

# TRANSFORMATION OF EDUCATION: WILL IT LEAD TO INTEGRATION?

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THIS ESSAY IS INTENDED TO SHOW that the Lebanese government's criticism of the Lebanese educational system that was in existence from 1968 to 1994 is not fully justified and cannot, therefore, serve as grounds for making the basic changes in it that have been made; and that these recent changes, though they may be good in part, will not lead to the goal of individual and social integration.

Most discussions about Lebanon focus on areas such as politics, economics, sectarianism, and the environment. Education does not usually feature in such discussions. Education must not be forgotten, however. It is the making of a country, since it is the making of its future generations. I take it the term "transformation" is clear enough. Before we discuss whether the transformation of education in Lebanon today will lead to integration, however, it is appropriate to identify the terms "education" and "integration," and to set the background that has led to the very recent transformation of the Lebanese educational system.

By "education" I mean the process of developing the moral, intellectual, emotional, or physical potentialities of an individual or of society. Of course, good education requires the development of such potentialities in ways suitable to this well-being. But the development of any or all of these potentialities is not sufficient, though necessary, to create individual and social well-being. Integration of all such developed potentialities is also required. By "integration," I understand allowing the moral, intellectual, emotional, and physical potentialities on individual and social levels to work harmoniously with each other. In other words, in integration there is always a diversity of elements that work harmoniously together. This is what Plato would call "justice," where the various faculties and various players fulfill their specific roles without overpowering or impeding the roles of the other faculties and other players.<sup>1</sup>

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However, it would seem that the best type of integration is that which allows the working together, not of just any variety of individual and social elements, but only of those elements that are conducive to individual and social well-being.

We should keep in mind, therefore, that not all integration is desirable, only that which enhances as much as possible the well-being of the part and of the whole in society through integrating the developed moral, intellectual, emotional, and physical potentialities in the most constructive way possible. The ultimate objective of education must be to bring about the well-being of individuals and society through this best kind of integration. Of course, absolute integration in this sense is probably impossible to obtain in any individual or social setting. There are always natural and genetic elements that resist any educational efforts and stand in the way of such integration. The best one can hope for is a relatively high degree of desirable integration. The issue before us now is this. Did the old educational system that has been applied until recently in Lebanon suffer from problems that stood in the way of this type of integration and, hence of individual and social well-being in Lebanon, necessitating thereby the transformation of this system?

#### HISTORY AND RESPONSIBILITY

In trying to assess the causes of the most recent Lebanese civil war, some people place the blame, in part or in whole, on the Lebanese educational system. Their main claim is that, by giving the various religious sects the right to have their own private schools, the system gave those sects the ability to destroy the identity of the Lebanese and, hence, their integration, owing to the fact that certain religious sects taught in their schools materials contradictory to those taught by other religious sects.

To go back in history, it is true that, as early as 1535, Sultan Sulayman (r. 1520-1566) gave the French community in Lebanon the right to have its own schools and to have control over those schools. Certain Christian communities then received the same right. The story of the missionaries who arrived in Lebanon in the nineteenth century and brought their schools with them is well known. What we now call the American University of Beirut was established by the Presbyterians in 1866 under the name Syrian Protestant College. The French Jesuits established Saint Joseph University in 1887. In 1888 the local Sunnis founded al-Maqasid. The Shi'ites opened their schools in 1910. The mandate gave the various religious communities the right to have their schools. The Constitution of the First Republic in 1926 confirmed these rights, on condition, first, that these communities abide by government regulations regarding education; second, that they not infringe on the rights of other communities; and third, that they not disturb the moral and public order.<sup>2</sup> These rights were reasserted in 1946 and preserved when the educational system was revised in 1968.

Now we can address the question whether these rights in themselves are responsible for destroying the identity and integration of the Lebanese. In other

words, are we to blame the educational system for the disintegration of Lebanese society just because this system gave the Lebanese communities the freedom to open private religious schools? It would seem that the blame for the disintegration of Lebanese society must not be placed on these rights in themselves, but in part on the fact that these communities did not have the foresight and sense of responsibility to prevent their schools from plunging the country into the disintegration and destruction it witnessed. In their schools, these communities misused education and taught materials that were essentially different, if not contradictory. This was the case especially in the fields of history and language, the two areas that could either bring people together or distance them from each other. Some communities, for example, stress in their schools, whether directly or indirectly, the idea that the Lebanese are Arabs and must be proud of their Arabic language. Others stress the opposite, that the Lebanese are non-Arabs, and so perhaps a language like French is more befitting to their linkage to the West and to their special “non-Arab” status in the region.

With time, the gaps among these communities (whether religious or secular, native or foreign) grew wider and wider. Furthermore, to create what they referred to as a “balance,” communities made an effort to strengthen their private schools and the curriculum in those schools. This effort widened the gap even further, something which, to a great extent, was responsible for what looks like the total disintegration of Lebanese society, thus the tragedy of 1975.

What in a sense helped fulfill the interests of these communities was the fact that the government had no supervision over the private schools and did not begin establishing public schools to counterbalance the teachings of the private ones until quite late. For example, the Lebanese State University was opened almost 100 years after the American University of Beirut had been established. The former was opened in 1951 and did not begin to operate properly until 1959. Moreover, even when public schools were opened, they remained much weaker than the private ones and primarily hosted students from financially poor sectors. Also, one of the most essential stages of education, preschool education, remained limited to private schools until 1971. And even then public schools devoted only two years to this stage of education, whereas private schools devoted three.<sup>3</sup>

Thus the government, too, was to a large extent responsible for the disintegration and tragedy by its lack of supervision and slowness in attempting to introduce public balanced views, not by the mere fact that it entitled religious sects to have private schools. To blame the government or the educational system in Lebanon for giving the religious communities the right to open private schools is like blaming God for giving human beings freedom just because certain people commit certain sins. In the United States, religious communities have the right to have private religious schools. For example, the Catholic Augustinian order was given the right in 1842 to open and manage Villanova University. But this did not entitle the Augustinians to turn Villanova into a divisive factor in American society.

As a matter of fact, private schools in the United States had complete freedom in the type of curriculum they adopted, as opposed to their Lebanese counterparts, which despite a degree of freedom in this regard had to submit to certain unified demands by the educational system. For example, students in all Lebanese schools, whether private or public, were required to sit for three official exams. This created a common element among these schools that is absent in American schools. Still, the Lebanese religious communities somehow managed to create a certain degree of divisiveness and disintegration in the society, whether by adding hours to teach materials over those required by the system or simply by including such materials during the regular hours.

Two factors have been mentioned as causes of disintegration in Lebanon, especially on the social level: the irresponsibility of the religious communities in the way they applied the educational system and the absence of an official response to counteract this irresponsibility. Was the curriculum itself a third factor? In what follows, the nature of the curriculum will be briefly examined. For the time being, suffice it to say that, even if the curriculum were perfect, the above two factors would have been sufficient to end integration in Lebanese life.

#### EDUCATION PRIOR TO TRANSFORMATION

No doubt the educational system in Lebanon needed some reform, primarily in the area of teachers' training and application and, of course, in updating information techniques and facilities. But through Markaz at-Tarbiya (the Center for Education), the government argued that the teaching curriculum and methods it had approved in 1968 and 1971, and which had been applied since then, suffered from problems, the elimination of which could help in the desirable integration of Lebanese life.<sup>4</sup> Some of the problems identified were:

1. *Especially on the lower levels, the teaching curriculum and methods focused primarily on quantity, theory, and individual learning, as opposed to quality, application, and group learning.* The teacher was the center of the learning experience and the student an uncritical passive learner. It is true the system then focused on quantity, but it is not true that that was to the exclusion of quality. My first-hand experience with the system is that it focused on both quantity and quality. The Arabic and English literature taught, for example, was qualitatively excellent. I would agree that the system focused on theory, where theory is possible, such as in geometry. But it did not exclude facts, where the study of facts is possible, such as in history and geography. It did not stress application, but it did not exclude it altogether, especially in physics, where students were required occasionally to apply certain theories. The teacher was the center of the learning experience, but the students cannot be described as inactive learners. The very heavy problem solving in physics, chemistry, algebra, and geometry and the literary and grammar analysis, for example, in which students engaged cannot at all count as passive learning, except if learning is

considered passive so long as the student is not the central figure and determinant of the learning situation.

2. *The curriculum was dissociated from vocational education on the various levels.* This was true in the academic schools, but there were vocational schools for those wishing to specialize in vocations.

3. *Pre-college education did not prepare the student for higher education or for the labor market.* Such preparation means beginning specialization in branches of learning and labor areas at the pre-college level. But the value of such early specialization is highly debatable. First, it would seem to deprive students from delving deeper into the branches they had begun to study, and moving on to touch superficially on new areas. Second, there seems to be no need to begin specialization in high school by way of preparing for college, when the majority of high school students have not so far selected to go to college. The statistics in item 6 below show only 2 percent of high school students going to college. Of course, these statistics may change in time, but it would seem that as one may begin specialization in high school, one may also begin it in college. I am of the belief that if one has a strong background in high school, one should find no difficulty specializing in college in the area in which one is interested. The same is true with regard to labor specialization. Instead of specializing in labor areas while in high school, one can do so afterward.

4. *Technological education was absent.* Yes, but this was because technology itself was absent.

5. *Students' education had no relationship to their environment.* According to the government, this fact left the schools in isolation and away from the benefits they could derive from the various opportunities in their surroundings. This is perhaps true.

6. *The educational system led to many drop-outs and failures.* According to the Center for Education statistics for 1981-82, the number of students dropping out or simply failing was very high. Of 1000 students, 340 dropped out of school on the elementary level, 247 on the intermediate level, and 223 on the secondary level; only 190 students remained in the last secondary class. That is, only about two out of ten students graduated from high school.

Again, this is perhaps true, but it does not necessarily indicate deficiencies in the curriculum itself. It is possible, for example, to have an excellent curriculum, yet have many failures and drop-outs owing to the teachers' poor application of the curriculum. I am not asserting that this was the problem. I am simply stating that the failures and drop-outs cannot be logically attributed to the curriculum unless there is evidence for that.

In sum, the government's readiness to transform the educational system that had been in place since 1968 into a new one was based on the argument that under the existing system the learning experience focused on quantity, theory, and student passivity; the curriculum did not deal with vocational training, college preparation, technology, and the environment; and the curriculum was responsible for a large number of drop-outs and failures. While there is some truth to some of these points, such as the dissociation of the curriculum from the

environment, for the most part the government failed to demonstrate the soundness of its argument, namely, that the failure of the educational system was necessarily linked to a deficiency in the educational curriculum, something that (in its view) necessitated essential changes in the curriculum themselves.

#### THE RECENTLY PROPOSED EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

The Ta'if Accord signed in 1989 dictates the following terms that would improve, according to it, the Lebanese educational system in ways that would help fulfill the needs of the Lebanese people and create a sense of integration among them.

1. Education must be available to all and compulsory at least on the elementary level.

2. Academic freedom must be ensured in accordance with the law.

3. Teaching in private schools must be protected, but government supervision over these schools and over the unity of textbooks must be strengthened.

4. Public, vocational, and technological teaching must be reformed and promoted in ways that fit the needs of the country for development and reconstruction. Under this term it is added that conditions in the Lebanese University must be reformed and support must be given to it, especially to its academic units that deal with applied sciences.

5. The curriculum must be reconsidered and developed in ways that promote national belonging (*al-intima'*) and integration (*al-insihar*), spiritual and cultural openness, and unity of textbooks in history and civics.

The new elements the Ta'if Accord seem to have brought to the picture are these: strong government supervision over private teaching institutions; accommodation of the reconstruction of Lebanon by reforming public, vocational, and technological teaching; changes in the educational curriculum to induce national belonging, integration, and spiritual and cultural unity; and insistence on the unity of textbooks, in particular for history and civics. These terms are broad and vague and may be subject to various interpretations. For example, the expression "national belonging" is vague unless the nature of the Lebanese nation is specified with clarity and in detail. In any case, when the Lebanese civil war ended in 1990, the government decided to transform the educational system into a system that takes into consideration the above terms of the Ta'if Accord and avoids what the government considered shortcomings of the previous system. In the view of the government, this new system would, among other things, meet the requirements set in the fifth term of the Ta'if Accord and, therefore, bring the Lebanese together and create integration in Lebanese society. This new system was first advanced in *al-Haykaliyya*,<sup>5</sup> which was approved by the cabinet on 25 October 1995. By "framework for education" the government means:

The general frame, which defines the direction, kinds and branches of education and the relationship of general academic education to vocational and technological education; the relation of pre-college education to higher education; and the link of various types and degrees of education to the market of labor and production, the needs and future aspirations of the Lebanese society. (*al-Haykaliyya*, pp. ii, 24, 27)

*Al-Haykaliyya* asserts that, therefore, the new framework is intended to pave the way for the introduction of “interrelated and integrated new curricula for all kinds, branches and degrees of education.”

The new curricula were fully elaborated in 1997 in *Manahij at-Ta'lam al-'am wa-Ahdafuha* (The Curricula for Public Education and Their Objectives). Let us first examine *al-Haykaliyya* and then see whether it would create educational changes that would bring about in Lebanese society the type of desirable integration defined above. For education to succeed in achieving this type of integration depends on a number of factors, the most important of which are the curriculum and application. What follows is a brief synopsis of the new curriculum.

*Al-Haykaliyya* requires twelve years of pre-college education (ages 6-18), as was required under the previous system. Basic education (elementary and intermediate levels) will by the dictates of *al-Haykaliyya* require nine years of education (ages 6-15). The elementary level will require six years instead of five as required by the old system (three for the first stage, ages 6-9; three for the second, ages 9-12) and the intermediate level will require three (ages 12-15). The secondary level will continue to require three years (age 16-18) (p. iii).<sup>6</sup>

On the secondary level some interesting changes are to be made in the field of what is referred to as “general” or “formal” education, which is to be understood as academic education. Four areas of study are identified in this field (pp. 26-29):

- (A) Humanities (*insaniyyat* or *adabi*: literature, art, languages, history, philosophy, religion, civics, and so on).
- (B) Social and economic sciences (*ijtima' wa iqtisad*: economics, politics, administration, law, sociology, and so on).
- (C) General sciences (*'ulum 'amma*: mathematics, physics, and chemistry).
- (D) Natural sciences (*'ulum al-hayat*: biology, medicine, agriculture, and so on).

Social and economic sciences is a new area, intended to take into account new developments requiring new skills not provided for by the old secondary curriculum. It is stated that this area was created in light of the

progress made in developed countries with respect to this area and the need of Lebanon for this kind of specialization (pp. 3, 31). But it is not shown why the progress of a certain field in “developed countries” necessitates the adoption of the same field in Lebanon, or Lebanon’s need for this field as such. In any case, the first secondary year forms a common ground for the four areas. The second forms a common ground for each two of the four areas. It is to be understood that the third and last year is to be devoted to specialization.

The technical or vocational secondary level is also three years. It branches into three areas: agriculture, industry, and public service (tourism, trade, management, and so on). Agriculture and industry are distinct areas in the first year. Public service does not branch out till the second year. So in the first year a student must take agriculture and public service or industry and public service. In the second and third years the student must take only one of the three areas.

*Al-Haykaliyya* stresses that one of the objectives of the new system is to ensure that students do not turn to nonacademic vocational or technological education before age 12 (age 12 being the end of the stage of compulsory education required by the new system; the end of the stage of compulsory education *hoped for* by the new *Haykaliyya* being the age of 15) (pp. iii, 31, 35). It is worth noting, though, that the end of compulsory education under the old system was also age 12. The difference between the new and the old systems in regard to this issue so far seems to be only in terms of hope.

What about the ideas and skills the new curriculum proposes to advance? Such ideas and skills may be summarized as follows:

#### *Catering to Students' Needs*

The new system asserts that teachers must cater to the needs of the students. But “education” has been defined as the process of developing the students’ potentialities, not catering to their needs. A potentiality is not the same as a need. John’s potentiality for walking, for example, is his capacity for learning to walk or to acquire the ability for walking. His need for walking, on the other hand, is his lack of walking when at the same time walking is with respect to him a suitable or desired activity, whether in reality or in imagination. To cater to students’ needs, therefore, is to try to satisfy the lack or deficiency of things that are in reality or imagination suitable or desired from the point of view of students. This is to say that to cater to students’ needs would be more like mirroring a lack of something whose presence for them is considered suitable or desired. Such mirroring, however, may be an impediment to the development of their potentialities. This could cause education to run into conflicting circumstances and perhaps even into self-contradiction. For, on the one hand, education would serve as a mirror of the students’ needs; that is, it would keep potentialities as they are. On the other hand, it would strive to make a change by developing these potentialities, as required by the definition of “education”



stated above. Perhaps what is intended is catering to students' capacities and abilities, not catering to their needs, as is stated in *al-Haykaliyya*.

### *Compulsory Education*

The new Framework requires compulsory education up to the age of 12, expressing the hope that in time a gradual move will be made to raise the age of compulsory education to 15 (pp. 23, 46). But a careful reading of the text reveals that two types of education will be at work: the systematic and the nonsystematic (pp. 27, 29, 42).

The systematic type, which extends over fourteen years (ages 4-18), is described as consisting of two main levels: basic, which in turn is divided into three sub-levels: kindergarten, elementary, and intermediate; and secondary, which includes academic and vocational types. The nonsystematic, which is not limited to specific ages and is not bound by strict educational rules, is described as opportunities given to the various social and vocational sectors and is intended primarily for social and job promotion. The nonsystematic type of education requires only 25 percent theoretical education; the rest is practical. Furthermore, in nonsystematic education, students are allowed after elementary school to focus completely on vocational skills, such as carpentry, dressmaking, and so on (p. 28). In other words, such students may depart from academic education as soon as they are 12 years old. This means that, like the old system, the new one does not enforce compulsory education beyond the age of 12, except if what is meant by "compulsory education" is compulsory learning of any type of information or skill, including skills related to vocations. I take it, though, that is not the common understanding of "compulsory education." Rather, the expression commonly refers to compulsory academic education. Moreover, why does the new system call for a gradual move from 12 to 15 years of age as the years for compulsory education? Why can it not impose compulsory education until the age of 15 immediately?

### *Religious Education*

The new system does not promote the teaching of religion at any level. (This curricular plan seems to be intended for public schools only, though it is not asserted to be the case.) This attempt to avoid including an essential element of the humanities in the curriculum seems to run contrary to the assertion made in the Introduction to *al-Haykaliyya*, namely, that it is never possible for the Lebanese system to deny the religious communities the right to have their own schools and to teach their religion and that one of the objectives of secondary education is to prepare the student for "understanding the essence of religion and its role in the spiritual, moral and human integration of the individual" (p. 53). This is also despite the further claim that one of the objectives of the new system is "the awareness that the spiritual heritage in Lebanon, represented in the monotheistic religions, is a precious heritage, which should be preserved and

strengthened as a model for spiritual and intellectual interaction and openness, since it is contradictory to the systems and doctrines that are based on racial discrimination and religious fanaticism” (p. 33). It seems that what is stated in the Introduction is for public consumption, and what is stated in the text is intended for inclusion in the curriculum. In any case, a more recent development regarding the present point is this. After strong negative reactions from the religious communities to the above proposal, the government consented to allowing the teaching of Islam on Friday and the teaching of Christianity on Sunday, with the proviso that any religious instruction is to be optional to students. But one would expect all Lebanese students to be required to study both Islam and Christianity, since these are the two major religions in Lebanon. The Lebanese government seems to have the idea that, if religion is not taught, religion will go away and, therefore, the “sectarian problem” in Lebanon will evaporate. But keeping people ignorant about their religion and that of their compatriots will not help create more understanding than keeping them informed, and will therefore not facilitate but worsen communication among them.

### *Languages*

Knowledge of languages, which has always been highly emphasized in Lebanon, seems to be diminished by the new Framework. This is particularly true in the case of Arabic, despite the assertion that in identity Lebanon is an Arab country (pp. 34, 36), that its official language is Arabic (p. 36), and that one of the objectives of *al-Haykaliyya* is to deepen the students’ knowledge of Arabic and help them become proud of it as their native language (p. 54). But, according to the text of the document, students are not to be more exposed in class to the study of the Arabic language than they are to be exposed to other languages, and nothing is to be done to bring the Arabic language closer to the students’ hearts and minds than are some foreign languages. For example, in the first three years of elementary education they are to receive seven hours weekly of Arabic and seven of a foreign language. At the second level of elementary education, they are to receive six hours of Arabic and six of a foreign language (p. 47). At the intermediate level, students will have six hours of Arabic, six of a foreign language, and two of another foreign language (p. 51). Furthermore, in some secondary branches, languages in general are to be given only as many hours as physical education or vocational studies are to be given, namely, two hours a week. In any case, it is not clear how the government expects students to become proud of the Arabic language and have a special affinity to it, when at no level are they given more training in it than in at least one other foreign language.

*Reasoning*

Reasoning on the part of students does not figure explicitly in the new Framework. Critical and analytical thinking is not encouraged, though one of the reasons offered by the government for the new system is its criticism of the absence of such reasoning under the old system. Some of the subjects known for promoting reasoning and critical thinking, such as analytical philosophy and logic, are missing from the curriculum. This is despite the fact that scholars in the West, like Matthew Lipman, have discovered that teaching logic, for example, even on the elementary level, sharpens students' rational skills.<sup>7</sup> The development of reasoning requires more than active learning of just any sort. Active learning of concrete things, for example, may be good, but it may not help develop the students' rational skills as much as active learning of abstract concepts and logical methods. On the whole, *al-Haykaliyya* seems to stress the positive value of vocations and to view theoretical and rational thinking with scorn. It ignores the fact that behind the success of all practical matters lies a logical way of thinking.

*Vocations*

*Al-Haykaliyya* points out that in 1993-94 Lebanon had 1508 public and private academic schools at the elementary and intermediate levels, compared to only 260 vocational schools at the same levels (14.8 percent). The number of students attending academic schools was 261,641 on the intermediate and secondary levels, as opposed to 25,383 on parallel levels in vocational schools (9-10 percent of the total number of students) (p. 12).

Based on the above figures, the government called for a balance between academic and vocational education. Such balance it admits cannot be achieved without full knowledge of labor forces and labor demands (p. 13). Still, *al-Haykaliyya* requires that vocations, such as carpentry, sewing, cooking, and so on, be given much more respectability and allotted more time in the curriculum than they had ever been given. Respectability for vocations is indeed necessary. But the strong emphasis in the curriculum on vocations in the absence of any study of the labor forces and demands that require such emphasis at the expense of promoting rational and linguistic skills is definitely unnecessary. It is worth noting that, with the exception of the Lebanese University and Saint Joseph University, none of the 17 or so Lebanese universities have a department of philosophy. They are instead emphasizing vocations, such as hotel management, public administration, and the like. For example, some Lebanese universities have already graduated a few students in hotel management. However, the market has failed to accommodate all those who have already graduated in this vocational area, though they are few in number.

*Special Education*

*Education for the physically challenged.* The new system acknowledges the existence of physically challenged members of the Lebanese society. *Al-Haykaliyya* states that in Lebanon there were only 10,000 physically challenged people in 1975, 13,000 in 1982, and over 15,000 by 1994 (p. 17). But most likely this estimate is incorrect. One would expect that, after the recent civil war, this number must have been raised to at least 50,000-60,000. Also, though the new system recognizes the need for the education of the physically challenged, it does not introduce any provisions or strategies for their education.

*Education for the gifted.* The new system gives no statistics about the number of gifted students in Lebanon, but simply insists on the necessity of attention to their education by having a special curriculum for them (p. 17). But, again, no plan for such education is proposed and no special curriculum is elaborated.

*Al-Haykaliyya* mentions that regulations will be issued later concerning the education of the physically challenged and the gifted (p. 27). But why later, not earlier, than the curriculum for normal students, which has been already issued? Furthermore, it is astonishing that education of physically challenged and gifted students is lumped together with part-time independent vocational training under nonsystematic education (p. 42). It is not clear either why education of physically challenged and gifted students is seen in the same light as that of part-time students or why these students are to seek nonsystematic education, instead of the regular academic systematic type. It must be remembered that nonsystematic education is, as mentioned above, (1) not limited to any specific age, (2) not bound by any strict educational rules, (3) described as opportunities given to the various social and vocational sectors, and (4) intended primarily for social and job promotion. In other words, physically challenged and gifted students are not to be given opportunities for the same type of academic education, which is to be accessible to their so-called normal peers. This despite the fact that there is nothing that prevents the former type of students (except in rare extreme cases) from benefiting from that type of education.

*Mechanical Promotion*

*Al-Haykaliyya* permits automatic promotion from the elementary level to the intermediate one (p. 31). That is, regardless of performance, students would be permitted to move on from the elementary to the intermediate level. But if the idea is, as I think it is, to prevent discontinuity in the first twelve years of the students' education, and to eliminate from the student's life the trauma of failure at an early age, the idea may create more problems than it solves. First, what is the point of continuity when the student does not catch up with the educational progress of his or her peers? Second, to remain with peers who are more advanced than one is to prolong the agony of feeling the failure. Third, the

knowledge that promotion to a higher level is granted regardless of performance will unavoidably leave some students unmotivated, lazy, and unconcerned.

There remain two very important issues that are worthy of consideration: teacher training and the status of private schools.

If one of the major objectives of this new system is the creation of a sense of unity and integration in Lebanese society, then teachers must interpret and apply the regulations and curriculum in a unified manner. Even if the curricular materials are unified, teachers may not interpret them in a similar manner unless trained and instructed to do so. But *al-Haykaliyya* seems to ignore the subject altogether. It does not in any way touch on the issue of teacher training in applying the new system.

*Al-Haykaliyya* and *Manahij* are concerned with regulations and curriculum for public schools to the exclusion of private ones. But since there are a number of official exams based on this public curriculum, private schools would have to use at least the basic contents of this curriculum. However, this in no way determines the other materials private schools would add to the basic curriculum, the manner in which they are introduced, and the specific textbooks they can use. It is not clear how much, if any, government control over private schools is to be maintained.

Considering the features of this new educational system, will it lead to integration, and if it will, what kind of integration will that be? As stated earlier, there are two types of integration—individual and social—each of which may be desirable or undesirable. On the individual level, I do not think there will be integration of the desirable type. This is because the nonintellectual faculties, which in ancient and medieval times were referred to as lower faculties, will prevail over the intellectual ones, which will remain dormant and unchallenged. There will be no integration of the whole society either, if for no reason other than leaving out its physically challenged and gifted members, its thinkers and theorists, and keeping vague the place of those educated in its private schools. The rest may integrate with each other, but primarily as cooks, carpenters, dressmakers, singers, and dancers. The emphasis on such skills at the expense of intellectual and academic development is exemplified in the following assertion by *al-Haykaliyya*: On the intermediate level students will receive weekly one hour of history, one of geography, and one of civics, but two of physical education and two of various activities such as drawing, painting, sculpture, music, singing, acting, gardening, cooking, driving, computer, community service, and so on (pp. 51, 78). Such activities, it is added, should help in the development of the student's talents and in the integration of his or her personality (p. 78). Indeed, they help in the development of nonintellectual and nonacademic talents, leaving very little room for the development of intellectual and academic ones. With this, there would be no personal integration, but an overpowering by the nonintellectual and nonacademic faculties and skills. It is worth noting that the same attempt that is being made in Lebanon to deintellectualize the new generations through education has also been made recently in Egypt and Palestine.

*Al-Haykaliyya* asserts that the changes in the educational system will fulfill “the needs of the Arab and local labor markets and their future expectations” (pp. 37, 71-72, 74). The same type of revealing idea is repeated at the end of the work. There it is stated that this new system is intended to prepare the Lebanese for the expected future local and regional labor market (pp. 71-74). One cannot but wonder whether there is a political effort to deintellectualize the Lebanese, stripping them of the intellectual and linguistic superiority for which they have always been known in the region and turning them into laborers with strong bodies that can do the job and weak minds that can obey.

## NOTES

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1. *Republic IV*: 432.

2. See Introduction to the Constitution, Paragraph C.

3. *Al-Haykaliyya al-Jadida li al-Ta'lim fi Lubnan* (The New Framework for Education in Lebanon) (Beirut: al-Markaz at-Tarbawa li al-Buhuth, 1995), p. 4.

4. For the six points presented by the Center for Education, see *al-Haykaliyya*, pp. 8, 9, 11. For a critique of these points, see Nimr Frayha, “Taqwim Awwali li al-Manihij al-Jadida wa Falsafatiha fi al-Ta'lim al-'Amm,” Part I, *as-Safir* (June 1998): 830.

5. See note 3.

6. Cf. *Manihij*, pp. 724, 751-52.

7. See, for example, Matthew Lipman, *Thinking in Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Lipman, *Harry Stottlemeier's Discovery* (Montclair, N.J.: Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children, 1977); Lipman, Ann Margaret Sharp, and Frederick S. Oscanyan, *Philosophy in the Classroom*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980).