

Introduction of religion in democracy in a



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Introduction

The many arguments given by secularist groups to support the exclusion or restriction of religion from politics rely on a misunderstanding of modern pluralism in the society.

A democratic society needs both political and religious views for a true democracy. The secularists hold that one's religious views should remain personal and private and never should they be subjected to public discussion or undergo any form of public voting. A pluralist society accepts both religious and anti-religious viewpoints without preference to any. While many people agree the importance of sex education to children, there is a controversial debate whether to incorporate sex education in school curriculum or contents of sex education. From a religious perspective, schools should root for abstinence not safe sex; sex, condom use, or use of any contraceptive should never find its way into a classroom.

Others view that the school sex curriculum should entail issues to do with safe sex. The discussion on sex education inevitably attracts both secular and religious views. However, the religious arguments ought to be rational in order to persuade even unbelievers.

Therefore, religion plays a role in any democratic secular society in the formulation of laws.

Introducing Religion into Politics

The efforts to bring religion into public debates and more so regarding public policy formulation should also target to counter any problems that may arise.

Perry argues that the introduction of religious conceptions to the public discourse makes compromise difficult to achieve (47).

He further argues religious people, in spite of what the religious books demand, be able to work through their ideas and compromise rather than being fanatical. This implies that the religious views should be rational for them to fit into public debates and any disagreements that may arise handled rationally. Christians have different views from non-Christians about sex and sexuality (Greenawalt 45).

In formulating policies regarding sex education in schools, the views of religious leaders are important. Historically, the health experts advocated for sex education in schools that teaches children about avoiding pregnancy and keeping them from sexually transmitted diseases while the religious leaders advocated for abstinence education. The conventions about sex education are intimately bound to ethical teachings that insist on good moral behaviors.

Nevertheless, members of specific religions bound by specific religious views regarding sexuality should not impose them on non-believers in a pluralist society.

The influence of Secularism on Religion

Majority of the religious beliefs are in one way or another under the influence of secularism. The influence of secularism is more notable in issues to do with morality where the influence on the religious people by a secularist view is high (Audi 133). Christians hold the view that sex education should entail abstinence from sexual intercourse but agree to a secularist belief; that is,

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use of contraceptives to prevent pregnancy and transmission of sexually transmitted diseases. Christians submit to the fact that their religious beliefs have little impact in an overwhelmingly secular society. This calls for a compromise between secularism and religion in formulation of acceptable moral laws that can serve the religious believers and secularists/atheists alike to avoid creating a scenario where either party feels oppressed by the laws.

The Role of Religion in Democracy

In a democratic political system, religious beliefs play an important and inalienable role. In a democratic system, religious freedom is allowed and one is entitled to voice his/her religious views (Hillel 99) However, religious arguments that are not rational or evidence based should not be brought into public debate, as this will be rejected on the basis for public or social policy.

This arises because people that hold a different religious belief rarely convince others by arguments not based on reason. Only rational religious or secular belief deserves public debate based on reason rather than on fanatical beliefs. This creates an understanding for proper formulation and implementation public policies in the social places including schools.

According to Perry, true democracy “ does not provide for an official state religion or peg citizenship on the adherence to an official religion” (44).

World developed democracies like in the western world allows the citizens to openly express their religious views and beliefs and can even establish institutions that are consistent with those views without fear of committing an offence; for instance, establishing a school that is run according to the

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religious principles and values. In State-run schools, the government does not enforce particular religious practices or interfere with worship services. Liberal democracies provide for the principle that freedom of citizens to practice their faith; that is, the religious practices remain unregulated. This means that religious and nonreligious citizens and nongovernmental organizations receive equal treatment.

Relationship between the Church and the State

The church plays an important role in a democratic political system as it provides guidance to its faithful (Sweetman 98). It is the responsibility of the church leaders to introduce rational religious beliefs into the public debate. This is necessary in legislating new public policies.

Although the primary role of religious leaders is to explain and defend their respective religious beliefs, they also need to articulate these religious beliefs politically. This is important as it enables the electorate and the government to know the religious stand as regards certain issues that affect the society. According to Sweetman, religious texts or religious traditions are important in a religious argument. He further argues that, religious issues should be supported with rationality before articulating them (107). Moreover, Christian arguments have to be persuasive enough even to non-Christians.

This is justifiable as the legislation of new policies applies to both the secular and the religious people. In a democratic system, no religion dominates to an extent that it imposes religious views on everyone. Religious leaders should

consider whether it is prudent to impose religious beliefs even to nonbelievers as this may amount to violation of individual rights.

Conclusion

Both religious and secular viewpoints are necessary in public debate arena in the formulation of new social policies.

The belief by secularist groups that religion should not play part in this process is misleading. All policies including sex education in schools need secular and religious perspectives to arrive at acceptable laws. However, the religious and secular beliefs should be rational and convincing enough for them to qualify into the public debate arena. The controversial issue of whether or not sex education is appropriate in schools calls for both religious and secular views in order to make policies. It is evident that comprehensive sex education is necessary in schools dealing with all aspects of sex and sexuality to avoid risks associated with irresponsible sexual behavior amongst unsuspecting and inexperienced schoolchildren.

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