

Project Proposal
On
Intercultural and Multi-Faith Education
Nepal

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Submitted by: Mrs Sushma Pant

Vision for Innovative Society

Member of the International Association for Religious Freedom

1. Introduction

Education is not about skills and jobs; it is part of a quest for truth . . . It seems glaringly evident that what competes with the open search for knowledge is not the perspective of committed belief, but the closed mind of boredom. Multicultural issue in the present context is a global issue of socialization. It has not yet been materialized into the education system in Nepal. The education system of a country should prepare students to function in today's diverse society. There are issues emerging in the effectiveness of the multicultural education and the concerns how to better shape the multicultural classroom in Nepal. This paper focuses on issues such as curriculum design, classroom management, and role of teachers and students in the multicultural classroom context. It also discusses the context, and recommends measures that can bring the multicultural education into the right track.

Secularism is the concept that religion and religious bodies should have no part in political or civic affairs or in running public institutions. It holds the view that government and other entities should exist separately from religion and religious belief. Secularism asserts that citizens have the right to be free from religious rule and teachings, and the right to freedom from governmental imposition of religion upon people within a state that is neutral on matters of belief. While many committed believers recognize only their own tradition as a religion, understanding expressions such as worship and prayer to refer exclusively to the practices of their tradition to the exclusion of other faiths, the practice of religion may also be equated with ignorance, fanaticism, or wishful thinking. However, defined, the right to practice one's religion or, freedom of religion, is recognized as a human right through various human rights instruments and as a fundamental right in most countries of the world. This article begins with a historical background of religion and secularism, pointing out the positive and negative aspects of secularism, and continues with a conceptual framework of religion and its importance. It then presents the right to freedom of religion as a recognized human right within the normative framework of human rights instruments. Freedom of religion as a fundamental right is discussed in light of the constitutions, legal provisions and judicial practices of the United States of America, India and Nepal. The last part of the article elaborates a discussion on the issues of secularism in Nepal and the opinions of various legal scholars.

2. Literature Review

Nepal is a diverse multicultural society. People from various cultural and religious backgrounds live together in perfect harmony and peace. As a nation, we Nepalese pride ourselves on our tolerance and easy-going acceptance of other cultures and beliefs. Nepalese home to people who hold and practice a variety of beliefs and religions. True tolerance requires effort, commitment and an acknowledgement that those of other faiths also have real insights into truth.

However, we fail to understand, appreciate and accept the diversity and values of the beliefs and religions of others. Belief systems are fundamental to the expression of personal values. These beliefs are central to the individual's conception of the meaning of human existence. Nepal's former constitutions described the state as a Hindu Kingdom. However,

those constitutions had also guaranteed the right to freedom of religion.

The freedom of individuals to hold their own religious beliefs is one of the basic characteristics of a democratic society. Most of the democratic states describe themselves as secular states and detach the state from religious affairs. However, the state has often been dragged into controversy in the court for its involvement in religious matters as the state has to strike a balance between freedom of religion and regulating the public order as well as regulating religious activities clothed as secular. Experience shows that maintaining neutrality in religious matters is very difficult as religions innately connected with the culture of society and every activity is directly or indirectly related to religion. The secular state does not involve itself in religious affairs and does not make systematic discrimination against any religion or religious denomination.

3. Beneficiaries

The main beneficiaries of the project are higher secondary level students, teachers, administrators, and society and even indirectly community and particular different religious groups and followers.

4. Objectives

- a. explore diverse perspectives in time, place, cultures and societies;
- b. learn how diverse cultural perspectives develop and change over time;
- c. explore values and ethical issues from diverse cultural perspectives;
- d. learn how peoples are shaped by social, cultural, religious, historical, economic, political, technological and ecological systems and structures, which develop in different ways, places and times;
- e. develop an awareness of the relationship between cultures (especially indigenous) and the natural world;
- f. develop an understanding of the links between the loss of biodiversity and the loss of cultural and linguistic diversity;
- g. experience compassion, understanding and respect for difference in a wide range of local, national and global contexts;
- h. learn to value and appreciate others and to celebrate diversity for its own sake and also for the benefits it brings to all;
- i. learn to think critically about bias, discrimination and stereotyped images;
- j. acquire knowledge of diverse societies locally, nationally and globally, and become aware of changing environments and systems over time; and
- k. learn about cultural diversity and social cohesion in societies and countries throughout the world;
- l. become aware of human rights and freedoms, and cultural and linguistic rights;
- m. become aware of power relationships, bullying, harassment, discrimination and other examples of structural violence in societies;
- n. become aware of inequalities and injustice locally, nationally and globally;
- o. develop compassion and a sense of social justice;
- p. come to understand the nature, causes and consequences of interdependence

between societies and their environments;

q. appreciate the importance of connection to the earth for indigenous peoples;

r. learn from traditional peoples, the value of the earth and respect for its resources and all living things, to be cared for and treasured for future generations; and

s. compare and contrast the different ways in which diverse cultures lived off the land through time.

5. Activities and Methods:

a. Workshop and Panel Discussion

Workshop and Panel Discussion will be held as the first single day activity of the project on two different schools among the teacher and students with religious representative leaders. The following topics wise events will be covered within the session:

i. The Culture Iceberg – What Aspects of Cultures and Faiths are Visible and Invisible?

ii. Protection and Promotion of Diversity

iii. Similarities and Differences through the Media

iv. Perceptions of Difference: Prejudice and Discrimination

v. Tolerance

vi. Respect for Difference

vii. Equity and Justice

viii. Challenging Stereotypes

b. Multi-faith and Multicultural group collaboration and Cultural Day Celebration

In this activity, Schools' students and teachers will be requested to come in their own cultural dress or other different cultural dress. This cultural day will be celebrated as the sharing and learning about the dresses and feeling towards the diversity.

Participants will be requested to present/explain about their dress, wearing occasions, culture and faiths.

c. Elocution Competition

Elocution Competition will be organized as the interschool completion in two distinct level that are secondary level and +2 level on the topic '**Importance of Intercultural and Multi-Faith Education**'. Different school will be requested for registration with two participants of each level.

d. Debates Competition

Debate Competition will be organized interschool in two distinct level that are secondary level and +2 level on the topic '**Intercultural and Multi-Faith Education is the part of our life**'. Different school will be requested for registration with two participants of each level.

e. Essay & Poem Writing, Arts and Slogan Competition

Essay and Poem Writing, Arts and Slogan competition will be completion among the school level students on the topic 'Intercultural and Multi-Faith Education'. Selected few participants will be called for the presentation and recitation. The collected and selected documents will be published and distributed to the selected participants.

f. Food Pot-luck

Interested and selected participants of different events will be requested to bring special cultural foods for the food exhibition. The collected brought foods will be decorated and share and participants will present in to different stalls with their particular cultural dresses.