



## Diverse worldviews education and social inclusion: a comparison between Finnish and Australian approaches to build intercultural and interreligious understanding

Tuuli Lipiäinen, Anna Halafoff, Fethi Mansouri & Gary Bouma

To cite this article: Tuuli Lipiäinen, Anna Halafoff, Fethi Mansouri & Gary Bouma (2020): Diverse worldviews education and social inclusion: a comparison between Finnish and Australian approaches to build intercultural and interreligious understanding, British Journal of Religious Education, DOI: [10.1080/01416200.2020.1737918](https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2020.1737918)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2020.1737918>



Published online: 05 Mar 2020.



[Submit your article to this journal](#) 



[View related articles](#) 



[View Crossmark data](#) 



# Diverse worldviews education and social inclusion: a comparison between Finnish and Australian approaches to build intercultural and interreligious understanding

Tuuli Lipiäinen <sup>a</sup>, Anna Halafoff <sup>b</sup>, Fethi Mansouri <sup>c</sup> and Gary Bouma <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Department of Education, University of Helsinki, Helsinki, Finland; <sup>b</sup>Department of Sociology, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia; <sup>c</sup>Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University, Melbourne, Australia; <sup>d</sup>Department of Sociology, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia

## ABSTRACT

Ongoing global issues relating to the decline of the popularity of institutional religions, the rise of numbers of non-religious persons, and new models of spirituality in superdiverse societies have resulted in the need to reconceptualise religious diversity as worldviews diversity, and to critically examine increasing calls for the provision of worldviews education in schools. This paper first examines the key concepts of superdiversity and religious complexity in contemporary societies. It then presents an overview of scholarship pertaining to the concepts of worldviews and worldviews education. It next provides case studies of worldview/s education in Finland and Australia, drawing on data of recently completed qualitative and quantitative studies in the two countries. Finally, it concludes with a comparative analysis of the two contexts, and recommendations pertaining to worldviews education as a means of enhancing cross-cultural literacy, positive attitudes to religious diversity and thereby social inclusion.

## KEYWORDS

worldviews; worldviews education; superdiversity; social inclusion

## Introduction

Increased human mobility, intensifying globalisation processes, significant advances in transportation and information and communication technologies (ICTs) are all engendering new and more complex forms of diversity in many societies across the globe (Bouma and Halafoff 2017; Mansouri 2017). Vertovec (2007) refers to this as superdiversity which 'is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade' (Vertovec 2007, 1024). This superdiversity which also characterises the internal diversification within immigrant communities themselves has also coincided with new mappings of the religious landscape against a historical backdrop of assumed secularity, which in reality has not affected all societies in the same manner, nor with the same intensity (Asad 2004; Beaumont, Eder, and Mendieta 2018; Cloke and Beaumont 2012). The proportion of 'nones', those who identify as having 'no religion' is increasing across many countries, and particularly in Western societies. At the same time, there is a strong interest in different forms of spirituality, and a corresponding rise in people identifying as being 'spiritual but not religious'. Religion, however, is not disappearing, as many people remain either strongly or nominally religious, or religious *and* spiritual (Furseth 2018; Singleton et al. 2019; Woodhead 2017). The complexity of this new religious landscape presents

challenges to the much-hyped secularisation thesis (Casanova 2009), which predicted a greater individualisation and privatisation of religious beliefs; the differentiation and separation of religion and politics, and the overall decline of religiosity in the twentieth century onward. Bouma (2017) argues that what has actually declined in Western societies is ‘packaged religions’ (129, 131), or what Woodhead (2012) calls ‘old style religion’, where people would adhere to one faith, attend regular worship services and follow the same rules. As Furseth (2018) argues, the secularisation thesis does not adequately explain the multiple ongoing and at times intersecting trends relating to religion, non-religion, and spirituality in contemporary society. Instead, Furseth suggests religious complexity as a more accurate descriptor of these phenomena. Following Beckford (2012), Beaumont and colleagues refer to this new social and cultural reality as post-secularity where new forms of spiritual and (non)religious identities are emerging in the public sphere (Beaumont, Eder, and Mendieta 2018; Cloke and Beaumont 2012).

Issues of social cohesion and preventing violent extremism, especially among young people, led the Council of Europe (2008), scholars and other intergovernmental and state agencies to focus more on educational strategies to respond to increasing religious and worldviews diversity in schools (Halafoff 2015; Jackson 2015). Calls by educators for more programmes on religious literacy and worldviews education, including religious, non-religious and spiritual dimensions, have stressed that these programs must be cognisant of the lived and complex superdiverse realities of young people, and for this to be reflected not only in policy and curricula but also in teacher education (Halafoff 2015; Halafoff, Lam, and Bouma 2019a; Halafoff et al. 2019b; Jackson 2014, 2015; Singleton et al. 2019).

In the context of this intensifying state of superdiversity, and the emerging complexity pertaining to religion in the twenty-first century this paper, therefore, explores worldviews and examines the important role of worldviews education in two national contexts. It specifically explores the way worldviews diversity is approached in Finnish and Australian education systems. The paper discusses whether these two different approaches to diverse worldview/s<sup>1</sup> education can inform one another, and possibly other societies’ educational policies and curricula.

In terms of methods, the paper engages critically with relevant scholarship pertaining to definitions of worldviews and worldviews education. It then provides two case studies of worldviews education in Finland and Australia, drawing on data of recently completed qualitative and quantitative studies in these countries. Finally, it concludes with a comparative analysis of this material and with some recommendations for worldviews education in Australia and Finland, and in other societies.

## Definitions of worldviews

The origin of the term worldview can be traced to the German word *die Weltanschauung*. While there is no single agreed definition of the word, there is some agreement as to what a worldview entails among existing scholarship. First, every human being has a worldview (Aerts et al. 1994; CoRE 2018; Miedema 2014; Naugle 2002; Valk 2009; van der Kooij, de Ruyter, and Midema 2013; Vroom 2006). Second, a worldview can be a secular or religious (or something in-between) view, vision or a set of presumptions about life (CoRE 2018; Miedema 2017; Naugle 2002; Valk 2017a; Vroom 2006). Third, a worldview is linked to the culture where an individual is living (Aerts et al. 1994; Vroom 2006). Fourth, a worldview includes values and norms, and therefore worldviews are never neutral (Vroom 2013).

Scholars and educators sometimes divide worldviews into *Organised worldviews* and *Personal worldviews* (van der Kooij, de Ruyter, and Midema 2013; Jackson 2014) or put differently, *Institutional worldviews* and *Private worldviews* (CoRE 2018). Organised/institutional worldviews are views of life shared by a group of people, which contain certain sources, traditions, rituals, and ideals, that have developed over time. They include values and explanations about life’s essential questions. All religions can be classified as organised/institutional worldviews, and consequently, as a subclass of worldviews. Yet worldviews are not necessarily religious, as is the case with Humanism and Atheism for example (Vroom 2006). A personal/private worldview can be related to some organised

worldview or it can be a separate or a modified version of one or many. A personal/private worldview is seen to be more complex than an organised/institutional worldview because individuals can define them themselves (Valk 2017b; van der Kooij, de Ruyter, and Midema 2013.) A personal/private worldview can thereby include a hybrid variety of non-religious, religious or spiritual elements (Ammerman 2014; Valk 2010; Woodhead 2017). Many scholars have emphasised the complex, dynamic, lived aspects of personal, lived religion and worldviews (Ammerman 2014; Hannam 2018; McGuire 2008).

Further complexity is an awareness that packaged/old style organised/institutional religion and non-religion, only makes up a portion of the worldviews landscape. New style religion, spirituality and non-religion are more personal, individualised, fluid, and beyond institutional control (Bouma 2017; Woodhead 2012). The personal is also not always any longer so private. What results at times is thereby less of a sharp divide between the organised/institutional and the personal/private worldviews, and also a significant overlap between the non-religious, religious and spiritual within them (CoRE 2018; Woodhead 2012).

These kinds of complex, albeit shallow, worldviews have been observed especially among young people (Åhs, Poulter, and Kallioniemi 2019b; Beyer 2013; Halafoff and Gobey 2018; Helve 2015; Jackson 2017; Kuusisto and Kallioniemi 2014, 2017; Singleton et al. 2019). The nature of young people's worldviews has been described as 'mosaic' (Kuusisto and Kallioniemi 2017, 97) or 'hybrid' (Halafoff and Gobey 2018, 273–275), with both terms referring to increased complexity and fluidity. Even though religious socialisation certainly exists, and parents do significantly affect the worldviews of their children, young people often question and redefine their own relationship to religion (Halafoff and Gobey 2018). In addition, peers, schools, social communities and media (Singleton et al. 2019) including social media (Helve 2015) are playing a significant role in forming young people's worldviews. Young people's worldviews are thereby described as being dynamic, non-linear (Helve 2015) and at times fragile (Aerts et al. 1994). They are also changeable and often develop with significant 'reflexive pauses' (Beyer 2013; Halafoff and Gobey 2018).

## Worldviews education

In this study, we use term Worldviews education instead of Religious Education to include also education about non-religious worldviews. Worldviews education typically includes three approaches; the development of pupil's worldviews, knowledge about different worldviews, and third, an emphasis on acceptance, respect and care towards each *other*, which is important in superdiverse societies. Experts state that worldviews education in public schools can play a part in enabling the maturation of pupils' personal worldviews, and particularly in developing an understanding towards others' worldviews. In this way, it can contribute to greater awareness of the *self* and *others* (Gardner, Soules, and Valk 2017.) However, understanding alone does not necessarily and automatically equate with respect or care; in fact, knowledge can at times increase disrespect and hate (Hannam and Biesta 2019), and therefore education that fosters respect and care towards each other is important. In this way, diverse worldviews education can contribute to developing individuals' attitudes and understanding the worldviews of others, in order to learn to live together in harmony with diversity (Hannam 2018; UNESCO 2013, 2018).

In order to achieve these goals of worldviews education, Robert Jackson (2017) argues that schools need to be neutral, open-minded and accept different personal and institutional worldviews equally, and strive for objectivity when providing worldviews education. Such an approach provides a balanced and inclusive approach to learning *about* diverse worldviews, which means that worldviews education should not be based on either faith or confessional issues or aim primarily to strengthen religious identity (see also Hull 2001.) A central component of worldviews education is building intercultural and interreligious understanding and competences (UNESCO 2013). One of the key approaches to such education has been dialogue (OSCE 2007) which is the starting point for developing intercultural and interreligious openness to diverse worldviews. Dialogue within cross-

cultural encounters can increase open-minded attitudes and develop empathy, likely to decrease separations between 'us' and 'them' (Gardner, Soules, and Valk 2017; Jackson 2014).

In addition, when considering worldviews education, the effects of internet and social media cannot be ignored. Young people live their lives concurrently in social media platforms (Helve 2015) which have also been targeted by extremist groups (Ghosh et al. 2016). Enhanced religious and worldviews literacy skills have been shown to lead to greater understanding, respect, harmony, and peace (Valk 2010), and particularly increasing positive attitudes to religious minorities (Singleton et al. 2019). Researchers have demonstrated that education is one of the most powerful ways to prevent intolerance and violent extremism, through developing not just knowledge but critical thinking skills (Ghosh et al. 2016; Halafoff, Lam, and Bouma 2019a; Singleton et al. 2019; UNESCO 2018).

The need for emphasising multiple literacies such as religious literacy and media literacy has also been reported in other studies (Halafoff et al. 2019b; Poulter et al. 2017). A critical approach to developing worldviews literacy, through worldviews education, considers and is aware of existing power relations and imbalances among diverse religious, non-religious and spiritual groups and states, and also of how worldviews and power relations are also shaped by intersections with other aspects of identity such as culture, gender, and sexuality diversity (Halafoff, Lam, and Bouma 2019a; Halafoff forthcoming). Moreover, the local context in worldviews education is critical as no two countries or contexts are identical (Valk 2017b). Therefore, it is not feasible, nor indeed desirable to seek standardised strategies for worldviews education suitable for all countries. Worldviews education must, therefore, be context specific (Halafoff, Lam, and Bouma 2019a; Halafoff et al. 2019b) though scholars and education policy and curriculum developers from different contexts can certainly still learn from each other.

## Comparative analysis of diverse worldviews education in Finland and Australia

### *Diverse worldviews in Finland*

In terms of the religious landscape in Finland, 69.83% of Finns are affiliates of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, and 27.39% do not identify with any religious community. Other religious affiliation percentages are low, for example, Greek Orthodox at 1.11%, Jehovah's Witnesses at 0.31%, and Islam at 0.29% of the population (Official Statistics of Finland 2018). However, the religious landscape has changed in recent decades as a result of immigration flows (Furseth 2018), decreasing affiliation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, increasing numbers of religious 'nones' (Pew Research Center 2018), and new kinds of spirituality, which are not linked to organised religions (Illman et al. 2017). Also, even though the majority of Finns are still nominal members of the Lutheran Church, 54% define themselves as 'neither religious or spiritual', and 58% agreed that they seldom or never attend religious services (Pew Research Center 2018).

Finland is officially a secular state, after the law of freedom of religion in 1923 resulted in a separation between church and state, yet religion still affects the nation in practical and ideological ways. The Lutheran Church still maintains a special status in society and in schools, including the right to collect taxes and setting celebrations and school holidays in public schools (Malkavaara 2017). Finnish society is thereby described as being at once of 'secular Christianity' (Poulter, Riitaoja, and Kuusisto 2016, 71; 2017, 57). In addition, the powerful position of the Lutheran Church within schools has been reported to cause 'othering' of non-Christian worldviews (Poulter, Riitaoja, and Kuusisto 2016). Moreover, a strong national hegemony and non-changing idea of Finnishness evident in the Finnish curriculum have been described as possibly contributing to some pupils from immigrant families feeling a sense of otherness and a lack of belonging in Finnish schools (Niemi et al. 2018).

### *Worldviews education in Finland*

The Finnish education system relies mainly on state public schools. The Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (NCCBE) emphasises the importance of interfaith education,

religious literacy, and the need to appreciate the knowledge of a pupil's own and other religions or non-religious worldviews as an important element of understanding societal diversity. While there are few private or religious schools, these also need to follow the national curriculum. The curriculum includes compulsory 'religious and worldview education' (Fin. katsomusaineiden opetus), delivered by teachers for approximately one hour per week in every grade (NCCBE 2014). 'Religious and worldview education' is a hypernym of all 15 worldviews education options provided in Finnish schools, including 14 different religious options for instance Evangelical Lutheran, Orthodoxy, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism and Catholicism, and one alternative Secular Ethics education option (Fin. elämäkatsomustieto). The model is usually referred to as an 'own religion-based' worldviews education approach which means pupils choose to participate in only one of the 15 'religious and worldview education' choices available. Pupils are separated into different subject groups according to their nominal religion and those who are not nominal members of any religious communities can choose the Secular Ethics education option (NCCBE 2014; Zilliacus 2019). However, anyone can choose Lutheran RE, despite their nominal membership, but Lutheran pupils need to attend Lutheran RE. RE in schools is officially non-confessional and does not include religious practices. All RE and secular ethics curricula include information about other worldviews; however, the content is slightly different across the 15 options, and taught from the point of view of the chosen option.

Religions and worldviews are less discussed in Finnish homes nowadays, which further highlights the importance of schools as sources of information about diverse worldviews (Kuusisto and Kallioniemi 2014). Finnish pupils have been noted to have positive attitude towards worldviews education (Kuusisto and Kallioniemi 2014; Kavonius, Kuusisto, and Kallioniemi 2015); however, they are more interested in everyday diverse worldviews, and how these relate to their own lived realities and personal meaning-making than in generalisations and knowledge about religions or worldviews (Åhs, Poulter, and Kallioniemi 2019b). Worldviews education has also been seen to play a crucial role in educating pupils to live together harmoniously (Kavonius, Kuusisto, and Kallioniemi 2015), and to have a vital role in promoting equity, inclusiveness, and peace (Rautionmaa and Kallioniemi 2017). Interestingly, pupils' openness towards diversity is noted to be higher in Helsinki (Kuusisto and Kallioniemi 2014), which may be due to the fact that Helsinki is more culturally and religiously diverse than other areas in Finland (Rissanen, Ubani, and Poulter 2019).

Scholars argue that the Finnish 'own religion-based' model of worldviews education is problematic as the group pupils are placed is not necessarily of their *own* choosing (Åhs, Poulter, and Kallioniemi 2019b; Benjamin and Kuusisto 2016; Kavonius, Kuusisto, and Kallioniemi 2015; Zilliacus 2019). The model does not respect that pupils' worldviews can be fluid, changing and hybrid, and ignores the possibility of young person's determining their personal worldviews for and by themselves. A pupil cannot leave or change their nominated religious or non-religious affiliation until they turn 18 and usually their parents select the group they are allocated to. In addition, a child or young person's relationship to their own nominal religion can be confusing, as Kimanen and Kuusisto (2017) noted in a recent study that half of their respondents were not even sure what their own religion was.

Many schools in Finland have pioneered integrated worldviews education models where pupils can study their own worldview, and the worldviews of others, in the same class together with their peers. Overall experiences in such classes have been reported as positive and heuristic in developing dialogue skills among pupils with different backgrounds has been emphasised in these programs (Åhs, Poulter, and Kallioniemi 2019b; Kimanen 2016; Käpylehto 2015.) The debate about Finnish worldviews education is thereby largely focused on how it should be organised, and what its aims are, and not if there is a need for it (Ubani 2019).

### **Diverse worldviews in Australia**

Australia has always been a culturally and religiously diverse society. It was at least in part as a response to this diversity that Australia was constituted as a secular nation. It has never had

a state church but religions do play a part in public life, and religious groups and schools do receive state financial support (Bouma and Halafoff 2017).

The 2016 Australian Census data reported that 30.1% of Australians have 'no religion', 52.1% are Christians, 2.6% are Muslims, 2.4% are Buddhists, 1.9% are Hindus, 0.5% are Sikhs, and 0.4% are Jews (ABS 2017). The numbers of Anglicans are falling, Catholics and Jews remain relatively steady, and the religious 'nones' are growing fast, as are the Pentecostals, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs (Bouma and Halafoff 2017). The Worldviews of Australia's Generation Z (AGZ) study has more recently found that 52% of AGZ teens claim that they have 'no religion', 38% are Christians, 3% are Muslims, 2% are Buddhists, and 1% are Hindus. In terms of religion and spirituality, 35% are neither religious or spiritual, 22% are spiritual but not religious, 16% are religious and spiritual, 12% are religious but not spiritual (Singleton et al. 2019).

Australia has an ambivalent history when it comes to this growing diversity, with on the one hand a broad acceptance of it and on the other a strong undercurrent of racism and hostility towards Indigenous Australians and immigrants. The AGZ study found that while 91% of teens think that having people of many different faiths makes Australia a better place to live, 25% have less than positive views about Hindus and 26% have less than positive views about Muslims. The AGZ study also discovered that teens who had General Religious Education about diverse religions, mainly those attending faith-based schools, had more positive views about religious minorities including Muslims and Hindus. This is a significant finding as it backs up assertions that diverse worldviews education can play a role in building more harmonious relations among Australia's diverse communities. The AGZ study also showed that teens were broadly accepting of religious diversity, as long as religious freedoms did not impede upon the rights of others (Singleton et al. 2019).

### *Worldviews education in Australia*

The place of religion in education in Australia has long been a contentious issue, given education's role in nation building and ongoing competing narratives regarding Australian identity as either a culturally and religiously diverse, or white Christian nation, since state schools were first established late in the nineteenth century. While secular public schools had either no or very limited content on religion in their curricula until very recently, religious volunteers were and are still permitted, in all states except South Australia and Victoria to provide confessional religious instruction/education (RI/RE) into their faith traditions in school time. Most RE/RI providers are Christian, and since the 1990s have also included Muslims, Buddhists, Baha'is and Hindus (Halafoff 2015; Maddox 2014).

The 2008 Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (MCEETYA 2008, 4), which was drafted when a more progressive Labour government was in power, highlighted 'the need to nurture an appreciation of and respect for social, cultural and religious diversity, and a sense of global citizenship'. It also stressed that schools should 'play a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and well-being of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation's ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion'. Yet the Australian Curriculum did not provide any distinct content on education about religions, spirituality and non-religious worldviews in its Key Learning Areas or General Capabilities, and only limited content on education about diverse worldviews was included sporadically across the curriculum, and particularly in History, Civics and Citizenship, Intercultural and Ethical Understanding (Halafoff 2015). Victoria, in its iteration of the Australian Curriculum released in 2015, by contrast, is the only state to include distinct content on 'Learning about World Views and Religions' in the Humanities (VCAA 2015a) and also in Ethical Capabilities (VCAA 2015b). It focuses on the main tenets of Secular Humanism and Rationalism and Victoria's major faith traditions of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism (VCAA 2015c).

The findings of international and Australian research on religion, education and social inclusion, including on education and preventing violent extremism, have led Australian scholars to argue, that

there is a pressing need for more dedicated content about worldviews and religions in the Australian Curriculum, and across all states, in order to foster greater religious, interreligious and worldviews literacy and respect for diversity. This type of education must be critical, and examine the potential for religion to contribute to both cultures of violence and peacebuilding and to explore the complexities not only of lived religious, spiritual and non-religious diversity but how it intersects with other diversities and rights, notably the rights of children, women, LGBTI people and also multispecies diversity. These are all issues that are currently in Australia's public sphere and that concern many young people. Most importantly young Australian's lived experiences of diversity need to inform the Australian Curriculum so that it adequately relates to their lived realities. Teachers need to be better supported to develop worldviews literacy and to facilitate discussions on these hot topics of intersecting and competing rights claims (Halafoff, Lam, and Bouma 2019a; Halafoff et al. 2019b, forthcoming; Singleton et al. 2019). Halafoff and Bouma (2019) have also recently argued that worldviews education should replace religious instruction/education in school time, given that it is taught by qualified teachers, covers many diverse worldview traditions, instead of just one, and that religious identity formation is not the responsibility of secular education.

## Conclusion

Worldviews can be non-religious, spiritual and/or religious presumptions about life that provide meaning, and include values and norms, that offer frameworks for thinking and acting. They can be organised/institutional and/or personal/private worldview, and personal/private worldviews can be complex, hybrid and dynamic, especially those of young people.

As discussed above, worldviews education can include three different dimensions; the development of pupil's own worldview; knowledge about other's worldviews, and promotion of acceptance and respect towards different worldviews. Worldviews education that increases knowledge about different worldviews, worldviews literacy, and critical thinking has been shown to play a significant role in increasing interreligious understanding and positive views towards religious minorities. It can thereby play an important role in promoting social inclusion and peacebuilding.

Finland and Australia have very different histories when it comes to diversity, migration and worldviews, yet both are secular states where Christianity is still the dominant religion with a strong influence on institutions, including education. Both countries are also experiencing similar trends of falling affiliation with Christianity, rising numbers of religious nones and non-Christian religions, notably Islam. Despite this, Finnish and Australian models of religious and worldview education are both still dominated by Christianity, although in different ways. In Finland, non-confessional 'religious and worldview education' is included in the national curriculum, but it is still delivered in separate silos to students according to their religious or non-religious worldview affiliation in the 'own religion-based' model. The vast majority of students are enrolled in the Lutheran option, for the reason of Lutheran Christian majority among Finnish, and because Lutheran pupils must be placed in Lutheran RE while non-Lutheran parents choose what type of worldviews education their children should be placed in. There are some experimental initiatives and a push by scholars to move to a more inclusive, neutral worldviews education model, which includes learning about diverse religions and secular ethics that all students could participate in together in the same groups. However, there is no current move to include this in the Finnish national curriculum by the government.

The Australian curriculum is also yet to include any dedicated sections on education about diverse worldviews. Most states, except South Australia and Victoria, offer confessional and mainly Christian RE, and also so-called minority faiths and non-religious options of ethics education provided by volunteers from these religious and non-religious groups. Only Victoria has dedicated diverse worldviews education modules on 'Learning about [non-religious] World Views and Religions' taught by teachers, to all students from kindergarten until year 10.

While in Finland there is a general consensus that worldviews education should be provided in state schools, in Australia the debate is still continuing with no agreed outcome yet in sight. Religious and particularly Christian and Jewish RE providers and their supporters fear that if worldviews education is introduced, RE will no longer be offered in school time, as is the case in Victoria. In Finland, the debate centres more on how worldviews education should be provided, and whether to shift from a silo model, where participation is determined by parental choices, to a more inclusive model encouraging interaction and dialogue among students of diverse worldviews. Religious organisations, including Christians and Muslims, in both nations are resisting a shift to an inclusive approach to worldviews education, and this is still having an influence on education policy and curricula, given this shift is yet to take place in either society. We, alongside other experts, argue that such a shift should occur in both societies, given data presented above that inclusive diverse worldviews education programs can play a crucial role in increasing religious literacy, positive attitudes to religious minorities and social inclusion.

In addition, even where worldview/s education is provided in Victoria and in Finland, it still follows an outdated world religions/old style format including knowledge about major religious and non-religious traditions. In this paper, we alongside other experts argue that worldviews education should better reflect the complex, diverse and hybrid 'lived' realities of young people, as described in detail above and that teacher education about diverse worldviews be informed by best practices and also these lived super-diverse pupil's realities.

These findings and recommendations from Finland and Australia may also be applicable to other contexts, where dominant religious groups are losing their strongholds and other non-religious, spiritual and/or religious groups are gaining popularity resulting in more diverse or super-diverse societies. Even in less diverse societies, given increased global mobility, young people are increasingly likely to encounter the diversity of worldviews as they work and travel elsewhere, they too could benefit from increased religious and worldviews literacy that diverse worldviews education programs can provide. However, given the existing unequal power dynamics that super-diversity, and thereby worldviews diversity education also entails resistance to such initiatives can be expected. This paper argues that critical analysis of these power dynamics across intersectional lines should also be included in contemporary worldviews education programs developed for and in consultation with young learners themselves.

## Note

1. The Finnish National Agency of Education uses the term 'religious and worldview education' (Fin. *katsomusaineiden opetus*), as Finnish schools provide such education to pupils according to their own singular religious or non-religious worldview. Worldviews education typically refers to education about multiple and diverse religious and non-religious worldviews. The Victorian state of Australia's curriculum refers to 'learning about world views and religions'.

## Acknowledgments

Thanks to Alfred Deakin Professor Fethi Mansouri for hosting the research visit at UNESCO Chair for Comparative Research on Cultural Diversity and Social Justice based at Deakin University and hosted by the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation. We also want to thank Adjunct Professor Saila Poulter and UNESCO Professor Arto Kallioniemi for commenting on draft of this article.

## Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

## Funding

Tuuli Lipiäinen would like to thank the Emil Aaltonen Foundation for the financial support she received for the research visit.

## Notes on contributors

**MEd Tuuli Lipiäinen**, is a Doctoral student at the University of Helsinki in the Department of Teacher Education. Her research interests include worldviews, religious and worldview education, future skills, and integrated worldview education. Recently she has been involved in project related to future skills, multiple literacies and teacher education development. She has also pioneered integrated worldview education model in Finnish basic education.

**Associate Professor Anna Halafoff** is a sociologist of religion and a member of the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation at Deakin University. She is also a Research Associate of the UNESCO Chair in Interreligious and Intercultural Relations – Asia Pacific at Monash University. Anna's current research interests include: religious diversity; interreligious relations; countering violent extremism; and education about religions and worldviews. She is the author of *The Multifaith Movement: Global Risks and Cosmopolitan Solutions* (2013) and co-editor, with Elisabeth Arweck and Daniel Boivert, of *Education about Religions and Worldviews: Promoting Intercultural and Interreligious Understanding in Secular Societies* (Routledge 2016).

**Alfred Deakin Professor Fethi Mansouri** is the founding Director (2015-) of the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation. Since 2013, he held the UNESCO Chair in comparative research on 'Cultural Diversity and Social Justice' and in 2016 was appointed Convenor of the UNESCO UniTwin Network for Inter-Religious Dialogue and Intercultural Understanding. Professor Mansouri is the editor of the *Journal of Intercultural Studies*. He is the author/editor of twenty scholarly books including 'Building Bridges: Creating a Culture of Diversity' (2009); 'Migration, Citizenship and Intercultural Relations' (2011); 'Global Perspectives on the Politics of Multiculturalism' (2014); 'The Multicultural Challenge' (2015); 'Interculturalism at the Crossroads' (2017); 'The Politics of Women and Migration in the Global South' (2017), and 'Contesting the Theological Foundations of Islamism and Violent Extremism' (2019). His 2004 book 'Lives in Limbo' was short-listed for the 2004 Human Rights Medals and Awards.

**Emeritus Professor Gary Bouma AM** is the UNESCO Chair in Intercultural and Interreligious Relations – Asia Pacific, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Monash University, Acting Director of the Global Terrorism Research Centre. His research in the sociology of religion examines the management of religious diversity in plural multicultural societies, postmodernity as a context for doing theology, religion and terror, religion and public policy. He is the author or co-author of over 25 books. Recent books include: *Australian Soul: Religion and Spirituality in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge University Press) and *Being Faithful in Diversity: Religions and Social Policy in Multifaith Societies* (ATF).

## ORCID

Tuuli Lipiäinen  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8453-2826>

Anna Halafoff  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-4274-5951>

Fethi Mansouri  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4120-9391>

Gary Bouma  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-2093-5738>

## References

- ABS (Australian Bureau of Statistics). 2017. *Religion in Australia*. Canberra: ABS. <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/by%20Subject/2071.0~2016~Main%20Features~Religion%20Data%20Summary~70>
- Aerts, D., L. Apostel, B. De Moor, S. Hellemans, E. Maex, H. Van Belle, and J. Van der Veken. 1994. *Worldviews: From Fragmentation to Integration*. Brussels: VUB press.
- Åhs, V., S. Poulter, and A. Kallioniemi. 2019b. "Pupils and Worldview Expressions in an Integrative Classroom Context." *Journal of Religious Education* 67: 203–221. doi:10.1007/s40839-019-00088-0.
- Ammerman, N. 2014. "Modern Altars in Everyday Life." In *The Many Altars of Modernity. Towards a Paradigm for Religion in a Pluralist Age*, edited by P. Berger, 94–110. Boston: De Gruyter.
- Asad, T. 2004. *Formation of the Secular: Christianity, Islam and Modernity*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Beaumont, J., K. Eder, and E. Mendieta. 2018. "Reflexive Secularization? Concepts, Processes and Antagonisms of Postsecularity." *European Journal of Social Theory*. doi:10.1177/1368431018813769.
- Beckford, J. 2012. "SSSR 'Presidential Address: Public Religions and the Postsecular: Critical Reflections'." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 51: 1–19. doi:10.1111/j.1468-5906.2011.01625.x.

- Benjamin, S., and A. Kuusisto. 2016. "Analytical and Methodological Considerations for the Use of Social Categories in Identity Research." *International Journal of Bias, Identity and Diversities in Education* 1 (1): 13–27. doi:10.4018/IJBIDE.
- Beyer, P. 2013. "Growing up Canadian: Systemic and Lived Religions." In *Growing up Canadian: Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists*, edited by P. Beyer and R. Ramji, 3–20. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Bouma, G. 2017. "Religions – Lived and Packaged – viewed Through an Intercultural Dialogue Prism." In *Interculturalism at the Crossroads, Comparative Perspectives on Concepts, Policies and Practices*, edited by F. Mansouri, 127–142. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
- Bouma, G., and A. Halafoff. 2017. "Australia's Changing Religious Profile – Rising Nones and Pentecostals, Declining British Protestants in Superdiversity: Views from the 2016 Census." *Journal for the Academic Study of Religion* 30 (2): 129–143. doi:10.1558/jasr.v30i2.2517.
- Casanova, J. 2009. "The Secular and Secularisms." *Social Research* 76 (4): 1049–1066.
- Cloke, P., and B. Beaumont. 2012. "Geographies of Postsecular Rapprochement in the City." *Progress in Human Geography* 37: 27–51. doi:10.1177/0309132512440208.
- CoRE. 2018. "Commission of Religious Education. Final Report. Religion and Worldviews: The Way Forward. A National Plan for RE." Accessed 3 September 2019. <https://www.commissiononre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Final-Report-of-the-Commission-on-RE.pdf>
- Council of Europe. 2008. *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue: Living Together as Equals in Dignity*. France: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Furseth, I. 2018. *Religious Complexity in the Public Sphere: Comparing Nordic Countries*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Gardner, R., K. Soules, and J. Valk. 2017. "The Urgent Need for Teacher Preparation in Religious and Secular Worldview Education." *Religious Education* 112 (3): 242–254. doi:10.1080/00344087.2017.1309113.
- Ghosh, R., A. Manuel, A. Chan, M. Dilimulati, and M. Babaei. 2016. "Education and Security: A Global Literature Review on the Role of Education in Countering Violent Religious Extremism; Tony Blair Institute for Global Change." Accessed 20 September 2019. <http://www.theewc.org/Content/Library/Research-Development/Project-documents-and-reports/Education-and-Security-A-Global-Literature-Review-on-the-Role-of-Education-in-Countering-Violent-Religious-Extremism>
- Halafoff, A. 2015. "Special Religious Instruction and Worldviews Education in Victoria's Schools: Social Inclusion, Citizenship and Countering Extremism." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 36 (3): 362–379. doi:10.1080/07256868.2015.1029889.
- Halafoff, A., and L. Gobey. 2018. "Whatever? Religion, Youth and Identity in 21st Century Australia." In *Youth, Religion, and Identity in a Globalizing Context*, edited by P. L. Gareay, S. Culham, and P. Beyer, 255–277. Boston: Brill.
- Halafoff, A. forthcoming. "Critical Religious Pluralism." *Interreligious Relations (IRR) Series of Occasional Papers, Studies in Inter-Religious Relations in Plural Societies Programme*. Singapore: Nanyang Technical University.
- Halafoff, A., A. Singleton, G. Bouma, and M. Rasmussen. 2019b. "Religious Literacy of Australia's Gen Z Teens: Diversity and Social Inclusion." *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 1–19. doi:10.1080/13617672.2019.1698862.
- Halafoff, A., and G. Bouma. 2019. "It's Time to Replace Religious Instruction with Worldviews Education in Australian Schools." *ABC Religion and Ethics* 26 (September): 2019.
- Halafoff, A., K. Lam, and G. Bouma. 2019a. "Worldviews Education: Cosmopolitan Peacebuilding and Preventing Violent Extremism." *Journal of Beliefs and Values* 40 (3): 381–395. doi:10.1080/13617672.2019.1600113.
- Hannam, P. 2018. *Religious Education and the Public Sphere*. New York: Routledge.
- Hannam, P., and G. Biesta. 2019. "Religious Education, a Matter of Understanding? Reflections on the Final Report of the Commission on Religious Education." *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 40 (1): 55–63. doi:10.1080/13617672.2018.1554330.
- Helve, H. 2015. "A Longitudinal Perspective on Worldviews, Values and Identities." *Journal of Religious Education* 63 (2): 95–115. doi:10.1007/s40839-016-0021-5.
- Hull, J. M. 2001. "The Contribution of Religious Education to Religious Freedom: A Global Perspective." Paper presented at the United Nations conference on religious education in relation to freedom of religion or belief, Madrid.
- Illman, R., K. Ketola, R. Latvio, and J. Sohlberg. 2017. "Johdanto." In *Monien Uskontojen Ja Katsomusten Suomi*, edited by R. Illman, K. Ketola, R. Latvio, and J. Sohlberg, 7–12. Kuopio: Grano Oy.
- Jackson, R. 2014. *'Signposts': Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-Religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.
- Jackson, R. 2015. "The Politicisation and Securitisation of Religious Education?" *British Journal of Educational Studies* 63 (3): 345–366. doi:10.1080/00071005.2015.1069257.
- Jackson, R. 2017. "'Who's Afraid of Secularisation?' A Response to David Lewin." *British Journal of Educational Studies* 65 (4): 463–468. doi:10.1080/00071005.2017.1358804.
- Käpylehto, K. 2015. "Kulosaaren Malli. Dialogiin Perustuva Katsomusaineiden Opetusjärjestely." In *Näin Rakennat Monialaisia Oppimiskokonaisuuksia*, edited by H. Cantell, 123–144. Jyväskylä: PSKustannus.
- Kavonius, M., A. Kuusisto, and A. Kallioniemi. 2015. "Pupils' Perceptions of Worldview Diversity and Religious Education in the Finnish Comprehensive School." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 36 (3): 320–337. doi:10.1080/07256868.2015.1029884.
- Kimanen, A. 2016. "Developing Pupils' Skills in Inter-Worldview Dialogue." *Usuteaduslik Ajakiri* 1: 79–92.

- Kimanen, A., and E. Kuusisto. 2017. "How Young People Perceive Factors that Support or Prevent Understanding between Worldviews: Perspectives of Finnish Lower Secondary School Pupils." *Intercultural Education* 28 (1): 75–89. doi:10.1080/14675986.2017.1288801.
- Kuusisto, A., and A. Kallioniemi. 2014. "Pupils' Views of Religious Education in a Pluralistic Educational Context." *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 35 (2): 155–164. doi:10.1080/13617672.2014.953296.
- Kuusisto, A., and A. Kallioniemi. 2017. "Finnish Youths' Views on Religious and Worldview Membership and Belonging." *Journal of Religious Education* 64 (2): 87–99. doi:10.1007/s40839-017-0032-x.
- Maddox, M. 2014. *Taking God To School*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
- Malkavaara, M. 2017. "Luterilaisuuden Vaikutus Kulttuuriin Ja Yhteiskuntaan." In *In Monien Uskontojen Ja Katsomusten Suomi*, edited by R. Illman, K. Ketola, R. Latvio, and J. Sohlberg, 46–64. Kuopio: Grano Oy.
- Mansouri, F., ed. 2017. *Interculturalism at the Crossroads: Theory, Policy and Practice*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
- MCEETYA (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs), 2008. "Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians." Melbourne: Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs.
- McGuire, M. 2008. *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Miedema, S. 2014. "From Religious Education to Worldview Education and Beyond. The Strength of a Transformative Pedagogical Paradigm." *Journal for the Study of Religion* 27 (1): 82–103.
- Miedema, S. 2017. "The Concept and Conceptions of Interfaith Education with Neighbour Concepts. Reflections from Pedagogical Perspective." In *Interfaith Education for All: Theoretical Perspectives and Best Practices for Transformative Action*, edited by D. Wielzen and I. ter Avest, 21–30. Boston: Sense Publishers.
- Naugle, D. 2002. *Worldviews: History of a Concept*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
- NCCBE (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education). 2014. Helsinki: Finnish Agency of Education.
- Niemi, P.-M., S. Benjamin, A. Kuusisto, and L. Gearon. 2018. "How and Why Education Counters Ideological Extremism in Finland." *Religions* 9 (12): 420. doi:10.3390/rel9120420.
- Official Statistics of Finland (OSF). 2018. Population structure [e-publication]. ISSN=1797-5395. Helsinki: Statistics Finland. [http://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/index\\_en.html](http://www.stat.fi/til/vaerak/index_en.html).
- OSCE/ODIHR. 2007. The Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools. Warsaw: OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights <https://www.osce.org/odihhr/29154?download=true>
- Pew Research Center. 2018. "Being Christian in Western Europe." May 29
- Poulter, S., A. Kuusisto, M. Malama, and A. Kallioniemi. 2017. "Examining Religious Education in Finland from a Human Rights Perspective." In *Religion, Education and Human Rights: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives*, edited by A. Sjöborg and H. G. Ziebertz, 49–62. Cham: Springer.
- Poulter, S., A.-L. Riitaoja, and A. Kuusisto. 2016. "Thinking Multicultural Education 'Otherwise' from a Secularist Construction Towards a Plurality of Epistemologies and Worldviews." *Globalisation, Societies and Education* 14: 68–86. doi:10.1080/14767724.2014.989964.
- Rautionmaa, H., and A. Kallioniemi. 2017. "Integrated Religious Education to Promote Dialogue." In *Interfaith Education for All: Theoretical Perspectives and Best Practices for Transformative Action*, edited by D. R. Wielzen and I. ter Avest, 145–158. Boston: Sense Publishers.
- Rissanen, I., M. Ubani, and S. Poulter. 2019. "Key Issues of Religion in Finnish Public Education." In *Contextualising Dialogue, Secularisation and Pluralism. Religion in Finnish Public Education*, edited by M. Ubani, I. Rissanen, and S. Poulter, 203–216. Münster: Waxmann.
- Singleton, A., M. L. Rasmussen, A. Halafoff, and G. D. Bouma. 2019. *Australia's Generation Z Study: Australia's Teenagers Negotiating Religion, Sexuality and Diversity. Project Report*. ANU: Deakin and Monash Universities.
- Ubani, M. 2019. "Religion, Multiculturalism and Finnish Schools." In *Contextualising Dialogue, Secularisation and Pluralism. Religion in Finnish Public Education*, edited by M. Ubani, I. Rissanen, and S. Poulter, 105–126. Münster: Waxmann.
- UNESCO. 2013. *Intercultural Competences: Conceptual and Operational Framework*. Paris: UNESCO Publishing.
- UNESCO. 2018. *Global Education Monitoring Report 2019: Migration, Displacement and Education – Building Bridges, Not Walls*. New York: UN.
- Valk, J. 2009. "Religion or Worldview: Enhancing Dialogue in the Public Square." *Marburg Journal of Religion* 14 (1): 1–16.
- Valk, J. 2010. "Worldviews of Today: Teaching for Dialogue and Mutual Understanding." In *Values, Religions and Education in Changing Societies*, edited by K. Sporre and J. Manning, 103–119. Dordrecht, the Netherlands: Springer.
- Valk, J. 2017a. "Learning as Encounter between Self and Other." *Religious Education* 112 (4): 334–337. doi:10.1080/00344087.2017.1325097.
- Valk, J. 2017b. "Worldview Education." In *Interfaith Education for All: Theoretical Perspectives and Best Practices for Transformative Action*, edited by D. Wielzen and I. ter Avest, 227–242. Boston: Sense Publishers.
- van der Kooij, J., D. de Ruyter, and S. Midema. 2013. "'Worldview': The Meaning of the Concept and the Impact on Religious Education." *Religious Education* 108 (2): 201–228. doi:10.1080/00344087.2013.767685.

- VCAA (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority). 2015a. *About the Humanities*. Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. <http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/the-humanities/introduction/about-the-humanities>
- VCAA (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority). 2015b. *Learning in Ethical Capability*. Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. <http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/ethical-capability/introduction/learning-in-ethical-capability>
- VCAA (Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority). 2015c. *Learning about World Views and Religions*. Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. <http://victoriancurriculum.vcaa.vic.edu.au/static/docs/LearningaboutWorldViewsandReligions.pdf>
- Vertovec, V. 2007. "Super-diversity and Its Implications." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 30 (6): 1024–1054. doi:10.1080/01419870701599465.
- Vroom, H. 2013. *Walking in a Widening World: Understanding Religious Diversity*. Amsterdam: VU University Press.
- Vroom, H. M. 2006. *A Spectrum of Worldviews: An Introduction to Philosophy of Religion in A Pluralistic World*. Amsterdam, the Netherlands: Rodopi.
- Woodhead, L. 2012. "New Forms of Public Religion: Findings and Reflections from the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme". Keynote address presented at the New Forms of Public Religion Conference, St. John's College, Cambridge, September 5–7. doi:10.1094/PDIS-11-11-0999-PDN.
- Woodhead, L. J. P. 2017. "The Rise of 'No Religion': Towards an Explanation." *Sociology of Religion* 78 (3): 247–262. doi:10.1093/socrel/srx031.
- Zilliacus, H. 2019. "Key Challenges in Supporting Identity Development in Segregated Instruction about Worldviews." In *Contextualising Dialogue, Secularisation and Pluralism. Religion in Finnish Public Education*, edited by M. Ubani, I. Rissanen, and S. Poulter, 57–80. Münster: Waxmann.