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## **Final Report on Field Work, Guide Launch and Workshops on the Inclusion and Assessment of Children with Disabilities in Centres Supervised by BASR, Palestine**

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**THE CENTRE FOR  
EVIDENCE AND  
SOCIAL INNOVATION**

Final Report on Field Work, Guide Launch and Workshops on the Inclusion and Assessment of Children with Disabilities in Centres Supervised by BASR

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**Inclusive World for All**



## **Background**

The School of Sociology, Education and Social Work (SSESW) of Queen's University, Belfast, was commissioned by the Association pour la Promotion de L'Education et de la Formation a l'Etranger (APEFE), Belgium, under the auspices of the Bethlehem Arab Society for Rehabilitation (BASR), Palestine, to undertake research on the assessment of children and young adults with disabilities and their inclusion in educational and vocational training centres in Palestine.

## **Aim of the Research**

The aim in conducting this research was to promote understanding of current conceptualisations of disability advanced by disability groups in the UK and elsewhere that is evidence based and informed by the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)(1989), the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Peoples with Disabilities (UNCPRD)(2006), and the United Nations Comment 4 on Article 24 (Education) of the UNCPRD.

## **Objectives of the Research**

There were three principal objectives in conducting the research. To:

1. Update criteria for assessing children and young people with disabilities.
2. Develop an Evaluation Handbook.
3. Facilitate seminars and workshops for BASR resource staff and teachers.

## **Methodology**

The researchers conducted field work in Palestine in April 2019, visiting eight educational and vocational centres in Bethlehem, Hebron and the South West Bank. The centres were located in both rural and urban settings. Participatory research methods were used with the children and young people to collect data on the educational experiences of children and young people in these settings. We also collected data on the perceptions of parents on the value of centres in providing education and training; and the perceptions of BASR staff on current understandings of disability, and the provision of specialised services.

A total of 56 participants took part in the research: 32 service users (23 children and eight adolescents), 12 members of staff (directors, teachers and trainers), and 12 mothers.

## **Key findings:**

### **Children**

- Some children and young people experience violence and aggression both within and outwith the centres;
- The importance of play;
- Children's view of self is that they are not 'normal';
- Some children do not feel they belong in their community;
- Children do not feel they have a say over their education;
- Children feel that they should be listened to about their education.

### **Staff**

- There is an urgent need for professional development and training;
- There is an urgent need for resources and funding;
- Smaller classes and appropriately resourced rooms;
- Better communication between centre staff and their directors, and stronger community links.

### **Mothers**

- The centres are valued by the mothers;
- Additional services would be welcomed, particularly to enable the child or young person to become independent.

## **Outcomes of the Research: The Launch and Workshops**

A full [Report](#) and a fully updated [Assessment Guide](#) and [Evaluation Handbook](#) were presented to APEFE and BASR in July, and were used to formally launch the guide to the Ministry of Education, NGOs, the centres and the press in Bethlehem in early September. The research team from Queen's reconvened with BASR to launch the guide and to provide workshops on using the guide with teachers from the centres that the researchers had visited in April.

The launch was held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2019. The General Director of Counselling and Special Education, Ahmad Al Hawash, was assigned by the Minister of Education to sign a Memorandum of Interest on promoting inclusive education by training teachers and counsellors on specific disabilities; promoting the guide; early detection, intervention and referrals; promoting physical accessibility in public schools; and, finally, the use of the Assessment Guide to support teachers.

Representatives from the Department for International Development (DfID, UK), the Belgian Consulate, and a wide variety of NGOs (over 60 were represented at the launch), such as Humanity and Inclusion, Médecins Sans Frontières, and Save the Children also attended the launch. The launch was reported on Palestinian News Network (PNN) and Mohammed Owaineh, Iyad Hamdan, Christine Bower and Alison MacKenzie were interviewed for the network. The Ministry gave a press release to the local newspapers. Attendees were given a flashcard that contained the report and guides, and hardcopies of the guides were distributed. The teachers who attended the workshops were also given copies of the guides.

The research team with colleagues from BASR held four workshops over two days that focused on aspects of the guide, namely: autism, dyslexia, behavioural difficulties, and individual lesson plans. The workshops encouraged teachers to use the materials provided to come with lesson plans, learning strategies, and resources that were dedicated to the specific learning need, but which could also be used with all children in their classes.

Research papers are now in preparation and will be published in top ranking, peer reviewed journals. The importance of the research lies in its innovative methodological approach, listening to the voice of the child, and using evidence based, current research that fully respects the lived experiences of people with disabilities. Palestine's unique situation is also of academic and humanitarian interest. As a result of this research opportunity, we have been able to reach out to an invisible population: children with disabilities. This is an area of growing research interest in the UK.

### **Recommendations**

We asked teachers who attended the workshops to complete evaluation forms. The feedback is encouraging. Close to 80% agreed that the workshops developed their teaching skills and over 90% felt very strongly that the workshops were valuable. Teachers found that the workshops were useful for:

- Dealing with autistic children and developing IEPs
- Having a guide that is focused on educational rather than on medical assessments
- Creating new ideas on how to include children's interests in the learning process
- Creating multi-sensory environments for learning from which all learners can learn
- Practical application of activities from the guide
- Knowing how to assess dyslexia

The teachers thought that the workshops provided a very good foundation for future work but they wanted more time in the workshops (they were of 45 minutes' duration and considered too short), and to have the opportunity to cover more SEN topics.

Based on the feedback, we make the following recommendations:

- There is an urgent need for continuing professional development and for teachers to have opportunities to meet and discuss learning strategies that are informed by current research;
- To run the workshops for new teachers, and to increase their length so that they have time to consider the issues and to develop resources. We suggest that these be offered over a two-day period, over two weeks. This could attract 60 (30 in week 1, 30 in week 2) fresh teachers from the centers;
- To provide further training for the teachers who attended the foundational workshops. These will provide focused, 90 minute, in-depth training to 60 teachers (30 in week 1, 30 in week 2) on specific issues over a four-day period. We envisage eight workshops in total;
- To visit the centres and work with the teachers using the Guide and Assessment Handbook.