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Reasonable accommodations and security agendas in multicultural societies: Secular and faith-based approaches to citizenship education in Canada, France and England

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Abstract

In liberal democracies citizenship education is a form of secular worldviews education that focuses on politics and promotes human rights as universal principles. Canada, a bilingual federal state with connections to both Britain and France, illustrates both a liberal nationalist approach, comparable to Britain, in the Anglophone provinces, and radically secularist policies, comparable to France, in the province of Quebec. In a context of global migration and demographic diversity, Canada was a notable pioneer in developing educational responses to its state policies of multiculturalism and human rights. Canadian scholars Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka developed theories of recognition and reasonable accommodation that accepted religion as both a marker of identity and a set of principles to inform behaviour and decisions. However, national security agendas have also driven education policy in Canada and Europe in response to terrorism motivated by ideological interpretations of religion. Security concerns curtail freedom of religious expression in secularist traditions but also in liberal traditions that recognise the salience of religion. The article argues that education for cosmopolitan citizenship challenges security agendas based on promoting nationalism and that recognition and reasonable accommodation are more likely to promote social cohesion and preserve traditions of democracy and human rights.

Keywords

Introduction

Citizenship education is an instrument used by governments of nation states to secure support for the constitution and regime. In liberal democracies citizenship education is a form of secular world-views education that focuses on politics and promotes human rights as fundamental and universal principles. However, contextual factors strongly influence ways in which citizenship education is

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enacted and the development of future education policies may benefit from a consideration of experiences in different settings. This article draws on evidence from Canada, France and England to evaluate educational initiatives intended to strengthen national unity in contexts of diversity and indeed superdiversity (Vertovec, 2007). I note that when state institutions, such as schools, and state employees, including teachers, have been targeted by terrorists motivated by anti-democratic ideologies, governments have responded with new security agendas that have created tensions with pre-existing policies for citizenship education.

This article draws attention to the contributions of Canada, a bilingual federal state with strong and enduring linguistic, cultural, political, and affective connections to both Britain and France, in pioneering the theory and practice of citizenship and human rights education. Since education in Canada is devolved to the provinces, theory-informed policies have been enacted in different contexts. The province of Quebec has adopted radically secularist policies for its public sphere, including citizenship education, comparable to France. In the Anglophone provinces, a more liberal nationalist framework prevails, comparable to Britain.

In all three countries education has been required to respond to the opportunities and some threats associated with their development as democratic multicultural societies. This paper explores the relationship between religion/worldviews and understandings of citizenship in both secularist traditions that exclude religion from the public sphere including schools, and in liberal traditions that recognise the salience of religion. It notes areas of overall agreement and also critiques of both approaches.

Framing multi-cultural policies in Canada

Canada was a notable pioneer in developing educational responses to its state policies of multiculturalism and human rights. In the 1960s, in response to a strong separatist movement in Quebec, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism was established. However, its investigations were challenged by Ukrainian Canadians who argued that Canada was home to many linguistic and cultural communities and that multiculturalism was a more inclusive framework for policy than biculturalism (Prymak, 2019). Multiculturalism was adopted as official Canadian policy in 1971 and was a key concept in the new Canadian constitution of 1982 known as the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter, the result of a collaborative process that reclaimed constitutional sovereignty from Britain, is premised on Canada recognising itself as a multicultural society. It explicitly guarantees the rights to the preservation, enhancement and sharing of the multicultural heritage of Canadians. This was further reinforced by the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988 (Sears, 2012).

Both the drafting and the enactment of Canada's multicultural constitution that grounds multiculturalism in legally enforceable human rights required careful theorising and an educational campaign to develop and consolidate public understanding of this national policy. Prominent amongst Canadian scholars who contributed to this process were the political philosophers Charles Taylor, from Quebec, and Will Kymlicka, based in Ontario. Their insights have also contributed to Canada's anti-radicalisation policy (Government of Canada, 2018).

Taylor, who co-authored the highly influential Bouchard Taylor Report (Bouchard and Taylor, 2008), discussed below, theorised identity as requiring a social context and this includes recognition by others of salient aspects of the self, including religious convictions. Indeed, he argues that recognition is a vital human need akin to a human right (Taylor, 1989, 1992). Individuals may engage in struggle for their recognition as citizens. Groups also may develop a collective identity and campaign for this to be recognised in the public sphere. Such struggles are amongst the most sensitive and politically charged challenges facing educators. Examples include demands for

justice in the face of unreasonable discrimination on the grounds of, amongst others, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, or disability. Taylor's proposal for reconciling competing claims and enabling individuals and communities to live together with their different traditions and behaviours is that there should be attempts to find reasonable accommodations. This article discusses ways in which recognition and reasonable accommodations are enacted in the different contexts considered. I argue that recognition and reasonable accommodation, rather than attempting to enforce a homogenising national identity, are more likely to promote social cohesion and preserve traditions of democracy and human rights. This approach can be conceptualised as education for cosmopolitan citizenship (Osler and Starkey, 2003).

Education for cosmopolitan citizenship also develops from the major contributions to developing educational responses to diversity made by Will Kymlicka who theorised citizenship within multicultural nation states as multicultural citizenship (Kymlicka, 1995, 2001, 2003, 2004). His view of state neutrality is that the State should be neutral amongst conceptions of the good. Whilst the State guarantees respect for human rights, it must also insist 'that people adjust their conception of the good to respect the rightful claims of others' (Kymlicka, 2001: 330). He challenges what he calls older models of the state as a possession of a single self-defined national group. If a state instead is agreed to belong to all its citizens, and these citizens have diverse historical, geographical, cultural and religious backgrounds and identities, amongst many possible identities, then it may be considered as a multicultural state, but only insofar as it 'repudiates those nation-building policies that assimilate or exclude members of minority or non-dominant groups' (Kymlicka, 2003: 150). Within such a state citizens should ideally be active and interactive, recognising themselves as intercultural citizens. Cosmopolitan citizenship complements national citizenship and can be defined as recognising a sense of identity and belonging with other individuals and groups irrespective of their geographical proximity or nationality. Intercultural citizens without borders recognise the salience of humanity, that is the universal entitlement to human rights, as well as respecting other people's choices about political belonging including nationality. Canada's self-definition as a multicultural state could be rephrased as a cosmopolitan state.

Homogenising secularism and multiculturalism

Within the three nations under consideration there are profound differences of opinion concerning the role of the state in contexts of multicultural societies. The French national policy of restrictive secularism (*laïcité*) is widely supported across the political spectrum to the extent that it has become discursively a fourth element in the national motto Freedom, Equality, Solidarity (Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité) (Rémond, 1998). The Stasi Report, that attempted to define *laïcité* for the 21st century, begins with the affirmation that 'The French Republic was built around *laïcité*' and 'France has raised *laïcité* to the status of a founding principle' (Stasi, 2004: 21 author translation). In spite of there having been many interpretations of *laïcité* in France (Bedouelle and Costa, 1998) the Report argues that the Republic must observe the strictest neutrality with regard to belief systems. Whilst citizens are entitled to feel confidence in the State to defend freedom of thought conscience and religion, the State itself refuses to recognise the salience of any religious identity or practice. It does so by reference to the principle of equality. The Republic aims to remove references to religion from public institutions and ensure that public servants, even when not in contact with the public, refrain from religious activities and abjure clothes and symbols associated with religion. Whilst in general these restrictions do not apply to users of public services, an exception is made for schools where students, particularly Muslim girls, must dress in the spirit of this interpretation of neutrality. This is justified as a requirement for public order. Following the law on *laïcité* of 2004, Muslim families have, almost without exception, accepted this restriction. Perhaps as a quid

pro quo, the Stasi Report recommended that schools start teaching about religions and worldviews where this can be appropriately accommodated in the curriculum.

Unlike France, religion may be thought of as central to the education system of England. As part of the negotiations to nationalise schools belonging to the Church of England for the 1944 Education Act, all schools were expected to have a daily act of Christian worship and Religious Education was made compulsory throughout schooling (Osler, forthcoming). With the gradual but highly significant secularisation of British society, the prescription for a Christian emphasis has been widely reinterpreted as demanding that schools at least take faith seriously (Garcia Oliva and Hall, 2021). There have been few constraints on schools adapting to migrants and then to their children by making reasonable accommodations to school uniform codes so that hijabs, for example, are permitted so long as they respect the school uniform colour scheme.

Schools in England have considerable leeway in deciding whether to insist on a school uniform and how the uniform is defined. Since the pioneering Race Relations Act 1976 and reinforced by the Equality Act 2010 they are not allowed to discriminate on the grounds of religion or race, so banning hijabs, turbans or kippahs would be illegal. The majority of schools have a dress code, but there is variation in the way it is enforced. There is a tradition in English schools of using uniform as a means of control. Deviation from the expected norm can be punished, even by exclusion. This has often been invoked to control hair styles, particularly those fashionable for Black and mixed race students. An NGO, the Halo collective, has helped families bring cases of discrimination on the grounds of hairstyle to the Equalities and Human Rights Commission and has been successful in some cases (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018). One school was forced to pay compensation and change its rules on afro hairstyles for girls. Another was found to have discriminated by banning dreadlocks. The NGO challenged a case where a 5-year-old child was banned for too severe a fade haircut. They developed the Halo code on afro hair which has been adopted by several schools that feature this commitment on their website (Ibraheem, 2020).

In 2019, the Quebec government passed the Law 21, known as the Act respecting the laicity of the State (Taylor, 2022). It justifies the need for legislation by reference to the four principles discussed in the Bouchard Taylor report, namely: 'the separation of State and religions, the religious neutrality of the State, the equality of all citizens, and freedom of conscience and freedom of religion'. However, the act specifies that concern for state laicity must be prioritised by state employees wishing to exercise their human rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed in the Canadian Charter. A wide range of employees in state-funded institutions, including school principals and teachers are prohibited from wearing religious symbols in the exercise of their functions. The Act defines religious symbols as: 'any object, including clothing, a symbol, jewellery, an adornment, an accessory or headwear, that is worn in connection with a religious conviction or belief; or is reasonably considered as referring to a religious affiliation'. In other words, whether something is a religious symbol is not just the subjective intention of the wearer but is open to interpretation by the authorities or those who alert the authorities. This allows for stereotypical or prejudiced views to be projected onto minorities.

Act 21 is said to enjoy popular support from two-thirds of Quebecers (Taylor, 2022) though it has also been strongly contested by scholars who highlight the Act's disproportionate effect on Muslim women (Canadian Race Relations Foundation, 2021). Although Bouchard and Taylor had nothing to say about the school curriculum, Canadian educationalists responding to Act 21 argue for the need to ensure education about religion and secularism since this, they maintain, contributes to strong communities and national relationships (Patrick et al., 2019; Reid et al., 2019). This further requires ensuring that teachers are equipped to engage constructively with issues of religion and secularism that will inevitably arise in classrooms, particularly in social studies.

Canadian multiculturalism: Identity, recognition and reasonable accommodation

Charles Taylor co-authored a report for the government of Quebec known as the Bouchard Taylor Report. The report responded to concerns about minorities using struggles for recognition and identity to undermine conventional norms and procedures (Bouchard and Taylor, 2008). The Report examines examples of parties resolving differences through reasonable accommodation from several contexts including education. Most of the cases cited are concerned with issues of religious freedom of expression, including clothes. The commission describes a period of intense controversy in Quebec from 2002 to 2006 followed by a year of turmoil concerning accommodations. The period of controversy was initiated by a school board banning a Sikh student, Gurbaj Singh, from wearing a ceremonial kirpan or small dagger to school. The incident arose at his primary school in 2001 when his kirpan was dislodged from his clothing and dropped to the floor. The school then banned bringing to school and wearing kirpans, but Gurbaj refused to comply, on the grounds that it was a mandatory part of his faith, and left the school, therefore being deprived of his right to education. The case went all the way to the Supreme Court of Quebec that in 2006 unanimously overturned the ban as infringing his right to freedom of conscience and religion. Singh and future Sikh school students were entitled to wear the kirpan subject to severe restrictions agreed by both parties to be a reasonable accommodation. At school, the kirpan must be worn under the clothes and sewn into a sheath so as to be of no possible danger to other students or school personnel.

The kirpan case seems to have been a trigger for opposition to reasonable accommodation including what the Bouchard Taylor report calls the notorious case of a statement published by elected representatives of the small community of Hérouxville in 2007. Councillors in this White, Francophone and culturally Catholic village, set out norms and practices to which any newcomers were expected to adhere (Drouin, 2017). The case of Hérouxville reflects discourses prevalent amongst the Francophone majority in the province, who tend to favour a hard-line secularism close to that widely advocated and legislated for in France. Whilst the village was not expecting an influx of migrants, its council feared what might happen if any new families were to arrive. The statement of life standards baldly states that newcomers must abandon practices from the country they have fled if these conflict with the norms set out. New arrivals are expected to adapt to their new social identity as Quebecers and Canadians. The extensive list of norms to be observed may be of interest to historians and anthropologists as revealing a way of life in a Francophone village. The list of norms stretches over seven pages, and the authors consider that it would be fastidious to be even more comprehensive. The sections include women's equality, children, festivals, health, education, sport and leisure, security, the workplace, shops, families and a final section pointing out that wayside crosses are an important part of the village's history.

Whilst much of the normative guidance appears well meaning if patronising, such as that at the end of the year 'we' decorate pine trees with baubles, in a cultural tradition linked to our heritage that is now not necessarily religious. However, the authors deliberately attempt to shock readers by outlawing extreme behaviours that they imagine may be current in the societies of origin of migrants. The examples clearly target extreme interpretations of Islamic Shar'ia law. So, this rural Quebec community will not tolerate stoning women to death in the village square, genital mutilation or enslavement. This manifesto for demanding that newcomers to Quebec assimilate to quaintly formulated norms symbolised the background concerns about reasonable accommodation that led to the Bouchard Taylor report.

The Report, published in 2008 in the wake of the Hérouxville provocation, makes the case for reasonable accommodation of migrants. It points out that in multicultural societies there is a need

for the management of diversity. Whilst traditionally this has been undertaken as demanding assimilation to a majority culture, the report argues that it is now widely accepted that greater respect for diversity is an important element in democratic nations and that there are many examples from Quebec of managing coexistence based on an ideal of intercultural harmonisation. The principle underpinning this change in mentalities is that differential treatment may be necessary in the pursuit of equality. Examples given include diabetic children being allowed to bring epi-pens to school in spite of a more general prohibition of syringes.

In making the case for reasonable accommodations, the report notes the ways in which customary norms and expectations favour majorities. 'Sociologically speaking, we have observed that a number of apparently neutral or universal norms in actual fact reproduce worldviews, values, and implicit norms that are those of the majority culture or population'. Examples include restaurants or school canteens not including vegetarian or vegan options. Whilst the right to equality is a given, the procedures that enable this equality can be implemented flexibly rather than rigidly. The report maintains that Quebec is committed to this approach. Accommodation is a response to direct or indirect discrimination on the basis of characteristics defined in law. It is a means of mediation rather than a right to be claimed without limit. In Canadian law accommodation is not feasible where there is undue hardship for the institution, such as a school, which is being asked to adjust.

The Bouchard Taylor report considers cases that have arisen in educational settings, drawing on the evidence provided in the Fleury Report of 2007 (Fleury, 2007) that identifies three types of request for accommodation. There are some issues relating to linguistic questions such as providing communications from the school in minority languages and allowing students where French or English is an additional language to have extra time to complete exam papers. Almost 80% of issues reported concern religious practice. Schools are given discretion to act where this does not involve derogation from the curriculum. Thus the wearing of headscarves, absences for religious holidays and sympathetic consideration during Ramadan were at the time authorised. No schools were allowed to designate a prayer room for a single religion and there was a ban on washing feet in sinks. The report highlights the relatively low level of requests for accommodation and recommends that such requests be handled through an educational support approach and on a case-by-case basis.

The Report explores the possibilities for developing a model for intercultural integration. Its starting point is current legal frameworks of human rights as set out in the Quebec and the Canadian Charters which were drafted in the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The authors point out that none of the rights and freedoms is absolute and that there is no hierarchy of rights within these instruments. This is the principle of indivisibility. From this basis, the authors advance 11 proposals that together help to constitute a Quebec model of interculturalism. They recognise the principle of multiple identities and note that integration into society often involves a group or organisation such as family, profession, association, religious group and this can be extended to ethnic affiliation. They also suggest that cultural and religious practices need not be confined to the private sphere.

That said, the Report recommends secularism as a guiding principle for Quebec and sets out its view of how it can be appropriately defined. It first considers the distinction between public and private. Whilst agreeing that the State its institutions and its public spaces should be considered neutral, it argues that within the spaces and the institutions diversity and freedom of expression should be expected. It specifically raises the issue of signs of religious affiliation in schools and queries why, in a rights respecting public system, there should be attempts to suppress inoffensive religious expression.

The authors are prepared to take a strongly normative position that liberal democratic states must uphold democracy, human rights and the equality of all citizens and that this is a

non-negotiable position. Different groups will have their reasons for supporting this framework and the State does not favour one worldview over another provided they support the principles of liberal democracy. The model of secularism proposed is an open model based on two basic principles namely the moral equality of persons; and freedom of conscience and religion. To achieve these aims, the State has instituted the institutional structures of on the one hand a separation of Church and State and on the other a commitment to state neutrality with respect to religions and worldviews. The Report notes that France has banned the wearing of religious signs in schools, but in keeping with a general tone of wishing to downplay the politicising of identities, notes that the practice on the ground is more flexible than many media reports suggest. It recommends that restrictive rather than open secularism is not appropriate in Quebec and diagnoses the French position as founded on taking a particular concept of the neutrality of the state as an ultimate purpose rather than a strategy. Restrictive secularism may be instrumentalised to encourage schools to deny the salience of religion and discourage observance. This is not a neutral position but one that is hostile to religion.

The Report recognises that demands for accommodation that are taken to court result in a winning and a losing party and therefore risk antagonism. The authors prefer an approach based on concerted adjustment than can be achieved through what they term the citizen route'. This requires a spirit of mutual respect and dialogue as the parties search for the best possible feasible solution. Such a dialogue may take place in schools and the Report endorses principles of reasonable accommodation in schools based on principles attributed to Marie McAndrew. These are that a request for accommodation or adjustment must not interfere with the student's other rights or the rights of other students. It must conform to the requirements of the Education Act, particularly concerning the curriculum. It must not be too onerous in its impact on the school's organisation or finances.

Canadian policies on multiculturalism have also been critiqued from those who identify a shift from attention to social justice towards a discourse of social cohesion (Joshee, 2019). Definitions of social cohesion as social inclusion can include social justice (Joshee and Sinfield, 2010) and be framed as democratic social cohesion (Bickmore, 2006). However, neo-liberals and neoconservatives promote a view of social cohesion that focuses on the acceptance of competition for resources driven by markets as the arbiter of political decision-making (Apple, 2018).

Education for cosmopolitan citizenship

In parallel with the Bouchard Taylor Report, Will Kymlicka developed a theory of intercultural citizenship within multicultural states. This requires education to promote high levels of intercultural skills and knowledge. Kymlicka argues that intercultural citizenship education 'not only involves promoting a certain sort of critical attitude towards authority, it also involves developing habits of civility and the capacity for public reasonableness' (Kymlicka, 2001: 308). In other words, there is an expectation that whilst supporting the principles of human rights that underpin the operation of the state, young people should learn to be wary of those who abuse state power. They should also learn how to interact constructively and politely with others and use reason as well as emotion in interpersonal relationships. Intercultural citizenship education encourages children 'to interact with the members of other groups, to understand the reasonableness of other ways of life and to distance themselves from their own cultural traditions' (Kymlicka, 2001: 308).

Kymlicka's theory informs the practice of education for cosmopolitan citizenship since it requires an understanding of human rights as standards that apply to all human beings irrespective of national identity. Human rights transcend national boundaries and so provide a wider cosmopolitan frame of reference. Cosmopolitanism refers to the acceptance of the inherent dignity of all 'members of the human family', as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and

the consequent entitlement to human rights. Cosmopolitan citizenship is therefore underpinned by human rights as core inalienable principles. It does not, however, ignore the importance of nation states in the current organisation of the world and in particular that human rights are predominantly guaranteed by and enacted by states with and for their citizens. In fact, patriotism and cosmopolitanism are perfectly compatible, as Charles Taylor argued in claiming that 'we have no choice but to be cosmopolitans and patriots, which means to fight for the kind of patriotism that is open to universal solidarities against other, more closed kinds' (Taylor, 1996: 121).

Education for cosmopolitan citizenship is more theoretically grounded than the more frequently invoked global citizenship education. Cosmopolitanism is the subject of a broad literature and wide debate within political philosophy (Appiah, 2006; Nussbaum, 1996; Sen, 2009). A helpful definition, proposed by Kaldor proposes that:

> The cosmopolitan ideal combines a commitment to humanist principles and norms, an assumption of human equality, with a recognition of difference, and indeed a celebration of diversity (2003: 19).

'Humanist principles and norms' as well as 'human equality' refer to human rights as common standards. The definition also highlights recognition, as in Taylor's theory, and diversity as in Canada's multicultural policies.

That said, the essence of education for cosmopolitan citizenship is that it relativises (rather than denies) the salience of a national identity and that it invites the reimagination of nation states as cosmopolitan (Osler, 2016). In this perspective there are endless permutations of what it means to be Canadian, French or British and there is an acceptance of multiple identities. Some identities will be based on kinship or friendship ties with communities across the world. In this way education for cosmopolitan citizenship is accepting of the significance to citizens and inhabitants of nation states and their governments in a way that the phrase 'global citizenship' avoids. However, there are also prominent discourses of cosmopolitan citizenship promoted by neoliberals that frame this citizenship as enacted entirely outside and transcending national boundaries. This neoliberal view of cosmopolitanism envisages the citizen as driven to acquire social capital through international networking at the expense of concern for social justice in any national context (Kymlicka, 2013).

Kymlicka's writings on education have been encouraged by his association with James Banks, a noted theorist of multicultural education from the USA. In a commentary on an international collection of case studies of citizenship education, he noted that the logic of multiculturalism challenges the bounded nature of the nation state. He distinguishes between domestic 'multiculturalism' and 'cosmopolitan multiculturalism' (Kymlicka, 2004: xvi). More recently he has conceptualised two broad strands of civics education in a context of global migration. Narrowly focused citizenship education considers how 'members of "the people" exercise their popular sovereignty' (Kymlicka, 2017: xx). In other words, this model is broadly political within the context of the nation state, though requiring a multicultural conception of belonging. The second strand is human rights education, which is a cosmopolitan perspective that is applicable to both nationals and others all over the world. He notes that scholars from across the world recognise that 'the combination of multicultural citizenship and cosmopolitan human rights represents a compelling ideal' (Kymlicka, 2017: xx; 2021).

Kymilicka comes close to recognising that education for cosmopolitan citizenship is a succinct term for what has become a widely held understanding of how citizenship should develop. Education for cosmopolitan citizenship was conceptualised by British scholars in response to a new compulsory model of citizenship education that only minimally engaged with diversity and avoided reference to multiculturalism (Advisory Group on Citizenship, 1998; Osler and Starkey, 2005). However, Kymlicka critiques the concept on the grounds that it is advocating for 'pure

cosmopolitanism', which he defines as abandoning the salience of the nation state. This is a misunderstanding of a concept that helpfully encapsulates both the recommendations of the Bouchard Taylor report and much of Kymlicka's own analysis (Kymlicka, 2021).

Citizenship education and threats to national security

Major security issues, such as the July 2007 bombings of the transport system in London and the several incidents in France in 2015, starting with the shooting of the journalists of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, led to calls for education systems in general and citizenship education in particular to find responses to murderous extremist and terrorist ideologies. A meeting of ministers of education from European countries, in the wake of the Charlie Hebdo killings, put forward an agenda for an educational response known as the Paris Declaration (Informal Meeting of European Union Ministers of Education, 2015). The published version is flagged as promoting a Europe-wide mobilisation of education in citizenship values. I now turn attention to the two European countries, France and England, that have the closest relationship with Canada to consider whether and to what extent policies for combatting terrorism through education take into account concepts such as recognition, reasonable accommodations, and cosmopolitan citizenship.

In the Paris Declaration, the ministers reaffirm their commitment to fundamental European values which they define as:

> respect for human dignity, freedom (including freedom of expression), democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights. These values are common to the Member States in a European society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.

This formulation can be read as asserting normative principles that are contested by Islamists. The defence of the journalists of Charlie Hebdo in publishing offensive cartoons of the Prophet was that they were exercising their freedom of expression. Similarly, the emphasis on equality between men and women implicitly suggests that cultural practices involving modest clothing for women and separation of sexes in religious and social settings run counter to European norms and values. This implies judgements that fail to distinguish between the socially conservative cultural practices of some Muslims and a highly politicised Islamist jihadist ideology (James and Janmaat, 2019; Zinigrad and Sawyer, 2023).

The articles of the Paris Declaration stress the imparting of the fundamental values. There is scope for reasonable accommodation by encouraging 'dialogue and cooperation among all the education stakeholders, in particular parents, families and associative structures'. There is however little overt support for recognition of minorities, though teachers are to be empowered to 'meet the needs of pupils from diverse backgrounds'. However, this is immediately followed by an injunction to impart fundamental values and combat racism and intolerance. This may be read as implying that minoritized students 'from diverse backgrounds' are less likely to uphold fundamental values and combat intolerance. There is no suggestion in the Declaration that citizenship is anything other than national.

The French response of citizenship education as a counter to Islamist jihadi ideology builds on a now well-established tradition of restrictive or hard-line secularism that started in autumn 1989 with a single headteacher, member of a right-wing party, banning headscarves or hijabs in his school in Creil (Gaspard and Khosrokhavar, 1995; Lorcerie, 2005). The ensuing national debate, amply promoted by the media, led the then Socialist government to request a ruling by the supreme court (Conseil d'État) on whether the head's action in excluding three students was legal in

constitutional terms. The court found that, whilst the French constitution in itself recognises that wearing clothes associated with a particular faith group does not contravene the principles of secularism, particular ways of dressing may be considered provocative and so may be regulated in schools for the sake of good order (Bouamama, 2004). The ruling left policy on students' headscarves to the discretion of school heads. This was challenged in 1994, following a change of political control to the right, when ministers attempted to rule that certain forms of clothing, such as the hijab, should be considered as challenging secularism. However, the Conseil d'État maintained its position that clothing is not in itself inimical to secularism, it is the way that an individual behaves when wearing it that must be judged.

Matters came to a head again in 2003/4, in the wake this time of the destruction in New York of the Twin Towers in 2001 and the 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq. The Interior Minister, the future President, Nicolas Sarkozy, addressed an assembly of a Muslim organisation provocatively raising the issue of whether it was admissible to wear a hijab in identity photos. Predictably this created yet another media storm (Tévanian, 2005) to which the government responded by setting up a parliamentary inquiry into religious signs at school, followed by a commission on secularism and the Republic which reported in late 2003 (Stasi, 2004). The outcome was a brief law passed in March 2004 which bans 'the wearing by school students of signs or clothes by which they are overtly demonstrating belonging to a faith group'. The law stipulates that any disciplinary action against a student must be preceded by a discussion with them. Evidence from school inspectors of examples of tensions around religious identifiers was published just before the summer break (Obin, 2004). Within the education system, this nationwide legal obligation shifts the focus on neutrality as the bedrock of secularism from the State's agents, the teachers, to the recipients of State provisions, the students.

In spite of the legal requirement for a dialogue in cases of disagreement over dress at school, the conversation is clearly intended to be one way, with the headteacher responsible for interpreting the dress code. In fact, issues around clothes likely to be worn by those from a Muslim background have persisted, since they present political actors with a populist platform. Examples include the banning of all over swimwear, disparagingly labelled 'burkinis' from public swimming pools and beaches. A newly appointed minister of education made the headlines in Autumn 2023 by explicitly banning abayas in schools, in spite of the fact that there were vanishingly few cases of students wearing them.

Although there is the legal requirement for dialogue about clothing in schools, there is little evidence of heads and teachers being willing to recognise that faith commitments often require outward and visible signs and that these are individual expressions rather than attempts to influence others. In effect the French system of neutral secularism denies the possibilities of accommodation and instead maintains 'a principle of equal exclusion of the private from the public' (Levinson, 1999: 123). Culturally Muslim children in schools and adults in the wider community are often perceived as and may recognise themselves to be outsiders in France (Beaman, 2017).

The French government response to its own initiative of the Paris Declaration was to reinforce civic and moral education with the intention of combatting extremist ideologies. The overall concept of morale laïque or secular morality was to infuse an hour of civic and moral education in primary and lower secondary schools from September 2015 with 1 hour a fortnight for upper secondary. This broke with the previous provision of civic education in conjunction with history and geography. Extra training was provided for teachers. However, this State-sponsored mobilisation to promote the official ideology resulted in a backlash and resistance. Evidence from teachers suggested that some students viewed the new classes as propaganda (James, 2022; Lorcerie and Moignard, 2017; Szukala, 2023). Moreover, many teachers were uncertain of how to deal with controversy in the classroom and how to counteract negative views of the Republic and its agents.

In fact, the author of a report commissioned by the Ministry of Education on training teachers to promote *laïcité* and Republican values feared that the battle for the hearts and minds of young people had been lost. He noted that:

> Many students see *laïcité* as a mechanism to coerce them or punish them, invented to suppress religious identities, and that their teachers refuse to recognise or even denigrate their worldviews (Author translation. Obin, 2021: 4).[1]

The distressing death of teacher Samuel Paty in 2020, decapitated outside his school by a young jihadi Islamist is illustrative of the disarray in educational circles over promoting Republican values. Paty was a teacher of history and geography in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine. He had 4e (year 9) civic and moral education classes and as part of the syllabus on freedom of expression he had planned a lesson called Dilemmas: supporting or not supporting Charlie. A definition of freedom. [Situation de dilemme: être ou ne pas être Charlie. Une définition de la liberté]. His PowerPoint for the lesson included slides of the caricatures of the Prophet, first published in Denmark and then republished by Charlie Hebdo. He gave due warning to his Muslim students and said that when the time came, they could avert their eyes. The class, and an earlier class where students had the option to leave the room, passed without incident. However, a student who was absent for the class, but who received a 2-day suspension for missing it, lied to her parents that she had been suspended for having challenged her teacher who was showing pictures of the Prophet naked. Believing her, her father used social media to call for action against the teacher leading in time to his brutal murder by an Islamist jihadi with no connection to the school (Seelow, 2023).

Paty was following what he believed to be a State sanctioned approach to promoting *laïcité* and Republican values. Although freedom of belief and expression can be illustrated through a variety of examples, the choice of the cartoons is consistent with a secular view that disrespects faith and demands assimilation to a majority-determined norm. Paty was aware of the capacity of the images to cause discomfort, but he persisted in this example because he understood that he was required to. He proposed a reasonable accommodation, namely, to avert the eyes, though one imposed rather than discussed. He was not in a position to recognise the importance of belief for some of his students and as a consequence not in a position to engage them in dialogue about the content of his course.

As Bouchard and Taylor recognised, national blanket policies need to be interpreted and enacted locally and ideally will be subject to dialogue and discussions. There is evidence that the move to allow schools to teach about religions has provided some flexibility for them to engage with issues of belief and practice (James, 2022; Laborde, 2019).

Fundamental British values

In England, education has been enlisted to combat terrorism and extremism although the Government has avoided prescribing that this be undertaken through citizenship education. Rather the policy has been to promote what have been designated as Fundamental British Values (FBVs) through the ethos of the school and as a cross-curricular theme (Starkey, 2018). As with the introduction in France of moral and civic education that caused stress and anxiety to teachers insufficiently prepared for the initiative, so did FBVs cause some consternation in England. Empirical studies of the enactment FBVs demonstrate the hugely varied interpretations of what the policy intended (James, 2022; Vincent, 2019).

Even in a context that is inclined to recognise diversity and come to reasonable accommodations, a concern to comply with security requirements, perhaps associated with anxieties about

keeping control, can result in discriminatory practices. In England a university instigated project found evidence of inappropriate use of dress codes in schools (Jenkinson et al., 2021). An experienced male teacher was observed lining up a whole class and spending 15 minutes inspecting their uniforms. Other evidence suggested that attention to uniform was more likely to be directed at black students. Further evidence that school dress codes tend to discriminate against girl students is provided in a report for the Department for Education (Cambridge Mallen, 2022). In a study of 40 state-funded schools, the researcher found that in two-thirds of the sample girls' uniform was significantly more expensive than the boys' uniform, partly because there was little scope to find generic items that could be bought anywhere. Moreover, schools used the term modesty in girls' policies only and had more specific and complex rules around dress codes for girls including not allowing them to wear trousers.

In spite of attempts in some schools in England to enforce discipline and compliance through severe application of a dress code, many schools have reached a reasonable accommodation with their students and their parents. They can, for instance, buy Islamic headscarves bearing the school logo. Guidance on dress codes that respect children's rights and avoid discrimination on grounds of gender, race, religion and sexuality may challenge school governing bodies to examine their practices (Jenkinson et al., 2021). For example, there is no reason why there should be different dress codes for girls and boys as this simply creates an unhelpful distinction based on gender.

Conclusion

Of the four jurisdictions briefly surveyed in this article, two have adopted a severe version of secularism that outlaws forms of dress and wearing of symbols that are associated with religion. In practice this tends to focus on Muslim students. This may be interpreted, in a climate of anxiety over the threat of jihadi violence, as an assumption that Muslims are likely to be more susceptible to adopting extremist ideologies. This form of secularism requires assimilation to social norms that have been determined without dialogue with communities affected. Parents and students may accept that school is a context where they have to be discreet about their religious and cultural affiliations, but that may deny them opportunities to explore cosmopolitan identities and benefit fully from educational provision (Orange, 2016, 2017). They may feel simultaneously citizens and outsiders (Beaman, 2017; Khosrokhavar, 2018). That said, at local levels accommodations are found and the discussion of religion in French schools is no longer taboo (James, 2022).

The theoretical perspectives developed from the Canadian experience enable the naming of the compromises required for the successful integration of minorities as reasonable accommodations. Overall, the proposals from the Bouchard Taylor report, namely to engage in dialogue, be flexible and find solutions at a local level, are broadly followed in England and in Anglophone Canada. There are still many challenges to intercultural or cosmopolitan citizenship education in these two contexts. These include attention to uniform dress codes and reconciling nationalist and cosmopolitan perspectives. Recognition of the salience of religion and cultures highly influenced by religion can help students to feel valued and so enhance their achievement.

England is the one context of the four that does not have a formal constitution. Citizenship and worldviews education can reference national constitutions as providing a normative framework for education. The constitutions of Canada, France and Quebec all reference international law and human rights. Citizenship education in England has to interpret the many possible meanings of the so-called Fundamental British Values that are to be promoted. 'British' values may helpfully be

construed by referencing the commitments to human rights and international law that underpin national life (Parekh, 2000). This would support a vision of the nation as cosmopolitan.

Any educational policies that fail to recognise key aspects of identity, including those associated with religion and worldviews may produce feelings of exclusion, particularly from minoritized individuals and groups (Shaw, 2023; Welply, 2019). Exclusion and rejection from a national 'we' may make students susceptible to extremism (Osler and Lybaek, 2014). Finding reasonable accommodations with students and communities who make demands on schools and education systems when they perceive discrimination is an ongoing task in all four contexts.

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Note

1. [chez beaucoup d'élèves se développe l'idée d'une laïcité coercitive voire punitive, conçue pour brider l'expression des religions et d'enseignants insensibles voire hostiles à leurs convictions].

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