



## **Which Right is Right?**

### **An Exploration of the Intersection between Religious Identity and the Human Right to Gender Equality in Two Different Teacher Education Contexts: South Africa and Norway**

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#### **Abstract**

This article argues that the intersection between personal religious identity and human rights issues needs to be explored. There is a need to bridge the gap between policy (the constitutions of countries such as South Africa and Norway espouse gender equality) and practice. Using gender equality as an example of a human rights issue, an intervention strategy is employed using an empathetic-reflective-dialogical approach to engage with pre-service teachers in both South Africa and Norway. Selected pre-service teachers are encouraged to engage in self-dialogue and to write their self-narratives. Participating in Communities in Conversation, Communities in Dialogue, and Communities for Transformation provides the platform for empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying to take place. This restorying has the potential to address possible dissonance between the individual's personal and professional identities when dealing with human rights issues. Classroom practice could become classroom praxis! There is also the potential for transformative practice in the wider society.

Keywords: empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying, Communities in Conversation, Communities in Dialogue, Communities for Transformation, human rights

## Introduction

In this article the human right to gender equality is explored in two different teacher education institutions in South Africa and Norway. These Southern African and Norwegian universities are located in vastly different contexts. Unlike the very egalitarian nature of Norwegian society, South Africa continues to struggle in reality with an unequal society, not least when it comes to gender equality. Religion, and the associated dominant discourses that influence social intercourse, plays a central role in maintaining patriarchal mores in spite of a very progressive constitution.

In support of the South African Constitution (Republic of South Africa), issues of human rights are embedded in the *Policy of Human Rights Across the Curriculum* (Department of Education 2003a) and the teaching-learning of democratic values as outlined in the *Manifesto of Values, Education and Democracy* (Department of Education 2001). In the school curricula and in particular in the “Life Orientation” curriculum there is space for the exploration of human-rights-related issues, including that of gender equality. Religion education is included in the “Life Orientation” curriculum. The *National Policy on Religion and Education* (Department of Education 2003b), promoting as it does a co-operative model when dealing with religious diversity, encourages intra- and inter-religious dialogue not only about religion per se, but especially about the articulation of religious discourse when addressing social issues and in particular human rights issues.

Norwegian society has become highly secularized (Schmidt) with the church and its institutions having weakened, especially during the last decades. Simultaneously, the religious landscape has changed with the arrival of immigrants who bring with them cultural and religious diversity, albeit as minority groups. The government has strengthened the position of human rights in both the legislative system and in society, including schools. This reflects national values that are underpinned by both Christian values and human rights values. This is also emphasized in the purpose clause of the Education Act, which states that education is to be grounded on values that are rooted in human rights (Ministry of Education and Research: sec. 1-1). Human rights are embedded within several subjects including religion education (KRLE) (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs: 37). KRLE is a compulsory school subject enabling learners to respectfully dialogue with people of different faiths. The religion education teacher plays an essential role in promoting an attitude of respect and tolerance for religious diversity and upholding human rights (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training).

Religion can either support the promotion of human rights or present a barrier to the same. There is often dissonance even with the same umbrella religion. This signals clearly the need for reflection, both on the part of the individual, and for the collective, in this case, pre-service religion education teachers. Drawing on Wetherell, it can be maintained that while pre-service teachers are born into specific religious contexts, each individual has the power to design his or her own religious identity. When human rights issues are addressed in religion education lessons as part of the broader “Life Orientation” curriculum (South Africa) and KRLE (Norway), it is reasonable to assume that if pre-service religion education teachers have not engaged in self-reflection and negotiation of their own religious identity, there is the potential to create less than the intended outcome as expressed in the South African *National*

*Policy on Religion and Education* (Department of Education 2003b) and *Curriculum for knowledge of Christianity, Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics* (Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training). In both countries, religion education has presented both challenges and opportunities with regard to policy image and personal religious identity.

Central to any human rights conversations is the individual's substantial (personal) identity that includes religious identity, and situational (professional) identity (Nias). According to Roux, "teachers cannot mediate or facilitate knowledge and skills pertaining to human rights without understanding their own position, identity and beliefs" (41). In this article we engage pre-service teachers who will be teaching religion education and we consider how their religious identity<sup>1</sup> intersects with the human right to gender equality. Empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying as an intervention strategy (Jarvis 2013; 2018) is presented, requiring pre-service teachers to engage with their substantial as well as situational identities. Drawing on self-dialogue and self-narrative, empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying has the potential to transform classroom practice, in this case specifically in Religion Education, into praxis (McCormack and Kennelly).

Empathy refers to the capacity of individuals to understand and respond to others with an increased awareness of the other person's thoughts and feelings (Abdool and Drinkwater). Reflection can be defined as the examination of responses, beliefs, and premises resulting in the integration of new understandings into experience (McCormack and Kennelly). Dialogue refers to the search for meaning and understanding, recognizing that each person has something of value to contribute (Allen). It is about opening up to the possibility of learning from the other (Ipgrave).

Empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying provides pre-service teachers with the opportunity to reflectively engage with their own religious identity by way of self-dialogue and then to express this through self-narrative. They are also provided with the opportunity to empathetically search for meaning and understanding of perspectives that are different from their own as they engage in Communities in Conversation (CiC) (Roux; De Wet and Parker) and Communities in Dialogue (CiD) (Roux). This has the potential to be emancipatory and transformational.

Nicolescu's theory of the Included Middle conceives "of people moving to a place where they become open to others' perspectives . . . valu[ing] premises and belief systems . . . letting go of aspects of how they currently know the world" (McGregor and Volckmann: 62). The logic of the Included Middle requires the creation of a space for dialogue and knowledge generation. That is what the intervention strategy presented in this article facilitates. As pre-service teachers engage with human rights issues, the strength and potentialities that emerge from these encounters have the potential to be transformative (McGregor and Volckmann).

For this empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying to be effective, a safe space (De Preez and Simmonds; Roux) was created where substantial and situational identities could intersect.

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<sup>1</sup> Referring to the religious identity of these pre-service teachers includes those who perhaps have no specific religious persuasion and who might consider themselves to be atheistic or agnostic.

This safe space does not only refer to literal or physical safety, but rather, denotes the figurative and discursive use of the notion (De Preez; Redmond; Stengel and Weems). In these safe spaces the religion education pre-service teachers engaged in a Community in Conversation (CiC) and a Community in Dialogue (CiD), and then in a Community for Transformation (CfT).

### **Theoretical Framework Underpinning Empathetic-Reflective-Dialogical Restorying**

The following bricolage provides the framework for empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying. The theories are drawn from a recent study (Jarvis 2013).

#### *Dialogical Self Theory*

The dialogical self provides a link between self and society. Hermans's Dialogical Self Theory advocates that individuals live not only in external spaces, but also in the internal space of their society-of-mind. Possible identity re-creation can result from the dialogical self in action. This occurs when the individual moves from one *I* position to another in the self as a way of gaining understanding about the self in relation to the world (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka). An example of this, when engaging with the human right to gender equality, would be the adoption of a counter-position to both individual and collective dominant voices in the individual's society-of-mind that promote male hegemony.

#### *Self-Narrative*

Various scholars (Gonçalves and Ribeiro; Nothling; Nuttall; White) make the link between narrative and agency, arguing that self-narration can help individuals to make sense of their lives, past and present. Self-narrative has a role to play in enabling individuals to discover the degree to which they are entangled with their other (in this case, male/female) and, furthermore, the extent to which it might be possible to become disentangled from their male or female other and thus be freed to build new identities (Nuttall). In this sense the self-narrative can be emancipatory and empowering as it can fragment and re-interpret dominant discourses such as that of male hegemony (Lawler).

#### *Restorying*

It is the contention of Ter Avest that stories that have the greatest potential to transform readers are open space stories. Such stories, instead of trying to colonize readers, allow them sufficient space to deconstruct and reconstruct what they receive. The possibility then presents itself that as pre-service teachers engage in open conversations they might restory what they know, as new interpretations are applied in the light of clarified or new understandings of dominant discourses. This can potentially lead to the co-production of new knowledges as individuals, previously locked into their religious traditions, embark upon personal journeys of restorying. In this project, the restorying takes place in and through the following conversations.

**Community in Conversation (CiC):** A Community in Conversation (De Wet and Parker; Roux) provides the opportunity for an informal sharing of information in conversation in a safe space. In the case of gender equality, for example, men and women meet separately. This conversation Green refers to as negotiation and collaboration. Informally exchanging perspectives and

personal experiences, can foster respect, trust and tolerant understanding as “divergent ways of thinking and speaking” (McCormack and Kennelly: 522) are reflected upon. This reflection entails the examination of responses, beliefs and premises resulting in the integration of new understandings into experience (McCormack and Kennelly). This process of reflection is very relevant within CiCs where it is anticipated that as men and women, separately but reciprocally, share their self-narratives they will reflect on the position as men and women (and their others) in their religious discourses. Their intersection with other organizing principles in society (Wetherell) could also be considered.

**Community in Dialogue (CiD):** A Community in Dialogue (Roux) fosters the opportunity in which the other is disclosed to his or her other (female or male) in a dialogue that includes a rhetoric that questions and a rhetoric that reveals respect, and inspires reciprocal exchanges with tolerant and empathetic understanding and collaboration initiatives for transformation. Conversations could be designed around unpacking religious discourses and the lived experience thereof and the implications for gender equality as expressed in the South African Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa) and the Gender Equality Act (Ministry of Children and Equality). The aim of the CiD would be to understand self-respect and own positionality and inspire reciprocal exchanges with empathetic understanding.

**Community for Transformation (CfT):** A Community for Transformation (Jarvis 2013; 2018) aims to explore how, in this case, new knowledges about substantial and situational identities and the human right to gender equality could inform teaching-learning about human rights for transformative classroom praxis. The CfT could identify challenges and possibilities for constructive engagement that could lead to new layers of consciousness (White) that has the potential to lead to action.

Self-dialogue (to an internal audience) is expressed as self-narrative (to an external audience) in the spaces created by a CiC, CiD, and CfT. As pre-service teachers explore how their religious identities intersect with the human right to gender equality, the possibility exists for restoring to take place.

## Methodology

This article draws on what emerged from a qualitative small-scale project that employed a narrative research design, conducive to the exploration of the ways in which the participants construct, interpret, and give meaning to their subjective experiences with regard to gender equality. It also provided the space to describe and explore how people are similar to and also different from one another (Newman; Silverman).

Narrative inquiry as a methodology within narrative research (Chase; Clandinin; Clandinin, Murphy, Huber, and Orr; Luttrell; Riessman; Squire, Andrews, and Tamboukou) and with a strong representation in the field of education (Connelly and Clandinin), refers to “the authentic accounts of real life experiences” (Nothling: 153). This is particularly relevant

in the Norwegian context where the participants were asked about their upbringing. Squire, Andrews, and Tamboukou add to this idea of narrative contending that it is “always multiple, socially constructed and constructing, reinterpreted and reinterpretable” (4). Narratives can be used to maintain the status quo, but can also have an emancipatory function, transforming individual lives and the broader culture (Plummer).

The project was located at a South African university in the College of Humanities and more specifically in the School of Education. In Norway it was located in a university college in the Faculty of Education.

#### *Participants*

In South Africa, twenty-four religion education post-graduates agreed to participate in this project. It so happened that there were twelve men and twelve women ranging from their mid-twenties to fifty years of age. The intervention strategy was presented to them as an example of a methodology that can be used when generating data.

In Norway, nine religion education second year pre-service teachers in their twenties participated, three men and six women. They are all ethnic Norwegians except for one who had an immigrant mother. The group was small but these pre-service teachers were focused and highly motivated.

In both contexts, the ethical code of conduct and requirements set for narrative research by the institutions of higher education was adhered to. Participants signed consent forms and were assured that their anonymity would be protected and that pseudonyms would be used when citing their responses.

#### *Empathetic-Reflective-Dialogical Restorying*

While empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying can be used to engage on numerous human rights issues, for the purposes of this project, it was employed to explore how the participants’ religious identities intersect with the human right to gender equality. Their self-dialogue and self-narrative contributed to their engagement in a CiC, CiD, and CFT.

In both contexts the researchers explained the process, locating it within the theoretical framework outlined previously. They introduced and asked the participants to consider specific questions at levels 1 and 2. Women and men were separated for the CiCs on level 3. Levels 4 and 5 were guided by the researcher. Audio recording, with the consent of the participants, was used in levels 3-5. Mindful of the different contexts in South Africa and in Norway, there are questions asked in both contexts and others are specific to each context.

On the first level the participants are given the opportunity to consider the dominant individual and collective voices informing the internal *I*-positions that they hold in their society-of-mind with regard to the position of men and women in their religious discourses. They are asked to consider the following questions:

In both contexts

How would you describe your religious identity?

Gender equality has been defined by Subrahmanian as female and male being equal to one another in quality and identical in value with women and men having the

same rights and opportunities. Do you think your religious identity affects the way in which you view the human right to gender equality? Please explain.

Table 1. *Empathetic-Reflective-Dialogical Restorying – 5 levels*

Levels	Process	Audience	Result
1	◦ Self-dialogue	Society-of-mind Internal audience	Negotiation of various I-positions and re-positioning of voices in the society-of-mind
2	◦ Self-narrative written text	Male and female religion education pre-service teachers	Production of own meaning and knowledge
3	◦ Self-narrative shared with an external audience ◦ Community in Conversation (CiC)	External audience At this level male and female pre-service teachers are separated and in a CiC they share their self-narratives exchanging perspectives and personal experiences in a space comprising their own gender	Co-production with writers/storytellers
4	◦ Self-narrative shared with an external audience ◦ Community in Dialogue (CiD)	External audience At this level male and female pre-service teachers share their self-narratives with one another	Co-production with writers/storytellers
5	◦ Group narrative ◦ Community for Transformation (CfT)	External audience Male and female pre-service teachers	Co-production of possible new narrative for transformation

#### South Africa

What does your religion say about your position as a woman/as a man?  
What does your religion say about your role and responsibilities as a woman/as a man?

#### Norway

Think back to your childhood: did you experience special privileges/responsibilities/duties as a girl/boy? Were you ever prevented from doing something based on your gender?

It is on this level that the participants negotiate their self-dialogue and consider or adopt counter-positions to male hegemony as they engage their dialogical self in action (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka). Their self-dialogue would find expression in level two where they write their self-narratives.

At level two both female and male participants, in response to the above questions, were required to write their self-narrative. According to Gonçalves and Ribeiro this self-narrative is “the outcome of dialogical processes of negotiation, tension, disagreement, alliance and so on, between different voices of the self” (302). The self-narrative, writing for the self (Ellis), can be therapeutic as it causes the individual to pause and to think about their positionality in relation to gender equality. This can also be empowering as their writing exposes a new sense of consciousness and a greater sense of control in the present and for the future (Paul, Christensen, and Frank).

At level three the participants are separated into two groups, one for men and the other for women. In each group or CiC they are afforded the opportunity to share their written reflections orally in response to the questions below. Sharing their self-narratives provided the opportunity for them to individuate as “equal . . . dignified partner[s] in constituting reality and constructing the world” (Becker: 89).

#### South Africa

What does your religion say about your position as a woman/man?

What does your religion say about your role and responsibilities as a woman/man?

What does your religion say about possible privileges that you have as a woman/man in your personal, social and professional domains?

What does your religion say about possible expectations of women/men in personal, social and professional domains?

#### Norway

Try to sum up your experiences from the individual reflections under following headings:

Experiences with role of gender in play when you were growing up

Gender based responsibilities

Gender based privileges

Expectations of you as a boy/as a girl in your family, society, school, as a teacher

At **level four** the participants together enter into a CiD. This fosters the opportunity in which the other is disclosed to his/her other (female/male) in a dialogue that includes a rhetoric that questions and a rhetoric that inspires reciprocal exchanges with tolerant and empathetic understanding. The researcher facilitates the responses of the participants who are asked to discuss their responses from the CiC with their other (female/male), using the following headings (in both contexts):

Gender based roles and responsibilities

Gender based privileges

Gender based expectations of the other

Understandings of the position of men and women, based on religious identity, and the possible impact of this on the way in which gender equality would be approached in professional spaces, namely, the school and more specifically the classroom.

At **level five** a whole group discussion as a CfT takes place with the aim of exploring how their substantial identities and substantial attitudes towards gender equality inform their situational or professional practice. This constructive engagement has the potential to lead to new layers of consciousness (Ritchie and Wilson; White) as the participants consider self-respect and their own positionality, and inspire reciprocal exchanges with empathetic understanding. This could potentially lead to the emergence of collaborative initiatives for negotiating entrenched positions, disentanglement from their other, and restorying for transformation.

The researcher guides the discussion at level five with the following questions:

Both

How has empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying impacted your understanding of gender equality in terms of experiences, roles and responsibilities, privileges, and expectations?

South Africa

As a religion education teacher how has the dialogue impacted your perspectives of teaching-learning about gender issues and promoting gender equality in a religion education class?

Evaluate the efficacy of empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying for the transformation of attitudes towards gender equality and for better understandings of the other in society.

Norway

In Norway much has been done to address gender equality, especially on the part of women. Do you think that the issue of gender equality is also an important matter for men? Give reasons for your answer.

Do you think that you have got new perspectives on teaching about gender and gender equality in KRLE and in the school in general? Elaborate.

Do you think the empathetic-reflective-dialogical approach would work in a classroom setting with, for example, Grades 8 – 10 learners? Elaborate.

### **Findings and Discussion**

Drawing on the work of various scholars (Chase; Gubrium and Holstein; Luttrell; Silverman), narrative analysis was employed as a tool of analysis. All five levels of empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying are implicit in the discussion that follows. The written responses (level 2) and audio recorded conversations at levels 4 and 5 were crystallized (Maree) to lend authenticity (Newman).

#### **South Africa**

Various threads emerged on how the situational and substantial identities of the participants intersect with the human right to gender equality.

*Dissonance, as Substantial Identity Intersects with the Human Right to Gender Equality*

The participants have a cognitive understanding of human rights education and the South African Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa). However, there is a dissonance between the demands placed by this understanding on their situational identity as professionals, as religion education teachers, and their substantial identity as informed by their religion. Their self-dialogue is informed by both individual and collective dominant voices reinforcing entrenched attitudes of male hegemony. This finds its way into their written self-narratives as shared in the CiC and as discussed with their other in the CiD. Gender-based roles, expectations, and responsibilities are deeply entrenched. The man is acknowledged as the provider, controller of finances, head of the family and the protector of the family. He is seen as superior to women and deserving of privileges. What follows is a selection of comments illustrating this firmly held position of gender inequality.

A man is the head of the family . . . (woman).

Men are entitled to privileges – being a man is a privilege on its own. Respect for men is one of the privileges. Also the privilege of power where as a man I hold the family name (man).

Men must be married . . . men are superior to *women* even if a women are career woman but ‘they’ can go to work and come back and cook and wash for me because of my position as a man. This is also practiced in religion where I hold and carry a family name and my religion name and when we get married she has to follow my religion (man).

The responses from the males demonstrated a sense of pride, superiority, and power. The women were made to feel that they were inferior and had less value than men. What the men highlighted as privileges, roles, and responsibilities to protect and provide for women, seemed to be in conflict with a respect for equal rights. On the contrary what was demonstrated was male hegemony. The men stressed that they are expected by society to behave like ‘a man’ failing which they are faced with discreditation and discrimination in society.

When it comes to religion, the women were of the opinion that they have to do what their religion prescribes. One female participant said this about her position:

I am a proud African woman and believe that in . . . religion there are no gender equality and human rights considered . . . In my position as a woman, I have to respect and serve my husband and take care of him and the whole family even members of the extended family. There is no room for gender equality and human rights for us women since men are viewed by society as heads or leaders in the family.

This endorsed the submissive behavior in women who do not question religious discourses. They have not had the opportunity nor a safe space, in which to voice concerns, needs and expectations. The collective response from women in level 2 and 3 with regard to expectations and privileges can be summed up as follows:

We felt that as women we are supposed to serve men. We tried to identify a few privileges but we agreed that we do not have much as men do. As a woman

you are not seen as going out and having a job . . . but looking after the man's and family's needs. Even in church we do not have privileges; we have to do everything . . . For men is that they provide for us . . . everything (woman).

The majority of the men were resolute that women should submit to them as the providers. In the CiD the women responded to their other (men) saying that providing for the family does not exonerate the men from sharing in the household chores. The women openly expressed their frustration that when they, as women, are the main providers in the family, they are not given recognition and the respect they deserve. They are expected to both work and manage the housework and the children. Both the men and the women were of the opinion that while human rights calls for gender equality, this is not manifest in practice as far as roles and responsibilities are concerned. This is also not promoted in their religious discourses.

#### *Safe Space*

The CiD provided the opportunity for the participants to engage with one another in a safe space and to challenge gender inequality and to explore how attitudes and positions shaping substantial identities are socially constructed. Women and men were provided with the space in which to respect their inner voices and to express this in order to bring about change. One male participant commented positively about how his experience made him consider his female other.

How does the other party feel about my action . . . leads to reflection . . . appeal to feelings . . . The strategy could work in the teaching of debates e.g. SA context issue of gender.

The findings show that it is important for both men and women to be secure in their personal identities so as to be able to acknowledge the other as having equal value. One of the male participants said the following:

As man we need to start by acknowledging women as integral part for us so that they recognize us as their husbands, we should do everything for them so that . . . The implications for that will be that in the working space we get to recognize and respect those young girls as much as those young boys.

This implies that in order to stop perpetuating and contributing to gender inequality both men and women have a responsibility to engage in conversation and dialogue [in a safe space] so as to forge a way forward that is transformative for society.

The participants also acknowledged that it is essential for both pre-service and in-service teachers, in this case religion education teachers, to work through areas of dissonance between their substantial identities (as dictated by their religion) and situational identities (as religion education teachers informed by the curriculum). By doing so there is less chance of a hidden curriculum undermining human rights as embedded in the school curriculum.

## Norway

### *Norwegian Collective Affiliation*

The key findings supported the notion that gender equality is a Norwegian collective affiliation. The participants share an understanding about the strong position of human rights in Norway, and an awareness of the strong position of gender equality in Norwegian society. It seems that neither family background nor religion plays an important part in how the participants understand the issue of gender equality. Their understanding of gender equality is derived from it being a core common Norwegian value. This, despite an upbringing with gender divided roles in their homes and expectations that men provide for their families by working while women do the housework. One of the male participants sums up the assessment of all the participants that these traditional views are “not normal at all.” This implies that gender equality is considered as something typically Norwegian. One of the female participants illustrates this view with the following:

And when I will teach about gender equality, I think that the society around will affect just as much as my own view of life, like here in Norway, here we are very much about equality, there should be no difference between man and woman . . . but if we had traveled to a country where there was no gender equality, and where gender equality was not on the agenda, you might have been influenced by it even if you agree with the values from here (Norway), it is not necessarily religious faith that will affect how you teach about equality . . . also experiences from the surroundings will affect.

This reflects an understanding of gender equality as a Norwegian collective ethnic affiliation, an intrinsic symbol of what is considered to be Norwegian, and a core value in the Norwegian project of modernization (Gullestad: 32). It is considered to be an established discourse in understanding Norwegian society (Røthing: 74). There seems to be an underlying understanding that it is no longer necessary to state this intrinsic value of gender equality, but rather to focus politically on equality in general (Bjørnestad and Røthing). The Norwegian participants confirmed this understanding and placed gender inequality either in the historical past, or as an issue that emerges in other cultures.

If the issue of gender equality is deemed passé, this potentially poses a challenge when taking into consideration the drive to make Norwegian schools inclusive of all children (no matter their background, culture, or religion). If Norwegian citizens and, in particular, in-service teachers and pre-service teachers are not constantly aware of potential gender inequality, the danger is that perhaps they will not be equipped to manage issues of gender inequality in their classrooms. There is a potential danger in putting the question about gender equality on hold and not keeping it to the fore. Issues of gender discrimination and sexual harassment that exist in Norwegian society could simply be overlooked. Empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying can help to keep up the awareness of gender related issues and prepare pre-service Religion Education teachers for their professional role.

### *Safe Space or Space of Awareness?*

Self-dialogue, self-narrative, and communities in conversation and dialogue helped to heighten the self-reflection of the participants. Both the written self-narratives and stories of

their upbringing and education in school and their discussions about expectations and gender based roles as shared in the CiC showed that gender equality is deeply rooted in their attitudes. In the CiD, the conversations showed that the participants have in common the experiences of gender equality in play, in school, and in society. They have not questioned the issue of gender equality, it has always been, as they see it, a natural part of their daily life, and in retrospect, a positive part of their upbringing. The CiD forced the participants to think critically about the gender issues they have taken for granted. The CiD revealed nuances in the participants' attitudes towards gender by questioning the background of their own thoughts.

[E]verybody has had a childhood and previous experiences, but didn't ask the question: Why is it like this? When you ask the question, you start to think about matters taken for granted (man).

Maybe we didn't get a new understanding but it has made us to think about these issues and we have become more aware that have been and still are differences (woman).

At level five (CfT) the participants agreed that they share the view that men and women in general have the same responsibilities in the family and that they should have the same opportunities in school and education. They also discussed the importance of being aware of their own values as teachers before entering the classroom.

The whole process enhanced the participants' consciousness and they became aware of the importance of addressing gender issues. The safe space became a space of awareness.

### **South Africa and Norway**

#### *Efficacy of Empathetic-Reflective-Dialogical Restorying*

In both contexts the efficacy of empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying was discussed. All the participants in this project, having participated in empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying, are far more aware of their self-dialogue (level 1) and the dominant voices in their society-of-mind that impact their self-narratives (level 2). They are also sensitized to the possibilities of their dialogical self in action as, especially in the South African context, they adopt counter positions to dominant voices (drawn from religious discourses) promoting gender inequality in their society-of-mind. The CiC, CiD, and CfT provided the opportunity to think critically about processes of socialization and the possible disjuncture between policy and practice and the individual's response to this in his/her own practice.

In the Norwegian context empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying afforded the participants a more nuanced picture of the status of gender equality in Norwegian society. They have also become more aware of their own perception of gender and more subtle gender biases that they might bring to the classroom and their own teaching. They also found that the process helped them to consider the perspectives of others. One male participant expresses this as follows:

I think that through this kind of discussions you can get a deeper understanding of how others think about being raised as a girl or a boy.

In South Africa, the CfT (level 5) provided the opportunity to discuss and begin the process of deconstructing socialization and unpacking the disjuncture between substantial and situational identities. Participants were made aware of how their substantial identities impact their situational identities and the expectations of them as professionals to implement gender equality.

The dissonance between human rights and the implementation thereof at the intersection with substantial identities became very clear in the discussion. One of the male participants said the following:

For me I think the strategy has made me realize something very important about human rights and gender inequality. It is very helpful and as I was raised by a single woman, and I respect women a lot. However, as we were discussing as men I realized that we have a lot of privileges that we are not aware of. I have never considered the amount of effort that my mother and other women put in . . . The strategy has taught me to listen to my inner voice, reflect about how others feel about my actions and decisions and to change the way I do and see them . . . and I therefore see the strategy as transformative.

As with the participants in South Africa, the CfT (level 5) provided the opportunity for the Norwegian participants to think critically about processes of socialization, and to discuss and begin the process of deconstructing the same. The participants discovered that there are many different expectations of men and women in Norwegian Society today and they had a constructive dialogue that showed the ability to deconstruct some of their lived differences. This can be summed up by the following responses:

We as women are supposed to be more caring as teachers than men. A kind of mama for all the pupils. The expectation to a man is to be more a teacher, like “You educate the children and we raise them” (woman).

But is that roles that women have as caring persons or is that roles that women take because they think it is an expectation in society? (man)

Male and female participants (South Africa) collectively agreed that that this strategy could be an effective tool to employ in their professional space, their religion education lessons, to enhance teacher/learner relationships. Their views include the following:

[T]his strategy stimulated the mind, gives us many possibilities ideas leading to critical thinking and to question yourself for better understanding and the probing questions assisted . . . it has a potential to be transformative (woman).

I found this strategy to be helpful especially in level 1 and 2 where one had to listen to different voices before one takes a decision . . . it gives you possible ideas to question yourself to say: What can you change? How can you do that? Why should you act in that particular way? (man)

Acknowledging that the strategy allows one ‘a personal space’ as indicated above, one male participant said that, in addition, he found it most helpful to hear women express their perspectives about their other (men) as well as men about their other (women). While the participants (men and women) were aware of how their particular contexts can shape their

behavior, engaging in this strategy assisted them to see that they can be agents of change. The strategy opened up a space for constructing a narrative in which they have some ability to direct future-oriented action, though constrained by the adversity of their circumstances.

In the classroom, in both South African and Norwegian contexts, empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying has the potential to assist, in this case, religion education teachers in the teaching-learning process with regard to human rights education. This could include exploring how to show respect for the other at home, on the playground, and in the workplace. In South Africa, there is a need for men to recognize and respect elderly women and children (both male and female), since incidents of rape, domestic violence, and all types of abuse are on the rise (Sibanda-Moyo, Khonje, and Brobbey; Langa-Mlambo and Soma-Pillay; Vetten). However, Norway is not exonerated from these evils, albeit that the incidences are far fewer.

Participants in South Africa suggested that empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying could be used to engage with various human rights issues in the religion education classroom, and they specifically mentioned racism and xenophobia. The suggestion was made that empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying, because of its engaging (free) nature, could be used in various contexts such as parliament, for politicians to engage meaningfully, considering their own self-dialogue and self-narrative and that of the other, so as to engage in conversation and dialogue so as to forge a way forward that is transformative for society. This intervention strategy could also be employed in the Norwegian context when issues of contention arise.

## Conclusion

Faculties and schools of education are professionally bound to provide intervention strategies in their graduate programs to create safe spaces for pre-service teachers to explore their substantial and situational identities and how these intersect with human rights issues. This article shows how empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying can contribute to social transformation (Hampson and Assenza 2012). Self-dialogue and self-narrative communicated in a safe space within a CiC, CiD, and CfT is empathetic, reflective, and dialogical, engaging as it does with the intersection between substantial and situational identities and human rights issues. This process requires “the ability to see the world through the lens of others . . . providing space within which to grow peoples’ capacity to communicate across boundaries” (McGregor and Volckmann: 62-63).

Empathetic-reflective-dialogical restorying as a teaching-learning strategy creates open spaces for empathetic, reflective dialogue. In this case, the intersection of substantial (religious identity) and situational (professional) identities and the human right to gender equality was explored and has the potential to be personally and socially transformative in both South Africa and in Norway, although the extent to which this needs to happen may differ according to each specific context.

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