Religion and Education: The Story of a Conflicted Canadian Partnership

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Abstract In Canada, education is a matter of provincial and territorial jurisdiction so that, while there is a federal constitutional framework, there is not a national system of education. This has had implications for regulation and protection of religion and religious diversity in and by education systems. This chapter examines the resulting regulatory variety but does so in the context of some of the conceptual ambiguities and creative social tensions inherent in the intersection of religion and education. Readers are encouraged to become critically aware of their own positionality in relationship with issues related to this dynamic and complex area of social engagement. This is an important topic because both education and religion are areas of social practice about which most people have strong opinions and feelings. Education represents huge investments of social and financial capital and regularly appears on political platforms during elections as an important measure of commitment to social equality. Education, in other words, carries a lot of freight and debates about education seem to generate a great deal of energy. This chapter is a contribution to an ongoing social conversation, encouraging readers to reconsider issues about which there is considerable accepted but often unexamined common sense.

Keywords Education · Religious freedom · Citizenship · Canadian values · Regulatory frameworks · Indoctrination · Government · Secularization

1 General Introduction and Synopsis of the Theme

The primary purpose of this chapter is to encourage students of education to become more critically aware of the constitutional, legal, political and social contexts in which religious diversity is regulated in and by the jurisdictions in which they work. This is important for three reasons. The first is that teachers' professional practice is

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shaped by the boundaries of what is considered appropriate and inappropriate in their schools, some of which are explicit but many of which are implicit commonly accepted sense.

The second is that it is in their professional interest to better understand the religious diversity they will encounter in their practice. Usually they will experience religious diversity as enriching and stimulating, creating opportunity for mutual learning. Sometimes they will experience diversity in conflicts over a wide range of issues, some of which may seem to have little to do with religion. In either case, it is important for teachers to be critically aware of the ways in which religious diversity is conceptualized and managed in their professional contexts.

The third reason is one of positionality. Teachers need to be aware of their own predispositions and opinions in relation to the religious diversity they encounter within their classrooms, their schools and the jurisdictions within which they practice. What they commonly accept as universally true may be open for reconsideration when compared with other possibilities. This chapter invites students of education to hear voices from the wider context of religious diversity in education in Canada.

However, while its primary audience is students of education, the issues raised in this chapter have implications beyond the world of professional education because of three things. The first is that the outcomes of education have obvious implications for civil society by being more or less effective in preparing students for success in a modern society. In addition, education and its delivery represents a site in which "Canadian values" are formulated and debated. Foremost of these is equal access to an essential social practice designed to deliver tolerance and other attitudes necessary in a diverse society. Furthermore, education is an important industry, generating jobs and other benefits, and funded by either private or public resources so that debates over education are often among stakeholders trying to protect their interests.

Therefore, education and the boundaries constructed around its delivery are often topics of vigorous debate throughout Canada and this chapter is intended for students in all disciplines. Most obviously, this is because their lives as students are all about education but also because they are citizens who will be called on to offer informed participation in debates in the future in their roles as parents, members of school communities and school board members.

1.1 Getting Started

Let's get started by thinking about religion and education as a social and conceptual conundrum in which teachers are front line workers. Religion and education are hot topics, particularly in the current global context of heightened security concerns and population movement. While these topics are debated on multiple levels by a wide array of interested parties, teachers and schools are on the front line of responding to real students coming to their classrooms with an astonishing range of vocabularies, sensitivities and experiences shaping their imaginations and understanding of how the world works. Teachers filter that complexity through their own imaginations so they are constantly alert to the reality of their classrooms being places

where a world of imaginations meet, to shape and be shaped by and in that meeting. Usually the meeting of different imaginaries is interesting and stimulating but sometimes it is shocking and offensive, to teachers, students and their parents.

Teachers are aware of a number of things regarding religion, among them their position of power and their own positionality in relation to their students. Being gatekeepers in their classrooms, they give and withhold permission, often in incidental interactions and sometimes in intentionally structured lessons. What makes this work on their students' behalf is their professional commitment to a classroom environment which encourages respectful engagement and re-examination of their own and their students understanding of the world (Sergiovanni 1999).

However, teachers must also be critically aware of how the political and regulatory context in which they work shapes their professional practice (Glenn and de Groof 2005). There are two parts to critical awareness. The first is *critical* awareness which is the humble recognition that their context is socially constructed in a particular historical, social and political situation rather than being universally normative. The second is critical *awareness* or *attentiveness* to the power issues inherent in the ways their context emerged and is maintained so that their sense of what is "normal" is somewhat destabilized. This is true in all educational contexts, including homeschools, privately-funded and state funded schools.

1.2 Questions for Critical Thought

Careful listening to dissonant voices is key to the development of critical awareness raising a number of questions for your consideration. Think about the following concepts and reflect on what you think is normal or what "feels right". Then see if you can talk with someone who has a different sense of what is normal.[1]

1. What is "religion"? What is its role in education? In society? In the life of an individual?
2. In a number of provinces, faith-based schools[2] are either fully or partially funded by governments. What is your reaction? Talk to someone who participates in a faith-based school or in a homeschool. What is the logic behind those choices? Or, talk to someone working in a state funded school identifying itself as "secular". How does she navigate the space for religion in her environment?

[1] You can also go to the Religion and Diversity website (http://religionanddiversity.ca/) for links to more detailed discussions and debates on issues relating to religion in society and, more specifically, religion and education.

[2] "Faith-based schools" refers to those schools for whom religion, such as Islam, Christianity, Judaism, Sikhism, etc., forms the central tenet of their identity. However, this term is somewhat arbitrary since all schools are "faith-based" in two ways. First, the actual outcomes of any

2 A Real-Life Story Based on Qualitative Research: "Navigating Regulatory Space"

While the regulatory context within which teachers work is established at various levels of government, what actually happens in teacher-student interactions can nuance the distinctions between private and public, religious and secular and other ways in which schools and education are often portrayed. This section provides insight into the working lives of teachers based on interviews with two participants, both identifying themselves as Christians in an Ontario public high school. The purpose of the interviews was to hear how teachers navigated the space created for religion in their professional interactions with students. This is by no means exhaustive but does give a snapshot into the nuanced complexity of how teachers interpret and practice the regulatory frameworks within which they work.

The teachers were active in their religious practice (weekly attendance at church services, prayers), saying that religion for them was a lived relationship with Jesus, describing themselves as "followers of Jesus".[3] One described himself as being a "religious skeptic" and "agnostic" about most institutional religion. Their primary and secondary education had occurred mainly in public schools and religion played a somewhat vague role in their schooling, although one of them said that public schools, before 1990, were "Christian", recalling that he had memorized Bible passages as a poetry memorization exercise. The current school opening exercises consisted of the national anthem and a moment of silence, during which both teachers prayed for their students and for the day's activities.

They described the relationship between religion and education in terms of finding and taking opportunities for students to engage important questions about the meaning of life, human destiny, origins etc. in a safe space. In their view, all people are on a spiritual quest, searching for meaning and purpose, but their students tended to be cautious about discussing that aspect of their lives. Their role as teachers was to "open a door" through which students could go if they needed to do so, both in informal interactions and in formal classroom activities. Their responses to students were both opportunistic and strategic. For example, one of the participants described his classes as preparation for "the final examination of life", encouraging his students to think beyond jobs to consider the bigger questions of what kind of life they envision for themselves. Both agreed that education must transcend any reductionist

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educational process are impossible to predict with certainty, so all schools operate on the basis of "faith" that their educational process will lead to a preferred outcome in terms of a graduate profile. Second, all educational endeavours operate on the basis of a more or less clearly defined set of "first principles" forming the imaginative screen for the social and educational activities that occur within them. There are two further complicating factors. The first is that, although in most jurisdictions, they are an important component in the delivery of education, there is a great deal of regulatory diversity in Canada and around the world for faith-based schools. Second, there is a great deal of diversity among faith-based schools, including within particular categories, so that there are many different kinds of Islamic, Christian, Jewish, Sikh etc. schools. In this chapter, the use of the term "faith-based" is a provisional matter of convenience.

[3] See McGuire, M. (2008) on a more detailed examination of "lived religion". It was interesting to see the teachers use the term without reference to McGuire's ground-breaking work.

view which denies students the opportunity to consider questions of ultimate importance. They agreed that a teacher is a "whole person" and that the idea of separating one's spiritual self from one's professional self is futile, leading to a lack of authenticity about which students are very perceptive. They described their school as hospitable to religious diversity and their student population as very diverse, with, among other things, a Jewish Cultural Club, Muslim prayer space and a Christian club. The teaching staff were primarily from a variety of Christian traditions, many of whom described themselves as such, while others would describe themselves as "secular". They experienced limitations on their religious expression in a number of ways. Many of the Christian teachers, like their students, were sensitive about expressing their religious selves. While a code of silence might be too strong a description, they described a "code of caution" around religion. Sometimes the restrictions were explicit, one teacher recalling an incident in which he was unofficially reprimanded for referring the amazing "design" of the human body, "design" suggesting a commitment to an "intelligent design" model of the world which was interpreted as being too close to an explicitly religious concept. In the words of one participant, a teacher whose imagination is shaped by religion and spirituality must, therefore, be "as wise as a serpent and as gentle as a dove", a reference to the gospel of Matthew 10:16. In summary, both were committed to "walking the talk" described in Philippians 4:8 which says "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." Thinking was seen to include action or praxis which, in turn, was understood as a natural and positive link with character education.

3 Key Terms and Concepts

The chapter is organized around three clusters of concepts, examining the implications of defining key terms in rhetorical binaries as they often are in public debate. They are *religion*, *education* and *citizenship.*

Religion: a mode of human thought, a social practice and a conceptual problem often defined by opposing harmful and benign forms of religion, religion and secular, religion and modernity.

Education: defined by opposing critical thought and indoctrination, education about religion and religious education, public, sectarian and private education and religion and science.

Citizenship: often debated by opposing what is included and not included in "Canadian values", the challenges of integration, social cohesion versus assimilation, and the threats posed by fundamentalism, radicalization and sectarianism.

This chapter does not offer a definitive resolution to the lively academic debate about the precise definition of religion. Rather, the purpose here is to encourage readers to reflect on their own working definitions of religion to understand how they may interpret and understand their experience of religious diversity. Working definitions are important because they animate debates over the educational resources, time and space which should be allocated to religion. However, they are usually unexamined in debates over prayer space in schools, gender diversity, course content, textbooks and school funding (among others). Students and teachers may have opinions about things, for example, gender equality, which when first expressed, may seem to have little to do with religion.

Careful examination and listening may open up consideration of deeply held convictions which the teacher must engage with professional detachment and respect. Parents and students who worry about sex education curriculum or presentations of gender diversity will do so for a variety of reasons but religious sensitivities may well be an important part of their thought process. Students have the developmental task of navigating the intersection between the intimate worlds in which they grow up and their school world which can open up new ways of thinking. However, in the absence of careful respect, that process can also create turmoil which can be more destructive to their sense of who they are. Living in a diverse society can be challenging for minority groups but is equally so for members of a dominant group who may not have had to examine their own biases and conceptual predispositions. Definitions of religions are more often a subtext in educational encounters rather than the explicit text and are therefore masked while, nevertheless, being powerful in their effects.

Readers are invited to become more critically aware of their own understanding of religion and of the often unexamined assumptions about religion in their working environment while recognizing that they will encounter counter discourses in their work with students, parents and colleagues. In fact, for students with cultural backgrounds other than Abrahamic traditions[4] and for the growing population of religious "nones", religion as a category may not make sense or may not be important. Nevertheless, education systems in Canada have their roots in Christianity and debates about the intersection of religion, education and citizenship take a particular shape within which this chapter works.

In the world of education, religion and religious diversity are usually non-issues, people living in respectful harmony or at least tolerance, negotiating differences in ways that do not attract attention. Sometimes debates involving religion can be vigorous and, at times acrimonious. However, the main fault lines are not, in the first place, between religion and non-religion, nor are they driven primarily by an impulse to eliminate religion from society. Canada, along with many other countries, is a signatory to United Nations declarations affirming the rights of people to religious freedom of choice and to anti-discrimination legislation. Rather, the more

[4] Abrahamic traditions include Muslim, Jewish and Christian religions, each of which has its own fascinating diversity.

pressing issue is the distinction between harmful and benign forms of religion or between bad and good forms of religion. Those boundaries are interpreted in different ways in different contexts but in western states the issues of "radicalization", religious "fundamentalism" and the links between religion and political violence provide insight into how the distinction between good and bad forms of religion are constructed.

In the Canadian context, shaped as it is by its Christian ideological past, the definition of religion and its role in the world is an important matter with implications for education and citizenship. There are two broad clusters of definitions which, although they are presented here as opposites, exist in the real world along a nuanced continuum. The first is that religion provides a comprehensive platform for truth and morality, essential to social moral order and a personal sense of meaning and purpose. On the other extreme, religion is seen as a social and epistemological barrier to social and personal development in conflict with modernity. It is important to reiterate that no person lives completely and consistently on one or the other extreme although sometimes in the heat of political debate one might think otherwise. Getting to know people who live religion in a variety of ways is a good way to nuance the picture (and complicate your life!!). This chapter proceeds on the principle that religion is an important mode of human knowing and experience, shaping both the individual and communal lives of students but it has also been an important factor in Canada's social diversity (Beckford 2003).

3.1 Questions for Critical Thought

1. Religion actually does not do anything, just as science or art do not. Rather, people do things, narrating, explaining and justifying what they do in a variety of languages, among them religion. How might religion be deployed in ways that are harmful? How might it provide a language for positive contributions to society and personal development? Where do you find yourself in this discussion?
2. How would you define *fundamentalism*? What about *radicalization*? Consider the idea that fundamentalism and radicalization can have sources other than religion.
3. What is secularism? What are the boundaries between the religious and the secular?

3.2 Education: Beyond the "3 R's"

Next, let's think about education in order to get beyond a "common sense" but limited understanding of education as a transmission of the "3R's", which very few teachers really believe anyway (Palmer 1993). Broadly speaking, education is a

social practice with a number of goals, some existing in a state of creative tension with one another. It can be organized in a wide variety of ways which include different ways of understanding the relative roles of various stakeholders in the educational process. Readers are invited to consider three issues in educational politics.

The first of these is the goal of education, or what education is designed to do both for individuals and/or for the society in which it is practiced. Education in any context lives on a kind of razor's edge between its conservative and its innovative impulses and purposes. On the one hand, education is an initiation process into a tradition and a community. On the other hand, education equips students for successful adaptation to an ever-changing world (Schiffauer et al. 2004).

The second issue, related to the first, is educational practice, in which the reader is invited to consider the distinction between education and indoctrination.[5] Because the tension between its innovative and conservative roles is inherent in education, the distinction between education and indoctrination is not always clear (Richardson 1991, 1996; Richardson and Introvigne 2001; Van Arragon 2015). This is an important point to make in a chapter on religion and education because of the tendency to link religion with indoctrination and the secular with education. While these linkages serve a rhetorical purpose in case law and in political debate, there is less evidence that they serve a useful purpose in describing what actually happens in classrooms across Canada. In addition, they can be a hindrance to productive discussion about the role of religion in education (Beaman and Van Arragon 2015).

The third and related issue involves the question of who "owns" the educational enterprise, often framed as a problem of the distinction between "public" and "private" education. Education lives at the nexus of actors highly invested in the outcomes of an educational process. What students will retain and value, even as they expand their knowledge base, their critical thinking skills and their perspectives is the subject of intense interest of parents, religious communities, education professionals, state regulators and, of course, the students themselves (Bader 2007). In the western world, parents, religious organizations, students, the state and state actors are most often seen as the stakeholders. However, there are important differences in understanding who, among those, is the primary stakeholder. During the nineteenth century the nation-state emerged as the dominant institution in the organization of public space, including public education delivered in public schools. However, counter-discourses are expressed by other stakeholders including religious

[5] "Indoctrination" in its popular usage is associated with "brainwashing" and the practice of depriving learners of access to information and opinions which challenge the achievement of a particular outcome. It is often associated with religion, as in "religious indoctrination" or with the practices of non-liberal state educational strategies designed to produce unthinking adherents. It is often contrasted with education, identified with the free and critical thought delivered by liberal and secular educational jurisdictions. However, there is a body of literature suggesting that these are constructions for the purposes of privileging some forms of education while marginalizing others.

organizations, parents, business interests and professional organizations in a wide array of schooling options. Conflicts over school funding, academic programs and school culture often reveal fault lines over assumptions about what schooling is for and who should, in the end, decide what is best and what is harmful to children and society.

The reader is asked to reconsider the rhetorical binary between "public" and "private" in education for two reasons. The first is that "public" is a malleable term used in various ways but in the context of education, it is most often linked to the state and state actors. The conclusion is that "public schooling" is schooling in which the state and state actors are the primary stakeholders while "private" and "sectarian" schooling is delivered by non-state actors. Religion is usually linked to private interests, along with family and other social activities.

However, linking "public" to the more general idea of the "common good" and the generation of *social capital*[6] opens other conceptual possibilities, one of which is that all social activities and the organizations and institutions in which they occur are both "private" and "public". For example, churches, usually thought of as "private" institutions, make contributions to public welfare or the common good when they engage in refugee resettlement or providing support services for homeless people. States and state actors, usually thought of as serving the public good, intervene in family matters which are usually thought of as "private". So, reconsideration of the "public" and "private" categories can be a useful exercise, opening up possibilities that state and non-state actors live in partnership to deliver the common good by generating social capital.

The second reason is more specific to the delivery of education when considered as a social practice with both private and public implications. The choice to provide education in a homeschool setting, a faith-based school or a school identifying itself as "secular" is made for reasons unique to the families making those decisions and, in that sense, is highly personal or private (Arai 2000; Van Pelt et al. 2007). However, the education provided in each of those settings is a public service in the sense that they each equip students to enter society along with students educated in other situations. In Canada, students can enter universities based on the education they receive in a wide variety of settings and there is no evidence that students are handicapped by their pathway choices. Regulatory frameworks across the country incorporate educational diversity in a variety of ways but all Canadian jurisdictions recognize the rights of parents and students to make choices about the schooling that they feel best serves their needs. The point is that the distinction between "public" and "private" education is less clear and more fluid than it is often represented to be.

[6] Social capital does not have one definition but refers to social relationships and networks based on trust as an important factor in society. For a quick introduction see "Definitions of Social Capital" by *Social Capital Research* <http://www.socialcapitalresearch.com/literature/definition.html>

3.3 Questions for Critical Thought

1. What is education "for" in your opinion? Who should be the primary stakeholder in making key decisions in education? In your educational world, who is the primary stakeholder or where are the key decisions made? What are the implications of that choice?
2. The current use of indoctrination has often had negative connotations and has been associated with religion. What is indoctrination? How is it different from education? What happens if you separate religion and indoctrination? Can indoctrination occur in a non-religious environment?
3. Is there such a thing as "bad education"? What might that look like? What about good education? What makes education good or bad?

4 Current Challenges and Opportunities in the Nexus of Religion, Education and Citizenship: A Mapping Exercise in Three Parts

The intersection of religion and education in modern Western states is shaped by the question of what it means to be an educated citizen and who has the mandate to deliver her. In the Canadian context, the educated citizen is one who, among other things, can distinguish between good and bad forms of religion, the standard for the distinction being "Canadian values" and the skill in applying it being critical thought. The distinction between good and bad forms of religion involves two things. The first concerns religious practices and values themselves and the second is the location of religious practices. For example, some religious modes of thought are considered inherently bad or good (for example, their implications for attitudes about gender) but might be tolerable if they are practiced or expressed in private. Still other forms of religious practice are acceptable in public, an example being religious engagement in interfaith dialogue or participation in food banks. The distinction between what is and what is not acceptable religious practice is further complicated by the jurisdiction in which they occur and which religious groups practice them. In Quebec, for example, religious symbols in public spaces or worn by state employees (or public servants) are a topic of considerable debate although no one seems to be advocating for the banning of such symbols in homes or places of worship. However, the issue of religious symbols has less social urgency in other Canadian jurisdictions. Another example can be found in education. In Ontario, education delivered in Roman Catholic separate schools is fully funded by the government while for other religious groups, the alternatives open to them other than public or Roman Catholic schools are privately funded schools or home schools. However, other provinces have developed mechanisms to fund a greater variety of faith-based schools.

While there are a number of different ways in which jurisdictions have responded to religious diversity, there are two common features or themes. The first is that all

governments express interest in the limits of religious diversity based on an assessment of what practices and modes of thought represent sources of harm to social order (Beaman 2008). The second is that education is universally seen as one of the key practices to deliver citizens who embrace common civic values and have the skills to identify and resist harmful modes of thought and practices. There are a number of conundrums inherent in the intersection of religion, education and citizenship with educators being on the front line of managing the resulting creative tensions in their schools and classrooms.

You are asked to consider the nexus of religion, education and citizenship from three perspectives. They are the distinction between public and private educational practices, the relationship between religion and science and the role of religion and education in the delivery of citizenship in a modern society. The purpose of the following paragraphs is to stimulate reconsideration of your assumptions about each of these perspectives.

In some contexts, religion is seen as a private matter, tangential to and even hostile to education. In contexts in which modernity and religion are opposed, religion and education are seen as existing in two parallel worlds. This binary crosses religious lines so that some religious groups agree that religion and education exist in two parallel worlds divided by "religious – secular" and "private – public" boundaries. In contexts where religion is seen as important in the private lives of students and parents, schools may respond by creating extra-curricular space for prayer and other religious activities. Academic programs may include references to religious groups and their activities as part of the Canadian multicultural mosaic or in courses such as World Religions. The point is that the academic program includes religion, not so much to achieve an intimate knowledge of religion but rather to enhance attitudes of tolerance of religious diversity. In this context, religion may or may not be considered important in the formation of a fully realized human being but may be seen as an important facet of social life which students must learn to navigate in order to achieve harmonious social diversity protected by a reasonable level of social tolerance.

However, where it provides a comprehensive framework fundamental to the fully developed life, religion occupies a central role in the educational process. Education is a form of religious practice designed to strengthen social bonds and an imaginary which rejects the religious-secular boundaries. Religion provides an apex of a conceptual hierarchy (Rappaport 1999), the foundation for a "chain of memory" (Hervieu-Léger 2000), a framework for "wisdom" (Blomberg 2007) or a platform to engage the world (Zine 2008). Faith-based schools and many home schooling movements are expressions of religion as a more comprehensive category which tends to be viewed with suspicion in Western societies (Sullivan 2005).[7]

[7] Winnifred Sullivan describes "protestantism" in this secularized sense, saying, "Religion –'true' religion some would say on this modern protestant reading, came to be understood as being private, voluntary, individual, textual and believed". In contrast, 'public, coercive, communal, oral

The different ways of understanding religion and its role in education are expressed in a wide variety of forms and contexts, mostly in harmonious coexistence. However, there are important differences among them, sometimes expressed in vigorous public debates. One of these is over the roles of science and religion in education. One way of thinking about science and religion is that they exist in parallel universes, science being a source of public discourse while religion is restricted to private areas of social and personal life. One conclusion is that the fully realized citizen is one whose public discourse is, in the first place, informed by science or scientific reasoning (Mackay 1969; Spinner-Halev 2000). Religion is often associated with non-rational or even irrational emotion while science, in contrast, is often associated rational and critical thought. Science is considered secular and modern while religion is considered, well, religious and traditional.

However, there are a number of things to consider here. The first is that a survey of the history of science reveals an intimate link between science and religion and that science, while it proceeds on the basis of "scientific method", is triggered as much by intuition, prejudice and self-interest in particular political contexts as it is by a commitment to a form of truth based on observable data. In the same way, a survey of religions reveals that they have their own rational systems of thought which satisfy particular human needs and have done so throughout history. The idea that Western societies, leading with scientific rationality, have achieved the pinnacle of human achievement, is a modern conceit with disturbing implications. Conversely, forms of religion which deny scientific evidence in favour of particular readings of religious texts about, for example, the age of the earth, have contributed to misunderstanding between science and religion (Numbers 1992).[8]

Consideration of the relationship between science and religion becomes more complicated by the association between science and modernity narrated in terms of a "secularization thesis" which assumed that religion would disappear as societies "modernized". At the same time, a secularization narrative adopted by religious communities can result in a kind of defensiveness which leads to other conclusions about the evils of modernity and the threat represented by modern science. A simplistic secularization narrative has contributed to misunderstanding of both religion and modernity, contributing to suspicion of science and marginalization of religious voices in public discourse, including education.

There are a number of flaws in a secularization narrative and, in fact, academic literature on secularization has become much more nuanced since the mid-twentieth

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and enacted religion … was seen to be 'false' … iconically represented historically in the United States, for the most part by the Roman Catholic Church (and by Islam today) was and perhaps still is, the religion of most of the world" (2005, p.8).

[8] The 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial in Tennessee is an iconic example of a conflict which probably did not need to happen. "The Creationists" by R.L. Numbers traces the hardening ideological binary between religion and science, providing evidence that creationism, in an ideological sense, is contested within religious communities. Creationism in the twenty-first century continues to be associated with a kind of "culture war" in which science has become a battleground obscuring more nuanced and productive engagement.

century (Asad 2003; Beckford 2003; Beyer 2006; Cavanaugh 2009; Hurd 2008; Martin 2005; Nisbet 1976). One flaw is that a secularization thesis assumes that "modernity" was one linear process modelled on Western liberal social developments. However, "modernity", like so many terms, is malleable meaning different things in different contexts and has been subjected to critical scrutiny by feminist and non-Western scholars who point to the fact that religion, rather than disappearing, has continued to flourish in modern societies.

Rather than placing science and religion in opposition, readers are asked to consider the idea that both religion and science are profoundly human modes of thought addressing different and complementary ways of knowing the world. Seen this way, education can provide a context which does not have to exclude either religion or science but rather, can draw on both to address the needs of students to know the world and themselves as actors in the world.[9]

This leads to the third perspective on the nexus of religion, education and citizenship in Canada which is the role of education in delivering graduates committed to "Canadian values". Like many other terms in discussions about religion, education and citizenship, "Canadian values" is variously defined, but intended to create a comprehensive imagination leading to harmonious social diversity in which religion plays an ambiguous role. For some, religion is seen as a source of sectarian division best restricted to private life with education serving to teach students how to adopt Canadian values which transcend religious particularities. However, there are citizens for whom Canada and Canadian values are not the highest point of their values hierarchy and loyalty. As a result, their citizenship loyalties are often called into question, an assessment which may have little to do with their actual behaviour and more to do with their ways of engaging public discourse. For some, engagement includes challenging aspects of the educational and social programs within public schools while for others it has meant opting out of a public education process considered by most Canadians to be essential to the development of fully realized citizenship. In either case, dissenting voices are often associated with unacceptable modes of thought and questionable values relating to, among other things, gender equality and biological diversity and origins.

Much of the conflict is over the intersecting roles of the state, religious communities, parents and professional organizations in delivering citizenship. The question here is about which of the stakeholders is the primary one and which ones play various supportive roles in the educational process designed to achieve the educated graduate. Very few of these constructions view the others as having no constructive role but there can be intense disagreement about their relative importance in delivering education (Bader 2007; Glenn 2000, 2011).

[9] Readers could consult a number of sources starting with *Science and Religion: Reconcilable Differences* <http://undsci.berkeley.edu/article/science_religion>; *Science and Religion* by Albert Einstein <http://www.westminster.edu/staff/nak/courses/Einstein%20Sci%20%26%20Rel.pdf>; *What is the Relation between Science and Religion*? by William Lane Craig <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/what-is-the-relation-between-science-and-religion>. Each article has further references. These are included in Sect. 7 to give the reader a sense of the diversity of the debates and not because they reflect the opinion of the author.

The relationship between education, religion and citizenship is uneasy because education, at its best, opens up new ways of seeing, helps students find their own intellectual and moral voices and gives them the skills to critically assess information. Freedom to think and choose is inherently disruptive so education lives on a kind of razor's edge between its conservative and its innovative functions. Its conservative function is to inculcate students into an existing belief and value system, for example, Canadian values (Ontario Ministry of Education 2008) or an Islamic "straight path" (Zine 2008). In contrast, the innovative function of education is to have students become adept at applying existing values to new developments. This is obvious for immigrants whose sense of social organization, values and behaviours are subjected to critical scrutiny by the next generation who must figure out how to live in their new country. However, it is equally true for those who are more established, seeing their children embrace new technologies and new social conventions. Education lives in a dynamic liminal space, having disruptive potential to any value system associated with socialization and is one of the reasons that education is the topic of intense social discourse and contestation. The regulatory framework adopted by provinces, school districts and schools include commitments to what forms of religion are identified as an important part of achieving educational outcomes and which ones are seen as harmful.

4.1 Questions for Critical Thought

1. What is your answer to the conundrums inherent in the nexus of religion, education and citizenship? Where do you see those tensions at play in your education and professional practice?
2. Why do people choose a particular educational pathway for their children? Why might people choose a state school over a private option? Why might they choose a privately funded option? How does religion figure into decisions about educational pathways?

5 Religion, Education and Citizenship in Canada

Having outlined the conceptual issues in the intersection of religion, education and citizenship, we now turn our attention to the ways in which the issues of religion, education and citizenship are problematized and resolved in Canada.[10]

Religion is present in education systems in many ways of which three are the focus of this chapter. First, religion can be seen as a comprehensive category driving

[10] For a more comprehensive and detailed analysis of this topic, see Van Arragon, L. (2015) and Beaman, L. and Van Arragon, L. (2015).

the entire ethos of an educational endeavour. These include faith-based or faith schools but also the homeschool movement much of which is religiously inspired. In such settings, religion is more or less evident in all areas of school social and academic life and it is also evident in religious instruction designed to inculcate religious information, and encourage commitment to the tradition in which the school finds itself. People participating in these endeavours insist that they are not anti-social and that they are good citizens who embody Canadian values, even though they are choosing an alternative path to educated citizenship.

Second, religion can be seen as a discrete area of scholarly investigation, much like other academic disciplines expressed in the phrases "education about religion" or "religion education". As such the study of religion must work within the usual rules of scholarly work involving the stance of academic detachment and awareness of one's own biases with investigation disciplined by critical thinking and other academic skills. This is not unique to the study of religion and, in that sense, education about religion has a legitimate place in the academic program along with other social sciences and humanities. Aside from being a discrete academic subject, consideration of religion can also be included as a factor in analyzing human motivation, historical events, varieties of human knowing and experience, social diversity and alternative models for thinking about biological origins and diversity.

Third, religion is a fact of social life in a school, represented by the religious diversity among students and their families. Schools develop strategies for addressing religious diversity in a variety of ways, including more or less formally organized activities to acknowledge and even celebrate religious practices important to the student population. In addition, reflecting the constitutional protections of freedom of religion school boards across Canada have adopted anti-bullying, discrimination and inclusion policies which identify religion as an identity category to create safe space for students.

In summary, religion can be seen as an identity category which must be protected, a mode of human knowing and/or a subject of scholarly investigation. Professional educators have choices about the role of religion in their practice but their practice occurs within a regulatory framework that encourages some ways of seeing religion while discouraging others.

5.1 Regulatory Frameworks for Education in Canada

Education in Canada is regulated within a framework outlined in the *Constitution Acts of 1867* and *1982*. Canada's system of government divides powers between the federal and provincial governments and *Section 93* of the *Constitution Act of 1867* designates education as a matter of provincial jurisdiction. In addition, it creates a framework for "separate schools" designed to protect minorities from the majority. In the 1860's the identified minorities in Quebec were English, Protestant and First Nations while the majority was French and Roman Catholic, in contrast with Ontario where the minorities were Roman Catholic, French and First Nations and

the majority was English and Protestant. Educational spaces for minorities in Quebec and Ontario were created in "separate" and "residential schools" as strategies to manage a political impasse or to assimilate a minority into a majority culture. Non-identified minorities were enrolled in common (later "public") schools. In addition, non-identified minorities have used the services of "private" schools from before Confederation. As other provinces joined the Canadian federation, they interpreted *Section 93* in their own ways, regulating the role of religion in education in ways that reflected the social and political dynamics of the day. Those initial resolutions to the challenges of religious diversity in education have continued to evolve reflecting changing demographics and trends in educational theory and practice in the context of dynamic political realities.

The *Constitution Act of 1982* includes a number of sections relevant to how religion intersects with education. *Sections 2* and *15* identify the protection of religious freedom and equality which have been used in attempts by various religious minorities to advance their interests in education. *Section 1* is relevant, giving governments the power to override *Sections 2* and *15* claims.

In addition, Canada adopted a Bill of Rights in 1960 which includes protection of religious freedom (among other rights) and is a signatory to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The provinces have adopted human rights codes modelled on the Canadian and United Nations declarations.

In summary, religion has been identified as a category deserving protection at various levels of government in Canada, placing Canadian governments in company with other liberal Christian jurisdictions around the world. In fact, religious freedom has become an important theme in foreign policies and a feature distinguishing liberal from non-liberal states. However, just what that means is contested and there is a body of critical literature suggesting that religious freedom is less about religion and freedom and more about the achievement of domestic and foreign policy objectives (Bosco 2014; Hurd 2008).

In Canada, provinces have interpreted the two constitution acts and protection of religious freedom in their own ways so that the Canadian education scene is characterized by a wide variety of regulatory systems and funding mechanisms reflected in provincial education acts within which education is delivered. There are similar legal and regulatory structures which include ministries of education, education acts and regulations administered by regional school boards with educational services delivered by professional teachers.

Ministries of education consistently express a commitment to diversity and protection from discrimination and bullying but beyond that, provinces have made a range of choices in the management of religious diversity in the *social life* of schools and the management of religious diversity in the *academic programs*. These are discrete areas with their own regulatory frameworks, legal and social histories but they also intersect in important ways to produce a particular outcome or graduate profile. In addition, each area is contested by a variety of groups promoting their interests in the dynamic regulatory world of education.

5.2 *Religion in the Social Life of Schools*

There are two aspects to the issue of religious diversity in the social life of education systems across Canada. The first is that all provinces and territories express respect for the religious diversity of students and families served in their school systems, expressed by the concept of "inclusivity". The second is that there are conflict zones over the role of religion and the limits to the expression of religious diversity in schools. These include responses to gender diversity with potential friction between guidelines for protection of gender diversity issued by ministries and departments of education and religious groups. Other points of friction can include choices of literature, the distribution of religious literature, prayer space in schools and religious symbols. Table 1 below gives a snapshot of ways in which Canadian jurisdictions are managing religious diversity in the social life of schools.

The focus on inclusivity as a concept for embracing religious diversity can be experienced as suppression of diversity in disputes over issues often not directly related to religion. Dissident voices in debates over gender diversity and bullying often arise from religious groups both within and outside public schools who have divergent ways of seeing human development and human interactions. Teachers need to be aware of these debates and their own positionality so that they can treat their students, parents, colleagues in other school systems with respect and listening, sometimes with "agonistic respect" (Connolly 2002, 2005) on the basis of "deep equality" (Beaman 2014, 2017) which includes a willingness to learn and adapt.

There are any number of ways in which space for religion in the social life of public schools is contested. They can include clothing as in the case of a student in

Table 1 Religion and social life in schools

British Columbia has a publication titled "Diversity in BC Schools: A framework" https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/diversity/diversity_framework.pdf. British Columbia works with the theme titled "Safe, Caring and Orderly Schools" with access to resources https://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco/resources.htm and a guidebook http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/sco/guide/scoguide.pdf.
The Alberta School Board Association has issued a statement on "Welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environments" http://www.asba.ab.ca/services/resources/policy-advice/welcoming-caring-respectful-and-safe-learning-and-working-environments/
Manitoba has an extensive section on religious diversity in schools, drawing on the work of Lori Beaman and the Religion and Diversity Project. Publication "Responding to Religious Diversity in Manitoba's Schools" http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/religious_diversity/full_doc.pdf
The Government of Ontario has a great deal of literature on the accommodation of religious diversity in its school system ranging from publications by the Ministry of Education http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/equity.pdf, www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/inclusiveguide.pdf, the Ontario Education Services Corporation equity.oesc-seo.org/Download.aspx?rid=9966 and by regional school boards tldsb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2013/.../BD-2038-Religious-Accomodation-Procedure.pdf and www.peelschools.org/aboutus/.../FINALReligiousAccommodationCOMS8.pdf

Nova Scotia insisting that he has the right to wear a T-shirt with a "pro-Jesus message" (Boesveld 2012) and other religious symbols in public spaces as in Quebec (Globe and Mail 2010). It can also include debates over other religiously oriented activities in schools during non-instructional times including prayer space for Muslim students, sometimes from groups who contest the idea in principle but also from other religious groups who claim that Muslims are being given preferential treatment (Browne 2015; CBC News 2011).

Many of the debates over the space for religion in public schools occur in the language of "reasonable accommodation" and "tolerance" in "secular" spaces. However, both reasonable accommodation and tolerance have been critically examined by Wendy Brown (2006) and Lori Beaman (2014), the key issue being the one of power. Who decides what can and cannot be "reasonably accommodated" is a matter of great interest for religious minorities who experience their minority status in being granted space which can as easily be withdrawn. In addition, faith-based schools experience their own debates over the limits of diversity, including issues of gender, dress and theology. There is a great deal of variety in the admissions policies and practices of faith-based schools, many of which accept students with religious traditions other than the one on which the school is based. One example is the Roman Catholic separate school system in Ontario which serves students from many different religions but the same thing can be observed in privately funded schools. The point is that all schools have their own ways of accommodating religious diversity and the boundaries of accommodation provides rich opportunity for energetic debate.

5.3 Questions for Critical Thought

1. How should religious diversity be accommodated in the social life of schools?
2. Who should provide the leading voice in determining the boundaries of religious accommodation?
3. What should be the ultimate criteria is decisions about limits to diversity?

5.4 Religion in Academic Program Design and Content

The focus of this section is the diversity of approaches in how religion is incorporated into academic programs. The specific references are just illustrative since course outlines and program requirements are regularly (more or less) updated, making any specific information time sensitive. Generally, one gains access to the information through ministries and departments of education finding links to academic programs and courses. Sometimes more specific information is available on

school board and school websites, sometimes but not always facilitated through the use of a "search" function. The most productive search words are "religion" and "world religions" on ministry of education websites.

All ministries of education express commitments to social diversity and have extensive documents regarding protection of students from discrimination and bullying arising from their being members of religious minorities. However, the issue of the role of religion in academic programs is more complicated for a variety of reasons. First, provincial guidelines allow varying degrees of interpretive latitude for school boards and individual schools. Second, schools and school boards have different ways in which they monitor teacher interpretation of and compliance with guidelines and policy documents (Gravel 2015). Third, there is little consistency in web design and access of information regarding the academic programs offered in provinces, school boards and schools. Some schools have detailed information about programs and courses on their websites while on others academic programs are less accessible. Further, there is no clear connection between the information available on websites and the quality of program and program delivery in schools. However, there is considerable evidence that education in Canada is both centralized in provincial and territorial governments (all of which have a ministry or department of education) and increasingly decentralized the closer one gets to the actual classroom. Tables 2 and 3 give a snapshot of the ways in which Canadian jurisdictions are managing religious diversity in academic programs.

There are a number of issues that provide an entry point into the ways religion in academic programs is contested, two of which are examined here. The first is over the role of religion in academics and the second is over the role of "opting out" as a strategy deployed by parents to address their discomfort with elements in the academic program. The role of religion in public schools has always been controversial and the current resolution is to identify public schools as "secular", meaning that engaging in religious practices and religious instruction should be kept out of public school classrooms. However, the line between "secular instruction" and "religious practice" is not always clear, illustrated by the National post describing a reaction to an Aboriginal cleansing ceremony in a school in British Columbia (Humphries 2016). The concern expressed by one parent was that the cleansing ceremony was a spiritual practice and therefore violated provincial legislation protecting the secular nature of public education. The school board in this case has argued that the smudging ceremony is a cultural practice with educational and social value by introducing students to Aboriginal cultural practices in a respectful context.

The distinction between religion and culture is not fixed and clear, nor is the identification of harm to children. So, what is a parent to do when her child is in a classroom where activities are taking place which are offensive in some way? One way is to exercise the right to "opt out", either out of specific programs and lessons or out of a school system entirely and to join another school option or to engage in home schooling.

Table 2 Religious diversity in Canadian Academic Programs

Manitoba – note the links to Lori Beaman's work and to the RDP, and to the global discussions about religious diversity and interfaith interactions Section Seven Interfaith Education Resources http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/docs/support/religious_diversity/section7.pdf
Quebec has the most comprehensive set of documents relating to religion, tracing the genealogy of the current Ethics and Religious Culture Program (ERC) http://www.education.gouv.qc.ca/en/search-engine/search-the-site/?94404E2F=8487491C81A0FF3A5E7D78210EA972E0&tx_solr%5Bq%5D=&submit-search=Search&id=30735&L=1
Newfoundland has an extensive K – 12 program of "Religious Education" http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/k12/curriculum/POS/Program_of_Studies_2016-2017.pdf which "enables and encourages students to grow religiously, spiritually and morally". It identifies religion as an important aspect of social and moral development and as an important factor in Newfoundland history.
Northwest Territories draws selectively on Alberta and Saskatchewan provincial curricula for some of its academic program but has developed its own curricula in Aboriginal Languages, French, Health Studies, Northern Studies, Social Studies (K – 9). https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/en/services/k-12-education-and-curriculum
In parts of the program developed in and for the Northwest Territories, there is widespread reference to spirituality as an integral element in aboriginal identities and perspectives. An example is Dene Kede under the Aboriginal Languages file https://www.ece.gov.nt.ca/sites/www.ece.gov.nt.ca/files/resources/dene_kede_grade-9_curriculum.pdf
The Yukon Department of Education website under the "curriculum" file directs people to the British Columbia website for information on "what your child learns in school". http://www.education.gov.yk.ca/curriculum.html#Yukons_current_curriculum
However, there is a parallel file titled "First Nations education" referring extensively on aboriginal spirituality. http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/unit.html. It would be difficult and inappropriate to isolate "spirituality" from other modes of human experience, including language, social relationships, relationship to the land, law and history. Doing so would impose a particularly European protestant framework of religion on a very different way of seeing spirituality. This file includes a "Handbook of Yukon First Nations Education Resources for Public Schools (2013/2014) http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/firstnations/pdf/13-14/handbook_13_14.pdf with, among other things, a review of residential schools with references to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Table 3 Statistical data on education in Canada

For information about student numbers in the context of a discussion about academic outcomes in private and public schools see "Academic Outcomes of Public and Private High School Students: What Lies Behind the Differences?" by Marc Frenette and Ping Ching Winnie Chan. It includes comparative work with other countries, a literature review, research methodology and data. http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2015367-eng.htm).
Statistics about education funding are available from a number of sources. For a 2015 Fraser Institute study see "Enrolments and Education Spending in Public Schools in Canada" by Clemens, Van Pelt and Emes (https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/enrolments-and-education-spending-in-public-schools-in-canada.pdf). For a Statistics Canada report see (http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/81-595-m/2010083/c-g/c-g008-eng.htm).

Opting out has long been protected in education acts across the country as a way of protecting minorities from the majority and people exercise their right to do so for a wide variety of reasons.[11] However, opting out has been and continues to be controversial, one reason being that opting out creates the potential for social pressure and anxiety for those exercising that option.[12] In addition, the decision to opt out of a state funded system in favour of a privately funded school or home schooling can have significant financial implications. However, arguments against opting out include the idea that parents may not have all the information with which to make good decisions and may not have a sufficiently broad perspective resulting in harm to their children by depriving them of valuable exposure to a variety of experiences.

In Canada the state has the power to limit parental rights of opting out as indicated in a 2012 Supreme Court ruling in a case testing the rights of parents to opt out of Quebec's Religion and Education Culture course (ERC) (McGarry 2012).

5.5 Questions for Critical Thought

1. While the link has often been made between religion and opting out, what other reasons might people have for opting out of particular classroom activities? You might think in terms of online and visual information which parents consider developmentally inappropriate, physical limitations and learning challenges as a way of getting started.
2. Should the right to opt out be protected and, if so, under what circumstances?
3. What are the implications of removing the right to opt out or of constructing barriers that make opting out a theoretical possibility but a practical impossibility?

[11] Cardus, a Christian research think tank, has done extensive research on issues relating to choice in education. It does not use the term "opting out" but their research sheds light on why people choose educational alternatives and on learning outcomes in an array of educational environments (https://www.cardus.ca/research/education/). See also Arai, B. (2000).

[12] "Opting out" as a way of dealing with offensive classroom practices was rejected by courts in *Zylberberg (1988)* and *Elgin County (1990)* in decisions which declared school prayers and religious instruction in Ontario public schools to be a violation of students *ss 2* and *15* rights and a source of social and psychological harm. However, opting out has continued to be protected in Ontario and in other provinces. The right to opt out has been a theme in challenges to Quebec's implementation of the ERC.

6 Conclusions

The dynamic nexus of religion and education is not unique to Canada or to the twenty-first Century. There are a number of reasons for the intense interest becomes especially animated when issues of citizenship become part of the debates in diverse societies trying to resolve the conundrums inherent in finding the balances between individual freedoms and social cohesion. Teachers live these conundrums and this chapter respects the challenges inherent in their professional lives. At the same time, it encourages teachers to practice critical attentiveness to their own biases and those inherent in the jurisdictions in which they work, re-examining rhetorical binaries which create a world of multiple solitudes. It does so in two ways. First, it examines the binaries themselves and second, it invites teachers to become aware of the many ways the role of religion in education can be conceptualized and structured. By doing so, it engages teachers in a conversation which will benefit their students and parents in a diverse, complicated and exciting society.

7 Further Reading

This section includes resources which expand some of the themes of the chapter. They nuance and complicate the world of education by offering different perspectives on the intersection of religion and education. The chapter invites readers to reconsider the categories and distinctions which are often presented as commonsense in a modern, secular and diverse society. The authors of the resources included here take readers into more specific issues in the world of religion and education. The resources also provide evidence of the rich variety in the world of religion and education.

Asad, T. et al. (2009). *Is critique secular? Blasphemy, injury and free speech*. Berkeley: The Townsend Center for the Humanities, University of California.

This is a volume with contributions by four scholars who examine the Danish cartoon debates from a variety of perspectives. It questions the link between secular and critical thought, suggesting ways in which "secular" thought is embedded in particular worldviews with its own limitations.

Bolt, J. (1993). *The Christian story and the Christian school*. Grand Rapids: Christian Schools International. Bolt develops a philosophy of Christian education based on a narrative approach, arguing that Christian schools are carriers of a story into which students are drawn, giving them a memory, a vision and, in this way, a mission. The book is a contribution to wider conversations about the role of education in modern societies, raising questions about what gives education its meaning and purpose.

Chamberlin, J. E. (2003). *If this is your land, where are your stories? Reimagining home and sacred space.* Cleveland: Pilgrim Press.

Story has a way of transcending the categories of the religious and secular. Chamberlin comes at story from a First Nations perspective while Bolt does so from a Christian tradition. The reader is invited to take seriously the idea that education and story-telling from multiple perspectives enrich the delivery of education in a diverse society.

Puett, T. (2014). *The political discourse of religious pluralism: World religions textbooks, liberalism and civic identities*. (Doctoral dissertation). Waterloo: University of Waterloo.

Puett engages the perspectives embedded in world religions textbooks, allowing readers to see more clearly ways in which texts tell a story from a particular point of view for a particular purpose.

Zine, J. (2007). Safe havens or 'religious ghettos'? Narratives of Islamic schooling in Canada. *Race, Ethnicity and Education, 10*(1), 71–92.

Zine looks at the role of Islamic schooling in providing a safe platform from which minority students can navigate the space between their traditions and the social world to which they have moved.

8 Researcher Background and Connection to the Topic

Leo Van Arragon was a professional educator, working as a teacher, school principal and educational consultant in privately funded Christian schools organized under the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools,[13] Christian Schools Canada[14] and Christian Schools International[15] from 1973 to 2010. He also worked in curriculum, leadership and school development and, occasionally in political advocacy during that period. He earned an undergraduate degree in psychology and philosophy at Trinity Christian College in Palos Heights, Illinois (1973) and a Master's degree in education (Social Studies and History) from Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan (1996), both Christian liberal arts colleges and a PhD through the Religious Studies Department at the University of Ottawa (2015). His doctoral research area was the regulation of religion in Ontario public education.

[13] http://www.oacs.org/

[14] http://christianschoolscanada.com/

[15] http://www.csionline.org/home

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