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EDUCATING TEACHERS FOR ONTARIO'S MULTI-RELIGIOUS CLASSROOM: ACCOMMODATING RELIGIOUS LEARNERS AND RESPECTING STUDENT AUTONOMY

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ABSTRACT

The 2015 revisions to the Ontario teacher education program were intended to give greater attention to diversity in the Ontario classroom and provide new teachers with more knowledge of the Ontario context. Using an interpretivist methodology, a careful examination of the curriculum changes undertaken by the Ontario Ministry of Education and the Ontario College of Teachers indicates that these objectives have not been met. Despite being an integral part of the identity and experience of a large number of Ontario teachers and students, religion is not one of the diversities given attention to in the revisions. This omission has revealed a gap in the Ontario teacher education curriculum in which the religious diversity component of the Ontario context is largely ignored. The gap in teacher education has also created a misunderstanding of the nature and intent of the secular classroom where, instead of being a place where all religions are given equal attention and one that fostering healthy religious conversations, it has become an environment of fear and silence, where teacher and students are unsure of how to engage it religious conversations. My research concludes that the OCT curriculum does not provide sufficient curriculum content that addresses teacher knowledge, skills and attitudes in the area of religion, nor does it provide information about religious belief systems and world views or clarify religious language and terminology. Despite the fact that teachers and parents welcome the academic, non-confessional study of religion in the classroom, the OCT and the OME have not indicated through the revisions that this is the direction in which they intend to proceed. Enacting changes to increase the amount of time required for teacher education has not prepared teachers to address the multi-religious context of the Ontario classroom or to meet the needs of religious students.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.
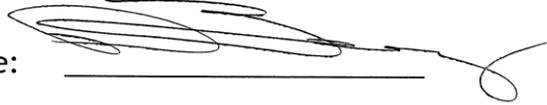
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DEFINITIONS

Accommodation: 'When a receiving organism changes itself in order to be able to take in influences from the environment. 'In learning this is about breaking down and restructuring established patterns of movement, potential actions, structures of knowledge or modes of understanding in accordance with new impulses' (Illeris, 2008:37).

Assimilation: In the learning context, assimilation is the action of taking something into an already existing structure. It is 'incorporating new influences in established patterns of movement, potential actions, structures of knowledge or modes of understanding' (Illeris, 2006:37).

Autonomy: 'The ability to take charge of one's own learning' (Holec,1981:3) is the definition used throughout the dissertation.

Diversity: 'The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity can include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status' (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017:4).

Equity: 'A condition or state of fair, inclusive and respectful treatment of all people. Equity does not mean treating people the same without regard for individual differences' (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017:4)

Inclusive Education: 'Education that is based on the principles of acceptance and inclusion of all students. Students see themselves reflected in their curriculum, their physical surroundings and the broader environment, in which diversity is honoured and all individuals are respected' (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2017:4).

Learning: 'Any process that in living organisms leads to permanent capacity change and which is not solely due to biological maturation or aging' (Illeris, 2006:3).

Needs of religious learners: In this context, a *need* represents anything that is necessary for the holistic education of a learner.

Pedagogy: 'The practice or the art, science, craft of teaching; therefore, to be a pedagogue is to be a teacher; it refers to the interactive process between teacher and learner and the learning environment (which includes family and community)' (Siraj-Blatchford, 2004:138).

Religious Learners: For the purpose of this study religious learners are those who self-identify with a particular religious community. In present Canadian society, religious affiliation is no longer evidenced by a weekly or bi-weekly involvement in an established worship time. Many of the participants viewed themselves to be part of a religious group despite the fact that they were not closely connected to a local congregation, temple or mosque.

Religious Literacy: 'Religious literacy entails the ability to discern and analyze the fundamental intersections of religion and social/political/cultural life through multiple lenses. Specifically, a religiously literate person will possess 1) a basic understanding of the history, central texts (where applicable), beliefs, practices and contemporary manifestations of several of the world's religious traditions as they arose out of and continue to be shaped by particular social, historical and cultural contexts; and 2) the ability to discern and explore the religious dimensions of political, social and cultural expressions across time and place.' (D. L. Moore cited by Harvard Divinity School, *Religious Literacy Project*)

Secular Classroom: In this context, secular means 'a constitutionally defined approach to the teaching of religion that neither privileges nor rejects any particular religious tradition or expression' (Moore, 2010:4).

Well-being: The definition of well-being that will be applied is that of the Ontario Ministry of Education (2016).

> 'The positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that we feel when our cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met. It is supported through equity and respect for our diverse identities and strengths. Well-being in early years and school settings is about helping children and students become resilient, so that they can make positive and healthy choices to support learning and achievement both now and in the future' (3).

ABBREVIATIONS

ABQ	Additional basic qualification
ARG	Accreditation resource guide
AAR	American Academy of Religion
AQ	Additional qualification
DDSB	Durham District School Board
ET	Experienced teacher
GTA	Greater Toronto Area
LGBTQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer
OCE	Ontario College of Education
OCT	Ontario College of Teachers
OHRC	Ontario Human Rights Commission
OME	Ontario Ministry of Education
P	Parent
ST	Student teacher
UOIT	University of Ontario Institute of Technology
WHO	World Health Organization

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Canada has a rich history of welcoming immigrants, and in recent years it has experienced an explosion in diversity. John McCallum, former Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, indicated that Canada's goal was to bring 305,000 new citizens to Canada in 2016, which was 40,000 higher than 2014 (Canadian Immigration News, 2016). In the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), 48.6% of the population is foreign-born (Statistics Canada, 2011). The Ministry of Finance reports that Ontario's share of new immigrants coming to Canada from 2010 to 2015 was between 39% and 48% (Government of Canada, 2016). Since multiculturalism became official policy in Canada through the 1988 Multiculturalism Act, ethnic and religious diversity has dramatically reshaped the character of the Canadian classroom. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME), the province 'is home to people from over 200 countries who speak more than 130 languages, including English and French' (OME, 2017). The Government of Ontario claims that 'diversity is one of its greatest assets — both today and for the future' (Government of Ontario, 2009:5).

In light of this growing diversity, Ontario teachers are increasingly confronted with a variety of religious perspectives and cultural understandings that challenge the Ontario classroom. The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), in its 2014 report, claims to have a reputation for producing educators that are progressive and informed about diversity, and along with the OME, continually seeks to create an education system that is one of the most equitable in the world. With the convergence of so many cultures, some with polarizing religious views, and the decreasing dominance of Christianity as the main religious force in Ontario, the provincial government has increasingly moved away from the religion-influenced education model that has been historically dominated by Christianity and Eurocentric methodologies to a non-confessional secular model that endorses no particular religion, but attempts to accommodate religious diversity. Secular is 'a constitutionally defined approach to the teaching of religion that neither privileges nor rejects any particular religious tradition or expression' (Moore, 2010:4). Predictably, when the decision to move to a secular classroom was introduced, it was met with strong opposition from religious and cultural groups who previously wielded strong influence in the public school

system, but now found themselves lacking places of privilege and influence. Despite the detractors, the governments of Canada and Ontario have insisted that the shift to a secular model is necessary in order to serve the rapidly diversifying Canadian population. While both the secular and traditional models of education allow for the standardization of curriculum, teaching methodologies and educational philosophy, the secular model can better accommodate the multicultural mosaic that Canada seeks to maintain, because it is not limited to or restricted by any particular religious tradition.

Over the last ten years, the OCT, in cooperation with the OME, has moved to address the changing classroom dynamic by conducting a review of its teacher education programme, and introduced sweeping changes. As of September 2015, the one-year teacher certification programme was extended from two semesters to four. According to the OCT (2014), the changes offer:

- more time for practice teaching (80 days minimum, up from 40 days)
- a greater focus on students' mental health and well-being, parent engagement and communication, and special education among other core elements
- greater attention to diversity in Ontario classrooms and knowledge of the Ontario context
- greater understanding of how to use technology in teaching.

Both the OME and the OCT identified the need for stronger diversity training, so giving 'greater attention to diversity in Ontario classrooms' and providing 'knowledge of the Ontario context' were key drivers.

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH

With both the OME and the OCT identifying the need for stronger diversity education for teachers and undertaking an extensive program redesign, essentially doubling teacher preparation time, the question of religious diversity cannot be avoided. Because of the dominant place of religion in Canadian culture, it follows that the new teacher education curriculum should have been redesigned to include religion as one of the diversities for which teachers are being prepared. So, my research question is: *Does the newly revised Ontario Teacher Education Curriculum equip teachers to meet the needs of religious learners in a secular classroom*? Essentially, I examine whether there is a

fundamental disconnect between the Ontario government's stated values concerning diversity education and how teachers are actually trained to deal with religious diversity. My research is important to the field for several reasons. First, it helps navigate the intersection between two politically-charged subjects, religion and education. Fancourt (2105) claims this intersection can be highly charged in many jurisdictions because teachers, academics, religious leaders, politicians, secular groups and the general public often have strong views. The intersection of religion and education in the Ontario teacher education curriculum is a difficult interchange, so understanding the historical context, policy development and current situation is critical to a brighter future. Secondly, my research is important because, with a current resurgence of extremist religious ideologies in global affairs, the moderate religious voice is in danger of being ignored or marginalised. Thirdly, although the secular Ontario classroom has benefits, there are questions as to whether it is the best approach to education, given the current level of immigration into Ontario. Finally, my research is important because it examines how the secular classroom model respects the learner's autonomy in directing their personal learning journey, respects learner identity, and encourages well-being.

CONCEPTS AND ASSUMPTIONS

In the discussion and analysis of the data, I have accepted that Illeris' (2006) three-dimensional model is a useful working theory of how we learn. His work is current and a broad description of learning. It explores the cognitive process, emotional process, and social process, not as independent processes but as occurring simultaneously. Unlike other theories that deal with smaller pieces of the learning puzzle, his theory of learning acts as a skeletal framework over which other theories can be laid.

I have also made the assumption that using school boards in the GTA as a case study was adequate to make claims about the provincial curriculum. Much of my research comes from the Durham region, east of Toronto, and the York region of Toronto. These suburban areas of the GTA have become increasingly multicultural and multi-religious. For example, nearly two-thirds of the population growth in the Durham Region, from 2010-2015, was a result of immigration (Durham Region, 2015:4). The proportion of visible minorities living

in Durham increased from 16.8 per cent in 2006 to 20.7 per cent in 2011 (Durham Region, 2015:5). These demographics make the GTA an ideal geographical area for my research.

NARRATIVE SIGNATURE

Growing up in a very mono-cultural environment on the east coast of Canada, encounters with people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds were rare. As the son and grandson of a Christian minister in a conservative branch of Christianity, association with persons of other faiths was virtually unheard of. Despite the fact that I attribute my open, accepting character and value system to my parent's influence, challenging the narrow world view of my childhood religious experience has been a lifelong endeavor. After graduating with a Bachelor of Theology from a conservative Christian denominational school, I became a third-generation minister and have been a parish minister for the past 30 years, in a variety of settings. I returned to academic studies in my early 40s, completing a Master of Theological Studies, followed by a Masters of Arts in Religion and Culture. My world view has changed dramatically since my childhood days in a small fishing village. As a minister, I have always been an educator, through sermons, seminars and presentations. For the past 15 years, I have been an adjunct faculty member at a minister training college. Admittedly, I bring to my research a favorable bias toward religious practitioners; I believe all religions have merit, when practised without radical or extremist views. My involvement in religion over the years strengthens my research because I bring an insider view as well as academic expertise. Despite being a religious insider, I strive to maintain an outsider perspective and to always be conscious of my personal filters and potential biases.

It was important for me not to project my personal views and beliefs onto the research and thereby affect its outcome. By remaining self-aware and reflexive when preparing the interview and focus group questions, and by listening to participant responses without giving suggestions, I endeavored to remove any personal bias. I was also careful that participants perceived me as a student researcher, and that most were unaware of my profession until after the interview was complete. Secondly, I was aware that my personal fear of the reader perceiving my data as foregone conclusions because of my epistemology

could influence me to push the outcome in the opposite direction. My involvement with and respect for people from all religions has taught me that acceptance of one another is not built on agreement but on respect. My studies have allowed me to dialogue easily in a multi-religious setting, and value people both inside and outside of religion. From the outset, I was overly cautious about not projecting one particular belief system on the research but allowing the data to emerge through the individual responses of the participants. Similarly, if at the end of the research some findings aligned with the views of a conservative Protestant minister, it would be equally wrong to devalue them for that reason. Undoubtedly, the research has changed my perceptions and practices. The interactions with teachers gave me a deeper understanding and respect for the classroom teacher and for the role that they play in the Ontario classroom. It also gave me a deeper appreciation for the OCT and the challenges of educating in a multi-religious culture. Personally, I am left with a growing desire to become more involved in the education field and am actively exploring ways to use my research to develop courses about religion for the OCT and business communities.

PLAN OF PRESENTATION

This first chapter introduced my rationale for undertaking this research and articulates my research question. It established the relevance of the question and the importance of this research to the field of education. It also included my narrative signature, and the conceptual tools and assumptions used in my analysis. Chapter Two is a brief summary of government education policy, examining how the Canadian government and the OME have historically dealt with the education of religious learners. This chapter chronologically charts the OME's road to the secular classroom and sets the context for the policy decisions that presently govern the Ontario classroom. It also examines the specific policy and curriculum changes to Ontario teacher education after 2015. In Chapter Three, I present the research methodology and methods employed to obtain and analyse the data, including a brief description of the methods used. I also discuss the scope and limitations of my research. Chapter Four presents my research data from the interviews and focus groups with several important Ontario stakeholders: experienced teachers, student teachers, and parents. The data are summarised using prescribed themes, specifically, the needs of religious learners

in the Ontario public school system, teacher training and preparedness for the Ontario classroom, the secular classroom environment, personal teacher experience, and practical classroom pedagogy. Chapter Five summarizes the scholarly work of several key authors and their theories of learning, teaching and spiritual/faith development. Although I rely heavily on authors such as Illeris, Piaget, Tomlinson, and Kohlberg as key representatives of these areas, other authors are included to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the intersection between education and religion. In Chapter Six, the data emerging from interviews and focus groups were subjected to a thematic analysis in which recognizable patterns were examined in light of the scholarly literature. Chapter Seven maps a path forward offering recommendations for practice and recommending changes to fill the existing gaps in the teacher education curriculum. Chapter Eight presents conclusions based on the data, and suggests areas of future study to further inform scholarship in this area.

CHAPTER 2: EDUCATION HISTORY AND POLICY IN CANADA

Even before Canada became a nation in 1867, there were attempts to address the educational needs of an increasingly diverse population. Where religious diversity is concerned, this process has sometimes been successful and at other times challenging. Reviewing the history of Canada's public education system, which like all countries, is a product of its own successes, failures and policy-making, helps the reader understand the evolution of the current education system and Canadian cultural context. So, this chapter is a brief historical overview that maps how education policy in Ontario has evolved from a religiously-dominated system to the adoption of a secular educational philosophy. It will also provide a clear picture of changes to the Ontario teacher education curriculum before and after the 2015 revision.

EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN CANADIAN HISTORY

A number of factors have defined Canada's approach to educating its multicultural and multi-religious population. One of which is Canada's unique historical formation. O'Toole (2006) characterises the commonly held perception of Canada.

> Canada is a vast and physically diverse country but its small population of 29 million cluster in the shadow of that "longest undefended border in the world" which separates it from the approximately 260 million inhabitants of the United States. A constitutional monarchy confederated in 1867 under the religiously inspired title of "dominion" this nation originates in the fusion of "two founding races" though it now embraces a far broader mosaic of indigenous and immigrant groups. (7)

O'Toole's description of Canada as the fusion of 'two founding races' is the common historical view. Until recently, Canadian history books portrayed the nation of Canada as the product of an uneasy alliance between two colonial powers, Britain and France. Historically, the country's approach to formal education has maintained a strong European flavor dictated by these two colonializing countries and administered in two official languages, English and French. It is only recently that educational historians have begun to challenge

the notion of two founding nations as they recognise the contribution of First Nations[1] or aboriginal peoples who inhabited the land before the Europeans as a third influence in shaping the educational bedrock of the country. McCue (2015) argues that:

> Before contact with Europeans, Aboriginal peoples educated their youth through traditional means — demonstration, group socialization, participation in cultural and spiritual rituals, skill development and oral teachings. The introduction of European classroom-style education as part of a larger goal of assimilation disrupted traditional methods and resulted in cultural trauma and dislocation. (The Canadian Encyclopedia, 2017)

Although the aboriginal or First Nations people's approach to education was family-based and informal, it was an effective pre-colonial approach to the education of children.

For the early French settlers, the education of children was secondary to the task of surviving in a new land. Similar to the approach taken by the pre-colonial First Nations peoples, the French saw the family and everyday life as the predominant context in which learning took place. Also, many children were not afforded the luxury of an education because they were valuable contributors to the workforce of the colonies and were needed to ensure the survival of their family. Formal education was also hindered by a sparse and dispersed population that had few resources to apply to education. As a result, Gaffield (2015) claims:

> The majority of the population in New France, particularly in the rural areas, could not read and write. In the early 17th century, about one-quarter of the settlers were literate, but by the turn of the 18th century, the preoccupation of survival had taken its toll on the literacy rate and only one person in seven could sign his or her name. (734)

Formal education came when French colonists entrusted the Roman Catholic Church with the responsibility of not only educating children in the tenets of the church, but in other subjects such as mathematics, history, natural science, and French. This was to ensure that children received some education in the Roman

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[1] First Nations is a catch-all term referring to all of the aboriginal people groups present before European colonization.

Catholic faith, French culture and French history. It also brought about the first formal attempts to Christianise the local aboriginal peoples.

During the Battle of the Plains of Abraham in 1759, British forces defeated the French in Canada, which brought many challenges for the British conquerors. On the political front, the British were faced with the question of what to do with a French Roman Catholic population that was distinctly different in culture and language, and which was already established in the country. On the educational front, they were faced with the challenge of establishing English Protestant schools in the newly conquered land, while at the same time dealing with the First Nations aboriginal peoples. Because of the unique and sometimes uneasy alliance between the France, Britain, and First Nations' peoples, issues of multiculturalism and racial integration have always been a major part of Canada's DNA, and its political and educational policy development, even before Canada officially became a nation in 1867. When the British North America Act (BNA) – 1867 (Government of Canada, 2015) officially recognised the contribution of two cultures, the French and the English, in the formation of Canada, it set a tone for accepting religious and cultural diversity early in Canada's history. The question of existing within a diverse society has always been a part of the Canadian mindset.

The first formal education in Canada was established by Christian religious orders and by European Christian missionaries, mainly from France and Britain. European ethnic colonies established their own schools by contracting professionals, especially missionaries such as Jesuits and Ursuline nuns, to teach their children about their respective ethnic origin and religious beliefs, and to ensure that their European heritage remained intact. Gaffield (2015) argues that it was the 19th century that brought about the birth of official schooling as the church, government and educators debated educational financing, control and participation. Primarily because of Canada's geographical size, education became the responsibility of each province or territory, despite being federally funded. The Canadian Teachers Federation (2017) summarises:

> Each province and territory has the power to establish its own autonomous education system and to make all decisions regarding schools, teachers and curriculum pertaining to education within the specific province/territory.

The establishment of official schooling in Canada was aided by enthusiasts like Egerton Ryerson who is considered the father of modern, state-controlled public education in Ontario, and who worked hard to encourage the general population to establish a public school system for everyone, based on the principles of Judeo-Christian morality. Ryerson, a Canadian Methodist minister, educator, politician and public education advocate in early Ontario, became the Chief Superintendent of Education in Upper Canada in 1844. In 1846, Ryerson founded the first teacher preparation college, the Toronto Normal School, where prospective educators could complete a 5-month programme for a second-class certificate and a 10-month programme for a teacher's certificate. Later, it became known as the Toronto Teachers College and then the Ontario Teacher Education College, and by all accounts was 'the cradle of Ontario's education system' (Ryerson, 1984). By the turn of the 20th century, other provinces had followed suit and the 'Normal' school system for training teachers was graduating approximately 2,000 students in seven different locations across Canada. The preparation of high school teachers was later entrusted to the Ontario College of Education (OCE), which required a university degree for entry. Kitchen & Petrarca (2015) note:

> At the turn of the [twentieth] century, the preparation of secondary school teachers took place in the Ontario College of Education (in Toronto), which was restricted to candidates possessing university degrees (mainly male). Elementary teacher education continued to grow, with the seven normal schools graduating close to 2,000 students a year (mainly female). (62)

During the depression and war years of the 1930s and 1940s there was a shortage of certified teachers and by the 1950s, teacher education was run by the Canadian government's Department of Education. This continued until the OCE's lock on secondary teacher certification was broken in the 1960s and several universities began to offer secondary teacher programs. More authority was handed over to the universities, with the understanding that the staff of teachers' colleges and the OCE be absorbed into the universities. In the 1970s teacher preparation transferred to the universities as part of a shift from centralization at the Department of Education to decentralization at the universities, and from *teacher training* to *teacher education*, with the shift from a college administered training programme to a university education

programme, which fostered a new view of teaching as less technical and more theoretical in nature.

Immigration has always been an important contributor to Canada's population growth and to the secularization of education, especially in Ontario. For a brief period in the 19th century, officials experimented with segregation, creating several ethnic schools in which black students in Ontario and Nova Scotia were educated separately from other students. Segregated schools were set up in Ontario border towns like Windsor and Chatham for black immigrants crossing the border into Canada from the United States of America via the underground railway. Since the middle of the 20th century Canadian policy in all areas of life, including education, began a shift first toward openness and then toward a celebration of ethnicity and cultural diversity (Sears, 2010). Through waves of immigration and continual efforts to accommodate diverse Canadians, inclusiveness has slowly become an integral part of the country's identity. Newcomers are encouraged to maintain their culture, religion, and way of life. This is a long way from early Canadian history, when any conflicts related to culture were met with practices and policies that sought to define a single 'Canadian' identity.

Since World War II the Government of Canada and the Government of Ontario have steadily developed a secular approach to Canadian society and toward education, particularly as urban areas began to flourish with new multi-religious and multi-ethnic groups from around the world. During the 1960s there was a concerted effort by the Government of Ontario to loosen the grip of religion, specifically the influence of Judaeo-Christian ideology, on the education of children. One example of this is the 1965 Halls-Dennis Report commissioned by an Order-in-Council and authored by the Ontario Provincial Committee of Aims and Objectives of Education in the Schools of Ontario. The committee's mandate was to:

> Study the school system in the province with an eye to reform and innovation, it began its duties by calling for briefs from the public concerning educational issues. Of the 90-odd briefs submitted from education groups from across the province, about a fifth of them came directly from religious organizations, discussing ethical, spiritual, and pedagogical issues. (Clausen and Easton, 2014: 82)

Clausen and Easton claim that despite the many submissions, religious organizations had little effect on the new aims and objectives in the Halls–Dennis report:

> To the casual reader, it would appear that it roundly ignored any debates that were swirling around the province at the time, abandoned the issue of religion altogether except in general terms, and focused solely on secular aspects of education in the province. One interpretation of this omission would be that the report merely shed the issue of religion like dry skin—an irrelevant relic of the past not worthy of discussion now that society had reached a new stage of enlightenment. (83)

Even in the 1960s, the Hall–Dennis report recognised that Ontario was becoming more pluralistic and diverse. Its approach to dealing with any differences or conflict was not prescriptive but to treat students on an 'individual level with each child treated in an idiosyncratic manner' (90). The report concluded that most conflicts concerning diversity can be resolved through 'proper teaching techniques, flexible curriculum material, special circumstances, and evaluation instruments outlined within the recommendations' (89–90). It is evident that religious groups were included in the conversation but ignored in the findings of the Hall-Dennis report. Clausin and Easton conclude:

> In essence, to make the document as palatable and inclusive as possible to the widest array of the Ontario population (as the population was indeed becoming more diversified) religious phrasing was largely eliminated. (96)

The unwillingness to return to a system influenced by one or more religions was a key factor leading to the creation of a secular classroom. Christian voices, because of their connection to colonial oppression and residential school abuse, lost their ability to effect change and forfeited the opportunity to be a major contributor to the direction of education in Ontario. During this time the emergence of postmodernist thought in the west brought about seismic cultural shifts away from dependency on dominant over-arching narratives and institutional allegiances, and pushed Canada towards a more inclusive and diverse approach toward education. Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, set up to look into the abuses of the residential schools, is a constant news media reminder of the roles of religion and government in this difficult time in Canadian education history.

Government legislation has increasingly recognised two cultures and two languages, French and English, as foundational to the development of the country. Throughout Canadian history, French people living in the province of Quebec have continually strived to ensure that the French language and culture did not die out. In the 1970s, Bill 101 was passed to guarantee that all new immigrant students in Quebec received French-language schooling. Education in Quebec is therefore offered in two official languages. Also, the Canadian government, recognizing the historical link between the founding French culture and Roman Catholicism, has financially supported two school systems, a public and a Roman Catholic school system. Although this arrangement has been questioned at various times in Canadian history, it remains an important part of the fabric of Canadian society.

In 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms enshrined secularism as the overarching approach to education in Canada. Buckingham (2012) captures the monumental change that the charter had on the development of Canadian culture and education:

> Every society has a dominant culture, usually with religious roots. Canada had a dominant Judeo-Christian ethos until the rise of secularism in 1960s. The advent of the Charter in 1982 accelerated the secularization of Canadian society. Secularization reflected a move away from religion as a dominant source of social mores in the western world. (12)

The involvement of the church and the imposition of Judeao-Christian ideology remained a large part of Canadian and Ontario education. At times, this created what Cohen (1972) calls *moral panic* among Christian groups as other religions, new to the country, emerged to challenge the Christian tradition in education. The shift away from a predominant Judaeo-Christian influence has been gradual but persistent as other religious and non-religious groups were given a stronger voice in the education system. When the call for a public school system for all Canadians came, it was a response to the denominational and colonial run systems, and the strong religious and European ties which prevented a unified Canadian educational identity. Wotherspoon (2004) claims:

> Education was to be secular — to overcome the particular intentions of denominational authorities; open to all pupils — to ensure that the entire population had a common education; and

suited to the cultivation of social and political bonds within Canada. (59)

The transfer of education from a predominantly Christian endeavor to a secular one was aided by the growing number of new immigrants to Canada affiliated with a variety of world religions other than Christianity.

The Charter states, 'This Charter shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians' (Department of Justice, 1982). The Canadian Constitution, which includes the Charter, forces all governments, whether politically liberal or conservative, to endorse multiculturalism and to weave it into the fabric of Canadian culture. As a matter of national policy, Canada promotes the idea that we are a nation of immigrants. The challenge for Canadian educators in responding to this cultural mosaic is to reflect this increasingly diverse national identity in the classroom. The government felt that this could only be accomplished in a secular classroom that simultaneously recognise all religions and those who have no religion. The 1990 Education Act prompted an even more inclusive spirit, and provided a foundation for the comprehensive and inclusive approach embodied in the 2012 Ontario Accepting Schools Act, which calls 'for all school boards to provide safe, inclusive, and accepting learning environments in which every student can succeed' (Service Ontario, 2012). The Act also states that students:

> Deserve a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability (Service Ontario, 2012).

As with the Halls-Dennis report of the 1960s, religion is not specifically mentioned in the above description of groups deserving a positive school environment. Instead, the word 'creed' is used to include religious observers but also to imply that religious tenants are not the only set of beliefs or values being taken into consideration.

Like most countries in the last 100 years, Canada has struggled with how to properly address religious and cultural diversity. Russo (2015) reminds us of an

ever-present tension, noting that at the outset of the second decade of the 21st century:

> A palpable tension exists between two fundamental human rights, freedoms to education and religion, especially as they interact in public or state-funded elementary and secondary schools. In other words, most nations subscribe to an array of international documents proclaiming both education and religious freedom as fundamental human rights. (17)

This tension, along with the determination not to return to religiously run education systems, a genuine desire to meet the needs of more culturally/religiously diverse school communities, the need to participate in global communities and the Canadian government's continuing effort to provide a multicultural education has given birth to the secular classroom in Canada. These factors are even more prevalent in the province of Ontario and the GTA, where religious diversity is more pronounced because of immigration.

EDUCATION AND CANADA'S FIRST NATIONS

As mentioned previously, the assertion that Canada's education system from its inception involved only two contributing cultures is a flawed one. It overlooks the significant contribution of Canada's First Nations Peoples. Although Canada has been successful in integrating new immigrants into its society and including them in the education system, it has had a dismal record in dealing with First Nations Peoples. The arrival of Europeans forever changed the lives of First Nations Peoples, especially the arrival of Christian missionaries, who viewed Canada's aboriginal peoples and their informal education as uncivilised and un-Christian. The goal of the Government of Canada was not only to educate European heritage children, but to educate the aboriginal peoples in the Christian religion and in European life. So, the First Nations' approach to education was quickly eradicated in favor of the European approach. According to the National Indian Brotherhood (1973), before colonization, the community was the classroom, community members were the educators, and each adult in the community, especially the parents, took responsibility and ensured that each child learned how to live a good life. Kirkness (1999) says:

> This was expressed in their daily living, in relationship of one to another, in humility, in sharing, in cooperating, in relationship to

nature — the land, the animals, in recognition of the Great Spirit, in the way our people thought, felt and perceived their world. Traditionally, our people's teachings addressed the total being, the whole community, in the context of a viable living culture. (15)

Unwilling to accept this informal approach to education, the Canadian government set out to educate First Nations' children using European methods. Eventually the Government of Canada abandoned the European method of day schools for First Nations' peoples in favor of residential (boarding) schools, where aboriginal children from ages three to eighteen were forced to live separate from their parents for months. According to a 2013 report published by the Government of Northwest Territories, Government of Nunavut, and the Legacy of Hope Foundation, as far back as 1844, attempts were being made to forcibly assimilate First Nations' peoples into colonial society. The 1844 Bagot Commission proposed implementing a system of farm-based boarding schools situated far from parental influence. This was followed by the Nicholas Flood Davin Report (1879) that adopted a policy of ''aggressive civilization', in which the aim of education was to destroy the Indian in the child' (14).

These government-funded and primarily church-run schools were devised to separate aboriginal children from their culture, to *civilise* them and to *Christianise* them. The first residential school opened in 1828 and the last closed as recently as 1997 (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2017). The general attitude of the government towards the aboriginal peoples is captured in the comments of a government official in the late 1800s:

> Little can be done with him [*sic*] [the Indian child]. He can be taught to do a little farming, and at stock-raising, and to dress in a more civilized manner, but that is all. The child who goes to a day school learns little while his tastes are fashioned at home, and his inherited aversion to toil is in no way combated (Indian Affairs Branch, 1879–1880).

In the 1950s and '60s, the government began to slowly phase out the boarding school project, but not before it had created a breeding ground for displacement, high mortality rates, physical and sexual abuse, and decades of hurt and mistrust. To accommodate the residential school closures, the Government of Canada, without consultation with aboriginal communities, instituted federally run day schools on native reserves and set out to integrate

aboriginal children into nearby public schools. Aboriginal people saw this as yet another attempt by their colonisers to exercise control over aboriginal life. There is still a lingering mistrust between Canada's native peoples and any government body that is perceived to be influencing native education, either positively or negatively. The National Indian Brotherhood stated emphatically in their education policy that 'Canada's ongoing colonial processes continue to have detrimental impacts on First Nations peoples' (Assembly of First Nations, 2010:4).

Despite the rhetoric and good intentions, mistrust between the Federal Government and First Nations' peoples runs deep and the wheels of change turn slowly. This mistrust has resulted in First Nations' children being disadvantaged in education and other areas. For example, in 2011, the graduation rate for First Nations and Aboriginal high school students was only 36 per cent compared to 72 per cent for the rest of Canada (Assembly of First Nations, 2012), twice as many aboriginal children live in poverty compared to the rest of Canada (Macdonald and Wilson: 2016:5), and suicide rates are five to seven times higher among First Nations' people than the rest of Canada (Assembly of First Nations, 2012). In an effort to move forward, the then Prime Minister of Canada, Stephen Harper, as recently as June 11, 2008, on behalf of the Government of Canada, made a formal apology in the House of Commons to the 150,000 former students of the Indian Residential Schools. In his speech, the Prime Minister acknowledged that:

> The Government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities. Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities. First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools. Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home. (Government of Canada, 2010)

The apology was necessary in order to put the historical injustices, including the residential school system, in the past and begin to bring about a new chapter in Canadian history, one that is accentuated by a spirit of cooperation. The Prime Minister's apology created a healthier national environment in which a renewed vision for First Nations education may be able to prosper. It displayed the leadership courage that may help overcome the legacy of colonialism and

further entrench aboriginal people in the present ever-growing multicultural mosaic that is Canada. But, only time will tell whether this was a government propaganda exercise or whether it will actually result in change.

EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Canada's geographical size and cultural make-up has necessitated the development of educational policy that accurately represents and serves the local context but also flows from national values and understanding. Therefore, a balanced teacher education curriculum will not only ensure that major world religions and belief systems are represented, but also that the religious beliefs that are local and traditional to the citizens of Canada are also included. This aligns with Canadian values of inclusiveness, equity and acceptance. Moore (2007) gives three compelling reasons why the study of religion should be included in public school curricula.

1. Religion has always and continues to function as a powerful dimension of human experience. Religious beliefs, expressions and world views have inspired and affected the full spectrum of human agency in artistic, philosophical, ethical, political, scientific and economic arenas. Attempts to "extract" religion from experience or to ignore its influence, is not only futile but also misguided. …

2. The study of religion invites students to identify and question underlying foundations of assumption in ways that inspire engaged reflection and critical thinking. This dimension of understanding includes both the "why" of human agency as well as the why of human "existence" itself. …

3. Ignorance about religion itself and the world's religious traditions promotes misunderstanding that diminishes respect for diversity (28-31).

These reasons apply equally well throughout the Canadian context. The new Ontario teacher education curriculum may be failing to take into account these powerful reasons to include the study of comparative religion in teacher education despite the fact that they support Ontario's accepted definition of the secular classroom.

When discussing education in a multicultural society, questions related to values naturally arise. What values should the education system espouse? Should the values expressed be those of the educator, the local society, the predominant

culture, the nation of Canada, or the values of the broader global community? The history of Canada suggests that ensuring all citizens are equally represented must be respected in society, and the presence of a strong constitution must guide the development of societal values. Buckingham (2012) claims that, 'The first step in developing a framework for the interface between a secular society and religion is to define the role of the "secular" state'. So, all policy development, for all areas of society, must align with the Canadian Constitution. The Constitution contains the Canada Act, 1982, which has two parts: The Constitution Act, 1982, and the British North America Act, 1867. The Constitution Act, 1982 contains the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter protects freedom of religion, of thought, of expression, of the press, and of peaceful assembly, the right to participate in political activities, the right to a democratic government, the freedom to move around and live within Canada, the right to leave Canada, and legal rights such as the right to life, liberty and security, equality rights, and language rights (Government of Canada 1982). In response to the Canadian Constitution, provincial governments have developed policies that are more specific and inform provincial governance. Ontario, for example, has developed a Human Rights Code that aligns with the Canadian constitution to further ensure that, provincially, its citizens' rights are protected. The development of education policy and teacher curriculum must therefore be created in alignment with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and adhere to the Ontario Human Rights Code. For example, the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) states that:

> School board policies on religious accommodation must be in accordance with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the requirements stated in Policy/Program Memorandum No. 108, "Opening or Closing Exercises in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools", and in sections 27–29 ("Religion in Schools") of Regulation 298. As part of their equity and inclusive education policy and implementation plan, boards will include a religious accommodation guideline in keeping with the Ontario Human Rights Code, which prohibits discrimination on the grounds of creed (e.g., religion) and imposes a duty to accommodate. Accordingly, boards are expected to take appropriate steps to provide religious accommodation for students and staff. (6-7)

By having a consistent standard of education that flows from the national constitution to the provincial government, and then to the local or municipal

School Boards, Canada has ensured that its education, although contextualised, maintains constitutional appropriateness.

Similarly, the Ontario Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum No. 119, (2013) gives a clear picture of what a diverse classroom should look like:

> The Ontario Students need to feel engaged in and empowered by what they are learning, supported by teachers and staff, and welcome in their learning environment. To this end, boards and their schools will use inclusive curriculum and assessment practices and effective instructional strategies that reflect the diverse needs of all students and the learning pathways that they are taking. Schools must provide students and staff with authentic and relevant opportunities to learn about diverse histories, cultures, and perspectives. Students should be able to see themselves represented in the curriculum, programs, and culture of the school. Also, since schools have a pivotal role in developing the work force of tomorrow, students should be able to see themselves represented in the teaching, administrative, and support staff employed at the school. (6)

It follows that the teacher education curriculum will be dictated by and developed in accordance with this memorandum and other national, provincial and local policies with an understanding that all policy is designed to ultimately improve the quality of education in the Ontario classroom.

SECULARISM AND RELIGIOUS LITERACY

In contrast to — or maybe because of — the role religion has played in Canadian history, Canada is now a secular country, and that is significantly impacting its education systems. Seljak (2005) claims that 'we have raised a generation of religiously illiterate students who do not understand the importance of religion in the world's societies (including Canada)' (179). Religious literacy is typically acquired through two sources: confessionally through personal participation in religious practices or institutional religion, or academically through educational curricula. Not surprisingly, as personal participation in institutional religion declines, it is increasingly important that a comprehensive religious curriculum be instituted in the Canadian education system. The natural consequence of not doing so is continued growth in teacher and student religious illiteracy.

Clark and Schellenberg (2006) report research into Canadian social trends, noting that:

Between 1985 and 2004, the share of Canadians aged 15 and older reporting no religious affiliation increased by seven percentage points from 12% to 19%.3 In addition, a growing share of Canadians had not attended any religious services in the previous year, even though they reported an affiliation (19% to 25%). Together, the proportion of adult Canadians who either have no religious affiliation or do have a religion but don't attend religious services increased from 31% to 43% over this period. (2)

They also examined 'private religious behaviour such as prayer, meditation, worship and reading of sacred texts on one's own' (3), and found that:

While only about one-third (32%) of adult Canadians attend religious services at least monthly, over one half (53%) engage in religious activities on their own at least monthly. Eleven percent engage in religious activities on their own a few times a year, while 18% never engage in such activities.

With individuals increasingly opting out of institutional religion and with no significant increase in the academic study of religion in Canadian education, it is not a major leap to extrapolate a continuing decline in religious literacy. Moreover, as religion becomes increasingly privatised and individuals opt for their personal interpretation of religious beliefs and practices, religion and religious practices are becoming increasingly fragmented. Adding to religious literacy decline is an increasingly nuanced expression of religion within Canada. Challenging claims about the decline of institutional religion, Bibby (2002) argued 'that organized religion is making something of a comeback' (xii). Predictably, his claims were critiqued. Thiessen and Dawson (2008) argue that:

The cumulative weight of his [Bibby's] own evidence is still more indicative of a continued preference for the consumption of religious fragments, … [and] the credibility of his proposal is undermined by some nagging problems with the way he sorts, reports and interprets his data. (389)

Hutchins (2015) reports Bibby's comment about a variable that contributed to the predictive errors: 'The thing that pumps new life into religion in Canada has been this mammoth entrance not only of Muslims, but also Catholics'. Hitchins adds that immigration also brought 'Protestants, Sikhs and Hindus' to Canada, and insists that for participation in religion the 'big boost in numbers comes from abroad'. He also reports that Canadian-born individuals over age fifty-five years are more likely to be participants in institutional religion, whereas almost half of individuals born outside of Canada and aged eighteen to thirty-four years

are likely to be participants. And, immigrants bring the variation of their religion local to their place of origin. The subtlety of understanding associated with such nuanced differences within religions is clearly lost when the level of religious literacy and interest are low.

Religious illiteracy is also encouraged by the growth in secularism. In fact, Bibby (2002) argues that:

> Religious groups themselves are increasingly influenced by secular culture. They consciously and unconsciously take their cues from sources such as media, education, business, and government, rather than from something that transcends culture, so their structures, ideas, and programs begin to closely resemble those of other organizations. (9)

So, at the same time religious interest is declining, the hegemony of secularism may be impacting the very religious institutions that are the guardians of religious truths. As Canadian society, encouraged by government policies, elects to become increasingly secular, access to religious education and learning, especially in the public school system, is diminished, as my research shows. That is not to suggest that society or governments are anti-religion, but their promotion and support of secularism has a displacement effect on religion and religious practice, especially in the public domain. The logical extrapolation of these trends is an increasing decline in religious literacy and the nuanced understanding necessary to comprehend the changing religious landscape of the Canadian mosaic. Moore (Harvard Divinity School, 2006) claims that religious literacy 'entails the ability to discern and analyze the fundamental intersections of religion and social/political/cultural life through multiple lenses.' The government's insistence on a secular approach to education, without a common understanding of how secularism is to be practised in a multi-religious society, has contributed to the increased inability of Canadians to discern and analyze these fundamental intersections.

ONTARIO TEACHER EDUCATION POLICY POST-2015

Like all the provincial education systems, the Ontario public school system is built on Canada's history of successes, mistakes and policy-making in the area of education, and according to Barber, Chijioke and Mourshed of the 2010 McKinsey

Report, it has grown into one of the top 20 school systems in the world. Maintaining that status and continued evolution will require a solid curriculum that is guided by progressive policies. It is essential that any changes to the teacher education curriculum, like those in the 2015 revision, consider the historical development of Canadian educational policy and also conform to and be driven by the policy in effect at the time of the change. It must further respect the multi-religious make-up of Canadian society and not stifle individual spiritual/faith development. Not including these elements in teacher education means that teachers remain unaware of the characteristics, practices and nuances of particular religious communities and, more importantly, the needs of individual religious learners.

There are several provincial policies that currently provide a framework for the administration of the Ontario education system and guide any changes to the OCT's teacher education curriculum. The OCT's *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession,* (see Appendix A), emphasises reference to respect, trust and fair-mindedness, and encourages members to 'honour human dignity, emotional wellness and cognitive development. In their professional practice, they model respect for spiritual and cultural values, social justice, confidentiality, freedom, democracy and the environment' (OCT 2017a). The OCT's *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession*, (see Appendix B), states that teachers are to:

> Treat students equitably and with respect and are to be sensitive to factors that influence individual student learning. Members facilitate the development of students as contributing citizens of Canadian society. … [Teachers] use appropriate pedagogy, assessment and evaluation, resources and technology in planning for and responding to the needs of individual students and learning communities. (OCT 2017b)

In order for teacher education to demonstrate respect for all aspects of human experience and be sensitive to factors that influence student learning, changes to the curriculum, especially those pertaining to religious students, must equip teachers to understand the world view, context and thinking of religious people. This policy requires that the teacher education curriculum promotes understanding and respect for the life experience and values of all students, and prepares them for a society that is, among other

things, religiously diverse. These policies provide clear requirements for curriculum governing local school board policy and raise the question as to whether classroom practices are aligned with these two key documents.

LOCAL BOARD POLICY

Most of the school boards in the GTA have adopted standards of practice for dealing with religion in the classroom. For example, the Durham District School Board (DDSB) (2010) has issued a policy entitled, *Guidelines and Procedures for the Accommodation of Religious Requirements, Practices and Observances,* outlining the specific accommodations that must be made for religious students, and including a brief overview of the belief systems of various religions, thereby increasing teacher awareness. The specific areas of accommodation are defined in the document and include the observation of major religious holy days and celebrations, school opening or closing exercises, prayer, dietary requirements, fasting, religious attire, modesty requirements in physical education, and participation in daily activities and curriculum. It states that:

> While these guidelines and procedures recommend courses of action and expectations for those who work in or are associated with the DDSB, in the long term, the best strategies for achieving an inclusive learning and working environment is a pro-active education system.

At present the OCT does not employ a pro-active approach to educating teachers about the belief systems of religious students. There is presently no course solely devoted to the comparative study of religion or religious diversity in the teacher education curriculum. This coupled with the fact that teachers who graduated from the public school system in Ontario will have been exposed to very little formal education about religion and would not have been any more religiously literate than the general population. In the Ontario system, religion is covered in only one compulsory module in the Grade 8 social studies curriculum. In history and literature classes, it is included only as an addendum or to provide context, and in the high school curriculum it is offered only as an elective. So, until the 2015 revision, it was conceivable and highly probable that students graduating from Ontario high schools could enter and leave the teacher education programme with a low or non-existent level of religious literacy. That is not to say that the OCT and the school system are not open and receptive to

religious people or that it does not have policies governing how religion is to be incorporated and accommodated in the education system. It does suggest, however, that before 2015 the curriculum did not educate teachers about the world views of over 75% of the population claiming to belong to a religious group (Stats Canada, 2011).

TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM CHANGES

An examination of the OCT promotional literature for the revised teacher education curriculum indicates that diversity is intended to be one of the key components of the program. According to the OCT (2013b), the new programme increased from a two-semester to a four-semester program, and the teacher practicum increased to 80 days. The OCT website indicates that the changes include a 'sharper focus on diversity, meeting the needs of students with special needs, children's mental health and the integration of technology' (OCT, 2016). It goes on to say that along with allowing prospective teachers to get 'more time working with the Ontario curriculum, studying classroom management and how to use research data and new technology', the changes will also allow teachers to 'benefit from an increased emphasis on supporting students with special learning needs and those from diverse communities' (OCT, 2016). The Government of Ontario (2009) and by extension the OME, defines diversity as:

> The presence of a wide range of human qualities and attributes within a group, organization, or society. The dimensions of diversity include, but are not limited to, ancestry, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, language, physical and intellectual ability, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status.

This raises several questions. For which types of diversity does the OME and the OCT intend to provide a 'sharper focus'? Which diverse communities referenced in the definition will benefit from an 'increased emphasis'? Will students from religious communities be beneficiaries of the increased emphasis and the sharper focus of the new OCT teacher education curriculum? From an examination of the teacher education curriculum, (which is summarised in Table 1), there is no indication that the changes aimed at 'diverse communities' include religious communities. The OCT claims that many of the changes to the curriculum were already embedded in the existing teacher education programme but are enhanced in the new one. There are several areas indicated in Table 1

Table 1: Teacher Education Curriculum Changes (OCT, 2013b)

The enhanced areas of focus, many of which are already embedded in teacher education programs, include:

- understanding the design, format and rationale for curricula and policies, the content and pedagogy in areas such as: literacy, numeracy, science, environment, knowledge of and appreciation for First Nations, Metis and Inuit traditions, cultures and perspectives
- understanding of child, youth and parental mental health issues
- articulation of teaching standards of practice
- preparing for transitions (i.e. student pathways such as: high school, college, university, apprenticeships, the workforce)
- teaching in the Ontario context (e.g. diversity, equity, safe and accepting schools, creation of a positive school climate,)
- education law (i.e. regulations/ethics/occupational health and safety/professional misconduct)
- professional relationships (communicating and engaging with teachers, school staff, students, parents, community)
- 21st century learning/technology as a teaching tool
- research and data analysis (e.g. self-reflection)
- inquiry-based research, data and assessment
- theories of learning/teaching methods
- classroom management and organization
- child and adolescent development (i.e. brain development and understanding student transitions ages 0-21 and grades K-12)
- current observation, assessment and evaluation strategies (i.e. assessment for, as and of, learning)
- teaching English Language Learners/French Language Learners
- pedagogy, assessment and evaluation for learning for specific subjects (e.g. mathematics, literacy)
- special education (e.g. writing Individual Education Plans, mental health).

for which diversity is specifically mentioned in the curriculum changes. There is no indication that these references are intended to educate teachers to more deeply appreciate the religious context of the learner. The first change that may be related to religion, seeks to provide teachers with 'knowledge of and appreciation for First Nations, Metis and Inuit traditions, cultures and perspectives.' Any education about religion in this context will be very specific to these groups. This change is not intended to better prepare teachers for the wide variety of religious world views represented in their classroom. The second change related to diversity that may pertain to teacher education and religion is

in relation to helping teachers understand 'teaching in the Ontario context'. This is the only area outlined in the changes in which an enhanced concentration on religious diversity is possible. When educating teachers for the Ontario context, the OCT has an opportunity to give strong consideration to religion's role as a key dimension of Canada's diverse society and to provide teachers with a basic understanding of the religious world views that make up Canadian society. Another area of change addressed in Table 1, related to diversity and religion, is in the area of professional relationships. The word *community* is used as an example of one of the groups that will receive an enhanced focus. It is unclear as to whether this includes religious community partnerships. But, even if religious community partners were included, it is unlikely that this approach would provide enough religious diversity education to significantly impact the religious literacy of teachers and students. The changes outlined in Table 1 do not indicate a stronger emphasis on religion as one of the diversities for which teachers are being prepared, and the changes do not significantly alter the OCT's direction concerning religion, nor do they indicate a stronger emphasis on the needs of religious learners.

UNIVERSITY PROGRAMME OFFERING

A review of the course offerings for initial teacher education at one of the OCT education providers, the University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT), further illustrates that religious diversity is not included as one of the diversities being given sharper focus and stronger attention. The UOIT 2015-2016 Undergraduate Academic Calendar and Course Catalogue and the promotional material about the curriculum changes state that diversity, along with technology, reflection and praxis, is one of the key educational principles on which its Bachelor of Education (BEd) programmes are based. Appendix C contrasts the post-2015 course requirements for a UOIT BEd degree, a qualifying degree for teachers in Ontario, to the pre-2015 course requirements. The comparison indicates that the only new curriculum element with religious content for primary or intermediate teachers is the EDUC 2400U Equity and Diversity course. This new course is compulsory for all student teachers, and replaces the older elective course EDUC 3440U Diversity: Teaching in the Mosaic. The course description for 2400U Equity and Diversity course is:

This course aims to demonstrate that diversity within a learning community is a rich resource, and one that requires clear commitment to policies and practices that ensure equitable opportunities for academic success. We will explore how the intersectionalities of gender, socio-economic status, race, language, faith, culture, sexual orientation and ability position students differently with respect to power and privilege. These diverse positions will result in varying levels of academic achievement. Students will examine ministry publications and explore culturally responsive teaching strategies for using students' prior linguistic and cultural knowledge, as well as other aspects of their identities to scaffold the learning of new concepts and skills. This course is framed from the standpoint that both theory and lived experience can powerfully inform our pedagogy, and therefore strikes a balance between drawing on theoretical concepts (critical multiculturalism, language acquisition, and aboriginal traditional knowledge) and the real-life experiences of students from diverse backgrounds. (UOIT, 2016)

While making the course compulsory is a positive step, the content, according to the course description, centres around a very broad spectrum of diversities. Dealing with such a wide range of diversities in a one-semester course dramatically limits student exposure to religious diversity. Many of the other diversities, such as gender and sexual orientation, are included in other courses or have a dedicated course. Further, in this course, religion is not addressed in a comparative manner but examined as one of the intersectionalities that affect student's academic achievement. In the course description, the word *faith* replaces the word *religion*. Although the word *faith* has stronger religious connotations than most replacement words, like *creed*, or *culture*, it leaves the impression that the OCT has again discouraged use of the word *religion*.

The UOIT course design fails to take into account the fact that in order for student teachers to properly assess the positive or negative effect of religion on academic performance, a rudimentary understanding of religious experience and religious views is prerequisite. For example, understanding why a young Muslim girl is absent from school for an extended time during her menstrual period requires that the educator understand the religious practice that drives that action. Or, having knowledge of the religious reasons why a young man is wearing a turban and carrying a ceremonial kirpan[2] helps the teacher better

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[2]A kirpan is a religious ceremonial sword, knife or dagger worn by Sikhs as part of five articles of faith that must be worn at all times.

understand the student. Also, given the intertwining of religion with ethnicity and culture, we may also postulate that in order for student teachers to accurately assess the many effects of culture or ethnicity on education, as the course description suggests, there must be some fundamental understanding of religion and religious practices. Some previous understanding of religious groups is necessary in order for student teachers to properly assimilate the learning from this course. But, as discussed earlier, we cannot assume that entering students are religiously literate.

Although an attempt has been made to include a stronger emphasis on diversity, the UOIT course offerings for initial teacher education, as required by the OCT, gives no indication that religious diversity has been given any greater priority than before the 2015 revisions. From examining the course offerings of other universities that deliver the OCT teacher education curriculum, it is clear that prospective teachers are given a variety of courses designed to provide instruction in dealing with various types of diversity including sexual diversity, abilities diversity, gender diversity, and even an introduction to cultural diversity, but instruction specifically related to religious diversity is absent. Without a mandatory requirement for even an introductory comparative study of religions, it is highly unlikely that teachers will emerge from the programme equipped with the knowledge and skills required to deal with religious diversity or the needs of religious learners. A review of several other Ontario university programmes, such as Trent University, Brock University and Queen's University, indicated that they follow the same path as UOIT, with little evidence that the restructured course offerings are intended to better address religious diversity or the needs of religious learners in initial teacher education.

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN THE NEW ACCREDITATION RESOURCE GUIDE

In preparation for the changes to the teacher education curriculum, the OCT began publishing the *Accreditation Resource Guide* (ARG) in 2014. One of the purposes of the guide was to clarify the intent, through additional information and examples, of the core content that should be included in the enhanced teacher education program. The guide itself corresponds to the core content areas listed in *Regulation* 347/02, *Accreditation of Teacher Education Programs*, *Schedule 1* (2007). The structure of the programme is not rigid, meaning that

although there are core components giving guidelines to the new revision, the specifics of course development and curriculum design are left to the individual Schools of Education. The guide states that revisions to the curriculum must also meet the existing guidelines of the OCT. In general, the OCT (2013) regulations require initial teacher education programmes to include:

- at least 40 per cent of one year focused on teaching methods—how to teach students in particular grades or subjects;
- 20 per cent of one year focused on education foundations—history, philosophy, and psychology of education;
- 20 per cent in any other area of education;
- and a minimum of 40 days of practicum supervised by the program provider. (2)

The subject of religion or faith occurs only three times in the entire 38-page ARG. It occurs the first time in the context of student teachers having an opportunity to acquire required knowledge and skills through involvement with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, and queer (LGBTQ), elders, cultural and faith leaders, and representatives of diverse communities who give presentations and demonstrations of different cultural ways of knowing and being. This is not a significant enough change to ensure the needs of religious students will be addressed in an ongoing or greater way. The second reference to religion is a brief address in the context of making teachers aware 'of the ever-changing socio-cultural, political, historical, economic, linguistic, religious, regional, institutional, systemic context of Ontario in which their work is situated' (27). This suggests that some initial attempt was made in the revision to influence teacher awareness about religion. Throughout their public school and high school education, all Ontario students are given introductory instruction in such topics as politics, history, economics, languages, etc, but can remain relatively ignorant about religion. Making a teacher aware of the ever-changing religious context of Ontario is unlikely to be valued by a teacher who has not yet learned anything about basic religious beliefs and religion's place in Canadian culture. The depth of that awareness and whether it will translate into a comparative study of religion remains to be seen. Providing teachers with religious content that can be passed on to their students and preparing them to meet the needs of religious learners in a multi-religious classroom is not the intent here.

Finally, the third reference to religion occurs briefly in the guide's assurance that:

> Course outlines and assignments incorporate the teacher's role with Ministry, board and school codes of conduct, policies, resources and supports in alignment with the Ontario Human Rights Code, including religious and other accommodations, bullying and harassment, and marginalized and/or under-served communities. (31–2)

This is also a positive step, but once again it is not intended to help teachers understand specific religions and those who follow them. Instead, it ensures that teachers learn about guidelines and regulations ensuring that they do nothing in their teaching that might offend or harm any specific group or individual, including religious people. This guideline is designed to ensure that boards and teachers are in compliance with the Ontario Human Rights Code. Accomplishing this goal may be difficult without first providing teachers with an understanding of the basic beliefs of different religious communities. The new guidelines, as outlined in the ARG, do not deal with helping teachers better understand the needs of religious learners in any significant way, and do little to address religious illiteracy or to enhance new teacher's understanding of religious diversity. Religion is not one of the diversities being seriously addressed in the ARG as there is no new or enhanced focus on the needs of religious learners.

ADDITIONAL TEACHER QUALIFICATION SINCE 2015

The OCT offers ongoing teacher qualification courses, known as Additional Basic Qualifications (ABQs) and Additional Qualifications (AQs) through many sources, such as universities, colleges, teacher federations, principals' organizations, school boards, subject organizations, and community organizations. The OCT (2017) insists that:

> Ongoing professional learning is an integral part of teaching. The profession's standards reflect the expectation that all members will participate in ongoing learning. Adding to professional knowledge enhances teaching practice, which improves student learning.

A list of the course offerings from one provider, Queen's University, is included in Appendix D. Of the 100 courses offered in 2016, none deal directly with religious belief systems or the practices of religious students. There are courses specific to helping teachers better instruct students with behavioral needs and

communication needs, and LGBTQ students. But, except for courses devoted to understanding First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples, which may include some discussion about religion, and courses that qualify Roman Catholic school teachers to teach in the Roman Catholic school system, there are no courses dedicated to helping teachers understand or meet the specific needs of religious students. Also, in the ongoing course offerings, educators are given opportunity to specialise in all the key subject areas, including visual arts and dramatic arts. Educating teachers to understand the thought processes and practices of religious students, or to deal with issues of religious diversity in the classroom is not included in any course offering. The OCT course offerings through Queen's University reveal no expanded focus on religion or the needs of religious learners.

LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Since my research is situated primarily within the DDSB, one of six different school boards in the GTA, I reviewed the seminars and professional development days offered by the DDSB. The DDSB serves approximately 69,500 regular day students in 131 elementary and secondary schools and learning centres. It employs approximately 7000 teaching and educational services staff (DDSB, 2016). An examination of the extensive list of courses offered by the DDSB reveals that over the six-month period from January to June of 2017, there were a total of 513 courses and seminars offered to help teachers in various areas of classroom preparation and skill improvement. Only two of these seminars are directly related to religion. These seminars are restricted to administrators, staff, teachers and other members of the DDSB, and do not include parents and students.

The description of the first seminar, entitled 'Integrating Islamic Art into the Curriculum', is:

> Visual art is a wonderful way to explore cultural groups and inspire conversation about Canadian diversity. We are pleased to feature Islamic Art as we continue to focus on culturally responsive pedagogy. Islamic Art is not restricted to religious art, but includes all of the art and varied cultures of Islamic societies, such as calligraphy, painting, glass, pottery and embroidery. The Equity and Inclusive Education Department invites all elementary equity representatives to register

for this after school session to pick up the resource, Learning at the Aga Khan Museum: A Curriculum Resource Guide for Teachers, Grades One through Eight. This resource features Islamic art lessons, Mathematics, Literacy and Social Studies. This resource is perfect for classroom use and for teacher reference. (DDSB, 2017)

As the course description indicates, the course content does not deal directly with the religious teachings of Islam, but focuses on Islam as it is experienced through culture. In its use of religious terminology, the course description does not delineate between religion and culture. Using the term 'Islamic' in this context suggests religion rather than culture. There is always debate about whether religion and culture can truly be separated, but according to Oxtoby and Segal (2007),

> Islam is the last of the three monotheistic faiths that arose in the Middle East, coming after Judaism and Christianity. It means 'submission' in Arabic and signifies the commitment of its adherents to life in total submission to God. (199)

'Islamic' is an adjective that refers to anything specifically related to Islam. Although the word Islamic is typically embedded in a cultural context and impossible to completely separate from culture, it can never be separated from religion. The study of Christian, Hindu or Shinto art cannot be undertaken without reference to religious beliefs and the stories of Christianity, Hinduism or Shintoism respectively. The average person does not separate the religion of Islam from Islamic culture and therefore advertising the seminar as a study in Middle Eastern art, for example, would be less confusing and avoid the risk of other religious groups feeling excluded. There is little indication in the seminar description that teachers receive any instruction or content related to the religion of Islam, but providing teachers with even a rudimentary understanding of the religion would enriched the learning experience.

The second course, entitled 'Islamophobia: Let's Talk', is the DDSB's response to a rise in anti-Islamic sentiment within the Ontario school system. The seminar is advertised as:

> The Equity and Inclusive Education Department continues to support all areas of marginalization through our programs, initiatives and book clubs. This upcoming workshop focuses on experiences of those who are marginalized by faith within our schools. Islamophobia is an issue affecting some students today. Some staff are experiencing

difficulty in knowing how to address this issue in a culturally responsive way. With current events, incidents of negative Islamic viewpoints have increased causing some students of Muslim faith to feel marginalized within their school communities. This workshop was developed to raise awareness of Islamophobia in order to reinforce inclusive spaces for our staff and students. Information about Islamic faith and beliefs will be discussed in order to dispel stereotypes or misconceptions. Using a collaborative approach, teachers will engage in professional dialogue to develop strategies of how to address Islamophobia in our schools. (DDSB, 2017)

The need for such a seminar highlights several key things. First, there is a growing recognition that there are groups of students in the school system who are 'marginalised' by being religiously diverse. Second, school staff are experiencing difficulty addressing issues rooted in religion in a 'culturally responsive way'. Third, the DDSB sees education as a way of overcoming challenges, such as racism, stereotyping and marginalization. This is a seminar that is genuinely focused on the needs of religious students but only because they are facing discrimination. Fourth, the DDSB is ironically 'providing information about Islamic faith and beliefs' in order to 'dispel stereotypes or misconceptions'. In other words, they are educating teachers and administrators about religion in a non-confessional way in order to better understand a segment of the school population. Fifth, the DDSB's approach, according to the course description, will engage 'collaborative strategies' and 'professional dialogue', indicating that the board has some understanding of the approach required to provide teacher education in this area. It is unlikely that a one-day seminar will make a dramatic change in the school environment, but using the strategy over a sustained period may prove to be productive. The course may be a microcosm of the diversity content needed in initial teacher education but leaves unanswered questions about why education in the area of religion is not provided proactively rather than the reactive approach taken here, especially when we acknowledge the low level of religious literacy within Canadian society.

Ontario's public school education leading up to the curriculum changes of 2015, was influenced by a long history of multiculturalism, even from its inception. Starting with policy that affected the English, French and First Nations, and progressing through waves of immigration, Canada has arrived at a secular approach to the education of its citizenry. Policies to support that decision and to remove the influence of one particular religion were gradually put in place.

As new immigrants arrive and new lifestyles and family structures become more prevalent, policy for acceptance and accommodation are continually introduced. Despite the fact that the Ontario government has cited diversity as a reason to extend teacher education, my research indicated that after 2015, nothing of significance changed to integrate religious literacy into the teacher education curriculum. No attempt was made to equip educators to better understand the student with a religious faith by better understanding their world view and context. Guiding documents about ethical standards and standards of practice did not change and no new curriculum was added to support an enhanced focus on religious diversity in initial and ongoing teacher education.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

In this Chapter, I present the methodology and methods employed to investigate how initial and ongoing education prepared both experienced and student teachers to engage religious students' ideas and world views in the Ontario classroom. Researchers bring different perspectives and have differing ideas about how to conduct research. A researcher with a science background will usually employ a positivist approach, and typically utilise quantitative data that can be discerned from external and objective observations. In contrast, my research project does not rely on quantitative data. Instead, I explore the experience of experienced teachers and student teachers in the Ontario public school system. The same methodology and methods are used to explore the views of parents of students. I also describe how and why participants were selected, protocols applied to group and individual discussions, methods of data analysis, obstacles encountered while conducting the research, and the ethical considerations applicable to the research.

METHODOLOGY

My research question is: *Does the newly revised Ontario Teacher Education Curriculum equip teachers to meet the needs of religious learners in a secular classroom?* A positivist approach was not appropriate because there are no statistics or hard numerical data against which to measure my findings, and no research grounded in static laws or assumptions. An interpretative methodology is the most logical approach from which to engage this research question, primarily because the research involves humans and the exploration of individual experience. Morehouse (2012) defines interpretative enquiry as 'an approach to research and evaluation that emphasizes a phenomenological perspective that sees humans as born into history. Persons are embedded in a complex world' (23). He also argues that 'Human acts cause and are caused by events outside themselves; however, thought, desire, and voluntary action cannot be brought under deterministic laws, as physical phenomena can' (24). Individual reality is constructed as each person gives meaning to specific events and situations, so for any given situation there can be a variety of perspectives and realities. My

research is designed to investigate the perspectives and realities of teachers within the Ontario school system and the extent to which the teacher training curriculum prepares them for the classroom. I first interviewed experienced teachers who have had at least five years working in the Ontario system. I also interviewed student teachers enrolled in a teacher education programme or who have completed the programme within the previous year. To obtain another viewpoint, I conducted two focus groups with students' parents. This provided data through a variety of lenses and realities, in keeping with the spirit of interpretive research, which, according to Myers (2009), accepts that 'access to reality (given or socially constructed) is only through social constructions such as language, consciousness, shared meanings, and instruments' (38). The data presented here flow from the richness and depth of the consciousness, experiences and language utilised by the varied participants to make meaning of their experiences. Because personal conversations reveal participants' understanding of education and the role of religion in the public schools, I chose to interview participants face-to-face rather than electronically or by phone in order to obtain more nuanced first-hand knowledge.

REFLEXIVITY

Since my research is informed by the presuppositions that evolve out of my personal epistemology, I have sought to maintain an outsider perspective, continually engaging in a process of transparency and self–examination to ensure that my own views and opinions did not bias the research. While it was relatively easy to approach the subject of public education from an outsider's perspective, it was more difficult to do so with religion. Apart from my children being educated in the Ontario public school system, I have never been formally involved in the inner workings of the school system, but I am however a Christian, who has studied religion at a postgraduate level. Admittedly, operating from behind a 'veil of ignorance' (118), as Rawls (1999) suggests, is not entirely possible, but I have endeavored throughout my research to continually engage in the process of critical reflection as espoused by scholars like Dewey (1933) and Schön (1983), and to engage in self-conscious consideration or reflexivity, which Danielewicz (2001) says 'can lead people to a deepened understanding of themselves and others, not in the abstract, but in

relation to specific social environments' (155). My own personal feelings, reflections and background have not hindered my analysis, but rather, as Danielwicz suggests, given me a deeper understanding of myself and others in the religious environment. Danielwicz further insists that reflexivity:

> Involves a person's active analysis of past situations, events, and products, with the inherent goals of critique and revision for the explicit purpose of achieving an understanding that can lead to change in thought or behavior. (156)

Engaging in the process of reflexivity means that I have allowed that process of researching to profoundly challenge my understanding of the Ontario learning environment. In some cases, engaging in the process of reflexivity has confirmed the 'gut-feelings' that I brought to the research and at other times it has eliminated them.

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

The interviews and focus group participants were recruited according to the following criteria:

- All teacher participants were from urban schools and were employed by one of the public school boards in the GTA. This ensured that the data emerged from participants within a similar context. Teachers were not asked to indicate what subjects they taught or specialized in. I was careful to select a sample that ranged in experience from teaching kindergarten through high school.

- Parent participants were from a variety of religious and non-religious backgrounds. The participants included practicing and non-practicing Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims, atheists, and Christians, from both Roman Catholic and Protestant denominational backgrounds. Religious involvement or practice was not a criterion for participation, nor was it an interview question. The only criterion was that parents had one or more students in the Ontario public school system. In some cases, I had previous knowledge of the participants' religious identities; others volunteered this information as a result of the interview subject matter.

- Student teachers had completed at least one year of their teacher education programme.

- A person's gender or age was not a factor in the selection process, but I did endeavor to include both a male and female voice and a balance between older and younger teachers whenever possible.

I was careful to make contact with socially conservative families only through the individual that the particular religious group recognized as head of the home. At focus groups where individuals insisted on bringing food, I ensured that the food met the dietary restrictions of the religions represented in the focus group. Despite my efforts to accommodate religious and cultural understandings regarding such issues as gender roles, some challenges were insurmountable. For example, after initial contact with a prospective female participant whom I assumed was from a moderate Muslim group, I chose not to pursue an interview because her religious beliefs prohibited her from speaking with a man without her husband present, and he would not agree to be interviewed as a couple. While their insights could have added to my research data, respecting their beliefs and practices was an overriding priority.

METHODS

The methods employed in any research are dictated by the over-arching research methodology. Since I employed an interpretative approach, the research methods included document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups. Pratt and Loizos (2003) insist that methods must also be chosen to 'take into account cultural differences' (18). In dealing with participants from different religious and cultural backgrounds, I was careful to choose methods that were appropriate and accommodating. For example, I felt that employing a focus group allowed religious participants to easily avoid answering any specific question compared to a direct one-on-one interview.

Case Study

Ausband (2016) insists that 'if your research involves how and why questions, a case study is most likely the best methodology or strategy to choose for your

research study' (765). Accepting Ausband's claim, I chose to employ a case study for several reasons. First, according to Baxter and Jack (2008), a case study is 'an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its context using a variety of data sources' (544). It allows for the research to employ 'a variety of lenses or multiple realities, which allows for multiple facets of the phenomenon to be revealed and understood' (544). For my research, the context, and therefore the data, is first bounded within the province of Ontario, distinguishing it from the other nine provinces and three territories that make up Canada. Because of Canada's large geographical size, some segments of the population remain largely mono-cultural or have limited religious diversity, so it was important to define an area in which issues related to diversity potentially exist. The research is also bounded by my decision to interview only participants employed by School Boards within the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). This area was selected because it is growing rapidly and becoming increasingly multicultural in contrast to the many rural areas. The parameters of the case study are further bounded by my decision to limit my research to the public school system, intentionally avoiding investigation of other school systems, such as the Roman Catholic school system, private school systems (religious and otherwise), and the French Roman Catholic school system. These parameters maintained a focus on the research question and allowed data to flow only through the lenses of those who have first-hand knowledge of the Ontario public school context and its relation to religion.

Document Analysis

Document analysis is a qualitative research method in which the researcher interprets existing documents in order to extract their meaning relative to a particular topic. The documents examined form the basis of the teacher education curriculum. Document analysis, according to Bowen (2009), 'entails finding, selecting, appraising (making sense of), and synthesising data contained in documents' (28). O'Leary (2014) suggests there are three primary types of documents: public records, personal documents, and physical evidence. My research involved the examination of government public records, including handbooks, strategic plans, government regulations, policies, and syllabi that have guided the curriculum for the Ontario teacher education programme. The analysis investigated revisions to the programme, and examined how well the

newly-revised curriculum addresses religious diversity and the needs of religious learners. To understand the historical Canadian context and government policies that establish parameters for the Ontario classroom, I reviewed four key documents, *The Multiculturalism Act (1988)*, *The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, *The Ontario Human Right Codes*, and *The Education Act (1990)*. To evaluate the present Ontario environment in which the research was undertaken, I examined *The Accepting Schools Act (2012)*. Most documents were readily available online at government and educational institution websites, but others, such as lists of course offerings were accessed through the local school boards. Examining these documents provided opportunity during the data analysis to triangulate what I perceived to be true about the Ontario teacher education programme through media and casual contact with educators with the data gleaned from the interviews and focus groups, and the public records, including policies, guidelines, course offerings, and syllabi. Denzin (1970) describes triangulation as a 'combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon' (291). Eisner (1991) insists that triangulation creates 'a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility' (110). Triangulating the data identified solid themes and isolated recurring phenomena.

Interviews

To view the data through a variety of lenses within a single context, I conducted twenty semi-structured interviews. (An interview schedule is included in Appendix E.) Longhurst (2016) says, 'Although the interviewer prepares a list of predetermined questions, semi-structured interviews unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important' (143). Merriam (2009) agrees that in a quality semi-structured interview 'the conversation is guided to issues to be explored, all questions used are flexible with no predetermined wording or order' (89). Galletta (2001) insists that 'a key benefit of the semi-structured interview is its attention to lived experience while also addressing theoretically driven variables of interest' (24). To obtain that lived experience, fifteen experienced teachers were interviewed to ascertain whether they felt adequately prepared to participate in religious discussions with students in the classroom. Most were recruited because they were casual acquaintances who worked in urban, multicultural school settings. Others were recruited through my own involvement in the school districts,

through personal contacts or through friends in the teaching profession. I invited interviewees to share accounts of any challenging experiences related to religion in the classroom during their teaching career, and asked whether they felt they had an adequate understanding of religious world views. By treating the interview participants as 'co-constructors of knowledge' (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015:22) and not just as a means to an end, some unexpected information (data) emerged during the interviews because there was flexibility to go beyond the predetermined questions. Additionally, five student teachers, nearing the completion of their OCT teacher training, were also interviewed, mostly about issues relating to the new teacher education curriculum. These interviews enquired whether student teachers felt the content of the newly designed curriculum was preparing them to deal with religious diversity in the classroom.

As a qualitative research method, semi-structured interviews employ a set of open-ended questions to loosely guide the conversation. I provided the interviewees with the questions and topics of enquiry before the interviews. Morehouse (2012) insists that 'the interviewee is considered a co-researcher on the topic of enquiry, so it is essential to let the interviewee in on what the interviewer wants to understand' (81). This allowed participants time to think about the questions and the freedom to elaborate on things that were important to them, while remaining within a loose framework. While answering the prescribed questions, the interviews had a conversational feel allowing the participants freedom to move in a direction of their choice, sometimes unpredictably. Each interview was conducted in a public place, was recorded, and transcribed with the permission of the interviewees. In one instance a school principal used his status as a gatekeeper to introduce me to teachers that were willing to give interviews. Participants were assured of confidentiality, and that pseudonyms would be used when reporting research findings.

Having adopted an interpretivist approach, I endeavored to create an environment that was comfortable for the participants, during the interviews and focus groups. First, because religion, and education for that matter, can be a contentious subject, all participants were assured in the pre-interview briefing that their views about religion and education would be respected. I spent extra time with interviewees and focus group participants before the formal part of the interaction, explaining the reason for my research, answering any pre-

interview procedural questions and assuring confidentiality. Teacher pre-interview questions indicated that it was important for teachers to be reassured that their responses would be kept confidential and not affect their employment in any way. Secondly, careful consideration was given to Morehouse's (2012) warning that while we take an interpretative stance, we must be careful not to strip participants of their agency and simply treat them like objects to be studied. He claims that when we remove agency from the participants we slip back into the 'laboratory style inquiry better associated with a positivist research stance' (26).

Focus Groups

I employed two focus groups to gather data from parents because it was a way of bringing together a larger number of people with differing religious and educational perspectives. I also employed this method with experienced teachers for the same reason. Morgan (1988) describes focus groups simply as 'group interviews' (9). His assertion that focus groups rely on 'interaction within the group, based on topics that are supplied by the researcher, who typically takes the role of a moderator' (9) characterises my role in facilitating the focus groups. Following Longhurst's (2016) suggestion that 'focus groups are usually between six and twelve' (143), both parent focus groups consisted of six parents whose children were in the public school system, while the teacher focus group was made up of five teachers in the public school system. Longhurst further recommends that focus groups 'meet in an informal setting' (143), so parent groups met at the home of one of the participants who volunteered to host the gathering. Although the teacher focus group met in a small conference room at a local public school the atmosphere was still informal and relaxed. Coffee and light snacks voluntarily provided by the host of the parent focus group helped create a relaxed atmosphere. Kruger & Casey (2000) state that a focus group 'is about creating a comfortable environment for people to share' (xi). I took time with the parents and teachers before the focus group discussions, ensuring that they fully understood the nature of the research and were prepared to share their views in a setting where varying views could be expressed. Because the focus groups involved people with different voice levels, intonations, and accents, I made a video recording to visually distinguish between speakers when

transcribing the discussion. This proved to be very helpful for the larger group of people.

Participants were selected for the first parent focus group because they were parents of children in the Ontario public school system and identified as religious. I recruited participants through suggestions from friends and colleagues in the teaching profession who acted as gatekeepers. After participants were suggested and it was determined that they fit the research criteria each individual was invited either personally or via email to participate. In each case, to establish familiarity I also indicated who had recommended them for the research study. This group included a Hindu couple, who are recent immigrants to Canada from India, a racially mixed protestant Christian couple, (he was of German heritage and she was of Chinese/Vietnamese descent), and an Italian heritage Roman Catholic couple. The Italian couple are the biological grand-parents and guardians of a grand-child in the school system. I chose to include their experience because I felt that it might add a slightly different perspective to the research while at the same time remaining true to the spirit of the focus group. The focus group discussion lasted approximately seventy-five minutes, was recorded and fully transcribed. The second parent focus group participants were also selected because they had children in the Ontario public school system. This group included two sets of parents who identified themselves as protestant Christians and one couple who self-identified as Muslim. This group discussion lasted for approximately 80 minutes. It was my intention that, between the two parent groups, a wide range of religious and cultural perspectives were included in the discussion. The third focus group was easier to organise. An opportunity arose to add to my research when a group of teachers from one school volunteered to make one of their regular meetings a focus group. Several teachers were intrigued by my research topic and invited me to come to the school, use one of the school's meeting rooms, and conduct a focus group for eight teachers. I used this focus group, primarily to confirm the themes and data evolving from the interview process. The teacher participants were from various religious backgrounds or no religious background, and were chosen randomly by a gatekeeper. This focus group lasted approximately eighty minutes, and was also recorded, videotaped, and fully transcribed.

Although it took considerable effort to keep all participants focused, as a methodology the focus groups were effective in generating data, especially as participants responded to each other's comments. Consistent with Kruger and Casey's (2000) guidelines, I gave attention to being open, nonjudgmental, careful and systematic to guide the focus group process. Each participant's reality was carefully considered, even when they expressed opinions that were vastly different from the rest of the group. Before beginning, the focus group participants were encouraged to openly share their religious views as they relate to their experiences within the Ontario school system. The focus groups were conducted in a way that gave equal time for everyone to participate so that no one voice or viewpoint dominated the discussion.

To investigate whether the *newly revised Ontario Teacher Education Curriculum equips teachers to meet the needs of religious learners in a secular classroom*, I decided to explore the following themes: the needs of religious learners in the Ontario public school system, teacher training and preparedness for the Ontario classroom, the secular classroom environment, personal teacher experience, and practical classroom pedagogy. I endeavored to keep these themes (see Appendix F), and questions associated with them, consistent throughout the research, during both the interviews and the focus groups. This provided a structured, but flexible, framework for organizing the research data while at the same time allowing new themes to be identified and explored as they emerged. It also served as structure for the final presentation of the research findings. The questions that flowed from the themes guided a semi-structured discussion which was designed to establish boundaries but be open-ended enough to allow the discussion to flow. All but one question was open-ended and designed to solicit participant's personal opinion. The closed question requiring a quantitative response was designed to create further qualitative discussion. It asked participants to self-rate their level of personal religious literacy on a scale of 1-10. This question sparked further discussion that provided insight into whether teachers felt prepared to deal with a multi-religious classroom.

My research proposal, which received approval from the Ethics Committee, (see Appendix G), included a focus group of religious students in their senior year of high school. However, I chose not to pursue this focus group for the following reasons. First, even though the students that I was seeking to interview were in

their last school year and within my ethics approval, local school boards required researchers to go through a detailed, and necessary, application process in order for such research to be conducted within their school board. Secondly, creating this group proved to be difficult because, even for high school level students, parents within some religious communities are guarded and reluctant to grant parental permission. Thirdly, the absence of this data source does not impact the integrity of my research because I was dealing primarily with the educator experience and their interaction with the new curriculum and teacher preparation. The student voice, although important according to Fielding (2012), was of secondary importance to this project and electing not to include it does not detract from the research in any way.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Collection and analysis of the interview and focus group data from all participants followed a five-stage process. First, all participants were asked similar questions, increasing the likelihood that similar or relatable themes would emerge. Second, participants' responses were recorded and transcribed in detail. The audio and video recording enabled me to identify nuances such as tone, while the transcription allowed easier access to the data. Thirdly, transcripts and recordings from teacher interviews and focus groups were analyzed separately and then together using a thematic analysis approach. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a qualitative analytic method for:

> Identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic' (79).

It requires a 'careful reading and re-reading of the data' (Rice & Ezzy, 1999:258) in order to identify recurring themes and patterns. It is a form of pattern recognition within the data, with emerging themes becoming the categories for analysis. The transcript of each interview and focus group was examined using this approach to determine where data corroborated or conflicted. Singular pieces of data that did not recur were isolated but not discarded. This is important, according to Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2016) in order to ensure that dissenters or outliers are not being censored or marginalised during the

process. Sim (1998) contends that even these argumentative interactions can increase the richness of the data. Fourthly, themes or headings for data presentation were then established based on the recurrent themes. In this way, themes were not pre-established but emerged from the data itself. Finally, data from interviews and focus groups were compared to the themes that appeared in the document analysis. For example, when issues relating to accommodation or autonomy appeared in the interview data, I went back to the governing documents to investigate how the Ontario government or the school system included the topic in policy. This provided a kind of triangulation between the teachers experience, parent experience, and published government, ministry and board documents, thereby increasing the reliability of my research findings.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

As immigration increases in Ontario there is a growing need for an increased understanding of what it means to be multicultural. The scope of my research includes different groups interested in the education of children in Ontario. It explored the Canadian and Ontario government laws and policies that govern education, and examined OCT policies and responsibilities in educating teachers for a multi-religious environment. It investigated teachers' understanding of the secular classroom and whether this understanding prepared students in the public school system for Canadian and global citizenship. So, it has implications for how these students perceive themselves in the Canadian mosaic.

My research is limited in that it is confined to one Canadian province, so not necessarily representative of all Canadian provinces, or Canada itself, since while public education in Canada is funded by the federal government, administration of public education is the responsibility of the provincial and territorial governments. Therefore, policies pertaining to Ontario may not apply to other provinces. Secondly, the research does not represent a wide variety of religious groups. Although participants were not asked to self-identify, interview and focus group participants volunteered that they were affiliated with or practising the Christian, Muslim, Hindu, or Buddhist religion, with varying degrees of dedication. Two student teachers and one experienced teacher indicated that they were not affiliated with any religion or declared themselves to be atheists. While the research was limited to the previously mentioned

groups and may not be representative of the many religions and sects in Canadian society, it does reflect the state of teacher education in Ontario, and to the extent Ontario is representative of the Canadian mosaic and Canadian education policies, my findings and recommendations have transferability to Canada's other provinces and territories. Further, the extent to which my research and analysis assesses the educational needs of teachers of religious students, my research has a broader transferability.

CHAPTER 4: DATA PRESENTATION

In addition to an analysis of documents and policies establishing the present teacher education curriculum, my research included interviewing student teachers (ST) enrolled in a teacher education programme, experienced teachers (ET) within the Ontario public school system, and parents (P) of religious learners. Data from the interviews and focus groups are summarised using the original themes, specifically, the needs of religious learners in the Ontario public school system, teacher training and preparedness for the Ontario classroom, the secular classroom environment, personal teacher experience, and practical classroom pedagogy. I also include insights that immediately emerged from the data. Chapter 6 has a full analysis and discussion of the data.

TEACHERS' ASSESSMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION

My data collection included interviewing five student teachers, two male and three female, who were enrolled as students in the teacher education programme at one of Ontario's universities. I also interviewed fifteen experienced teachers; thirteen were female and two were male. I conducted a teacher focus group with five other experienced teachers, all of whom were female. Although none were asked their religious affiliation, several teachers volunteered that information. Two described themselves as atheists, two as Muslim, one as Hindu, one as Buddhist and six as Christian (Roman Catholic or Protestant). The rest of the teachers were undeclared.

The Needs of Religious Learners

My research investigated whether teachers were being equipped to meet the needs of religious learners through the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) teacher education curriculum. In order to do so, it was necessary to first ascertain whether the educators and parents perceived the needs of religious learners in the classroom to be different than the needs of other students. I also wanted to explore whether educators felt that the Ontario school system shared in the responsibility of meeting those needs. In this context, a *need* represents anything that is necessary for the holistic education of a learner.

Twenty of the twenty-five experienced and future teachers interviewed and the focus group participants agreed that religious students shared many of the same common social needs as other students but to a greater degree. In other words, some needs were simply more accentuated with religious students rather than being unique to them. Most teachers initially answered, 'Yes', when asked if religious students had unique needs. Upon clarification most realised that the needs they were citing were common to all students. Carmen[3] (ET) for example insisted, 'Yes, there are specific needs for religious students.' When questioned further she identified the common need of accommodation and explained that 'Every student needs to be accommodated, but there is a greater need where religious students are concerned'. Carmen, like most participants, looked at accommodation associated with any student who needed it, including situations concerning religion, gender or disability. All but one educator agreed that the public school system had a responsibility to endeavor to meet the needs of the religious students. Laura (ET) felt that meeting religious needs indicated acceptance. She said, 'Depending on the religion or the cultural background, students may need to know that they are accepted as people even if others don't share their religious beliefs.' The one dissenting individual did not believe that it is the school system's responsibility to meet the needs of religious learners because she believed that religion is a private affair and not a burden of the state. Twenty-three of the twenty-five educators and all parents felt that for most students' their needs for acceptance, assimilation, accommodation, wholeness, and autonomy are being met within this school system. But, when asked if the Ontario secular school system adequately met the needs of religious learners in the classroom, nineteen of the educators said, 'No'.

Teachers unanimously agreed that it was the school system's responsibility to meet these needs for all students to the degree that religious learners required, for two reasons. First, participants indicated that meeting the needs of religious students reflects the Canadian value and policy of multiculturalism. Several educators cited the Canadian value of multiculturalism as the primary reason why they felt it was the school system's responsibility to meet the needs of

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[3] All research participants are identified by pseudonyms.

religious students. They felt that it was important for the school system to provide a holistic educational experience. Carmen (ET) insisted:

> Absolutely, with Canada being so multicultural, especially in Ontario, places like Ajax and Toronto (I think we had over 21 countries and many religions represented in the same school), our job as professionals is to teach to the whole child. And, I think religion is part of who a person is, it is part of who a family is, and it is our responsibility to ensure that they see themselves represented at school.

Anna (ST) affirmed Carmen's view:

> Yes. Religion is something that everyone has a right to in Canada. So, if your religion requires you to do or practise certain things, then I think your school should accommodate that as long as it's not extreme.

Sarah (ET) claimed:

> We talk so much about inclusiveness but we cannot say we are inclusive and not be meeting the needs of the students in a way that is suitable for whatever their belief system happens to be. It may not be exactly the way it is when they leave here and go to another place, but we have to find a way to make it work for them while they are here in this building.

Meeting the needs of religious students was considered an important part of providing a holistic education. During the focus group discussion, Michaela (ET) insisted that it was the school's responsibility to maintain a holistic approach to education. She argued, 'We can't expect to educate the whole student if we disrespect their belief systems by asking them to leave a big part of who they are at the door.' Charlene (ET) agreed, 'If we don't try to understand the student as a whole, how are we going to teach the whole student.' The idea of teaching the whole child surfaced several times among experienced and student teachers. When asked if the school system has a responsibility to meet needs Charlene said, 'Absolutely.' Joy (ET) said that:

> The overt goal of education is to present the curriculum; the covert goal is to build better people and global citizens. We can't do that without looking at the student as a whole.

Several participants felt that a well-rounded education contributed to the student's sense of wholeness and that encompassing all aspects of personhood

including religion, was important for students to feel a sense of equity, acceptance and belonging, and develop the capability to achieve personal educational goals.

The main reasons participants did not feel that the Ontario school system was meeting the needs of religious students were the general lack of teacher education about religion and the lack of attention to specific requests for accommodation. Michaela (ET) responded, 'No, student needs are not being adequately met because our needs as teachers are not being met. We don't get any training in how to be culturally and religiously sensitive.' The small portion of educator participants, six of twenty-five, who felt that the school system was meeting the needs of religious students, cited the efforts of specific schools to accommodate religious practices and provide ongoing teacher training about religion. Educators identified physical 'accommodation' of religious practices as a need unique to religious learners and one that required the most attention. Teachers referenced practices such as allowing students to be dismissed for set prayer times, creating a multi-religious sacred space for prayer and meditation, permitting time away from class for religious celebrations and holidays, and granting permission to be dismissed from class activities that go against their religious belief systems. One teacher insisted that schools often promoted equity and diversity, but were lacking a genuine desire to understand the needs of religious students. Several teachers also indicated that, for the public school system, understanding religious students and their world views was secondary to accommodating their practice.

Experienced teachers indicated that the level of religious accommodation depends on several factors. First accommodation of religious practice was more prominent in schools having teachers who were also practising the same religion. Charlene (ET) said:

> I found that accommodation was more prominent in the schools that had Muslim teachers who were practising at the same time. But I don't know if this would have happened if the school did not have Muslim teachers.

Secondly, religious accommodation was more prominent if the religious group was more persistent and demanding. Teachers described some groups as more

demanding of accommodation than others, with Muslims and Jehovah's Witnesses being the two religious groups most frequently identified. Karen (ET) said:

> The Muslim people were much more demanding of school hours, especially holidays. There was a lot of fasting time. The kids don't come to school with food and that affects their learning.

Thirdly, religious accommodation was also more prominent in classrooms where teachers were comfortable talking about religion. Carmen (ET) said, 'It can vary unfortunately, from classroom to classroom, based on what the teacher's comfort level is.' One teacher went as far as to say that she felt that the school system's efforts in meeting the need for accommodation may be biased. Karen (ET) claimed:

> Yes, I believe they go out of their way to accommodate some religions. They go above and beyond most of the time. But I don't think they do that for other religions. I think when it comes to the Christian religion the same thought process is not attached to it.

Several teachers pointed out that accommodating the needs of religious students such as dieting or withdrawing from certain activities, was often disruptive to the class and draws unwanted attention to the student. Ingrid (ST) felt that teacher education would help them be more proactive in their accommodation of students who may not be outgoing or assertive. She commented:

> To be completely honest with you, there was a Jehovah's Witness girl in my class, and it must have been hard for that girl to always have to approach the teacher and say, 'I have to leave.' It was like she always had to go out of her way to always tell the teacher what she was doing. It should be more of a natural thing, and teachers should be trained to recognise how difficult it was for her.

Kim was the lone voice in the crowd who felt strongly that the school had no responsibility to meet any accommodation needs: 'No. If kids need to pray, they can go home and pray.'

Overall, most teachers felt that accommodating student's religious practices was important because it engendered a sense of student well-being, including such things as their sense of self-image, self-understanding, and wholeness, and an

awareness of the emotional, spiritual and psychological state of all students.[4] Charlene (ET) felt that religious accommodation was connected to the child's understanding of themselves: 'Yes, religious students have internal needs that can go unnoticed or undetected, and therefore unaddressed.' Sarah (ET) connected the school's response to accommodation to the student's mental and emotional health, and with their scholastic success. She argues:

> It is very important because of student well-being. That's huge now. Student well-being has always been important but there is such a focus right now in terms of student achievement and well-being. We are talking about mental wellness and mental health. So, if they do not have an environment that allows for that, then the idea is that they won't achieve. They won't have good marks and go forward because they aren't being accommodated. So, their marks suffer as a result.

Laura (ET) said:

> I think there should be a general understanding that everybody's religious beliefs are a part of each student and should never be ridiculed or disrespected in any way. If we don't take the time to understand observing Muslim students and their needs and give them the time out to pray, how can we really understand the struggles they may be having within themselves in not following their religious practice.

Ingrid (ST), on the other hand, was the only educator who felt that at times religious accommodation may hinder student well-being. She claims:

> People don't always understand them the way they're seen in the classroom. They have a need for people to understand them and relate to them better. If they're going through dieting or if they have to leave the classroom for prayer people look at them differently.

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[4] The Ontario Ministry of Education defines well-being as 'a positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that we feel when our cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met. It is supported through equity and respect for our diverse identities and strengths. Well-being in early years and school settings is about helping children and students become resilient, so that they can make positive and healthy choices to support learning and achievement both now and in the future' (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2016a). Student well-being is one of the key focuses for the Ontario Ministry of education who developed a ministry-wide strategy to ensure that student needs were addressed. Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education Discussion Paper (2016) lists four key components as the foundation of its well-being strategy: positive mental health, safe and accepting schools, healthy schools, equity and inclusive education (5).

While there were different opinions about implementation, educators accepted that meeting the accommodation needs of a religious student was important and connected to student well-being.

Insight

The participants' input about student needs modified my earlier assumption that religious students had different needs than other students. The participants identified the need for acceptance, assimilation, accommodation, wholeness, and autonomy as important to all students. Of these shared needs, the three that participants felt were more specific to or accentuated in religious learners were the need for accommodation of practice, the need for personal wholeness, and the need for personal autonomy. There was a general agreement that teachers and parents felt that it was the responsibility of the school system to endeavor to meet these needs in religious students.

Teacher Training and Preparedness

The interview questions in this section probed whether participants felt prepared to address religious issues in a secular classroom and whether their teacher education, both initial and ongoing, had equipped them to meet the needs of religious students. All of the educators interviewed admitted that they were unfamiliar with the specific revisions to the new teacher training curriculum. Additionally, all experienced teachers indicated that they had received no instruction about religious diversity or the needs of religious students in their initial teacher education. Further, the experience of most teacher participants indicated that classroom practices about religion rarely went beyond recognizing religious holidays, holy days and celebrations. Mina (ET) admitted that the only instruction she received was about religious days and celebrations:

> All I was asked to do was to make a bulletin board project. I had to recognise each religious holiday, and each religious holiday had to be documented to create a bulletin board. Like everyone else I had no training.

Tanya (ET) simply said, 'I received none.' Angela (ET) said, 'All of the friends that I have talked to, even in more urban boards, tell me that anything they

learned about religion came through experience rather than through their formal education'. Fran (ET) added, 'No, I am still learning even the basic information about various religions. I don't have any knowledge. I had no idea. I learn from my peers [and] students.'

Experienced teachers were asked to describe the diversity education that they had received since their initial teacher education program, including any Additional Qualification (AQ) courses, board or ministry seminars, workshops, and professional development days, and how such additional teacher education prepared them to deal with the needs of religious learners in the classroom. Again, experienced teachers indicated they received little diversity education to prepare them to deal with the needs of religious learners in the classroom since their initial teacher education. None of the experienced teachers interviewed received education specifically related to religious diversity through AQ courses available through OCT certification training. Three of the twenty experienced teachers interviewed indicated that they had received some instruction related to religious diversity through non-mandatory board sponsored seminars and professional development days, which included leaders from various religious communities. Tina (ET) stated:

> The board offers different seminars and professional development days but you can only offer it. It is up to the teacher to take the seminar. Teachers are already swamped. Getting them to volunteer for a seminar is not easy.

Maggie (ET) lamented:

> There are definitely options to take that, but I have found that I am a little disappointed with myself, thinking that I haven't chosen to take that route even though that is so important because of that whole child. All the new initiatives, like the new math and other initiatives, take precedent over this and I am a little disappointed in myself for not pursuing the options that are available.

Helen (ET) declared strongly, 'No. If it was provided during my initial education I would have taken it'. Laura (ET) remembered some informal staff training:

> We have had people from religious communities that have come into the school to talk about the different religions, mainly Muslim and Sikh. I think it was four or five years ago. They would be representatives of the board and they have spoken to the staff as a whole to say this is what these people believe, so when a parent

comes in for parent-teacher interview for example, don't be offended if this happens. They were helping us become more sensitive to the students that were represented in our school.

Four of the experienced teachers interviewed indicated that the responsibility for education in the area of religion should not rest entirely on the OCT, but felt that it was also the responsibility of the individual teacher.

Asked if their initial teacher education had prepared them to meet the needs of religious learners, John (ET) admitted, 'I was not at all prepared.' Relaying the story of her first teaching assignment, Anita (ET) said:

> You know, my first year teaching I went to a school that was eighty percent Muslim. I did not even understand that religion, so how was I supposed to understand my student population. But, no one gave me even a warning.

Even in situations when it is evident teachers require some basic knowledge of religions and religious diversity, the data suggest no such teacher education is being provided. Laura (ET) also admitted that she felt ill-prepared:

> I do not feel that I am. I have, on a personal level, taken an interest in religious issues and make it a point to personally investigate, especially if I know there is a child in my class from a particular religion. For example, if I know there is a Hindu child I will try to find out what branch or brand of Hinduism they follow, try to prepare myself to educate the other students when they ask questions or better engage the Hindu child. But as for feeling prepared, I definitely feel inadequate. But, I'm not sure you can ever feel totally adequate because there are so many religious beliefs.

Similarly, student teachers studying the new teacher curriculum received no education in religious diversity or understanding the needs of religious learners. Anna (ST) stated:

> No. Honestly, it's not something I actually thought of before. Actually, none that I can think of. And, if there is, it has been so minimal that I don't even remember it.

Anna (ST) indicated that she had completed the 'basics of the program', and did not anticipate the subject coming up in the remainder of her studies. Ingrid's (ST) response was similar:

> No. We have had no classes or seminars specifically about religion. We hear a lot about cultural diversity. I think they lump the two together.

I find that at our school they talk a lot about aboriginal people. At my school, there's a lot of talk about First Nations people and their culture and spirituality. We have to include it in our classrooms.

Michaela (ET) confirmed that there was very little change from the old curriculum to the new curriculum in the area of religion. In reference to a student teacher that she was supervising Jacqueline wasn't hopeful. She said:

All it looks like is that they [OME] took her one-year programme and stretched it out to 16 months, but it is the exact same content as it used to be but it's just taking them a little bit longer. And that's all.

When asked to self-rate their level of religious literacy or general knowledge about world religions, on a scale of one to ten, the median score among both experienced and student teachers was four. 'Carmen (ET) said, 'I felt sad answering that one.' Dave (ET) assessed his level of religious literacy at five, citing the fact that he grew up being exposed to religion. Steve (ST) rated his religious literacy level at three, saying, 'Unfortunately, I wasn't brought up going to church regularly'. Anna (ST) said, 'I would say six. Being a history major, I have had some exposure to other religions. But, as for going and taking a course that is strictly based on religion, I haven't. Ingrid (ST) said: 'To be completely honest with you. I would say a four. That's sad because we are definitely a country of many religions.'

Mina (ET) agreed, 'The whole piece about having more training for the staff, because I think it would definitely be to our benefit'. Karen (ET) agreed and went further, indicating that she felt teacher education about religion should be mandatory. She also felt that funding was the real issue behind why it is not made mandatory:

It all comes down to the school boards having funding to train and the school boards making it mandatory whether the teachers want it or not. It has to be mandatory. You will run into teachers who will say this is against my right, to make me take a mandatory course. I don't have to teach this because it's about religion. I think that's ridiculous because if you're a teacher you're serving everybody. You can have your own thought, but you just have to serve everybody.

Participant teachers unanimously agreed that the revised curriculum should include mandatory education relating to religious diversity and meeting the needs of religious students. Michaela (ET) said:

> I think as teachers we do need a lot more training and support. Some of us obviously are a lot more comfortable and others are not. I think it needs to come down [to the teacher level]. Administration gets a lot of support where that is concerned but I don't think teachers do.

Carmen (ET) agreed, 'Absolutely, the religious diversity is a huge part of our society, even more so today, and I think that needs to be number one'. Anna (ST) also responded affirmatively:

> Yes. You can understand religious diversity without being religious yourself. That's like biology. If you are religious and you don't believe in the theory of evolution, you still teach it as a theory even though you don't believe in it.

Dianne (ST) agreed:

> Yes, it should, absolutely. Whether that's through teacher's college or workshops or placements, they need to give us the knowledge just to be aware of what religious communities learn or teach so that when kids come up to you and ask questions you will know how to answer them.

It was also evident from the data provided by the student teachers that even late in their teacher education programme, none had received any definition or instruction about the nature of the Ontario classroom with respect to religion or religious diversity. Also, there was indication from all student teachers that they initially anticipated being educated about religious diversity and the needs of religious students before the end of their initial teacher education. Ingrid (ST) said, 'I'm hoping so because it's a pressing issue in our society today. Although it's not as public today, it is still important for us to have knowledge about other religions'.

Teachers felt unprepared to deal with the subject of religion or issues relating to religion in the classroom. Half of the educators interviewed indicated that they did not feel that they were equipped to recognise and meet the needs of religious learners. Angela (ET) said, 'They just think we are professionals and we will just figure it out for ourselves.' Most of those who felt unequipped cited a lack of personal knowledge of religious world views, practices and customs. John (ET) admitted:

> There have been times when I may not have known that a certain activity would be frowned upon in certain cultures, so I have had to modify things on the fly for all the students to be more successful.

There was also evidence that educators sometimes rely on students and colleagues to educate them about the needs of specific religious students. Several of the teachers admitted that they sometimes rely on their students to supply religious content to the class, despite the fact that they do not have the background to verify the correctness of students' input. Sarah (ET) said, 'Sometimes we don't really know, and we learn from the students.' Angela (ET) said, 'It doesn't really matter whether we were given the tools to respond to religious diversity or not. We are very much told not to discuss those things anyway.'

Insight

Clearly, teachers did not feel adequately prepared to address the needs of religious students in the classroom. But the fact that teachers are not taking the initiative themselves may indicate several things. It may indicate that teachers do not see religion as an important enough element to include in their personal preparation, that they do not see the study of religion as something critical to student development, or that they are simply too busy. It is clear from the data that teachers have not received, and are not receiving, education in religions, religious diversity, and the needs of religious learners. It is equally clear that the participating teachers feel that it is a missing component of the teacher education curriculum. Given the generally low level of religious literacy in Canada, it is not surprising that teachers feel a gap in this area, especially when the gap is not addressed in the teacher education curriculum. But, unlike many in Canadian society, their jobs require teachers to deal with religious people and religious issues, sometimes frequently, depending on the demographic profile of their school and community.

Recognizing radicalization and extremism

Given that the research was situated in a geographical area where the student population is becoming increasingly multicultural, I felt that it was important to investigate whether teachers were being educated to recognize radical or

extremist views and behaviors in the classroom. The research was also undertaken during a time when the issue of student radicalization was prevalent in media and educational discussions throughout North America and Europe. So, it was important and timely to include this in the research.

As to whether teachers were equipped to recognise religious radicalization and extremism in the classroom, two-thirds of teachers said, 'No.' For example, Gabrielle (ET) claimed:

> In the area of radicalization, I don't feel that I am equipped, but as a professional I am well-equipped to know my students, to notice anything that is different or offside or out of character. That would be a hint to me. And I know there is some training regarding threat assessment. One of the grade four teachers found a list in a student's desk of who he wanted to hurt. I know it's removed from religion, but there are steps in place to help. I think I could recognise it, but knowing what to do next I think I would need help'.

Others felt that they were equipped to engage and get to know their class, and by doing so would be able to recognise any radical views. Steve (ST) acknowledged:

> As for individual teachers, it is their responsibility to know their class, who is in their class, the religions represented, and make an effort to not offend, and an effort to engage the whole student.

Sarah (ET) admitted to having concerns about some of her students, and not feeling equipped to recognise extremism in her high school classroom. She commented:

> I have some students that are a little more outspoken than others and they will make comments here and there that make me think, 'Oh, maybe they are an extremist.' It more so presents itself when students do assignments. If they have presentations that they're doing and things come out there. We recently had a TED Talk at our school and there were a couple of speakers that had very serious talks about their religions and you wonder, 'Well maybe they are extremists, but I would not know the tell-tale signs.'

Karen (ET) relayed the following story as an example of extremism in the classroom.

> So, this is where I have a little bit of an issue. And I will speak to an experience that I had because it really affected me in a lot of ways. And, I think it really affected the child as well. This is a radical Muslim

family, and their daughter got her period for the first time, and she was not at school for a week and a half. I got a call from her mom who told me that she is not to be seen by a boy, she is not to be touched by a boy, she will not attend school, and she is to be in her room away from everyone. I did not know what to say. It's her right, but that significantly hurts her child's education. She is away from school for a week every single month. She can't be near her father. She can't be near her brother. I have to respect that, but I have a very hard time with that. She came to school and her mother would put oils on her, something to do with being cleansed. So, a week before, other students didn't want to be around her because she smelled from the oils. So, I had a hard time with that one. And there was not a way around it because I had to respect their views, … I struggled with her being ostracised and isolated. And she was missing a lot of school. When it came to her missing school, I had to take my lunches and my recesses to tutor her on what she missed. And I don't think that's my job. I know that sounds awful. So, this girl is missing a week every month of the school year. That's seven days, times nine months. That's over and above what is acceptable by the Ontario government for absences.

Insight

Although in the above scenario the family and students adhere to a strict religious code and this behavior may be seen as correct by the family, some teachers would perceive it as extreme. It illustrates the need to educate teachers to recognise socially conservative religious practices, extremism that impinges on autonomy and individual rights, radicalisation that may translate into extremist action, and the differences between them. Overall, teachers did not feel prepared to deal with issues related to religion in their classroom. They had low levels of religious literacy and were not educated to identify radical speech or behavior in the classroom. All agreed that a standardised curriculum about religion in teacher education would better prepare them to deal with situations and issues associated with religion and religious practices. Teachers tied receiving proper education in this area to classroom safety and even to national security. Some felt that giving teachers the tools to recognize radical or extreme views early may help prevent the treat of home-grown terrorism.

The Secular Classroom Environment

I explored participant's understanding of the secular classroom and enquired whether the participants felt the secular classroom approach is effective in

dealing with the needs of religious learners. Experienced and student teachers were divided on their understanding of the secular classroom. For example, Tanya (ET) saw it as a neutral place. She said, 'It is just a neutral classroom. Everyone is accepted. There's equality, equity — but we don't focus on one. Just neutral'. Ingrid (ST) said:

> Secular means non-Christian, non-religious; away from all of that. Kind of like how our society is today. It's not connected to religion in any way. It's breaking away from all of that.

Dave (ET) said:

> I believe the classroom can be secular and I believe it should be. Secular, in my mind, does not mean anti-religious or no religion. It means that one religion is not given preference over another. I think there are people who think it means that no one can mention religion in the classroom. Some think that secular means taking the atheist approach.

Seven educators interpreted it as a place of no-religion, two described it as neutral, thirteen understood the secular classroom as a place that welcomed all religions, and three teachers admitted that they did not fully understand the concept. Anna (ST) seemed taken off guard by the question and admitted that this was not a concept that she had considered: 'I have no idea. I should probably know that'.

When asked if there has ever been any discussion as to whether the classroom should be a secular classroom or not during her programme, Anna answered with an emphatic, 'No'. Ten out of twenty-five experienced teachers and all of the student teachers believed the secular classroom was a place of open discussion, while the others interpreted the secular classroom as a place where religion could not be discussed. One experienced teacher, Charlene, felt deceived by her school administration about the nature of the secular classroom because while the school advertised the classroom environment as a place of welcome and understanding of all diversity, they felt that it had become a place where the word *secular* was interpreted to mean, a non-religious space. She explains:

> What we say we are on the outside may not be exactly what it is on the inside. For example, the last school I worked at — and I won't mention the name because it may get me in trouble — did a very good job of tweeting what it was doing, and was well known as a social justice school. But, what was seen on social media was the farthest

thing from the truth. Many schools do a great job of portraying an image of being inclusive and secular, but on the inside, they really aren't.

John (ET) was adamant, 'Yes, I think it means that we teach about the religion of children in the classroom in an academic way, rather than doing the practice of religion'. Tanya agreed:

> Yes, definitely. In terms of everyone feeling accepted within the classroom, having the right to learn and express themselves in a comfortable setting. Yeah, I definitely don't agree with everything they do but I accept them.

Referencing the Canadian Charter of Rights, Ingrid (ST) declared her belief that the classroom should remain secular, 'Yes I do. You can't deny what someone believes. It's their beliefs, right? It's in our Charter. That's what we stand on'.

When asked, what changes they would recommend in the classroom to better meet the needs of religious learners, the most frequent answer was more content for students and teachers about religion. Michaela (ET) insisted:

> I think more teacher training, more teaching resources to use in the classroom that are common. So, the same language with the same understanding is being used by all teachers. I think that more Board or Ministry created documents need to be created; I'm talking actual lessons.

Sharon (ET) expressed her desire to see students better equipped to handle differences of opinion in the classroom. She said:

> Mostly I have had great discussion with students in my class, but I've had some heated discussions also. One was between a student who is Christian and one who is agnostic. The conversation got heated and it was about homosexuality. At the end of the conversation they at least walked away and no one was really upset. But, it bothered me that they did not have the skills to be able to discuss it rationally without getting really mad.

Several felt that a formalised curriculum, that was non-confessional and age appropriate, would result in greater student and teacher autonomy. Nineteen of the twenty teachers interviewed and all five of the teacher focus group participants agreed that learning about religion should be age-related, systematic, and woven through the public school curriculum. Brian (ET) said, 'I have often wondered why some form of education about religion was not

included in the diversity discussions?' But, teachers were divided concerning the age at which the instruction should begin. Naomi's (ET) response was somewhat surprising. Identifying herself as a conservative Protestant Christian teaching high school in a secular system, she felt that children should not be taught about the beliefs of other religious groups until they are old enough to have a firm grasp on their family's religious beliefs. She explained:

> When I think about my kids, do I want them to be exposed to different religions from a young age? I would want them to be exposed to the fact that, yes, there are people from different religious backgrounds and you should be accepting of everyone and love everyone. But, to say that you are going to teach them the different religions, I think that I would want to make sure that they are not being directed towards one particular religion. You know how there might be that one teacher that's more bias. They are going to push one more than the other, so I would want to make sure from a young age that kids don't get confused about different religions.

Ingrid (ST) agreed with Naomi that elementary years were too early, but felt that when they were juniors it was appropriate.

> I think when they are juniors they should be taught about religions. When they are really young, I don't believe they can grasp the concepts. Maybe grade four or five, most definitely in high school. I think if kids understand one another's religious beliefs, they can understand each other better as a people.

In contrast, both Dave (ET) and Brian (ET) felt that a systematic approach from an early age was a viable way to teach students. Dave suggested:

> You start with elementary and look at the holidays, and as students get older introduce more and more complex ideas. It would help them understand each other. That's a huge issue right now. It would really help having someone in the building that, if you have a situation that you don't know how to deal with, you have someone to refer to.

Nine teacher participants felt that instruction should begin in kindergarten, eleven said that it should begin at grade four or five, while five felt that it should be a part of the high school curriculum.

When asked if they have seen any changes in the classroom concerning religion since the beginning of their teaching career, Dave (ET) shared:

> There has definitely been a change. It has been more under the umbrella of equity and diversity and inclusion. It has never been just religion, but it is focused around including everyone and including everyone's holidays.

Karen (ET) saw the changes that she observed as something negative:

> I think any changes I have seen have been hurting rather than helping. By saying things like you can't decorate, you can't do this or that. That all happened from my first year of teaching to now. It was completely different.

Most experienced teachers admitted that their definition and understanding of 'secular' was formed through years of classroom experience and from interpreting board and Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) directives, and not drawn from their initial teacher education or subsequent formal education received after their initial teacher education. Sharon (ET) admitted, 'I have never been given a clear definition of what a secular classroom looks like. I sort of made it up as I went along.' After examining the OME's definition, teachers unanimously agreed that the province should maintain the secular classroom approach.

All experienced teachers also indicated that education about religion should be taught by the classroom teacher as opposed to a specialist or an outside professional member of a religious community. Control over content and student trust were the main reasons given for making it part of the classroom teacher's responsibility. Over half of the teachers expressed a genuine fear about addressing the subject of religion in the classroom. Anneliese (ET) openly admitted her fears of being admonished by administration if she discussed religion in the classroom. She said, 'No one openly gives you permission to discuss religion with your students, but the general opinion is that you avoid doing those things.' Several expressed a fear of reprisal from parents if they discussed religion with their children. Others expressed fear of a school principal, school board, or OME reprimand that could potentially affect employment. Teachers also feared a loss of reputation with the students in the classroom because of their lack of information about the subject of religion. Teachers indicated that if they were well-informed about the subject matter, they were more apt to engage in conversation about religion. According to participants, the teacher's personal comfort level with religion determined the

degree to which the idea of a truly secular classroom was lived out in real experience.

Most teacher participants agreed that equipping teachers to deliver a systematic age-related curriculum was the best way to teach religion in the school system. Anneliese (ET) suggested that 'a teacher at each school be trained to be a subject matter expert in the area of religion and religious issues'. Some suggested that a teacher at each school be trained to be a subject matter expert in the area of religion and religious issues. No teacher thought that it should be delivered by outside leaders of religious communities. Tina (ET) said:

> It should be integrated into everything that we do. My understanding of world religions would be that the core is about being a good human. That's how I would sum it up. When we talk about all the character traits that are big in our Board those are just about being good people. Things like compassion and empathy. We should be allowed to talk about it whenever we want. Definitely social studies lend itself very well to that, and I think it should be celebrated.

Helen (ET) felt that teachers should be entrusted with teaching about religion:

> I think teachers should go about it. They should have a course on it; maybe have a teacher who is designated for it. But, I think once a teacher goes over it, you can bring in people from that community. That way, you can know what they actually believe from first-hand experience.

All experienced teachers agreed that students in public schools should receive some kind of formalised and consistent curriculum about religion somewhere in their public school education. Although the school system, especially at higher levels, strongly endeavors to promote environments of 'acceptance', 'inclusion' and 'respect,' for all students, they also indicated that there was a lack of mandatory teacher and student education about the subject of religion.

Insight

In general, teachers were inconclusive as to whether the secular classroom was a place where religious views were encouraged or discouraged. Most felt that it should be a place that allows for religious conversation rather than discouraging it. Teachers did not feel free to express their own

religious views and expressed apprehension and fear when dealing with any religious conversation in the classroom. They felt that in order for religious conversations to occur, teachers should be trained to deliver a systematic, age-related curriculum about religious world views.

Personal Teacher Experience

Participant teachers' descriptions of their experiences concerning the way religion plays out in the classroom learning environment is obviously subjective and an interpretation of personal experiences. All but one experienced teacher related stories of negative experiences concerning religion in the classroom. Michaela (ET) said:

> Sometimes you're teaching and even though you are talking about something in a very broad way and educational way, it is not their belief system. They are coming to you as a teacher and saying, 'No, that's not true.' And then, it's having to embrace that in front of the child, and say that it is true for you but actually it's not for everyone. You do not want to teach them outside their belief system, but you have to teach them to be tolerant and accepting. That sometimes is an interesting spot to be put in.

Michaela (ET) presented another problem:

> We not only have to deal with the student who cannot participate, but we have to educate the other students around it. They have to understand why I am asking them to stand and participate and not the religious students. So, you have to accommodate that in a way that does not isolate them because of choices being made by them or their parents.

When asked to describe any experience related to religious diversity involving parents and their belief system, Carmen's (ET) answer indicated that issues related to religion can extend beyond the classroom instruction to other areas of school life such as administration. She said:

> One Muslim man came into the office when I was doing admin duty and he would not talk to me, but he would talk to my supervisor who was a man. Someone told me later that it was because I was a woman.

Karen (ET) had a similar experience:

> This is where I don't have a lot of tolerance. I had a man who came to a parent-teacher interview and would not look at me or sit down with

me. So, I said something to him, 'If you are going to attend this meeting with your daughter I want you to sit down and look at me. I don't feel that I should be disrespected by you not looking at me. I am educating your child.'

Naomi (ET) said:

> I remember there was a student of mine, she skipped school and went off to the Scarborough Town Centre, and the next day she had to wear a hijab. She was completely covered. That to me was a bit shocking. But, I obviously had to respect what the parents were doing.

When asked how they addressed classroom conversations about religious diversity, eighty percent of the teachers interviewed said that they avoided the subject if possible. Eleven of those interviewed admitted to feeling uncomfortable and even fearful handling religious issues in the classroom. Most were afraid of being reprimanded by the school administration or by parents. Several indicated that they feared that their personal knowledge was inadequate to engage in discussion about religious subjects with students. Alana (ET) said, 'I am always afraid that I do not know enough about religious practices and beliefs.'

Insight

Teachers relayed a variety of negative personal experiences related to religion and education. Most issues reflected the teachers' misunderstanding or lack of knowledge about students' family context or about religious customs and rituals. Most participants who shared experiences relayed a story that involved someone from the Muslim religion.

Practical Classroom Pedagogy

I also explored how participant teachers separate practical from ideological aspects of the practice of religion in their classrooms. Half of the experienced teachers reported that they were careful to celebrate the religious holidays and festivals of religious students in their classroom. This was more prevalent among teachers of elementary students. High school teachers, like Sarah (ET), indicated that as students get older it is important to show interest, but did not feel that celebrating in a significant way was necessary. She said that she does not go out

of her way to celebrate religious holidays but will respond to students if she notices.

> There have been some students, if I notice that they have certain things like the henna, or if they are wearing different colors that stand out I'll ask them about it, whether they are celebrating anything special. Or, if I know it's Diwali, I will say 'Oh are you celebrating? What do you guys do?'

Carmen (ET) felt that celebrating religious holidays was important to a holistic education for children:

> We need to teach to the whole student. Religion is a part of who a person is and should be represented and celebrated in everything we do so that the child feels included.

Fran (ST) anticipated celebrating religious holidays in her classroom when she completes her teacher education:

> I will celebrate religious holidays. Yeah, you shouldn't designate all your time to it, but certainly recognise the holidays of those who are present. I do believe that when the holiday comes up you should tell the true meaning behind it. If it is Christmas, then tell the religious significance of Christmas. Tell what Christians actually mean, not the Santa story.

All teachers felt that recognizing religious holidays and festivals was important for a holistic education for students. While some reported decorating their classrooms, others felt it was sufficient to engage in conversations privately and in front of the class to ensure that the students saw their interest. All participants felt that the recognition of religious days was important for the student's feeling of inclusion. Three of the interviewees used the term 'student well-being' when describing the importance of recognizing religious holidays. Two experienced teachers felt that recognizing and including everyone's religious practice in daily school life was impractical, especially in classrooms that were very religiously and culturally diverse.

Insight

Generally, teachers acknowledged the religious holidays of the students in their classroom but felt that education about religion needed to go further than the recognition of religious holidays and holy days. Several research findings

emerged unsolicited from the interviews, and are included because they were recurring themes in the educators' responses. First, when personal religious beliefs and popular cultural ideals clashed, teachers felt that the Canadian Constitution and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms trumped any religious ideals. Secondly, three of the teacher participants admitted that whenever possible, they celebrated the secular or folk version of religious holidays instead of dealing with the religious significance. Most indicated that it was easier to deal with the secularized version of the holiday and focus on the fun things that unite students, rather than on the specific doctrinal points that may be divisive.

PARENTS' ASSESSMENT OF TEACHER EDUCATION

Two focus groups provided parents' perspective on the Ontario public school system and its interaction with religion. This perspective was important to provide another lens through which to investigate teacher education in relation to the needs of students. Once again research data were organised in accordance with previously established themes, but with a flexible approach that allowed for new themes to emerge.

Parent Focus Group Profiles

My field research included two parent/guardian focus groups. The first parent focus group consisted of three couples. One couple identified as practising Hindus, the second couple as Protestant Christians, and the third as Roman Catholic Christians. The second parent focus group was also comprised of three couples. One couple was Muslim, the second was Protestant Christian, and the third couple described themselves as spiritual but not religious.

Religious Involvement

For the first focus group, despite having acquaintances in other religions, two of the couples admitted to having only people of their own religious affiliation as part of their close circle of friends. Lucky responded:

> In India, there is a variety of religions, so since the beginning we brought celebrating Christmas when we were young kids, and we

celebrate our own festivals, we celebrate Eid, you don't feel like it's not yours, so that is how we grew up. We have accepted multicultural because that is how we grew up.

Toni reflected, 'We always got together with work acquaintances but my friends are all Christian-based religions. This is not by choice, it is just the way it is'. Joseph said:

> We have friends of all religions, especially in this subdivision, everybody is so excited and happy, and there is never any mention of our differences. When we get together, everybody brought the dishes they enjoyed from their own culture.

All three of the couples in the first focus group attributed their connection to people of other religions to their work or careers. One couple had a wider circle of friends and close acquaintances from other religious backgrounds, and attributed this connection to their constant efforts to connect with a wide variety of people in their neighborhood. All couples considered themselves to be a part of a religious group. Two of the three attended their place of worship regularly. Mira said, 'We are not directly involved in any religious community but we do follow our religion at home'. Lucky said, 'At home we follow our religion every day; what I have seen since my childhood. [I've] always been a follower of Hindu'. Angelo said:

> We are Catholics. To a certain extent, I have had a very strong Catholic/spiritual upbringing. But along the way, you fall by the wayside of Catholicism. But, I always maintain a certain connection to church.

One couple admitted to being seasonal attenders at their place of worship. All three couples said that they practised their religious beliefs in their everyday life, included such things as prayer, service, personal behavior modification, and teaching their children about their religion.

When I asked the second focus group about their circle of friends, Jan and Tom acknowledged that most of their close friends were from their church and consequently they interacted very little with people of other religions. Kalai said:

> Outside of our home we interact with people of all religions, especially in the workplace. But I would say that the people that we

invite to our home, that we are close with, are usually those we have something in common with, like our family or Tamil friends. It's a comfort thing I guess.

Eva said:

> We are comfortable with people of all religions but I would have to say our closest friends are white Canadians. We have a couple of Asian friends but I'm not sure what religion they are. We don't talk religion.

When asked about church attendance Tom responded, 'We attend church almost every Sunday and try to raise our children with Christian values. That's not always easy these days.' Mike said:

> We tried attending every Sunday but our kids are involved in dance and hockey, and it is hard to make that commitment. We do try to teach our family about God through the way we live every day.'

Guna said, 'We don't go every week to the temple, maybe once a month, but we are involved in the life of the temple, especially during religious festivals and holidays.' Participants' involvement in religious practice ranged from no involvement to several times a week at a local mosque, temple or church.

Insight

Most participants who identified as religious had a circle of friends who shared their religious beliefs. Their interactions with people who believed or practiced other religions were typically associated with their workplace or neighborhood interactions. People tend to associate with individuals who share similar interests and backgrounds, and are not inclined to pursue interactions with culturally or religiously diverse others to explore differences. So, it is not surprising that they remained unfamiliar with people holding differing beliefs and religions. Consequently, the resulting low level of religious literacy prevails among the parents of students within the school system, and clearly adds another dimension to the teachers' interactions with religious learners in their classrooms.

The Secular Classroom

All three couples in the first focus group described the secular classroom as a place of religious tolerance and acceptance. Angelo responded:

> I find it incredibly appealing that we are a very tolerant society, and it starts at a very young age, and it is extremely important that it is instilled at a very young age and hopefully it carries out through their adult life.

Toni said, 'In my experience, depending on the teacher, the classroom is a place where everyone can be who they are.' Participants also felt that children who grew up in close contact with people of other religions and cultures were much more tolerant and accepting of religious differences. Angelo said:

> I see color and perhaps even judge color. And, yet you see kids and bring up color, it is like you are talking a foreign language. They don't understand color, or why it should be considered as such.

Toni said, 'It is about acceptance. They are not bullied in any sense. It is funny because kids accept anything and anyone'. The second focus group had a mixed understanding of the secular classroom. Two couples saw it as a place where religion was open for discussion, while one saw it as a place where religious conversation was stifled. Tom said:

> I remember one of our kids brought up something religious in class. I'm not sure what it was, but she said that the teacher asked her to discuss it with her after class. I don't think our daughter ever did though.'

Guna said:

> I've never really thought about it but to me the secular classroom is a place where religion is not talked about. In one way, I agree with that. I don't want anyone trying to convert my child to another religion. I do want them, when they are older, to learn about other religions.

Eva responded:

> I see the secular classroom as a place where everyone's views should be respected. Unfortunately, I think it's a place where no religious stuff gets talked about. I grew up knowing nothing about other people's religion, and I grew up in a city. We had this kid in our class who was a Jehovah's Witness and we thought she was weird because

she didn't stand up for the national anthem. If someone had sat us down and explained her religion to us maybe we would have looked at her differently.

Insight

Most parent participants understood the secular classroom as a place where all religions were to be respected and accommodated and where they expected their children to feel accepted. While most indicated that they had not experienced any religious discrimination they did not see it as a place where their children were free to openly discuss or share their religious views. And while they did not want their children to engage in discussions that challenged their own religious views until they were cognitively ready to do so, they did feel that the academic study of religion, presented by qualified teachers, was an important part of their child's social development. Parents felt that integrating their children with people of other religions and cultures was healthy and taught their children to be respectful, tolerant and accepting of differences.

Experiences of Religious Intolerance or Discrimination

No parent participant from the first focus group articulated encountering any circumstance where their family or religious values were opposed to the values of the school system. Lucky responded:

> I don't think we ever came across any situation that we felt we had to sacrifice our family values for our kids to integrate. I am a teacher and I know that I should not bring up religious topics, but some high school students will ask 'Where are you from?' and I'll say that I am from Canada.

Toni said:

> I think my parents, that generation, were a little bit racist, but for us that grew up in Canada and who have been exposed to all different people, different religions, different nationalities, characters, it is very easy for us. Our generation has changed; we are more evolved.

Parent participants did not indicate that their children had faced any significant discrimination related to religion in the classroom. Lucky responded, 'Not really. In terms of places, Toronto is most acceptable to other cultures. Racism over here is very minimal as opposed to other places in Canada.' Mira shared a story

of feeling culturally discriminated against, but not in connection to religion or the education system.

When the second parent focus group was asked if they had ever felt that their personal or family religious values ever conflicted with values being taught in the classroom, two parents said, 'Yes.' Kalai said:

> I am still not sure about the sex education curriculum. I understand what they are trying to do but I think they need to consult with families of all religions about what they are teaching. Everyone's family values are not the same. I think this is one area where family values clash with the school's values.

Tom agreed:

> In most cases I don't have a problem, but I want my wife and I to call the shots about when and where our kids learn certain things. Just because the government says that something is right, that does not mean that religious parents think it is good for their children.

None of the couples expressed feelings of religious discrimination or intolerance when dealing with the school system. Eva said, 'With regards to being discriminated against because of religion, I don't think that has ever happened.' All parents had positive interaction with the Ontario school system where religion is concerned and did not feel that religious concerns were dismissed or trivialized. Kalai responded, 'Any time that I have had to talk to the school about anything, I have never felt disrespected or discriminated against.'

Insight

Most parents felt that the school system endeavored to be respectful of their religious views, especially about family issues, and that there were never times when they felt forced to compromise their family values because of the school system. Several voiced concern about the new health curriculum in the area of sexuality and felt that more consultation with parents was necessary in that area. These concerns may reflect the conservative understanding of sexuality and family associated with many religious groups.

Religious Literacy

In rating their religious literacy on a scale of one to ten, parents in the first focus group gave themselves an average of three. Lucky, who rated himself at four, said:

> Because I grew up in India, we learned about other religions and their festivals. We learned the differences. We learned from each other and it prepared us, not only in childhood but for our whole life.

Angelo gave himself a low rating:

> My knowledge is a two. I know very little about the other religions. It is a shame. Social media makes it so different, there are no more barriers, no more boundaries, no more excuses.

Toni also rated herself very low:

> I would say two, because it was only in my adult life that I hear someone was Buddhist and I would ask them what that is. Muslims, what do you do? In school, we only learned about the Catholic faith.

Jenn said:

> I would rate myself at three. Back home my parents were Buddhist, and my parents would go to the temple three times a week. They would fast, no meat, egg, fish, only veggies. We would follow my mom to the temple, but we had some friends who were Christian and every Christmas we were excited to go to church. Fun time! I learned a little bit from my friends. My parents had no issue that we hung around with other religions or [would] go to church.

Also rating himself at three, Joseph reflected:

> We have families from other religions all around us. We learned a lot from our neighbors. Our Hindu friends would have their priest come over and pray for their house. We were invited to join in the blessing of their house. It was OK. I worked with people from many different religions.

The second parents focus group assigned themselves an average rating of four. Mike rated himself at five, saying:

> When I was in university I took a course in world religions just out of curiosity. I learned a lot but if you asked me today, I could probably tell you some things but I've forgotten a lot.

Eva said:

> I'm probably a three, maybe even a two. I feel bad about that but I am not in the workplace or in a neighborhood that has a lot of religious diversity. I think we should know these things, but I don't.

Jan admitted:

> I'm probably a three. I would like to have time to learn because I do think this is important. I was hoping you wouldn't ask me that question because I feel bad that I don't know more.

Tom responded:

> I would say that I'm a four. I know some things, mostly about people's culture, not specifically about religion. We had some cultural stuff for work, sensitivity stuff, but that's all. Anything I do know I learned for myself.

Kalai said:

> I think I would say a five because I grew up around people of all religions. We were taught not to like some of them, but that even made me more curious about their beliefs.

Guna said, 'I would say a three. I know a lot about a couple of religions, but nothing about some.' Parent participants gave themselves a median score of three out of ten for religious knowledge. While most attributed any knowledge that they have to their interaction with people of other religions in the workplace or in their neighborhood, they expressed disappointment with not knowing more about other religions.

Insight

All parents felt that an academic understanding of religion would help their children in social and employment situations and there was a general feeling that knowing more about the religion of other people contributed to healthier global citizenship. So, while religious literacy is generally low among parents, for many there appears to be a desire to know more. However, the incentive, opportunity or resources to acquire religious literacy is evidently not strong enough to overcome the barriers of acquiring such knowledge.

Teaching about Religion in the School System

Examining how important it was to parents that teachers have a basic understanding of religion and religious communities allowed the research question to be examined through another lens and brought another critical voice to the discussion. All parents in the first focus group felt that it was extremely important for teachers to be educated about the world views of various religions. Mina said:

> It is extremely important to know about other religions, their ideologies. Even if you are a man and a lady wouldn't shake hands; even putting your hand forward to shake someone's hand could be offensive. It has to be understood — the reason behind it. Teachers should be educated how to deal with this in teacher's college.

Joseph agreed:

> Teachers don't understand half of their classroom. We are living here in the Toronto area where we have religions from all over the world. Sixty-eight percent are from East Asia, and the majority are Muslim. Seventy-five percent of people in Canada claim to be part of some religion.

When asked to describe how important it is for students to learn about the world views of various religions and whether it should be mandatory, Mina stated, 'There is a course in high school called World Religion which is optional. Not mandatory. It should be mandatory.' Lucky said:

> Toronto is already multicultural and it is not going backwards. Just very basic teaching, so they are aware of each religion. There is a difference between teaching about religion and teaching religion. … Teaching religion in school I am against. School is not a place where we should be teaching religion, but we need to be aware [of it]. We are not in favor of teaching religion, but teaching about religion.

Parents unanimously felt that it was beneficial to involve outside professionals in teaching children about religion provided they were given a curriculum and held accountable to ensure that they did not preach or proselytise. Toni responded:

> Yes, Yes. As long as the one brought in, keeps it in lecture format from an information perspective, not preaching to the kids; taught in an informative manner.

Mina agreed, adding:

As a guest speaker, but equal portion should be given to all not just one religion. Here we are teaching the understanding of all religions and the tolerance of all. It should not be dominated by one'.

Lucky was more cautious:

> The tricky thing is to make sure that they don't teach religion. Sometimes you bring in these preachers. There is a very fine line between the two. As soon as you start you have to keep the preaching out.

All parents felt that their children's needs concerning the practice of religion were being met at home and not at the school. Joseph said, 'A child's religious needs are met at home, not through the school'. Angelo said, 'Teach them the basics of all religions, and acceptance and tolerance. The practice of the finer things should be done of home'.

When parents in the second focus group were asked to describe how important it is for teachers to be educated about the world views and ideologies of various religions, all three couples indicated that they thought it should be mandatory. Jan said:

> I feel that if the school system is trying to understand a student, they have to know where they are coming from. I don't know if there is any research on how different religions learn but that might be interesting to study.

Mike responded strongly:

> I think it should absolutely be mandatory. Teachers in the classroom need to know their students. A teacher might be saying or doing something completely offensive to one of the kids or their parents and not even know it. Especially in places like Toronto, you've got to know these things. I thought they learned that stuff in their training.

In response to whether it was important for students to learn about the world views and ideologies of various religions, parents were mixed in their responses. Kalai argued:

> I want them to learn their own religion well first and then they can make decisions for themselves. I think high school students should have to take religion, not to become another religion but to learn about the beliefs of other people.

Eva said, 'I think they need to learn about other religions but I am concerned about the age. I don't want competing religious ideas for younger kids.'

When asked how their religious holidays were recognised or celebrated in the classroom, parents responded that they were comfortable with how this was undertaken. Guna said, 'I want my child to see that every culture has something special in it, especially the fun stuff. Kids need to know that this is universal.' Jan agreed:

> All of the teachers that we have been involved with, except one, took the time to get to know the backgrounds of the kids in the class and would ask them to share their holidays. I thought this was really good for the kids. No one got offended.

Insight

All parents felt that it was important for their children to learn about other religions. This may be a desire drawn from the parents' experience in the workplace. Most parents felt that the best approach for teaching about religion in the classroom was by teachers who are educated in the subject. This strong belief among parents that teachers should be educated in the area of religion echoes that of the teachers. The strong assertion by parents that education should be age-appropriate led to a further discussion regarding teacher education. Most parents agreed that living and working in the multicultural Canadian context requires that teachers have at least a basic understanding of the students in their classroom, and that basic understanding includes their religion.

Teaching Methodology

All parents in the first focus group expressed gratitude for Canada's multicultural mosaic, and felt that the classroom should definitely be an expression of the country's diversity. While over half of the participants had experienced bias and discrimination in Canada on a personal level, they felt that the younger generation was far more tolerant of religion and religious expression. When asked whether outside religious leaders should be invited to participate in the classroom when their religion is being taught, there was a mixed response. Tom said:

I think this is where it gets tricky, people want their kids to know, but they also want to know whose teaching them. I also think that age is an important thing here. It can get very confusing for a child in elementary school if we teach them everything about religion.

Toni said:

Definitely, this area should be taught to teachers, who should then teach the kids. They should know, if something comes up, how to deal with it.

Joseph responded, 'I am not sure if I agree with that approach. I think the board should have people who are trained just for that purpose.' Kalai agreed, insisting that he prefers that the teacher be educated in these things, especially where younger children are involved. Mike, on the other hand, was fine with outside people being involved as long as they were approved and supervised by the board. Guna said, 'I would like for religious leaders to review the material because I would be afraid that whoever teaches about my religion would not do it correctly.'

When asked to describe how their child's personal religious needs are being met by the school system, Eva responded:

I think the main responsibility for the child's education about his or her own religion is the parent. I think that any need can be met by a child's own religious leaders and parents. The school needs to teach about the views of other religions on an academic level.

Kalai added:

I'm responsible for my child's needs, all of them. I think there is a difference between religious knowledge and religious needs. … I guess providing knowledge is meeting a need, in a way.

Insight

While parents viewed education about religion as an important part of identity, they articulated a clear delineation between the confessional and academic study of religion. Most saw parents and trusted religious community leaders as responsible for confessional teaching but saw trusted, trained teachers as responsible for academic education. They unanimously felt that teachers, rather than outside religious leaders should be educated to provide the content. The

views of parents here may be a form of protectionism against prosyletising or simply a desire to see curriculum presented by qualified individuals. Parents felt that outside help should be welcomed as subject matter experts but that qualified teachers should present the curriculum. Parents were unanimous in their belief that the delivery of religious content needed to be done in a way that was age appropriate, non-proselytizing and included non-religious points-of-view. Parents in both focus groups felt a personal responsibility to meet most of their child's religious needs instead of leaving it up to the school. They did, however, see it as the school system's responsibility to prepare teachers by providing them with knowledge about religion. Parents saw this preparation and the ability to disseminate knowledge about other religions as meeting their child's need. Parents also felt that one of the main reasons teachers should be educated about religion was because it prepared them to teach in the multicultural, multi-religious Canadian context.

What emerges from the data is a picture of an education system that is cautiously grappling with the reality of a growing multicultural population. This struggle and the lack of clear guidelines regarding the nature of the secular classroom has left teachers with no sure foundation on which to build a practical pedagogical approach. The data indicate that teachers and parents see academic religious literacy as important to student development. Teachers and parents agreed that the OCT is endeavoring to educate teachers to create classroom environments that meet the needs of all students. Most teachers and parents identified the need for acceptance, assimilation, accommodation, wholeness, and autonomy as important to student development, but especially so for religious students. In general, parents and teachers felt that not providing teachers with content about religion may affect the teachers' ability to fully understand religious students. While teachers indicated that they felt religious knowledge was missing in their initial education and that it was important to teacher education, they showed little initiative in obtaining that knowledge through additional qualifying courses or personal study. Most parents and teachers also agreed that trained educational professionals rather than religious professionals should deliver the curriculum. Parents and teachers did not make a distinction between religious and non-religious student involvement in the academic study of religion, but felt that studying religion contributed to a

greater cultural understanding because religion is such a large component of Canadian culture.

CHAPTER 5: DESIGNING TEACHER EDUCATION

To fully address my research question requires an examination of the interconnectedness of the critical elements that shape student curriculum and pedagogy, and how teachers must be equipped to effectively present that curriculum. These six elements, gleaned from my literature review and outlined in Figure 1, are policy development, learning theory, curriculum design, cognitive development, teaching methodologies, teaching methods and style, and moral/faith development.
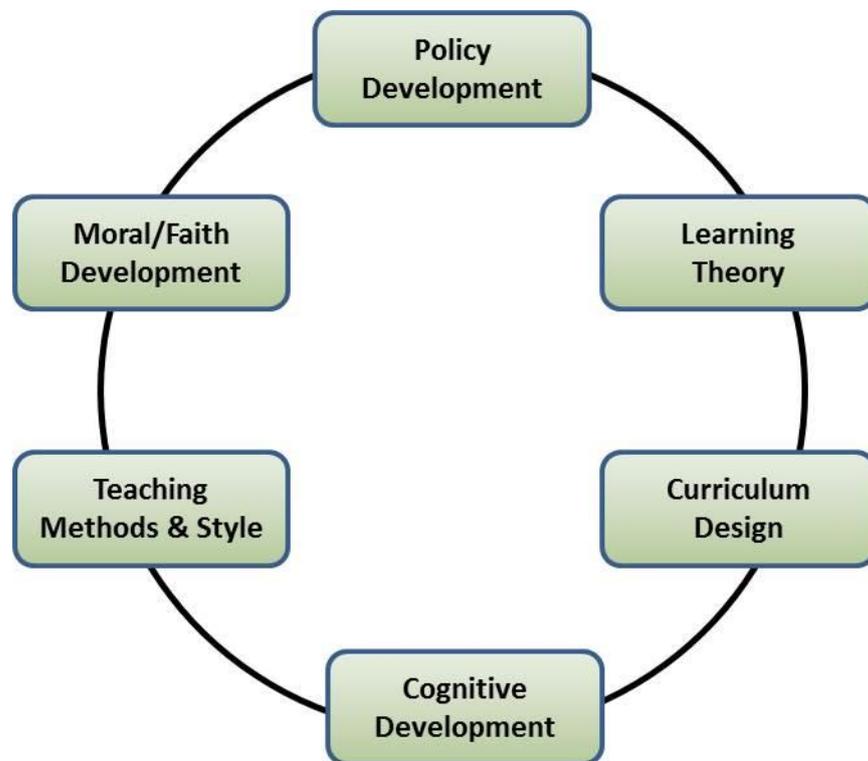
Figure 1: Critical Elements Shaping Student
Curriculum and Pedagogy

Beyond Chapter Two's discussion of policy development that has shaped the Ontario education system, these components help construct a framework for educating teachers that is focused on student pedagogy and meeting student needs. Understanding these components is useful in evaluating the effectiveness of the new 2015 teacher education curriculum.

LEARNING THEORY

The first critical component of student pedagogy that informs discussion of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) teacher education curriculum is learning theory. To frame my discussion, I am utilising Illeris' (2006) three-dimensional model of learning, which integrates diverse theorists into a comprehensive model. This model brings together the leading educational theorists and schools of thought, past and present, and introduces a comprehensive picture of how we learn. Illeris (2003) claims that his model is:

> A very broad and open definition of learning covering all processes
> that lead to relatively lasting changes of capacity, whether they be of
> a motor, cognitive, psychodynamic (i.e. emotional, motivational or
> attitudinal) or social character, and which are not due to genetic-
> biological maturation. (397)

He boldly states that his work brings together 'a set of different learning types that, taken together, cover all learning' (2006:30). His premise is that individual schools of thought are not exclusive theories or processes but are in fact important pieces of a larger puzzle and his model illustrates the interconnectedness of this very broad spectrum of theorists and ideas.

Illeris' Model of Learning

Illeris model encompasses educational psychology and its experience-based research, connects with biology and its study of cognition and brain functions, and at the same time interacts with the social sciences and the many ways of functioning in society. The model includes three dimensions of learning, content, incentive and interaction, and recognises that these dimensions exist within a particular societal and social context, as illustrated in Figure 2. Illeris (2003) contends that an important step in the construction of his theory:

> … is to realize that all learning implies the integration of two very
> different processes, namely an external interaction process between
> the learner and his or her social, cultural or material environment,
> and an internal psychological process of acquisition and elaboration.
> (398)

He insists that all 'academic schools and fields can have something important to contribute to a satisfactory holistic understanding' (2006:7). Illeris
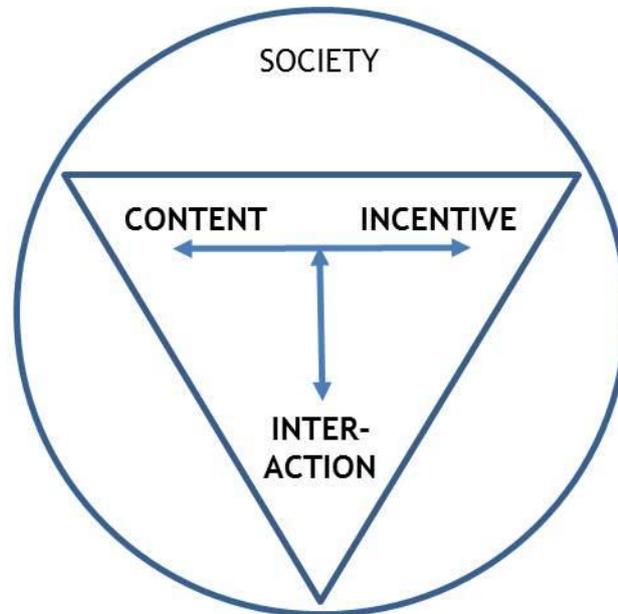
Figure 2: Three Dimensions of Learning (Illeris, 2006:26)

claims the cognitive dimension (content) including knowledge and skills, the emotional dimension (incentive) including feelings and motivation, and the interactive dimension (interaction) including communication and cooperation are all embedded in a societally situated context (environment). Any attempt to educate teachers about religion must therefore be holistic in that it gives consideration to all three dimensions of the student's learning. The basic premise of Illeris' model, as illustrated in Figure 3, is that learning has two axes, the horizontal axis of acquisition and the vertical axis of interaction, which he uses to create his three-dimensional model. The horizontal or 'acquisition' axis is comprised of 'content' and 'incentive'. Illeris notes that 'acquisition typically
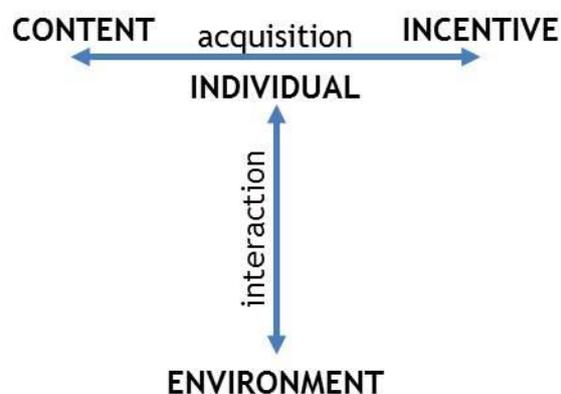
Figure 3: The Fundamental Process of Learning (Illeris, 2006:23)

has the character of linkage between new impulses and influences and the results of relevant earlier learning — by which the result obtains its individual mark' (2006:22). He claims here that his model not only encompasses both internal and external processes of learning, but also speaks to the relationship between the learner's past and present thought processes. This has implication for the way teachers are educated to address the prior and ongoing religious learning that they and students may bring to the classroom. Illeris (2006) says the content dimension:

> … typically concerns knowledge, understanding and skills. Through this we generally seek to create meaning and mastery, thus strengthening our functionality, i.e. our ability to function appropriately in relation to the environment in which we find ourselves. (29)

This too has implications for teacher education because in order for students to create meaning and mastery, and strengthen functionality about religion in their environment, teachers must first establish their own meanings and, to some degree, master the subject of religion. Subject mastery may provide teachers with a greater ability to assume classroom roles that go beyond presenter or subject matter expert, and embrace the role of a mediator or facilitator which lend themselves more to inquiry-based learning models.

Illeris touches briefly on the subject of unconscious learning, or learning that takes place without the individual knowing that it is happening, claiming that 'it is important to be aware of the fact that we can learn something without being conscious of it — all of us probably do this every day' (17). Eisner (1994) claims that what curriculum designers or educators choose to leave out of the curriculum, the null curriculum, sends a veiled message about what is to be valued: 'What children don't learn is as important as what they do learn. What the curriculum neglects is as important as what it teaches' (96-7). Jacobs (1997) insists, 'Curriculum design has become more an issue of deciding what you won't teach as well as what you will teach' (27). This highlights the importance of including religion in teacher education and the unintended learning that may be taking place in public school classrooms if teachers remain religiously illiterate. Additionally, past personal experience, interaction or involvement with religion is part of the teacher's religious literacy.

The acquisition axis of Illeris' model includes incentive or the individual's 'motivation, emotion and volition' (2006:29). Illeris insists its ultimate function is 'to secure the *mental balance* of the learner and thereby it simultaneously develops a personal *sensibility*' (2003a:399). How a situation is experienced is important to the learning process, including the feelings, motivations and mental energy involved. A comprehensive teacher education may ensure that teachers are equipped to go beyond merely dealing with external things, like the accommodation of religious practice or physical elements like head coverings, to dealing with the internal aspects such as emotions, faith, and motivation. That may help teachers view their role as facilitators of ongoing identity-shaping discussions in the classroom rather than simply a conduit of content. The value and durability of learning is closely related to the emotional dimension of the learning process. Illeris (2006) also insists that the acquisition of learning is a byproduct of the coming together of content, which is structural, and incentive, and it is dynamic in the experience of the learner. He contends that, in order for acquisition to take place, the learner must be able to link new impulses with earlier ones, or in other words, the learner must be able to seamlessly link information obtained through past learning experiences with new learning in the present. When teachers are equipped to understand and to appreciate the vital link between their own past and present impulses, religious and otherwise, they can then help students do the same. Those vital links are made possible only if religious content has been previously learned.

The interaction dimension of Illeris' model addresses the relationship and interface between the learner and the environment. In the interaction dimension, the focus shifts from 'the human being's biological-genetic constitution and its individual and societal development in this relation, to society's historically developed structures and customs of which the individual forms a part' (Illeris, 2006:96). On the individual level, Illeris (2003a) argues that 'both the cognitive and the emotional functions and their interplay are crucially dependent on the interaction process between the learner and the social, cultural and material environment' (401). If the interaction within the environment is not acceptable to the learner, learning may not occur or the learner may learn something other than what the educator intended. Content and incentive may be present but, if the environment is not conducive to

learning, learning may not occur. In order to situate learning in environments that are acceptable to all learners, teacher education must include some instruction in how to make that possible. Illeris further contends that all learning is 'situated', ie that it takes place in a certain situation, a certain learning space, which both determines the learning possibilities and shapes the learning process and the nature of the learning that occurs. Providing teacher education about religion has the potential to create learning spaces in which students are given the opportunity and freedom to explore the humanity and world view of others in a safe and welcoming environment, and provide teachers with the skill to facilitate and moderate such environments. Additionally, for Illeris, the situatedness of learning is understood at different levels. The environment is part of the learning and encompasses both the learner's social situation and the larger societal context, and consists not only of the historical/societal, but also accounts for the biological and our development as a species. Consequently, it includes such things as action, communication and cooperation. Educating teachers about religion recognises that student education is situated in Canada's rapidly globalizing, multi-religious society, and in a present post-secondary climate that, by all indications, is anxious to learn more about people of other religions.

Illeris (2006) describes four types of learning based on the complexity of the conceptual framework that is engaged. First, he describes cumulative learning which is learning that occurs when the 'learner does not possess any developed mental schemes to which impressions from the environment can be related, ie when the first element in a new scheme is developed' (39). With religious diversity in Canada, and the fact that content about religion is not mandatory in public school, later learning about religion may be necessarily cumulative. Teacher education could potentially provide the foundational building blocks for education about religion for both the teacher and the student. Second, assimilative learning is described as the acquisition of learning into an already existing meaning structure. It is about, 'incorporating new influences in established patterns of movement, potential actions, structures of knowledge or modes of understanding (Illeris, 2006:37). It is likely that providing teacher education about religion will result in students and teachers adjusting their

existing structures of knowledge to assimilate religious content. Third, Illeris (2006) says accommodative learning occurs when the receiving organism:

> … changes itself in order to be able to take in influences from the environment. … In learning this is about breaking down and restructuring established patterns of movement, potential actions, structures of knowledge or modes of understanding in accordance with new impulses. (37)

Teacher education has the potential to generate individual and societal changes in areas concerned with religion if accommodative learning occurs.

The fourth category of learning, listed by Illeris, is transformative learning, which Mezirow (2000) defines as:

> The process by which we transform our taken-for-granted frames of reference (meaning perspectives, habits of mind, mind-sets), to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective so that they may generate beliefs and opinions that will prove more true or justified to guide action. (7-8)

Mezirow insists that transformational learning includes the process of critical reflection to fit what has been learned into new paradigms and world views that reconstruct our existing meaning schemes. Dirks (1998) says Mezirow uses the term 'perspective transformation to reflect changes within the core or central meaning structures (meaning perspectives) through which we make sense of the day-to-dayness of our experiences' (4). He further suggests that for Mezirow perspectives consisted of sets of beliefs, values, and assumptions acquired through the experiences of life and through which we interpret and understand ourselves and the world around us. For Mezirow, transformative learning is a ten-stage process:

1. A disorienting dilemma;
2. Self-examination (sometimes with feelings of shame or guilt);
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions;
4. Recognition of a connection between one's discontent and the process of transformation;
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions;
6. Planning a course of action;
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan;
8. Provisional trying of new roles;
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships;

10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's new perspective (1991:168-9).

While transformative learning is complex and includes emotions, arguably the emotions do not have to be negative, eg shame or guilt, but rather strong enough to evolve deep critical reflection. Transformative learning may be an important part of a teacher's educational experience if the curriculum presents information that significantly challenges perspectives. That may be true for subjects like religion, if teachers are presented with experiences that provoke personal growth and ultimately prepares them to facilitate teaching about religion in a secular classroom. Where religion is concerned, taken-for-granted frames of reference need to be continually evaluated and changed as cultures, societies and religious communities change. And, this may be particularly true in light of the subtle shifts in the profile of certain religious communities due to immigration, as discussed earlier.

Curriculum Design

A second critical element of student pedagogy that informs discussion of the OCT teacher education curriculum is curriculum design. Simply inserting religious content to satisfy a perceived need without taking into account the requirements of curriculum design is short-sighted. A tension arises as to the most effective design approach when delivering religious content within teacher education. Elements of a product curriculum design as proposed by Tyler (1949) may be effective in delivering specific religious content to fulfill specific learning objectives, but it may not be sufficient to address the nature of the interaction or relationship between teacher and learner. A process approach as articulated by Stenhouse (1975) understands curriculum as:

> An attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a way that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice. (4)

This approach focuses on specific content requirements, processes and conditions, and ensures that they are fully met but is not as concerned with the final product or formal assessments to validate the effectiveness of the learning. However, it may be necessary to interject a measurable tool by which teachers

are evaluated on their knowledge of religious communities (product approach) into a process approach to curriculum design. Effectively delivering teacher education about religion may require holding process and product curriculum design approaches in tension.

Whatever the approach, Bilbao et al (2008) suggest a framework for curriculum design that takes into account both the macro and the micro. Macro includes the overall curriculum programme employed by the educational institution or governing body, and micro is the specific content presented in the classroom interaction. Bilbao et al suggest seven criteria that should be employed in curriculum design to ensure that both the micro and the macro curriculum requirements are satisfied. Applying the same strategy to student curriculum design and teacher education curriculum design may create a more systematic and holistic approach to meeting the needs of religious learners. The first criterion of curriculum design articulated by Bilbao et al is *self-sufficiency*. The subject matter or content selection should help learners attain maximum self-sufficiency. The goal is to use less teaching effort and educational resources, and increase student learning by encouraging them to experiment more and learn independently. The second criterion for effective curriculum design is *significance*. The content must be significant, meaning that it must develop the three domains of learning, cognitive, affective and psychomotor, and consider the cultural aspects of the learners. This is particularly important when dealing with learners from diverse cultural or religious backgrounds. The third criterion is *validity* meaning that the content must be authentic and relevant to the student's life. This requires constant upgrading of content and the replacement of irrelevant content, on both the macro and micro levels. Religious learners need to feel that the content is relevant to them and authentic to their life experience, which includes the subtle but dynamic shift taking place within religious communities themselves as they continually evolve. Bilbao et al's fourth criterion is *interest*, which takes into account that students and teachers learn best, and learning becomes meaningful, if they are interested in the subject matter. When dealing with religion, curriculum designers must seek to make the content more student-centred and engage the student's own experience. This gives the conversation meaning and generates interest. The fifth criterion, *utility*, insists that curriculum must highlight the usefulness of

the content and demonstrate its usefulness to the life of the learner. The extent to which students and teachers view the subject matter as meaningful to their lives and education is determined by the curriculum. Learners value the subject matter or content in proportion to its utility. The sixth criterion of curriculum design is *learnability*, meaning the subject matter or content must be within the experience of the learner. Teacher education curriculum must therefore employ teaching methodologies and instructional styles designed to engage learners' previous experience and knowledge. The final criteria of curriculum design outlined by Bilbao et al is *feasibility*. It asks two questions: can the content be fully implemented within the present school, government, and society context, and are students realistically able to complete assigned tasks in the allotted time? Feasibility suggests that there should be teachers and subject matter experts available in the area being taught. It also considers whether the content is appropriate to the abilities of the learner. Most of the criteria for curricula design are met in the present Ontario teacher education programme. The missing critical pieces are religious content, educating teachers to assume the role of moderator or facilitator, and the political will to make significant changes to public school curricula.

Cognitive Development

A third critical element of student pedagogy that informs the discussion of teacher education curriculum is an understanding of how human cognition develops. While Illeris deals primarily with the learning process, Piaget and Vigotsky describe two different approaches to understanding the process of cognitive or mental development. Piaget's identification of age-related learning characteristics is helpful in educating teachers to determine the various stages at which it is appropriate to introduce certain elements of content into the curriculum. His work focuses primarily on the principle that development determines learning. Piaget (1969) suggests that children go through a constant process of gaining new knowledge, expanding on existing knowledge, and revising knowledge. Wadsworth (1978) suggests that Piaget's stages are 'both continuous and discontinuous. Continuous because each subsequent development builds on and incorporates and transforms previous developments. Discontinuous in that qualitative changes take place from stage to stage' (12). So, children rarely go backwards in their cognitive development but progressively move

forward as each stage replaces the previous. Ensuring that teachers understand this process is valuable in determining how individuals process religious knowledge.

According to Piaget, there are four cognitive stages through which children progress as they take an active role in learning about the world around them. The first stage, the sensorimotor stage (birth to age two years), is the period during which a child's cognitive understanding is essentially limited to motor responses and response to stimuli, and is largely dominated by interaction with parents. Children are learning that they exist separately from other objects and individuals, and that those people and things continue to exist even when they aren't visible. They also learn that they have the ability to make things happen. Although teachers may have no interaction with students at this stage, understanding the beginning of the cognitive process is important to understanding later stages. The second stage, the pre-operational stage (age two to seven years), is the period during which motor skills are refined and language skills develop. Children can grasp activities such as counting, recognizing and associating symbols, and the concept of time. Their world is concrete, not abstract. They also develop a reliance on the opinion of other people and strong dependency relationships, since children come to depend on the people around them to provide clear guidelines and life information. During this stage, they enter the classroom and are introduced to and become dependent on the input of teachers. Although parents remain the primary influencers in their lives, educators become important during this stage of their development. Educating teachers about this stage of development is critical because it gives teachers an understanding of the degree to which students are already processing religious concepts and knowledge, even before entering the classroom. The third stage, the concrete operational stage (age seven to eleven years), is identified by Piaget as the period when children begin to think logically, but still have problems thinking for themselves, reasoning, or understanding abstract concepts. They can understand different perspectives and points of view, and they realise that there is a bigger world beyond theirs. Thinking, during this stage, is still often connected to a concrete reality. Piaget (1951) insists that until this stage 'introspection is extremely difficult for it requires that we should be conscious not only of the relations which our thought has woven, but of the actual activity of thought itself' (144). Educating teachers

to understand the importance of this stage of development requires giving them strategies to sensitively interact, confront or support existing family world views. Piaget claims the fourth stage or formal operational stage, (age eleven to adulthood), beginning about puberty, is when individuals develop the ability to think logically, grasp abstract concepts, and reason. In this stage, they can focus on ideological issues, examine multiple possibilities, and think through complex situations.

Vygotsky's approach differs with Piaget's in that it is predicated on the understanding that learning drives development rather than the other way around as Piaget suggests. Vygotsky (1978) states that, 'learning is a necessary and universal aspect of the process of developing culturally organized, specifically human psychological function' (90). He asserts that one's community and social interactions play a key role in the process of meaning-making. Therefore, it is impossible to understand an individual's cognitive development without understanding the social and cultural context in which their development is taking place. His approach suggests that cognitive development varies depending on an individual's social or cultural context. He asserts:

> Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relationships between individuals. (57)

This has significant implications for religious learners who likely will have received very specific social learning that has shaped their individual thoughts long before they reach formal education. For Vygotski one of the most powerful components of development is the merging of language and thought at around three years of age. This interaction results in the creation of inner speech, as children begin to internalize their external monologues. According to Vygotsky (1962) this internalization of language is what drives cognitive development. He explains:

> Inner speech is not the interior aspect of external speech – it is a function in itself. It still remains speech, i.e., thought connected with words. But while in external speech thought is embodied in words, in inner speech words die as they bring forth thought. Inner speech is to a large extent thinking in pure meanings. (149)

Vygotski's assertion that language has an early and powerful effect on cognitive development may have implications for children whose social and cultural context involves religious language and ideas, and the internalization of these as inner speech is developing. If, for example, families with strong culturally conservative belief systems are attempting to instill the concept of God in their children from a very early age, much of the influence and language being internalized will be influenced and affect the child's development. Treating child development as a linear, staged process, as Piaget suggests, does not take into account cultural and social contexts that are present even from the earliest stages of a child's development. While Piaget is a foundation upon which to build understanding in this area, Vygotsky adds a much needed and often ignored layer of understanding. In presenting a view that contrasts Piaget, Vygotski raises some significant questions. One of the most significant for this research may be whether students from religious communities, because of their early internalization of religious concepts and speech, require a different approach to learning or different teaching methodologies than other students?

Educating teachers to understand cognitive development, including at which stage students are able to grasp religious content and when it is appropriate for a curriculum to present students with factual religious information versus abstract concepts, is the contribution Piaget's stages of cognitive development adds to this discussion. Vygotsky's contribution is also important because it insists that not everyone fits neatly into a prescribed developmental framework and that an individual's religious and social context may affect learning, which in turn affects development. Both offer insight into how the OCT should educate teachers so that they do not risk contradicting social, cultural or family religious views by introducing competing religious concepts or introducing religious concepts that children are not cognitively ready to process. One offers a general timeline and framework for human cognitive development while the other reminds us not to view the timeline and framework of development as inflexible, staged or linear, but something that may be influenced by societal, cultural and religious factors.

TEACHING METHODS AND STYLE

A fourth critical element of student pedagogy informing teacher education curriculum is teaching methods and style. In the context of school curricula, student learning is significantly impacted by the approach to teaching employed in the classroom. Three elements, represented by three different authors, are considered to ensure that different aspects of student-teacher interaction in the classroom are addressed. Tomlinson's (1999) differentiated model is important because its primary goal is to engage the maximum number of students in the classroom. Scardamalia's (2002) model of enquiry-based learning is included because it promotes student involvement and an environment that is willing to address the difficult questions that will likely arise around religion. Grasha (1994) identifies various teaching styles that can be helpful in the development and presentation of religious curriculum. No matter which philosophical approach is emphasised, the student's experience must be viewed holistically. In order to ensure the broader needs of the student are met, including diversity and religious needs, curriculum has to evolve as the student's capabilities and experience expand. It follows that teachers must be educated to employ teaching methods that align with the evolving needs and capabilities of students, including religious learners.

Tomlinson's (1999) differentiated instruction model employs a constructivist approach that is useful in accommodating the religious learner in a multicultural classroom. Tomlinson insists that teachers who seek to be effective in the multicultural classroom must ensure that their methods and styles engage a wide variety of students with diverse backgrounds. Essentially, she argues that a classroom must be student-centred, and she encourages teachers to consider the needs of all students when developing lesson plans or classroom activities. Employing the same teaching methods and strategies for all students is an ineffective way to teach. Morgan (2010) claims this is especially true in relation to cultural education: 'Teachers may believe that treating all students the same avoids discrimination against any group, but that practice in itself is discriminatory' (117). Differentiated instruction according to Tomlinson & Imbeau (2010) has the following key elements.

- Students differ as learners in terms of background experience, culture, language, gender, interest, readiness to learn, modes of learning, speed of learning, support systems for learning, self-awareness as a learner, confidence as a learner, independence as a learner and a host of other ways.

- Difference profoundly impacts how students learn and the nature of scaffolding they will need at various points in the learning process.

- Teachers have a responsibility to ensure that all of their students master important content.

- Teachers have to make specific and continually evolving plans to connect each learner with key content.

- Teachers are required to understand the nature of each of their students, in addition to the nature of the content they teach.

- A flexible approach to teaching "makes room" for student variance.

- Teachers should continually ask, "What does this student need at this moment in order to progress with this key content, and what do I need to make that happen?" (14)

The Metropolitan Center for Urban Education (2008) claims:

> Teachers who differentiate instruction recognize that students differ in many ways, including prior knowledge and experiences, readiness, language, culture, learning preferences, and interests. They realize they must change the way they teach in order to reach all students. Through differentiated instruction, students will get to the same place, but take different paths. (2)

Tomlinson (1999) notes that there is no one recipe for differentiation, but there are broader guiding principles and characteristics. Like any constructivist teaching methodology, the methods involved are highly student-focused and enquiry-driven. The methods used encourage input from the maximum number of students, high levels of participation and collective meaning-making, while at the same time incorporating the knowledge of the educator as a guiding factor. This teaching approach requires teachers to engage in ongoing critical reflection, flexible teaching style alteration, and constant role adjustment to accommodate all of the religious needs present in a multicultural, multi-religious classroom. Critics of this view say that it favors the more advanced, competitive students and does not fully meet the needs of those children who are more passive. This instructional approach, because of its focus on the greatest number of student needs in the classroom environment, may give

insights into educating teachers for a multi-religious classroom. If Vygotsky's assertion regarding cognitive development being affected by context is correct, treating religion and the religious context as a form of differentiation may influence student learning.

While Tomlinson's overall approach provides a viable framework in which religious learning may be presented, specific classroom engagement where religion is concerned must remain focused on the student and their questions and ideas. This and other enquiry-based learning models may ensure that religious learner needs are not being overlooked. According to Chirotto (2011) enquiry-based learning is:

> … a dynamic and emergent process that builds on students' natural curiosity about the world in which they live. As its name suggests, enquiry places students' questions and ideas, rather than solely those of the teacher, at the centre of the learning experience. Students' questions drive the learning process forward. (7)

She views this type of learning as a continuum that moves from closed to open. 'The more teacher-directed the learning, the more closed the inquiry. The more student-directed the learning, the more open the inquiry' (8). She also acknowledges that the decision to move to an enquiry-based approach requires:

> What some teachers have described as a "leap of faith", a sense of trust and confidence that this new way of thinking and doing will lead to valuable learning for their students. (8)

This type of environment is not a negative where religious learning is concerned, but may be a preferred path forward because it moves the student, their experience and learning needs, to the centre of the learning environment where their questions of faith can be engaged. Differentiation that does not focus on separation of specific groups of students from the larger classroom, but focuses more on variations in modes of presentation and engagement may be more conducive to creating a classroom that portrays religion as a part of culture rather than something that should be separated from it.

Table 2: The 12 Principles of Knowledge Building

1. **Real Ideas, Authentic Problems:**

   Knowledge problems arise from efforts to understand the world. Ideas produced or appropriated are considered real or concrete objects that are touched and felt. Problems are those which learners care about, typically differing from textbooks problems and puzzles.

2. **Improvable Ideas:**

   All ideas are treated as improvable. Participants work continuously to improve the quality, coherence, and utility of ideas. For such work to prosper, the learning culture must assure psychological safety, so that individuals feel safe in taking risks, revealing ignorance, voicing half-baked notions, and giving and receiving criticism.

3. **Idea Diversity:**

   Idea diversity is essential to knowledge advancement, just as biodiversity is essential to an ecosystem. To fully understand an idea requires understanding the ideas that surround it, including contrasting ideas. An environment of diverse ideas and perspectives enables new and more refined ideas to evolve.

4. **Epistemic Agency:**

   Participants set forth their ideas and negotiate how they 'fit' or compare with the ideas of others. They seize upon contrasting or different ideas to help deepen their understanding instead of depending on others to chart that course for them. They take responsibility for issues (such as goal-setting, motivation, evaluation, and long-range planning) which are normally left to teachers or managers to resolve.

5. **Community Knowledge, Collective Responsibility:**

   Contributions to the organization's shared, top-level goals are prized and rewarded as much as individual achievements. Team members produce ideas of value to others and share responsibility for the overall advancement of community knowledge.

6. **Democratizing Knowledge:**

   All participants are considered legitimate contributors to the shared goals of the community, and take pride in the knowledge advances achieved by the group. The group's diversity and divisions do not translate into hierarchies of 'knowledge haves and have-nots' or 'innovators and non-innovators'.

7. **Symmetric Knowledge Advance:**

   Expertise and knowledge are exchanged within and between communities. Symmetrical knowledge advancement results from this knowledge 'give-and-take'.

Table 2: The 12 Principles of Knowledge Building (Cont'd)

8. **Pervasive Knowledge Building**:

   Knowledge building is a pervasive, continuous process of learning, both in and out of school, rather than an activity relegated to particular occasions or subject areas.

9. **Constructive Uses of Authoritative Sources**:

   Up-to-date knowledge of a discipline requires continuous learning and re-assessment. This can be achieved through the respectful use of, and critical stance toward, authoritative sources of knowledge.

10. **Knowledge Building Discourse:**

    The discourse of knowledge building communities results in the sharing, refinement and transformation of knowledge. The explicit goal of these discursive practices is to advance the learning community's knowledge.

11. **Embedded, Concurrent and Transformative Assessment:**

    Learning communities embed assessment in their day-to-day workings in order to identify problems in knowledge advancement. Through rigorous, finely-tuned assessment, they are able to achieve transformative outcomes that exceed the expectations of external assessors.

12. **Rise Above:**

    Creative knowledge building entails working toward more inclusive principles and high-level formulations of problems. It means learning to work with diversity, complexity, and messiness to achieve new synthesis. By moving to higher planes of understanding, knowledge builders transcend trivialities and over-simplifications, and reach beyond current best practices.

Scardamalia's (2002) twelve principles of knowledge building, which I have summarised in Table 2, are the essence of the enquiry-based learning process, and describe an educational environment that may be conducive to the development of student and teacher religious curriculum. She outlines an environment that allows knowledge problems to arise from student and teacher efforts to understand the world, treating the ideas that arise in discussions as real, and dealing with problems that students and teachers care about. This may be the learning environment in which to build teacher curriculum about religion. Creating this type of environment would allow the difficult questions of religion to be discussed, and help teachers prepare to engage religious issues and problems in the classroom.

Table 3: Five Teaching Styles (Grasha, 1994:143)

Style	Description	Advantage	Disadvantage
Expert	Possesses knowledge and expertise that students need. Strives to maintain status as an expert among students by displaying detailed knowledge and by challenging students to enhance their competence. Concerned with transmitting information and ensuring that students are well prepared.	The information, knowledge, and skills such individuals possess.	If overused, the display of knowledge can be intimidating to inexperienced students. May not always show the underlying thought processes that produce answers.
Formal Authority	Possesses status among students because of knowledge and role as a faculty member. Concerned with providing positive and negative feedback, establishing learning goals, expectations, and rules of conduct. Concerned with the "correct, acceptable, and standard ways to do things."	The focus on clear expectations and ways of doing things.	A strong investment in this style can lead to rigid, standardized ways of managing students and their concerns.
Personal Model	Believes in "teaching by personal example" and establishes a prototype for how to think and behave. Oversees, guides, and directs by showing how to do things, and encouraging students to observe and then emulate the instructors approach.	The "hands on" nature of the approach. An emphasis on direct observation and following a role model.	Some teachers may believe that their approach is "the best way" leading some students to feel inadequate if they cannot live up to such expectations and standards.
Facilitator	Emphasizes the personal nature of teacher-student interactions. Guides students by asking questions, exploring options, suggesting alternatives, and encouraging them to develop criteria to make informed choices. Overall goal is to develop in students the capacity for independent action and responsibility. Works with students on projects in a consultative fashion and provides much support and encouragement.	The personal flexibility, the focus on students' needs and goals, and the willingness to explore options and alternative courses of action to achieve them.	Style is often time consuming and can be ineffective when a more direct approach is needed. Can make students uncomfortable if it is not used in a positive and affirming manner.
Delegator	Concerned with developing students' capacity to function autonomously. Students work independently on projects or as part of autonomous teams. The teacher is available at the request of students as a resource person.	Contributes to students perceiving themselves as independent learners.	May misread students' readiness from independent work. Some students may become anxious when given autonomy.

Implementation of appropriate learning models and classroom engagement necessitates that attention be given to teaching style. Grasha (1994) claims that learning styles are only one-half of the teacher-student interaction. He identifies five teaching styles, describing the advantages and disadvantages of each. (They are outlined in Table 3.) Grasha's teaching style inventory identifies several teaching styles that may be tailored to the teacher's personality and strengths, and may be helpful in the presentation of religious content. Effective teaching methodologies, especially when dealing with minority groups such as ethnic or religious communities, must take into account teaching styles. Morgan claims, 'One reason minority students are likely to encounter more problems in school than mainstream students involves incomplete knowledge of minority students learning and communication styles' (114). He goes on to claim that 'differences in learning styles can often be explained by cultural norms and values' (114). One may assume that the same applies to religious minorities and that teachers must be educated to employ teaching styles that are effective with religious learners. Not providing teachers with content about religion eliminates several teaching styles from the classroom. For example, the expert style and the formal authority style cannot be employed because they are dependent on a prerequisite level of religious literacy. Similarly, the personal model style requires open and autonomous expression of personal religious beliefs and practices in order to be a model to religious learners. Investigating and promoting teaching styles that are effective when teaching about religion or dealing with religious learners is an important component of the development of teacher curriculum. A teacher education curriculum that is informed by Tomlinson's differentiated learning model, Scardamalia's enquiry- based model and Grasha's description of teaching style may create a classroom in which students are free to explore their own experience and the difficult questions of religion, and one in which teachers are equipped to help them learn. So, educating teachers to understand their role in the classroom as a mediator or facilitator who oversees a knowledge-building process, rather than an expert or formal authority who passes on information may be the preferred goal when teaching about religion. It portrays the idea of exploration and journeying together with students, rather than simply providing them with information. Whatever the teaching method or style, it is extremely important that teachers always possess some level of subject-matter expertise.

MORAL/FAITH DEVELOPMENT

A fifth critical element of student pedagogy that informs discussion about teacher education curriculum is faith/moral development. Awareness of the process through which individuals acquire faith and morality is important to understanding the needs of religious learners. I am including Kohlberg (1984) in the discussion because, unlike Fowler, he does not limit his discussion to moral development within faith, religion or spirituality. Further, he concluded that children progress through consecutive stages of moral development, (see Appendix H), that closely correspond to Piaget's stages of cognitive development. Kohlberg was convinced that it was uncommon for children to skip any stage or go backward to a previous stage. Kohlberg's approach, like that of Piaget, suggests that there may be an appropriate period when students are able to enter into the social contract that guides a multicultural Canada in which a wide variety of religious views are expressed. Educating teachers about faith development will equip them to identify and address student needs along the developmental path. Kohlberg's work helps determine when it is appropriate to include content about religions into curricula without making students feel like they are disappointing family and violating their religious community's expectations if they investigate the views of others.

Fowler (1995), unlike Kohlberg, is much narrower in his approach. His investigation is not the wider field of moral development but a narrower investigation of the stages of faith development. His framework is included here because it may provide further guidance as to when it is appropriate to introduce religious concepts in the public school classroom. His theory has been criticised for its rigidity and research sample quality, but despite these criticisms, his explanation of the sequential process of human development is valuable in that it describes some general faith/moral characteristics of children at various stages of development. So, it may be useful in determining the teaching approach and curriculum content for each developmental stage and for assessing whether a curriculum is meeting students' needs. Fowler (1995) outlines six stages of faith development, which I have summarised below.

> *Stage 1: Intuitive-Projective Faith*: (ages three to seven years) In this
> stage of faith development, students have very active imaginations

that have been enlivened by religious world views filled with religious stories. At this stage children struggle to separate fantasy from reality, and are very literal and self-focused.

Stage 2: Mystical-Literal Faith: (ages six to twelve years) In the second stage students intuitively gain a belief in such things as a just and fair universe, and are also very literal and concrete in their belief in deities, moral rules and interpretation of religious stories. Equipping teachers with the skills to help students navigate this stage lessens the likelihood of internal conflict as students come in contact with others who have a different world view. In this stage, moral rules are understood literally and concretely, and there is little ability to grasp overarching meanings or see the bigger picture.

Stage 3: Synthetic-Conventional Faith: (ages thirteen to eighteen years) It is not until this stage, during adolescence, that students are able to engage abstract ideas and thoughts. This phase, although characterised by a lack of openness to having belief systems challenged, is also characterised by strong trust in external authority figures. Often at this stage teachers become the outside trusted figures in the lives of adolescents, and if educated about religions and religious practices, may also influence the school system to include education about varying religious belief systems.

Stage 4: Individuative-Reflective Faith: (eighteen to twenty-two years) This is a very difficult stage because it is here that people begin to realise that there are world views other than their own. This stage is a characterised by disillusion and questioning one's previously established faith concepts. Fowler claims that some people stay in this stage and abandon their religious faith.

Stage 5: Conjunctive Faith: (early thirties) During this stage, usually associated with mid-life, individuals start to accept that life is full of mystery, unanswered questions and paradox. People often go back to the familiar roots, symbols and stories of their upbringing, without attaching those to a theological framework.

Stage 6: Universalizing Faith: (older adults) At this stage, rarely
reached by individuals, faith is defined in terms of service to others
and community. There is an almost complete absence of worry or
doubt about the world and one's place in it.

Fowler does not connect his research specifically to religious faith but suggests
that from birth to death all individuals go through a staged development of
faith. He views spirituality as a basic aspect of human existence, suggesting that
faith develops in a way similar to cognition and other aspects of human
development. Fowler does not define faith through any particular religion, but
describes it as a particular way of relating to the universal and creating
meaning. Fowler's theory is strongly connected to many aspects of child and
adult psychological development described by Piaget. His six stages of
development highlight the importance of continuity between the religious life
and the classroom life of the child. Kohlberg, Fowler and Piaget agree that there
is a specific developmental stage at which complex, abstract and even
conflicting concepts can be introduced. All suggest that this stage of
development coincides with the high school years.

Along with policy development, there are several disciplines that intersect in the
creation of a religious teacher education curriculum, especially one designed to
meet the needs of religious learners. Illeris' model highlights the necessity of
content, incentive and interaction in learning and provides a theoretical
foundation on which new curriculum can be built. Bilbao (2008) et al suggest
elements of curriculum design ensuring that both micro and macro curriculum
requirements are satisfied, while Scardamalia (2002) and Tomlinson recommend
effective teaching methods that engage the maximum number of students and
put them at the centre of the learning curriculum. Also, when it comes to
teaching styles as articulated by Grasha (1994), encouraging teachers to view
themselves more as classroom moderators and facilitators, rather than experts,
seems to be a more open approach when dealing with religion and the sensitive
issue of spiritual development. The intersection of religion and education in the
curriculum necessitates that designers consider student age-related cognitive
development as presented by Piaget and Vigotsky, and an understanding of
individual faith/moral development described by Kohlberg (1984) and Fowler

(1995). All of these elements must be included in a teacher education curriculum to prepare teachers to meet the needs of students, especially religious learners.

CHAPTER 6: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Once the data were collected, it was subjected to a thematic analysis, the process of 'identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns within data' (Braun and Clark, 2006:79). Recognizable patterns were related back to scholarly literature on the subject. Participants agreed that the needs common to all students, such as acceptance, assimilation and accommodation, were being adequately addressed by the school system. However, they also indicated that a lack of teacher education in the area of religion may have diminished the teacher's ability to fully address the needs of religious students. While not limited to religious students, the data suggest that in order for the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) and Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) to craft a practical and pragmatic response to teacher education within the current Ontario context the following items must be addressed: religious content, teacher incentive and motivation, programme implementation, teacher-student interaction, learner autonomy, moral and faith development, Canadian values, and teacher's well-being. (See Figure 4.) Participants agreed that addressing these areas may require a different approach to religion within the curriculum than the one currently employed by the OCT and may also require a more universal understanding and articulation of the secular classroom.
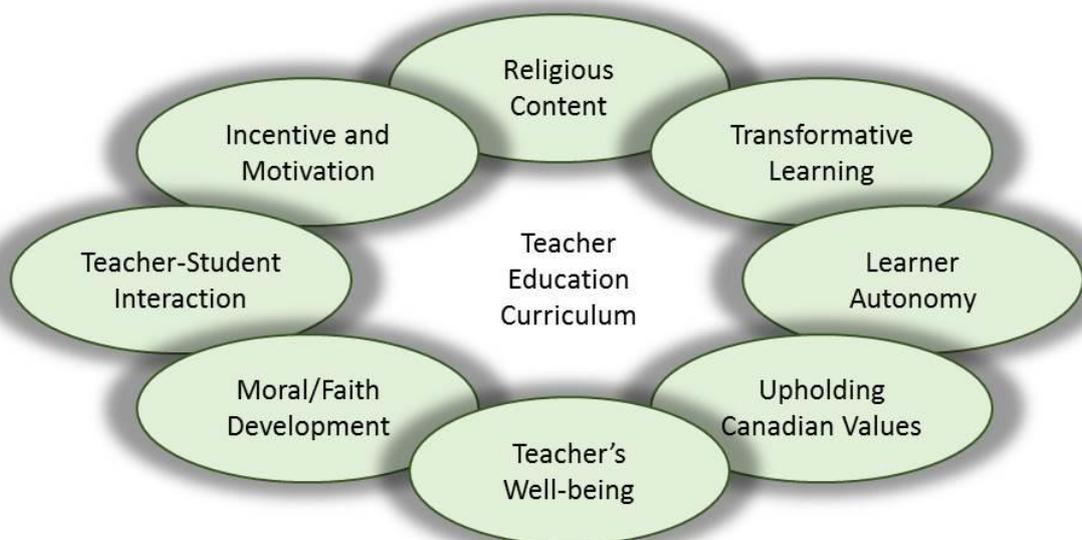

Figure 4: Components of Teacher Education

RELIGIOUS CONTENT

Teacher participants overwhelmingly acknowledged that they would require more education about religion in order to better address religion in the classroom and meet the needs of religious learners. Parent participants supported that opinion, and felt that educating teachers in this area would make them more effective in preparing students for their future lives in a multicultural Canada. The data indicate that there is a significant gap between the OCT teacher education curriculum and what parents and teachers believe is important. This gap suggests that the OCT, despite its recent curriculum revision to include more teacher preparation for diversity, may need to further evaluate its teacher education curriculum to include more content about religion in initial and ongoing teacher education.

All participants, including parents, agreed that having teachers and students learn religious content was important, and that creating a curriculum that includes religion was the OCT's responsibility. What that content should look like requires an understanding of curriculum design and the elements required to create an effective curriculum about religion. Bilbao et al's (2008) suggestion that both the micro and macro elements must be considered when designing curriculum is important here. The macro includes the overall curriculum programme utilised by the educational institution or governing body, while the micro is the specific content presented in classroom interactions. They suggest that seven elements should be considered in curriculum design. These elements provide guidance for the OCT in designing a teacher education curriculum that includes the academic study of religion. By considering the first element, *self-sufficiency*, the OCT can encourage teachers to be more independent about and exploratory of their thoughts around religion. This would encourage teacher confidence and autonomy, and allow for greater expression of personal religious beliefs in the classroom. Creating teacher education that fosters this type of classroom environment should be the goal of the OCT. The second element identifies the importance of the OCT curriculum assigning *significance* to religion as an important part of society and of student identity. Creating a curriculum for teachers that promotes the value of religion as a significant component of the lives of millions of people may help foster many of the OCT's stated values, such as equality and tolerance. The third element to incorporate in curriculum

design, according to Bilbao et al, is understanding and presenting the *relevance and validity* of religion to the lives of teachers and students. The OCT's teacher education curriculum design must also respect such relevance and validity, and encourage all participants in the Ontario education system to do the same. Therefore, the OCT's teacher education curriculum cannot be static, but must be constantly updated or replaced in order to remain relevant and valid.

The fourth element considers the learners' *interest* and the OCT's ability to educate teachers to present curriculum in a way that is student-centred and includes room for the teacher and students' personal experience. This may give greater meaning to the discussion of religion and help teachers develop engagement skills and knowledge about teaching strategies that create student interest in the study of religion. The fifth element of curriculum design, *utility*, suggests that the OCT curriculum must establish the importance of religion as a component of individual identity and as a cultural phenomenon. Therefore, the OCT's teacher education curriculum should include educating teachers to present not only the negatives of religion, but also the positive contributions of religion to individual experience and to societies around the world. This may require designing curriculum that addresses the teacher's personal attitudes, biases and beliefs about religion. *Learnability,* the sixth element suggested by Bilbao et al, can easily be realised because of the fact that religion is such a strong historical component of Canadian society. Many learners will have previously encountered religious concepts and individuals from other religions before engaging with any religious curriculum. In other words, the subject of religion is very learnable because it is not foreign to students and teachers, as they frequently interact with religion in the Ontario context. The final element that should be considered when designing the Ontario curriculum is feasibility. Creating student and teacher religious curricula is *feasible* within the present Ontario school, government and societal context. Administrators easily find the resources to highlight in the curriculum any areas of education that governing bodies deem important to student and teacher development. Restructuring teacher education to include courses about religion by using existing resources and educational structures make the endeavor feasible. Ensuring that the above elements are present in the design of the OCT teacher curriculum and the Ontario classroom curriculum would be a productive starting point for the

creation of a more systematic and holistic approach to meeting the needs of religious learners.

Illeris' model, discussed earlier, illustrates the importance of content. He contends that content helps 'create meaning and mastery' (2006:29). So, right content in the teacher education curriculum will help teachers function better in their environment and potentially equip them to function in the multicultural and multi-religious environment of the Ontario classroom. It will also help them on a personal level to better understand and master the subject of religion, and thereby become more confident in their abilities to engage with students about religion. The data indicate that teachers do not have a sense of 'meaning and mastery' of religion, either as a cultural phenomenon or as a part of student identity. Experienced teachers overwhelmingly claimed that they emerged from their teacher education programme having received no formal content about religion or religious diversity. Moreover, most were offered no subsequent mandatory professional development content on the subject. Most teachers also indicated that they were unfamiliar with the specific changes to the teacher education curriculum and whether religious content was included. A similar lack of religious content is evident throughout the OME's Additional Qualifications (AQs) for teachers, which contains no mandatory content focused on comparative religion, religious diversity, or the practices of religious communities. While a limited amount of content about religion and religious practices has been provided in School Board seminars and professional development days to ensure that acceptance and religious accommodation is implemented, my research indicates that revisions to the curriculum have not enhanced teacher education in this area. My research further indicates that the content dimension of the OCT's curriculum does not strengthen the educator's ability to function more appropriately concerning religion in their teaching environment. By not providing sufficient content for teachers to become knowledgeable or skilled in dealing with the subject of religion and religious practices, the OCT may be profoundly affecting the public school classroom and perpetuating religious illiteracy.

First, a lack of religious content in teacher education may be resulting in a subjective classroom curriculum. Several teachers described classroom scenarios in which religious students, not the classroom teacher, were relied on to provide

content or give context to religious holidays or viewpoints. While it is appropriate to include the students experience and voice in classroom discussions about religion, as Cook-Sather (2002) cautions, teachers who lack knowledge of religion may be opening the classroom to the possibility of misinformation. When asked how they know that what is being presented by students is accurate, two teachers declared, 'We don't!' When teachers are not provided with content about religion in initial and subsequent teacher education, the quality and accuracy of any religious content being presented in the classroom cannot be verified. It is left to individual teachers on their own initiative to verify any claims or presuppositions presented. Teachers also reported that they did not engage students in conversation about religion because of a lack of confidence in their personal knowledge, or they chose to teach about the secular versions of religious holidays over the religious version. This too is a direct result of a lack of religious content in the teacher education curriculum. While constructivist and enquiry-based approaches to learning, promoted by authors such as Chirotto (2011) and Tomlinson (1999), are beneficial in helping students develop meaning schemes for religious concepts and themes, some subject-matter and factual information must be introduced by subject matter experts to ensure that knowledge construction has a proper foundation. Ideas about religion must be grounded in facts about religion and religious practices. The practice of allowing students to provide the basic religious information does not allow for the presentation of religious content in the careful and systematic way that would ensure religious belief systems and world views are appropriately supported or challenged. Moreover, the general level of religious literacy does not ensure the students are well informed, since they may be acquiring their knowledge from poorly informed parents or others. It also means the classroom curriculum for religion is subject to the comfort level of the individual teacher.

Second, a lack of religious content in teacher education may provide an opening for personal bias in the classroom. If teachers are not prepared to answer student questions about religion they may be tempted to rely on past negative or positive religious experiences or on other teachers who have knowledge of or experience with religion and religious practices. As much as they endeavor to be bias-free, teachers do not enter the classroom completely void of all bias or

from behind a 'veil of ignorance' or a wall of neutrality. They bring their own religious beliefs, opinions and world views, and they bring historical mental impulses or knowledge informed by a variety of sources, such as society, ethnicity, family, community, religion, media, and friends. Even those who claim no religion bring that particular bias to the classroom (Lin, Lake, and Rice, 2008). With formal and standardised content, teachers would be less likely to express their personal biases about religion and be encouraged to present curriculum that is better aligned with the OME definition of a secular classroom.

Third, several experienced teachers indicated that at times they relied heavily on religious colleagues to educate them and their class about religious holidays, celebrations, and world views. These colleagues were consulted because they were actively involved in the particular religion being discussed in the classroom. In such cases the validity of the classroom content is subject to the opinion of individuals who may not be trained to deliver academic content about religion. It may also expose the students to individuals who unintentionally employ a more confessional approach to religion and do not fully understand the OME secular mandate. While parents were in favor of children receiving instruction about religion, they were strongly opposed to any type of indoctrination into a particular religion. Soliciting the advice of a religious colleague who is untrained in the delivery of religious content could leave the classroom open to bias and allow for only selected religious viewpoints to be expressed. Parents accepted the idea of having someone who is a religious specialist on staff to teach religion, but wanted that individual to be selected by the school board and held accountable to ensure that they were not proselytizing or religiously biased. Teachers felt that experienced teachers would be the appropriate specialists because they would be unbiased and balanced, and would better maintain OME guidelines, if the teacher education curriculum included appropriated religious content.

Fourth, a lack of religious content in teacher education may constitute a failure to prepare teachers and students for life beyond the classroom. Anderson (2004) argues that globalization, curricular pressures, and general consensus dictate that the school system is compelled to teach students about world religions. Wexler (2002) reasons that in order to prepare students to think and speak intellectually about the world around them, teachers must be equipped to teach

world religions. Parents, because of their work environments, expressed far more comfort than teachers concerning interactions with people of other religions and cultures, and saw understanding all diversity, including religious diversity, as a value of being Canadian. They felt that, because the world is full of religious people, a broader understanding of religion would give teachers a greater ability to discern and analyze the intersections of religion with social, political, and cultural life. Moore (2010) agrees, arguing that 'a religiously literate person will possess: the ability to discern and explore the religious dimensions of political, social and cultural expressions across time and place' (4). By not including religious content in the teacher education curriculum, the OCT fails to fully include essential content that recognises the multi-religious, and multicultural dimensions of Canadian society. Given the present Canadian political climate and the continuous move toward globalization, multiculturalism and inclusivity, one is left to speculate whether this curriculum omission is motivated by a specific political agenda, public pressure, cost prohibitive measures, or other reason. By not educating teachers about religion, the OCT may be failing in its mandate to prepare teachers, and therefore students, for the realities of the local and global community.

Fifth, a lack of religious content in teacher education may be jeopardizing student and teacher safety. Providing adequate content about religious world views may also be a safety issue in that it could help teachers distinguish between rational and extreme ideologies and language in the classroom. Most of the teachers interviewed indicated that they have had no training in identifying or addressing extremist or radical views. One teacher related an incident in which she found herself questioning some of the views about extremism that were being expressed by several of her high school students. Having prior knowledge of religious views may have prepared her to better evaluate the situation. Several other teachers described incidents and conversations that they felt had implications of extremism. Receiving education about religion may better prepare teachers to understand the mindset and world view behind strong religious devotion by measuring it against prescribed content. UNESCO (2016) says:

> Violent extremism and the underlying forces of radicalization are
> among the most pervasive challenges of our time. While violent

extremism is not confined to any age, sex, group or community, young people are particularly vulnerable to the messages of violent extremists and terrorist organizations. In the face of such threats, young people need relevant and timely learning opportunities to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes that can help them build their resilience to such propaganda. These competencies can be developed with the help of confident, well-prepared and respected teachers, who are in extensive contact with young people. (9)

Decision 46 adopted at the 197th session of UNESCO's Executive Board underlines the importance of education in the prevention of extremism and radicalization. It states that education will:

- Help young people develop the communication and interpersonal skills they need to dialogue, face disagreement and learn peaceful approaches to change.
- Help learners develop their critical thinking to investigate claims, verify rumours and question the legitimacy and appeal of extremist beliefs.
- Help learners develop the resilience to resist extremist narratives and acquire the social-emotional skills they need to overcome their doubts and engage constructively in society without having to resort to violence.
- Foster critically informed citizens able to constructively engage in peaceful collective action. (15)

Providing teachers with the basics of religious thought and educating them to know when religious thought and speech crosses the line into extremism may help avoid vulnerable and unsafe situations in the classrooms.

Sixth, a lack of religious content in teacher education may be hindering the acquisition process of learning as described by Illeris. The data indicate that a lack of content and teacher confidence in dealing with religious subject matter may have resulted in a gap between past and present learning whereby teachers and students were unable to connect their previous religious learning and impulses to their present education. My research indicates that the OCT's teacher education curriculum, before and after the curriculum changes of 2015, provides very little formal content about the belief systems of religious students, making it difficult for the teacher's earlier impulses concerning and knowledge of religion to be linked with any new impulses going forward. When learning is truncated, neither educators nor students are able to connect past religious teaching and experiences with classroom life. The idea that acquisition requires

the learner to link learning impulses from the past with those of the present takes into account the important fact that even a child entering elementary school in Ontario has already been exposed to a set of cultural, familial, and sometimes religious impulses and influences. This is also true of teachers entering a post-secondary or graduate institution to learn how to teach in the Canadian context. All have had some exposure to religion through personal involvement, media or religious acquaintances. As Illeris insists, content which facilitates necessary linkages is essential for acquisition of learning to occur.

By not offering new content about religion, the OCT is likely creating an environment in which some new, but negative, impulses are being generated. In other words, an absence of content does not mean that there is nothing being learned, felt or imprinted about religion and religious diversity. As noted earlier, Illeris claims that probably every day we learn some things without being aware of the learning occurring. Despite the fact that conscious or intentional learning about religion may not be occurring during teacher education, significant unconscious learning may be happening. For example, the OCT's approach likely creates impulses in religious learners about such things as the motivation of the OCT and the OME, and whether there is a genuine desire within the school system to address the needs of religious learners. Religious teachers and students, by not having their previous learning and life experience blended with new knowledge about religion, could surmise that their previous experiences have no validity and no value in the classroom. Instead of attempting to seamlessly merge past learning or impulses with present ones, the OCT's curriculum decision could be perceived as a statement that all past experiences are valid and welcome in the secular classroom, except religious ones.

Seven, a lack of religious content in teacher education may affect partnerships with religious parents and communities. The OCT's failure to include religious content in the teacher education curriculum and in classroom instruction may risk misrepresenting the positions of key participants in the education system. For example, my research indicates that teachers were unsure about the nature of the secular classroom and how to represent the secular model. This may have created occasion for teachers to misrepresent the official position of the OCT, the local School Board, the OME, or parents and religious community groups. Teachers admitted that at times they steered the conversation away from

religion or shut it down entirely because they were unsure of the official religious position and how to represent that position to student and parents. There is a danger that redirecting or shutting down the conversation may be sending an unintended message that the OCT, local school board, and OME are anti-religion. It may unnecessarily create the possibility, even likelihood, of offending religious communities and parents, and create the perception that religious conversation is not welcomed.

Even though the OME provides guidelines for accommodation of religious practice, teachers indicated that, outside of discussion of religious holidays, very limited instruction is provided in teacher education that gives guidance in how to further the religious conversation. This gap in teacher education again introduces the possibility of offending parents, teachers, and religious communities who expect equality in education, but may not see their community represented in the classroom, or see other religious communities over-represented. Arguably, the OME's most influential partners in education are parents. Curran and Murray (2008) highlight the need for teachers to be educated in ways that encourage strong interaction with parents as partners. Anderson and Minke (2007) claim that 'parent partnerships in education reap incredible benefits and are linked to a variety of positive academic outcomes' (311). These benefits include higher grade-point averages, increased achievement in reading, writing and mathematics, lower dropout rates, fewer special education placements, increased ability to self-regulate behavior, and higher levels of social skills. Several teachers related incidents of conflict with deeply religious parents as a result of misunderstanding or lack of knowledge about religion. Burtt (1994) contends that 'there has always been a debate that centers on the competing claims of family and community to control the form and content of a child's education' (51), so it is critical that teachers are educated to foster relationship with religious communities, especially those who are strongly religious, in a way that is respectful and allows parents to feel they are welcomed to participate in directing their child's education.

Eight, by not providing content about religion in teacher education the OCT may be creating an atmosphere in which the needs and world view of non-religious individuals are given preference over religious students, and in which non-religious students and teachers are, by default, the only voice being presented.

Not providing formalised content about religion in teacher education may be interpreted by religious learners and the communities they represent as a lack of concern for their needs, thus widening any divide that may already exist between some religious communities and the secular school system. Moreover, by not providing ongoing teacher education about religion, the OCT may not be taking into account the fact that religious communities are constantly evolving, often through the arrival of immigrant groups. Group boundaries, the nature of identity, and cultural practices are not static. For example, the boundaries within the Islamic context, as in most religions, are continually being contested and negotiated (Khan, 2000; Tibi, 1991).

Nine, a lack of religious content in teacher education may be having an effect on student well-being. Teacher participants were insistent that there is a connection between students' religious needs being met and student well-being. The OME (2016a) defines well-being as 'a positive sense of self, spirit and belonging that we feel when our cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met'. The teachers' and parents' responses indicated that they view a lack of religious content as something that is in opposition to this definition. Suggesting that student well-being is 'supported through equity and respect for our diverse identities and strengths' (OME, 2016a) requires that teachers be given the tools to at least understand those diverse identities. Going further, the World Health Organization (WHO) connects individuals' well-being to their quality of life. The WHO (1994) defines quality of life as:

> Individual's perception of their position in life in the context of the cultural and value system in which they live and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concerns. It is a broad ranging concept affected in a complex way by the persons' physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relationships and their relationship to salient features of the environment' (1404).

Students may perceive their inability to express their religious identity in the school environment as affecting their quality of life. The present classroom context that deflects the conversation of religion or has no guidelines in which religion is expressed may be having an effect on the student's 'physical health, psychological state, level of independence, social relations and their relationship with salient features of the environment', which in turn may be affecting their well-being. Abdel-Khalek (2010) agrees that well-being, along with other key

elements such as physical health, and economic and social factors, is a critical element of an individual's quality of life and the positive side of mental health. He suggests that synonyms for well-being include such things as 'happiness, joy, satisfaction, enjoyment, fulfilment, pleasure, contentment and other indicators of a life that is full and complete' (1135). Green and Elliott (2010) go further, linking religious practice with people being less depressed, having greater self-esteem, more effective coping skills, greater happiness, greater life satisfaction, and improved physical health. Fredrickson (2002) claims that 'at a practical level, if individuals and communities wish to promote health and well-being more effectively it would pay to know the active ingredients in the religion-health link' (209). The ethical standards of the teaching profession require that members express their commitment to students' well-being. This suggests that in addition to other aspects of student well-being, teachers should also give careful consideration to students' spiritual well-being and understand their religious identity. Providing accommodation for students' religious practice, although important, is not the only factor in promoting a sense of wholeness or well-being. Teacher education about religion should empower students and teachers to more freely express their religious identities and views in the classroom, experience a greater level of personal well-being, and help improve quality of life. The close connection between religion, quality of life, and student well-being cannot be ignored in teacher preparation.

Ten, a lack of religious content in teacher education fails to fully respect and promote religious diversity. Presently teachers are only being educated to recognise and celebrate religious holy days and events. While this expresses acceptance and respect, and is an important effort toward an inclusive classroom, simply acknowledging major calendar events can be no more than token acknowledgement of the religious diversity within a given classroom. Teachers must be taught to be conscious of the everyday religious practice of their students, and ensure students are continuously respected and their autonomy embraced. Obviously, there are many other cultural and diversity issues and practices of which teachers must be aware and which should be respected and valued in the classroom. So, creating a teacher education curriculum that is balanced and comprehensive must be the OCT's mandate. By omitting religious content, the OCT may not only be affecting the present classroom environment by allowing anti-religious bias, but may be promoting

religious ignorance, jeopardizing community partnerships, the well-being of students, and significantly influencing the future — maybe even the safety — of Canada. Not preparing teachers to understand or interact with religious students may be unintentionally promoting an agenda that excludes religion altogether.

INCENTIVE AND MOTIVATION

The many factors that motivate individuals to learn are as varied as the individuals themselves. For some, it may be the betterment of their family or the desire to accumulate knowledge or increase wealth. For others, the motivation may be instrumental, driven by the desire to become a qualified worker in a competitive marketplace. As noted earlier, Illeris' model illustrates the importance of incentive to the acquisition axis of his learning model. Most of the Ontario teachers interviewed expressed a desire to learn about world religions so that they could better understand their students or become more knowledgeable themselves. This indicates incentive or intrinsic motivation. Also, the fact that student teachers indicated that they were expecting to receive curriculum content about religion suggests that there is some level of incentive and expectancy among student teachers in the area of religion. Further, the willingness of new teachers to enrol in initial teacher education and AQ courses in religious subject areas also suggests incentive and motivation. Teachers and parents felt that teachers were responsible to take the initiative to educate themselves about religion and to understand the religious and cultural identity and needs of the children in their classrooms. My research indicates that teachers are motivated to learn about religion and would take the initiative to learn if they were provided with the curriculum and opportunity to do so.

In its curriculum revisions, the OCT makes it clear what the motivations and incentives of new teachers should be. The Accreditation Resource Guide (ARG) provides the following guidance for the curriculum revision:

> The guide presumes that all teachers view themselves as learners and understand that the student/learner must be the centre of their work in teaching and learning. The concept that teachers are life-long learners who are beginning the continuum of professional learning underpins the guide. The guide expects that all teachers hold a growth mindset and work from an asset-based approach for their students and themselves. It is intended to be comprehensive regarding

areas of knowledge and skills for teachers beginning their careers with recognition that these areas will continue to deepen and grow throughout their careers. (2014:3)

It is evident from the ARG that the OCT expects new teacher motivation, incentive and volition to be centred on three things: the student/learner, personal growth, and professional development. As indicated in the ARG, initial and ongoing teacher education is at the heart of the OCT vision of teacher education. My research indicates that most teacher participants like teaching and entered the profession for noble reasons. Interestingly, no teacher interviewed expressed a desire to change professions, and many were motivated and eager to learn about and to teach about world religions. The exclusion of mandatory content from the new teacher education curriculum and from the public school curriculum about such a universal topic as religion does not raise questions about the incentive or motivation of the Ontario teacher, but it may be questioning the OCT's and OME's motivation or agenda. Are the OCT and OME motivated by a genuine desire to meet the needs of religious learners? If so, it follows that their motivation and incentive must mirror the motivation and incentive expected of individual teachers and must communicate a desire to produce informed, productive citizens for Ontario and Canada.

The OCT's teacher education curriculum can be perceived as a lack of concern for students who are preparing to participate in a world that is rapidly globalizing. Given the increasingly close geographical proximity of those holding competing religious world views, interaction is unavoidable. The OME's introduction of a seminar on Islamophobia suggests that the OCT has adopted a reactive approach to educating teachers rather than a pro-active, systematic one. The OCT's curriculum gap in preparing teachers to be comfortable in a multi-religious environment is inconsistent with the Canadian government's strong stance on multiculturalism and diversity. Mayo (1999) argues:

> There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (5)

In the case of the OME and the OCT, neither of Mayo's objectives are met because, in terms of Illeris' horizontal axis of acquisition, while incentive is present, content is not. By avoiding religious content in the education of teachers, and by extension to the public school students, the OCT is neither fully integrating a generation into the present multicultural Canadian society, nor is it helping teachers and students respect autonomy, deal critically with reality, or participate in the transformation of their world. Individual teacher incentive and motivation may vary, but the motivation of the OCT and OME is unclear. While the OCT cannot be held responsible for the incentive of every student or of individuals training to be teachers, it does, according to its mandate, have a responsibility to provide content for teacher education that best prepares teachers to teach in the Ontario and Canadian context. Arguably, it fails to meet that responsibility because of the omission of world religions from the diversity requirements of its teacher education curriculum.

TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING

Several experienced teachers expressed concern and disappointment about their level of religious literacy and about the effort required to learn religious content at the various stages of their career. Admittedly, teachers come to the learning environment with varying levels of religious experience and literacy, but because they have overwhelmingly indicated that their personal level of religious literacy is very low, the OCT has an opportunity to be the first educational influence that creates the foundational mental impulses on which religious learning can be built. Illeris (2008) notes that the processes of assimilation and accommodation are occurring continuously during learning and they make an environment alive, dynamic and continually evolving. Whether they are new or experienced teachers and whether they have a religious background or not, if teachers are to enter the public school classroom with an understanding of religion and religious learners, they must be provided with content that challenges their existing paradigms. For example, a new teacher who comes from a religious or family context in which traditional gender roles are well-defined may need to be challenged by content that expresses a different understanding. In order for accommodative learning to occur, the OCT may need to offer content that challenges, maybe even shatters, an existing world view. The OCT has a history of introducing content that required new and

experienced teachers to restructure their established patterns of thought in order to respond to new impulses or knowledge. For example, the introduction of the Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum (2015) challenged long-established cultural understandings of gender and sexuality, and requires new teachers to break down established patterns of thought and structures of knowledge to assimilate the content. This was particularly challenging for teachers from religious backgrounds who adhered to a different view of gender and sexuality. Insisting on assimilation of new content was beneficial in the case of introducing sexual diversity issues, so it is surprising that the same approach has not been applied to issues of religious diversity. With the admitted low level of religious literacy among teachers, a readjustment or reorienting of individual thought processes, knowledge schemes, and impulses would likely be challenging, but necessary. Accommodative learning, as described by Illeris (2006), may be a slow process because of already established cognition, but as in the implementation of the new Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum, the process of educating teachers and students about religion must extend to all levels.

Mezirow's (2000) understanding of transformative learning as an ongoing process that continually pushes individual learners towards re-evaluation, new ways of understanding, and change, is helpful when addressing adult teacher education. Cranton (2006) adds the element of freedom when referring to transformative learning as emancipatory learning or learning that can 'free us from forces that have limited our opinion or forces that have been taken for granted or seen as beyond our control' (2). This is not to say that it is an act that frees an individual from religion or the bonds that hold someone to religious views. It is learning that presents alternative views and grants the freedom to accept, reject or modify one's understanding of the world. Experienced teachers entering the teaching profession have already experienced, either consciously or subconsciously, the effects of transformative learning. Most have acquired massive amounts of life experience, knowledge schemes, and frames of reference that help them make life choices and grapple with religious world views and concepts, so likely transformative learning, in some form or another, has been occurring from a very early age. Also, if teachers are to promote transformative learning in the Ontario classroom, initial and ongoing teacher

education is necessary to ensure that proper care is given to classroom management. Untrained teachers may hinder transformative learning rather than promote it, when dealing with issues such as age-appropriateness or articulating alternative world views.

For the education of new teachers, transformative learning will likely occur in a way that challenges many of the impulses and impressions that have been accumulated and assimilated from an early age. As the name suggests transformative learning has the potential to significantly change the learner and, as Rogers (2003) suggests, be somewhat unhinging or disorienting, as new world views require a reconstruction of the self. As challenging as it may be, in a constantly changing world this disorientation in adult learning is a preferred outcome. The OCT's lack of significant content avoids any challenge to personal world views, avoids any disorienting dilemma, self-examination or critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural or psychic assumptions. When there is no teacher religious education, teachers, and by extension students, are not afforded the opportunity to recognise that others are experiencing the same disorientation and change, or the opportunity to explore other options, plan a course of action, evaluate new roles and ideas, or build confidence as they integrate into a new reality, as Illeris (2006) suggests. By avoiding religious content in teacher education, the OCT may be denying teachers and public school students, religious and non-religious, the opportunity to experience transformative learning and the opportunity to challenge their own culture and religious views. Teachers already possess well-developed psychological schemes by the time they enter post-secondary education, so it would be unfair to conclude that the mental schemes they are encountering are completely new. But, the data shows that many teachers have never studied religion, either at an academic or confessional level, so ensuring that the impulses and impressions that have already been imprinted are accurate is very important. Before including religion in teacher education, it may be necessary to evaluate teachers to better assess the level of cumulative religious learning that they may have already acquired. It may also be necessary to acknowledge that although new teachers require a deeper and more nuanced understanding of religion, this form of learning may continue into the future.

Assimilative learning requires that existing mental schemes absorb new impulses, knowledge, or content from outside influences. This type of learning is likely to occur naturally during teacher education as teachers come to the learning environment in a constant process of constructing, integrating and stabilizing knowledge. Because teacher education is adult education, impulses from past education, socio-economic factors, religious influences, culture and family, and other external stimuli have already created a bank of knowledge and experience that has to be adjusted in order to accommodate new content about religion. By not including content about religion in the new teacher education curriculum that can be assimilated into already developed mental schemes or accommodated in amended meaning schemes, the OCT may be missing an opportunity for acquisition and learning to occur. Also, by adding no new meaningful content about religion, the present OCT curriculum may imply that impressions and impulses provided by family, religious communities, or culture are not valid impulses or are not worthy of assimilation. From the teacher's perspective, a willingness to synthesise new impulses about religion with already existing meaning schemes is vital to learning. A desire to learn religious content allows the new teacher's thought processes to develop and mature as new ways of viewing the world are added to already existing meaning schemes. It must be noted that, while it is the responsibility of the OCT to create sufficient religious content that is worth learning, it is also incumbent on the learner, especially experienced teachers, to be willing to synthesise this new content into their already established patterns of movement, potential actions, structures of knowledge, or modes of understanding.

Mezirow suggests that people experience learning through the disorientating process of transformative learning. Content can be instructive and transformative, but also highly disorienting, even to the point of eliciting fear, guilt, and shame. These moments may be mitigated by the presence of affirming friends, parents, and knowledgeable teachers who are prepared to be supportive during such transformative moments. To challenge teachers' and students' previously established meaning schemes, either by questioning or dismissing them, may be inviting internal and family conflict. Transformative learning that does no harm requires that all teachers be knowledgeable, and maybe even specialised, in the area of comparative religion. Helping teachers understand

alternative world views allows them to confront, revise if necessary, stabilise, and normalise their own thought processes about religion before endeavoring to respond to students questions about religion. If they are not given opportunity to reflect on already existing meaning schemes, no revision or transformation is likely to occur. Mezirow (2000) argues that:

> One of the critical modes of making meaning is becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation. (4)

Making teachers aware of their own assumptions, whether positive or negative, requires a conversation that does not invalidate past learning experiences but re-evaluates them. This re-evaluation may or may not result in the teacher creating new modes of understanding the world. Not allowing different world views to challenge and unsettle an individual's previously-established meaning schemes hinders the transformative learning experience, and meaningful change does not take place. If Mezirow is right and the transformative learning experience involves something close to a rebirth or a catharsis, teachers with specific expertise in delivering a well-developed curriculum about religion must be employed to avoid family and community conflict. Depending on the degree to which meaning schemes are affected, this may result in a consolidation or a challenge to previously held religious views. It is the responsibility of the OCT, in consultation with religious and non-religious partners, to create teacher education curriculum that allows all types of learning, especially transformative learning, to occur.

TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION

The individual and societal aspects of interaction in the Ontario system are presently very learning-friendly, for a variety of reasons. Recognition of multiculturalism, the need for inclusivity and diversity, the need to combat Islamophobia, and even the willingness to make changes to improve education, are all signs that, on many levels, the environment is positive for learning. Also, the OME and the OCT have provided strong physical infrastructure, including facilities, organization, technology, and educational policy, that is capable of supporting the social aspects of the environment. My research indicates however that teacher education in Ontario, while providing physical environments for

interaction to take place may not be providing teachers with the necessary content to fully interact with the religious learners in those environments. Although learning can occur anywhere, the art of teaching is essentially the dynamic interaction between the teacher, the student, and the content to be learned. As noted earlier, Illeris (2003) claims that learning includes an external interaction process and an internal psychological process of acquisition and elaboration. He further adds that:

> All learning includes three dimensions, namely, the cognitive dimension of knowledge and skills, the emotional dimension of feelings and motivation, and the social dimension of communication and co-operation — all of which are embedded in a societally situated context. (396)

According to Illeris, learning is a result of an internal and an external process, and involves a cognitive, an emotional and a social dimension. It may be argued that the OCT has endeavored, through policy enactment, to address the external process of learning. It has educated teachers to create external social, cultural and material environments that promote student learning. However, my research suggests that it has not educated teachers to provide for the 'psychological process of acquisition and elaboration in which new impulses are connected with the results of prior learning' (Illeris, 2003, 396). Not preparing teachers to affect the internal processes means that teacher education, particularly where religion is concerned, fails to fully affect the three dimensions of learning, namely, 'the cognitive dimension of knowledge and skills, the emotional dimension of feelings and motivation, and the social dimension of communication and co-operation'.

When asked what they learned about religion in their initial and subsequent teacher education, teachers indicated that, other than learning to acknowledge the religious calendar events of students in their classroom, they were provided with no learning strategies or methods geared to engaging religious learners. Educating teachers to affect the internal and external process and all three dimensions of learning requires that teachers be taught a variety of teaching methodologies and methods. For example, according to Illeris (2003b), the social dimension of learning involves 'participation, communication and co-operation' (399), thus building up the *sociality* of the learner. So, preparing teachers to interact with the social dimension of students in the classroom requires that

teachers be equipped with teaching methods that promote the social dimension of student learning. The Center for Teaching and Learning at the University of North Carolina (2017) identifies over 150 different teaching methods that can be employed in education. While no teacher can be expected to employ all of these methods, teachers must be exposed to methods that speak to all three dimensions in order to enhance classroom interaction and ensure students have a more holistic learning experience.

Tomlinson's (1999) theory of differentiated learning is an example of a teaching methodology that may be effective when educating teachers for a multicultural and multi-religious classroom. She outlines the premises of her theory.

> In differentiated classrooms, teachers begin where students are, not the front of the curriculum guide. They accept and build upon the premise that learners differ in important ways. Thus, they also accept and act on the premise that teachers must be ready to engage students in instruction through different learning modalities, by appealing to different interests, and by using varied rates of instruction along with varied degrees of complexity. (2)

The differentiated classroom does not provide a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching, but takes into account that every student has a different roadmap to learning. If teachers are educated to take into account religious background as a part of where 'students are', this approach to learning may be a key to meeting the needs of religious learners in the classroom. Many of the concerns raised by interview participants are addressed by the 'building blocks' of differentiated instruction as articulated by Forsten, Grant and Hollas, and outlined by the Metropolitan Centre for Urban Education (2008). About the first building block, 'Knowing the Learner', the authors claim that:

> Teachers need to know as much as possible about their students to teach them well, including learning styles and pace, multiple intelligences, personal qualities such as personality, temperament and motivation, personal interests, potential disabilities, health, family circumstances, and language preference. (4)

My research showed that, in the case of the Ontario classroom, teachers did not know as much about their students' religious context as they should. Educating teachers to become better acquainted with the religious background of their students would better equip teachers to facilitate ongoing religious conversation. A second building block of differentiated learning outlines the

traits of a quality teacher. The authors argue that a teacher who is educated to employ a differentiated learning model will 'understand diversity and think about students developmentally' (4). The OCT's teacher education curriculum indicates that understanding religious diversity is not something that teachers are being prepared to address, despite the fact that parents and teachers indicated there was a lack of education and a definite need in this area. The third building block of differentiated learning is the provision of quality curriculum that must be 'relevant to [student's lives]' (4). Some form of religion and the experience that is associated with religion is the reality of millions of Canadians. It is a relevant part of their life experience and should not be ignored in the curriculum content. Acknowledging the importance of religion must be a part of the road forward, and the OCT's modification of the teacher education curriculum to align with a differentiated learning methodology may address some of these issues. Tomlinson's (1999) differentiated learning model suggests that it is not necessarily the number of methods employed in the classroom, but whether or not those methods impact the greatest number of students. According to Tomlinson, just as teaching methods must be chosen to meet the needs of a culturally diverse or a cognitively diverse student population, there must also be a conscious effort by the OCT to educate teachers to choose the best teaching methods to engage religious students in the classroom.

Tomlinson's assertion that teaching begins where students are, rather than with the teaching guide, should be given consideration because, according to my research, teachers are not being taught about the religious student's individual context. While teachers are taught to accept and build on the premise that learners differ in many important ways, my research indicates that religion is not treated as one of those differences. There is no indication that the OCT educates teachers to employ different learning modalities for religious learners or how to vary their rate of instruction or adjust their degree of complexity for religious learners or when teaching religious content, as a differentiated model suggests. Because of the historically divisive nature of religion, teaching methods such as lecture and debate may have to give way to approaches that are more conversational, embracing, and reciprocal. The fact that experienced teachers confided that they relied on the religious students to bring content about religion indicates that teachers were willing to adjust their personal filters

and the paradigms that shape their perspectives of themselves, others and the classroom in the area of religion. They are already engaging in the process of reframing the classroom environment and their role in it, in order to provide content about religion and a richer learning experience. Educating teachers, who are willing to learn with and from students, and to interact with students who are given the freedom to share their religious experience, creates a strong learning environment for both parties. My review of the curriculum content and course offerings in the teacher education programme indicates that teacher education strongly influences teacher-student interaction, and even teacher incentive, in most subject areas. But, by not providing religious content, the OCT is placing responsibility for religious content in the hands of individual educators, and thereby hindering teachers' knowledge and incentive to interact with students concerning religion and religious practices.

Building the Ontario teacher education curriculum around an enquiry-based model may provide a psychologically-safe environment for teachers and students. This would allow learners, as Scardamalia (2002) suggests in Table 2, to 'risk revealing ignorance, voicing half-baked notions, and giving and receiving criticism without repercussion'. This may be an ideal environment in which to introduce a religious curriculum. The environment that she advocates, is also one that welcomes diversity, 'enables new and more refined ideas to evolve', promotes agency and personal responsibility, offers ownership and free exchange of ideas, encourages students to learn outside the classroom, and includes the respectful and constructive use of authoritative sources. The environment also applies rigorous and ongoing assessment in order to ensure that there is progress and that creative knowledge building occurs. It means 'learning to work with diversity, complexity, and messiness, and from that, achieve new synthesis', as noted in Table 2. Educating teachers to employ the principles of the enquiry-based learning model may require changing or even re-inventing the present OCT learning environment, but the enquiry-based model does have the potential to be extremely helpful in the creation of religious teacher education curriculum.

Carefully choosing appropriate methods of teaching in order to engage religious students is critical, but so is choosing effective teaching styles. Grasha (1994) offers style options that may be utilised during classroom interaction. For

example, the *Delegator* style emphasises autonomy and independent thought and is therefore useful when exploring religion. Teachers who utilise this style may be more apt to allow student-initiated discussion and exploration and a greater interchange of multiple viewpoints around religion. The teacher-student relationship emphasised by the *Facilitator* style may help create a stronger atmosphere of trust, therefore promoting a safe place for the exchange of religious ideas. The *Personal Model* style may have its drawbacks when teaching religion because of the fear of indoctrination or proselytizing. Some elements of the *Expert* teaching style may be effective in the case of religion because it requires the teacher to possess knowledge and expertise that students require, display detailed knowledge, challenge students to enhance their competence, be concerned with transmitting information, and ensure that students are well-prepared. The religious gap in teacher education may be preventing teachers from developing teaching styles more suited to learning religious content.

Several experienced teachers indicated that they sought out content about religion from colleagues and even students. By doing so, these teachers may be unintentionally moving towards a student-centred, or enquiry-based learning environment. In a multi-religious environment, educating teachers to employ clear boundaries of conversational engagement has to be a priority. Cranton (2006) claims that those involved in the learning environment must be aware of meaning perspectives. She describes these as 'filters, frameworks, or paradigms that shape our perspectives of ourselves, others and our surroundings' (96). She goes on to say that it is not only important that educators be aware of their own meaning perspectives, as they are critical to an educator's personal growth, but they must also have those meaning perspectives open for questioning. This ensures openness in the learning environment and provides conversational guidelines for teacher/student interaction in the classroom. Educating new teachers to facilitate conversations with a greater degree of openness in the public school system may result in greater individual autonomy and co-learning experiences, which can result in both the teacher and student becoming more at ease with religious content. Potentially, providing an open conversation about religion can teach public school students how to respectfully engage people of other religions. A reciprocal or cooperative learning environment may not work for the study of all subjects, but because of the uniqueness, breath, and depth

of convictions about religion, it is imperative that students and teachers plan and agree to learn cooperatively.

While local School Boards, the OCT and the OME have all provided a strong learning environment for both teacher and student learning in the area of religion, the dynamic interaction of teaching, which takes into account individual personalities, past experiences, differentiated teaching methods, and learned teaching styles, cannot occur without some critical element of religious content. Illeris (2006) contends that whatever the teaching methods, strategies or styles employed in the student-teacher-content interaction, if the interaction within the environment is not acceptable, learning may not occur or the learner may learn something other than what the educator intended. Therefore, the absence of content in the form of a systematic curriculum makes the environment non-conducive to learning about religion. Also, as previously mentioned, Eisner (1994) claims a curriculum consists of the explicit, implicit, and null curricula. This means that teachers in their initial and ongoing education learn from what is explicitly stated, what is implied, and what is omitted from the curriculum. In this case, they may be receiving the mistaken impression that religion is not an important element in society, culture and human development. Teachers and students may in fact be learning something that the OCT did not intend for them to learn.

LEARNER AUTONOMY

My research indicates that teachers do not feel free to share their own religious identity, knowledge or experiences with students in the classroom. This has created a scenario in which teacher autonomy may be limited. The term 'learner autonomy' has taken many forms since Holec (1981) introduced it. The literature indicates that writers are inconsistent in their use of the term. Some writers use it to describe a personal characteristic or trait, some use it in a political context, while others us it to define an educational end. Holec described autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (3). Little (1991) expands on this definition by saying that learner autonomy is 'essentially a matter of the learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning — a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action' (4). He further suggests that to experience autonomy, not

only should individuals have freedom to direct their own learning destiny, they must also have the freedom to process information in light of their own experience. For Ontario teachers and public school students, learner autonomy should be interpreted as the personal freedom to process education in light of their individual religious, ethnic, and cultural experiences, and the freedom to incorporate their religious experience into their learning experience. Little's (1991) definition of autonomy connects it to the ability to engage in critical reflection about the process and content of the curriculum. A lack of content about religion makes this an impossibility in teacher education. There is little opportunity for teachers or students to reflect upon religious concepts or ideas. Schön (1983) insists that critical reflection requires content on which to reflect and make decisions. Little also connects autonomy to the ability to engage in independent action. Teacher participants indicated that their understanding of the Ontario secular classroom did not allow them the freedom of decision-making or independent action in the area of religion. Teachers' perception or experience of limited autonomy may be passed to students in the public school system, who may be left with the impression that they should leave their religious self at the door when they enter the classroom.

Understanding personal autonomy as the 'learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning' means that religious teachers and students may include their religious knowledge, ideas, and views in the educational process. In fact, all content is viewed through the lens of past experience, including religious experience. So, personal autonomy is limited when religious content is suppressed, leaving teachers and students with the impression that religious conversation is off-limits in the secular classroom. But, the secular classroom, according to its intended meaning, does not limit autonomy. The limitation of personal autonomy is fueled by three things: teacher confusion about what 'secular' means, teacher fear of offending religious communities, and teacher uncertainty and fear of administrative repercussions. My research indicates that because of a misunderstanding of the intended classroom environment, teachers, and consequently students, are reluctant to share their religious selves. In other words, fear, uncertainty and unclear expectations have severely limited the expression of personal autonomy. These factors can be attributed to gaps in teacher education, which in turn results in an ignorance of the belief

systems, practices, and world views of the religious communities represented in Ontario. Not providing teachers with education related to religion may therefore constitute a violation of the learner's autonomy. Learner autonomy must be encouraged in all aspects of individual identity, including sexual identity, gender identity, cultural/ethnic identity, language identity, or any number of layers that comprise a person's identity. Respecting teacher and student religious identities and seeking to give them autonomy equates to understanding another piece of the already complex puzzle that makes up the human person. Hecht (2005), and Shavelson and Bolus (1982) claim that personal identity is multidimensional or multilayered. Hecht and Choi (2003) suggest that a person's identity has four layers or frames: a personal layer, an enactment layer, a relationship layer, and a communal layer. Because religion involves all layers of personal identity, teachers must be free to express their personal identity and be equipped to respect and nurture student identity and autonomy in the classroom.

Zine (2001) claims that the need to gain acceptance is particularly important among minority youth. She argues that 'Muslim youth must struggle to negotiate an identity within three often cultural frameworks: the dominant culture, their ethnic culture, and Islam' (404). By not educating teachers to adequately deal with religious students, the OCT is encouraging learners to perceive autonomy only in the layers of their personality with which their educators are comfortable. Historically, teachers have been comfortable expressing autonomy in identities that are commonly and socially accepted. For example, identification with familial roles, such as male or female, son or daughter, causes no discomfort to educators. But, expressing autonomy in other areas of identity, such as gender, religion, political affiliation, or ethnicity, can be discomforting. By failing to educate teachers to engage the whole student, the OCT may be negligent in offering students the freedom to express who they truly are. In order for students to be free to be themselves completely, especially as religious people, the idea of autonomy must be viewed more holistically. Concerning religion, the OCT teacher education curriculum is not inclusive of the autonomy of educators and students seeking to integrate their religious identity into their personal development.

Another issue related to learner autonomy that surfaced in the data is age-appropriateness. Most teachers and parents felt that the gradual integration of knowledge related to religious belief systems should begin at an early age, while others felt that it should not occur until high school. Participants were divided on which age it is appropriate to engage children in critical reflection whereby they are given the autonomy to challenge their parental and communal understanding of the world. When is one mature enough to be free to, as Dewey (1933) suggests, 'assess the grounds or (justification) of one's belief system' (9)? Educating teachers to assess age-appropriateness in all subjects of education is critical and has been a part of the systematic teaching process since formal education was introduced. The OCT has lots of historical precedence in assessing age appropriateness, so doing the same for religious content and distributing religious curriculum accordingly should not be a challenge.

Because teachers are not equipped and therefore do not feel confident facilitating religious conversations, students are not encouraged to include their religious identity, with all the feelings, impulses and experiences associated with it. This approach may be limiting to learner autonomy. In order for religious learners to process the classroom knowledge that they are receiving daily, and make sense of it in light of their religious world view, they must be given autonomy to bring their religious knowledge and experience into the classroom. Little (1991) suggests that, the freedom to interpret one's own reality and progressively assimilate new knowledge is a key component of learning. By not encouraging the religion conversation, the OCT is expecting teachers and students to separate their religious self from their educational self. This equates to expecting a female child to leave their femaleness behind when she enters the classroom, or asking First Nations children to enter a residential school and leave their native-ness behind. Again, this dualism creates a division between the student's religious and non-religious worlds, and hinders the learner's ability to combine in-class learning with beliefs and practices obtained outside the classroom. This limits educator's and student's freedom to synthesise any past mental thought processes or impulses obtained through religious learning, expression, practice or conversation with new themes introduced in the OCT curriculum. Religious learners are only truly autonomous when they are given the freedom to engage their religious experience and religious world view with

the curriculum content. It is only when they do so that their pre-existing knowledge can be cognitively confirmed or rejected. In essence, no learning will occur unless learners are given the autonomy to learn or unlearn. Piaget (1948) claims that mutual respect is a 'necessary condition of autonomy' (103). He says that 'it frees the child from the opinions that have been imposed upon him [sic] while it favors inner consistency and reciprocal control' (103). The OCT is ethically obligated to educate teachers to provide a classroom of mutual respect for all religious views.

Teachers and parents indicated that they were pleased with the level of attention given by the OME and local school boards to raising awareness of religious diversity, and promoting religious tolerance and respect for religious practices. What they felt is missing is a curriculum for teacher education that respects the autonomy of religious learners and teachers in all areas of identity, and a curriculum that instructs teachers how to create classroom environments that promote religious identity and autonomy. Failure to educate teachers to handle the conversations that arise around religion suggests that the OCT and the OME are not yet comfortable granting teachers and students full autonomy to express their religious identity and fully incorporate their religious views in the classroom. This further suggests that, the Ontario school system is an environment in which autonomy is a stated value not a practised value. It is possible that educating teachers to simply welcome religious people into the classroom and making room for their objects of worship, dress, prayer times, religious holidays and practice may not result in them becoming a fully integrated part of the learning environment. In other words, granting access, acceptance and accommodation does not result in complete autonomy. Teachers who are educated to facilitate an ongoing conversation using age-appropriate curriculum about religion, free to incorporate their own beliefs, and free to express their religious identity as part of their learning and teaching are essential to creating and maintaining a practice of autonomy in the classroom.

MORAL/FAITH DEVELOPMENT

While parent participants agreed that teachers should be educated to teach about religion in the classroom, they were divided about what age this should begin. The OCT's mandate, according to parents and teachers, is to prepare

teachers to educate children in a holistic manner. To fulfil this mandate the OCT is required to educate teachers in more than how children develop cognitively. Presently, teachers are educated to assist students through the cognitive development process, described by Piaget (1969), but they are not being equipped to aid children through the stages of moral/faith development as outlined by Kohlberg (1984) and Fowler (1995). Educating teachers in this area may help equip them with the knowledge to effectively and appropriately instruct religious content and address religion in the classroom. Piaget contends that it may be highly inappropriate to introduce religious content, especially competing world views at the preoperational stage of development when ideas, morals and world views need to be reinforced, including familial and religious ideas. This is not the stage at which children are able to properly process competing world views cognitively, morally, or spiritually, nor are they able to process a dismantling of previously held belief systems. But, at the formal operational stage, during which the adolescent mind is capable of processing a variety of complex concepts, it may be appropriate. As mentioned previously, Piaget's concrete operational stage, age seven to eleven, is a time when children begin to think logically and may be the appropriate time to introduce children to basic concepts of religion while being careful not to challenge family religious values. According to Piaget (1969), while introspection is difficult at this stage, 'children are able to see things from different perspectives and points of view. There is a consciousness that there is a bigger world beyond their own' (144). Educating teachers to understand moral/faith development during this stage of cognitive development ensures that the religious learners' faith and moral development is not hindered. At Piaget's formal operational stage, from eleven years of age onward, cognition is developed such that they can process scenarios that require logical thinking and reasoning. This suggests that, at this stage, the student can handle the presentation of a variety of world views and the introduction of abstract concepts associated with religious thought. A teacher who is knowledgeable about religions can be helpful for faith development at this stage. Educating teachers to introduce religious content after children have progressed beyond Piaget's concrete stage ensures that students have the capacity to reason and process competing world views.

Combining Piaget's description of cognitive development, with Kohlberg (1984) and Fowler's (1995) descriptions of spiritual development can be useful for the OCT in assessing age-appropriateness when introducing religious content. As students move from the Conventional to the Post-Conventional level of Kohlberg's Moral Development model (which coincides with Piaget's concrete operational stage), they begin to think logically and can accept that people have different religious and non-religious views and values. This level of moral/faith development may be a good place for the OCT to introduce students to basic religious concepts. It ensures that students are old enough to process concepts that could potentially challenge family religious values. As Kohlberg suggests, at this stage, students begin to develop internal moral principles and select universal ethical principles for themselves. Stage one of Fowler's model, Intuitive-Projective Faith, indicates that teachers must be educated to properly address students about faith much earlier. He suggests that faith development begins with the first family faith stories, so by the time they enter public school they have already been exposed to world views that include such concepts as God or gods, good and evil, eternity, heaven, karma, angels, and reincarnation. Children at this stage believe what they have been taught by family and through interaction with their religious community. Therefore, the role of the teacher in supporting that faith and not presenting conflicting views about religion is important. Stage two, Mystical-Literal Faith, during which moral rules are understood literally and concretely and there is little ability to grasp overarching meanings or to see the bigger picture, is an appropriate age to introduce concepts that gently expand the child's religious world view. Stage three, Synthetic-Conventional Faith, in which students have the ability to grasp abstract concepts and investigate deeper concepts, may be the correct faith development stage to introduce mandatory learning about religion. This coincides with Piaget concrete-operational stage and Kohlberg's Post-Conventional Level of moral development, and indicates that the high school period is the best time to implement curriculum that presents conflicting religious views which could potentially challenge a student's existing world view. The OCT must carefully ensure that students at this stage of cognitive development are not presented with a classroom environment that answers their question of faith only from a non-religious or anti-religious world view.

UPHOLDING CANADIAN VALUES

All participants agreed that a teacher education curriculum about religion and the presentation of religious content in the public school classroom should be aligned with Canadian values. Equality, diversity, acceptance, tolerance, religious freedom, and multiculturalism were all terms used to describe values that participants expected to see in teacher educational curriculum about religion. Being silent on religion in the teacher education curriculum indicates that the OCT may not view religion as a valuable cultural manifestation. Moore (2010) suggests that religion is a factor in cultural interpretation and understanding, and cannot be ignored:

> Just as religion cannot be understood in isolation from its cultural manifestations, it is impossible to understand culture without considering its religious dimensions. In the same way that race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality are always factors in cultural interpretation and understanding, so too is religion. (27)

This is why the OCT's approach to educating new teachers is so perplexing. It simply is not reflective of the Canadian cultural values of equality, religious freedom, and multiculturalism, articulated and endorsed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1984), the Constitution Act (1982), and the Education Act (1980). With the majority of Canadians adhering to some form of religion and an influx of new foreign-born Canadians with strong religious beliefs settling in Ontario, educating teachers to engage in conversations about religion is a more productive and essential strategy than avoidance of religion and religious practices.

Canada values unity over division, so by choosing not to produce content about religion, the OCT may be promoting an environment in the public school classroom that has divided participants into religious and non-religious. Beaman (2008) reminds us that society is not so neatly divided into secular and sacred realms, and this dualistic thinking can lead to legalism and protectionism. It may also lead to a fear, on the part of religious groups, of anything that does not fit into specific religious frameworks. For example, music or art is often divided into 'secular' and 'religious' in an endeavor to protect religious people from certain themes that oppose religious teaching. The designation of *secular* and *religious* sets up guidelines designed to indicate what the religious leadership

deems appropriate. But, it also sets up an *us* and *them* scenario, and further strains the equality conversation. In reality, life is more fluid and integrated, and religion is intertwined with everyday life. When either religious or non-religious leaders separate the secular from the sacred, it is an act that severely limits freedom of expression on both sides. Multicultural learning environments are challenging and especially so when attitudes that create division are allowed to exist unchallenged in Canadian culture.

By not insisting that teachers maintain a level of religious literacy, the OCT is, by omission, promoting a learning environment that is not inclusive, tolerant or accepting, and is non-religious. This promotes religious illiteracy, and has consequences. Moore (2010) claims:

> Religious illiteracy is certainly not the sole or even primary cause of the heartbreaking violence that dominates local and global news stories. It is, however, often a contributing factor in fostering a climate whereby certain forms of bigotry and misrepresentation can emerge unchallenged and thus serve as one form of justification for violence and marginalization (AAR, 2010, 5).

Sheets Hernandez (2005) insists that religion is one of the diversity issues that generally contributes to multiple conflicts in the classroom. Also, the fact that thirty percent of all hate-crimes in Canada in 2012 were related to religion points to the growing need for stronger education in this area. The targets of these hate-crimes were mainly Jews, Muslims, and Roman Catholics, followed by Protestants, Hindu, Sikhs, and Buddhists (Stats Canada, 2014). Educating teachers to teach about religious differences and respect at an early age aligns with Canadian values, while the present practice of avoidance does not.

By not educating teachers about religion, the OCT may also be promoting a formal equality rather than an environment of equity. The University of British Columbia's (2010) strategy for advancing equity and diversity claims that a clearer understanding of the difference between equity and equality is necessary for all Canadians not to feel excluded in societal development:

> Equity is not the same as formal equality. Formal equality implies sameness. Equity, on the other hand, assumes difference and takes difference into account to ensure a fair process and, ultimately, a fair (or equitable) outcome. In this way, equity can be seen as the equivalent of the concept of substantive equality built into the

Canadian legal system. Equity recognizes that some groups were historically disadvantaged in accessing educational and employment opportunities and were, therefore, underrepresented or marginalized in many organizations and institutions. The effects of that exclusion often linger systemically within organizational policies, practices and procedures.

Understanding the difference between equity and equality is essential to the conversation about curriculum because Canada is a place where difference, not sameness, is accounted for in the process of societal development. Canadians value equity, so they would expect the teacher education curriculum to mirror that value. Not educating teachers to deal with religious diversity promotes sameness and devalues individual opinions and varied personal belief systems. Often the groups who are historically disadvantaged in accessing educational and employment opportunities and who are underrepresented or marginalised in Canadian organizations and institutions are those who come from particular religious group. Therefore, educating teachers to better understand religion may be beneficial in helping them and their students attain equity.

As previously mentioned, the nation of Canada, and by extension the Ontario classroom, must be a secular place where all religions are given equitable representation. The secular classroom, understood correctly, is the only learning environment appropriate to Canada's constitutionality. As noted previously, Moore (2010) defines the secular classroom as 'a constitutionally defined approach to the teaching of religion that neither privileges nor rejects any particular religious tradition or expression'. This approach has served Ontario well in most areas over the past few decades by ensuring that a non-devotional, non-confessional, academic approach to instruction and religious instruction is maintained. It has ensured that all religious groups are given equitable consideration in the educational process. The secular classroom has created a more functional and manageable classroom in the midst of increasing immigration and a rapidly globalizing world. A major problem with the manner in which the secular classroom is often interpreted and actualised is that it has been used to enable educators to manage difficult religious conversations primarily by avoiding them. While the OCT has educated teachers to welcome all religious students into the classroom and accommodate their religious practices, it has also allowed teachers to limit or avoid any conversation that could potentially bring religions into conflict with each other. Equal consideration for

religion in the classroom can be expressed in one of two ways, depending on the comfort level of the teacher. On the one hand, a teacher who is uncomfortable with comparative religions or anti-religion will, by default, silence the conversation. A teacher who is knowledgeable and educated in the area of religion is able to facilitate and inform the conversation. Teachers are staying true to the spirit of the secular classroom by giving equitable consideration to all religions, but often it is equal consideration by way of silence. If religion is not talked about in the classroom, over time *secular* is interpreted as non-religion.

The Canadian constitution also values education on an individual level as a means of fulfilling human potential while simultaneously valuing education as a means of producing human capital or workers for the Canadian economy. This is also the understanding of the OME and the OCT. Ontario Ministry of Education's Policy/Program Memorandum No.119 (2016) states that:

> Since schools have a pivotal role in developing the work force of tomorrow, students should be able to see themselves represented in the teaching, administrative, and support staff employed at the school (6).

The values associated with the learner's personal fulfillment are critical to Canadian society. Providing education related to religious diversity on a personal level can only build towards a more confident, holistic, fulfilled self, and a greater understanding of others. In making the connection between the workforce and education, the OME is also acknowledging that one of education's main concerns is how well students are prepared to interact with others in the Canadian workplace. By failing to prepare teachers, and by extension students, to understand people of other religions, the OCT may be failing to fully prepare workers for the Canadian economy. The value that a society assigns to education is directly related to its intended purpose for that education. The Canadian workforce, especially in larger urban areas, is religiously diverse, so educating future workers in the values of understanding, inclusion, equity, acceptance, accommodation and diversity can only prove to be good for the workplace. Closely connected to education about religion is the idea of enculturation. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) summarise Durkheim's argument that a failure to pass on values, in this case the Canadian values of religious diversity and understanding, can leave young people without the necessary tools to fully break into culture.

> The Durkheim functionalist sociological approach suggested that values in education should express the underlying beliefs of the society into which people, especially younger people, are being assimilated. Values in Durkheim's eyes were the tools that ensure that enculturation into the larger community takes place (73).

By not providing content related to religious diversity, the OCT's teacher education curriculum has failed to fully support the underlying Canadian values of promoting personal fulfillment, preparing workers for the Canadian workplace, and enabling citizens to be fully enculturated into the larger Canadian society that values religious diversity.

A teacher education curriculum that fails to prepare teachers to deal with religious diversity (as is the opinion of many of the educators interviewed for this research) ultimately fails the students. Educators who are unprepared, afraid, or unwilling to discuss religious topics in the classroom give students the impression that any topic related to religion is taboo or off-limits. This avoidance approach fails to prepare students for participation in the multi-religious environment of Canadian society, such as the workplace and institutions of higher learning. Conversely, a teacher who is trained to properly facilitate religious conversations in the classroom is more likely to allow students of different religions to engage in horizon-broadening discussions. This approach more accurately exemplifies the spirit of the secular classroom. To be truly secular according to Moore's definition, the classroom must acknowledge the presence of many religions and those who have no religion, and accept all parties equitably. Unfortunately, because there is little to no curriculum dedicated to religion diversity and no teacher education in this area, the religious dialogue is incidental or non-existent rather than strategic and intentional. The only students being accommodated in the present scenario are those who have no religious affiliation. The OCT's failure to properly articulate a clear understanding of what it means to be secular has not only resulted in confusion and fear on the part of teachers, it has also resulted in several misrepresentations of what it means to be Canadian and the values associated with it.

When it comes to maintaining a consistent value system that permeates all of Canadian society and is transferable, the Ontario Government's Accepting

Schools Act, 2012 is a good example. This act amended the Education Act, outlining the extent to which schools must go to make students feel accepted in Ontario schools. The major emphasis of the act is to ensure that students, particularly those who identify with the LGBTQ community, are protected from bullying and discrimination. The preamble states that:

> The People of Ontario and the Legislative Assembly believe that all students should feel safe at school and deserve a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting, regardless of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, marital status, family status or disability. (Legislative Assembly of Ontario, 2012)

The Accepting Schools Act aligns with Canadian constitutional values and the spirit of acceptance and inclusion. An unwillingness to educate teachers in this area suggests that the OCT has mistakenly interpreted the Canadian ethos as non-religious. O'Toole (2006) argues that:

> If it is acknowledged that "Canada from the beginning has been a strongly religious nation," it follows that "no real understanding of the forms and values of Canadian society is possible without a knowledge of the diverse religious convictions, organizations and experiences that have substantially shaped this society". (7)

One major issue with the Accepting School's act is the recurring tendency on the part of government to remove the word 'religion' from its policy documents. In this document, it is assumed in the words *creed* and *culture*. The underlying tone of the Accepting Schools Act is not specifically anti-religious; it simply fails to use the term *religion* to describe the groups that also deserve a positive school climate that is inclusive and accepting. *Religion* gets swallowed up in either the word *culture* or the word *creed*. The Ontario Human Rights Commission does not give a definition of creed, but courts and tribunals dealing with issues related to creed often make reference to religious beliefs and practices as part of their understanding. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (2015) stated:

> Creed may also include non-religious belief systems that, like religion, substantially influence a person's identity, worldview and way of life. The following characteristics are relevant when considering if a belief system is a creed under the Code. A creed:
> - Is sincerely, freely and deeply held

- Is integrally linked to a person's identity, self-definition and fulfilment
- Is a particular and comprehensive, overarching system of belief that governs one's conduct and practices
- Addresses ultimate questions of human existence, including ideas about life, purpose, death, and the existence or non-existence of a Creator and/or a higher or different order of existence
- Has some "nexus" or connection to an organization or community that professes a shared system of belief (OHRC).

Again, either out or fear, neglect or intentionality, there is a tendency by the provincial government to remove the word religion from important documents that govern the future of education. Obviously, the word *creed* is meant to encompass religion and a variety of other identity statements, while avoiding the term religion. But, this does little to indicate to educators or religious learners that their needs are being valued in any significant way. If religion is covered by the term culture, the act wrongly assumes that culture and religion are the same thing. For example, one can be of Tamil culture and be either Hindu, Muslim, or other. One can also be culturally Italian without being Roman Catholic. The question as to whether there is a deliberate attempt to avoid using the word *religion* is a legitimate one. This is disturbing because clear policies are created to protect societal values. Not specifically including the word *religion* leaves doubt as to whether the education curriculum still sees the protection of religion as a value.

While documents, like the Education Act, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and the Accepting School Act promote respect and understanding of cultures and religions, the question is whether that value is embedded in the new teacher education curriculum and the public school curriculum. Educating teachers how to live out this value in the classroom in ways that respect and affect the learner personally, academically, and socially is in doubt. Dewey, like Durkheim, believed that education has strong repercussions throughout society and is far more than just the transference of information. Dewey (1897) argued that, 'education is a regulation of the process of coming to share in the social consciousness; and that the adjustment of individual activity on the basis of this social consciousness is the only sure method of social reconstruction' (16). If that is the case, not educating teachers to engage in the religious conversation,

or to encourage student to do so, is ignoring a large part of the Canadian social consciousness and its place on the global stage. In a rapidly globalizing world, where cultures bump up against each other with greater frequency, ignorance of the belief systems of other people can only hinder the place of our citizens in that process. Consistency of values is essential for the development of Canada's culture at home, but also for its place of influence in the global education landscape. In a rapidly globalising world, having educational policies and values that are consistent, transferable, and able to be shared on a global scale is important. Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue that public policy, including education policy, which was once exclusively developed within a national setting, is now located within a *global system*. This puts pressure on all countries to develop policies based on values that are universally acceptable and transferable. The Ontario classroom must be an expression of the Canadian constitution and Canadian values. Keeping educators uninformed about religious people and their belief systems and values is unCanadian! Enhancing teacher education to include instruction in religion is required to improve teacher practice in the secular classroom, both to respect student autonomy and to value diversity. As my research shows, uninformed teachers tend to avoid discussing religion, religious practices, or religious issues in their classrooms. Often, such avoidance is not indicative of a desire to ban or reject the subject of religion, but the result of fear or a lack of knowledge about even the basic tenets and practices of the major religions.

TEACHER EMOTIONS OF FEAR AND INADEQUACY

My research indicated that the lack of religious content in teacher education has resulted in feelings of inadequacy, as teacher participants self-rated their level of religious literacy low and did not feel equipped to discuss religious world views in the classroom. The feelings of inadequacy were generated because teachers view their role as instructor and therefore feel they need to have subject matter expertise that is greater than, or at least equal to, their students. Experienced and student teachers typically self-assigned a level of religious literacy at four out of ten. Even educators who actively practised a religion indicated that they did not feel equipped to discuss religious world views, including their own, in the classroom. This feeling of inadequacy was expressed by several teachers who admitted that they cringed whenever

religious conversations arose. They connected their feeling of inadequacy directly to the lack of content about religion provided in initial and subsequent teacher education. While parents did not indicate that they or their children experienced any fear associated with interacting with people of other religions, most admitted that their close circle of friends was comprised only of those from their own religious communities.

The interview data, corroborated by the review undertaken in Chapter 2, indicates that there is strong negative emotion attached to the historical progression of education and religion in Ontario. There may be a historical fear on the part of government legislators and policy-makers, and the OCT concerning the inclusion of religion in education, motivated by historical events. Avoiding or limiting religious content suggests a fear that including religion in the teacher education programme and in public school curriculum may be signaling a return to a system that was dominated by European and Christian methodologies and ideology. It is against this historical backdrop that choices are made about content, once again, leading to questions of motivation and the impression that the OCT is fearful of repeating past mistakes in the area of religion. This may be a legitimate fear because, as Foucault (1998) argues, as long as there are human agents involved, there is a form of power being expressed. Parents indicated that they did not experience any significant fear as a result of conflict between the values espoused by the school and their own family values. They also said that they experienced no incidences which they felt were discriminatory or racist in nature when dealing with the school system. Parents did not raise issues related to personal fear about religion and the school system. But, one of the surprising pieces of data emerging from the interviews was the personal fear expressed by experienced teachers. Two parents and two experienced teachers admitted that they still have a lingering fear of people who have religious world views different than their own. While the number is not high, it is significant and suggests that, for a small percentage of the population, there may be an underlying fear of people of other religions and cultures.

Although not in a negative way, interviewees, especially recent immigrants in the parent focus group, made a distinction between their own cultural/religious communities and those of other Canadians. Throughout history, Koppelman (2011) claims, it has been common around the world for people to categorise

groups who are different than themselves as the *other*. Beaman (2008) claims the *other* is constructed in narratives as someone to be feared, identified, and overcome. She insists that in Canada, 'the current historical moment is fraught with anxiety about the dangers posited by the "other" who presents as the terrorist, the disease, the religious fanatic, the irresponsible citizen' (10). Cohen (1972) describes the atmosphere caused by the emergence of new groups within a society, such as through immigration, as one of 'moral panic', which he defines as a 'condition, episode, person or group of persons emerging to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests' (28). During the past 50 years Christianity has experienced moral panic as it has watched its grip on the education system slowly disappear. The OCT decision not to educate teachers or children about religion suggests that they may be experiencing their own moral panic as more and different religious people move into the Ontario classroom. It is impossible to completely remove the cultural and religious differences of the citizenry of a country, nor should we attempt to do so. But, as long as new citizens, cultures, religions or other groups are viewed through a lens of fear and moral panic, it is impossible to have an agreed upon pedagogy that addresses everyone's needs. An unwillingness to engage religion on a deeper level may give the impression that the OCT views religion in Canadian society as something to be feared. This approach risks offending the dignity and sensibilities of people of faith who participate in the school system. The educational environment should not engender fear, but create stronger learner autonomy.

One cause of personal fear among teachers is that there is no common understanding of the secular classroom. My research showed that parents had a clearer understanding of secular than most experienced teachers. This may be attributed to the fact that parents' understanding of a secular environment is often shaped by their exposure to a workplace that is secular and multicultural. Experienced teachers indicated that they acquired their definition of the secular classroom from involvement in various schools with various school administrations. Some administrations wanted no religion expressed in the classroom and encouraged teachers to shut down any conversation in order to avoid potential conflict. Others tried hard to ensure that every religious person in the classroom saw themselves in the curriculum and in the life of the school. These conflicting views, while both espousing secularism, represented equality

in completely different ways. One represents it as equally absent and the other as equally present. Either way, my research indicates that there is confusion about the definition of secular, and that has resulted in teachers being unclear and even fearful about religion in the classroom.

In order to prepare teachers for a multicultural secular classroom in a way that addresses the needs of religious students, teacher education curriculum must first start with an accurate assessment of the teacher's religious knowledge using a well-designed assessment tool. Simply knowing that religious literacy is low does not reveal the nature of the knowledge gap — all religions, all religions but one's own, specific religions only, religions of new immigrants, etc — nor does it reveal how the knowledge gap varies among different community and demographic groups. Parsons and Beauchamp suggest that:

> Since learning is extremely complex, using a single measure to assess what has been learned is less than insightful. Rather, a well-rounded (balanced) assessment system is important to determine whether a student benefits from instruction and what changes might be needed to enhance that student's learning. Specifically, a well-rounded assessment system needs to provide the best evidence that learning has occurred and indicate what has been acquired (9).

A comprehensive system of cohesive assessments that is aligned with educational standards and is ongoing may ensure that teacher education curriculum meets the needs of religious learners.

Clearly, in designing an effective teacher education curriculum, the OCT must give attention to curriculum content, motivation and incentive, teacher emotions of fear and inadequacy, and classroom interaction including teaching methods and styles. It is also important that the curriculum create and maintain an environment that promotes learner autonomy and well-being, supports moral and faith development, and continually aligns with Canadian values in order to accurately represent Canadian society, to enculturate and prepare future generations. One effective, simple, and quick way to start the process may be to provide a clear, shared understanding and articulation of what is meant by the term *secular*.

CHAPTER 7: RECOMMENDED PATH FORWARD

The first and most fundamental question is whether or not the secular approach that Canada has committed to still fits the Canadian context. A brief examination of other approaches help provide an answer. Cush (2007), in an admittedly oversimplified look at religion and education on a more global scale, narrows the national approaches down to three. She suggests that countries have three basic reactions to religious curriculum in schools. The first is the approach that Canada presently employs:

> In countries that are committed to a strict separation of religion and state, such as the USA, China or France, the *secularist* option is taken, where religion does not feature as a subject on the curriculum, either because it is considered that this is the fairest approach where there is a plurality of traditions, or because religion is suspect in the state ideology. Religious education in the sense of nurture is then a matter for the private sphere of the family and religious community (219)

Those who espouse the idea of leaving religion out of the curriculum argue that religious beliefs are personal and that the school is not the place to engage such sensitive issues. Teachers in this approach are not encouraged to share their own personal religious views, and the likelihood of religious communities being misrepresented or misunderstood is high. The curriculum in this approach emphasises the shared human moral values that unite religions, rather than those that divide.

The second approach is taken when religion is an important component of the dominant construction of national identity. Because of the historical dominance of Protestant and Roman Catholic Christianity in culture during the early years of Canadian history, the second approach is one from which Canada has increasingly distanced itself. This approach:

> … is for *confessional* religious education, nurture in the faith tradition of heritage, to appear as a subject in the curriculum. This religious education can … be offered only in the dominant tradition of the country. (219)

The irreparable damage to several cultural groups and to the reputation of religious institutions necessitates that a different approach be employed than the one outlined in this second option. Those who argue for the

inclusion of confessional religion in the school system believe that because there are many diverse religious beliefs, the historical or predominant religious beliefs present in the culture should be learned first. However, there is a strong belief that in a multi-religious society students need to establish their own religious identity first. Cush suggests that in countries where there is a historically dominant religion a confessional approach may be seen as critical to national or cultural cohesion. The third option, according to Cush, is a minority one:

> It is the *non-confessional multi-faith* religious education offered by the Agreed Syllabuses of England and Wales, and also found in Scotland, Norway, Sweden, South Africa and Namibia, and upper secondary years (16+) in Denmark and Finland (219).

The non-confessional multi-faith approach argues that it is impossible to properly understand culture without including and endeavoring to understand the religions of that culture. True cultural harmony and global harmony cannot be attained unless we make an effort to understand the beliefs and values of our neighbors. Cush insists that those who advocate for this approach believe that:

> The neutral space of school is the most likely to give children as impartial a view as possible; that pupils need time and space to evaluate the religious or anti-religious views expressed by their parents and communities; that pupils need to reflect upon and develop their own beliefs, and that excluding religion from the curriculum is not a neutral stance but an anti-religious one, in that it suggests that religion is not important enough to study. (219)

Before a teacher curriculum can be created that truly addresses religious learners, Canada must re-evaluate its commitment to the secular approach to education, outlined in option one. One wonders if the approach presently being taken is 'because it is considered that this is the fairest approach where there is a plurality of traditions, or because religion is suspect in the state ideology'. The existing gap in teacher education, in which religion even as a cultural phenomenon is not emphasized, must be filled, and the present approach does not accomplish that goal, or address the widespread religious illiteracy in Ontario. It is only after the approach is selected that curriculum can be developed that truly addresses the needs of religious learners. My research indicates that Canada could progress towards the third approach presently being employed by England and Scotland, because it is an option that better

represents the Canadian mosaic and value system, and better respects autonomy and identity. Most of the Ontario parent and teacher participants in my research feel a non-confessional, multi-faith approach that promotes understanding of religions through education, rather than through silence, better reflects their understanding of religious diversity, since it encourages dialogue, autonomy and expression of one's religious identity while maintaining the true definition of the secular classroom.

The struggle to find approaches that better address a changing cultural landscape is not unique to Canada. There are also calls for another look at religious education in Britain. A BBC (2015) report calls for the overhaul of the present religious education curriculum to better reflect the changing cultural and religious landscape in Britain, insisting that 'interviews with teenagers across England revealed a desire for the truth beyond media stereotypes of major religions and a feeling that religious education was increasingly important'(Burns). There is also a movement within France calling for a review of how the educational system there deals with religion. The Local (2017), a popular French newspaper, reports: 'In a secular state bruised by a string of jihadist attacks, religious education is a sensitive subject. But in recent years, France has cautiously begun developing religious education in schools'. The report goes on to indicate that:

> In the wake of attacks that have killed 241 people, claimed by radical
> Islamists, since January 2015, the state has begun to look again …
> [and has] taken the initiative of offering training to teachers,
> including with the launch of an online course.

Kozyrev et al (2007) suggests that even in post-Communist Russia, support for content about religion and the inclusion of school subjects such as 'religious culture' are beginning to take hold in public school education. The Ontario Ministry of Education (OME) may wish to examine the educational approaches emerging from countries like Britain, France, Russia, and others, which are struggling to adjust to populations that are becoming more multicultural and multi-religious.

For the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT), charting a path forward to better meet student needs, including religious learners, requires creating curriculum

that fills the existing gaps in teacher education. A curriculum that accomplishes this necessitates a careful examination of present and ongoing teacher education, and gives attention to the elements required to create an effective curriculum: knowledge, practices and attitudes. Creating a systematic curriculum for teacher education ensures that philosophy and methodology remains consistent, and that all teachers are given equal opportunity and autonomy to learn and develop. It should also help teachers better understand the context and world view of students in their classrooms and promote religious literacy. Along with teacher education that provides an understanding of student cognitive development, teachers must also receive instruction that helps them aid, or at least not hinder, students' moral/faith development.

TEACHER KNOWLEDGE - CONTENT

A teacher curriculum that fills the gap in teacher education must provide the necessary knowledge elements in order for teachers to be effective. For example, teachers must learn subject matter to ensure that they fully comprehend religion and religious communities, cognitive and moral/faith development, a variety of teaching methodologies and strategies, and their role in the secular classroom. The data indicate that many teachers have never studied religion, either at an academic or confessional level, so as previously mentioned, it may be necessary for the OCT to evaluate teacher knowledge to better assess the level of cumulative religious learning that teachers have already acquired. Creating an assessment tool or survey may be valuable at this historical point to determine areas in which teachers are lacking knowledge.

In order to satisfy teacher knowledge requirements, it is necessary for the OCT to listen to a wide variety of voices and draw content from several important sources. First, the OCT must draw on present and past scholarship about pedagogy, especially scholarship that values the academic study of religion as an important element in education. Secondly, gleaning knowledge from teachers and administrators who are presently involved in education may result in a more comprehensive curriculum that is rich in personal experience. Thirdly, consulting with parents, especially religious parents, may also bring a necessary and more holistic perspective concerning curriculum requirements. The OME must make an

effort to better engage parents, including those who are deeply religious and devoted parents, in curriculum design discussion. The OME (2010) claims that:

> Study after study has shown that student learning and achievement improve when parents play an active role in their children's education and that good schools become even better when parents are involved. (10)

It goes on to say that 'any effective parent engagement policy must actively seek to establish an understanding of families' backgrounds, cultures, interests, concerns, goals, needs, and views of their children' (12). Fourthly, drawing from religious leaders in the community would also inform curriculum because it can bring clarity to religious terminology, practices, and thinking. Dalton and Wright (1999) suggest that curriculum designers 'must consider seriously the desires of the community' (287). The knowledge obtained through these sources can then inform a model of teacher education that is not only religiously well-informed, but systematic, consistent and reproducible. In suggesting that it be systematic, I am arguing that it must be a methodical plan, with well-defined aims and goals. A consistent education about religion is one that becomes a regular and ongoing part of overall teacher preparation. And, a reproducible curriculum will require that the content, especially definitions, be the same no matter the context or presenter. Teacher education curriculum should align with national values as outlined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Multiculturalism Act, and other national and provincial policies governing education. As such, it must serve all Canadian and Ontario citizens and embody the values of the secular Canadian society, thereby respecting and promoting Canadian values, ideals and realities. Aligning with existing policy and practice that has been created through the historical progression of education in Canada and Ontario should prove to be extremely valuable. Lessons from history, especially the effects of Euro-Christian influence, also dictate that teacher curriculum should remain secular or religiously neutral in nature. It must not show favorable bias toward any one religious group, or toward those who espouse no religion.

In order to fill the gap in teacher education, it may be necessary for the OME and the OCT to revise existing policy or even create new policy. In doing this,

consideration must also be given to the various contexts in which teacher education is embedded or situated. Illeris (2006) emphasises that interaction is 'always embedded in a larger social and societal context that provides impulses and sets the frames for what can be learned and how' (19). This social and societal context in which teacher education is situated is multi-dimensional. First, the learning environment designed by the OME and the OCT to disseminate the content of the teacher education curriculum is embedded in the Canadian/Ontario societal context. This environment is supported by government policy that ensures that teacher education happens within a multicultural, multi-religious and secular context. Secondly, the present curriculum is embedded in the individual Schools of Education at Ontario universities and within the various universities' customs and traditions. This environment works within the guidelines of the OCT, but how it is structured and how the content is delivered is left to the individual School of Education. In order to revise teacher education to include religion, a restructuring of the university educational programmes and course offerings is required, and even some faculty re-education may be required. Thirdly, teacher education is embedded in the policies and practices of provincial and local organizations that provide oversight to teacher education. Provincial organizations like the OCT oversee the content, delivery and environments of teacher education, and locally, various School Boards offer education to teachers by way of professional development that supports ongoing learning. Finally, the educational environment for new teachers may also be situated in the multi-dimensional environment of the individual learner, which includes everything from the formal classroom of initial teacher education, a peer environment like AQs, or even more casual environments, such as seminars and professional development days. It may even take place through contact with others inside and outside the educational field. The OME and the OCT also provide for multiple learning environments that are both formal and informal to support teacher education, including physical facilities, such as libraries, and internet-based and distance learning environments. The social/societal environments of interaction in the Ontario system are learning-friendly for a variety of reasons. Recognition of multiculturalism, the need for inclusivity and diversity, the need to combat Islamophobia, and even the willingness to make changes to improve education,

are all signs that, on many levels, the environment is a positive learning environment.

The OME and the OCT must be ethical in how they include and represent religion in teacher education. A review of historical educational policy in Ontario reveals that, beginning with the Halls-Dennis Report (1965) the Government of Ontario, the OME and the OCT have progressively eliminated religious terminology from critical policy documents, including the term *religion* which is typically replaced with the word *creed*. According to the Ontario Human Rights Commission (2017), the word *creed* and the word *religion* do not necessarily mean the same thing:

> The fact that both creed and religion are used in Canadian human rights legislation (and sometimes even used in the same statute) suggests that they do not mean exactly the same thing and should be interpreted to have independent meanings.

Replacing the word *religion* with *creed* raises an important question about the place of religion in the school system and respect for its place in Canadian educational history. Once a strong participant in the educational structure of Ontario, religion is no longer mentioned in a specific manner, but lumped into a more general category of creed. While *creed* is also defined as 'a brief formal summary of Christian doctrine', in the context of these policies and legislation, it means 'a set of principles or opinions, esp. as a philosophy of life' (Canadian Oxford Dictionary, 1998:sb). The OHRC defines *religion* as something that 'typically involves a particular and comprehensive system of faith and worship' (2017). Religion typically includes belief in a divine, superhuman or controlling power. Religion is also understood as freely and deeply held personal convictions or beliefs. These beliefs are connected to an individual's spiritual faith and integrally linked to one's self-definition and spiritual fulfillment. Practicing religion allows individuals to foster a connection with the divine or with the subject or object of that spiritual faith. The purposeful omission of the word *religion* by replacing it with the more general word *creed* raises the question of how the Ontario government views the place of religion in education. The teacher education curriculum must be respectful of the place of religion, and religious teachers and learners in the school system.

The teacher education curriculum must also be designed to educate teachers in how to respond respectfully to student enquiries and comments in ways that do not diminish or disparage religion. Curriculum that addresses the religious literacy gap in teacher education will equip teachers to recognise and appreciate the underlying religious premises behind religious comments, questions and practices in the classroom. It will help teachers create a greater understanding of the religious underpinnings that shape belief systems. Teacher education curriculum must ensure that both administration and teachers understand that the term *secular* does not mean no religion. Further, my research indicates that the creation of a teacher education curriculum which maintains a clear understanding of the secular classroom may help address feelings of fear, inadequacy and insecurity among teachers.

TEACHER SKILLS - INTERACTION

Teacher education must provide teachers with the necessary skills to become proficient in their careers. These include communication skills, collaborative skills, presentation skills, interpersonal skills, and technology skills. A curriculum that fills the gap in teacher education will not only address the necessary knowledge requirements, but also inform teacher practice in the classroom. For example, a well-designed teacher curriculum will instruct student teachers in critical reflection. Teachers must be taught to reflect on their personal learning and practice as well as how to pass on that skill to their students. Although it may be difficult to design in and mandate the practice of critical reflection, its importance is emphasised by Freire (1998), who states that:

> Critical reflection on practice is a requirement of the relationship between theory and practice. Otherwise theory becomes simply "blah, blah, blah" and practice, pure activism. (30)

Critical reflection is important to a holistic teacher curriculum. Moreover, teachers should be taught how to employ critical reflection in the classroom, especially when multicultural and multi-religious classes bring a plethora of diverse world views into the discussions. It is especially important that teachers are critically reflective of their practice. As Schön (1983) recommends, their critical reflection should include 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action'. Content specifically designed to be transformative may facilitate that.

When considering practice, instructional design must also be emphasised. Teachers should be educated in how to design their classroom, content, and teaching methods and styles to be inclusive of religious learners. Educating teachers about practice using strategies such as Tomlinson's differentiated learning model would help teachers design their teaching in a way that is geared to the different individuals in the classroom, including religious learners. Also, as Grasha suggests, teacher education curriculum must identify and promote teaching styles that are effective in engaging religious learners. My research suggests that designing curriculum that addresses teacher practice must also include instruction in recognizing and addressing extremist or radical thought and language in the classroom. Educating teachers to be cognizant of the difference between ultra-conservative religious thought and practice, and extremism is critical. Equipping teachers with strategies in this area helps them address certain behaviors and deal with students, families and religious groups who exhibit extremist tendencies or ideologies. If they do not receive curriculum content that provides guidance in this area, teachers may be inadvertently
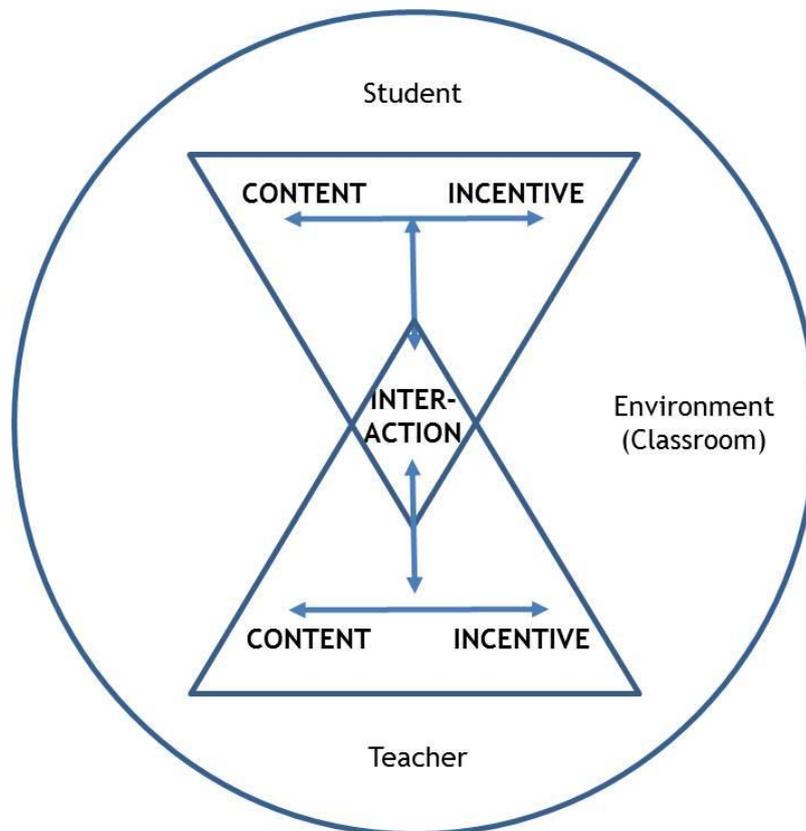

Figure 5: Interactive Learning

promoting wrong thinking or behavior, and even unintentionally being over-supportive when they should take action. Teachers may also be unsupportive of conservative or ultra-conservative student beliefs if they are not educated to understand the difference between conservativism, ultra-conservativism and extremism. Creating curriculum that promotes right practices in this area is a safety issue for teachers and students. In Ontario classrooms, as in all areas of learning, a strong delineation must be made between world views that are extreme and radical and those that simply express the values of the majority of followers of different religions. By having the curriculum remain silent on religion, the OCT risks portraying all religious world views as illegitimate. Also, the OCT has not equipped teachers in the Ontario secular classroom to effectively challenge individual meaning schemes or religious world views, whether ideologically correct, incorrect, or radicalised.

Finally, curriculum that bridges the gap in teacher education will more clearly establish the parameters of the interaction dimension of Illeris' three-dimensional learning model, and educate teachers how to facilitate interaction in the classroom context. Figure 5 illustrates interaction between two individuals who are simultaneously participating in the learning process within a prescribed environment. It shows how a teacher and student may be interacting while individual personal acquisition is still possible. Each individual's processing on the acquisition axis will be personal and potentially different, while still incorporating the input from the interaction axis. Respecting these differences also respects individual identity and autonomy. Collaborative learning environments must, according to Gerlach (1994), and Smith and McGregor (1992), emphasize these qualities. The OME (2013) already employs collaborative learning environments that define the parameters for interaction in many areas of education. It states:

> The case for collaborative learning cultures – and their direct impact on school improvement and student achievement – has been made so consistently and conclusively that collaborative approaches of one form or another have become a common feature of effective education practice in Ontario (1).

A curriculum that defines the parameters of interaction must allow teachers the autonomy to learn religious content while at the same time facilitating student learning. This is important given most teachers' low level of religious literacy.

Teachers should be given the freedom to identify and explore their own values and beliefs inside the safety of a collaborative learning environment during teacher education, and also given the knowledge to manage those personal beliefs in the classroom. So, the OCT teacher education curriculum must allow for teacher autonomy in the area of personal religious belief, expression and practice, while at the same time educating teachers how to appropriately exercise that autonomy within the interaction dimension of learning. Educating teachers to create this type of environment is not only possible, where religion is concerned, it is best practice.

TEACHER ATTITUDES - INCENTIVE

Not only does the OCT have a responsibility to provide necessary knowledge and skills to fill the curriculum gap, it must also clearly define the attitudes and values it expects teachers to display. Palmer (1998) says, 'Good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher' (10). Therefore, what a teacher believes about education, about themselves and about the world around them is important because it is what constitutes her or his identity. So, the OCT curriculum has a role in shaping the identity, attitudes and values of experienced and future teachers. Teacher curriculum must value subject areas that could easily be diminished or weakened by its curriculum choices and content. For example, the OCT must express to teachers that, whether they are personally religious or not, they are expected to understand and promote religion as a valued cultural phenomenon. This may require a change of attitude for some teachers. The OCT presently emphasises acceptance, assimilation and accommodation of religion, thus ensuring that everyone feels welcomed in the secular classroom environment. Neglecting to educate teachers about religions and religious practices, and allowing them to avoid religious conversations, makes it difficult for religious teachers and learners to feel that religion is valued.

The OME must create curriculum that insists on an environment that engenders a healthy respect for religious spirituality. Tisdell (2003) rightly says that 'spirituality and religion are not the same, but for many people they are interrelated' (xi). All spirituality is not religious in nature, but in order to create a teacher education curriculum that allows teachers to fulfil the mandate of the

Ontario Accepting School's Act (2012) and the Ontario Education Act (1990), the OCT's definition of spirituality must include religion. It is impossible to create curriculum that fully prepares teachers to address the spiritual needs of all students in a diverse classroom without including religious spirituality. Tisdell further claims that spirituality is an awareness and honoring of wholeness and the interconnectedness of all things through the mystery of what many refer to as 'the Life-force, God, Higher Power, higher self, cosmic energy, Buddha nature, or Great Spirit' (xi). While spirituality is typically understood to include a deity, the OCT may be assuming a definition of spirituality that excludes religious spirituality. Not educating teachers to understand and teach about religion could indicate a prejudice against religious spirituality and religious people, and a biased preference toward other types of spirituality. Tisdell further suggests that spirituality is 'always present (though not always acknowledged) in the learning environment' (xi). Given the large number of religious learners in the Ontario education system, the OCT must design curriculum that acknowledges the presence and important contribution of religious spirituality to student learning. Religious spirituality is also the experience of a large number of Ontario teachers, so giving value to their spirituality in the curriculum validates their religious identity and the symbols, festivals and rituals that comprise their identity. The OCT curriculum must educate teachers to respect the past religious experiences that teachers and students bring to the learning environment. Every learner, religious and non-religious, brings a specific bank of knowledge, beliefs, value judgments, feelings, assumptions and past experience to the classroom. To create new meaning schemes going forward, individual learners must allow their past religious and cultural experiences to be influenced or challenged by new ideas and impulses. The OCT curriculum should allow for examination, critical reflection, re-evaluating, discussion, and even catharsis. That may even result in transformative learning. Mirriam, Caffarella and Baumgartner's (2007) understanding of transformative learning as 'a dramatic fundamental change in the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live' (123) dictates that teachers be equipped to embrace those dramatic changes in themselves and help their students do the same. Past experiences can contribute greatly to transformative learning if these experiences are viewed, not as wrong or antiquated, but as building blocks for future understanding.

Secondly, teacher curriculum must also address present attitudes toward the secular classroom. There is confusion about the nature of the secular classroom primarily because, as teachers indicated, they have a limited understanding of how those in charge of the education system expect them to integrate religion and spirituality into the secular classroom. As mentioned, Moore defines secular education as 'an approach to the teaching of religion that neither privileges nor rejects any particular religious tradition or expression'. Maintaining a secular classroom as described by Moore is the right approach to education in Ontario, so the OCT must insist that all teachers understand and operate under that definition. My research indicated that some teachers understood the secular classroom as a place of equal religious expression while others interpreted it as a place of no religious expression. By default, the only position being represented was that of non-religious or anti-religious teachers and students. Teacher education that fills the existing gap would be helpful in ensuring that teachers are not accused of unethical behavior because they are teaching no religion or only presenting their own religious biases. The Government of Canada and the OME must articulate and demonstrate a clearer definition of the secular classroom. The OCT can then develop a teacher education curriculum that supports that definition.

Thirdly, if acceptance, assimilation and accommodation ensure that religious learners feel welcomed in the secular classroom, autonomy provides them with a voice in that environment. Eisner (1990) insists that 'good curriculum material both emancipates and educates teachers' (65). As discussed earlier, the present gap in the teacher education curriculum may be affecting religious learner's identity and autonomy, as it sends a message that true religious identity is not completely free to raise its voice in the classroom. This uncertainty creates confusion, reluctance and even fear among teachers and students concerning the expression of personal religious identity. White (2014) argues that a teacher's religious identity can positively affect the way they manage a classroom. Teachers reported that they experienced fear of dealing with religious issues in the classroom, fear of parental reprisal, fear of administrative reprimand, and loss of reputation. The data suggest that these fears have resulted in a collective silence among teachers, students and parents concerning matters of religion, other than surface issues such as religious holidays and holy days, thereby

making religion a taboo subject. Going forward, an effective teacher education curriculum would lessen the confusion and eliminate the reluctance for religious teachers to express autonomy and personal identity.

Finally, for better or worse, the Ontario education system has traditionally been deeply influenced by the structures of European Christianity. The dominant power structure in Canadian education, and essentially most aspects of Canadian society for two hundred years, was Christianity in its many forms. So, it is easy to see the Christian influence on many of the public institutions and policies. Education, as a secular enterprise in Ontario, will never be completely free from religious influence because the education system will always be comprised of policy makers, administrators, teachers, officials, and students who possess religious views. The OCT and the OME must be careful to include Christian learners and not view Christianity as dominant or privileged because of the mistakes of the earlier Christian/European system.

OTHER CURRICULUM CONSIDERATIONS

Moving forward the OME and the OCT must define critical terminology more clearly. For example, as much as they are intertwined, there is a distinct difference between *religion* and *culture*. The Durham District School Board's Annual Information Calendar 2016-2017 dedicates several calendar months to the understanding of different cultural groups. January is Tamil Heritage Month, February is Black History Month, the month of May is Asian Heritage and South Asian Heritage Month, and June is Italian Heritage and National Aboriginal History Month. All of these cultural groups, with the many religions they encompass, are celebrated in a variety of ways. The month of October, Islamic History Month, is the only month dedicated to the celebration of a religious group. Islam, like Christianity, Judaism, or Hinduism, is not simply a culture; it is a religion that may influence or define a culture. To include Islam as a cultural group, like Italian or South Asian, is simply incorrect. It is impossible to fully understand culture without understanding the religion or religions that make up that culture, even though most of the educators interviewed use the terms *culture* and *religion* interchangeably. They understand that in many cases, especially when dealing with new immigrants, there is often no clear separation between one's cultural identity and one's religious beliefs. Although religion is a

major component of culture, assuming that a teacher's culture and religious affiliation are synonymous is stereotyping.

Another example of unclear terminology occurs in the UOIT course list for teacher education in which one of the course titles is, 'Teaching the Catholic Religion in Schools' (Appendix C). Religious and non-religious scholars recognise Roman Catholicism as a sect or branch of the Christian religion, not a religion in and of itself. Identifying one religious group over others, or assuming that one's culture is the same as one's religion, affords the opportunity for inequality to emerge and offence to occur. Curriculum that bridges the existing gap in teacher education requires the OCT to develop a strong system of continuing education in the area of religion. The OCT (2016) presently has a well-defined mandate for ongoing teacher preparation, specifically:

> To provide for the ongoing education of members of the College. It also informs the public of the many ways educators remain knowledgeable and current. The *Professional Learning Framework for the Teaching Profession* supports the ongoing growth and development of the profession through the identification of a wide range of learning and education opportunities (1)

The OME must include in its teacher training, language that recognises religious learners, not as those who need to be accommodated, but as a vital part of the complexities of world views that make up education in Ontario. The Ontario Human Rights Code prohibits discrimination on the grounds of creed (including religion) and imposes a duty to accommodate religious practice, so the OME must educate teachers to give attention to equity and respecting learner autonomy, which goes beyond simply allowing practices such as prayer and head coverings.

Because of the present lack of teacher religious literacy, some mandatory basic courses covering the tenants of faith of major world religious would be a starting point. It is important that continuing education is mandatory for several reasons. First, religious thinking and practice is continually evolving, so it is important to ensuring that teachers are current in their understanding of community changes. Secondly, Canadian demographics are continually changing. Canada has opened its doors to new cultures, ethnic groups and religious communities, so keeping informed on the changing Canadian cultural landscape is critical. I am not

suggesting that religion is the most important defining aspect of people groups, but it cannot be minimized or excluded in our quest to understand each other. Thirdly, religious issues are always present in Ontario education, requiring the OME to continually navigate the intersection of religion and education. Issues such as religious discrimination, wearing head coverings or religious dress, and the observance of religious practices requires teachers to pursue continuing education that helps them be proactive in their understanding of the latest issues affecting religion and education.

In addition to discussing the OCT teacher education curriculum and religion, I have also discussed meeting the needs of religious learners in the secular classroom. Given Canada's increased multiculturalism and growing immigration, especially in urban areas, and increased globalization, it is logical that the OME must design a religious curriculum for public school students. It may be time for the OME to undertake a reimagining of the Ontario classroom environment. If they are willing to create curriculum that fills the existing gap, specifically religion education, and produce qualified teachers who become subject matter experts in this area, the natural progression is to design a public school curriculum that allows teachers to pass on their religious knowledge to students. As they are attempting to do for First Nations' peoples, gender diversity, and sex education, the OME and the OCT must provide curriculum that educates teachers about religions and about the beliefs and practices of religious people. Consultation with subject matter experts, parents, and community and religious groups would help produce curriculum that accurately represents religious communities, promotes religious understanding, and is true to Canadian values. This type of curriculum, which would mirror the necessary elements of a teacher education curriculum, would potentially achieve the following:

- Seamlessly link the learners past and present religious and life experiences.

- Provide reciprocal or collaborative learning experiences in which teachers and students learn from each other through the interaction dimension of learning.

- Be well-designed in that it takes into account all types of learning: cumulative, assimilative, accommodative, and transformational.

- Be transformative in that it embraces rather than avoids some measure of disorienting challenge.

- Provide informed citizens, who will become productive workers for the Canadian and global economies.

- Be a contextually Canadian environment that reflects the values of Canadian society.

- Be an environment that promotes autonomy, equity, and personal identity, and encourages the expression of the religious self.

- Be developmentally and age appropriate.

Taylor (2007) says that the classroom environment is significant in the process of transformative learning and is created 'through trustful relationships that allow individuals to have questioning discussions, share information openly and achieve mutual and consensual understanding' (179). Creating learning environments that are characterised by descriptors like *trustful*, *relationship*, *open*, *mutual*, and *questioning* should be the goal of the OCT and the OME.

The OME and the OCT have a lingering fear of returning to a religiously controlled education system in Ontario. Therefore, accepting a set of guidelines like those created by the First Amendment Centre (2008) and implemented in several United States school districts may serve the Ontario system. These guidelines distinguish between teaching religion in a way that promotes a particular faith and teaching about religion from a religious studies perspective. It cites several differences between the devotional teaching of religion and academic teaching about religion:

- The school strives for student awareness of religions, but does not press for student acceptance of any religion.
- The school sponsors study about religion, not the practice of religion.
- The school may expose students to a diversity of religious views, but may not impose any particular view.
- The school educates about all religions, it does not promote or denigrate religion.
- The school informs students about various beliefs; it does not seek to conform students to any particular belief. (3)

Such guidelines may help safeguard the school system and alleviate some of the institutional fear that pervades the system. The OME should hire or train teachers to be religion and cultural specialists to oversee the implementation of a system-wide education programme about religion. The majority of teachers and parents felt that to alleviate the lingering fear of one religious group dominating the system again, or the fear of handing the public school system over to chaplains or outside clerics who specialise in the devotional or confessional approach to religion, the Ontario system would better serve the needs of religious learners by training educators who are already in the system to become specialists in the areas of religion and culture. This would empower the OCT and the OME to systematically educate teachers about religious world views and cultural issues in an academic manner. Such personnel would also ensure that strict policies are maintained, preventing recruitment of children away from their family religion while in the school's care. Many Canadian universities are already equipped to educate such individuals through their religion and culture departments.

A teacher education curriculum that closes the present gap will take into consideration the fact that religion is not just a private matter. Devoted religious teachers and students understand their religion as all-encompassing. Therefore, giving it token accommodation underestimates the important role that religion plays in the lives of millions of Canadians. An ongoing conversation of learning and respect between people who believe differently speaks of a journey that teachers and students take together rather than a win-lose interaction. History shows that religion can be divisive, even deadly, when allowed to separate the citizens of a country. But, could the educator, by allowing the conversation to naturally unfold within a controlled classroom environment, be the catalyst that enhances student's personal autonomy, diffuses religious and cultural tensions, and contributes to a new world of harmony?

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS

Does the newly revised Ontario teacher education curriculum equip teachers to meet the needs of religious learners in a secular classroom? My research concludes that there is a gap in the preparation of teachers to understand, respect, and meet the needs of religious learners. Canada's growing immigration and multiculturalism, especially in urban areas, coupled with rapid globalization has created a diverse classroom that the Ontario teacher education curriculum is not addressing, especially for religious learners. There is a fundamental disconnect between the Government of Ontario's stated value concerning diversity education and the education of teachers to address religious diversity. This disconnect in the teacher education curriculum and failure to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills to teach effectively in a multicultural, multi-religious classroom may be lessening respect for student identity and autonomy, and compromising student well-being. Misinterpretation of the secular classroom is also hindering teacher and student interaction, and causing teachers to feel fearful and inadequate in certain situations. Further, it is potentially hindering the moral/faith development of students.

A lack of religious content in the teacher education curriculum is not reflective of the spirit of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Multiculturalism Act, and the Education Act. Despite the fact that the Ontario Ministry of Education (OME), the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) and local School Boards have created policy that protects such values as religious freedom, diversity and inclusiveness, the teacher education curriculum does not support these policies. For example, despite the fact that the Ontario Ministry of Education's Policy/Program Memorandum No.119 states that 'Ontario schools must provide students and staff with authentic and relevant opportunities to learn about diverse histories, cultures, and perspectives' (6), the OCT has not provided teacher education that fully supports that memorandum. In fact, most Government of Ontario, OME and OCT policies avoid the word religion. By not educating teachers about religion, the OME and the OCT are not preparing them for the Ontario classroom, nor are they giving them the tools to equip students for the Canadian workplace.

My research data along with an examination of the OCT's initial and subsequent teacher education programme indicate no significant changes to the OCT's teacher education curriculum were undertaken in the area of religion as a result of the 2015 revision to better educate teachers about diversity. This is evidenced by the fact that there have been no significant changes to the university course offerings for teachers concerning religion. Also, the subject of religious diversity is given only brief reference in the OCT's Accreditation Resource Guide intended to help universities implement the new two-year program. Also, there has been few if any courses about religion or religious practices added to the Additional Teacher Qualification program to provide teachers with ongoing learning in this area. Any additional seminars and professional development provided to teachers and local school boards containing content about religion are not mandatory.

My research concludes that a crucial step in bridging the existing gap is providing curriculum content for teacher education that addresses teacher knowledge, skills and attitudes in the area of religion. It must also provide knowledge about religious belief systems and world views, clarify religious language and terminology, and provide tools to recognise and combat radicalism and extremism. My research further concludes that teachers and parents welcome the academic, non-confessional study of religion in the classroom, as long as teachers are qualified to deliver the religious content, the content equally represents all religions, the content is age-appropriate, and students are not pressured in any way to convert to another religion. One of the greatest ironies of life in Canada is that, while we are one of the most religiously and culturally diverse countries in the world, we are also one of the most religiously illiterate. As noted earlier, Seljak claims that in Canada 'we have raised a generation of religiously illiterate students'. We have opinions about religions that are fed by media or by our own religious and cultural groups, but we actually know very little about religions other than our own (if we adhere to one). Unless there is a concerted effort to educate teachers about religion and transfer that knowledge to the student population, religious literacy, as defined by Moore, will not increase in Ontario. In fact, it may continue to decline, which raises concerns about how well multiculturalism will be supported in the future. Providing teachers with the necessary curriculum content about religion and religious

practices can only lead to a more knowledgeable and understanding Ontario classroom and a more religiously literate and tolerant Canadian society.

Educating teachers about religion is essential in the present Canadian/Ontario context. Doing so will provide a safe classroom environment in which students and teachers together can explore issues that exist in a wider world. It will also help teachers and students understand issues and ideas that are important to other people and people groups, and ensure appropriate responses to differing belief systems. It can give teachers and students the autonomy to develop their own ideas, beliefs and values, and provide a place for an exploration of philosophical and ethical questions. A good curriculum will not teach students to be religious but to study religion academically. A strong teacher education program may positively influence religiously and racially motivated crime statistics. Finally, the strong link between religion and politics both in Canada and globally necessitates a stronger understanding of religious belief systems and world views than the one which presently exists in the Ontario school system.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Areas that I recommend for further study include the following:

1. Researching the students' point of view about religion and teacher education would provide a clearer understanding of the issues and content that students view as an important component of teacher education.

2. Investigate the causes of teachers' feelings of fear and inadequacy in the secular classroom, and how the teacher education curriculum can be modified to mitigate these feelings.

3. Examine how the teacher education curriculum may accommodate teachers' personal religious beliefs and practices, and instruct teachers in the expression of such beliefs in the secular classroom.

4. Investigate how the teacher education curriculum can instruct teachers in the recognition of religious extremism and radicalization

in the classroom, and provide techniques for addressing such inappropriate views and behaviors to ensure classroom safety.

5. Investigate the motivations behind the omissions of religious terminology and content in educational policy and teacher education curriculum.

6. Develop a research tool that would better help the OCT evaluate teachers' level of religious literacy.

7. Investigate the nature of religious literacy in Ontario and Canadian society to determine what Canadians do not know, what they understand incorrectly, and what their prevailing attitudes toward religion and religious practices are. How this varies across demographic and community groups, including new immigrant groups, should also be examined.

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Appendix A: Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession

The Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession (OCT, 2017)

INTRODUCTION

The *Ethical Standards for the Teaching Profession* represent a vision of professional practice. At the heart of a strong and effective teaching profession is a commitment to students and their learning.

Members of the Ontario College of Teachers, in their position of trust, demonstrate responsibility in their relationships with students, parents, guardians, colleagues, educational partners, other professionals, the environment and the public.

THE PURPOSES OF THE ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION ARE:

- to inspire members to reflect and uphold the honour and dignity of the teaching profession
- to identify the ethical responsibilities and commitments in the teaching profession
- to guide ethical decisions and actions in the teaching profession
- to promote public trust and confidence in the teaching profession.

THE ETHICAL STANDARDS FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION ARE:

Care

The ethical standard of *Care* includes compassion, acceptance, interest and insight for developing students' potential. Members express their commitment to students' well-being and learning through positive influence, professional judgment and empathy in practice.

Respect

Intrinsic to the ethical standard of *Respect* are trust and fair-mindedness. Members honour human dignity, emotional wellness and cognitive development. In their professional practice, they model respect for spiritual and cultural values, social justice, confidentiality, freedom, democracy and the environment.

Trust

The ethical standard of *Trust* embodies fairness, openness and honesty. Members' professional relationships with students, colleagues, parents, guardians and the public are based on trust.

Integrity

Honesty, reliability and moral action are embodied in the ethical standard of *Integrity*. Continual reflection assists members in exercising integrity in their professional commitments and responsibilities.

Source: Ontario College of Teachers, (2017) *Ethical Standards* at http://www.oct.ca/public/professional-standards/ethical-standards (last accessed 06 July 2017)

Appendix B: Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession

The Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession (OCT, 2017)

INTRODUCTION

The *Standards of Practice for the Teaching Profession* provide a framework of principles that describes the knowledge, skills, and values inherent in Ontario's teaching profession. These standards articulate the goals and aspirations of the profession. These standards convey a collective vision of professionalism that guides the daily practices of members of the Ontario College of Teachers.

THE PURPOSES OF THE STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION ARE:

- to inspire a shared vision for the teaching profession
- to identify the values, knowledge and skills that are distinctive to the teaching profession
- to guide the professional judgment and actions of the teaching profession
- to promote a common language that fosters an understanding of what it means to be a member of the teaching profession.

THE STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION ARE:

Commitment to Students and Student Learning

Members are dedicated in their care and commitment to students. They treat students equitably and with respect and are sensitive to factors that influence individual student learning. Members facilitate the development of students as contributing citizens of Canadian society.

Professional Knowledge

Members strive to be current in their professional knowledge and recognize its relationship to practice. They understand and reflect on student development, learning theory, pedagogy, curriculum, ethics, educational research and related policies and legislation to inform professional judgment in practice.

Professional Practice

Members apply professional knowledge and experience to promote student learning. They use appropriate pedagogy, assessment and evaluation, resources and technology in planning for and responding to the needs of individual students and learning communities. Members refine their professional practice through ongoing inquiry, dialogue and reflection.

Leadership in Learning Communities

Members promote and participate in the creation of collaborative, safe and supportive learning communities. They recognize their shared responsibilities and their leadership roles in order to facilitate student success. Members maintain and uphold the principles of the ethical standards in these learning communities.

Ongoing Professional Learning

Members recognize that a commitment to ongoing professional learning is integral to effective practice and to student learning. Professional practice and self-directed learning are informed by experience, research, collaboration and knowledge.

Source: Ontario College of Teachers, (2017) *Ethical Standards* at http://www.oct.ca/public/professional-standards/ethical-standards (last accessed 06 July 2017)

Appendix C: UOIT Teacher Education Curricula Comparison

UOIT New Teacher Education Programme Comparison 2013-14 - 2015-16

2013-14 Curriculum (Primary/Junior)	2015-16 Curriculum (Primary/Junior)
Core Requirements	*Core Requirements*
CURS 4200U P/J Core Curriculum Methods	EDUC 1300U Foundations I: Planning and Preparation + Practicum
CURS 4210U P/J Language Arts I	EDUC 1301U Learning and Development
CURS 4240U P/J Mathematics I	EDUC 1302U P/J Digital Literacies I
CURS 4280U P/J Science and Technology I	EDUC 1303U P/J STEM (Science-Technology and Mathematics) I
EDUC 3510U P/J Learning with ICT	EDUC 1304U P/J Arts/Health and Physical Education
EDUC 3610U P/J Contemporary Educational Practice	EDUC 1305U Foundations II: Curriculum Theory and Practice + Practicum
EDUC 3750U P/J Learning and Child Development	EDUC 1306U P/J Digital Literacies/Social Studies II
EDUC 4380U P/J Analysis and Management of Classroom Behaviour	EDUC 1307U P/J STEM (Science-Technology and Mathematics) II
EDUC 4910U P/J Field Experience and Practica I	EDUC 1308U P/J Mathematical Thinking and Doing
CURS 4211U P/J Language Arts II	EDUC 2400U Equity and Diversity
CURS 4241U P/J Mathematics II	EDUC 2401U Learning in Digital Contexts
CURS 4251U P/J Visual Arts, Music and Dance CURS 4271U P/J Social Studies	EDUC 2402U Teaching for Inclusion: Special Needs and Individualized Education
CURS 4281U P/J Science and Technology II	EDUC 2403U Independent Inquiry/Internship
CURS 4291U P/J Health and Physical Education	EDUC 2404U Education Law, Policy and Ethics
EDUC 3800U P/J Individual Needs and Diversity	EDUC 2405U Foundations III: Long Range Planning and Assessment + Practicum
EDUC 4911U P/J Field Experience and Practica II + Education electives	EDUC 2406U Reflective Practice/Action Research
	EDUC 2407U Mental Health Issues in Schools
	EDUC 2408U P/J STEM (Science-Technology and Mathematics) III: Coding and Communication

2013-14 Curriculum (Primary/Junior)	2015-16 Curriculum (Primary/Junior)
Electives	*Electives*
EDUC 3430U Dramatic Arts	EDUC 3205U Visual Arts: An Introduction to Indigenous Art
EDUC 3440U Diversity: Teaching in the Mosaic	EDUC 3206U Teaching the Catholic Religion in Schools
EDUC 3441U L'apprentissage en français	EDUC 3207U Teacher as Coach
EDUC 3450U Teaching Kindergarten	EDUC 3209U Outdoor Education: Winter
EDUC 3452U Teacher as Coach	EDUC 3200U Pedagogy of the Land
EDUC 3455U Mental Health	EDUC 3208U Teaching Kindergarten
EDUC 3460U Problem-Based Learning	EDUC 3201U Environmental Education
EDUC 3470U Issues in Education	EDUC 3206U Teaching the Catholic Religion in Schools
EDUC 3480U Outdoor Education: Canoe Tripping	EDUC 3210U Teaching French in Schools
EDUC 3481U Outdoor Education: Backpacking	EDUC 3211U Outdoor Education Leadership: Backpacking
EDUC 3482U Outdoor Education: Winter Adventure	
EDUC 3483U Outdoor Education: Bush Snowshoeing and Tenting	
EDUC 3490U Geographic Information Systems	
EDUC 3560U Religious Education: Teaching in Ontario Catholic Schools	
EDUC 4611U Planning for Learning with Technology	
EDUC 4612U Technology for Teachers	
EDUC 4620U Teaching Extended Mathematics	
EDUC 4622U Mathematics for Teachers	

2013-2014 Curriculum (Intermediate/Senior)	2015-2016 Curriculum (Intermediate/Senior)
Core Courses	*Core Courses*
CURS 4000U I/S Core Curriculum Methods I CURS – Curriculum Studies I*	EDUC 1300U Foundations I: Planning and Preparation + Practicum
CURS – Curriculum Studies I*	EDUC 1301U Learning and Development
EDUC 3511U I/S Learning with ICT	EDUC 1309U I/S Digital Literacies/ICT
EDUC 3613U I/S Contemporary Educational Practice I	CURS – Curriculum Studies I*
EDUC 3751U I/S Learning and Adolescent Development	CURS – Curriculum Studies I*
EDUC 4381U I/S Analysis and Management of Classroom Behaviour I	EDUC 1305U Foundations II: Curriculum Theory and Practice + Practicum
EDUC 4900U I/S Field Experience and Practica	EDUC 1310U I/S Mathematical Thinking and Doing
CURS 4001U I/S Core Curriculum Methods II	CURS – Curriculum Studies II*
CURS – Curriculum Studies II*	CURS – Curriculum Studies II*
CURS – Curriculum Studies II*	EDUC 2400U Equity and Diversity
EDUC 3614U I/S Contemporary Educational Practice II	EDUC 2401U Learning in Digital Contexts
EDUC 3801U I/S Individual Needs and Diversity	EDUC 2402U Teaching for Inclusion: Special Needs and Individualized Education
EDUC 3911U I/S Information Literacy	EDUC 2403U Independent Inquiry/Internship
EDUC 4382U I/S Analysis and Management of Classroom Behaviour II	EDUC 2404U Education Law, Policy and Ethics
EDUC 4901U I/S Field Experience and Practica II+	EDUC 2405U Foundations III: Long Range Planning and Assessment + Practicum
CURS 4100U and CURS 4101U I/S Biology	EDUC 2406U Reflective Practice/Action Research
CURS 4110U and CURS 4111U I/S English	EDUC 2407U Mental Health Issues in Schools
CURS 4120U and CURS 4121U I/S Chemistry	EDUC 1311U I/S Science-Technology and Mathematics: Coding and Communication
CURS 4130U and CURS 4131U I/S Physics	CURS 4100U and CURS 4101U I/S Biology
CURS 4140U and CURS 4141U I/S Mathematics	CURS 4110U and CURS 4111U I/S English
CURS 4150U and CURS 4151U I/S Visual Arts	CURS 4120U and CURS 4121U I/S Chemistry
CURS 4180U and CURS 4181U I/S General Science	CURS 4130U and CURS 4131U I/S Physics
CURS 4190U and CURS 4191U I/S Geography	CURS 4140U and CURS 4141U I/S Mathematics
CURS 4501U and CURS 4502U I/S History	CURS 4180U and CURS 4181U I/S General Science
CURS 4503U and CURS 4504U I/S Health and Physical Education	CURS 4501U and CURS 4502U I/S History
	CURS 4503U and CURS 4504U I/S Health and Physical Education

2013-2014 Curriculum (Intermediate/Senior)	2015-2016 Curriculum (Intermediate/Senior)
Electives	*Electives*
EDUC 3430U Dramatic Arts	EDUC 3205U Visual Arts: An Introduction to Indigenous Art
EDUC 3440U Diversity: Teaching in the Mosaic	EDUC 3206U Teaching the Catholic Religion in Schools
EDUC 3441U L'apprentissage en français	EDUC 3207U Teacher as Coach
EDUC 3450U Teaching Kindergarten	EDUC 3209U Outdoor Education: Winter
EDUC 3452U Teacher as Coach	EDUC 3200U Pedagogy of the Land
EDUC 3455U Mental Health	EDUC 3208U Teaching Kindergarten
EDUC 3460U Problem-Based Learning	EDUC 3201U Environmental Education
EDUC 3470U Issues in Education	EDUC 3206U Teaching the Catholic Religion in Schools
EDUC 3480U Outdoor Education: Canoe Tripping	EDUC 3210U Teaching French in Schools
EDUC 3481U Outdoor Education: Backpacking	EDUC 3211U Outdoor Education Leadership: Backpacking
EDUC 3482U Outdoor Education: Winter Adventure	
EDUC 3483U Outdoor Education: Bush Snowshoeing and Tenting	
EDUC 3490U Geographic Information Systems	
EDUC 3560U Religious Education: Teaching in Ontario Catholic Schools	
EDUC 4611U Planning for Learning with Technology	
EDUC 4612U Technology for Teachers	
EDUC 4620U Teaching Extended Mathematics	
EDUC 4622U Mathematics for Teachers	

Source: UOIT academic calendar at https://uoit.ca/current-students/academics/academic-calendars/index.php

Appendix D: Queen's University Continuing Education

OCT Continuing Teacher Education Courses, Queens University 2016

ABQ Junior CONT564 ABQ Primary & Junior 125 hours

ABQ Primary CONT563 ABQ Primary & Junior 125 hours

Adult Education CONT860 One Session Qualifications 125 hours

Classroom Management CONT806 One Session Qualifications 125 hours

Communications Technology Grades 11/12 CONT404 Technological Education 125 hours

Communications Technology Grades 9/10 CONT403 Technological Education 125 hours

Computer Technology Grades 9/10 CONT490 Technological Education 125 hours

Cooperative Education Part 1 CONT681 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Cooperative Education Part 2 CONT682 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Cooperative Education Specialist CONT683 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Family Studies Part 1 CONT677 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Family Studies Part 2 CONT678 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Family Studies Specialist CONT679 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples: Understanding Traditional Teachings, Histories, Current Issues and Cultures, Part 1 CONT524 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples: Understanding Traditional Teachings, Histories, Current Issues and Cultures, Part 2 CONT525 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

French as a Second Language Part 1 CONT536 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

French as a Second Language Part 2 CONT537 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

French as a Second Language Specialist CONT538 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Green Industries Grades 9/10 CONT492 Technological Education 125 hours EN Next: Winter 2017

Guidance & Career Education Part 1 CONT611 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Guidance & Career Education Part 2 CONT612 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Guidance & Career Education Specialist CONT613 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Health & Physical Education P/J, Part 1 CONT510 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Health & Physical Education P/J, Part 2 CONT511 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Health & Physical Education P/J, Specialist CONT512 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Honour Specialist Biology CONT586 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist Business Studies CONT640 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist Chemistry CONT587 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist Dramatic Arts CONT588 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist English CONT590 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist Family Studies CONT688 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist French as a Second Language CONT591 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist Geography CONT592 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist Health & Physical Education CONT596 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist History CONT593 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist Mathematics CONT594 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist Music CONT582 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist Physics CONT595 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist Science - General CONT602 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist Social Sciences CONT636 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist Technological Education CONT598 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Honour Specialist Visual Arts CONT599 Honour Specialist 125 hours

Integration of Information & Computer Technology in Instruction Part 1 CONT701 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Integration of Information & Computer Technology in Instruction Part 2 CONT702 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Integration of Information & Computer Technology in Instruction Specialist CONT703 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Intermediate Business Studies CONT652 ABQ Intermediate 125 hours

Intermediate Computer Studies CONT758 ABQ Intermediate 125 hours

Intermediate English CONT770 ABQ Intermediate 125 hours

Intermediate Family Studies CONT687 ABQ Intermediate 125 hours

Intermediate First Nations, Métis, and Inuit Studies CONT638 ABQ Intermediate 125 hours

Intermediate French as a Second Language CONT769 ABQ Intermediate 125 hours

Intermediate Geography CONT795 ABQ Intermediate 125 hours

Intermediate Health & Physical Education CONT606 ABQ Intermediate 125 hours

Intermediate History CONT789 ABQ Intermediate 125 hours

Intermediate Mathematics CONT573 ABQ Intermediate 125 hours

Intermediate Science - General CONT609 ABQ Intermediate 125 hours

Kindergarten Part 1 CONT801 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Kindergarten Part 2 CONT802 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Kindergarten Specialist CONT803 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Manufacturing Technology Grades 9/10 CONT443 Technological Education 125 hours

Mathematics, Primary & Junior Part 1 CONT542 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Mathematics, Primary & Junior Part 2 CONT543 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Mathematics, Primary & Junior Specialist CONT544 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Reading Part 1 CONT533 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Reading Part 2 CONT534 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Reading Specialist CONT535 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Religious Education in Catholic Schools Part 1 CONT624 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Religious Education in Catholic Schools Part 2 CONT625 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Religious Education in Catholic Schools Specialist CONT626 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Safe and Accepting Schools CONT805 One Session Qualifications 125 hours

Senior Biology CONT773 ABQ Senior 125 hours

Senior Chemistry CONT605 ABQ Senior 125 hours

Senior English CONT771 ABQ Senior 125 hours

Senior Geography CONT772 ABQ Senior 125 hours

Senior History CONT794 ABQ Senior 125 hours

Senior Law CONT637 ABQ Senior 125 hours

Senior Mathematics CONT574 ABQ Senior 125 hours

Senior Physics CONT608 ABQ Senior 125 hours

Senior Science - General CONT610 ABQ Senior 125 hours

Senior Social Sciences CONT635 ABQ Senior 125 hours

Senior Visual Arts CONT614 ABQ Senior 125 hours

Special Education Part 1 CONT504 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Special Education Part 2 CONT505 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Special Education Specialist CONT506 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Student Assessment & Evaluation CONT811 One Session Qualifications

Teacher Leadership Part 1 CONT530 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Teacher Librarian Part 1 CONT797 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Teacher Librarian Part 2 CONT798 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Teacher Librarian Specialist CONT799 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Teaching English Language Learners Part 1 CONT539 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Teaching English Language Learners Part 2 CONT540 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Teaching English Language Learners Specialist CONT541 Three-Part AQs 125 hours

Teaching LGBTQ Students CONT807 One Session Qualifications 125 hours

Teaching Students with Behavioural Needs CONT810 One Session Qualifications 125 hours

Teaching Students with Communication Needs (Autism Spectrum Disorders) CONT812 One Session Qualifications 125 hours

Teaching Students with Communication Needs (Learning Disability) CONT816 One Session Qualifications 125 hours

Teaching and Learning Through e-Learning CONT815 One Session Qualifications 125 hours

Technological Design Grades 11/12 CONT488 Technological Education 125 hours

Technological Design Grades 9/10 CONT487 Technological Education 125 hours

Use and Knowledge of Assistive Technology CONT820 One Session Qualifications 125 hours

Appendix E: Interview Schedule

Experienced Teacher Interviews:

15 January 2015	Carmen
30 January 2015	Brian
12 February 2015	Sharon
09 March 2015	Angela
22 March 2015	Joy
18 February 2016	John
02 March 2016	Dave
19 August 2016	Maggie
10 September 2016	Gabrielle
11 September 2016	Charlene
13 September 2016	Karen
17 September 2016	Anneliese
26 October 2016	Helen
15 December 2016	Laura
30 December 2016	Naomi

Student Teacher Interviews:

23 November 2016	Dianne
28 November 2016	Fran
05 December 2016	Anna
12 December 2016	Steve
22 December 2016	Ingrid

Teachers Focus Group:

15 January 2016	Sarah, Alana, Michaela, Tanya, Tina

Parents Focus Groups:

12 March 2017	Group # 1: Angelo, Jenn, Joseph, Lucky, Mira, Toni
13 May 2017	Group # 2: Eva, Guna, Mike, Kalai, Rena, Tom

Appendix F: Interview Themes

Student Teacher Interview Themes:

1. The new Teacher Training Curriculum and religious diversity.
2. Personal feelings about the secular classroom.
3. Personal feelings of preparedness to deal with a multi-religious classroom.
4. Personal knowledge of predominant religions in Canada.
5. Knowledge of the needs of students with diverse religious beliefs.
6. Feelings of preparednes to identify religious extremism and radicalization in the classroom.
7. Views about celebrating religious holidays in the classroom.
8. Views about religious leaders participating in the classroom.

Experienced Teacher Interview Themes

1. Training related to religious diversity in the classroom received in undergrad programme or teacher training program.
2. Changes in the classroom for religious diversity since the start of your career.
3. Changes in the classroom for religious diversity since the start of their career.
4. Challenge of maintaining the secular classroom in light of growing religious diversity.
5. Supplementary training related to religious diversity received since you began your teaching career. (eg. seminars, training courses, professional development days)
6. Experience with issue related to religious diversity in the classroom?
7. Feelings of preparedness to deal with religious and cultural diversity in the classroom today.
8. Views about present practice of celebrating religious holidays in the classroom.
9. Feelings of preparedness to recognise religious radicalization and extremism in the classroom.
10. Views about the participation of outside religious leaders in the classroom.

Parent Focus Group Themes

1. Family religious values versus Canadian classroom values.
2. Feelings related to religious acceptance and accommodation.
3. Views about celebration of religious holidays in the classroom

4. Incidents of religious discrimination, misunderstanding in the classroom.

5. View about outside religious leaders participating in the classroom.

6. Views about teacher preparedness to deal with religious diversity in the classroom.

7. Views about the Canadian model of the secular classroom.

8. The extent to which they think their child's religious needs are being met in the classroom?

9. The extent to which they think religious radicalization and extremism in the classroom would be recognised.

Appendix G: Ethics Committee Approval

University
of Glasgow

College of Social
Sciences

Application Approved

Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects

Staff Research Ethics Application ☐   Postgraduate Student Research Ethics Application ☒

Application Details

Application Number: 400150068

Applicant's Name: W D Bursey

Project Title: Respecting and Meeting the Religious Diversity Needs of Learners in a Secular Classroom

Application Status: **Approved**

Start Date of Approval: 14 Dec 2015

End Date of Approval of Research Project: 31 Dec 2018

Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any enquiries please email socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk.

University of Glasgow
College of Social Sciences
Florentine House, 53 Hillhead Street. Glasgow G12 8QF
The University of Glasgow, charity number SC004401

E-mail: socsci-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix H: Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

Level	Stage	Age Range	Description
Pre-conventional	Obedience and Punishment	Infancy	Based on prohibition and avoidance of punishment. Right actions are based on physical consequences.
	Self-Interest	Pre-School	The right behaviors are seen as those that best suit the self. Getting what they want by bargaining.
Conventional	Conformity and Interpersonal-Accord	Pre-School	Responds to the "good girl/good boy" affirmation. Meeting the expectations of others and conformity are important.
	Authority and Social Order	School Age	Sees the Laws of the land as the highest ideals for a successful society. Fulfills societal duties and upholding the law.
Post-conventional	Social Contract	Teens	Understands that different people have different values. Ascents to values agreed upon by society
	Universal Principles	Adulthood	Develops internal moral principles. Selects universal ethical principles for themselves.