

Integrating the Disabled in Schools

In December 2004 a book was published on Integrating the Handicapped in Schools written by Professor Geryes Khoury according to an agreement between the Ministry of Social Affairs and the National Committee for the Rights of the Handicapped in Lebanon. The book has 107 pages and is divided into six parts, with a bibliography in both Arabic and English.

The first two parts deal with theoretical and analytical studies, future prospects and the actual and ideal pedagogical specifics.

The first part deals with the reality of integration, in that integration has become a confirmed policy in developed countries, and is a right guaranteed by Lebanese law, as well as by the International Agreement on the Rights of the Handicapped currently being discussed at the United Nations.

In the second part the writer defines the meaning of integration, delineating its nature, types and conditions, drawing on pedagogical definitions on the one hand, and on the leading experiments in the field on the other. He clarifies the way to study integration, and the current experiments in the field in Lebanon.

The third part deals with integrating the blind in the nor-

mal schools in Lebanon, which started sporadically and on a limited scale at the beginning of the sixties, but which increased in the nineties and the present century, taking on three types: integrating the blind by sending them from special schools for the blind to normal schools, then having them return to their special school to study and sleep. The second type is complete integration whereby the blind are sent to a normal school from kindergarten till graduating from high school, having their parents participate directly in this integration. The third type is by integrating a small percentage of sighted pupils in a school for the blind, as applied in the Huda Institute, and which is a unique experiment. This part ends with what is practiced in the Ahliyya School where the blind pupils are integrated according to the first and second types.

The fourth part deals with the integration of the deaf in normal schools, with a detailed account of the pupil Rani Aqqad's experience, and points to the material, logistic and academic burdens this kind of experiment entails. It also describes the experience of two institutions specialized in teaching the deaf by integrating some of their students in normal schools. It also discusses the problems faced by the deaf when they are integrated, the difficulties they have mixing with those who hear, as the deaf Dr. Hussein Isma'il points out.

The fifth part is a detailed account about the integration of those who are handicapped in their movement as practiced in the Forum for the Handicapped in north Lebanon, noting that the problems pertaining to the adaptation of the schools architecturally and technically are not really taken into account in this experiment.

The sixth and last part is a quick overview of the experiments to integrate the mentally handicapped, those with Down's Syndrome and autistic pupils. In spite of this part being short it strongly highlights many of the problems raised by these endeavors, which are academic, material, social and psychological as is clearly shown in the introduction to this part and by what is said by Professor Sami Hammoud, the Director of the Lebanese Committee for Special Education, and by Mrs. Fadia Farah, Head of the Committee of Triple Chromosome 21, and Head of the Lebanese Committee for Autism, Mrs. Arwa Halawi.

