National Institution for Human Rights Response to the Questionnaire Regarding:[[1]](#footnote-1)

 **“THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION”[[2]](#footnote-2)**

At the request of:

Special Rapporteur on the right to education

Deadline 20-2-2020

Note: some questions were grouped to have one answer

1. ***Please provide information on how, in your country, the issue of respect for cultural diversity and the cultural rights of each person is reflected in school curricula (legislative, institutional and policy framework, and implementation);***
2. ***Please provide information on how, in your country, the issue of respect for cultural diversity and the cultural rights of each person is taken into account in the organization of the school system and schools (legislative, institutional and policy framework, and implementation);***
3. ***Please clarify to what extent the measures described above relate not only to the issue of languages in education (in this regard, please briefly explain the context and provide details on the State language policy), but also to the arts, heritage, science, history, values and religions, or world views and ways of life, in all their diversity.***
4. The Kingdom of Bahrain has special interest and given great care and attention to the right to education, as it is considered a guarantee to enable and strengthen the practice of all related human rights and in particular cultural rights. The amended Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain stipulates in Article No. (7) thereof, that: “**a. The State sponsors the sciences, humanities and arts, and encourages scientific research. The State also guarantees educational and cultural services to its citizens. Education is compulsory and free in the early stages as specified and provided by the law. The necessary plan to combat illiteracy is laid down by law. b. The law regulates care for religious and national instruction in the various stages and forms of education, and at all stages is concerned to develop the citizen's personality and his pride in his Arabism. c. Individuals and bodies may establish private schools and universities under the supervision of the State and in accordance with the law. d. The State guarantees the inviolability of the places of learning”**.
5. The right to education is a guaranteed right for all. The amended Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain states in Article No. (18) thereof that: “**People are equal in human dignity and citizens are equal before the law in public rights and duties. There shall be no discrimination among them on the basis of gender, origin, language, religion or creed**”.
6. With regards to national legislation, Law No. (27) of 2005 on Education guarantees the right to education for all without any exception or discrimination for any reason whatsoever. The Law establishes that the goals of education include shaping and molding the individual’s personality nationally, scientifically, professionally, and culturally in all conscious, moral, mental, social, health, behavioral, and sports aspects, as well as developing greater awareness of human rights principles, by including these principles in educational curricula. In addition, education aims to develop concepts of peace, a better future for mankind, and international cooperation and solidarity based on justice, equality, and mutual interaction and respect among all countries and peoples. Moreover, Law No. (3) of 2005 on Higher Education addresses and clarifies the goals sought by higher education through its institutions and the legal obligations of these institutions.
7. Decree-Law No. (25) of 1998 regarding Private Educational and Training Institutions regulates the issues related to the function of private educational institutions, the conditions required for the establishment of such institutions, the objectives of private educational institutions, and the financial systems that these institutions need to comply with , together with an description of the type of educational system adopted by these institutions, specifying the technical and functional supervision mechanism, and the administrative control over private educational and training institutions. It is worth noting that the first private school was established in the Kingdom of Bahrain in 1899 and the first regular government (public) school was established in 1919. In 2019, the Kingdom of Bahrain celebrated the 100th anniversary of education, reflecting the importance and depth of its education history.
8. , In March 2019, the Kingdom of Bahrain launched a national plan to enhance national affiliation and instill citizenship values named “Our Bahrain”, with the purpose of preserving the Bahraini identity by strengthening national affiliation, instilling citizenship values, developing educational curricula, in addition to reviewing national laws and legislation to ensure that there are no inconsistencies with the national plan. The plan is based on five axes, namely: affiliation programs, public relations campaigns, media initiatives, curricula and courses initiatives, and legislation and regulations initiatives. The number of submitted proposed initiatives have reached (70) proposals.
9. Within the framework of collaboration with those concerned with the right to education; and in order to disseminate the values of tolerance, coexistence, and refusal of violence among schoolchildren, and to spread the concept of citizenship, strengthen the sense of national unity, and reject all forms of discrimination, the Ministry of Education has developed a special education curriculum on citizenship and human rights for all stages of study starting from the primary level to the secondary school level.
10. tThe Ministry of Education launched the Citizenship and Human Rights Enhancing Schools project, which aims to disseminate citizenship and human rights principles through curricula that include pluralism, concepts, and skills, focusing on affiliation, loyalty, tolerance, voluntary work, moderation, dialogue, democracy, acceptance of multiculturalism, pluralism within the framework of unity, crisis management, and sustaining peace. Noting that this project has earned international acclaim from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
11. Aiming at respecting diversity and cultural rights in the field of education, the Ministry of Education teaches Islamic education curricula in public and private schools for Bahrainis, whatever their beliefs and without discrimination. Such curricula include a set of principles and values that are common to religions and sects, such as virtues, ethical and behavioral values, harmony, , human solidarity, and tolerance among human beings. Studying the curriculum of Islamic education is not compulsory on non-Muslims (Bahraini or foreign), nor is it counted as part of their exams and assessments.
12. To promote cultural diversity within the curriculum of Islamic education, the issues shared by the two sects in the Kingdom (the Sunni and Ja’afari Schools of Islamic Jurisprudence), are taken into consideration in order to promote diversity in curriculum in particular, with regard to worship, so that the student is aware of other views and beliefs In addition, a Ja’afari religious institute was established similar to the Sunni religious institute offering the same curricula with the same specifications except for the details of each sect separately.
13. As for the level of concern and taking into account the other various cultural differences in the Bahraini society, several private schools were established devoting special attention to the intercultural commonalities among them. Perhaps the most prominent of these schools are Al-Falah Schools, Sacred Heart Schools, St. Christopher School, the Indian School, the British School, the Pakistani School, the Bangladeshi School, the Philippines School, the French School, and other schools of different cultures.
14. ***Please specify the specific and particular difficulties encountered in ensuring an inclusive and quality education that allows cultural diversity and the cultural rights of each person to flourish at the same time;***

***6- What recommendations should be provided to States and other stakeholders on these issues?***

1. The Bahraini society is a tolerant and coexistent in peace and harmony society without hate, violence, or racism. In the past years, the National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR) has not observed - through its broad mandate - any situation that constituted obstacles limiting the diffusion of diversity and cultural rights related to the right to education in the Kingdom of Bahrain.
2. However, as a national institution, we believe that it is essential to pay more attention to teachers through increasing the academic content of their program of studies at university by including human rights related courses as core (required) courses, with an in-depth focus on issues related to children's rights from the educational aspect, and linking it with the educational curricula of their study, giving primacy to the knowledge side over the theoretical side. The National Institution for Human Rights can contribute positively and effectively to the promotion and development of a culture of human rights through conducting specialized training programs for teachers on issues related to human rights.
3. The NIHR appeals that outreach programs be increased to further develop concepts of diversity and cultural rights among school and university students, and to encourage dialogue among them to promote coexistence and social peace.
4. ***Have specific mechanisms been established to consult and ensure the participation of stakeholders, in particular the populations concerned and parents, for a better understanding and effectiveness of the right to education, including its cultural dimension? What place is given in this context to the voice of children?***
5. Schools in the Kingdom of Bahrain have given significant attention to instruments that ensure participation of parents in the decision-making process with the schools in a participatory manner. Moreover, those schools have not overlooked giving children (pupils) an opportunity to participate through establishing a student council in each school, as well as another council for their parents, in which those who wish to become a council member may apply for membership. The student council reflects the opinions, concerns, needs, demands, and requests of students, through direct, simple, and straightforward communication with the administration of the school.
6. Parents’ councils discuss study plans of their children. In the parents’ councils, the progress of the educational process is explained to the parents to ensure coherence between the effort of the schools and that of the parents. In addition, consultation and participation take place in making some decisions, including ensuring the best interests of the children (students).

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1. To view Law No. (26) of 2014 on Establishing the National Institution for Human Rights, as amended by Decree-Law No. (20) of 2016, you can visit the Institution’s website at the following link: <http://www.nihr.org.bh> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For more information on the right to education in the Kingdom of Bahrain, please see the annual reports of the National Institution for Human Rights for the years (2013) and (2017) published on the Institution’s website: Annual Reports Section: at the following link: <http://www.nihr.org.bh> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)