

Measuring religious tolerance among final year education students

The birth of a questionnaire

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Abstract

Given the fact that most societies worldwide are currently suffering from (serious) incidents symptomatic of religious intolerance, and since education can be regarded as one of the main instruments that society has at its disposal to combat this vice, it was decided to construct a questionnaire with which to measure the degree of religious tolerance prevalent among final year undergraduate students in education, that is, young people on the threshold of entering the teaching profession. The article begins with an outline of the problem of religious intolerance that many societies have to cope with. It then continues to discuss the “phenomenon” of religious tolerance, and after arriving at a working definition of tolerance describes how the proposed questionnaire was constructed and validated. The article concludes with an invitation to interested parties to join the authors in administering the questionnaire in their own institutions of teacher education, wherever they are.

Keywords Tolerance, religious freedom, questionnaire construction, religious diversity, human rights, social justice.

1. The need to attend to the problem of (religious) intolerance

According to Furedi (2012: 31), tolerance “sustains life itself” in that it makes difference possible; difference, in turn, makes tolerance necessary. The notion of tolerance was developed to allow the free expression of opinions, beliefs and behaviour associated with the exercise of individual conscience. Tolerance, therefore, is intimately connected to the affirmation of the most basic dimension of freedom – the freedom of belief and conscience.

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From recent observational and journalistic evidence, as well as from our scholarly interpretations of such evidence it would seem that the form of tolerance that Furedi is referring to tends to be categorically renounced by individuals intent on the realization of various forms of political or religious ideals. Experience furthermore proves that such individuals often congregate in collective movements that share the same fundamentalist belief matrix. This means that both the intent and incidence of their collective religious intolerant behaviour gains exponentially in terms of its threat potential. At present, one of the principal ways in which evidence of religious intolerant behaviour gets distributed around the globe, is that of video material. It gets transmitted via the Internet and has since been labelled as a new journalistic genre, namely “the terror video genre” (<http://21stcenturywire.com/2015/02/17/libya-egypt-and-isis-could-world-war-three-start-with-a-video>).

Posted online via IS-connected social channels, recent video evidence suggests serious human rights abuses carried out by, for example, ISIS in territories under its control in Syria and Iraq, and by Boko Haram in Nigeria and elsewhere in Africa. Besides single as well as mass executions, these videos also depict scenes of abduction, rape, slavery and even crucifixions (<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/09/08/return-war>). The following recent examples attest to this:

In September 2013, Boko Haram stormed an agricultural school in Nigeria and killed 50 male students. In April 2014 they killed over 75 civilians in twin bomb blasts and in May 2014 they abducted 200 Christian school girls from the South of Nigeria in order to trade them for captured Boko Haram fighters (Liz, 2015: no page number).

On 21 October 2014, the Israeli National News Channel *Arutz Sheva* aired a video that originated from ISIS-controlled Syria. The video shows a woman being stoned to death by her own father, after being accused of adultery (Soffer, 2014: no page number).

On 16 February 2015, a video that was posted online via IS-connected social channels, shows how 21 Egyptian Coptic Christians were slaughtered by ISIS militants on the beach in Al-Our, a farming community in Egypt’s Minya province, situated about 150 miles south of Cairo (Henningsen, 2015: no page number).

On 10 March 2015, a video that was posted online via IS-connected social channels (the latest in a long string of garish footage), depicts a young child executing a man that ISIS claims was an Israeli spy. In the video, the man is kneeling on the ground with an adult militant and a young boy standing behind him. The adult then commands the child to kill the man with a gunshot to the forehead. The child then shoots the man twice more on the ground (Ware, 2015: no page number).

Similarly, a young Sudanese woman was condemned to death by the Muslim government because she was found guilty of heresy in that she committed herself

to her mother's Christian faith and not to her father's Muslim faith. (The sentence was later rescinded, and then overturned when she was again arrested for the same "crime".) These incidences, and also those catalogued below, are proof that religious intolerance (and other forms of intolerance, including cultural and political) is rife in this modern day and age.

Using experiential interpretivism as methodological approach, it would seem that at least one common feature of these kinds of religious intolerant behaviour is the cry for authenticity by groups of people (e.g. Boko Haram and ISIS) who might have lost their faith in the secular ruling elites and Western philosophies and ideologies such as Marxism-Leninism, liberalism, and secularism. There seem to be deliberate, organized and conscious efforts of members of particular religious societies to construct a more satisfactory religious reality and, especially, an *alternative*. In other words, fundamentalist religious groups such as Boko Haram and ISIS seem to question the existing political order, as a result of which they then rise up as rival powers with rival divine missions of drastic and violent (religious) transformation (cf. Coolsaet, 2011: *passim*, Mohanty, 2012: *passim* and Hassan, 2013: 2).

The next section of this article contains a catalogue of various forms of violence and conflict in the world today which attests to the fact that even though tolerance is deemed as one of the most important preconditions for peace, social justice and might hold certain consequences for people's respect for the social contract, many individuals and groups do not accept this as an ideal, and are prepared to be highly intolerant in their aspirations to attain their own (religious, cultural or political) ideals. After having attested to the need for research into the problem of tolerance in that section, the article goes on to outline our understanding of what tolerance is and what it entails. The third and main section of the article discusses how we developed an instrument for measuring tolerance in education, particularly among teacher education students in their final year of undergraduate study. We not only show how we developed the questionnaire, but also validated it by inviting different groups of students, from different continents, to respond to it and by statistically processing the results. The article ends with a brief discussion of further possibilities that could be pursued with this questionnaire, and with an invitation to teacher educators worldwide, in as many countries and linguistic media as possible, to collaborate with us in the application of the questionnaire. Based on the interesting results that emerged already in the validation phase of the questionnaire, the worldwide application of the questionnaire holds great promise for rather interesting findings.

2. Violence, conflict and religious intolerance around the world

In recent years, schools and education authorities worldwide have been paying an increasing amount of attention to the current rise in acts of intolerance, violence,

terrorism, xenophobia, aggressive nationalism, racism, anti-Semitism, exclusion, marginalization and discrimination directed against national, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities, refugees, migrant workers, immigrants and vulnerable groups within societies, as well as acts of violence and intimidation committed against individuals exercising their freedom of opinion and expression (UNESCO, 1995:2; cf. also Potgieter, Van der Walt & Wolhuter, 2014:1). These examples of intolerant human behaviour threaten the consolidation of peace and democracy, both nationally and internationally (UNESCO, 1995:2). Despite unparalleled advances in almost every field of human endeavour, especially technology, our streets still abound with the hungry and homeless, and violence and war still continue to plague us (Olthuis, 2012:2/7). It is therefore of particular significance that the Norwegian Nobel Committee had decided on 10 October 2014 to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2014 to Kailash Satyarthi and Malala Yousafzay for their unremitting struggle against the suppression of children and young people and for the right of all children to education. Children must go to school and not be financially exploited. It is a prerequisite for peaceful global development that the rights of children and young people be respected. In conflict-ridden areas in particular, the violation of children leads to the continuation of violence from generation to generation (The Nobel Peace Prize, 2014: n.p.n.).

The recognition of moral and ethical principles of human behaviour, on the one hand, and the observance of such principles in the day-to-day activities of human beings, on the other are, however, two different matters. Law (2011:207) argues, for example, that one cannot reason, argue or otherwise communicate with people who behave religiously intolerantly towards people of other religious persuasions. Because the attitude on which their religious behaviour is based effectively amounts to mental slavery, dogmatism and repression (Morton, 1998:172–173), it is practically impossible to make religiously intolerant people recognise and understand that what they are doing might be morally and ethically wrong. They simply will not listen to reason (Law, 2011:207). Grayling (2007:110-111) concurs and then proceeds to point out that people (of various religious persuasions) who behave religiously intolerantly may even go as far as to murder those whom they see as infidels and apostates. They almost always regard themselves as people with integrity, people who are truly “organic” individuals, that is, as people with a spirit of serving others and caring for their interests. They see what they do as absolute obedience to the will of their deity or of a higher force in their lives.

Religious intolerance might also be regarded as a psychologically thought-provoking phenomenon because it seems to be symptomatic of insecurity and fear (Potgieter *et al.*, 2014:2). Religious extremists, who would, if they could, persecute a person into conforming to their way of thinking, might claim to be trying to save

that person's soul despite him/herself; however, it is possible that they might really be doing it because they feel threatened. Fear begets intolerance, and intolerance begets fear (cf. also Grayling 2000: n.p.n.). The cycle seems indeed to be a vicious one and it is therefore not difficult to understand why some people who belong to extremely orthodox, fundamentalist faith communities might experience the notion of religious tolerance as painful. It essentially asks of them to betray their own confessional convictions and life-view-related norms, values and attitudes.

The perpetrators of religiously intolerant behaviour, driven by a basic set of beliefs, more often than not inflict misery on large numbers of people (bystanders) who are neither politically nor religiously involved in religious or political conflict or struggle. Over the past four years or so, the world has witnessed a number of such incidences flowing from attitudes of religious extremism, of which the 9/11 attacks (2001) in New York are emblematic. The current strife in Syria, the recent "Arab Spring" uprisings, the conflict between the Muslim north and the Christian south of Nigeria, and the attack on a shopping mall in Nairobi, Kenya, count as further examples.² Peck (2006:173) correctly points out that differences can exist between atheists and theistic believers as well as *within* religious groups:³ "We see dogmatism, and proceeding from dogmatism, we see wars and inquisitions and persecutions. We see hypocrisy: people professing the brotherhood of man killing their fellows in the name of faith, lining their pockets at the expense of others, and practicing all manner of brutality" (Peck, 2006:184). In Wright's (2009:421) view, "the bulk of westerners and the bulk of Muslims are in a deeply non-zero-sum relationship, [*and*] by and large are not very good at extending moral imagination to one another." Alford (2009:57) concurs with him in saying that religious fundamentalism⁴ seems to be the cause of many of the world's ills, the reason for this being that people tend to operate from a narrower frame of reference (world-view) than what they are capable of, thereby failing to transcend the influence of their particular religion, culture, particular set of parents and childhood experience upon their understanding (Peck, 2006:180). The following three examples seem to attest to this:

² The world was recently also rocked by attacks by religious fanatics in Copenhagen, Denmark and Paris, France.

³ Denominational differences within Christianity are a well-known example of this. Christianity embraces reformational, Catholic and pentecostal believers, to mention only three such different groups of believers.

⁴ Religious fundamentalism refers to a contextual condition where a group of people may decide to view their religion's role in public life to be greater than it realistically should be. Consequently, their behaviour is usually too religiously confident and / or they may engage in any sort of action out of religious conviction (Potgieter & Van der Walt, 2014: 3).

The self-declared Islamic State, which previously called itself the *Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant* (ISIL), is an unrecognized Sunni jihadist state in Iraq and Syria in the Middle East. In April 2013, the group changed its name to the *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria* (ISIS) (Nye, Zennie & Martosko, 2014: n.p.n.). During August and September 2014, ISIS made headline news across the world, mainly because of videos that showed them beheading firstly United States journalist James Foley, then United States journalist Steven Sotloff and thereafter British journalist John Cantlie, claiming that the executions were all carried out in retaliation for the U.S.' Obama administration's continued airstrikes in Iraq (Taibi, 2014: n.p.).

Boko Haram, which literally means "Western education is prohibited" (Okonta, 2011:12), was suspected of being responsible for the 2010 Old Eve's bomb explosions in Nigeria (in which 23 people were killed).

Early in 2015, 21 Egyptian Christians were beheaded by alleged Muslim fundamentalists.

3. The meaning of tolerance (in education)

From the above, it is clear that although, as Frank Furedi remarked, the matter of tolerance is not very exciting, research into the various aspects and facets of tolerance remains of importance. Tolerance, as Furedi (2012: 30-31, 37) convincingly indicated, constitutes one of the most important preconditions for social justice, fairness and democracy; without tolerance we cannot be free, we cannot live with one another in relative peace, we cannot follow and act on our conscience, we cannot pursue our own road toward seeking the truth. To be tolerant is a socio-cultural accomplishment; a tolerant society is one where tolerance as a cultural orientation discourages or restrains social intolerance. Tolerance, Furedi concludes, represents a positive appreciation of the necessity of diverse views and conflicting beliefs. It represents a positive orientation towards creating the conditions where people can develop their autonomy through their freedom to choose how they wish to think, believe and behave. Saulius (2013: 49) agrees with Furedi: tolerance indeed can be regarded as one of the most important democratic values.⁵

Tolerance, as Potgieter, Van der Walt and Wolhuter (2014) discovered, is a rather difficult concept to delineate (also see Saulius, 2013: 49). This explains why they and Van der Walt (2014) approached the phenomenon referred to as "tolerance" from various theoretical angles. It is not necessary, however, for purposes of this article to enter into all these different approaches to tolerance. Instead, it seems

⁵ The concept of tolerance is criticized as it could be seen as "a form of paternalism towards the object of their tolerance, castigating tolerance as the 'intellectual charity' of the powerful" (Furedi, 2011: 17). The argument that tolerance has been a concept of the past, used to affirm power relations is strongly rejected by Furedi.

more important to attempt to explain how the concept “tolerance” was defined for purposes of developing the research instrument as discussed below.

When trying to understand what is meant by a particular concept, it is always helpful to discover what it is *not*. Frank Furedi’s (2012) analysis of tolerance is useful in this regard. According to him, tolerance is not a disinclination to judge or to have strong views about the views, convictions and behaviour of others. It is therefore not a superficial signifier of acceptance and affirmation of anyone and everyone. It also does not mean judging other people and their views. It also is not a form of detached indifference or a polite gesture connoting automatic acceptance. Furthermore, he says, it is not a companion term to be used alongside terms like “inclusive” and / or “non-judgmental.” It is furthermore not an expansive and diffuse sensibility that unquestioningly appreciates other cultures and religions. In addition, it is also not just about being nice and polite to other people, and it does not articulate “a necessary but passive act of putting up with someone else’s view,” of putting up with views deemed wrong or inferior (cf. Boersma, 2012). Calls for respect and recognition do not simply mean an exhortation to be polite and sensitive to the beliefs, cultures and predicament of other people. It is, therefore, not the unconditional affirmation transmitted by today’s anti-judgmental respect for others’ views, belief and acts (Furedi, 2012: 31-37). Tolerance, as Joe (2011: 8) remarked, does not mean that one has to respect those lifestyles, or even regard them as morally equal to one’s own practice. It is also not the polar opposite of conflict (Furedi, 2012: 33). To this list of what tolerance is not, Saulius (2013: 49) adds that it is also not a skill or competence such as those that students master through effective education. He adds another “not”: the mere fact of having firm values is not synonymous with being tolerant or intolerant.

In view of the above negative delineation of tolerance, what is it in positive terms? In contrast to Boersma (2012) who contends that an ontology of tolerance might not be possible, Van der Walt (2014: 43) sees it as a “moving phenomenon” that is difficult to delineate, circumscribe or define. According to Potgieter *et al* (2014 :3), it reflects the ontology of a social construct, and as such reveals the following essential features: it involves decision-making based on a certain value system, ethical behaviour, reasonable argument, difference, as well as a spectrum of behaviour.

How one perceives the phenomenon depends, therefore, to a large extent on context, as will be explained below. Despite their different opinions about the ontic status of tolerance, Boersma’s view is akin to that of Van der Walt; he perceives “tolerance” as a social concept about which one has to reflect philosophically. Also in this case, how tolerance is approached depends to a large extent on definition and context. (Incidentally, the vague nature of tolerance, and the possibility that there might not be an ontology of tolerance made the birth of the measuring instrument

– as reported below – a very difficult one. Many of its facets had to be operationalized and concretised for purposes of being included as items in the questionnaire [cf. Van der Walt, 2014]).

Analysis of Furedi and others' views about tolerance shows that tolerance indeed can be regarded as a social construct that can be circumscribed in terms of a number of key concepts. The first of these concepts is *freedom*. For tolerance to exist there has to be an appreciation of the true meaning of freedom. Tolerance, according to Joe (2011: 6), can only be practised in a society that values freedom, and freedom itself requires a tolerant society. The individual should be free to hold any belief and should be able to express his or her views either through a medium (such as the press) or inter-personally. Without tolerance one cannot be free to live with others, to act on one's own conscience and pursue one's own road toward seeking the truth. Tolerance allows the free expression of beliefs, opinions and behaviour associated with the exercise of individual conscience. Tolerance is therefore, Furedi (2012: 30) opines, intimately connected to the affirmation of the most basic freedom, namely the freedom of belief and conscience. Tolerance pertains to the domain of the political and philosophical through its avowal of the principle of non-interference towards the way people develop and hold beliefs and opinions. Tolerance affirms the freedom of conscience and individual autonomy (Furedi, 2012: 31).

Furedi (2012: 31) typifies tolerance with Voltaire's well-known statement: "I disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it." This expresses the intimate connection between judgment and a commitment to freedom. Tolerance represents, Furedi (2012: 37) concludes with respect to its connection to freedom, a positive appreciation of the necessity of diverse views and conflicting beliefs; it represents a positive orientation towards creating conditions where people can develop their autonomy through the freedom to choose. Since Kant, decisions and actions have moral content not because of social context but rather as expressions of free will. In contrast to Saulius (2013: 53) who sees human coexistence as the interaction among absolutely free individuals, Boersma (2012) does not regard the freedom of human beings as absolute and total; such an approach, in his opinion, overemphasises human freedom and autonomy.

Secondly, the notion of tolerance is only meaningful in the *context of difference(s)*. People differ, but not all differences among them are acceptable to each and every individual and group, particularly if a certain individual or group sees a difference as of no value or significance if and when compared with their own (Saulius, 2013: 50). Tolerance comes into play when different individuals and groups have conflicting beliefs and / or act in unacceptable ways (morally, politically or in a religious sense). Tolerance is born when individuals and groups realise

that they have no alternative if they wish to coexist peacefully with others who are different (i.e. when they strive to a positive *modus vivendi*).

As alluded, tolerance is, thirdly, also closely connected to *respect* for others. One can only speak of tolerance when people regard one another as moral equals and respect them as such (Saulius, 2013: 53). To be tolerant means that we accept the existence of others' lifestyles and respect the right of others to lead their lives as they see fit (Joe, 2011: 8). To tolerate others and their views and behaviour implies having respect for their right to hold beliefs and act according to the dictates of their conscience. The act of tolerance, says Furedi (2012: 32), demands reflection, restraint and respect for the right of other people to find their own way to the truth. As mentioned, calls for respect and recognition do not simply mean an exhortation to be polite and sensitive to the beliefs et cetera of other people; tolerance always also calls for judgment, evaluation and discrimination (Furedi, 2012: 36).

Tolerance is, fourthly, closely connected to *judgment, evaluation and discrimination*. Although one accepts the autonomy and freedom of others to believe and act as they choose, this does not mean that one accepts what they believe and do uncritically. It does not mean that one has to uncritically accept their lifestyle or regard them as morally acceptable or equal to one's own lifestyle (Joe, 2011: 8). A tolerant person may have strong views about the beliefs and behaviour of others (Furedi, 2012: 30). On the other hand, it implies a willingness to live with or put up with disagreeable beliefs and opinions instead of attempting to suppress them. Although tolerance involves an act of judgment and discrimination it does not serve as a prelude to censoring another person's supposedly wrong belief because "tolerance demands respect for the right of people to hold beliefs in accordance with their conscience" (Furedi, 2012: 31). Acts of judgment, evaluation and discrimination, says Furedi (2012: 34), are integral to the act of tolerance. When tolerance is seen as a default response denoting uncritical approval of others, their views and their behaviour, people are attempting to protect themselves from the challenge of engaging with moral dilemmas. Mere acceptance and affirmation "can be seen as a way of avoiding difficult moral choices" (Furedi, 2012: 32).

In the fifth place, tolerance is closely connected with a person's *values or ethical system* (Saulius, 2013: 49). To be tolerant, one needs an understanding of what is good or bad (as values), of what behaviour is expected from one under certain circumstances. Tolerance only has meaning if basic moral categories can be satisfactorily defined. If one has no ethical "truths" on which to fall back, one has no basis for tolerance (Saulius, 2013: 53). Van der Walt (2014: 43) concurs with Saulius: values and principles play a pivotal role; people tend to be tolerant if they do not feel their values and principles threatened, and vice versa.

In the sixth place, Saulius (2013: 50) makes the important point that tolerance depends on the *context*. There are two contexts at play here. The first is the one referred to by Saulius (2013: 52), namely that tolerance might be a product of *Western political thought* and that it therefore is based on Western standards of thinking and living. This might explain why certain non-Westerners display behaviours and values that are “normal” and “acceptable” to them but abhorrent to Westerners, such as the death penalty for religious heresy. Tolerance is also, in the second place, a context dependent notion, and therefore claims about tolerance as a general concept are “ambiguous, uninformative and non-instructive,” according to Saulius. Regarding this second context, Van der Walt (2014: 43) contends that tolerance relates to *a particular point in time*. A relatively minor incident might trigger or spark a bout of severe intolerance and even conflict, and vice versa. The degree of tolerance depends on the equilibrium prevalent in a social system. Greater tolerance might be the order of the day if all checks and balances are in place.

In the seventh place, tolerance depends on *understanding and empathy*, on moral imagination, as Wright (2009: 413-428) refers to. Intolerance discloses itself when a person “avoids discussion on motives and principles of their actions,” in other words when s/he resorts to so-called end vocabulary (final or last-ditch statements of principles) that puts an end to any conversation or discussion (cf. Saulius, 2013: 54).

On the basis of these seven aspects of tolerance, tolerance can be circumscribed as that respectful, meaningful and empathetic attitude of people or groups which, in a context of differences, acknowledges and defends the right of individuals and groups of people to cherish freely certain beliefs and values while accepting that others possess the freedom and right to evaluate and judge those same beliefs and values in terms of their own value systems.⁶ Tolerance can therefore be approached from two different perspectives, namely from the vantage point of one’s own (religious) motives, values and beliefs, and from the perspective of the other who may judge and evaluate same from the vantage point of his or her particular (religious) motives and value system. The future of society and the maintenance of a peaceful *modus vivendi* in a diverse society depend to a significant extent on the tolerance of individuals and groups. Most if not all societies harbour a number of latent tensions that can lead to conflict in one form or another, and tolerant members can help relieve such tensions. Social justice must also prevail in the sense that despite the diversity of society, the right and freedom of every individual and group to maintain their own (religious) motives and value systems should be respected while allowing others to do the same. The future of societies worldwide that are becoming

⁶ Tolerance can of course also occasionally be abused, for instance when a person appeals to others to be tolerant only so that he or she can enjoy the freedom to do and say as he or she wishes, even to the extent of doing and saying things that might be intolerant of others and their views.

increasingly diverse due to migration and other factors depend on the inculcation of tolerance in all individuals and groups.

The inculcation of (religious) motives and values as well as of an attitude of tolerance begins with the home and extended family of an individual (Hitlin & Piliavin, 2004: 371-372) and is continued during the period of primary, secondary and higher education (Borgonovi, 2012: 146-147). According to Biesta (2011: 20) the development of an individual lies at the intersection of the ideal to attain a certain competence, skill and / or qualification, and the processes of socialization and subjectification. Socialization refers to the many ways in which an individual – through education – becomes part of a particular social and / or political group. Education tends to socialize even when to do so is not seen as an explicit aim of the educative act. The same can be said of subjectification, that is, the process of forming a person to become and eventually be an individual in his or her own right, as an independent person and hence not simply as an exemplar of an encompassing and dominant social order (Biesta, 2011: 21). The intersection between socialization and subjectification is the locus where an individual tends to construct his or her own value system while at the same time attempting to become and remain loyal to the values of the society in which he or she is growing up and also learning to be critical (and ideally, also tolerant) of the opinions of other individuals and groups in that society.

This formation process (education) is not only facilitated by lessons or textbooks but also by the educator's behaviour and attitude. Beliefs and intuitions continuously seep through during the teaching and learning process, mostly without the educator being aware of them as part of the hidden curriculum. This hidden curriculum, in part an expression of the educator's own value system, is also at work with regards to the inculcation of religious tolerance with respect to differences. The role of the educator should therefore not be underestimated in the process of guiding young people to become more or less tolerant, as the case may be.

It is on the basis of this conclusion that we decided to focus on prospective teachers in the process of developing an instrument for measuring the degree of tolerance that prevails in a particular social group. Prospective teachers are not only in the process of developing their own individual value systems but, in a sense, they also represent the degree to which the respective social groups to which they belong can be considered religiously tolerant or not. As educationalists / teacher educators who attach value to religious and other forms of tolerance among individuals and groups we are particularly interested in the degree of tolerance that prevails among *final year* undergraduate teacher education students, that is, students typically in their fourth year of undergraduate study. Once we have determined the degree of tolerance among these student teachers, steps can be taken

to ameliorate the situation (if and where necessary) or to offer the necessary support (if and where required). We specifically targeted final year teacher education students because they find themselves on the threshold of entering the teaching profession. Their teaching proficiency at this liminal stage represents the upshot of the teacher training curriculum to which they have been subjected over the previous four years. In order to understand the outcome of their training or education (with specific reference to the degree of religious tolerance that they display) and hence of the teacher education curriculum that they have covered, it is necessary to measure the degree of religious tolerance at this stage of their training. If necessary, curriculum changes can be effected on the basis of the data obtained by means of the instrument.

4. The birth of the measuring instrument

The above outline of tolerance is a brief summary of the theory on which the measuring instrument discussed in the following section was based. For purposes of providing theoretical grounds for every item in the questionnaire, the various theoretical aspects and / or facets of tolerance were teased out. Each of these theoretical perspectives was thereafter formulated as a potential item to be included in the questionnaire. Specialists in the art of formulating measuring instruments, in this particular case a questionnaire, then took over and reformulated the tentative theory-based items into items suitable for a questionnaire. The rest of the article explains the rationale that these specialists followed in putting the final questionnaire together. It also contains an exposition of how the questionnaire was validated by submitting it to four entirely different cohorts of respondents, from different parts of the world and from different language groups. The article concludes with a brief exposé of the results flowing from the validation phase, and with a brief outline of future plans and prospects with the questionnaire.

5. Developing and validating the questionnaire

We departed from the premise explained by Olthuis (2012: 1-7) that there is no innocent, unbiased way that people look at the world; they look at the world through the lens or frame of their worldview, an important part of which are their religious beliefs. Part A of the questionnaire (see appendix 1) therefore probed respondents' affiliation with one or more of the major religious groupings in the world, and items numbered 1-3 probed their level of awareness of the extent to which religious beliefs play a role in guiding their lives and choices (see appendix 2 for the entire questionnaire).

In addition, Olthuis (2012) developed an interesting theory about how people look at others and the world around them. Based on psychology literature, he came

to the conclusion that people look at / experience the world around them through one or more expectancy filters. A person looking at the world and others through a *secure filter* tends to trust others and to be open to the world; a person working with a *pre-occupation filter* is engrossed in efforts to get his or her own needs met and tends to be inattentive to the needs of others; a person using a *dismissive filter* expects nothing from others and of the world, and a person with a *fearful filter* is fearful of any closeness to other people. To probe this psychic disposition of respondents in their encounters with others (and their religious convictions) items 4-8 were included in the questionnaire.

Radical centre theory contends that since we are living in an increasingly culturally (including religiously) diverse world there should ideally be a core of universal values that all people can identify with and find broadly acceptable (Alford, 2009: 57, 163). To test respondents' beliefs as regards the existence of such a common set of core values, items 9-14 as well as items 32, 35 and 51 were included in the questionnaire.

It was also contended that besides the fact that a person looked at the world through an expectancy filter, he or she also tends to orientate themselves on the basis of the values that they hold dear. A person's hierarchy of values might have its origin way back in the family and / or school and / or religious community in which s/he was brought up. To determine the presence, force, rigidity and / or openness to change of respondents' hierarchy of values items 15-21 were included in the questionnaire. To probe the extent to which respondents are willing to acknowledge the impact of context with regard to religious differences, items 26-31 and 41-44 were included. To determine the role that judgment plays in their religious tolerance, items 22-25 were included, and to get an indication of the role of respect (another feature of tolerance, as explained above), items 40, 48, 50 and 52 were included. As explained above, tolerance is intimately connected to the notion of freedom. To test respondents' views on freedom with respect to religious beliefs, items 37-39 and 45-47 were included. To probe the occurrence of understanding and empathy as features of tolerance, items 33, 34 and 49 were included.

The questionnaire was run among a pilot group of respondents, consisting of final year undergraduate student teachers from different cultural contexts. The first version of the questionnaire was translated into the languages of the students. The first administration of the instrument thus produced five datasets – the complete dataset and four subsets. Only questionnaires that were completely filled in were taken into consideration for analysis (n=323) in order to determine the validity and the reliability of the first version of the instrument. The complete dataset as well as the four subsets were analysed in the process (see appendix 3 for the results of the factor analysis).

The five sets of data were subjected to exploratory factor analysis (free rotation, cf. Howitt & Duncan, 2005a: 309). Fifteen factors were initially extracted with eigen values equal to or greater than 1.00, which explained 62.5 per cent of the total variance in the data pool. Some of this large number of factors consisted of only one or two items. A second factor analysis was then done with a fixed number of factors, namely six (Howitt & Duncan, 2005b: 171-177). The six factors identified on the basis of the first factor analysis were: 1. Value attached to own religion; 2. Respect; 3. Inclusivity; 4. Relations (those living together, society); 5. Inclusivity; 6. A willingness to recognise the freedom of others; a tendency to be indifferent about others and their values. These factors explained 46.7 per cent of the total variation in the data pool. These factors, the items that loaded onto each factor, the names of the factors and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of each factor are presented in appendix 3.

Cronbach's alpha index is used to measure reliability or internal consistency; a value of 0.7 plus is conventionally taken as indicative of internal consistency (0.8 plus indicates a high level of reliability; cf. Field, 2009). All but one of the sets of questions grouped under the six factors have a Cronbach's alpha coefficient value of 0.7 plus. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the total questionnaire is 0.83.

6. Concluding remarks

The validation process that the measuring instrument (questionnaire) underwent brought two significant initial findings to the surface. The first is significant in view of the theory that undergirded the questionnaire. When the results of the four cohorts of students (different countries, different areas, different language media) were processed as a single cohort ($n=323$), six factors emerged that explained nearly 47 per cent of the variance. As mentioned, these factors were: value attached to own value system and / or religious convictions; respect for others; the tendency to think and behave exclusively and self-centredly; understanding the need for a positive *modus vivendi* (peaceful coexistence); the need also to think inclusively, recognise the freedom of others, and a measure of indifference about what others think and do. By and large these findings lend support to the underlying theory of the questionnaire.

The second finding was equally significant in that it underscores the importance of context, as suggested by the underlying theory. When the results of each cohort of respondents are processed separately, between 72 per cent and 77 per cent of the variation in the data pool is explained by the questionnaire. However, when all the responses are lumped together, the explanation of variance drops to 47 per cent. This seems to suggest that national, cultural, political, religious and other contextual factors are important; items and factors tend to cancel one another out

when lumped together. Put differently, each group seems to be more homogeneous regarding their beliefs, values and respect for others than the aggregate of the four groups lumped together. This preliminary finding will now have to be tested by administering the questionnaire to other groups of final year teacher undergraduate education students.⁷

The next round is already in progress. The questionnaire is – as we write – being administered to another 25 cohorts of final year undergraduate teacher education students in Anglophone countries across the globe. In each case, the responses will be processed separately to see what degree of variation in the data pool the questionnaire explains in each case. All the responses will again be lumped together to see what effect that might have on the explanation of overall variation in the data pool. The results of this exercise will be reported in a follow-up article.

Readers of this article who have access to a cohort of 100 final year teacher undergraduate education students, irrespective of location, culture or language medium, are hereby invited to contact any of the authors of this article with a view to administering the questionnaire to their final year teacher education students. The questionnaire is currently available in English, Afrikaans, Dutch and Setswana but will be translated for the following round into French, then Spanish, German, Portuguese and as many of the other languages used around the world as possible.

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⁷ It is important to note that this article only discusses the birth of the questionnaire. The findings referred to in appendix 3 therefore only pertain to the development phase and not to the subsequent application of the questionnaire to other groups. To do so will follow in the next round as described in the next paragraph in the text.

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Appendix 1: Part A of the Questionnaire

Indicate with a cross which is applicable to you (make just one cross).

- I regard myself as belonging to one of the organised religions/philosophies/life and worldviews. (if you chose this option proceed to the next question and from there to questions 1-52)
- I do believe in a supernatural force/power, but I do not belong to an organised religious/philosophical/life and worldview grouping. (if you chose this option, proceed to questions 1-52)
- I do not regard myself as belonging to an organised religious/philosophical/life and worldview grouping and I also do not believe in a supernatural force/power. (if you chose this option, proceed to question 1-52)

To which of the following prevalent religions/philosophies/life and worldviews do you regard yourself as belonging to? (cross just one option)

- Christianity Islam Hinduism Buddhism Taoism
 Jewry /Judaism Sikhism Traditional African religion

Appendix 2: Part B of the Questionnaire

1. My religion/philosophy/life and worldview defines everything in a series of rules and dogmas.
2. I live strictly according to the rules of my religion/philosophy/life and worldview.
3. When having to take an important decision, I am strongly aware of my religion and/or my beliefs which are part of my religion/philosophy/life and worldview.
4. In general I feel safe and secure when I encounter other people.
5. I concentrate on my own affairs and interfere as little as possible with other people.
6. I could not care less what other people think and feel.
7. I desire to be on a friendly foot with other people.
8. I do not feel threatened by the world around me.
9. I can comfortably get along with someone who adheres to norms and values different from my own.
10. All people should be able to get along with one another, regardless of which norms and values are important to them.
11. There are norms and values which should be important to all people, regardless of their own religion/life-views.
12. I share particular norms and values with people who adhere to a religion/philosophy/life and worldview totally different from my own.
13. In my encounters with other people I always adhere to my own norms and values.
14. Values and norms which stem from a religion/philosophy/life and worldview other than my own cannot give direction to my life.
15. The values which are important to me, all stem from my religion/life-view.
16. The values and norms which are important to me cause me to see myself as quite different from other people.
17. The values which are now important to me are not much different from the values that I adhered to as a child.
18. The values which I regard as important today, were imbued in me by my parents when I was a child.
19. The values which I today regard as important were imbued in me by the school(s) that I attended.
20. I am able to explain to others those values that I regard as important.
21. I can explain the values that are important to me in such general terms that other people can also find them acceptable.
22. I do not care what other people think and do.
23. I feel quite comfortable in the company of a person who acts in accordance with the rules of his own religion/life-view.
24. I do not care what other people think and do based on their religion/life-view.
25. I am not concerned with the ideas and actions of other people based on their own religion/life-view.
26. I think that I am contributing to the wellbeing of my fellow human beings when I tolerate their ideas and beliefs.
27. I often tolerate behaviour in other people, even when I myself do not hold it in high regard and/or which I myself do not find acceptable.
28. I can imagine adhering to a religion/philosophy/life and worldview totally different from my own.
29. I have a strong tendency to trust people of religions/life-philosophies other than my own.
30. I have a deep trust in my own beliefs.

31. I am of the view that other people should have the right to their own beliefs, even if I do consider them to be wrong.
32. I believe in a society where all people share one and the same set of beliefs.
33. I believe that my own religion/philosophy/life and worldview is the only correct one.
34. I think that people can arrive at the truth only via my religion/philosophy/life and worldview.
35. I believe that all religions/life-views in the end lead to one and the same truth.
36. I am convinced that my own religion/philosophy/life and worldview can be enriched through dialogue with other religions/life-philosophies.
37. In my view, personal freedom is the highest goal to strive for in life.
38. I am convinced that people should adhere to principles contained in the holy scriptures of their religion.
39. I am of the view that people should live and behave according to principles not flowing from a particular religion/life-philosophy.
40. I respect the religious beliefs of people with convictions quite different from mine.
41. Based on my own religion/philosophy/life and worldview, I feel unhappy with some of the measures taken by Government.
42. I do not care whether my country is governed by Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists or New Age followers.
43. I feel I should participate in society if that does not result in conflict with my religious views.
44. I would like to become a member of a society where everyone's approach to life is the same as mine.
45. I am convinced that differences between people are so pronounced that peaceful co-existence in one and the same society is impossible.
46. I am of the view that people should have so much trust in one another that peaceful co-existence between them can be possible.
47. I am convinced that people should seek ways to overcome the differences that exist among people in society.
48. I am of the opinion that people should respect the differences that exist among different people in society.
49. I find it very difficult to imagine myself living according to the thought system of people who adhere to a set of beliefs totally different from my own.
50. I respect and do not condemn people whose beliefs are different from mine.
51. I am convinced that people who see themselves as belonging to an organised religious grouping are also searching for a higher/supernatural power.
52. I feel free to respectfully socialise with people who hold beliefs quite different from mine.

Appendix 3 : The Results of the Factor Analysis of part B

Factor 1: Value attached to own religion Cronbach's alpha: 0.83

1. My religion/philosophy/life and worldview defines everything in a series of rules and dogmas.
2. I live strictly according to the rules of my religion/philosophy/life and worldview.
3. When having to take an important decision, I am strongly aware of my religion and/or my beliefs which are part of my religion/philosophy/life and worldview.
13. In my encounters with other people I always adhere to my own norms and values.
14. Values and norms which stem from a religion/philosophy/life and worldview other than my own cannot give direction to my life.
15. The values which are important to me, all stem from my religion/life-view.
20. I am able to explain to others those values that I regard as important.
30. I have a deep trust in my own beliefs.
38. I am convinced that people should adhere to principles contained in the holy scriptures of their religion.

Factor 2: Respect Cronbach's alpha: 0.78

26. I think that I am contributing to the wellbeing of my fellow human beings when I tolerate their ideas and beliefs.
31. I am of the view that other people should have the right to their own beliefs, even if I do consider them to be wrong.
36. I am convinced that my own religion/philosophy/life and worldview can be enriched through dialogue with other religions/life-philosophies.
40. I respect the religious beliefs of people with convictions quite different from mine.
46. I am of the view that people should have so much trust in one another that peaceful co-existence between them can be possible.
47. I am convinced that people should seek ways to overcome the differences that exist among people in society.
48. I am of the opinion that people should respect the differences that exist among different people in society.
50. I respect and do not condemn people whose beliefs are different from mine.
52. I feel free to respectfully socialise with people who hold beliefs quite different from mine.

Factor 3: Exclusivity Cronbach's alpha: 0.70

32. I believe in a society where all people share one and the same set of beliefs.
33. I believe that my own religion/philosophy/life and worldview is the only correct one.
34. I think that people can arrive at the truth only via my religion/philosophy/life and worldview.
41. Based on my own religion/philosophy/life and worldview, I feel unhappy with some of the measures taken by Government.
51. I am convinced that people who see themselves as belonging to an organised religious grouping are also searching for a higher/supernatural power.