

IMMONIQUE CAITLIN SEREMAK
STUDENT NUMBER: 41948270
EDT303Q – ASSIGNMENT 2 – S2
UNIQUE NUMBER: 769213

QUESTION: 1

Introduction

As The principal of the school, I would call a meeting with the School Governing Body (SGB) and address the learners' concern, as well as suggesting that we address their concerns in an explanatory school circular which would be distributed to learners and their parents alike. The circular would contain the below information.

This circular will attempt to address the concerns expressed by some non-Christian learners post visit of a Christian speaker to our school on Tuesday. We will attempt to explain the legal requirements, values and guidelines required for religion education in public schools as set out in the National Policy on Religion and Education. Should you not be able to understand certain points, you are most welcome to make an appointment with us so as we may explain it to you. 1

The education policy in SA is based on the values and principles of the Constitution of 1996. The Constitution provides the Bill of Rights (Chapter 2) which outlines the rights of all citizens. The Constitution ensures equality, human dignity and freedom. Section 20 of the Bill of Rights states: "no citizen may be deprived of citizenship". The implication for education is that *no learner* may be denied their educational rights. These rights pertain to education as the state is compelled by law to protect and respect the democratic principles and dignity of learners. It includes: The protection of life of all learners (Chapter 2 S 11), the protection of freedom of religion, belief and opinion of all learners (Chapter 2 S 15), the protection of freedom of expression of all learners to the extent that this does not constitute hate speech against individuals, cultures or religions (Chapter 2 S 16), the protection of children's rights to their spiritual, moral and social development (Chapter 2 S 28 (f)(ii)), and the protection of children's rights irrespective of their culture, religion or language (Chapter 2 SS 30 + 31). 1

The Bill of Rights forms the basis of the ten fundamental values in the Curriculum. These are embedded in the Curriculum. They are: Democracy, social justice and equity, freedom of person, belief, expression, non-racism and non-sexism, human dignity (UBUNTU), an open society and the rule of law reconciliation. The implication for educational classroom practices is that all teaching and learning must take place in an environment of respect and tolerance.

The SA School's Act 94 of 1996 stipulates that the core curriculum must uphold the Constitutional rights of all citizens. These rights include: freedom of conscience, religion, thought, belief, opinion and freedom from unfair discrimination on any grounds, including religion in public institutions. Respect must be shown to all religious festivals, school uniforms and diets. These values are expressed in the National Policy on Religion and Education as: Respect for equality, diversity, openness, adherence to accountability and social honour. 1

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The Constitution provides the value base for the Curriculum. The following values are expressed in the policy: The freedom of conscience of thought, the freedom of opinion and belief, the freedom of religion, the freedom of unfair discrimination, and the freedom of coercion (*ideological and religious*). Every citizen has the right to pursue material and spiritual development and the freedom to associate with others who may assist the individual in their developmental pursuits. In the policy the state affirms responsibility to ensure the democratic rights of citizens are met.

The policy stipulates: Public schools must provide teaching of the broad base of religious activities in a way that is different from religious nature and, religious instruction in a particular region. However the state is non-prescriptive about the religious approach adopted by schools. The basic core values network provided by the state for teaching religion states that schools, parents and communities have the right to decide how the teaching of religion should be conducted in their school because individuals in their communities are best informed to exercise their rights and responsibilities (*Articles 22, 23, 49, 68& 70*). The policy protects Religious Education from being used as a tool for social engineering.

The state provides the guideline / framework within which educational institutions must teach religion. The state is non-prescriptive about the implementation and individual freedom can be exercised. Results of this approach:

The relationship between religion and education must flow from the constitutional values (*Art 11*)

Public institutions must teach about religions that reflect an appreciation for spiritual, non-material aspects of life (*Art 16*)

BUT

It must be different from religious education, religious instruction or religious nurture. Religious education must contribute to create an integral community that affirms unity in diversity in our society (*Art 9, 10 & 25*)

Teaching about religion diversity must be conducted by trained professionals. Programs in religious education must be supported by appropriate and credible teaching and learning materials and objective assessment criteria. (*Articles 34, 46 & 47*)

As an educational programme, Religion Education requires the training, commitment, and enthusiasm of professional educators. The teaching of Religion Education in schools is to be done by appropriately trained professional educators registered with the South African Council of Educators (*SACE*). Representatives of religious organisations who are registered with *SACE* could be engaged, and as with other learning areas, occasional guest facilitators from various religions may be utilised, provided that this is done on an equitable basis. Such guest facilitators need not be registered with *SACE*, since they and the class remain under the authority of the teacher. Religious organisations are therefore encouraged to explore ways in which schools, especially poorly resourced schools and those in remote areas, could also have access to such guest facilitators. The teaching of Religion Education must be sensitive to religious

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interests by ensuring that individuals and groups are protected from ignorance, stereotypes, caricatures, and denigration. If called upon to do so, professional educators must accommodate this reality, in an impartial manner, regardless of their personal views. However, the utilisation of teachers in a school is managed by the school, and as with any other learning area, should take account of the interests, capabilities and sensitivities of each teacher.

The outcomes identified for Religion Education fit with the competences required of all teachers in public schools. The Norms and Standards for Educators [7] require all teachers to have the skills, values and attitudes related to a Community, Citizenship, and Pastoral Role. This includes the responsibility to practice and promote a critical, committed, and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others. Religion education is therefore not the mere technical transmission of factual information; its comprehensive role is demonstrated in the teacher's reflexive, foundational, and practical competency to facilitate learning by:

Reflecting on ethical issues in religion, politics, human rights, and the environment, knowing about the principles and practices of the main religions of South Africa, the customs, values, and beliefs of the main cultures of South Africa, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, knowing about ethical debates in religion, politics, economics, human rights, and the environment, understanding the impact of class, race, gender, and other identity-forming forces in learning, showing an appreciation of, and respect for, people of different values, beliefs, practices, and cultures, being able to respond to current social and educational problems with particular emphasis on the issues of violence, drug abuse, poverty, child and women abuse, HIV/AIDS, and environmental degradation, demonstrating caring, committed, and ethical professional behaviour and an understanding of education as dealing with the protection of children and the development of the whole person

The policy for the role of religion in education flows directly from the Constitutional values of human rights, equality, freedom from discrimination, freedom of conscience, religion, thoughts, beliefs and opinion. By enshrining these basic values, the Constitution provides the framework for determining the relationship between religion and education in a democratic society.

We hope that the explanation provided in this circular has been of help in addressing your concerns with regards to the Christian speaker's visit on Tuesday.



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QUESTION 2

Introduction

On the surface, Buddhism and Islam have more differences than similarities in their philosophies. While Islam is a monotheistic religion that believes in worshipping an almighty God, Buddhism rejects the notion of a creator God but does honour enlightened beings as deities.

Buddhism preaches vegetarianism and shunning alcohol and drugs. Islam also bans alcohol but does not preach vegetarianism. A Buddhist who takes a spiritual refuge outside the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha is not considered a Buddhist. S/he may study and learn from other religions, but to consider another teaching and to honour someone outside the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha (collectively called the Sasana) as equal to, or higher than the Sasana makes him/her a non-Buddhist. 7

The idea of an omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent creator is rejected by Buddhists. The Buddha himself refuted the theistic argument that the universe was created by a self-conscious, personal God. There is only one God (monotheism). God is the one True Creator. God has always existed; none existed before him and He will exist forever. He transcends life and death. No part of His creation resembles Him; He cannot be seen, but sees all.

Rebirth is one of the central beliefs of Buddhism. We are in an endless cycle of birth, death and re-birth, which can only be broken by attaining nirvana. Attaining nirvana is the only way to escape suffering permanently. All beings created with reason will be accountable to God Almighty on the Day of Judgement. They will be rewarded for every atom's weight of good, and either forgiven or punished for evil deeds. Buddhist monasteries, temples, and shrines are where worshipping is done, while Mosque/masjid, or any place which is considered clean by Islamic standards is where Muslims worship. 7

Buddhists meditate, using the Eightfold Path; right view, right aspiration, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration, while Muslims pray to the Five pillars: Testament that there is one God and Muhammad is his messenger (shahadah); prayer five times daily; fast during Ramadan; charity to the poor (zakat); pilgrimage (Hajj).

The goal of Buddhist prayer is to attain enlightenment and be released from the cycle of rebirth and death, thus attaining Nirvana. The goal of Muslim prayer is to fulfill gift and responsibility of this life through following the guidance of Holy Quran and Hadith, striving to serve mankind through compassion, justice, trustworthiness, and love for all of God's creation. According to Islamic scripture, all people who follow God's revealed guidance and the messengers sent with it 'submit' to that guidance, and are considered Muslims (i.e. Adam, Moses, Abraham, Jesus, etc.). 7

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Statues are used as meditation objects, and revered as they reflect the qualities of the Buddha. In Islam, images of God or prophets are not permitted. Art takes the form of calligraphy, architecture etc. Muslims distinguish themselves from other groups by not drawing lifelike human works, which could be mistaken as idolatry. No image is representative of God. In the Buddhist texts, it is seen that when Gautama, after his awakening, was asked whether he was a normal human being, he replied, "No". Humans are born pure and innocent. Upon reaching adolescence, you are responsible for what you do, and must choose right from wrong. Islam also teaches that faith and action go hand-in-hand. 1

Buddhists are those who follow the teachings of the Buddha. Islam is derived from the Arabic root "Salema": peace, purity, submission and obedience. In the religious sense, Islam means submission to the will of God and obedience to His law. A Muslim is one who follows Islam.

The Buddhist Sangha composed of bhikkhus (male monks) and bhikkhunis (female nuns). The Sangha is supported by lay Buddhists. In Islam the Imam leads congregational prayer in a mosque. It is not a religious duty to marry. Monks and nuns do not marry and are celibate. Islam is totally opposed to monasticism and celibacy. Marriage is an act of Sunnah in Islam and is strongly recommended. Men can only marry the "people of the book" i.e., Abrahamic religions. Women can only marry a Muslim man. 1

Sin is not a Buddhist concept. Forgiveness must be sought from God; there is no intermediary with him. If any wrong is done against another person or thing, forgiveness must first be sought from them, then from God, as all of God's creation have rights that must not be infringed. In Islam, Sharia law (derived from Quran and Hadith) governs prayers, business transactions, and individual rights, as well as criminal and governmental laws. Religious debate or 'Shura' is utilized for practical solutions to contemporary issues.

There are no distinctions between men and women in Buddhism. Women are equal to men, and men are equal to women in the Sangha. The Buddha gave Men and Women equal rights and a major part in the Sangha. The prophet said "Do good to and serve your mother, then your mother, then your mother, then your father, then the near relatives and then those who come after them." Islam's honoring women is the great status of the mother in Islam. 1

Being a practical philosophy, Buddhism is neutral against other religions. Christians and Jews are regarded as the people of the book, who hold a great deal of respect over materialists but are disbelievers far from the correct path.

