



CULHAM ST GABRIEL'S
CHAMPIONING RELIGION AND WORLDVIEWS EDUCATION

Surveying the Freedom of Religion or Belief and Education Landscape: A review of research literature, resources, and organisations

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Foreword

When approached to write a foreword for this report on freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) and education, I immediately accepted. The report, written by two of the authors of the 2023 *Primary FoRB Project* report, both with considerable experience of working on these topics, contains a review of available literature in the English language on FoRB and education, maps global efforts to promote the principles underpinning the right to FoRB in different formal educational settings, and provides recommendations for actors ranging from (in)formal educators to policy-makers. With this report, its authors aim to encourage a levelling-up of the status quo within education as regards the transmission of human rights, and especially FoRB principles.

As Nelson Mandela famously remarked, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” A respect for human rights is essential if each individual within society is to be able to live a dignified and meaningful life. However, for rights to be more fully realised, an enabling environment is needed in which the rights can be normalised and take root. This entails, at a minimum, that people know and understand the rights themselves as well as the relevance of the principles that underpin them. Education is not merely about handing people information- internet search engines can do that-, but it is about encouraging learning as part of a process that includes unlearning, relearning, and adjustment.

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts that education should be “*directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further [...] the maintenance of peace.*” Unfortunately, not all school curricula, textbooks, educational materials or teachers take

fundamental freedoms such as FoRB into account; some even undermine them. As the report illustrates, based upon the existing literature and examples of work in this area, context matters.

Lastly, the report indicates that when actualised, freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief (FoRB) contributes to greater mutual respect within societies. This same assumption underpins the 2007 Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools published by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Almost two decades after Toledo, teaching FoRB principles for better pluralism remains a pertinent message. With greater movements of people and, therefore, greater levels of pluralism, people within societies may be less rooted in local cultures and practices than they are connected with transnational movements or identities. There is then a need to constantly (re)teach people how to live together well with their similarities and differences, including differences of religion or belief so that they have the tools to thrive together. Whether you are an educator or a policy-maker reading this report, it should provide you with some good starting blocks to assist in this endeavour.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Kerr', with a stylized flourish.

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Executive summary

Across four sections – an introduction, a survey of academic literature, a survey of resources and organisations delivering FoRB education in schools, and a conclusion - this review maps global efforts to promote Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) principles through educational interventions in formal educational settings. In order to achieve that, it traces research, scholarship and programmatic activity pertaining directly and indirectly to these aims.

FoRB is a human right, part of the United Declaration of Human Rights; Article 18 and protected by other international instruments (e.g. Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)). The heart of FoRB is the freedom to have, choose, change, or leave a religion or belief and the freedom to practice or manifest a religion or belief. FoRB protects the person and not the religion, does not protect religions or beliefs from criticism and does not mean that the public sphere should be free from religious expression. It protects the right to manifest religion or belief both in public and in private and protects the individual from discrimination. It is these concepts, and the principles which follow from them, which the authors of this paper have taken to be the basis for the ‘FoRB Principles’ which FoRB Education seeks to promote.

The following findings, about FoRB and education, emerge from the survey of academic literature:

- Some academic sources refer to how education can promote or act against FoRB principles; other sources focus on how to teach and learn about FoRB; while other sources combine these focus’ to explore how different teaching approaches about FoRB can promote or act against FoRB principles.

- FoRB does not support religious causes but protects freedom of choice in religious and non-religious convictions and practices. As this relates to education, this means that FoRB cannot conflict with freedom of expression or the right to education.
- Researchers found that the context, whether of a school or state, is significant when considering the relationship between FoRB and education. For instance, a religion may dominate education in a state, or parents may have chosen a school with a religious character as an expression of FoRB.
- When considering FoRB and education, researchers suggest that religious education is a right but that it must enable children to develop an understanding of religious pluralism and be founded on principles of respect. Researchers suggest that this should be the case regardless of educational setting, applying equally to schools of religious and non-religious character.

The search of organisations delivering in-school FoRB Education initiatives reveals some clear findings:

- FoRB Education requires that learners have opportunities to reflect on their own religion or belief identities, to think about how they might differ from those that other people may hold, to feel comfortable with those differences, and to be able to talk about them with respect and sensitivity.
- FoRB Education requires that learners are aware of FoRB as a Human Right as articulated in Human Rights frameworks, documents and agreements.
- FoRB Education and FoRB Adjacent Education can embrace a variety of pedagogical approaches, reflecting the experiences and confidences of teachers and the contexts in which they teach.

In light of all this, the following recommendations are made in relation to how FoRB and FoRB principles can be promoted and protected in schools:

Recommendations for religious education teachers

- Engage with the organisations and resources listed in the Appendix 2 of this report to shape lessons for their own pupils and context. Take time to consider the FoRB principles being promoted.
- Ensure that specific named human rights are explored in curricula and classroom teaching.
- Ensure that pupils are enabled to reflect on their own backgrounds, values and positions as part of religious education.

Recommendations for senior school leaders

- Ensure that the importance of FoRB in relation to navigating our complex multi-religious and non-religious world is understood within the school, including encouraging staff to reflect on their own backgrounds, values and positions in relation to religious education.
- Provide professional learning for all staff about promoting and protecting FoRB principles to ensure it is taught comprehensively and sensitively, including engaging with and teaching about controversial issues.
- Inform and include parents in and about learning and reflections relating to FoRB, including how it might relate to the ethos of a school.

Recommendations for policy professionals

- Consider the relationship between high quality religious education and FoRB principles: specifically, that high quality religious education can only be taught in an environment where FoRB principles flourish, and that for FoRB to be promoted and protected requires that children have access to high quality religious education.
- Ensure that education about FoRB is embedded as part of high-quality religious education. Recognise that for FoRB education to be effective requires that learners have opportunities to reflect on their own religion or belief identities, to think about how they might differ from those that other people may hold, to feel comfortable with those differences, and to be able to talk about them with respect and sensitivity.
- Ensure that emerging FoRB education interventions enable learners to be aware of FoRB as a Human Right as articulated in Human Rights frameworks, documents and agreements.
- Ensure specialist RE teachers are well equipped through subject specific professional development and resourcing to teach effectively and appropriately about FoRB.

In light of the findings of this review, some questions emerge for future research, professional reflection and discussion:

- To what extent do current educational systems and structures in the UK support FoRB?
- What are the implications of implementing FoRB principles across the religion and worldviews education curriculum?
- How might the educational structures and systems be in harmony or in tension with the religion and worldviews curriculum in relation to FoRB principles?
- How do schools approach FoRB-related situations in their overall policies, for example, in relation to school uniform and visible religious symbols or items? How do they approach FoRB-related situations within specific curricular practice, for example, teaching about visible religious symbols or items in religious education?

1. Introduction

Culham St Gabriel's Trust is an endowed charitable foundation based in England: <https://www.cstg.org.uk/> . The trust's vision is for a broad-based, critical, and reflective education in religion and worldviews contributing to a well-informed, respectful, and open society. Culham St Gabriel's Trust pursues this vision through research, development, and innovation, as well as influencing government policy by campaigns promoting an education in religion and worldviews, improved teacher recruitment and Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB): <https://www.cstg.org.uk/campaigns/> .

This review begins to map global efforts to promote Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) principles through educational interventions, and to trace research and scholarship pertaining directly and indirectly to these aims. In doing so, the review positions the activities of Culham St Gabriel's, as they relate to the promotion of FoRB principles, in relation to those of other organisations and contained in other findings. The overall aim is to draw out learning and recommendations which could be applied to efforts to promote FoRB in schools, including Culham St Gabriel's current Primary FoRB project (see Culham St Gabriel's Trust 2023a) not least because it is increasingly the case that governments are recognising the role which schools can and do play in the promotion of FoRB.

For instance, this review acknowledges recent statements by governments concerning the importance of education in promoting respect for human rights, including FoRB, and thus the urgent need for such a review. At the 2022 FoRB Ministerial participating governments noted that teachers need to be equipped with the training and resources to enable discussions that promote understanding, dialogue, tolerance, non-violence and human rights. Furthermore, there was a commitment to supporting the development of curricula which could promote human rights (see Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office 2022). Subsequently, the Marrakesh Communiqué of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (see Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2023) made clear the need for public education which promotes respect and understanding

between individuals across religions and beliefs. In other words, there is an emerging narrative at a policy level, around education and FoRB which adds further credence to the need for this review.

This review looked across both academic research literature and outputs by FoRB and human rights-based organisations, including educational programmes and resources. That these sources are heterogenous in kind is reflected in this review's structure: they are dealt with in separate sections before being reflected together in a concluding set of emergent questions to consider.

The review looked for items falling into three broad types. Firstly, those explicitly about FoRB education. Secondly, those implicitly about FoRB education (with relevance, which is yet to be drawn out; for instance, initiatives which seek to address anti-religious hate in schools, but which do not actively frame their work as relating to FoRB principles, or FoRB or human rights issues arising in general educational practice). Thirdly, gaps to fill in future. Thus, the scope included both formal and informal educational settings, but also beyond education.

2. Survey of academic publications

An online library search under ‘freedom of religion or belief education’ brought up 4,200 items. Item-by-item scanning was suspended at item 400: the further into the scan, the less secure the relationship between each item and the issue of freedom of religion or belief education became, and the greater the incidence of repeat entries. Most items addressed issues of freedom of religion or belief around the world, at social or political levels. There was relatively little on education, but the overall size of the set meant that this amounted to a substantial selection. There was nothing that could be counted as a research report on school practice related to freedom of religion or belief. This was the significant gap where our aims are concerned. In the future, scanning further through the entries may reveal more sources of interest, but the general trend of the search so far suggested otherwise.

57 items were selected for closer attention. All are articles published in peer-reviewed academic journals. During closer reading, several were found to be limited in relevance and are not cited below. Additionally, material from two peer-reviewed academic books was considered, having been found through earlier research. Whether the survey is extensive, or representative, cannot be claimed, but it represents an extension of the research summaries provided for Cycle 1 of the Culham St Gabriel’s Primary FoRB project (Culham St Gabriel’s Trust 2023b, 20-24).

The search brought out a differentiation within the category of ‘explicitly about FoRB education’. Some sources refer to education as reflecting FoRB principles or not, others teaching and learning about FoRB principles; sometimes, a combination (e.g. Lindhardt 2022). The rest of this section, rather than organised by the ‘explicit’ and ‘implicit’ categories, has five inter-related subheadings (not boundaries) reflective of how the literature found can be grouped.

Nature of FoRB

Scholarly commentary on the nature of FoRB tends to elaborate or exemplify authoritative human rights documents such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations undated). This may be, for instance, to underline how an aspect of freedom of religious belief and expression is the protection of those who are nonreligious (Beaman, Steele, and Pringnitz, 2018). The rising number of ‘nones’ in many countries reveals the extent to which religious establishments shape day-to-day life in a manner that is experienced as coercive by the nonreligious. This can reflect (and create) tensions and the care needed to protect the freedom of all, for instance, in school institutional and daily arrangements. Relatedly, under Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, states must not set up situations where individuals are obliged, directly or indirectly, to reveal that they are non-believers (Valutypité and Gailiuté 2012, 47).

From a different perspective, religion itself is often expressed through cultural practice (Abdulla 2018). A restriction on culture can therefore be a restriction on FoRB. If a state or place shuts down cultural and artistic expression, this indicates a low level of FoRB, and vice versa, even if freedom of religion is heralded by the government. If FoRB manifests, it is as a lived experience. This increasingly includes online experience. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has serious potential to both advance and restrict FoRB (Ashraf 2022). ‘The Internet is increasingly a fundamental space not only for expression, but also for religion or belief to take shape, manifest, and thrive. It can alternatively become a space of religious control, surveillance, and restriction.’ (Ashraf 2022, 780).

For Bielefeldt, Alves Pinto and Juul Petersen (2022, 3) though some people assume that FoRB supports conservatively religious causes, in fact many legal cases have been brought by people of faith in support of socially progressive concerns. FoRB does not protect the reputation of religions; rather, it protects human beings in their freedom to find their own ways in religious and nonreligious convictions and conviction-based practices. Similarly, it is sometimes assumed that FoRB justifies discrimination against

women, but this is also quite wrong (Ghanea 2022). Whilst key FoRB documents do not mention women's rights specifically, and vice versa, the intersections are vital, as is the universality of human rights (this is re-iterated in the following section). A problem is that state violations sometimes take place in the name of a state religion. Religious norms are invoked to justify gender discrimination. Article 16 of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women addresses equality in rights and responsibilities within marriage; Morocco expressed the reservation that this was incompatible with the complementarity principle in Sharia. But in 2020, the UN Human Rights Council asked states to refrain from using cultural or religious relativism to evade their duties regarding women's rights and equality. FoRB, again, does not protect religions, but the empowerment of all human beings, including those usually ignored in these discussions (Stenlund 2017).

However, FoRB violations have increased in the period since 2007 (Loft and Robinson 2023, 15 ff). Toft and Green (2018) ask: Have state attempts to reverse this been successful? The record is mixed. The US, Canada, Norway, and the UK are named as the most active states. There is scepticism that efforts have impacted offending states. Domestically, the UK's focus appeared at the time of writing to have turned gradually towards FoRB as a security measure. The conclusion of the piece is that the intersection of FoRB with nations' security is indeed vital, as well as with human rights and trade discourses, but it is striking that FoRB in education is not mentioned, even though 'building a FoRB culture domestically' (p.15) is. Kerr (2022) echoes this analysis, arguing that FoRB and security are intricately intertwined and using the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's (OSCE) concept of comprehensive and cooperative security as a model from which to assess other approaches to security. State security is needed to uphold FoRB; but in a multi-directional way, in that engaging in positive relationships with faith communities is necessary to promote state security.

Universality and inseparability of rights, case law

Still, apparent tensions between rights, and consequent legal issues, surface in several countries. Essop (2023) reports how, in terms of section 29(1) of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 'everyone has the right to basic education'. At the same time, the Constitution provides that everyone has the right to freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief and opinion, and the right to participate in the cultural life of his or her choice. Infringing on a learner's ability to exercise their right to freedom of religion by prohibiting them from donning a headscarf is considered unfair religious discrimination until the school can demonstrate otherwise. School dress codes should not prohibit the headscarf and female Muslim learners should not have to request permission to wear one. Cases in the UK pose this as a dilemma and raise hard questions (Smith 2007). Firstly, a pupil refused to attend school because she was not allowed to wear a jiljab. The school permitted the hijab and shalwar kameez but disallowed the jiljab on grounds of falling outside school uniform. The House of Lords ruled that the uniform policy was proportionate, giving equal weight to cultural diversity of and social cohesion; freedom of belief was not implicated because the expression of a belief, rather than a right to a belief, was at issue. The pupil could return to school, so her rights to education were intact. Secondly, a school refused to allow a pupil to wear a niqab, and the Court of Appeal upheld this on security grounds (staff would not have been able to identify the pupil) but dismissed the school's claim that effective teaching and learning were impaired. The gender issues are noteworthy and the case-by-case approach unsatisfactory, though the reconciliation of education and religious rights is a dilemma without a resolution in sight.

Do schools further social cohesion by placing common uniform limits on pupils, or through specific rather than general respect (or tolerance) of religious beliefs or their expression?

Turning back to South Africa, Kok (2017) considers what should happen when a perpetrator of discrimination tries to justify the act(s) based on an appeal to religious freedom. Here, where there is a clear conflict between the right to equality and the right to religious freedom, the Equality Act is clear – the right to equality enjoys priority. But it distinguishes fair from unfair discrimination. In the case of a Muslim employee instructed to remove headwear in a ‘Christian shop’, the court found in favour of the employee – the attempt to discriminate was unfair because the shop was not a religious context, and the employer’s assertion of religious rights inappropriate. A court should give preference to the outcome that will facilitate the creation of a more egalitarian society, or a more caring society. In parallel, in Canada, two legal cases illustrated tensions and resolutions over FoRB, equality, and academic freedom (Clarke 2012). In the first, a university applied to the authorities for full control over its teacher education programme, to ensure it reflected an evangelical Christian worldview. The application was refused on grounds that the university’s documentation espoused discrimination against gay people. In the second, a student filed for religious bias against a different university; she had initially had difficulty with a set text which she found offensive and blasphemous, and the issue had never been resolved. The case was dismissed on grounds that a contentious issue does not mean a human rights breach.

Cumper and Lewis (2011) offer the wide range of religious and other beliefs as a reason why UK judges have a hard task with FoRB cases, going on to suggest that they tend to approach religious claims deferentially, out of regard for the existential importance of issues for appellants, including a Hindu whose local council had ruled against his desired funeral pyre. The council’s ruling was upheld, but the authors contend that it might have been different had thorough, knowledgeable analysis replaced judicial deference to religion in general – a weak position without detailed knowledge. In fact, according to the appellant’s beliefs, failure to observe the correct ritual procedure could have disastrous karmic consequences post-mortem. The case shows, perhaps, the need for comprehensive religion and worldviews education.

Context

Künkler and Lerner (2016) examine state-supported religious education and its consequences for civic attitudes in Indonesia and Israel. While in Indonesia the state was able to gradually introduce a secular curriculum in religious schools and exert influence on the way religion is taught, in Israel, by contrast, state-funded religious schools over time became increasingly opposed to a mandatory 'core curriculum' of general studies. In Indonesia the inclusion of a secular curriculum in religious schools should be seen as one of the factors promoting the production and dissemination of 'rationalist approaches to religion' and brought religious actors on board of democratisation, while in Israel the exclusion of a secular curriculum from religious schooling has undermined civic commitments among ultra-Orthodox Jewish citizens and as such weakened Israeli democracy. Ireland has become a proving ground for FoRB in education, and Heinz, Davison and Keane look at attitudes of intending teachers: the Irish school system is dominantly Catholic despite the country's increasing diversity (2018). While according to the Irish Constitution, every citizen is guaranteed freedom of conscience and the free practice and profession of religion, the research shows how (student) teachers who are not Catholics (or non-practicing Catholics) are clearly in a situation where being openly true to their personal beliefs could jeopardise their employment opportunities. For them, the freedom of choice may therefore rather lie in deciding whether, or not, they would be prepared to change or 'fake' religious beliefs to gain secure employment. Mawhinney (2015, p.295) explores the more general picture, stating that though Ireland has long championed human rights, the three dominant features of religion in Irish education – discriminatory admissions legislation, discriminatory employment legislation, teaching of doctrinal religious education – raise a range of human rights concerns.

Looking also at England and Wales, in relation to how different school leaders treat issues of religion, Lumby and MacRuairc found variety (2021). They gathered views on questions such as what religion-related issues the leaders faced, and how they responded to religious plurality. In response, there were – to give some examples - a Catholic school that explicitly made no accommodation to Muslim parents' culture or

wishes, whilst another Catholic school attempted to encourage all pupils in expressing their beliefs and developing their own spirituality; a Church of England school mapping commonality of values across its different communities and using these to support school standards; a school without a religious character attempting to subsume aspects of faith or ethnicity into a common overall persona for pupils (namely, 'achievers'). RE varied similarly. The most common term used across the schools studied for dealing with religious plurality was inclusion; but none analysed the school experience of pupils as far as inclusion was concerned. Any school, of any character, needs this, the authors argue.

Concerning the nation state, as Breskaya, Giordan and Zrinščak illustrate, any sociological appraisal of FoRB needs close attention to context (2022). Treatment of minorities is the best test, but policies towards religion can be rather different from one another. In Iran, for instance, secularisation produced a religious backlash in 1979, whilst attempts to deepen Islamisation now have the opposite effect. A society with a stronger human rights culture and public discourse (such as in Italy) contributes to young people's understanding of religious freedom in socio-legal terms while a lack of public freedom (such as in Russia) may be linked to more subjective claims of religious freedom oriented to the search for individual truth. Internationally, there is a persistent gap between promises and practice (see e.g. Reimer and Vu 2016).

As Breskaya, Giordan and Zrinščak suggest, questions arise (2022, 251). How can FoRB be measured? Are detailed, measurable, everyday life items available, to operationalise? How does the background legacy of a state inform how FoRB is conceptualised? It is argued by Breskaya, Giordan and Zrinščak (2022, 249) that the conditions generally supportive of FoRB appear consistent: they are religious pluralism, political secularism supporting religion's presence in the public sphere, and pro-democratic political views (but see also Grüll and Wilson 2018, for an argument that national or local traditions need to be drawn on in supporting FoRB). At the same time, within a national context, it helps to be aware of differences between political parties (Tadros 2022): left-leaning academics, think tanks, development actors and sometimes politicians are more likely to defend the rights of religious minorities (particularly

Muslims) living in the West, while their right-wing oriented counterparts tend to defend the rights of religious minorities internationally.

In relation to education, to which we turn fully next, Valutypé and Gailiuté (2012, 47) clarify that according to European human rights law: individuals have the right not only to an education but to draw benefit from it, through official recognition of the studies completed; in the context of parents having the right to educate their children in line with their convictions, a conviction is not merely an opinion or idea, but views that attain a level of 'cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance', and primarily, parents are responsible for children's education; but setting and planning of curricula fall within the competence of states (p.47). Moreover, the legal principle of the 'margin of appreciation' is as follows: the European Court respects that there are different understandings of legal issues and different legal traditions, allowing states scope for decisions.

FoRB in education

Inevitably, some points connected to FoRB in education were rehearsed in earlier sections, as education systems and schools are, as well as contextualised in states and policies, spaces for the enactment or contestation of rights. How can teachers be prepared to address this? For Rea-Ramirez and Ramirez (2017), children are particularly vulnerable to the ideas of intolerance and hate that lead to violent extremism and need a framework to understand freedom of religion or belief as a fundamental human right. A curriculum was introduced by a US based NGO (Hardwired) in the Middle East and North Africa on FoRB based on conceptual change theory. Analysis of this process and effect has allowed a deeper look at the process of conceptually moving from actions based on inherent beliefs and ideologies to new models of conceptual understanding that may enhance tolerance and empathy toward people of different religions and beliefs, including those with no religion or belief. People must first become aware of their preconceptions. They are then challenged by examples that are dissonant with their prior models, rather than told what to think; hard right or wrong

answers are replaced by increased awareness of complexity. The aim is to move pupils from naïve ideas (e.g. freedom is desired for me but not for others) to insight (e.g. freedom is for all and therefore means some limitations). The pedagogy involves repeated cycles of criticism and revision through analysis of scenarios, role-plays, and other activities.

Meanwhile, Becker's research, partly philosophical, partly based on focus groups with teachers, explored the issue of human rights literacy in nation-building in South Africa (2015). Freedom in classrooms is seen as a risk avoided by repetitious relationships of sameness and otherness. For a new beginning, these need to be replaced by 'equal difference', to break down past boundaries and move towards the unexpected and unpredictable. Juul Pedersen (undated) enumerates international challenges to address regarding FoRB in education:

- Lack of education in some parts of the world, for religion or belief minorities.
- Disruption of education by violence or war.
- Bias in teaching materials, e.g., stereotyping or neglect of minority religion or belief groups.
- Non-inclusive religious education, that is, religious education that does not respect children's right to respect for their own convictions nor the right of parents to educate their children according to their own convictions.
- Non-inclusive sex and relationships education, that is, sex and relationships education that is not comprehensive, accurate, scientifically sound, and culturally sensitive (p.10).
- Coercion in matters of dress or cultural expression.
- Restrictions on religious dress or symbolism.

Mawhinney (2015) discusses how in 2014 the UN Human Rights Committee instructed the Irish government to act to advance rights including freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, which demand has potential; but governments, she argues, need to respond together with the support of an active and well-informed civil society, which can reasonably be said to be a point that should be added to Juul Pedersen's set.

More recently, Jones (2023) outlines transformative theories of religious freedom, intersecting, for instance, with sex and sexuality rights (see also Endsjø 2020). Religious freedom can be defined as protecting the religious practices and underlying beliefs of citizens. In this sense, the state is justified to intervene against educational institutions that deny equal citizenship rights or fail to represent diverse religious or non-religious views or expressions of gender. She found that students at a religious independent school in Australia were less likely to say that the school had an anti-LGBTIQA+ bullying policy, allow students to bring same-sex partners to school formals, or retain divorced staff. LGBTIQA+ pupils understood religious freedom to mean freedom to believe or reject, including expression of sexuality; freedom to join or reject any religion; to not discriminate against others; and an absence of forcing. Similarly, the background to Rasmussen's discussion (2017) is what is termed the resacralisation of education in Australia and the reluctance, or refusal, of the Australian Christian Lobby¹ and the Catholic Church to continue programmes to support LGBTI pupils in schools. The religiously-based schools have exemptions allowing them to sack teachers identifying as gay or having children out of marriage. The debates are keen and the rights of the pupils and teachers precarious. Being opposed to LGBTI safe space schools is sometimes seen as an expression of freedom of religion. FoRB and freedom related to gender and sexuality are therefore sometimes seen as in opposition, increasingly so in the author's view. But she draws on research that shows that LGBTI young people envisage ways that traditional, conservative goals can make room for them, e.g. remodelling structures like marriage and the family.

¹ <https://www.acl.org.au/about/>

FoRB in religious education (RE)

In Russo's analysis (2020), freedom of religion and education are both human rights, yet exist in tension in many parts of the world, if education systems privilege one religion or deny representation to religion generally. National leaders should consider lifting restrictions. RE should be a right, as should the choice of faith-based education, but any education must be religiously pluralistic and founded on respect. Laws must be there to protect this, and, concomitantly, all must respect these laws. Expert curriculum materials on religion are needed, and pupils helped to develop the related critical skills. It is important to safeguard the twin rights of education and religion. In an earlier article (2015), he reports how in the US, schools can teach about religion, for instance in history or social studies lessons, but cannot teach religion, except in 'nonpublic' religiously affiliated or faith-based schools. Difficulty with clarifying the difference has led to a lot of litigation. Further, education is a fundamental right, and so is freedom of religion (and for parents to educate their children in line with their own convictions), by international instruments, so how can the needs of all pupils be met, especially in public schools? There are careful balances to be held. Russo offers recommendations for consideration: recognise the right of all to RE, within world-class education systems; treat all education as integrative and respectful of diversity; have pluralistic principles that respect international norms and reflect these in curricula; respect minority needs, and develop curricula that satisfy religious freedom including challenge to develop critical skills in relation to established beliefs; develop curricula that can be widely accepted, involving all stakeholders – regularly bring these to meetings and conferences, and regularly review these goals.

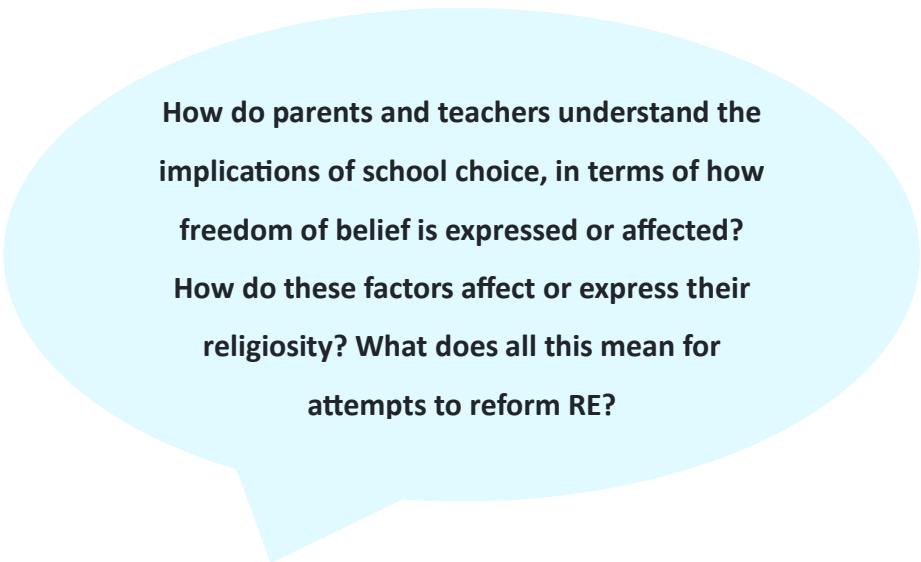
Franken's (2016a; see also Franken 2016b) is a reply to Russo, and comparing the Belgian situation (where faith schools can be publicly funded) with the US, Franken argues: 'A comparison between the United States and Belgium has shown that in the United States, policy makers are often afraid that a shift in the educational policy will slide off to a policy that is too religious, whereas in Belgium, policy makers are often convinced that a shift in educational policy will slide off to a policy that is not religious enough. In fact, both a policy of support for faith-based schools and religious

education, as well as a hands-off policy with regard to these things are possible. *What counts is not whether faith-based schools and religious education classes are recognized and/or subsidized, but whether the freedom of education and the freedom of religion are de facto realized by means of these particular policies.* (Our italics.) If we take this as a guiding principle, both Belgium and the United States have still some work to do.’ It could be suggested that within the overall policy frameworks, school communities have to examine this view of what counts, in relation to their own hopefully agreed educational goals. In this case, Franken’s and Russo’s conclusions are not so different (see also Varnham and Evers 2009).

Partly echoing these views, Lindhardt (2022) postulates that the child’s right to freedom of religion or belief and fundamental principles such as equality and non-discrimination constitute an international frame for religious education (RE). However, these rights might be challenged when RE is allocated a major role in transmitting the majority religion as national cultural heritage and national identity. The research is an analysis of the transmission of Christianity as cultural heritage in the national RE curriculum for primary and lower secondary schools in Denmark. It argues that principles from human rights education could provide a basis for a more pluralistic, objective, and critical approach to RE, thus enabling the classroom to function as a community of disagreement. And: relating human rights education to the “deep knowledge” of personal reality as well as the “hard knowledge” of factual content is fundamental for ensuring that learners view human rights not as abstractions but as integral aspects of their lives. FoRB should be both a field of knowledge and a framework for classroom conversations.

Relaño’s analysis (2010) of two decisions of the European Court of Human Rights results in vital questions for schools on the teaching of religions and beliefs. In these cases, the Court asserted that students should be exempted from compulsory courses on religion or from courses that are not conveyed in an objective, critical and pluralist manner to protect the rights of parents to raise their children in accordance with their beliefs and to protect the child’s religious freedom. What emerges from both decisions are sound principles about how to implement and teach these courses without

violating the freedom. In Norway, humanist parents objected to a course they found designed to impart Christian identity; in Turkey, an Alevi family objected that the curriculum was underpinned by Sunni Islam. Questions arise. Are we providing a plurality of information, or responding to a plurality of needs? Is there self-reflection, and a consensus through the school community that all needs are addressed and met? From a different angle, Fancourt (2022) arrives at related questions. He summarises freedom of belief in English education and RE from the 19th century to the present, tracing historical trends in law and policy, foremost, the more recent impacts of neoliberalism on school choice and culture. He concludes with recommendations for researchers which could also be put to practitioners and managers, to ask:



How do parents and teachers understand the implications of school choice, in terms of how freedom of belief is expressed or affected? How do these factors affect or express their religiosity? What does all this mean for attempts to reform RE?

Lester (2011) too puts emphasis on the community of the school, arguing that though John Dewey's democratic education approach has strengths when teaching about religion (thinking critically and with sympathetic imagination can be helpful for democratic citizenship), it might also violate norms of religious respect; an integral part of many religious views is strong disagreement with those of others. How do schools avoid the impression that open-ended forms of religion are favoured? By also putting on elective, out-of-hours classes catering for religious conservatives, e.g. on intelligent design theory? Whichever way, the Deweyan insight that religious tolerance only flourishes in democracies via moral imagination is unaffected. For Haugen (2023), on the other hand, even though Conservative opposition to freedom of religion or belief is

on the rise, religious conservatives might nonetheless be persuaded to support it: discrimination, exclusion, and violence are not only harmful to the individuals but are also damaging for societies. Second, they can identify texts in holy books that affirm human dignity and compassion. Third, on the individual level, religious adherents are, in many instances, good at treating persons with care and compassion. Opposition to changing religion was framed in the context of opposition to Western colonial presence; arguments used in earlier times cannot be considered to have similar weight in the 2020s. Kollontai and Lohmann (2023), having presented case studies, offer a prospectus of how religious traditions and secular actors stand to support human rights in constructive partnerships, despite opposition in some religious quarters, the development of religious literacy being their first recommendation; shared by Haynes (2023, 274), even if it is a contribution to overcoming religious and ideological divides rather than a cure for them, but still a necessary part of school education in the US.

For Allgood (2016), ignoring religion in schools is a violation of the public trust. There is ‘an imperative for public school educators to teach about our nation’s religiously diverse people in an academic and profound way in order to mitigate the ramifications of prejudice and discrimination based on religion.’ (p. 284). It requires learning deeply about religious groups without making quick judgements on their rightness or legitimacy, in a classroom climate based on respect. This is demanding but safeguards the religious freedom of all students in the teacher’s charge. For Temperman, also, ways for states and schools not to fall foul of human rights obligations in matters of education, religion and belief include framing a neutral subject on religion in a non-confessional manner, handled by professional educators not religious institutions, as well as opt-out safeguards (2010). Questioning the language of neutrality, however (a starting position cannot be avoided), Jackson (2019) traces how The Council of Europe’s work on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Education has grounded the study of religions in schools firmly in human rights. There is an ‘information-based, impartial and dialogical approach, which aims to give accurate information about religions (and other worldviews) together with opportunities for students to discuss their learning, with other students and with the

teacher. The teacher acts as both provider of accurate information and moderator of dialogue. Teaching and learning methods aim to promote impartiality, rather than detachment or neutrality. Contact with members of religious (and belief) communities is encouraged as a learning resource, with care given to educating all participants about their roles. For example, a representative of a religious community invited to a school to speak, has the role of informant, and must not attempt to persuade students to adopt her position.’ (p. 131). This relates very closely to concerns for human rights, prominently that of freedom of religion or belief.

Amongst defining school and professional factors are context and teacher sensitivity and skill. Writing about secondary schools in Lesotho, Mokotso (2019) presents a case for the integration of RE with citizenship education, involving constructive and civil management of religious plurality to help clarify pupils’ identity and enable their social participation, and this appears to be compatible with the Council of Europe’s approach (see also Fedorov 2022; Pelupessy-Wowor 2016; Jackson and O’Grady 2019; Jackson 2014). A novel contribution to this form of RE comes from Ferreira and Schulze (2016). They comment on how South African RE teachers are unsure how to deal with plurality in multicultural classrooms, and how to avoid divisiveness; in response, they devised a spiritual intelligence programme, which was found to be a way to help meaningful interaction between pupils. Based on the researchers’ view that adolescents must cultivate a holistic outlook on life, including appreciation of diversity, their respondents / pupils were asked how they themselves though they might develop different forms of self-awareness, and when and how they might find deeper meaning through RE.

Finally, in a reminder of the overarching significance of context, Schihalejev (2013) reports her own research on secondary-age pupils in Estonia, against the background of fear in a post-Communist society that RE will attempt to convert pupils to Christianity or have this effect. She finds the opposite to be true, and that those schools that integrate religion into their everyday life, making it more visible and less private, support students’ readiness for respect and tolerance. Students without any study of religion, except for dealing with religion in other subjects, could be detected throughout her questionnaire responses; both those with and without a religious affiliation felt uncomfortable and insecure in encountering a different worldview and

lacked the competence needed for mutual dialogue. RE in secondary schools, on the contrary, made students curious, developed readiness for discussing religious matters, and helped increase students' self-confidence to maintain and express a different opinion. In this respect RE is 'not a threat to freedom but a prospect for it.' (p.33).

Summary

Various key points can be taken from the academic literature survey. Scholarly commentary on the nature of FoRB tends to elaborate human rights documents such as the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights: for instance, to underline how FoRB protects the nonreligious. Still, religion itself is often expressed through culture and a restriction on culture can therefore be a restriction on FoRB. If FoRB manifests, it is as a lived experience; this increasingly includes online experience. Internationally, FoRB violations have increased sharply in the last two decades. State security is needed to uphold FoRB; but equally, engaging in positive relationships with faith communities is necessary to promote state security.

In relation to education, there are sources that refer to how it can reflect or act against FoRB principles, others focused on how to teach and learn about FoRB, and, sometimes, a combination of these aspects. In education and elsewhere in society, FoRB does not support religious causes but protects freedom of choice in religious and nonreligious convictions and practices. Rights are universal and inseparable (e.g. FoRB cannot conflict with freedom of expression or the right to education). The context (e.g. state or school) for FoRB is discussed is significant (e.g. a religion may dominate education in a state, or parents may have chosen a school with a religious character as an expression of their own FoRB). RE should be a right, as should the choice of faith-based education, but any education (RE included) must be religiously pluralistic and founded on respect.

3. Survey of organisations and resources

Context

Having established broad trends on the nature of FoRB and reflected on the universality and inseparability of rights, particularly as they relate to FoRB, the preceding sections of this paper explored the relationship between FoRB and the formal provision of education in general, and between FoRB and RE / R&W as a subject taught to children in schools, in particular.

This review revealed a broad range of considerations which teachers and school leaders might choose to engage with when considering how schools can be places in which FoRB principles might be promoted.

While it is evident that framing those considerations in language consistent with Human Rights education suggests that one approach could be to root work in schools in Human Rights education, the purpose of the following survey is in part to explore whether that is the case. Essentially, what follows attempts to establish which FoRB principles schools and educators are trying to promote and how do they approach that task.

Methodology

So as to map out efforts used and developed by educators to promote FoRB principles in schools, a desk-based search of educational interventions was carried out using the following methods to identify projects and organisations:

- Engagement with Culham St Gabriel's existing networks in the UK (predominantly organisations involved with the promotion of religious education and the public understanding of religion and belief).

- Engagement with wider professional networks (interfaith organisations and those involved at a policy level with FoRB).
- Online search for relevant projects using search terms including: Freedom of Religion or Belief Education; FoRB Education; Article 18 Education; Religion and Belief in the classroom.

In conducting the review, the following primary parameters for inclusion were established:

- The intervention is aimed at school teachers (e.g. teacher training) or is delivered to children in formal educational settings.
- The intervention is being delivered systematically, across a number of schools.
- The intervention could involve teacher training, the development and publication of resources/curricula/lesson plans, or delivery in school by a third party.
- The intervention actively encourages learning about FoRB and FoRB principles.

A secondary search parameter was established on the expectation that the primary search would be unable to identify a significant number of interventions which actively focussed on FoRB and FoRB principles. The terms of this additional search emerged following an analysis of the themes which exclusively FoRB focussed interventions described themselves as exploring. The additional parameter was that:

- The intervention actively encourages learning about FoRB-adjacent themes, including, but not limited to: tackling anti-religious hate (antisemitism, Islamophobia), promoting concepts of inclusive citizenship, promoting intercultural/inter-religious understanding, promoting ideas of tolerance, broad Human Rights education.

A full list of those projects and programs reviewed can be found in Appendix 2. However, in subsequent sections themes are explored based on the approaches taken by those organisations. Inevitably, as the search parameters were loosened, the numbers of interventions being delivered increased and the connection to FoRB became more distant.

It is worth noting that the list in Appendix 2 is not an exhaustive list of interventions which could be captured by the broader search parameters. Indeed, there are a number of ways in which those parameters could be loosened further so as to increase the number of relevant interventions:

- Include FoRB focussed interventions delivered in non-formal learning settings (youth clubs, places of worship, sports clubs etc).
- Include in-school interventions designed to promote broad understanding of Human Rights and associated principles.

Furthermore, the search did not capture the work of individual teachers delivering lessons in their schools which encouraged learning about FoRB and FoRB principles. There is anecdotal evidence to suggest that certainly in the UK, there are teachers designing and implementing lessons to promote those outcomes.

Search results

The search generated a very small number of educational interventions being delivered anywhere which articulate their objectives and impact explicitly in relation to FoRB principles. Using the broader search parameter, the search yielded a modest number of educational interventions geographically clustered in the UK, the EU and wider European area. There were also smaller numbers of initiatives based in the US and also in Israel. Future research might be given to considering what educational interventions might look like in other parts of the world if they exist.

An initial analysis of those interventions found revealed three broad modalities of delivery:

- Teacher training programs.
- Resources developed by educators and made freely available for use by teachers in their classrooms.
- Workshops delivered by external facilitators in schools and during regular school hours.

FoRB-focused interventions

Only two interventions were identified which made explicit reference to FoRB in their objectives and impact. They were Hardwired's Conceptual Change Pedagogy delivered in schools in Iraq, and the Culham St Gabriel's Primary School Project delivered in England, and each project took a different approach to articulating the FoRB principles which their intervention sought to promote.

Hardwired, an American organisation which works on issues of religion and freedom, has a track-record of working in Iraq and the Middle East and North Africa. Their work in schools focusses on delivering training to help teachers explore issues of freedom with their students. Their work is rooted in human rights, peace education and principles of pluralism. The lessons and curricula which they develop for use by teachers encourage the use of stories and role-play to enable children to learn about FoRB principles. The teachers with whom Hardwired work are not specialist religious education teachers.

Hardwired articulates the principles which they seek to promote amongst participating children as:

- An awareness of the attributes of pluralist societies.
- An ability to recognise instances of intolerance and to identify root causes.

- An ability to articulate the constitutional and human rights which people have.
- An ability to evaluate their own perceptions and attitudes of others.
- An ability to engage with people from different backgrounds and beliefs.
- An ability to exhibit empathy and respect for people who are different from them.

As explored earlier in this paper, Hardwired's approach draws on existing literature relating to Conceptual Change approaches to education. The approach also makes use of the language of Human Rights and constitutional rights in articulating the FoRB principles being promoted.

Culham St Gabriel's Primary School Project worked with primary school teachers in England to develop classroom contextualised lesson plans to explore FoRB principles. Participating teachers were supported to design lesson plans which reflected the different ways pupils approach learning and to identify resources to stimulate discussion and learning. Through this process teachers identified methods (including philosophical enquiry and role-play) and resources (predominantly story books) to support the learning. To aid the process, Culham St Gabriel's produced a Learning Outcomes document which describes the FoRB principles their program seeks to promote. A full articulation of the learning outcomes can be found in Appendix 1, however, the principles can be summarised as follows:

- An ability to talk about freedom, what it means to be free, what it means for others to be free, and what it might mean or feel like to have those freedoms restricted.
- An ability to talk about their own religion or belief, an opportunity to experience ways in which other people explore and express meaning, and, to learn about where and how their religion or belief may be different to others.

- An opportunity to learn about Human Rights, that they are for everyone everywhere and that FoRB is a human right.

Reflections on methodologies

Given the small number of interventions identified, it is difficult to attribute too high a level of significance to the analysis, nonetheless, there are similarities in the approaches taken by these two organisations.

In terms of methodology, both organisations have focused on working with teachers. This is as opposed to sending trainers into schools to deliver workshops or making resources freely available which were the other broad modalities of delivery identified in the search phase.

The choice to work directly with teachers in part reflects the nature of the two organisations (Culham St Gabriel's and Hardwired) but also could reflect an awareness that FoRB principles may be unfamiliar to teachers and educators. Therefore, rather than producing resources which are freely available, organisers have understood that if their approaches are to be successful and have a long-term impact, it will require teachers and school leaders to assimilate new information and concepts so as to inform classroom culture. This approach also gives greater scope to the individual teachers to adapt their approaches in response to their students and schools, contextualising approaches, and stimulus materials accordingly.

Equally, while not an active consideration for the two organisations identified in the search, the use of external facilitators to deliver classroom interventions adds cost to an intervention impacting on its sustainability.

Both organisers emphasised the use of creative and diverse methodologies to encourage and enable learning. Across the two interventions, methodologies delivered in the classroom included:

- Whole-class, and small group discussions using various media (including watching videos and engaging with Human Rights agreements, documents and frameworks, also known as instruments, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, National Constitutions etc) as stimuli.
- Classroom discussions stimulated using a Philosophy for Children² approach.
- Role play.
- Comprehension activities using non-FoRB focussed stories.
- Comprehension activities using FoRB focussed stories.

This is likely to reflect an awareness by many educators that using creative methods is an effective way to encourage children, including very young children as in the case of the intervention supported by Culham St Gabriel's to engage with complex ideas and concepts. Furthermore, this heterogeneous approach to pedagogy is likely a reflection of the choice to empower teachers to take ownership of the learning process as opposed to an external organisation applying a methodology with only a limited understanding of the classroom context.

Reflections on principles

The organisers of both these interventions found that promoting FoRB principles in their schools required enabling children to understand that Human Rights exist, and that their choice to have a religion or belief is a Human Right. Children were supported to learn that Human Rights are universal, and that they apply to everyone, everywhere. Furthermore, they were supported to learn that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, UDHR, existed, and that FoRB is one of the Rights which the UDHR recognises and seeks to provide protection for.

² See for example <https://www.saperc.org.uk/>

In different contexts organisers chose to refer to other human rights agreements, frameworks and documents, known collectively as instruments, beyond the UDHR; specifically in Iraq the Iraqi Constitution, and in the UK the Equality Act (2010) and the Human Rights Act (1998). Additionally, organisers saw it as an important FoRB principle that children be able to talk about concepts of freedom: their own and others. Moreover, it was also seen as important that children should have an opportunity to understand what restrictions on those freedoms might look and feel like, for themselves and for others. There was also a sense (certainly in the work which Culham St Gabriel's developed) that children should begin to think about the role which they might have in addressing violations.

Both organisations found that helping children to talk about their own beliefs, and in doing so to think about how their beliefs might differ from those held by other people, was a FoRB principle. Furthermore, organisers found that it was a FoRB principle to encourage children to feel comfortable with those differences, and to be able to talk about them with respect and sensitivity.

Both organisations also articulate ideas of enabling critical thinking and self-reflection amongst children as being a FoRB principle which should be promoted in schools. Many classroom interventions in the UK, and indeed in other parts of the world, will use this language to describe the impact which they are trying to achieve. Therefore, it is worth further investigation to understand more fully what is meant when talking about critical thinking. For instance, it could be a reflection on school contexts whereby sadly not all are spaces in which critical thinking is the norm (perhaps due to external interference, or differences in teacher training regimes), but it could also refer to the idea that these skills (i.e. critical thinking) be explicitly explored and applied within the context of particular curriculum subjects (for instance, as it relates to FoRB perhaps in religious education, citizenship or ethics classes). It is certainly the case in the UK that teachers see RE as the subject in the curriculum which lends itself particularly readily to the promotion of critical thinking and self-reflection.

FoRB-adjacent interventions

As noted earlier, a secondary search parameter was established on the assumption that there would be a very limited number of interventions being delivered in schools narrowly focussed on promoting FoRB principles and articulating the impact in those terms.

This secondary set extended the search to include interventions aimed at tackling religious hate (antisemitism, Islamophobia), promoting concepts of inclusive citizenship, promoting intercultural/inter-religious understanding and promoting ideas of tolerance.

Anti-religious hate interventions

There was a cluster of interventions whose primary goal was to tackle anti-religious hate in schools. Primarily these interventions were focussed on tackling anti-Semitism (as in the case of the Anne Frank Trust and the Holocaust Education Trust) and Islamophobia (as in the case of Remembering Srebrenica). One organisation (Solutions Not Sides) delivered workshops which explored the historic and on-going Israeli-Palestinian conflict to challenge anti-Semitism and Islamophobia. There was an example (Facing History and Ourselves) of a broader approach which sought to enable children to be equipped with the skills to stand up to hate and bigotry. There was also one example of an organisation teaching about anti-Semitism and Islamophobia alongside one another (Stand Up! Education). There was also an example of an organisation that had a suite of interventions to tackle anti-religious hate (Belieforama). Other organisations positioned their anti-religious hate interventions within a wider body of anti-racism work (see for instance ZARA Training).

Organisations delivering anti-religious hate interventions made use of the full range of modalities of delivery identified: teacher training, freely available resources and external facilitator delivered workshops. Most of the organisations identified made use

of historical events to teach about present day instances of hate and used a range of teaching resources to do so.

With one exception, it is not clear whether organising organisations made use of Human Rights frameworks or other instruments to address anti-religious hate. The one organisation which did (Stand Up! Education) used the UK Equalities Act to frame their workshop, presenting anti-religious hate within the context of existing legal frameworks and protections.

Promoting inclusive citizenship and broad human rights education

There was a cluster of organisations working to develop inclusive citizenship education, including an emphasis on supporting children to develop positive appreciation for diversity and respect for others. These organisations (Adyan and Arigatou) focussed on working with teachers and developing resources for use in schools. They also sought to connect their interventions more explicitly to academic thinking and approaches to education. Furthermore, one of the organisations actively framed the work that they were doing in relation to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, explicitly connecting their work to a Human Rights framework.

The survey revealed that there were initiatives (most notably UNICEF's Rights Respecting Schools Award) which sought to embed Human Rights awareness and education in schools. Such programmes made use of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (which includes Article 14 whose language echoes that of Article 18). In doing so, they sought to encourage awareness that children have rights to be respected and that doing so gives children the best chance to lead happy, healthy lives and to be responsible, active citizens.

Promoting interreligious and intercultural understanding

A cluster of organisations was identified whose work is to promote ideas relating to interreligious and intercultural understanding. These organisations strongly rely on

concepts such as Contact Theory³ to give a conceptual framing to their work. These organisations (the Faith & Belief Forum, The Linking Network, The Rossing Center) train teachers, develop resources and deliver external facilitator led workshops to enable children to develop an understanding of the lived experiences of people different to themselves, with an emphasis on religious and cultural difference.

It is not clear whether any of these organisations made use of, or referred to, Human Rights frameworks or other legal instruments, to frame their interventions to promote interreligious and intercultural understanding.

Other noteworthy interventions

In conducting the survey, noteworthy interventions were identified which do not fall into the parameters of this paper.

Most notably, the FoRB Learning Platform works in the context of informal education settings. The FoRB Learning Platform provides training and learning resources for those interested in the promotion of FoRB principles in their communities. The resources make use of methods familiar to non-formal educators, encouraging the use of role-play, small group discussions, conflict analysis and peace-building tools to the promotion and protection of FoRB principles in local communities. The approach is framed by the human right to freedom of religion or belief for all, as given in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

A set of interventions which this review began to identify and which merit further exploration were those being delivered by museums. For instance, there are various museums across Europe in particular, which highlight the experiences of minority communities and which offer learning opportunities for school children. For instance,

³ Contact Theory, a concept developed by George Allport in 1954, articulates that contact between people from different groups can, under the right conditions, reduce prejudice. There is however, also a body of evidence which suggests, that if the right conditions are not in place, inter-group contact can be counter-productive for reducing prejudices.

museums such as the Jewish Museum of Greece, the National Sikh Museum and the Migration Museum (both in the UK) provide educational opportunities to learn about the experiences of particular minority communities. In doing so, they provide opportunities to explore FoRB-adjacent themes.

As with those organisations delivering FoRB-focussed interventions, it was common for those working in FoRB-adjacent spaces to articulate ideas of enabling critical thinking and self-reflection amongst children as being a critical to their over-arching aims (tackling anti-religious hate, promoting inclusive citizenship, promoting interreligious and intercultural understanding). For the same reasons as explored in the earlier section further investigation would be helpful to understand more fully what is meant when referring to critical thinking.

Summary

The search of organisations delivering in-school FoRB education initiatives reveals some clear points. Firstly, FoRB Education requires that learners have opportunities to reflect on their own religion or belief identities, to think about how they might differ from those that other people may hold, to feel comfortable with those differences, and to be able to talk about them with respect and sensitivity. Secondly, FoRB Education requires that learners are aware of FoRB as a Human Right as articulated in Human Rights frameworks, documents and agreements. Beyond that FoRB Education and FoRB Adjacent Education can embrace a variety of pedagogical approaches, reflecting the experiences and confidences of teachers and the contexts in which they teach.

4. Conclusion

The review appears to bear out our previous thought that there are no studies of education for FoRB-related principles in schools, in practice, even though there is plenty of coverage of the principles themselves and there is increasing appetite from states to envisage a role for schools to promote FoRB principles. Therefore, the gap we are seeking to fill is wide, though the effort is supported by a wealth of background research and discussion.

The review has identified various issues for FoRB-related education, including religious education or religion and worldviews education. One is whether implementing FoRB principles across the religious education or religion and worldviews curriculum means that human rights must be seen as the basis for this curriculum, such that the subject is a branch of human rights education. Relatedly, another is how this would square with a religious character of a school, whether there are problems of compatibilities of value sets, or e.g. a Christian-based advocacy of human rights education can be upheld. More conservative forms of religion may be represented in the school or other community, or in the religious education or religion and worldviews curriculum. If these religious individuals or groups are less supportive of the framework of human rights, then avoiding their marginalisation, or the appearance of it, should be a matter to consider. In this respect, ensuring that methods of learning reflect a human rights emphasis may help, and links with emphases on reflexivity or positionality in a religion and worldviews approach, paralleled by Rea-Ramirez and Ramirez's work on conceptual change theory (2017). A further question is whether there are, additionally, points on the curriculum where issues of FoRB can be treated specifically, such as cases of controversy over visible expression of religious or other identity factors. In these cases, there will be professional issues of age-readiness and sensitivity to manage, and how the wider school community is brought on board with these; and throughout the age-range, there is the problem of how FoRB principles are respected during pupils'

online experiences. More generally, if a school or other organisation seeks to reflect human rights values right across its life, it should therefore look at how members (e.g. staff, parents, and pupils) understand this aim, and offer them scope to contribute to its fulfilment. In a similar vein, the policy of the school or organisation regarding visible expression of religious or other identity factors should be articulated as for the good of all and have the support of all.

Furthermore, and as noted elsewhere, given the increasing willingness of governments and international organisations to openly articulate a role for schools in the promotion of FoRB, there is scope for future conversations between education professionals and those seeking to promote FoRB. Whilst this review has not taken a normative position, the issues which it has highlighted could feature in such conversations. It might be onerous for a school, other organisation, or project to take on all these issues at once. However, depending on past practice or context, any of them could be a first focus for professional discussion and planning, with others temporarily held in the background and introduced at later stages. That it may be challenging to take up the highlighted issues is not doubted, but to the extent that this review does reflect a normative position, it is that addressing FoRB-related matters is necessary for the health of education systems and societies.

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Appendix 1

The Culham St Gabriel's FoRB learning outcomes

Children aged 4-5

Children have an opportunity to talk about freedom (what it means to be free and what it means for other people to be free) and their own religion or belief. They experience (through all their senses) ways in which people explore and express meanings (e.g. using symbols, stories and rituals). They know about where and how their religion or belief may be similar and different to others, and are beginning to understand that difference.

Children aged 5-7

Children acquire some knowledge of different religions and beliefs and learn that we are all different and sensitive to that difference. They know that there are Human Rights. They can express what it would feel like if they were prevented from expressing their religion or belief for some reason. They understand that they and others have the right to freedom to express themselves about their religion or belief and that others have this same right and are respectful of that fact.

Children aged 7-9

Children begin to know what Human Rights are and that freedom of religion or belief is a fundamental Human Right and that Human Rights are for all. They acquire knowledge of different religions and beliefs and learn that we are all different. They are aware of and sensitive to that difference. Increasingly, they recognise that families, communities and wider society are shaped by religion or belief. They begin to give some examples of how they may promote and protect Human Rights relating to religion or belief.

Children aged 9-11

Children begin to understand that Human Rights affect how we experience the world and that some people, in some parts of the world, do not enjoy the same Rights as they do. They begin to understand that this extends to the Right associated with religion or belief. Children have some understanding of the role everyone can have in promoting and protecting Human Rights, in doing so they develop a wider Human Rights vocabulary. Children give example of ways in which the fundamental rights associated with religion or belief might be violated. Through a variety of sources, they know about how they and others might experience these violations. They begin to understand the role they can play in promoting and protecting the fundamental rights associated with religion or belief.

Children aged 11-14

Children use a range of methods to research and explain different dimensions of the Human Right associated with religion and belief. They can describe, explain and analyse real-world situations in which the Right is being protected, promoted or violated. They can make insightful reflections on the tensions between the rights associated with religion and belief and other Human Rights (including, but not limited to, gender, sexuality and the rights to education). In doing so, they participate in challenging experiences of debate, dialogue, imagination and encounter, and draw on their own experiences of religion or belief to come to informed judgements on contested issues. They are able to express those judgements in a variety of forms (in writing, orally, graphically and so on), and can confidently express their role in promoting and protecting the fundamental rights associated with religion or belief.

Appendix 2

Weblinks and organisation portraits

In addition to the work of [Culham St Gabriel's](#) and [Hardwired](#) cited earlier, the following is a list of FoRB-adjacent interventions:

Adyan – Contested Narratives in Citizenship Education

Based in Lebanon, Adyan's Contested Narratives in Citizenship Education programme seeks to stimulate innovative learning and teaching practices by developing pedagogical models that encourage self-reflection, awareness of power relations, and critical thinking when teaching contested narratives. The aim is to strengthen the teachers' ability to create an inclusive learning environment by addressing stereotypes and highlighting common vulnerability. The program includes the development of digital teaching materials and a virtual exchange format for participating teachers.

Arigatou International – Learning to Live Together Program

The Learning to Live Together Program applies Ethics Education for Children in the classroom to promote values and ethics for children and young people within the framework of the child's right to education as stated in the UN Convention on the Rights to the Child. The Learning to Live Together Program contributes to the development of life skills that enhances children's ethical reflections and values and their capacity to make positive contributions to their societies. The program enhances children's critical thinking and ability to make ethical decisions; fosters spiritual development; nurtures children's ability to appreciate diversity and respect others; and empowers children to contribute to their communities together.

Educationforpeace.com – a selection of activities and resources curated for use by teachers in schools (no evaluation or reports).

Faith and Belief Forum

The Faith & Belief Forum works to tackle religious intolerance in society. The organisation takes a skills-based approach to this work, recognising that young people and teachers need to develop the skills and confidences to navigate culturally and religiously diverse communities. Their workshops, teaching resources and trainings place an emphasis on understanding religious and cultural differences and identities.

Anne Frank Trust

Rooted in the story of Anne Frank, the Anne Frank Trust run school workshops to challenge all forms of prejudice. The Anne Frank story is used to help young people understand antisemitism; they then broaden the learning to include understanding prejudice of all kinds today. A peer education model is used to empower young people to share their learning across their school.

Facing History and Ourselves

Facing History & Ourselves uses lessons of history to challenge teachers and their students to stand up to bigotry and hate. In the UK, they seek to advance the education of children and young people in human rights and good citizenship by engaging them in an examination of racism, prejudice and antisemitism in order to promote the development of a more human and informed citizenry. They also assist teachers to develop curricula designed to help young people link events and trends in history to issues of individual choice and social justice.

Rossing Center

Based in Israel, the Foundations for Partnership program enables school students to deepen their acquaintance with their religious culture and tradition (Judaism, Christianity or Islam) and to expand their knowledge of the other's religious culture and tradition. The program aims to promote understanding, respect and intercultural tolerance, and encourage the development of social and interpersonal skills in a multicultural society. The program seeks to combat prejudice and stereotypes towards the 'other' through the twinning of Jewish-Arab school that directly involves head teachers, teachers and pupils.

Stand Up! Education

Stand Up! Education deliver workshops to young people in schools about tolerance and responsibility by framing the conversation around the Equality Act (2010) and British Values. The programme emphasizes the importance of British values, clearly defines racism, antisemitism, anti-Muslim hate, and other forms of discrimination. Additionally, the program introduces the fundamental principles of Judaism and Islam and addresses common stereotypes. It presents reliable and verified statistics regarding hate crimes. Through case studies and real-life incidents, the programme sensitively explores the experiences of young people. Furthermore, it equips young people with the necessary skills and tools to responsibly challenge hate crimes.

The Linking Network

The Linking Network (TLN) seeks to advance equality and diversity and religious and racial harmony by raising awareness of these issues amongst school children and teachers. By linking two schools with different characters, the TLN's programs seek to foster understanding between people from diverse backgrounds. They also provide support and encouragement to teachers (through training and CPD) to enhance the understanding of identity, equality, and diversity.

Holocaust Education Trust

The Holocaust Education Trust works to promote religious and racial harmony, equality, diversity and citizenship in the UK. It does this by advancing education about the Holocaust and its contemporary relevance to antisemitism and other forms of prejudice and hate. It does this by providing teacher training, free classroom teaching resources and enhanced learning opportunities for students.

Remembering Srebrenica

Remembering Srebrenica takes the Srebrenica genocide as a starting point from which to discuss the key requirements for building stronger, more resilient societies. Remembering Srebrenica provides free classroom teaching resources for teachers to use to explore the possible stages of genocide, helping young people learn to identify and challenge issues which may cause division in our communities.

ZARA Training

Based in Vienna, Austria, ZARA monitors reports of racism across Austria. In addition ZARA delivers preventive and awareness-raising activities. This includes trainings and workshops in schools on the topics of discrimination, civil courage, digital civil courage, racism and equal treatment. These workshops enable recognition of diversity, engagement with prejudices and visualization of discrimination and institutional racism.

Belieforama

This project supports individuals and organisations seeking to make a positive long-term impact on religious diversity and belief issues. Trainings offered to teachers and educators include: Religious Diversity & Anti-discrimination training, Overcoming Antisemitism, and, Overcoming Islamophobia. They also deliver a training called 'A Classroom of Difference' which enhances the awareness and skills of the school community to be able to embrace diversity, confront discrimination, and create inclusive learning environments where all pupils can succeed.

FoRB Learning Platform

The FoRB Learning Platform provides courses, learning resources and training materials for individuals, communities, organisations and decision-makers. This includes resources suited to personal study, staff training and for educators and facilitators to use with groups of young people and adults. The resources have been developed in partnership with a wide range of secular and faith-based organisations that seek to promote the human right to freedom of religion or belief for all, as given in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

UNICEF Rights Respecting Schools Award (RRSA)

The RRSA works with teachers and Senior School Leaders in the UK to embed processes into the practices of individual schools. Through the Award, children, teachers and the whole school community learn about the rights of children and think about how to put them into practice every day together. RRSA provides training and resources for schools resulting in a positive impact whereby: children are healthier and happier; children feel safe; children have

better relationships; and children become active and involved in school life and the wider world.

Solutions Not Sides

Solutions Not Sides delivers workshops in UK schools to provide humanising encounters, present diverse narratives and support children to learn critical-thinking tools in order to empower young people with the knowledge, empathy and skills to promote dialogue and conflict resolution, and to challenge prejudice in the UK.

About this paper

This report was commissioned by Culham St Gabriel's Trust following the delivery of its Primary FoRB Project in 2023. Culham St Gabriel's is an endowed charitable foundation based in England. The trust's vision is for a broad-based, critical, and reflective education in religion and worldviews contributing to a well-informed, respectful, and open society, including FoRB.

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