

Teacher's Perception of Secularism

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Secularism is a matter of both pedagogic and social interest, for teachers. It has in recent times been part of the general discourse in the country and is also part of the curriculum. In education the presence of denominational schools, those run by religious trusts, makes it especially salient. The context of the present study includes a clearly articulated point of view in terms of endorsing the Constitutional values as the basis for pedagogy. Secularism is both in the aims of education as well as in the content to be transacted.

The National Curriculum Framework 2005, in its Aim of Education includes the following point.

*'The guiding principles discussed earlier provide the landscape of social values within which we locate our educational aims. The first is a commitment to democracy and the values of equality, justice, freedom, concern for others' well being, **secularism**, respect for human dignity and rights. Education should aim to build a commitment to these values, which are based on reason and understanding. The curriculum, therefore, should provide adequate experience and space for dialogue and discourse in the school to build such a commitment in children.'*

The class 8th textbook on Social Science, Social and Political Life-III, has as its first unit, the Indian Constitution and Secularism, which further has two chapters:

1. The Indian Constitution
2. Understanding Secularism

In its introductory note to teachers, in this section it states that the chapter uses this definition (separation between religion and state) as the foundation and then proceeds to elucidate two ideas: a) Inter and Intra-religious freedom and b) Indian Secularism. Further, after a brief exploration of these issues the note concludes with *'While discussion is to be encouraged, it is important to mediate this and ensure that it does not reinforce stereotypes of religious minorities.* Also, there are exercises within and at the end of each chapter to help students *'... engage analytically with the material presented.'* this is in

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