

Palestinian textbooks for Civic education, Grade 1-3

Andrea Zempel, Erlangen - Nuremberg¹

Reviewed textbooks

This article reviews four textbooks that are designed for the school subject civic education for grades one, two and three in elementary school. The first book (Civic Education, grade 1, vol. 1, below named CE 1/1) is intended for grade one. It is the first of two volumes and has 39 pages. The second book (Civic Education, grade 1, vol. 2, CE 1/2) is volume two for the first grade and has 41 pages. The third book (Civic Education, grade 2, vol. 1, CE 2/1) is a second modified edition of volume one for grade two with 42 pages. The fourth book (Civic Education, grade 3, vol. 1, CE 3/1) is volume one for grade three with 35 pages. Since all of the reviewed textbooks are intended for the same subject and follow up on each other, this review combines all books in one review. This makes it possible to consider whether and in which way the books are referring to each other. It must be emphasised that CE 2/1 – the textbook for grade two – is already part of a revised edition. Furthermore, this review cannot provide a complete picture, since the second volumes of the textbooks for grades two and three are not included in this review.

Main contents

Each book has the same overall structure. The inner front page names the main authors. The subsequent page details more contributors such as supervisors, curriculum workshop members, correctors or illustrators. After that, a preamble by the ministry of education and an introduction by the authors, including a list with learning goals, follow. The next page shows an index of content and then the lessons start. They usually consist of chapters that are divided into mostly three subchapters. The final page of each book lists around 50 people who contributed to the book.

¹ Special thanks to Yasmine Berriane and Bashar Humeid for proof-reading my translations from Arabic and to Michael Holzammer for proofreading this paper.

CE 1/1 has three chapters, mostly divided into three subchapters. The chapters are named “My school identity” (pp. 3–17), “ I am clean” (pp. 18–29) and “I and my family” (pp. 30–39). One of the first chapter’s subchapters is named “My beautiful country”. CE 1/2’s four chapters are named “Tidiness” (*Nidham*) (pp. 2 – 13), “Dialogue with others” (pp 14–21), “(Moral) Values for life” (pp. 22–29) and “How we help others” (pp. 30–41). CE 2/1 has three chapters that are named “Cleanliness around us” (pp. 4–17), “We respect tidiness” (pp. 18–27) and “We discuss and stay friends” (pp. 28–42). CE 3/1 has three chapters named “I and the other” (pp. 3–20), “Tolerance” (pp. 21–27) and “Co-operation” (pp. 28–35). National symbols like the Palestinian flag or the Palestinian Authority’s emblem occur sometimes but do not dominate the books. The books do not deal directly with wider political and social issues connected to the Israeli–Palestinian/Arab conflict, and Israel or Jewish religion are not mentioned at all.

In sum, the textbooks focus on certain topics within Palestinian society and the promotion of certain civil and ethical values that are obviously seen as crucial for creating and preserving a Palestinian civil society in which a) each individual has their rights and duties and is linked to the collective by contributing to the functioning, preservation and welfare of the whole community and to the homeland’s nature and b) peaceful and co-operative methods are used for dealing with arguments and problems within school, peer group, family and community.

The books for grade one give the impression of a lack of structure and they mix up too many different topics in the subchapters. The books for the second and third grade, however, seem to be much more structured. There is a great degree of overlap and repetition of themes throughout all four textbooks. This can be seen positively as deepening the understanding, internalisation and implementation of the subject matters. Still, one question remains: won’t the pupils feel rather bored if they learn about the same issues every year? In terms of quantity, issues like cleanliness, tidiness and discipline are definitely dealt with so much that pupils might in fact get bored. This is particularly the case with the textbook for grade two, in which the first three chapters mostly deal with these values. There could have been more variation in topics, for example by putting more emphasis on playing and leisure activities not connected to community service.

Learning goals

In each book's introduction, the authors present an outline of the learning goals. In CE 1/1 and CE 1/2 the following goals are listed: Acquisition of cleanliness, respect for the family and others, values like honesty and taking responsibility, knowing one's rights and duties, appreciation for professions and their significance for society, understanding and appreciation of security, understanding of belonging to society and implementing this by contributing to it. CE 2/1 names enhancement of awareness for health and environment, the development of understanding of the meaning of citizenship, developing a spirit of co-operation, enhancement of the ability of dialogue like listening to others, and enhancement of keeping tidiness and order (*Nidham*). Also, the introduction mentions that values like democracy, justice, equality and tolerance are to be exercised among individuals and the group. CE 3/1's introduction mentions the same goals and adds co-operation; after that it only lists the three chapter names.

Comparing the learning goals for grade one with those of grade two leads to quite striking results, for the number of goals has been levelled down. In addition, the introductions to CE 2/1 and CE 3/1 both comment on the methodology of teaching. First, they stress that a wider variety of methods has been introduced in order to promote the goals in an indirect way. Second, they point out that teachers need to give the pupils more space so that they can really interact with the subject matters. Moreover, they emphasise that the contents are not designed for repeated recital. Instead, CE 2/1 stresses that the teachers ought to help pupils in reading, understanding and carrying out the exercises, and CE 3/1 refers to the need for concentration on discussion, dialogue and implementation of the exercises.

To some extent, the learning goals are very ambitious in that they might overstretch the pupils. In particular, the large amount of content in CE 1/1 and CE 1/2 is probably not going to be implemented given the young age and intellectual level of first-graders. In the process of making these books, the authors may have realised that. In their introduction to CE 1/2 they added the following advice to the teachers: "We recommend that our colleagues simplify the book's themes in order to meet the level of the pupils." Furthermore, there is a strong emphasis on complex issues like tolerance and problem solving. However, it is already quite common in other countries to start teaching these skills at elementary school. As the authors'

introduction to CE 1/1 puts it, the Palestinian ministry of education is convinced that “the concept of civil society must be anchored from childhood on”. This goal can only be achieved if teachers that are still holding on to older methods change their style of teaching. Also, it has to be possible for pupils to attend school regularly and the pupils’ environment has to support the learning goals. This means that the learning goals must meet the consensus of the Palestinian society’s majority.

Didactics and methodology

As far as the combination and quantity of texts, exercises and illustrations in the books is concerned, these forms are related to each other in a way that seems to be very appropriate for the pupils in the respective age groups. Usually there are three or four chapters per book, divided up into subchapters. Since the pupils in grade one are usually not able to read, CE 1/1 and CE 1/2 are dominated by colourful pictures. Teachers are required to read texts and instructions written in small letters beside the pictures. Lessons mostly start out with questions on a big picture followed by one to five pages of exercises and stories where the pupils are required to deal with pictures by way of watching, circling or painting.

In CE 2/1 and CE 3/1, the pupils are expected to read the texts by themselves. Thus, letters are of large size and words come partly with vocalisation. CE 2/1’s lessons mostly begin with a picture and a short text, often a dialogue, followed by two to four pages of exercises consisting of questions, stories, dialogues, cartoons, songs or paintings. The lessons in CE 3/1 have considerably fewer pictures. They begin with a longer text, dialogue, speech or story and they are followed by two to five pages of exercises containing mostly questions, dialogues and stories.

Turning to the question of the relation between open questions and mnemonic verses and whether exercises allow for a multi-perspective approach, all the textbooks make a good impression. Mnemonic verses appear very seldom, but the books contain some exercises that try to convey certain subject matters to the pupils in a way that is too direct, too simple or just not suitable. However a gradual improvement in the use of progressive methods takes place from book to book, especially in CE 3/1.

Exercises: Negative Examples

The textbooks provide some examples of unsophisticated exercises, mnemonic verses and oversimplistic questions concerning “correct” behaviour. At the beginning of CE 1/1, a part of the first chapter, “My school identity”, is being used to promote national symbols and departing too much from the lesson’s central topic. The very first lesson on school identity is actually a good approach to helping the pupils to get to know each other and making them feel that they have a place in the school at the beginning of their school career. But then the attached exercises on pages 4 and 5 present copies of a variety of Palestinian identity cards and ask pupils to name the symbols on those cards or circle things similar to each other – the only similar things and symbols being the emblems of the Palestine Authority (PA). So during the first hours of civic education Palestinian children spend their time circling the PA’s logo and are obviously expected to internalise it as a national symbol as much as their flag. The need and the love for national symbols on the Palestinian side is comprehensible and legitimate given their ongoing struggle for their own nation state. But in this case, it is at least doubtful whether this is an appropriate beginning for the subject of civic education in grade one.

Some few mnemonic verses occur in CE 2/1, most of them in lesson three on respecting tidiness (*Nidham*). The sentences “Tidiness is useful for our life.” (p. 19) and “We respect tidiness at our school.” (p. 23) must be read and written down by the pupils. On page 26, the pupils are required to repeat a song concerned with promoting tidiness and the consequences if one does not: “Who neglects tidiness does not carry the flags/badges (*al-A’lam*)”.

The exercises on tidiness, cleanliness and correct behaviour vary a lot in terms of the quality of open questions and a multifaceted perspective. In this context, some exercises for grade one seem to be too direct and do not pose open questions, for example CE 1/2 pages 13 and 21. Here pupils ought just to colour those pictures that show a “correct” behaviour. The questions in CE 1/1 on page 19 (tidiness), page 34 (kitchen) and in CE 1/2 on page 26 (honest behaviour) could have been posed in a more open way. CE 2/1 provides at least the possibilities to discuss and think about the “right” or “wrong” behaviour, for example on pages 9 and 13. In another exercise, teachers are expected to make the pupils apply a certain

concept to a further setting e.g. proper behaviour in public buildings (p. 25) after having learned the proper behaviour at exhibitions – a rather boring task.

Discussion of reasons for narrow questions

Especially with CE 2/1, one gets the impression that a lot of questions are designed in a boring and narrow way that directs the pupils to just repeat the values introduced at the beginning of the lessons. For example, on page 39 the pupils are asked how Farah could be convinced to drink milk. Though asking “how” and therefore allowing several options, the question directs to the answer “It is healthy”. Whether it will be considered in this context that what makes milk healthy is calcium which other foods also contain does depend on the teacher. Of course no one would question the healthiness of milk, but the much more interesting question is: Why is it so important to promote drinking milk? Do the pupils behave “wrongly” if they do not drink milk? Despite being open, questions concerning values often seem to be too simple and focusing too much on the internalisation of “right” values. This may be a result of the dominating strategy used in the structure of exercises dealing with moral values. In some exercises the pupils only have the option to refer to the already introduced message – and to repeat it. Another strategy would be not to introduce the value at the beginning but to let the pupils work out the value concerned and its importance on their own. On page 10, for example, instead of starting with Adel’s message on the board, “Cleanliness leads to progress of society”, the pictures on page 13 or 15 could have been put at the beginning. Thus the pupils would be able to find out themselves that it is much safer for everybody to put garbage into the garbage can. The only problem with that may be that the pupils in grade two would not draw a connection between tidiness and the progress of society like Adel does. But there may also be a deeper problem in teaching values and right behaviour. Maybe there is an inherent problem in creating exercises dealing with values like cleanliness, tidiness or the proper behaviour because these values are quite basic, inflexible and personal compared to others like tolerance or co-operation. The latter are easier to discuss, role play and question, because they have a bigger realm of foundations and meanings – they are just more complex. Thus, from the viewpoint of a textbook author it is probably much easier to create attractive lessons on those values. The best way then might be to connect personal with social values – like working together when cleaning up the park – and this is what the authors actually often did in CE 2/1.

Exercises: Positive examples

Although there are some simple or unsophisticated exercises, lessons that allow for open questions, discussions and a multi-perspective approach constantly appear throughout all CE textbooks.

The questions featuring pictures often refer to the picture on the one hand and to a more abstract topic on the other hand, which requires independent thinking from the pupils. On page 6 in CE 1/1 the pupils should talk freely about what they associate with Al-Quds, on page 32 they must consider several aspects concerning a birthday party and on the following page 33 they can talk about changes within their own family. An outstanding example of open questions is the lesson on page 28 about the conservation and protection of water. Here, several pictures depicting lakes and waterfalls are shown and the following questions are posed with a comment for the teacher to discuss them with the pupils: “Why do we care for clean water?”, “Which use do we have from water?”, “What is our role in the protection of clean water?”. All of these questions allow a wide variety of answers.

CE 1/2 employs more questions of this kind. For example, by means of pictures the pupils are expected to think about the meaning of the sentence “People treat you the same way you treat them”(p. 24) or think about different aspects of planting trees (p. 33). The pupils are also required to explain how they would deal with the uncertainty about a fruit salesman’s honesty or dishonesty (p. 27) and must comment on pictures and try to find solutions for the problems depicted (pp. 9, 16, 31). There are also occasions to comment freely on questions without pictures, such as “If I cannot agree with my friend on a game we are playing how do I deal with him?” and “How do I convince my brother or my sister of my opinion?” (p. 18). Moreover, CE 1/2 distinguishes itself from CE 1/1 by the fact that much more advice for teachers is given. They enrich the exercises generally. In particular, the quite boring exercises in which pupils have to find out and circle or approve a “correct” behaviour within a group of pictures are getting less simple when teachers ask pupils why this behaviour might be good or bad (pp. 6, 12, 25, 34).

The chapter “We argue and remain friends” in CE 2/1 is a good example of open-mind exercises. With the exception of the already mentioned milk story, throughout this chapter a

variety of creative exercises help the pupils to deepen their understanding of dialogue, as well as their ability to make up, express and discuss their own opinions while also considering others' opinions and being able to concede points during a discussion. This can be found, for example, on page 34 where teachers are required to motivate pupils to discuss and express their own opinions on the issues of respecting others' opinions and accepting a majority's vote. A further example is on page 35, where teachers are told to let the pupils move around the classroom in order to find a classmate with a similar opinion on a certain topic. Furthermore, on page 36 the pupils are asked to suggest solutions for problems shown on pictures and on page 41 they may consider possible benefits of other people's suggestions.

CE 3/1's exercises make a similar positive impression. On page 13, an exercise requires open discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of watching TV. A question on page 34 asks pupils to find other solutions to the problem of the lack of water than those described in the story, and the exercise on page 17 asks pupils to tell what they would do if they were a character described in a particular story. An impressive example of the introduction of democratic decision-making is the story on page 7 about a class's vote on what activity to carry out during Independence Day. On the following page, the pupils are introduced to a circled table in which the results of the vote are pictured. Moreover, they need to say what they would have voted for and whether they have other ideas. On page 13, they have to give their opinion on a solution to a problem described in the story on page 12, and on page 35 the pupils need to think of ways of participating in common tasks like keeping the school tidy. On page 18, pupils are asked to write the conclusion to a story on their own, after having thought about several aspects of the conflict of interests described in it.

Presentation of Non-Palestinians

As for presentation of non-Palestinians, there are barely any references in the books. The few that exist give a positive picture of "the others" and how to deal with them. In an exercise on dialogue in CE 1/2, the pupils see the setting of a conference in a picture. Several people are sitting side by side at tables wearing translation headphones and are listening to a speaker. Signs in front of some people name their country but already from differing clothes, facial features and skin colour the pupils can easily see that they are mainly foreigners (p. 20). The aim of this exercise is not to talk about those people or others in general but to become aware

of people speaking in different languages. So in this context the others are presented positively. It is obvious that “they” are different in terms of clothes, appearance and language, but thanks to headphones and translation everybody can understand each other. CE 3/1’s tolerance chapter has a subchapter named “I accept the others” (pp. 22–24). Here “the others” are displayed in a picture as a group of obviously foreign people who are distinguished from each other by dress, facial features and skin colour. The text below explains that each nation (*sha’b*) on earth has their special beliefs, that the revelation religions² demand respect for each other and that traditions, customs and skin colour vary. The most important sentence is the last one which clearly expresses a modern system of tolerance: “We must respect all beliefs of the people (*al-Nas*), their customs and traditions even if their skin is different; and we must judge everybody (*al-Insan*) according to their actions and interaction with others.” In the attached exercise named “We do the same thing in different ways”, pupils are required to write a comparison of pictures that show different ways of praying, eating and greeting.

Omission of Israel and Jewish religion

The first question that is usually posed when it comes to the issue of how “the other” is presented in Palestinian textbooks is: “How are Israel, the Jewish people, Jewish religion and Jewish and Israeli history presented?”

As I mentioned at the beginning, none of these issues is dealt with in the four CE textbooks. Although there is a simple reference to the revelation religions in CE 3/1 on page 22, the terms “Israel” and “Jewish” never appear on any page. If this was the case in a mathematics textbook no one would criticise that. But in textbooks concerned with conveying values to the pupils, criticism may be appropriate. In the case of some of the CE textbooks, referring to certain aspects especially of the Jewish religion would have been possible. In particular CE 1/1 and CE 3/1 could easily have included such references because they deal with Jerusalem/Al-Quds and with religion. In CE 1/1’s chapter on “My beautiful country”, exercise 1 on page 12 shows two pictures, the Dome of the Rock and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The teacher is advised to talk with the pupils about Al-Quds, to ask them whether they have visited it and what they saw there. There could have been a picture of a Jewish holy site as well, such as the Western Wall. This could have been used to point out to the pupils

² Jewish religion, Christian religion and Islam

that Jerusalem has a very important meaning in Jewish religion. CE 3/1's chapter on tolerance deals with mutual tolerance between Christians and Muslims. There is a story with historical background of Jerusalem's conquest by the caliph Umar in 638 CE. The pupils are supposed to learn that Christians and Muslims respected each other's beliefs at that time. Obviously this story serves as historical reference for the claim that there was (and has to be) a peaceful co-existence between both religious groups. However, Jewish religion is left out again.

Discussion of omissions

These omissions are of course no accidents but clear political decisions of the PA and its ministry of education. But it would be too simple to draw the conclusion that Jewish people are generally excluded from the promoted behaviour towards other people. There are three main approaches to dealing with the omissions of the very people who actually play a major role in Palestinian life. The first one is usually taken by groups³ with a political agenda, who criticise the omission and take it as proof of a Palestinian unwillingness to make peace and to accept the existence of the State of Israel.

The second approach has its origin in the philosophy of peace education. It criticises the omissions on the basis that peace and reconciliation between Jewish/Israeli people and Palestinian people can only be achieved if both sides know about the other's history, religion and culture and that these issues must be taught in schools. The third approach is taken by the Palestinian ministry of education, which in a statement pointed out that "Many underestimate the complexity of reconciliation and the healing process and the time it requires" and claimed that Palestinians "have the full right to consider Jerusalem as their future capital and to mention this position, hope and aspiration in their textbooks" since "East Jerusalem was occupied by Israel in June 1967". Furthermore, omissions of possible references to the Jewish religion are explained by the textbooks' main focus on Palestinian society, and "Palestinians are Moslems and Christian so our Textbooks teach tolerance between them. ... But, the intention of the Ministry is to avoid all forms of stereotyping on basis of race, gender, disability or religion" (Palestinian Ministry of Education).

³ Like the "Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace" which lobbied a lot against Palestinian textbooks. The Center's homepage is www.edume.org.

Regardless of what approach one agrees with, three points must be considered. Firstly, it is quite obvious that the underlying objective of the textbooks is to teach values like tolerance and respect for others' opinions and beliefs, as well as solutions of conflicts and problems within the context of Palestinian society itself. This might not be enough for observers and critics. But the teaching of values within the context of Palestinian society does not necessarily rule out a future application of these values beyond that sphere. Furthermore, the pupils do not only learn from textbooks but from many other sources, too. From that they know that Israel also claims Jerusalem. Why should not Palestinian pupils bring up that topic when talking about archaeological, religious or national aspects of Jerusalem? Thirdly, it is still the teachers who have the power to put issues on the agenda and to provide more information than is written in the textbooks.

War and peace

A clear reference to terms of war and peace or the Israeli–Palestinian conflict is not visible in any of these textbooks. Actually these words do not even occur. These omissions may be connected to the omission of Israel or may stem from the textbooks' explicit focus on issues within Palestinian society.

However, there are two references to the so-called “independence day”. Generally, the existence of such a holiday implies that there was a time of dependence but no reference is made to this issue. Further, the date is not made clear and one can only consider that most probably the “independence day” is celebrated on November 15th. On this day in 1988, Arafat declared the independence of the Palestinian state, during a meeting of the Palestinian parliament-in-exile, the Palestinian National Council, in Algeria. The term “independence day” occurs once in CE 3/1 on page 7 in a story about a class discussing what project to do for independence day. During this discussion the children in the story also think about how to honour the martyrs' families. The mentioning of martyrs also points to a time when Palestinians died or were killed for independence but again no explicit reference to this issue is made. The second reference can be found in a picture in CE 2/1 on page 32 showing a group of people preparing and decorating a square for festivities. A poster being hung over the street by a boy reads “independence day”. In the same picture the only reference to peace is made through the symbol of a peace dove which is painted as a graffiti on a house wall.

Self-perception: Presentation of Palestinian society

At first glance one gets the impression that a very complete and harmonious picture of Palestinian society is presented throughout all four textbooks. Soon it becomes clear that this picture does not match reality because issues like deeper disagreements within the society, as well as the influence of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict on the society, are omitted.

A clear emphasis is put on national unity (CE 1/1, p. 9, example 3), individual variety; traditional values like tidiness and cleanliness; respect, inclusion of and caring for social groups like disabled, blind and old persons (CE 3/1, p. 3); mutual respect and tolerance in relationships such as Muslims/Christians (CE 3/1, p. 26), children/adults (e.g. the mayor takes the child's letter seriously in CE 3/1, p.16), children/parents, children/children and Palestinians/foreigners; independent problem-solving and common social engagement in local and national tasks. This picture is conveyed without referring to nationalistic phrases and without anti-Israeli incitement. In sum, a picture is presented of a Palestinian society that lives and works together on a basis of freedom, tolerance, respect for others and democratic decision-making.

This perception seems to be incomplete since two important issues influencing Palestinian society are omitted. First, existing gaps and issues of conflict within the Palestinian society are not mentioned, for example, issues such as how to react to Israeli occupation or what political system to install. Also, questions about the role of women in society or issues like discontent with their political leader's performances are not addressed directly. Probably the authors thought that confronting pupils on the elementary level with such content would be too difficult and not appropriate given the children's intellectual level. Clearly, the book's emphasis is on introducing skills like discussion and democratic decision-making to deal with situations of disagreement within the society. But this argument only partly explains the omissions. The emphasis on national unity and loyalty towards family, peer group and city is understandable, but it does not help to clarify and deal with issues that threaten to deeply divide a society. Second, by not mentioning Israel, the issue of occupation is totally left out in the picture that is presented. Palestinian society is presented as being a very independent entity which is not threatened by any political situations or developments, and which has left behind the state of occupation. This does not match the children's reality since the ongoing

conflict with Israel and the presence of the IDF and Israeli settlements clearly do influence the life and development of Palestinian civil society. With that omission the authors also abstain from the opportunity to provide space for the children to talk about their experiences, emotions and opinions regarding the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

The presentation of Palestinian society in the textbooks is incomplete and does not reflect the current reality; rather, it looks like a vision of how the future State of Palestine’s society ought to be. The above-mentioned values and qualities promoted in the books do exist to a certain extent within the society or within some of its factions. From the viewpoint of the books’ authors, the aim is to expand these values’ partial existence to the whole society by teaching them to the future generations. Still, even if this self-perception is understood to be a vision, there are some shortcomings within the promoted values. Several uncertainties remain concerning the moral values described: to what extent will it be acceptable if someone refuses certain values or does not implement their obligations to the community? How far can individual variety actually develop within Palestinian society? What would happen to a Palestinian who has left behind the moral boundaries of the value system promoted in the textbooks? Someone who, for example, commits serious crimes such as murder or works as a spy for Israel? How are those “defectors” to be treated? Do basic human rights apply in those cases? These issues are neither explained nor discussed in the textbooks.

Connected with that is a problem in the presentation of the tolerance concept. It is mainly based on religious tolerance. This is a step in the right direction, bearing in mind that religion is much more present in daily life in Palestine than, for example, in western countries, but still this may not be enough. Tolerance needs a deeper or broader foundation, such as the idea of equality of human beings and the acceptance of a general validity of human rights. Partly such an approach has been taken in CE 3/1 when talking about foreigners and other nations, but there are still more references to religion.

Towards a co-existence of traditional and modern attitudes in Palestinian society?

Another approach to analysing the presentation of Palestinian society in the CE textbooks is to look carefully at what is presented wittingly or unwittingly between the lines. Small hints in the textbooks point to a Palestinian society in the process of pursuing two contradictory

aims: that of being a conservative and traditional society and that of being and wanting to become a liberal and modern nation. This leads to some incidents and pictures in the textbooks that look like contradictions, either compared with other content in the books or compared with reality. However, these “contradictions” can be seen positively and should be taken seriously. For they show that Palestinian society is still in a process of defining itself and that there may be space for the co-existence of traditional and modern attitudes. The main aspects of this development are the co-existence of the group and the individual, the co-existence of traditional and modern gender roles and the introduction of children’s participation in decision-making.

First, the books’ attempt to introduce the concept of the individual and the concept of the group on an equal basis is visible. On the one hand, loyalty to and co-operation within a group are emphasised (see learning goals and examples above). This would point to a more traditional approach. On the other hand, the importance of the individual’s role and opinion is highlighted, for example in the context of choosing different hobbies and having different opinions in discussions. This points to a more modern concept, where the idea of the individual is dominating society. This impression is also produced by the variety of verb forms used for introducing exercises. Sometimes the imperative form (“discuss!”), sometimes the first person singular (“I discuss”) and more often the first person plural (“we discuss”) is used in all four books. It looks as if the authors are trying to balance both concepts, but this double focus on group and individual must not be overestimated. The individual’s role is still defined within the realm of the group in the textbooks. There is personal freedom, but it is not clear how far this freedom goes.

Second, the textbooks show traditional and modern gender roles at the same time. In a traditional society dominated by Islamic belief mostly men would be earning the family’s income whereas women would be working at home and would not often appear in public. In a modern society, these roles are mixed up. In the textbooks, in fact, women often appear in pictures within the context of the family (for example in the pictures in CE 1/1, p. 33, p.34, p.36). In the picture showing a class field trip into the city (CE 1/1, p. 9), only one woman is depicted, and she is wearing a head scarf. Those examples could be understood as pointing to the women’s role in the family and in the home. But there are also examples contradicting this traditional picture. For example it is questioned that the younger sister is taking care of

tidying (CE 3/1, p. 31) – this is a sentence that is also being read by boys. Women in pictures do not always wear a head scarf outside the house (CE 1/2, pp. 40, 41 and CE 2/1, p. 40), and in some stories they also have jobs that include big responsibilities such as school director (CE 3/1, p. 15) or members of a conference (CE 1/2, p.20) or a TV news reader (CE 3/1, p. 6). Moreover, on two pages in CE 1/2 one finds a quite unusual Arabic spelling. After the male word a slash is put in and then a female ending is added in order to make it clear that the sentence addresses both genders. This happens in CE 1/2’s introduction by the authors with the word for “teacher” (*al-Mu’alimin/at*) and at the bottom of page 29 of CE 1/2 with the word for “pupil” (*at-Tilmidh/a*).

Third, the textbooks frequently show children taking part in the process of decision-making in the family, at school and in the community. This contradicts a traditional view which would mean adults or parents having the power and taking decisions for children, while children must obey their parents’ commands and are viewed more as objects to be safeguarded than as subjects who take their own decisions. In the textbooks, especially in CE 3/1, there are examples where parents respect the wish of their child (CE 3/1, pp. 9–10), or children try to convince parents of their differing opinion (CE 3/1, p. 14) or the pupils themselves discuss and vote for the project they want to carry out in class during independence day (CE 3/1, pp. 7–8). Also, the possibility of pupils taking part in improving their environment is described in one story where a child’s letter to the mayor’s office demanding a zebra crossing is answered positively (CE 3/1 pp.16–17). These examples show an understanding of children as active subjects whose opinion must be taken seriously.

Textbooks analysed:

State of Palestine, Ministry of Education:

At-Tarbiyya al-Madaniyya (Civic Education), grade 1, vol. I, Al-Bireh, Ramallah, 2000

At-Tarbiyya al-Madaniyya (Civic Education), grade 1, vol. II, Al-Bireh, Ramallah, 2000

At-Tarbiyya al-Madaniyya (Civic Education), grade 2, vol. I, Al-Bireh, Ramallah, 2002

At-Tarbiyya al-Madaniyya (Civic Education), grade 3, vol. I, Al-Bireh, Ramallah, 2002

Palestinian Ministry of Education, Statement “Clarification from the Palestinian Ministry of Education Regarding the Palestinian Curriculum and Textbooks”, May 23, 2001,

<http://www.palestineaffairsCouncil.org/palestinian_curriculum_and_text.htm> (April 14, 2003)