

# Pushing the Conceptual Boundaries in Researching Religion in Education in Diversity: A Critical Appraisal of Cornelia Roux's Work

René Ferguson  
Rene.Ferguson@wits.ac.za

Dominator culture has tried to keep us all afraid, to make us choose safety instead of risk, sameness instead of diversity. Moving through that fear, finding out what connects us, revelling in our differences; this is the process that brings us closer, that gives us a world of shared values, of meaningful community (hooks 2003: 197).

## Abstract

This article emanates from a global analysis of the many articles, book chapters and research reports written by Cornelia Roux from 1988 to 2013. The article is a critical appraisal of Roux's contribution to the fields of religion and human rights in education in South Africa as 'scholar-activist'. An analysis of Roux's published work indicates that she was conscious of changes in political and social paradigms especially where religion in education is concerned, and consequently the need for 'paradigm shifts' before effective learning and teaching religion in diverse religious and cultural educational contexts could occur. Given the influences of her Reformed Christian upbringing, growing up and being educated in apartheid

South Africa, Roux was ever conscious of the need to challenge patriarchy, bigotry, religious intolerance and cultural particularism. Consequently, key themes are evident in her work that would contribute significantly to the debates on religion in education in South Africa and abroad. The article covers the following themes in Roux's work: the significance of values in education and in collaborative research, the need for paradigm shifts for effective learning and teaching religion and values; the teacher as facilitator/mediator of learning; creative and appropriate pedagogies for diversity and learning to understand 'the other'; classroom praxis and research as praxis; religion and belief as a human right in a diverse society; and finally a critical discussion of Roux's research projects as collaborative and consciousness-raising endeavours.

**Keywords:** collaborative research; feminist research paradigms; religion in education; human rights education; research as activism; scholar-activism

## **Introduction**

There are two novel-biographies that made an impression on Cornelia Roux in the latter part of her career (Roux 2012a). The one was written by Greg Mortenson (with David Relin) titled *Three Cups of Tea*, and the other by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, titled *Infidel My Life*. The theme common to these two narratives is the critical evaluation of the place of women and girls in society. Mortenson tells the story of his experience of building schools in Pakistan, where the education of children, girls in particular, was hardly valued. The narrative also tells of Mortenson's encounters with the villagers and their leaders. In one such meeting, Mortenson recalls a meeting with Haji Ali, a village leader, who teaches Mortenson a valuable lesson about collaboration. In the story, Haji Ali refuses to begin work on a building site until he and Mortenson have drunk tea together.

If you want to thrive in Baltistan, you must respect our ways .... The first time you share tea with a Balti, you are a stranger. The second time you take tea, you are an honoured guest. The third time you share a cup of tea, you become family ... (Mortenson & Relin 2006: 150).

The story told by Hirsi Ali is that of her life, subjected to servitude in a strict Muslim family. Hirsi Ali's story is also a story of women's oppression, female circumcision, forced marriage and the desire to contribute to reforming Islamist repression in order to liberate women from its patriarchy (Hirsi Ali 2007).

There are at least four reasons why I have introduced this article in this way. The first is the most obvious. These novels inspired Cornelia Roux to think about the rights of women and girls in relation to religion and culture. Second, the protagonists in the two biographies are both activists – Mortenson in his campaign to build schools for girls in the land of the Taliban, and Hirsi Ali in her fight for the rights of Muslim women and girls and her desire to reform the attitudes towards women in fundamentalist Islam. Activism is a key theme to be traced in relation to Roux's work throughout this article. The third reason is associated with the values that are reflected in these novels, values that resonate in the many books, book chapters and articles written by Roux over two and a half decades. A global analysis (Flick 2006: 315<sup>1</sup>) of Roux's work reveals that from early on she was concerned with values propagation in education (Roux 1988/1989a), an aspect that has been a dominant feature of her academic, research and teaching career ever since. Most notably care for the wellbeing of both teachers and learners as they learn about 'the other' in 'multi-religion content', care for what teachers and learners know and how they learn about religions and cultures other than their own, 'feeling safe' in the process (Roux 2003: 131; 1998a; 1998b; 2012a), care for how and what children learn, respect (rather than tolerance), sharing as in collaboration in research communities, curiosity and open mindedness (Roux 2005; 2007a; cf. Noddings 2003/2013<sup>2</sup>).

The fourth reason is associated with the idea of 'tea-drinking' (Mortenson & Relin 2006) and its significance in the culture of many middle-eastern and eastern countries, including Turkey, Pakistan and Afghanistan (<http://sadiasteaparty.com.2013>). Tea is drunk for many different reasons, but the reason most relevant to this article is the custom that tea epitomizes

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<sup>1</sup> See Uwe Flick (2006: 315ff) on global analysis as data analysis procedure.

<sup>2</sup> Roux drew on Noddings' (2003) *Caring, A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*. The 2013 edition is the second, updated edition. See reference list for the amended title.

hospitality. In Pakistan business is apparently preceded by socializing, tea drinking and meeting family. Tea is associated with building relationships as is intimated in the quotation above from Mortenson's book (Chabot 2008). Everyone who enters Roux's circle will drink the first cup of tea as stranger, the second as honoured guest in the sense of being remembered and respected for some or other academic contribution, and thereafter become part of the friendship and research family suggested metaphorically in sharing the third cup of tea (Roux & Ferguson 2002; Roux, Smith, Ferguson, Du Preez, Small & Jarvis 2009; Roux 2009a; 2012a: 39; Roux & Ter Avest 2013). In fact, tea drinking as metaphor for sharing and hospitality became a central feature of the *South Africa Netherlands Project on Alternative Development* (SANPAD) 2005-2009 (Roux, Smith *et al.* 2009) and 2010-2012 (Roux 2012a: 33; Roux & Ter Avest 2013), research projects which Roux led. Tea drinking served not only as the symbol of the close relationship that developed between the academics, post-doctoral fellows and researchers who worked on the projects, but also, in the case of the 2010-2012 project, as the means to gain the trust of the women who participated in the communities in conversation/communities of practice, the main sites of data collection (Roux 2009a; 2012a: 33, 42; Ferguson 2012: 132; Roux & Ter Avest 2013). Those of us who have worked with Roux either as co-researchers or post-graduate students conceptualised research projects and debated and 'dialogued' complex issues over copious cups of tea or coffee. I will return further along in the article to this culture of tea drinking in relation to collaboration in research as one of the themes covered.

At least four of the authors who have contributed to this special edition were Cornelia Roux's students (Ferguson, Du Preez, Jarvis and Simmonds). An analysis of all of our work indicates the extent to which we have been influenced by Roux, in similar ways, but also differently, depending on our own research interests, the nature of the collaboration, and the time and space in which we studied with her (Ferguson 1999; 2011; Du Preez 2006; 2008; Jarvis 2008; 2013; Simmonds 2010; 2013).

This article is a critical appraisal of Cornelia Roux's contribution to the field of religion in education and human rights education research in South Africa as scholar-activist from the perspective of a former post-graduate student and co-researcher. It is not possible to review all of Roux's work given the confines of this article, hence I have opted to focus on a selection of her scholarly works in terms of my memory of her work prior to

meeting her in the early 1990s, and the key concepts and related debates that emerged from our grappling with religion in education, particularly in terms of how these debates influenced and shaped my own work. In addition I will reflect on the experiences of research collaboration with Roux, my perspectives on her scholarly work over time and her challenging approach to research and academia. Some of this contribution must of necessity incorporate constructive critique since the Roux I know as scholar and academic mentor would not expect any less! In her supervision of my post-graduate studies, ‘standing on the shoulders of giants’ did not mean treating those giants as heroes, but finding chinks in the armour to offer critique and to push the boundaries of theories to advance scholarly work.

### **From Whence the Scholarship?**

As noted above, in order to write this article in this way I have conducted a global analysis of various articles, book chapters and research proposals and reports that Roux conceptualised, authored and co-authored from 1988 to 2013. The work for which she is most well-known is her research and theorising the place of religion in education in multicultural societies; debating the challenges associated with religion in the national curriculum and the curricula of teacher education providers in the pluralist democratic state; generating creative pedagogies for Christian religious education and ‘multi-religious’ education; religious education and hermeneutics; and more recently, for her theorising of her interpretation of the relationship and distinction between religion in education/ religion and education, and the intersections between the Constitution and human right to the freedom of religion or belief and human rights in education, with a particular emphasis on feminist theory and gender rights (Roux 2009a; De Wet, Roux, Simmonds & Ter Avest 2012; Roux & Ter Avest 2013).

Given the influences of her Reformed Christian upbringing, growing up and being educated in apartheid South Africa, Roux was ever conscious of the need to challenge patriarchy, bigotry, religious intolerance and cultural particularism (Roux & Van der Walt 2011; Roux 2012b). Roux was also conscious of change in political and social paradigms, where religion in education is concerned in particular, and the consequent need for ‘paradigm shifts’ in the thinking of teachers, university students and civil society more broadly, before effective learning and teaching of religion in diverse contexts

in education could occur (Roux 1998a; 1998b; 1999a; 1999b; 2001). Roux's voice was also the voice that challenged academics to take responsibility and to contribute to the status and quality of Religion Studies in universities 'as an important subject and area of research in education in general and in society in particular' (Roux 2009b: 5).

### **From Whence the Activist?**

Being an activist does not necessarily mean protesting by brandishing placards in front of parliament buildings, embassies or magistrate's courts, or organising boisterous campus activities, to draw attention to violations of women's rights, children's rights or any other rights and freedoms. Activism can also be powerfully initiated and experienced in research and through the written word, in adopting praxis-oriented learning and teaching strategies in the classroom, and using scholarly processes to generate alternative discourses to push the boundaries of theory and theorising on particular social issues (Young 2011; Zine 2004).

Thelathia Young (2011) suggests that the scholarly processes of researching, analysing, reflecting and writing are imaginative and ethical acts that spark social change. She also suggests that 'iteration and naming' (Young 2011) are powerful sources of activism. Activism is usually associated with movement, action, emancipation, shifting understanding, agency – all for contributing to humanitarian causes. Scholar-activism denotes that activism is supported by scholarly processes: theorising, research, data collection, analysis, interpretation, writing, reflection. I would add that *scholar*-activism (e.a.) could also be motivated by humanitarian interests since engaging with theory in research allows researchers to think more carefully through social issues, to rise above the level of common-sense knowledge. Young (2011: 1) refers to this kind of scholarly work as 'praxis-oriented ethics', as it is motivated by humanitarian interests and the values of mutuality, respect, reciprocity, care and the genuine desire to construct meaning through, as Patty Lather maintains, 'negotiation with research participants' (Lather 1991: 53; cf. Roux 2007a, 2012a). Feminist activists campaign for women's rights while also promoting bodily integrity, and women's autonomy in the social, political and economic spheres. Feminist scholar-activists will conduct their research in research paradigms that require action since they are designed around agency and with emancipatory

goals (Shields & Dervin 1993; Zine 2004; Roux 2007a; 2012a). Research methodologies preferred by scholar-activists include participatory action research and auto-ethnography (Roux 2007a; 2009a; Roux & Ter Avest 2013).

Roux's activism is evident in the uninhibited way in which she has responded to social issues or important questions that arose in relation to the field of religion in education starting in the 1980s. Whilst David Chidester and his colleagues at the University of Cape Town led the way in defining Religion Education in the wake of the apartheid era (Chidester, Mitchell, Omar & Phiri 1994) as a response to Christian National Education (CNE) in South Africa, Roux was amongst those who led the way in how she challenged the narrow hermeneutics that informed the writing of Children's Bibles (1989c/1994b) and the conservative pedagogies associated with teaching the Bible and Christian dogma to children (Roux 1988/1989b/1994c). After democracy in South Africa, Roux contributed significantly to understanding the role of the religious educator in multicultural and multireligious public schools in South Africa, through various empirical research projects conducted with children at schools (Roux & Steenkamp 1995; 1997), with her teacher education university students (Roux 1996a; 2001; 2005; 2007b; 2009c) and with in-service teachers (Roux 1998b: 129ff; Roux & Ferguson 2002; Ferguson & Roux 2003b; 2004). The Constitutional and human right to the freedom of religion or belief brought new challenges to the South African context particularly since CNE had penetrated so deeply in South African society and politics. Of necessity, the place of religion in education needed to be reviewed from a human rights perspective (Roux 1998a; 1999a; 1999b; 2005; Ferguson & Roux 2003b; 2004; Roux, Smith *et al.* 2009).

## **Scholar-activist**

It is generally true that one's socialization will influence the activities and worldview (ontology) we hold as we grow older. As academics we too are shaped by the worldviews (ontologies) we are raised with as well as by other influences that we encounter along the way. Roux's upbringing was a training ground for the type of probing issues she would raise questions about later in her life and pursue in research projects, but so too was the exposure to diversity on the international scene as she started to visit and engage with

academics in different countries to find the answers to her questions about the place of religion in education (Roux 2012b: 138). Roux's (2012b: 137; Roux & Van der Walt 2011) autobiographical reflections tell of her socialization in apartheid South Africa, in a white Afrikaans Reformed Christian context, having attended whites only Afrikaans schools, and being exposed to 'traditional behaviourist pedagogy' or fundamental pedagogics (Roux 2012b: 137). Roux however challenged the assumptions of fundamental pedagogics, a challenge which was already evident in her earliest research and subsequent publications (Roux 1988; 1994a; 1994b; 1995).

Cornelia Roux entered the field of scholarship in the late 1980s when she published various works related to teaching the Bible to little children. These works included *My Oop Gemoed* (1988) (translated into English as *An Open Mind*), *Die Religieuse Potensiaal van die Kind* (1989b/1994a) (translated into English as *The Religious Potential of the Child*), *Afrikaanse Kinderbybels* (1989c; revised as *Kinderbybels in Perspektief* in 1994, translated as *Children's Bibles in Perspective*). *An Open Mind* was a handbook for an innovative model of Religious Instruction for pre-school children. These books and various related academic publications that followed a few years later (Roux 1994c; 1995; 1996b), all shared the questions and criticisms that Roux raised concerning the narrow interpretations of the child's religious and spiritual development perpetuated in the fundamentalist pedagogics taught in some Afrikaans Universities and the view that lay at the root of Christian Nationalism in the apartheid era (Roux & Van der Walt 2011: 51; Roux 2012b: 137).

Roux's research on the religious and spiritual development of the child and her critique of Children's Bibles (Roux 1994a; 19889c; 1994b) were ground breaking at the time. In a book chapter published in 1995, Roux wrote the following on the religious potential of the child:

It is often very distressing to observe an ignorance concerning the religious potential of young children by some well-meaning teachers in Religious Education classes. Adults seem to hold the view that the child's knowledge of God and his or her understanding of the Bible message are solely the result of their good lessons, their courage and their teaching of the ethics and the content of the Bible. It may sometimes seem as if we are keeping God out of the children's lives just to experience a special feeling of self-success (Roux 1995: 87).

Following the work of Sophia Cavalletti, Maria Montessori and Jerome Berryman (Roux 1994a; 1995; 1996b), Roux supported the belief held by these educationalists that children are born with an inherent religious potential (Roux 1995: 88). She argued that the actions of adults could either hinder or promote the religious development of the child. Therefore, the teacher of Religious Education needs to facilitate the growth of this religious potential by providing appropriate reading and other visual materials for children to refer to in the classroom (Roux 1994c; 1995). Three key elements that would develop in Roux's work later were already evident at this stage, one being the child's religious, moral and ethical development, a second being the role of the teacher as facilitator of learning rather than one who merely conveys facts to the children (Roux 1995: 92). A third element that would carry through her work with teacher education students is the importance of creating a 'supportive, interesting and stimulating' environment to enable the children to gain a better understanding of religion (Roux 1995: 100; Roux & Ferguson 2002; Ferguson & Roux 2003b; 2004; Roux 2006). The environment in which learning takes place should be 'positive and relaxed' (1995: 102). That the knowledge, attitudes and pedagogical skilfulness (or praxis) of the teacher is central to enabling meaningful learning did not escape Roux either, as becomes evident in the numerous research projects designed to inspire innovative practice in the religion education classroom (Roux 1995; 2003; 2006; Ferguson & Roux 2003b; 2004; Roux & Du Preez 2006; Roux, Smith *et al.* 2009; Roux 2009c).

It was in this context of pre- and in-service teacher education that our paths crossed. Our auto-biographies in terms of growing up in 'white' South Africa are similar and of attending segregated schools. I however experienced a somewhat different upbringing as I am an English speaking South African, attended English medium schools and an English medium, historically liberal university. Our different life worlds would shape the challenges we would face in pre-service teacher education, that is, how we would facilitate (Roux) or mediate learning (Ferguson 1999; Ferguson & Roux 2003a) different religions and beliefs to education students who come from predominantly mono-religious and/or mono-cultural backgrounds (Roux 1996a; 2001; 2005; 2007b), or to students who come from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds, who had either been subjected to segregated primary and secondary education or multicultural education (Ferguson 1999; Ferguson & Roux 2003a; Roux 2001; 2007b).

Roux problematized (1998a; 1998b: 128) that those aims of education underpinned by Biblical or Christian values to convert school pupils to Christianity represented a position that did not bode well in a multicultural democratic society. Roux emphasised repeatedly that many teachers who had been socialized into believing that culture and religion were inextricably linked, clung to the belief that moral education should be linked to Christianity only. Such a position would eliminate the possibilities for learning about ‘other belief and value systems’ (1998b: 128; cf. Roux 1997).

Certain key themes that emanate from a global analysis of Roux’s work and already alluded to in this article will now be discussed in more detail. These themes are the following: paradigm shift, facilitation, values and religion education, collaboration in research and ‘consciousness-raising’.

### ***Paradigm Shift***

Roux’s work with pre- and in-service religious education teachers in a ‘constricted religious and cultural’ context contributed to the argument that ‘there was a need for a paradigm shift in teaching religion in multicultural schools’ (Roux 1998a; 1998b; 1999b; 2005). A paradigm shift was necessary because religious education had been politicised in the apartheid era and because communal values and religion in some communities were ‘non-negotiable elements’ (Roux 2001: 17) of a particular school tradition, making the transition to a more inclusive religion education inconceivable for both teachers and parents. In a transforming society such as South Africa post 1994, paradigm shifts would be ‘necessary and unavoidable’ (Roux 1998a: 84) to counter faulty perceptions pertaining to the place of religion in a democratic society. This paradigm shift should also entail a change in understanding the role of the teacher from ‘nurturer and Bible educator’ to that of ‘facilitator for the attainment of knowledge of religions, religious customs and values’ (Roux 1998b: 127, 128).

Roux suggested that a paradigm shift could only be implemented successfully from within a ‘hermeneutical frame of reference and only after social problems have been recognised, historical facts evaluated and the relevant questions asked’ (1998a: 84). The challenge to bring about these kinds of shifts in one’s frame of reference may ‘give rise to conflicts’ (1998a: 84). Working with her own university students and Christian teachers of religious education, Roux realized that there were various issues or problems

that needed to be addressed before teaching multireligious education could become a reality (Roux 2007b: 114). At a societal or macro level, teaching religion in schools in South Africa had meant religious instruction from a particular dogmatic position in Christianity, motivated by political dogma (1998a: 86; 2012b). The approach to instruction in the Christian faith in this way was characterised by a ‘history of conflict and intolerance’ (1998a: 86) meaning that many South Africans post 1994 were suspicious of religious education in the new dispensation. At a personal or micro level, many teachers were fearful of change, since change would entail teaching diverse religions in multicultural and religiously diverse schools. Writing from the perspective of the Christian teacher, fear could be located in the teacher’s lack of knowledge of different religions and the belief that ‘multi-religious’ education would be ‘a threat to their own belief system’ (Roux & Steenkamp 1997: 20; Roux 1999b: 105; Roux 2001: 17). Alongside this discussion, Roux also challenged the idea of the public school as a ‘faith community’ where collective worship takes place in assemblies, an argument that raised eyebrows since many teachers and parents argued that this would be seen as a violation of *their* right to freedom of religion and belief in schools that identified with one religion only (Roux 1998a: 86).

Such a paradigm shift (1998a; 1998b) would be easier said than done as was discovered working with student teachers and in-service teachers, since students and teachers who had been exposed to a monoreligious paradigm could be ‘trapped’ in the paradigm (1998b: 127). What would be imperative to the success of multireligious education in schools therefore, is the training of professional educators, taking into consideration the fears and negative perceptions that seemed to prevail (Roux & Steenkamp 1997:15; Roux & Ferguson 2002; Roux 2005). Well-defined Religion Studies modules in tertiary institutions were needed to ‘facilitate the paradigm-shift’ to ensure that students feel secure in delivering an inclusive curriculum (Roux 2005: 295; 2007b: 111). The paradigm shift would also need to reflect a shift in the educator’s values, since facilitating learning about diverse religions and beliefs would require ‘tolerance, respect and love for every child, irrespective of his or her religious and cultural background’ (Roux 1998b: 129).

### ***Facilitation***

Parallel to the argument that a paradigm shift would be the prerequisite to

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successful ‘multi-religious’ education, was the proposition that an element of the paradigm shift would entail answering the question how religion should be taught in school (Roux & Steenkamp 1995; 1997; Roux 1997; 1998a; 2001; 2005). In addition, the paradigm shift should entail the teacher implementing creative or innovative facilitation strategies for learning that allows pupils greater participation and opportunities to reflect on their own beliefs and values in the classroom (Roux & Steenkamp 1997; Roux 1998a; 1998b; 2003; 2006; Ferguson & Roux 2003b; 2004). Roux pointed out that the challenge for tertiary educators, as facilitators, lay with how well student teachers would in fact ‘adapt to change’ (Roux 2005: 296’ 1999a), if transformative thinking is at all evident as students are exposed to content on diverse religions and value systems (Roux 2005; Roux & Du Preez 2006), and how they understand their own and others religions or beliefs (Roux 2007b: 111). Intervention programmes were deemed to be integral to enabling pre- and in-service teachers to develop or to modify the way in which they view content on diverse religions and to assist them in developing the professional knowledge base, with ‘applicable mediation and facilitation strategies’ (Roux 2005: 294).

In a research project conducted under Roux’s supervision (Ferguson 1999; Ferguson & Roux 2003a), I investigated the role of the university educator or tutor as a potential agent of change with regard to pre-service teachers’ learning and teaching diverse religions and beliefs. The theoretical assumptions were drawn from Reuven Feuerstein’s theory of Mediated Learning Experience (MLE) (Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman & Miller 1980; Sharron 1987). The main aim of this project was to investigate the efficacy of Feuerstein’s theory as a vehicle for pre-service teachers to learn diverse religions and beliefs (Ferguson 1999: 5). From 2001 to 2002 we conducted our first collaborative research project titled *Facilitation Strategies of Belief and Value Orientations in a Multicultural Education System* (Roux & Ferguson 2002). In this project we further investigated the efficacy of MLE in the participating teachers’ practice of teaching and learning religions in school.

In retrospect, it is interesting to note that while Roux used the term ‘facilitate/ facilitation’ (1999a) to describe the actions of the teacher in the classroom, and Ferguson (1999) the term ‘mediation’, we did not really debate if there is a difference between the two, or if one approach is more effective than the other. An analysis of the various articles that emanated

from the research (Ferguson & Roux 2003a; 2003b; 2004) would indicate that we used the terms interchangeably. In an article written in 2001, Roux did discuss the two approaches as different strategies and suggested that both were equally useful in positively ‘influencing the student teachers’ perceptions of the subject’ (Roux 2001: 23). In this same article, Roux drew on McCutcheon’s (1999; cf. Roux 2001: 20) insider/outsider problem in the study of religion to argue that the position of the facilitator of ‘multireligious content’, whether insider or outsider to a particular religion or tradition, is significant. In retrospect, however, I argue, based on Feuerstein’s theory, that if teachers are to be effective mediators, they need to learn to be impartial towards the religions or beliefs of others. In this regard I agree with Jackson (1997: 136) who points out that,

Impartial teachers of religious education are prepared to countenance rival conclusions as well as those to which they are personally attached and know how and when to contain their commitments and how to present material from a religious tradition from the point of view of an adherent.

I also argue, that it is irrelevant for the mediator to disclose his/her insider or outsider status with regard to any religion or belief in the academic study of religions, if the study is to be fair and unbiased, and based on the principle of equality, as learning religions and beliefs in a human rights framework would require. However, it is important to acknowledge this insider/outsider distinction, on the grounds that being an outsider to a religion could affect how teachers represent religions or traditions other than their own (Jackson 1997: 49).

I argue in addition, in agreement with Sonia Nieto and Patty Bode (Nieto 2000; Nieto & Bode 2012) that the educator or researcher of religion studies (in terms of the challenges posed by diversity) needs to learn to affirm diversity in order to be fair and to do justice to the subject. This has implications for how teacher education students are exposed to religions in their university courses. Nieto and Bode argue furthermore that transformation is only possible if multicultural education is an essential component of the school curriculum (Nieto & Bode 2012: 40). Multicultural education is critical pedagogy (after Paulo Freire) and it is education for social justice (Nieto & Bode 2012: 54).

Defining a multicultural perspective means learning how to think in more inclusive and expansive ways, reflecting on what is learned, and applying that learning to real situations (Nieto & Bode 2012: 51).

This perspective has implications for both facilitation and mediation. To enable pre-service teachers to ‘alter [their] perceptions on different belief systems and values to promote effective education praxis’ (Roux & Du Preez 2006: 150ff), I would argue that exposure to MLE is more effective than facilitation. My reasons for arguing in this way are based on the fact that Feuerstein introduced the theory of MLE as the underlying theoretical basis for the concept of *cognitive modifiability* (e.a.) (Feuerstein *et al.* 1980; Ferguson 1999: 15, 16). Cognitive modifiability or enhancement refers to the potential to enhance the thinking abilities of a learner and is brought about by a deliberate programme of intervention. Feuerstein argued that the quality of learning is improved when a human mediator intervenes between the stimulus, the learner and the response to the stimulus (Skuy *et al.* 1991: ii; Sharron 1987: 35). Hence, the mediator selects topics, events, concepts or topical issues and assists the learner to give meaning to these stimuli in ways that enable the learner *to adapt to new situations effectively and efficiently* (e.a.) (Greenberg 1990: 34; Sharron 1987: 36; Ferguson 1999: 16). Feuerstein challenged Piaget’s premise that a person learns simply through contact with stimuli provided in his/her environment which may describe the actions of a facilitator (Rogers 1983: 20). Feuerstein identified at least ten criteria or types of interaction essential for classroom mediation that differentiates MLEs from other teacher - learner interactions. These ten criteria are as follows: the mediation of intent and reciprocity, of meaning, transcendence, competence, sharing behaviour, self-regulation and control of behaviour, individuality, goal planning, challenge and awareness of change. The mediation of ‘affective value’ was added as an eleventh criterion by Greenberg (1990: 36; cf. Ferguson 1999: 18) which refers to the ‘reciprocal sharing of learning’ (Greenberg 1990: 36), whereby the teacher/mediator emphasises the importance of the learner’s feelings and well-being in the learning process. More recently, Howie (citing Silver & Burden in Howie 2011: 33) further defined affective value as six important parameters for the mediator’s demeanour which are humour, sensitivity, belief, energy, creativity and love. Bloom’s taxonomy too includes an affective domain of learning (businessballs.com retrieved February 2014), which advocates for developing

the emotions, feelings, attitudes and values of the learner. If one ties this domain to Feuerstein's MLE criteria, the criteria become the vehicle for the affective domain and therefore of values infusion in the learning process. The sharing of intention for example may include that people treat each other with respect, that all learners are encouraged to participate in the learning activities, and that they learn collaboratively (Howie 2011: 33, citing Booth & Ainscow 2002). In the context of religion education, collaboration entails that learners engage dialogically to deepen learning and understanding about the religions and beliefs of others (Swidler 2004: 767; Roux 2005; 2010; cf. Ferguson 2011: 73, 175).

In analysing Roux's work on facilitating the learning of religion (1999), it is difficult to identify the basic theoretical assumptions that lie behind her understanding of facilitation, however Roux's earliest work on teaching the Bible to little children, indicates that the 'adult who presents the material must not tell the child which elements are accessible to him (*sic*) or not' (Roux 1988: 2). In a book chapter titled *The Use of Reading Material in Religious Education in Primary Schools* (in Rossouw 1995: 88), Roux argued her support for the religious potential of the child theory. Citing Sophia Cavalletti, Roux maintained that 'teachers should be aware of this potential and should endeavour to serve as *catalysts to let it develop to the full*' (e.a.) (in Rossouw 1995: 88). Roux pointed out that the actions of adults may promote or hamper religious development in children. For this reason children should be encouraged 'to discover God by themselves, while the adult acts merely as *facilitator*' (e.a.) (ibid: 88). Drawing on Cavalletti, Montessori, Berryman and Tamminen (89, 91), Roux was clearly of the opinion that the teacher should provide the right kinds of experiences to enable the child's religious development. Teaching and learning in religious education should therefore not merely be 'content-driven' and teachers should not resort to imposing a particular morality or 'moralising' in the classroom as if the learners have little to offer (Roux 1988; 1999a). She was also concerned that children should not be passive in the classroom, but actively involved in their own learning (Roux 1989a; 1989b; 1995; Roux & Steenkamp 1997; cf. Rogers 1983).

It is difficult to say why there was no theoretical underpinning to facilitation *per se* (it seems as if the meaning is taken for granted), but it is nevertheless possible to detect that Roux's earliest arguments concerning the facilitative role of the teacher (or any adult for that matter) in the process of

learning the Bible, were extended and adapted as the place of religion in education shifted in South Africa (cf. Roux 1999a; 1999b; 2001; Ferguson & Roux 2003b; 2004; Roux 2005; 2006). In the case of pre-service teacher education, Roux's facilitation operated on two levels. On one level, the facilitator is the university educator who assists and mentors the pre-service teacher to make the 'paradigm shift' from a monoreligious to a multireligious programme (Roux 2001; 2005; 2006). The second is at the level of the pre-service teacher who in turn needs to learn to be a facilitator of learning and develop facilitation strategies as they enter the world of the religious education classroom (Roux 2001; 2005; 2006; Roux & Du Preez 2006).

In Roux's work, facilitating learning about religion or religious diversity was never devoid of a values underpinning (affective domain). At first perhaps not consciously, but certainly more obviously later, Roux's drawing on feminist philosophy contributed to the emphasis on care and responsibility as values that she maintained need to be expressed by facilitators of learning and researchers in the field of religion, culture and human rights (Roux 2012a; cf. Noddings 2003/2013; Lather 1991). The role of the teacher as facilitator of learning could mean that the teacher simply shifts the responsibility for learning to the learners. Whilst the teacher in his/her role as facilitator may come up with innovative learning and teaching strategies and encourage active participation from the learners, it is also possible that the teacher adopts a detached position from the learning process (Jansen 2001). A careful analysis of Roux's work indicates that this was not the intention in the way she conceptualised facilitation. Roux's conceptualisation of facilitation seems to resonate with how Carl Rogers (1969/1983), the humanist psychologist<sup>3</sup>, conceptualised facilitation. What follows are a few ideas on the role of the facilitator drawn from Rogers (1969/1983) with some comparison with Roux's work:

- The facilitator has much to do with setting the initial mood or climate of the group or class experience (Rogers 1969; 1983: 135, 136). Rogers emphasised the importance of giving to students greater freedom to learn by enabling them to become inquirers, to work towards discovery. It is the teacher as facilitator who 'sets the stage

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<sup>3</sup> See also Facilitation Theory and Humanism <http://teorije-ucenja.zesoi.fer.hr/>. (Accessed on 23 February 2014.)

for a mind-set of inquiry, creating a responsive environment, and giving assistance to the students in the investigative operations' (Rogers 1983: 147, 156) (Roux 1988; 2001; 2005; 2006; 2010).

- The facilitator helps to elicit and clarify the purposes of the individuals in the class as well as the more general purposes of the group (Rogers 1969; 1983: 155) (Roux 2001; 1998a; 1998b; 2007b; 2012b).
- The facilitator relies upon the desire of each student to implement those purposes which have meaning for him/her, as the motivational force behind significant learning (Rogers 1969; 1983: 136) (Roux 2005; 2006). Roux emphasised the importance of dialogue, specifically her conceptualising the phenomenological-reflective-dialogical approach as the pedagogical tool to enable her students to come to terms with diversity (Roux & Steenkamp 1997; Roux 2005, 2006).
- The facilitator endeavours to organize and make easily available the widest possible range of resources for learning (Rogers 1969; 1983: 148). Roux introduced new strategies for learning different religions, including the development of multi-media programmes with stimulating visuals, that would allow students from monotheistic backgrounds as well as students who were not religious, to participate in the learning (Roux 2001; cf. 1988; 2006; 2007b; 2010; Roux & Steenkamp 1997).
- In responding to how students express themselves in the classroom, the facilitator accepts both the intellectual content and the emotionalized attitudes, endeavouring to give each aspect the approximate degree of emphasis which it has for the individual or the group (Rogers 1969; 1983: 124, 147ff). Roux was conscious of the emotions that learning about diverse religions evokes in university contexts where students come from monoreligious and monocultural backgrounds. Religion in education as an emotive research domain inspired Roux to investigate if student teachers from a monoreligious background, exposed to religious diversity in a university course, are able to make the shift to teaching diverse religions in their own

practice in schools (Roux 2001: 23; 2007b: 114; cf. Roux & Du Preez 2005).

- Throughout the classroom experience, the facilitator remains alert to the expression indicative of deep or strong feelings, ‘the fear and hesitation of the student as she approaches a new problem ...’ (Rogers 1969; 1983: 124). In conjunction with the point made above regarding religion in education as an emotive research domain, Roux was alerted to the fears and uncertainties that some Christian teachers and student teachers might have with teaching multireligious content (Roux 1996a; Roux & Steenkamp 1997: 19ff; Roux & Du Preez 2005; Roux 2006: 1299; 1230; Roux 2007b: 118).

The way in which Roux approached her *praxis* has led me to conclude that what Roux meant by facilitation is what Ferguson meant by mediation. Roux’s research with pre-service teachers or with co-researchers from outside of her university context was usually conducted from the perspective of the second and third cups of tea (to return to the analogy with which I introduced this article), meaning that the concern that friends and family should have with one another’s physical and emotional well-being, was carried through into the university programmes and research projects that Roux directed. Hence, research to do with religion and pedagogy, or with enabling pre- and in-service teachers to cope with religious diversity, is always a *moral* project (Roux 1988; Roux 2001; Roux & Ferguson 2003b; 2004; 2005; 2006, Roux & Du Preez 2005, 2006). The moral project also extended into research that focuses on religion and culture, religion and human rights (Roux, Smith *et al.* 2009; Roux, Du Preez & Ferguson 2009; Roux 2010), the necessity for developing religious literacy and human rights literacy (Roux 2010) and more recently religion and culture intersecting with gender and children’s rights (Roux 2009a; 2012a: 40; Roux & Ter Avest 2013; De Wet, Roux *et al.* 2012: 3). Particular values run as thread through Roux’s work which emanated from her Christian background (with the emphasis on Biblical values), her interest in Cavalletti, Montessori and Berryman and what these scholars stood for with regard to child development, her ongoing interest in the work of Paulo Freire, and later her interest in feminist theorists, with their overt infusion of values into the research process (Lather 1991; Shields & Dervin 1993; cf. Roux, Smith *et al.* 2009; Roux 2012a; Roux 2012b).

### ***Collaboration in Research: Auto-ethnographic Feminist Research Paradigm***

A more recent aspect of Roux's work which I will discuss in this section is her deliberate shift to conduct research from a 'feminist research paradigm' (Roux 2007a), an approach that was born out of the experience of conducting collaborative research with women academics from different universities (Roux, Smith, Ferguson, Du Preez, Small & Jarvis 2009). This particular project, titled *Understanding Human Rights through Different Belief Systems: Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue*, was a SANPAD funded project (South Africa Netherlands Project on Alternative Development 2005-2009).

Roux recognised that the diverse cultural and religious environments that characterised the different participating universities could add depth to the study (Roux 2007a: 505). The need for collaboration between universities was necessary to investigate how the 'fragmentedness' of teacher education in the area of religion and human rights education could be overcome. Furthermore, given the patriarchal tendency of leadership in many universities, this project would simultaneously contribute to the professional development and empowerment of the women in the research team (Roux 2007a: 507; cf. Gatenby & Humphries 2000: 89). Roux was concerned that the women who participated in this research team should understand and benefit from the 'the philosophy of the feminist research paradigm' with its strengths and empowering intentions, and not reflect the self-pity of some women researchers struggling to overcome the patriarchal domination in their tertiary institutions and in their home circumstances (Roux 2007a: 506).

An analysis of Roux's work intimates that feminist principles were already unobtrusively at work in the early research initiatives. Although gender specifically may not have been a main area of focus to start off with, other feminist sensibilities and shared values were, namely inclusivity in diversity, mutual respect and collaboration (Roux 1998b: 129; 2006: 1302; Roux & Ferguson 2002; cf. Lather 1991: 50). Later, the aim to empower women researchers (Roux 2007a), by encouraging the reflexive sharing of knowledge and experience between the researchers about their individual components of the research project (Roux 2007a: 506, 508; Shields & Dervin 1993: 67), and reflective journaling by the student participants became central features of this feminist research design (Roux *et al.* 2009: 78ff).

Given the patriarchy and institutionalized sexism (hooks 1994: 120) that continues to dominate in religions and cultures in South Africa, a position that threatens the safety and well-being of women and girls, and her growing interest in human rights in the school curriculum, Roux initiated a second SANPAD-funded research project titled *Human Rights Education in Diversity: Empowering Girls in Rural and Metropolitan School Environments* (2010-2012) (Roux 2009a; Roux & Ter Avest 2013). In keeping with the particular values and approaches of feminist research, this project was also a collaborative project comprising a team of women academics and researchers from five different South African universities and one university in the Netherlands. The research team would explore the terrain of human rights education and the rights of the girl-child (Roux 2012a: 31). This project attempted a more sophisticated application of the auto-ethnographic feminist research paradigm that had been applied in the 2005-2009 SANPAD project (Roux 2007a). A central aim of the project was to explore the complexities associated with the intersections between religion, culture and human rights:

The main aim of the project was to identify whether religious and cultural practices are in conflict with human rights education and the empowerment of girls (Roux 2012a: 37).

A key question raised in the study was if girls are ever aware of their rights and freedoms when religious or cultural practices are often discriminatory and indicative of unequal power relations between men and women. In seeking answers to this question, an elaborate research project was designed that combined a large number of researchers, from across widespread geographical locations in different religious and cultural contexts, with emancipatory goals for both the researchers and the women participants. The research methodologies used in this project included narrative inquiry actualised as conversation or dialogue in communities in conversation/communities of practice (Roux 2012a: 43; Ferguson 2012). The project drew on the co-operation of the researchers, participating teachers and mothers or female guardians of girls in the participant schools (Roux 2012a: 42). The intention was to develop conversational 'circles of trust' to identify instances of discriminatory practices associated with religious and cultural practices

and how such instances could be in conflict with human rights and therefore human rights education (Roux 2012a: 37).

In keeping with the principles of feminist research (cf. Shields & Dervin 1993: 67), this project intended to ‘place value’ on the experiences of women and girls in the midst of patriarchal dominance, by women researchers (Roux 2012a: 39). The project was also conceptualised with care as an underlying value (after Noddings 2003/2013) coupled with the intention of creating safe spaces for the conversations given the sensitive nature of the research topic (Roux 2012a: 31). It is difficult to say how influential this research was in drawing attention to *actual* discrimination of girls in the name of religion and culture at the data collection sites. However, another principal of feminist research that emerged in my evaluation of this project was ‘consciousness-raising’ as ‘an integral part of the feminist methodology’ (Shields & Dervin 1993: 67).

The intimate conversations that were generated in the communities in conversation/communities of practice provided opportunities for the female teachers and parent participants to share their particular narratives of abuse or violation. However, other cases of abuse in the surrounding communities also emerged from the conversations, as well as other ‘sites of struggle’ (Shields & Dervin 1993: 86) of young people in the form of parental neglect and alcohol and drug abuse (Ferguson & Perumal 2011 Gauteng Research Reflections). The information shared by the teachers and parents was useful to conceptualise human rights education in the different geo-social contexts. An interesting outcome of this research project was that field researchers have the potential to disrupt, to enable the ‘recognition and naming of realities’ (Young 2011: 1) so that change in communities can be activated (Ferguson & Perumal 2011 Gauteng Research Reflections).

The various communities in conversation at the three different research sites did not necessarily confirm or refute the ‘opaqueness’ of discrimination often linked to religious and cultural ritual practices where girls are concerned (Roux 2012a: 37). However, as Shields and Dervin (1993: 67, citing Lather) emphasised, the process of consciousness-raising during the research process, elicited by the aims of the research project may be more important than the product of the research (Shields and Dervin 1993: 68; Roux & Ter Avest 2013; cf. Roux (ed) 2012).

## Consciousness-raising: Last Reflections

A final point of constructive critique takes me back to the Hirsi Ali autobiography mentioned in the introduction to the article, with regard to Roux's citing of it to emphasise the oppression of women in the name of religion and culture and possibly also to theorize gender (Roux 2012a: 35, 37). Reading this work led me to look more deeply into feminist Islam. I was concerned that the Islam that Ayaan Hirsi Ali wrote about was not the Islam of my many female colleagues in my academic context and the Turkish Muslim women I have come to know in Johannesburg over the last two years. The teachers who participated in my community of practice in the SANPAD 2010-2012 project were predominantly Muslim.

Of the eight participants, two are Christian and six are Muslim. Five of the Muslim women wear *hijab* and one does not, although all are equally conscious of their Muslim identity. On one occasion, a lay counsellor, known to one of the teachers was invited to attend a focus group session. She too is Muslim and wears *hijab*. These women offered a counter-narrative to the one offered by Hirsi Ali. All spoke confidently about their faith, the respect that their menfolk afforded them in their families, and that wearing the headscarf was a matter of choice for them.

When the researchers raised the issue of female genital mutilation, as practiced in the Sudan and Somalia, they were appalled that it was being practiced in Islam. On my university campus, more and more young Muslim women have taken to wearing the full veil or burka. The influences behind their adopting this practice are not clear and nobody asks. Jasmine Zine (2004), a feminist Muslim and self-confessed 'scholar-activist', distinguishes between two kinds of feminist Muslims: those who are distinctly secular, and those who are framed within a religious or faith-based paradigm (Zine 2004: 171, 173). Zine also draws attention to 'the construction of Muslim women through sensationalised accounts of their victimization ... on the part of feminist writers who turn their gaze upon invariably "oppressed" Muslim women' (Zine 2004: 168). The attention on Muslim women and the various feminist schools of thought regarding whether or not *hijab* is a religious requirement or not (Zine 2004; Ahmed 2011), the argument whether or not they are capitulating to patriarchy and fundamentalism, or whether wearing *hijab* or *burka* is an 'expression of agency over the representation of their bodies' (Zine 2004: 174), has emerged as one example of 'iteration and naming' (Young 2011) and is deserving of further research that pushes the

conceptual boundaries in researching religion and its relationship to education.

Roux pushed the boundaries, first as scholar and individual, with a particular focus on the religious development of the child and a critique of Children's Bibles; then as scholar in collaboration with under- and post-graduate students; and as scholar in collaboration with colleagues (and students) across universities; and finally, as scholar in collaboration with students, colleague-students, post-graduate students and colleagues as fellow researchers across universities, nationally and globally.

This is a long way from her first publication, *My Oop Gemoed* (1988), when she wrote:

This course tries to convey the Bible to children in a particular way. The child gets the opportunity to discover the Bible facts and religion at his own rate. The writer was privileged to attend a course at the Christ Church Cathedral Centre in Houston, U.S.A and to do research on a special method to convey the Bible to very young children. The writer has adapted and compiled this course to fit in with general Reformed liturgy and principles. The result of this course and experience of the young children is remarkable. With the necessary training and motivation the person who presents the course will experience many beautiful moments with the children (Roux 1988.89).

These beautiful moments with the children extended to include many beautiful moments with women in research in religion, the third cup of tea offered as a gesture of hospitality and collegiality and as encouragement to continue to push the boundaries.

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René Ferguson  
School of Education  
University of the Witwatersrand  
Johannesburg  
Rene.Ferguson@wits.ac.za