# The Classroom, an Inadequate Mechanism for Advancing Diversity via Religion Education in the South African Context

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## Abstract
In the interest of instilling a respect for diversity in learners, the South African policy on religion and education (DoE 2003) aims to recognise religion in teaching and learning in public schools. The policy provides one mechanism for advancing diversity via religion education; Life Orientation in the classroom. Research however suggests that embracing religious diversity in the classroom is challenging. This article therefore examines whether this is an adequate mechanism for achieving the intended outcome of the policy. The article proceeds to examine the mechanism for advancing diversity via religion education, the classroom, in relation to integration of the post-apartheid classroom and teachers' capacity. The article finds that the mechanism to advance diversity via religion education provided by the national policy on religion education is inadequate within the current South African context.

**Keywords**: religion education, classroom, post-secular, teacher capacity

## Introduction
As part of the process of forging a democratic sensibility amongst a deeply divided people in South Africa, post-apartheid education policy has incorporated religion education into the curriculum. To the extent that many South Africans consider themselves religious (Jeenah 2005:1; Bangstad

2007:34) but diversely so (DoE 2003:6) incorporating religion in education is intended to contribute to the celebration and appreciation of diversity in South Africa (Jeenah 2005:2). A National Policy on Religion and Education has been put in place in the spirit of embracing religious diversity of South Africa (DoE 2003:8). The 'national policy for religion education created expanding opportunities for the academic study of religion to engage the educational challenges of defining religion, representing religions, and developing curricula, learning materials, and teacher training' (Chidester 2008: 276). Consequently much scholarly writing has been published on diversity and religion education as it pertains to the policy (Chidester 2008; Potgieter 2011) and teacher training (Ferguson & Roux 2003; 2004)[1]. The policy presented promises for the classroom that required scholars of religion and education to fulfil (Chidester 2008:276). Yet despite much promise and scholarship, according to Roux (2009:7), there is reluctance to implement the policy. In addition research since 2003 has not introduced any new ideas or arguments in Roux's (2009:14) view. The policy provides one mechanism for advancing diversity via religion education, Life Orientation in the classroom. Research however suggests that embracing religious diversity in the classroom is challenging in the South African context marked by mono-religious experience, training and resources (Ferguson& Roux 2004; Roux 2009). This article examines whether this mechanism is adequate to achieve the intended outcome of the policy.

The article begins by with a review of the policy related to diversity and religion so as to demonstrate why and how it was proposed that diversity advanced be advanced via religion education in the classroom. The article proceeds to illustrate that advancing diversity via religion education is pertinent because the post-secular public sphere is fraught with potential conflict. As such it is apposite that education policy mechanisms intended to advance diversity via religion education be assessed. The article further considers role of school integration in position the post-apartheid classroom as a mechanism for advancing diversity via religion education. The article proceeds to examine teachers' capacity to mediate opportunities for advancing diversity via religion education in the classroom. The article finds that the mechanism provided by the national policy on religion education to

[1] See Roux (2009) for a comprehensive list of scholarly in South Africa on religion education.

advance diversity via religion education is inadequate within the current South African context.

## Diversity and Religion Education in Post-apartheid South African Policy

The majority of classrooms in South Africa, in roughly 90 percent of schools (Potgieter 2011:398) are located in public schools funded by the South African state. Classrooms in public schools constitute a powerful platform for enhancing democracy through teaching and learning. The main purpose of '[s]chools were to serve 'the people' (i.e. popular sovereignty) by creating loyal citizens' (Arnot & Dillabough, 2001:11). In South Africa policy on education intends to enable democratic principles in society (DoE 1995:18; Waghid 2010:118). Democracy recognises that each individual has an equal stake in the outcome of governance (Van Niekerk 2004:6). Young (1996:126) reminds us that democratic politics is undergirded by fact that individuals have to live together in interdependence, impacting others through their conduct. In other words due to humanity's interdependence each person has a stake in how the other's life unfolds. This means all individuals in society influence the lives and the condition of the lives of others'. In recognition of this connectedness democratic principles seek to enhance governance in the best interest of all.

The best interest of all can be challenged when diversity is not respected and valued. Democracy 'requires the active encouragement of mutual respect for people's diverse religious, cultural and language traditions' (DoE 1995:18). Fukuyama (1992:181) contends that the democratic ideal relates to the recognition of each individual's self-worth. In order to recognise someone's self-worth it is necessary that one get to know them. In this way one may learn 'to respect the liberties of others as being equally important as one's own [and recognise] that others have similar freedoms to live their lives according to how they see fit' (Waghid 2010:55). Indeed Abdool, Potgieter, Van der Walt and Wolhuter (2007:545) contend that 'a deep understanding of the other at the spiritual level will also contribute to social and civic peace in the broader pluralistic community'. In a nutshell democracy requires citizens to respect each other so that they may reach decisions in the best interest for all. In order that citizens can respect

each other they need to know one another and this necessitates confronting and appreciating any differences between them.

The South African motto, imprinted on the coat of arms, reads '!ke e: /xarra //ke', literally 'Unity in Diversity'. 'It means accepting each other through learning about interacting with each other – and through the study of how we interacted with each other in the past' (DoE 2001:16). The first Minister of Education of the first democratically elected government of South Africa, Professor Bengu, expresses the importance of building a system of education and training that respects diversity in the first education policy document (DoE 1995:3). The first policy document on education, the White Paper on Education and Training, moreover states that an education system in a democratic society 'embodies and promotes the collective moral perspective of citizens' or 'the code of values by which the society wishes to live' (DoE 1995:12). Development of this collective moral perspective was however begun under conditions of contending moralities and thus warrants respect for diversity (DoE 1995:12). Equality as citizens does not erase difference or decrease diversity; citizens thus have to understand diversity and not shy away from it (DoE 1995:12). In other words an appreciation of diversity is articulated as crucial for how democracy unfolds in the foundational education policy document.

Diversity is further taken up in the education legislative and policy framework in South Africa post-1994. The preamble of the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996 states that one of the aims of the 'new national system for *schools'* is to 'protect and advance our diverse cultures and languages'. The foreword of the Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy (hereafter 'the Manifesto') (DoE 2001:1) argues that democracy in South Africa was born with the idea 'of moulding a people of diverse origins, cultural practices, languages', an idea the policy seeks to add flesh to in the education arena. The Manifesto proposes ten values, derived from the Constitution, should be taught in the classroom, 'Democracy, Social Justice, Equality, Non-racism and Non-sexism, Ubuntu (Human Dignity), An Open Society, Accountability (Responsibility), The Rule of Law, Respect, and Reconciliation' (DoE 2001:3). The Manifesto furthermore proposes sixteen strategies by which the values can be instilled in the learning environment. Amongst them are 'Nurturing a Culture of Communication and Participation in Schools' and 'Introducing Religion Education into Schools' (DoE 2001:4, 5). It is hoped that learners would gain an understanding of difference when a

culture of communication and participation is nurtured in schools (DoE 2001:4).

Interestingly, the Manifesto also links diversity to the introduction of religion education in schools. According to the Manifesto (2001:5), learners will be afforded an opportunity 'to explore diversity of religions that impel society, and the morality and values that underpin them' with the introduction of religion education in schools. In so doing 'religion education can affirm the values of diversity, tolerance, respect, justice, compassion and commitment in young South Africans' (DoE 2001:5). As such it is expected that religion education would offer an exploration of the diversity of religion specifically, but also perhaps by implication affirm diversity broadly as a value. Roux (2003:134) states that because different religions are present in schools, knowledge and respect for diversity can be initiated when there is an opportunity to express this in the classroom.

In 2003 the National Policy on Religion and Education was approved by Parliament that would 'give full expression to the invocation of religion in our Constitution and the principles of governing religious freedom' (Asmal 2003:2). Minister Kader Asmal (2003:2) asserts that '[a]s a democratic society with a diverse population of different cultures, languages and religions we are duty bound to ensure that through our diversity we develop a unity of purpose and spirit'. The policy departs from the overtly religious agenda of the apartheid government affirming respect for South Africans' diverse religious heritage by the post-apartheid state (Chidester 2008:273). 'Policies of Christian National Education divided even members of the same faith' (Roux 2003:130). The 2003 policy may be regarded as a firm break with the past relationship of the state and religion in South Africa. Indeed teaching and learning about religion is aligned with nation building (DoE 2003:6; Chidester 2008:276).

The relationship would now be guided by the state's democratic nation building project. The policy aims to set out 'the relationship between religion and education that ... will best serve the interests of our democratic society' (DoE 2003:3). The policy adopts a co-operative model for structuring the relationship between religion, the state and education. This model affirms both 'the principle of legal separation and the possibility of creative interaction' (DoE 2003:4). Freedom of religion is however always paramount in any interaction within the co-operative model (DoE 2003:4). In line with 'the constitutional guarantee of freedom of religion, the state,

neither advancing nor inhibiting religion, must assume a position of fairness, informed by a parity of esteem for all religions, and worldviews' (DoE 2003:5). Recognising the diversity of religious affinity and affiliation amongst South Africans, Asmal (2003:2) notes that 'in our public schools ... no particular religious ethos should be dominant over or suppress others'. From the perspective of the South African state, the relationship between diversity and religion education is intended to enhance democracy in society not promote religion (DoE 2003:3). The policy affirms national initiatives by drawing South Africa's many religious communities into building a common future (Chidester 2008:282). As such the policy seeks the inclusion of all religious communities in the public school classroom (Chidester 2008:294).

The policy offers an explanation of the relationship of diversity and religion education that will strengthen democracy by valuing diversity. On a number of levels religion education is viewed as an enabler to constructing unity out of our diversity within the policy. 'The main aim of the policy is to facilitate the next generation educationally about diversity and religious realm' (Roux 2009:6). The policy claims that, in the context of affiliation to a diversity of religions amongst people in South Africa, 'religion can play a significant role in ... respecting our diversity' (DoE 2003:6, 5).

> In the interest of advancing informed respect for diversity, educational institutions have a responsibility for promoting multi-religious knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of religions in South Africa and the world (DoE 2003:7).

Incorporating religion education in the curriculum affirms the state's recognition of citizens' diverse religious affiliation and orientation and could bring about respectful recognition amongst learners. 'Religion Education allows for a free exploration of religious diversity in South Africa and the world, and is therefore consistent with and indeed promotes the freedom of religion' (DoE 2003:12). Learning together about their diversity would provide an opportunity for learners to forge a sense of tolerance for each others' beliefs that would facilitate religious freedom in communities[2]. In this way '[r]eligion Education should contribute to creating an integrated and

[2] The policy has also been criticised for limiting the right to religious freedom, and by implication unconstitutional (Potgieter 2011:401-2).

informed community that affirms unity in diversity' (DoE 2003:5-6). Indeed Religion Education is intended to contribute to the celebration of diversity (DoE 2003:6).

The policy advocates a conception of religion education in line with the South African state's commitment to religious freedom as well as the recognition of and respect for diversity of religious communities. In a bid to define how religion will be presented in the curriculum the policy draws a distinction between religion education and religious instruction (DoE 2003:12, 20). A similar distinction is stated in the Manifesto delineating the former, educational and the purview of public schools and the latter, spiritual nurturing as the forte of the family and religious community (DoE 2001:32). The aim of education in schools is to develop the logical-cognitive-analytical potential of learners (Abdool *et al.* 2007:552).

In locating religion education as educational the policy regards it as a curricular programme with related aims and objectives (DoE 2003:9). Religion education is regarded as 'a programme for teaching and learning about religion in its broadest sense, about religions, and about religious diversity in South Africa and the world' (DoE 2003:9). Religion education approaches religion as an important area of human activity which learners ought to know about in order to be deemed educated (DoE 2003:11). Such knowledge is thought to equip learners with an enhanced understanding of themselves and others (DoE 2003:11). 'The policy is clear in demarcating educational rather than religious aims and objectives in teaching about religion' (Chidester 2008:277).

In line with this the curriculum assessment policy statement (CAPS) for the foundation phase, for example, situates religion education in the study area, Personal and Social Well-being in the subject Life Skills (DoBE 2011:10, 31) and Life Orientation in the senior phase (Faller & McCormick 2013:3). The subject Life Skills 'is aimed at guiding and preparing learners for life and its possibilities, including equipping learners for meaningful and successful living in a rapidly changing and transforming society' (DoBE 2011:9). The study area Personal and Social Well-being should enable learners to 'show tolerance for ... religious diversity in order to contribute to a democratic society' (DoBE 2011:10). From the curriculum it is also clear that the South African state views religion education within the broader aim of recognising diversity in process of democratic nation building. At the same time, the policy trajectory for religion education takes it to the classroom. In

other words religion has not been excluded in post-apartheid education policies of the South African secular democratic state and the site for celebrating diversity through religion is the classroom. Education policy appears apposite because conditions of the contemporary public sphere suggest that celebrating religious diversity is important, given that religion is both present and active in shaping public debate.

## Diversity and Religion Education in a Post-secular Public Sphere

The awareness of diversity of religions came sharply into focus with the events of September 11, 2001 (Roux 2009:15). A number of other events globally had, by then marred the dominance of the secularisation thesis. Criticism of an inevitable global secular society was forced as a result of empirical realities, showing that religion has not moved to the margins of most societies (see Casanova 1994:3-6; Berger 2001:445, 446). Salvatore and Eickelman (2004:xiv) point to the Iranian revolution, the solidarity movement in Poland, liberation theology in Latin America, as well as Protestant fundamentalism in the USA as major developments that led to the secularisation theory being challenged. The secularisation theory is no longer considered tenable for most (Habermas, 2008).

Secularisation had been the main theoretical paradigm through which social scientists viewed the relationship between religion and modernity (Casanova 1994:211; Yamani 1997:110; Berger 2001:443). *Secularisation* is broadly understood as a growing division, and ultimately or increasingly a decline of religious ways of living in modern society (Berger, Dawie & Fokas 2008:2). Two major ideas exist which are associated with the secularisation theory. First, religion separates as a distinct sphere of society – much like all other spheres – a fundamental principle of Durkheim's social analysis (Turner 1993:11). For Casanova (1994:6, 18) and others (Yamani 1997:115; Swatos & Christiano 1999:213; Salvatore & Eickelman 2004:xiii-xiv), secularisation is tantamount to a sub-theory of the differentiation theory, implying the separation of religion from all other spheres of social life, not only from the state. The second and perhaps more significant idea, is that religion declines in importance (Berger 2001:443; Bracke 2008:57). This

occurs in the form of privatisation and marginalisation, in some cases diminishing completely.

Secularisation – the notion that religion would increase in marginality - never panned out the way it was prophesised (Salvatore & Eickelman 2004: xiii-xiv). The idea that only those who attach themselves to the nation state would be politically significant is no longer entirely obvious (Salvatore & Eickelman 2004:xiv). In Africa religion acts, and has acted, as a symbol of cultural authentication, as well as a tool for liberation in post-colonial societies (Tayob 2004:20). In Casanova's (1994:19) words, 'The old theory of secularisation can no longer be maintained'. Turner (2010:11) concurs, stating that there is general consensus in academic literature that the secularisation thesis was too narrow and specific to Europe – the notion that religion would decline with increased urbanisation and rationalisation looks inaccurate.

In the face of the demise of secularisation theory rather than religion, the post-apartheid state's decision to recognise religious diversity and incorporate an appreciation thereof into the project of nation building is entirely commensurable. The presence of religious communities in a continuing secular society has been coined as the post-secular public sphere by Jürgen Habermas (2006:15). Habermas (2008) argues that the post-secular involves a change of consciousness brought about via three phenomena. Firstly, global religious conflicts undermined a secularist belief. There is no longer a certainty that modernisation can advance only at the cost of the public influence and personal relevance of religion. Secondly, religion is gaining influence in national and international public spheres. Lastly, immigration to Europe has at the same time increased religious pluralism and the visibility thereof on the continent. These represent, for him, critical moments where religion is becoming post-secular. Given the fact that difference of opinion is more prevalent that agreement, Habermas (2006:10-16) provides a framework, based on cognitive adjustments on the part of religious and secular citizens, within which public opinions could be formulated between them. 'The challenge for religion education will be to include religious plurality in educational practice and discourse rather than contributing to religion being pushed back to the private' (Naidoo 2013:69-70).

As noted in the introduction, South Africans are religious (Jeenah 2005:1; Bangstad 2007:34) but diversely so (DoE 2003:6). Moreover an increased visibility of religion has been witnessed in South Africa according

to Settler (2013:12). Such visibility is however not necessarily appreciated and accepted by all. Settler (2013:11) argues that the policy on religion and education has provided religious communities in South Africa a remedy for challenging the broader inclusion of practices of diverse faith in public schools in court. As such the policy provides individuals who are members of religious communities with recognition before the law. That individuals require such recourse demonstrates that practices of diverse faiths are not always included in public schools. Indeed Settler (2013:24-5, 27) states that individual learners bear the burden of seeking legal intervention. In particular individual learners have to go up against School Governing Bodies (SGBs) that continue to 'uncritically uphold protestant Christianity as the legal and social norm' (Settler 2013: 24-5).

Members of religious communities expressed disagreement with the policy of religion and education. A coalition of leaders from various religious communities drafted a South African Charter of Religious Rights and Freedoms in 2008 'to roll back what they perceive to be the erosion of religious rights' (Settler 2013:13). To the contrary South African courts have continually sought orders that favour religious expression of individual learners (Settler 2013:24-5). The role of religion in public schools continues to be contested although there is a national policy on religion and education (Settler 2013:13). Are the provisions in the policy on religion and education sufficient to address the aim of the policy that learners are able to embrace unity in diversity?

South Africans know very little about religions other than their own. Settler (2013:14) notes high levels of religious illiteracy which necessitates religion education at public schools. One would imagine that teaching and learning about religion in respect of diversity could further enhance the ability of related dialogue between individuals. At the same time critics from religious communities regard learning about faiths other than one's own as an infringement of their right to freedom of belief (Settler 2013:16). Moreover there is anxiety that religion education would serve the interest of the state and weaken those of religious communities (Settler 2013:24). It would appear that critics of the policy do not address the individual believer as a citizen amongst others which differing values and beliefs.

Individuals attesting to religion have and continue to spawn conflict across the globe. In view of a post-secular public sphere and ever differentiated religious communities in secular society the relationship

between diversity and religion education deserves attention. Evaluating the capacity of provisions in the policy that would enable learners to be educated about religion in a manner that respects and appreciates diversity is pertinent. As a learning area within Life Skills and Life Orientation, religion education should enable learners to comprehend religious and secular plurality within the public sphere of contemporary society. Given that the policy regards the classroom as the site where learners are to learn about religion, an examination of policy provisions depend on what occurs in the classroom.

## School Integration and the South African Classroom

For the majority of South African learners, the classroom remains an undifferentiated experience. Apartheid segregationist policy implementation left an indelible mark on the education institutions in South Africa. A recent report submitted to UNICEF examining the social cohesion in South Africa found that the only schools that have experienced some degree of integration are those which were designated for white learners during apartheid (FHI 360 2015). Teachers who were interviewed for the study claimed that learners to represent a single ethnic group in schools (FHI 360 2015:37). The report claims that schools face challenges with integration (FHI 360 2015:38). 'Moreover, the attempt of schools to facilitate positive social relations between students(sic) from diverse backgrounds is undermined by limited school integration that is largely a result of the racial and ethnic homogeneity of surrounding communities' (FHI 360 2015:39). While the report does not make particular reference to religion, religious homogeneity in schools would follow, given the intersections with race and religion in South Africa.

Religious homogeneity at schools can further be deduced from Ferguson and Roux's (2003:275; 2004:18) finding that there is greater awareness of religious diversity in urban as opposed to rural settings. Advancing diversity via religion education in the classroom is severely constrained by the lack of social integration in schools, and consequent religious homogeneity. In addition, greater resistance to religion education has been reported with respect to Afrikaans-medium ex model C schools as well as Xhosa-speaking schools (Ferguson & Roux 2003:275; 2004:21). 'These schools have had to overcome a long and influential monoreligious and monocultural past, fraught with political and religious conservatism albeit for different reasons' (Ferguson & Roux 2004:21).

Religious homogeneity of schools and, by implication, classrooms in South Africa provides a significant impetus for advancing diversity via religion education in the classroom while at the same time being an impediment to it. Constraints placed on the classroom as a mechanism for advancing diversity via religion education from a lack of school integration, places a great responsibility on the teacher to implement the policy provisions.

## Diversity and Religion Education in the Classroom

The national policy on religion and education is undergirded by the assumption that as we learn about each other we will enhance our ability to embrace our differences (Settler 2013:17-8). Researcher experiences with learners indicate that religion can be a source for grappling with their and others' diversity as intended by the National Policy on Religion and Education. For example Ferguson and Roux (2004:12-4, 15-6) found that although some learners displayed initial reserve implying some difficulty with religious difference in the classroom, learners were generally interested and excited about learning about diverse religious expressions. Both the reserve and the interest related to difference could offer valuable learning opportunities for learners with respect to diversity. For instance lessons related to religious content amongst learners in grades four and five resulted in discussions about stereotyping and misunderstanding associated with religious beliefs and practices (Ferguson & Roux 2004:12). On another occasion, a teacher experiencing conflict between learners in class regarding two different religious affinities and affiliation used the opportunity to discuss the two religions in greater detail (Ferguson & Roux 2004:20). The presence of different religious affiliations and experiences in the classroom offer opportunities for teachers to engage diversity in the classroom during lessons related to religion (Abdool *et al.* 2007:554). Opportunities are never a given.

Opportunities have to firstly arise and then secondly be taken. Opportunities can only be taken within the context that they present themselves. Policy provisions are thus dependent on the context within opportunities to engage with diversity in relation to religion present themselves. Opportunities will presumably be limited in classrooms where learners do not have different backgrounds. The policy provisions are

dependent on opportunities in the classroom. As such the responsibility lies with the teacher.

Opportunities to engage diversity in the classroom are mediated by the capacity of the teachers who present the lessons. The background, training and attitude of teachers to diversity in relation to religion are significant for classroom expression thereof (Ferguson & Roux 2003:275). The National Policy on Religion and Education (DoE 2003:16) expresses a concern for widespread religious illiteracy amongst teachers as well as a backlog of trained religion educators. Chidester (2008:275) notes the lack of teacher training related to religion education. Indeed Ferguson and Roux (2004:6, 9), reporting on a study, state that only 35 percent of twenty teachers who teach religion education have training in religion, and the nature thereof is either Bible education or religious studies. All the teachers in that study claimed to be knowledgeable about the Christian religion only, although they communicated their willingness to learn about other religions (Ferguson & Roux 2004:9-10).

Recent research reemphasise findings that teachers' capacity to advance diversity via religion education could be a challenge. Life Orientation teachers draw on religion, in particular Christianity, as an authoritative discourse to construct teaching positions (DePalma & Franscis 2014:1689, 1700). A teacher at a public school is reported to have stated that, 'We're based on Christian morals at the school' (DePalma & Franscis 2014:1703). Findings from a different study indicate that Life Orientation student teachers struggled with adopting a multi-religious approach (Jarvis 2013). This may be so because higher education institutions are not sufficiently proficient in preparing teachers to facilitate religious diversity in the classroom (Roux 2009:7, 9). This means that teachers have a mono-religious experience of education in religion. This would influence their capacity to mediate opportunities that would advance diversity through religion education.

The mono-religious experience and training of teachers in South Africa can be a challenge to advancing diversity via religious education in the classroom. Notwithstanding teachers' willingness to learn about additional religions, Ferguson and Roux (2004:10, 20) witnessed fear, prejudice and bias on the part of teachers in respect of religions other than their own as well as religion education. Research demonstrates that training about religion can advance reflection on diversity, even amongst teachers. In particular training

that communicates the distinction between religious instruction and religion education is considered to be paramount for engaging diversity in the classroom (Ferguson & Roux 2004:20). Despite initial fear, prejudice and bias, subsequent to receiving teacher training on the six major religions in South Africa, teachers commented that they spent time grappling with their own positions towards the content of other religions (Ferguson & Roux 2004:10-1, 17). However in the absence of teacher development teachers may not confront their fear, prejudice and bias towards religions other than their own, further weakening their capacity to advance diversity via religion education.

The availability of appropriate resources to aid teachers in presenting lessons could close the gap created by mono-religious experience and training and contribute to advancing diversity via religion education in the classroom. The National Policy on Religion Education proposes that learning materials be developed as a matter of urgency (DoE 2003:18), implying that, when the policy was formulated, such materials were not readily available. Religious organisations are invited, in the policy, to voluntarily contribute to the development and distribution of religion education material for use in the classroom (DoE 2003:18). In a booklet aimed at familiarising the education community with the National Policy on Religion and Education a number of organisational contact details are provided as possible resources for teachers (Jeenah 2005:15). The invitation to 'religious organisations' to develop learning material for 'religion education' paired with contact details for particular religious organisations as resources exacerbates the mono-religious challenge for advancing diversity via religion education in the classroom. Compounded with mono-religious teacher background as well as education in religion in the past and insufficiencies within initial teacher education with respect to preparing students for diversity via religion education, the mechanism provided in the policy is inadequate.

## Summary and Conclusion

Many South Africans consider themselves religious though differently so. Religion thus provides a potential mechanism, within education, to engender an understanding of unity in diversity. In recognition hereof the national policy on religion and education (DoE 2003) in South Africa aims to enhance

learners respect for diversity in the process of teaching and learning about different religious manifestations. Moreover religion has taken up a central place on the world stage rendering the contemporary public sphere post-secular (Habermas 2006:15). Examining the adequacy of mechanisms which are meant to advance diversity via religion education is therefore pertinent to the national and global contexts. To this end the article examine the mechanism provided in the national policy on religion education, the classroom.

A review of the national policy of religion and education indicates that the only mechanism provided for advancing diversity via religion education is the classroom. The article further illustrates that a lack of social integration in schools and society places an added impetus and responsibility on the classroom, and by implication on the teacher, to advance diversity via religion education. Teachers, however, are constrained by their mono-religious background as well as education. Given the context of South Africa with respect to impeded social interaction as well as mono-religious background of teacher the mechanism provided in the national policy on religion education is inadequate to achieve its intended outcome. This is not to critique the intended outcome; advancing diversity via religion education. Rather this is to challenge policy makers, education officials, teacher educators and members of schools to identity additional mechanisms to achieve the intended outcome of the policy on religion and education in South Africa.

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