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Published: 23/11/2022

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

Link to publication on the UWS Academic Portal

Citation for published version (APA):

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Decolonising Scottish Religious Education in Secular Schools: A Remote or Distinct Possibility?

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Abstract
In this paper I critically examine whether there is a remote or distinct possibility in decolonising Scottish RE. Through the lens of decoloniality, including its adjunct, anticoloniality (Spivak, 1991; Mignolo, 2007; Clapman, 2020), I argue that despite curriculum reforms in recent decades, Scottish non-denominational RE (hereinafter Scottish RE) remains largely in a neocolonial formulation. I highlight the continued Christian privilege in RE, although I acknowledge that other scholars interpret developments in Scottish RE differently (see Nixon, 2015; Scholes, 2020). The absence of anti-racist education in RE for a country historically implicated in the colonial project, including slavery is a major concern. After all, religion and education were at the epicentre of Scottish imperialism as well (see Gearon et al., 2021). Scotland has within its communities, non-indigenous populations from formerly colonised and enslaved parts of the world, and as such the need to utilise anticolonial strategies to dislodge the assumed sense of homogeneity in curriculum-making in RE (Race et al., 2022; Matemba, 2021). Despite claims of inclusivity, Scottish RE must recentre controversial debates around genders and sexualities, including LGBTQ+ to redress the “longstanding exclusion and discrimination” of marginalised narratives (Coll, 2021, 25, 30ff). As I see it, decolonising Scottish RE is a distinct rather than a remote possibility because already there are promising signs of decoloniality. Within CfE RE has attempted to ‘de-other’ the content allowing different religions (and none, e.g., paganism) to be included for study. These decolonial movements must be encouraged and supported if Scottish RE is to be inclusive and equitable within broader debates calling for the decolonisation of education elsewhere.