

The Georg Eckert Institute (GEI) Inception Report

Context

- On 24th April 2019, then Vice-President of the European Commission, Federica Mogherini, announced that the EU would be funding a comprehensive review of the Palestinian Authority curriculum, following a report by IMPACT-se.
- She stated the report would be conducted ‘*with a view to identifying possible incitement to hatred and violence and any possible lack of compliance with UNESCO standards of peace and tolerance in education.*’¹
- The Georg Eckert Institute was selected to carry out the review with a scheduled start date for spring 2019 with results to be made available by September 2019.²
- The UK government [announced on 11 May 2020](#)³ that Interim Report is expected by June with a full report later in the year.
- An Inception Report⁴ outlining the methodology of the study was issued on 12th April 2019 however, was only made public on 18th June 2020 following an FOI request.
- The Inception Report lays bare a number of comprehension and methodological issues, raising concerns surrounding the reliability of the study.

1. Factual Inaccuracies in Inception Report

- **The prevalence of factual inaccuracies in the GEI Inception Report⁵ puts the scholarship of the Interim Report into doubt.**
- **The report contains Arabic translation mistakes.**
- **Mistakes suggest a lack of familiarity with Palestinian Arabic usage and culture.**
- **Reference made to research that does not exist.**

- a. GEI uses mistranslated Arabic terms in the word bank cited in the Inception Report.

These include:

حور العين – Translated as “horoscope” (the astrological forecast of a person's future).

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2019-000906-ASW_EN.html

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-has-successfully-pushed-for-a-review-into-palestinian-textbooks>

³ <https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2020-05-01/41933/>

⁴ http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020-0322/Inception_report.pdf

⁵ http://data.parliament.uk/DepositedPapers/Files/DEP2020-0322/Inception_report.pdf

It means the beautiful women who accompany Muslim believers in paradise.

اطفال الحجارة – Translated as “children stones” (translator’s meaning is unclear).
It means Children of the Stone, a well-known phrase denoting the Palestinian youth guerilla movement.

بيرس – Translated as “piers” (raised structures that rise above water).
It refers to Peres (Shimon), the late Israeli President.

النكسة – Translated as “remembrance” (the act of remembering something)
It means setback, defeat or failure and specifically and very commonly, the Palestinian day of commemoration of the 1967 War.

- b. There are glaring omissions in the GEI word bank for an institute studying a modern Palestinian curriculum. These include:

سلاح - weapon

جندي - soldier

تضحية - sacrifice

نكبة - Nakba

استشهاد - martyrdom, death of a martyr, or "heroic death"

شهيد - martyr (singular)

اسرلة \ تهويد - Judaization

حماس - Hamas

الحرم الشريف \ بيت المقدس - Al-haram Al-Sharif \ Bait Al-Maqdas - two common names of the Al-

Aqsa Mosque

قبة الصخرة -Dome of the Rock

ارض، اراضي - Land, Lands

حرب - War

دم، دماء - Blood

كافر، كفار - Infidel, Infidels

تنظيم الدولة الإسلامية (داعش) ISIS

- c. The word "refugees" appears consecutively, nine separate times in English for no clear reason, while appearing once in the parallel Arabic word bank translation.

- d. GEI mentions, without reference, an April 2019 IMPACT-se report that does not exist. Other existent IMPACT-se reports are not mentioned.

2. Lack of Experience

- **The EU asked that “the study shall be carried out by an independent and internationally recognized research institute”.⁶**
- **GEI has not published independent research of the full Palestinian curriculum, old or new.**
- **There is no publicly available evidence that the researcher for this project has previously published anything on the Palestinian curriculum.**
- **GEI’s last published research on the Palestinian curriculum that is available, covered only seven textbooks from a curriculum of over two hundred textbooks. The most recent book in this short study was from 2013. The study was published as a single chapter in a book, a full five years later. By publication, those seven textbooks were no longer taught.**

The researcher for this project⁷ does not appear to have previously published research on the PA curriculum, old or new. We cannot identify any recognized scholarly articles or analysis on this issue, nor do any appear on the list of publications on the GEI website bio page.

GEI has made only a few highly selective forays into researching Palestinian textbooks and has at no point published a full and proper review.

GEI’s last monograph on PA textbooks is from 2013. It was published five years later in a single chapter of a 2018 book.⁸ By publication, the books were obsolete. The chapter itself⁹ analyzed just seven PA textbooks from a curriculum of over 200 books. They were taken from curricula taught 2010-2013, provided few examples, and those that existed were mainly from a single Grade 11 book. On this basis, the author formed far-reaching conclusions.

GEI has not published research of PA textbooks at all, post the PA’s sweeping 2016 curriculum reform. GEI is funded by the federal and state German governments. Naturally, its expertise has

⁶ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2019-000906-ASW_EN.html

⁷ <http://www.gei.de/en/mitarbeiter/riem-spielhaus.html>

⁸ See GEI’s new book series, *Palgrave Studies in Educational Media*, with the prestigious publishing house Palgrave Macmillan and its 2018 book: *Multiple Alterities -Views of Others in Textbooks of the Middle East*: <http://www.gei.de/en/publications/psem.html>

⁹ <http://lib.uok.ac.ir:8080/multiMediaFile/152752667-4-1.pdf#page=88>

been in researching curricula is centered on Germany and Europe, rather than those in the Middle East.

3. Problematic Methodological Approach

- **GEI is applying an over-complicated mix of methodologies. It is unclear as to how the methodologies square with the EU directive.**
- **The report does not reference a single Palestinian textbook that will be researched.**
- **No booklist is cited.**
- **Crucially, the full curriculum is not being reviewed.**

In April 2019 the EU announced that the study of the PA curriculum had been commissioned in order to identify “*any possible lack of compliance with UNESCO standards of peace and tolerance in education*”.¹⁰ There are no mentions of UNESCO standards within the inception report.

Rather the proposed methodology, as best one can determine, is a mix of a Stanford University group’s standards for textbooks and a qualitative approach derived from Grounded Theory. It is unclear as to how this methodology is in line with the EU directive.

This combination of standards over-complicate the methodology. Significantly, GEI’s methodology does not include the UNESCO standard of unbiased information.¹¹

“Triangulation” is cited with no explanation of what this entails. The discourse analysis is additionally undefined. Qualifying statements in the explanation of the methodology (‘where possible’) allow for a less rigorous study. There is no clear explanation as to the classification of Arabic language studies which appear to have been partially categorized as a science.

Moreover, the report does not reference a single Palestinian textbook that will be researched for the study meaning there is uncertainty about the grades, semesters or subjects that have been included.

GEI does not offer to cover the entire PA curriculum and the proposed scope and methodology covers only 72.3% of the PA curriculum for grades 1-12 (160 books out of 221).

¹⁰ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/E-8-2019-000906-ASW_EN.html

¹¹ Based on UNESCO Recommendation concerning education for international understanding, cooperation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms, adopted by the General Conference at its eighteenth session, Paris, November 19, 1974, Article V.14.

Note on GEI and IMPACT-se Collaboration

IMPACT-se's research was published in GEI's new book series¹², *Palgrave Studies in Educational Media*, with the prestigious publishing house Palgrave Macmillan in two chapters of a 2018 book titled *Multiple Alterities -Views of Others in Textbooks of the Middle East*.

In their 2018 book (p. 211-212) GEI describes IMPACT-se's research and methodology as: *“based on page-by-page scrutiny of the books under study singling out each reference to the Other and to peace, be it in a form of text, photograph, illustration, map, chart or graph. Special attention was given to cases of non-reference, which are no less important in textbooks research. The evaluation of the specific method of messages of each reference (or non-reference) was made according to UNESCO recommendations and principals. This way a clear picture had been drawn of the general attitude to the Other and to peace in this region.”*¹³

In GEI's book of 2018 they describe Groiss's methodology (p. 212) as resulting in *‘a clear picture had been drawn of the general attitude to the Other and to peace in this region.’*¹⁴

¹² <http://www.gei.de/en/publications/psem.html>

¹³ <http://lib.uok.ac.ir:8080/multiMediaFile/152752667-4-1.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://lib.uok.ac.ir:8080/multiMediaFile/152752667-4-1.pdf>