

Lebanese Educational System: An Impairment

A Multimedia Website

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## **Abstract**

The main purpose of this project is to shed light on the problems of the Lebanese curriculum, which affect the learning process in public and private schools, specifically when it comes to online learning and special education. Since solving the problems is crucial, possible solutions were provided from different experts in the field. All this information is presented in a website of three major sections. The first section is about the history of the Lebanese curriculum and its problems followed by an interview about the possible solutions with the educational expert Dr. Nemer Frayha. The second section is about online learning and it is divided into three minor parts. The first part is a video about the advantages and disadvantages of online learning and how did the Ministry of Education respond to online learning. The second part presents the experience of four students: two from public schools and the other two from private schools, regarding online learning during Coronavirus pandemic. The last part of this section is a survey that examines the experience of 192 parents regarding their children's online learning. It also aims to discover if online learning is possible given the current curriculum in Lebanon. The data collected from the survey are presented in an informative video. The spotlight about special education in Lebanon is the third section of our project. This section includes a video and a feature story about the problems of special education in Lebanon and their possible solutions. Educational experts and a special educator provided this information.

**Keywords:** Lebanese curriculum, online learning, special education, Coronavirus, education

**Website Link:**

<http://lebanons-educational-system-an-impairment.mozello.com/online-learning/experience-of-students/>

## **PART I: ABOUT US**

- 1. Our Mission**
- 2. Our Story**
- 3. Our Team**

### **Our Mission**

Our mission is to shed light on the challenges facing public education in Lebanon and provide possible solutions that can help in creating an equal, developed, and supportive learning environment. This project also tackles the educational consequences that resulted from Coronavirus pandemic that hit Lebanon and shifted our education from traditional learning to online learning. In addition, this project looks into the obstacles of students with special needs who are victims of the inflexible educational system. Thus, we found it important to suggest solutions that may fill in the gaps in the curriculum, special education and online learning.

### **Our Story**

The main motive of creating the website comes from our personal experience being victims of this curriculum. As former school students, we realized the pressure we underwent during studying in and outside class and the weak assessment of skills. The website will show you a brief review of the Lebanese curriculum and its problems focusing on the history of the curriculum and an interview with the expert Nemer Frayha in the first part. In the second part, the video presents the advantages and disadvantages of online learning, the experience of students during this time and an informative video that presents the results of a survey we conducted about the involvement of parents in their children's online learning. Lastly, the third part provides a spotlight on special education in Lebanon through a feature story and a video with a special educator.

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This is the senior project for Bachelor's degree in Multimedia Journalism at the Lebanese American University that was supervised by Dr. Claudia Kozman.

### **Our Team:**

**Jana Barakat** (Lebanese): Jana is a 22- year-old Multimedia Journalism senior student at the Lebanese American University (LAU). She is also a writer at CONNECTIONs, the student-led magazine of the Department of Communication Arts at LAU. Her main interests are politics and football or soccer (whatever you prefer to call it!).

**Nour Khafaja** (Lebanese): Nour is a 21-year-old Multimedia Journalism senior student at LAU. Her main interests are social work and fashion.

**Kinda Zoghby** (Lebanese): Kinda is a 21-year-old Multimedia Journalism senior student at LAU. Her main interests are fashion, sports and travelling to discover new cultures.

## **PART II: LEBANESE CURRICULUM**

### **1. Literature Review: The Journey of the Lebanese Curriculum**

### **2. Q&A with Nemer Frayha, Ph.D**

The history of the Lebanese Curriculum is still present!

The Lebanese curriculum has been unchanged in terms of content since the late 1990s.

Although some might expect education to be renewed or updated periodically, this is not the case in Lebanon. Thus, we wrote a comprehensive review of academic research in order to enhance your understanding of the history and the content of the curriculum. In addition, we conducted an interview with Nemer Frayha, a professor at the Lebanese University to know the reasons behind inhibiting the curriculum's enhancement.

### **1. The Journey of the Lebanese Curriculum: A Review of Research**

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Technology has been affecting the development of most sectors of life, namely industrial, medical, scientific, among others. It has also been enhancing the educational system to help us cope with everything new. Thus, it is expected to have an updated curriculum that fits the students' needs from time to time.

This is not the case in Lebanon.

According to the Ministry of Education and Higher Education in Lebanon (MEHE), the Lebanese educational system hasn't been officially updated since 1997. Akl showed in her study conducted at the University of Malta that the inhibitors of progression of the educational system are the several wars Lebanon has gone through such as the civil war that lasted for 15 years. Similar to any other country in the world, Lebanese schools are divided into two sectors: public schools and private ones. The systems suffer from many problems related to the way of delivering the material to students, the level of interaction between the students and their teachers, lack of technologies and online teaching alternatives. A study by Hashash, Abouchedid, and Abourjeily revealed that many different reforms and development strategies were taken to update and to improve the educational system in Lebanon, yet several obstacles are still preventing this development especially at the public sector level. The following themes are sections associated with the Lebanese educational system:

### *CERD: Center for Educational Research and Development*

CERD is a national association for modernization and improvement of training through instructive planning and strategies. This program was initiated in order to design the curriculum for schools where a number of teachers and professors meet to put all the necessary points. According to Mona Nabhani, Ph.D. in Education and a former participant in CERD, the major problem in this program is the sectarian division. "For example, if we were

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13 experts all from different sects and religious backgrounds, but one sect is missing, then they will add this person for the missing sect regardless of their profession in the field, Nabhani said. She continues to explain that the problem is the absence of a structured and well-organized plan. Nabhani claims that the absence of this plan is due to the differences in philosophies every professor might implement depending on their background. In reference to the study by Awada and Diab, it wasn't until 2013 and under the former Minister of Education Hassan Diab that CERD was forced to plan an advanced curriculum for grades one through three and was accepted by the 2013 Council of Ministers.

### *Curriculum Implementation Assessment*

One of the most concerning issues the Lebanese curriculum suffers from is the implementation of fair and equal assessment of the students' skills. As stated by Awada and Diab, teachers are mainly interested in assessing skills that are tested in the Lebanese Official Examinations. For example, critical thinking and cultural awareness are two of the skills that are not practiced in public schools. Students are treated as machines that only receive information in order to be tested through exams. The majority of schools turn a blind eye on the importance of involving students in activities and introducing them to skills that can meet their targets in the future. In addition, Boujaoude believed the curriculum highlights the importance of teaching the knowledge of science and not "science as a way of knowing. In other words, students should memorize the outcome of science rather than using science to reveal the outcome. Another concerning issue presented by Akl is that the Lebanese curriculum lacks consistent and logical guidelines that could help the students deal with the cultural, political, and religious dilemma; thus, shaping the educational Lebanese system in a very limited way.

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### *Textbooks and Themes*

A report written in 2002 by LAES showed some criticism of the Lebanese curriculum. One of the main criticisms was the equal distribution of themes and goals each grade should fulfill. According to Shaaban's study, some grades have more themes than other grades. Shaaban elaborated that primary grades have 2-6 themes, intermediate grades have 13 themes and grade 10 has around 19 themes. Moving to the language section, the LAES report revealed that the current curriculum does not reflect sufficiently the language requirements, mainly in public schools. This can have many negative implications on students' skills especially with the presence of globalization and the importance of the English language nowadays. A difference in the usage of books was also highlighted in many studies. Private schools, unlike public ones, prefer to use imported books they think are better written. According to Awada and Diab, the local Lebanese textbooks do not meet the professional standards the imported textbooks have. One example is the history book that has not been updated since 1943 due to political disagreements. The former MP Elias Abou Saab stated that neither the books nor the official exams trigger the creativity of students, as stated in Awada and Diab's study.

### *Student-Teacher Relationship*

Abouchedid and his colleagues conducted an experiment that showed several barriers exist in the student-teacher interaction, which creates many obstacles on different levels (educational, psychological, social...). Instructors' behaviors in class show their unprofessionalism and their lack of interest toward their students. In the research article published at the Lebanese American University, Bahous and Nabhani discovered there is no clear relation between students and their teachers in public schools. For instance, teachers tend to treat their students in harsh ways and disrespect them, which may lead to tension between teachers and students.

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In addition, Bahous and Nabhani along with Abouche, found out that students in public schools feel uncomfortable with their teachers because their teachers express low expectations towards them. This is opposed to the students' expectations of themselves which are optimistic and fruitful. The lack of a good relationship between students and teachers leads to the lack of interest in a subject. A research study by Bacha, Bahous, and Nabhani showed that students were not interested in language subjects since their teachers make them seem boring. To elaborate, Bacha, Bahous, and Nabhani revealed that teachers rarely include any motivational processes that will encourage the students. Rather, they choose to discuss topics they assume will interest the student. This can be considered as a disqualification for some teachers, since the teacher's role is not only to deliver material but also to have a unique and effective way to deliver it.

### *Online/ Distance Learning*

Online Learning is not a new concept in Lebanon. In October 2011, the Ministry of Education launched the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to improve the quality of education in Lebanon. Awada and Diab defined ICT as an important component in the Lebanese educational system since it allows students to get used to the digital age and benefit from it as much as possible. To specify, Awada and Diab stated the tools of ICT which are computers, tablets, interactive smartboards and high-speed Internet connection in schools. However, ICT is not implemented in every Lebanese school, especially public schools since it incurs high costs. Nonetheless, ICT's usage could have been beneficial during the Coronavirus crisis since learning was shifted from in-class to distance learning. As a result, educational institutions were forced to close and rely on online learning. The research about the effectiveness of online learning by Nguyen found that participants viewed online learning either neutral, positive, or negative with regards to traditional learning. Even



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though the results were divided into three parts, the majority of the participants (92%) thought that online learning is as beneficial as traditional learning, whereas only 3% preferred traditional learning. The variation between online learning and traditional learning depends on special techniques teachers use. Haidar's study suggested that teachers might help in making online learning as effective as traditional learning if they tend to use techniques that will help the students in interacting and understanding the information. There are several drawbacks and difficulties students and even teachers might face while participating in online courses. According to Haidar, the possible drawbacks are the slow-speed internet connection, the poor funding in some schools, and most importantly the lack of accreditation of the Lebanese government and the absence of legal composition of online learning.

### *Education for Students with Disabilities*

One could start with the following question: should students with disabilities be included in regular classes? The literal meaning of inclusion from Cambridge dictionary is "the action or state of including or of being included within a group or structure". However, in context to children with disabilities, Vaz et al's findings defined inclusion as a "concept of social justice; wherein all students are entitled to equal access to all educational opportunities, irrespective of disability or any form of disadvantage". Vaz et al clarified that the vagueness about inclusive learning for students with disabilities is often due to the extent of its well implementation. A study conducted by Mngo showed that about 69% of the teachers in Ontario were unprepared to teach students with disabilities. Mngo's study is one of many studies done to check whether teachers and individuals support the concept of inclusion. It showed that about 65.2% of the teachers preferred the inclusive method claiming that their presence in class won't make it harder for other students to learn and grasp the information easily. In Lebanon, the special education program is implemented in private schools more

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than in public ones, as stated in El Zein's research. Lebanon previously separated regular education and special education and made them as independent of each other, El Zein added. In specific, parents of students with disabilities were the ones who highlighted the need for a proper special education program in Lebanon. El Zein clarified that a program for inclusion was initiated in the early 90s with the help of teachers, schools (private mainly), and parents in different regions in Lebanon but then stopped because the program came to a halt. Parents had a pleasing attitude towards including their children in regular schools and classes; they also insisted that their children should be included in all levels starting from nursery (or what's called kindergarten 1 'kg1' today) up till Grade 12, as referred by both Kustantini and El Zein.

### 1. Q&A with Nemer Frayha, Ph.D

*Nemer Frayha, is a professor at the Lebanese University and an educational expert in the area of citizenship and curriculum. He has a Ph.D. in education and M.A in political science from Stanford University. He works as a consultant of the new department of citizenship in the Ministry of Education. Frayha is also engaged in developing new curricula based on modern standards. In addition to his publications, he is currently finalizing a book in Arabic, named "Curriculum and Standards: A New Approach in Developing Modern Curricula". Frayha was also the former head of the Education Center for Research and Development.*

*This interview emphasizes the problems the Lebanese educational curriculum suffers from and its possible solutions.*

**1- Do you think that the curriculum can be now modified to keep up with the rapid development that we are witnessing these days?**

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This is up to the educational center. They have announced through various media outlets that they are planning the start of a new curriculum. The question raised here is how will the new curriculum be different. Will they refer to the old traditional curriculum? These matters are still unknown and vague.

### **2- Who should be held accountable for the low educational level in Lebanon and the chaos that prevails as a result of this low education in Lebanese schools in general, and in public ones in particular?**

Politicians and political parties are responsible for the current situation of our schools. They use public schools as means to exchange services and favors by hiring their partisans. These teachers, who are supported by a certain politician or party, rely on them. Thus, they do their minimum duties as teachers since they are often not prepared to teach. As a result of their weak performance, their educational outputs will also be weak.

### **3- What are the main events that happened throughout history that have led to this decline in the educational system?**

The consequences of the civil war that occurred in 1975. Until now many aspects of this war still remain alive in Lebanese people's memories. However, there are those who exploit and benefit from its negative consequences. Now, every previous war and militia leader considers education under his control. The war destroyed the educational level and created new non-academic standards. Teachers should devote themselves to educate others, but they are profiting from it. Instead of viewing schools as a way to prepare the new generation, society looks down on official schools and gives importance to private schools which cost more. All of these factors ruined the official schools' reputation and decreased their importance. The

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statements given to students by the Ministry of Education rather than conducting official exams also contribute to the poor standards.

### **4- Do you expect any improvements in the public schools' education in hopes of gaining the trust of students' parents anytime soon?**

I don't expect any of that. However, the number of students will gradually increase due to the economic situation and not for the level of teaching that keeps on declining. Parents will not be able to pay the private schools tuition next year, and so the alternative is to enroll their kids in public schools.

### **5- What methods can be adopted to develop public schools?**

Public schools need to be reformed from the top of the pyramid to the base. The reform process has not started and will not start in the foreseeable future because the views of those in charge haven't changed. To achieve this purpose, teachers and education staff should be trained in a completely different way and equipped with technological items that are used in most school subjects. They need to reconsider the laws that sponsor their establishment and management, and distribute their study programs and the teaching hours that the teacher has to teach.

## **PART III: ONLINE LEARNING**

- 1. Advantages and Disadvantages of online learning**
- 2. Experience of Students**
- 3. Survey and Statistics**

### **Coronavirus and Online Learning: Pro or Con?**

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Due to the Coronavirus pandemic that took over the world in 2020, both public and private schools in Lebanon were forced to shift to online learning. The purpose of this section is to understand whether online learning was a success or not in Lebanon. Additionally, educational experts and teachers provided some solutions in order to enhance the program to prevent further complications from arising, should we need to refer to online learning later on.

### 1. Advantages and Disadvantages of Online Learning

The year 2020 was the first time online learning was applied in Lebanon. Besides, Lebanon is facing several political and financial crises which uneasy the implementation of online learning. Opinions about its success, however, differed. Whereas officials in the Ministry of Education found this experience a successful one, two teachers in a public and private school found it unsuccessful for several reasons. Here is a short reportage that shows the advantages and disadvantages of online learning.

Update: After the continuous increase in Coronavirus cases in Lebanon, the Minister of Education, Tarek El Majzoub, held a press conference where he announced the cancellation of the official exams for Grade 9 and 12 and the continuation of the academic year through online and distance learning. However, there was no clear statement regarding the final exams and he kept the decision for the schools to choose the best criteria for their students to pass their grades.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kR6PdeQLmXQ>

### 2. Experience of the Students

Students in Lebanese schools are not used to online learning and accordingly, it was necessary to acknowledge their experiences with the matter. Four students, two from a public and two from a private school, shared their experience with us.

- **Fatima Maaz (Public School- Grade-12):** I shifted from a private to public school and found many differences. In my private school, the focus was mainly on studying; however, in my public school, I've participated in various activities. I have realized that in my public school, I faced difficulties in literature subjects because teachers do not

care much about them. Also, teachers in public schools don't care much about their students. We're learning via WhatsApp and not understanding the content. We tell them to change, but they just ignore us.

- **Mohammad Arwadi (Public school- Grade 11):** I was not really interested in online learning because the material delivered was hard to understand. In addition, I was skipping classes due to the slow internet connection that affected the delivery of the material. I think this is a weird way of teaching because neither students nor teachers are trained for it. As for exams, we did not do any, we only submitted assignments. All in all, online learning is not an efficient step in Lebanon.
- **Lynn Zoghbi (Private school- Grade 11):** What once involved me taking the bus to school, interacting with my friends and teachers in an actual classroom has now become an online and virtual experience. Suddenly, my private and school life was no longer separate. Through studying online, I get to choose my own learning environment and manage my time. Also, online courses are helping me become more self-motivated, improve my self-discipline and responsibilities since no one is physically obliging me to complete my deadlines. However, I am facing several struggles especially in the internet connection. Since I live in a small town in West Bekaa, I am usually waiting for hours for the videos and documents to download. In addition, the lack of interaction between us, students and teachers, makes the learning process boring and less effective.
- **Khaled Safeya (Private school- Grade 12):** After the Coronavirus pandemic, my whole school life has changed. Like any other school, my private school shifted its traditional learning to online learning. At the beginning, it seemed to be a good and a more comfortable way to learn especially that we are no longer obliged to wake up early and attend our classes physically at school. However, after several weeks of

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implementing online learning, I've found out that this was the worst teaching technique especially that I am an official exams student. At first, we were taking the courses via a WhatsApp group where the teachers used to send us the lectures explained. After that, we started attending our classes through live videos with our teachers. The last was a better technique since we have been forced to attend. Regarding the exams, we haven't done more than four exams during this period, which was unhelpful since many students were copying each other's answers. Finally, the major obstacle we are facing is the slow internet connection during online learning.

### 3. Survey and Statistics

This survey aims to examine the experience of parents regarding their children's online learning. The survey will show if online learning is possible given the current curriculum during coronavirus. Also, it will reveal if the system does not only affect students but their parents too.

The survey was made up of 23 questions and the participants' number was 192. Their confidentiality and autonomy were guaranteed and their participation was possible only after signing the consent form.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the LAU IRB: **LAU.SAS.CK2.5/May/2020**

This video will present the data collected from the survey

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7LLhjA3-Ri0>

## **PART IV: SPECIAL EDUCATION**

### **1. Feature Story: The Lebanese Curriculum Puts Special Education at Risk.**

## 2. Discover the content: Video

**Welcome to the SPOTLIGHT of the project!**

### **Special Education**

#### 1. Feature:

Regardless of the procedures the Lebanese government took for special education, there are still many gaps that make special children suffer in the Lebanese educational system. Special education needs to be highlighted in order to fill in these gaps and allow special students to pursue their education and careers in the future. The story talks about the major problems embedded in the curriculum regarding the teaching students who need special education. The problems are presented by an Education Professor at the Lebanese American University (LAU) and a special educator at a private school in Lebanon. Solutions are also provided in order to make the teachers', students', and parents' lives easier.

### **The Lebanese Curriculum Puts Special Education at A Risk**

“I suffered. It took me almost a year to make the best yet hardest decision. Leaping from one school to another and assembling his medical reports to guarantee him the best education due to his special situation. It was a rollercoaster: exhausting but worth many lessons.”

Although the tuition fee is high, Mrs. Hamdan was able to find the right school for Rami, her child with autism.

Rami's case is similar to that of many who have educational difficulties or what some call students with disabilities. His needs for special education and mental treatment make it harder for his parents to find the best institution that can help in pursuing his education, which is his basic right. Not much attention is given by the government to the education of students with special needs. The problem lies in the fact that schools, especially public ones,



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lack the special equipment used for educating these students, have extremely high tuition, and teachers who are not well-trained to deal with their special needs. The stated problems make it harder for students with special needs to study a proper curriculum because the implemented Lebanese curriculum does not meet the students' needs.

According to a Human Rights Watch report in 2018, the number of children with disabilities in Lebanon was about 8,558 of which only 3,806 were registered in either public schools, private schools, or government funded institutions. The Human Rights Watch also assured that most of the registered children didn't attend educational facilities. In other words, students with learning difficulties in Lebanon may experience three different scenarios that depend mainly on the budget of the parents and their awareness with regards to special education.

In the first scenario, parents do not have enough money to enroll their children in a special organization and thus end up in a public school that does not provide the quality of education they need. In the second scenario, they can afford enrolling their child in a specialized school where fees exceed \$10,000 per year. In the last scenario, parents are sometimes unaware of their children's learning disability and get them enrolled in a school that discriminates against them and thus makes their case worse. Some students who suffer from learning or mental disabilities are excluded from many schools. According to Human Rights Watch, one main reason could be the lack of reasonable accommodations, poor training of staff and discrimination during admission, lack of the concept of inclusion, and finally expensive tuition fees.

As per Lebanon's Law 220, which secures the basic rights of the students with disabilities, stating, "all children should have access to education free from discrimination," the Ministry

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of Education in Lebanon forces all schools, private and public, to accept all students equally even if they have a disability by stating on their website the following “learning is a right for everyone.” The issue with this statement is not the content but the way it is applied in public schools. Private schools that adapt the special education program usually get a lot of funds most of which can be international. They also have most of the needed equipment to help children accommodate to the new environment and develop their skills.

### *The Basic Needs*

In this respect, special educator Tala Badr who works in a private school asks the following question: “considering everyone is competent, do we have the needed equipment?” The answer was simply “no”. The main element that public schools need is the funds because these programs are expensive. She insists that money is needed in order to provide the child with the best education.

Students with disabilities need more requirements than regular ones be it in the classroom or outside it. Thus, Badr emphasizes “these children might need more than one teacher to cooperate with them and sometimes up to seven teachers: one for the speech, one for the psychomotor activity, one to teach the subject, etc....” This explains the two types of special education that depend on the student’s case.

For example, students who have severe cases undergo segregation education where each one has a special class and specialists that deal with each and every problem he/she has. The second type is inclusion education where the student is capable of joining a larger class but needs a specialist who could help him/her in every subject and skill.

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Well-preparation is important to adopt a special educational system. This leads to the following question: Are Lebanese schools prepared? Lara El Khatib who holds a Ph.D. in education and is a part time professor at the Lebanese American University (LAU) believes Lebanese schools don't seem to be prepared at all because "there is no understanding that variability is the norm." In schools, , there is a lack of speech therapists and occupational therapists who are considered a basic need to have a better special educational system. This process of having specialists inside the class with the students is called inclusive education and is considered highly important. El Khatib clarifies that this kind of education requires a team group including specialists and trained therapists.

### *Difference in educational systems within schools*

Lebanese schools adopt two different systems: French and American. That is, students either study from American books imported from outside Lebanon or apply the French schooling system. "Even when it comes to activities and routines in special education, we are still applying traditional ways from the French system, that are maybe long forgotten by the French themselves", El Khatib explains.

The French and American systems adopted by some schools have different philosophies and different views on things although they both require teamwork of specialists such as occupational therapists and speech therapists. El Khatib elaborates that the American system highly depends on the parents' role with regards to their kids' therapy and education because it is essential to follow up on every step at home.

### *The various ways of teaching*

"Transforming the content into active and experiential learning where you don't just give the idea to parents but you tell them why it makes sense and why they will need it, will make the

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kid's journey easier for both, the student and us, to get efficient and fast progress," assures Mona Nabhani, Ph.D. in Education and a part-time professor at LAU.

There is a misunderstanding among schools and teachers concerning the variation in skills special students might require. The capability to grasp and understand the information varies from one student to another, that's why the curriculum is not common among all students.

The problem is not always related to reducing time or material. El Khatib considers these procedures "superficial" because that's not the only thing special students need.

### *Accommodation vs. Modification*

"Information must be presented in more than one way, so the problem is not adding 30 minutes to an exam duration or eliminating some chapters," Badr says. To elaborate, there is a difference between the concept of accommodation and modification, which implies the importance of the role of special educators at schools. Accommodation is what El Khatib referred to as superficial and not all special students need that; some of them might need more.

Modifications in the Lebanese curriculum is what students need the most. The Ministry of Education doesn't offer a modified curriculum to special students; they all receive the same material and are expected to sit for official exams in Grade 12, according to Badr.

Modification is changing the whole curriculum until it meets the special students' needs.

"Not all students can follow the same curriculum, I make a curriculum with different objectives and goals for each and every student," says Badr, shedding light on the problem in public schools.

### *Training of teachers for special education*

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In addition, students might have shadow teachers when in class, but this is not enough. “Anyone can be a shadow teacher; they only supervise the student”, Badr explained. However, at some point, this might have detrimental effects. Badr insists that special students need more than shadow teachers; they need special educators who are able to modify the curriculum for them, help them with solving exercises, improve their critical thinking, and teach them new skills.

To stress the previous idea, Nabhani, regretfully said that teachers are not trained to create an individualized plan for slow learners or for students with disabilities and at the same time catering for the others in the same classroom. In fact, the problems are major and many to such an extent that special students are not exempted from Grade 12 official exams no matter what their case is.

### *The fate of special students regarding official exams*

“We see a lot of students who drop out of school before they reach Grade 12 because of this issue, and thus don’t enter university” Badr said annoyed. She urged the government to take this issue into consideration because those who are not dropping out of school are getting other nationalities that will allow them to escape the official exams and therefore enter university.

Searching for another nationality is a predicament because not all students have the ability to acquire another citizenship. Consequently, students would be forced to take the one decision that will stop their educational journey unless the Ministry of Education imposes new rules that will help students and work in their benefit.

### *The \$100 million solution*

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To every problem, there is a solution. Since the special education program needs massive funding and the Lebanese government is unable to provide it, the Ministry of Education obtained in 2016 a loan of \$100 million from the World Bank, with no interest and three years grace period. The aim was to establish a number of public schools that will help all children aged between three and 18 years have equal accessibility to schools without having to pay expensive tuition fees.

This money will help buy the needed technology for schools whether for regular or special students and develop the curriculum when needed. However, this money was never used for unknown reasons. The privilege is still present, and the money can still be used whenever the Minister of Education in collaboration with the Council of Ministers agrees to ask for it.

The challenges remain to be critical while the curriculum is still stuck in the late 90s waiting to get freed and reformed. The goal of drastic changes is designing a curriculum that can fit all students equally. Some special students along with their parents are suffering in Lebanon because not all schools are equally accessible to special students. Segregation and inclusion are both important methods that schools need to take into account.

Once the differences are known then the child will have hope for a better education.

Rami says with enthusiasm and with eyes full of hope: “I want to be remembered in a way, to discover something, and I will.”

### 2. Discover the content

#### **Special Education: A needed reform!**

This section contains a video where the special educator Talah Badr explains thoroughly the importance of special education, the problems special students face in schools due to the

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Lebanese Curriculum, and the possible solutions that can help students with special needs.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w4jeVeol7gM>

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