

INTERROGATING AND PROMOTING TOLERANCE IN PLURALISTIC SOCIETIES THROUGH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

BY

Chukwuemeka Nwosu

Deapartment of History and International Studies

Faculty of Humanities

Imo State University

Owerri

:+2348037112023

barrchukwuemekanwosu@yahoo.com

and

Uwadiiegwu, Chinedozi. U. I.

Dept. Of English and Literary Studies,

Faculty of Humanities,

Imo State University, Owerri.

+2348060071227 udomama2001@gmail.com

Abstract

In Madrid from 23 to 25 November 2001, the International Consultative Conference on School Education in Relation with Freedom of Religion and Belief, Tolerance and Non-discrimination was held. The conference was organized by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief, Prof. Abdelfattah Amor, in collaboration with the Spanish government. The conference, was not intended as a theological meeting, rather it was convened to create an international educational strategy focused

on the right to freedom of religion, thought and conscience. The United Nations Secretary General Kofi Anan, in a message delivered at the Opening ceremony by Mrs. Mary Robinson, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Conference aim was “to break new ground” through a discussion about how education, about religion and belief can contribute to building global tolerance”. In its religious dimension, one of the most vital elements that is to make up the identity of believers as well as their conception of life, although a precious asset for atheists, agnostics, skeptics as well as the unconcerned. Thus, the pluralism indissociable from a democratic society, which has been obviously won over the centuries, rely on it.

Keywords: Religious Education, Human Rights, Freedom of religion, Tolerance, Conference.

Introduction

In order to combat intolerance and discrimination based on religion and belief which continue to be manifested in various parts of the world, the Special Rapporteur has been monitoring the situation in the field of freedom of religion and belief and has been alerting the international community concerning problems.¹ For all intent, and purposes, and for the most part, his intention has been geared to the manifestations of intolerance as well as discrimination, and not to their prevention. A survey conducted by the Special Rapporteur in 1994 by means of questionnaire addressed to States, on problems relating to freedom of religion and belief in schools, revealed that elaboration of prevention strategies is an issue of great importance.²

Altogether, replies were received from 77 States, providing issues of further debate and helping to shape the framework of the conference.³ However, comments to replies were available on the website before the Madrid Conference started, although the conference was preceded by consultations and discussions, based on

analysis and interpretation of the data gathered during the survey. Besides, representatives of States, intergovernmental organizations, religious communities, NGOs as well as experts submitted their recommendations. The Spanish government in collaboration with the International Religious Liberty Association, for instance, invited a group of experts to respond to a questionnaire on this topic as well as assembled them together to deliberate on their responses. The questionnaires and responses and resulting reports were collected into a volume published prior to the Conference, Religious Freedom, Tolerance, and Non-Discrimination in Education.⁴

Based on the U.N Charter and taking into consideration, the provisions of the 1981 Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion and Belief, the call of the Vienna World Conference on Human Rights, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the UNESCO Convention Against Discrimination in Education and its recommendations on education for international understanding, peace and co-operation, the Madrid Conference aimed to critically assess the draft of a document defining a set of recommendations in support of principles outlined for the development of textbooks as well as curricula related to tolerance and non-discrimination in the field of freedom of religion and belief. Thus, the redesigning the role that school education should play to contribute to the promotion and protection of human rights was given a special attention.

However, the most attractive presentations emphasized that what is far-reaching in education is the development of values and attitudes among students so they can appreciate the diversity and richness of different ethnic, religious, social and cultural groups as a source of positive contributions to the entire society. As a first step towards a preventive educational strategy, Speakers stressed that the

eradication of perspectives on stereotypes, biases as well as myths from textbooks which always leads to misunderstanding as well as obvious discrimination.

With respect to preventing prejudice and hatred toward other groups, the teaching of comparative religion versus education in one religious tradition was raised by numerous speakers during the debate as valuable approaches and tools. Furthermore, also included in the debate is the issue of whether or not religious education should be a specific subject in schools or whether it should be incorporated within the framework of other subjects like history, philosophy or ethics. Another issue for consideration was the need for appropriate teacher training, as well as internship abroad including the designing of international educational programmes providing bilateral school exchanges. Although, the presentations did not provide for the conditions required for such contacts as well as exchanges to be successful, yet such specific information is for specifically pedagogical seminars, instead of the Madrid Conference which was characterized to be a human rights conference focused on freedom of religion and belief.

Stressing the need for awareness of the interdependence between nations, the Final Document states that efforts aimed at promoting freedom of religion and belief through education require “co-operation among states, concerned organizations and institutions, and that parents, groups and communities based on religion or belief have an important role to play in this regard”.⁵ In this connection, the Final Document recognized “the right of parents, families, legal guardians and other legally recognized care givers to choose schools for their children, and to ensure their religious and/or moral education in conformity with their own convictions”, with minimum educational standards as established by state authorities.⁶

The article in its introduction has discussed the conference background, conference goals and objectives, and the conference outcome. Furthermore, it discussed prerequisites for pluralism; the basic issue and approach; paradigm for religious education, the aims and challenges; the outcome of Special Rapporteur; and regional examination of approaches to religious education.

Prerequisites for Pluralism

Thus, the European Court of Human Rights 1993, in *Kokkanakis V. Greece* reiterated the prerequisite for peaceful coexistence in pluralistic societies. Freedom of religion or belief as a human right, not only makes pluralism possible, although, the right to have as well as to manifest a religious, or non-religious, conviction is also closely related to the equal as well as inherent of all human beings.

At the state level, toleration of different religious and nonreligious opinions and manifestations can be seen as one dimension of freedom of religion or belief.⁷ Among its citizens, the state is obliged to accept (tolerate) the existence of a diversity of opinions. Also, it is obliged to respect the freedom of its inhabitants to change their religion or belief, as well as their freedom-either alone or in community with others and in public or private-to manifest their religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship or observance.⁸ States have also committed themselves to the promotion of awareness of and respect for human rights among citizens, in order to minimize the possibilities of human rights violations resulting from the actions of “third parties” (*Drithioirkurgen*).⁹ Furthermore, this awareness invariably should include respect for the right to freedom of religion or belief of all individuals, so that discrimination based on religious intolerance can be avoided.

With respect to the promotion of freedom of religion or belief, we might distinguish between “toleration” at the state level, and

“tolerance” at the individual or group levels.¹⁰ Thus, while state toleration of diverse beliefs as well as practices may or may not be based on the values or worldview of a certain religion or tradition, tolerance as an individual attitude or conviction will often have some particular worldview as well as value system as its underpinning. From the perspective of the individual, tolerance-by the very connotation of the word-assume that you have a basic conviction that differs from the convictions of the person or the practice that you tolerate. From the principle of equal human rights and equality before the law, in Liberal States, state toleration of different religions or belief systems and hence the protection of freedom of religion or belief, will be guaranteed or followed strictly. However, in certain “confessional” states the toleration may be induced by the values of the belief system that the state has given priority to, values that also may comprise or give support to the liberal principles of human rights as well as freedom of religion or belief.

In the field of religious education, the distinction between “toleration and “tolerance” may be studied further by examining its relevance. Thus religious education is taught in public schools either as an independent subject or as part of other subjects, in several countries of the world. A state’s toleration of and attitude towards different religious or philosophical traditions becomes manifest, and hence, freedom of religion or belief as well as the principle of nondiscrimination may be challenged, in the field of religious education. Moreover, in this sphere of school curriculums, different religious as well as moral convictions may be presented and discussed, and hence the pupils’ conceptions of their own and of other traditions may be influenced and challenged. At the individual level, this makes religious education vital for addressing the challenge of fostering tolerance.

Where the state is to be credible in its use of the education system to promote tolerance among people of different confessions,

state toleration of different groups as well as opinions must be articulated and freedom of religion or belief must be accommodated by the content of textbooks and curricula, and in the choice of teaching methods.

The Basic Issue and Approach

Bearing in mind the great significance of toleration and tolerance to freedom of religion in the field of religious education, the main of this article is to study, criteria for successful religious education¹¹ in pluralistic societies. The religious education being discussed in this context must bear the following attributes:

- Contribute effectively to the fostering of tolerance, and
- Respect the equal rights to freedom of religion or belief of all individuals affected.

The basic issues for determination are inter alia:

What approaches to religious education in pluralistic societies can contribute effectively to the fostering of tolerance and at the same time respect the equal right of all inhabitants to freedom of religion or belief?

Our discussion of this basic issue is a combination of normative as well as empirical factors. To this end, it will be based on results of different comparative surveys on religious education. Thus, the basic empirical focus will be on experiences of different European countries. In the field studies conducted in other parts of world, a regional focus is chosen mainly because of limited access to studies. Nevertheless, some results from the global survey of the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief will be presented, based on summaries of the survey, in documents made available for the International Consultative Conference on Tolerance,

Non-Discrimination and Freedom of Religion or Belief in Relation with School Education, in Madrid, 23-25 November 2001.¹²

The human rights norms on freedom of religion or belief constitute the main standard of evaluation, in examining different approaches to religious education. In this context, our normative discussion will focus on the recommendations for the promotion of tolerance through religious education presented by the U.N Special Rapporteur in the documents for the 2001 Madrid Consultative Conference as well as the final document of the Madrid Conference.

Paradigm for Religious Education: Aims and Challenges

Much like other fundamental human right norms, the U.N. human rights standards on freedom of religion or belief include, a strong emphasis on the principle of nondiscrimination. The equal right of all inhabitants to freedom of religion or belief is stated in several human rights documents,¹³ i.e, in the 1981 U.N. Declaration on the Elimination on All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief.¹⁴ However, the declaration emphasis the close relation between promotion of tolerance and freedom of religion or belief. It contended that:

The child shall be protected from any form of discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief. He shall be brought up in the spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, respect for freedom of religion belief of others, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men (art. 5, para 3).¹⁵

The declaration went further to state inter alia:

every child shall enjoy the right to have access to education in the matter of religion or belief in accordance with the wishes of his parents or, as the case

may be, legal guardians, and shall not be compelled to receive teaching on religion or belief against the wishes of his parents or legal guardians, the best interest of the child being the guiding principle (art. 5, para. 2)¹⁶

In defining the content of religious education, according to the two statements from the 1981 Declaration, several concerns must be taken into consideration. The first consideration is that the public educational aim of promoting tolerance and mutual understanding; secondly, the rights of the parents to have a last say in the religious and moral education of their children.

The Outcome of the Special Rapporteur

Another tension among human rights norms in this field is between, on the one hand, the rights of the parents to decide the religious and moral education of their children, and on the other hand, the rights of the child to freedom of religion or belief, expanding with increasing age, and the right of the child to receive pluralistic information and in other ways, an education that meets with the aims set out in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, the best interests of the child being the guiding principle.¹⁷

In the field of religious freedom, tolerance and nondiscrimination, since the early 1990s, the Special Rapporteur has worked on developing preventive strategies. Although, focusing on human rights violations, such strategies may supplement the traditional monitoring strategy. Education-and in particular religious education- has been emphasized as one of the most effective means for fostering tolerance and mutual understanding across borders of faith and culture in pluralistic societies.¹⁸

In 1994 the Commission on Human Rights encouraged the Special Rapporteur to examine the role of education in the promotion of tolerance of different religious views and traditions, and to study

how education might contribute to the fostering of tolerance in a more effective way.¹⁹ With regards to the protection of human rights in general and to the protection of religious freedom and a climate of tolerance and nondiscrimination in particular, the Special Rapporteur conducted a survey that was to explore if and how the curricula on religious education at the primary and secondary school levels of different countries contributes. In this respect, a questionnaire was sent to the UN member states, and responses were received from seventy-seven states. The answers were analyzed and summarized, and the Special Rapporteur presented the results in his report to the Commission on Human Rights at its 2001 Assembly in Geneva.²⁰

In the field of religious education and of possible strategies to meet challenges, the material collected in the Special Rapporteur's survey provides a rich basis for discussions both of the challenges to religious freedom and tolerance. The Special Rapporteur concludes that there is a "considerable variety in the approaches taken with regard to education in the field of religion and conviction. What emerges clearly is that beside a consistent number of interesting experiences, there are just as many situations nurturing a 'ghetto approach' based on exclusion".²¹ The Special Rapporteur, in his report, warns against the Kind of 'ghetto mentality' that might be created by a religious education that does not provide knowledge about religions other than one's own, and that does not serve the aim of tolerance, nondiscrimination, and respect for human rights.

Furthermore, the two approaches to religious education discussed by the Special Rapporteur might be called a "Separation" or "ghetto" approach as well as an "integration" approach. Against this backdrop, the Special Rapporteur contended for the latter approach to religious education, according to which all pupils are kept together as much as possible, rather than being separated into groups, and learn not only about their own tradition but also about that of others.

In the school systems of various countries, the Special Rapporteur points out the differences in the status given to religious education. In some countries religious education is a compulsory subject but still does not “affect the passage from a level to the subsequent one”, the Special Rapporteur notes.²² The Special Rapporteur underlines that where religious education is a subject online with other parts of the curriculum, this may express a conviction that this subject can foster “understanding of the others, of cultural and moral differences, and contribute to the creation of a culture of peace, human rights and tolerance.”²³ In order to deliver their teaching in a credible way, the Special Rapporteur points out the importance of and need for training teachers and educators in the field of human rights and religion. Although, his main emphasis is, nevertheless, on the aims of religious education. The underlying proposition should be both on developing the child’s self-understanding and on the child’s understanding of ‘the other’, by providing knowledge about and respect for the different religions and traditions. By the Universalist dimension of education, as expressed in universal human rights and the principles of equal human dignity, tolerance and nondiscrimination, these two aims should be connected. By recognizing these values, the Special Rapporteur argues, we learn to see the unity of mankind (“mankind is one”) and hence to see that “the others are indeed us”.²⁴ The Special Rapporteur, in these statements, expresses the view that religious education, and education in general, should not only contribute to increased knowledge, but also to identify building and internalization of values, and a certain image of man or mankind.

Similarly, human rights standard presupposes that education should provide Knowledge as well as respect for other groups and the national culture in which the child resides. However, they also make it clear that the cultural, religious or philosophical identity of the child should be respected in accordance with the convictions and

wishes of the parents.²⁵ In the self-conception of the individual child, and his religious identity, an encounter with different religious as well as philosophical traditions might lead to changes. As the Special Rapporteur puts it, schools will have to deal with the challenges that follow from parents' rights to decide about the religious and moral education of their children, in the sense that, if one important aim of religious education is to help the pupils to "see themselves as the other".

Regional Examination of Approaches to Religious Education

During the last years, some comparative and systematic studies on different models and dimensions of religious education in European countries have been undertaken.²⁶ The studies show that it is possible, for instance, to distinguish between two main types of religious education (RE)-a "confessional approach" on the one hand, and a "non-confessional approach" on the other.²⁷

- The "confessional approach" indicates that a religious community or a church is responsible for the curriculum, for the qualifications and acknowledgement of RE teachers, and sometimes also for school books. As a rule, this type of RE is organized for the children of a specific faith community, but in some countries pupils can choose the subject without being an affiliated member (e.g., in Belgium and Protestant RE in Germany). In all cases the pupils and their parents have the right to opt out and or to choose other alternative subjects like ethics or philosophy, in line with freedom of religion. The main aim of this type of RE is to facilitate the identity formation of pupils concerning religious questions, e.g., about the meaning of life, death and sorrow, love and happiness, to give orientation and knowledge.
- RE based on a "non-confessional approach" often has the aim to inform about religious) and other world views. Learning about religion is combined with learning from religion to help the pupils

make their own choices. It can focus mainly on one religion, or, as is the case in England and Wales, on a number of religions.²⁸

The confessional/non-confessional distinction above has similarities to the distinction between an “integration approach” and a “separation approach” drawn from statements of the Special Rapporteur. Peter Schreiner’s distinction is based both on differences in content and aims of religious education.²⁹

- (i) different ways of co-operating about RE based on who has overall responsibility for the content of religious education: public schools, faith communities or both;
- (ii) different ways of organizing the teaching of RE: either one or several alternative RE subjects); compulsory or noncompulsory RE; RE taking place only outside school hours or included in school curriculums;
- (iii) different approaches to RE based on the pedagogical profile of the subject in terms of content, aims, and guiding principles (a focus on one or on several confessions/religions, aiming mainly to provide knowledge, or also emphasizing religious experience and religious or existential identity building); and last but not least;
- (iv) different ways of defining the value basis of RE and of school education in general, focusing on moral and other values of the “cultural heritage” of the country, linking it to specific religious tradition(s); and/or focusing on values that are taken to be “common” for different religions, by reference either to national legislation and constitutional principles or to universal human rights standards.

In more detail, we may analyze the religious education of different countries, using a multidimensional approach. Therefore, summarizing our findings, it is essential to sort the approaches of different countries into main categories. If we combine two of the four dimensions provided above, and then sort findings of empirical

studies of religious education in Europe and the U.S.A, we may-at a very general level-group the different main approaches as follows:

Models for Religious Education

Dimension 1: The <i>profile</i> of Religious Education curriculums and aims*			
Dimension 2: The institutional <i>arena</i> and responsibility for Religious Education**			
Dimension 1:	Confessional (Segregated)	Pluralistic (Integrated)	Ethics (Integrated)
Dimension 2: School		Sweden Norway Iceland	(Brandenburg)
Cooperation school/church (in school)	Finland Germany Italy Austria	England	
Church (in school)	(Berlin)		
Church (<u>outside school</u>)	France USA		

* Dimension 1 indicates different *profiles* of religious education in terms of curriculum contents and teaching goals: focusing on the teachings of one particular confession ("Confessional") on different religions or life stances ("Pluralistic") or on ethics and philosophical thinking ("Ethics"). Dimension 1 also maps the *organizational* separation of pupils and/or students of religious education along confessional divides ("Segregated") or, alternatively, the organizational integration of all pupils/students in shared religious education classes ("Integrated").

**Dimension 2 maps different institutional arenas for religious education: whether provided for in public school venues and as a part of regular school hours; or as a shared responsibility between school authorities and faith communities for curriculum, text books, and teacher training and qualification; or as provided for outside public school premises and managed by religious or life-stance communities.

This overview of different models of religious education is based on studies of curricula and legal provisions regarding religious education in the countries named, supplemented by presentations of the country's approach to religious education in public documents, reports, and scholarly articles.³⁰ Thus, sorting religious education practices of different countries, in some cases, may prove challenging. There are differences, for instance, in the profiles of the so-called "pluralistic" and "integrated" approaches of different countries. For instance, the English-often called the "multifaith approach"- and the Swedish models have a more comparative as well as multireligious profile the Norwegian and Danish ones, particularly at the lowest levels. In Norway and Denmark, a main emphasis is still on the Christian tradition, even though Knowledge about other

religions and philosophical traditions is a part of the curriculum.³¹ However, it would be misleading to group them with countries that still provide “confessional” education in the traditional context. In Norwegian and Danish public schools, loyalty to the doctrines of a particular denomination is no longer required for teaching religious education. Furthermore, some interesting variations can be found at regional as well as local levels of the countries surveyed here. In parts of England, many schools strongly emphasize the pluralistic approach, both in the content of their RE and in their development of RE didactic principles.³²

To some extent, different approaches to religious education are correlated to the different religio-political systems of countries³³ Thus, in the Nordic countries, for instance, with the exception of Finland, church and state still maintain close relation, and the state has the general responsibility for the content and the teaching of religious education. In the field of religious education, like in Germany, where there is separation of church and state yet close co-operation between the state and the majority churches at the level of the *Bundersländer*, we find close local level co-operation agreements. The separation between the church and state in France and the USA is much stricter than in Germany, and religious education is left as a responsibility for faith or belief communities and is not a part of public school curricula.

Based on answers to questionnaires to state parties and curricula and textbook materials attached to their answers, and despite variations in analytical categories and differences in empirical materials, the findings of European survey point in the same direction as the findings of the global survey of the Special Rapporteur. As do the alternative distinction between different kinds of models for organizing the religious education and different pedagogical profiles of the subject(s) the distinction of the Special Rapporteur between the “integration logic” and the “ghetto

approach”, and Schreiner’s distinction between the “non-confessional” and the “confessional” approach, leads to broadly similar groupings.

At least on the European scene of religious education, the differences that are revealed through comparative studies of religious education must not cover that fact that there are also some common characteristics and some general tendencies of development. At least as a part of the education given during the school time and on the premises of public schools, the dominant feature is that most European countries have some kind of religious education. Despite the province of Alsace-Lorraine where religious education is taught in the public Schools, France is the most obvious exception from this. Thus, another general feature is that religious education in public schools in almost all the countries is either noncompulsory or pupils have a choice between different RE subjects with different confessional or nonconfessional profiles. Norway and Sweden are indeed exceptions where the parents and children, since 1997 as well as 1998 respectively, can only be exempted from specific parts of RE subject that is compulsory and common for all pupils.

Across religious borders, when surveying approaches to religious education of various countries, another similarity found is the focus on “common values”. In general, often these are values that are also supposed to be part of the normative foundation of public school in education. From country to country, and sometimes also between regions within a country, the definition of “common values” differs. In some of the German Bundesländer, as well as in most of the Nordic countries, for instance, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden, there is a particular emphasis on the “Christian tradition” as a normative for some of the core values such as human dignity, even though the significance of a cross-religious consensus about some basic values is also emphasized. The value foundation of the national educational system, in some countries is rather defined by the

universal principles of human rights or by similar principles enshrined in national constitutions in countries like Germany and France. A “Charter on Values in Education and Community” in England, has been developed by different groups of civil society taking part in a national dialogue, initiated by the school authorities. Respect for human rights as well as rule of law were emphasized by this Charter however, it also describes a number of other values that are assumed to be for the common good of humanity.

In pluralistic societies, these attempts to define some kind of common value foundation for public school education in general, or for religious education in particular, can be seen as expressions of different definitions of what is- or should be – the basis for a common identity. However, if one shall succeed in defining the basis of such a common “we” that transcends differences of faiths, it is important not to define the basis for identification too narrowly.

In a pluralistic society, the basis for common identification can be approached in diverse ways. For instance, one might distinguish between the “cultural heritage” approach and the “meeting point” approach to the issue of collective identification.³⁴ Resorting or better still concentrating on a country’s cultural heritage as a basis of identification for all in a pluralistic society may exclude rather than serve as a means of social cohesion. In other words, this unintended consequence might be avoided if the cultural heritage view is combined with a more pluralistic as well as dynamic approach to common identification, focusing on contact and communication between people with diverse cultural as well as religious backdrop as a basis of identification and solidarity development.

Conclusion

The Special Rapporteur, in the draft documents for the Madrid Consultative Conference, warned against the “ghetto” or “Segregation” approach, keeping pupils separated according to their

religious affiliation in the religious education provided by public schools. For the fostering of tolerance and understanding across borders of faith, I do align and adopt the reasoning of the Special Rapporteur, that the school classrooms are the most important potential arenas for achieving such objective. In conclusion, however, the need for dialogue, accommodating representatives of the diverse faith communities in developing as well as evaluating the curriculum and textbooks for religious education, is a most prerequisite for the “integration approach” to breakthrough.

ENDNOTES

¹See the special Rapporteur’s Website at<[http://www.unhchr.ch/huridoca.nsf/frame_page/intolerance%20En? Open Document & Start =1 Count = 15 & Expand = 2](http://www.unhchr.ch/huridoca.nsf/frame_page/intolerance%20En?Open+Document+&+Start=1+Count=15+&+Expand=2)>

²A copy of the questionnaire is available on-line at <http://www.unhchr.-ch/html/menu2/7/6/mrei_quest.html>

³A report containing the replies is available on-line at <<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/7/b/cfedubasicdoc.html>>.

⁴A copy of the questionnaire is available on-line at <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/7/b/mrei_quest.html>.

⁵Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Final Document of the International Consultative Conference on School Education in Relation with Freedom of Religion and belief, Tolerance and Non Discrimination, sec. (t) (hereinafter” “Final Document”). See also sec. 14: “Encourages all parts of society, both individual and collectively, to contribute to an education based on human dignity and to respect freedom of religion or belief, tolerance and non-discrimination”, and 15: “Encourages states at the

appropriate level of government organizations and all members of civil society to join their efforts”.

⁶Ibid., sec. (n). See also sec. 9 “Deems that the role of parents, families, legal guardians and other legally recognized care givers is an essential factor in the education of children in the field of religion or belief; and that special attention should be paid to encouraging positive attitudes and, in view of the best interest of the child to supporting parents to exercise their rights and fully play their role in education in the field of tolerance and non-discrimination.

⁷Sophie Van Bijsterveld distinguishes the negative dimension from the positive dimension of freedom of religion or belief. Toleration, as defined in the following, refers mainly to the negative dimension of this basic human right. Sophie C. Van Bijsterveld, “Religion and Law: Legal Structures in an International and Comparative Contexts”, in church and state consultation: Conference of European Churches, 13-16 March 1997, Czech Republic (Geneva: Conference of European Churches, 1998).

⁸CF. 1966 UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (C.C.PR) article 18; 1981 Declaration; 1950 European Convention in Human Rights, article 9. Whereas the State may never interfere with the individuals Conviction or belief (the “forum internum”) there may be limitations to the right to express or manifest one’s conviction (the “forum internum”) when necessary in other to protect public safety, order, health, morals or the fundamental freedom of others (cf CCPR, art. 18[3]). One might say that the limitations to the right to freedom of religion or belief based on the criteria just mentioned also express limits to prescribed state toleration of different expressions of religion or belief.

⁹“Dirttwirkungen” are human rights effects caused by the actions of other individuals or groups in civil society (“third parties”).

¹⁰A similar distinction is made by Howard L. Biddulph in a paper presented at the Conference on Religious Freedom in Kiev, 2001. Biddulph's makes a fruitful distinction between the term "toleration" and the term "tolerance" that might be used; respectively, for the level of state and the level of individuals and groups. Biddulph's definition of these terms will be used as a point of departure in this article.

¹¹By "religious education" I shall refer to education about both religions and secular worldviews or life stances.

¹²The conference was initiated by the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Abdelfattah Amor, in co-operation with the Spanish government. An aim of the Conference was to discuss the possibilities for developing an International Strategy for the fostering of tolerance through education. Documents from the conference are available online, including "Introductory Note" by Abdelfattah Amor at <http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu_2/7/b/cfeddy.home.html>. The Madrid Final Document is available online at <http://www.oslocalition.org/html/project_school_education/index.html>.

¹³Cf. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) articles 2.

¹⁴General Assembly Resolution 35/55 (November 25, 1981).

¹⁵These aims and principles have later on been included in the UN Convention on the Right of a Child of 1989 (CRC). Article 3 of CRC further underlines a basic principles that must also be heeded by the state in the field of education: In all actions concerning the child, "the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration". Article 3[1], article 29 of the CRC outlines aims and principles for the education of a child: it shall be directed to the development of a child's personality and talents to their fullest

potential (29.1a). Further, it shall ensure respect for the child's parents and his or her own cultural identity, language, and values, as well as respect for the national values of the country in which the child is living and for civilizations different from his or her own (29.1c). The education also shall prepare the child for "responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups" (29.1d).

¹⁶The right of parents (or guardians) to decide upon the religious and moral education of their children is also stated in several other human rights treaties, e.g., the 1948 UN Universal Declaration on Human Rights (art. 26 [3]) the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights (art. 2 of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention) the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (arts. 18, 4) the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (art. 13 [3]) the 1969 UNESCO Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination in Education (art. 5 [1]) and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (arts. 14, 28 and 29).

¹⁷CRC, arts 3, 12 and 29.

¹⁸Commission on Human Rights Resolution 1994/18 (February 25, 1994) and Resolution 1998/18 (April 9, 1998).

¹⁹Commission on Human Rights Resolution 1994/18 (February 25, 1994).

²⁰Cf. Amor, "Introductory Note".

²¹See Ibid, para. 14.

²²Amor, "Introductory Note", para. 38.

²³Ibid

²⁴Ibid, para. 17.22.

²⁵Cf. Convention on the Rights of the Child.

²⁶Cf. Peter Schreiner, Religious Education in Europe: A Collection of Basic Information about RE in European Countries (Münster: Comenius Institut/Intereuropean Commission on Church and School, 2000); Ingvil T. Plesner, “Religion Political Models and Models for religious and Moral education,” Panorama: International Journal of Comparative Religious Education and Values, ed. Peter Schreiner, Vol. 14., no.2 (winter 2002); Ingvill T. Plesner, “Hvordan Definere fellersskapets grunnlag? Om Pluraliseringens betydning for offentlig religions undervisning” (How to define the basic of community? On the impact of the pluralization on Religious education in Public Schools in identitet og pluralitet (identity and plurality)).

²⁷Schreiner, Religious Education in Europe

²⁸Ibid., 8

²⁹Plesner, Et Komparativt utblikk” and “Hvordan Definere”.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹In Norway the parliament has recently reiterated that at least fifty percent of the time in the RE classes in total shall be spent on the Christian traditions. In Denmark knowledge about religions other than Christianity is not to be taught before the second level of primary school (about the age of eleven).

³²The multireligious approach in the English School System is also expressed by the fact that the schools are obliged to organize “collective worship,” where all pupils shall gather in a veneration of a divine creature or force. As a main rule, the “collective worship” (CW) shall have a “mainly Christian” character, though “without being distinctive of any particular denomination” (Department of Education Circular, 1994). The schools might also choose to have a

CW of a mainly non-Christian character if this seems more natural with regard to the religious diversity of the pupils (ibid).

³³Cf. Ingvill T. Plesner, “Religion Political models and models for Religious and moral education”, *Panorama: International Journal of Comparative Religious Education and Values*, ed. Peter Schreiner, Vol. 14, no. 2, (Winter 2002).

³⁴Terms translated from Norwegian, See Geir Skeie’s article in Heid Leganger-Krogstad and Elisabeth Haakedal, eds., *Religiose og Pedagogiske Idealer (Religious and Pedagogical Ideals)* (Oslo: Norges forskningsråds Skriftservic KULT nr. 42, 1995); and Thomas Hylland Eriksen ed., *Flerkulturell forståelse (Multicultural Understanding)* (Oslo: Tano Aschehoug, 1997).