

Fall 2012

The Perceptions, Problems, and Possibilities of Cameroonians with Mental Disabilities: A Case study of Le Centre National de Réhabilitation des Personnes Handicapées de Yaoundé

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The Perceptions, Problems, and Possibilities of Cameroonians
with Mental Disabilities:

A Case study of *Le Centre National de Réhabilitation des Personnes
Handicapées de Yaoundé*

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November 25, 2012
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ISP Codes: 201, 228, 500, 903

Abstract

For my study, I focused on the state of persons with mental disabilities in Yaoundé, Cameroon, a discriminated and marginalized population. I completed an internship at *Le Centre National de Réhabilitation des Personnes Handicapées* in the special education school as a case study. There, through participant observation, simple observation and interviews as well as outside research, I gathered information regarding my research questions and hypothesis:

1. Who is responsible for the majority of persons with mental disabilities?
2. What are the affects of perceptions of persons with mental disabilities?
3. What are some possibilities for a better life and through what means?

Hypothesis:

1. Because many people with mental disabilities are abandoned, the state is in charge of their well being.
2. Because the general public stigmatizes persons with mental disabilities, they face difficulties with integration.
3. If people with mental disabilities attend the special needs school at *Le Centre de Réhabilitation des Personnes Handicapées*, it will facilitate integration into society and into the educational system.

Résumé

Cette étude un rapport de stage effectué pendant un mois à l'école spéciale du Centre National de Réhabilitation des Personnes Handicapées de Yaoundé au Cameroun, à partir de l'observation participante, l'observation simple, et les entretiens et les sources écrites, j'ai collecté des informations autour de mes questions de recherche et mes hypothèses:

1. *Qui est responsable pour la majorité des personnes avec les handicapés mentaux?*
2. *Quels sont les perceptions développées autour des personnes avec les handicapés mentaux?*
3. *Quelles sont les possibilités d'amélioration des conditions de vie des handicapés mentaux et au prix de quels moyens?*

Hypothèses:

1. *L'Etat est responsable des handicapés mentaux dans la mesure où ceux-ci sont le plus souvent abandonnés par leurs familles.*
2. *Les handicapés mentaux font face à des difficultés d'intégration à cause des stéréotypes sociaux.*
3. *L'école spéciale prépare l'intégration des handicapés mentaux dans le système éducatif national et dans la vie sociale.*

Acknowledgments and Dedication

This work is dedicated to my students at *La Colombe*, the school of *Le Centre National de Rehabilitation des Personnes Handicapées*. Thank you for embracing me in your community and allowing me to work with you. Your enthusiasm during general assembly was always a joy.

I would first like to recognize my parents for their love and support during this process.

In addition, I want to recognize the *L'Arche* Community of Mobile, Alabama, a communal living organization for persons with disabilities, for their work and for giving me the idea in the first place through my experience with their organization.

Thank you to Amina, my advisor for guiding me through this process. Your enthusiasm and encouragement was greatly appreciated.

Thank you to my host family for graciously hosting me and listening to my stories each day.

Thank you to the *Institut Français de Yaoundé* for being a meeting place for many *rendez-vous* and work sessions.

Finally, I want to thank the Lord for giving me this opportunity and continually walking by my side. All I am is dedicated to Him and this work as well.

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Introduction

It began with one encounter; one exchange framed my idea for this project. During the semester with the School for International Training, we often visited different cultural sites during the weekend. One particular weekend, we visited the only art school in Cameroon and I looked forward to seeing the studio and finished works. What I did not expect to see was a young boy with a mental disability. When we arrived and climbed out of the bus, he was there to greet us. One could tell he had a mental disability but it was not visible what kind. I went to take a photo by a nearby mural and he joined. From that point on, he was my shadow for the day. As we walked to the first building, I could tell he had urinated and vomited on himself. Thinking he must live there, I took the hand he offered as we left to see the school facilities, hoping that someone could help him clean himself. However, it became evident as we had our tour that he was often around the center but did not live there. The host siblings on the trip pointed at him as they kept their distance. It seemed all needed was attention to affirm that he was someone worthwhile. Once we arrived at the gallery, he became more and more animated as he realized the attention he could get from the other children by chasing them. No one seemed to know what to do with him. It became a tense situation when he even chased students around the gallery full of fragile art pieces. As we took the bus to leave, he blocked the entrance and tried to grab hold of students. It was only when our tour guide took hold of him that we could enter to depart.

The situation upset and unsettled me. Who was he? Where was he from? Why was no one taking care of him? And why was everyone so afraid? I had already determined to study persons with disabilities because of several experiences in the States working with adults with mental disabilities but this encounter made me curious to know more specifically the state of persons with mental disabilities in Cameroon. This led me to ask the following research questions:

1. Who is responsible for the majority of persons with mental disabilities?
2. What are the affects of perceptions of persons with mental disabilities?
3. What are some possibilities for a better life and through what means?

Persons with mental disabilities in Cameroon

Throughout Cameroon, there are 2 million persons with disabilities.¹ Their lives are characterized by exclusion, discrimination, and marginalization.² Many people are afraid or do not have information to understand these conditions. In addition, children with disabilities are in a particularly vulnerable state as my introductory experience implies.

My study focuses specifically on *Le Centre de Réhabilitation des Personnes Handicapées* and my internship in the special education school.³ The Center was first created in 1971 by Canadian Cardinal Paul Emile Leger and called *Centre de Rééducation de Yaoundé*.⁴ For the first seven years, the Center aided children with polio before handing the organization over to the state, continuing to aid those with polio and physical disabilities. Then in 2009, the mission of the center changed when it became a public establishment. All types of handicaps were welcomed as the center was renovated to accommodate persons with visual, motor, hearing, and mental impairments.⁵

Directed by the *Ministère des Affaires Sociale*, *Le Centre National de Réhabilitation des Personnes Handicapées* is the only government center of its kind in the country. Some of its services include providing housing for abandoned children and persons with disabilities. In addition, there is a special needs school and an inclusive school to see that each student's case is

¹ Mme Cathérien Bakang Mbock, Ministre des Affaires Sociales. *Journée Internationale des Personnes Handicapées*. speech. 3/12/12, CNRPH.

² Termes de Références. Le Centre National de Rehabilitation des Personnes Handicapées. Print. 30/11/12.

³ *La Colombe*

⁴ *Le Centre National de Réhabilitation des Personnes Handicapées* official brochure.

⁵ Jaquiline Noubissi, Director of Services, informal interview 21/11/12, her office at CNRPH.

addressed. Physical therapy, occupational therapy, counseling, doctors and nurses, sports activities, social activities, and a chapel are also part of the Centre's campus to meet physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. To develop skills for income generation, professional classes are available as well. With this context in mind, I proposed the following hypotheses in answer to my research questions:

1. Because many people with mental disabilities are abandoned, the state is in charge of their well being.
2. Because the general public stigmatizes persons with mental disabilities, they face difficulties with integration.
3. If people with mental disabilities attend the special needs school at *Le Centre National de Réhabilitation des Personnes Handicapées*, it will facilitate integration into society and into the educational system.

To further define and clarify my study, I selected the following key terms to quantify:

1. Disability: limitation of a person's ability, due to a deficiency, to fully participate in an activity in a given environment⁶
2. Person with disability: any person who is unable to fulfill by themselves all or part of the requirements of a normal person or social life, as a result of a physical or mental disability, be it of birth or otherwise⁷
3. Handicap: a condition that markedly restricts one's ability to function physically, mentally, or socially⁸
4. Integration: the action or process of integrating; the intermixing of people or groups previously segregated⁹
5. Inclusive education: schools should accommodate all children regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other conditions. This should include disabled and gifted children, street and working children, children from remote or nomadic populations, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities and children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.¹⁰

⁶ Law N.2010/002 of April 2010 Relating to the protection and welfare of persons with disabilities - Republic of Cameroon.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ "handicap". Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford University Press. 10 December 2012 <<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/handicap?q=handicap>>.

⁹ "integration". Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford University Press. 10 December 2012 <<http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/integration?q=integration>>.

¹⁰ The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, para 3

6. Perception: a way of regarding, understanding, or interpreting something; a mental impression.¹¹
7. CNRPH: *Le Centre National de Réhabilitation des Personnes Handicapées*
8. Down syndrome: a congenital disorder arising from a chromosome defect, causing intellectual impairment and physical abnormalities including short stature and a broad facial profile. It arises from a defect involving chromosome 21, usually an extra copy (trisomy-21).¹²
9. Autism: a developmental disability significantly affecting verbal and nonverbal communication and social interaction, generally evident before age 3, that adversely affects educational performance. Characteristics of autism include irregularities and impairments in communication, engagement in repetitive and stereotypic movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences.¹³
10. Cerebral Palsy: a condition marked by impaired muscle coordination (spastic paralysis) and/or other disabilities, typically caused by damage to the brain before or at birth.¹⁴

Literature Review

Throughout the globe, persons with disabilities make up 15 percent of the population with one quarter of the world population acting as care givers or family members of such persons. In their daily lives, persons with disabilities face difficulties such as stigmatization and discrimination, remaining outside mainstream society as well as the political process.¹⁵ In addition, eighty percent of persons with disabilities are located in developing countries and are represented in some of the most marginalized groups in the world. With regards to worldwide progress, the Millennium Developmental Goals set eight key goals for the global community, addressing concerns of poverty, health, education, and the environment, specifically for the most

¹¹ "perception". Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford University Press. 10 December 2012 <http://oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/perception?q=perception>.

¹² "Down's syndrome". Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford University Press. 10 December 2012 <http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/Down's_syndrome?q=down_syndrome>.

¹³ Harman, Michael L, Clifford L. Drew, M. Winston Egan. *Human Exceptionality , Society, School, and Family*. Allyn & Bacon. sixth edition. Print. 1999. 273

¹⁴ "cerebral palsy. Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford University Press. 10 December 2012.<http://oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/cerebral_palsy?q=cerebral_palsy>.

¹⁵ <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1561>

poor and marginalized persons on the globe. Thus, MDGs must include and integrate persons with disabilities into developmental progress to fully attain their objectives.¹⁶

Education remains to be an issue for persons with disabilities as reported by the Millennium Development Goals Report from 2010, showing the connection between disabilities and marginalization in education as well as the estimation that “more than one third of out-of-school children have a disability.”¹⁷ With this in mind, the resolution 65/186 of the General Assembly calls for the inclusion of persons with disabilities into the developmental process, including education. Events such as the 2011 ECOSOC¹⁸ Annual Ministerial Review emphasized this step by directing their attention to “implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to education.”¹⁹

In Cameroon, the rights of persons with disabilities are protected by Law N.2010/002. Section 24 specifies that persons with physical, sensory, mental and multiple disabilities should have access to general education and professional training. Thus, the political stance for education in Cameroon is inclusive education, creating an environment where students with special needs can have meaningful learning experiences in regular schools. The necessity of primary education for students with special needs was passed in 1983 law on the protection of people with disabilities followed by a 1990 specifying the implementation of the law including “sport for schools, special pedagogical assistance, training of specialized staff and the development of curriculum materials.”²⁰ Cameroon lacks a ministry specifically for special education, rather it falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Welfare, who also supervises voluntary organizations that aid students with special needs.

¹⁶ <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1569>

¹⁷ <http://www.un.org/disabilities/default.asp?id=1576>

¹⁸ Un Economic and Social Council

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/281_79.pdf p 63

While there is little literature available for persons with disabilities, there is even fewer when specifying mental disabilities. This can also be confused with a mental illness. Thus, for this study, it is important to define the difference between a mental illness and a mental disability in Cameroon. When one talks of a *maladie mentale*²¹, it falls within the range of depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and schizophrenia. These conditions can occur to circumstantial stresses as well as neurological imbalances. However, my study of mental disabilities are conditions that have sociocultural differences, biomedical factors, behavioral factors, and unknown prenatal influences.²²

Methodology

Site Selection and Location

For my study, I chose to complete an internship, allowing for me to learn as well as be a participant observer and simple observer in a specific setting. As I searched for possible sites, my academic director suggested visiting *Le Centre National de Rehabilitation des Personnes Handicapées* (CNRPH) for further information. At my second attempt to contact the office, I spoke with the office staff who placed me in contact with *le directeur du Bureau*,²³ Fukah Relendice. She works specifically with the special needs school and gave me a tour of both the special needs school and the inclusive school as well as the other areas of the center.

CNRPH seemed well suited to what I wanted to study, especially with the special education school, named *La Colombe*. Thus, I applied for an internship, specifying that I work at *La Colombe*. Through this experience, I hoped to study the state of persons with mental disabilities and the effect that special education has on the lives of the children through my interactions in the classroom with the students and teachers. I felt that this specialized attention

²¹ Mental illness

²² Human Exceptionality 273

²³ Director of Office

could aid students in their efforts to further integrate into the community. To see this possible effect, I planned to discover what past students are doing now to see what kind of impact it had on their life. Although there is also an inclusive school, it includes mainly students that that have learning or physical disabilities.

Le Centre National des Personnes Handicapées is located in Yaoundé-Etoug-Ebe at the top of a hill long hill to the right of the main intersection. Once one enters the gated community, there are well kept gardens to the left, a chapel on the right, and offices straight ahead. Upon further entering the Center, one sees that it is a vast locale with several long narrow buildings connected in the middle to make rectangles and an open space in the middle including a swimming pool and a basket ball court. Going down a hill on the right, one passes buildings to reach the two schools at the bottom of the hill which are in the form of an L-shape; the offices completing the horizontal portion and the two schools occupying the vertical portion. There is a wide open parking lot area for the students to have recess and a cafeteria building at the far end. Inside the school, there is first a large open area for main assembly and large gatherings for the organization. To the right is a long gray hallway, split by a gate in halfway down to separate the special needs school from the inclusive school.

Target and Sample Population

My target population was persons with mental disabilities in Cameroon while my sample population was persons with mental disabilities at CNRPH, particularly in the special education school. It is important to note that while this was my population, due to ethical concerns, I did not interview persons with mental disabilities but rather people who live and work closely with them as later specified. I focused my research on persons with mental disabilities rather than mental illnesses to delineate the difference. In my preliminary research and throughout my

interviews with sources outside the Center it was especially necessary to indicate. Otherwise, I was talking about a different population than my interviewee. While my project is limited mainly to the persons with mental disabilities *au Centre National de Réhabilitation des Personnes Handicapées* I used the *Foyer de Coeur Immaculé* and *La Fondation de Chantal Biya* for references since the former has some older abandoned persons with mental disabilities the latter follows children with all types of difficulties, including mental disabilities.

Data collection procedures

My data collection consisted of participant observation, simple observation and interviews. I chose these methods to obtain a well rounded understanding of my subject matter and have the ability to pose further in depth questions. To begin my study, I pretested my questions with two psychology students at the University of Yaoundé I. Although the questions were not directly relevant to them because they referred to teachers, parents, and administrators, it was helpful to have their input on the breadth and width as well as the correctness of my questions.

In total, for my participant observation and simple observation, I spent 88.75 hours at my internship over the course of three work weeks. At my site location, I recorded observations and participant observation activities throughout the day. Additionally, I noted interactions I observed between students, students and teachers, and students and parents. Eight (08) of those days were spent with the *maternelle*²⁴ level class, *Initiation I*, to become familiar with a particular class and students. Then, I spent a day in each of the other classes at the special education school including *Initiation II*, *Alphabétisation*,²⁵ *Cycle Spécial*,²⁶ and *Initiation au*

²⁴ kindergarden

²⁵ Literacy

²⁶ Special cycle

Langage des Signes.²⁷ Finally, I spent two days (02) in the Inclusive Education section with *Maternelle I et II* and *SIL*, which is the equivalent of first grade, to compare the two sections of *La Colombe*. In preparation for the *Journée Internationale des Personnes Handicapées* on December 3rd, classes were cancelled for a educational discussion for parents, teachers, and administrators which I attended. Then, on the day of the celebration, classes were also canceled so we could participate in the activities. Finally, after classes, I spent one week interning with one of the professional development classes for sewing, *le Programme de Propreté Atelier de couture*, to observe and interact with the students and see what kind of skills they are gaining for a more independent life.

To have concrete data to connect with my observations, I conducted interviews at the Center with teachers, parents, and administrators. In total, I interviewed fourteen (14) teachers with multiple interviews for several, three (03) administrators with multiple conversations, six (06) parents, as well as the psychologist at the Center (01). Finally, I interviewed a student (01) with a physical disability at the professional formation class for sewing since I did not interview persons with mental disabilities. Overall, my interviews allowed me to pose relevant questions for my study according to my research questions but also to direct my questions according to my observations.

In addition, for further background study on persons with mental disabilities in Cameroon, I conducted two (02) preliminary interviews at *L'Université de Yaoundé I*, an interview with a psychology professor at the same university (01), and *La Fondation Chantal Biya* (03), for a scientific perspective through my conversation with the neurologist and the physical therapist. Finally, I obtained a social perspective from a nun at *Le Foyer du Coeur Immaculé* (01).

²⁷ Introduction to sign language

In the preliminary steps of my research I also planned to conduct interviews at *l'Hôpital Jeanmot*, *Le Ministère des Affaires Sociales*, and *Le Ministère de l'Éducation de Base*. However, I learned that the hospital primarily takes care of persons with pulmonary infections and mental illnesses rather than a type of mental disability. Because this is irrelevant to my study, I did not spend the time completing interviews there. In addition, CNRPH falls under *Le Ministère des Affaires Sociales*. Any information I would have received from other persons at *Le Ministère des Affaires Sociales* would have been less accurate than what I learned through the personnel at the Center. In addition, *Le Ministère de l'Éducation de Base* does not deal with special education and thus was less relevant. Currently, there is no specific Ministry for special education.

The interview process varied between formal and informal interviews. The longer, more in depth interviews were normally formal while my daily interviews were informal. Because I spent the majority of my time at the special education school working with teachers, I wanted their input into daily situations that arose as well as more guided conversational interviews. The day of a teacher is very demanding with little time apart from the students, especially when they need to be supervised more closely in this setting. Thus, for the most part, my interviews with them were informal, unrecorded conversations throughout the day. Interviews with parents were normally conducted after I had established a rapport with them. These were scheduled, formal interviews conducted at the school before classes started. Throughout this process, I had twenty-four (25) informal interview and eight (08) formal ones with ten (10) that were recorded. Some persons abstained from recording because of the political nature of the organization while others for comfort. At times, however it was also impossible to use my recorder for each conversation because of the distraction it would have created in the classroom setting.

My interviews were conducted in both French and English. Because the majority of the teachers at *La Colombe* were anglophone, it was often more comfortable to converse in English rather than French. For others, when there was confusion in our conversation, we switched to English from French to clarify. However, the majority of my conversations took place in French.

Other methods of data collection include photography and the collection of important documents. To chronicle my studies, I took pictures in class with the permission of my project advisor as well as the teacher of the class. This allows one to refer visually to the students as well as the activities that took place. In addition, I collected lists of the students and other important documents from my project advisor for further reference.

Data from my interviews was first of all rewritten in my work journal in the form of notes. If there was a recording, I then transcribed the material for further reference. When I began coding the material, I grouped similar responses from the same type of informant in order to make comparisons. Finally, I illustrated them as possible through charts or graphs to visually see the similarities and/or differences. To ensure the reliability of my data, I completed many interviews, allowing for more variety of responses rather than using the testimony of just one person.

Ethical issues

Because I worked with mentally disabled children in my internship, I only included observations since I could not contest to their age and cognitive state. For some students, their age estimated by teachers since they were abandoned. In addition, I could not count of the reliability of the information presented to base my study upon. During one of my visits in an older class, students talked with me for about two minutes each for an activity lead by the teacher. However, I did not include these responses because they seemed influenced in the way I

posed the question, because many times the responses were unclear, and finally because I could not ethically base my responses on the conversation due to their cognitive state. Finally, I did not include the names of students because they are, for the most part, under the age of sixteen.

Strengths and limitations

This study presents several strengths in its construction. First, I was able to be in one setting for three weeks, interacting with children with mental disabilities each day. All the teachers in the special education as well as the inclusive section were trained as special education teachers and provided ample opportunity to discuss different aspects of my study each day. The ability to observe students of various ages was very helpful in my comparison of the different grade levels.

In addition, I had many resources available to me because of my location in Yaoundé. As CNRPH is the only such center in Cameroon and central Africa, I observed the forefront of the governments work for persons with special disabilities and the resources that are available. To broaden my perspective of the state of persons with mental disabilities in Cameroon, I talked with a psychology professor, neurologist, physical therapist, nun, and young mother with a baby that has cerebral palsy. This allowed me to place CNRPH in a social context outside of my work there and see what progress is being made with other organizations for persons with mental disabilities.

My project also presented its difficulties. As I began my background research, I was challenged by the fact that there is little literature is available. This was reflective of the newness of special education and the concept of mental disabilities in the country as well. Thus, my material relating specifically to Cameroon was limited.

Because I completed an internship that was the duration of the work day, time constrains posed difficulties with conducting outside research for further social analysis. At times, I cut my

afternoon short working in the sewing workshop to complete an interview before 3:30 pm. This was also difficult because I had a long commute each day by taxi.

In addition, I faced some difficulties with the commencement of my internship. When I first contacted CNRPH for my internship, they seemed glad to have me as an intern and directed me to apply for their record. However, when I brought my application, the office noted that the process can take up to two weeks at times for approval from the advisors. Thus, when the week of ISP began, rather than starting right away with my internship, I began with research and interviews outside of my internship setting.

When I did not receive a call during the allotted time, I visited the center but was told to return the next day to talk with the Director of Services from the *Ministère des Affaires Sociales*. It was only when I was face to face with her that she read my application and approved my internship. Additionally, the direction of my internship was a bit of a challenge with my project advisor on site. For instance, although I thought it would be helpful to observe and interact with one of the professional courses each day, their schedule did not exactly coincide with mine. Thus, when I attended, students were either having lunch, working individually, or taking notes rather than completing lectures or class activities.

Furthermore, health issues posed some constraints on my research. A severe sinus infection continued to plague me, affecting my participation in some class activities. For example, I was informed that a sporting event would take place on a Saturday morning the Friday before. Because it seemed like a good opportunity, I decided to go despite not feeling well all week but it proved impossible Saturday morning. It was only afterward that I learned it was an annual competition for students with disabilities called *HandiSport*.

Because I used my camera to document the activities and meeting at my internship, it was an important part of my research. However, it was stolen while walking to *L'Institut Français de Yaoundé* during the final week of my internship. Because it previously did not work when I tried to load them on my computer, I lost all my photos and further evidence of research.

Internship

When I began my internship, my project advisor gave me a tour of the Center, explaining the different areas of work. As we considered the best option for my internship and research, it seemed that I would have the most interaction and information through the special education school. I previously indicated, I began my first week working with one teacher in the *Initiation I* class and then visited the other levels and the inclusive school. In addition to my work in the special education school, I interacted and observed with the professional formation class for sewing. The focus of special education at CNRPH is educational reintegration with the purpose of the students being able to move on to this inclusive education section. However, this has only happened twice so far in the school.²⁸

Daily Activities

Each day began at 8:00 am as all the children gather from playing outside or in the main assembly area. One of the male teachers conducted general assembly and each grade lines up perpendicular to the small stage and the students followed the teacher's lead. Students completed exercises such as raising their raising and lowering their arms and standing at ease and then attention. As the teacher named an area of their body, they touch their mouth, ears, nose, etc. At times, the leader indicates one part but touches another to see if the students have to follow what he said, not his action. Other activities included discussing the day of the week and a certain aspect of personal responsibility such as washing their hands, using the bathrooms correctly and

²⁸ Relendice Fukah, informal interview 15/11/12, 26/11/12, Initiation I classroom.

helping with chores at home. Additionally, each day we sang the national anthem and “*Je suis dans la joie*”²⁹ led by a student. Prayer each day is led by a student as well. To send the students to class, we march and sing: “March, march, march to class. We are marching, we are marching. To go and learn, to go and learn.” The students follow each other in a line as they marched to their classroom.

Halfway during the day, students had a break for snacks and play time. Besides *Initiation I*, all levels are able to go outside to play under the supervision of a teacher. The youngest level stayed inside because they have the tendency to run off, even during class time. When students return to class, they take a small rest at their desks, although it does not always turn out to be a time of calm as students tend to bother each other in the *Initiation I* and *Initiation II* levels.

Finally, all students who have signed up for lunch go to the cafeteria at about 11:30 am. As the teachers and I passed out the meal and supervised, the students typically eat rice with vegetables and fish. Because the students like to eat, it can be used as motivation and is also an opportunity to teach them about cutlery and proper eating habits, especially for the younger children. Lastly, it is another opportunity for students to interact and socialize.³⁰ After lunch, the school day finishes at 12:00 when parents are supposed to come gather their child. One to two teachers remain on *permanence*, supervising the students until they leave with their parents.

Initiation I

I spent my first eight days with *Initiation I*, the equivalent of a maternal or preschool. However, the children are normally older but at a less developed level than their peers due their mental disabilities. The focus at this level for the fifteen (15) students is reflective of its name as

²⁹ I'm happy

³⁰ Relendice Fukah, informal interview. 21/11/12, *Initiation I* classroom.

students learn to become initiated to the school, to interact in a group setting, to follow instructions, and to exhibit proper behavior. For example, when school started at the beginning of the semester, Liliosa, the teacher, had many problems with children who urinated or defecated in class. However, once I visited, these problems were becoming fewer and fewer, only three times within my time there.

In this class, students range in disabilities from down syndrome (02), autism (05), cerebral palsy (02), West syndrome (01), to mental or developmental disabilities that have not been specified. For four students, it was their second year in the class, while for most, it was their first year in *Initiation I*.

Initiation II

Students in this level are older and already adjusted to the school and its rules. It has two teachers, one who has been working there for 27 years while the other, Eric, just two.³¹ They focus on the alphabet, writing, and numbers as well as life skills. The class contains fourteen (14) students. Throughout my day with this class, I observed the distinctions of each student. There were various levels in the class generally according to students with more or less severe disabilities. The class included one child (01) with down syndrome, one (01) with West syndrome, three (02) with autism while the rest had “*les problèmes du développement ou une maladie qui a changé le comportement de l’enfant.*”³² For example, one of the students had a head injury and operation. Now, he exhibits signs of autism.³³ In addition, some students were more boisterous while two were more quiet and scholarly.

Alphabétisation

³¹ Initiation II teacher, informal interview, 27/11/12, Initiation II classroom; Eric, informal interview, 27/11/12, Initiation II classroom.

³² Eric, informal interview, 27/11/12, Initiation II classroom.

³³ Ibid.

*Alphabétisation*³⁴ is the third level at *La Colombe* with students sixteen (16) ranging in age from sixteen to twenty years old. Because it is so large, there are two groups in the class at different levels. The main focus literacy as well as math with the goal that all can read. While the teacher identified one (01) student with autism and one (01) with down syndrome, the rest he categorized as having a “*deficits intellectual*.” In this class, there is only one teacher, Steve, who was completed training for the Ministry of Social Affairs for persons with disabilities. Then he received training for literacy from the Ministry of Youth and a social program for those with handicaps called *Programme Social de Lutte contre le chômage et l’analphabétisation*.³⁵ While relating his passion for literacy, he cited the fact that 30% of Cameroonians are illiterate and the importance of reducing this statistic.³⁶

Cycle Spéciale

This class of students represents the oldest and most severe cases of mental disabilities. Because of this, the focus is to help the seven (07) students with daily life skills. Flora, one of the two teachers, cited goals of having the students be able to say good morning, brush their teeth, bathe, dress and eat by themselves despite the fact that it can take two to three years to understand.³⁷ The students also work on things such as the alphabet, numbers and days of the week. While there is one (01) student with down syndrome, the class also contains three brothers (03) with severe cases of autism. They rest have different forms of mental and developmental disabilities, with two (02) students in wheelchairs as well. After general assembly, when classes normally start we waited for the students to arrive. One by one, they came. The teachers have

³⁴ Literacy

³⁵ Social Program against unemployment and illiteracy

³⁶ Steve, informal interview, 28/11/12, Literacy classroom.

³⁷ Flora, informal interview. 29/11/12, Cycle spéciale classroom.

been instructing the students all semester how to knock, come in, and greet the teacher. A few students completed this task, but it is still difficult for many.

Initiation au Langage des Signes

The final section that I interacted with in the special education school was a class specifically for deaf children. It consists of seven (07) students ranging in age from three (03) to ten (10). In addition, two (02) of these students also were autistic. Their teacher, Mr. Bouhba, was specially trained in braille and sign language. In his experiences, the combination of deafness and autism was the most often compared to other types of mental disabilities.³⁸ These cases interested me because they were the most relevant to my study and illustrated to me the difficulty of having multiple types of disabilities.

Inclusive school

In my interaction with an English school teacher at the inclusive school, I discovered more of the role of this educational setting. All the teachers in the section completed their formation as a special education teacher. In these classes, the teacher cited autism, dysgraphia, dyslexia, dyscalculia,³⁹ as well as physical disabilities and behavior disorders such ADHD. Although it is challenging for him to address each case and situation, he indicated the importance of such inclusive environments because it reduces stigmatizations creates an atmosphere where peers help each other, no matter the disability. They try to use language that is acceptable to this population, such as “intellectually retarded,” or “people with disabilities” rather than the word handicapped.⁴⁰

I spent two days in this section of the school. First, I participated in *Maternelle I et II*, the youngest class of eighteen students (18) which has two teachers (02). The disabilities represented

³⁸ Mr. Bouhba Celestin, informal interview, 4/12/12, in his classroom

³⁹ mathematics disability

⁴⁰ Ayong Edongong Etohgon, informal interview, 23/11/12, Initiation I classroom.

range from spina bifida, difficulties with motor and fine motor movements, physical handicaps, and a child who was born without arms who has learned to write with her toes. Some students have speaking and learning difficulties because they came from villages and are just learning french. Other difficulties include dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia. The teacher cited that they try to create a “positive culture towards disabilities”⁴¹ in the classroom. My next interaction with the inclusive school was with *SIL* (class I). It contains a total of thirty-six (36) students with exactly half of them having some sort of disability.

Home for Abandoned Children

On my first day at my internship when received a tour from my project advisor, one area of the center that we visited was the housing for abandoned children. She explained that many children both with a physical or mental disability or left by their families because of the difficulties their state presents. The orphanage area has bedrooms with several beds or cribs in each according to the child’s age. In addition, staff were present taking care of the physical needs of the children. While I did not have time to interact with them, I saw the various forms of physical and mental disabilities within the group of children. Many were more severely disable and needed more specific care.

As children grow older, the Ministry of Social Affairs generally relocates them to a living space for their appropriate age with other abandoned children. They provided a busing service to bring the children to school. However, with the aid of the social worker, children are at times reunited with their families. During the International Handicap Day the Director of CNRPH, Mme Fomulu Grace Nubonyin, cited that out of eleven abandoned children at the center, five have been reunited and reintegrate into their family.

⁴¹ Takougen Gislain Laurence, informal interview, 6/12/12, Maternelle I et II classroom.

Professional Classes

At CNRPH, there are several opportunities for students to progress in their education after finishing at *La Colombe*. While these professional classes are not limited to students with mental disabilities, this was my focus when I engaged with them. The Director of Office indicated that five students from the special education school at the Literacy level have moved on to such classes.

My first week at CNRPH, I attended the sewing class each afternoon after I finished with the special education school. While the majority of the twelve (12) students are young women, there are two young men as well. Some students have physical disabilities while others may be in a disadvantage situation financially or have a mental disability. However, the director could not specify the different mental disabilities; she just explained that three students came for the special education school while others came from the Center and some from the community. There was however, one student who was not able to speak, presumably from a mental disability.

In an informal interview with the director of the program, she explained the curriculum for the program, which is three years long. It has two sections: *Industrie de l'habillement (IH)* and *Economie Sociale et Familiale (ESF)*. The first portion of the class consists of studying colors and patterns of fabric as well as the different types of textures followed by drawing figures and clothing, the technology of fabric, sewing and embroidery, complete outfits, and finally washing and ironing each type of clothing.

The ESF portion of the class focuses on nutrition, becoming a mother, and the economy of the home. In addition, there are classes on french, english, hygiene, and natural science. After one completes the program, the student receives a sewing machine, iron, scissors, thread and

fabric. The instructors help the students find work and follow them to see how they are doing. Other students continue with the program even after the three years.

Because of my work at the special education school in the morning, I was not able to observe their classes that took place throughout the day. Rather, I interacted with the students as they worked. During my time there, I helped with small assignments such as ironing, sewing clasps and dresses, and doing small bits of sewing. All the students were working hard in preparation for the International Disability Day, when they would display and sell their work. Most pieces were small dresses, kabbas, or crocheted blankets, hats, footies, and clothing for babies.

Other classes that help prepare students with a professional skill include woodworking and shoemaking. CNRPH also cites classes on metal working, “*sérigraphie*,”⁴² and “*cordonnerie*”⁴³ as classes although I was not able to visit each of these due to time constraints.

Special events

Throughout my internship at CNRPH, there were special events outside of the normal classroom activities. The first occurred on my second day at the Center, November 16th. There was a special meeting as the Hilton Organization gave the Center special gifts in recognition of their work. Halfway through the school day, we gathered all the special education and inclusive education students in the main assembly area. *Madame du Service* began by introducing the center and its history followed by a welcome song led by the students. Then, Hilton presented their thanks and an overview of their organization as well as encouragement to CNRPH in their work. Their gift to the Center was a meal for the students and staff consisting of various kinds of bread and fruit as well as juice and coffee.

⁴² silkscreen printing

⁴³ shoe repairing, *Le Centre National de Réhabilitation des Personnes Handicapées* official brochure.

Despite the generosity of the gift, I was struck by the fact that there was not only enough food for all the students but the fact that Hilton did not give something that could have been more helpful to the student's education.⁴⁴ If they truly knew the Center and their needs, they could have recognized them by giving more school supplies or sponsoring children at the school who cannot afford to enroll in the lunch program. It was an event that was confusing and frustrated from my point of view.

The next event was a sports competition for students with disabilities called *HandiSport* on Saturday, November 24th. Because, as I indicated, I was sick with a severe sinus infection, I was not able to attend the Saturday event. However, the other teachers explained the details of the event to me. It was a third annual event that takes place with other schools for disabled children; this year the other students came from Douala. Students took part in soccer and racing competitions and many of the students received medals for their accomplishments. Seeing them on the Monday afterward, students proudly wore their medals for others to see. The event seemed to boost their moral and self-confidence in the things they were able to achieve.

Additionally, in preparation for *La Journée Internationale des Personnes Handicapées*, the Center conducted a *causerie éducative*⁴⁵ on the importance of inclusive education. Teachers, parents, and social workers gathered in the general assembly area as the administrators gave speeches on the topic, expressing the ways to conduct inclusive education and its benefits, as well as the barriers they still face.

December the third was the annual *Journée Internationale des Personnes Handicapées*. The program officially began as the *Ministre des Affaires Sociales*, Mme Cathérine Bakang Mbock, arrived. There was an official welcome for her followed by the signing of the national

⁴⁴ Hilton organization gave food and a presentation to recognize CNRPH while the school is in need of materials such as paper, crayons, colored chalk, and soap.

⁴⁵ Educational discussion

anthem by a group of hearing impaired women. A delegate from Goodwill Cameroon then gave an welcome address, citing the theme of the celebration, “*lever les barrières en vue de favoriser l’avènement d’une société accessible et inclusive pour tous.*”⁴⁶ The next speaker was the Secretariat of the UN General who announced the need for a diverse and inclusive society as well as the official opening of a high level meeting taking place next year on disabilities. This meeting will discuss persons with disabilities and their inclusion in the development agenda of 2015 and the Millennium Development Goals.

During the program, there were also cultural presentations such as a skit illustrating the importance of inclusive education and musical pieces by persons with visual impairments. A child with a visual disability gave a piece explaining the process who goes through when she crosses the street to get a taxi, step by step.

Additional speeches included a man with a visual impairment who holds a doctorate. The director of CNRPH also spoke after receiving a donation from the representative of Chantal Biya which included five wheelchairs and many sets of crutches. Then, persons with physical disabilities gave their testimony how CNRPH had aided them in their recovery process and reintegration into society. The *Ministre des Affaires Sociales* gave the final presentation, explaining that such persons are often victims of discrimination and marginalization and that development cannot occur if certain groups of people remain outside the progress of the nation.

The event ended with the presentation of certificates recognized various groups of persons with disabilities, in particular, the students from CNRPH who received medals from their sporting competition. After a group picture with the event participants and attendees with

⁴⁶ Delegate of Goodwill Cameroon speech, Journée Internationale des Personnes Handicapées, 3/12/12, CNRPH

disabilities, the official even concluded and guests mingled in the vending booths to see the handicraft of persons with disabilities.

Throughout the event, I was struck by the fact that it was opened and led by persons without disabilities. Persons with disabilities were referenced to but not empowered to led and guide the event except for several exceptions. For example, after several musical presentations, one of the announcers stated that one could see that “persons with disabilities are not just consumers but also producers.” Despite their good intentions, it seemed to minimize this population. In addition, the celebration emphasized mainly persons with tangible disabilities, there was hardly any mention or recognition of persons with mental disabilities. This is illustrated by the donation from Chantal Biya which addresses only physical disabilities.

Next, to continue with the celebration, CNRPH held a Round Table event on December 6th. A total of eight (08) speakers of various backgrounds completed the panel. They included a parent of a child with a disability, a psychologist, the president of a university group representing students with disabilities, the moderator, a professor from the only special education formation school in Cameroon, a sociologist, a special education professor, and finally a jurist. The session began with a word from the Director of CNRPH followed by the Director of Service. Then, as the audience heard from difference speakers, we learned about the current situation and difficulties with regards to persons with disabilities and inclusive education. Each person on the panel gave their analysis of the current barriers to this goal as well as next steps to eliminate them. For example, while the parent had a personal testimony of her life with a child with a disability, the jurist provided information regarding the rights of persons with disabilities. The event ended with each person giving concluding thoughts followed by a meal in the conference room that the other teachers and I helped serve.

The final event was an annual visit from a nearby middle school. We gathered all the inclusive education children into the chapel with the visiting students. A teacher of the middle school led praise songs and taught them to our students as well. While it was hard to keep the students on their best behavior, they seemed to enjoy singing and clapping. Later, a priest gave a prayer and message, emphasizing Christ and his acceptance of all people. After communion was served, we left for the main assembly where both the special education and inclusive education sections gathered to welcome the students. One delegate from the middle school gave a speech of thanks for the visit followed by a word from the director of *La Colombe*. Then the children presented gifts, including items such as soap, pasta, laundry detergent, and toilet paper. After their lunch, they colored Christmas pictures and wrote notes to the students at *La Colombe*.

Results

By working with various educational levels in the special needs school as well as the professional development classes and my various interviews with other organizations, I obtained a fuller perspective of persons with mental disabilities. While many responses were similar for some groups, others differed in their opinions and experiences, as will be addressed. To begin, I utilized my experiences and interviews to create charts to illustrate the current situation and possibilities of persons with mental disabilities.

This first chart illustrates the connection between aid, perceptions of persons with mental disabilities, and the government. They are interconnected, affecting the outcome of the other. When one area is lacking, so are the other two. Thus, it is necessary that the basis of the triangle, perceptions and the government, work together towards helping those

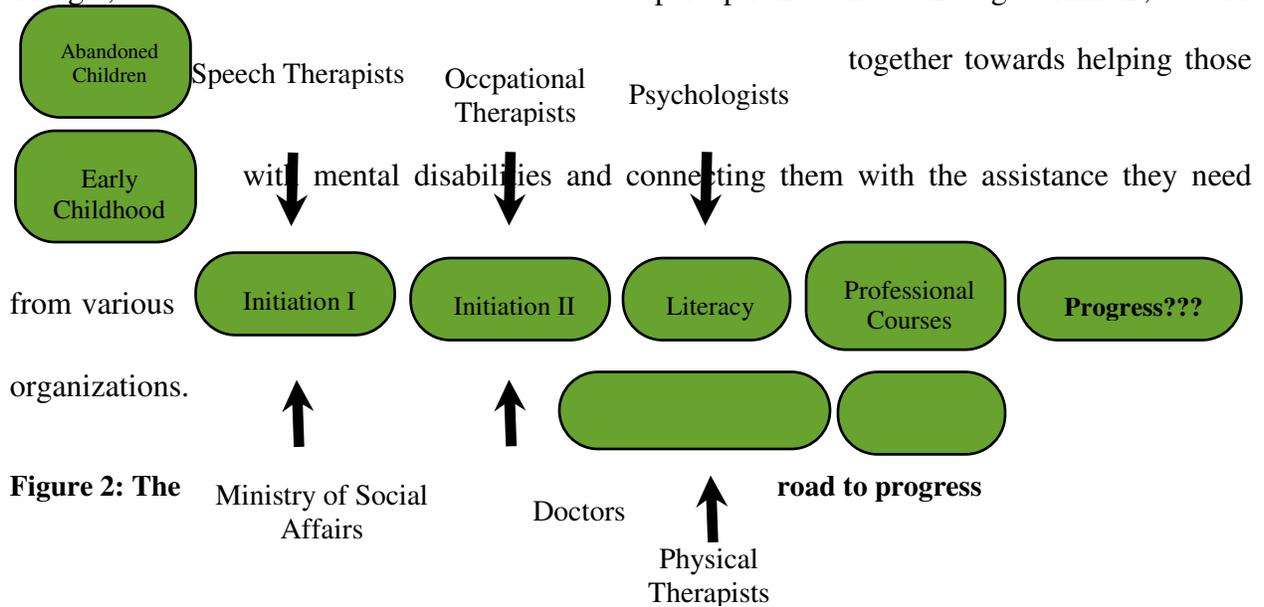


Figure 2: The

Ministry of Social Affairs

Doctors

Physical Therapists

road to progress

Figure 1: The interconnected elements of helping those with mental disabilities

- 1) Help is expansive but not very accessible or widely known
 - 2) Perceptions influence the steps people take in getting help
 - 3) Government influences perceptions
- This is a conceptual diagram showing the interconnected elements of helping those with mental disabilities. It consists of a green triangle with three vertices. The top vertex is labeled '1) Aide', the bottom-left vertex is labeled '2) Perceptions', and the bottom-right vertex is labeled '3) Government'. The text 'This is a conceptual diagram showing the interconnected elements of helping those with mental disabilities' is written across the triangle.

2) Perceptions

3) Government

person with a mental disability. Students continue

through the first two levels at school before there is a possibility of a literacy class or the special cycle for those with more severe disabilities. The next step is continuing to a professional

development course while some stay at home. The question is, do these steps lead to the progression of the individual and their integration into society and it is possible for everyone?

This brings up the need for collaboration and inclusive education to incorporate mentally disabled children into schools that are already existing as later addressed.

With regards to my first hypothesis, “Because many people with mental disabilities are abandoned, the state is in charge of their well being,” I found that abandonment can be categorized in two ways with the addition of exceptions. This happened first in the formal sense, in that children were left by their parents and provided for by the state. In the *Initiation I* class, two children live at an orphanage created by the *Ministère des Affaires Sociales*. One of them represented the most severe case in class as he had cerebral palsy. Additionally, the two students in wheelchairs in the class *Cycle Spécial* were abandoned; one living at CNRPH and the other again with the *Ministère des Affaires Sociales*. Additionally, *La Fondation de Chantal Biya* has an orphanage for abandoned children, including those with mental disabilities.

Abandonment can occur through family conflict or perception of the child. If the father of a child find out the child has a disability, he many leave the mother who then has to struggle to bring up the child herself, who may find it too difficult to do.⁴⁷ The Director of CNRPH used the term “pingpong” in an address during the Round Table to describe the situation of the child, being passed back and forth until the state eventually becomes in charge of them. In addition, she cited the example of a child found tied in the forest left to die.

Additionally, abandonment that leaves the state responsible for such children or persons happens in an informal manner. For example, each day after school, there at least several children who remained from one to several hours after classes finished because their parents left them there. Eleven out of twelve teachers that I consulted about the difficulties they face cited

⁴⁷ Jaquiline Noubissi, Director of Services, informal interview, 21/11/12, his office at CNRPH.

parents as being a challenge that they faced because they do not cooperate with, support, or accept their child's condition. Doing so is a form of psychological abandonment, even if the child still lives in the home because they do not fully accept their child. In addition, they cited that parents do not follow up with their child's education and development in the home, thus, in a sense, leaving that responsibility to the state. School is often regarded as a day care or way to occupy children with disabilities.⁴⁸

However, there were also exceptions to parent's actions. For instance, the six parents that I interviewed constituted an exception to my research. Each of them took care of their child and explained the process of visiting doctors and looking for help. One mother of three month old boy began taking him to *La Fondation Chantal Biya* because he was born with asphyxia, that is, not enough oxygen. Later, she noted that his head and eyes stayed to one side and that his right foot often twitched and brought him back to the Foundation to be followed by doctors. After a long and painful process, she found he has cerebral palsy. While she does not know how severe his condition will be, understanding the problem eased her heavy heart as she saw her baby suffer.

Another mother explained that her child was behind in her development; starting to walk and talk at age five. As she took her child to the hospital, they explained it was "*un retard de croissance.*" While it was very difficult for her to accept at first, she said, "*ça va déjà,*" because her child is learning to talk.⁴⁹ Finally, a mother of a twenty-three year old explained the process of discovering the problem with her child. After noting several problems and visiting doctors to complete tests, it was discovered that his cranial bones had hardened at an early age, not leaving enough room for his brain. Thus, at age seven, doctors completed an operation.

⁴⁸ Fukah Relendice, Director of Office, informal interview, 21/11/12, Initiation I classroom.

⁴⁹ Bikai Charlotte, formal interview, 23/11/12, main assembly area at CNRPH.

However, his condition was much more severe afterwards, exhibiting signs of severe autism. After taking her son to different schools or letting him stay at home, the mother found CNRPH. Each mother cited the difficulty they face having a child with a disability but also the comfort of prayer and knowing that their child is from God.

These stories do not form the basis of my research because if I were truly to discover the stories of abandoned children, I would have talk with them but it was impossible due to ethical concerns. Additionally, I was to gather more information from parents, I would need the help of CNRPH to contact them because parents who have abandoned their child or just neglect them by forgetting about them were not available to me to interview. However, it was the parents that I established a rapport with or saw at school that I interviewed. Their daily action bringing their child to school already shows their level of care and investment in the child.

As I addressed my second hypothesis, concerning the affect of perceptions on integration, I found that perceptions of persons with mental disabilities vary because the true causes are not common knowledge and thus the common ideas can damage their interaction into society. Persons with disabilities are first of all prevented from integrating into society by the perceptions and resulting actions of their family. One's image of the situation is framed in a cultural and religious context. Parents lack acceptance of their child because of the their perception of "African magic."⁵⁰ In addition, as they look for answers, they may blame their ancestors or witchcraft.⁵¹ Divine punishment is also a cause that is considered. Rather than getting medical and educational help, a parent may want to hide their child at home due to shame.⁵² One teacher cited a mother who kept her child inside the house until he was 11 years

⁵⁰ Flora, informal interview, 29/11/12, Cycle Spéciale classroom.

⁵¹ Professor Mayi, formal interview, 14/11/12, professor's restaurant at *L'Université de Yaoundé I*.

⁵² Dr. Mbasse Awa H.D. Neuropediate, informal interview, 22/11/12, his office at *La Fondation de Chantal Biya*

old because ashamed.⁵³ Children with disabilities were called snake children in the past if they could not walk but crawled around on their stomach like a snake. Children have been killed or abandoned at the riverside or left at home with out attention with the possibility of dying of starvation. This occurred as a way to “save” the family and prevent such cases in the same family.⁵⁴ Persons with mental disabilities are hurt by society and their families. They may be viewed as “*un malheur, un scandale, un désastre, ou un objet de malédiction.*”⁵⁵

Another group of people whose perceptions adversely affect the integration of persons with disabilities is the community. One mother cited that although her family accepted her child, “Les gens ne sont pas contents. Ils te repoussent.”⁵⁶ This idea of being pushed away was also echoed by a staff member.⁵⁷ Fear and misunderstand again surround this behavior. Not wanting to accept what is different, society casts such people aside. One teacher explained that in the past, before learning more about disabilities, she made fun of such people in the road but now wants everyone to that all are equal in the eyes of God.⁵⁸

Finally, through my study of persons with mental disabilities at CNRPH, I found that the educational system did help integrate them into society for several reasons according to my third hypothesis. The integration of students into society and the educational system is attested to by the improvements they have made through the school, socially and educationally. The first and most important change is social. Students who at first kept to themselves are now able to interact with others and play with their siblings at home, such as the case of an *Initiation I* student with autism.⁵⁹ Class activities at the school also aid this process. For example, *animation* with Leuth

⁵³ Steve, informal interview, 28/11/12, Literacy class.

⁵⁴ Dr. Mbasse Awa H.D. Neuropediate.

⁵⁵ Jacque Bessaice, psychologue et therapute cojugall et familial, informal interview, 27/11/12, his office at CNRPH.

⁵⁶ Bikai Charlotte, personal interview, 23/11/12, main assembly area at CNRPH.

⁵⁷ Eric, informal interview, 27/11/12, Initiation II classroom.

⁵⁸ Flora, informal interview, 29/11/12, Cycle Spéciale classroom.

⁵⁹ Celestine, social worker, informal interview, 20/11/12, in her office at CNRPH

Daniel helps the students to overcome their socialization struggles. When he conducts class activities such as signing, dancing, and games, his goal is that they will become more openminded and not keep just to themselves. Sports class also gives the students a sense of pride and accomplishment, especially after earning medals at *Handisport*. These socialization activities thus introduce the student into an interactive environment where they complete activities that are a part of mainstream society.

School can also alter student's behavior and manners. Education helps with life skills and their ability to greet others, such as the case of the *cycle spéciale* students. Proper behavior during lunch is also a component of the program. Students are instructed how to eat with the correct utensils and take their finished plate to the kitchen. Through education, students also learn self-care. Younger students learn not to urinate or defecate on themselves⁶⁰ while older ones learn how to better bath and dress as well as how to keep good company.⁶¹ One case of improvement cited were students who used to play with their saliva but who stopped within the first month at school.⁶² Other students have decreased their habits of certain noises or clapping in *Initiation I*.⁶³ While in that class, the students struggled in the beginning of the year with urinating and defecating on themselves, they have gained their "autonomy" and "If they want to go and ease themselves, they ask permission."⁶⁴

Education also helps integrate students into society through their studies. When students begin at a young age in the special school system, it allows them to continue to in the regular school system.⁶⁵ Each parent interviewed at *La Colombe* desired for their child to be able

⁶⁰ Relendice Fukah, informal interview, 21/11/12, Initiation I classroom.

⁶¹ Divine, informal interview, 23/11/12, CNRPH hallway.

⁶² Relendice Fukah, informal interview, 21/11/12, Initiation I classroom.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Eric, informal interview, 27/11/12, Initiation II classroom.

to talk with the help of the teachers. This is a huge step in the progression of continuing education. One mother of a student in the *Initiation I* class cited that her daughter began talking after her first year at *La Columbe*.⁶⁶ In my time in *Initiation I*, I saw improvements in the work of the children. For example, when we introduced the vowel “i” to students, one in particular caught on very quickly. Another student who had difficulties writing began to form round circles rather than scribbles.

Another aspect that better integrate students into society is informal education at home. With the help and love of their parents, they can better learn. Teachers often assign small activities for the students to do at home but lack to help and follow through of the parents. One example of this occurred in my inclusive education experience as I previously mention. Two boys with mental disabilities struggled with counting; however the one who was more severe was able to count better because of the help he received at home.⁶⁷ To facilitate this situation, CNRPH is in the process of starting a school for parents to better educate them on the needs of their child.

Students slowly but surely gather the building blocks of their education with the help of the teachers at *La Colombe*. To one outside of a special education setting, these advances may seem small, but here are in fact large improvements in the children’s lives that have taken time and energy. It does not happen easily or quickly, but the work is worth it.

Possibilities for economic integration into society are also available to students who complete the professional training courses. In a conversation with a middle aged woman with a physical disability, she explained that before she began the class she was stuck at home. Now,

⁶⁶ Madame Mvondo Gisielle, formal interview, 27/11/12, Initiation I classroom.

⁶⁷ Tsamo Georges, informal interview, 7/12/12, SIL classroom.

the course has given her by having something to do each day, learning with her hands.⁶⁸ Other conversations in the class were not conducted because the question of age and mental disability. However, as I observed the students on World Disability Day selling their work, they seemed very proud of what they had accomplished and of the ability to earn an income.

Conclusion

From my unexpected encounter with a young, mentally disabled boy, I was led to ask research questions specifying 1) Who is responsible for the majority of persons with mental disabilities? 2) What are the affects of perceptions of persons with mental disabilities? And finally 3) What are some possibilities for a better life and through what means? Through these questions I hoped to study the state and perceptions of persons with disabilities and to see how possibilities such as education can impact their life. Through my internship and case study at *Le Centre National de Réhabilitation des Personnes Handicapées, La Colombe* I gained responses in accordance to my hypotheses:

1. Because many people with mental disabilities are abandoned, the state is in charge of their well being.
2. Because the general public stigmatizes persons with mental disabilities, they face difficulties with integration.
3. If people with mental disabilities attend the special needs school at *Le Centre National de Réhabilitation des Personnes Handicapées*, it will facilitate integration into society and into the educational system.

My work research verified my responses as much as possible with the ethical limitations I had in gathering data. Physical and psychological abandonment of children leaves them in the care of the state with the exceptions of the parents I interviewed. Stigmatization that result from cultural and religious perspectives and misunderstanding of true causes, leave persons with mental disabilities estranged from society. However, the process of integration into society is possible through the school at *Le Centre National de Réhabilitation des Personnes*

⁶⁸ Bibi, sewing class students, informal interview, 23/11/12, sewing classroom.

Handicapées. Improvements in social behavior is the most important step while educational progression is a slower process. Cameroon is taking steps towards progress, but much more still needs to be done. Neighbors in West Africa are further along in the process, such as Ghana or Nigeria.

Through my experiences, several themes arose in my learning. The teachers and administrators truly care for their students and well being. However, despite the good that occurs at CNRPH, it is the only public school of its kind, presenting the problem of human resources. In response to this problem, the government promotes the policy of inclusive education. However, this is an ongoing process. As the activities and theme of World Disability Day illustrated, there are still barriers to be removed for inclusive education. To address this, more teachers trained in special education are needed as well as improved infrastructure to integrate them into normal schools.

The events that were held for World Disability were helpful starts to the work that needs to be done but I found there is often a disparity between the statements of the government and the reality of the situation for persons with mental disabilities. For example, *La Colombe* is in need of simple supplies such as more paper, pencils, crayons, and colored chalk but the *Ministère des Affaires Sociales* does not meet all these needs. In addition, while CNRPH presented all its services during its events, my interactions with teachers showed that children did not receive needed help through physical, occupational or speech therapy because of a lack of means. Thus sponsorship would be an important thing to consider.

As the neurologist cited, there are often too many different cases of mental disabilities in one class, which can lead to the children imitating behavior that is not normal. In resolving this situation, the *Fondation Chantal Biya* is planning on creating a day school specifically for

students with autism, addressing the issue of too little human resources by having a specialized school that can offer help. Another such school specific to autistic children, *Le Centre au Orchidée*, in Douala, is increasing in its man force. This school manages all areas of autism and is sending someone to train as a speech therapist in order to have a broader range of competence.⁶⁹

However, to further improve the integration of students with mental disabilities into society, other changes need to take place as well. One such change is sensitization of the public and community based reintegration. It is “*la communauté nationale qui va permettre un changement.*”⁷⁰ Thus, change needs to occur not only on the smaller community level but at the national level. With this change in sensitization, there is also a need for education and disability prevention through medical and social means. Vaccinations and maternal examinations and care are important as well as measures to prevent motorcycle and car accidents that can cause physical and mental impairments.

Weaknesses

I also encountered weaknesses and limitations with regards to the Center. Communication and organization between the teachers, hierarchy, and the parents was often a problem as was witnessed on *La Journée Internationale des Personnes Handicapées*. With the help of additional meetings for the school and social workers to help the parents, this problem could be addressed. A lack of space and personnel also contributed to less individual attention and less specialized meeting of needs for the students. As I asked for records and information regarding current and past students, I found that the school’s organization and records are not well kept, possibly due to lack of personnel to keep them. Discipline also was an issue that I encountered. Because parents often use corporal punishment to correct their children, teachers

⁶⁹ Dr. Mbasse Awa H.D. Neuropediate, informal interview, 22/11/12, his office at *La Fondation de Chantal Biya*

⁷⁰ Eric, informal interview, 27/11/12, Initial II classroom.

feel obliged to do so as well since students are unruly without it. However, students with mental disabilities at times do not understand why they did something wrong. Thus, it is necessary to address the problem at the familial level and in the classroom so that children can understand proper behavior and respond accordingly.

Suggestions for further investigation

My internship with CNRPH was a wonderful experience but it only scratched the surface of my topic of persons with mental disabilities. There is much more research to be done on this area of study in Cameroon. To further specify persons with mental disabilities, one could focus on a certain age range such as young children or the elderly and compare the differences between their care and circumstances. For instance, in studying children ages 1-5 may face different difficulties compared to ages 6-10, youth ages 11-15 and young adults ages 16-20.

Throughout my research I found that abandonment is a harsh reality for persons with mental disabilities, specifically children. The children orphaned and left to the Ministry of Social Affairs or to Chantal Biya's foundation attest to that. This is an important area to further exploration; the causes, cases, and conditions of abandonment for these children as well as the organizations that are available to help them.

In addition, autism was a striking issue for the children I interacted with at CNRPH. In the Initiation I class, five out of 15 were autistic. Because it is an issue that is just gaining attention, it can area for parents. However, more interest and help is forming in different sectors that would be beneficial to draw attention to and study. For example, the *Fondation Chantal Biya* is creating a school specifically for children with autism within the next year. Psychomotricians at the center also work with children who have autism to help them with their motor movements and daily live skills. The special school in Douala previously mentioned, *centre au Orchidée*, is also an opportunity for a case study.

In the realm of education for students with disabilities, Cameroon is moving towards inclusive education. It would be of interest to follow this development and see how it is being implemented studying several school systems.

One of the areas of importance presented by the Director of CNRPH and also the Law N.2010/002 is the prevention of some disabilities. This is an imperative area of study an action in address this issue. It can be done through education, medical means and immunizations, as well social measures. Thus, one could the issue on several levels.

Thinking about the children you know and interact with, consider, if they had a mental disability, what would you do? How would you act? What measures would you take to care for this child? The children at *La Colombe* deserve each step that you would take for your own child's well being and development. The persons in the professional classes deserve at chance at a brighter future. The answer is clear, despite elements of progress, much needs to be done. More personnel and infrastructure is required. Sensitization and education mental disabilities throughout Cameroon are needed. There is a population of people who need empowerment and connectedness in society. As the theme of the *Journée Internationale des Personnes Handicapées* conveys, let us remove the barriers in favor for a more accessible and inclusive society for all. It cannot happen in one day, or one year, but there are opportunities, however small, each day to do your part.

Appendix

Field Journal

5/11/12

- visited CNRPH to see if I could gain any information and was told to come back in the morning when the office is open

6/11/1

- Returned to CNRPH and spoke with Gerald in the office. After I explained my studies and desire to complete an internship there, he introduced me to Fukah Relendice, the Director of Office.
- She gave me a tour of the Center including the special ed. and inclusive school, housing for abandoned children and adults with disabilities, physical therapy unit, and sewing class.
- She pointed out children with down syndrome in the classes when I told her of my interest in studying mental disabilities
- Discussed the history of the center and the services it provides
- Noted how it is monastery-like and enclosed, has a swimming pool with no water, and many people outside the buildings with physical disabilities.

7/11/12

- Left my application at the Center and was told the process takes 1-2 weeks but I may be able to start sooner with the approval of the Director of Services
- Gerald said he would call me M or T to let me know

8/11/12

- Research au Cercle PPSA at Un. Y. I
- Meeting with advisor

12/11/12

- Research and trying to contact interviewees - Professor of Psychology at Un. Y. I

13/11/12

- Research
- Meeting with advisor
- Set up meeting with Professor Mayi

14/11/12

- Went to CNRPH because Gerald had not called me; told me to come back the next day
- Visited Foyer du Coeur Immaculé at Simbock and did interview with nun
- Visited Sacré Coeur at Efoulan but was not able to do an interview/more mental illness issues there
- Interview with Professor Mayi at Un. Y. I

15/11/12

- Visited CNRPH and internship was approved
- Started by visiting Initiation I (15 students) and teacher Liliosa, where I was placed to start
- Surprised by corporal punishment
- Music class for all of the special education school, sang with students
- Lunch time, served food and oversaw students
- Discussed internship with Fukah Relendice

16/11/12

- Began when school started at 8h

- Main assembly
- Initiation I class
 - went over numbers 0 and 1, helped students individually
 - supervised games and fine motor movement activities
 - snack time
- Hilton Reunion
 - arranged children in main assembly with the teachers
 - visited to give donation of food
 - special ceremony for whole school
 - honored CNRPH
 - in the end, there was not enough food for everyone
 - photos, with permission of Relendice
- informal interview with Liliosa
- Talked with other teachers to get to know them
- Observations:
 - autistic children had more trouble interacting in class
 - one student frequently makes crying noises, another is claustrophobic and afraid of the bathroom - urinated in class

17/11/12

- Visited l'Hopital jamot
 - unable to leave my information or schedule an interview b/c it was the weekend
 - found the Foundation of Chantal Biya, same situation

19/11/12

- Main assembly
 - songs, prayer, day of the week, and exercises
 - deaf children seemed to cause more trouble amongst themselves and others
- Initiation I
 - began the day with socialization activities: exercises on command, singing, and dancing
 - lesson for the day by Liliosa: 0 and 1, had to identify on the board
 - I worked individually with students
 - played games while Liliosa did corrections
 - snack time
 - coloring as concentration activity
 - lunch
 - waited for students to be picked up
- Sewing class
 - began afternoon work there
 - 4 women as teachers, 1 man
 - topics: nutrition, cleaning, washing, and ironing clothes, sewing, crocheting, cooking
 - everyone making items for World Disability Day
 - used the Singer machine that cranks by hand, doing simple seams for BiBi

20/11/12

- Main assembly

- Informal interview with Celestin the social worker
- Initiation I
 - socialization activities with students
 - some problems of the day: one student with cerebral palsy came in having already defecated on himself and was put in the corner for the day
 - lesson: “chiffre un” with a banana
 - one student who never talks said “banana”
 - worked on writing #1
 - I led charades to occupy the students
 - snack time
 - Informal interview with Relendice
 - talked about discipline, improvements in children
 - one girl defecated in class and was disciplined
 - Informal Interview with Flora
 - helped Relendice with the sand activity where students wrote 0 and 1 with glue and then sprinkled sand on top
 - hand washing activity
 - lunch
- Informal Interview with Celestine the social worker
- Sewing class = *Programe de Propete Atilier Couter*
 - students were taking notes on economic lesson
 - lesson on cutting material
 - 12 students total

21/11/12

- Main assembly
- Initiation I
 - socialization and songs
 - I taught lesson on Michigan, showing a drawing on the board with my state, water, trees, and fish. Made comparison to those things here and made tree and fish movements. Traced and colored hand for fine motor skills and concentration
 - Animation teacher, Monsieur Gérald Sidieu led singing and dancing activities
 - break, hand washing, and snack
 - Informal interview with Relendice with my list of questions
 - special activity with ball for autistic students to learn how to share, Relendice and I
- Sewing class
 - learned about bed covers from the male teacher
 - helped students with their activities
- Informal Interview with Joelle, host mom’s niece about her baby with a mental disability

22/11/12

- Was not at school due to migraine
- Better later, had meeting with advisor
- Informal interview with neurologist and physical therapist at Foundation of Chantal Biya

23/11/12

- Formal interview mother of Initiation I child
- Main assembly
- Initiation I
 - socialization and songs
 - lesson: o and a on board
 - I helped with individual work
 - ball activity with autistic students
 - sent students to hallway for class to be cleaned, supervised them
 - Informal interview with Divine
 - Informal interview with Ayong
 - lunch
- Sewing class
 - informal interview with BiBi
- Foundation of Chantal Biya
 - interview with physical therapist and observation of work with 3 yr old who is possibly autistic

24/11/12

- Sporting event for my students but did not go due to migraine/sinus infection (HandiSport)

26/11/12

- Informal interview with Liliosa and Fukah
- Main assembly
- Initiation I
 - socialization and songs
 - lesson: vowel i, with an umbrella on the board to illustrate it
 - students did well with new lesson, others needed to continue with o and a (two autistic, two down syndrome, and one other student)
 - one student with cerebral palsy had a good day, was very clean and ate well
 - snack time/break
 - Relendice worked with gifted autistic student in identifying different fruits and beginning addition
- Sewing class
 - informal interview with director

27/11/12

- Formal interview with mother of Initiation I student
- Initiation II - 14 students
 - two teachers, 1 specially trained (Eric), 1 not
 - went over date
 - addition
 - I worked with students individually on numbers 0, 1, 2, 3
 - Eric did sand activity to help students write in sand
 - snack time/recess

- Informal interview with maitresse
- observation: students range more in their abilities than the first class, also rang in their rowdiness
- lesson on washing clothes, Eric used pagne as an interactive lesson
- less corporal punishment - b/c older?
- Informal interview with Eric
- Informal interview with psychologist at CNRPH, Jaques Bessaice

28/11/12

- Main assembly
- Literacy class - 16 students
 - ages 16-20 ranging
 - only 1 teacher, Steve
 - introduced myself to the class
 - they introduced themselves to me
 - He told them not to bother me because I was there to help and observe
 - I helped students with alphabet flashcards, students need repetition
 - went over how to welcome important people for World Disability Day
 - went over vowels, consonants b, c, d, and then the syllables they make together
 - had students give examples of words (bu - bureau)
 - Informal interview with Steve during break
 - Steve had each student talk with me for 1-2 minutes as an interactive activity/to help me understand their disabilities better, some struggled with lang. and comprehension, others socialization, for others it was quite easy
 - lesson on health, diseases, what to do to stay in good health
- meeting with advisor

29/11/12

- Main assembly
- Cycle Speciale - 7 students, 2 teachers
 - Informal interview with teacher Flora while waiting for the students
 - students came in one by one and had to knock and greet the teacher
 - represents the oldest and most severe cases
 - socialization activity/exercises
 - Divine went over numbers 1-10 on the board, having students identify them and them fill in the missing blanks
 - break/all but 2 students left who were in wheelchairs, both are abandoned children
 - worked with student with down syndrome when we started, doing numbers 1-10
 - Divine continued with the alphabet on the board
 - Flora went over the days of the week - sang a song to engage the students
 - Informal interview with Divine

30/11/12

- Causerie educative - no classes
 - for parents, teachers, administrators

- intro to World Disability Day and theme of removing the barriers for a more inclusive society, esp with regard to education
- Director of Services and Office led it with questions and input from others
- benefits of inclusive education, barriers, how to break them
- helpful perspective with the other teachers
- not many parents there that I recognized
- for inclusive ed - need to increase training of sp. ed. teachers, improve infrastructure, and inform regular teachers with training sessions

3/12/12

- World Disability Day
 - student's weren't supposed to come but they did
 - arranged them in setting
 - many vendors of art, sewing, jewelry, and woodwork by persons with disabilities
 - visited with Celestine
 - sat down for program
 - theme: *lever les barrieres en vue de favoriser l'avenement d'une societe accessible et inclusive pour tous*
 - national anthem presented in sign language
 - welcome address of Goodwill Cameroon
 - UN Secretary General (assistant?)
 - cultural interlude - presentations of music and dance by persons with disabilities
 - Minister of Social Affairs - speech
 - donation rep. of Chantal Biya = 5 wheel chairs and many pairs of crutches
 - award ceremony for HandiSport
 - group pictures
 - observations: focus on physical rather than mental disability, big show - any action? donation seemed very small compared to need of students who don't have monetary access to PT, OT, or doctors

5/12/12

- Main assembly
- Deaf children class - 8 students
 - Mr. Bouhba Celestin
 - two students also with autism
 - teacher uses colors and illustrations to aid education process
 - went over day (with sign)
 - language exercises: went over a, p, o, and i
 - teacher wrote, signed, and said the letter and had students repeat
 - loudly said sound so they could try to imitate it
 - for p, held paper in front of their mouth to move when they made the sound
 - coloring exercise
 - Informal interview with Mr. Bouhba during break
 - students cleaned room
 - I taught Mr. Bouhba "The First Noel" which he translated in sign and we taught to the students

- break until parents came - none of the students are signed up for lunch
- observation: two older students bothered each other often and then tried to get attention of the teacher to blame the other
- Visited Initiation I
- Informal interview with of a deaf and autistic student
- Participated in animation class for inclusive education class by Leuth Daniel
 - lots of singing and clapping, makes it a very light atmosphere
- Informal interview with Leuth Daniel, animation teacher
- On permanence, that is, I stayed with the teacher who was in charge of watching the students until all the parents came. The last student left at least two hours after classes finished.
 - played with students in the meantime - they seemed to just want attention and love
- Arranged interview with Cycle Special parent
- Visit PT unit to talk about its connection with the school children but no one was available
- Visited the woodworking shop for another perspective on the professional classes but not one was available

6/12/12

- Inclusive school - Maternelle I et II
 - had visited and interacted with all the sp. ed. classes and wanted another perspective
 - 18 students, 2 teachers, 1 (Gisalain is sp. ed.)
 - students with language, learning, mobility disabilities, spina bifida
 - one student who was not there was born without arms and has learned to write with her feet with the help of occupational therapists
 - classroom was the most decorated and interactive - charts made by teachers on types of houses, the body, animals, insects, and families, paper stars and ring chains
 - started with songs, days of the week, the day's date
 - colored Christmas pictures
 - practiced small skits for Christmas
 - snack time/break
 - took child in wheelchair outside to play with friends
- Informal Interview with father of cycle special student
- Visited Initiation I
 - one student had defecated on himself and was not wearing any pants because they were dirty - no one had extra pair/nothing in place to help students when this happens
- Round Table event
 - 8 panelists (parent, psychologist, president of student disability group, moderator, professor at sp. ed. formation school, sociologist, special ed professor, jurist)
 - provided different perspectives on disabilities and inclusive education, esp, with regards to the theme of removing barriers for an inclusive society
 - discussed ways to improve inclusive education
 - CNRPH director gave intro and concluding speech - cited the importance also of preventing disabilities
 - helped serve a meal to the attendees

7/12/12

- Last official day

- SIL (class I) of inclusive education
- 32 students, 16 with a disability and 1 teacher (Georges)
- One student just started this year at age 14 because he was abandoned in a village last year, has cerebral palsy
- Began by introducing myself
- Went over date
- Georges had students read a chart on the board going over combinations of f and a vowel, that is the sound of the syllable and an example of a word that contains it
- While the students worked independently one by one, Georges had two students come and work on numbers with him, both had a mental disability
- Class normally end early on Friday but we finished at about 10h to have mass with a visiting middle school
 - gathered inclusive ed. students and took them to the chapel
 - teacher from other school led songs and taught new ones to our students
 - priest gave a message about the love and acceptance of Christ for all
 - inclusive ed, sp. ed. and visiting middle school gathered in main assembly area
 - student gave a speech of thanks for accepting their visit
 - school director thanked students for visiting those who are less fortunate
 - middle school gave gifts of items such as pasta, soap, detergent, and toilet paper.
 - visiting students had lunch outside, colored pictures, and wrote notes to the students at *La Colombe*
 - I stayed at the school on permanence with several other teachers, one student from the deaf class ran off in the chaos of people but was later found
 - before visiting students left, helped serve sandwiches and juice or water to them

Will be visiting their Christmas party to say goodbye and thank the teachers

Brief overview of causes of Mental Disabilities

Mental disabilities can result from several different causes, biomedical and behavioral being the main categories. Biomedical factors include those that “relate to biologic processes, such as genetic disorders or nutrition.”⁷¹ For example, a chromosomal abnormality with the twenty-first pair can cause Down syndrome. Mayo Clinic defines this syndrome as “a genetic disorder that causes lifelong mental retardation, developmental delays and other problems. Down syndrome varies in severity, so developmental problems range from moderate to serious.” Chromosomes are important, minuscule kidney bean shaped structures that carry the genes which determining inherited characteristics. Although rare, aberrations in chromosomes can occur during cell development, causing severe and physically apparent abnormalities. Those who have this condition have certain facial features, normally distinct cheekbones, eyefolds, and a petite, flattened nose⁷².

Metabolic and nutritional problems may also cause a mental retardation. When one is unable to process a certain substance, it becomes toxic to the body and can cause damage to the central nervous system. For example the inherited metabolic disorder phenylketonuria (PKU) is

⁷¹ Harman, Michael L, Clifford L. Drew, M. Winston Egan. *Human Exceptionality , Society, School, and Family*. Allyn & Bacon. sixth edition. Print. 1999. 273

⁷² Ibid. P. 273

caused by the inability to process phenylalanin which is found commonly in milk which leads to the accumulation of poisonous substances. Without proper and prompt treatment, various levels of mental retardation can occur. Yet, with the correct treatment, impairment can be prevented or reduced.

Behavioral factors are defined as “potentially causal behaviors, such as dangerous (injurious) activities or maternal substance abuse.”⁷³ Infections and intoxication fall within this category, although maternal alcohol consumption and thus fetal alcohol syndrome is rare.⁷⁴ Maternal infections can pose serious problems to the development of the unborn child, causing a spontaneous abortion or birth defect. Congenital rubella, for example, can cause mental retardation, deafness, blindness, cerebral palsy, cardiac problems, seizures, and other various neurological disorders.⁷⁵

HIV can also cause mental retardation when transmitted from the mother to the unborn child. It is “the single largest cause of preventable infectious mental retardation the world⁷⁶” Other causes of mental retardation include difficulties during birth. Anoxia is one such case in which the infant is deprived of oxygen during delivery complications. This can damage the brain, leading to irreversible problems.⁷⁷

Interview questions

Le Centre National de Réhabilitation des Personnes Handicapés

Parents:

1. *À quel moment connaissez-vous que votre enfant a un handicap mental? Es-ce que vous pouvez expliquer ce processus et vos réactions?*
2. *Quel était la réaction de votre famille?*
3. *Comment vous trouvez Le Centre National de Réhabilitation des Handicapés?*
4. *Qu'est-ce que voulez-vous pour votre enfant de gagner du programme ici?*
5. *Est-ce que vous avez vu les différences dans votre enfant après l'école a commencé?*
6. *Comment vous trouvez l'impact des enseignants?*

Teachers:

1. *Est-ce que vous pouvez expliquer les difficultés que vous faites face comme une enseignante de l'éducation spéciale?*
2. *Quelle type de formation est-ce que vous avez fait pour l'école spéciale? Comment vous avez décidé de l'étudier? Travaillez-vous toujours ici?*

⁷³ Ibid. P. 275

⁷⁴ Dr. Mbase Awa H.D. Neuropediate, informal interview, 22/11/12, his office at the Foundation of Chantal Biya.

⁷⁵ Ibid. P. 275

⁷⁶ Ibid. P. 275

⁷⁷ Ibid. P. 275

3. *Quelles types des handicaps mentaux sont les plus fréquent dans votre salle de classe? Comment adressez-vous chaque cas d'étudiant accordant?*
4. *Quelles types des méthodes d'enseigner est-ce que vous utilisez? Laquelle trouvez-vous comme la plus aidant?*
5. *Quelles sont les difficultés que vous faites face avec les perceptions des personnes avec les maladies mentales ? Comment vous les adressez?*
6. *Quelles sont des autres difficultés pour cette population?*
7. *Est-ce que vous avez vu l'amélioration dans vos étudiants?*
8. *Quelles espoirs avez-vous pour vos étudiants dans la future?*
9. *Les étudiants du passée ont fait quoi maintenant?*

Staff:

1. *Comment la plupart des handicapés mentaux arrivent ici?*
2. *Quelles types de handicapés mentaux est-ce que vous rencontrez ici?*
3. *Est-ce que vous travaillez avec d'autres organisations ? Si oui, laquelle et comment ?*
4. *Est-ce que vous travaillez sur des projets de sensibilisation ? Si oui, lequel ?*
5. *Quelles sont les difficultés que vous faites face avec les perceptions des personnes avec les handicapés mentaux?*
6. *Quels sont d'autres problèmes ou d'autres difficultés pour cette population?*
7. *Quel type de formation est nécessaire pour vos enseignants de l'éducation spéciale? Et pour les enseignants dans l'école inclusive? S'il y a une différence, pourquoi?*
8. *Comment vous trouvez les affects de l'éducation dans leurs vies?*

Professor:

1. *Est-ce que la psychologie est accepté par la société ? Pourquoi il y a-t-il les opinions différentes ?*

2. *Est-ce que voyez-vous un changement historique dans la perception de psychologie ?*
3. *Qu'est-ce que vos étudiants font normalement après leur licence?*
4. *Quelle type d'handicapé mental est le plus fréquent ici à Yaoundé? Pourquoi selon vous?*
5. *Comment vous trouvez les perceptions des gens avec les handicapés mentaux au Cameroun?*
6. *Selon vous, quelles sont les raisons pour abandonné un enfant ou une personne avec un handicapé mental?*
7. *Quelles sont des problèmes ou des difficultés pour cette population?*
8. *Est-que vous avez vu un effort du gouvernement ou les ONG's d'adresser des problèmes?*
12. *Est-ce que vous avez vu les améliorations des handicapés mentaux ?*

Observational forms

L'école spéciale:

1. How do the teachers interact with the students?
2. What are some of the mental disabilities that can be detected?
3. How do the students interact and relate with each other? Does this correlate with their disability?
4. How students with mental disabilities and students without mental disabilities interact? Is there a power differential? In what direction?
5. What are the emotions the students express?
6. How do the doctors and nurses treat the students with mental disabilities?
7. If visitors enter the center, how do they react?
8. What is the difference between the special education school and the inclusive school for students with mental disabilities?

Contacts and Resources

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L'Universtié de Yaoundé I
Le Cercle Philo/Psycho/Socio/Anthro (PPSA) library

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