings at the Howard College site simultaneously. In July 2008, it moved from its temporary site at Howard College to its current location in the Memorial Tower Building (MTB). This new location is significant because the discipline is located within the same building as the disciplines of isiZulu, English, Linguistics, Philosophy, Psychology, Environmental Sciences, History, Anthropology, Gender Studies, Sociology and Labour Studies amongst others. Furthermore, the MTB is located between the Law Faculty building on its southern side and the Engineering buildings on its northern side. As is characteristic of residential campuses, geographical proximity provides students from these two faculties with the option to also enrol for their cross-faculty electives in Religion.

Taking these developments into consideration, this article addresses the enrolling of students from within the Faculties of Humanities, Law and Engineering for Religion modules as electives. On the one hand, we need to take cognizance of the fact that there is a specific interest of students from within our fellow Humanities disciplines to enrol for modules in Religion, as well as for students from the faculties of Law and Engineering. By establishing the degree to which there are certain trends in these uptakes of Religion modules, one could develop secondary elements[6] in modules and offerings in such a way that they could more consciously articulate with the disciplinary, career and existential or 'meaning' expectations among students from these disciplines and faculties[7]. On the other hand the developing of the curriculum of the Religion discipline itself in terms of current socio-economic and related contextual imperatives, as well as the critical scrutiny

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[6] The most prominent is to build in choices between interdisciplinary focuses in learning as well as skills developing activities – e.g. for semester papers.

[7] Seeing that South Africa is a developmental state – still very much engaged in social transformation processes away from determinations by its colonial and apartheid pasts – this observation is important (cf. the divergent views on South Africa as Developmental State, in Stiglitz 2001; Rodrik 2006; Turok 2008; Poon 2009; Fine 2010).

of these articulations[8], could assist in gaining an improved understanding of the challenges the discipline faces. It could also open possibilities for innovative developments for both its undergraduate as well as postgraduate programmes[9].

Against this very brief historical and contextual background, this paper seeks to accomplish three objectives. *Firstly*, it briefly overviews the enrolment figures of select modules offered for the period 2005 – 2010 as electives to students across the disciplines at the Howard College site. The objective is to represent these figures in line and column graphs so as to get a sense of the actual enrolment figures in the modules for these six years.

Secondly, it provides an analysis of the home disciplines and programmes of students who enrolled for RELG101 Introduction to Religion and RELG106 Religion and Conflict as electives. To this is added a cursory analysis and interpretation of the reasons why students from the Faculties of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (HDSS), Law and Engineering did so. Such analyses will not only reveal the trends with regard to the home disciplines of the students enrolling for the modules, but also the trends in the rationales of students taking the different modules.

This is, *thirdly* followed by a brief analysis and interpretation of the significance of the articulations of these two modules with the home disciplines from which students came. This focus will enlighten on some of the content dynamics the interaction of the disciplines with the specific module bring to the fore and how this may feed into the broader paradigm of Comparative Religion Studies which frames the school's programmes.

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[8] The main overall challenge is to continue to develop a bouquet of Humanities programmes that not only provide students with the most excellent scholarly, knowledge and skills education but also prepare them for careers and a job market in which there are high expectations that graduates perform excellently career-wise.

[9] These challenges form part of the general challenges faced by the Humanities the world over. For South Africa, see the recently published *Report Commissioned by the Minister of Higher Education and Training for the Charter for Humanities and Social Sciences* (Sitas *et al.* 2011) and the *Consensus Study on the State of the Humanities in South Africa: Status, Prospects and Strategies* (Jansen & Vale 2011).

For this, the article then *firstly*, provides the figures and numbers; the second, the home discipline trends and rationales with regard to the two first level modules; and the third, some insight into the dynamics of the interaction of the Religion modules with the respective disciplines – where in future, similar studies can lead to a closer development of the modules to also link up with issues addressed in the home disciplines of students within the broader paradigm of Comparative Religion Studies.

I
Enrolment Figures: Electives in Religion (2005 – 2010)

Since 2005, we have offered a wide variety of modules at Howard College campus. The most popular among students taking electives, have proven to be first and second level modules from the Comparative Religion stream. The main reason is that students normally pick up electives at first and second levels and not necessarily third levels[10]. Even though the first level modules, RELG101 Introduction to Religion and RELG106 Religion and Conflict, form part of the BA Major in Religion, they are also very popular with students from other disciplines enrolling for them as electives. The data for these two modules together with other popular second level Comparative Religion level modules is as follows[11].

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[10] Final year students normally concentrate on completing their studies, and may still pick up outstanding electives at first and second levels but not third levels – except when they do this out of their own curiosity, interest, or desire to include some of our third level modules in their bouquet of undergraduate studies.

[11] The second level Comparative Religion modules offered during this time, were: RELG207 Religion, Migration and Urbanization; RELG209 Morality, Ethics and Modernity in Africa; RELG214 Women, Religion and Culture; and RELG217 Religion and the Media. Due to their technical nature, modules from the Religion-specific stream are not as popular as the Comparative Religion ones.

	Years					
Modules	**2005**	**2006**	**2007**	**2008**	**2009**	**2010**
RELG101	34	161	182	161	136	180
RELG106	104	122	73	99	89	114+
RELG207	40	66	70	116	125	53+
RELG209	-	-	-	43	79	100
RELG214	61	46	49	86	96	41+
RELG217	-	20	-	145	95	40+

Table 1: Popular second level Comparative Religion modules
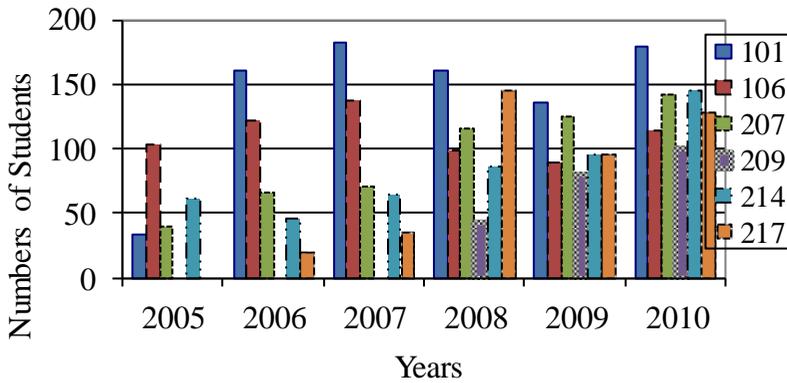
Figure 1: Column Graph:- Selection of Electives: 2005 – 2010
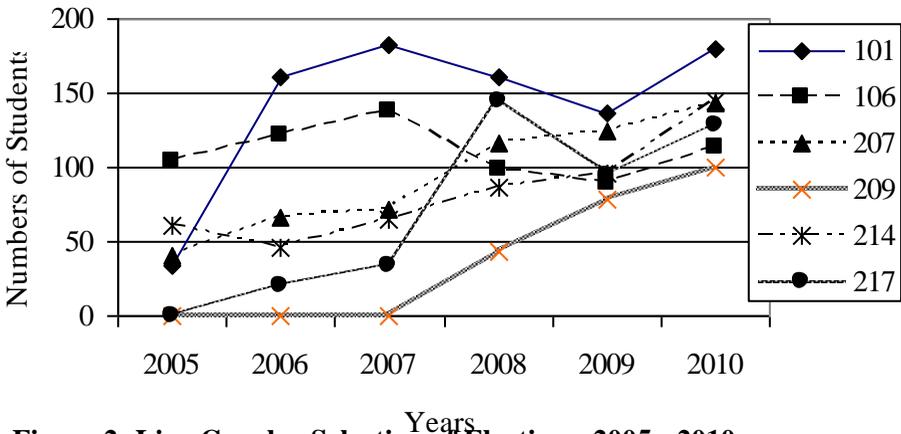
Figure 2: Line Graph:- Selection of Electives: 2005 - 2010

The line graph clearly shows the upward movement of the numbers in all modules towards the latter part of the period covered. RELG209 and RELG217 were only offered from 2008 and 2006 respectively.

The pie-chart below gives an indication of the progressive growth in student numbers in electives in percentages per annum over a six year period since the university introduced the offering of Religion at Howard College campus.

Figure 3: Pie-chart of progressive increase in Undergraduate Religion modules: 2005 – 2010

It is evident that there has been a steady annual increase of students taking the Religion modules as electives, indicating the growing popularity of these modules at the Howard College campus.

In what follows, we provide a brief overview of the selected Comparative Religion modules in line and column graph form that were offered as electives over the six year period. In these graphic representations, one can clearly see the upward movement of the enrolments over the years with regard to each of the individual modules.

RELG101 Introduction to Religion
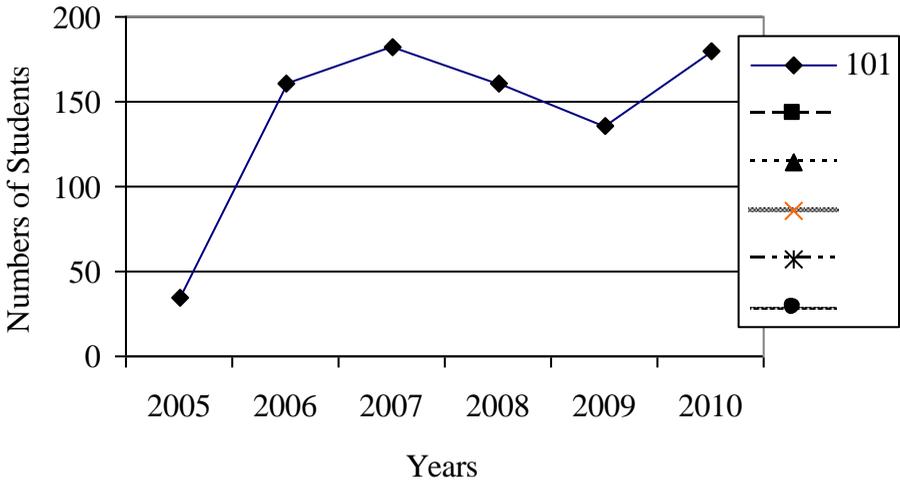
Figure 4: Line graph:- RELG101 Introduction to Religion
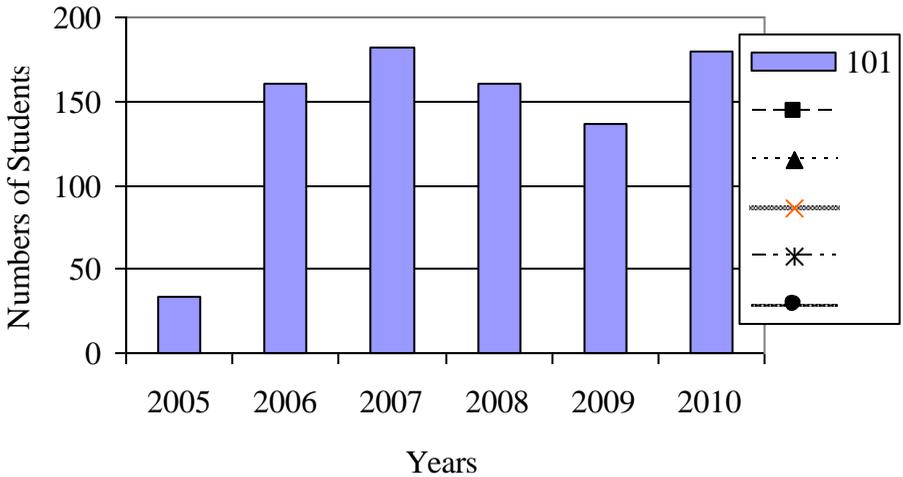
Figure 5: Column graph:- RELG101 Introduction to Religion

RELG 106 Religion and Conflict
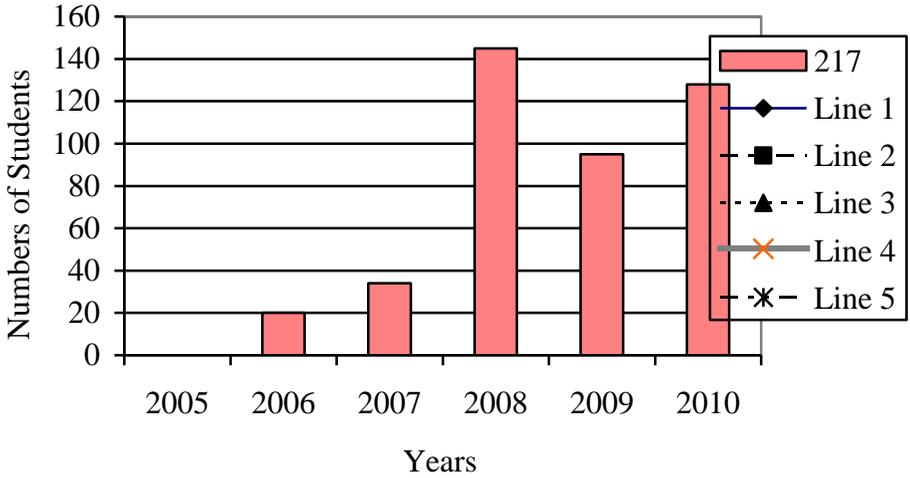
Figure 6: Line graph:- RELG106 Religion and Conflict
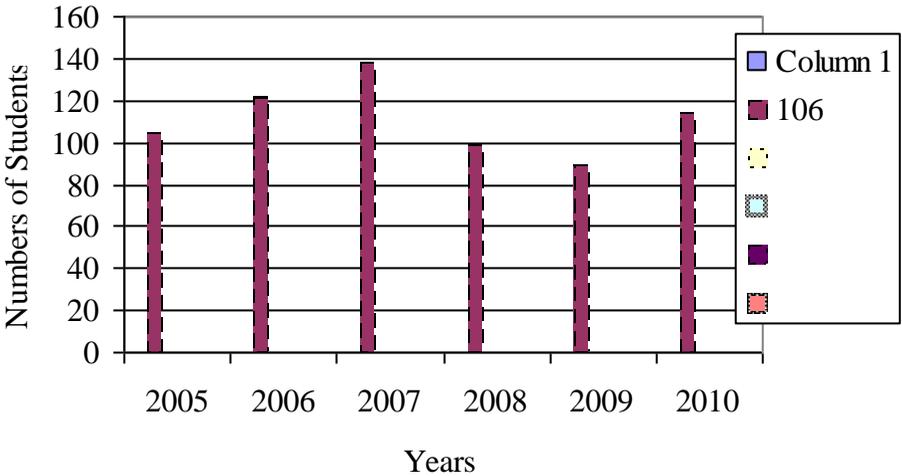
Figure 7: Column graph:- RELG106 Religion and Conflict

RELG207 Religion, Migration and Urbanization
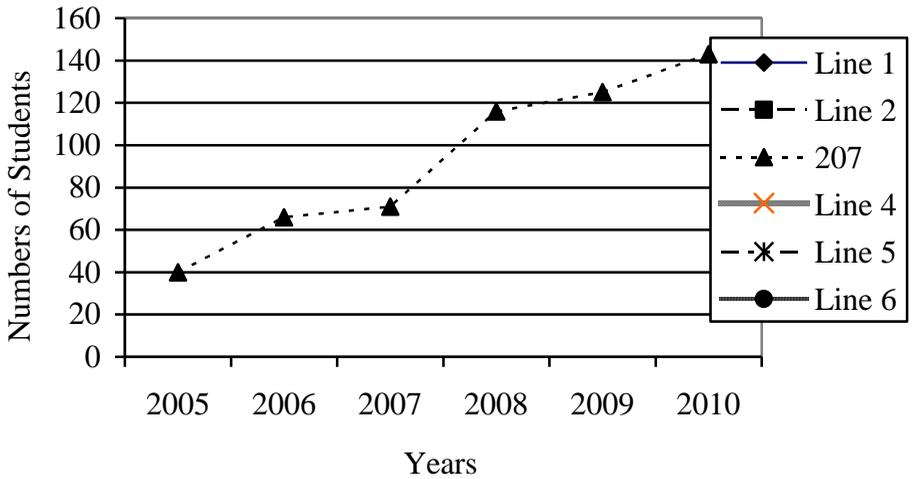
Figure 8: Line graph:- RELG207 Religion, Migration and Urbanization
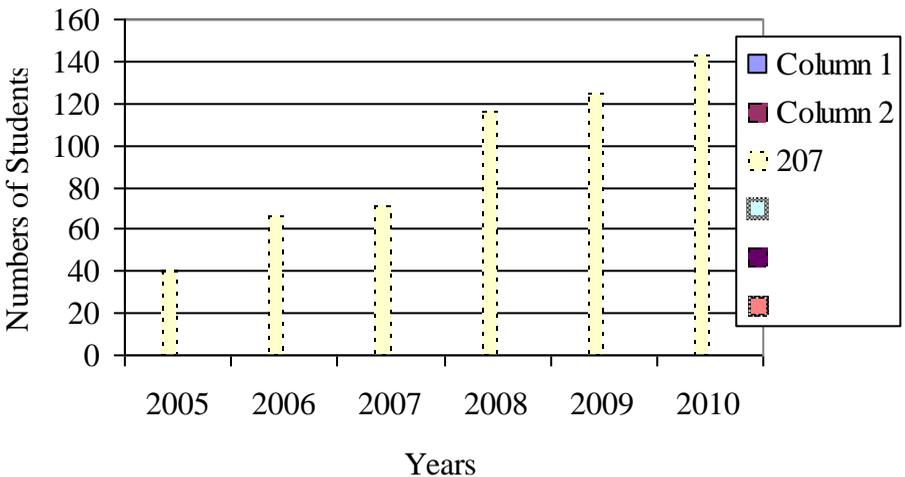
Figure 9: Column graph:- RELG207 Religion, Migration and Urbanization

RELG209 Morality, Ethics and Modernity in Africa
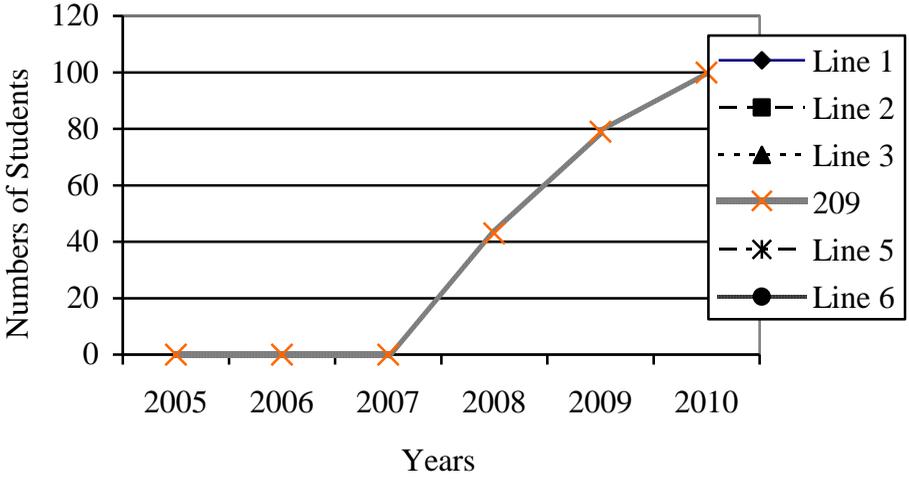
Figure 10: Line graph:- RELG209 Morality, Ethics and Modernity in Africa
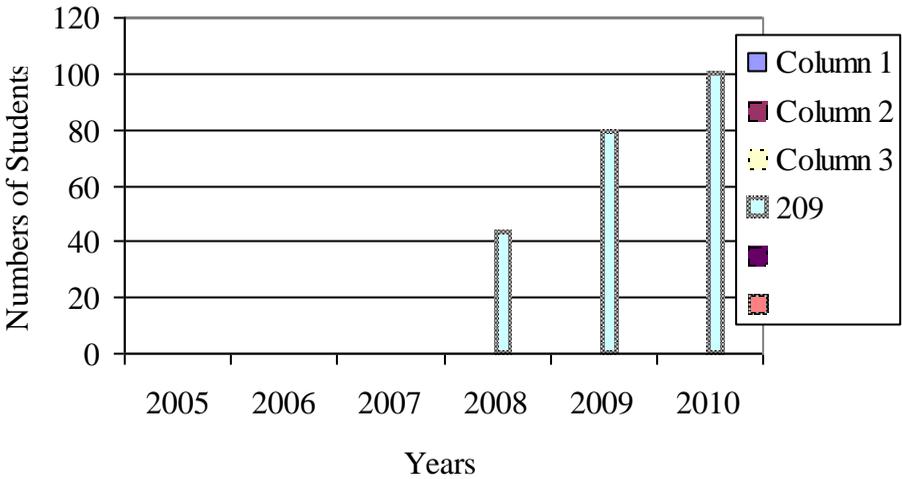
Figure 11: Column graph:- RELG209 Morality, Ethics and Modernity in Africa

RELG214 Women in Religion and Culture
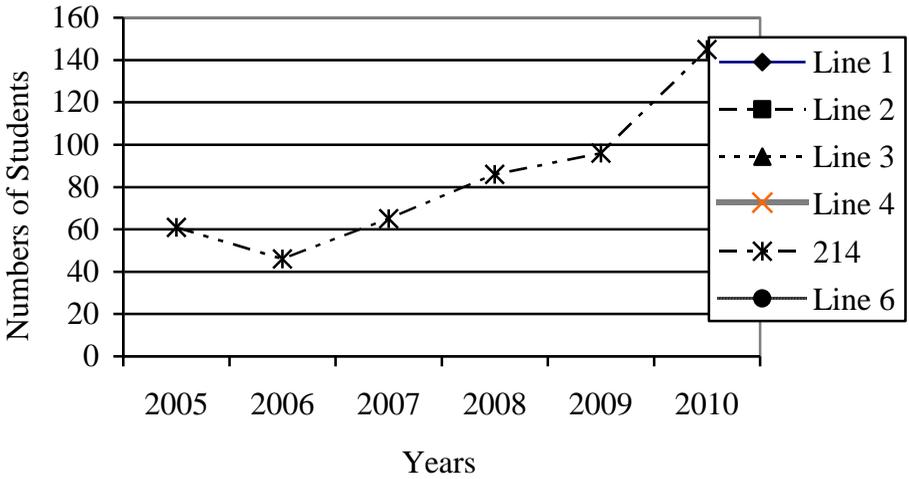
Figure 12: Line graph:- Women in Religion and Culture
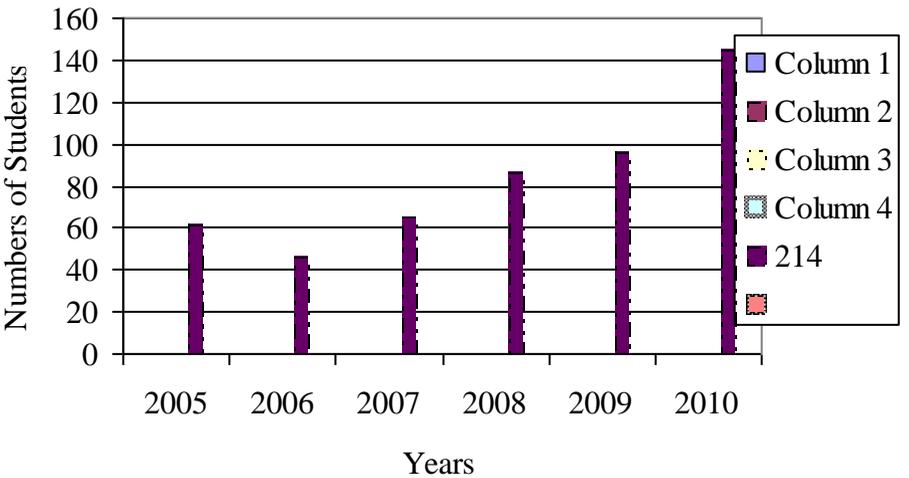
Figure 13: Column graph:- Women in Religion and Culture

RELG217 Religion and the Media
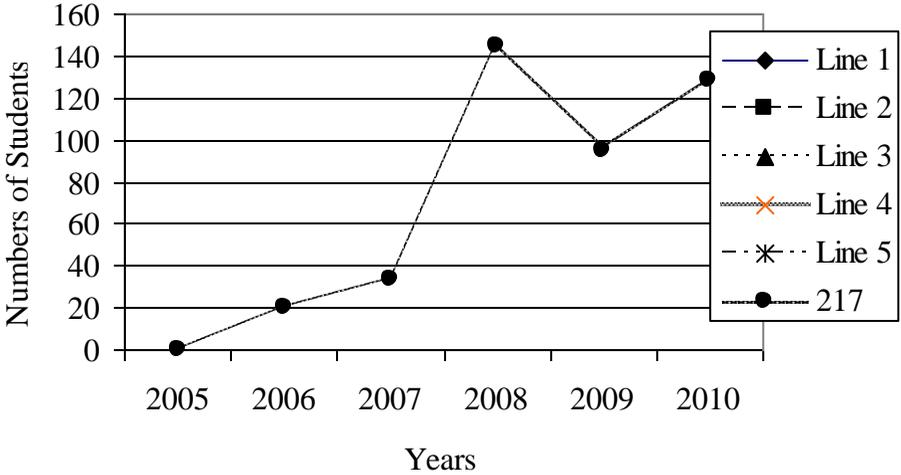
Figure 14: Line graph:- RELG217 Religion and the Media
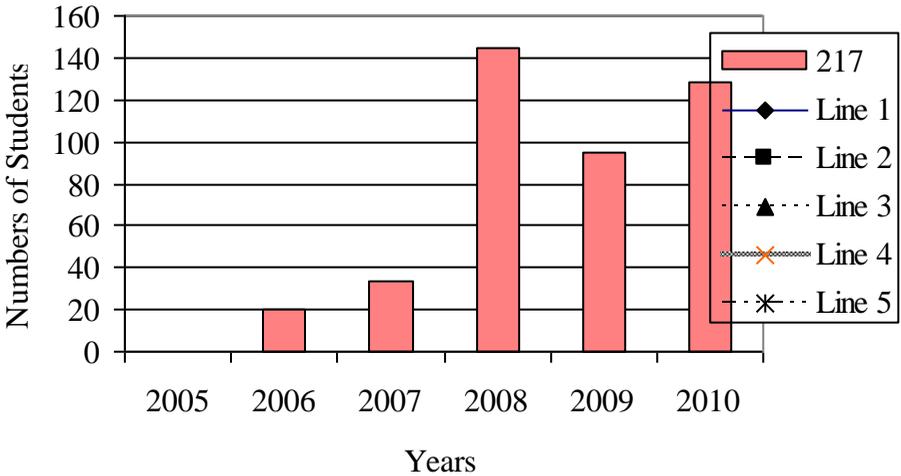
Figure 15: Column graph:- RELG217 Religion and the Media

II
Module Trends (2008 – 2010)

Against the background of the overview of 1st and 2nd level data presented in line and column graphs in the previous section, this section only focuses on the tracing of trends in the two first level modules, RELG101 Introduction to Religion, and RELG106 Religion and Conflict. The rationale is that these two modules would provide some basic indication as to the general trends in the student enrolments for the electives at the undergraduate level in Religion[12].

1   Research Instrument

The data for this section of the article is gleaned from the internal registration form that all students are expected to complete in the first lecture of each semester. The main purpose of the form is to gather some basic contact information of the student before it has been made available by the university administration. In addition, it also requires students to enter their main qualification or programme, major(s) and electives, followed by a question that reads: 'Why have you chosen this module?' with a blank space next to it. With regard to the interpretation of the responses to this question, there are four aspects of the form we need to keep in mind.

- Since students enrolling for the BA major in Religion mostly just state that they take it because it is a programme requirement for the BA major in Religion, these responses are not included in this study.

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[12] What is not covered in this more detailed analysis, is that students from the Social Sciences and students from Development Studies mostly enroll for RELG207 Religion, Migration and Urbanization; students from the Faculty of Law, for RELG209 Morality, Ethics and Modernity in Africa; a general mix of HDSS and Law students enrol for RELG214 Women, Religion and Culture; and students in programmes in Media, for RELG217 Religion and the Media.

- Students from other disciplines and faculties normally have to think about choosing a specific module and the question allows for them to furnish their reasons for taking the module.

- The single question with a blank space also allows for the student's un-coerced response.

- Since module registrations and change of curriculum still continue for another two weeks, experience has shown that not all students complete the form at this first meeting of the class. Data is as follows.

	2008 Forms Completed	2008 Final Student Number	2009 Forms Completed	2009 Final Student Number	2010 Forms Completed	2010 Final Student Number
RELG101	138	**161**	91	**136**	72	**177**
RELG106	91	**99**	70	**89**	112	**113**

Figure 16: Comparison of the sample with the total number of enrolments for the year

Except for RELG101 (2010), the sample of student numbers are substantial enough to provide representative samples for revealing the trends sought in the study.

2   Home Disciplines and Rationales

An analysis of the forms submitted over the three years (2008 – 2010), shows that the students that have enrolled for the electives in Religion are from the following qualifications or programmes[13]: 1) BA; 2) BSocSc; 3) Law; 4)

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[13] Theology is not offered at the Howard College campus in Durban, so there is no data for its undergraduate degree on this campus. Even so, cf. Whaling's (1995) chapter on 'The Study of Religion in a Global Context' for his arguments regarding the distinction between the study of Religion and Theology for instance.

BSocSc (Psychology); 5) Engineering; 6) Community Development; 7) Management; 8) Social Work; 9) Geography; 10) Tourism.

The responses to the question, 'Why have you chosen this module?', were categorized in terms of one of six categories. These were not imposed on the data but derive from the responses of the students themselves, which remarkably could be grouped into any of the following six categories.

1) No information (item left blank);
2) Learn more about Religion;
3) Sounds or looks interesting;
4) Elective (needs credits);
5) Existential reasons/ love religion/ want to explore religion for myself; and
6) Different cultures/ diversity.

The presumed rationales for these reasons for enrolling for a Religion module may be described as follows. (In general these are normally mentioned when asked for comment during the registration process.)

- No information – This is self-explanatory. Some students may only provide the contact details on the form and not be willing to divulge any other information; or not be willing to engage the issue at all because they merely need electives and extra credits.

- Learn more about religion(s) – There may be many reasons for this statement but the most obvious is that the student has some basic religious knowledge and wants to study his or her own religion in a deeper sense or the own religion together with other religions, or all religions in general. All three of these reasons often come to the fore in discussions with students at the time of registration.

- Sounds or looks interesting – Again, there may be many reasons for this statement. Even so, the most obvious one is that since the religions, and orders and denominations normally function quite separately in civil society, and in terms of their own universes of meaning and practice, the opportunity to study the major world religions in one module in a

programme aimed at accommodating the diversity of the city in which the university is situated, seems exciting.

- Elective (needs credits) – This too is self-explanatory. There is no preference of the religion module *per se*. The student needs a 'filler'. Another perspective – and which is one we propagate to the students – is that the student does need the credits but also need to make a conscious decision about the specific bouquet of electives to be included in the qualification or programme, so that the student has some independent decision making power over the nature of the specific qualification or degree with which s/he exits.

- Existential reasons – This rationale may link up with any of the two items on learning more about religion(s) or that the religion module 'sounds'/ 'looks' interesting. Yet, we do have the added 'meaning' dimension that moves beyond the mere scholarly or knowledge or information gaining interest.

- Different cultures/ diversity – in a city characterized by so much diversity in terms of culture and religion as well as a variety of combinations and fusions of these, this is another reason that has social significance.

3　RELG101 Introduction to Religion

This module deals with and engages the normal introductory information about the religions as well as their specific historical and contextual significance in South Africa. The module's aim and content descriptives are as follows.

Aim: To gain diachronic and synchronic insight into, and focus and overview of religious and cultural traditions in the broader ambit of selected issues and debates in contemporary religion.

Content: A syntagmatic and generalized study of beliefs and practices of African Traditional Religions and Cultures; Christianity; Eastern Religions and Hinduism; Islam and New Religious Movements.

3.1   2008

3.1.1   Data

Significantly, for the year 2008, and of the 138 internal registration forms completed by students taking RELG101 as elective, there were no students from the BSocSc (Anthropology major); BA (Psychology major); Social Work; Geography; and Tourism modules. There are some variables involved here, e.g. that Religion is not recommended by staff in these disciplines, that other electives are recommended and not Religion, or that modules with a religious focus are already available for students in the respective programmes – especially in Anthropology. For this year, the enrolment figures are as follows: BA degree (22); BSocSc (29); Law (19) BSocSc (Psychology) (10); Engineering (51); Community Development (1); and Management (9). The most significant statistic is the 51 Engineering students. At this point in 2008, we became aware that the module has become quite popular among Engineering students at Howard College campus. This was due to positive feedback by fellow students who have taken the module in previous years but also Engineering Programme Coordinators who actively encourages students to consider it as their elective taken from another faculty.

Reasons	Qualifications						
	BA	BSocSc	Law	BSSc Psych	Engin	Com Dev	Man
No information	1	1	1		7		
Learn more about religion	7	11	6	4	7	1	3
Sounds or looks interesting	6	6	4	4	7		3
Elective (needs credits)	6	11	5	2	28		
Existential reasons			3		2		
Difference of cultures/ Diversity	2						

TOTAL RESPONSES: 138

Figure 17: Data for RELG101 Introduction to Religion (2008)

3.1.2 Interpretation

The first observation is that for this year, the majority of students came from Engineering – 51 – and the second largest group, from students registered for the Social Sciences degree – 29. Numbers for the other qualification programmes are: BA – 22; Law – 18; BSocSc Psych – 10; Community Development – 1; Management – 6.

As pointed out above, we became aware of the trend of *Engineering students* taking the module in 2008, and that it has mostly come about due to the word-of-mouth advertising of the module by students who completed it in the years 2005 – 2007. By this time, we also became aware that the module was actively propagated by some academic coordinators in Engineering. Apart from taking the module for meeting the needed credit requirements, the two main reasons were that Engineering students wanted to or expected to 'learn more about religion' or that the module 'sounds' or 'looks' interesting. Subsequent discussions with students revealed that the module also had a surprise element in that they did not realise that 'the world is such a religious place'. We also took the opportunity to engage Engineering lecturing staff and to discuss the future prospects of Engineering students taking the module. There was general approval of the module and support among colleagues from Engineering.

The trend for *Law students* is similar for this year – most students took the module to 'learn more about religion' or that the module 'sounds or looks interesting'. Apart from possible existential reasons, there is also the added importance the module has for prospective lawyers and graduates who want to follow a career in the law profession. Similar to graduates in the helping and service professions, prospective workers in the legal fraternity would have an advantage when engaging with their clients who would come from a variety of religious and cultural backgrounds. This would not only provide the needed insight into specific domestic and cultural beliefs and practices, but also the needed knowledge about how to engage people from diverse backgrounds in ways that would assist them most.

For the *BA* and *BSocSc students* to 'learn more' about the religions and that the module 'looks or sounds interesting' are again the highest. Statements focused on the fact that the module allows for students to expand their knowledge about religions. Even though only 10 students from BSocSc

(Psychology) enrolled for the module, the majority here too, mentions these two reasons for taking the module. Across these disciplines, and in line with the main rationale of the module, one may assume that the module adds some basic understanding about the religions and that this would articulate with the discipline focuses in each of the areas of the BA and Social Sciences but also more specifically Psychology.

Finally, we do not think one should read something distinctive or specific into the fact that the only existential responses came from Law and Engineering students. These may be pure coincidence and existential reasons may well be embedded in the other responses. One should however remember that whereas the human and social sciences often deal with issues that involve existential questions this may not always be present in the Law and even less in the Engineering disciplines. Even if it does not form part of a programme officially, existential issues are often discussed even outside the official requirements of the programmes. From this perspective one may therefore look into the possibilities for addressing issues related to 'meaning' more consciously for the benefit of students who enrol for the course.

3.2   2009
3.2.1   Data

For the year 2009, 91 students enrolled for this module as an elective. There were again no students from the BSocSc (Anthropology major); BA (Psychology major); Geography; and Tourism modules. Social Work, however, had 2 students taking the module. For the other qualifications, the data is as follows: BA degree (11); BSocSc (17); Law (10) BSocSc (Psychology) (6); Engineering (43); Community Development (1); and Management (1). The most significant statistic again, is 43 Engineering students. It seems as if this trend continues, with positive responses from both students and Engineering academic coordinators.

Reasons	Qualifications							
	BA	BSSc	Law	BSSc Psy	Engin	Soc Wk	Com Dev	Man
No information					4			

Learn more about religion	8	6	4	1	27			
Sounds or looks interesting	3	4	2		4	1		1
Elective (needs credits)		4	4	4	8			
Existential reasons		2		1		1	1	
Difference, cultures/ Diversity		1						

TOTAL RESPONSES: 91

Figure 18: Data for RELG101 Introduction to Religion (2009)

3.2.2 *Interpretation*

Similar to the interpretation for 2008, the majority of students again came from Engineering – 43 – and the second largest group, from students registered for Social Sciences qualifications – 17. Numbers for the other qualifications and programmes are also similar to the previous year: BA – 11; Law – 17; BSocSc Psych – 6; Community Development – 1; and Management – 1.

As pointed out above, we became aware of the trend of *Engineering students* taking the module in 2008, and engaged academic personnel about it for which there was general support. One important deduction we may make on this point is that it is most probably due to official support from faculty, that the figure for the reason for taking the module only for its credits, has dropped by 36%, from 28 (55%) out of 51 to 8 (19%) out of 43. Whereas 28 students took the module in the previous year for its credit value, there were only 8 in 2009. Conversely, the reason that they took the module in order to 'learn more about religion' jumped by 49%, from 7 (14%) out of 51 to 27 (63%) out of 43. (Since the increase is so large we may even assume that the reason for taking the module was used as a motivation among the students themselves.)

The general trend for the other disciplines basically remained the same with no sufficient deviation. To 'learn more about religions' remain the same across the other disciplines.

3.3   2010

3.3.1   Data

For the year 2010, 72 students enrolled for this module as an elective. There were again no students from the BSocSc (Anthropology major); and the BA (Psychology major). There were however a few from Geography (4) and Tourism (5). For the other qualifications, the data is as follows: BA degree (6); BSocSc (14); Law (9) BSoc Sc (Psychology) (12); Engineering (39); Social Work (3); Community Development (5); Management (4); Geography (5); and tourism (1). The most significant statistic again, is the 28 Engineering students who took the module to 'learn more about religion'.

Reasons	Qualifications									
	BA	BSSc	Law	BSSc Psy	Eng	Soc W	Com Dev	Ma	Geo	To
No info.					3					
Learn more about religion	1	4	6	5	28	3	5			1
Sounds or looks interesting	4	6		5	3					
Elective (needs credits)			3	1	5			1	5	
Existential reasons		1		1				2		
Difference, cultures/ Diversity	1	3						1		

TOTAL RESPONSES: 72

Figure 19: Data for RELG101 Introduction to Religion (2010)

3.3.2 Interpretation

The interpretation is again similar to the interpretation for 2009, with the majority of the students coming from Engineering and the second largest group, from students registered for the Social Sciences degree – 14. Numbers for the other qualification programmes are also again similar to the previous year with no significant fluctuations: BA – 6; Law – 9; BSocSc (Psych) – 12; Community Development – 5; and Management – 1. The addition of Geography and Tourism students were not very clear at this point because students from these disciplines have not taken this module before.

With regard to the reasons for enrolling for the module, it is clear that the majority of students from Law and Engineering gave as reason, to 'Learn more about religion'. The majority of BSocSc students fall in the category of 'Sounds or looks interesting' with an equal split between these two reasons for the BSocSc students. Taken together, we observe though that these two reasons together by far constitute the main reasons for students taking this module.

3.4 Conclusion

As far as the analysis of the reasons why students enrol in the RELG101 Introduction to Religion is concerned, the findings can be summarised as follows.

RELG101 Introduction to Religion	2008	2009	2010	TOTAL
No information	10	4	3	17
Learn more about religion	38	46	53	137
Sounds or looks interesting	30	15	18	63
Elective (needs credits)	52	20	15	87
Existential reasons	5	5	4	14
Difference, cultures/ Diversity	2	1	5	8
			TOTAL	326

Figure 19: Data summary - RELG101 Introduction to Religion (2008 – 2010)

The data speaks for itself. Even so, the most significant finding was that by far the most students enrolled for the two reasons 'learn more about religion' (137 or 42%) and 'sounds or looks interesting' (63 or 19%). These two reasons, the learning or educational and the curiosity reasons are heartening because they show that taking modules for credit only (87 or 27%) is indeed not the only reason why students take electives and in this case, the foundational RELG101 module.

4   RELG106 Religion and Conflict

This module deals with some of the kinds of conflict that exist and the variety of roles that religions and religious formations may play in these conflicts. With its main focus on the African continent, and African contextual realities, the module's main aim and content descriptives are as follows.

Aim: To understand how religion as resource can be used in addressing conflict and redressive action.

Content: The definition of religion in conflict situations; culture and religiously-inspired conflicts in the history of religions - globally, in Africa, nationally, locally. Different kinds of culture and religious conflict; relationship between religion, culture, politics, economics; fascism, national-socialism, and religion advancement; the positive elements in conflict.

4.1   2008

4.1.1   Data

Similar to RELG101 Introduction to Religion, for 2008, there were no students from the BSocSc (Anthropology major); BA (Psychology major); Social Work; Geography; and Tourism modules. The reasons may be similar to the ones for RELG101 – that Religion is not recommended by staff in these disciplines, that other electives are recommended and not Religion, or that modules with a religious focus are already available for students in the respective programmes. For this year, the enrolment figures are as follows: BA degree (15); BSocSc (21); Law (12) BSocSc (Psychology) (19); Engineering (11); Community Development (1); and Management (3). In

comparison with RELG101, the most significant statistic is the low enrolment from Engineering. This may indicate that RELG101 is more popular than RELG106. The general spread of enrolments between the BA and BSocSc qualifications appears to be generally in a similar region.

Reasons	Qualifications									
	BA	BSSc	Law	BSSc Psy	Eng	Soc W	Com Dev	Ma	Geo	To
No information	1	5	6	7	1		1	1		
Learn more about religion	2	8	5	9	1			1		
Sounds or looks interesting	8	5		3	3			1		
Elective (needs credits)	2	1			6					
Other	2	2	1							

TOTAL RESPONSES: 91

Figure 20: Data for RELG106 Religion and Conflict (2008)

4.1.2 Interpretation

In comparison with the elective RELG101 Introduction to Religion module taken for 2008, we see, surprisingly, that students from Engineering and Law do not figure prominently for RELG106. The reason may be that students are required to only take one module, and in which case they choose the introductory module which is more foundational than RELG106 Religion and Conflict. Another reason may be that whereas RELG101 is better accommodated in the Engineering and Law timetables, the same is not the case for RELG106. Significant, however, is that the highest score is for only taking RELG106 for purposes of extra credits.

Another significant trend is that the qualification programme numbers strongly veer toward the Humanities: BA degree (15); BSocSc (21); Law (12) BSocSc (Psychology) (19); Engineering (10); Community Development (1); and Management (3). The most significant statistic is that

represented by the combination of the BSocSc and BSocSc (Psychology), which comes to 40. The main reason may be that apart from foundational interests, RELG106 deals with a variety of forms of social and cultural conflict articulated with religion, which constitutes one of the main challenges in society and encountered in both the Social Sciences and the BSocSc (Psychology) programmes. This fact is brought to the fore even more in that BSocSc has 19 students for this one year, whereas RELG101 only had a total of 27 for the three years 2008 – 2010.

For the reasons why students enrol for this module, it is clear that the two reasons, 'learn more about religion' and 'sounds or looks interesting' are the most prominent for the BA, BSocSc, and BSocSc (Psychology) qualifications and programmes with a substantial representation from Law. The module's topical focus, obviously motivates students to choose it vis-à-vis others on offer in the Humanities faculty. What is significant, however, is that students want to learn more about religion, indicating that there is a recognition that there is a lack of knowledge of the religion disciplines and religions among students enrolling for these qualifications and programmes.

4.2   2009
4.2.1   Data

For the year 2009, 70 students enrolled for this module as an elective. There were again no students from the BSocSc (Anthropology major); BA (Psychology major); Social Work; Community Development; Management; Geography; and Tourism modules. For the other qualifications, the data is as follows: BA degree (9); BSocSc (18); Law (11) BSocSc (Psychology) (23); Engineering (9). The most significant statistic is the combined number of 40 students from the BSocSc programmes.

Reasons	Qualifications									
	BA	BSSc	Law	BSSc Psy	Eng	Soc W	Com Dev	Ma	Geo	To
No information		4	5	2	6					
Learn more about religion	4	3		5	3					

Sounds or looks interesting	2	8	3	12					
Elective (needs credits)	1	3	3	2					
Existential reasons	1			1					
Difference, cultures/ Diversity	1			1					

TOTAL RESPONSES: 70

Figure 21: Data for RELG106 Religion and Conflict (2009)

4.2.2 Interpretation

For 2009, the basic trend continues. We see again that students from Engineering and Law do not figure as prominently as in the RELG101 module, with only 9 for the former and 11 for the latter enrolling for RELG106. Statistics for the other modules indicates a substantial number from the two BSocSc qualifications.

Of the students who enrolled for 2009, the majority list their reason for choosing the module as 'sounds or looks interesting'. In total, 20 students from the BSocSc qualifications give this as reason. The curiosity element is here signalled again and also registers for the BA qualification and Law.

4.3   2010

4.3.1   Data

For the year 2010, 112 students enrolled for this module as an elective. There were again no students from the BSocSc (Anthropology major); the BA (Psychology major); Community Development; Geography and Tourism. For the other qualifications, the data is as follows: BA degree (10); BSocSc (11); Law (14) BSocSc (Psychology) (40); Engineering (4); Social Work (2); Management (31). In comparison with RELG101, the most significant statistic again, is the low number from Engineering. However, there is a sharp rise in numbers for students from the BSocSc (Psychology) and Management programmes.

Reasons	Qualifications									
	BA	BSSc	Law	BSSc Psy	Eng	Soc W	Com Dev	Ma	Geo	To
No information					1			1		
Learn more about religion	2	6	6	21				10		
Sounds or looks interesting	5	3	6	16		2		15		
Elective (needs credits)	2			1	3			4		
Existential reasons				1				1		
Difference, cultures/ Diversity	1	2	2	1						

TOTAL RESPONSES: 112

Figure 22: Data for RELG106 Religion and Conflict (2010)

4.3.2   *Interpretation*

In general for 2010, we see the basic trend continues. Again, students from Engineering and Law do not figure as prominently as in the RELG101 module, with only 4 for the former and 14 for the latter enrolling for RELG106. There is however an additional feature in evidence here. In comparison with 2008 (19 students) and 2009 (23 students), we see a remarkable increase in BSocSc (Psychology) students (40 students). We also see a very remarkable increase in students from Management (31 Students).

As with earlier years, the majority of reasons why students enrolled for these modules – especially in the groups with the large number of students (BA; BSocSc; Law; BSocSc (Psychology); and Management Studies) the two most prominent reasons are 'learn more about religion' and 'sounds or looks interesting'. The expectations of gaining knowledge and the curiosity element are the most prominent.

4.4   Conclusion

For the analysis of the reasons why students enrol in RELG106 Religion and Conflict, the combined finding is as follows.

RELG106 Religion and Conflict	2008	2009	2010	TOTAL
No information	22	17	2	41
Learn more about religion	26	15	45	86
Sounds or looks interesting	20	25	47	92
Elective (needs credits)	9	9	10	28
Existential reasons		2	2	4
Difference, cultures/ Diversity	5	2	6	13
			TOTAL	264

Figure 23: Data summary - RELG106 Religion and Conflict (2008 – 2010)

The data again speaks for itself. Similarly, the most students enrolled for the two reasons 'learn more about religion' (86 or 33%) and 'sounds or looks interesting' (92 or 35%). The combined finding for students who only did this module for purposes of credit, is a lowly 28 or 11%.

III
Inter-disciplinary Articulation of Religion with the Humanities Disciplines

The dynamics analysed in this article represents only a sample of the bigger picture of the offering of the full bouquet of Comparative Religion modules (all three levels) as well as the modules of the Religion-specific stream (only offered at levels 2 and 3) and their articulation with fellow Humanities disciplines. In general, the analyses so far not only indicate the steady rise in student numbers since the introduction of the religion discipline at Howard College, but also some of the variables that impact on the implicit or latent articulation of these two religion modules with fellow subjects in the

Humanities (and Engineering and Law). What we here term 'implicit' or 'latent' articulation relates to fellow Humanities disciplines not only content wise – by filling a perceived gap in these adjacent disciplines – but more significantly indicates the constructive contribution to these two religion modules to the Humanities disciplines as perceived by tis clients, the students. This is especially evident in the fact that in both RELG101 and RELG106, the two overriding reasons given for enrolling for the modules are to 'learn more about religion' and 'sounds or looks interesting'.

	RELG101	RELG106	Combined
Learn more about religion	137 (42%)	86 (32%)	223 (38%)
Sounds or looks interesting	63 (19%)	92 (35%)	155 (26%)
			TOTAL: 378 (64%)

Figure 24: Cumulative data for the two most prominent variables (2008 – 2010)

What is significant in this calculation is that cumulatively, the two most prominent reasons for enrolling for these two modules come to a total of 64%. This means that the main reasons why its clients enrolled for these two modules over the period 2008 – 2010 are that they expected the modules to add to their knowledge of religion as well as satisfy their curiosity about religion. More significantly, the analyses also raise the question of the actual perceived importance of the inter-disciplinary engagement of the disciplines by the students, and per definition by the modules offered. Such interdisciplinary articulation of Religion at the Howard College campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal could be represented as in figure 1.

The representation of these articulations is only drawn from the two modules, RELG101 Introduction to Religion, and RELG106 Religion and Conflict, for the years 2008 - 2010. In the section below, we only focus on these two modules and reflect on the potential for developing further some relevant critical perspectives on these interdisciplinary articulations.
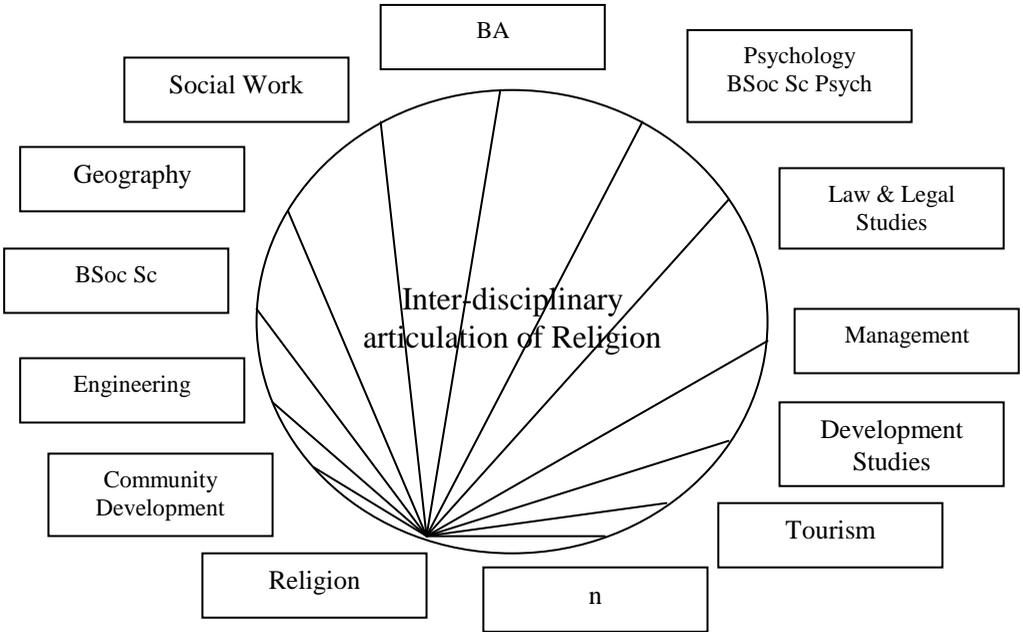
Figure 25: Inter-disciplinary articulation of Religion with Humanities disciplines at Howard College

1   Inter-disciplinary Articulation of Religion in the Humanities - Data

This first section provides the data, followed by the data interpretation of each of the articulations in the next. The third and fourth sections interpret the significance of the data for the two respective modules, RELG101 Introduction to Religion, and RELG106 Religion and Conflict.

RELG101 Introduction to Religion

Dates	Qualifications								
	BA	BSocSc	Law	BSSc Psych	Engin	Com Dev	Man	Soc Wk	To

2008	22	29	19	10	51	1	6		
2009	11	17	10	6	43	2	2	2	
2010	6	14	9	12	39	5	4	3	1
Total	**39**	**60**	**38**	**28**	**133**	**8**	**12**	**5**	**1**

TOTAL RESPONSES: 301

Figure 26: Inter-disciplinary articulation of RELG101 Introduction to Religion with Humanities disciplines at Howard College

RELG106 Religion and Conflict

Dates	Qualifications							
	BA	**BSocSc**	**Law**	**BSSc Psych**	**Engin**	**Com Dev**	**Man**	**Soc Wk**
2008	15	21	12	19	11	1	3	
2009	9	18	11	23	9			
2010	10	11	14	40	4		31	2
Total	**34**	**50**	**37**	**82**	**24**	**1**	**34**	**2**

TOTAL RESPONSES: 273

Figure 27: Inter-disciplinary articulation of RELG106 Religion and Conflict with Humanities disciplines at Howard College

2 Inter-disciplinary Articulation of Religion in the Humanities - Interpretation

2.1 *Religion and the BA Qualification*

It is to be expected that a sizeable portion of the annual intake of students for a Religion elective would come from the BA general studies cohort of students. For these three years, the two modules drew 39 (13%) and 34 (12,5%) students of the total respectively. In general they comprise an average mix with students coming from across the BA majors, in the languages, literary, historical and gender studies.

2.2 *Religion and the BSocSc Qualification*

For the three years being studied, the two modules drew 60 (20%) and 50 (18,3%) students of the total respectively. A sizeable portion, about one fifth

of the class enrolled for these two modules over this period comes from this qualification group. Significant is that the two modules drew about the same percentage of students from the social sciences for these three years.

2.3   Religion and Law/ Legal Studies
For the years analysed, the number of students who enrolled from Law or Legal studies were: 38 (13,6%); and 37 (13,5%) respectively. Similar to the students from the social sciences, there appears to be about an equal distribution of students interested in the two modules from the Law student cohort. So some students would enrol for the introductory module due to its general and introductory nature. A similar percentage enrolled for the second module because it introduces and stimulates interest due to its focus on social and cultural conflicts and how these articulate with the religions – with the parallel significance of such conflicts in a legal frame of reference.

2.4   Religion and Psychology (BSocSc Psych)
It is significant that for the years analysed, the number of BSocSc with Psychology students are: 28 (9,3%); and 82 (30%) respectively. Significant is the substantial number enrolling for the second module, indicating that most interest from Psychology perspective lies not in the general introductory nature of the module, but the significance of the articulation of religion with conflict and how this could also have significance in the area of the study of Psychology from social scientific perspective.

2.5   Religion and Engineering
The data indicates that it is especially the introductory module which is popular among Engineering students. For the introductory module, we have 133 (44%) and for religion and conflict 24 (9%) respectively.

2.6   Religion and Community Development
One could understand that students from Development Studies would be very interested in Religion, because it is such an important social construct in grassroots communities. The statistics for this articulation were however low: 8 (2,6%); and 1 (0.3%) respectively.

2.7 Religion and Management

For students enrolling in Religion modules from Management, the statistics were: 12 (%); and 34 (%) respectively. Similar to the indication in the BSocSc (Psychology) articulation, we also have a sharply higher percentage of students enrolling for the Religion and Conflict module. The obvious deduction is that students in Management Studies also deal with real-time and concrete events and realities of conflict and the enrolling for this module would provide some introduction and background to the analysis and understanding of the significance of religion in conflict situations which have to be engaged and dealt with in organisations and companies at different levels of management.

2.8 Religion and Social Work

The statistics for Social Work is quite low: 5 (1,6%); and 2 (0,7%) respectively. This may be due to the fact the Social Work is a structured qualification and that students only take the religion modules over and above their regularly enrolled qualification mixes.

2.9 Religion and Tourism

Here too, the statistics is quite low: 1 for the introductory module and 0 for religion and conflict. It appears the religious dimension in tourism is not yet prominent in Tourism studies.

2.10 Conclusion

Even though only applicable to the period focused on 2008 - 2010, there are three important observations concerning the statistical analyses above.

The *first* deducation is that there is an equal distribution of students between RELG101 and RELG106 from the adjacent majors and disciplines in the BA, BSocSc, and Law/ Legal qualifications. This indicates a general trend among these cohorts of students in their decisions and rationales for enrolling for these two first level religion modules.

The *second* observation is that the main choice of Engineering students is the introductory module. With 51, 43 and 39 in the respective years, this indicates a general trend of interest in RELG101 rather than RELG106.

Thirdly, there is an overwhelming interest of BSocSc (Psychology) and Management students in RELG106 Religion and Conflict. Moreover, if the data for the structured degree of the BSocSc (Psychology) students is added to that of the BSocSc (General) students, we get a figure of 132 or 48,3% – which indicates that nearly 50% of the RELG106 students over the three years studied, comes from the Social Sciences majors and qualifications.

Given these observations, it appears that the main deduction which could be made is that the lecturers responsible for offering the modules should take these findings into consideration, and especially the fact that a large percentage – nearly half of the class of RELG106 – hails from the social science cohort of students every year.

3 Critical Perspectives: RELG101 Introduction to Religion

Apart from the module introduction and conclusion which both prepare and introduce as well as conclude and summarise the module, students are introduced to some of the basic perspectives and concrete contents of African Religion, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and New Religious Movements respectively in RELG101. Students are introduced to these religions in terms of five critical theoretical perspectives.

These five critical perspectives critically articulate with Comparative Religion Studies as general umbrella theoretical construct for the programme. These also underpin the teaching delivery of the material, e.g. the continuous highlighting of pluralism, phenomenology, secular theory, contextuality and postcolonialism in prescribed material as well as in tests and essays. *Pluralism* is explored in so far as all the major world religions present in the greater Durban area are studied equally with regard to focuses on the diversity of religions as well as diversity within religions. The progressive study of the religions is rooted in the *phenomenological approach* in so far as they are not studied from a specific faith perspective and in a non-partisan manner according to Smart's 'dimensions of religion'. Ninian Smart's (1997) phenomenological distinctions between beliefs, narratives, ethics, ritual, social organisation, religious experience and symbol

systems[14] are well-known. Since all of these are not equally present with the same intensity in the different religions, this diversity is taken into consideration in terms of the material and contextual manifestation and significance of the religions in South Africa. Such diversity is present both in the comparison of religious formations within each of the religions as well as between them – which also adds another dimension to the focus on pluralism. The significance of the *secular theoretical framework* links up with the basic phenomenological approach and the modernisation debate – holding that for religions to meet on an equal footing, there should not be one overarching or dominant system. The course's *contextual focus* is evident in that each religion's historical facets and significance are briefly reviewed in southern African context and the critical role(s) it has played and continues to play in our country. This is primarily done from *postcolonial* theoretical perspective as the perspective which gives the broad contextual parameters for the description of our current post-apartheid dispensation[15].

This general five-fold philosophical approach in the modules, and by implication how this focus impacts on the RELG101 Introduction to Religion but by implication also the whole programme, derives from a combination of the Philosophy of Consciousness tradition as well as the Philosophy of the Sign (cf. Flood 1999). In developmental context, a rigorous split between these two European-derived traditions is unwelcome to say the least[16]. The critical and empathic as well as agency aspects of the tradition of the Philosophy of Consciousness must be practiced and kept in a healthy tension

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[14] In addition to the 6 dimensions that Smart has worked with initially, it is well-known that he has also added the focus on religious symbols as well as the study of the religions in their material manifestation in subsequent studies.

[15] Our approach resonates with Oxtoby and Hussain (2011) but also moves beyond their approach as encapsulated in our five critical theoreitcial perspectives, as well as the more general spread of our modules on offer.

[16] In this regard, Gavin Flood's *Beyond Phenomenology* is helpful but not convincing – in his attempt to separate these two focuses as if they can be dealt with as distinct paradigms. If one does make such an attempt, one's argument often founders on simplifying the perspective against which one develops one's own argument.

with the tradition of the Philosophy of the Sign and its recognition of diversity, contradiction, ambiguity and ambivalent, non-conclusive nature of social and cultural life. Whereas the former focus is important for the objectification of experience, and the cultivation of conscious action and agency, it needs to be counter-balanced by an existentially inclusive ethical focus on the different forms of diversity which characterises social and cultural life in developmental contexts. This is especially important in the recognition of the importance between 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives. If this latter dichotomy is accounted for in developmental context, the researchers' own embeddedness in social and cultural life is acknowledged and recognised in terms of the socio-economic and cultural constraints such embeddedness entails in the scholarly paradigm they work in. it also curtails claims to completeness or the theoretical totalising of the theoretical domain.

Drawing on notions of both consciousness as well as semiotics, the module's general formative and generic character and the five main critical philosophical perspectives, the module aims to meet the diverse expectations of its clients from within the BA and BSocSc[17] qualifications, students from the other majors and disciplines, as well as the Engineering students. From this perspective, the module aims to meet their expectations with regard to the social and cultural significance of its study of the religions, and their institutions, systems[18].

Correspondingly, the module provides a very basic introduction to the foundational analysis and theoretical understanding of a sample of the structures and systems of the major world religions and some new religious movements in the region. At selected points in the course, there are also

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[17] For the BA General Studies SAQA template, see: http://regqs.saqa.org.za/viewQualification.php?id=23375. For the BSocSc Sociological Analysis and Social Research qualification SAQA template, see: http://regqs.saqa.org.za/viewQualification.php? id=81201.

[18] Indicative of this fact is the significance social scientists give to the study of religions and religious formations. Historically, most prominent is the work by Durkheim (1915), Weber (1930; 1951; 1958) but also Berger (1967a; 1967b) more recently. On the African continent, there is a rising tide of scholarly publications. Cf. for instance, Nthoi (2006); Platvoet, Cox & Olupona (1996); ter Haar (ed) (2007; 2010); Ugba (2009); and Ukah (2008).

some basic and preliminary explication of some of the basic and most seminal principles and practices of empirical social research into the social systems and structures of society. In this regard one of the choices for the researched semester paper comprises the empirical research of a religious tradition, formation or practices of a specific religious group. Students are able to not only learn theoretically but observe and study a social phenomenon empirically and practically as 'lived religion'[19]. They are also encouraged to choose and formulate a semester paper topic that links up with their home discipline and/ or career objectives. As such the module is brought closer to the career and professional expectations of students, while firmly anchored in the module's course materials. Such an approach is vital in South Africa, if we conscientiously attend to its diversity and plurality but also the variety of developmental needs and the dearth of informed critical social analysis, especially with regard to the actual functioning and social impact of religion[20].

Similar to the generic significance of the module for the BA and BSocSc, it would have the same function for the Law qualifications. The analysis shows that there are a consistent number of Law students enrolling for this module. As such, the module is valuable for a career in law or the legal fraternity at a very basic level[21]. The same is true for students from the BSocSc (Psychology) background. They would similarly acquire a broad spread of perspectives on the study of Religion[22].

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[19] The collection of essays edited by Harvey (2010) is ground-breaking in this regard.

[20] Gifford (1998; 2004; 2009) has significantly addressed this very important issue for some regions in sub-Saharan Africa.

[21] There have been some remarkable developments in the area of Religion and law (cf. Feldman 2000; Bennett 2011). Additional perspectives concern the articulation of religious morality, ethics or law with corresponding secular legal but also scientific fields, e.g. biomedical ethics (cf. Martin 2007 for a few general perspectives; and Ebrahim 2011 on reproductive health).

[22] Apart from the rich history of the articulation of Psychology with Religion (cf. Leeming, Madden & Marian 2010), see the very influential study by Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi ([1958] 1975) which set the agenda and is indicative of the important areas of the field; cf. also Wulff (2010).

A major reason why Engineering students enrol for the module is that it is a requirement in their qualification structure that they take at least one module from a discipline outside the Engineering faculty. However, as the statistics above indicates, Introduction to Religion has become popular among Engineering students because of two prominent reasons – that they 'want to learn more about religion' and because it 'sounds or looks interesting'. This, one could say, is the curiosity element that serves as motivation. Even so, reviews of the module have indicated that it meets expectations of the Engineering students on this score. Being the foundation module of the programme, and also because it serves such a variety of students from within the Humanities, it is not advisable to make alternations concerning specifically Engineering disciplinary requirements, e.g. the significance of engineering in the history of religions, and their material manifestations[23].

Even though one could provide quite a number of reasons, why a basic introductory course to religion would be of interest to students in Community Development, Management and Social Work, the most significant is the module's general spread of focuses on the religions. It is therefore disappointing that so few students from these programmes enrolled for RELG101. This may indicate that there is a general lack of knowledge of the significance of the religions in these working life contexts. With regard to tourism, the limited interest is understandable since the Tourism programme offers CHTM211 Festivals and Events Tourism which includes a focus on religious festivals. The more general spread of the study of the religions in RELG101 is also not directly applicable to tourism. A more specialised module, for instance would represent the role and function of religious people and faith-based organisations in the politics, and history of the region – similar to literary and political figures[24].

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[23] There is however a vast scholarship on this both with regard to the classical texts and remnants of dated scientific expressions in buildings, architecture, machinery, etc. (cf. Schwartz 1997; 2002 among numerous others) – which represent the fact that religious personnel often also functioned as the thinkers and scientists of the past – as well as more recent reflections (cf. Gosling 2001; Herzfeld 2009; Smith 2010).

[24] Amongst others, see Jeanette Eve's *Literary Guide to the Eastern Cape* (2003) for instance.

4   Critical Perspectives: RELG106 Religion and Conflict

The main rationale for this module is that it studies the articulation of religions and religious formations with different kinds of conflict from the perspective of viewing the religions as resources of peacebuilding and peacemaking and not as part of the causes of conflict in the first place. As such, it starts off by defining religion in conflict situations – to highlight that religions are not necessarily part of the causes of conflicts and that they could play different roles in conflict processes and developments – that of critic or bystander for instance. This is followed by successive historical focuses on religiously-inspired conflicts, fundamentalism, the relationships between religion, culture, politics and economics in conflict situations, and the different kinds of conflict in terms of sect and cult studies. It then deals with genocide and the roles of religions in these very serious manifestations of conflict and repression. Finally, and retrospectively, the module treats the fact that conflict is not to be seen as only negative but also as a positive force in human society, and how religions have formed and continue to form part of this positive developmental force.

Since this second semester module follows on the offering of RELG101 Introduction to Religion in the first semester, it is assumed that it would not only provide an adequate background for RELG106, but also impacts on the latter with regard to the general philosophical, theoretical and empirical approaches. With regard to the general philosophical approach of the module, the module continues the study of religions in terms of the phenomenon of conflict in the Comparative Religion Studies theoretical framework. Each of the six sections covered engages the five main critical philosophical perspectives to various degrees. *Pluralism* is inherent in the realities focused on. How diversity between and inside the religions play a role in conflict generation and intervention are also traced and how diversity could be dealt with in terms of peace-building, peacemaking, peace-keeping and reconciliation exercises. The basic *phenomenological* map of the dimensions of religion forms the contours of the different focuses in so far as the roles and functions of each of these are traced in the theoretical study of the phenomenon, as well as in the case studies. All are treated in *secular perspective*, allowing students to explore the topics both from within their own religion standpoints as well as others'. Where possible, all topics covered are addressed in terms of the phenomenological approach and the

modernisation debate. The module's *contextual focus* is evident in that each religious phenomenon's historical dimensions as well as material significance are analysed, with a main focus on African realities. This is primarily done from African *postcolonial* theoretical and moral perspective – social justice, freedom, dignity and equality – as the perspective which gives the broad evaluative contextual parameters for the description of our current post-apartheid dispensation.

Similar to the spread of students for RELG101, RELG106 has a similar spread from the BA, BSocSc and Law qualifications – around 34 (12,5%), 50 (18,3%), and 37 (13,5%) respectively. The rationale for this spread could again be similar – that the percentages represent a general trend of interest in the module among students coming from across the BA majors and BSocSc qualifications. These students enrol for the module due to its general introductory nature with regard to the articulation of religions and religious formations with different kinds of conflict in the broader social and cultural domain[25] but also for its central focus on peacemaking and peacebuilding[26]. Furthermore, from the legal perspective, students enrolled for the module because it introduces and stimulates interest due to its focus on conflict at educational but also ethnic and group levels[27].

Different from the enrolments for RELG101, the BSocSc enrolment figures for this module are quite high – nearly 50% of the class over the three year period. In comparison with RELG101, this is a definite indication that there is a much higher interest among BSocSc students in the Religion and Conflict module than in the Introduction to Religion. This is due to the

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[25] For the broader cultural dimensions of conflict, see Avruch, Black & Scimecca (1998) and Cohen (1991).

[26] For significant sources in this regard, see Lederach (1993); Saunders (1999); Getui & Ayanga (2002); Getui & Kanyandago (1999); Mollov (2003); Iram (2006).

[27] Cf. Johnston & Sampson (1994) and the significant but controversial book by Huntington (1996) as well as the scholarship and divergence of opinion around it, especially Sen (1999) on diversity; Berman (2003) on groups of protagonists as cause of conflict and not 'civilizations'; and Said (2001) on the diversity in Islam vs Huntington's homogeneous representation of Islam.

recognition of the significant role religions play in socio-cultural conflicts as well as peace-building on the African continent and elsewhere[28].

Furthermore, the fact that the interest is from both general sociological and psychological perspectives, indicates that on this level too, there is not only an interest with regard to the social systems and structures but also how conflict relates and articulates with human personality and social psychological perspectives with regard to social psychological articulations with individual and group life.

A similarly substantial percentage was registered for students from the management sciences. The obvious deduction is that students in Management Studies also deal with real-time and concrete events and realities of conflict and the enrolling for this module would provide some introduction and background to the analysis and understanding of the significance of religion in conflict situations which have to be engaged and dealt with by management – especially at larger and global levels.

As pointed out above, even though present, this module is not very high on the agenda for students from Engineering, Community Development, and Social Work.

Conclusion

After a brief background sketch of some of the dynamics that lead to the founding and establishing of the Religion discipline at the Howard College campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal this article *firstly* overviewed the student numbers of two first level and four second level modules that were offered as electives since 2005. The most significant observation was the overall annual steady growth in numbers the modules experienced.

The *second* focus of the article was the analysis of the home disciplines and programmes of students who enrolled for RELG101 Introduction to Religion and RELG106 Religion and Conflict as electives as well as a cursory analysis and interpretation of the reasons why students from the Faculties of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences (HDSS), Law and Engineering chose these modules.

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[28] Cf. the seminal study by Westerlund (1996).

With regard to the analysis of home disciplines and programmes of students who enrolled for RELG101 Introduction to Religion, the following findings were made:

- the identification of the home disciplines and programmes;
- the near average spread and distribution of enrolments from year to year from the BA, Law, BSocSc and BSocSc (Psychology) students; and
- the large number of students representing the Engineering qualifications and programmes over the three years.

With regard to the home disciplines and programmes of RELG106 Religion and Conflict, the findings were:

- the identification of the home disciplines and programmes;
- the near average spread and distribution of enrolments from year to year from the BA, Law, BSocSc and BSocSc (Psychology);
- the strong presence of students from the social sciences – when we combine the numbers of BSocSc and BSocSc (Psychology) – which was much higher than for RELG101 Introduction to Religion;
- the very low number of students from Engineering when compared to RELG101; and
- the very significant increase in students numbers from Management in 2010.

As far as the analysis of the reasons why students enrol in the Religion modules is concerned, the findings were that most enrolled for these two modules because they wanted to learn more about Religion or that they were curious about the subject. Combined, the statistics are: 378 or 64% vis-à-vis the combined number for those who only enrol for it for credit purposes, 115 or 19%. This augurs well for the continued enrolment of students taking these modules as electives because it indicates commitment and not mere enrolment for credit purposes.

Our *third* focus was the analysis of the significance of the articulations of these two modules with the home disciplines from which students came. The analyses speak for themselves. Even so, this is an area in

need of more focused and concerted research, not only how the modules articulate with the home disciplines and programmes of students but especially how they articulate with real-life social challenges in society and community as the third point of comparison and application.

Given this study and its findings, it appears that the main deduction which must be made is that the lecturers responsible for offering the modules should take the findings into consideration in their teaching and learning – especially the fact that a large percentage hails from the social science cohort of students every year. Coupled with the second section of analyses, it is this group of students that also indicates as the main reasons for enrolling for this module as wanting to learn more about Religion or that they are curious about the subject. If similar analyses could be done early on each semester that the modules are offered, better informed and focused decisions could be made about how to more constructively accommodate the students from the adjacent programmes, disciplines and schools in actual course content and course teaching and learning.

Finally, it stands to reason that religion as social phenomenon has been part and parcel of human evolution. In our post-colonial and post-modern context, this has not changed. It appears that at least for a certain sector within the Humanities disciplines, the social scientific study of religion, is regarded as a very significant part of studying human evolution, human societies, and human community[29].

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[29] In this regard, we can at least say that this study has confirmed that the decision taken by the academic staff at the former University of Durban-Westville (1999) to develop a social science approach to the study of religion in our region, has been borne out. Even though one can never exclude a meaning-focused approach to the study of religion, in our own developmental context, a social sciences approach seems the most appropriate.

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Critical Education about Marriage: Combining Critical Pedagogy and *Phronesis* for Religious Education

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Abstract

This article discusses the nature of criticality for religious education curriculum and pedagogy, with a particular focus on marriage in Hebrew Bible (Old Testament, abbreviated OT) texts. First, 'criticality' is defined in historical and literary terms, asking questions of what the Bible writers meant and intended. Secondly, the use of Bible texts is explored through the prism of 'critical theory', in which social critique particularly emphasises notions of justice, equity and democratic 'voice'. The presence of secular Jewish thought within the Frankfurt School of social-critical thought suggests some influence from the ancient Jewish prophetic call for everyday justice. Thirdly, I explore synergies between critical theory and the Aristotelian concept of *phronesis*, 'practical wisdom' on effective living, as developed by Bent Flyvbjerg and colleagues. Through these lenses, I examine how these ideas might affect the way marriage is discussed and taught in religious education in Africa and elsewhere. Finally I discuss the broader potential for this mix of Critical Theory and *phronesis* for education as a whole.

1. Critical Education about Religion

Learning about religion through a curriculum content agreed by some education Board and declared as 'fact' obscures the problematic nature of

religion and of knowledge, and fails to engage learners actively with issues. Various attempts have been made to define a methodology for religious education, combining description with issues (Barnes 2011 is a balanced recent example). This paper brings together the socially empowering Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School, and Bent Flyvbjerg's (2001) social application of *phronesis*. I apply this to education about marriage because marriage choice, intermarriage and divorce are issues relating to religious groups in Africa. Elsewhere, including the UK, there are similar issues in some Muslim communities. Although written for an African journal, issues of sexuality and marriage are relevant in different ways across the world and within various religions. I then consider how critical pedagogy for religious education might be developed. In Aristotle's view, the quest for knowledge is a balance between conceptual knowledge (*epistemé*), technical skill (*techné*) and everyday practical knowledge (*phronesis*), a triplet of human virtues – to get to know things, to become skilled, and to have common sense. Concerning marriage and sexual relationships, attitudes are generally neither *common* (that is, widely agreed) nor *sensible* (that is, based on rational thought). The rationality of choices in matters of sex, religion and politics are profoundly problematic, and all collide in the debate about marriage choice, lifetime marital fidelity, and divorce. Religious beliefs impact strongly on marriage partner choice, contraception and divorce; and traditionalist political voices, whether it is in Christian Africa, in the US Republican Party, or in an Islamic context, adversely affect the lives of many[1]. The religious education curriculum needs therefore to be grounded on and to develop ethical criticality.

Critical Biblical Studies

Religious Education has evolved from Christian instruction to become an academic, intellectually-rigorous subject, a study of religions and the personal and social issues they impact on. Criticality, broadly defined, is central to a modern academic curriculum: criticality in Biblical Studies until the 1970s was primarily historico-linguistic, and these areas continue to be

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[1] See Bigger (2009) for a discussion of the African context.

relevant[2] leading to a greater emphasis today on the *writers* as creative theologians of the post-exilic period (Grabbe 2004; Jonker 2010). That literary and redaction criticism (i.e. the art and techniques of the original writers and editors) is important I argued in detail in *Creating the Old Testament* (Bigger 1989), following Robert Alter's (1981) determination to discover what the final historical authors might have meant[3]. This is not, in my view, an excuse for theological conservatism: the Bible writers wrote to persuade and on occasions are neither wise nor edifying, particularly their views on 'other' nations. The writers held positions of religious and political power which they wished to preserve, and they wanted their texts to persuade and even enslave others (in the sense that the texts would mould the lives of followers). A critique of such power is the task of Critical Theory. Their texts have affected marriage ideology and sexual choices throughout the centuries to the present day.

Once we detach Biblical Studies from church hermeneutics, the texts take on different meanings. Ancient texts such as Homer, Sophocles, and Euripides in ancient Greece, Gilgamesh in Sumeria, and the Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata all come alive for modern audiences through their human relevance and interest. The 'reception history' of such texts is currently a lively research topic reflecting a broad hermeneutic, and biblical texts are no exception. In my view, the study of the ancient texts as literature is enriching only if it is critical in every sense of that term, preventing the text from becoming a museum piece gathering dust, or religious propaganda. Embedded social assumptions are contested and scrutinized in a critical curriculum, using concerns for equity, justice, empowerment, and dialogue[4] in addition to concerns about historicity and authenticity. Social critique draws on the social sciences, such as anthropology, sociology and cultural studies, research into what people in general *believe* and *do*. 'Critical

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[2] A reassessment of the historicity of OT material has been made by van Seters (1975); Hayes and Miller (1977); Lemche (1988); Davies (1992); Whitelam (1996); Thompson (1999); and Dever (2001).

[3] Alter's work was developed further in Alter and Kermode (eds.), 1987, covering the whole of the OT.

[4] Dialogic Pedagogy is associated with the work of Mikhail Bakhtin, see White and Peters, 2011.

studies' critique the social status quo and power structures, emphasising justice and exposing the ploys of the powerful. Issues of race, religious diversity, class, gender and sexuality all have deep roots in biblical literature, but not all are supportive of a just society. A broader secular hermeneutic to enrich understanding today will condemn some features (e.g. racist assumptions) and draw positively on others (e.g. social justice). Such a discussion needs to be at the heart of religious education both in curriculum design and in pedagogy.

Critical Studies and Critical Pedagogy

'Critical' is an vague word in education, demanded of adolescents as well as graduates and postgraduates. An opposite is 'descriptive', a surface account without questioning or debate – although critical discussion needs accurate description, as in anthropology. Nevertheless this broad use of the term 'critical' is helpful since pupils from infants onwards do need to learn how to think clearly. Socio-critical questioning or 'Critical Theory' provided an ethical countermeasure to Nazism from 1929, in Frankfurt, Germany, relocating to America (Colombia University) after the Nazis' rose to power (returning to Frankfurt in 1953). The agenda described below was articulated first by Horkheimer (1982) and Adorno[5] (1973), and later by Marcuse (1968/2009) and Habermas (1973; 1990). Their theoretical insight was to recognize that modernism had not produced a just society, and that critique of this should encourage the emancipation of the oppressed – 'to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them' (Horkheimer 1982: 244). Critical Theory recognizes that critique of society has to look beyond the worker/owner dichotomy of Marxism and to judge all social action through its potential either to transform or to oppress (How 2003)[6]. Concerns for equity and emancipation require us to seek out and listen to silenced

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[5] See also Horkheimer and Adorno (1972).

[6] Applying this to Biblical material, Whitelam (1996) and Yiftachel (2005) both discuss the silencing of Palestinians in modern Israel in what the latter calls 'ethnocracy'. Sand (2009) speaks of the 'invention of the Jewish people'; Hobsbawm and Ranger (1992) discuss the issue of cultural invention more generally.

voices; equally, it invites us to be sceptical about the claims of the powerful, and their attempts to construct 'knowledge' in ways which benefit themselves and their social group at the expense of those weaker.

This is described in Peter McLaren (1989; Darder *et al.* 2009: 61-83) as *dialectic*, a relationship between a point of view and its antithesis. That relationship can lead to synthesis, except that power differentials prevent a solution which is fair to both sides, since the voice of the powerful holds too much weight. Therefore the holding of power itself needs to be examined. Contrasting with descriptive sociology, this social critique is not neutral but evaluates aspects of society moving from *what is*, to *what should be* (Giroux 1983: 28; 1988). The championing of critical subjectivity was a deliberate rejection of the failure of the objectivity of positivism to produce a society that was in any way fair and just, so it had become the duty of thinking people to apply ethical standards. Critical Theory criticised the 'fetishism of facts' for their own sake and without ethical insights, and the claim of value neutrality as hidden strategies for hegemony and domination (Giroux 1983/2009: 33). The various research fields which emerged from Critical Theory, such as feminism and antiracism, deliberately make no attempt to be neutral, but affirm the assumption that society is a mixture of varying degrees of powerfulness and powerlessness, declaring that this balance needs to be studied from the standpoints of equity and justice, and rectified. Paulo Freire (2004), for example, fostered political consciousness through active and relevant adult education: he and his followers strongly advocated the participation of the powerless in political processes, and the accountability of the powerful for their choices. This provides a 'pedagogy of possibility' (Rossatto 2005).

Religion and its study is beset by unequal power relationships, prompting a critique in terms of gender, class, age, race, sexuality and disability. For example, patriarchal attitudes in the Bible are countered by feminist writers after pioneering work by Phyllis Trible (1978; 1984). Where religious policies such as on birth control exacerbate poverty, critique may question both its appropriateness and motives. Sexuality and disability are affected by religious attitudes (for example by hostility to same sex relationships, and by regarding disability as divine punishment). Critical Theory therefore offers a different way of looking at religious texts and the doctrinaire institutions that use them, texts produced by a literate power

elite, and used over the centuries by other elites. The Old Testament (OT) texts did not have to follow liberal, politically-correct agendas: for example, an enemy's life had no value; a father had absolute authority even when wrong. Within Religious Education, a social-justice critique opens up to pupils a way of looking not only at scriptures but also at their own society, and helps them to critique the nature of religious authority with which they are presented. This puts them in a position to understand whether or not a particular religious position is reasonable or not, and is emancipating or not. This is not to import a western agenda onto biblical texts: there are strands of biblical prophetic literature, and laws, which support the weak over the strong, defending the poor, the widow and the alien. Many critical theorists had Jewish roots; thus we are in effect applying updated prophetic insights to our criticism of OT narrative and story.

Phronesis

A recent recasting of critical studies uses Aristotle's term *phronesis* ('practical wisdom') concerning how to act in particular circumstances, sitting alongside technical skills/know how (*techné*) and conceptual knowledge (*epistemé*). Practical wisdom, following Aristotle, can never be divorced from knowledge of what works, and discussions about truth and falsehood. *Phronesis* involves exchanging ideas and expertise through group or community problem-solving: a phronetic approach develops this ancient concept to restrict powerful voices. Flyvbjerg and his colleagues (2012) identify practical wisdom as a product of discussion and debate, with 'expert' voices not privileged, ambiguities recognized, and due caution taken to recognize the sleight of hand used by powerful agendas. Practical wisdom is thus viewed as open and democratic. Flyvbjerg (2001) challenged the positivism of social science research, so that research *about* something becomes viewed as weaker than research which is sensitive to *the application of* knowledge (Flyvbjerg, Landman & Schram 2012:1-12) *which improves* some identified problem. In a sense, 'being phronetic' is a state of mind which fosters strategies for improvement, whilst separating this from the other agendas of administrators and politicians. Power is always present in social situations and has to be carefully scrutinised and sidelined. Thus, Simmonds, in this 2012 volume (pp. 246-263), expounds on 'making the

teaching of social justice matter'. On the question of who decides, in a sense the whole community decides (that is, practical wisdom has to be generally accepted); but in another sense it is dynamic, that is the choices may change with circumstances and dialogue. The last word has never been spoken; the details of practical wisdom will always be controversial.

As an issue for Religious Education, dogma is the weapon of the powerful to control the attitudes and behaviour of others. Freedom of thought and expression become victims of dogma, and have led to religious intolerances and persecutions. *Phronesis* invites *all* people involved to discuss without barriers or recriminations. The emphasis on justice demands that decisions made are fully consulted over and are fair to all involved. On the topic of marriage, the tension between family pressures and personal consent are at issue. Historical critique is important where historical documents (such as the Bible) are used as authorities to persuade: it is vital that this appeal to authority is relevant and the proof-texts actually meant what is claimed for them.

Phronetic study asks four questions to establish practical wisdom, according to Flyvbjerg *et al.* (2012:38-40):

(1) Where are we going?
(2) Who gains and who loses, and by which mechanisms of power?
(3) Is this development desirable?
(4) What, if anything, should we do about it?

Using this to explore our topic of marriage.

(1) On religious attitudes to marriage, there is a tension between traditionalists emphasising family approval and secular couples who focus on love and relationship. Arranged marriages, same sex marriages, birth control and divorce are current flashpoints which religious dogmas seek to control.

(2) Religious pressure to conform may be policed by social pressures and threats of ostracism, so the holders of hegemonic power will lose if this is challenged. Equally the individual will lose if it is not confronted. The struggle for gain is between personal emancipation

including the right to develop a relationship with someone loved, and the family's right (often with religious sanctions) to control sexual availability and childbearing.

(3) The two sides will disagree over the desirability of changing traditional practices. The mechanism required in this method is to allow the silenced majority (girls and women especially) to express their opinion on an equal playing field, their views given due weight. This will result in a more balanced view.

(4) We should apply principles of social justice, making sure that marriage choices are made with full consent without unfair pressures. In terms of polygyny, direct and indirect pressures on women can be eliminated, so decisions on polygyny are taken only by those most affected, the women who would become co-wives.

Thus *phronesis*, everyday wisdom, develops a process for societal improvement and empowerment which involves dialogue, democracy, justice, the resistance of officious power, and reconciliation.

2. Marriage in Religious Education

Critical teaching about 'religion' invites the kind of investigation that recognizes and reduces bias. Whether religion and marriage should be interlinked is a crucial question: what is a social custom to some is a sacrament to others. Law and custom, for example, made divorce difficult until relatively recently as this separates what God (it was presumed) had joined together. The same sensitivities affect whether previously divorced couples can marry in church. Whether marriage should be regulated by religion requires critical investigation; and how couples might be *justly* paired and supported in the secular community is an important question for social critique. Creating a family through casual copulation has drawbacks in child support and nurture, devaluing the role of father and the nuclear family. At a time when morality and values were presumed to have a religious basis, it made sense to place child nurture in the domain of the sacred, constrained by values claiming to have authority as 'God's will'.

However, religious belief and teaching have a human origin, establishing power and authority to an elite priesthood. The people in power are likely to be male; their concern to control sexuality will be hegemonic and one sided. For women, a sexual exclusivity contract may be the price that has to be paid for persuading a man to provide continuously for mother and child. Whether women would receive sexual exclusivity from their husband is however a different issue.

Marriage customs have been influenced by tradition and by religious teaching. From the standpoint of social justice, neither influence has set a high regard for love or even consent. Bible stories sometimes talk of a man loving a girl (Isaac, Jacob) but less of a girl loving her husband. Wives are said to complain (Sarah, Rebecca, Michal) and be spiteful to co-wives (Sarah and Hagar, Leah and Rachel, Peninnah to Hannah)[7]. Detailed studies of marriage in the OT and elsewhere in the Near East are sparse[8] Marriages were decided within families by families, often when a girl was young, and often with economic implications. Tribal tradition favoured polygyny where warfare depleted male numbers. Warfare also resulted in the capture of women, who became reluctant workers and childbearers. The OT stories reflect this, with concubines, harems, and even marriage by capture (Judges 21.14-24). Those treating the Bible as scripture might view such stories as vindications of unjust practices, unless the nature and purpose of the story is understood and its context within the complete canon of Biblical texts is clarified. Biblical stories, in short, cannot provide a sound basis of present-day policy and practice, but are themselves a critique of ancient practice. Stories were not necessarily told *with approval.* Critical pedagogy within religious education has a crucial part to play to uncover these layers.

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[7] Gen 24.67; 29.18; 16.6; 30.1; I Sam 1.6; II Sam 6.16.

[8] Ancient Hebrew marriage and family customs were the subject of my PhD (Bigger, 1975). Early studies are by Burrows (1938), Epstein (1927, 1942), Neufeld (1944), Mace (1953), De Vaux (1961), Plautz, (1962). Ugaritic families were described by van Selms (1954) and Rainey (1965). The Nuzi texts were described, transliterated and translated by Breneman (1971). More recently there have been studies by Perdue et al. (1997), McNutt (1999), and from a conservative Christian perspective Davidson (2008). There have been many other simplistic popular books.

Old Testament Stories about Ancestry

Today the vivid narratives of novels and television soaps are ever popular; similarly, the scintillating but sometimes seedy OT stories depict controversial attitudes to sexuality and status. Their purpose is at the same time theological, political and social, to generate obedience, control and compliance. The stories are not straightforward but were written by people unknown to us in order to persuade and influence their readers (or audience if the stories were recited). We need therefore to read the Biblical narratives as stories with theological and political agendas.

The Genesis family saga runs from Adam to Ephraim, the chosen son of Joseph: this comments on legitimacy and suggests that the writer is a supporter of the northern kingdom so hated by the Judaean writers of the books of Samuel and Kings. The story sets up a fictional family tree of twelve tribes whose father/ ancestor, Jacob was conveniently nicknamed 'Israel'; the earlier ancestors Shem and Abraham were common to all other semitic tribes. Tribes such as Judah are critiqued through the poor behaviour of their patriarch, both for his mishandling of the 'levirate' type marriage of Tamar his daughter in law (Gen. 38) and in the part he played in selling Ephraim's father Joseph into Egypt. In promoting the interests of Joseph (and of his mother Rachel) the other elder sons of Leah are criticised in different ways – Simeon and Levi for slaughtering the inhabitants of Shechem because of a proposal for intermarriage (Gen. 34); and Reuben for having sex with Bilhah his father's concubine (Gen 35.22 and 49.4). The blessings of Jacob (Gen 49) seal the down-rating of the sons of Leah. Thus, whatever else they imply, the stories of Dinah and Tamar are mainly constructed as mechanisms to expose the male characters to criticism. Their circumstances, Dinah raped or seduced as a prelude to marriage, and Tamar denied 'levitate' marriage on the death of her husband may be recognizable social situations, but we need to be cautious about generalisation since they are fictional tales within a fictional setting. The status of Jacob's wives is also subject to this stricture: Leah was described as being foisted on Jacob by trickery, replacing Rachel whom he loved. The genealogy of Genesis 46 records Rachel as the only wife, reducing Leah and the servant women as women 'who bore Jacob children', even though this distinction is not made in the story itself. The final version of Genesis (perhaps influenced by post-exilic genealogists) uses monogamy as its schema, with exceptions (e.g.

Abraham and Jacob) explained away. Non-Hebrew tribes (e.g. Lamech, Esau) are explicitly polygynist, and the problems of this are emphasised (e.g. Rachel and Leah, Gen. 29.31-30.22). This monogamous schema creates genealogical simplicity but does not imply much about actual marriage customs.

This brings up another consideration, the extent to which a coherent narrative has been added to by later editors. We do not have space here to explore this fully, so general comment will suffice. The Ephraim edition of Genesis, of which we have spoken, gives the overall shape to the story that we recognize. Joseph is a hero in exile, producing continuity from exile through his sons. We know little of deportations after the defeat of the northern kingdom, where a pro-Ephraim agenda might be found. That Jeroboam the first king of 'Ephraim' (the northern kingdom) fled to Egypt has been seen as the source of the Joseph story (Carmichael 1979). There may have been earlier and later versions, as source criticism asserts. There can be no certainty that the Pentateuch as a whole had a single author (but see Whybray 1987, that the Pentateuch was a fictional 'prequel' to the Hebrew monarchy, using various fragments). The opening Genesis creation story seems influenced by the Babylonian creation story; that a covenant of circumcision was an exilic construct is possible; that a pro-Ephraimite agenda was relevant in the exile needs some explaining but we know that the Samaritans continued this tradition. The underlying questions and issues are historical/literary, not doctrinal.

One other aspect of Genesis' approach to sexuality worth highlighting in this section concerns legitimacy. Abram/Abraham's family lies at the core of the semitic Near Eastern family tree: the meanings of his names, 'great father' and 'father of many' note his function as Ancestor. Since his main wife Sarai/Sarah was childless, Abraham's firstborn child by a servant woman, Hagar, was Ishmael who became the ancestor of Arab tribes. Sarah had however already been passed off as Abraham's sister and given in marriage first to Pharaoh of Egypt, and secondly to Abimelech of Philistine Gerar (Gen 12 and 20), showing little regard for biological legitimacy had she become pregnant. Because she laughed at the thought of becoming pregnant in old age, her son Isaac's name is constructed from the verb 'to laugh' (though not the form 'she laughed'). The Abraham legend contains a section on his nephew Lot whose life in Sodom ended with the

destruction of that city. His daughters bore by their own father children who became ancestors of the Moabites and Ammonites. There is an acute question for us about why the patriarchal story is dominated by chaotic sexuality – certainly to entertain, but also to demonstrate that God's choice of a people was not to be constrained by human sexual behaviour. God controlled both children and barrenness. Inheriting sons are chosen, with biological firstborn sons not automatically recognized.

Isaac's main function was the beget Esau and Jacob, Esau the ancestor of the Edomites (Gen 36) and Jacob ancestor of the Israelites (Gen 46). Jacob (Gen. 27-37) tricked his older twin of his birthright, and was himself tricked in marriage by his father-in-law Laban, who married him to the wrong girl – but he in turn tricked Laban to build up a fine herd of sheep in preparation for leaving. Later he was tricked by his own sons who declared Joseph dead, but almost at the point of death switched the birthright from Manasseh to Ephraim, sons of Joseph. As Israelite ancestor, Jacob was no role model. Hebrew history thus had very shaky foundations. There is little doubt in all but conservative quarters that the characters in the stories never existed as real people. We can term the stories 'legend', so long as this does not imply exaggerated stories of real people. They are fictions. God sent Abram to Palestine as an alien, an element designed to declare that Palestine was given by God. Abram negotiated with God over the saving of Sodom and Gomorrah, and was granted an heir by divine dispensation. Ishmael, expelled to the wilderness, was saved by God. A solemn covenant between God and Abraham is declared (Gen 17) using circumcision as the symbol. Isaac's life is spared by God, and Jacob wrestles with God at Penuel (Gen 32.24-28). God is shown as puppet-master, the organising figure behind history. This is the central message. And, according to Genesis, this God chose Ephraim as the legitimate heir.

The issue for pedagogy is that teaching about Old Testament stories are stories that require interpretation. The critical agenda requires teachers to use the curriculum for discussion of social and moral issues, regarding the attitudes within the text as open and not to be accepted as uncontroversial. Pupils faced with the stories of Abraham, Sarah and Hagar (for example) should interrogate these rationally and by no means regard them as role models.

Monogamy and Polygyny

The creation story (Gen. 1-3) brings man and woman together as 'one flesh', first to be fruitful, and second with a relationship created by sin. This is bitter-sweet, explaining why marriage is emotionally problematic, much as the story explains the pain of childbearing and the toil of farming.

Polygyny still occurs today, and Religious Education needs to explore the issues. Polygyny occurs in the Old Testament as an exception that creates problems. In primeval genealogies, the exceptional bigyny of Lamech is considered worthy of comment (Gen 4.19) but there are no other hints. With Abraham, childbearing by Hagar is a response to the childlessness of his 'wife' Sarah; his marriage to Keturah comes only after Sarah's death (Gen. 25.1). Hagar and Keturah may have been the 'concubines' mentioned in Gen 25.6, the ancestresses of many Near Eastern tribes – or it may be a catch-all for any others who claim Abrahamic ancestry). I argue elsewhere that the non-semitic term 'concubine' (pilagesh) is a late attempt to show that these other descendants of Abraham did not inherit (Bigger 2011). Jacob's polygyny, a trick by his father-in-law, caused major family tensions between wives and their offspring. The people 'Israel' emerged from very murky ancestral roots, at least in this fictional prequel. Mary Douglas (2004) the anthropologist may be right in claiming that one motive for writing Genesis may have been to discourage ancestor worship[9].

Samuel's mother Hannah was barren (I Sam. 1), her fecund 'rival' co-wife Peninnah bullying her. Samuel's birth to an otherwise barren woman, as with Isaac's birth to Sarah (Gen 21.1-2), is shown as a divine gift of a significant historical figure. The late writer Ben Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) commented on family tensions: polygynous jealousies are bitterness indeed (Ecclus. 26.6; 37.11). Polygyny was allowed in Judaism into the middle ages and beyond, but that is not to say that it was common. The Elephantine Jewish colony in Egypt controlled polygyny by contract (Porten 1968), if the woman's family had sufficient influence. We have insufficient evidence of marriage contracts in Israel in the OT period to put together a fuller picture of ordinary marriages and families so can only try to interpret the hints in the texts. Some kings are depicted with harems of wives and concubines –

[9] Mary Douglas also made substantial contributions to OT study in the light of Anthropology (Douglas 1974, 1993 and 1999).

especially David, Solomon and Rehoboam[10], the three generations leading up to the division of the monarchy into Israel/Ephraim (North) and Judah (South). Later kings are identified through their mothers' names, which may be a hint that kings at least had several wives so that the mother of the crown prince had a high status. However, since Samuel and Kings were written during the exile (the books end with the exile) the stories may mirror the harems of their host empire (first Babylon, then Persia).

If we read these ambiguities in the light of the prophets' desire for justice and loving-kindness involving support for the weak in society, these stories do not within their context support unjust marriage practices today. This prophetic message parallels the secular desire for social justice within critical theory, thus offering a modern strategy for critiquing the biblical text. The OT is a document of the powerful, written by a literate elite in order to establish their legitimacy against the claims of others. The comparative statuses of wives and concubines is a facet of this claim, maintaining the fiction of unequal family relationships as a metaphor for tribal competition. The status of women depicted as unfavoured wives is *literary*, and is not evidence of what happened in society. Even that most peculiar of stories, the rape and murder of the Levite's concubine (Judges 19) is a propaganda story against the tribe of Benjamin, King Saul's tribe, told in all probability centuries after the supposed events.

For Religious Education, it is important to emphasise that no form of marriage is divinely ordained. Polygyny, the Bible warns, is a source of bitterness: respect and justice should in general be shown towards the powerless (Amos 5.24). The biblical writings, even law codes, had agendas, and all are concerned first and foremost to condemn idolatry, revealing through its narratives and laws that actually idolatry was exactly what everyone did in real life. There is a substantial subtext to support women in case of marital problems, and biblical stories expose oppression, told without approval and sometimes with mockery. We have to remember that marriage was a family and not a romantic attachment. Fiction may laud Isaac's love for Rebekah and Jacob's for Rachel, but Leah's experience was less positive, and Tamar was motivated by wanting a child and not a husband (Judah comes out of this story particularly badly). The husband who makes a false

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[10] II Sam 3.2-5; I Kgs 3.1f, 9.24; II Chron 11.21.

accusation against a new bride must remain married to her – doubtless without great affection on either side (Deut 22.19). Some polygynous marriages at least were prohibited, if the two women were too closely related (Lev 18 and 20, Bigger 1979). An implication for today is that showing respect for one's wife or wives is more significant than wondering whether particular marriage customs are divinely sanctioned.

Intermarriage and Divorce

The OT presents a confusing picture of intermarriage. Ezra's extraordinary demand that men divorce (or maybe dissolve their marriages) to their 'foreign' (i.e. non-Hebrew) wives to prevent apostasy takes up a disproportionate amount of space. On the positive side, Ruth the Moabite became the ancestress of King David, and Joseph's sons, including Ephraim the heir in Genesis, had an Egyptian mother. Rebekah objected to her son Esau's Hittite wives demanding that his twin Jacob (clearly not yet married) found a bride within the extended family, as Isaac had done. This (fictional) marriage curiously linked Israelite origins to Haran near Damascus, not to Palestine (the patriarchs were described as sojourners in Palestine)[11].

A mother teaches her children language and story, and so is deeply influential to their development; therefore intermarriage was presumed to cause idolatry and backsliding. Deuteronomy (7.3) recommends avoidance of some intermarriages. Approaching this from the standpoint of critical *phronesis*, practical wisdom with its emphasis on power, the various ancient criticisms of idolatry suggest that intermarriage with local non-Hebrews was common and was only deemed a problem by a group of religious officials with exclusivist tendencies who were horrified about what they saw and wished to control it. In Elephantine texts, inter-religious marriages were common, even referring to both sets of Gods. Then, as later, a hard-line on intermarriage had been very hard to keep, and involved some repressive strategies such as threats and stigma. The same has been true in some modern religious communities. Repression is opposed to justice. This invites discussion in religious education on the advantages and disadvantages of religious, cultural and 'racial' mixing. Memories of Nazism and the spectre

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[11] Ezra 9-10; Gen 46.20; Gen 27.46.

of segregation makes this difficult to defend today, though pressures controlling marriage choice still exist. Our conclusion underpinned by social justice has to be therefore that inter-religious marriages are a normal aspiration. Chetty (2007) used rhetorical criticism on Ezra-Nehemiah and New Testament texts to comment on issues of divorce today, which in his view should not use Ezra-Nehemiah as a guide. Johnson (2011) contrasts the circumstances of social trauma in Ezra-Nehemiah with the institutionalised racism which discourages intermarriage in the United States. Southwood (2012[12]) seeks clarification from anthropological study of the trauma of return migrants.

Divorce is sparsely covered in the OT, and virtually disallowed in the NT. Examples of marriage contracts/documents are known from the ancient Near East, especially an early cuneiform collection found in the city of Nuzu (Breneman 1971) in the region referred to in Genesis as Haran. Conditions for the marriage could include specifications about divorce. The wife's belongings brought into the marriage were often listed to be retained by the wife when she departed. These have become somewhat confused with the idea of dowry imported from anthropological descriptions. Much later, around the 4th century BCE, specifically Jewish documents which include marriage and divorce were found in Elephantine near Aswan, Egypt, a military colony in the Persian period. Here, mixing with the local community was normal and some documents were sworn in the names of both Jewish and Egyptian deities. Again, the wife's belongings were listed in case of divorce. That no marriage documents from the OT period have been found in Palestine/Israel might be because writing materials used were not durable. Documents hidden and later discovered in Dead Sea caves survived because they were considered precious; a family archive was then, as now, more ephemeral, as modern family historians can attest. Deut 24.1-4 offers the only law, and this is curious since its main purpose is to prevent a man remarrying his divorced wife.

Apart from the Ezra diatribe about idolatry, there is little in the OT which gives solid guidance about marriage. We need to look elsewhere for

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[12] See Bigger, forthcoming, 'Review Article: Anthropology and the Biblical Exile' which includes a review of Kelle, Ames and Wright (2011) on the complexity of modern studies of the biblical exile.

such guidance, to the prophetic concepts of justice, mercy, uprightnessness and lovingkindness. In modern terms, this invites the use of critical pedagogy, basing a social and personal curriculum on justice and respect and promoting positive interpersonal relationships.

3. Conclusion

Examples of marriage in the OT do not give us a clear picture either of marriage as conducted then, or ideals that might be helpful in the modern world. The material had social, political and religious agendas which cloud all descriptions. Since the Bible is used as a source of authority, Religious Education has a role in helping pupils to read the Bible critically so that they can resist irrational demands. Critical pedagogy engages pupils both with understanding ancient texts in their context (exegesis) and interpreting them for today (hermeneutics). I argue that everyday wisdom about sexuality needs to start with a social critique based on justice and respect, which can be defined religiously or secularly. This *critical phronesis* asks questions about power agendas and hegemony, and seeks a balanced view about how just solutions can be found, with no voices repressed. This invites us to consider what counts as everyday wisdom (that is, assumptions about what is appropriate and effective) within a vision of an empowering community. Incorporating these insights into schooling produces a 'critical pedagogy' that puts personal empowerment and fulfilment first. Rossatto (2005: 120-127) calls this *centring pedagogy on student need.*

Religious Education has so far favoured a descriptive methodology, describing world religions and scriptures in ways unlikely to offend. Critique is therefore impeded. The detail has been written by people with agendas, and the descriptions are generalisations which tend not to show either the wide variation of belief and practice or those aspects detrimental to human happiness. Religions are presented through rose tinted spectacles as legitimate forms of knowledge, belief and practice. Critical pedagogy turns this around: the emphasis is now on issues of ethics, power and oppression. The curriculum might cover attitudes (across religions) to poverty, oppression, discrimination, respect, environmental responsibility or vandalism and autocracy versus democratic communities. These will enrich the social, moral and political learning of pupils. All religions have aspects

that require critique and even condemnation. Forced marriage choice is on this list, as is female genital mutilation. Sexuality and marriage are key sites of oppression for girls and women, enforced by older women as well as by men. Critical *phronesis* assumes that such a critique is part of the change process, enabling education to improve the world by consultation and joint decision-making. This model of Religious Education puts religion under a microscope. It is not anti-religious, since it seeks out the best (ethical, responsible, democratic) forms of religion in order to give pupils higher expectations of institutions and personnel. Nevertheless it needs to explicitly expose and reject aspects which are repressive and oppressive.

Critical 'phronetic' Religious Education on marriage and sexuality focuses on social and personal issues, using the principles of justice, responsibility, loyalty, support, care and undivided love. These could be described as human values (statements of what holds real value), virtues (positive attitudes and behaviour) and ideals (visions of how society should be) as I demonstrate elsewhere in relation to the whole curriculum (Bigger & Brown 1999). Religious Education needs, using Paulo Freire's phrase to 'read the world', that is examine why the world is as it is, and seek to challenge and change it where necessary. Through doing that pupils can 'read the word', that is understand literary conventions and their implications, including the use of scriptures (Freire 2004). This would transform classroom practice and the understanding of religion. Religious Education has to study religion and religious attitudes critically if it is to maintain its place as an academic subject. That means far more discussion of ethical, social, psychological and political issues. That will challenge some religions and denominations which try to control people's lives and choices, and this is no bad thing. Any faith honouring the principles of justice, equity and respect will have little to fear. At stake is the issue of what we do as a world community about the treatment of girls and women: justice, equity and respect are good starting points in a world where sexual violence and sexual exploitation are endemic, and the even law often provides little justice. This 'critical' approach to sexuality, relationships and marriage is broader than the religious education curriculum: discussions of social justice and democratic voice need to permeate the whole curriculum if it is to prepare pupils to contribute to a fairer and more fulfilling society.

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A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis of Hindu Philosophy – The Role of Metaphor and Framing in Conceptualizing Divinity within the *Advaita Vedanta* School of Thought in Light of Swami Vivekananda's Teachings.

Suren Naicker

Abstract

In this article, I look at the metaphors employed by Swami Vivekananda to explain otherwise abstruse philosophical principles within the Hindu school of thought, with especial emphasis on the advaita Vedanta, which maintains that there is no duality of existence despite the appearance of such. Using Conceptual Metaphor Theory as a framework, and Corpus Linguistics as a tool, I explore Vivekananda's complete works and have come to the conclusion that, unlike mainstream Western religions, which employ primarily the FAMILY frame to conceptualise God, this is not so within Vivekananda's Hinduism; though he does use the said frame, he more often than not draws on the WATER frame to explain concepts, thereby deviating from the norm.

Introduction

After outlining the research problem, the theoretical framework, premised on George Lakoff's Conceptual Metaphor Theory, which fits into the general framework of the Cognitive Linguistics Enterprise, will follow. A brief outline of modern-day Hinduism will also be explicated with reference to its ancient Vedic roots, culminating in the Vedantic philosophy which Swami Vivekananda aligns himself to.

This study aims at mining a significant sub-section of an important body of work, that being *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*; the corpus was read with the explicit intention of finding the various metaphors which Vivekananda used in expounding abstruse philosophical concepts mostly to a fairly green, Anglo-American audience (though not exclusively the case, but the samples chosen for the purpose of *this* study happens to be). In the 'methodology' section, it is explained how these metaphors were pin-pointed, and grouped according to themes into *frames*.

Finally, the article ends with an overview of what these metaphors and frames say about Swami Vivekananda's take on Hinduism in general, and the Vedanta philosophy specifically.

Research Problem

Lakoff's claim that there is a link between the FAMILY metaphor in religious discourse and our political ideologies is rather contentious, and does not form an important part of this article. What I am interested here is using this model to see how applicable would this framework be to other schools of religious thought. Does this polarity exist outside of a Judaeo-Christian context, which Lakoff writes about? Is he justified in claiming that frames and conceptual metaphors govern our religious thought and understanding?

More specifically, two questions are considered:

1. Are the two said family models relevant in a Hindu context – are there alternative models, family-related or otherwise, that we can base our philosophy on?

2. Even if they are relevant, do we necessarily need to explain our religious understanding in terms of frames or (family) metaphors in the first place?

Theoretical Framework
A Brief Overview of Conceptual Metaphor Theory within the Context of Cognitive Linguistics

Cognitive Linguistics (CL) was born as a reaction to the Chomskyan school of

Generative Linguistics (henceforth GL). Whilst the influence of GL can scarcely be exaggerated, CL is fast gaining ground and could rightly be referred to as a rival paradigm.

Both CL and GL actually subscribe to tenets that are rooted in very old philosophical and linguistic traditions. Panini, for example, analysed the Sanskrit language in his classical text, the *Astadhyayi*, most comprehensively and meticulously along regional, stylistic, social and pragmatic lines. Tomes have been written on syntactic, morphological and phonological rules, together with rules for variations and optionality – and indeed the deep vs surface structure phenomena (Kiparsky 1979).

Bundgaard (2003) writes about one of the early precursors to generative grammar, and rightly traces some of the fundamental claims arrogated to Chomsky back to the German philosopher Edmund Husserl, as expounded in his famous *Logical Investigations*. The said work pointed out that language reveals 'a lot about the mind' (p. 5), and that language is a discrete combinatorial system. A distinction is also made between '*Unsinn*' (senselessness) and '*Widersinn*' (nonsense). An instantiation of the former would be a statement like *Shop a go to car be in*, where both the word-order and lexical items do not make any sense; an instantiation of the latter would a statement like *Colourless green ideas sleep furiously*, where the grammar is acceptable yet the statement is devoid of meaning. Pinker (1994) attributes the latter example to Chomsky, which he used to illustrate the dichotomy between syntax and semantics. Chomsky would also point out that an *Unsinn*-type statement is not logically possible, whereas a *Widersunn*-type statement is. Whilst Husserl would not endorse Chomsky's insistence on treating semantic phenomena almost as an epiphenomenon, we see here that this distinction is not an original one.

Bundgaard then cites Husserl as stipulating that we need to strip language of superfluous verbiage, and find out according to which *principles* language combines it constituent parts into meaningful wholes. Chomsky takes this to imply that we ultimately need to reduce rules of grammar to a finite set of phrase structure rules, analogous to mathematical formulae, which will generate all possible sentences in *any* language (Chomsky 1966). Bundgaard points out that we need to 'find *a priori* rules that specifically govern the combination of linguistics elements' (Bundgaard 2003: 14). Husserl however did not believe that an analysis of this kind should exclude

semantic considerations; in fact, according to Bundgaard, an analysis of this kind should be 'semantic through and through' (p. 10).

Husserl's analysis, then, may be regarded as a semantic combinatorial system, which is an enterprise Chomsky would indeed be averse to endorsing. In fact, it is precisely this fact that caused the rather acrimonious drift to ensue between George Lakoff and Noam Chomsky, and their subsequent ideas. This has been documented in detail by Harris (1993), and alluded to in Botha (1989). Lakoff never intended to work 'outside' the generative school by developing what he then called 'generative semantics', but Chomsky saw this as a threat to his own ideas viciously attacked Lakoff for questioning the axioms upon which generative grammar was based.

Bundgaard then goes on to detail why it is important to outline these 'syntactic templates', and illustrates how these said templates cannot dispense with what he refers to as 'global semantics', analogous to what we may call context or pragmatics. He then draws parallels between the approach suggested by Husserl and that of Leonard Talmy, pointing out that the latter claimed that a study of semantics as a genuine combinatorial system must be a systematic study of the kind of structure specified by closed-class elements, ie. linguistic elements which do not admit new members to its set. Bundgaard illustrates this with regard to how using different prepositions form different conceptual structures apropos to the open-class elements in the proposition; hence, the said preposition does more than just fulfil a *grammatical* role, as traditionally assumed.

The point of Bundgaard's article serves to illustrate that although one would traditionally take Husserl's approach to be a precursor to generative grammar, it would actually be more commensurable to draw the analogy between cognitive linguistics and the said approach, and to point out that both GL and CL date back to much older traditions, though the respective names may not have been in vogue.

In his concluding remarks, Bundgaard points out that any analysis of language would have to account for 'principles of syntactic combination' (p. 26), but one should not reduce the linguistics enterprise only to this and relegate other aspects of the combinatorial system to epiphenomena; the point is to understand and formalize how such combinations serve as a facilitating, two-way vehicle between thought and the world.

This background is relevant since it serves to illustrate how a rela-

tively modern approach to the study of language has its roots in a tradition which ante-dates Chomskyan linguistics, and should not be viewed solely as a *reaction to* the latter, as many scholars have assumed – cf. Faucconier's article, in Janssen and Redeker (1999).

CL is an enterprise quite unlike other schools of thought in that it covers a variety of themes, and the movement cannot be pinned down to a single founder. However, one of the overall goals is ultimately to show how language can give us insight into human nature and thought.

Explaining the relationship between language and the brain, therefore, is meant to explain a substantial part of human nature.

Conceptual Metaphor Theory (henceforth CMT) is one of the sub-themes within the CL paradigm. In a CL context, metaphor is defined as a mapping of a source domain onto a target domain, with concomitant restrictions like the invariance principle, which refers to the fact that these mappings must occur in a way that is 'consistent with the inherent structure of the target domain' (as defined by Lakoff 2007: 279, in Evans *et al*).

By this broad definition, phenomena like synecdoche, simile, metonymy, personification, pathetic fallacy, allegory and parable are conflated. These are primarily literary devices which serve the same purpose *conceptually*. Attempts have even made to integrate metonymy into CMT; as an aside, Goossens (1990), for example, coined the term 'metaphtonymy' in an article discussing how metaphor and metonymy interact. This is indeed a complex and contentious issue, as is the relation between metaphor and blending. It is not clear whether these are distinct processes, or whether one may be subsumed under the other – and if so, *which* is to be subsumed? In light of this contention, Lakoff and Fauconnier put out a statement clarifying their position on this.[1]

Lakoff refers to his approach as *embodied realism*, and claims that since we are embodied beings, all our thinking is based on bodily awareness, which expands to other entities and to the world as we grow older. We start off with learning conceptual metaphors, based on our experiences, which become part of the way we think. Lakoff & Johnson (1980) document various conceptual metaphors which we use in our everyday lives, without even recognizing it as such, for example by saying *I spent an hour on the computer*,

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[1] Available at http://www.cogsci.ucsd.edu/~coulson/spaces/GG-final-1.pdf

we are employing a TIME IS MONEY metaphor, whereby you can 'spend' it. In later books, he explains how research in the field of neuroscience is trying to trace the neurological bases of conceptual metaphor. For example, according to this line of thinking, when we see books being piled on top of each other, we see the *height rising*, which activates one part of the brain; we also notice the amount getting *more*, which activates another part of the brain. When we see such things often enough, we start to form a minimal neural pathway between these two brain centres, and a metaphor is born. From then on, we automatically start to associate 'up' with 'more', hence the metaphor UP IS MORE, such that we understand what *The price of fuel went up* means, even though there is no necessary link between the two. Likewise, we start to associate 'up' with 'good', such that if someone is *low down*, we mean that he is immoral; when talking about God, who is the Ultimate Good, we look *up*, etc. Hence, our sense of morality also has its basis in conceptual metaphor, which is embodied (Lakoff 1996).

Lakoff also believes that conceptual metaphors are the cogs which make up frames, which govern both our political and religious views. Frames are cognitive schemas which govern the way we function in the world, and are the driving force behind the tacit rules of social decorum and the like. In Lakoff (2008), he explains various cultural narratives in light of framing and conceptual metaphor, with emphasis on how these lead us to embrace either progressive or conservative politics. Lakoff points out that:

> We can no longer conduct 21st century politics with a 17th century understanding of the mind.... In thinking, the old view comes originally from Descartes' 17th Century rationalism. A view of thought as symbolic logic was formalized by Bertrand Russell and Gottlob Frege around the turn of the 20th Century, and a rationalist interpretation was revived by Chomsky in the 1950's (Lakoff 2008: 6).

The brain gives rise to thought, amongst others, in the form of conceptual frames, image-schemas, prototypes, conceptual metaphors, and conceptual blends. The process of thinking is not algorithmic symbol manipulation, but rather neural computation, using brain mechanisms and global cognitive tools not modularised for the processing of language only. Hence, it is through our framing and conceptual metaphors that we understand the world around us.

Lakoff (1996: 245-262) postulates two models of Christianity, one based on a conservative interpretation, the other based on a liberal one – based on an overall FATHER metaphor. Lakoff's point is that we conceptualise God and His attributes metaphorically, which guides our interpretation of a sacred text like the Bible, as well as what we take our religion to stand for. He claims that there is a match between a STRICT FATHER interpretation of Christianity and conservative, right-wing politics, and consequently, between a NURTURANT PARENT interpretation of Christianity and progressive, left-wing politics.

A Brief Overview of Hindu Philosophy

Broadly speaking, Hindu philosophy can be divided into two main branches, each comprising six sub-schools, which are further divided. The finer details can be quite intricate, so what is presented here is simply a superficial overview with the purpose of contextualizing the current study and explaining where the philosophy and teachings of Swami Vivekananda fit in.

The two main branches are the heterodox and the orthodox systems (*nastika* and *astika* in Sanskrit). The primary distinguishing feature of these two systems is that the former does not accept the authority of the Vedas, whereas the latter does, with varied interpretations. Hence, for our purposes, the emphasis is on the latter, not the former, since Vivekananda (as indeed, does modern-day Hinduism) uses that as the basis for his teachings.

There are six heterodox systems of philosophy, viz.:

1. The materialistic school of Charvaka;
2. The system of the Jainas;
3. The school of presentationists;
4. The school of representationists;
5. The school of idealism; and lastly
6. The school of nihilism.

Then, there are the six orthodox schools:

1. The *Nyaya*;
2. The *Vaiseshika*;

3. The *Sankhya*;
4. The *Yoga*;
5. The *Mimamsa*; and
6. The *Vedanta*.

As mentioned, the criterion for orthodoxy here is acceptance of the Vedas and Vedic literature as the ultimate authority. In fact, most Hindus would not recognize the tenets premised on heterodoxy as being part and parcel of Hinduism. In fact, there are mutually exclusive doctrines within the orthodox schools as well. Even within the Vedic tradition, there is a distinction between *srutis* (that which is revealed via direct perception) and *smiritis* (that which is interpreted and remembered). The former constitute that body of literature which always takes precedence of the latter since the *smiritis* are written for a particular society at a particular time, and therefore not necessarily applicable to all people for all time.

Before going on to explain they key tenets of each school, it would be worth noting that the Hindu mind advocates tolerance not only within the context of intra-Hindu pluralism, but also in an inter-religious context. This is often explained via an analogy with rivers flowing into the sea: just as each river will eventually reach the sea, so will all followers of whatever path they are on eventually 'reach' God. Sivananda (1977: 217) says that they are 'like the six different roads which lead to one city'. This concept needs to be spelt out a bit for it to make sense, but the point I would like to make for now is that these systems are best understood as different perspectives of the same truth, not as different cults within the Hindu tradition. However, it is said that 'No student of Hinduism ought to be satisfied without acquiring a clear and accurate knowledge of the principle distinguishing characteristics of the six philosophical schools' (Sivananda 1977: 217).

Since these six orthodox schools of thought are all premised on Vedic literature, it is necessary to understand exactly what this refers to. The word 'Veda' simply means knowledge, and some would not even want to commit to using this term in any sense which would classify a certain body of work. A study of the Vedas forms 'generally the beginning of an advanced learning in the philosophical and religious literature of India' (Krishnananda 1973: 3).

The hymns in the Vedas are intended to invoke certain aspects of Divinity, represented by deities, which resonate different energies and are

thereby able to synchronise with different aspects of life. Hence, these energies can be summoned for executing an ideal.

The deities which represent various aspects of both God and mankind are interpreted differently by followers of Hinduism. Some see them as purely symbolic – like Lord Vishnu representing God as preserver, yet having no autonomous existence if His own – whereas others indeed see them an actual entities who ought to be propitiated. Others still do not see these as being mutually exclusive, and the comparison used is that of someone looking at a wave and focusing only on that *aspect* of the ocean. Someone may ignore the wave and focus on the ocean as the only reality, or accept that it is ephemeral, or splash about in it and enjoy it for what it is at that point in time. Nonetheless, this does not preclude someone from knowing that the wave is, in a sense, unreal, and yet still indulge in it in whatever way he deems fit.

The various schools of thought are there to cater for the different ways in which people interpret God. It is interesting to note that the tantras and the agamas deify and spiritualise aspects of the world and of human nature which many would find appalling, offensive and even perverse. However, one could argue that the Hindus believe that all is part and parcel of the Cosmic Consciousness we call God, and therefore *all* people, regardless, should be given a recipe for spiritual edification. Tantric texts, for example, would not stigmatise the prostitute for being what she is, but instead prescribe a way to *use* sex to transcend body-consciousness. However, this philosophy falls under the heterodox schools, and nevertheless it would require a more exhaustive discussion which is beyond the scope of this article.

There are four main Vedas: the Rig-Veda (comprising 10 chapters and 10 589 mantras), the Yajur Veda (comprising 40 chapters and 1 976 mantras), the Sama Veda (comprising 29 chapters and 1 875 mantras), and the Atharva Veda (comprising 20 chapters and 5 977 mantras). The Rig Veda is concerned with panegyrics to the deities. The Yajur Veda is divided into the 'black' and 'white' portions (as is the Atharva Veda). It contains sacrificial formulae, in both prose and verse, to be chanted at the performance of a sacrifice. The Sama Veda, actually, comprises sections from the Rig-Veda in song form, meant to be *sung* during various sacrificial rites. The Atharva Veda, which is genrally held to be the 'youngest' of the four Vedas, comprises mainly spells and incantations.

A Side-note on Ramakrishna's and Vivekananda's Unorthodoxy

Few appreciate that Ramakrishna was very unorthodox in his teachings, and that his teachings differ greatly from that of Vivekananda, as documented in books by Dhar (1976) and Ananyananda (1979), for example. M., the pen name of the disciple of transcribed the *Gospel*, was very uncomfortable with Vivekananda's emphasis on social welfare and service, and many of Ramakrishna's other disciples questioned his interpretation of Ramakrishna's teachings. M. confronted him directly on the issue, and was not happy with the response. His guru-bhais were very happy about his success, but 'when the content of his teachings there became known', there was a lot of dissension (Dhar 1976: 912), mostly because they thought that fame was 'getting to his head', and that Ramakrishna's teachings were being suppressed in favour of Vivekananda's. This matter was settled, partly because it was Ramakrishna himself who named Vivekananda as his successor. At one stage, Vivekananda simply told them that the people ought to understand Vivekananda first before they even begin to understand Ramakrishna.

Ramakrishna even went so far as to say that 'Even should Naren live on beef and pork, it could not harm in the least the great power of spirituality within him' (Ananyananda 1979: 134). It is a well-known fact that Vivekananda ate meat and smoked, as did Ramakrishna. When Vivekananda was taken to task on this issue by the orthodox priests and scholars he responded: 'I am surprised you take so seriously the missionaries' nonsense. . . . If the people in India want me to keep strictly to my Hindu diet, please tell them to send me a cook and money enough to keep him' (CW-5: 64); and later added that chastity and poverty are the two important vows for a monk to adhere to, and that he has never broken that.

There is a lot more to be said on this point, but as it is a digressive point, perhaps this would not be the forum to dilate upon this topic.

It is worth noting that some authorities do *not* accept the *Atharva Veda* as an authentic division. Some point to the grammar used, claiming that it is a much later form, others infer this from the fact that the word 'trayi' is often used to refer to Vedic literature in the ancient scholarship, which denotes a tripartite distinction. This interpretation is not categorically accepted either, since Vedalankar (1965: 128) claims that this could refer to the fact these texts deal with 'the three aspects of human nature: Jnana, Karma and

Upasana'. In other words, those who prefer hands-on activities would prefer the path of karma, or work; those who are of an intellectual bent, would prefer the path of Jnana, or knowledge – philosophical contemplation on the Divine; and those who are of a mystic temperament would prefer the path of worship and meditation. These are all described as different paths to the same goal.

As mentioned earlier, if one reads the Atharva Veda, one would certainly understand why orthodox scholars would want to discount this as being part and parcel of Hindu sacred literature – it is filled with spells and sacrificial rituals, many of which are for worldly gain, like wooing a lover, material success, along with charms and spells to drive away diseases and 'to injure the enemy' (Nowbath *et al* 1960: 27); furthermore, there are certain portions of the *Atharva Veda* and the Yajur Veda which 'are concerned with black magic' (Nowbath *et al* 1960: 26). There are also certain mantras to bind your lover to you, which seem to be adaptations from the mantras of the Rig Veda, used during marriage ceremonies (another reason some think this scripture must have come into the literature at a much later stage). However, despite the ritual aspect, it must also also be noted that the 15th chapter (there are 20 in this Veda) is highly philosophical and speaks of the glories of the Supreme Being.

Now, each Veda has another four divisions, known as the *Samhita*, *Brahmana*, *Aranyaka* and *Upanishad* respectively. The Vedas deal with just about every aspect of inquiry, from the mundane to the sublime. Topics like geography, logic and mathematics are dealt with. Science and astrology are too. As an aside, the 33rd chapter of the Yajur Veda talks of phenomena only recently 'discovered' (or perhaps proven would be a more accurate word), like space-time being conflated as one entity, resulting in gravitational force, the fact that the sun is the centre of the solar system, and that the earth revolves around it, the statement that only massless entities can transcend the speed of light, and a very accurate statement on how old the universe is. All these have been borne out in recent findings. In Naicker (2004) I tease this out in more detail.

The six aforementioned schools of thought are to be understood as being inter-related, even though they may seem to be ostensibly premised on mutually exclusive doctrines. Furthermore, these systems are paired together as follows:

i)   The Nyaya and the Vaiseshika;
ii) The Sankhya and the Yoga;
iii) The Mimamsa and the Vedanta.

The understanding is that the Vaiseshika is seen as supplementary to the Nyaya; Yoga is a supplement to the Sankhya, etc.

A study of all these systems are actually 'necessary to understand the Vedanta' (Sivananda 1977: 218). The Nyaya, for example, sharpens the intellect and enables the seeker to grasp the fine philosophical precepts found in the Vedanta. Many would consider the Nyaya a fundamental prerequisite for all philosophical inquiry.

There are very few followers of the Vaiseshika system today. Sankhya is also seen as an anachronistic system, since Yoga is said to be based on the Sankhya principles, and has, in a sense, taken its place. Yoga is practiced by many in its practical form, though there is an over-emphasis of Hatha Yoga, which is the physical aspect of it based on certain *asanas* (postures), and has regrettably been equated with Yoga in its entirety in Western popular culture.

The Nyaya and the Vaiseshika gives an analysis of the physical world. The world is arranged into various categories, and God is said to have made the universe out of atoms and molecules. After doing this, they prescribe various methods for knowing God.

The Sankhya outlines the Hindu concept of the mind. Yoga deals with thought control and meditation techniques, and various methods of disciplining the mind and senses and senses are outlined in the various Yogic texts.

The Vedanta philosophy explains in detail the nature of God (*Brahman*, in Sanskrit), and argues that the individual soul is, in essence, identical with God. Of course, there are three schools of Vedantic thought, which will be explained further below, but the culmination of all Vedic and Vedantic thought is said to be a true understanding of our one-ness with the Cosmic Consciousness which we call God, and furthermore that the material manifestation is actually an illusion (called *Maya* in Sanskrit) which will only be understood when we reach a state of spirituality whereby we have purified our minds and perfected our character to the point of becoming one with God – this is what is understood as Enlightenment (*Samadhi* in Sanskrit – aka *Nirvana*, *Satori*, etc). Spiritual practice is seen simply a method of reclaiming

that lost identity that we have forgotten: like a wave that, though it has a name and a form of its own, is really one with the ocean.

The idea is that God with form, represented in various symbols and images, is meant for temples and temple-worship. Ashrams, on the other hand, are ideally meant to dispense with this ritualistic aspect to Hinduism, and are meant primarily for meditative practices. In practice, most ashrams still have a ritual element to them, but it is tacitly understood that this is a means to an end. Swami Vivekananda founded a famous ashram in the Himalayan mountains, called *Mayavati Ashram*, which completely dispenses with any kind of ritual-based worship, and does not have any image representing any aspect of God, for example.

Furthermore, rituals performed for self-gain actually defeat the purpose of spiritual life. Hindus believe that we are trapped in what could theoretically be an endless cycle of births and deaths, and the more materialistic we are, the more we would be dragged down into the world. The idea is to perfect oneself by loving everything equally, controlling the desires, etc. – and when one has done this, there would be no need for rebirth. We are born in this world to learn certain lessons, and if we fail in those lessons, we would have to come back until we have indeed learnt what we needed to learn. The more money we desire, the more earth-bound karma we generate, which ties us to the world more, meaning we would have to be reborn time and time again until we learn to renounce our love for Mammon. However, there are rituals meant to propitiate the goddess Lakshmi, who presides over wealth, and the belief is that she would grant material prosperity to those who pray to her. To illustrate: in many temples, there is a special kind of tree, to which you tie a red cloth and walk around eleven times – once a week. After the eleventh week, a special prayer is done. This is done specifically to find your special love and get married.

Now, it might seem contradictory that a tradition which prides itself in the advocacy of abstinence in every sense has these rituals – one to get more money, and one to get a wife/husband, but as mentioned from the Vedantic point of view this is to be understood as a means to an end. Material needs and desires are not frowned upon totally because different people have different predilections, and there are various aspects to Hinduism which caters for this. In fact, there are four stages in Hindu life, known as *brahmacharya*, *grihastha*, *varnaprashta* and *sannyas*. The first is the life of the student, where one is

required to be celibate; the second is the householder life; the third, is when one is expected to engage in selfless service to humanity (after having completed the duties of a householder, when the children are independent, and the married couple purify themselves by becoming more spiritual); and the latter entails complete renunciation of the world by donning the ochre robe, following a strict vegetarian diet and cutting off all ties with family – relying completely on God for everything. It is believed that every person is meant to go through these stages. Each stage of life has certain recommendations in order to be successful at it. For example, chastity and obedience to your teacher are important to being a good student. Sublimation of your *veerya* (explained only recently as sublimation in modern psychology) is important as your semen contains very concentrated and pure energy, which will be wasted if used sexually, and will be transformed into a profound creative force if not. Aside from ethical considerations, the eating of meat is also advised against because it dulls the mind, and induces laziness. There are various scriptures meant to be specifically for students, with concomitant rules and regulations. Just as school students find appeal in the universal charm of story-telling, some scriptures are in the form of stories, which is why we have so many epics, and the richness in symbolism is there simply because students appreciate the symbolism in a more sophisticated manner the more advanced they get.

Likewise, in the stage of married life, which is the second one mentioned above, there are various scriptures which tell of how to conduct yourself as a householder. This includes the rites and rituals that ought to be performed during the wedding ceremony, what being a good mother entails, what being a good *father* entails, etc. (Sivananda 2001). Of course, there is guidance on being a good husband and a good wife as well, together with the duties and prayers each has to do to maintain a spiritual atmosphere in the home. Key to a healthy marriage is a healthy sex life, which is what a *part* of what the Kama Sutra is meant to address.

Scriptures like the Upanishads, upon which Vedantic philosophy is based, are meant for the final two stages of life, when you have gathered life experience, with more than just a bookish knowledge of your profession, have passed the stage of material acquisition to the point where you see its futility, have conquered sexual desire, etc. It is only in this context that a reading of the said scriptures, together with their moral implications, makes any sense.

This is why Vedanta entails having a rather sophisticated view of the world, and requires standards of discipline not otherwise expedient. My point here is that there are scriptures dedicated to each and every aspect of life, even one with advice on how to fulfill your partner sexually (known as the *Kama-Sutra*: *kama* meaning 'sexual love' and *sutra* meaning 'precepts'). Hinduism, then, being described as a 'way of life' is not as clichéd as one might imagine, since every aspect of human life is catered for, but I mention this to make the point that Vedanta is to be understood as not only the culmination, but also the *transcendence* of everything else.

This is why it is said that the Vedantic ideal is to completely do away with ritualistic tendencies of any form. Vivekananda describes this ideology very boldly and unambiguously as such:

> This is the religion of non-dual philosophy. It is difficult. Struggle on! Down with all superstitions! Neither teachers nor scriptures nor gods exist. Down with temples, with priests, with gods, with incarnations, with God Himself! I am all the God that ever existed! There, stand up philosophers! No fear! Speak no more of God and [the] superstition of the world. Truth alone triumphs, and this is true. I am the Infinite (CW-1: 502).

Adi Shankara was the founder of the *Advaita Vedanta* school of thought. During his time, all six systems flourished. Hence, he had to refute these other systems in order to establish his monistic theory. Today, however, Sankhya, Vaiseshika, Mimamsa and Nyaya are virtually not practised. Hence, it is a pointless exercise to go into too much detail expounding the nuances of these systems – that in itself would require a thesis.

The Vedanta, which Vivekananda aligns himself to, was founded by an ancient sage by the name of Vyasa is said to be the founder of the Vedanta school of thought. This system is based on the writings to be found in the Upanishads, and, as explained earlier, it contains the doctrines set forth in the 'closing chapters of the Vedas', which is literally what the Upanishads are (Sivananda 1977: 270). There are 108 Upanishads, and of these there are 12 principle Upanishads.

Suffice to say, then that the Vedanta is the most satisfactory system of philosophy, and in fact, Vivekananda is of the opinion that what we refer to as

Hinduism today is tantamount to Vedanta.

There are three main sub-schools of thought which grew out of Vedantic thinking. Each proponent commented on the Upanishads in his own way and built his own philosophy. Vyasa was very critical of the Vaiseshika and Sankhya systems especially.

The Three Main Schools of Metaphysical thought within Vedantic Philosophy

According to Vivekananda himself, 'The Vedanta philosophy, as it is generally called at the present day, really comprises all the various sects that now exist in India' (CW-1: 357). He later goes in the same discourse, entitled *The Vedanta Philosophy*, he goes on to say that Vedanta really has become one and the same as Hinduism itself. The Vedanta, then, from a practical purview, forms the scriptures of the Hindus, and all systems of philosophy that are orthodox have to take it as their foundation, as mentioned above.

'All our commentators, when they want to quote a passage from the scriptures, as a rule, quote from the Vedanta' (CW-1: 357). The most well-known commentators on the Vedanta are Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva. They founded the schools known as *Advaita*, *Visishtadvaita*, and *Dvaita Vedanta*. These may be translated roughly as 'non-dualism', 'qualified non-dualism' and 'dualism'. The conventional Hindu mind does not see a tripartite arrangement which perceives the world in three different ways, but rather as rungs on a ladder, each one necessary for understanding the other. A simple illustration would be someone who looks at the ocean and sees a massive body of water. The Advaita Vedantin would openly declare that there is only one ocean, and that the waves are ephemeral, constantly changing and certainly not real; the only reality is the ocean, from which the various waves emanate. The Visishtadvaita Vedantin would say that though the waves may have an ephemeral existence, as long as they are there in that from, we have to acknowledge their existence, short-lived as it may be. The Dvaita Vedantins would tell us that it is silly to imagine that waves and the ocean are the same thing. This might be true in some sense, but a surfer cannot go to the depth of the ocean and expect to surf – he needs the waves, and for him, their ontological status is given as axiomatic. The same goes for people studying wave-patterns, or for children who go to the beach especially to splash in the

waves. Hence, the latter is a more pragmatic philosophy, premised necessarily on dualism.

These different Vedanta systems have one common psychology, and that is, the psychology of the Sankhya system. The Sankhya psychology is very much like the psychologies of the Nyaya and Vaisheshika systems, differing only in minor particulars. This is why the latter two systems are seen as redundant today. As mentioned earlier, the Vedanta and the Sankhya are to be seen as complementary.

The Vedantists agree on three points:

- They believe in God,
- They see the Vedas as Divine revelations, and
- They believe in cycles.

The belief about cycles is as follows: all matter throughout the universe is the result primal matter (*Akasha*), and all the forces acting upon each other, is the outcome of one primal force (*Prana*). Prana acting on Akasha is *projecting* the universe. The word 'creating' in this context would be inaccurate, because the eastern concept of creation is not the same as that of the western one – whereby there was a big bang and something manifested out of nothing. No sect in India advocates such a belief, which is why projection is preferred since Hindus believe that there was an underlying stratum to all creation which has always existed, but manifests itself cyclically through the process expansion and contraction (or 'creation and destruction', or 'the big bang' and 'big crunch', or 'evolution' and 'involution').

At the beginning of a cycle, Akasha is motionless, unmanifested. Then Prana begins to act, more and more, creating grosser and grosser forms out of Akasha — plants, animals, men, stars, and so on. After some time this evolution stops and involution begins, everything being resolved back through finer and finer forms into the original Akasha and Prana, when a new cycle follows. This parallels the claims of modern physics, which postulate red shift and blue shift, and holds that the universe started with a 'big bang', and is therefore expanding, but will eventually stop expanding and start contracting, resulting in a big crunch, which will once again expand, starting with another big bang, etc. (Hawking 1995).

Within the Vedantic context, however, there is something beyond Akasha and Prana. Both can be resolved into a third thing called Mahat, the Cosmic Mind. This Cosmic Mind does not create Akasha and Prana, but *changes* itself *into* them. It ought to be evident now why the English word 'God' is problematic within the Vedantic context, but suffice to say, Mahat would either be a key property of your conventional God, or even tantamount to it.

Methodological Approach

CMT is used as a tool to analyse a body of work pertaining to Hindu philosophy, specifically focusing on the following texts:

- Vivekananda's addresses at the Parliament of Religions, convened in Chicago in September 1893;
- Vivekananda's commentary on a classical Sanskrit text by the saint Patanjali, compiled into a book entitled RAJA-YOGA;
- Transcripts of 21 of Vivekananda's discourses/lectures given across America and the UK.

The above constitute the bulk of the material found in *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda – Volume 1*, henceforth CW-1 (and CW-2 to refer to volume 2, etc). The edition I have used is the 'Mayavati Memorial Edition' published in 1977.

After reading through the text manually, I noted the various metaphors, and grouped them into related frames (or more accurately, perhaps, metaphors at a superordinate level). Thereafter, I searched for key words in an electronic version of the said text, just in case I may have missed some during the manual reading. A concordance program called AntConc (version 3.2.2.1w) was used for this, and a KWIC analysis was done to search for the relevant key words. Of course, human intervention was further required to check which of these words linked to phrases employing them in a metaphorical manner; conceptual metaphor is, by definition, something perceived conceptually, and therefore cannot be detected by a computer program. Sentences like

> *The balloon went up*

and

> *The price went up*

will be parsed in exactly the same manner by a machine, meaning that they will be considered syntactically homogenous without any appreciation for the fact that one is literal and the other not. Furthermore, specific lexemes cannot be distinguished as literal or metaphorical by the computer; cf. the use of the word 'father' in the following sentences:

> *Vivekananda's father was a well-known lawyer in the Calcutta region*
> vs
> *We must aspire to perfection, just as our Father in heaven is perfect.*

If the corpus contained these two sentences, it would simply show two hits when 'father' is searched for. The computer has no way of 'knowing' when the word is used in a metaphorical sense, and when not – all a concordance program can do is present the user with the word, the number of times it occurs in the corpus, and with a KWIC analysis, the context in which the word occurs. As mentioned, this is why an *ex post facto* manual reading was necessary even after using the concordance program.

Results: Analysis and Discussion

The conceptual metaphors found in the texts can be grouped into 24 different frames[2]:

1. Family

'And of this Indian <u>Mother</u>-Church' (CW-1: 3)
'India herself, the <u>Motherland</u>, as <u>she</u> already exists' (CW-1: 3)

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[2] Only a few examples are cited here for illustrative purposes – there were hundreds of instantiations throughout the text…
Text was not bold/underlined in the original.

'These, then — the Shâstras, the Guru, and the <u>Motherland</u> — are the three notes that mingle themselves to form the music' (CW-1, p.3)

'I thank you in the name of the <u>mother</u> of religions' (CW-1: 6)

'these sects were all sucked in, absorbed, and assimilated into the immense body of the <u>mother</u> faith' (CW-1: 8)

'Ignorance is the <u>mother</u> of all the evil and all the misery we see' (CW-1: 34)

'Blessed, indeed, is the woman to whom man represents the <u>fatherhood</u> of God. Blessed are the children who look upon their <u>parents as Divinity</u> manifested on earth' (CW-1: 42)

' 'Thou art our <u>father</u>, and wilt take us to the other shore of this ocean of ignorance' ' (CW-1: 111)

'Patanjali, the <u>father</u> of the Yoga philosophy' (CW-1: 125)

'Kapila, the great <u>father</u> of the Sânkhya philosophy' (CW-1: 165)

2. Book

'Life is infinite, one <u>chapter</u> of which is, 'Thy will be done,' and unless we realise <u>all the chapters</u> we cannot realise the whole' (CW-1: 197)

'There are all the <u>past chapters</u>, and this <u>present chapter</u>, and there are a whole lot of <u>future chapters</u> before him' (CW-1: 266)

'No child is born with a *tabula rasa* — with a clean, <u>blank page</u> — of a mind. <u>The page has been written on</u> previously' (CW-1: 185)

3. Water

'That shows that consciousness is only the surface of the <u>mental ocean</u>' (CW-1: 10)

'[…] the <u>ocean of memory</u> can be stirred up' (CW-1: 10)

'[…] my body is one little continuously changing body in an unbroken <u>ocean of matter</u>' (CW-1: 13)

'[…] each man is only a <u>conduit for the infinite ocean</u> of knowledge and power that lies behind mankind' (CW-1: 69)

'[…] with the help of this body you will cross the <u>ocean of life</u>' (CW-1: 82)

'This <u>little wave</u> of the Prana which represents our own energies, mental and physical, is the nearest to us of all the <u>waves of the infinite ocean</u> of

Prana. If we can succeed in controlling that <u>little wave</u>, then alone we can hope to control the whole of Prana' (CW-1: 84)

'[…] the whole universe was an <u>ocean of thought</u>, he and everyone else had become <u>little thought whirlpools</u>' (CW-1: 85)

'In an ocean there are <u>huge waves</u>, like mountains, then <u>smaller waves</u>, and still smaller, down to <u>little bubbles</u>, but back of all these is the <u>infinite ocean</u>. The <u>bubble</u> is connected with the <u>infinite ocean</u> at one end, and the <u>huge wave</u> at the other end. So, one may be a gigantic man, and another a little bubble, but each is <u>connected with that infinite ocean of energy</u>, which is the common birthright of every animal that exists' (CW-1: 87)

'Think of the universe as an <u>ocean of ether</u>, consisting of layer after layer of varying degrees of vibration under the action of Prana' (CW-1: 88)

'All are parts of the <u>same ocean</u> of Prana, they differ only in their rate of vibration' (CW-1: 89)

'[…] this world is only <u>one drop in an infinite ocean</u>' (CW-1: 101)

'[…] the <u>waves</u> in the <u>ocean of the mind</u>' (CW-1: 104)

'If it [the mind] is clear, and there are <u>no waves</u>, we shall see the bottom. The <u>bottom of the lake</u> is our own true Self; <u>the lake</u> is the Chitta and the <u>waves</u> the Vrittis' (CW-1: 112)

' 'One moment of company with the holy makes a <u>ship</u> to <u>cross this ocean of life</u>' ' (CW-1: 123)

'This <u>body is the boat</u> which will carry us to the other shore of the <u>ocean of life</u>' (CW-1: 124)

'[…] the Purusha so great that the whole universe seems as a <u>drop in the ocean</u> and falls off by its own nothingness' (CW-1: 141)

'The whole universe is one <u>ocean of matter</u>' (CW-1: 144)

'[…] the knowledge takes the Yogi <u>across the ocean</u> of birth and death' (CW-1: 164)

'[…] the <u>infinite river of souls</u> is <u>flowing into the ocean</u> of perfection, of self-realisation' (CW-1: 175)

'Supposing we are materialists, for argument's sake, we shall have to come to this, that the whole universe is simply an <u>ocean of matter</u>, of which you and I are like <u>little whirlpools</u>. Masses of matter are coming into each <u>whirlpool</u>, taking the <u>whirlpool</u> form, and coming out as matter again. The matter that is in my body may have been in yours a few years ago, or in the sun, or may have been the matter in a plant, and so on, in a continuous

state of flux. What is meant by your body and my body? It is the oneness of the body. So with thought. It is <u>an ocean of thought</u>, one infinite mass, in which your mind and my mind are like <u>whirlpools</u>' (CW-1: 213)

'[…] everyone from the highest angel to the lowest particle of matter is but an expression of that <u>one infinite ocean</u>' (CW-1: 214)

'There is, as it were, an <u>infinite ocean</u> behind, and you and I are so many <u>waves</u>, coming out of that <u>infinite ocean</u>' (CW-1: 221)

' 'As so many <u>rivers</u>, having their source in different mountains, roll down, crooked or straight, and at last come into the <u>ocean</u> — so, all these various creeds and religions, taking their start from different standpoints and <u>running through</u> crooked or straight courses, at last come unto THEE' ' (CW-1: 222)

'As the gentle falling of the <u>dew</u> at night brings support to all vegetable life, so, slowly and imperceptibly, this divine philosophy has been spread through the world for the good of mankind' (CW-1: 222)

'It is only a question of time, and time is nothing in the Infinite. It is a <u>drop in the ocean</u>' (CW-1: 238)

' 'As all the <u>rivers</u> of the world constantly <u>pour their waters into the ocean</u>, but the <u>ocean's</u> grand, majestic nature remains undisturbed and unchanged, so even though all the senses bring in sensations from nature, the <u>ocean-like heart of the sage</u> knows no disturbance, knows no fear.' Let miseries come in millions of <u>rivers</u> and happiness in hundreds! I am no slave to misery! I am no slave to happiness!' (CW-1: 262)

'I want to love where this <u>mighty river</u> of my love can go, the <u>ocean</u> of love; this <u>rushing tremendous river</u> of my love cannot enter into <u>little pools</u>, it wants the <u>infinite ocean</u>' (CW-1: 273)

'But you find out that it is very difficult to <u>cross this ocean</u> [of Maya by] yourself' (CW-1: 279)

'[They are] different little <u>whirlpools</u> in this <u>ocean</u> of mind'[3] (CW-1: 283)

'The manifold does not destroy the unity. The <u>millions of waves</u> do not destroy the unity of the <u>ocean</u>. It remains the same ocean' (CW-1: 284)

'Let us realise [that] we are the infinite power. Who put a limit to the power of mind? Let us realise we are all mind. <u>Every drop has the whole of the ocean in it</u>' (CW-1: 286)

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[3] Brackets in original.

4. *Circuit*

'[…] we can send <u>electricity</u> to any part of the world, but we have to send it by means of <u>wires</u>. Nature can send a vast mass of <u>electricity</u> without any wires at all. Why cannot we do the same? We can send <u>mental electricity</u>' (CW-1: 138)

'When the mind has been trained to remain fixed on a certain internal or external location, there comes to it the power of <u>flowing in an unbroken current</u> […] towards that point' (CW-1: 104)

5. *Cyclic Nature of Life*

'[…] just as in the case of electricity the modern theory is that the power leaves the dynamo and completes the circle back to the dynamo, so with hate and love; they must come back to the source' (CW-1: 109)

'We know there is no progress in a straight line. <u>Every soul moves</u>, as it were, <u>in a circle</u>' (CW-1: 236)

6. *Animal*

'The human mind is like that <u>monkey</u>, incessantly active by its own nature' (CW-1: 97)

'As the <u>snake</u> is happy in giving up his old skin' (CW-1: 180)

'The organs are the <u>horses</u>, the mind is the rein, the intellect is the charioteer, the soul is the rider, and the body is the chariot. The master of the household, the King, the Self of man, is sitting in this chariot. If the horses are very strong and do not obey the rein, if the charioteer, the intellect, does not know how to control the horses, then the chariot will come to grief. But if the organs, the <u>horses</u>, are well controlled, and if the <u>rein</u>, the mind, is well held in the hands of the charioteer, the intellect, the chariot reaches the goal' (CW-1: 132)

7. *Light vs Dark*

'The <u>lamp</u> is constantly <u>burning out</u>' (CW-1: 65)

'So we must work faithfully using the prescribed methods, and <u>light will come</u>' (CW-1: 72)

'[…] the mind is in three states, <u>one of which is darkness</u>, called Tamas, found in brutes and idiots' (CW-1: 112)

8. *Heat*
'If you <u>boil</u> all their theories down, the <u>residuum</u> will be that' (CW-1: 84)

9. *Fire*
'And when it reaches the metropolis of all sensations, the brain, the whole brain, as it were, reacts, and the result is the <u>full blaze</u> of illumination, the perception of the Self' (CW-1: 92)

10. *Conduit*
'[…] each man is only a <u>conduit</u> for the infinite ocean of knowledge' (CW-1: 69)
'I have already spoken of the Ida and Pingala currents, <u>flowing through either side of the spinal column</u>' (CW-1: 94)

11. *Physical Actions*
'<u>Instead of being knocked about</u> in this universe' (CW-1: 58)
'The world is ready to give up its secrets if we only know how to <u>knock</u>, how to <u>give it the necessary blow</u>' (CW-1: 73)

12. *Machine*
'Breath is like the <u>fly-wheel of this machine</u> [referring to the body]' (CW-1: 80)

13. *Power*
'So Pranayama is not breathing, but controlling that <u>power</u> which moves the lungs' (CW-1: 85)

14. *Master-slave*
'[…] <u>we shall conquer nature</u>, <u>we shall be masters</u> of phenomena of nature' (CW-1: 233)

'God's children are your <u>Master's children</u>. [And children are but different forms of the father.] You are <u>His servant</u>'[4] (CW-1: 249)

15. *Building*
'Wherever there is life, the <u>storehouse</u> of infinite energy is behind it' (CW-1: 87)

'On reason we must have to <u>lay our foundation</u>' (CW-1: 103)

16. *Journey*
'The Chitta is always trying to <u>get back</u> to its natural pure state, but the organs draw it out. To restrain it, to check this outward tendency, and to <u>start it on the return journey</u> to the essence of intelligence is the first step in Yoga, because only in this way can the Chitta <u>get into its proper course</u>' (CW-1: 113)

'Those Yogis who do not <u>reach</u> perfection die and become gods; <u>leaving the direct road they go into one of the side streets</u>, and get these powers. Then, again, they have to be born. But he who is strong enough to withstand these temptations and <u>go straight to the goal</u>, becomes free' (CW-1: 163)

17. *Instruments*
'[…] just as by the <u>telescope</u> and the <u>microscope</u> we can increase the scope of our vision, similarly we can by Yoga bring ourselves to the state of vibration of another plane' (CW-1: 88-89)

18. *Up is Better; Up is Spiritually Edified*
'Whenever a prophet got into the superconscious state by <u>heightening</u> his emotional nature, he brought away from it not only some truths, but some

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[4] Brackets in original

fanaticism also, some superstition which injured the world as much as the greatness of the teaching helped' (CW-1: 102)

'What we call knowledge is a <u>lower state</u> than the one beyond knowledge. You must always bear in mind that the extremes look very much alike. If a very <u>low vibration of ether is taken as darkness</u>, an intermediate state as light, <u>very high vibration</u> will be darkness again. Similarly, <u>ignorance is the lowest state</u>, knowledge is the middle state, and <u>beyond knowledge is the highest state</u>, the two extremes of which seem the same' (CW-1: 119)

19. *Plant*

'It [the Vedanta philosophy] is, as it were, the very <u>flower</u> of all the speculations and experiences and analyses, embodied in that mass of literature' (CW-1: 220)

'He [Lord Krishna] taught that a man ought to live in this world like a <u>lotus leaf</u>, <u>which grows</u> in water but is never moistened by water' (CW-1: 12)

'<u>The seed</u> is put in the ground, and earth and air and water are placed around it. Does <u>the seed</u> become the earth; or the air, or the water? No. <u>It becomes a plant</u>, it develops after the law of its own growth, assimilates the air, the earth, and the water, converts them into <u>plant substance</u>, <u>and grows into a plant</u>' (CW-1: 19)

'Little do these ignorant, deluded persons dream that whilst they are congratulating themselves upon their miraculous power to transform human hearts, which power they think was poured upon them by some Being above the clouds, <u>they are sowing the seeds</u> of future decay, of crime, of lunacy, and of death' (CW-1: 97)

'Then will all sorrows cease, all miseries vanish; <u>the seeds</u> for actions will be burnt, and the soul will be free forever' (CW-1: 105)

'Put a <u>seed into the ground</u> and it disintegrates, dissolves after a time, and out of that dissolution comes the splendid <u>tree</u>' (CW-1: 110)

20. *Reason as Person to be Followed*

'On reason we must have to lay our foundation, <u>we must follow</u> reason as far <u>as it leads</u>, and when reason fails, <u>reason itself will show us the way</u> to the highest plane' (CW-1: 103)

21. Institutions as Traps

'If you take my advice, do not put your neck into the <u>trap</u>. The moment they try to put their <u>noose</u> on you, get your <u>neck out</u> and go somewhere else' (CW-1: 267)

'We have got ourselves caught in the <u>trap</u>, and we will have to work out our freedom' (CW-1: 141)

22. Bondage

'Buddhism ... broke the <u>chains</u> of the masses' (CW-1: 257)

23. Food

'Those that only take a <u>nibble</u> here and a <u>nibble</u> there will never attain anything' (CW-1: 99)

24. Stage

'[…] sound symbols play a prominent part in the <u>drama</u> of human life' (CW-1: 45)

As mentioned, these metaphors are only a portion of those found, but I believe it gives an accurate overview of the crux of Vivekananda's key ideas from the said texts. Most metaphors are attached to frames which are unsurprising in the sense that they are perfectly commensurable with common sense, in sync with other schools of thought (including Occidental ones), and therefore require little explanation to be interpreted.

The FAMILY frame gives us an interesting take on how Vivekananda conceives India, Hinduism and the key exponents of the various schools of Hindu thought. He believes that India is oldest cultured society in the world, and therefore refers to it as the 'Mother-Church', 'Motherland', etc. Likewise, Hinduism being the oldest religion known to man is referred to as 'the mother of all religions', ostensibly implying that all other religions are off-shoots from this original way of life. He qualifies this later on by referring to Judaism as the oldest Occidental religion, and Hinduism as the oldest Oriental religion, and elsewhere adds Zoroastrianism: 'Three religions now stand in the world

which have come down to us from time prehistoric — Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism' (CW-1: 8). His general point though is that Hinduism is unique in that 'Judaism failed to absorb Christianity and was driven out of its place of birth by its all-conquering daughter' (CW-1: 8). Furthermore, only 'a handful of Parsees' (CW-1: 8) remain as a shadow of the grandeur that may have once been. Hinduism, however, embraced sect after sect over the thousands of years of its existence, ostensibly questioning the universality and applicability of Vedic. Yet, 'like the waters of the seashore in a tremendous earthquake it receded only for a while, only to return in an all-absorbing flood, a thousand times more vigorous, and when the tumult of the rush was over, these sects were all sucked in, absorbed, and assimilated into the immense body of the mother faith', that being Hinduism (CW-1: 8). Hence, the various schools of thought that have sprung up over the years have never become break-away factions, with the exception, perhaps, of Buddhism, though that too may need to be qualified.

Regarding the BOOK frame, Vivekananda explains nature (both human nature and the natural environment) as a kind text that, with the right kind of 'literacy', we can understand, interpret and come to grips with. The knowledge we gain from this would be, ultimately, an understanding of who we are, and where we fit in to the grander scheme of things – the realization that we are part and parcel of this universe, not a separate entity, as we think we are, whilst still in our 'illiterate' state. The means by which we would attain the kind of 'literacy' which would enable us to 'read' this book would be the various spiritual practices delineated in the various texts, specifically the eight-fold practice of Raja-yoga.

Vivekananda also describes the human mind as a 'blank page' which has been 'written on previously', and categorically declares that 'no child is born with a *tabula rasa*' (CW-1: 185); hence, he is a classical empiricist in that he subscribes to the Lockean axiom, viz. that 'there was nothing in the intellect that was not first in the senses' (Uzgalis 2010). This may sound contradictory, but can be understood if one bears in mind that Eastern thought subscribes to the doctrines of reincarnation and metempsychosis; whilst actual memories are generally eradicated after death, the predilections embedded in one's being remain. These are called *samsaras*. Even concrete memories are believed to be recorded in the ether, and can be tapped in to.

The most pervasive frame used by Vivekananda is that of WATER. The human mind (*Chitta*, in Sanskrit) is described as either as a lake, or an ocean. When the mind is active, there are 'waves' created on this ocean, and the more sensory stimulation we are subjected to, the more 'waves' we create in our minds, causing us to be more restless. When we restrain our senses, we allow these 'waves' to subside, thereby enabling this 'ocean' to subside. The aim of yoga is to get the mind to be as calm as possible, since the mind, though necessary to function in everyday life, precludes us from getting in touch with our intuitive self, which enables the individual soul (*jivatman*) to connect with the cosmos, which can be seen as the Greater Soul (*Paramatman*), of which the individual soul is a part – separate only insofar as the wave is 'separate' from the ocean. Memories are like bubbles which sink (sic) into the 'ocean', and can be called up (remembered). Memories from long ago sink deeper, but never disappear – this includes memories from previous births, which is why the 'ocean of memory' can always be 'stirred up' (CW-1: 10).

Advaita Vedanta holds that the world does not really exist. In this sense, Vivekananda may be deemed an idealist (cf. Srivastava 1973), though Vivekananda himself refused to be boxed into a category. The world as we see it is merely an illusion, and with the dawn of the relevant knowledge, we will see that what we once perceived as something real, will dissipate into nothingness – the world is just a conglomeration of ideas. In CW-1, Vivekananda alludes to an incident regarding Humphrey Davy, the famous British chemist, where whilst teaching a class he was overpowered by some kind of gas which heightened his sensory perception, and during that moment he was able to see through the *phenomenon* (the term being used in the Kantian sense) and perceive the *nounenon* behind the forms, whereby Davy described the 'whole universe' as 'an ocean of thought', and every person thereby, a 'little thought' whirlpool in this ocean (CW-1: 85).

The concept of *Prana* is an important one, and may be defined as the underlying, animating force which pervades the universe. In the context of the Raja-yoga text which Vivekananda provides a commentary on, it is important to note that this particular text is based on the Sankhya, the details of which are not important, except that there is a belief that beyond this *Prana* is something called *Purusha*, which is Supreme Intelligence. The goal then of Raja-yoga would be to tap into this cosmic *Prana* by controlling this *Prana*

housed within your own body, after which you can tap into the Purusha. Unlike *Advaita Vedanta*, the Sankhya philosophy does not subscribe to this idea of oneness. Hence, the very idea of 'merging' into an 'ocean', as the Vedantins would like to, is foreign. This is why, in *this* context, he now talks about us as housing 'little waves' of Prana, which we must control, and will enable us to tap into the 'infinite ocean' of the greater Prana, so to speak (CW-1: 84). This would give the practitioner various powers, detailed in the text. Furthermore, if we do not allow ourselves to be distracted by these powers, we would be able to tap into the Purusha, which is 'so great that the whole universe seems as a drop in the ocean', and thereby attain enlightenment (CW-1: 141).

Scarcely is there ever mention of God in Vivekananda's writings. This may be because the word connotes something foreign to Hindu philosophy. When describing the 'infinite ocean', and its 'tiny bubbles' and 'little waves' all being part of it (CW-1: 87), the analogue in this context for the ocean would be what the Western mind would call God. What marks the Hindu conception of God as different here is that people, the world, the universe (all analogues for the bubbles, waves, etc.) are not *separate* from each other, or from God; a large wave and a smaller wave are separate only in a very artificial sense, such that 'everyone from the highest angel to the lowest particle of matter is but an expression of that one infinite ocean' (CW-1: 214). The radical thing about this belief is that there is no qualitative difference between one wave and another, even if one is, for the moment, bigger than the other. Hence, every 'drop has the whole of the ocean in it' (CW-1: 286), meaning that we are really the same as each other, and indeed as God. The body we have gives us a false, temporary form, which precludes us from merging with God, like a wave that gets thrown out and 'forgets' to go back to the ocean, where it belongs. The belief is that every being will one day merge into the Cosmic Consciousness we call God, hence the proclamation that 'the infinite river of souls is flowing into the ocean of perfection' (CW-1: 175).

The CIRCUIT frame conceives of the body as a conduit for thoughts, which behaves like electricity. This does not only refer to nerve currents 'flowing' in the central nervous system, but also to the idea that certain people can transfer their feelings and thoughts to other people, as if by wireless technology. Furthermore, Vivekananda claims that the entire universe is pulsating with energy, which every person can tap into. If the prescribed

methods are followed, every person can tap into this energy and become a powerful dynamo, 'flowing in an unbroken current' (CW-1: 104).

Regarding the CYCLIC frame, Vivekananda believed that strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a straight line, even in the context of basic Euclidean geometry; it only seems that way from our limited perspective. Even motion can never occur in a straight line. He explicitly states that 'every motion is in a circle' (CW-1: 109), and illustrates this using the following hypothetical thought experiment: if we were somehow able to take an object and project it into space with enough power, and live long enough, assuming the object encounters no obstructions, would 'come back exactly to your hand'. He then concludes that any 'straight line, infinitely projected must end in a circle' (CW-1: 109). In recent times, this notion has gained increasing popularity in light of Einstein's theories of relativity, which has empirically proven that space-time is indeed curved, and that the Euclidean axioms do not apply to space-time geometry. However, Vivekananda takes this as a basis to make a metaphysical point, namely that we are all going to go back where we came from: we are on a path of learning, and will eventually end up where we started, at the very beginning of time, in a state of *sunyata* (nothingness), being one with the universe. That is why every soul moves 'in a circle' (CW-1: 236). Vivekananda also explains that the emotions and thoughts that you send out will always come back to point of origin, as it is like the power which 'leaves the dynamo and completes the circle back to the dynamo' (CW-1: 109).

Conclusion

I have not discussed the other frames as the same themes run through them in different ways, and space constraints preclude it from discussion here. The remaining metaphors listed above can be understood within this context. Nevertheless, an in-depth analysis of all the frames and their concomitant metaphors mentioned here will require scores more to be written.

The FAMILY frame was indeed used, but certainly not with the primary aim of portraying God as a father figure of some sort, or even as a nurturant parent, as can be seen from the examples cited above. Hence, Lakoff is incorrect in his prediction that our political views are necessarily based on our conceptions of the government as a parental figure, and that we

superimpose these views consistently onto our religious beliefs. Hence, Lakoff's 'guess […] that what makes conservative Christians conservative is that they interpret their religion as requiring a Strict Father model of the family' may apply to Christians and/or American politics, but does not apply in the Eastern context since there is no necessary connection between one's political views, and one's religious views (Lakoff 1996: 247-248). Also, there is no consistent family metaphor used to conceptualise God, as Lakoff predicts.

It is evident, then, that Vivekananda's interpretation of Hindu lore sets it apart from most other traditions in that there is no concept of evil, hell and punishment, for example. None of the metaphors employed frame any issue along retributive lines, and there is no notion of God as an authority figure who needs to be feared in any sense.

Though there are analogues with other Eastern traditions, what we see here is a claim that humanity is one, not only qualitatively the same as each other, but the idea is that the whole of creation is essentially a manifestation of this one essence. This is what sets *Advaita Vedanta* apart from other schools of Hindu thought, and from other religious traditions.

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