

Reframing curriculum for religious education

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ABSTRACT

This article arises out of work undertaken within the After Religious Education project. It synthesizes the curriculum expertise of established researchers, with the expertise of current teachers of RE in England. A question drives our shared interests: how should we approach curriculum development in RE and how do we justify the approach taken? The article proceeds in three steps. First, we elaborate, contextualize, and justify this question by introducing varied approaches to the curriculum production in RE. We argue that these approaches lack a foundational influence from general didactics: an understanding of subject matter that is informed by distinctively educational theory. Addressing this omission, the second step presents an alternative approach to RE established on the 'Bildung/didactic' tradition, and the specific general didactic analysis of Klafki. Third, we explore this approach in relation to two teaching contexts, modelling these applications, and the principles they exemplify. We demonstrate the value of synthesizing theoretical and practical expertise for RE theory and practice.

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Introduction

This article results from work undertaken within the After Religious Education project.¹ All four co-authors combine experience of teaching RE in England with thinking and researching issues of curriculum development. Two are established researchers with experience of teaching RE (Lewin and Orchard), two are teachers of RE engaged in research whose current role is more focused on practice (Christopher and Brown). A broad question drives our shared interests: how should we approach curriculum development in our subject and how do we justify the approach taken?

As one of four separate national jurisdictions that comprise the 'United Kingdom' (UK), England has developed its own distinctive policies and practices regarding teaching religion in schools (Davids, Orchard and Jackson, 2024). Non-denominational religious education (RE), not instruction, has been the legal requirement of the school curriculum in England and Wales since 1944, focused on how various religious and non-religious traditions influence people's values, practices and beliefs in the UK and globally. It is determined locally, by Standing Advisory Committees on Religious Education (SACREs) on behalf of local government, because it does not feature as a National Curriculum subject. Faith-based schools remain broadly popular in England, with a reputation for academic standards and good discipline, and in these institutions the place of RE on the curriculum may be better supported. However, in this paper we focus on the context of community schools where for various reasons (sketched briefly below) RE is perceived to be a subject in crisis.

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First, local government control over education in England on which RE curriculum development relies has contracted. Adding to this, a greater emphasis on the value of other curriculum subjects in schools from 2010, including the introduction of a school quality measure (Progress 8), has marginalized RE further. Next, there are longstanding concerns concerning quality of teachers, including their subject knowledge, leading to claims that RE often fails to represent religions accurately. Panjwani and Revell point to representations of Islam in textbooks, examinations, and syllabi as ‘essentializations’ for example, ‘leading to stereotypes and unsubstantiated generalizations’ (2018, p. 269). Finally, the privileged and protected position of Christianity in syllabi over other religions and worldviews has contributed to the impression that RE retains its confessional purpose, whether, or not, this is the case in practice. The legal position requires an emphasis on Christianity to reflect its place as the established religion, constitutionally speaking. However, the 2021 Census has demonstrated that for large numbers of ordinary people in England, religious ‘faith’ is increasingly anachronistic. A review of the logic and structure of the RE curriculum is urgently needed.

Elaborating and justifying the question

While there are well-documented discussions of ‘teaching methods’, or ‘content’ for RE in England, we begin at a more general level asking, ‘How should we approach the question of what to include on the curriculum, and how should we justify that approach?’ We then go on to consider what educational principles or logic shapes thinking about RE curriculums before exploring an alternative approach. The concept of education that informs this work is derived from continental pedagogy tradition which emphasizes the intention of an educator to influence a student’s relation to subject matter (Friesen & Kenkies, 2022). This emphasis on intention is a basic feature of the production of subject matter. Thus, we characterize curriculum developers and teachers as *producers* because they design, curate, and produce educational situations for their students. What students may take from these productions is an important consideration, however, the focus of this article is curricular production: both the planning of curriculums and the related development of teaching materials.

Everyday teaching preparation involves making judgements about how to contextualize subject matter and engage students. These judgements are informed by knowledge of the subject domain, but also pedagogical knowledge (knowledge of teaching practices and learning processes), combined with experience of what works in specific classroom contexts (the classroom teacher’s understanding ‘on the ground’). Teaching may be positioned as a reflective practice (Orchard et al., 2020) in which subject matter is *produced* by design, with those involved as clear as possible about the purposes underlying those processes. One interesting and unusual aspect of RE in England, because of its locally determined character, has been a greater emphasis on teachers’ active involvement in constructing their own curricula and teaching materials collaboratively. Baumfield (2016) draws attention to the prevalence of communities of practice in RE on which a project like ours can potentially build. We caution that this expertise must be used soon or it will be lost in community school contexts as declining investment in and institutional support for the subject has reduced these practices considerably.

Context: current approaches

While a comprehensive review is beyond our scope in this paper, we briefly outline the thinking that informs some current approaches to RE in community schools: namely, the world religions paradigm and the academic or scholarly approach. This is followed by discussion of two influential attempts to define curricular logic in the subject, ‘Powerful Knowledge’ and ‘Big Ideas for RE’, before showing how our approach, which draws on continental educational theory, differs from these.

The world religions paradigm

Where do concepts in RE come from? What governs our general interpretation of 'religion' or 'worldview' and how do we decide which objects are included in as relevant subject matter? What, in other words, is the conceptual framing of subject matter? Scholars have identified a dominant framing of religions within RE that has come to be known as the *world religions paradigm* (WRP), dating from the 'Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education' established in 1969 (Jackson, 2019). While the WRP has been critically engaged with by a generation of RE teachers and theorists (e.g. Jackson, 1997), it continues to furnish teachers with key concepts drawn from general understandings of what religion is, as well as providing a subject content framework: the six major world religions that form the content (Cotter and Robinson, 2016). The WRP has been presented as more inclusive than those 'confessional' forms of RE (Alberts, 2017) taught in faith-based settings which we do not consider here. However, recent work led by the RE Council of England and Wales (REC), culminating in the publication of a Commission on Religious Education report (CORE, 2018), have reinvigorated concerns about the predominance of the WRP and have sought to promote a 'paradigm shift' to what is sometimes called a 'worldviews approach' in RE (Cooling, 2020). Concerns that the WRP is perspectival (and prejudiced) have been highlighted, as it interprets 'religions' in colonialist categories derived from Western Christian scholarly analysis (Masuzawa, 2005; Cotter and Robinson, 2016). Such criticisms, drawn from research undertaken within academic disciplines, bring us to a second area of concern: the scholarly traditions on which RE in schools in England is based.

The academic or scholarly basis for RE

Jensen (2008) that in democratic states the only legitimate foundation for RE in schools is the academic study of religion based on secular Religious Studies. No doubt the academic discipline of Religious Studies has some role, but it seems common for RE, in England at least, to draw on a range of academic disciplines, most obviously, Philosophy, Theology, and Religious Studies. Indeed, some commentators make play of the broader disciplinary influences, positioning RE as though it were a Liberal Arts subject, including history, sociology, anthropology, and other disciplines (Georgiou & Wright, 2018). Not only is RE multidisciplinary, but the study of religion, in schools and universities is not undertaken in a vacuum. Scholarly inquiry is shaped by wider social and cultural changes in a diverse multi-religious and multi-secular society (Ofsted, 2021), leading to calls for RE to take account of religious and non-religious pluralism (CORE, 2018). The rise of non-religion in the UK particularly, in terms of both number and diversity, has generated arguments for a new curricular approach entirely, focused on 'worldviews' (O'Grady, 2022), a phrase and approach that is contested by some curriculum theorists (Barnes, 2023). We set those debates aside, while noting they suggest a curricular logic that this paper is also concerned to explore; how to acknowledge the complexity of lived experience and diverse worldviews with no universal perspective from which to understand all (Theos, 2021). Given that recent research has revealed the perception of RE as being disconnected from the lived experiences of young people (Conroy et al., 2013; Shaw & Dinham, 2015), we maintain that to make the subject matter meaningful, those lived experiences ought to be a fundamental consideration for RE curricular production. These contextual factors make the argument that RE should be a 'mini study-of-religion(s)' (Jensen, 2019, p. 42) based purely on an academic basis hard to uphold.

Powerful knowledge and big ideas

It is common within didactic analysis (the analysis of teaching practice) to identify two basic didactic categories, 'general' and 'special' (Arnold, 2012; Willbergh, 2016) of which *Powerful Knowledge* (PK) and *Big Ideas* (BI) are respective examples. PK makes general claims rather than subject-specific ones while BI remains focused on and applied to RE, as the title indicates.² As a form of general didactics,

PK offers greater curricular reach, while BI might be more easily applied within the subject area, requiring less ‘translation’ work by curriculum producers and developers.

The ‘general/special didactics’ distinction provides insight into current didactic analysis of RE in England. For beyond discussion of general psychological theories of learning (behavioural, constructivist, social etc), and occasional philosophical (aims and purposes) and sociological (social context) analysis, there seems little evidence of general didactical theory of the kind offered in this article.³ An illustration of this point can be found in commentary on Grimmitt’s (2000) influential *Pedagogies of Religious Education* in which alternative pedagogies for the subject are discussed. One expert witness called to Phase One of the RE Review for England (2013) suggested that the collection was concerned narrowly with ‘methods’ rather than ‘pedagogies’ (Orchard, 2015). Despite much to recommend in Grimmitt’s book, it reflects the tendency within this context to side line aspects of general didactic analysis, thus removing curriculum development from the purview of broader educational thinking,⁴ and leaving curriculum development in RE dominated by subject-specific, special didactics, all too often reified into teaching ‘methods’.⁵

As a form of general didactics, does Young’s Powerful Knowledge (PK) approach help to bridge certain gaps in RE as some have suggested (e.g. Kueh, 2020; Stones & Fraser-Pearce, 2022)? This is a large and complex matter and raising it here is primarily designed to signal where the contours of our argument lie. The starting point of PK is certainly a fundamental question in didactics: ‘What is the important knowledge that pupils should be able to acquire at school?’ (Young, 2013, p. 103). Rooted in an assumption that PK is both objective and reliable, it is based on the differentiation between common-sense knowledge acquired from everyday experience, and disciplinary knowledge as developed by specialist communities, the latter having been ‘developed by clearly distinguishable groups with a well-defined focus and relatively fixed boundaries, separating different forms of expertise’ (Young, 2015). The acquisition of PK allows learners to expand their horizons beyond their own personal experience of the world so as to ‘envisage alternative and new possibilities’ (Young & Muller, 2013, 245).

But there are a couple of problems with the application of PK to RE. Firstly, it has been noted that there isn’t one specialist academic community responsible for the development of RE’s disciplinary foundations (Biesta et al., 2019, p. 9). RE’s multi-disciplinarity is both a virtue and a vice, but it does mean a central pillar of the PK edifice may not provide support for RE practitioners and so enthusiasm about the application of PK to RE seems misguided. A more general problem with PK as identified by White (2018) is that it places knowledge front and centre without recognizing the central issue of aims. By assuming that ‘the pursuit of theoretical knowledge is the first priority in school education ...’ PK advocates fail to recognize that ‘school education has many legitimate goals’ (White, 2018, p. 328). White’s criticism of Young, that he doesn’t persuasively argue for his subject-based (rather than aims-based) approach, resonates with the broader theme of our argument which argues for a curriculum founded, first and foremost, upon the question of what we hope to achieve, a question central to the continental *Bildung* tradition. From the continental pedagogy perspective, Willbergh has also criticized the concept of PK for its overestimation of the significance of substantive knowledge, which, she argues, prioritizes subject matter over meaning for the students (Willbergh, 2016, p. 116).

Big Ideas for RE (BI) is a significant development in curriculum design which we have characterized as ‘special didactics’. BI addresses the concerns of meaning for students, by attending to the principles and criteria for content selection, rather than content as such. Six ‘Big Ideas’ have been identified as ‘crucial in understanding the content in the study of Religion and Worldviews’ (Big Ideas for RE, 2022). Those Big Ideas are: Continuity, Change and Diversity; Words and Beyond; A Good Life; Making Sense of Life’s Experiences; Influence and Power; The Big Picture. They are constructively reductive, tested for their capacity to prioritize subject knowledge selection, by providing organizing principles that allow educators to interpret and present a complex mass of information. The curriculum takes great care to express the BI identified in ways that are both memorable and transferable to ideas outside the classroom, and in both the present and possible future. In short,

there are clear elements of general didactic theory in BI, as would be true for the 'Big Ideas for Science' on which the model is based. This is not the place for a full discussion of BI, though we wish to note that it oriented by a special didactics approach which emphasizes disciplinary thinking (Francis, 2022), and so cannot connect systematically with general didactic insights (as we hope to do). What we mean by this and why we deem that disconnect so important will become evident later where we draw on the general didactics of Klafki.

These theories—and our brief treatments of them—scratch the surface of possible discussions of what RE should be doing and why. Despite these and other lively curricular discussions, the subject remains in considerable tension: described as being at a crossroads or experiencing crisis (see Barnes, 2019, 2021; Castelli and Chater, 2018). Is RE on the cusp of a paradigm shift, meaningful change, or continuing decline? There are evident problems and many calls for reform (Chater, 2020). Hence the re-consideration we propose, using an alternative approach: *Bildung/didactic* curricular analysis.⁶

Although certain conversations within the *Bildung/didactic* approach have been influential in Anglo-American curricular discussions (see Deng, 2020), there remains a gulf between these approaches (see Westbury, 2015). Apart from a few exceptions (Alberts, 2007, 2017; Stones & Fraser-Pearce, 2022), the German tradition of educational theory is under-represented in curriculum debates in England, including RE. Given how the teaching of religion has been shaped by peculiarities in the specific national policies, histories, and cultural contexts, we must ask to what extent is the German *Bildung/didactic* relevant to RE in England?

Bildung, didactic and RE

The 'continental pedagogical tradition'⁷ is sometimes referred to as the '*Bildung*' tradition because of its foundations in that concept, understood here to refer to a lifelong and holistic process of human development, or formation, undertaken by oneself or through the influence of others.⁸ '*Bildung*' assumes that schooling has a purpose beyond knowledge acquisition alone, being 'based on higher principles and moral values that are not easily reduced to simple measures' (Horlacher, 2016, p. 118). On the *Bildung/didactic* approach, educators are concerned to bring about human flourishing in the broadest sense,⁹ conceiving their influence to be one of employing cultural knowledge as tools or resources that 'create powerful, transformative experiences in the classroom' (Deng, 2021, 1668). Instead of helping students to acquire curriculum content conceived as 'piles' of disciplinary knowledge, within the *Bildung* tradition, classroom experiences are seen as personally formative (Deng, 2021), an idea that resonates with RE as a subject in community schools that promotes knowledge of 'personal' value (Ofsted, 2021), without being confessional or indoctrinatory.

Deng (2021) notes an important divergence between Young's notion of Powerful Knowledge and *Bildung*, maintaining that the former interprets 'substantive' knowledge as empowering content, while the latter advocates the broader development of human powers. Stones and Fraser-Pearce (2022) have argued that PK could provide RE with a suitable pedagogical foundation, used appropriately by the epistemically literate teacher. They suggest bridges might be built between PK and Klafki's didactics. We have already noted that the emphasis of PK on content places it at some distance from the *Bildung* tradition, and would emphasize the relevance of Deng's distinction to curricular development in RE by viewing subject matter in a more *educational* than disciplinary way—as formative rather than just informative (Friesen & Kenklies, 2022).

Given the proliferation of schemes of work and resources designed to transform, transpose, or convert disciplinary knowledge from Theology and Religious Studies as research fields into school subject matter (e.g. Georgiou et al., 2019; Norfolk Agreed Syllabus 2019), this issue is highly relevant to current curriculum debates in RE. We recognize the contemporary appeal of producing 'school RE' framed by subject knowledge aligned to academic disciplines (a la Jensen), the appeal to intellectual foundations reinforcing RE's status as non-confessional. However, we have already suggested, that concern can be addressed through the *Bildung* didactic tradition, while retaining a focus on education for human flourishing, using Klafki's framework.

What is the ‘what’ of subject content?

Framed by an aspiration to develop knowledge-rich curriculums, our concern is that too often RE teachers are encouraged to reduce subject matter to piles of substantive content instead of curating it to promote its broader power to enable flourishing. So, we turn next to subject content. When teachers select the ‘what’ of RE, they might consider whether to include Catholic/Protestant doctrines, or both, or which Eastern religious traditions to select in the limited curriculum time available. As Uljens (2005, p. 16) observes: ‘In teaching there is always somebody (who?) that teaches somebody else (whom?) some subject matter (what?) in some way (how?) ... [for some reason (why?) towards some goal (which?)].’ Instead of thinking of religious subject matter as disciplinary material waiting to be transmitted, we understand it as something that is formed, arranged, and presented—produced – for a particular context and purpose. In this regard (and in contrast to PK), we consider educational intentions paramount in content selection and arrangement. Teaching entails telling certain stories, presenting certain objects, and designing certain activities to bring about educational conditions, the stories, objects, and activities, being products themselves of certain pedagogical intentions and decisions.

A host of terms or metaphors may be used to highlight the ‘produced’ nature of pedagogical subject matter. Gericke et. al. draw attention to the ‘didactization of disciplinary knowledge’ (Gericke et al., 2018, p. 429); Chevallard (Chevallard & Bosch, 2014) describes the process of *didactic transposition*. Borrowing from the related German notion of *Didaktische Reduktion*, we have appropriated the idea of *pedagogical reduction*, meaning selection, simplification, and representation for educational purposes (Lewin, 2019, 2020, 2021). Tröhler (2008, p. 79) makes a similar distinction in relation to textbooks, describing the ‘content’ they include as resulting from ‘[s]election, condensation, composition, didactical structuring and streamlining for classroom instruction’.

Tröhler distinguishes between academic knowledge generated through research, (*research knowledge*), and knowledge formed for pedagogical purposes (*pedagogical knowledge*). The knowledge teachers present in school classrooms, both in textbooks and other resources, is distinctively pedagogical, being stable, neither provisional nor contested. Teachers avoid exceptions and contradictions when presenting pedagogical knowledge of this kind, presenting elements in discrete parts or units and often in attractive or entertaining ways. Ironically, Tröhler’s gloss of pedagogical knowledge reflects what is often thought to be wrong with much RE today (see Jackson, 1997): because in essentialising (so that it is apparently reductive), it de-historicizes the ‘what’ for it to make sense and to avoid complications. In arguing for a *productive* interpretation of pedagogical reduction, our intention is to highlight how teachers can’t just present subject matter but must also generate subject meaning. As Willbergh puts it ‘to unlock the educational substance of a given content in the curriculum ... to teach in a way that can turn the matter (*Bildungsinhalt*) into meaning (*Bildungsgehalt*) for the students’ (2016, 116). This emphasizes the pedagogical expertise and skills of teachers.

Making this argument is not to deny the problem of unproductive pedagogical reductionism or over-generalization. Rather, the danger in much RE teaching is not with the use of essentialised categories per se, but with their naturalization: the categories appear natural or given, rather than culturally formed, or produced for didactic purposes. It may be educationally beneficial for students to become conscious of the processes of curricular production themselves.¹⁰ Age and context depending, there are educational reasons for encouraging pupils to understand that selection and arrangement of subject matter has taken place and to develop a sense of why this is significant. An educational aim of encouraging students to become conscious of the selection and arrangement of subject matter could be a response to the call for emphasis on methodology (e.g. Führding, 2017) in contemporary RE practice.

The constraints that shape teachers’ pedagogical choices, including legal frameworks, assessment requirements, socio-cultural contexts, and other factors that we have described as the context for RE (the world religions paradigm, disciplinary thinking), themselves need to be carefully constructed, if

they are to influence teachers' curriculum production in positive ways. The ideas, concepts, texts, categories, and narratives selected, presented, and discussed, should take account of legal and socio-cultural contexts, but also, ideally, be 'self-consciously and articulately selective' (Smith, 2013, 13). By this we mean teachers should be conscious and considerate of the potential influence of their choices, developing the kinds of epistemic literacy that Stones and Fraser-Pearce (2022) rightly valorize.

How might this look in practice? How are we to encourage teachers (and perhaps their students) to understand that the approach taken in academic practice is not simply a given, but one approach? This question animates our general inquiry: how do teachers share with children framings of religion/worldviews, cultivating some form of historical consciousness and thus a richer understanding of where they stand?

English RE practitioners will be aware several reviews and reports have been undertaken in recent years, most notably, the CoRE, 2018 report which encourages this kind of methodological approach and frames the project on which this article is based. One significant aspect of the report and the so-called worldviews paradigm that has developed in its wake is the proposed renaming of RE to *Religion and Worldviews* which seems to be designed to draw attention to the way the category of religion operates discursively. Nevertheless, the instinct to think about curriculum content in terms of substantive knowledge persists among well-intentioned teachers and curriculum developers motivated by a search for more inclusive, representative, and engaging RE. The desire to ensure all children see themselves represented in lessons, including marginal voices, can be interpreted as a call to expand curriculum content. Wagenschein (2015) has warned persuasively against the temptation of curricular completeness, arguing that it 'leads to haste and a lack of thoroughness' where 'an impressive heap of gravel' is built up, when 'education is not a process of just adding' (2015, 163). Smith's first pedagogical rule, 'less is better' (Christopher, 2013, p. 6), seems even more unequivocal. He adds, 'there is nothing that must be taught, there is nothing that cannot be left out'.

This brings us again to consider educational aims. Intention provides the curriculum theorist with a basic orientation for approaching what might otherwise prove the overwhelming domain of subject knowledge. We do not propose to offer a summary of the many and varied aims and intentions RE in community schools might plausibly address, since that would entail another article. Rather, drawing from the general didactics of the continental pedagogical tradition just outlined, we explore the potential of an existing didactic framework which allows for diverse educational aims to be accommodated.

Klafki's didactic framework

We have chosen Klafki's didactic framework for several reasons. First, within a German context, Klafki's contributions to general didactics are widely acknowledged, his five-step framework being 'the most widely used model for Didaktik in Germany' (Hopmann, 2015, p. 197). While Klafki's theories have been widely discussed and criticized,¹¹ his theories continue to inspire educational researchers, including those working across the *Bildung* – Anglo-American divide (Deng, 2015; Friesen, 2018; Hudson, 2002, 2003; Willbergh, 2015, 2016) and his didactic framework has been applied to many school subjects, although rarely to RE in England (Alberts, 2007; Stones & Fraser-Pearce, 2022). In one sense this is surprising, given his established appeal to intercultural educational researchers is of potential relevance to RE after the WRP.

Application of his didactic framework could re-focus teachers and curriculum developers in RE on the educational dimension that has eluded the subject (Hannam and Biesta 2021). Taking the educational aims of the lesson as central for pedagogical reduction, our starting point is the five questions which Klafki presents in the context of his wider didactic theory, but which provide something of a standalone stimulus. In Table 1, we reproduce the five questions in the left-hand column (Klafki, 2015, pp. 151–155) while in the right-hand column, we offer an heuristic application

Table 1. Klafki's Didactic Analysis

| Klafki's five questions | Applied to Religion and Worldviews |
|--|---|
| 1. "What wider or general sense or reality does this content exemplify and open up to the learner? What basic phenomenon or fundamental principle, what law, criterion, problem, method, technique, or attitude can be grasped by dealing with this content as an 'example'?" (Klafki, 2015, p. 151) | Take a life story, e.g. Anita, a Gujarati Hindu from Coventry, with a complex and multi-layered identity. ¹² Wider points exemplified: The 'Hindu' tradition to which she belongs is diverse (like religions more generally). The label 'Hindu' is in part a matter of interpretation (as religions in general are interpretations from this perspective). That Hindu identity is rooted in materiality, such as food, clothing, ritual etc (as 'religious' identity is hard to disentangle from cultural identity). <i>Wider points exemplified:</i> The 'Hindu' tradition to which she belongs is diverse (like religions more generally). The label 'Hindu' is in part a matter of interpretation (as religions in general are interpretations from this perspective). That Hindu identity is rooted in materiality, such as food, clothing, ritual etc (as 'religious' identity is hard to disentangle from cultural identity). |
| 2. "What significance does the content in question, or the experience, knowledge, ability, or skill, to be acquired through this topic, already possess in the minds of the children in my class? What significance should it have from a pedagogical point of view?" (Klafki, 2015, p. 151) | Reflexivity: student's relation to the tradition(s) of their families and friends around them. Do they see institutional aspects to it or not, and why? How do they understand the interaction between their personal religion or worldview and those of the institutions with which they may/may not identify? |
| 3. "What constitutes the topic's significance for the children's future?" (Klafki, 2015, p. 152) | Academic significance: sparks inquiry into a related area of study? Future study? Examination outcomes Personal: reflection on the life experience of another a safe way to hold a mirror up to my own experience, encourage reflexivity; better understand life in my local, national, or global community. Personal: reflection on the life experience of another a safe way to hold a mirror up to my own experience, encourage reflexivity; better understand life in my local, national, or global community. |
| 4. "How is the content structured (which has been placed in a specifically pedagogical perspective by questions 1, 2, and 3)?" (Klafki, 2015, p. 153) | How might Anita's story fit in to broader schemes of work and school curriculums? |
| 5. "What are the special cases, phenomena, situations, experiments, persons, elements of aesthetic experience, and so forth, in terms of which the structure of the content in question can become interesting, stimulating, approachable, conceivable, or vivid for children of the stage of development of this class?" (Klafki, 2015, p. 155) | Depends on a specific group/class but might include: contrasting cases, particularly with less orthodox/more orthodox features relative to Anita. Connections with current celebrity figures whose cases resonate, e.g. actors or sports women and men. Experiences capture through the arts, e.g. film, music, stories, or poetry. Personal connections with family members/local community. |

to RE. The interpretations remain relatively abstract here, with more 'concrete' and extended illustrations of Klafki's framework in two contrasting RE classroom contexts to follow.

Although RE 'content' can vary from place to place, the basic organizing logic remains consistent, implied by the questions. Whether a teacher chooses to use Anita's story, or another narrative, whether these categories (e.g. Hindu) are too constraining for their pedagogical purposes, is a matter for professional interpretation in relation to the context of teaching (the students concerned, the place, the time) and the goals of the educator. In this initial application, the logic has been oriented generally by the 'worldviews' approach.

The questions highlight what is significant to the learner and how pedagogical principles are elaborated through that significance. Subject matter is made meaningful because it is derived from principles and purposes articulated through questions. Here, the teacher does not begin with reified subject content, piles of stuff in textbooks, or knowledge passed down from academic disciplines framed as Powerful Knowledge. The examples teachers use should be understood as just that: only

examples. The notion of ‘canonical’ or core subject matter to define or dictate the educational experiences in the classroom is thereby avoided.¹³ Klafki’s questions stimulate reflection on what might be educationally effective but is not dogmatic. The questions provoke teachers to reflect and to select certain kinds of material while understanding that the teacher must be familiar with a broad field of knowledge to undertake this task effectively.

While Klafki’s approach invites us to reflect on our overarching aim, that aim is set in capacious terms. The general educational aim of *Bildung* (Willbergh, 2016) allows teachers and curriculum developers to have different goals in mind. One teacher may be oriented by goals that seek to change social attitudes to race and religion, contributing, for instance, to anti-racism and decolonizing the curriculum. Another might wish to focus more on existential goals such as the call to subjectivity (Biesta, 2020). These goals can be unified under the concept of *Bildung* as the holistic formation of human powers.¹⁴

Furthermore, it should be clear that Klafki’s approach is quite different to advocating specific core knowledge in RE (Biesta et al., 2019, pp. 7–9). In our discussion of Powerful Knowledge, we highlighted that there remains a tendency to advocate for particular kinds of knowledge without sufficient attention given to educational aims. While we accept that ‘Young’s account of knowledge is certainly not susceptible to the sort of atomistic enumeration one finds in the “knowledge planners” sometimes advocated by proponents of a “knowledge-rich” curriculum’ (Biesta et al., 2019, p. 8) we argue that PK is still associated with the substantive knowledge content of the curriculum that the Klafkian approach moves away from.

We have argued that disciplinary approaches underestimate the expertise of the teacher or curriculum maker in the transformations or reductions of subject matter. As Deng puts it ‘the fundamental task is not that of helping students acquire disciplinary knowledge, but that of using disciplinary knowledge as a tool or resource to create powerful, transformative experiences in the classroom that can lead to the cultivation of human powers’ (Deng, 2021, 1668). Although Klafki’s questions can only be answered in practice, we now turn to two specific and contextualized illustrations of Klafki’s framework for RE to further illuminate its relevance.

Case study 1: Klafki applied to GCSE RS

I have been a classroom teacher for almost 20 years. My current work is planning and teaching in a girls’ community Secondary school in East London. My wider context is years of research, practice, and conversations within the RE community. My students are mostly from South Asian backgrounds, the large majority being Pakistani-heritage Sunni Muslim. I find them to be a studious bunch who cheerfully throw themselves into their education. I have reimagined planning for the Religious Studies General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE), a public examination generally taken by pupils in the fifth year of secondary education, a common reality for Secondary teachers. From this, I will offer some general comments regarding Klafki’s didactic analysis from a teacher’s perspective.

Klafki’s didactic analysis begins by directing teachers to select content that opens up the world, revealing principles, laws and patterns. I have found this a positive and edifying starting point with which to approach the current GCSE specifications in Religious Studies. Although the content is non-negotiable, it is empowering to utilize my professional skills and reshape the curriculum. Can this framework elevate the GCSE specification as a result to a meaningful teaching and learning experience?

Applying Klafki’s first question to a common concern at GCSE RS with ‘Christian Beliefs and Teachings’, we get straight away to current frustrations experienced when preparing students for this paper. The content, a list of Christian doctrines including creation, incarnation, resurrection, Trinity, atonement, sits in a vacuum where no context, interpretation or critical view is seemingly required. They are presented in the specification as uncontroversial, even unremarkable, fact, for example ‘Christians believe that...’ or ‘Christianity teaches that...’ with no supporting scholarship

provided as evidence. Klafki's first question applied to the GCSE specification I teach shows immediately how that falls short regarding a wider framing.

Moving to the significance of the content selected, in the current GCSE, biblical texts of one or two lines are given to support some concepts, often out of context. At the level of GCSE, no critical engagement with those texts or the underpinning doctrines is called for (as would be the case in textual analysis in English or History at GCSE). Taking Klafki's second question and applying it here elevates the teachers' concerns to a comparison of different theological interpretations, challenges, or adaptations. With nothing to critically engage with, students can only repeat universalized doctrinal propositions. Students are trained to answer questions such as: 'how might belief in salvation influence Christians today?' or 'God as creator is the best way to understand God. Discuss'.

Klafki's third question concerns the future significance of what has been selected for study. On this basis, my students should be required to engage with centuries of infinitely complex, sometimes highly charged, sometimes violently expressed, human experience. In practice however, no theological conversations, ancient or modern, are required, just the theology itself, expressed as doctrine. The major struggle for the GCSE teacher is to weave context back into the picture, for example to consider the impact of Paul's missions and letters to the emerging religion of Christianity. This process also shows me that the practical job of planning must allow pupils to see the workings and critically engage with Christian metaphysical claims, rather than simply repeating them.

Reflecting on the process, which I found helpful, I present below a checklist for GCSE teachers trying to bring to life an acontextual, ahistorical, acritical specification for pupils to possess the information. My numbered points follow Klafki's five questions.

- (1) Consider the contents of the specification holistically. Identify the fundamental questions lying beneath the subject matter. These could be theological, historical, philosophical, or sociological, but they must raise serious questions about belief, reality, meaning, belonging, for example, with which students can engage critically.
- (2) Taking these fundamental questions, find connections with previous learning as starting places. Ensure these lead students to explore authentic questions within the field of study. The connections should lead students to new or more complex material.
- (3) Select content that exemplifies these fundamental ideas. The content should furnish students with a foundational understanding of the field. Ask questions such as 'what is it essential to understand to be well-educated in this field?' or, 'what mode of thinking or information must be grasped by the end of the course?'
- (4) Structure the learning content to reveal these fundamental ideas over time, allowing time to make connections to previous learning and explore the fundamental questions underlying the content.
- (5) Choose eye-catching or puzzling pieces of information to grab students' attention, draw them into more complex information and allow them to critically engage with the fundamental questions at the heart of the course.

What could this checklist potentially yield? Firstly, considering the specification holistically, rather than as a series of bullet points, the teacher's first job is shifted to identifying *contexts* which illuminate the otherwise abstracted Christian doctrine, within the limits of time and pupil capacity. At present, my teaching has started with the idea of the Christian messiah, to succinctly demonstrate the Jesus' movement's split with Judaism. However, the didactic analysis shows me I need to take pupils a lot further into the nature of Jesus' ministry, the movement that arose in his name, the different Gospel concerns, Paul's context and concerns and the timescale from Jesus' death to the Council of Nicaea. Such information, including Paul's missions, the destruction of the Temple, could potentially be explored at the end of Year 9 ensuring a deliberate sequencing of information over time (see checklist, point two). As so much of the specification is based on biblical proof texts, pupils must have some grasp of biblical history and context.

While learning content on a GCSE specification is non-negotiable, it is in a teacher's gift to shape and present content in a way that allows critical engagement, as I have noted, through setting information in context. Exploring textual and historical contexts in Religion and Worldviews, as with History and English for example, is essential to being well-educated, a sense of roots and causes to doctrinal disagreements, not just repeating claims in ways that are borderline confessional. Critical engagement with text requires a comparison of different experiences of humanity, God, in this context the covenant and questions such as 'Are Christians polytheists?' 'Must a Christian believe they are in a state of sin?'. Identifying the foundational ideas are central to rich and scholarly engagement which I understand as central to the *Bildung* tradition. Through well-chosen, carefully sequenced learning content, pupils can make increasingly sophisticated connections as their understanding develops.

As a classroom teacher, I have enjoyed engaging with a new theoretical account of curriculum and lesson planning. The planning process is the backbone of my work as a classroom teacher. I ask myself, what am I doing? I sense I am drawing down on 'unstable' disciplinary knowledge, as Tröhler would describe it, and manipulating it to come to life for 21st Century teenagers. However, in Klafki's didactic analysis this is just the start. In the classroom, the teacher should enter into a relationship of rediscovery with that being taught alongside her pupils, as they discover it for the first time. Klafki's account of planning as dynamic, creative, uncertain, and relational, reminds me as a teacher of multidimensional pedagogical skills, and encourages a more active exercise of professional judgement.

Case study 2: Klafki applied to decolonising the curriculum

I have been a secondary school teacher of RE for 4 years. My students are mostly white British middle class and male and this is reflected in the staff body (in particular, positions of leadership). Additionally, most students and staff are atheists. Whilst the level of religious literacy in the school is surprisingly low, there is a desire to change this; there is also enthusiasm for learning and exploring issues, topics, and areas from positions other than that of a white-western Eurocentric tradition.¹⁵ Upon my appointment, I was tasked with revamping the current curriculum. This was primarily due to low levels of engagement.

Decolonising¹⁶ the curriculum is at the heart of my pedagogy and practice and is an area that is of great importance to me. I will explore to what extent Klafki's didactic analysis can assist myself and other teachers in our efforts to do this.

Whilst Klafki's didactic analysis provides many insightful avenues of exploration, my contribution to this paper will investigate the meta-narrative surrounding, what knowledge is included within the curriculum content, and the impact it has on the teacher's methods of preparation. Klafki asks the following pivotal questions:

- (1) What is the nature of this 'lesson content?' (2015, 143)
- (2) What is the nature of the subject-matter or topics of the curriculum? (2015, 144)

Following these thought-provoking questions, he then states that 'this is not the place for a detailed critique of the different answers to this', (2015, 144) but the irony is, there seldom seems to be a right or given time for RE teachers within England and Wales to have this conversation.

The subject matter and by extension, the areas that act as a format for the curriculum, as Author 1 rightly states 'sits in a vacuum where no context, interpretation or critical view is seemingly required' (see above). Consequently, this area of teaching, which is unsurprisingly a great cause of contention, is one that teachers are expected to follow and comply with (albeit with much disgruntlement). The "curriculum designers' decision of what is to be considered contents of education (*Bildungsinhalte*), is presented as being obvious, linear, above the teacher's position, and thus not their concern" (Klafki, 2015).

It is here that this section of the paper wishes to assert that, the colonial logic embedded in both the structure and layout of not only the RE curriculum, but perhaps more to the point, the teacher training, leads to a negation that is not only intentional, but is fundamental to upholding a harmful status quo. It is worth noting that practitioners such as myself who deviate and practice a 'pedagogy of fugitivity', sees my students and I engage in subversive acts, through instructional strategies and creative responses, to unravel the colonial logic embedded within the contents of the RE curriculum. In keeping with a decolonial framework, the power dynamics between the teacher must be such that, students are not only encouraged but are expected to be part of the 'world bending' and 'reshaping' aspect of decolonizing the curriculum.

However, it is imperative to note that this process can be very laborious and such a deviation may risk student's grades, as the specification typically promotes and acknowledges thinkers within a Western Eurocentric tradition.¹⁷ Consequently, whilst students indeed benefit from, and are highly appreciative of their teacher's endeavours, with the education system being so assessments driven, and due to their being a large amount of content needing to be taught in an insufficient number of lessons, students can at times fear time is being 'wasted' on things that will not come up in the exam. In short, students to a large degree, are not truly afforded the space/are stripped of the capacity to truly appreciate the social capital, cultural capital, and skills that this level of critical engagement has to offer. Such a reality then sees students become complicit in their upholding of a colonized curriculum that places content inside and outside the binary of 'real knowledge'. Furthermore, it suggests that education/'real knowledge' is something that must be commodified in order to have worth and relevance.

What religions and worldviews are less familiar or ones which they struggle to access?

The students in the school that I currently teach in, for the most part, are broadly unfamiliar with anything that does not fall within a white western Eurocentric tradition. I recall a lesson in which I was teaching 'Religion, Social Justice and Human Rights'. The specification required that the students explore the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), analyse its historical origins and the benefits of its implementation. I began setting the scene for my decolonial point of entry by asking them to consider; why some countries may have taken exception to, or criticized the UDHR. The students found this line of questioning very difficult to understand, as they interpreted the articles within the declaration as self-evidently good and could not conceive of any grounds for critique, let alone objection. The UDHR has become naturalized as part of the progressive landscape of the modern world. My intention, then, was to open the possibility for questioning the implied universalism of UDHR. I shared with my students that many Muslim majority countries governed under Shari'ah law took exception to the UDHR, for two reasons. Firstly, because many believed it was premising rights and morality upon a secular caricature of fundamental Christian values. In other words, it was considered to be implicitly antagonistic to certain kinds of religiosity. And secondly, not only did it wrongly assume that many nations would prize a secular legislative foundation to govern their nation, it was presented as very monolithic cultural interpretation of values that would be understood differently or would simply not be conducive within many cultural norms outside of the West. In a bid to further decolonize the notion that European systems of culture are universal and superior, I introduced my students to an alternative declaration: the 'Cairo declaration of Human Rights in Islam, 1990', which was said to encompass the overarching concerns of the UDHR, but in contrast, was grounded in the qur'anic principles such as Tawhid (the oneness of Allah) and ummah (Muslim community) (O'Connor, 2014).

Whilst this stimulated a rich discussion, it was clear that the students had not conceived that there are other ways of knowing, being, doing and sense making that do not presuppose the white western secular male normative lens. The structuring of the content presented western norms, traditions, and values as 'normal' 'common-sense based' and rooted in the universalistic language of inclusion. By introducing my students to the UDHR and by

default, anything that did not echo or sought to deviate from this, was presented and assumed to be 'in conflict', 'undermining' of western values and 'primitive'¹⁸. Too often, the structuring of the RE content does not equip students to be curious about the existence of other epistemologies, let alone act as a vehicle for students to navigate and explore different paradigms, absent of the colonial gaze.¹⁹

As a teacher whose identity and worldviews do not align with values of 'colour-blindness' (broadly speaking- a refusal to acknowledge and critically engage with difference), nor an articulation of inclusion premised on 'shared values and common decency', I struggle to ignore the historical and socio-political power dynamics that have brought us to this point. I also find it tiresome and to a large extent dehumanizing, to constantly have to work from a position of critique and reform. All too often, when practitioners such as myself whose identity intersects across multiple marginal facets of the human identity, seeks to decolonize the curriculum through centring the voices, lived experiences and epistemologies of those who occupy marginalized positionalities, our endeavours are often met with suggestions that we are 'too close to the material' and as such we are unable to be 'objective'. Whilst considering Klafki's question '*What religions and worldviews are less familiar or ones which they struggle to access?*' I also urge the reader to be mindful of the *intellectual and emotional labour that practitioners face, when unearthing and seeking to embed such material into the curriculum. Additionally, I encourage the reader to be curious about the seen, unforeseen, spoken and unspoken cost of refusing to uphold and perpetuate whiteness.*

How do we factor in awareness of our own positionality to reading of other worldviews?

I previously created a 'Decolonial Point of Entry' reference worksheet (which is heavily embedded within Womanist theology²⁰) that some of my colleagues and I use to decolonize our lessons and schemes of work. Below are some of the questions that act as 'decolonial points of entry':

- (1) What is the other life that the normality, luxury, comfort and privilege is predicated on?
- (2) What ideas are being transported as normal? Do we see these same power dynamics play out in contemporary society?
- (3) Who is assuming the role of the storyteller? What are their undertones and overtones? What is their vested interest in the status quo? What is their proximity to the event and theme in question? (Gafney, 2017, p. 3)

This level of questioning allows for me as well as my students to acknowledge the positionality and bias that we hold when engaging with worldviews. It also forces me to consider the power dynamics at play, especially on a structural level. This will also be something I will introduce to my students by way of actively encouraging them to be part of the decolonizing process.

These decolonial points of entry allow for a rich scholarly engagement which is a pivotal facet of '*bildung*', the academic richness and the personal reflection and engagement. As a decolonial practitioner, the questioning of the structuring, resources, the use of language and the narrative is key and something that sharpens and informs my practice and academic work. I maintain that the contents of the RE curriculum perpetuates coloniality (ongoing manifestation of colonialism), and thus a neutral/objective pedagogy cannot undermine, counter or dismantle this.²¹ Decolonising is a process of undoing, unlearning, un-sense making, world-bending, reimagining and creating new possibilities. I consider and position myself as a teacher-student who learns alongside her students.

I understand Klafki's questions as a necessary reminder of the importance of questioning my motivations, methods, structuring sequences and resources that goes into my preparation for planning decolonized lessons. I am explicitly thinking here about ensuring I am decolonizing as opposed to simply including a variety of sources (surface level- 'diversity and inclusion'). In short, Klafki's questions encourage me to acknowledge my own subjectivity and how that impacts my thought process and production. Klafki's questions also act as a necessary reminder that I am also a

product of a colonized educational experience, and that my own personal journey is ongoing, irrespective of the fact that I am a teacher.

Conclusion

The *After Religious Education* project has set as its goal the development of both a new logic and supporting exemplification suited to a future RE curriculum for England. This article has offered a selective account of what that could look like, both theoretically and practically. Whilst we have not elaborated on suggestions for teaching in detail, we have set out underpinning principles situated in the Bildung/didactic tradition that RE curriculum developers might employ, with further work planned as the *After Religious Education* project progresses. In focusing our thinking on one specific model (Klafki) within that approach, our presentation is not intended to be representative; anyway 'the tradition' does not constitute a tightly coherent body of thought. It also goes beyond the scope and scale of the present paper to engage in critical analysis of Bildung/didactic. Instead, we present something more akin to a 'thought experiment', worked through examples offering initial glimpses of the attitudes and approaches we will take up and develop as the project progresses.

In focusing on general didactic principles, rather than pedagogical insights specific to RE, we have begun to reframe conversations about the future of the RE/Religion and Worldviews curriculum. Emphasising the purpose of RE as an academically rigorous subject which promotes *Bildung*, or self-cultivation, we establish a balance between its necessarily scholarly character in publicly funded schooling in a contemporary pluralist democratic society with its potential to be personally 'transformative'. Thinking about curriculum development in RE from within the *Bildung* tradition makes clearer sense of the notion of 'personal knowledge' proposed by Ofsted and a new language of reflexivity in RE which sidesteps the 'learning about' and 'learning from' religion adopted in the influential 2004 Non-Statutory Framework. Self-cultivation by contrast is a broad and inspiring educational starting point.

In pursuing an approach to curriculum production in RE based on general rather than specific didactic principles, we are also reasserting the importance of allowing teachers to exercise and apply their pedagogical knowledge to suit the hybrid alchemy of their subject, its disciplines, their own classroom and pupils. Good teachers will be able to understand the insights of *general didactics*, that is, a foundational understanding of the purpose of the curriculum, prior to the methods of its design and execution, or *special didactics*. Good RE curricula will be produced, not prescribed.

We have experienced some of the emotional and psychological demands entailed in 'shaking' the curriculum up ourselves as a group of writers. Here a collaborative and mutually supportive team approach that has been vital in encouraging each other to 'think outside the box'. We are mindful of the intellectual labour that will continue to be required if theory and practice in the subject is to change. We understand that transformation can be difficult, given the degree of investment in the status quo, despite evident shortcomings and injustices. We anticipate challenges to curricular reforms we propose and do not underestimate the degree of resistance. In this light, questions we will need to address include:

- How can we create a culture of care and respect for teachers shifting from being curriculum deliverers to producers?
- What practical steps/support/channels can be put in place?
- How do we respond to those who find our re-imagining of RE challenging?
- How will what we wish to do enrich children's and young people's school experience?

Ongoing work in the *After Religious Education* project will further extend and exemplify the details of the approach taken here. The fundamental point that educational theory has something specific to

offer RE (here outlined as general didactics rather than special didactics) is an important principle. It means that future work can align the discipline of Education with the practice of teaching informed by contemporary understandings of the place of religion in society.

Notes

1. We are grateful to Culham St Gabriel's Trust for funding the AfterRE project (<http://www.afterre.org>).
2. *Big Ideas in RE* builds on *Big Ideas in Science* and no doubt there are general didactic principles that apply across the curriculum. But Wintersgill's approach is explicitly RE focused making it a form of special didactics.
3. It should be acknowledged that the nature of such analysis beyond psychological, philosophical and sociological analysis might not be obvious to the reader. In short, the analysis that is missing is educational (more specifically didactic) (Biesta & Hannam, 2021). Alberts makes the point that 'general didactic theory should be related to the subject matter of individual subjects in order to develop educationally justified didactic concepts' (2007, 72). For further discussion of what that might look like, see Rein (1897) or Westbury et al. (2015).
4. See for instance Biesta and Hannam (2021) for some discussion of the lack of specifically educational analysis within RE debates.
5. See, for instance <https://www.natre.org.uk/primary/teaching-re/methods-of-teaching-re-1/>
6. One possible avenue that we have not explored is the 2021 RE Syllabus 'Living Difference IV' <https://www.hants.gov.uk/educationandlearning/hias/curriculum-support/living-difference-re-syllabus>. This Syllabus offers the kind of general didactics approach that we elaborate. While this innovative Syllabus demonstrates a commitment to specifically educational principles, its focus is relatively localized (RE in the Hampshire region of England) and naturally does not engage explicitly with concepts of Bildung or general didactics. Our scope of our argument is broader.
7. Friesen and Kenkies (2022) use the phrase 'continental pedagogy' though they acknowledge that the phrase is a neologism and a compromise.
8. *Bildung* is distinct to the notion of *Erziehung* which refers to developing and acquiring particular knowledge and skills. It is a complex notion with no single definition. For a fuller discussion of Bildung see (Autio, 2014; Pinar, 2014, p. 2).
9. It should be noted that the following account of the *Bildung/didactic* approach is necessarily selective and impressionistic. For a broader discussion of Bildung see Westbury et al. (2015) who bring together diverse approaches of figures such as Erich Weniger, Heinrich Roth, Martin Wagenschein, and Peter Menck.
10. The 'RE-searchers' project (Freathy & Freathy, 2013) promotes the idea that the student/learner should become conscious of the processes of curricular production.
11. See Meyer and Meyer (2007). For instance, the Berlin model of didactics established by Paul Heimann (1901–1967) argued that Klafki's didactics were too abstract and unworkable (Uljens, 2005).
12. The example of 'Anita' is borrowed from Jackson (1997, pp. 66–68) who's interpretive method aligns well with this didactic approach.
13. This is not to say, of course, that good examples that have stood the test of time, ought not to achieve the status of something nearing 'canonical' but avoids taking core knowledge that must be taught as a starting point (Biesta et al., 2019).
14. We have noted that *Bildung* could be defined quite broadly. Autio gives the following definition: 'to become, first, socialized to one's culture through school and other official curricula, and then, second, individuated by one's own studies, activities, and hobbies and "transcending" (the Hegelian *Aufhebung*) the official education and curriculum. The final, ideal aim of Bildung ... is the individual's competence to be able to lead public life; to participate in a knowledgeable way in cultural activities, public affairs, and politics; and to critique—ideally to reconstruct—society by transforming oneself through continuous study and different, idiosyncratic activities' (Autio, 2014, p. 18). Thus, all these diverse educational aims could, in theory, be included in the broad concept of *Bildung* as an overarching aim.
15. Whilst this is a broad term, I will use it to refer to the white British, Western European and American traditions that act as the normative and dominate position within academia. The term also explicitly refers to the way in which this tradition judges and deems information as knowledge once it can be verified within a rigid empirical positivist and empirical based model. Black Feminist Patricia Hill Collins refers to this tradition as having a political criteria influenced by a validation process that is twofold. The first is; 'knowledge claims are elevated by a community of experts who members represent the standpoints of groups from which they originate. Within the process, it means a scholar making a knowledge claim must convince the scholarly community controlled by white men that a given claim is justified. Second, each community of experts must maintain its credibility as defined by the logic group in which it is situated and from which it draws its basic, taken for granted knowledge. This means that scholarly communities that challenge basic beliefs held in the culture at large will be deemed as less credible than those which support popular perspective' (Collins, 1990, p. 1)

16. Decolonisation seeks to 'shift the geographies of reason' away from the fundamentals of white-western Eurocentric thinking, to include other knowledge systems (Hlabangane, 2021, p. 166). Consequently, decolonizing knowledge requires us to delink ourselves from binary thinking that normalizes the belief that Eurocentric knowledge purports a 'God's eye view' (Grosfoguel, 2011, p. 4), because its, universal and objective nature, derives from mathematical, logical, and rational thought. This then suggests that such knowledge is unimpeded by any power dynamics that may result from the embodied experiences of others and their social location (Dussel, 2008). Furthermore, through disrupting this paradigm, we undermine racist notions that some people are less human than others, and as such, have inferior knowledge.
17. Sources of authority/contributions outside of this are typically seen as something to 'include' but not 'knowledge that can and must be centred'. In other words, knowledge outside of the West is utilized to be reactionary, a deviation, marginal or a primitive articulation of Western thought, as opposed as an integral part of the foundational knowledge.
18. Whilst it lies beyond the scope of this paper to go into greater detail, I think it is necessary that we begin to consider how the 'common-sense' and 'popular consensus' that Western articulations and formulations of human rights, is embedded within a logic that produces discursive and ontological forces that emanate beyond the walls of the RE curriculum. For example, political discourse surrounding climate justice, global trade agreements and nationalism and citizenship.
19. This lack of curiosity and consideration is primarily due to a lack of knowledge, which is the consequence of 'epistemicide'- one of many chief objectives within slavery and colonialism. As such, the systematic destruction of knowledge has caused both gaps, fissures, and silence. It must be noted that the unparalleled exposure and normativity that Western Eurocentric knowledge is accustomed to, legitimized by and dependent on the ignorance and absence of other corpuses of knowledge and epistemologies (Mills, 1997). This becomes ironic when we begin to explore of the many residues of epistemicide, 'generational linguistic and epistemic amnesia'. This manifests itself in many enslaved Africans and colonized folks are unable to fully recover and draw towards plains of knowledge from their ancestral heritage, because in many instances, it has been hidden, rewritten, erased and/or destroyed. The impact of this is even more palpable as this reality is seldom taught in classrooms.
20. 'Womanism is often simply defined as black feminism. It is that, and it is much more. It is a richer, deeper, liberative paradigm; a social, cultural, and political space and theological matrix with the experiences and multiple identities of black women at the centre. Womanism shares the radical egalitarianism that characterizes feminism at its basic level, but without its default referent, white women functioning as the exemplar for all women. Feminism here is both the justice work of women on behalf of women in public and private spaces that seeks to transcend boundaries, and feminism as it is in the Western world with historical and contemporary racism, classism, and transphobia characterizing it to differing degrees' Gafney (2017), p. 7).
21. Policies that aim to address a colonized curriculum in a 'tidy', 'neat' and 'respectable' manner, will not lead to long-lasting structural change. There must be an apologetic and unashamed anti-racist, anti-colonial and decolonial approach to the curriculum. Superficial inclusive and diverse approaches in many respects would be analogous to requesting to be taught in a prison with a 'bigger cell, softer chains' (Dillon, 2011, p. 182).

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