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Learning Disabilities in Palestinian Youth

by Lisa DePasquale

This research is dedicated to the children of Palestine who may not have a firm voice or one at all.

They deserve to be heard and understood.

Abstract: Learning Disabilities are heightened in war torn countries. There is a stark link between poverty and learning disabilities as well as influences from the psychological implications from the war. The Learning Disability rates of Palestinians are doubled to that of Israeli children. Overall, the poverty caused by the occupation, lack of awareness, negative social stigma related to disabilities and diglossia has adversely impacted the educational systems within the Palestinian territories. A two state solution would benefit programs and help mobilize special education within Palestine with funding.

Intro: Living under constant occupation with the bombardment of missiles, witnessing of gruesome deaths, home demolitions, oppressive military actions and constant military presence has generally negatively impacted the psychological effects it has on Palestinian youth living in under occupation. Consequently, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been a catalyst for psychological warfare based upon clash of ideals leading to destructive actions on both sides. The prevalence of inadequate education within Palestinian territories has progressively affected the psychological makeup of several youths who live under Israeli occupation while undermining the increasingly high numbers of Learning Disabilities in Palestinian youth.

**It's important to know that these trends are not current and that the percentages do not reflect the current rates of disabilities and have a marginal error*

Background of Learning Disabilities

The general definition of Learning Disabilities (LD) spans to verbal and nonverbal inadequacies and is designated to different categorical disabilities such as dyslexia, auditory processing, visual processing and reading comprehension. LD can affect writing, reading, listening, speaking, spelling, reasoning and mathematics simultaneously. Many researchers believe that learning disabilities are caused by the ‘differences in how a person's brain works and how it processes information.’ LD does not correlate to lack of intelligence, it is merely a difference in learning styles and how one adapts to receiving information.

Youth with LD typically have average or above-average intelligence yet still struggle on a daily basis with executing tasks because of their complications in acquiring vital skills. This in turn can affect their performance at school, in the community and the workplace and also at home. “For example, an individual’s daily activities in the home may be affected because of the potential for poor memory, poor reasoning, or poor problem solving associated with the neurobiological problem.”¹

Learning disabilities are often times permanent but can be outgrown upon reaching adulthood. The sooner LD is recognized in a child, the sooner steps can be taken to implement an academic plan that would help a child circumvent the challenges they may face in school. As stated, there is no medical ‘cure’ for learning disabilities. However many children with LD become extremely hard workers and high achievers who find ways to maneuver around their disability and achieve academic success.²

A strong indication of learning disabilities is the presence of obscure gaps within a youth’s level of expected achievement and their performance. ‘Learning disabilities affect every person differently and they present differently at various stages of development. LDs can range from mild to severe and it is

¹ Dajani 274-275

² "What Are Learning Disabilities?" *National Center for Learning Disabilities*. N.p., n.d. Web

not a rarity for people to have more than one learning disability.’³ LD often triggers additional social problems and often times leads to prominent behavioral problems and decreased self esteem. It is not uncommon for youth to become aggravated or embarrassed with their learning disability and thus drop out of school.⁴

Statistics of LD in Palestinian Youth

Statistically, Palestinian Children suffer from excessively high rates of Learning Disabilities. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had published The Arab Human Development Reports (AHDR) as part of an “ongoing series to identify and address problems and possibilities for human development in the Arab world.”⁵ The reports presented a “unified perspective on development concerns, identifying three cardinal obstacles to human development regarding (1) freedom (2) women's empowerment and (3) knowledge.”⁶ In 2003, the reports emphasized the need for educational reform in order to create a “knowledge society” in order to overcome several challenges in the Arab world.⁷ Knowledge not only enhances societies but it enhances the mind and paves way for positive ethics and development. In retrospect, the report neglects to mention how obtaining knowledge is troublesome amidst the excessively high rates of Learning Disabilities in the Arab world, particularly Palestine.⁸

Arabpsynet Journal conducted a study of learning difficulties in Palestinian Children in fifth and sixth class. Their studies showed that, “27.8% of Palestinian children had learning disabilities in Arabic Language, 24.5 % had learning disabilities in English Language, and 17.7% had learning disabilities in

³ "What Are Learning Disabilities?" *National Center for Learning Disabilities*. N.p., n.d. Web

⁴ Dajani 275

⁵ http://www.tc.columbia.edu/sie/journal/volume_3/dakwar.pdf

⁶ http://www.tc.columbia.edu/sie/journal/volume_3/dakwar.pdf

⁷ http://www.tc.columbia.edu/sie/journal/volume_3/dakwar.pdf

⁸ http://www.tc.columbia.edu/sie/journal/volume_3/dakwar.pdf

mathematics.”⁹ Take into account these rates reflect LD in children, may be higher with including multiple age groups. In comparison, “approximately 10% of Israeli-Jews have learning disabilities.”¹⁰ The rate of learning disabilities in Palestinian children is more than doubled¹¹ in numbers to learning disabilities in Israeli-Jewish youth. *Arabpsynet Journal’s* study also shows rates of LD in the Palestinian territories were even higher than those in third world African countries. In a survey in Kweneng District in Uganda only 8%¹² of these children were found to have serious learning difficulties.”¹³ In comparison to other Arab countries 10 % of Kuwaiti children are diagnosed as learning disabled. Egypt has also suffered from high disability rates. Egypt has an average of 23 %¹⁴ of pupils with “intellectual disabilities.”¹⁵ Roughly 2% of Saudi Arabian children suffer from learning disabilities.

Special help in academics, especially aid in test taking is sparse for Palestinian children. The Central Bureau of Statistics found “clear socio-economic correlations: while only 5.7% of Arab pupils received relief on matriculation tests, almost a quarter, 23.9%, of the Jewish pupils received help.”¹⁶ The inequitable nature is centralized around the distribution of resources in Israel. In the 1998- 1999 school year “only 8.4 percent of special education integration hours went to Arab schools.”¹⁷ The integration hours are distinctively spread based on a school’s “development index.” When distributed in this fashion, it is evident that there is discrimination against Palestinian schools. In reference to integration hours for kindergarten classes, “there were sixty-one Jewish integration kindergartens but none for

⁹ Dajani 274

¹⁰ <http://eng.nitzan-israel.org.il/home/community-outreach/nitzans-services.aspx>

¹¹ The mean average of LD in Palestinian children (grades 5 and 6) is 23.3% in the study

¹² 8.1%

¹³ Dajani 279

¹⁴ The rate will be smaller for children.

¹⁵ "Country Report: Indicators and Indices for Egypt" 6

¹⁶ Levy

¹⁷ Golan 3

Palestinian Arab children.”¹⁸ Even though Palestinians show high rates of learning disabilities, Palestinian youth “receive proportionately fewer special education resources than Jewish Children.”¹⁹ With the limited distribution of resources, the *Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics* states in a 2011 Disability Survey report that, “86.9 of Palestinian Territory don’t use Specialist Education Programs.”²⁰ Most of the programs are ‘comfortably’ established in Israel with the necessary tools to sustain the program. These statistics reflect the inherent need to focus on special education in Palestinian territories and the importance of substantial resources. The clear division between the socio-economic conditions of Palestinians and Israelis in this study displays the discriminatory nature which is embedded in the occupation. The low usage of Special Education Programs within the territories is also linked to the lack of awareness in the Palestinian community, in particular with the parents and teachers, and also the embedded negativities associated with the social stigma of LD thus stunting potential program growth in conjunction with the limited resources.

Link between Poverty in Palestine and Learning Disabilities

The link between poverty and disability is akin. The presence of poverty increases disability risk factors and hence the degree of the disability. Barriers which deny opportunities to earn a sustainable income mean that it is very difficult to rise out of poverty for many persons with disability, particularly in the developing world or war-torn countries. “Political violence has long been understood to be deleterious to the economical and social well-being of communities.”²¹ War-torn countries fall into a constant state of relapse due to the negative environmental factors. The unique nature of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict presents a clear division of social-economical differences based on the

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ *Ministry of Education* 158

²⁰ *Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics and Ministry of Social Affairs* 35

²¹ Al-Krenawi 427

isolated boundaries implemented by the Israeli government. “The implications of contemporary wars on the collective health status and well-being of affected populations, at home or in exile, go beyond the loss of life and destruction of physical infrastructure.”²² While the conflict has primarily affected the overall infrastructure of the West Bank and Gaza, it has negatively impacted social institutions. In this way, the occupation not only confines Palestinians in a geographical sense but also suppresses educational programs. The ongoing wars instills a perpetual fear which impacts the daily activities of youth but most importantly distracts a child’s thoughts from learning and turn intensifies the effects of learning disabilities. Dr. Moshen M. Saleh, Chief editor at *Al-Zaytouna Centre for Studies & Consultations* states, “the Palestinian child lives in constant fear and anxiety, where worries force him to be a “grown-up” while still a child...Amazingly, the Palestinian child sets the example to mature people, even before he goes to school.”²³

The accumulation of several factors annihilates the success rate of special education programs implemented to help Palestinian children with learning disabilities, let alone the existence of any programs. Resources are limited and prevent program growth. The occupation serves as a ‘vacuum’ in the sense that Jewish schools receive the largest amount of specialized educational programs in Israel compared to the Palestinian territories. *The Human Rights Watch* found that Arab special education schools lacked special curricula and teaching materials from the Ministry of Education. Khawla Saadi, Director of Curriculum for Arab Israeli Schools, states that, “her department had just developed primary level special education books in Arabic in 2000.”²⁴ These had not been distributed to any of the special education schools *Human Rights Watch* visited.²⁵ There are numerous challenges making it

²² Persden 427

²³ Helah 5

²⁴ Human Rights Watch interview with Khawla Saadi, Director of Curriculum for Israeli Arab Schools, Ministry of Education, Jerusalem, December 20, 2000.

²⁵ Human Rights Watch interview with Khawla Saadi, Director of Curriculum for Israeli Arab Schools, Ministry of Education, Jerusalem, December 20, 2000.

laborious to build special education programs in Palestinian territories. First, there are a scant number of experts in Palestine who are qualified to diagnose and treat children with disabilities. The lack of experts presents two key problems— “children with disabilities have limited access to the one-on-one attention they need, and fewer teachers have access to the training to build inclusive classrooms.” While there are a small amount of trained professionals available, many families do not have the “resources” to give their children the support they need. Many of these services are costly and are “located far away” from a child’s home resulting in higher transportation expenses. Thus, many disabled children have no access to the services they need to be able to reach their full potential.²⁶ Human Rights Watch states in an interview,

“At one Arab school for [special education] children that we visited, students came from approximately forty villages, some as far as seventy kilometers away, traveling an hour and a half each way. With the school day lasting from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., some children were away from home for as long as eleven hours a day, the principal explained.”²⁷

With the Special Education Law, a child is authorized to “a special education school near his home”²⁸ or, if there is no school nearby, then “as near to his home as possible.”²⁹ The State and local authorities hold ‘joint responsibility’ for maintaining special education schools but the Ministry of Education has the power to ‘order local authorities to said schools.’ The Special Education Law also requires that each special needs student have an individualized education plan based on the child's particular needs.³⁰

²⁶ “Including Children with Disabilities in Palestine.” Palestine Note. Tomorrow’s Youth, 24 Oct. 2011. Web

²⁷ Coursen-Neff

²⁸ Coursen-Neff

²⁹ Coursen-Neff

³⁰ Coursen-Neff

The classroom environment of Palestinian schools is directly linked to the hardships in overseeing learning disabilities in the classroom. Most classrooms contain as many as “45 or even more pupils, usually made up of a mixture of abilities, negative attitudes towards school, low levels motivation, scarcity of qualified teachers. These situations make it difficult for children with disabilities to receive the extra help they need.”³¹ Many teachers in the school system have not received relevant training on how to identify children with learning problems and hence are unable to provide remedial assistance to such children even under the best of conditions.³² The lack of space also disrupts any attempts to stabilize a special education program in Palestinian schools. Often times, children are being “turned away” as a result. A special education teacher at an Arab primary school, who with an assistant, teaches twelve children, states, "We cannot accept more than twelve because we lack the instruments, the tools. Many children need to be in the class, but I cannot have more than twelve. Each kid needs special and private help, and it's just me alone. I cannot help all these kids.”³³

School conditions are not the only variable in halting growth for children with learning disabilities. The lack of diagnosis and awareness of child’s disabilities has lead many parents to view their troubles as a lack of motivation on the child’s part. Jane Anderson and Rebecca Hopkins, professors at Saint Mary’s University gave a speech in Ramallah about learning disabilities.³⁴ Anderson mentions her two grandchildren in her speech who have difficulties in reading. A woman approached her following her speech stating that she was ‘brave’ for speaking openly about her grandchildren’s academic struggles.³⁵ She had found that to be strange. Hopkins says, “Some of these kids are kept home by their families because of the shame...these children need to be celebrated.”³⁶ Teachers have

³¹ Dajani 280

³² Dajani 280

³³ Coursen-Neff

³⁴ Rosenkrans

³⁵ Rosenkrans

³⁶ Rosenkrans

often shunned children for their struggles, believing that they merely lack motivation or effort. In retrospect, several children with learning disabilities display higher degrees of effort and hardworking stature which is often translated into the work environment later on in life. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) states, “Unless the reasons why Palestinian children are not learning are better understood and the challenges in learning (disabilities, difficulties, and disadvantages) they experience addressed within an inclusive learning environment, a large number of Palestinian children will continue to be excluded from learning and activities by teachers who label them as low achievers or non-learners and leave them out of learning in the classroom.”³⁷

The importance of kin in the Arab world does not escape educational boundaries. Specifically in Palestinian culture, “a children’s education is considered to be a family responsibility, and their academic performance may have a reciprocal impact on parent– child interactions.”³⁸ The performance shows a distinct decrease with low presence of academic aid within the family of a child with LD. In an occupational context, the cataclysmic effects of ongoing wars lessens the remedial impact of the parent-child relationship on a child’s academia. Life under occupation deems stressful which minimizes the priority of educational growth and specialized educational treatment. Parents may be absent long periods of time or busy with household duties and thus unable to provide the adequate assistance. “Although individualized educational plans to address learning disabilities in the school context are child focused, there is a need for family collaboration and support in assisting children.”³⁹ Palestinian schools are under constant scrutiny as a result of the occupation. The limitations not only affect the quantity of schools in Palestinian territories, but also the quality. Resources are scant and the inferiority between

³⁷ EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI): Assessment Study of Learning Challenges Experienced by Palestinian Students." *UNICEF*. N.p., Aug. 2012. Web. 01 Oct. 2014.

³⁸ Dajani 280

³⁹ Dajani 280

Israeli and Palestinian schools serves as a key issue in the educational systems. The Human Rights Watch states,

“It is less likely that a Palestinian Arab child will be accommodated in a local school because the Ministry of Education allocates fewer resources per Palestinian Arab child for integration and fewer special education services to help Palestinian Arab children stay in regular schools. The special education classes are also larger in Arab schools than in Jewish schools. The separate Arab special education schools are inferior to the Jewish ones, and only a handful exist. Thus, many Palestinian Arab children face an unsatisfactory choice: to attend regular classes that do not meet their needs, to travel very long distances to attend an Arab special education school, or, if one is available, to attend a Jewish special education school. Faced with these choices, some parents just keep their children at home. International law explicitly guarantees the right to education without discrimination for disabled children.”⁴⁰

What is truly riveting is the maximized political awareness instilled in the minds of Palestinian Youth. Children in war-torn countries often exhibit a heightened knowledge base due to being stimulated by constant unrest. “A British study about Palestinian children during the Intifada noted that children who grew up under the occupation display higher levels of political awareness. All refugee children memorized the names of the villages from which their parents or grandparents were originally expelled; and they know a lot about the facts of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”⁴¹

Shame and Awareness: Social Stigma of LD

To elaborate on the social stigma previously stated; shame and lack of awareness in relation to Learning Disabilities in Palestine serves as a barrier to special education program growth. While it may

⁴⁰ Convention on the Rights of the Child, arts. 2, 23(3); Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons, paras. 2, 6, 10, G.A. Res. 3447 (XXX), 30 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 34) at 88, U.N. Doc. A/10034 (December 9, 1975).

⁴¹ Helah 16

be easy to point fingers and point out the faults in Israel's distribution of resources and treatment of Palestinian children, it is also important to be aware that this issue is also a Palestinian one. Many Palestinians are blind to the visible signs of psychological disorders and even worse; neglect that they even exist. The correlation between culture and shame may better attribute to the underdevelopment of Special Education programs and the treatment of children with learning disabilities. Specifically in cultures who have strong religious ties such as Saudi Arabia, disability can be seen as a punishment on the family from Allah. For example, "the birth of the child with disability is commonly viewed as a tragedy and the notion persists that a family with a child with disability is a family with disability diseases."⁴²

In the Muslim world, mental illness is often associated with displeasure with a superstitious "untouchable" nature resembling that of a contagious disease as it does in many other parts of the world, not excluding the Arab/Muslim population. People of Arab origin tend to have a negative view of mental illness and consequently the use of mental health services such as special education programs which aim to help children overcome or cope with their disabilities. As a result many parents "mistrust and underuse them"⁴³. Exceptions are reflected by the "level of education and degree of acculturation."⁴⁴ These factors emphasize the discrepancy within Middle East culture. Many parents identify cognitive specialist as suspicious and as "researchers or as doctors who discard religious values and fail to see these values as a genuine source of solace and healing."⁴⁵

There is a strong correlation between religious superstitions within Islam and the shame involved with negative attitudes towards 'invisible' or mental disabilities. It is also important to address that

⁴² Haimour, Abdulhade I., and Radi M. Abu-Hawwash 38

⁴³ Al-Krenawi, Alean, and John R. Graham

⁴⁴ Al-Krenawi, Alean, and John R. Graham

⁴⁵ Al-Krenawi, Alean, and John R. Graham

religion and ethnic nature is not the only key factor in the negative stigma. LD is a ‘hidden disability’ that does not manifest itself as loudly as other prominent cognitive disorders. The nature of this concept in turn enables parents, teachers and the larger community ‘gloss’ over any indication of learning disabilities in children and therefore sustaining the already high percentage of children the Palestinian territories with LD.

Arabic culture also tends to emphasize the ‘collective’ over the ‘individual.’ This is another component that limits the potential for Palestinian children with LD to have the ‘individualized’ help they need. In viewing society by a collective means it places negative associations on the family when a child is viewed as disabled instead of limiting the presence of the disability in a singular form. This is partly why awareness is often times overlooked and why children’s struggles are kept secret in the confines of the family.

Teachers are the primary resources for children with Learning Disabilities. When teachers neglect the existence of LD in the classroom, they neglect roughly 20 % of the Palestinian students. Maysaa Banza who has Ed.D. in curriculum and teaching, compiled a study to explore the “interactions between the imported learning disabilities model and local/socio-cultural knowledge.” Her purpose was to reveal the stigma associated with Learning Disabilities in the Arab world, particularly with teaching assistants and whether they “accept, resist, invert, modify, or indigenize” modern or ‘Western’ ways of dealing with learning disabled children. Her research revealed that teacher’s prevailing problems in fully grasping the components of learning disabilities resulted “not so much from their impairments per se, but rather from the way people with impairments are regarded and treated by society—from their labeling, segregation, and medical/scientific positioning as problematic or deficient.” Teachers serve as the

mediators in identifying LD within the classroom, if they are viewing it in a negative light children will continue to be undiagnosed and inadequately labeled as under achievers.

As a result of the economic limitations within the Palestinian territories, those who do want to spread awareness are limited in what they can do. For example, a mother in the United Arab Emirates opened a The Ta'leem Training and Skill Development Centre to help spread awareness and offer help to youth who struggle with learning disabilities. Her son struggles with dyslexia which prompted her to seek outside help and in turn spread awareness.⁴⁶ Opening various Development Centers without governmental support or financial support would be extremely difficult financially. This is the only option for Palestinian parents and sadly it is not feasible with the given economic situation in the West Bank and Gaza.

Diglossia - Language Varieties

The term Diglossia derives from bilingual similarities or presence of two dialects or varieties in a language instilled in a “singular community.” In this case Fusha (classical Arabic), colloquial Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), Hebrew and English are the prominent languages present in the Palestinian community. The issue in this matter is the divide between written and spoken Arabic and the variety of various features of the Arabic Language. In reference to the Arabic language, one of the distinctive features is the presence and “occurrence of diglossia.”⁴⁷ Within the Arabic language, “one variety is the primary dialect of the language and the other is learned largely by means of formal education and used for most written and formal spoken purposes, but not for ordinary conversation.”⁴⁸

Reem-Khamis-Dakwar, who is a Professor in the Communication department at Adelphi University and who has a Ph.D. in Speech and Language Pathology, emphasizes that, “There is a lack

⁴⁶ Al Khoori

⁴⁷ Khamis-Dakwar 75

⁴⁸ Khamis-Dakwar 75

of empirical study of the Arabic diglossic situation and education”.⁴⁹ Switching between two spoken languages, including the different varieties of one language messes with grammar and reading skills of the Arab child which may result in reading, writing and spelling difficulties which are major features of LD. Dr. Mohamed Maamouri, who specializes in linguistics, claims that there is “growing awareness among Arab educational specialists of the direct relationship between the use of Fusha in formal schooling and the high illiteracy rates in many Arab countries.”⁵⁰ According to the words of Maamouri, "They learn to read instead of read to learn."⁵¹ Khamis-Dakwar's research shows that,

“Children stated having naming and comprehension problems on the one-word level, transforming from one variety to the other for understanding during reading and writing in the elementary grades. Additionally, their statements reveal that they perceive these two language varieties as two different systems.”⁵²

The indistinguishable nature of the two language varieties presents two problems (1) It separates the language making it additionally hard to decipher the grammatical forms of words properly and (2) it maximizes the struggles of children who struggle with dyslexia, writing and reading comprehension. Consequently, “skillful” readers are those who can shift simultaneously between their oral language skills to reading and writing in Arabic. Outside of an educational context, “native speakers of Arabic [are constantly exposed to] MSA when they read and write and hear language used in radio and television programs – especially the news, cartoons, radio shows, some songs and stories.”⁵³ Complications arise because MSA is “never used in a casual conversation in everyday life.”⁵⁴ As a result, Arabic-speaking

⁴⁹ Khamis-Dakwar 76

⁵⁰ Khamis-Dakwar 77

⁵¹ Khamis-Dakwar 83

⁵² Khamis-Dakwar 83

⁵³ Khamis-Dakwar, Reem, Karen Froud, and Peter Gordon 70

⁵⁴ Khamis-Dakwar, Reem, Karen Froud, and Peter Gordon 70

cultures are forced to learn both “spoken language and the standard language variety of written tests along with other formal contexts.”⁵⁵ With this said, Palestinian Arabic speakers with learning disabilities have to exert their efforts in school even more so than children with learning disabilities who only speak one language.

How LD could be Treated and Mobilized in Palestine

The mobilization of Special Education programs would require tactical observation of the current situation in order to constitute a feasible solution. The underlying source of educational inadequacy is obviously an economical one. Little has been done to aid in growth of educational programs in Palestinian territories, mainly because it is the least of the international community’s concern; nonetheless ignoring the issue is limiting the full potential of a child’s mind which I find most unethical. The most troublesome attribute of Palestinian schools is the lack of resources. Funding is a key component to the issue of resource shortage. Channeling funding to better education systems and better educated staff would allow a learning-friendly atmosphere to form and in turn enhance learning disability programs.

As addressed earlier, classroom size is limiting individualization and intensifies learning disabilities in youth. By limiting the number of students in the classroom, teachers would be able to give the one-on-one attention needed for children with learning disabilities. Distractions would also be minimized and children would be able to channel their learning effectively. Providing easily accessible educational programs in terms of transportation, is crucial to the outreach for children with LD. To do this the government must mandate special education school programs in each city especially within Palestinian territories. This can be possible through simultaneously funding such programs.

⁵⁵ Khamis-Dakwar, Reem, Karen Froud, and Peter Gordon 70

Better attention needs to be given to the occurrence of diglossia within the Arabic language and Palestinian school system. As mentioned previously, educators are being increasingly aware of the link between illiteracy and diglossia. “The policy-making institutions in Israel similarly ignore the potential effects of the diglossic situation on literacy and educational achievement. Researchers claim that language policy in Israel is unclear due to a lack of a written constitution or a law defining language policy.”⁵⁶ In this way, “The Ministry of Education is responsible for forming language-education policy by setting curricula, deciding on language instruction hours, hiring teachers and authorizing textbooks.”⁵⁷ The Ministry of Education must find a holistic method to make the divide between language variety easier to manage and to incorporate linguistic methods for children to overcome the negative traits associated with diglossia.

Palestinian Schools also need to establish a system which allows parents be connected to a child’s academic progress. Several teachers in the United States create daily bulletins which are distributed to the children and to be given to the parents. Parent teacher conferences also inform parents on a child’s academic progress and allows both parties to come to a compromisable solution in dealing with a child’s academic difficulties. The number of conferences should increase once a child is diagnosed with a Learning Disability.

Prejudice is a common trait found in Palestinian schools in terms of the teacher-pupil relationship. Shame is put upon a child who struggles academically. There needs to be growing awareness of the complications associated with Learning Disabilities that would allow the community to see the “disability” in a positive light instead of focusing on negative social stigma. By focusing on the multiple talented features of children with learning disabilities, attention could be diverted to the positive

⁵⁶ Khamis-Dakwar 83

⁵⁷ Khamis-Dakwar 83

traits of LD allowing the community to better appreciate mind of a child with LD and lessen the negative stigma associated with it. Since Arabic culture tends to emphasize the collective over the individual, awareness could be channeled through the means of showing the aversive effects of LD on the collective community while creating sympathy and awareness. Rather than focusing on spreading awareness centralized around the 'individual', collective means of attention could be given to the wider community with LD and thus promote enhanced awareness as a result of correct correlations in relation to the features of the community.

With a healthy educational environment void of judgement and prejudice, youth would be able to grow in different ways instead of systematically establishing a universal way of learning which allows separate voices to be heard without feeling 'inadequate.'

How would a two state solution would improve the treatment of LD in Palestinian youth and occupational tension?

Under the one-state solution, little has been done to equally distribute these resources among Israel and the Palestinian territories. By creating an independent Palestinian state, there would be a chance for a Palestinian economy equal to that of Israel. This in turn would allow the educational system to improve.

Funding would create more graduates and thus help improve the development in jobs that would boost the overall economy leading to educational development. Many Palestinian children travel outside of the Palestinian territories for upon reaching collegiate status. As a result, there is minimal room for educational development, simply because of its scanty. There are a lack of scholars, most importantly, *Palestinian* scholars within the territories. With a two-state solution, academia can reach its full potential in the Palestinian identity. Economic growth happens with the right tools and scholars

serve as those necessary tools. A better educated staff would produce the right ‘fruits’ needed for children to grow academically. A new “Palestine” would allow environmental conditions to improve drastically while influencing the positivity of Youth towards education and most importantly enabling them to thrive amidst their Learning Disabilities.

The occupation has allowed violence to manifest itself not only within the community but also in the school systems as the result of biased teachers. Learning disabilities often leave children distraught and thus seek to channel through frustrations elsewhere. Jihad, specifically violent Jihad, may become an avenue for those who seek to ‘flourish’ in some obscure way. It is a second option when knowledge and ethics disappears in the midst of an oppressed society. Israel’s oppressive occupation is actually *creating* jihadist themselves. Less children would be called to martyrdom as a result of the positive ethics being demonstrated and taught within the classroom. Dr. Hussien Iblish, Senior Fellow at American Task Force on Palestine emphasizes that martyrdom is thwarting positive relations is Israel and the United States. In his informative book, *What’s Wrong with the One State Agenda?*, Iblish states, “The Gaza war demonstrates clearly that Palestinians need statehood because the on going cycle of occupation and resistance only produces intensified occupation and more counterproductive forms of resistance, most damagingly manifested by the self-destructive glorification of ‘martyrdom’.”⁵⁸ Violent jihad could be minimized if only children were enabled not just an education, but one that is just as competitive as it is in Israel. Ousting children of this is not merely an ‘unfortunate’ punishment; it is a crime given the notion that the Foreign Ministry of Education states that every child have a right to specialized education. Children in Palestine continue to dismiss hope for a better future. This ‘battle’ is not fought between children, it is fought between the occupiers and against the foundations of common justice. Mohammed S.M. Iqtifan, who is a Campaign Coordinator of the Gaza-based Migratory

⁵⁸ Iblish 10

Letters Campaign states that the “issue was not one between Palestinian youth and Israeli youth. The problem lay with Israeli soldiers’ attacks on Palestinian youth.”⁵⁹ While 52 % of Palestinian youth supported the two-State solution, most were pessimistic that the conflict would be resolved.”⁶⁰ Youth are the hope for future generations. The creation of two states would allow children a second chance to thrive in an equally beneficial society and that is the true desire in youth’s hearts.

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⁵⁹ "Impact of Israeli Occupation on Housing, Health Care, Employment for Palestinian Women, Youth Examined at Paris Meeting." *UN News Center*. Department of Public Information, 30 May 2012.

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