

INTRODUCTION

School textbooks are one of the most crucial means by which a nation passes on to the younger generation a certain worldview, determined according to parameters set by the educational establishment. As such, they open a window on to what the education system in a specific country wishes to instill in the students' minds.

The Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace (CMIP), which has already conducted surveys of Israeli, Palestinian and Syrian school textbooks, has undertaken a similar survey of Saudi Arabian textbooks, with the cooperation of the American Jewish Committee. However, unlike the former surveys, this present one has attempted to broaden its perspective to include the Saudi Arabian outlook on Christianity and the West and has not limited itself to the Middle East conflict. The report has also dealt with Saudi notions of government, women's status and children's rights as taught in schools.

For the purpose of this research, 93 Saudi textbooks on various subjects for grades 1-10, mostly from the years 1999-2002, have been examined (see List of Sources). All books, except one, were published by the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education (the exception being a book issued by the female inspectors of the lower grades of girls' education in the Riyadh Province). The material has been scrutinized according to the criteria of both UNESCO and CMIP, as follows:

UNESCO relevant criteria:

1. Are the data given accurate and complete?
2. Are illustrations, maps and graphs up-to-date and accurate?
3. Are the achievements of others recognized?
4. Are equal standards applied?
5. Are political disputes presented objectively and honestly?
6. Is wording likely to create prejudice, misapprehension and conflict avoided?
7. Are ideals of freedom, dignity and fraternity being advocated?
8. Is the need for international cooperation, for the formation of common human ideals and the advancement of the cause of peace, as well as for the enforcement of the law, emphasized?

CMIP criteria of analysis:

1. The image of other peoples, religions and communities: Are they recognized, accepted as equal and respected; or are they presented in a stereotyped and prejudiced way?
2. Peace and the peace process: Does education foster peace? Does it support the peace process? Is there any room for improvement in this respect?

In line with CMIP's methodology, the present report consists mainly of quotations from the books, organized in chapters according to subject. The extent of analysis here is minimal, to allow the material to speak for itself. Occasional explanatory remarks have been added for clarification - either as footnotes or in brackets within the quotations.

Qur'anic verses follow in most cases N. J. Dawood's translation of the Qur'an, published in the "Penguin Classics" series. Texts of Prophetic sayings (Hadith) have been freely translated.