

**Euro -Mediterranean Teacher
Training Course on
Religious Diversity and Gender
in an Intercultural Perspective
Alexandria, Egypt, 20-24
November 2006**



© Alaa K. Ashmawy

"The religious dimension of intercultural education at school"

Presented by *Basma Elshayyal* at the

Euro -Mediterranean Teacher Training
Course on
Religious Diversity and Gender
in an Intercultural Perspective
Alexandria, Egypt, 20-24 November 2006

RE in England

- ❖ RE is not officially one of the subjects of the National Curriculum, but it has a special, statutory place in the school timetable.
- ❖ Learning about & learning from (QCA guidelines)
- ❖ RE should not be taught in a way that undermines a parent's right to have his or her child educated within a particular religious faith.
- ❖ The legal requirements regarding RE and school worship can be found in the Education Reform Act 1988 (Sections 6-13). They are reaffirmed in the Education Act 1996 (Sections 375-389) and the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 (Sections 69-71).

Quick overview of legal requirements outlined in ERA

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- Collective worship
- Special provisions as to collective worship in county schools
- Religious education required in the basic curriculum: further provisions
- Exceptions, special arrangements and supplementary and consequential provisions

DUTIES WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS

- Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education
- Determination by advisory councils of cases in which the requirement for Christian collective worship is not to apply
- Advisory councils: supplementary provisions

Arguably one of the more important elements is the “Act of worship”, when taken in the context of informing whole school ethos...

❖ The 1944 Education Act stated that ‘the school day in every county school and every voluntary school shall begin with collective worship on the part of all the pupils in attendance’. In accordance with Britain’s traditional respect for religious freedom, the 1944 Act also gave parents the right to withdraw their child, perhaps in favour of separate arrangements.

❖ By the time the 1988 Education Reform Act was going through Parliament, Britain had become a much more diverse nation. As a result of moves within the state educational establishment, either to ignore the legal requirements for daily worship altogether, or to lump all religions together into a multi-faith, multi-cultural “mish mash”, many felt it was necessary to reinforce the position of Christianity as the main, traditional religion of this country. Consequently, the Education Reform Act 1988 reaffirms that ‘all pupils in attendance at a maintained school shall in each school day take part in an act of collective worship’ (though parental rights to withdraw their child are retained).

❖ It should also be noted that legal opinion suggests that ‘mainly of a broadly Christian character’ does not mean that other faiths can be mixed in with Christianity – that would be multi-faith or syncretist worship, which the law is intended to prevent. Nor is the law intended to force any child, whose faith is not Christian, to attend Christian acts of worship against parental wishes.

❖ The law clearly says that acts of worship may be for all the pupils or for separate groups within the school. Exactly like the 1944 Act, this allows schools with pupils whose religion may be other than Christianity to make provision for these pupils to have their own separate act of worship in their own faith group.

❖ The law also places responsibility for setting up Standing Advisory Councils on Religious Education (SACREs) with the Local Education Authorities (LEAs) . These must be representative of local religious interests. (composition & influence)

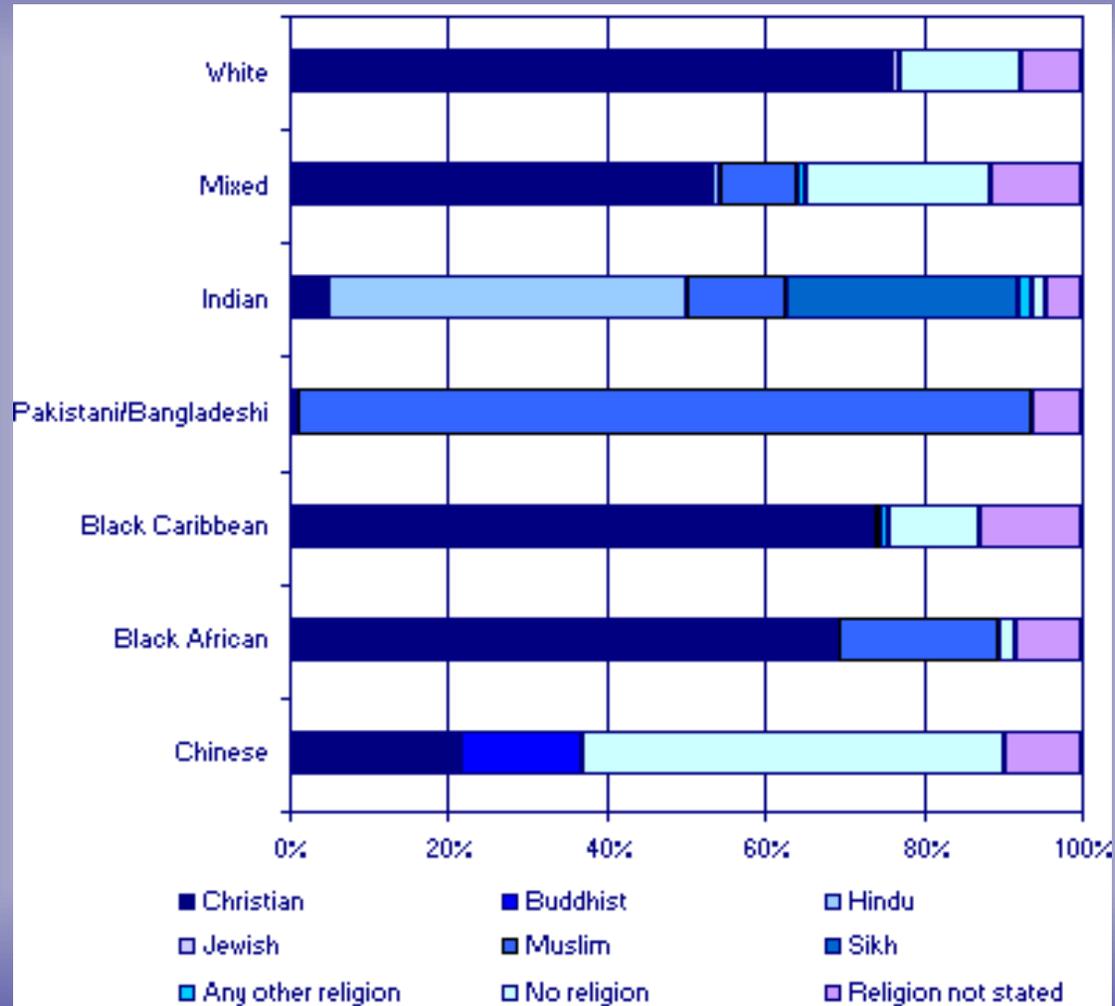
❖ It should also be noted that a school's statutory act of worship is religious and a school assembly is secular. The assembly (which does not feature in the law) is for announcements to the whole school, encouraging a school spirit etc, but the two should not be confused or intermingled. The law allows withdrawal from the act of worship but not from the secular assembly.

❖ The 1988 Act was intended to reinforce the role of schools in giving children the opportunity to grow up within a religious faith and tradition which in this country is generally Christian. However, it must be stressed that the law gives complete freedom to parents of other faiths (or none) to have their children educated 'in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions'. Indeed, the Human Rights Act 1998 says that: 'In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.' Whatever their own religious or cultural background may be (and providing they remain within the law) it is entirely for parents to decide the degree to which they pass on their own or any other beliefs and values to their children.

❖ Ofsted, the school inspectorate, recently reported that 4 out of 5 secondary schools do not implement the law & hold a daily act of worship for their pupils. As yet, no serious action has been taken against any "law breaking" schools by any of the responsible authorities

- ❖ Census (in Egypt yesterday!
- ❖ Importance of, reasons for etc.
- ❖ Not deemed necessary till recently.
- ❖ (eg look @ religion statistics, officialy & “comprehensively” collected for the first time in 2001 in the UK)

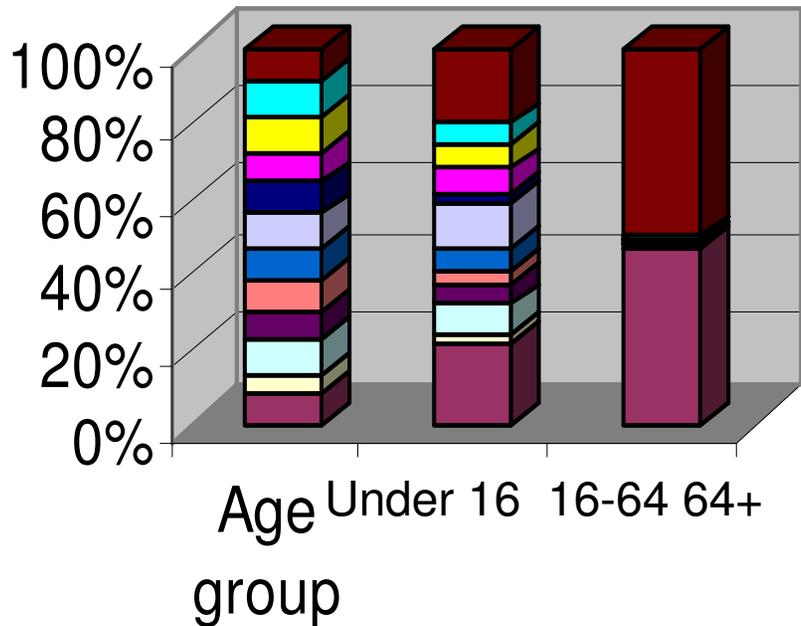
Ethnicity & Religion in England and Wales



Ethnic group by religious composition in England & Wales. Source: Census 2001, Office for National Statistics

Age distribution by ethnic group, 2001/02

Ethnicity



■ All ethnic groups % 20

■ Other % 20

■ Other % 20

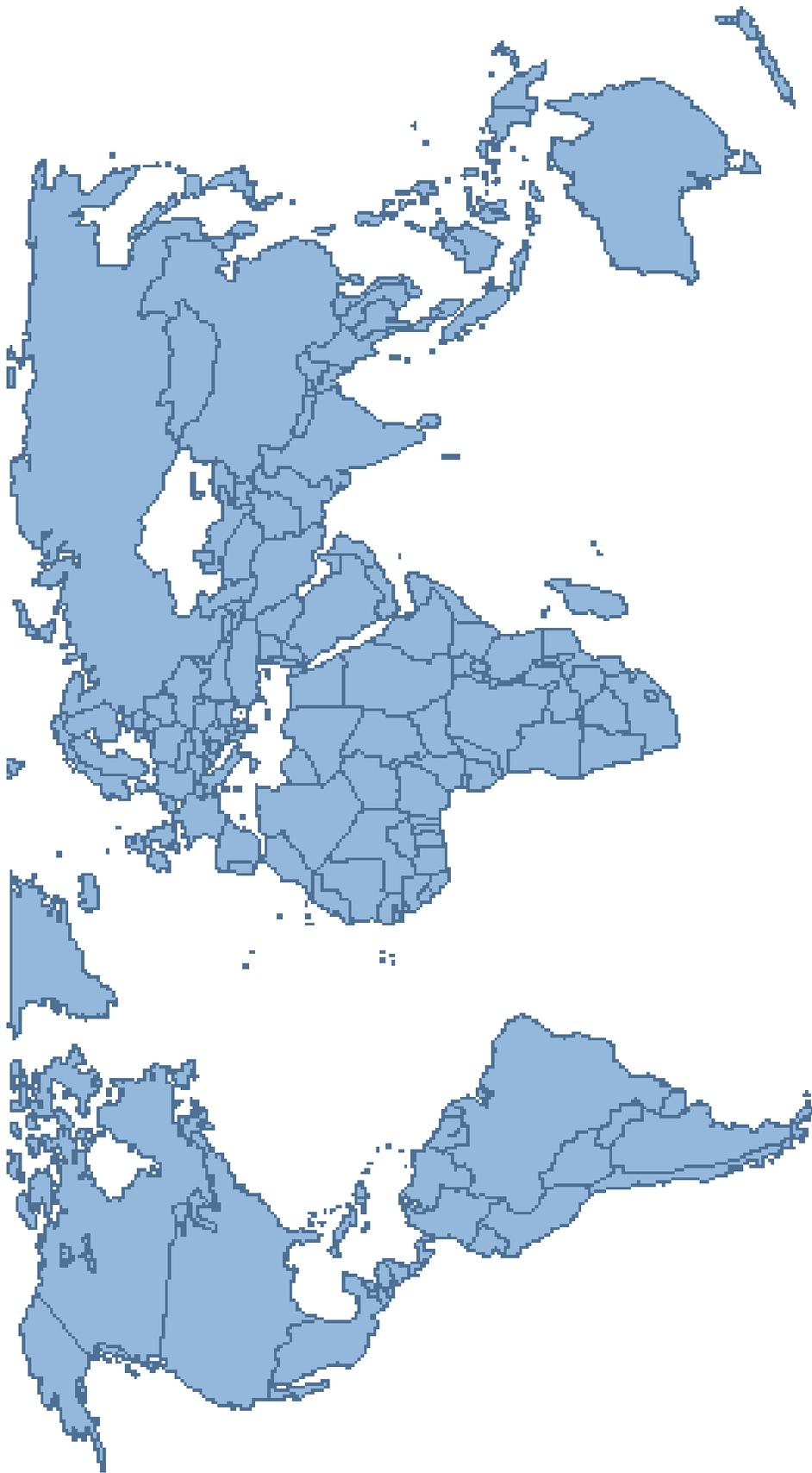
■ Chinese % 18

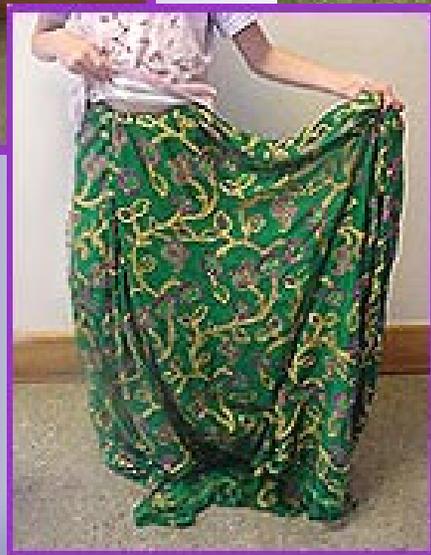
■ Other Black % 35

■ Black African % 33

■ Black Caribbean % 25





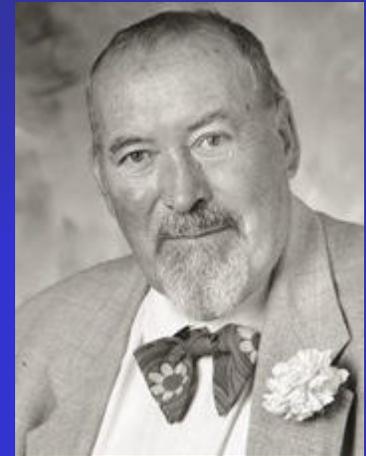


“Saris & Samosas”!...

Clive and Jane Erricker



**Ninian
Smart**



Andrew Wright





Gender?

Basma Elshayyal, Head of RE

Email:

alex_masriyya@yahoo.co.uk

Address: Islamia Girls' High School

Mobile: +44 7956 168 110

107 Tollgate Drive

Hayes, Middx.

United Kingdom

UB4 0NW

