Cultural Considerations Policy

Ras Al Khaimah Department of Knowledge

Ras Al Khaimah Department of Knowledge - Government of Ras Al Khaimah

1. Introduction

The UAE's rapid growth and evolving demographics have transformed Ras Al Khaimah into a global hub of cultures, where schools play a key role in promoting intercultural understanding. This diversity has enriched the educational environment, promoting international awareness and mutual respect. Guided by the principles of tolerance outlined in the UAE's National Tolerance Program, there is a crucial need to ensure that schools strike a balance between inclusivity and respect for cultural and national values. All school community members need to recognise and adhere to culturally and nationally acceptable topics and practices within the educational setting.

This policy aims to assist schools in achieving a balance that promotes diversity and cultural integrity.

1.1. Purpose

- Provide schools with guidance to promote culturally appropriate awareness and practices within the UAE.
- Define school practices that align with UAE legislation and cultural values.
- Ensure teaching and learning resources respect and align with the UAE's cultural norms.

1.2. Scope of Application

This policy applies to all private schools in Ras Al Khaimah. It encompasses all aspects of school operations, including curriculum, teaching resources, school events, and community interactions.

2. Definitions

Cultural Consideration	Understanding and being aware of appropriate topics and practices in a culture.
Culture	The unique characteristics of a society include its traditions, beliefs, lifestyles, and values.

Indoctrination	Teaching in a biased way to promote a specific principle, religion, or ideology.
Legislation	The legal rules and regulations that govern practices within a specific area.
Malicious Intent	Deliberately disregarding cultural norms to offend.
National Identity	The shared values and traditions represent the lifestyle and history of a nation.
School Community	All individuals connected to a school, including staff, students, parents, and alumni, working together to create a supportive environment.
Teaching and Learning Resources	Materials and tools, such as books, videos, and digital content, that support education and enhance learning.
Cycle	The education system is classified into four stages: KG, Cycle 1 (G1-G4), Cycle 2 (G5-G8), and Cycle 3 (G9-G12).
Phase	The phases in the education system are classified as follows: Phase 1 (Pre-KG-KG2), Phase 2 (G1-G4), Phase 3 (G5-G8), and Phase 4 (G9-G12).
Section	An administrative grouping of students may be organised by cycle, grade, class, or other parameters and may have a different gender status than the overall school.

3. Policy Statement

3.1. Adherence to UAE Legislation

3.1.1. Schools must ensure that all members of the school community understand, respect, and comply with the requirements outlined in this policy and relevant UAE legislation. This includes adherence to national and cultural guidelines as stipulated in the following frameworks:

- **Code of Conduct for Education Professionals in General Education (MoE, 2022):** Emphasises professional behaviour and cultural alignment in educational practices.

- **MoE Circular No. 1 of 2022 Regarding Private Schools' Compliance with National Identity Requirements:** Establishes standards for preserving national identity within school environments.

- **MoE Circular No. 1 of 2023 Regarding Promoting a Safe School Environment:** Focuses on creating secure and culturally respectful educational spaces.

- **Ministry of Culture and Youth National Tolerance Program**: This program promotes tolerance and respect within educational institutions, aligning with the UAE's cultural values.

- **Any additional regulations or circulars** issued by the Ministry of Education, Ras Al Khaimah Government Media Office (RAK GMO), or other relevant authorities.

3.1.2. The school principal is accountable for ensuring that all practices and the content of all teaching and learning resources align with and uphold UAE cultural considerations in compliance with federal laws, including but not limited to the following:

- **Article 44, Constitution of the UAE:** Residents must respect the constitution, laws, public authority directives, public order, and public morals.

- **Clause 11, Article 11, Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 on Private Education and Amendments:** Schools must preserve Islamic and Arab values, public morals, and the traditions and systems of the state.

- **Clause 12, Article 11, Federal Decree Law No. (18) of 2020 on Private Education and Amendments:** Schools must respect national identity and sovereignty within all operations.

- **Article 416, Federal Decree Law No. (31) of 2021 Promulgating the Crimes and Penalties and Amendments:** Penalties are imposed for the production, possession, or dissemination of materials that violate public morals, ensuring all school content adheres to these legal requirements.

3.2. Cultural Considerations in Schools
3.2.1.   School Requirements

To promote cultural awareness and respect in Ras Al Khaimah private schools, the following measures shall be implemented:

- **Training and Awareness**
  - Schools must provide induction sessions for all new staff, students, and parents to raise awareness of UAE cultural values and expectations.
  - Annual refresher sessions are <u>mandatory</u> for all school community members to ensure an ongoing understanding of cultural considerations.

- **Teaching and Learning Resources**
  - Schools must establish a formal process for reviewing and approving all teaching and learning materials to ensure alignment with UAE cultural values.
  - Schools must ensure that age-appropriate resources suit the UAE's cultural and national values.
  - Schools must reject materials that promote inappropriate topics such as substance abuse, violence, or any form of discrimination.

- Schools must maintain detailed records of the vetting process.
- Schools must adhere to the updated Ministry of Education (MOE) list of banned publishers and resources in schools.
- Materials must align with UAE culture, values, and age-appropriateness, avoiding topics like:
  - Substance abuse or violence.
  - Inappropriate representations of gender identity or sexual orientation.
  - Politically or religiously sensitive content outside of formal curricula.

- **School Activities and extra-curricular activities**
  - Schools must avoid engaging in any events/activities that go against Islamic customs, traditions, and beliefs. Consider both regulations and cultural norms to ensure that the activities align with the cultural values of the United Arab Emirates. (The event must align with the values and traditions of UAE culture and Islam.)
  - Parents and students should have the choice to participate in any event, and written consent from parents must be obtained.
  - The school must obtain the required permissions from RAK DOK and the relevant government authorities (as applicable) when organising any event or activity.

- **Observation of Cultural Practices**
  - Schools must integrate UAE cultural practices into their daily routines, including:
    - Singing the national anthem.
    - Celebrating national holidays and observing official protocols for flags and portraits.

- **School Social Media**
  - Schools must monitor all official social media accounts to ensure compliance with UAE cultural values. This includes:
    - Reviewing and approving all posts on official accounts to align with UAE traditions and norms.
    - Regularly monitoring social media activity to prevent inappropriate or culturally insensitive content.
    - Ensuring posts featuring students or staff have prior consent and reflect the school positively.
    - Taking immediate action to address breaches of UAE cultural or legal standards.

- **Handling Controversial Topics**

- Schools must address sensitive topics (e.g., biological reproduction, wars, or social issues) within the curriculum objectively and respectfully.
- Parents must be informed in advance of any lessons that may contain sensitive content, with an option for parents to excuse their children.

3.2.2. Roles and Responsibilities

o All members of the school community, including principal, staff, students, and parents, must ensure:

- **Adherence to UAE Laws and Values**: Ensure all behaviours, practices, and displays align with the UAE's laws, cultural norms, values, and traditions.
- **Respect for Cultural Norms**: Avoid promoting inappropriate stereotypes, assumptions, or preconceptions about the UAE and its region.
- **Prohibition of Inappropriate Behaviours**: Avoid engaging in or promoting drug and alcohol use, smoking, violence, indoctrination, or practices inconsistent with UAE cultural values.
- **Appropriate Use of Symbols and Imagery**: Refrain from using symbols, colours, or imagery that conflict with UAE cultural norms, such as extremist ideas, disrespectful representations, or inappropriate content.
- **Prevention of Discrimination and Extremism**: Prevent activities, content, or discussions that promote extremism, racism, bullying, or any form of discrimination.
- **Prohibition of Protests and Demonstrations**: Do not organise or participate in rallies, protests, or demonstrations on school premises or during school-related events.
- **Culturally Aligned Events**: Ensure all school-organised events and celebrations respect UAE cultural values and traditions.
- **Culturally Considerate Appearance:**
  - o Cover visible tattoos and inappropriate piercings.
  - o Follow the school's dress code to ensure clothing aligns with cultural expectations.

4. Compliance

4.1. Effective Date: This policy shall take effect from the start of the Academic Year 2025/26. Full compliance is expected from all private schools by the beginning of the Academic Year 2025/26.

4.2. Enforcement and Penalties: Schools that do not adhere to this policy will be subject to accountability measures as stipulated by RAK DOK, including

possible penalties or other corrective actions. Non-compliance may result in intervention by RAK DOK as per UAE federal regulations.

4.3. Compliance Audits: RAK DOK reserves the right to conduct periodic audits to ensure schools comply with this policy. The school administration must promptly resolve any discrepancies found during these audits to avoid further action.

5. Feedback and Improvement

5.1. Annual Review: RAK DOK will conduct a yearly review of this policy to incorporate feedback, address emerging needs, and ensure it aligns with the latest educational standards and regulatory requirements.

5.2. Feedback Mechanisms: School administrators are encouraged to submit feedback on this policy to RAK DOK, allowing for continuous improvement based on the practical experiences of schools.

6. Contact Information

For any questions related to this policy, please contact: **info@dok.rak.ae**

7. Recommendation / Conclusion

By adhering to *RAK DOK Cultural Considerations Policy*, schools in Ras Al Khaimah demonstrate their commitment to creating an inclusive and welcoming learning environment for all students. This policy promotes coexistence by ensuring that schools respect the cultural history of the Emirate while also welcoming diversity. Compliance with this policy strengthens schools' alignment with Ras Al Khaimah's strategic educational vision and contributes to nurturing responsible, globally aware learners.

8. Revision History

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Note:

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