

Woman's Image in School Books in Lebanon ⁽¹⁾

Dr. Ilhām Kallab's study on woman's image in school books in Lebanon, funded by IWSAW, has been abridged in publication into 260 pages, with illustrations, indexes and references. The author makes use of eleven sets of textbooks on reading, grammar, conversation, civic education and vacation exercise books, in order to illustrate the image of woman that is being presented to the young generation. She utilizes content analysis and the statistical method to effect a complete survey of the roles played by a woman at the various stages of her life. The female appears as a static stereotype, copied without change from earlier books into the more recent ones. Division of labor is strictly observed in family activities and in outside social relations.

In her detailed study, Dr. Kallab identifies two characteristics by which woman is defined in the text-books:

1) Woman has no individual identity: she is identified by means of symbols, classifications and functions. She is not even given a personal name. In 90 percent of the cases, she is identified through

her eldest son: mother of so - and - so. Her age is unknown, unless she is a grandmother, seventy years old, or a little girl, seven years old. In the last two cases, she is too old or too young to be a source of temptation to the other sex. The role of mother is faithfully imposed on her throughout three generations: the grandmother or mother of the past, the present mother whose role has been planned and well-defined, and the little girl who is preparing to be a copy of her mother.

2) The first quality of a woman — as an eternal mother — is to take care of her family: to feed its members, serve them and protect them even when she receives little in return. If she works outside the home, it is out of sheer necessity and, in that case, she is socially degraded, despised or pitied.

The book ends with Piaget's question: Is the function of the school to allow the personality of the child to flower or simply to mold it into the fixed patterns of the past?

(1) IWSAW, Monograph 3, (Arabic), 1983.