The Representation of Religion in Religion Education: Notes from the South African Periphery

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Abstract: Scholars of Religion Education (RE) have promoted a non-confessional approach to the teaching of religions that explores and examines the religious history of humankind, with due attention paid to its complexity and plurality. In this promotion, the public representation of religion and its impact on RE has not received sufficient attention. An often hegemonic representation of religion constitutes an important part of religion in public life. Moreover, this article argues that this representation is a phenomenon shared by secular, secularizing, and deeply religious societies. It shows that a Western understanding of secularization has guided dominant RE visions and practices, informed by a particular mode of representation. As an illustration of how education in and representation of religion merges in RE, the article analyses the South African policy document for religion education. While the policy promotes RE as an educational practice, it also makes room for a representation of religion. This article urges that various forms of the representation of religion should be more carefully examined in other contexts, particularly by those who want to promote a non-confessional and pluralistic approach to RE.

Keywords: religion education; secularity; secularism; religion in public life; representation of religion

Although we might not be able to achieve unity in any other public sphere, the religion education classroom can be a public place in its own right, in which we can work towards creating an 'us' with no 'them' [1].

1. Introduction

Religion Education (RE) as an educational and not a religious or confessional practice is increasingly accepted as the only legitimate and reasonable pedagogy for plural societies. In this view, religion should be studied in its plural manifestation in local contexts and for an increasingly globalizing world. This vision is promoted by scholars but also accepted among policy makers in diverse countries (Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and South Africa). It is believed that RE focussed on the study of multiple religions in one classroom meets the needs of changing societies. Another argument brought forth in support of RE is the phenomenon of secularization that has swept the globe. While an earlier prediction that religion would eventually disappear has been abandoned, the secularization of social life has not decreased in many parts of the world. Particularly in the Western world, where RE is promoted more than elsewhere, secularization of individual consciousness, and the dwindling number of citizens who identify themselves as religious, cannot be denied. RE as both non-confessional and pluralistic is promoted for undeniable educational and social reasons.

This vision for RE is persuasive, but it is founded on theories of secularism and secularization that have been challenged by global events since the last quarter of the 20th century, and by post-colonial criticisms of secularism and the modern state. Both the original and the revised theories of secularization and secularity are based on Western political and social experiences. Quite unexpectedly,

they point to a presence and representation of religion in the public sphere. Religion occupies a place as a remnant of a religious past, a persistence of belief, a vision for the future, or a contemporary political context. These dominant, sometimes hegemonic, representations of religion have been recognized by some scholars of RE, as will be shown below. However, the focus of most scholarship is on the problems posed by theology and confessionalism, and not on how the public representation of religion plays an equally significant role in RE.

This contribution argues that the public representation of religion is an unavoidable feature of RE policies and syllabi. It begins with a literature review that shows that perceptive scholars have recognized the public representation of religion in RE. The article then offers an analysis of how to develop this recognition through a close reading of secularization theories. In a counter-intuitive way, these theories point to divergent representations of religion in the public sphere. With this framework, the article proceeds to show the representation of religion in South African RE. It offers a careful analysis of the policy of RE promulgated by the Department of Education in 2003. The policy is the key document used in the country to guide syllabi, textbooks, and practices for teaching religion in schools. An analysis of the policy reveals that its explicit goal is to promote RE in a non-confessional and pluralist manner. The policy reflects the dominant model of RE. However, a closer analysis reveals that the policy also makes room for a representation of religion for schools and classrooms. The article concludes that RE policies, visions, and practices must consider the public representation of religion and its impact on the deliberation and study of religions in a pluralistic and non-confessional manner.

2. Religion Education and the Representation of Religion

Scholars and research projects in various parts of the globe have been promoting RE as a non-confessional study of religions, their history, and their contemporary roles and meanings [1–3]. Many scholars have become aware of the complexity of a non-confessional and objective representation of religions in the classroom. Some have brought up the difficulty of maintaining a neutral stance towards religions [4], while others have pointed to the secularist framing of religions in the classroom [5,6]. The impact of public debates on religious education has also been noted [7,8]. I would like to show that these studies point to a politics of representation that is very much a part of RE.

From the second half of the 20th century, scholars have documented the emergence of RE in different parts of the globe. It is not possible within the limits of this article to document this emergence everywhere, but some prominent examples may be mentioned. In some European countries, particularly Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and the United Kingdom, a non-confessional and multi-religious approach to RE slowly took shape from the 1950s. The subject was mooted as part of a larger societal process of democratization, as well as the increasing pluralization of society and the classroom from the 1970s. In the United States, a court decision in 1963 paved the way for teaching religions in schools and universities in a non-confessional way [9]. South Africa introduced a new RE policy in 2003, one that replaced confessional Biblical Studies of apartheid, while Zambia apparently introduced such a policy much earlier in 1977 [10]. Some studies have pointed to the urgency of introducing RE with a focus on more than one religion after the events of '9/11' [11–14]. Some other countries, like Nigeria and Kenya, for example, have addressed religious diversity in the classroom by introducing separate programmes for Christians and Muslims [15]. However, these arrangements are not considered properly speaking RE models.

Diane Moore's important book (2007) on engaging religious illiteracy in the United States presents a justification and model for multi-religious RE [9]. She points to the contextual conditions in the United States that have made the study of diverse religions necessary and essential. According to Moore, no good education can afford to ignore the role of religion in society and history, and the diversity of religions in a globalizing world. RE should be part of democratic education that aims to promote engaged citizens and moral agents. Like most other protagonists, Moore also values the role of critical thinking for the study of religions. Education in religion does not merely focus on gathering

information but engages in critical enquiry, comparison, and evaluation [9]. Moore's book eschews any kind of theological justification and apologetics in the RE curriculum.

Achieving the goal of RE as defined by Moore has not been easy. By following some selected scholarly studies that have addressed this challenge in a number of countries, I will show the prominent role played by the public representation of religion in policies and classrooms. I begin with Jensen (2009), who critically followed the process of introducing RE in Denmark. Jensen believes that many valuable opportunities were missed. Reflecting on a 2005 State Executive Order that aimed to promote RE, Jensen notes with dismay that some public concerns and challenges were expected to be included in a proposed syllabus [16]. These public concerns and challenges included a focus on Christianity and the teaching of Islam. They pointed, respectively, to the history of Denmark and the particular challenge of Islam since '9/11', and increasing Muslim migration to Europe. RE, according to Jensen, had to avoid these "challenges" and maintain its commitment to emancipation and its contribution to "culture with a (capital) C." RE should be regarded as part of *Bildung*, which was centred on "knowledge and competences essential to the furthering of an enlightened society and world, and to the furthering of an autonomous and knowledgeable ('*mündig*') individual and citizen. Emancipatory knowledge, if you like" [16]. The teaching of religion was part of the human commitment to freedom of religion, no more and no less [16]. Jensen's discomfort with the public concerns that were included in a proposed RE programme is revealing. It points to the presence (representation) of religion in the public sphere that, when brought into the classroom, would obstruct the broader objectives of the subject in schools. Any neutral "representation" of Christianity and Islam in this case, compared with the representation of Hinduism, say, would have to take account of these public pressures and debates. Such challenges and concerns would distort, according to Jensen, a classroom that was committed to an objective study of religions.

In his extensive oeuvre on RE in the United Kingdom, Robert Jackson was more critically aware of the presence of religious traditions in public and in classrooms. However, he was not approaching RE from the perspective of a neutral and secular Religious Studies discipline like Jensen but from the perspective of cultural studies and the history of religious education in the United Kingdom. With respect to the former, Jackson proposed that RE curricula take into consideration religions as dynamic traditions. The latter are constantly changing through processes of contact and exchange, and should not be taught as wholistic traditions with clear and defined boundaries [17]. Secondly, he pointed to the history of RE in the United Kingdom over the course of the 20th century and showed how it followed closely the history of Christianity in the country. Its framework of religion changed from piety, to an intellectual tradition, to an inward feeling, and then to its essence [18]. For the 21st century of global exchange and multiculturalism, Jackson proposes that RE should follow an interpretive framework in which learners could explore and find values and identities for themselves [13]. Jackson's reflections and proposal point to the public presence (or notable absence) of religion and its location in the new multicultural context of the United Kingdom. His work reveals the unavoidable representation of religion in the public, as well as in RE curricula.

Writing on Norway and Sweden, respectively, Skeie and Berglund have pointed to the public representation of Lutheranism that pervades RE curricula in these countries. Skeie points to the extensive debates on religions that mark the public sphere, and their unavoidable effect in schools. He points to debates between secularists, Christian religious conservatives, and minority religious communities, each arguing for a different approach to RE in the Norwegian classroom called KRL (*Kristendomskunnska med religions-og livssynsoirentering*, Christianity, Religion, Life Stances). Moreover, the Lutheran Church holds an overseer role in society and education. In contrast with Jensen, Skeie does not see a problem in allowing the RE classroom to facilitate these and other discussions. He prefers a typically Norwegian "corporatist" approach to RE [7,19]. In her study of the RE curriculum of 2009/2010 for Swedish schools, Berglund shows that Christianity is also singled out for special consideration. She says RE in Sweden is marinated in Lutheranism [20]. In another continent and country, these Scandinavian examples are echoed in van Arragon's study in Ontario (Canada). In a

new secular approach to RE introduced there, van Arragon detects a hegemonic role of the state and Christianity [4]. These case studies are among many that may be cited, illustrating that the public representation of religion cannot be filtered out of RE, even in those committed to secularity and secularization.

There is another body of work on RE that may be described as postliberal or postsecular in orientation. These works represent studies that take a critical perspective on the non-confessional approach advocated by earlier scholars [21]. Here, the public presence of religion is embraced as a desirable or unavoidable feature of the classroom. One example would be sufficient to show this new direction. After a thorough review of the models advocated by various scholars in England, Philip Barnes uses a postmodernist linguistic argument to highlight the deep differences among and within religions. He comes close to rejecting the idea that the concept and term "religion" was suitable to signify (represent) the diverse manifestations of traditions. "Religions" are so diverse that the term 'religion' may not be applicable without ambiguity to African religions, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam. There are too many differences within these traditions for one term to represent them. Barnes believes that a liberal approach to RE has downplayed these differences, in favour of a cosmopolitan representation of religion that neither reflects actual religions nor their role in the public sphere [22]. Barnes does not want to go back to an old-fashioned confessional approach but argues that some fundamental questions on truth and morality should be reintroduced in the curriculum [22]. Whilst Barnes' postmodernist argument unsettles the prevailing model of RE, his proposal re-inserts public religious debates into the classroom. His suggestion seems like a recipe for putting the dominant religion, Christianity in this particular case, back in the centre of the classroom. The history of Christianity in the United Kingdom will inevitably impact on how other religions are studied, as Skeie, Berglund, and van Arragon have shown in their respective studies.

These studies show that the presence or representation of religion in the public sphere cannot be completely kept out of the RE classroom. Whether one is dealing with a critical and secularist perspective or a new post-secular one, the representation of religion cannot be avoided. These studies have directly and indirectly shown that the public presence of religion makes its way into policies, pedagogies, and classrooms. As a way of developing this feature of RE, I turn to secularization theories that surprisingly point to some divergent forms of the public representation of religion.

3. A Theoretical Perspective on the Representation of Religion in Public Life

Secularization theories offer some insight on how to think about the politics and problematics of the representation of religion. The different and nuanced perspectives of Charles Taylor, Jürgen Habermas, Jose Casanova, and Talal Asad are useful for thinking about the representation of religions in modern societies. I will begin with Charles Taylor, whose definition of secularity in Western societies matches the representation of religion in dominant models of RE. I then follow up with some more critical reflections on secularization and how religion may be seen to be a necessary or unavoidable part of the modern state and the public sphere. This paves the way for thinking about the representation of religion in RE.

Taylor identifies three features of modern secularity that bring out its uniqueness in the political and intellectual history of the West. The first refers to the removal or reduction of religious influence and power from the political sphere, the second to the emptying of the churches, and the third to a change in individual consciousness [23]. It is the third feature that makes secularity a defining feature of Western history and societies. Being secular in this way is a realization that belief in a supreme being, or a supernatural plane of existence, is an "option": "(we) are able to see ourselves as occupying one standpoint among a range of possible ones, with which we have in various ways to coexist" [23]. Following Immanuel Kant, he calls this an escape from naivety [23]. Taylor calls this a "condition" of secularity that pervades the public sphere. Options for choosing a lifeworld are never far from one's being in the world. Even if secularity may be an "embattled option in the Christian (or "post-Christian") society, (it was) not (or not yet) in the Muslim ones" [23]. This hesitation

about the Muslim world is soon lost in Taylor's prose, but there is a hint that Muslim (and other non-Western) societies occupy a different stage of secularization. However, Taylor also thinks that the public presence of religion shines through dimly in some countries in the West: " . . . the countries of western Europe have mainly become secular—even those who retain the vestigial public reference to God in the public space" [23]. One gets two impressions from Taylor's thesis. The main one is that in a secular age, religions present themselves as options to be chosen. The second impression is that in some societies, religions may be seen as remnants from the past.

Jürgen Habermas also focusses on the Western experience of secularization, but in his earlier work puts the "vestigial public reference" in historical context. In a book first published in 1962, Habermas wrote of the Church's "representative publicness" (*repräsentativen Öffentlichkeit*) in medieval Europe, which he compared and likened to the "representative publicness" of the feudal lord in his estate or manor. Both occupied a place of power, representing authority and values that were tangible and absolute. There was no place for debate and deliberation in relation to either the landed nobility or the Church. Like the nobility, the "representative publicness" of the Church demanded acceptance. According to Habermas, the Church's representative publicness was not eliminated when a rational public sphere of early modern Europe replaced the representative publicness of the feudal lord: "in church ritual, liturgy, mass and processions, the publicity that characterized representation has survived in our time" [24]. According to Habermas, then, religion was at most a relic of the past. According to the secularization thesis dominant in the 1960s, it was going to be swept away. Habermas has changed his position since then, but his thesis of "survival" is retained in Taylor's more recent book.

With his book on *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Casanova attempted to refine the secularization thesis with ideas of how these "vestigials" and "survivals" may play a significant role [24]. Casanova offered a model that assigned a particular role to religion in the public sphere (but not in the political sphere). Also using mainly material from the history of the West, he argues that religion lost its "role of systemic normative integration" [25]. Casanova pays particular attention to the philosophical critique of religion, the wars of religion, and the development of inwardness promoted by Protestant Christianity. All these destroyed or considerably weakened the integrative role played by religion in social and political spheres. With the revival of religion in the public sphere, he shows with the example of Catholicism that religions can accept these conditions of secularity and play an important role in the public sphere. Religion, for example, can and should act as a voice of conscience with regard to the excess of state power: "religion could stand up against all posthumanity and posthistory theses" [25]. Casanova is confident that this role may be played by religions elsewhere, with a particular hope that it will happen within Islam [26]. His model for religious engagement in the public sphere is shared in the recent writings of Habermas [27,28].

Against Taylor, Habermas and Casanova, Talal Asad (2003) offers a critical post-colonial perspective on secularism that shows a greater role played by religion and the religious in the formation of the modern, secular state [29]. In his analysis, religion was neither a vestigial remain nor a useful participant in a post-secular public sphere. Religion was always implicated in the formation of the secular. It was a necessary part of secular culture, a binary opposite without which the latter could neither be defined nor imagined. Secondly, turning an anthropological gaze to the secular state in the West, Asad argued that the secular was not a neutral space within which projects were founded and executed. It included a set of cultural practices and performances, backed by power, to carry out nation-building projects, wage wars of occupation, and domesticate populations. In these projects, the secular inhabited by as much spirit and magic as any religious or cultural tradition. Inspired by Asad, scholars of religion Dressler (Islamic Studies) and Mandair (Sikh Studies) show this thesis in a number of countries. The essays in their edited collection point to the "religion-making" that modern states and elites engage in to inscribe a national, secular state [30].

These different perspectives on secularization point to the continuing presence of religion in the public sphere. This presence or survival of religion is framed by the theses in unique ways. Taylor and

the early Habermas partly share a vision of a declining public presence of religion, while Casanova wants to guide religion to a constructive role in the public sphere. Taylor offers secularity as an individual consciousness that faces a market place of religions. Current RE models reflect these theses, as is evident in the following description in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*:

> It seems likely that, over the first quarter of the twenty-first century, practice in religious education in public schools in different Western pluralist liberal democratic societies will gradually converge. However, this may result in individuals increasingly constructing their own personal religious faith, selecting bits from a smörgåsbord of different religions—a phenomenon already being observed among some students exposed to a world faiths approach to religious education [31].

This description of RE matches the model promoted by Robert Jackson, and adopted extensively in European programmes of RE research and pedagogy [17,32]. These models could easily accommodate Casanova's model in which religions may make a positive contribution in the public sphere. We may conclude, then, that RE assume a particular representation of religion in the public sphere. Seeing religions as vestigial remains or options to be chosen, they do not reflect Asad's post-colonial critical thesis of the deep roots of religion and the religious in the secular. However, they clearly do not suggest that the public representation of religion has disappeared.

While religions may be options to be chosen, they may also be already implicated in the formation of the secular. While they may be seen as merely vestigial, they may be re-ignited in times of crises. They may not play a role in social integration, but they can come alive in public debates in which secular reason has failed to provide answers. In any of these possibilities, religion in public life cannot be ignored. In any case, its public representation in subtle and explicit forms should be expected in RE classrooms and policies. I want to now turn to a detailed examination of RE in South Africa to show how the study of religion in a non-confessional and pluralistic manner stands side by side with a particular representation.

4. The Representation of Religion in South African Policy

Post-apartheid South Africa has been celebrated for its progressive constitution that promotes human rights in all its dimensions. The freedom of religious conviction and association are prominent, and religion flourishes in political and public spheres. In a recent book, a South African student of religion Annie Leatt Dhammamegha has shown the close relation between organized religious groups and the development of the 1996 constitution. That relationship, often identified as a cooperative model to be distinguished from theocratic or separatist models, was nurtured in the period leading up the first democratic government in 1994 [33]. Dhammegha believes that a "political secularism" informs state policies and practices in relation to cultures and religious traditions [34]. Her analysis follows Asad in showing how religions and cultures are carefully corralled into a new nation. However, this is not the only form of religious presence or representation in the country. Places of worship, both local and global, have made South Africa a market-place of religions. Religion occupies a major role in state and independent radio and television stations. Additionally, religion is also present in the speeches and public displays of the state. Presidents and various government officials regularly invoke religion in state performances [35–37]. I would suggest that a political secularism sits by side with a proliferation of religious representations in South Africa.

In this context, the South African government initiated an extensive process for deliberating on how religion would be taught in schools. Some religious representatives favoured a policy that allowed confessional education in schools, but this was rejected by academics and several other religious groups [38]. Eventually, human rights norms were adopted in formulating a policy, and in 2003 the *National Policy on Religion and Education* was published [39]. Consisting of 28 pages and 71 paragraphs, the policy has been used to guide new syllabi for the teaching of religion in schools, and and used by supporters and opponents of RE as a point of debate. I want to offer a close analysis

of the policy and show that it emphasizes RE with educational goals but also makes provision for religious observances in schools. It maintains a fine balancing act between the study of religion as an educational practice and the representation of religion as a public and religious performance. This close analysis will include a review of its reception in the country by academics and religious commentators.

The policy opens with a commitment to foster cooperation between the state and religions (Paragraph 3). It rejects theocratic and secularist models for South Africa and instead "combines constitutional separation and mutual recognition" (Paragraph 4). No one religion is privileged, but a "creative interaction" is pursued between the state and religions in a spirit of freedom, non-coercion, and non-discrimination (Paragraph 3).

The policy makes a distinction between RE and religious instruction. The former belongs to the school, while the latter is more properly located in religious communities and homes (Paragraph 8). RE pursues explicitly educational goals (Paragraph 17). It recognizes religion as an important human venture that is reflected in the histories of religions and their contemporary roles (Paragraph 23). RE brings out the common humanity shared by all religions (Paragraph 26). It is not concerned about the truth of any one religion (Paragraph 28), and, more emphatically, "the policy is not a project in social or religious engineering designed to establish a uniformity of religious beliefs and practices" (Paragraph 68). In keeping with its educational goals, professional teachers would be trained for this subject (Paragraphs 35,41).

The policy projects a positive disposition towards religions. Religions are expected to add value to the social and individual life of learners (Paragraph 18). South African religions are expected to contribute to the moral regeneration of the country (Paragraph 31). The policy also envisages RE to form an important part of individual development. RE ought to enable pupils to engage with a variety of religious traditions in a way that encourages them to grow in their inner spiritual and moral dimensions. It must affirm their own identities, while leading them to an informed understanding of the religious identities of others (Paragraphs 19,40).

While the policy stresses the values of freedom and non-discrimination, it avoids any reference to the negative effects of religion on either social or individual life.

One may conclude that the policy is geared to promote a general study of religions in the classroom, for the benefit of public life. RE in the policy matches that promoted in various other countries mentioned in this article. However, a closer reading reveals that education and deliberation are not its only concerns. The policy also makes provision for a representation of religions in schools in two different ways. On a general national level, RE articulates a vision of religious diversity in and for the nation. In addition, the policy makes provision for the representation of religious traditions.

Diversity is a fundamental vision of RE (Paragraphs. 10,14,30,44,69). The word is mentioned 41 times and refers to the diversity to be celebrated in the South African nation, the classroom, and the school. Religious diversity is a national asset (Paragraph 10). South Africans from various religious backgrounds share a civil society (Paragraph 14). The policy does not reflect on real or potential conflicts between religious groups. It echoes a prominent image of South Africa in the 1990s as a rainbow nation, first proposed by Archbishop Tutu in 1991 [40]. This image is also found in the national coat of arms introduced in 2000: "diverse people unite" (*!ke e: |xarra ‖ke* in the Khoisan language of the |Xam people). For the nation, the policy's celebration of religious diversity promotes an image of what religions are and can be.

Another type of representation is evident in the place given to religious practices in schools. While the policy insists that religious instruction is ideally placed in the home, religious observances are not excluded from school premises. The latter may be used for religious instruction outside school hours "provided that opportunities [are] afforded in an equitable manner to all religious bodies represented in a school" (Paragraphs 55,57). The policy dictates that learners should be allowed time off to attend to religious observances on holy days or special times of the week (Paragraph 56). Schools may allow religious groups to observe some practices (Paragraph 58), and this may include prayers in school assemblies. In all such observances, there should be no coercion or unfair discrimination.

In Paragraph 62, the policy proposes a "rotation of opportunities for observance, in proportion to the representation of different religions in the school." Religious observances are thus given a prominent place in the school, standing side by side with a celebration of religious diversity in the nation.

The policy engages in a balancing act between the study and representation of religions in schools. RE is designed to expose learners to the diversity of religions that constitute the nation. Through education, learners are expected to study religions throughout the world and the nation. At the same time, the policy makes space for the representation of religion. This is firstly reflected in privileging a national image of diversity that signifies the classroom, the school, and the nation. The policy also affirms and promotes religious observances and practices on school grounds during and outside school hours. It creates a vision of a multi-cultural performance of religions, with the freedom and celebration of religious observances. It underplays the tension between its educational and representational visions. Using the values of equity, fairness, and freedom, it suggests that education and representation are easily reconcilable.

Studies on the policy have exposed the tension and contradiction between studying and representing religions. Scholar of comparative religions David Chidester was chair of a ministerial committee on RE and lead author of the 2003 policy. He supported the development of a new approach to RE from the early 1990s. He worked with researchers and teachers to provide innovative materials to teach the subject. However, Chidester was hesitant about the positive reception of the policy in schools. Writing reflectively on the process in 2002, he expressed grave concerns about how a new policy might be received. On the one hand, he commented on a decision by the then provincial minister of education in the Western Cape that religion will not be taught in schools: "Although he thought he was responding to legitimate religious interests, Provincial Minister of Education André Gaum was actually condemning his pupils to ignorance about their world" [38]. On the other hand, commenting on the little time allocated for the subject in the curriculum, Chidester said that "in a country that takes religion very seriously, with strong bonds of religious solidarity, but also with the potential for religious misunderstandings, divisions, and conflict, the relatively small space given for religion in schools might be just right" [38]. Chidester seems to be saying that the educational goals of the policy will be challenged by strong religious convictions in the country, and in schools. He was revealing some concern about how the representation of religions would obstruct the policy's educational goals. This reminds us of Taylor's "secularity", which is not reflected in the religious consciousness of how South Africans relate to religions. Rather than choices to be exercised, South Africans take religions "very seriously".

Leading a body of educators in research projects, Cornelia Roux has been more hopeful about the prospects of the policy. A close examination of her work shows that it is focussed on the representation of religion through individual learners. She sees the potential for teachers and learners to find each other in the diversity of the classroom. RE, she argues, should not lead to religious development; it should cause learners to "(f)eel . . . safe with their own religion while gaining knowledge about other religions in order to develop respect for the diversity in their school environment" [41]. The RE classroom facilitates the discovery of the self and other through the religious tradition of self and other. Roux seems to have embraced the policy's representation of religious diversity through personal encounters. The educational part of the policy takes a back seat in this articulation.

Recent studies on the policy and its effects in schools reveal that the representation of Christianity maintains a hegemonic presence in schools. Some schools are indeed making adjustments for minority religious observances for the representation of these religious groups previously marginalized or unrepresented [42]. Since the promulgation of the policy, however, learners from minority religions continue to face great hurdles in representing their religions in school [43]. Some of the controversies have been taken to the judiciary, which has led to the following comment by religious studies scholar Ricco Settler: "the onus is put on the learner to seek relief from the court in cases of overt discrimination or limitation of their rights" [43]. Ntho-Ntho's research on Christian school principals concludes that they do not know what to do with the demands of such learners [44]. I see these debates and conflicts

as evidence that the representation of minority religions has been repeatedly monitored or curtailed in schools [45]. The representation of Christianity has not been replaced by a representation of religious diversity.

In other comments on the policy, some Christians have consistently rejected the educational goals of the policy, as well as its vision for a new representation of religion. In spite of the extensive place given to religious observances in the policy, Mestry says that it "is vague and [gives] no specific direction … to where and when religious observances will fit into the *school's programme* (my emphasis)" [46]. Professor of Law Serfortein says that the government aims to "impose a set of multi-religious convictions on individual learners" with the policy [46]. She fears that "South Africa will develop into a secular state ungrounded in any religion, conforming to a dull uniformity" [47]. Abdool et al prefer religious instruction in schools that does not ignore the idea of the Holy, which would then be followed by dialogue [48]. These commentators reject or ignore RE as a study and deliberation of the religious history of humankind in its plurality. They demand the continuing representation of Christianity in schools. Chidester takes some comfort in the fact that their demands are expressed in the language of the Constitution [49]. I see them rather as a demand to maintain the representation of Christianity in schools and societies in the past.

The 2003 South African policy on religion and education reveals the tension between education and representation in exemplary fashion. While the policy is clearly committed to the teaching of religion in its diversity in a non-confessional manner, it also makes space for the representation of religion in the classroom and school. In terms of the analysis pursued in this article, these responses seem to be focused on the representation of religions. Chidester fears that strong religious commitments will undermine the educational project. Coming from one Christian background, Roux supports the opportunity for self-representation for all religions. However, there are many other Christians who fear that the representation of Christianity is undermined by the policy.

5. Conclusions

In this essay, I have argued that the public representation of religion in the RE classroom has not received the full attention it deserves. RE should not only be seen as a transition from confessionalism to non-confessionalism in the study religions; it should also recognize the particular representation of religions in the public sphere that finds its way into the classroom. This representation is evident in secularization theses, both old and revised. Habermas, and to a lesser extent Taylor, regard the public representation of religions as remnants or vestiges of a by-bone era. Taylor presents religions as so many possible options in Western public life. Casanova offers a revised secularization thesis, in which religion may play a greater role in the public sphere. Prevailing models of RE seem to match these theories of secularization. However, Asad's work has pointed to a deeper collusion between the secular and the religious in the history of the West and elsewhere. "Religion-making" plays a bigger role in the formation of the secular than imagined in theses that seek to represent the secular as a departure from the religious. In any case, secularization theses show diverse forms of the public representation of religion in Western and non-Western societies, and it is these representations that cannot be ignored in the RE classroom.

In a brief review of recent literature on RE, this essay has shown how the representation of religion has been felt. From the secular emancipatory project of RE advocated by Jensen to Barnes' revised post-secular model, the public representation of religion can hardly be avoided. No model for RE committed to the study of religions in its complexity and plurality can avoid this feature. This article illustrated this entanglement in the South African context. The post-apartheid policy on RE revealed an attempt to support the educational goal of studying religions while promoting a representation of religions. The policy promoted a model of RE that matched global models while simultaneously pursuing a distinctive representation of religion. The responses in schools and among academics show that the representation of religion has dominated the field.

In conclusion, RE cannot be completely excised from public life. It is not as Chidester states in the opening epigraph, a place where "us" and "them" are obliterated. Like religion in public life, RE is a struggle between the deliberation on and representation of religions. Deliberation focusses on a dispassionate study of religions, while representation comes into the school through the practices of states and religions (Asad), through the remnants of the past (Taylor, Habermas), through renewed public interests (Casanova), through choices to be made among many (Taylor), or through religious practices (South African policy). An RE that seeks to transform religious education from a confessional to non-confessional model cannot avoid the representation of religion.

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