A MODEL FOR THE EDUCATION OF GIFTED LEARNERS IN LEBANON

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The purpose of this paper is to present a model for developing a comprehensive system of education for gifted learners in Lebanon. The model consists of three phases and includes key elements for establishing gifted education in the country, such as raising community awareness, adopting valid identification measures, and developing effective curricula. An important consideration is to embed the model in non-traditional views of intelligence and giftedness so that programs are diversified and identification is not limited to high scores on standardized tests. As such, the model is based on DISCOVER, a non-traditional system for identifying and educating gifted learners. Research is needed to determine the effectiveness of such a model for Lebanon. The model could be emulated by other Arab countries where it can be adopted and adapted to the unique needs and particulars of each culture.

Lebanon is one of the smallest countries in the Middle East (10,452 square kilometers), about the size of the State of Connecticut. Programs for the gifted are virtually non-existent in the country. In Beirut, the capital, some private schools that cater to students from high socio-economic status, offer some enrichment programs to high-achieving students. However, these programs are limited in content and scope and are not comparable to the well-grounded programs available to gifted students in American schools. Rather, these programs represent attempts to nurture the talent and ability of students with high grade-point averages through a variety of enhancement activities (Sarouphim, 2009).

The reason for this deficiency in gifted education in the country is due, to a large extent, to the lack of a fundamental understanding of the construct of giftedness. Also, the country lacks measures and assessment procedures for identification purposes. The only tests used to assess intelligence in Lebanon are imported from the West (mostly France and the United States) and translated into Arabic, the native language of the Lebanese, or even on occasion, these tests are administered in English or French, as most Lebanese students are fluent in at least one of these two foreign languages (Diab, 2006). Thus, these measures yield at best a rough estimate of the students' ability, a process loaded with dangerous consequences. Hence, a great need exists for reliable and valid instruments for the identification of gifted Lebanese students, as well as for programs for gifted students grounded in well-established theories.

The purpose of this paper is to propose a model that delineates key elements for developing a comprehensive system for the education of gifted learners in Lebanon. Based on insight from the literature, the paper describes the steps needed to design such a system and implement it on the national level. The significance of this paper is its uniqueness in the literature, as it represents the first document about a structured model for developing a nation-wide program for gifted learners in Lebanon. In fact, one would be hard pressed to find any literature on gifted education in Lebanon (Sarouphim, in press).

The System of Education in Lebanon

Schools in Lebanon follow a lock-step system, with grade levels extending from K-13. Thus, students in Lebanon finish high school at about 18 years of age. Those who pursue a college education enter college at the sophomore level and graduate with a Bachelor's degree in about three years. Upon successful completion of the ninth grade, students are given a choice between one of four possible tracks: Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Economics, and Philosophy (Ayyash-Abdo, Bahous, & Nabhani, 2009). These tracks are fundamental and preset the student's choice of a college major. Thus, students who choose to follow the Mathematics track at school will study usually engineering or mathematics in college. Similarly, students who choose the Natural Sciences track will study typically

biology and medicine, and those in the Economics track will choose business as their major in college. Finally, students in the Philosophy track will end up selecting a major in the social sciences

Compulsory education in Lebanon covers grades K-8 (Ayyash-Abdo et al., 2009). In public state schools access is free, but the quality of education is poor compared to that of private schools. Public schools in Lebanon cater to students from low socioeconomic status and parents who can afford high tuition fees would rather send their children to private schools, as these have higher rates of student success on national and university entrance examinations (Bahous & Nabhani, 2008).

The first national Lebanese curriculum was established when Lebanon was still under the French mandate (1920-1943). It consisted of a duplicate of the French curriculum at the time, with the addition of four subject-matters taught in Arabic: Arabic language, local history, geography and Arabic philosophy. The first revision of that curriculum took place about four decades later in 1968 (Frayha, 2003), with a focus on learning a large body of information, and little emphasis on *the development of analytical, evaluation, critical thinking and other necessary skills and competencies* (p. 84). However, the latest curriculum revision in 1995 witnessed a major shift in emphasis from that of rote memorization to a focus on hands-on activities and the development of students' higher-order skills (Frayha). The objectives were to promote sound educational practices and increase students' learning outcomes for the sake of rebuilding the country after 16 years of a brutal civil war (1975-1991). Specifically, the aims of the educational reform were to *strengthen national affiliation and social cohesion among students, and to provide the new generation with the basic knowledge, skills, and expertise, with emphasis on national upbringing and authentic Lebanese values, such as liberty, democracy, tolerance and rejection of violence* (National Center for Educational Research and Development [NCERD], 1995, p. 8).

All schools in Lebanon, public and private, follow a unified national curriculum mandated by the Ministry of Education. In the latest revision of this curriculum (NCERD, 1995), catering to students with special needs was made mandatory. As stated, provisions include support services and remedial classes offered to students with learning disabilities, but exclude services of any sort to gifted students. In addition, Public Law 220 approved by the Lebanese Parliament in May 2000 has provided a legislative framework for *people with disabilities* (Wehbi, 2006, p. 323). Article 59 of the Law guarantees the right to equal educational and learning opportunities for all people with disabilities. In addition, Article 60 asserts that a disability should not restrict access to any educational institution or setting in Lebanon. However, no mentioning of the education of gifted students exists in the Lebanese law. Clearly, the scope of special education in Lebanon is limited to students with disabilities, as neither the Lebanese law nor the revised national curriculum have made any stipulations concerning the issues and concerns of educating gifted students in Lebanese schools. In other words, the matter of educating gifted learners is neither encouraged nor discouraged in the Lebanese national curriculum, but rather simply ignored.

Lebanon has the highest literacy rates, highest percentage of females in the work force, and the best universities in the Arab world (Ayyash-Abdo et al., 2009). In such a thriving environment and at a time of national renewal, establishing a model for educating gifted learners in Lebanon seems timely and critical, as the country is in need of developing all potential talent in its citizens. As such, this paper describes a model for establishing gifted education in Lebanon. The model is based on non-traditional conceptions of giftedness and on implementing the identification procedures and curriculum content of a well-established model for the education of gifted learners, the DISCOVER model (*D*iscovering *I*ntellectual *S*trength and *C*apabilities while *O*bserving *V*aried *E*thnic *R*esponses), developed at the University of Arizona (Maker, Rogers, & Nielson, 1994).

Designing a program for the gifted

Programs for gifted learners in American schools did not emerge from a vacuum. Rather, scholars and educators have extended great efforts to shed light on the importance of fostering the abilities of gifted students and establishing policies and programs to ensure that all gifted students are provided with adequate education. In Lebanon, a similar process must be put in motion. The following is a model that consists of three phases; preparation, implementation, and evaluation, for establishing a comprehensive system of education for able learners in Lebanon (see Figure 1).

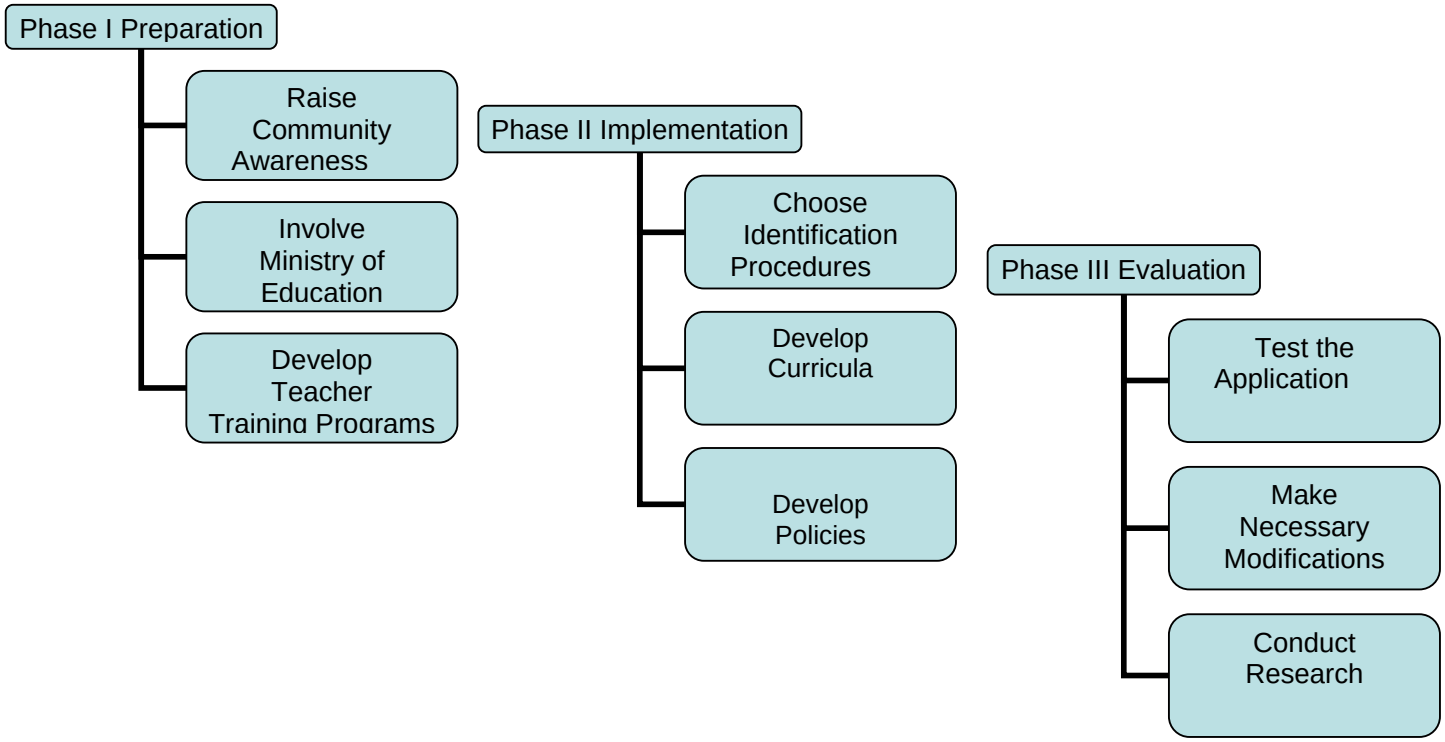

Figure 1
Model for Establishing a System of Education for Gifted Learners in Lebanon

Phase I: Preparation
This phase consists of preliminary action steps to ensure that the system is ready to be put into action. The steps include educating the Lebanese community in the concept of giftedness, embedding the program for gifted learners in a solid theoretical basis, and developing teacher training programs.

*Step 1: Raise national awareness***.** A common misconception of giftedness in Lebanon is the notion that highly intelligent individuals are those who excel in mathematics to the exclusion of other criteria, such as high performance in languages or the arts. This misconception is well-ingrained in the minds of the Lebanese and dates well before Lebanon became an independent and sovereign country in 1943, when school curricula were still influenced by the French system of education (Ghaith, 2003). Therefore, one of the first tasks needed to start a program for the gifted in Lebanon is to develop an understanding of what constitutes giftedness, as well as an understanding of the needs and characteristics of gifted children. Such a task is complex and will demand commitment and dedication from scholars who will pioneer in developing such programs for Lebanon, as changing the beliefs of individuals in a particular culture is a demanding and time-consuming process.

Another popular misperception prevalent in the minds of the Lebanese is that highly able students will thrive in any environment, mostly without much assistance from teachers or parents (Sarouphim, 2007). This predominant belief is one of the obstacles that have hindered the introduction of programs for the gifted in the country. Basically, radical changes in people's attitudes and understanding of the construct of giftedness are a must, but the challenge does not end in explaining to the public the meaning and components of giftedness. If a program for the gifted is to survive in Lebanon, the Lebanese must also develop respect for such a program. Administrators and teachers must believe in the value of nurturing the ability of gifted learners before they are able to convince others of the importance of providing services to gifted learners.

The enlightened few will have the difficult task of educating the general public in the importance of making special provisions for gifted students. Awareness programs could start in a few schools, mostly private schools in the capital Beirut, followed by large scale campaigns to spread this awareness nationwide. Booklets, public lectures, letters to parents, all constitute possible venues for the awareness campaign. Also, for the campaign to succeed in Lebanon, the assistance of the Ministry of Education is vital, which leads to the next step in this first phase of establishing a program for gifted learners in Lebanon.

Step 2: Involve the Ministry of Education. In Lebanon, the Ministry of Education is the key authority on all major decisions concerning the school curriculum. Even though schools in the private sector are mostly autonomous and administrators have some latitude in choosing what they deem best for their own school (Bahous & Nabhani, 2008), all schools in Lebanon must abide by a national curriculum mandated by the Ministry of Education (NCERD, 1995). Thus, in theory, private schools have the freedom to administer special programs for the gifted, but in reality such programs do not exist in Lebanese schools, given that the Ministry of Education does not mandate special provisions for gifted learners. If programs for the gifted are to gain momentum and expand nationwide, they must have the seal of approval of the Lebanese government. Therefore, all efforts in this regard have to be coordinated with the Ministry of Education. A few attempts already have been made in that direction. Some educators, including the author of this paper have approached government officials with a list of suggestions to implement programs for gifted learners in Lebanese schools. At the time this paper was written, nothing tangible had been initiated yet. However, the fact that educators in Lebanon have made such a move is significant enough and constitutes major progress toward reaching the goal of establishing programs for gifted learners in Lebanese schools.

Step 3: Develop teacher training programs. At present, teacher training programs in Lebanon focus mostly on mainstream education, with the exception of a few graduate programs available at some prestigious universities in Beirut. For example, the American University of Beirut and the Lebanese American University offer a Master's degree in education, with an emphasis on special education. However, the emphasis is mostly on the area of learning disabilities and does not address the specialty of giftedness. Consequently, teachers trained in educating gifted learners are scarce in Lebanon. If teachers are to be involved in the process of identifying and educating gifted students, they need to be trained in understanding what constitutes giftedness. Jacob (as cited in Gross, 1999) found that unless teachers are given specific training in how to identify a gifted child, they are more likely to misidentify a cooperative child who seeks the teachers' approval for one of high intelligence. Also, unless teachers understand the characteristics of gifted children, they might feel threatened by a child who seems to know more than they do about a certain subject-matter. Lebanese teachers will need a comprehensive training in the fundamentals of giftedness, the methods used for identifying gifted students, and the techniques needed for developing curricula for gifted learners.

An important component of this training is to expose teachers to the instructional strategies used with gifted learners. One useful approach advocated in most models for the gifted is the constructivist approach (Maker, Muammar, Serino, Kuang, Mohamed, & Sak, 2006). Lebanese teachers have to be trained in the role of the constructivist teacher. Rather than imparting knowledge, the teacher's task in this approach is that of a coach, providing scaffolding, and affording experiences at the zone of proximal development (Eun, Knotek, Heining-Boynton, 2008). Problem-solving, creativity and discovery become the focus of instruction (Maker et al.). In Lebanon, such an approach to instruction constitutes a major paradigm shift, as teachers follow mostly traditional instructional methods and classrooms are teacher-centered rather than student-centered, especially in pubic schools where highly qualified instructors are mostly missing (Frayha, 2003).

Step 4: Adopt non-traditional definitions of giftedness and theories of intelligence. The modern conceptions of giftedness and theories of intelligence have shifted focus from conceptualizing high ability as a global construct to that of a more diversified and multi-dimensional paradigm. For example, Maker (1996) has stipulated that the key element in giftedness is the ability to solve complex problems in the *most efficient, effective, or economical ways* (p. 44). Similarly, Renzulli (1978) defined giftedness as an interaction between three clusters of basic traits: above average general ability, high levels of creativity and high levels of motivation or task commitment. In the same vein, Gardner (1983) defined intelligence as the multiple abilities that permit an individual to solve a problem or create a product that is valued within one or more cultural settings. Sternberg (1991), another scholar who

criticized the narrow scope of IQ testing, has proposed three kinds of intelligence: analytical, practical, and creative.

A program for gifted students in Lebanon must be embedded in these modern conceptualizations of intelligence and giftedness. Of particular interest is the widening of the curriculum scope beyond the traditional mastery of the 3Rs. Also, identification procedures have to be diversified and must examine a multitude of abilities. As Gardner (2009) stated: …*MI can be a useful vehicle for broadening the remit of education: to include subjects that address the several intelligences and ways of thinking, as well as teaching methods that speak to individual differences, and assessments that go beyond standard, short-answer language-and-logic instruments* (p. 14). Without adequate instruments and sound program content and scope, a system of education for the gifted might be doomed to fail anywhere in the world, let alone in Lebanon where education for gifted learners is still in its early stages. Therefore, one has to be particularly diligent in establishing the program on solid basis from the very beginning to increase its chances for continuity and success.

Phase II: Implementation

This phase consists of implementing the model in schools. Its aim is to put into operation a system for educating gifted learners in Lebanese schools. This phase consists of implementing major tasks, such as adopting valid identification measures and designing effective programs, as well as involving the parents and developing national policies on assessment and placement procedures.

Step 1: Adopt effective identification procedures. The issue of identifying gifted students has been much debated in the literature (e.g., Maker, 1992; Sarouphim, 1999). Traditionally, students identified as gifted were those who scored at or above the 97th percentile on either standardized achievement or intelligence tests (Ford, Harris, Tyson, & Trotman, 2002). However, in Lebanon, these tests do not exist. With the recent paradigm shift in identification that calls for instruments other than standardized tests, different measures could be used in Lebanon, namely alternative assessments. Also, these relatively new measures match the non-traditional conceptions of giftedness and intelligence that will be adopted in the Lebanese program. Another benefit of these instruments is the effectiveness of their use with diverse groups and the ease of adapting them to the particular cultural setting in which they are administered (Whiting & Ford, 2006). Also, students from lower income groups in Lebanon will have a higher chance of being identified through the use of performance-based assessments, as these instruments were found to be more effective with economically disadvantaged students (Ford et al.).

Several studies have shown that the use of alternative assessments (also called performance-based assessments) for identification purposes has yielded mostly positive results (e.g., Borland & Wright, 1994; Clasen, Middelton, & Connell, 1994; Hafenstein & Tucker, 1994; Maker et al., 2006; Reid, Romanoff, Algozzine, & Udall 2000; Sarouphim, 2009). The use of alternative assessment for identifying gifted students has witnessed an increase in the last two decades (Baldwin, 2005). This increase has coincided with the rise of non-traditional theories of intelligence (e.g., Gardner, 1983; Sternberg, 1991) and unconventional conceptions of giftedness (e.g., Maker, 1996; Renzulli, 1978). Advocates cite many advantages for the use of these instruments, such as assessment of higher-order skills, reducing the gap between testing and instruction, coverage of broad areas of intelligence, and assessing students in life-like and complex situations (Maker, 1996; O'Neil, 1992). Ortiz (2002) suggested that the use of alternative assessment provides qualitative and valuable data on the ability of students through observing the strategies used while they complete items on the test, thus providing insights into how they are reasoning about information.

One such alternative instrument, called DISCOVER, was shown to produce positive results with students from a wide cultural diversity (Sarouphim, 2001, 2005, 2007). The DISCOVER assessment was developed by Maker and her colleagues and is grounded in Gardner's MI theory (Maker et al., 1994). The assessment includes tasks that increase progressively in complexity and openness. Basically, three activities are performed in class during the administration to assess spatial, mathematical, and oral linguistic intelligences. Logical-mathematical and written linguistic intelligences are measured a day or so following the classroom assessment through paper-and-pencil tasks. Bodily-kinesthetic and the personal intelligences are assessed by observing the behaviors of students throughout the group administration, which lasts about two and a half hours.

Sarouphim conducted two studies to examine the effectiveness of DISCOVER in identifying gifted Lebanese students. The first study (2007) included a small sample and had for its purpose to examine

whether the assessment could be used effectively in Lebanon. In that study, DISCOVER was administered to 49 fifth graders taken from one private school in Beirut. The results showed that 19% of the participants met the criteria for identification. Also, no significant gender differences were found. The results were corroborated by interviews with teachers and the students' grade reports, indicating that DISCOVER could be used effectively in Lebanon. In the second study (in press), the sample consisted of 248 boys and girls in grades 3-5 from two private schools in Beirut. Students' DISCOVER ratings were compared to their school grades and their scores on the Raven Standard Progressive Matrices (RSPM). The results showed evidence for DISCOVER's concurrent validity with RSPM, as correlations between students' DISCOVER ratings in spatial intelligence and their Raven scores were high whereas correlations between students' DISCOVER ratings in linguistic intelligences and their Raven scores were low. Also, the students' school grades matched their DISCOVER ratings. Interviews with teachers and parents corroborated the results, with a few exceptions. Of the total sample, 14.5% were identified, with no gender differences.

Hence, DISCOVER seems to be a promising instrument that could be used as one measure for identification purposes. However, identifying gifted Lebanese students should not be based solely on the use of DISCOVER; rather, this instrument could constitute the basis for further screening and assessment of the students' strengths. Other data sources must be considered, too, such as parents' and teachers' nominations, as well as evidence of high academic achievement in one or several areas, as demonstrated through portfolio assessment. Riley (2005) argued that schools must use multiple methods of identification embedded in the cultural context to ensure that all students, including students from diverse populations are given a fair chance in identification and consequently, in being placed in programs for the gifted.

*Step 2: Design an effective curriculum***.** Much research has been conducted on designing the appropriate curriculum for gifted students (Gallagher, 1985; Maker et al., 2006; Renzulli & Reis, 1985). Most models focus on three aspects: pace, breadth, and depth. For example, Maker and Nielson suggested that programs for the gifted must have the following four objectives: to enrich the content of instruction, to emphasize process or problem-solving strategies, to encourage creativity in students' products, and to create a supportive classroom climate that enhances creativity and talent. Conversely, Renzulli and Reis argued against pull-out programs and focused on moving enrichment to the regular classroom, as shown in the *School Wide Enrichment Model* that they have developed and applied successfully in many schools.

More recently, Eyre (2007) developed the *structured tinkering* model based on the following assumptions, also shared by Hickey (as cited in Eyre, 2007):

- Gifted students are a heterogeneous group; therefore, the best provisions have to vary from one child to the next.
- The best provisions have to extend that which is available to all students rather than provide a completely different curriculum for gifted learners.
- The learning environment has to permit capable students to develop their potential while interacting with their peers.
- The learning climate has to enhance intellectual ability, talent, creativity, and decision-making.
- Gifted learners have to be encouraged to use higher levels of thinking, such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

These assumptions constitute a sound basis for the model to be developed for able Lebanese learners. The key in this model is that gifted students will not be provided with a completely different curriculum than that used in the regular classroom, but rather the model stipulates that provisions for the gifted have to be extended from that which is already available to all learners. The Lebanese model will have for its aim to nurture the multiple intelligences of students by providing them with the necessary material and classroom environment that will capitalize on their strengths, talents, and creativity.

Typically, in developing programs for the gifted, an important consideration is that the curriculum has to match the identification measures (Whiting & Ford, 2006). Given that the main instrument to be used for identification is the DISCOVER assessment, it follows that the curriculum of choice to be adopted in Lebanese schools is the DISCOVER curriculum model (Maker et al., 2006). This model is embedded in Gardner's MI theory and is based on a constructivist approach to teaching and learning. The model is based on teaching students through actively involving them in their own learning. Developing problem-solving skills, building new knowledge on prior experience and acquiring higher

order thinking skills are the main learning objectives of the DISCOVER curriculum. Also, in this model, teachers play the role of coaches and facilitators, rather than disseminators of information. The model has been applied in several countries outside the United States, including China, Taiwan, and the United Kingdom. Research in all these countries on the effectiveness of the DISCOVER curriculum has shown a significant increase in students' academic success (Maker et. al). Given that the application of the model has yielded positive results in different countries with a population of students from diverse cultural groups, it is expected that adapting it to the Lebanese context will yield similar positive results as well.

*Step 3: Develop policies***.** A program for gifted students in Lebanon cannot survive without the formulation of policies relevant to the Lebanese setting. Policies on identification, placement, access, and evaluation have to be developed to meet the needs of able learners. One of the important policies to consider is that concerning nondiscriminatory assessment and placement to ensure that all the children of Lebanon, of different gender, religion, and socioeconomic class have an equal opportunity to access programs for the gifted. Typically, minorities and economically disadvantaged students have been under represented in programs for the gifted (Ford et al., 2003). In Lebanon, students at risk for being under represented are those from lower socioeconomic groups who attend public schools. Therefore, care must be taken to ensure that identification procedures and placement policies protect these students' rights for equal access to programs for the gifted.

Another policy of similar importance is that of making the availability of services for gifted learners compulsory in the Lebanese educational system. Just as services for students with disabilities have been mandated by the Ministry of Education in Lebanon (Wehbi, 2006), provisions for gifted students must be mandated as well, as in the hiring of experienced staff and establishing resource rooms in all schools across the country.

One important consideration is that policies on gifted education should be implemented on the national level with the cooperation of the Ministry of Education. Moreover, inspections of whether schools are abiding by these policies must be effected on regular bases. At this time, inspectors pay yearly visits to schools in Lebanon. They examine mostly whether school officials are abiding by governmental guidelines on teacher qualifications, curriculum applications, and school facilities (Frayha, 2003). When policies on providing services for gifted students are established, inspectors should examine whether schools are indeed providing these services to gifted students, as well as their quality. If infractions are found, sanctions must be imposed to ensure that provisions for gifted students are made available in all schools.

*Step 4: Involve the parents***.** Several studies have documented the advantage of parents' involvement in the identification and placement of gifted children (Baldwin, 2005; Callahan, 2005). Parents' involvement must exceed the mere granting of their permission to test or place their children, to that of an active participation in the program. At first, Lebanese parents should be trained in what constitutes giftedness and in how to recognize the signs of high ability in their children. Secondly, parents should be educated in how to nurture and develop their children's abilities (e.g., games, activities, material, etc.). In one study, parents who were provided with a booklet on giftedness were successful in identifying signs of giftedness in their children and in helping them develop higher order skills, such as problem solving, creativity and leadership (as cited in Baldwin, 2005). Involved parents who believe in the value of the program could become important advocates in spreading awareness among the Lebanese population on the significance of gifted education in the country. Also, when these parents perceive the success of the program in meeting their children's academic needs, they will be more willing to encourage their children and others to participate in such program (Callahan, 2005).

Phase III: Evaluation

This last phase has for its aim to determine the success of the model. It consists of action steps, such as enhancing successful procedures, correcting flaws, making revisions, and conducting research on the overall effectiveness of the model.

Step 1: Test the application. The main task in this action step is to assess the quality of the program. How well is it functioning? What are its strengths and weaknesses? Are the instruments used for identification effective? Are identified students given adequate services and support? The purpose in this phase is to investigate all aspects of the operation by examining students' performance,

interviewing teachers and parents on their satisfaction with the program, and assessing the added value of the program to the education of gifted students.

Step 2: Make necessary modifications. The feedback provided by students, teachers, administrators, and parents will serve to revise the program. Identified strengths will be enhanced and flaws will be fixed. To ensure the continuity of the program, assessing the outcomes must be an ongoing process. Models other than DISCOVER could be introduced at this point, such as the School Wide Enrichment Model (Renzulli & Reis, 1985) or other models found to be effective with diverse populations. No matter which models are used, care must be taken to adapt their scope and content to the needs of students in the Lebanese educational setting.

*Step 3: Encourage research***.** No discipline could survive without research. Given that the field of giftedness is new in Lebanon, studies on the effectiveness of the model are of great importance. At first, research must focus on the Lebanese public's perceptions of the program to assess how well it was received by the consumers, namely administrators, teachers, parents, and students. Next, research must focus on the effectiveness of the program in meeting its objectives. Then studies investigating program revision and quality enhancement must be conducted at a later stage.

Conclusion

Giftedness can be found in all cultures and is expressed through a variety of behaviors (Baldwin, 2005). Parents, teachers, and school officials need to be made aware of the characteristics of giftedness and its determinants so that they become *talent spotters*, always on the look-out for untapped ability. An important consideration in this process is to adopt broad views of the concepts of intelligence and giftedness that exceed high academic performance and encompass a wide range of abilities. Such a consideration is of particular importance in Lebanon where efforts on developing identification procedures and programs for gifted students are still in their initial stages. One advantage for the current lack of programs for gifted students in the country is the *clean slate* phenomenon; that is, educators can start working afresh, molding the field of education of the gifted based on empirical evidence yielded by the pool of research findings already available in the literature, a process potentially less problematic than that of attempting to fix flaws in already pre-existing programs. A thorough examination of the body of literature on giftedness is needed; however, for optimal results, the research findings must be fine-tuned and adapted to the Lebanese educational setting. In sum, establishing a discipline of education for gifted learners in Lebanon, effective and unique to the country is timely and critical.

The steps outlined in this paper are neither exclusive nor final. When the model is launched, modifications will be tailored to emerging needs. At this time, the initial efforts must focus on finding a starting point and an amenable climate where education of the gifted can thrive in Lebanon. The strategy to adopt is along the following lines: start small, evaluate constantly, revise and expand according to needs. In a country with a history troubled with repetitive wars, it is the civic responsibility of scholars and educators to recognize and nurture the talents of its gifted citizens who represent the untapped promise for a better future for Lebanon. When the success of the model is established, other countries in the Middle East could adopt the model and adapt it to their own unique and particular needs.

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