

Rethinking Interfaith Pedagogy

A snapshot of one Middle Eastern country's public school interfaith education

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Education

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts
(Educational Studies)
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

April 2009

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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-63327-4
Our file *Notre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-63327-4

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ABSTRACT

Rethinking Interfaith Pedagogy

(A snapshot of one Middle Eastern country's public school interfaith education)

Leila Mirshafii

Students in the Middle East are being educated to believe that adherents of other religions are malevolent, evil and their enemy. These misconceptions or the 'psychopolitics of fear' influence their outlook towards the world and once this prejudiced attitude is formed, it can become resilient to change. The negative effects of such beliefs could in practice translate into destructive results both in their own destiny and that of the human community at large.

This paper looks at the process by which such indoctrination takes place at the schools of one Middle Eastern country. In order to do so, the middle school level (grades 6-8) Islamic Culture and Religious Studies textbooks were researched and examined for different types, themes and methods of indoctrination. The study then strives to shed some light on the fear that underlies a prejudiced education. Finally, this paper recommends exploring different models of an 'interfaith education' that aim to be free from prejudice and bias: a "critical interfaith education" which embraces diversity of human community and is based on the themes forwarded by the UNESCO 1974 Recommendation.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank many people who have made this study possible.

First and foremost, Parvaneh S. my grandmother, teacher and soul mate. Your love, passion and concern for humanity and justice will be forever immortalized in these pages.

My father, Nemat, for your love, patience and constant support.

Maryam, Akbar, Farzad, Rosita, Behrooz, Jeff, Roksana and Hamid; for your encouragements, wisdom, and unwavering love. Your presence in my life inspires me to be the best that I can be.

Dr. Ailie Cleghorn, my treasured advisor, for your silent power, love and continual support. Your understanding, perceptiveness and uncomplicated ways gave me the assurance and the clarity to pursue my dream.

Dr. Mohammad Naseem Ayaz – your sensitivity, passion for teaching, and gentle spirit have touched many lives and influenced many works. This work is no exception.

Dr. Waddington – for the exquisite job you performed editing and revising the thesis.

Dr. Hamalian and Dr. Hyslop Margison, I would equally like to thank you for the many

extraordinary ways by which you have affected my thinking; fuelling my desire and curiosity to embark on such a study.

Special thanks to Nadine, for going out of her way to serve and care for others.

This work is dedicated to lives shattered by the evil of indoctrination.

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“Henceforth the religions of the world will make war not on each other, but on the giant evils that afflict mankind (Charles, 1893).”

“Education is our hope for the future; it is the best resource and means for countering the dangerous trends of prejudice, violence and exclusion that plague our society (Puett, 2005, p.1).”

INTRODUCTION

In countries where the government and the official religion are closely linked, children often develop an early conception of the “religious other”. In such countries the school system often acts as the main societal institution to shape religious attitudes. In that the school system is effectively an arm of the government it is not surprising that what is taught in school may be designed purposely to create a hostile attitude towards ‘the other’ as part of the government’s strategy for creating nationalistic fervour and a sense of unity in the population. Little is known, however, about the precise mechanisms through which this kind of socialization takes place. This study will explore this matter by focusing on the content of the curriculum and by looking at the content of selected textbooks at the middle school level in one Middle Eastern country.

The Middle East is composed of several countries marked by conflict: conflict between certain countries and conflict within. Much of this conflict at least on the surface, is based on religious differences (Christian, Jewish, Muslim) which in turn are tied to cultural differences (Western-Eastern) and political differences (democratic-autocratic). Complex as this matter is, the fact remains that in each of these countries a

large part of children's socialization into the dominant norms and beliefs of the society they reside in, comes through the school system. This is the one institution where religious, cultural and political factors may be identified within the curriculum.

In this study, I take the position that in at least one Middle Eastern country the religious other is actively demonized in a process that is intended to coerce students into believing that their faith is the only 'correct religion', and the only path to the sacred. Although it will not be possible to observe what actually goes on in classrooms, to document what it is that teachers actually say to students, it is clearly evident just from reviewing the textbooks that at least in this particular country, school children are told repeatedly that followers of other than the Muslim faiths are 'Children of the Great Satan' and 'God's enemy' and that in order to save these people from darkness and to purify the world (which is usually described to them as the ultimate holy act) they are obliged by the Almighty to resort to any means, even violence. Obviously, demonizing 'the other' is not a new phenomenon and it exists in a number of countries in the world. Nonetheless, in some parts of the globe, it is the rule rather than the exception. School is the main institution via which the information about the 'religious other' is disseminated and it is mandatory to attend school up to a certain age in most countries. Due to the fact that this kind of knowledge is disseminated in school, it may be cloaked as part of the official curriculum, and passed on as objective truth.

I believe as a former student who has been schooled in such a setting, my beliefs and attitudes were tainted remarkably by the teachings that I received as a child. Chances are that if one does not have the opportunity to travel and live amongst people of other faiths,

his/her initial opinion of the 'religious other' may never change and persist for a lifetime, possibly affecting an individual's adult commitment to behave in harmful ways towards the other.

This is precisely the issue that prompted me to propose this study. My concern is that when one is indoctrinated into believing something about 'the other' which does not reflect the reality, this belief or attitude could have profound impact on his/her own life and the larger human family in which we all live. I believe that violent acts stem from violent thoughts. Therefore I assert that those who govern the school systems are to a significant degree responsible for perpetuating if not initiating intergroup conflict, related as it is to 'interfaith conflicts'.

According to Stein (2005), when one sees a group of individuals as the enemy or the enemy of her people, she erroneously is led to believe that inflicting pain and committing violence is alright. "The other" no longer has a face, rather it is viewed as 'an enemy' whose destruction is not only legitimized but also necessary. When an individual is no longer viewed as "human", apparently he/she is no longer to enjoy any "human rights". Desensitization is an extremely effective technique, perhaps even an essential ingredient of hatred and violence.¹

¹ Due to ethical and security reasons, the actual name of the country being studied is not disclosed throughout this thesis and the pseudonym "Aram" will be used instead. Similarly, the national language of the country in question will be called Aramian, its people Aramians, and so forth. The names of certain national figures or places will also be removed from certain passages for the same reason.

It is essential to clarify what is meant by certain chief notions at the outset of this paper, since their significance is central to the understanding of this whole thesis. The first one is 'otherness', or the act of 'othering'. 'Othering' signifies psychological and/or social ways in which one group excludes or marginalizes another group. By declaring someone "other", a group aims to underscore what makes the "other" in question dissimilar from or opposite; and this carries over into representations, and stereotypes (Volf, 1996). 'Othering' is often used as a 'weapon' and an instrument of hatred for political ends.

Alongside "otherness" the notion of 'indoctrination' needs to be distinguished from 'education. Indoctrination normally has a negative connotation and in this thesis refers to manipulation towards political ends. It also implies conveying information to students in ways that intend to prevent them from critically analyzing its validity or truth. Milech's (1978) review of the literature on this topic, cites a number of sources: Kilpatrick (1963), Johnson (1966), Snook (1972), Peters (1966), and Greene (1968) in '*Whether Jewish Education Is Necessarily a Case of Indoctrination?*'

Indoctrination usually refers to a 'negative' and 'not- a- very healthy' form of education, whereas true education represents a 'positive' or respectable process of information transfer. Indoctrination is often viewed in terms of authoritarian coercion, imposition and inculcation. It implies conveying beliefs based on 'ideologically tinted information not known to be true, and presenting them as true' such as superiority of a nation. So inculcating the 'times table' or grammatical verb conjugations in schools would not constitute indoctrination.

The intention also plays a key role here. The indoctrinator's only intention is that the student acquires and accepts a certain belief, in order to arrive at a certain premeditated outcome, regardless of the validity, truth, or rationality of the belief. He/she discourages autonomous thinking, for it could bring about the likelihood of the student's refusal of the belief. Whereas education allows for substantial room to manoeuvre, indoctrination almost always communicates rigidity in viewpoint. So one way to differentiate between the two is to see whether the student's beliefs are unchangeable in the face of contrary evidence. The indoctrinator's intention is to lead the student to adopt beliefs and make him/her believe as though he/she acquired them through inquiry, and yet to keep these beliefs from being exposed to any true inquiry, and thereby securing them against the threat of change by the later discovery of contradictory argument or evidence.

Other criteria to determine whether 'the transfer of information' is indoctrinatory include seeing whether the information is harmful to the student; seeing if it matters to the instructor whether the student understands the information being taught; and lastly, checking whether the student has the option of analytically scrutinizing the subject being taught. Milech (1978) finally concludes that determining whether something is indoctrinatory or not depends on many variables, some of which are the nature of the student, the nature of the subject matter, and the overall intention of the teacher (or transmitter of information) (p. 63).

Having addressed the two very important notions of "indoctrination" and "otherness" above, if the school systems were reformed and 'otherness' was portrayed without prejudice and bias, and if "critical interfaith pedagogy" was practiced instead, then

intergroup conflicts based on religious difference would diminish drastically. Critical interfaith pedagogy is a type of education about other faiths and their respective adherents that portrays the truth and aims to be unbiased. It is a dimension of the critical pedagogy theory forwarded by Paulo Freire in the *Pedagogy of Oppressed*.

Barakett and Cleghorn (2008) review the essentials of critical pedagogy as suggested by McLaren (1998) and Freire (1970; 1973; 1985). Based on critical theory which demands a persistent effort to examine any conviction, ideology or judgment; critical pedagogy attempts to help students understand the relationship between power and knowledge, and question and challenge domination and the ideologies and practices that dominate. It aims to help students achieve 'critical consciousness' which in classrooms implies not only validating every student's subjective knowledge - based experiences, but also a simultaneous critique of school knowledge. The intention is to demystify the supposed objectivity of knowledge and expose its link to the interests of the dominant group and thereby alleviate oppressive social conditions (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2008, pp. 89-91).

The implications of the present study could therefore be applied to any nation or state that is plagued by a history of intergroup or more specifically interfaith conflict. A psychology or a culture of peace propagated through interfaith peace education would constitute the indispensable cornerstone of a lasting and genuine peace between countries that are presently or have been experiencing intractable conflicts rationalized in terms of religious and other difference.

I would also like to point out here that in this study my aim is not to question the

validity of the claims that Aramian textbooks make about 'the other'. My concern is that true or not true, this information is being fed to students, and the students not being exposed to 'the others'' version of the stories and claims, are impacted and indoctrinated to adopt certain negative attitudes towards 'the other'. This negative perception in turn will be used unconsciously as a basis for possible action.

This study takes as a given that many of the current educational systems in the Middle East are filled with hidden and overt negative messages towards people of 'the other faith'. As a case in point, this study draws on the pertinent literature as well as an analysis of selected school textbooks of the public school system in Aram.

The thesis is divided into two main sections. The first section will attempt to shed some light on the nature of fear and prejudice that are the two most important inter-related phenomena underlying interethnic conflict. It will further illustrate the societal beliefs associated with a collective emotion of fear that characterize groups with a history of intractable conflict, and their actual implications for the societies involved- underscoring their potent and lasting negative impact on the peace making process and the sustenance of peace. The second section will investigate the existence of bias and prejudice about the 'religious other' in the context of the public school system of Aram. For this purpose, efforts were made to locate societal beliefs of an indoctrinating nature associated with nations characterized by intractable conflict. Either direct quotes and excerpts, or paraphrases from the 'Islamic Culture and Religious Studies' textbooks grades 6-8 (middle school) were translated and analyzed. In addition, images accompanied by some of these texts were presented to further illustrate the condition of

the public education in Aram. For a more in depth analysis, a sub-section was added in which any omissions of facts and viewpoints pertaining to the 'religious other' in the above textbooks were studied. For this purpose, the corresponding level in Quebec Public School's Ethics and Religious Culture program is examined and used as a brief point of comparison. The conclusion will highlight the importance of a critical interfaith pedagogy based on the UNESCO 1974 recommendations for education, and will briefly touch upon desired themes recommended for such a model.

The rationale behind carrying out this research is that if school is to some degree responsible for promoting or perpetuating a negative opinion towards people of the other faith and therefore is legitimizing violence against 'the other', then the opposite could also hold true. In other words, adopting a culture of peace through critical interfaith pedagogy that embraces difference, diversity, acceptance and respect will lead to global peace and reduce interfaith conflict.

METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive study based primarily on a detailed content analysis of Aram's textbooks that are currently used in the public school educational system. It has examined the texts and the images associated with the themes presented in the lessons. More specifically, to explore my hypothesis that the content of the curriculum in one Middle Eastern country is not only biased but promotes hostility towards the religious 'other', current public school textbooks of Islamic Culture and Religious Studies (2007-2008) of Aram were analysed. As such, the textbooks were thoroughly researched for the presence of societal beliefs associated with 'intractable conflicts' that are recognized to be indoctrinatory in nature. In addition, omissions, as defined by what is included in one non-Middle Eastern country's textbooks, were also taken into consideration.

The research was carried out through my own analysis and interpretation of the data in order to draw a general picture in the current educational system in Aram, and which perhaps could resonate with the trends present in some other countries' schooling systems in the Middle East. Therefore, I collected, reviewed, described and interpreted the data using the foregoing ideas as my conceptual framework.

Originally, when planning the thesis, I intended to carry out interviews as well as a "content analysis" of the textbooks of four countries in the Middle East. The intention was to locate the situation of Aram in a broader context. In due course, the scope of the thesis was narrowed down to an analysis of the content of grade 6 to 8 textbooks in Aram. In particular, I was interested in locating content that deliberately aimed to

indoctrinate Aram's students against the religious 'other'. Although these decisions limited the scope of this study, they also provided an opportunity for greater depth. The main texts used in the analysis were those currently used in three subjects: 'Aramian Literature', 'Islamic Culture and Religious Studies', and 'Social Studies' for grades 6 to 8. An extensive background literature review was also carried out.

The literature review revealed a number of related topics to consider when analyzing the textbooks. These included fear, intractable conflict, collective memory, collective orientation of fear and that of hope, prejudice, insular personalities, in-group vs. out-group, indoctrination, stereotypes, discrimination, intergroup peace education, and Critical Interfaith Pedagogy. The literature review included the UNESCO 1974 Recommendation for Education on International Peace, Understanding and Cooperation.

Nine textbooks, three of each subject, were initially reviewed lesson by lesson. My expectation that the books would contain problematic material was quickly confirmed; however, I found that the 'Islamic Culture and Religious Studies' textbooks were more overtly indoctrinatory, and thus this text material was selected for more focused analysis. In total, 62 lessons, 28 images, and 330 pages of text were analysed. Some images especially were found to speak much louder than the texts themselves. These images usually summarized the entire theme of a lesson. For clarity, the findings are further summarized in Table 1, as well as in the section of the thesis on 'omissions'.

SECTION 1

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY – PSYCHOLOGY OF INTERGROUP WAR: FEAR AND PREJUDICE

In this chapter I present both current and past sociological and social-psychological theories that have been put forth to explain the nature of prejudice and outright hostility between groups. This will include mention of in-group/out-group theory, and politically generated fear of 'the other'. Every effort will be made to avoid the over-generalizations.

The Nature of Prejudice

One of the earliest contributors to our understanding of prejudice was Gordon Allport who sought to disseminate his understanding of the holocaust with his 1954 book *The Nature of Prejudice*. In this book, he extends a comprehensive definition of prejudice: its true meaning, how and why it is formed, what purpose it serves and how it manifests itself. In addition, many related concepts such as categorization, stereotypes, discrimination, formation of in-groups and out-groups are also discussed. Much of what Allport wrote is relevant today.

Allport (1954) explains that while some of the intergroup antagonisms seem to be based on realistic conflicts of interest; most of it is unfortunately a product of fears of the imagination. Yet, imaginary fears can cause real suffering (p. xiii).

When we think of prejudice, we are likely to think of 'race prejudice'. This is an unfortunate association of ideas for throughout history human prejudice has had little to

do with race. The conception of race is recent, scarcely a century old. For the most part, prejudice and persecution have rested on other grounds, often on religion. That is why the term 'ethnic' is preferred to the term 'race' since it covers a whole range of characteristics of groups that may be in unequal proportions: physical, cultural, national, linguistic, religious or ideological in character (Allport, 1954, p. xv).

The etymological stem of the word prejudice is the Latin word *praejudicium* whose significance has subtly evolved since it was initially used. For the ancients it meant a *precedent* – a judgement based on previous decisions and experiences. Later, the English term acquired the meaning of judgment formed before due examination and consideration of facts – a premature or hasty judgement. Eventually, the term also included the favourable and unfavourable sentiments accompanied by such prior and unsupported judgment. But since most of the problems in the world revolve around the negative form of prejudice, then we could maintain that prejudice is thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant (Allport, 1954, p.6).

It is not easy to determine how much fact or proof is needed in order to justify a judgement. But a prejudiced person will most definitely claim that he has sufficient warrant for his views or assertions. In most of these cases, his stories are a mixture of selective sorting of few memories with hearsay, and overgeneralization. No one can possibly know all Arabs, all Anglophones, all Jews or homosexuals. Therefore a negative judgment of any group as a whole is an instance of ill thinking without sufficient grounds. Sometimes, it is even the case that ill-thinkers have never had a first-hand experience to form a prejudgment against another (Allport, 1954, p.7).

Although not always true, prejudice usually serves a functional purpose for its bearer. As such, it is fabricated and sustained by self-gratifying considerations. Also, prejudice is usually manifested in the following forms of antipathetic action, starting from the mildest to the severest:

- 1) Antilocution - talking negatively and spreading rumours about the disliked.
- 2) Avoidance - Avoiding the members of the disliked group, even perhaps at the cost of great inconvenience of the bearer.
- 3) Discrimination – depriving the disliked from certain rights, such as employment, political, residential housing, educational opportunities, hospitals, or some other social privileges.
- 4) Physical attack – heightened emotional prejudice may lead to violence. Gravestones in a Jewish cemetery may be desecrated, or a gay couple’s adopted kid may be severely threatened in a neighbourhood that they’d have to leave in fear.
- 5) Extermination – Lynching, massacres, pogroms, or genocides such as in the cases of Rwanda, Serbia, and the holocaust, in which the ultimate degree of prejudicial violence was expressed (Allport, 1954, pp. 14-15).

It might seem that ‘polite prejudice’ is harmless, but history has proven that it is always the ‘idle chatter’ that has paved the road for active discrimination or violent expressions of prejudice. It just makes the transition to a more intense level easier:

It was Hitler’s antilocution that led Germans to avoid their Jewish neighbours and erstwhile friends. This preparation made it easier to enact the Nurnberg laws of discrimination which, in turn, made the subsequent burning of synagogues and street

attacks upon Jews seem natural. The final step in the macabre progression was the ovens at Auschwitz. (Allport, 1954, p.15)

So, how is prejudice formed and why is it so easy to slip into ethnic prejudice? The simplest explanation is that its two essential ingredients – erroneous generalization and hostility – are natural capacities of human mind. The human mind operates by making use of categories – a process that is also called *generalization*. Once formed, categories represent the basis for our normal prejudgments. We cannot possibly avoid this automatic process. Orderly living depends on it. It facilitates life and guides our daily decisions, by helping us to quickly identify a related object (Allport, 1954, pp. 20-27). But the problem with categorization is that it doesn't just simplify our experiences but it *oversimplifies* them.

Moreover, one type of categorization that predisposes us to make unwarranted prejudgments is our personal values. In other words, the very act of affirming our way of life often leads to the threshold of prejudice. In order to better understand this concept, we turn our attention to the formation of in-groups and out-groups. An in-group is defined in simple terms as any cluster of people who use the term 'we' with the same significance (Allport, 1954, pp.31-35). For example, gender can be an in-group such as 'we women', so can religion 'all we Christians' or 'the nation of Islam', nationality too 'all Canadians', etc.

But the formation of in-groups usually depends on the existence of an out-group. Every line, fence or boundary marks off an inside, from an outside. Therefore, an in-group always implies the existence of some corresponding out-group. But one's loyalty

to the in-group does not automatically imply disloyalty or hostility towards an out-group. Yet it is undeniable that the presence of a threatening common enemy will cement the in-group sense of any organized aggregate group, be it a family, a sports team, or a nation. The French biologist, Felix le Dantec, insisted that every social unit from family to a nation could exist only by virtue of having some 'common enemy'. The 'school spirit' is never so strong as when the time for an athletic contest with the traditional 'enemy' approaches. A family unit (even if badly disrupted) will grow cohesive in the face of adversary. Hitler created the Jewish menace not so much to demolish the Jews as to cement the Nazi hold over Germany. The existence of an outsider may be, in the beginning, an essential condition of any warmth or togetherness within the group (Allport, 1954, pp. 41-42).

Finally, stereotypes represent a fixed mark on a category and they can be either favourable or unfavourable. They are an exaggerated belief associated with a category. For example: "native people are uneducated" or "Jews are intelligent or stingy", or "immigrants are lazy", or "white people are clean" are all stereotypes whether positive or negative. They have a few functions: they are used to justify our conduct in relation to the members of a category, and they are often used as a selective or screening device (Allport, 1954, pp.189-191).

Foucault's (1980) theory of 'Power/knowledge dynamic' is relevant here. He contends that when a claim of truth is being promoted, other equally valid claims have been dismissed at its expense. The claim of the truth that is inculcated to be "The Truth" almost always seeks to benefit a certain group of people at the expense of another.

Furthermore, this “Truth” is usually propagated to gain control over a certain (minority) group, or it is being promoted to ensure the maintenance of power of a certain group, usually the dominant one in a society.

Jessica Stern (2005) notes in her book *Terror in the Name of God* how religious militants are not born that way, but are conditioned to become militarized through a complex process of conditioning that is beyond their own control. This indoctrination is usually achieved through dissemination of information and imputing of certain societal beliefs (presented as ‘truths’. such as glamorization of religious martyrs in the press and through the content of schooling. Persistent and repeated indoctrination carves fear into the collective mind.

A Culture of Fear

Many scholars have cited the strong connection between fear and human conflict. I intend to highlight some of the contemporary literature written on the subject in this paper. The emotion of fear is not an easy phenomenon to explore since it is multilayered, nevertheless it is crucial to familiarize oneself with it, in order to understand its detrimental effect on people and societies. (Palmer, 1997) reminds us in his essay, *A Culture of Fear* that “we are at our worst when fear takes the lead in us.”. Drawing from his writings, I would maintain that when one groups’ fear clashes with that of another group, “Fear” multiplies geometrically, thus creating a cycle fear; and thereby paralyzing any attempts for peace.

Palmer (1997) elaborates on how our fearful heart, being afraid of the “unfamiliar”,

tends to see 'the other' as an object. By objectifying "the unfamiliar other" we distance ourselves from it. When 'the other' becomes an object, it no longer has life. Being lifeless, it has no power to touch or transform us, nor our knowledge of it. This way, we feel safe, since the very innermost layer of our fear of "the unknown" is the threat that it could mean that we have to change. Our identity would become altered, and our knowledge would no longer be pure or valid (p.52).

More often than not, our insecurities are masked by arrogance. So if we claim to be better than others (the superiority complex), or to be the only source of knowledge, then what we are really saying is that *I'm really afraid to know anything else or your version of the Truth, so I might as well remain in my own denial and self-deception, not to cause any disturbance or imbalance in my own state of being, or knowing.*

Daniel bar-Tal, a prominent researcher and a professor at the department of Education in Tel- Aviv University has similarly researched extensively the psychology of fear. In his essays, he explores the notions of "collective orientation of fear" and "intractable conflicts", and the societies characterized by the former and plagued by the latter; while studying their interconnection in terms of "societal beliefs". Thus concluding that the underside of a society's failure to achieve or sustain real and genuine peace is indeed fear itself.

Fear is an automatic emotion, grounded in the perceived present and often based on memorized past which is processed unconsciously. This negative emotion, often causes freezing and conservatism, and could even lead to pre-emptive aggression. Whereas hope involves mainly conscious cognitive activity, requiring search for new ideas based on

creativity and flexibility. So understandably, hope which is based on thinking can be seriously impeded by spontaneous and unconscious influence of fear (Bar-Tal, 2001, p.2).

Both fear and hope can equally become a collective emotional orientation, which serves to organize a society's views, and direct its courses of actions. Bar-Tal (2001) postulates that societies plagued by intractable conflict are characterized by a collective emotion of fear, which although helpful for coping with conflictual situations, serves ironically as a potent barrier to peace realization. Rather than being driven by hope for a peaceful future, the inflicted societies are fixated on their past fears, impairing the progress of peace.

Emotions are further in general accompanied by physiological, cognitive and behavioural responses. Emotions are not just an individual phenomenon; they can become cultural-societal reflections as well. For instance, fear can be arisen in situations of perceived danger or threat to one's society. It would then be accompanied by psychological and physiological responses that ensure and maximized the possibility of survival for oneself and one's group in threatening situations (Bar-Tal, 2001, p. 4).

Moreover, fear can be acquired based on received information about objects, people, groups, events, situations, which are considered to be threatening to one or one's society. Once this information is imparted, it is stored in the explicit emotional memory. The implicit emotional memory responsible for arousing the reactions of fear in view of a particular cue is proven to be particularly resilient, exhibiting little or no diminution with passage of time. It tends to dominate and control thinking, and flood consciousness. In

addition, a prolonged experience of fear is observed to cause an overestimation of danger and threats, and increases the expectation of threats and danger. This in turn would lead to cognitive freezing, avoiding openness to new ideas and risk taking, and uncertainty.

Interestingly enough, fear-based reactions can be evoked either through conscious assessment of a threatening situation, or they may even be induced through a programmed system that deals with dangers in a routine fashion, without conscious thinking. This response, activated by the unconscious process, bypasses cognition to automatically protect life and homeostasis, but could sometimes operate irrationally or perhaps even destructively. So fear that motivates protection from events or people (groups) perceived to be a threat, could manifest itself not only in the form of defence, but also aggression against a certain source of a perceived threat (Bar-Tal, 2001, p.5).

By the same token, as suggested earlier, societies, like individuals, can identify with one particular dominant emotion. The society provides the contexts, models, information, emphases and institutions that influence the emotions of its members. Because of these shared cultural frameworks that impact a society's members' emotional tendencies, these emotional experiences can become a societal phenomenon and therefore take the form of a collective emotional orientation. As such, the members are socialized and trained to think, feel and behave in a certain way, by discouraging or promoting certain culturally-specific realities.

The collective emotional orientation that consists of societal beliefs based on collective memory, ideologies and myths therefore constitute the prism through which all society's cognitive processes and outlook are organized. These core beliefs usually

decide what emotions to be evoked in certain situations. Consequently, a prolonged emotion of fear based on past negative events can have an impinging effect on the personal lives of the civilians. In societies plagued by intractable conflict, this effect seems to be an inevitable by-product. The society members' cognitive process unconsciously focuses only on the evil intentions of the adversary who is threatening and filled with danger, and thus the entire society suffers from a culture of fear (Bar-Tal, 2001, pp .6-10).

Fear in public is also believed to be contagious and may spread without even passing through higher cognition and cut deep into the psychic fabric of a society. It will also cause the society members to be on constant guard. Nevertheless, it *will* enhance social cohesiveness and solidarity among members, immobilizing them to combat the potential threat on behalf of the society and defend the society at large (Bar-Tal, 2001, p. 13).

As previously mentioned, another negative consequence of being characterized by a collective orientation of fear is the collective freezing of beliefs. The members tend to cling to their beliefs about the causes of the threat, the adversary, and the ways of coping with the danger. They will have difficulty entertaining alternative solutions and ideas. So their perspective becomes very limited, since present is closely intertwined with the past experiences, thus setting their expectation of the future on the basis of the past. Creativity is therefore aborted and hunches and information could be misinterpreted as real signs of threats and danger. Mistrust and delegitimization of the adversary are also inevitable consequences of fear. The collective orientation of fear is believed – in a nutshell – to be the major cause of violence.

The societal beliefs that constitute the psychological infrastructure of a society appear on the public agenda, are discussed among society members, serve as the grounds for leaders' decisions and decide courses of actions. Social institutions vigorously impart them to the citizens. They are further incorporated into the ethos and are reflected in the group's language, stereotypes, images, myths and collective memories, and contribute to solidification of social identity (Bar-Tal, 2001, p.8).

The following eight themes are in particular embedded in the social beliefs discussed above necessary for coping with intractable conflicts: 1) the justness of one's own goals, 2) security 3) adversary's deligitimization, 4) positive self-image, 5) own victimization 6) patriotism, 7) unity and 8) own wish for peace. Societies always try to maintain a positive self-image, develop security, patriotism and unity, and they believe that their goals are just. But what makes these beliefs different in nature at times of intractable conflicts is their one-dimensional extremism; the dichotomous black and white "us" vs. "them" view, and the blind adherence to them, their validity, and their intensive and extensive use in the society. So, let's briefly elaborate on each of these societal beliefs.

Beliefs about the Justness of One's Own Goals

Intergroup conflicts break out because the two societies have mutually contradictory or exclusive goals. Psychologically, individuals have to be convinced of the justness of their cause, which implies unjustness of the adversary's goals. This outlook further provides the rationale for the eruption of the conflict since failure to achieve these goals would threaten the existence of the society which is assumed to be of utmost importance. The justness is often supported by resorting to historical, national,

theological and cultural sources.

Beliefs about Security

Since intractable conflicts involve violent confrontations including military actions which would require an excessive demand of the economic, military, human, political and societal resources, the issue of security becomes the central preoccupation on the members' daily agendas. They translate into national survival and personal safety. Of special importance are security beliefs pertaining to military issues, in particular military personnel which fulfill a crucial and determinative role in maintaining the security by defending the nation and in the ultimate victory (Bar-Tal, 1998, pp.1-3).

This is precisely the reason why societal beliefs about security primarily seek to honour the military forces by raising their prestige and status. They encourage military service, volunteering and commitment, glorifying heroism by making a point of commemorating those who have sacrificed their lives for the cause of the conflict (Bar-Tal, 1998, p.10). Stern (2005) equally sheds light on this potent mobilizing tactic, namely the glorification of martyrs and militarism as a powerful vice for sustaining wars and animosity. She maintains that special rewards are promised to those who sacrifice their life for the cause of the Holy war (the martyrs) in afterlife that in no way can be matched here on earth. She discovered through interviews with the Islamic Jihad members that terrorist organizations emphasize that seventy-two virgins are a special reward for martyrdom:

They (The organization that recruits suicide bombers) hold celebrations for *Shaheed* (martyr) to celebrate his purported marriage in paradise. Death notices in Palestinian

papers often take the form of wedding announcement. For example, a notice in *Al-Istiqlal*, the Palestinian authority paper read: With great pride the Palestinian Islamic Jihad marries the member of its military wing... the martyr and hero Yasser al-Adhami, to the 'black-eyed' virgin. (Stern, 2005, p.54)

Although Koran strictly forbids *intihar* (suicide) and murder, it rewards *istishhad* (martyrdom).

Beliefs that Delegitimize the Other

Deligitimization is described as the categorization of groups into extremely negative social categories with the purpose of excluding them from recognized human groups which act within the framework of accepted values and norms. In other words, they are striped from their humanity. Deligitimization includes practices such as outcasting, negative characterization, use of political labels and group comparison. Undoubtedly, this tactic is used to further legitimize one's own actions. They also serve to delegate total responsibility for the eruption of the conflict to the opponent, since each society views itself in a positive light and its own goals legitimate and just. Deligitimization explains why the adversary has selfish, irrational and spiteful motives which stand in clear contrast to the honourable, noble goals of one's own society, and why the enemy is uncompromising and unreconciling (Bar- Tal, 1998, p. 11). Finally, deligitimization tactics are often used to justify one's own aggression and ruthlessness towards the adversary by implying that the delegitimized society does not deserve human treatment, suggesting the need to prevent danger by initiating violence and to punish them for past barbaric uncivilized acts.

(Stern, 2005) echoes the same concern explaining that deligitimization and negative labelling dehumanizes the opponent which is a necessary step for desensitization which could then enable people to kill or inflict harm on another human being. “The other” is no longer a human, but a faceless, vicious, and dangerous beast that needs to be annihilated to save the “pure group”. This tactic, she elaborates, is what made the U.S. veterans capable of inflicting violent acts on the opponent in the Vietnam War. Then difference between the intensity of brutality prior to and after the psychological conditioning- namely desensitization was huge.

On the other hand, the society’s own self-image is developed and maintained in positive light through indirect allusions to the past and present positive values. The effort to maintain a positive self-image is intensified during the intractable conflict, which is crucial for both social and military mobilization, and justification to inflict violence on ‘the other’. At such times, intense self-glorification and grandiosity is common in these societies. Attributes often used for this purpose include: humanness, morality, compassion, fairness, in addition to trustworthiness, courage, heroism and endurance. Special efforts are made to contrast the adversary to own society. The objective is to fabricate a self-image that is “superior” to “the other”. (Wallis, 2005), another contemporary scholar shares a similar perception:

Necessary to the preparation for war is the dehumanization of our enemies. They become sinister and disgusting. Our enemy’s way of life is depicted as inhumane. They are seen bearing nothing but ill intentions towards us. We tag them with derogatory names that further hide the human faces of those we are making ready to

destroy. (p. 105)

Beliefs about Victimization

Beliefs about self-victimization imply that the conflict was imposed by the adversary who not only fights for unjust goals, but also uses immoral means to achieve these goals. In this respect, these beliefs give a rationale for continuing the struggle.

Beliefs about Patriotism

Patriotism or attachment to one's country is of crucial importance since it connotes love, loyalty, commitment, pride and care which are all positive emotions. If not internalized by the society members, they will have difficulty making sacrifices for the sake of the conflict. It enhances social cohesiveness and conduces them to sacrifice their personal wishes and convenience for a more noble cause. Let's not forget that defending one's country will most inevitably require the ultimate sacrifice – which is the loss of life (Bar-Tal, 1998, p.15). Consistent with the above analogy, intentionally idolizing a group's religion and reinforcing ideological attachment would justify sacrificing self and personal needs for a noble cause – in this case 'The Religion of the Sacred' requiring the Holy war.

Beliefs about Unity of in-group

A common trait of these societies is to present themselves to themselves and the world, as peace-loving and cooperative. Although this peace is only described in utopian conditions, it serves as a light at the end of the tunnel, meaning hope and optimism – a necessary means for the advancement of the prolonged conflict that involves much suffering and irreversible costs (Bar-Tal, 1998, pp.1-6).

The societal beliefs outlined above constitute the ideology necessary to strengthen the society to cope in conflict situations. They are a product of the social construction of reality that serves as the lens through which the societal members think, perceive, feel, decode and understand situations. They further arouse strong feelings that gradually become resistant to change. Societal institutions are extensively mobilized to socialize members to acquire these beliefs by focusing on them, emphasizing with them, setting norms by them and turning them into values. Eventually, they form the basis on which the societies construct their language, symbols and collective memory (Bar-Tal, 1998, p.15).

Bar-Tal therefore concludes that the violent confrontations in the Middle East, Northern Ireland, Kashmir, and the Balkans (and I would add to this list the American invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan) are indeed the result of a collective orientation of fear. In all these cases, fear is identified as the major culprit and motivating force for the years of vicious and bloody violence and their continuous resistance to peace. In view of this analysis, he concludes that any attempt to make peace or sustain it would be impaired, since in societies engulfed by intractable conflicts, fear overrides hope – which is a necessary factor for the sustenance of a peace process. The peace-making dreams will only begin to crystallize if hope orientation not only inhibits the automatic activation of collective memories associated with fear, but also replaces them with new beliefs and behaviours. The new beliefs would have to be imparted, entertained, learnt, understood, accepted and implemented before they can subdue the automatically activated fear- which by no doubt is quite a challenging mission to accomplish. As such, a society would

not let its visions of future be merely dictated by the experiences of the past, but would rather broaden its adaptive capability to the changing conditions of the future.

Discussion

Psychologists assert that there is a strikingly high correlation between various forms of prejudice, meaning that it is not the object of prejudice that triggers the act; it is, rather, a system of prejudice formation that is present in the outlook of the person processing it. More precisely, a person who is hostile towards one foreign/unfamiliar group, for whatever reason, is very likely to be opposed to every other foreign/ unfamiliar group. The link between psychological factors and intergroup aggression will become more evident below.

Unfortunately, most of the prejudiced attitude is based on preconceived ideas and misconceptions about the 'religious other' which have no solid basis, except that they are being propagated by an authoritative figure or institution. The media, schools and other public institutions in society are a person's window to the outside world and are extremely effective ways of shaping his mind and outlooks and affecting his judgements regarding others. Not infrequently, these days, the press, television, radio, school books, and even the film industry continue to create or perpetuate hatred for, and prejudiced attitudes about people with dissimilar orientations of ideology and faiths. Although, in the Middle East, this unjust portrayal seems to be more prevalent, some countries in the West have been engaged in such practices in the past few years. They persistently continue to preach war and aggression and justify it by camouflaging the real reason in the guise of

religion.

What is especially unfortunate is that usually an individual who just simply belongs to a group that is presumed to have objectionable qualities could be subjected to prejudice, only due to the fact that he/she belongs to the group. There is a very plausible explanation for this: the human mind is the major culprit behind this unconscious process of categorical generalization. This natural tendency is formed to simplify the task of making decisions in our complex and busy lives. We appreciate practical and fast solutions that help us decide whether objects or people are good or bad by categorizing them. It would be much more time-consuming to weigh each individual, object, etc. in this world by itself. Clear-cut and ready rubrics, however broad and exaggerated, will suffice. But whether the prejudice is extended towards a group or an individual, the net effect is to place the object of prejudice at some disadvantage not merited by his own misconduct.

One must also distinguish between misconceptions and prejudice, although both may be recognized as overblown generalizations. A misconception takes place whenever we organize the wrong information. Whereas a misconception is a prejudgment that is not resilient to change in light of new or enlightening information, a prejudice is actively resistant to all evidence that would unseat it. So prejudgments become prejudices only if once they are exposed to rectifying and new knowledge, they would still be irreversible. A prejudiced person is therefore likely to grow emotional when his/her prejudice is threatened in light of new or contradictory evidence (Allport, 1954, p.9).

In this chapter, we studied what constitutes the mental framework necessary to initiate and keep alive hostility and war. We also studied different possible means by which these

objectives could be attained. In addition, the process of indoctrination and the issue as to why the human brain responds more readily to fear than it would to hope were deliberated upon. The upcoming section highlights the existence of indoctrination in the educational systems in the Middle East; in particular in Aram.

SECTION 2

A SNAPSHOT OF EDUCATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

In the proceeding section, we discovered that fear and prejudice play a key role in initiating and perpetuating intergroup conflicts. In addition, we studied in detail how societal beliefs can influence the mental construct of individuals and their collective memory and attitudes towards ‘the other’.

Although as mentioned earlier, prejudice and bigotry seem to be rampant in a number of educational systems around the globe, this study will emphasize the situation in Aram, the country with which I am most familiar. But in order to locate the study within a broader context however, the section below will first examine the literature as it pertains to several countries in the region, and then will attempt to draw attention to the presence of indoctrination in Aramian textbooks.

Watson (2005) reports, “Each year thousands of Pakistani children learn from history books that Jews are tightfisted moneylenders and Christians vengeful conquerors (p.1)”. The report further illustrates how textbooks approved by the administration of President Pervez Musharaf urge children to die as martyrs for Islam, “The Islamic Studies textbook for grade eight teaches students they must be prepared to sacrifice every precious thing, including life, for Jihad (Holy war) (p.1)”. He then maintains “The textbooks for adolescent students say Muslims are allowed to take up arms and wage jihad in self-defense or if they are prevented from practicing their religion (Watson, 2005, p.1)”. In his report he discusses specific passages in Pakistani textbooks that indirectly or directly

allude to Jews, Hindus and Christians as ‘enemies’. “A section on the Crusades teaches that Europe’s Christian rulers attacked Muslims in the Holy Land out of revenge even though history has no parallel to the extremely kind treatment of the Christians by Muslims (Watson, 2005, p.3)”.

Ayaz (2005), in an examination of Urdu texts in Pakistan textbooks, similarly affirms that the approved curriculum guidelines enhance and reinforce the animosity between the in-group (the Muslims), and the main perceived enemy (the Hindus). He further alludes to the texts presenting ‘the Hindu’ as the ‘enemy within’, and ‘the Jew’ as the ‘enemy without’, from both of which the nation (of Islam) has to be protected.

Saigol’s (2005) review of Pakistani textbooks reflects a similar finding. In a detailed account of the Civics and the Social Studies textbooks, she sheds some light on how the textbooks attempt to “form a national identity in alienation from another, who poses a perpetual threat to the self (P.3)”, by reinforcing the national enmity. She argues that without the enemies surrounding the nation, creeping around its borders and dwelling within its core, there’s no self either (p. 4). She further explains that the wide variety of Pakistan’s permanent and ever-present enemies include Hindus, Christians, Jews, and Sikhs, who each play a role in the construction of ‘us’ versus ‘them’.

In the same manner, Israeli textbooks and school curricula’s portrayal of Arabs is biased. A study done by Ashwari (2005) reveals explicit examples of how in the majority of Israeli schools Arabs are stereotyped negatively. In one children’s book, she offers this sampling to emphasize her point that Arabs are often portrayed as ‘murderers’, “We were lonely pioneers surrounded by a sea of enemies and murderers (p.4)”. Furthermore, (as

cited in Ashwari 2005), a report prepared by journalist Maureen Meehan titled *Israeli Textbooks and Children's Literature Promote Racism and Hatred towards Palestinians and Arabs* expresses the same concern, "Israeli school textbooks as well as children's storybooks, portray Palestinians and Arabs as 'murderers', 'rioters', 'suspicious', and generally backward and unproductive (p.4)". The deligitimization and negative stereotyping of Palestinians and Arabs, Meehan maintains, is the rule rather than the exception in Israeli textbooks. Ashwari (2005) equally highlights the militarist nature of the Israeli educational system and the indirect enticement of children to become militarized, by alluding to a report by an Israeli research institution on 'Child recruitment in Israel', "Official curricula and textbooks reflect the militaristic attitudes inherent in the Israeli educational system, all the way from kindergarten to the last year of high school...School field trips, at all ages are often made to military memorials set up on former battlegrounds (p. 5)".

Likewise, Saudi Arabia's school curricula have been under serious criticism for their "promotion of hatred, intolerance, and anti-western thinking" as indicates a report prepared by Stalinsky (2003). According to this report, a press release based on an audit carried out by Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs determined that at least five percent of the schoolbooks and curriculum contained possibly offensive language towards 'the other religious'. In Saudi schools, he observes that children from a very early age are taught about jihad for the sake of Allah and that it is the utmost duty of a Muslim to go to war for defending the religion of God (Islam) and its propagation throughout the world. Another aspect of the Saudi education he argues is the teaching of

‘hatred of Jews and Christians’:

A textbook of the eighth grade explains why Jews and Christians were cursed by Allah and turned into apes and pigs. The lesson explains that Jews and Christians have sinned by accepting polytheism and therefore have incurred Allah’s wrath. To punish them, Allah has turned them into pigs and apes. (p.3)

A schoolbook for the fifth graders is also mentioned and excerpts are cited in his report to provide vivid examples of religious bigotry. The textbook clearly states that ‘the only true religion is Islam and that other religions are false’ as mentioned in Koran:

The whole world should convert to Islam and leave its false religions lest their fate will be hell... I swear by Him who holds Muhammad’s soul in his hand that not one Jew or Christian who had heard me and did not believe the message that I was sent with shall die without being one of those whose fate is hell. (Stalinsky, 2003, p.3)

Stalinsky (2003) further maintains that the students are then asked to respond with “yes” or “no” when asked whether Islam is the only road to heaven and whether adherents of other religions will undergo eternal damnation. These findings are paralleled by a separate study gathered by Davies and Paton (2007) which underscores hatred towards Christians and Jews taught in Saudi-funded schools based in U.K., “Year one pupils are asked to mention repugnant characteristics of Jews, and give examples of worthless religions such as Judaism, Christianity, idol worship and other (p. 1)”.

Finally, “_____” (2007) expresses her deep concern for Aramian school children that are being indoctrinated into a lifestyle of hatred and violence that is preparing them to be martyrs against the west (p.1)”. Wagner (2007) also in a new study, identifies elements of

hatred towards the west, especially the United States, and observes that Aram's schools urge students to become martyrs in a global holy war against countries perceived to be enemies of Islam. The foregoing texts are among those to be analyzed in more detail in the thesis.

The Case for Critical Interfaith Pedagogy

Aram's textbooks present a suspicious if not an antagonistic image of the "religious other". The reason why it is important to shed light on this topic is indoctrination. Based on the information that students receive, their judgments of the 'religious other' is shaped, and so is their social reality, since they would view people of different faiths as 'the enemy', which, in turn, affects both their own destiny and the destiny of the human community at large.

This research is based upon grades 6-8 textbooks of "Islamic Culture and Religious Studies" (2007-2008). Not surprisingly, I found almost all of the societal beliefs pertaining to societies characterized by intractable conflict present in the content of these textbooks. What did take me by surprise however was the manner in which the hostility is presented which was quite different than what I had originally assumed. My hunches were, of course, based on my own experience as a student who had studied in the educational system of Aram and my recollections from the texts and passages in textbooks of my time which was some 23-25 years ago. I was surprised because I expected the hostility towards the 'Religious Other' to be direct and explicit. But what I found was that the language had become more indirect and diplomatic. Antagonism is

still there- but it is not that easy to pinpoint. It is embedded in the stories and through indirect allusions, but never too direct. The parables and stories - very nonchalantly - paint a gruesome picture of the vicious, heartless, uncompromising and tyrannical 'old enemy', the Enemy of Islam and the 'Nation of Islam', who is also God's enemy. This inculcates dread towards this 'imaginary foe', which serves to mobilize the masses and enhance socio-political cohesion. By contrast, the in-group's depiction of self is righteous, virtuous, humble, peace-seeking, victimized and benevolent. Themes of glorification of martyrdom and militarism are also rampant throughout the texts. In addition to the texts themselves, at the end of each lesson, you will find a set of questions aimed at students that are intended to reinforce the themes forwarded in each lesson. This is also a very powerful tactic of non-direct indoctrination. A clear example of 'implicit Indoctrination' is seen in grade nine Islamic Culture and Religious studies textbook, where there's an elaborate depiction of the brutality of the Abbasid dynasty (whom Aramians *know* were Sunni caliphs) towards the Shiite Imams, without directly referring to the Sunnis.

I have tried to refrain from too much explanation or interpretation, since the texts and the images themselves will prove to be self-explanatory. What I'm referring to by this statement is that most of the texts only needed 'mere translation' to show the validity of the claims suggested by the thesis. The same assertion holds true for the images in which profound hostility, promotion of martyrdom, and/or other indoctrinaire themes explained in the thesis, are vividly present. Also, I was hoping that the reader could make his/her own judgment about the texts, without my influence. However, knowing the significance

of certain terminology and historical events and facts is necessary for non-Muslims and non-Aramians in order to fully grasp the meaning of some passages. For instance the term '*kafar*' or infidel refers to a non-believer – somebody who does not acknowledge either your God and/ or your prophet to be the 'Seal of prophets' - so in practical terms all atheists, Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, Baha'is, etc. are considered infidels. Muslims assert that Mohammad is the 'Seal of all prophets', meaning that he is the last prophet and that the Koran is the most complete and 'The Last Holy book'. Again, this kind of mindset communicates a non-verbalized superior rank of Islam and Muslims in contrast to the rest of the world. It is the echo of an egocentric mindset. The term '*moshrek*' refers to anybody who believes that God shares His divinity with anyone else, so by definition, a Christian who believes that God has a Son named Jesus is considered a 'moshrek'. So are Buddhists who believe in a number of Gods and Goddesses. Adherents of some African religions who believe in polytheism would also be considered moshreks. As such, the term covers a wide range of the 'religious others'. The term '*moshrek*' is derived from the word '*sherk*', which refers to 'the belief that God shares His divinity'. We must distinguish here that a 'moshrek' is not the same as a 'bot-parast', since the latter refers to an 'idolater' or an idol worshippers. So again, this is one of the indirect ways to attack non-Muslims without actually needing to name the actual adherents of each religion. Since it is camouflaged under the labels of '*kafar*' and '*moshrek*', it would be hard to penalize the Islamic government for discriminatory and hostile language against people of other faiths.

Moreover, the term '*khavarej*' is used in Koran for people who have turned their back

on Islam and become somewhat derailed. A more specific translation could be 'backsliders', 'apostates' or 'deviants'. On the same note, a '*monafegh*' is somebody who claims to be Muslim, but does not comply with or obey the religious authority or rule and may even oppose them. In Aram, the term is commonly used for the Muslim political opposition party members '*Mojahedin*' who criticize and oppose the conduct of the Islamic government. These individuals were hugely eliminated in the early and mid eighties under the label of '*monafegh*', since they were viewed as a great threat to the Aram's government. '*Boghat*' – the plural of '*baghi*' is another Islamic idiom analogous to '*monafegh*', and it refers to individuals who plan or participate in a revolt. The word '*taghoot*', if loosely translated, would imply 'worshipping anything other than *Allah*', and '*taghootian*' signifies both people who worship something or someone other than *Allah*, and anyone who lets himself be worshipped. But in the post-revolution modern Aramian terminology, it could signify either anyone who has had any links with the Aram's 'ancien regime' which also happens to be affluent or anyone who has any links or somehow is on good terms with the 'great imperialists' of the world, namely the Great Britain or the United States of America. It further signifies the wealthy nations themselves with imperialistic agendas, again alluding to the Great Britain and the United States. '*Estekbar*' is another post-revolutionary idiom that is used quite commonly to refer to 'imperialism', and '*Mostakbers*' are imperialists who are believed to be once more the Great Britain and the United States of America. So, basically all of the above people are considered evil and as you will discover they are all referred to as 'the enemy'.

In addition, the Muslim religion is divided into two major sects, Shi'ism and Sunnism,

and their respective adherents are called Shiites and Sunnis. Aram's dominant religion is Shi'ism. Shiites basically have twelve Imams which are the clan of the Prophet Mohammad and are the dearest and the most holy religious figures to a Shiite after his prophet. The whole division was brought about by the decision as to who should succeed the leadership of the 'nation of Islam' after the Prophet. Sunnis believe that '*Aboo- Bakr*', a major Islamic scholar and a close friend of the Prophet should have; and the Shiites believe that the clan of the Prophet beginning with his cousin Imam Ali should have. All Muslims regardless of their denomination, share and pray towards '*Ka'beh*' – their holy temple – located in the city of Mecca; where Muslims are highly encouraged and commanded to pilgrimage, if financially feasible and viable health-wise. The entire ceremony of pilgrimage is called '*Hadj*'.

Synonymous with the term 'Imam' is the word '*Hojjat*' that signifies the 'people who are chosen by God and receive guidance from Him to guide and lead people, and to supervise and correct their conduct'. '*Toheed*' is another term which appears in contrast to 'sherk' – the belief that God does not share His divinity with any other being. The term '*Basseedj*' also signifies 'unity'. So, Muslims are to be united to help each other in every matter. But the term 'Basseedj' is also the name of a paramilitary organization in Aram whose main objective is defending Islam. It is comprised of members as young as 11 years old and up. Basseedj members enjoy a high social status and power since they are viewed as 'heroes'. During the eight year war that the Aram had with one of its neighbouring countries (whose majority of residents are Sunnis), many of the soldiers who lost their lives were Basseedj members who volunteered to go over mine fields, or

fought in the front line of the battles. They embraced martyrdom to safeguard ‘the nation of Islam’.

Another Aramian word that is tantamount to a ‘revolt’ is ‘*fetneh*’. Basically, a ‘*fetneh*’ refers to a concoction made up of sedition and conspiracy leading to a revolt. Finally, ‘*Ghesas*’ is a term in the Islamic terminology that signifies ‘revenge’ or ‘an eye for an eye’. As you read through this section of the paper, you will often need to refer back to these terms in order to recall their significance.

Again, as I said earlier in the textbooks, unlike before when religious minorities were both overtly and inadvertently condemned, dislike and enmity are quite subtly hidden within meanings. For example, I found in the following textbooks that there were mentions of the wars between Sunnis and Shiites, such as the ‘Saffein battle’ 38 (AH)² throughout which a gruesome picture of ‘the enemy’ is depicted. Although there is no direct indication of who the enemy really were, it is a fact that the battle was between Shiites and Sunnis. Another instance of this diplomatic approach of demonization of Sunnis was found in one of the stories that shows how the caliphates, the governors of the time (which we know were Sunni leaders), tortured and persecuted the Shiite Imams. So animosity is cleverly implied. The same tactic is applied to ‘the enemy’ during the ‘Battle of Ahzab’ about 5 (AH), in which Meccans fought against Muslims with the help of the Jews.

² (AH) is the short form of *After Hejrat*, which refers to the Islamic calendar year based on the major coerced migration of the Prophet Mohammad.

A very important notion that is noteworthy is '*jihad*' or the concept of the holy war that is portrayed emancipative, divine, and legitimized; therefore not perceived as a violent act. It is in fact considered a noble act, the ultimate religious duty and the highest form of self sacrifice for the cause of the Lord. On the same note, obeying the decrees set out by the Islamic government is conflated with obeying the Lord, so disobeying, non-compliance or any form of questioning the Islamic authority is regarded as rebellion against God.

Another similarly interesting misperception of Aram's media, which is also reflected in education, is the dichotomous discourse of 'good' versus 'evil'. The 'foreigners' or the 'Westerners' are powerful, trespassers and oppressors by nature; and the impoverished, oppressed and underdeveloped countries have been the victims of the West. The latter group further needs to be emancipated by the command of God. So the 'good' and the 'evil' are clearly distinguished here. These foreigners are often held responsible for a number of historical and present-day domestic and international socio-economic problems and moral decay- if not all! The West is said to be colonialist, imperialist and exploitive towards peoples of the oppressed nations. They are as such portrayed as 'the faceless' and vicious enemy who can not be trusted, and should be viewed with suspicion. They may even deserve to be punished for the despicable past crimes, because since their conduct has been inhuman in the past, why should they enjoy any human rights now?

So, let's examine the textbooks. The following quotes and excerpts are taken from the grade 6, Islamic Culture and Religious Studies textbook (2007-2008): In a story entitled

“The Harvest Time” which alludes to sowing good deeds in this world in order to reap the benefits in the afterlife, a little girl is visiting her uncle and his wife at his house. When her aunt is glancing through a magazine and very nonchalantly she comes across a will that belongs to a ‘Holy war martyr’, the little girl insists that she reads it. The will starts with a quote from the Koran: *“Do not count those who are killed in the Holy War as dead people; for they are alive and get rewards from their Lord.”* Then the will continues as follows:

Oh how beautiful is it to be martyred for the cause of the Lord. In this land, I will fight with the enemy until either I gain victory and succeed or until I attain the glorious status of a martyr. If I am worthy enough to become a martyr for the cause of the Koran and Islam; congratulate my mom, for I am at the banquet of the Lord. Oh how true it is that death is so sweet and desirable for the cause of the Lord.....It is the beginning of the eternal life.... (pp. 14-15)

Then Hassan, the brother of the protagonist, asks his uncle “Dear uncle, how does a martyr attend the banquet of the Lord? What does martyrdom mean?” And the uncle replies:

Martyrdom means that we fight for the purpose of God and under the direction of a Godly appointed leader, with infidels and tyrants, until we die. A martyr brings glory, honour and dignity both in this world; and in the world to come he will enjoy the highest position, acquaint with and enjoy the same status as the prophets, and the righteous. God’s special blessings will be bestowed upon him, and heavenly residents will envy his position. (pp. 16-17)

Among the questions that follow the lesson that serve to reinforce themes, you will find “Please state the status enjoyed by a martyr”. The following lesson entitled “Transition to the Next World” starts as such:

Glory be to all martyrs of the Islamic Revolution who taught us bravery, fearlessness, religious devotion, faith, honour and grandeur. Martyr ‘Reza Khadem’ – whose precious memory and place in heaven are eternalized, in his invaluable will has stated: Man is born one day and dies another one. His deeds are the things that remain. So, since death is our inescapable destiny, isn’t it better to die for our ideology and belief? Do not be upset about my death, because I am alive in the presence of the Almighty and get rewards. It’s only my body that is not amongst you. Do not be upset about death and do not mourn for me. Dear mother, I know that you will be upset about my death. But I want you to know that those who die in the Holy war are alive and get rewarded by God. I honestly hope that God makes me one of His martyr servants.

(p.19)

The lesson then concludes: “So as you can see, this beloved martyr, just like all other martyrs has understood the Truth, and is completely right!” This conclusion is then immediately followed by Imam Hossein’s – the (II Imam) and the greatest martyr in the Shiite history- last words the night before his martyrdom in *Ashoora*, the bloodiest battle between Sunnis and Shiites that took place in the city of Karbala in Iraq. He is the most highly regarded religious martyr – a role model of bravery and religious devotion for all Shiites. He resembles death for a righteous man who is a follower of Prophet Mohammad and fights to defend his religion, to a “bridge that takes one from all his troubles and

difficulties to a secure, serene and beautiful garden.” Similar use of imagery is also applied through a quote from Imam Sajjad, the fourth Shiite Imam. He maintains that “death for a righteous believer is like changing his dirty and uncomfortable clothes into beautiful and perfumed ones and being set free from chains. But for the infidels and the unrighteous, it is the opposite and transition to a place of the worst tortures and pains” (pp. 20-21).

The lesson ends with the following questions and notes: 1) What have the martyrs of the Islamic Revolution taught us? 2) Is death the same thing for everyone? Why? 3) Why aren't Muslims afraid of death and martyrdom, and why won't they ever accept humiliation and misery? Notes: Bring a copy of the will of some of our beloved martyrs into class and discuss amongst yourselves. In order to better grasp the messages and the wills of the martyrs, you can meet with their families (p.22).

The next lesson entails 'how to appreciate and take care of God's blessings'. This lesson basically promotes a major principle of Islam “Encourage people to be righteous and stop them from sinning”, which could mean, in extreme cases, to 'stop people from sinning at any cost!' This religious duty is further supported by a quote from Prophet Mohammad as he became infuriated and condemned people who did not stop sinners from sinning and did not safeguard 'the religion of God' (p. 35).

Lesson five is entitled “There's only one God”. In this lesson, Prophet Mohammad invites people to stop idolatry and *sherk* (believing that God shares His divinity, as defined in the introductory glossary). The author further highlights that a major purpose for the Muslim pilgrimage at Ka'beh is to put their heads together and unite to fight for

the liberation of all human beings from tyranny, humiliation and ‘sherk’, and to proclaim disgust against all *moshreks* (those who believe in ‘sherk’). This duty is echoed further by “_____”, the founder of the Aramian Islamic Revolution:

Proclamation of disgust of the ‘moshreks’ which is one of the major pillars of *Toheed* [the belief that God does not share His divinity], and a very important political duty of those who attend *Hadj* [Muslim Pilgrimage at Ka’beh] must be displayed in the form of a very glorious and powerful demonstration.... Isn’t the religious realization anything other than declaration of love and loyalty to the Truth, and display of anger and disgust towards the evil? (p.41)

Lesson six entails an indirect and implied delegitimization of the Sunni sect and describes how followers and pioneers of the Sunni sect mocked Prophet Mohammad when he appointed Imam Ali (his Cousin and the leader of Shiite sect) as his successor, which serves to depict an unfriendly picture of Sunnis (the enemy) in this case. This lesson, further serves as the background to the lessons in higher grades regarding the Sunni/ Shiite conflict. The story instils in students an ancient history of enmity between the two sects.

After Prophet Mohammad appoints Imam Ali, “Some of his guests [indirect reference to Sunnis], while hiding their fury behind laughter, told Aboutaleb [Ali’s father]: Did you hear what he said? Did you hear what he commanded you to do? He commanded you to be obedient to your son from now on (p.48)!”

The text thus continues by asking the students:

Do you think that the ‘guests’ had understood that the Prophet had chosen Ali as his

successor and the leader of the Islamic community after himself? If they had not understood it, then why do you suppose they said furiously and in a sarcastic tone to Aboutaleb that Mohammad has ordered you to be obedient to your child? (p.48)

In addition to underscoring the evil image of the 'enemy', questioning serves the purpose of establishing the legitimacy, reasonableness and validity of the Shiite sect and simultaneously serves to delegitimize the Sunni sect. It implies how unreasonable and unintelligent their adherents can be (since there's ample evidence that the Prophet *did* in fact appoint Ali, and therefore validate Shi'ism). But then again this objective is achieved very subtly.

Lesson eleven is entitled "Refusing any form of compromise". The writer asserts that it was finally time that the 'good' would be openly separated from the 'evil', and it ends with this conclusive comment:

As you read, Prophet Mohammad condemned any form of compromise with 'moshreks' and trespassers. We too as Muslims are called to continue his path and fight with the love of the world and 'taghoot'; and refuse to compromise until all deprived and abused people in the world are emancipated. (p.57)

In addition, the important points of the reading are reiterated: The Lord's Prophet clearly condemned 'sherk' and idolatry and identified them as 'The Cause' of people's misery and misfortune. He believed that people should become enlightened in order to quit their idolatrous lifestyle (p.57). With regards to the issue of compromise, he asserted: "I swear to God, if they [the enemies] put the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left one, I will not quit my mission until either I win or I die (p.57)".

So, basically, this sets an example and prepares the background to lead to the ‘natural conclusion’ which is the Muslims’ duty now in this era regarding compromise, when faced with the adversary. The last question at the end of the lesson asks the students “What is our duty (us, the Muslims) when it comes to safeguarding the Islamic Revolution, and refusing any offers to compromise (p.58)?”

Lesson thirteen is entirely devoted to portraying how just the religion of Islam is in general, and especially how justly it treats non-Muslims (positive self-image). It is further aimed to specifically draw a contrast between the conduct of Imam Ali that is forgiving, does not use his status of power for personal gain, to that of a Christian who is portrayed as a liar and a thief. The story takes place at an Islamic court, where Prophet Ali brings a Christian man who has stolen his sword but denies it, to retrieve his possession. The Islamic judge does not treat Imam Ali – the highest religious figure of the time any differently than the ordinary non-Muslim fellow; nor does Imam Ali want to be treated unequally. So, the Christian man wins the trial through false pretences, but later on becomes ashamed and confesses the truth. Impressed by the justness of the Islamic court, he converts to Islam and Imam Ali, rewards his conversion by giving him the sword as a gift. The story ends happily with the martyrdom of the converted man in a holy war (pp.66-69)!

Lesson fourteen commands how Muslims should treat each other- and only each other. These include all virtues of brotherly love, such as helping each other, not gossiping behind each other’s back, etc. But there’s no mention of treating all human beings the same way.

Lesson seventeen is an intense glamorization of martyrdom and militarism as it describes Imam Ali's applaudable virtues which were his bravery, fearlessness and being always on guard to defend Islam. Martyrdom is further said to be "The greatest divine commission". Here's an excerpt from this lesson:

Imam Ali was a role model of bravery and fearlessness. He participated in all the wars, and for the victory of Islam and liberation of masses from the paws of infidels and tyrants he always fought with the enemy. He loved the Holy war and martyrdom. He was never afraid of anyone and was always a pioneer in the front line of the battles. He was very firm when it came to the duty of safeguarding his religion, and regarding his bravery and desire for martyrdom he said: "I swear to God, if all the Arab community get united to fight against me, I will not quit fighting or surrender to the enemy. I swear to God that if I am martyred in the battle ground through a thousand stab wounds, it is sweeter to me than dying in a death bed."

...In the battle of *Ahad*, Imam Ali fought solo to safeguard the Prophet and he fought so hard with his sword that the heavenly angel said "There exists no man with the bravery and integrity of Ali, and there are no sword like his"... The leaders of the idolaters and heads of infidels were often demolished by the powerful hands of Ali. He was one of the most virtuous and religious men of God... and he finally was martyred while he was praying. (pp. 87-88)

Ali is said to be nevertheless, a very kind and gentle man who preferred not to resort to violence (again, positive self image and self-glorification). However, the reasons for which he killed oppressors were '*ghesas*', or getting revenge from offenders,

administration of justice in the Islamic community, and pleasing God. He was the best-trained Muslim—taught by the Prophet himself – and a hero who assisted the Prophet throughout his life in his divine mission. He was brave and crazy about ‘*jihad*’ the ‘holy war’ and martyrdom (p.89).

Lesson twenty two is a vivid depiction of Muslims’ history of victimization. The author describes how Muslims have been a community that was persecuted from the very beginning, therefore instilling the ‘imaginary fear’ that is needed to mobilize people for the purpose of security. It also draws a gruesome picture of ‘the enemies’ who are vicious, uncompromising and ‘out there to get them’ in order to desensitize students to the pain and suffering of the opposing groups, should violent confrontation become necessary. Militarism is therefore considered a religious duty. It is said to be a vital aspect of the ‘mass prayers’:

From the very beginning, Muslims— although few in number and forced to perform their religious ceremonies in secret for the fear of their life— made every effort to prayer together. That is why they had to go to the surrounding mountains and valleys –away from the threat of the enemies – in order to pray together (p.105).

This passage is followed by a quote from the late “ _____”, the leader and the founder of the Islamic revolution of Iran: “Pray in masses... fill the mosques. These [the enemies of Islam] are scared of mosques. Mosques are rifle pits. Rifle pits should be filled (p.107).” For homework, students are asked to elaborate on certain themes. One question asks them specifically to describe what is meant by the sentence “Mosques are

rifle pits”.

The Grade Seven Islamic Culture and Religious studies (2007-2008) textbook’s main themes are militarism, martyrdom, self-sacrifice and dehumanization of the enemy in conjunction to the stressed importance of the ‘holy war’. Here is a quote from lesson five:

The Holy War: Invitation to revolt against oppressors, imperialists, and sinners; after the invitation to believe in God and His exclusive divinity, and afterlife is one of the most fundamental agendas of the prophets. In the Holy Koran, God says “We sent the prophets with clear indications and gave them holy books with laws so that people could revolt for the cause of justice.” “Oh you who have become believers, become rebellious for the cause of the Lord and testify for justice.” “Oh prophet, tell people that I advise them to fight for God, in pairs or alone.” All prophets fought for the promotion of faith, administration of justice, emancipation of the oppressed; and opposing sin, ‘*sherk*’ and the love of the world. (p.28)

Thus, this background serves as the basis of the religious duty incumbent upon students to safeguard and defend their religious beliefs and the Islamic revolution. The author draws a clear conclusion from the verses quoted from the Koran that revolution, and ‘*jihad*’ –the holy war – is a major religious commandment and duty and that any form of compromise should be condemned. The students are thus led to feel accountable to God and condemned if they are reluctant or refuse to participate in such an activity. The text concludes that it is now our duty to continue our revolt with all our strength against imperialists and oppressors in order to sustain the Islamic revolution; and not to stop until all principles of Islam are materialized and the emancipative message of

“there’s no God but *Allah*” is propagated (p.29).

Lesson six underscores the vision of Islamification of the world as stressed by “_____’s” speech that ‘Koran was sent down by God for all human beings.’ Along with this, the sacrifice of former devout Muslims to preserve and safeguard Islam is commemorated in order to arrive at the conclusion that we as Muslims have the same duty today (pp.32-33).

Lesson seven entails a story of ‘faith and perseverance’. It is about a family who converted to Islam, and were hence harshly persecuted by the ‘enemies of Islam’ and martyred: “Yasser, Ammar’s father because of these tortures, attained the high rank of a martyr and with his endurance and perseverance taught us Muslims how to be patient (p.41).”

The infidels asked Sumaya, who had witnessed her husband’s martyrdom, to call Mohammad names but Sumaya said, ‘We have found our way and put our faith in the Prophet Mohammad. We have accepted his leadership and will never give up our faith and purpose.’ These were Sumaya’s last words. Abu-Djahl, who had become frustrated by the words of this courageous woman and was infuriated, struck her body with a fierce blow of spear and she fell to the ground and died. She was saying ‘God is great’ and ‘There is no god but *Allah*’ with her last breaths and became a martyr. Sumaya was the first courageous woman who achieved the prominent rank of martyrdom in the path of Islam.

Ammar’s parents were martyred and Ammar too, suffered and was tortured in the path of Islam. After tolerating years of torture and suffering, he migrated to Medina

and fought amongst the ranks of soldiers of Islam against the enemies. After the Prophet's death, Ammar became one of Imam Ali's most loyal disciples and fought at his side in wars until he achieved his deepest desire of becoming martyred. (p. 42)

(See Appendix 2)

The concluding notes reiterate that the victory and expansion of Islam is a result of the self-sacrifice and perseverance of devout Muslims, coupled with their endurance and reliance on the Almighty Lord. We too should learn from them how we ought to safeguard and propagate Islam (p.42).

Lesson eight is entitled "Working hard to save human beings". It details Prophet Mohammad's efforts to 'guide people to the right direction' and to convert from '*sherk*' and idol worship to Islam. The story narrates how the '*moshreks*' were happy to see the Prophet lose his beloved uncle and wife, and used the opportunity to conspire against him (pp.45-46). Then, it describes how the Prophet, for fear of his life, had to leave the town where he was propagating Islam as the '*moshreks*' were stoning him and injuring him. He was bleeding and his body was filled with wounds. He, who was sacrificing himself to liberate and save the people who were in the dark and deceived, was now leaving this town with a wounded and injured body (p.46).

Finally, as he was leaving the town, devastated and discouraged, he ran into a Christian man to whom he explained Islam. Since the man was of good conscience, he immediately recognized and accepted the Truth. So, the Prophet was happy to see the fruit of his trip, and thanked the Lord, since he was able to lead at least one oppressed man to the Truth (p. 47).

The next section of the book that starts with lesson nine gives a preview of all the lessons in this section. Lesson eleven, “The Great Nation of Islam”, describes the boundaries between ‘enmity’ and ‘friendship’ and warns the Muslims to safeguard the “Great Nation of Islam” (P. 51). Slogans such as this which represent a clear ‘interplay of meaning and power’ are often used to unify the masses to defend a ‘common cause’ that is far greater than the individual, his personal needs or goals. They justify sacrificing ‘all’ for the greater cause. They further serve to draw an imaginary fence where clear lines between the ‘in-group’ and the ‘out- groups’ are drawn.

Lesson nine describes the scene of the battle of *Khandag* also known as *Ahzab*, at the time of the Prophet, in which idol worshippers and Jews were trying to destroy Muslims. Nonetheless, although the text only refers to ‘the enemy’, and does not specify who they really were, it is a historical fact that the enemy in this battle were Meccans and Jews: “The huge crowd of the enemies were quickly approaching Medina. They intended to win the war in one day and were determined not to let even one Muslim live (p.54).”

Lesson ten is entitled “Basseedj” – or unity (please refer to introductory section for explanation). This is how the lesson begins:

In the Islamic community, *jihad* [the holy war] and defence are absolutely fundamental and everyone should defend his/her land, integrity and faith, with all his/her strength. As such, we must always be prepared to face the enemy. If the enemy sees our (us Muslims’) preparedness for war and becomes filled with dread, it would never even dare to invade and attack our country.

How are we to prepare ourselves for such war? How can we enhance our fighting

strength day by day? How should we communicate our military strength to the enemy?

Being always on guard is achieved through different means. Taking part in the exciting war sports and contests is one of the ways. Knighthood and shooting are excellent examples of such sports. The prophet of Islam has endorsed that “all Muslims regardless of the era they live in, should practice these two beneficial sports.” He iterates:

Learn both how to ride a horse and shooting, but if you can not do both, make sure that you learn how to shoot and know that with each bullet that is shot, the Almighty renders three groups deserving of heaven and heavenly blessings: 1) The Muslim who has fabricated the bullet, 2) The Muslim who delivers the bullet to the soldiers, 3) The soldier who shoots the bullet for the cause of the Lord to the enemy. He further elaborates: teach your children how to shoot and how to swim.

So, the Muslim adolescents and youth must through practicing exciting and exhilarating sports, maintain their health and strength and continuously enhance their military skills. Our dear prophet and our other great leaders trained in knighthood and enhanced their shooting skills. They also encouraged Muslims to learn these sports and participate in contests related to them. (pp. 58-59)

This long passage is then followed by an exaggerated story about the fifth Imam, Imam Bagher, who surprised everyone in a royal feast with his shooting skills and defied the Sunni king –*Hossham*, in a shooting contest (who was also considered an enemy of the Islam at the time). The story then ends with a few concluding notes:

Taking into account the guiding principles and commandments of Islam; it is

incumbent upon every Muslim youth to create fear in the hearts of the enemies of the Lord and His people, by his outstanding skills and training in military sports. He/she should always be on guard to defend his/her nation, integrity and religion; and use all he/she has to fulfill this purpose. How about you? Are you ready to learn the military skills in Baseedj? (p.60)

The importance of training in the military is further emphasized through “_____’s” address to the Baseedj members - who himself founded the ‘Baseedj of the Oppressed’. He continuously underscored the crucial role played by this organism:

Equip your military forces and enhance your military training; and teach your friends. The members of an Islamic nation should all be armed and have military training.... It is incumbent upon everyone to learn how to shoot and to learn combat skills... It should not be that if they get their hands on a rifle, they won’t have a clue as what to do with it. They must both learn and teach. Teach the young people. It should become like this everywhere: in a country that has a population of twenty million, twenty million should be armed. It should have an army of twenty million soldiers, and such a country will never be harmed. (p.61) (See appendix 2)

The ending notes further reiterate that we should always be on guard to defend the dignity, faith and the ‘Nation of Islam’, to prevent the invasion of the enemy. A verse from the Koran recapitulates the lesson: “And prepare your military forces and train to the best of your abilities to face them, in order to scare your enemies and the enemies of the Lord (p.61).” The ending questions inculcate the themes in the lesson: -“According to

the prophet, who will receive blessing by one shot of a gun and become eligible to enter heaven? What is our duty with regards to preparing to confront the enemies of Islam (p.62)?”

Lesson eleven, as mentioned earlier, is focused on the ‘Nation of Islam’. It begins by providing the reasons why Koran considers all Muslims to be one nation. They all believe that there’s only one God, they believe in prophethood, the afterlife, the fact that Prophet Mohammad is the ‘Seal of prophets’ and that Koran is the last holy book. They all pray towards one temple ‘*Ka’beh*’, and they all share one common purpose which is execution of the divine statutes and implementation of a monotheistic system in the entire world (p.63).

Here I’d like to remind you of previous chapters where we said that any social organism-whether small or big- grows cohesive in the face of ‘the common enemy’, even if it has been badly disrupted or divided before. There are obviously clear differences and disputes between the Sunni Muslims and the Shiites. But what this lesson is trying to achieve is that when faced with the ‘enemies of Islam’, these differences should be overlooked, and that all Muslims should be united to fight the common enemy regardless of their differences and disagreements.

The ‘Nation of Islam’ is called upon to unite and to combat infidels and oppressive countries that are the ‘common enemy’ of all Muslims. There are also allusions to the ‘occupied Muslim territories’ that have been invaded and looted by the ‘enemies of Islam’. The enemy has also crushed their ancient heritage, and rich culture.

“ _____”, the founder of the Islamic Republic has commanded the pilgrims at

Hadj (the pilgrimage of the holy temple of Muslims):

Muslims of the world, together with the military assistance of Aram, must be on guard to crush the teeth of the United States of America (this oppressive nation who has a history of harassment) in its mouth; and then watch the bud of liberty, monotheism, and prophethood bloom in the world of the Great Prophet. (p.65)

His speech to the Baseedj forces is further cited as he calls all Muslims to arise and rescue themselves from the clutches of the tyrannical criminal enemy and rescue Islam and the Muslim countries from the hands of colonizers and their allies (p.65). The ending questions also ask students: Who are the common enemies of Islam? (The author not wanting to be held responsible for pointing fingers at any particular group shifts the responsibility to name 'the enemies of Islam' to students.) - And how are Muslims to preserve the independence, grandeur and unity of the 'World of Islam'? (This question is also very suggestive, since it is evident from previous readings that it is only through 'jihad' that the targeted goal can be achieved.)

Lesson twelve talks about leadership in Islam. Islam is said to be a religion that has thought about both the life of individuals as well as the issues of the society as a whole. It also has given guidelines for both of these dimensions of life. For the social aspect, Islam has given directives to govern the society, many of which are economic and political. Examples of such social directives are '*jihad*' or the holy war, and '*ghesas*' or 'an eye for an eye. (p.70)

Lesson thirteen talks about the twelfth Shiite Imam, Mahdi, who is the last Imam of the clan of the prophet, and is still alive since his disappearance centuries ago. He is said

to be the emancipator of the world, the helper of Muslims in every aspect of life, including the holy war, since he was given supernatural powers by God. He is to reappear once the world is completely Islamicised. That is why they call him ‘Imam Zaman’ – meaning the ‘Imam of time’.

In this lesson, the enmity between Sunnis and Shiites is revisited through tracing back the history of Shiites’ persecution by the Sunnis. But just like previous readings, Sunnis are not named. Instead, you will see only the name “tyrannical Abbasid Caliphs”. Now it is a historical fact, that the Abbasid dynasty was a Sunni dynasty who ruled over the Muslim nation, during the lifetime of most Shiite Imams. The lesson also serves as an introduction of the persecution of Shiite Imams by the Sunni leaders that will be studied more in details in the grade nine Islamic Culture and Religious studies textbook. The reading is in addition filled with themes of militarism, self-victimization and the Islamic decree of ‘encourage good deeds and stop sin’.

The lesson begins by describing how the eleventh Imam, the father of Mahdi, was persecuted, tortured and imprisoned by the despotic Abbasid regime, just before he was martyred by them at the age of twenty eight (p.75). Following this introduction, comes the next passage:

The Abbasids, knowing how much people felt attached to him (the 11th Imam), and his role in awakening the masses, exerted a lot of pressure on him and were incessantly searching for his successor so that they could kill him. That is why that Imam Zaman’s birth took place in secret, and by God’s command, he disappeared since childhood and continued living this way.

If he was visible, then oppressors and '*taghootian*' would kill him because the Prophet and the Imams had previously indicated to people that the promised Mahdi and the final member of the clan of Mohammad was the enemy of oppressors and '*taghootian*'; and that he would, in a violent and bloody battle, with the aid of his faithful disciples, overthrow their castles all over the world and establish the government of the oppressed and the throne of God in the world instead. ...If he lived visibly among people, oppressors would have killed him long before he could train his faithful disciples and make the necessary preparations for the worldwide revolution, and the earth would be left without any '*hojjat*' and Imam.

So now, he who is not visible to men is the hope and the fortress of all Shiites and the suffering. To expedite his coming, they make every effort to prepare the conditions necessary to establish the worldwide Islamic government. In the hopes of meeting his face that is full of light, they are working hard to correct themselves and the society, and combat the evil and oppression, until they prepare the way for his victorious coming. (pp. 75-77)

To reinforce the duty incumbent upon students, one of the ending questions asks the students about the duty of Muslims is while Imam Zaman is living in secret. Obviously, the answer to this question is nothing other than preparing the way for his glorious coming which entails internal and external jihad.

Lesson fourteen is called "Cleanliness in Islam". Ten things are listed to be '*nadjes*' or unclean: urine and feces; the corpse of an animal; a piece of skin or flesh of an animal or a man with blood still running through it; a dog or a pig living in land; wine, beer or any

drink that makes one drunk; infidels –or people who do not either believe in God, or thinks that He shares His divinity, or do not accept the prophethood of prophets. It is said that the items above are unclean inherently and can not be made clean in any way. But things that touch the above ten things; despite becoming unclean themselves, are not unclean inherently and can become clean, if washed (p.83).

Lesson seventeen's topic is 'Friday mass prayer' which is one of the most important prayers for Muslims. The religious leader – Imam Jom'eh- leads the prayer standing in front, and everyone else prays behind him. The text portrays how praying is tantamount to religious war. Therefore this justifies violence by making what otherwise would be considered a crime seem legitimate.

Alongside this, another group is condemned using a scripture from Koran: the '*monafeghs*'. They are described as 'those who do not believe in God, the Prophet and the afterlife, but call themselves strong believers'. They create immorality in the Muslim community and deserve to be eliminated (p.95).

But, if you recall from the introduction, in present Aramian society, the term '*monafegh*' is used for anybody who is a Muslim, but does not comply with the religious authority. Therefore, Aram's government does not recognize them as 'true Muslims' but rather as 'hypocrites' who are there to disturb the social harmony. The term is widely understood to refer to the members of the party that stands as the opposition to the Islamic government. They have been eliminated and persecuted from the early eighties under the label of '*monafegh*'.

The Imam Jom'eh delivers his sermons while he is standing and leaning on his

weapon. Do you know why? It is so that he can announce that Islamic society keeps itself on guard and ready for combat under any circumstances. He holds his weapon in his hand and leans against it so that he can declare that in the path towards realization of the ‘holy statutes,’ the Islamic society is always prepared to wage the holy war against the infidels, the deviants and the *monafeghs* who do not accept the Truth and rebel and oppress others. (p.93)

At the end of the lesson, again we see that the students are asked “Why do you think that the Imam Jom’eh gives the sermon while leaning against his weapon?”

In lesson nineteen, we revisit the religious ceremony of ‘*hadj*’ pilgrimage discussed in the sixth grade. Again, the religious duty of pilgrims to get united and manifest with shouts of anger against oppressors is reminded (p.102).

The grade nine Islamic Culture and Religious Studies textbook similarly reflects a culture of fear. But pro-holy war sentiments and demonization of enemies of the ‘World of Islam’ represent the focus of the textbook. In lesson three; the importance of the Islamic law of ‘an eye for an eye’ is accentuated: “paying evil for evil in this world is easier than paying for one’s sins in the afterlife. So take revenge here, in order to be safe in the afterlife (p.12).”

Lesson four is a development of the theme of afterlife from previous grades. It talks about who belongs to heaven and who to hell. It also depicts how living in both places would be like, so they stand in contrast together:

In heaven, there are very glamorous castles for believers--castles furnished with beautifully designed rugs. Believers, robed in gorgeous outfits in pretty colours, relax in

comfortable armchairs and converse with prophets, saints, martyrs and other residents of heaven (p.18).

In heaven, anything you ask or desire is granted to you immediately. Whereas, in hell, there are flames of fire, grindings of teeth and suffering- all the things that God has prepared for oppressors, infidels and '*moshrebs*'. In fact, it is their own misdeeds that are turned into a curse upon themselves (pp.19-23).

Lesson seven is entitled 'the Deception of *Moshrebs*'. It describes how they plotted the Prophet's death. It was a vicious and violent scheme and they were planning to cut him into pieces. Other Muslims were also being persecuted and tortured. Among them were many women and children. Alongside this, the praiseworthy virtues of the in-group are thrown in. These include patience, faith, dependence on God, perseverance, loyalty, self-sacrifice, generosity and endurance (pp. 42-47).

Lesson eight builds on the same story. It narrates the forced migration of Muslims from Mecca to Medina that was brought upon them by the '*moshrebs*', because of the fear of their life. It ends with a verse from the Koran that "those who are forced to migrate or participate in the holy war because of God, are granted the forgiveness of sins and entrance to heaven (p.54)."

Lesson eleven is the central point of the textbook. It is called 'The concepts of Holy war and defence in Islam'. Here's the lesson's introduction: "Jihad in literal terms means 'working hard', but in the Islamic terminology, in addition to this meaning, it signifies war and armed combat against the enemies of Islam and Muslims (p.65)."

Meanwhile, Islam is described to be a religion of reason and faith that has been

propagated throughout the world mainly through this peaceful mean. So, it will never force people to convert unless it becomes necessary. That is when jihad or the holy war comes into play. So, when it becomes a necessity, not only it is commanded by Islam, but it is also religious duty and one of the best ways to worship the Lord. There are three kinds of holy war: preliminary jihad, defensive jihad, and internal jihad, which will each be explored shortly.

Jihad is further described as a 'business transaction' between man and God. In the holy Koran, it is written: "God purchases the believers' lives and instead grants them the entry to the beautiful heaven. These believers fight the holy war and kill and get killed (p.67)." The next few paragraphs then are there to ensure that the students understand what this 'business transaction' entails:

Who is the buyer in this business deal? Who is the seller? What is the item being sold? What is the price of this item? The buyer is God... The item being sold is the life, money and all the possessions and belongings of believers. The combatant of the holy war sells his life to the Lord - he hands back the life that has been given to him by God, to God again and sacrifices it for Him. He leaves all he has at once and joins his object of his worship. He throws away all the affection of the rest of the people, and rushes towards the source of light as a butterfly would. What is the price or the value of this transaction? It is heaven, the eternal life and living with the prophets and Imams, in addition to acquaintance with martyrs, the righteous and all the deserving people of God. (p.68)

(Note: Here again a meaningful imagery is employed: butterfly is a symbol of self-

sacrifice and love in Aramian literature. In many Aramian poems you will find that the butterfly keeps going around the light of a candle until it gets burned!)

The believer and the soldier of the Lord is said to hit two birds with one stone:

For the contentment of the Lord, defending the illuminating statutes of Islam, freedom, justice and assisting the oppressed and the poor and to defend his country, he fights courageously. Either he kills the enemies of Islam, demolishes them and comes back home dignified to his family, or for the cause of the Lord and in His presence, he sacrifices his blood. Either way he attains happiness and victory. (pp.68-69)

Thus, it is a win-win situation! The preliminary jihad is described to be not for the purpose of expansion or personal and selfish gain (good virtues reinforced!). Rather, it is used for emancipative purposes; to save the people who are in the dark with regards to the Truth, to save those who are impoverished, oppressed and looted by the oppressors and '*taghootian*'. We are called to rush to their rescue. At first through peaceful invitation to convert, but then, if that doesn't work, they leave us with no choice other than resorting to violence (p.69).

The 'defensive war' takes place when a Muslim country is being invaded by 'foreigners' and it is necessary in order to defend the interest of those being invaded and robbed. Finally, the 'internal war' or the 'civil war' is also considered to be a version of the defensive war, but it is said to be used against 'rebellions' that riot and bring about disharmony in the Islamic country. But, in reality, it is used to exterminate any political opposition. So anybody who does not comply with, question or challenges the religious authority is automatically categorized as a '*monafegh*' or a deviant (as mentioned earlier),

and is regarded as an enemy of Islam. Despotism is camouflaged in the guise of religion. In other words, the decrees set out by the religious authority are not changeable or to be challenged. Blind adherence and obedience is demanded. Yet, theocracy is not openly advertised. Children are led to believe that they live in a country that promulgates freedom and democracy. But when we look very closely, we realize that what they are actually getting is an 'illusion of a democracy'.

It is further incumbent upon all Muslims to assist the government in the elimination of such 'evil doers'. This religious duty is further emphasized by drawing a parallel scenario of the 'deviants' and the rebellions of the early years of Islam, who were fiercely confronted and dealt with by Imam Ali:

If, in an Islamic country, a group of people conspire, riot and disrupt the peace of the society to weaken the Government of Islam, they are no longer in compliance with the religious authority and the rules set out by the Islamic society, and have deviated from the obedience of the religious leader... At first the religious leader will try to lead them to the righteous path, but if they do not listen and remain uncooperative, since the religious leader is entrusted to defend the integrity of Islam, he will be left with no choice other than stifling them with all his power by proclaiming the defensive jihad. In this case, it is expected of all Muslims to make every effort to kill them, to try to annihilate their conspiracies in any way possible, and to demolish their people. Battle with '*boghat*' [rebels] and '*khavarej*' [deviants], conspirers and 'evil doers' is a type of defensive jihad and it is incumbent upon all Muslims to fight against them and to annihilate them, no matter how much they pretend to pray, fast and read the Koran.

Imam Ali (glory upon him) – fought with the deviants of his time who were called the deviants of *Nahrovan*- and except for few- they were all murdered in the war that they had initiated with the Imam of the Muslims. Deviants pretended to be religious, but they had deviated from the authority of Imam Ali – who was the Godly- appointed leader of Muslims, and had created chaos. (p.71)

Here, there is also an indirect allusion to the Sunnis of the time who did not comply with Imam Ali's authority. There is an explanation attached to this passage in small print as a footnote in which the Prophet explains to Ali about deviants and what kind of '*fetneh*' (a revolt based on a conspiracy) calls for the 'holy war': "The *fetneh* of a group that testify to monotheism and my divine mission (as being the last prophet), yet oppose to implement the tradition set out by me, and create their own covenant; and insult the religion (p.72)". So when Imam Ali, seems puzzled and asks "why should we fight we them, since they worship God and testify to your mission as the 'Seal of prophets'?" the Prophet elaborates: "because they have started their own covenant and have deviated from the obedience of the Muslim leader and consider shedding the blood of my clan admissible" (p.72).

This introduction is of course the prelude to lesson fifteen whose main theme seems to be (indirect) demonization of the Sunni sect. But before that, in lesson fourteen, we read about how the prophet appointed Imam Ali as his immediate successor and his two sons as the next ones, and thus established the tradition of the Shiite sect. Hence, this invalidates the Shiite claim that the leadership of the Islamic community was granted by God to the prophet and then to his family members or his clan.

Once this is established as an ‘objective fact’, lesson fifteen embarks on depicting the mistreatment of the Sunni leaders of time who brutally killed, threatened and tortured the clan of the prophet. Although there are no clear indications and no direct references to “Sunnis” per se, all Aramians do know that *Mo'avieh, Ma'moon, and Haroon Al-rasheed* were the Sunni heads of the state or the caliphs at the time of the Shiite Imams.

Thus, lesson fourteen serves to establish the legitimacy of the Shiite belief and affirms that accepting the clan of the prophet as his successors and as the religious authority is tantamount to obeying God and His decrees. At the same time, it serves to delegitimize the Sunni sect which stands in contrast to the former:

...So, from this story that is called the story of *Saghalein* and other statements of the Great Prophet we conclude that Koran and the clan of the prophet [his family] are the source and the essence of guidance and happiness of man, and it is necessary that all Muslims refer to them throughout their lifetime and assure a victorious life in this world and in the afterlife by obeying them. These two are inseparable and lead to the solution of the problems of Muslims, both on the individual and on the social level.

(p.90)

It is important to remind you that the extremely rich values, the admirable virtues, and the comprehensive statutes of the Shiite belief are all based on the Holy Koran, the Prophet's tradition and the treasure of the words of the clan of the prophet. Whoever benefits from this fresh resource will be victorious here and in the world to come, and anybody who turns his back to them will remain thirsty and damaged in here and in the afterlife. (p.91)

This is the destiny of man. If anybody does not follow the Shiite belief, they will lead a miserable life—eternally. As a result, they need to be emancipated!

Once the legitimacy of the Shiite belief is established, lesson fifteen will detail the history of enmity and the ‘intractable conflict’ between the adherents of the two sects of Islam: Shiites and Sunnis. The reading reminds us again that the clan of the Prophet *were* appointed by God to carry his mission and lead the Muslim nation:

The sinless Imam knows the religion in depth and from within, and the Lord helps him to safeguard the religion through His invisible aids. He is charged with the responsibility of the implementation of godly plans and taking over the power from the hands of the oppressors, and making himself the leader and the governor of the Muslim community. So, the government and the leadership of the Muslim community is one of the responsibilities of the sinless twelve Imams of Shi’ism. In their turn, Muslims are also expected to recognize their Imam as their Godly- appointed leader and to accept and affirm his leadership and his mission: to work hard and fight to establish and expand his godly government.

All our dear Imams fought and worked hard all their life so that they could fulfill this duty... They fought hard to realize the Islamic rule, and their utmost desire was to overthrow the ‘*taghooti*’ and monarchical governments and to establish the Islamic government. (pp. 93-94)

In this manner, the long struggle of the Shiite Imams against the ‘tyrannical and despotic’ regimes of their time in order to establish the throne of God and implement the illuminating statutes of Islam, is presented. Starting with Imam Ali (1st Imam) who

fought until he was martyred while praying, Imam Hossein (II Imam) in the infamous bloody battle of *Ashoora*, and so on:

Imam Hossein, for the purpose of ‘preserving Islam and exposing the government of the *Bani Omayyeh* dynasty [a Sunnis dynasty]’, found it necessary to revolt and declare to the people of the world that a child of Prophet will not tolerate the ‘anti Islamic’ government of *Yazeed* [the Sunni Caliph], and will fight with it, even if it requires that himself and his infant child become martyred in this holy war.

Other Imams, as well, continued the endeavour of Imam Hossein, and each according to the situation they found themselves in, chose a suitable tactic....The fourth Imam- Imam Sajjad (Glory upon him) – lived in a very politically toxic and repressive era. He could not even talk to people directly, so he transmitted his messages via prayers to awaken people and teach them the statutes of Islam. (p.94)

The fifth and the sixth Imams are also said to fight against the ‘tyrannical government’ of their time. “The oppressive Caliphs constantly prevented people from visiting these Imams, and the interested Muslims had to disguise themselves in order to be able to visit their beloved Imams. They were often arrested without any warning by the Caliphs or imprisoned or martyred (p.95).”

Imam Bagher (VI Imam) was imprisoned by *Hosham –ibn-abdolmalik-* who is said to be a ‘despotic Caliph’ of the *Banni Omayyeh* dynasty (a Sunni dynasty) for the crime of guiding people and being in contact with them. Another Sunni governor – *Mansour Dovanighy-* ordered to raid the house of the Sixth Imam in the middle of the night in order to murder him. But he was unable to go ahead with the plan because of certain

(political) considerations (p.95).

Imam Moossa Kazem –the seventh Imam- similarly was imprisoned for a very long time in the prisons of the despotic Caliphs such as *Mehdi* of the *Abbasid* dynasty, *Hadi* and *Haroon Al-rasheed* [all are Sunni Caliphs]. Finally, he was poisoned in the prison by *Haroon Al-rasheed* and was martyred. The eighth Imam—Imam Reza—was the contemporary of a very deceptive Caliph, named *Ma'moon* [again, a Sunni Caliph]. He respectfully invited the Imam to “_____” (the capital city of Aram at the time), so that he could have his conduct, visits and visitors under surveillance. But what he really wanted to do in fact was to separate him from his friends in Medina and to eventually martyr him with poison. (p.95)

The ninth and the tenth Imam were likewise repressed by the despotic regimes of the *Abbasid* dynasty, and were stripped of the right to meet with people and propagate their own religion. Even their close friends had a hard time getting in touch with them. *Motevakkel* of the *Abbasid* dynasty ordered to climb the fences of the Imam's house in the middle of the night, search his house, bring him to Baghdad and imprison him in a military base. Finally, this beloved Imam was poisoned and martyred by the hands of the *Mo'tamed* of the *Abbasid* dynasty. The eleventh Imam, also spent all his life in a military centre, under the surveillance of the Caliphs' soldiers, and was absolutely forbidden to promote Islam, guide people or see anyone.

So why do you suppose that our beloved Imams were subject to so much repression by the oppressive governors of their time and endured all the tortures and imprisonments? Was it because they articulated the statutes of God to people and

invited Muslims to individual worship and prayer? Were they being tortured so much and harassed, simply because our Imams were trying to materialize the ‘divine government’ and educated people for this purpose? [Implicit enticement] (p.95)

“_____” (the leader of the Islamic revolution) has commented in this regard:

The martyrdom of Amir al mo’menin -Imam Ali- glory upon him and also that of Imam Hossein (glory upon him), and imprisonment, tortures, exiles and poisoning of Imams (glory upon them), have all been due to the political combats of Shiites against oppressors and in one word, combats and political activity constitute a major aspect of religious duties. (p.96)

Finally, the lesson concludes that the Islamic combat, after the disappearance of the twelfth Imam –Mahdi—was handed down to religious leaders and his appointed ministers. They all fought with the oppressive regimes of their time, with the aid and revelations of Mahdi and have handed down the flag to the next religious leader after themselves, until it was handed down to “_____”, the founder and leader of the Islamic regime. This endeavour and combat shall continue as such until the total attainment of triumph over the rule of infidels and imperialism, the uprooting of any form of tyranny and oppression, and the appearance of the promised Imam Zaman and the realization of a universal rule of Islam (p.96).

The following table displays the number of incidents in which each of the above indoctrinating societal themes were found in the grade six, seven and eight Islamic Culture and Religious Studies textbooks. In total, there are 108 pages and 24 lessons in

the grade 6 textbook, 108 pages and 20 lessons in the grade seven textbook, and 114 pages and 20 lessons in the grade eight textbook. Below the table, specific references to the lessons where each theme was found in each textbook are cited. Since some themes might be overlapping, they have been put together to avoid repetition. For instance, the two themes of ‘security’ and ‘patriotism’ (which in the context of religion is translated into ‘defending the borders of the Muslim Nation’) are put together. Likewise, the notions of ‘self sacrifice’ and ‘glorification of martyrdom’ are indicated as one theme. In addition, as mentioned before, the dichotomous discourse of ‘good’ versus ‘evil’ through the belief that ‘our way is God’s way’ as opposed to the rest of the world; and the Islamic commandment to fight for ‘encouraging to do good and stopping the evil’ are reasons that justify the goals of hostility and violence of the in-group towards ‘the other(s)’ in this case study.

Table 1: Frequency of the appearance of indoctrinatory themes for Grade 6, 7 and 8 respectively

Indoctrination Themes	N Incidents		
	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8
Martyrdom	7/24	7/20	5/20
Deligitimization of the Opponent	9/24	8/20	7/20
Justness of In- group’s Goals	10/24	9/20	7/20

Security/ Defending Borders of Islam	10/24	8/20	3/20
Encouraging Militarism	11/24	11/20	8/20
Exag'n . of In - grp 's Hist. of Victimization	4/24	6/20	5/20
Positive Self-image	14/24	8/20	9/20
Unity Against a 'Common Enemy'	4/24	3/20	6/20
In-group's Own Wish for a (Utopian) Peace	1/24	3/20	5/20

Associated Reference List of Lessons for Grade Six:

Martyrdom: Lessons 3, 4, 6, 11, 13, 17, 22.

Delegitimization of Opponent: Lessons 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17.

Justness of In-group's Goals: Lessons 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 16, 17, 18, 22.

Security/Defending Borders of Islam: Lessons 3, 4, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, 22.

Encouraging Militarism: Lessons 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 17, 22.

Aggrandizement of In-group's History of Victimization: Lessons 9, 11, 17, 22.

Positive Self-image (Self Glorification): Lessons 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22.

Unity against a Common Enemy: Lessons 7, 8, 11, 22.

In-group's Own Wish for Peace: 1.

Associated Reference List of Lessons for Grade Seven:

Martyrdom: Lessons 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13, 19.

Delegitimization of Opponent: Lessons 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14, 17.

Justness of In-group's Goals: Lessons 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 17.

Security/Defending Borders of Islam: Lessons 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 17.

Encouraging Militarism: Lessons 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 17, 19.

Aggrandizement of In-group's History of Victimization: Lessons 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13.

Positive Self-image (Self Glorification): Lessons 5, 6, 7, 8, 12, 13, 14, 19.

Unity against a Common Enemy: Lessons 10, 11, 19.

In-group's Own Wish for Peace: 8, 11, 13.

Associated Reference List of Lessons for Grade Eight:

Martyrdom: Lessons 6, 7, 8, 11, 15.

Delegitimization of Opponent: Lessons 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 15, 16.

Justness of In-group's Goals: Lessons 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16.

Security/Defending Borders of Islam: Lessons 11, 14, 16.

Encouraging Militarism: Lessons 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16.

Aggrandizement of In-group's History of Victimization: Lessons 6, 7, 8, 14, 15.

Positive Self-image (Self Glorification): Lessons 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15.

Unity against a Common Enemy: Lessons 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16.

In-group's Own Wish for Peace: Lessons 8, 9, 11, 15, 16.

Omissions

Omission is also another potent technique used for inculcation. We often find, in politicized discourses, that beliefs, events, realities, concepts, historical evidences, and points of views of out-groups are omitted. Although not always evident to the target audience, omissions play a role just as significant as any other indoctrination method in impacting one's beliefs and attitudes. In an educational system devoid of prejudice, there must be a fair and unbiased balance of own and others' points of view on the same issues. Similarly, the others' religious doctrines, values, significant figures, historical background, etc. should be included, discussed and treated in the same way that those of the dominant culture and religion are being treated.

So, in order to conduct a more meaningful analysis of the Aramian public school religious curricula for "omissions" and "inclusions", I decided to take a look at another country's public schooling religious education first, so that the former could stand in contrast to the latter. For this purpose, the first part of the present analysis looks at the Quebec Religious Education program for the corresponding cycle in order to explore the Quebec's Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sports (MELS) new religious education program, and to compare the content of its Cycle One Secondary to the religious program used at the middle school level in Aram. In Quebec, the middle school (grades 7-9) is referred to as Cycle One of the Secondary level, which is a close equivalent to the middle school in Aram. The intention is to throw light on the emphases and omissions of Aram's program. Before proceeding with the comparison, some more background information is needed.

In 2005, MELS developed a new Religious Education program, the intent of which was to embrace diversity and to be sensitive to the growing pluralism that characterizes the Quebec community of the 21st century. As a result, in September 2008, instead of the old system that provided a choice between the three distinct courses of Moral Education, Catholic Religious and Moral Instruction, and Protestant Moral and Religious Education, one common program called Ethics and Religious Culture was to be implemented and mandatory for all students.

Quebec's Ethics and Religious Culture Ministry -Approved Curriculum

The new Ethics and Religious Culture program is rooted in the in the student's reality and in Québec culture; it respects the freedom of conscience and religion, and fosters living in harmony with others. Teachers are called upon specifically to attach particular importance to respecting the values, beliefs or convictions of families of students, and to address them with objectivity and impartiality. On a parallel note, students studying ethical or religious issues should aim to understand them without negative prejudices or blind submission (Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2005, p.6).

Although religion is supposed to bring people closer together, it can also be a source of tension and conflict. To promote social cohesion, the learnings in the projected curricula are deliberately centred on sharing common values, acquiring a sense of civic responsibility when expressing one's values and convictions, and becoming aware that individual choices do impact the society at large. This is why the classroom should be a place of expression, research, awareness, reflection, discussion and dialogue on different

topics adapted to the students. Different viewpoints should be considered, and the commitment must be made with others to pursue the common good. The new curriculum also seeks to prepare students to resolve disagreements using ‘non-violent’ approaches. It further endeavours to shape autonomous individuals capable of exercising critical judgement on ethical norms, issues and dilemmas.

The elementary curriculum will focus on the values, beliefs and convictions that the students have in common in order to foster recognition of others and to cultivate respect and tolerance. At the secondary level, students’ knowledge will be widened and consolidated in order to address ethical or religious issues with objectivity and discernment (MELS, 2005, pp.5-6).

Since the textbook is not yet written for this ERC program, the approved ministry curriculum for the Cycle One of the secondary level is going to be researched. As suggests the name of the course ‘Ethics and Religious Culture’, this course is divided into the two distinct parts: Ethics and Religious Culture; and each section includes its own themes, teaching guidelines and related content.

Ethics component of the ERC. In this section, the first theme to be studied is ‘freedom’ and the teacher is advised to draw upon various ways of examining and considering the resulting implications in the lives of individuals and groups. It is aimed at helping students realize that there are different ways of viewing freedom, and that there are different types of freedom: freedom of action, freedom of thought, freedom of expression and free will. Limits to freedom are discussed in relation to such matters as

responsibilities, obligations, promises, pacts, commitments, roles, and the like. Similarly, ‘rights and obligations’, rules of conduct, codes of ethics, laws, charters, and privileges are considered and deliberated upon.

The next theme to be studied is ‘autonomy’. The goal of this theme is to familiarize students with conditions required for developing autonomy and to distinguish between autonomy and dependence. So the conditions of autonomy are listed as critical judgment, common sense, moral responsibility, ability to choose, authenticity, and so on. Other subthemes such as desire for emancipation, acts of solidarity, struggles against dependencies, as well as the source of tensions (personal interest and the common good), assertiveness and respect for others are also included.

The last theme in Secondary Cycle One is ‘social order’, which constitutes of looking at values and norms of societal groups, institutions and organizations: family, gangs, school, industry, the State. This concept also includes forms of power: authoritarian, charismatic, cooperative, democratic, etc. The curriculum then addresses different forms of respecting, obeying and disobeying the law such as obedience, complete submission, and conformity are all reviewed.

The Secondary Cycle One curriculum is clearly aimed at preparing students for the curriculum content of Secondary Cycle Two. Although this level relates to grades 10 and 11 while the focus of this paper is on the middle school years, the discussion that follows is important for highlighting the kinds of values and the kinds of citizens that the Quebec Reform and especially the ERC are trying to bring about in this very multicultural society. The Secondary Cycle Two themes include the following:

-- Tolerance. The teacher is guided to draw upon specific cases taken from literature and current events in order to help students reflect on the meaning of tolerance, intolerance and indifference. Reflections on tolerance take account of the limitations of a right, respect for differences, multiculturalism, pluralism, and universalism.

-- The future of humanity. This theme aims to help students recognize different ways of looking at the future of humanity with regard to how human beings and the environment relate.

-- Relations between human beings, including relations between poor countries and rich countries with respect to health, education, totalitarianism, and democracy.

-- Justice. Students learn that depending on the society, there are various ways of looking at justice, at the principles associated with it and the questions it raises.

-- Human ambivalence. This last theme aims to help students become aware that human beings living in complex, multicultural societies are sometimes faced with conflicting values, for example, between the family (home) and the school.

Religious culture component of the ERC. Analysis of the Quebec Ethics and Religious Culture curriculum points to the extent to which the ERC is inclusive in its discussion of other than Christian or Jewish religions. According to ministerial directives, the 'Religious Culture' is to have the following '*compulsory* content':

- Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism) covered throughout each year of a cycle
- Judaism and Native spirituality covered on a number of occasions

in each year of a cycle

- Islam covered on a number of occasions over the course of a cycle
- Buddhism covered on a number of occasions over the course of a cycle
- Hinduism is covered on a number of occasions over the course of a cycle
- Religions other than those mentioned above may be covered over the course of cycle, depending on the reality and the needs of the class.
- Cultural expressions and those derived from representations of the world and of human beings that reflect the meaning and value of human experience outside of religious beliefs and affiliation are addressed during the cycle.³

The teachers are directed to lead students to find common grounds in all religions as well as to help students draw upon various forms of religious expression, such as symbols, writings, ceremonies, rituals and objects associated with a given religion. This way, the students will be able to understand the diversity of representations of the Divine and of mythical and supernatural beings found in society and within religions. In addition, sacred places, special figures, and doctrines within each religion are to be studied. Issues of peace and conflict, religious conquests, ecumenism, dialogue between religions, and the roles of missionaries are also raised. In addition, religious affiliations, animist religions, Abrahamic religions and oriental religions are all part of this curriculum.

³ Excerpted from the Quebec's Ministry of Education, Leisure and Sports Ethics and Religious Culture approved curriculum, p.57).

The ERC curriculum for final year of the Cycle One revolves around the fundamental theme that underlies all religions – the existential questions. Its function is to help students become aware that human beings have always asked themselves questions such as “Who are we?”, “Where do we come from?”, and “Where are we going?”, and that various religious traditions or currents of thought have offered responses to these questions. It draws upon sacred or philosophical texts in order to help students understand the range of answers to questions concerning the existence of the Divine, the meaning of life and death, and the nature of human beings. Then, the student is introduced to a myriad of doctrines: monotheism, pantheism, animism, polytheism, deism and agnosticism. Critiques and denunciations of the existence of the Divine are also considered such as atheism, religious alienation in the works of Marx, Freud and Sartre, and the death of God in the work of Nietzsche. These ideas are set in the context of universal human issues such as the meaning of life and death, life after death, suffering, love, happiness, paradise, hell, purgatory, nirvana, and reincarnation. On the same note, relationships between men and women, sexuality, and the complementarity of men and women are reflected upon .

So clearly, as indicated above, many ‘other religions’ are part of the compulsory content and are to be studied with impartiality and in detail. Teachers are further guided to help students find common ground in all religions as well as identify potential sources of conflict. This goal is to be achieved through dialogue, respect and with open minds.

Omissions in Aramian Textbooks

It goes without saying that the just-stated objective should be the goal of any educational system devoid of prejudice. That is to say that in a sound and well-meaning system, as already mentioned in the introduction to this section, there must be a fair and unbiased balance of own and others' points of view on the same issues. Likewise, the others' religious doctrines, values, significant figures, and historical backgrounds should be included, discussed and treated in the same way as those of the dominant culture and religion.

Nevertheless, the significant information pertaining to the minority religions within Aram and the religions outside the border were found to be either completely left out in the textbooks, or distorted in favour of the in-group's intentions, if mentioned at all. In contrast to a detailed and elaborate description of Islam, the ways of worship of other religions are all completely absent in these texts. For example, there is an incredible amount of written text complemented by pictures to support Shiism's legitimacy through presentation of historical proofs that support the divine appointment of Imam Ali as the prophet's successor. Many lessons are dedicated to the Muslim's (Friday) mass prayers and the Hadj pilgrimage (i.e. gr. 6, pp. 104-108). A few lessons are dedicated to the Koran's emancipation plan and their twelfth prophet (Imam Zaman) who is to appear someday (i.e., gr. 7, pp. 72, 73). But nowhere is there a word about other religions. If anything, there are only descriptions of the despicable and inhuman traits and characteristics of 'the others'.

Interestingly enough, the only paragraph in the three textbooks that talks about other

religions is on page 32, lesson 6 in grade 6 textbook, where it states that Muslims recognize the five major Abrahamic prophets—namely Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus and Mohammad—and are commanded to respect their adherents. Nonetheless, the Baha’i religion is completely left out from this list. This is not a coincidence. It is simply because, as already stated, Muslims believe that Prophet Mohammad is the last or the Seal of the prophets, meaning that there is no prophet after Him and therefore no legitimate religion after Islam. Baha’ism came into being around the eighteenth century (A.D.), meaning about 1200 years after Islam. As a result, Baha’is have been the religious community most attacked, despised and persecuted in Aram, since their religion is not recognized as legitimate. When I lived in Aram, I remember that a lot of people, myself included, were hesitant to even disclose that we were friends with or even knew anyone belonging to this particular religious community. Many of them have been tortured, had their possessions confiscated by the government or persecuted simply due to their religious affiliation.

That being said, there is an incredible amount of literature in the textbooks that I reviewed that points to the Muslims and especially the Shiite community being persecuted by ‘the enemy’. Nonetheless, there is no mention of the Muslim and the Shiite community persecuting people of other religions. Baha’is for example, have been the silent victims of such persecution. In the mid 1900s, they were overtly persecuted, tortured and forced to convert. There was a mass genocide of this population in Aram. As a result, many of them had to flee to the neighbouring countries such as Russia for fear of their life. But there is absolutely no reference to this horrifying historical event anywhere

in the textbooks.

Analogous to the foregoing, there is no mention of the role played by Muslims and the Shiites, as they inflicted harm on other human beings in wars and conflicts. With respect to the explicit depictions of the murderous role the enemy has played in such confrontations, the violence and brutalities carried out by the in-group are portrayed as noble acts, and sugar-coated in terms such as bravery, killing for the cause of God, and emancipating the oppressed and defying oppressors.

Moreover, while there are a few stories claiming that people belonging to other religions converted to Islam (gr. 6, pp. 66-70; gr. 7 pp.44-50), there is no literature suggesting the opposite possibility. In the real world, we know that people frequently convert from one religion to another and this conversion is not exclusive to new Muslims. In order to refer to those who convert from Islam to other religions, pejorative terms such as khavarej, apostates, and infidels are used. What is not articulated here is that it is from *their* perspective that these people are infidels and apostates. In reality, these individuals have chosen another religion instead of Islam.

In addition, there are numerous occasions that the term the 'Muslim Nation' is used throughout the books (i.e. gr. 7, pp. 63-67), but there is no reference anywhere to the 'Buddhist Nation', 'the Baha'i Nation', and the rest. Lesson 11 in grade 7 textbook talks about the 'Nation of Islam' in detail. It asserts that the number of Muslims in the world is estimated to be one billion and this assertion is maintained by a map of the world on page 64 that displays the countries that constitute the Muslim Nation. But this depiction is not paralleled in any way for the 'other religious nations'. Other religious nations are simply

referred to collectively as the ‘foreigners’, which again reinforces the dichotomous discourse of ‘us’ versus ‘them’.

Finally, it is commanded to every Muslim to extend kind treatments to other Muslims, but no such commandment exists regarding the ‘other religious’. Lesson fourteen in the grade six textbook called ‘Fraternity in Islam’ calls Muslims to be kind, patient, sharing, loyal, honest, benevolent, non-hypocritical, etc, etc. towards their Muslim brothers and sisters- only. Other members of the human family are apparently excluded from receiving the same kind of treatment.

As revealed, in the foregoing texts, it is clear that the points of views, praiseworthy attributes, historical roots, religious doctrines, and many other items that would support the legitimacy of the ‘religious other’ and the justness of their cause have not been mentioned in contrast to those of the in-group. As such, the ‘religious other’ is deprived of ‘voice’ and denigrated without being able to defend itself from being subjected to indoctrination.

Discussion

The proceeding paragraphs shed some light on the indoctrinatory nature of education in the Aramian textbooks. Specific examples throughout lessons were highlighted that clearly demonstrated the existence of the societal beliefs underlying a collective emotion of fear that serves to mobilize masses against ‘the other religious’. Moreover, in order to carry out a more in-depth analysis of the textbooks, omissions of the beliefs, events, realities, concepts, historical evidences, and points of views of out-groups were also

taken into account. Moreover, in order to clarify what is meant by omissions and what needs to be included in a religious education curricula which aims to be unbiased and devoid of prejudice, the Quebec Ethics and Religious Culture curricula for the equivalent level (middle school) were considered, reviewed and investigated for omissions and inclusions. In light of the foregoing, Aram's Islamic Culture and Religious Studies textbooks were then examined and analysed for precisely the same elements.

Can inter-group conflict be prevented? Can peaceful relations between groups be achieved? That is exactly what the next section will attempt to address. One of the preconditions for the maintenance of an atmosphere of security is to end the 'psychological war' that different groups wage on each other. As many educators strive to meet the challenges of the 21st century, many also recognize the critical role that religion plays in our world; in particular in the interethnic conflict and violence. As a result, they are more sensitized to the importance and the urgency of a religious education that promotes peace as opposed to war. Since wars are initiated in human minds, the only place that peace could truly come to life is nowhere but the human mind.

SECTION 3

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding sections, it was established that the educational systems of countries involved in interethnic conflicts somehow support the continuation of war and tension. As a result of this education, they are led to think and behave in a certain way when it comes to dealing with 'the other religious'. Arriving at such beliefs is by no means a coincidence. It is more often than not a very effective result of mobilizing the society members to perpetuate conflict as a means to deal with the adversary. Nevertheless, in the process, many lives are lost and much needless suffering takes place.

That being said, should these trends be abolished, a politically stable global society might emerge. A critical interfaith pedagogy is therefore urgently called for, should we truly aspire to live in a peaceful world free from interethnic conflict.

This is precisely where organizations such as United Nations and the UNESCO come into play. Every effort must be made to research effective methodologies which could eradicate prejudicial education in the schools and replace it by an unbiased 'critical interfaith education'. Puett (2005) equally articulates the urgent need to investigate existing world interfaith pedagogies for tracing characteristics of hatred and violence; alluding to the September 11, 2001 atrocity and the consequent climate of social tension, conflict, and the hate crimes. On a parallel note, Puett recognizes the need to explore interfaith education's role in public education, as education for life in global society (p.3).

Critical interfaith pedagogy is founded upon the same principle that shaped Paulo

Freire's model of critical pedagogy in *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Since pedagogy is the production of knowledge, identities and values, critical pedagogy presupposes that all pedagogy is inherently politically charged. Barakett and Cleghorn note, "Freire's primary concern is social transformation and developing an emancipatory or liberating education" (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2008, p.85). For Freire, knowledge is deeply rooted in power relations, so critical pedagogy questions why and how knowledge gets constructed the way it does and why some constructions of reality are legitimated at the expense of others. Not only are people processed in schools, but knowledge is also selected, organized, and processed there. He further insists that individuals have the power to come to an understanding of their own situation in the world, and to question and challenge domination, ideologies and power structures and to arrive at a state of awareness which he refers to as "critical consciousness". As such, every society member can become an agent of transformation of not only educational practices, but of societal situations as well (Barakett & Cleghorn, 2008, pp. 84-88).

Freire believes that one's perception of reality is heavily influenced by ideologies formulated by the dominant class who control not only educational access, but also processes and content. Pedagogical practices are therefore flooded by mechanisms to maintain the position of those in power, with the result that those who are not in the position of power are robbed of the possibility of developing a 'critical consciousness'. Thus, whatever teaching and knowledge those without control do receive ensures that they remain passive. The outcome of such an education is what Freire refers to as the 'culture of silence' (Freire, as cited by Barakett & Cleghorn, p. 87)

Kincheloe (2008) acknowledges the challenges that teachers face in classrooms concerning justice, democracy, and competing ethical claims. He claims that while teachers do possess agency, their actions are not completely free because of the choices made by those in power. Kincheloe (2008) further suggests that some basic concerns common to all critical pedagogues are the political nature of pedagogy; the alleviation of oppression and human suffering based on race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, ethnicity and physical and mental ability.

Analogous to the same principles underlying critical pedagogy, a “critical *interfaith* pedagogy” aims to empower students through knowledge to form conscious and informed views about people of the other faith, therefore enabling them to participate in shaping their own destinies and become better citizens of the future. It is aimed at combating hidden power structures that manipulate through creedal fanaticism, zealotry, and triumphalism leading to discrimination, conflict and violence (Puett, 2005, p.2).

A sound interfaith pedagogy that is based on dialogue, understanding and respecting diversity founded upon the principles forwarded by the UNESCO 1974 General Conference on Education⁴ may include a wide range of issues and themes. Some of these may be discussing the importance of freedom of expression and the right to self-determination and assembly set by the ‘right to religion’ of the Charter of Human Rights and Fundamental freedoms. It should further enable students to recognize fully the ways and means by which human rights can be translated into social and political reality,

⁴ See Appendix 1.

especially as they apply to religious and political rights being infringed through discrimination due to religion. On a parallel note, it should clearly communicate to students how interfaith conflicts could evolve into violent confrontations.

Moreover, a critical interfaith pedagogy should strive to impress upon students that they are not to relinquish responsibility to a mechanical, administrative authority to decide their fate. Rather, as potential political agents of change, they can and *should* take charge of their own fate and the fate of their country. In turn, this feeling of responsibility and obligation should be expanded to an international level in which we are all seen as world citizens, with national, ethnic, cultural and religious boundaries disappearing gradually. Ideally, future citizens will focus on one sacred end- namely human survival through dignity and mutual respect.

The above goal can only be attained if the curriculum allows for students to discuss the causes and sources of inter-group biases, prejudices, and tensions in the classroom. At the same time, it should be impressed upon every student that there is no one “right” solution to the problem and that his/her contribution is welcome. In addition, a sound teacher education where teachers are encouraged to assess their own biases and to reflect on their pedagogical approaches is needed so that interethnic diversity may be embraced.

I honestly hope that this study and other similar studies will not be overlooked, but rather be considered for policy reform, curriculum modification, and ultimately promoting interfaith peace. Educators and world governments must develop a firm and unwavering commitment to implement the provisions of the UNESCO recommendations, and to reformulate or modify their interfaith pedagogies to one that is committed to ‘end

human suffering and protect students from being hurt (Kincheloe, 2008)'. We must ultimately learn to respect and honour the path each of us takes to the Sacred, if we truly wish to arrive safely!

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APPENDIX 1

Appendix

Recommendation concerning Education for International Understanding, Co- operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Adopted by the General Conference at
its eighteenth session Paris, 19 Novem-
ber 1974.

The General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, meeting in Paris from 17 October to 23 November 1974, at its eighteenth session.

Mindful of the responsibility incumbent on States to achieve through education the aims set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, the Constitution of Unesco, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Geneva Conventions for the Protection of Victims of War of 12 August 1949, in order to promote international understanding, co-operation and peace and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms,

Reaffirming the responsibility which is incumbent on Unesco to encourage and support in Member States any activity designed to ensure the education of all for the advancement of justice, freedom, human rights and peace,

Noting nevertheless that the activity of Unesco and of its Member States sometimes has an impact only on a small minority of the steadily growing numbers of schoolchildren, students, young people and adults continuing their education, and educators, and that the curricula and methods of international education are not always attuned to the needs and aspirations of the participating young people and adults,

Noting moreover that in a number of cases there is still a wide disparity between proclaimed ideals, declared intentions and the actual situation,

Having decided, at its seventeenth session, that this education should be the subject of a recommendation to Member States,

Adopts this nineteenth day of November 1974, the present recommendation.

The General Conference recommends that Member States should apply the following provisions by taking whatever legislative or other steps may be required in conformity with the constitutional practice of each State to give effect within their respective territories to the principles set forth in this recommendation.

The General Conference recommends that Member States bring this recommendation to the attention of the authorities, departments or bodies responsible for school education, higher education and out-of-school education, of the various organizations carrying out educational work among young people and adults such as student and youth movements, associations of pupils' parents, teachers' unions and other interested parties.

The General Conference recommends that Member States submit to it, by dates and in the form to be decided upon by the Conference, reports concerning the action taken by them in pursuance of this recommendation.

I. Significance of terms

1. For the purposes of this recommendation:

- (a) The word 'education' implies the entire process of social life by means of which individuals and social groups learn to develop consciously within, and for the benefit of, the national and international communities, the whole of their personal capacities, attitudes, aptitudes and knowledge. This process is not limited to any specific activities.
- (b) The terms 'international understanding', 'co-operation' and 'peace' are to be considered as an indivisible whole based on the principle of friendly relations between peoples and States having different social and political systems and on the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. In the text of this recommendation, the different connotations of these terms are sometimes gathered together in a concise expression, 'international education'.
- (c) 'Human rights' and 'fundamental freedoms' are those defined in the United Nations Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenants on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and on Civil and Political Rights.

II. Scope

2. This recommendation applies to all stages and forms of education.

III. Guiding principles

3. Education should be infused with the aims and purposes set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, the Constitution of Unesco and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly Article 26, paragraph 2, of the last-named, which states: 'Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.'
4. In order to enable every person to contribute actively to the fulfilment of the aims referred to in paragraph 3, and promote international solidarity and co-operation, which are necessary in solving the world problems affecting the

individuals' and communities' life and exercise of fundamental rights and freedoms, the following objectives should be regarded as major guiding principles of educational policy:

- (a) an international dimension and a global perspective in education at all levels and in all its forms;
 - (b) understanding and respect for all peoples, their cultures, civilizations, values and ways of life, including domestic ethnic cultures and cultures of other nations;
 - (c) awareness of the increasing global interdependence between peoples and nations;
 - (d) abilities to communicate with others;
 - (e) awareness not only of the rights but also of the duties incumbent upon individuals, social groups and nations towards each other;
 - (f) understanding of the necessity for international solidarity and co-operation;
 - (g) readiness on the part of the individual to participate in solving the problems of his community, his country and the world at large.
5. Combining learning, training, information and action, international education should further the appropriate intellectual and emotional development of the individual. It should develop a sense of social responsibility and of solidarity with less privileged groups and should lead to observance of the principles of equality in everyday conduct. It should also help to develop qualities, aptitudes and abilities which enable the individual to acquire a critical understanding of problems at the national and the international level; to understand and explain facts, opinions and ideas; to work in a group; to accept and participate in free discussions; to observe the elementary rules of procedure applicable to any discussion; and to base value-judgements and decisions on a rational analysis of relevant facts and factors.
6. Education should stress the inadmissibility of recourse to war for purposes of expansion, aggression and domination, or to the use of force and violence for purposes of repression, and should bring every person to understand and assume his or her responsibilities for the maintenance of peace. It should contribute to international understanding and strengthening of world peace and to the activities in the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism in all their forms and manifestations and against all forms and varieties of racialism, facism, and apartheid as well as other ideologies which breed national and racial hatred and which are contrary to the purposes of this recommendation.

IV. National policy, planning and administration

7. Each Member State should formulate and apply national policies aimed at increasing the efficacy of education in all its forms and strengthening its contribution to international understanding and co-operation, to the maintenance and development of a just peace, to the establishment of social justice, to respect for and application of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and to the eradication of the prejudices, misconceptions, inequalities and all forms of injustice which hinder the achievement of these aims.
8. Member States should in collaboration with the National Commissions take steps to ensure co-operation between ministries and departments and co-ordination of their efforts to plan and carry out concerted programmes of action in international education.

9. Member States should provide, consistent with their constitutional provisions, the financial, administrative, material and moral support necessary to implement this recommendation.

V. Particular aspects of learning, training and action

Ethical and civic aspects

10. Member States should take appropriate steps to strengthen and develop in the processes of learning and training, attitudes and behaviour based on recognition of the equality and necessary interdependence of nations and peoples.
11. Member States should take steps to ensure that the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination become an integral part of the developing personality of each child, adolescent, young person or adult by applying these principles in the daily conduct of education at each level and in all its forms, thus enabling each individual to contribute personally to the regeneration and extension of education in the direction indicated.
12. Member States should urge educators, in collaboration with pupils, parents, the organizations concerned and the community, to use methods which appeal to the creative imagination of children and adolescents and to their social activities and thereby to prepare them to exercise their rights and freedoms while recognizing and respecting the rights of others and to perform their social duties.
13. Member States should promote, at every stage of education, an active civic training which will enable every person to gain a knowledge of the method of operation and the work of public institutions, whether local, national or international, to become acquainted with the procedures for solving fundamental problems; and to participate in the cultural life of the community and in public affairs. Wherever possible, this participation should increasingly link education and action to solve problems at the local, national and international levels.
14. Education should include critical analysis of the historical and contemporary factors of an economic and political nature underlying the contradictions and tensions between countries, together with study of ways of overcoming these contradictions, which are the real impediments to understanding, true international co-operation and the development of world peace.
15. Education should emphasize the true interests of peoples and their incompatibility with the interests of monopolistic groups holding economic and political power, which practise exploitation and foment war.
16. Student participation in the organization of studies and of the educational establishment they are attending should itself be considered a factor in civic education and an important element in international education.

Cultural aspects

17. Member States should promote, at various stages and in various types of education, study of different cultures, their reciprocal influences, their perspectives and ways of life, in order to encourage mutual appreciation of the

differences between them. Such study should, among other things, give due importance to the teaching of foreign languages, civilizations and cultural heritage as a means of promoting international and inter-cultural understanding.

Study of the major problems of mankind

18. Education should be directed both towards the eradication of conditions which perpetuate and aggravate major problems affecting human survival and well-being—inequality, injustice, international relations based on the use of force—and towards measures of international co-operation likely to help solve them. Education which in this respect must necessarily be of an interdisciplinary nature should relate to such problems as:
 - (a) equality of rights of peoples, and the right of peoples to self-determination;
 - (b) the maintenance of peace; different types of war and their causes and effects; disarmament; the inadmissibility of using science and technology for warlike purposes and their use for the purposes of peace and progress; the nature and effect of economic, cultural and political relations between countries and the importance of international law for these relations, particularly for the maintenance of peace;
 - (c) action to ensure the exercise and observance of human rights, including those of refugees; racialism and its eradication; the fight against discrimination in its various forms;
 - (d) economic growth and social development and their relation to social justice; colonialism and decolonization; ways and means of assisting developing countries; the struggle against illiteracy; the campaign against disease and famine; the fight for a better quality of life and the highest attainable standard of health; population growth and related questions;
 - (e) the use, management and conservation of natural resources, pollution of the environment;
 - (f) preservation of the cultural heritage of mankind;
 - (g) the role and methods of action of the United Nations system in efforts to solve such problems and possibilities for strengthening and furthering its action.
19. Steps should be taken to develop the study of those sciences and disciplines which are directly related to the exercise of the increasingly varied duties and responsibilities involved in international relations.

Other aspects

20. Member States should encourage educational authorities and educators to give education planned in accordance with this recommendation an interdisciplinary, problem-oriented content adapted to the complexity of the issues involved in the application of human rights and in international co-operation, and in itself illustrating the ideas of reciprocal influence, mutual support and solidarity. Such programmes should be based on adequate research, experimentation and the identification of specific educational objectives.
21. Member States should endeavour to ensure that international educational activity is granted special attention and resources when it is carried out in situations involving particularly delicate or explosive social problems in relations, for example, where there are obvious inequalities in opportunities for access to education.

VI. Action in various sectors of education

22. Increased efforts should be made to develop and infuse an international and inter-cultural dimension at all stages and in all forms of education.
23. Member States should take advantage of the experience of the Associated Schools which carry out, with Unesco's help, programmes of international education. Those concerned with Associated Schools in Member States should strengthen and renew their efforts to extend the programme to other educational institutions and work towards the general application of its results. In other Member States, similar action should be undertaken as soon as possible. The experience of other educational institutions which have carried out successful programmes of international education should also be studied and disseminated.
24. As pre-school education develops, Member States should encourage in it activities which correspond to the purposes of the recommendation because fundamental attitudes, such as, for example, attitudes on race, are often formed in the pre-school years. In this respect, the attitude of parents should be deemed to be an essential factor for the education of children, and the adult education referred to in paragraph 30 should pay special attention to the preparation of parents for their role in pre-school education. The first school should be designed and organized as a social environment having its own character and value, in which various situations, including games, will enable children to become aware of their rights, to assert themselves freely while accepting their responsibilities, and to improve and extend through direct experience their sense of belonging to larger and larger communities—the family, the school, then the local, national and world communities.
25. Member States should urge the authorities concerned, as well as teachers and students, to re-examine periodically how post-secondary and university education should be improved so that it may contribute more fully to the attainment of the objectives of this recommendation.
26. Higher education should comprise civic training and learning activities for all students that will sharpen their knowledge of the major problems which they should help to solve, provide them with possibilities for direct and continuous action aimed at the solution of those problems, and improve their sense of international co-operation.
27. As post-secondary educational establishments, particularly universities, serve growing numbers of people, they should carry out programmes of international education as part of their broadened function in lifelong education and should in all teaching adopt a global approach. Using all means of communication available to them, they should provide opportunities, facilities for learning and activities adapted to people's real interests, problems and aspirations.
28. In order to develop the study and practice of international co-operation, post-secondary educational establishments should systematically take advantage of the forms of international action inherent in their role, such as visits from foreign professors and students and professional co-operation between professors and research teams in different countries. In particular, studies and experimental work should be carried out on the linguistic, social, emotional and cultural obstacles, tensions, attitudes and actions which affect both foreign students and host establishments.
29. Every stage of specialized vocational training should include training to enable

students to understand their role and the role of their professions in developing their society, furthering international co-operation, maintaining and developing peace, and to assume their role actively as early as possible.

30. Whatever the aims and forms of out-of-school education, including adult education, they should be based on the following considerations:
 - (a) as far as possible a global approach should be applied in all out-of-school education programmes, which should comprise the appropriate moral, civic, cultural, scientific and technical elements of international education;
 - (b) all the parties concerned should combine efforts to adapt and use the mass media of communication, self-education, and inter-active learning, and such institutions as museums and public libraries to convey relevant knowledge to the individual, to foster in him or her favourable attitudes and a willingness to take positive action, and to spread knowledge and understanding of the educational campaigns and programmes planned in accordance with the objectives of this recommendation;
 - (c) the parties concerned, whether public or private, should endeavour to take advantage of favourable situations and opportunities, such as the social and cultural activities of youth centres and clubs, cultural centres, community centres or trade unions, youth gatherings and festivals, sporting events, contacts with foreign visitors, students or immigrants and exchanges of persons in general.
31. Steps should be taken to assist the establishment and development of such organizations as student and teacher associations for the United Nations, international relations clubs and Unesco Clubs, which should be associated with the preparation and implementation of co-ordinated programmes of international education.
32. Member States should endeavour to ensure that, at each stage of school and out-of-school education, activities directed towards the objectives of this recommendation be co-ordinated and form a coherent whole within the curricula for the different levels and types of education, learning and training. The principles of co-operation and association which are inherent in this recommendation should be applied in all educational activities.

VII. Teacher preparation

33. Member States should constantly improve the ways and means of preparing and certifying teachers and other educational personnel for their role in pursuing the objectives of this recommendation and should, to this end:
 - (a) provide teachers with motivations for their subsequent work: commitment to the ethics of human rights and to the aim of changing society, so that human rights are applied in practice; a grasp of the fundamental unity of mankind; ability to instil appreciation of the riches which the diversity of cultures can bestow on every individual, group or nation;
 - (b) provide basic interdisciplinary knowledge of world problems and the problems of international co-operation, through, among other means, work to solve these problems;
 - (c) prepare teachers themselves to take an active part in devising programmes of international education and educational equipment and materials, taking into account the aspirations of pupils and working in close collaboration with them;

- (d) comprise experiments in the use of active methods of education and training in at least elementary techniques of evaluation, particularly those applicable to the social behaviour and attitudes of children, adolescents and adults;
 - (e) develop aptitudes and skills such as a desire and ability to make educational innovations and to continue his or her training; experience in teamwork and in interdisciplinary studies; knowledge of group dynamics; and the ability to create favourable opportunities and take advantage of them;
 - (f) include the study of experiments in international education, especially innovative experiments carried out in other countries, and provide those concerned, to the fullest possible extent, with opportunities for making direct contact with foreign teachers.
34. Member States should provide those concerned with direction, supervision or guidance—for instance, inspectors, educational advisers, principals of teacher-training colleges and organizers of educational activities for young people and adults—with training, information and advice enabling them to help teachers work towards the objectives of this recommendation, taking into account the aspirations of young people with regard to international problems and new educational methods that are likely to improve prospects for fulfilling these aspirations. For these purposes, seminars or refresher courses relating to international and inter-cultural education should be organized to bring together authorities and teachers; other seminars or courses might permit supervisory personnel and teachers to meet with other groups concerned such as parents, students, and teachers' associations. Since there must be a gradual but profound change in the role of education, the results of experiments for the remodelling of structures and hierarchical relations in educational establishments should be reflected in training, information and advice.
 35. Member States should endeavour to ensure that any programme of further training for teachers in service or for personnel responsible for direction includes components of international education and opportunities to compare the results of their experiences in international education.
 36. Member States should encourage and facilitate educational study and refresher courses abroad, particularly by awarding fellowships, and should encourage recognition of such courses as part of the regular process of initial training, appointment, refresher training and promotion of teachers.
 37. Member States should organize or assist bilateral exchanges of teachers at all levels of education.

VIII. Educational equipment and materials

38. Member States should increase their efforts to facilitate the renewal, production, dissemination and exchange of equipment and materials for international education, giving special consideration to the fact that in many countries pupils and students receive most of their knowledge about international affairs through the mass media outside the school. To meet the needs expressed by those concerned with international education, efforts should be concentrated on overcoming the lack of teaching aids and on improving their quality. Action should be on the following lines:

- (a) appropriate and constructive use should be made of the entire range of equipment and aids available, from textbooks to television, and of the new educational technology;
 - (b) there should be a component of special mass media education in teaching to help the pupils to select and analyse the information conveyed by mass media;
 - (c) a global approach, comprising the introduction of international components, serving as a framework for presenting local and national aspects of different subjects and illustrating the scientific and cultural history of mankind, should be employed in textbooks and all other aids to learning, with due regard to the value of the visual arts and music as factors conducive to understanding between different cultures;
 - (d) written and audio-visual materials of an interdisciplinary nature illustrating the major problems confronting mankind and showing in each case the need for international co-operation and its practical form should be prepared in the language or languages of instruction of the country with the aid of information supplied by the United Nations, Unesco and other Specialized Agencies;
 - (e) documents and other materials illustrating the culture and the way of life of each country, the chief problems with which it is faced, and its participation in activities of worldwide concern should be prepared and communicated to other countries.
39. Member States should promote appropriate measures to ensure that educational aids, especially textbooks, are free from elements liable to give rise to misunderstanding, mistrust, racialist reactions, contempt or hatred with regard to other groups or peoples. Materials should provide a broad background of knowledge which will help learners to evaluate information and ideas disseminated through the mass media that seem to run counter to the aims of this recommendation.
40. According to its needs and possibilities, each Member State should establish or help to establish one or more documentation centres offering written and audio-visual material devised according to the objectives of this recommendation and adapted to the different forms and stages of education. These centres should be designed to foster the reform of international education, especially by developing and disseminating innovative ideas and materials, and should also organize and facilitate exchanges of information with other countries.

IX. Research and experimentation

41. Member States should stimulate and support research on the foundations, guiding principles, means of implementation and effects of international education and on innovations and experimental activities in this field, such as those taking place in the Associated Schools. This action calls for collaboration by universities, research bodies and centres, teacher-training institutions, adult education training centres and appropriate non-governmental organizations.
42. Member States should take appropriate steps to ensure that teachers and the various authorities concerned build international education on a sound psychological and sociological basis by applying the results of research carried out in each country on the formation and development of favourable or unfavourable attitudes and behaviour, on attitude change, on the interaction of personality

development and education and on the positive or negative effects of educational activity. A substantial part of this research should be devoted to the aspirations of young people concerning international problems and relations.

X. International co-operation

43. Member States should consider international co-operation a responsibility in developing international education. In the implementation of this recommendation they should refrain from intervening in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State in accordance with the United Nations Charter. By their own actions, they should demonstrate that implementing this recommendation is itself an exercise in international understanding and co-operation. They should, for example, organize, or help the appropriate authorities and non-governmental organizations to organize, an increasing number of international meetings and study sessions on international education; strengthen their programmes for the reception of foreign students, research workers, teachers and educators belonging to workers' associations and adult education associations; promote reciprocal visits by schoolchildren, and student and teacher exchanges; extend and intensify exchanges of information on cultures and ways of life; arrange for the translation or adaptation and dissemination of information and suggestions coming from other countries.
44. Member States should encourage the co-operation between their Associated Schools and those of other countries with the help of Unesco in order to promote mutual benefits by expanding their experiences in a wider international perspective.
45. Member States should encourage wider exchanges of textbooks, especially history and geography textbooks, and should, where appropriate, take measures, by concluding, if possible, bilateral and multilateral agreements, for the reciprocal study and revision of textbooks and other educational materials in order to ensure that they are accurate, balanced, up to date and unprejudiced and will enhance mutual knowledge and understanding between different peoples.

APPENDIX 2



Figure 1: Endorsing Martyrdom

(Lesson 7, gr. 7 Islamic Culture and Religious Studies textbook : "Faith and Perseverance".)



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Figure 2: Militarism

(Lessons 10 and 11, gr. 7 Islamic Culture and Religious Studies textbook : "Islamic Jihad".)