

The world. just last
june in 2017 was



The question as to whether or not religious instruction and practise should be removed from the public school curriculum is something that is newly being debated all around the world. Just last June in 2017 was The Nigerian Education Department debating at the removal of Christian studies being merged with Islamic Studies in public schools due to parents voicing their complaints about Islamic education and instruction being taught to their Christian-identifying children and vice versa.

Places in Europe are also considering removing religion altogether and replacing the subject with something that teaches morals and values instead. Some education officers believe that religious instruction and studies should be removed from the curriculum altogether while others believe that religion is important and should be taught everywhere in public schools, regardless of a child's' religion. The education board of nations, students and religious educators all over the world feel differently towards this idea. Their contrasting beliefs and perspectives on whether or not Religious instruction and study should be maintained as apart of the educational public school curriculum will be evaluated. David Gregory McAfee's article" Why We Should Teach Religion to Kids" is essentially a watered down telling of his beliefs as an author with 6 books under his belt at the age of twenty-eight, as an atheist and as a critic of biblical literalism. He quite clearly has picked his side with books he's written such as Disproving Christianity: Refuting the World's Most Followed Religion and Mom, Dad, I'm an Atheist: The Guide to Coming Out as a Non-believer. Alongside book writing, he's a journalist with multiple articles posted in reputable online magazines and journals such as the LA Times, CNN and

Huffington Post. You could describe David as unapologetically biased and headstrong as his writing has been extended from guides and evaluations of multiple religions to children's books; *The Belief Book* and *The Book of Gods* both aim to explain to children what religion is, why people believe in Gods and teach religious diversity.

Despite his strong stance on atheism, his article uploaded on The Richard Dawkins Foundation website highlights a perspective that is not biased. As he doesn't feel that any one particular religion should be taught, he feels that all should be taught to children from a young age. Why? Because it is the equivalent of satisfying a child's curiosity surrounding subjects such as "history or politics." Children are curious and eager to learn from a young age, teaching them a variety of religions demonstrates the diversity and a contrast of values that generations before them have curated and abided by. The key to teaching religion to youngsters, in David's opinion is to highlight that there is no superior religion. Making children believe that there is a religion of more worth and superiority is where the danger lies. David highlights that in the United States, his home country, has upheld religious teaching in the public education sector for many years but in the end, students "learn very little about the phenomenon of religion from traditional educational outlets, and instead adhere to whatever faith they were born into out of enculturation and ignorance." This displays that the United States is not taking the teaching of the course seriously.

If this is already the case, then what is the point of implementing such a subject as apart of the curriculum. He then goes on to discuss the findings of survey results conducted in the United States of America (Pew Forum on <https://assignbuster.com/the-world-just-last-june-in-2017-was/>

Religion & Public Life) and the United Kingdom (2008 European Social Survey). The Pew Forum revealed that “ 78.

4 percent of 35, 000 or more respondents identified specifically as Christians — with only 6. 3 percent declaring they were secular and unaffiliated with a religion.” In contrast, the 2008 European Social Survey revealed 52. 68 percent selected ‘ No Religion’ when asked: “ Which religion or denomination do you belong to at present?” The defining reason for the difference in results is down to the style of education used to teach religion. In Europe, religion is taught from a more academic and educational perspective which aims to show diversity and history of religion rather than to brainwash. Those that choose a denomination have been influenced by their upbringing which is why, by the time a child can logically reason and make a judgement on religion, the decision has already been made for them.

David’s conclusion is not that religious education should be extracted from the curriculum, but rather, the way it is taught should be changed. Also coming from the western, English-speaking world with a contrasting ideology of religious studies and education’s place in the curriculum is Irish Education Policy Officer for Atheist Ireland Jane Donnelly. Written in Ireland’s popular news site, The Journal, She defends Irish school student Nathan Young who complained to the Irish Human Rights Commission because “ his human rights were breached by compulsory prayer services” while advocating for the introduction of schools run on a secular basis rather than run by the Church in order to end the practice of religious instruction and education in primary schools in Ireland. Jane, like David also has strong ties to Atheism and Education. Though she identifies as an Atheist, her aim is not to teach in

schools that there is no such thing or concept as God, despite that being her and the organisation she belongs to beliefs. Instead, her idea is to introduce a secular school in comparison to an atheist school or normal state schools that enforce tasks such as daily prayer and compulsory religious education.

Essentially, she wants to take and apply what is being done in rest of Europe, approaching religious education from a purely academic approach. Similar to previously mentioned David G. McAfee's children's' books which teach children the different types of Gods and Religions that people follow and believe in. Essentially, leaving the task of religious education up to parents so as to reduce cases from both parents and students alike. Jane's reasons for her beliefs in a secular basis state-run school are difficult to disagree with, she simply states that it benefits society if all its children are taught together which is true as the concept does not advocate for one religion, in particular, creates tolerance and educates young minds in order to help children better understand other. It also gives power to the children as they can decide what they can do with the information they have learnt rather than being forced to partake in an activity that could potentially be against their morals and beliefs. Secondly, Donnelly believes that through a secular school, students human rights in the education sector can be monitored and controlled so that everyone is comfortable and respected.

While the idea of educational neutrality is grand, Ireland still has a far way to go. There is no separation of church and state and while the Irish Constitution has made it compulsory for students to have a basic understanding of morals " the state only funds moral education based on religious values," hence enforcing Christianity and its practices onto Irish

students regardless of their faith and neglecting their human rights. The United Nations the Council of Europe have expressed their disagreement with such a practise five times.

The Equal Status Act which provides exemptions from religious institutions but only to “organs of the state.” Unfortunately, Ireland is not an “organ of state.” This all demonstrates the lack of tolerance and space for growth in terms of religion and ideology. There is clearly a lack of understanding of religious diversity. Perhaps in a country like Ireland where is no room for any other religion, a secular-basis style of education should be implemented whilst doing away with purely Christian instructions and teachings. Nigeria in June of 2017 also heavily looked into the removal of religious studies, specifically Christian Religious Studies. Instead, it will be merged with Islamic and Arabic Studies.

This has caused quite a reaction. And NGO, Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria, HURIWA fears that this will cause an “inter-religious crisis in Nigeria.” Others feel as though it is a biased act constructed by the Educational Minister as it complies with his personal religious beliefs. Along with that, the act of merging the two religions into one subject essentially goes against Section 1 and 2 in which is stated that no person attending any place of education shall be required to receive religious instruction ... religion not approved by his parent or guardian.

The HURIWA essentially perceives the merging of the two subjects as one that “shoves” religion down the throats of South African students. This ideology dramatically contrasts with religious studies that are taught in the

Western world in which it is typically taught alongside, differences, similarities and all. If other countries have used the approach of teaching multiple religions side by side, then surely this accusation is rather biased. The desire to retain ownership of a sector in education exceeds the actual benefits of the placement of the subject.

Apart from the merge, they've also made the Arabic/Islamic subject compulsory. Many have expressed their distaste towards this decision as currently there is already a low number of French teachers and if one is not doing French then they must take Arabic and Islamic Studies. HURIWA feel as though this is pushing a religion onto students whose minds, value and judgement systems are still developing. It would, for Christian students be as good as an “ attempt to impose one religion as a state religion against the constitutional provision in section 10.” All these contrasting perspectives have strongly influenced my personal opinion. The United States of America, Ireland and Nigeria have all developed differently in terms of education and religious identification. Some faster and slower than others.

Due to this, I find the question of completely removing religious instruction and education altogether would be too harsh of a suggestion. This is because the entire world works on religious, there are completely Islamic and Christian countries alongside countries that identify with no religion. Instead of completely abolishing the subject, educating children under the public school system about all religions, their history and development, so that no one is forced to accommodate to one sole religion that is not theirs becomes fair.

It would create tolerance and answer curious minds. It would also help humans become more empathetic and understanding of one another better. It would keep religious educators and parents happy, as children's right to education on values and morals are not being taken away and parents will not feel as though their children are being forced to learn and participate in religious activities that do not reflect their personal beliefs. That being said, I also believe that introducing a separate class on teaching morals and values for the 21st century would also be helpful. Looking at religion from an academic perspective rather than something to take advice from would be unwise as not all religions follow instructions that are suited for the modern day. While millennials are still the least religious generation it does not mean that this is the time to get rid off religious studies as we are currently living in a world that is more diverse than it has ever been before. We should embrace that rather than abolish the whole concept altogether, although some countries may be prepared to let go of the subject and practise as it is not prominent in their lifestyle or decision-making.

That is not to say that this is the correct solution, more research is required to come to an absolute conclusion.