



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF  
GIFTEDNESS IN SCHOOLS IN LEBANON

by  
SARAH ISHAC EL KHOURY

A thesis  
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
to the Department of Education  
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences  
at the American University of Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon  
May 2014

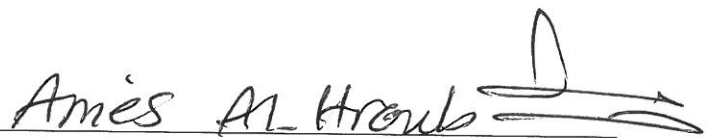
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Approved by:

Dr. Anies Al-Hroub, Associate Professor  
Education



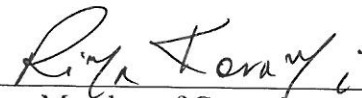
Advisor

Dr. Tamer Amin, Associate Professor  
Education



Member of Committee

Dr. Rima Karami Akkary, Assistant Professor  
Education



Member of Committee

Date of thesis defense: May 9, 2014

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For the entirety of my life, and anything good or decent or creative or wonderful I may have done with it, I thank my dearest friend and closest companion, God.

My most sincerest gratitude is for my Thesis advisor Dr. Anies Al-Hroub, who proved to have the patience of a saint and was always ready to answer my endless questions. He has never given up on me, and was always there to support me. I am especially indebted to his constructive feedback, and for going the extra mile with me, to ensure that I gave nothing less than my best. Thank you Dr. Anies!

I would also like to thank Dr. Rima Karami Akkary and Dr. Tamer Amin for agreeing to be my committee members despite their very busy schedules. I want to thank them also for their constructive feedback on this thesis.

My most heartfelt gratitude is for my dad, Ishac, for always encouraging me to do my best, and for his unconditional love, support and inspiration. I want to thank my mom Ghada, for her endless words of wisdom and for her readily available hugs. My last thank you is for my sister Jouana for abusing Nescafe with me, and staying long nights after midnight, working together and supporting each other.

Finally, I want to thank Vasilis, Lina, Ray, Nadine, the other Nadine, Marise, Hiba, Nour, Sarah, Mira, Lara, Mahmud and Serene, for their constant companionship and support. Without you guys, it would not have been an adventure.

# AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Sarah Ishac El Khoury for Master of Arts and Sciences  
Major: Educational Psychology, School Guidance

Title: Elementary Teachers' Perceptions of Giftedness in Schools in Lebanon

In order to initiate programs in gifted education that are built on a solid basis, research on identification conceptions is needed. The main reason for the shortage of gifted education in Lebanon is mainly due to a lack of understanding in the construct of giftedness. Consequently, Lebanon lacks the appropriate assessment and procedures for identifying gifted students (Saphourim, 2010). This study adopted a mixed research design in order to explore current elementary teachers' perceptions of the attributes of gifted students, as a starting point to understand where the lack of understanding in the construct of giftedness is. The purpose of this study is threefold: (1) explore the perceptions teachers currently have on attributes of gifted students, (2) survey the current practices used as forms of identification for gifted students; and (3) explore the available services and programs used in schools for students with gifted needs.

Data was collected through 140 surveys from six schools, 15 semi-structured interviews and five focus group discussions with elementary school teachers in five private schools in the greater Beirut area. The results revealed various definitions from each school. A definition for giftedness was constructed from the findings which included a combination of three parts: High intellectual ability, high academic performance, and social intelligence. High intellectual ability includes high logical thinking, and that the gifted student's scores on the report cards should be the highest among the class. High academic performance means that gifted students excel in one or more academic subject area. Giftedness also encompasses social intelligence, which means that the student should be a natural leader, take charge of small groups, and be able to deal with real life situations that are mainly applicable in Lebanon, for example, the ability to bargain for better prices, and cutting in line to get the service or product faster. The constructed definition has some similar attributes to Sternberg's WISC theory and Renzulli's Three-ring model of giftedness, however with some differences as well. As for identification procedures, there was no official identification procedure available, due to a lack of an official definition on Lebanon, thus teachers reported that they tend to rely heavily on scores on the report cards, or consult with other teachers, principal, or parents. One secondary finding was the boys tended to be identified by teachers for giftedness more than girls. Finally, as for programs and services, no program seems to exist in Lebanon and in schools, according to the teachers.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a background of theory, research, and practice on giftedness in Lebanon and abroad. Consequently, this chapter will present the current definitions of giftedness according to research and theory, and will shed light on current identification practices and programs according to research and in Lebanon. Indeterminate definitions of giftedness and the diverse procedures for identifying gifted students, has been a constant problem in the field. Because of this, definitions of giftedness and identification procedures are consistently the problem when it comes to identifying, placing, and providing appropriate services to students who are gifted (Bracken & Brown, 2006).

A common and early definition of giftedness includes top scores obtained through standardized IQ tests. Alfred Binet created the first IQ in 1905, in order to predict success in school, rather than use them as a measure of innate intelligence, or 'raw' genetically based potential (Gardner, 1992). Unfortunately, until now, many researchers, psychologists, educators and people in general believe that IQ tests are a major tool in determining and measuring intelligence and giftedness (Sarouhim, 1999). Opponents of this view believe that IQ scores are not enough to determine or identify whether a student is gifted or not. They argue that linguistic and logical mathematical abilities are the only abilities measured through IQ testing, and this leaves out other important abilities such as spatial, personal, musical and artistic abilities (Gardner, 1992), and that IQ tests exclude other important factors such as motivation, effort, and

creativity, which are key components in more recent definitions of giftedness. Furthermore, another reason for the dissatisfaction with using IQ testing as a sole identification method is that their use has led to major underrepresentation of students from culturally diverse groups and who are economically disadvantaged (Callahan, 2005), probably due to their over reliance on verbal skills, which minority students lack (Sarouphim, 2009).

In 1977, Renzulli reconceptualized a new definition of giftedness, which he called the three-ring model. He hypothesized that giftedness is an interaction between three clusters of basic traits: above-average general ability, high levels of creativity, and high levels of motivation (task commitment). Similarly, in 1993, Maker proposed that creativity and intelligence can be interlinked; for example, she affirms that 'creative problem solving' is a characteristic of giftedness. She goes further in 1996, and states that the key element in identifying gifted students is the ability to solve complex problems in the "most efficient, effective, or economical ways" (p. 44).

In 1983, Gardner defined intelligence as someone having multiple abilities to solve problems or to create a product that is valued within one or more cultural settings. Furthermore, he proposes a multidimensional definition in which he identifies seven types of intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily-kinesthetic, and musical. In 2000, Gardner added one and a half intelligences to his definition. He named the eighth intelligence "Naturalist", which is sensitivity to the ecological environment, and he named the half intelligence, the "Existentialist", which is having insight into the different meanings of life and one's existence (Gardner, 2000).

Sternberg's (1985) Triarchic Theory of Intelligence, similar to Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences, is a comprehensive, flexible and inclusive theory which contend that

"giftedness is a social construct that manifests itself in many ways and means different things to different cultural groups. Both Gardner and Sternberg acknowledge the multifaceted, complex nature of intelligence and how current tests (which are too simplistic and static) fail to do justice to this construct (Colangelo & Davis, 2003, p. 514)." He further divides intellectual activity into componential, experiential and contextual elements, which work together to produce intelligence. Sternberg makes a distinction between analytical, synthetic and practical giftedness. (Sternberg, 1985). Sternberg however expanded his model of giftedness and called it the WICS, which is an acronym for wisdom, intelligence, and creativity, synthesized. Sternberg argues that these four attributes are all needed in order to have a future successful life, and they can be modified and nurtured overtime, and are not fixed (Sternberg, 2004).

Gagné's Differentiated Model of giftedness and Talent is another model developed for identifying giftedness in students. Gagné distinguished between giftedness and talent. According to Gagné, he defined giftedness as "the possession and use of untrained and spontaneously expressed natural abilities in at least one domain, to a degree that places a child at least among the top 10% of his or her age peers: (p. 60). On the other hand, he defined talent as "the superior mastery of systematically developed abilities (or skills) in at least one filled of human activity to a degree that places a child's achievement within the upper 10% of age peers who are active in the field" (p. 60). In this model, giftedness includes four aptitude domains: intellectual, creative, socioaffective, and sensorimotor (Gagné, 2004).

There is an obvious overlap between the above models of giftedness. For example, In Gardner's model, linguistic, logical-mathematical and spatial abilities are similar to some extent to the traditional intelligence test (Lichtenberger, et. al., 2006). Furthermore, Sternberg's Triarchic model and Gardner's linguistic and logical-mathematical abilities seem to align under

the analytical domain. Also, the synthetic model is very similar to the creative and artistic intelligences in Gardner's model, such as musical intelligence. As for the practical domain, it could be related to Gardner's interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligences, and they involve exploring environments that are partially social or knowing and managing one's strengths and weaknesses (Lichtenberger, et. al., 2006). Finally, Gagné and Renzulli's model share intrapersonal and environmental intelligences.

### **A. Gifted Education in Lebanon**

Lebanon lacks a formal system of education for gifted students, because the emphasis in the national school curriculum remains on mainstream education (Sarouphim, 2010). However, in Beirut, the capital city of Lebanon, there are some private schools that cater for high achieving students who have a high socio-economic status. These private schools do offer some enrichment programs, however the programs are often limited in content and scope, unlike the enrichment programs offered in American schools for example. Regardless of their limited scope, the programs offered in some Lebanese schools attempt to nurture high achieving students through enhancement activities (Sarouphim, 2009).

Sarouphim (2010) believes that the main reason for the shortage of gifted education in Lebanon is mainly due to a lack of understanding in the construct of giftedness. She also states that Lebanon lacks the appropriate assessment and procedures for identifying gifted students. Similarly, Diab (2006) affirms that, "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 (p.

81)". However these tests provide an estimate of the students' ability only. It was already mentioned earlier that a child is more than just his/her grades and academic achievement and that giftedness does not rely on purely academic scores. Consequently, a need for more reliable and valid identification methods must be provided, in addition to programs that are well-grounded in established theories for gifted students (Sarouphim, 2010).

However, there is one advantage to the lack of gifted programs in Lebanon according to Sarouphim (2009). She labeled this advantage as the "clean slate" phenomenon, which is: "Educators can start working afresh, moulding the field of education of the gifted based on empirical evidence yielded by the pool of research findings already available in the Western literature, a process potentially less problematic than attempting to fix flaws in pre-existing programs" (p. 277). What she means here is that using western studies can help tremendously with gifted research, however caution should be taken as we cannot simply apply Western evidence to the Lebanese culture blindly. Therefore, the first thing that needs to be done is viewing and exploring the current perceptions of teachers on giftedness and see how much the gap is between on-the-ground application and knowledge of giftedness and current research. How much of the research is being applied?

It should be noted that all schools in Lebanon, whether public or private, must follow a national curriculum mandated by the Ministry of Education. Catering to students with special needs was made mandatory, in the latest revision of this curriculum (NCERD, 1995). In the latest version, provisions include support services and remedial classes offered to students with learning disabilities, but they exclude any services of any kind to gifted students. Moreover, the Lebanese Parliament in May 2000 approved Public Law 220, which provided a legislative framework for 'people with disabilities (Wehbi, 2006). In addition, Article 59 of this Law



“guarantees the right to equal educational and learning opportunities for all people with disabilities” (Wehbi, 2006, p. 323). Furthermore, Article 60 declares that “a disability should not restrict access to any educational institution or setting in Lebanon” (Sarouphim, 2010, p. 72). There is no mention existing pertaining to the education of gifted students. Therefore, the scope of special education in Lebanon is limited to students with disabilities, as there is no mention concerning the issues of gifted education by either the Lebanese law, or the revised national curriculum. Sarouphim (2010) points out that the matter of educating the gifted is not a matter of encouraging gifted education or discouraging it; but a matter of simply ignoring it.

## **B. Identifying Culturally Gifted Students**

According to Saccuzzo, Johnson, and Guertin (1994) and Colangelo and Davis (2003), some of the most promising instruments for assessing giftedness in students are nonverbal tests of intelligence, such as the Naglieri Non-Verbal Abilities Test and the Raven's Progressive Matrices, in order to identify more Black and Hispanic students, than just White students. These tests are considered to be less loaded culturally than the traditional tests, therefore, they are more likely to identify the strengths of culturally diverse students. A study done by Saccuzzo et al. (1994) concurs with this, as they were able to identify more Black and Hispanic students using the Raven's than using the more traditional test, and accordingly reported that, "50% of the non-White children who had failed to qualify based on a WISC-R qualified with the Raven (p. 10)". They also add that "the Raven is a far better measure of pure potential than tests such as the WISC-R, whose scores depend heavily on acquired knowledge (p. 10)". A clarification should be made; "nonverbal" tests assess intelligence nonverbally, but this does not mean that students are "nonverbal", as in they cannot talk; but rather, the tests give students opportunities to demonstrate their intelligence, without the restricting influence of language, vocabulary and

academic exposure (Colangelo & Davis, 2003). Both Sternberg and Gardner agree that not all gifted students have strong verbal or linguistic skills, as in the cases of musically, creatively, spatially gifted students, or gifted students who have practical and social intelligence. Therefore, a need arises in finding ways to identify these gifted students and for now, nonverbal testing seems to have more promise than others (Colangelo & Davis, 2003).

### **C. Purpose of the Study**

In Lebanon, little research has been done on gifted learners and gifted education (Sarouhim, 2009). In order to initiate programs in gifted education that are built on a solid basis, research on identification conceptions, which mean identification procedures based on evidenced-based definitions of giftedness, is needed. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate and explore the current understanding and conception of giftedness of teachers in Lebanon, in order to construct a definition, and identify the current identification procedures and services are offered to gifted students. Hence, our aims are threefold: (1) explore the perceptions teachers currently have on attributes of gifted students, (2) survey the current practices used as forms of identification for gifted students; and (3) to explore the available services and programs used in schools for students with gifted needs.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are Lebanese private, elementary school teachers' conceptions of the attributes of gifted students?

2. What are the current practices of identification of gifted students?
3. What are the available curricular and program services for gifted students in private elementary Lebanese schools?

#### **D. Rationale**

Whether a student has been identified as gifted, or suspected to be gifted, his or her education becomes the most important priority in maintaining his or her attention, enriching his or her fields of interest, and finally motivating and challenging him or her to reach their utmost potential. In Lebanon, according to Sarouphim (2009), a growing interest in the education of the gifted has been noted among educators and scholars even though at present, the country lacks a formal system for educating gifted students. For this reason, identification procedures present a major issue. In order to initiate programs in gifted education that are built on empirical evidence, research on identification measures is much needed in the country, given that the growing interest in this field will eventually lead to the establishment of programs for the gifted in Lebanese schools (Sarouphim, 2009).

For this reason, before there can even be talk about establishing gifted education programs, the definition of what it means to be gifted needs to be agreed upon. There needs to be a consensus in order to develop sound identification procedures and programs to ensure that the gifted students are being identified properly and receive the education that they deserve. There also needs to be culturally appropriate tools. However, very little research can be found on identification procedures of gifted students in Lebanon, or even on services provided, much less on how Lebanon defines giftedness. There exists a gap in the literature. This study attempts to fill in this gap. Therefore, exploring current teacher's perceptions of giftedness is finding out

where the gap is. We are focusing on the scope of the teachers' conception of giftedness. We had no pre-conceived notion of how teachers view giftedness, as there are no studies done about this in Lebanon. Therefore, we are exploring teachers' conceptions as they are presented.

The reason that we decided to include elementary teachers in our study is, as Silverman (2007) discusses, "the ideal time frame for testing for giftedness is between the ages of 5 and 8 years. After 9 years of age, gifted children may hit the ceiling of tests, and gifted girls may be socialized to hide their abilities (Silverman, 2007). In any case, we believe that early identification is essential, because it leads to early intervention, and this promotes optimal development for gifted students.

The mixed method approach was adopted in this study, because using surveys would not be enough; the best method for exploring perceptions is through qualitative research techniques such as interviews and focus group discussions. Qualitative research design is best used because of its focus on revealing individual understandings or conceptions (Lee, 2006). Otherwise, the study would be incomplete. Hence we adopted the mixed method approach, as the quantitative analysis will help us explore the teachers' perceptions, and the qualitative analysis will help us explore these perceptions in depth.

## **E. Significance of the Study**

The study has theoretical and practical implications. The theoretical implication is constructing a single definition by combining the current beliefs that teachers have on gifted education. There is no official definition of giftedness in Lebanon. In this study, we gathered teachers' perceptions of giftedness and combined them to come up with one clear definition of how Lebanese teachers perceive giftedness. This is to discover what is currently on the ground in

Lebanon. Well-grounded programs cannot exist if the definition of giftedness is unclear or not agreed upon. Additionally, problems in identifying gifted students exists because there are different characteristics and concepts in the Lebanese culture, and this gets in the way of agreeing with a single definition.

Stemming from this is the practical implication which entails that if we construct a common definition for giftedness in Lebanon, there would not be as many misconceptions, and multiple assessment would take place. This study could help institutionalize these definitions, and policy makers can adopt them. In addition, viewing and exploring the current perceptions of teachers on giftedness helps see how much the gap is between on-the-ground application and knowledge of giftedness and current research. How much of the research is being applied? Most importantly, the practices that will be implemented should be based on theory and on solid-based theory and evidence. This would meet the needs of students much better than if each school acted on their own, without premise. Finally, because Lebanon is a country with a long history of conflict, it would be very beneficial to recognize and nurture the minds and talents of gifted students who may be the promise for a much better future in Lebanon.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **A. Definitions of Giftedness**

##### *1. History of Early Definitions*

There are a lot of diverse definitions of giftedness, and various identification methods, that it has become a major problem in the field of giftedness. Consequently, this leads to the problem of identifying, referring and providing appropriate services to students who are gifted (Bracken & Brown, 2006). A study done by Pfeiffer (2003), tackled this very issue. Pfeiffer asked 64 authorities in the field of gifted education about this topic, and his findings were that “94% of the respondents agreed that the definitions and the conceptualization of the gifted was their number one concern, and problems with the identification process was their second most frequently cited issue (41%) (p. 457)”.

Finding and agreeing on a definition is difficult because of two reasons. According to Renzulli (1979), these two reasons are that first, a definition can “limit or restrict the number of performance areas that are considered in determining the eligibility for special programs (p.180)”. A ‘conservative’ definition might actually limit a student from entering a gifted program purely because they program might consider academic performance only, and exclude other areas such as art, drama, music, leadership, public speaking, and creative writing. Second, Renzulli also says that “a definition may specify the degree or level of excellence one must attain to be considered gifted (p. 180).” Therefore, the definition of what exactly determines whether or not a student is gifted has changed significantly over the years.

Let us take a look at some early attempts at finding definitions of giftedness. Some scholars explored giftedness as well, even though they were not necessarily experts in the field. In his Book *Handbook of intelligence*, Sternberg (2004) summarizes some philosophies regarding intelligence, which we will include here. Some examples he included are Homer in the *Odyssey*, when he differentiated between ‘good looks’ and ‘good thinking’ (Sternberg, 2004). He explained that “one man may make a poor physical impression but speak in an articulate and persuasive way. Another man may be handsome but lack the ability to communicate well with others (p. 9)” Plato had much to say about intelligence as well in his book *Theaetetus*. He stated that:

Socrates asks Theaetetus to imagine that there exists in the mind of man a block of wax that is of different sizes in different men. The block of wax also can differ in hardness, moistness, and purity. Socrates, citing Homer, suggests that when the wax is pure and clear and sufficiently deep, the mind easily will learn and retain information and will not be subject to confusion. It only will think things that are true, and because the impressions in the wax are clear, these impressions will be distributed quickly into their proper places on the block of wax. But when the wax is muddy or impure or very soft or very hard, there will be defects of the intellect. People whose wax is soft will be good at learning but be apt to forget. People whose wax is hard will be slow to learn but will retain what they learn. People whose wax is shaggy or rugged or gritty, or whose wax has an admixture of earth or dung, will have only indistinct impressions. Those with hard wax will have the same because

there will be no depth to their thoughts. If the wax is too soft, the impressions will be indistinct because they easily can be confused or remodelled (p. 9).

Finally, Aristotle has also given his opinion on the matter. In *Posterior Analytics* Book 1, he claimed that intelligence is someone who has ‘quick wit’. He explains that “an intelligent person seeing someone in conversation with a man of wealth might conclude quickly that the person is seeking to borrow money from the man of wealth” (p. 9).

There are other conceptions as well regarding giftedness over the past centuries and cultures. Surprisingly, not all cultures regarded academic skills as ‘giftedness’ (Davis, Rimm, & Siegle, 2011). For example, in ancient Sparta, military skills were extremely valued. Training and schooling in combat and warfare began as soon as children reached the age of seven, and any baby with a physical defect were flung off a cliff (Davis et al., 2011). In Athens, social positions and gender determined giftedness and those two factors determined the type of life opportunities one was able to get. Accordingly, Upper-class free Greeks sent their boys to private schools and were taught reading, writing, arithmetic, history, literature, the arts and physical fitness. Sophists taught young men mathematics, logic, grammar, and so on (Davis et al., 2011). At the time, apparently only Plato’s Academy was for free, and they selected both men and women based on their intelligence and physical stamina, and not on social class (Davis et al., 2011). Not surprisingly, Roman education stressed on architecture, engineering, law and administration. Both boys and girls attended classes from elementary and secondary schools (the number of girls here would decrease), but only boys were allowed to finish their higher education. Davis et al. (2011) say that “Rome valued mother and family, however, and some gifted women emerged who greatly affected Roman society, most notably Cornelia, Roman matron and mother of statesmen Gaius and Tiberius Gracchus (p. 3)”.



If we move on to the other side of the globe, we see that even as early as 2200 BC, the Chinese developed an elaborate system of examinations that selected outstanding persons for government positions (Renzulli, 1979). Also, during the Tang Dynasty in 618 A.D, China valued gifted children, and they sent them to the imperial courts where their gifts were recognized and cultivated. Interestingly, the Chinese accepted a multiple-talent concept of giftedness, valuing literacy ability, leadership, imagination, and originality, while at the same time valuing perceptual giftedness such as reading speed, memory, reasoning, and perceptual sensitivity (Tsuin-chen, 1961). In addition, and this added greatly to Confucius, about 500 B.C., the Chinese recognized that education should be available to all children, however, each student should be educated according to his/her abilities (Davis & Rimm, 2011). Moreover, in Japan for example, birth determined the type of opportunities a child got. According to Anderson (1975), during the Tokugawa Society period (1604 – 1868), Samurai children were trained in Confucian classics, martial arts, history, composition, calligraphy, moral values, and etiquette. The ‘commoners’ were taught other things such as loyalty, obedience, humility, and diligence. A few private academies were opened for intellectually gifted children, whether they were Samurai or common (Anderson, 1975).

As for more recent history, the contributions of Francis Galton, Alfred Binet, Lewis Terman, and Leta Stetter Hollingworth, following the impact of Russia’s Sputnik, added a lot to the field of gifted education. Francis Galton (1822 – 1911), was a young cousin of Charles Darwin. He was one of the first people who had significant research in intelligence testing. He believed that intelligence sprang from the keenness of one’s senses, namely, vision, auditory, smell, touch, and reaction time (Galton, 1869). He argued that intelligence (sensory ability) is due to natural selection and heredity. In his book *Hereditary Genius*, (Galton, 1869), he concluded that

distinguished people generally seem to come from generations of distinguished families, and that it increased the person's chance of becoming distinguished.

Albert Binet contributed a great deal as well. In the 1890's, he was responsible for the roots of Modern Intelligence Tests (Davis et al., 2011). He came up with the notion 'mental age', which is the concept that children grow in intelligence, and that any child is either at the appropriate stage intellectually for his/her age, or is advanced or behind. He also said that children who learn more do so because of greater intelligence. At first, in order to distinguish between regular and gifted children, he tried to compare hand-squeezing strength, hand speed in moving 50 cm, amount of pressure on the forehead before causing pain, detecting differences in hand-help weights, or reaction time to sounds or naming colors (Davis et al., 2011). He found that there was no significant difference between the two. However, when he measured the ability to pay attention, memory, judgment, reasoning, and comprehension, he was finally able to get more accurate results. These tests would determine the gifted from the non-gifted (Binet & Simon, 1905a, 1905b).

As for Lewis Terman, a Stanford psychologist referred to as "the father of the gifted education movement", made two very important contributions to the field of gifted education. The first contribution was when he supervised the modification and Americanization of the Binet-Simon tests producing in 1916 the *Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale* (Davis & Rimm, 2011). His second famous contribution was his identification and longitudinal study of 1528 gifted children, which was published in the *Genetic Studies of Genius* series; Terman and his colleagues identified 1000 children using the Stanford-Binet IQ scores above 135 (the upper one percent). Later in 1928, he added 528 children. His earlier research involved parents, teachers,

medical records, and anthropometric measurements. When he died in 1956, his work was continued by many others (Davis et al., 2011).

Leta Stetter Hollingworth, known as the ‘Nurturant Mother’, invented strategies that identify, teach, and counsel gifted children (Klein, 2000). Leta contributed to the field of gifted education. She believed that the top 1 per cent of the children population (IQ 130 to 180) are considered gifted, and that gifted children become gifted adults (Davis et al., 2011). She believed that early identification is the crucial in order to provide optimum educational experiences for the child. She also believed that school should use multiple identification criteria when assessing a child for giftedness. Her identification procedure included IQ tests, interviews with the child and the parents, nominations from the teacher and the principal, and finally a review of each child’s social and emotional maturity (Davis et al., 2011). Interestingly, Hollingworth assumed that students with an IQ of 140 waste around half their time in school and students whose IQ level is 170, waste all their time (Davis et al., 2011).

Finally, there came the launching of the Russian satellite Sputnik, in 1957. What is curious about this, and the reason it is so famous, is that “To many [American people], the launch of Sputnik was a glaring and technological defeat – Russia’s scientific minds had outperformed ours” (Tannenbaum, 1979). The effect of this extraordinary event led to reporters criticizing American education, specifically, it’s ignoring of its gifted population. Tannenbaum (1979) summarizes the events that happened after the Sputnik event, “gifted students were identified. Acceleration and ability grouping were installed. Academic course work was telescoped (condensed). College courses were offered in high school. Foreign languages were taught to elementary school children”, and so on. Tannenbaum refers to these events as “total

talent mobilization”. According to Tannebaum, the awareness and concern for educating the gifted children renewed in the mid-1970s.

## ***2. Modern and Broader Definitions***

Modern conceptions of giftedness are a result of evolution of ideas. Each generation of gifted theories is built on earlier ones, integrating previous generations of research and ideas, and adding different and extra components that reflect the current state of research (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2008). In 1972, a committee formed by the U.S. office of Education proposed a definition of giftedness that included performance domains as well as academic domains. Children could be considered gifted if they showed high abilities in the following areas: (a) general intellectual ability, (b) specific academic aptitude, (c) creative or productive thinking, (d) leadership ability, (e) visual and performing arts; and (f) psychomotor ability (which was excluded in the 1978 statement). Other contemporary definitions arise from this.

Moving on to definitions, according to Renzulli (1986), gifted children are “characterized by three interlocking clusters of ability, these clusters being above average (though not necessarily superior) ability, task commitment, and creativity (p. 9)”. Renzulli goes on to describe what each ability means; above average ability (high ability) is defined according to Renzulli, as having high levels of verbal and numerical reasoning, high levels of abstract thinking, spatial relations, memory and fluency. He also mentions ‘automatization’ of information processing; which refers to rapid, accurate, and selective retrieval of information. He goes on to describe another factor in high level thinking, which includes Specific Ability. He defines specific ability as, “the application of various combinations of the above general abilities to one or more specialized areas of knowledge or areas of human performance (e.g. the arts, leadership, administration) (p. 9).” In other words, a gifted student is one who is able to acquire

and make use of vast amount of information, and be able to apply them in particular problems or manifest them in their specialised areas of performance, in addition to having the skill to sort out relevant to irrelevant information in solving a particular problem.

Moving on to the second ability of Task Commitment, Renzulli defines it as, “the capacity for high levels of interest, enthusiasm, and involvement in a particular problem, area of study, or form of human expression” (p. 9). It is the ability to commit, and to have perseverance, determination, and be completely dedicated. The student would present a large amount of self-confidence, a strong ego and a belief in his/her ability to carry out important work, freedom from inferiority feelings, drive to achieve. This also includes setting high standards for his/her work and being able to maintain openness to self and external criticism.

Finally, he explains creativity as having fluency, flexibility, and originality of thought. In other words, the student would be open to new experiences, receptive to new ideas, no matter how bizarre or different. These students are usually very curious, speculative, and adventurous, and are willing to take risks in thought and action. They are also very sensitive to detail, are able to act on and react to external stimulation and one's own ideas and feelings (Renzulli, 1986).

When there are lists of traits such as this one, there tends to be an overlap with individual items, and an interaction between and among the general categories and the specific traits (Renzulli, 1986). However, Renzulli clearly points out that not all the traits have to be present in a single individual for them to be labelled as gifted. This is why he named his model the Three Ring Conception of Giftedness, as the name emphasizes that there is an interaction among the clusters, rather than only having one cluster.

Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI), describes seven types of intelligences, and then recently added an eighth. He was opposed by the severe limitation of IQ

test scores, as they undervalue students' other strengths Gardner (1999). The original seven in addition to the eighth intelligences are: (1) linguistic (verbal) intelligence, which includes verbal comprehension, syntax, semantics, and written and oral expression, (2) logical mathematical intelligence, which includes inductive and deductive reasoning, (3) spatial intelligence, which is the capacity to represent and manipulate three dimensional configurations, (4) musical intelligence, which includes pitch discrimination, sensitivity to rhyme, texture, and timbre, (5) bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, which is the ability to use all or part of one's body to perform a task, (6) interpersonal intelligence, which is the ability to understand actions and motivations of others and act sensibly based on that knowledge, (7) intrapersonal intelligence, which is a person's understanding of one's own cognition, strengths and weaknesses, thinking styles, feelings, and emotions (Gardner, 1983), and the latest addition to these intelligences, which he called (8) naturalist intelligence, which is spiritual, moral, existential, and naturalist intelligence (Gardner, 1999).

In his Triarchic Theory, Sternberg (1985, 2004) identified three main types of intelligence: (1) Analytical giftedness "is the academic talent measured by typical intelligence tests, particularly analytical reasoning and reading comprehension, (2) Synthetic giftedness refers to creativity, insightfulness, intuition, or the ability to cope with novelty. Such persons may not earn the highest IQ, but ultimately they make the greatest contribution to society; and (3) Practical giftedness involves applying analytic and/or synthetic abilities successfully to everyday, pragmatic situations" (p. 26). Sternberg (2004) also states that the central aspect of giftedness is being able to coordinate the three abilities, and knowing when to use which one, and having a balance between the three. He uses the term 'mental manager' to describe this phenomenon. Finally, in 2000, Sternberg modified his Triarchic theory to include wisdom as a

subtype of practical intelligence. Wisdom, according to Sternberg (2000), centers on concern for “the needs and welfare of others” (p. 26). Therefore, high wisdom means giving good advice to others as well to oneself.

Grantham (2003) defined giftedness as an ability to excel at the upper end of any talent continuum. Kaufman and Sternberg (2008) said that “‘giftedness’ is a label – nothing more” (p. 71). They also state that there is not one “absolute criteria” that one can follow when it comes to defining or labeling a gifted student; “Criteria for such labeling are a matter of opinion” (p. 71). They go on to explain how labeling can be applied either in a general way, or a specific way:

The more general way implies that giftedness is relatively general across many domains—that is, someone is either gifted or not. On this view, someone who is gifted is gifted very broadly. The more specific way implies that giftedness is something that is potentially limited to one or several narrow domains—for example, verbal skills; or within the verbal domain, writing skills; or within the writing domain, fiction- writing skills. Indeed, relatively few successful fiction writers are also successful nonfiction writers, and vice versa (p. 71).

In their article, Kaufman and Sternberg (2008) also established that the conceptions of giftedness often change over time. They give the example of how in the past, a student’s ability to learn classical Greek and Latin quickly was a sign of giftedness, but nowadays, this ability is less valued. Finally, they also point out that conceptions of giftedness are usually based on either explicit or implicit theories of giftedness. They explain this perfectly, so we will quote them directly:

An explicit theory is one proposed by a scientist or educator who has studied giftedness and has arrived at a conception of giftedness that has been subject to

some kind of empirical test. An implicit theory is simply a layperson's conception of a phenomenon. It has no explicit scientific basis. It might be looked at as a "pragmatic" conception rather than as one based on rigorous research (p. 72).

Sternberg came up with a new model of giftedness, called the WICS model of giftedness. Giftedness in this model is perceived as a synthesis of wisdom, intelligence, and creativity (Sternberg, 2004). WICS model stipulates that:

...in life, people need creative skills and attitudes to produce new and original ideas; analytical skills and attitudes (academic intelligence) to evaluate the quality of these ideas; practical skills and attitudes (practical intelligence) to execute ideas and to persuade others of their value; and wisdom related skills and attitudes in order to ensure that one's ideas help to foster a common good, rather than only the good of oneself and those closely associated with oneself. Gifted people, in this view, are not necessarily extremely strong in all of these aspects. Rather, they recognize and capitalize on their strengths, and recognize and compensate for or correct their weaknesses, in order to adapt to, shape, and select real-world environments (p. 77).

François Gagné (2004) proposed a theory of giftedness that looked more closely at the talent-development process. According to him, the terms 'gifted' and 'talented' are used interchangeably. Therefore, he proposed a new model called the Differentiated Model of Gifted and Talented (DMGT) in order to distinguish between these two terms. His aim was to uncover the major environmental influences (such as home, school, parents and activities, etc.), non-intellective variables such as motivation and temperament, and learning, training, and practicing



which transform the genetically determined ‘gifts’ (intellectual, creative, sensorimotor and so on) into talents (such as language, science, mathematics, art, music, leadership, etc.).

Finally, Gottfredson (2003), described a three-level, pyramid shaped model of intelligence. At the top of the pyramid is the (1) basic intelligence or *g*. The middle level (II) consists of general abilities which are correlated to the *g*. Finally, the bottom tier includes myriads of specific abilities, many which are unidentified, which are "related to one or more intermediate, more general types of intelligence (p. 27)." Gottfredson concluded that Gardner's eight intelligences and Sternberg's Triarchic theory would fall in the middle level of the pyramid, indicating that all are related to basic intelligence.

### ***3. Characteristics and Attributes of gifted learners***

Children who are gifted differ from one another not only physically, but in cognitive and language abilities, interests, learning styles, motivation, energy levels, personalities, mental health, self-concepts, habits, behaviors, and more importantly, their educational needs (Davis et al., 2011). We will refer a little back to the Terman Studies, because his findings suggested that students who are gifted are not only more intelligent than other children, but are better adjusted psychologically, socially, and even physically. This directly opposes what has been said by Lombroso in 1895, a few centuries back, when he claimed (as cited in Davis et al., 2011, p. 32): “signs of degeneration in men of genius included stuttering, short stature, general emaciation, sickly color, rickets (leading to club footedness, lameness, or a hunched back) baldness, amnesia, sterility, and that awful symptom of brain degeneration – left handedness.” Apparently, Lombroso’s declaration was widely accepted, and this made ‘average’ people feel good about being ‘average’. However, Terman completely changed this myth when he claimed that people

who are gifted are not only well-adjusted in their lives, emotionally stable and have greater success, but also show a below average incidence of suicide and mental illnesses (Sears, 1979; Terman & Oden, 1947, 1959). In 1947, Terman and Oden summarized the main characteristics of gifted children:

For the fields of subject matter covered in our tests, the superiority of gifted over unselected children was greater in reading, language usage, arithmetical reasoning, science, literature, and the arts. In arithmetical computation, spelling and factual information about history and civics, the superiority of the gifted was somewhat less marked.... (p. 225).

They also concluded in their study that gifted children learn how to read easier, and have spontaneous interests and read 'better' books than the average child (Terman & Oden, 1947). They also said that gifted children are better at playing games and acquire more hobbies. Also, compared to the other children, gifted children generally score higher on emotional stability tests. As for other aspects, such as physical health, gifted children learn to talk earlier, walk around a month earlier than the average child, have great breathing capacity, fewer headaches, and so on. However, Terman and Oden also admit that the socioeconomic factor comes to play when talking about health of gifted students (Terman & Oden, 1947). One must keep in mind however, that in Terman's study, the 1528 children who participated in the study were nominated by their teachers as being gifted, and according to Davis et al. (2011), the teachers were more likely to choose the 'more pleasant', 'well-behaved', attractive, and spoke more standard English students, than other students, therefore there might have been a little bias going on when the selection process was taking place. Davis et al. (2011), give the example that Terman's

conclusions do not necessarily apply to those students who have great artistic talent, yet are irritable, rebellious and ‘undesirable’.

What does it mean to be gifted in terms of observable behavior and attributes? We will first be looking at intellectual characteristics (such as precocious Language and thought, logical thinking, early math, art and music, motivation, persistence and advanced interests), and affective characteristics (such as social skills, personal adjustment, self-concepts, independence, self-confidence, internal control, preferred styles of learning, instruction, thinking and expression, humor, and finally high moral thinking and empathy). We will first begin with precocious language and thought.

Precocious language and thought, according to VanTassel-Baska (2003), is the overriding trait of giftedness. He named precocity as the first of the three characteristics relevant to gifted curriculum planning, the other two being intensity and complexity. Similarly, Binet described gifted children as having a ‘higher mental age’, in correlation with their chronological age. Finally Silverman (1993a, 1993b, 2002, 2003) and many others, refer to intellectual giftedness as ‘asynchronous’ development characterized by advanced cognitive abilities. In other words, what all these researchers are trying to say is that gifted children’s mental or cognitive development surpasses their chronological development (or physical development). Jackson (1988, 2003) illustrates this when he points out that in some cases, gifted children are able to draw recognizable pictures or use elaborate language at age 2 ½ , or are able to begin reading by the age of 3, and finally, are able to read fluently by the age of 4. However, Davis and other colleagues add that not all gifted children had superb reading ability. They assert that Albert Einstein did not learn how to read until he was 8 years old, and Picasso’s reading tutors quit teaching him one after the other. Language ability in gifted children is their comprehension

skills. The gifted students are able to learn a large amount of vocabulary, and are able to grasp complex, not to mention abstract, concepts that are usually learned at an older age. Finally, gifted children are able to write well at the precocious age. Although mental readiness helps greatly with this, we should not undermine the parent involvement, teachers, and the child's strong drive to learn when it comes to the gifted child's writing skills (Davis et al., 2011).

As for logical thinking, compared to the average child, the gifted students' thinking processes are both quick and more logical. They are not easily appeased with the quick response of 'because' if they asked the question 'why'. Therefore, it is not surprising that questioning abilities, good understanding of cause-effect relationships, problem solving, persistence and insight, are constantly mentioned when the literature mentions traits of gifted students (Davis et al., 2011).

In parallel to verbal and conceptual skills are advanced mathematical, musical, and artistic abilities. For example, the mathematically gifted child may be counting by fives and tens, and adding and subtracting two-digit numbers while still in kindergarten (Davis et al., 2011). Not surprisingly, that child may have his/her own way of coming up with a mathematical solution for these problems. An example given in Davis and et al.'s book is that a child concluded that, "there must numbers below zero because temperatures can go below zero (p. 35)." Artistically, gifted children also differ dramatically from other children. According to Winner and Martino (2000, 2003), artistically gifted children learn rapidly how to draw at a very early age, and they have superior visual memories, have great problem solving skills, and learn virtually all by themselves. Winner and Martino (2000) also talk about musical giftedness and that musical giftedness may appear somewhere between the ages of 1 and 2. Apparently, at this age, one can know whether or not their child is gifted is if the child was enthralled by musical sounds. Mozart,

at age 4, composed a harpsichord concerto, and at age 7, Yehudi Menuhim performed with symphonies. Davis and his colleagues clarify even further that in order to be musically gifted, the child usually has an innate understanding of music structure (that is, tonality, key, harmony, and rhythm) and the ability to hear expressive properties (such as timbre, loudness, articulation, and phrasing). They have great sensitivity with regards to the above things, not to mention a strong 'musical memory', which allows the child to remember the music, play it back vocally or with an instrument, and sometimes even improvise with the music.

Another noticeable characteristic in gifted children is their continual motivation, persistence, and their advanced interests. Davis and his colleagues assert that, "the high motivation and urge to learn found in gifted children, combined with their curiosity and their advanced comprehension and logical abilities, can lead to surprisingly advanced academic accomplishments. One group of gifted elementary students in Manitowish Waters, Wisconsin conducted an environmental impact study that led to the State Highway Department to move a section of the proposed freeway" (Burk, 1980; as cited in David & Rimm, 2011, p. 36) for example, found that persistence was related to both achievement and personal adjustment.

Siegle and McCoach (2005) found that gifted students score higher on 'intrinsic' motivation than average on measures of motivation. They reviewed several studies that showed that gifted students score higher on measures of motivation that "reflect intrinsic reasons for learning, including internal locus of control and measures of intrinsic motivation and autonomy. They also found that gifted students are more likely to demonstrate positive attributions for success and failure, for example, attributing success to their own ability and effort, and attributing failure to bad luck or inappropriate strategy choice" (p. 26). Moreover, Gottfried, Gottfried, and Guerin (2006) have taken a unique approach to motivation and giftedness, and

from their longitudinal study of intellectual and motivational giftedness, they investigated high academic motivation as a form of giftedness in itself.

a. Affective Services

Moving on to the affective characteristics of the gifted, we will be starting with social skills. Interestingly enough, Terman's subjects were found to have high mental health, whereas Hollingworth's research showed that there were many cases of 'troubled gifted children' and that they badly needed counseling or emotional education). We already discussed earlier the results of Terman's study, where the selection of students had come from teachers, and the teacher were apt to choose those students who were better-behaved. Also according to Hollingworth (1942), the level of giftedness affects social skills. In her studies, she found that students with IQs ranging from 140-160 tend to have more friends, were well-adjusted, and more successful in general. However, Hollingworth noted that children with IQ's above 180 felt too different and their social adjustments were difficult. Gross (2003) in concurrence with Hollingworth, showed that students with a very high IQ have damaging social skills. In her study, she studied 15 Australian children with very high IQ scores (all the students scored 160, except 3 students who scored over 200). According to the study, their social self-esteem scores on the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1981) were significantly below average. The students were aware that they were greatly disliked by the students. However, research on personal adjustment is very minimal, according to Norman, Ramsay, Roberts, and Martray, (2000).

## **B. Identification of Gifted and Talented**

Braken and Brown (2006) acclaimed that appropriate gifted identification is vital, especially when discussing equity in placement. Freeman (2005) stated that, "Context is all in the

identification of giftedness because ‘gifted’ is an adjective, a description, so the recognition of individuals who are seen as meriting that term depends on comparisons (p. 1).” When discussing identification, one cannot but ask three important questions: what is to be identified? Why and for what purposes is the identification attempted? And finally, how are students who are gifted identified? These questions lead to rationalizing the aim of why it is important to identify students who are gifted, and if it is beneficial.

### ***1. Importance of Identification***

Heller (2005) points out that it is important to identify these students, because when giftedness is not recognized, (possibly due to negative labeling effects) conflict may arise between these students and the social environment. Some disadvantages of identifying students who are gifted may pose the problem of labeling, bullying, and insecurity of parents while trying to connect with their gifted children (Heller, 2005). In the case of labeling, conflicts may arise between the child who is gifted and their sibling who are not gifted, parents, peers, and classmates. Heller (2005) states that, “labelling problems include: social isolation, development of egocentric attitudes and behaviors, endangering or disturbing the personality development and self-concept through extreme achievement pressures or too much responsibilities” (p. 153).

However, the importance of identification cannot be eradicated. Students who are gifted may feel the continual lack of challenge in their classes and therefore cause major behavioral problems, and isolation due to the lack of possibility in meeting other students who are gifted (especially to some girls who gifted in Math and the Sciences, but cannot say anything due to role expectation) (Heller, 2005). In addition, without identification, it is not possible to develop nurturance for these gifts, and they will go to waste. For our argument, we are in favor of

identification of gifted students, because we believe that nurturing these gifts will be added value to society.

## ***2. Methods of Identification***

As for the identification procedure itself, gifted students cannot always be easily identified (Heller, 2005). Reasons for this include: prejudices, false assumptions, observational errors, lack of knowledge, and misguided information. Other reasons for misidentifying students is because of many students who are gifted have major behavioral problems so are therefore overlooked; some because many of the gifted students are underachievers (Ziegler & Heller, 2003); others because they are economically disadvantaged, or are from minority groups (Heller, 2005).

If we look back a little to the earlier researchers such as Terman and Hollingworth, as already discussed, we find that giftedness was based entirely on raw intellectual power, or IQ level (Bracken & Brown, 2006). So in the beginning, identification was based solely on IQ scores. Bracken and Brown (2006) discuss that giftedness at the time was correlated directly with intellectual giftedness, and only after setting the minimal IQ standards for identification, did these researchers investigate the nature and characteristics of giftedness. However, as the field evolved, elitism was developed and so was limited access to programs and resources, and those were only provided for the students who were part of the 'intellectual club', and these students were admitted to that club purely based on their Stanford-Binet or Wechsler scales. Because of this elitism and due to the social press advocating the inclusion of more students into these gifted programs, the field began to consider different methods of identifying gifted students, using alternative scales to purely IQ scores (Bracken & Brown, 2006). Therefore, because there is a lack of consensus with a definite definition of giftedness, and because of the trend at the time to use IQ cut scores for purposes of identification, he helped broaden the identification methods of



gifted students, and began using teacher-completed rating scales; one of the earliest, being the Scales for Rating the Behavioral Characteristics of Superior Students (SARBER) (Renzulli, Smith, White, Callahan, & Hartman, 1976). The SRBCSS and similar scales are worth mentioning, because they added a third party element in the process of identification. The belief was that teachers can add greatly from their expertise to the identification process (Bracken & Brown, 2006). Stemming from this conclusion, nowadays, the use of teacher and parent rating scales is becoming more apparent and useful in identifying gifted students. Since then, more and more scales were developed and more behavior specifications used for identifying gifted students have increased to more than 30 (Jarosewich, Pfeifer, & Morris, 2002). Jarosewich et al. (2002) for example, used 31 scales that he collected from the literature, and he narrowed them down to three dominant scales. These scales are more gifted specific but are broader in behavior assessment, and of course, they take into account more recent conceptions of giftedness (Bracken & Brown, 2006). What sprang from this is the Gifted Rating Scales (GRS; Pfeiffer & Jarosewich, 2003), and this more contemporary instrument added even more scales and a comprehensive list of behavioral indicators that coincide with recent definitions of giftedness.

Because it is the teachers who interact with and observe students more frequently in a variety of situations, this gives teachers the advantage and good position in serving as a central role in identifying students who are gifted (Bracken & Brown, 2006). However, are teachers qualified to make judgments about their students' behavior? Rohrer (1995) was concerned with teacher's preconceived notions of giftedness, and how it can affect students from entering gifted programs. He discusses that on most behavior rating scales, teacher may be improperly influenced by the scale headings, item organization and arrangement. Many times, teachers may 'fake good' or 'fake bad' the student in their ratings, depending on how they feel about that particular student.

In spite of this, Rohrer also found that many times, teachers are able to recognize accurately potential gifted students, even if the student does not fit the criteria of the stereotypical gifted student.

Another more recent instrument is the Clinical Assessment of Behavior (CAB; Bracken & Keith, 2004). This instrument is a comprehensive teacher and parent behavior rating scale for children ages 2 to 18 years, and is used to assess a diverse collection of behaviors consistent with psychosocial maladjustment and behavioral disorders as well as adaptive behaviors. According to the authors of the CAB, they state that the CAB “may have promise as an instrument for widespread identification of gifted students through objective teacher evaluations. The CAB has the benefit of being easy to administer, brief, and computer scored and interpreted; and it has excellent psychometric properties for students aged 2 through 18 years. Although the CAB has promise as a behavioral screener, additional validation work needs to be conducted to evaluate its utility as a tool in the identification of gifted and talented students” (p. 120).

In Germany for example, students are identified using the ENTER model (Ziegler & Stoeger, 2003). The ENTER model has five stages: explore, narrow, test, evaluate, and review. Data are collected about the child in during the first three stages of the model. Then, in additions to a series of tests of ability, other information such as family life, early development, school experiences, leisure-time activities, and friends are collected. During the first three stages, the objectives become narrower.

This collected information, in addition to the test results, guide the evaluation stage. During the evaluation stage, a decision is made regarding the appropriate provisions for the students. The student is monitored closely during the review stage, in order to determine the reasons for the initial identification of that student, and to make sure that there is a positive correlation

between the model of giftedness that was used for the initial identification, and the recommendation that is made after the evaluation phase (Ziegler & Stoeger, 2003)

### ***3. Giftedness and Culture***

Giftedness can be found in all cultures and is expressed through a variety of behaviors (Baldwin, 2005). However, the identification of giftedness has been very complex, loaded with controversies and is debated extensively (Sarouphim & Maker, 2010).

First and foremost, a definition of culture needs to be established. The definition that fits most our purpose is by Shade, Kelly and Oberg (1997) which states: “culture is a social system that represents an accumulation of beliefs, attitudes, habits, values and practices that serve as a filter through which a group of people view and respond to the world in which they live” (p. 19).

According to Robert Serpell (2000), the relationship between culture and intelligence is divided into three different perspectives that he summarized under the metaphors of: culture as a language, culture as a womb, and culture as a forum. Culture as a language means that "each human culture constitutes a distinctive system of meanings for representing the mind, within which the concept of intelligence is defined. According to the womb metaphor, different human cultures generate different kinds of nurturant environment for growth of a person that stimulate or mould the development of the individual's intelligence in different ways. According to the forum metaphor, the culture shared by a community gives rise to, and feeds off, debates among its members about such matters as how to organize education and preoccupations of various participants in those debates assign particular significance to intelligence” (p. 549). As Serpell (2000) noted, “its range of connotations includes not only a particular set of mental functions but also the value-laden concepts of appropriateness, competence, and potential” (p. 549). An example of this will be given by comparing the meaning of intelligence between Western culture

and African culture. English usage of the term intelligence can be clustered around the following characteristics: “clever, sensible, witty, observant, critical, experimental, quick-witted, cunning, wise, judicious, and scrupulous” (Serpell, 2000, p. 45). In the United States and other, English speaking industrialized societies, a person with few of the above characteristics is considered as someone who will succeed in his or her life. In contrast, some African tribes consider intelligence as having cultural values, showing respect for elders, caring for young children, and showing attentiveness, understanding, trustworthiness and obedience. They emphasize more on cooperation and responsibility (Serpell, 2000). It is indeed very interesting on how different the perceptions of intelligence can be. Another example is by Tobon Wu and Davidson (1989), where they state that teachers and other professionals in the United States readily acknowledge the possibility that a child who behaves antisocially at school might be intellectually gifted. Yet, a sample of teachers and parents in Japan (another highly industrialized society) reacted to such a suggestion with puzzlement. As one of them put it, “If he's so smart, how come he doesn't understand how to behave better?” (p. 550).

There is a major underrepresentation of certain groups among gifted students in schools. Ford and Harmon (2002) stated that the main reason for this underrepresentation is, as he calls it, a "deficit perspective" which influences the access of gifted, culturally diverse students into gifted programs. This perspective assumes that students who are economically disadvantaged and who come from minority populations, are 'cognitively inferior', because they fail to meet the traditional criteria for placement in gifted programs, which is scoring on the 97th percentile or above, and as a result, these students are underrepresented in gifted programs. This underrepresentation is estimated to be about 30% to 70% relative to their percentage in the population (Galbeko & Sosniak, 2002). This shows that this cognitive deficit hypothesis implies

that most schools are also using this narrow definition of giftedness and intelligence (Ford et al., 2002). Bernal (2002) concurs with this, and adds that this definition has a major limitation because it does not take into consideration cultural factors in determining gifted cognitive abilities. Consequently, because of this traditional, widespread belief, "identification procedures in most school districts (about 90%) still rely heavily on the scores of standardized tests, a practice that limits the access of culturally diverse students to programs for the gifted and keeps the demographics of these programs mostly White" (Ford & Harmon, 2001, p. 62). This presents a big problem to minority gifted students. According to Maker and Sarouphim (2005), scholars have called for a paradigm shift in identification procedures.

This is not the only problem. There is also the issue of inadequate policies and practices, and they also play a role in the underrepresentation of gifted students from minority groups. Some policies in the U.S. for example, require that gifted education screening must first begin with a teacher referral, and this poses a problem because teachers (even culturally diverse teachers) underrefer students for gifted services (Colangelo & Davis, 2003). This is problematic especially if teacher referral is the only recruitment step for the referral, because teacher referrals are often subjective and rely heavily on expectations and perceptions of students (Colangelo & Davis, 2003). It is even more problematic if the teachers themselves are unclear about what defines a gifted student and if there is no general consensus with the definition of giftedness. Thus, a need for an instrument that is grounded in the local context is needed in Lebanon, that is not purely based on teacher referrals.

#### ***4. Misconceptions and misdiagnoses of gifted children***

The underrepresentation of gifted students from minority groups continues to be a widespread problem in the field of gifted education (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008;

Grantham, 2003; Yoon & Gentry, 2009). The Education Trust (2003) did a sampling of education reports for 30 states in the United States, and found that African American students were underrepresented in 22 states in gifted programs, Latino students were underrepresented in 16 states, and finally, Native Americans were underrepresented in 3 states (Education Trust, 2003). More recent data on this says that even though African American students consisted of 7.60% and Latino students 48.15% of school enrollment in California for example, during the 2006-2007 term (California Department of Education, 2009a), African American children consisted of only 4.18% who went to gifted programs, and only 28.27% of the Latino students were enrolled in gifted programs (California Department of Education, 2009b). Comparatively, Caucasian students consisted of 29.41% and Asian students 8.12% of the state's total school enrollment; however, Caucasian students filled 43.30% and Asian students 17.49% of the gifted program enrollment. Not surprisingly, ethnic minorities are not the only groups who are underrepresented in gifted education (Carman, 2011). Other groups who are underrepresented include students with physical or learning disabilities, English Language learners, and students living in poverty (Burney & Beilke, 2008; Cotabish, Robinson, Anthony, Bryant, & Calder-Isgrig, 2007; Lockwood, 2007).

There are many explanations for the problem of underrepresentation, one of the main ones being the issue of teacher nominations. Another problem includes stereotyping (Carman, 2011), racist predispositions and socioeconomic biases (Elhoweris et al., 2005; Grantham, 2002; Hyland, 2005; Moon & Brighton, 2008; Tyler et al., 2006)

### ***5. Utility of Teacher Nomination***

As we said earlier, teacher nomination has become a prevalent method used for identifying gifted children. McBee (2006) refers to teacher nominations as the 'gatekeeper' of the first steps

of the identification path. In some cases, teacher nominations is the ultimate means of identifying the gifted children in their classrooms while on the other hand, other cases use teacher nominations as just one method of many, while trying to identify gifted children (Bain & Bell, 2004; Wu & Elliott, 2008). Schroth and Helfer (2008) conducted a study on the school personnel's beliefs about identifying gifted students, and they found that teacher nominations were believed to be the second most effective method of identification, following performance assessments, but ranked ahead of standardized tests. However, they also found that the teacher participants in their study, ranked teacher nominations as the most effective and efficient means of identifying gifted students in the classroom. For example, many researchers believe that the number of African American males that participate in gifted programs are there because of teachers who act as 'gatekeepers' allow these students to enter gifted programs (Elhoweris et al., 2005; Ford & Whiting, 2008; Speirs Neumeister, Adams, Pierce, Cassady, & Dixon, 2007).

#### ***6. Racist Predispositions and Socioeconomic Biases***

Interestingly, not all teachers value programs for the gifted (McCoach & Siegle, 2007), and it is plausible that these teachers are predisposed to not recommend students of any nationality, race, ethnicity or gender in participating in gifted programs. Surprisingly, findings from the literature revealed that there are some teachers who although they support gifted programs, unlike teachers who do not, still do not recognize gifted characteristics in African American children for example (Elhoweris et al., 2005; Tyler et al., 2006). This inability of teachers recognizing gifted characteristics in black children, for example, is related to racism and socioeconomic biases.

If we take a look at racist predispositions, we find that in some studies, also done in the States, teachers were more likely to refer White students to gifted programs than they would

Black or Hispanic students (Elhoweris et al., 2005). In an experiment done by Elhoweris et al. (2005), 207 elementary school teachers were asked to make referrals to students to gifted programs, based on vignettes that did not include the student's ethnicity. However, the study found a strong association between the students' race or ethnicity and gifted program referrals. They concluded that, "stereotypical notions about African American student capabilities may serve to bar some of these students from participating in gifted and talented programs" (p. 29). Similar studies have been done by Tyler et al. (2006), and they came up with the same conclusion. Hyland (2005) concluded that teachers usually mean well, and are often unaware of their racist biases.

As for socioeconomic biases, some studies reveal that some teachers regard students that come from low-income and minority backgrounds are 'less intelligent' than other students (Moon & Brighton, 2008). In Moon and Brighton's study (2008), they found that, 35% of the teachers who participated in their study disagreed with the statement that "the potential for academic giftedness is present in all socioeconomic groups in our society (p. 461)." This relates to an earlier study done by Minner (1990), who concluded that "teachers were less inclined to refer a student from a poor or middle class background for participation in a gifted program" (p. 39).

## ***7. Stereotyping***

Stereotyping is defined as "the unconscious or conscious application of (accurate or inaccurate) knowledge of a group in judging a member of the group" (Banaji & Greenwald, 1994, p. 58). Stereotypes involve certain behaviors, expected interests, physical attributes, activity preferences and social functioning (Biernat & Thompson, 2002). Other contents of stereotyping include gender, age, race, physical appearance, language use, stigmas, occupation



and traits (Schneider, 2004). Given these various traits, it is easier for the public to ‘know’ about a certain group of people without actually getting to know them. Stereotyping also allows for predicting cognitive efficiency (McGarthy, 2002). This can be dangerous because these stereotypical thoughts, ultimately may affect the decisions made by the teacher regarding a student. Studies assent that teachers who hold stereotypical thoughts tend to produce bias recommendations based on these stereotypical thoughts (Channouf, Mangard, Baudry, & Perney, 2005; Madera, Hebl, & Martin, 2009).

Carman (2011) conducted a mixed-methods study where he explored the levels of stereotypical views about gifted individuals held by current and future educators. He found that: The majority of both levels of teachers held stereotypical thoughts in four of the six areas of stereotypical thoughts examined. Whether in-service or pre-service, stereotypes from each area (gender, ethnicity, age, learning interests, talents, and use of glasses) were held by more than half of the respondents. Some categories (age, ethnicity, and talent) had fewer than 30% of the respondents not holding stereotypical thoughts, with more than 85% of pre-service teachers imagining a Caucasian gifted person. Given that those holding stereotypical thoughts tend to make biased recommendations based on those stereotypical thoughts. This suggests that the underrepresentation of gifted students from non-majority populations could be related to the nominations given by the teachers.

Equality in placement and accurate identification ensures fair access to gifted services, programs and a lot of other resources for students. The argument Bracken and Brown (2006) make is that if identification is to be comprehensive, fair, and accessible, then the current method of identifying giftedness, needs to be broadened in order to triangulate information from various resources.

## ***8. Perspectives of Teachers about Giftedness and Talent***

This section is a collection of several studies found in the literature about teachers' perceptions of giftedness. According to Freeman (2003),

The choice of children as gifted depends neither on their high-level potential nor even their manifest excellence in any field of endeavor. Selecting for giftedness depends on what is being looked for in the first place, whether it is tested academic excellence for formal education, innovation for business, solving paper-and-pencil puzzles for an IQ club, gaining entry to a summer program for the gifted and talented or competitive athletics for one's country. Choice as gifted without testing could be affected by, for example, the interaction between the personalities of everyone concerned, what the children look and behave like, the agreed definition of giftedness, or even the percentages of ethnic representation demanded by educational authorities. Parental choice is beset by cultural stereotypes, usually meaning that two boys are chosen for every girl; a strangely stable gender proportion found all over the world, from Britain to China (p. 2).

Is there a difference in perspectives between developing and developed countries? Let us take a look at the United States as our example of a developed country. Regarding the number of African American males participating in public school gifted programs for example, data collected and analyzed by the federal and state agencies showed a low percentage. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2006), "the combined national percentage of Black male and female students participating in public school gifted programs was only 3.1% (NCES, 2006)". In addition, there is a direct relationship between the disengagement by Black males in education and their high imprisonment rates and death usually by homicide (Children's

Aid Society, 2006). These statistics show a society where most of the workforce in the next few years will consist of only a few African American males (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2006).

Hargrove and Seay (2011) conducted a study to determine whether teachers' felt that non-school-related or school related factors served as barriers that limited the number of African American male children entering gifted programs in North Carolina (Hargrove & Seay, 2011). The rationale behind this study according to its authors is that "too many academically gifted Black make school children transition out of formal education and become the statistics reported above because their intellectual promise is not recognized by teachers" (p. 435). One of the factors that the researchers found was, "the awareness by African American children of being treated unfairly by some White teachers" (p. 437). For example, a Black male fifth-grade student enrolled in one of the gifted programs, told Harmon (2002) that, "They [the teachers] expected you to never get anything right or to be the best...It was like they purposely did not want us to succeed" (Ineffective Teacher, p. 47). Franklin (2007) attests that for many years, in order to be labeled gifted, one had to attain high scores on the standardized tests that reflect cultural, educational and historical 'nonminority', middle, and upper class students. In this regard, the reliance on pure test scores used for identification purposes, led to disregarding a great many African American students from entering gifted program (Bonner & Jennings, 2007; Franklin, 2007).

Interestingly, different cultures perceive giftedness in different ways. For example, Alencar, Fleith and Arancibia (2009), found that teachers in Argentina nominated students for gifted programs based solely on high intellectual ability and academic achievement above mean scores. This shows that these teachers perceive academic achievement and high scores is what truly defines a gifted student. On the other hand, Sternberg and Okagaki (1993) found that for

minority students, effort was the most important characteristic in their parents' and teachers' conception of intelligence. Holloway (1988; as cited in Nelson, McInerney & Craven, 2004) found similar results in East Asia who attributed success in school to effort, rather from pure innate ability (Nelson et al., 2004). Nelson et al. (2004) also found that in countries like Papua New Guinea, teacher's perceptions of giftedness included the ability to have the skills and knowledge for life in the workforce, and to have skills in village-based living.

Recently, the definition of giftedness has expanded to more than just IQ scores. It includes “creative performance, unusual leadership capacity, demonstrated high understanding in certain academic fields as well we scores on standardized tests” (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Manning, 2006 p. 298).

As stated earlier, teachers’ beliefs, biases, attitudes, and expectations influences whether or not a student is recommended to a gifted program (Seigle, 2001).

#### a. Elementary Cycle

In their study, Moon and Brighton (2008) revealed that primary-grade teachers tended to hold traditional beliefs regarding gifted children, and that they found it hard to believe that a gifted student can come from a minority group or from a low socioeconomic background. Specifically, their study indicated that elementary teachers still continue to hold traditional conceptions of giftedness, especially with regards to cultural minority, non-English speaking students. Although they defined and described a gifted student as having strong language skills, vast general knowledge, strong reasoning skills, and strong logical mathematical skills, which are associated with gifted characteristics in 'rich' students, they had great difficulty conceptualizing gifted students as not working independently, and who lacked internal

motivation and persistence (characteristics associated with children from impoverished family backgrounds).

Referring back to their study, Elhoweris et al. (2005) realized that teachers making referrals for their fictional students were less likely to nominate an African American student than an identical student who had not been labeled African American. As already mentioned as well, a student's socioeconomic status has been proven to have a major effect on teachers' perceptions of giftedness and hence their decision making regarding placement in gifted programs (Moon & Brighton, 2008; Rohrer, 1995). Considering school level, Rohrer (1995) concurred and found that the socioeconomic status of the students played an important factor in kindergarten and first-grade teachers' perceptions of giftedness, and were more likely to nominate students who came from two parent houses, had educated parents, or shared some other type of high class or high-socioeconomic-related characteristic. Unfortunately, in concurrence with Rohrer's findings, Moon and Brighton (2008) found that a quarter of the teachers in their study believed that one of the major predictors of giftedness was the student's socioeconomic status. Finally, teachers in Brighton and Moon's study seemed to believe that gifted services were most appropriate for students who demonstrated all the traditional characteristics of giftedness, on the conditions that the student has no deficits. Their findings also indicated that the teachers were not able to identify a gifted student if they came from minority groups or students from different backgrounds than their own. The respondents suggested that the student must be able to overcome their deficits before they can be considered as gifted.

Lee (2006) also researched the perceptions of teachers in the process of identification, and asked them to describe gifted children, using a qualitative research method. He studied 16 early childhood teachers. Lee's research findings showed that the teachers understand giftedness

as a series of conceptions such as: excellence, potential, rarity, behavior, innate ability, motivation and asynchrony. In his study, Lee also found that the teachers tended to nominate more boys than girls.

A study was done to test the perceptions of 4<sup>th</sup> grade teachers regarding giftedness and identification procedures for minority gifted students, by Neumeister, Adams, Pierce, Cassady and Dixon (2007). Twenty-seven teachers were surveyed. The results showed that these teachers held narrow conceptions of giftedness and were not aware that culture and environmental factors may ‘get in the way’ of the identification process of the minority and economically disadvantaged students. The teachers were also ‘concerned’ about the one third of their students being qualified to enter gifted programs. The basis of their concern they agreed, was that the students have a deficit in one area, poor work habits, or behavior problems. They were less likely to encourage these students mentioned above from entering gifted programs (Neumeister et al., 2007).

## **C. Curricular and Program Services**

This section portrays the different programs and services that are found in the literature.

### ***1. Enrichment Model***

Many young and gifted students are referred to enrichment programs in order to engage in activities suitable for their own interests and abilities (Lee, 2006). In their book *Handbook of Gifted Education*, Colangelo and Davis (2003) use the term enrichment to refer to both curriculum and program delivery services. Enriched curriculum refers to “richer, more varied educational experiences, a curriculum that has been modified or added to in some way” (p. 164).

The modifications and additions are usually in content or teaching strategies, and are ideally based on the characteristics of the gifted students who are using them (Davis et al., 2011). In *Handbook of Gifted Education*, the book states that the goal of the enrichment program is, “to offer students curriculum that is greater in depth or breadth than that generally provided; that is, to challenge and offer growth in the area of the student’s giftedness” (p. 164). The way in which the enrichment program is implemented is usually through after-school Saturday classes, resource rooms, additions to the regular classroom curriculum, or enrichment clubs (Colangelo & Davis, 2003). Programs such as Future Problem Solving, Odyssey of the Mind, and Science Olympics are a few examples of some enrichment programs; however, although they enrich the curriculum and motivate the gifted students, they are not sufficient supplement by themselves (Colangelo & Davis, 2003). The key element here is that the enrichment program has to be a systematic plan for extended student learning, but not as a means on its own.

Renzulli (1978) proposed the Enrichment Triad programming model. The Enrichment Triad offers three types of enrichment experiences for students. Renzulli explains the model as follows:

Type I Enrichment involves general exploratory experiences for students, such as field trips and guest speakers. Type II Enrichment includes instructional methods and materials designed to promote the development of thinking, feeling, research, communication, and methodological processes. Type III Enrichment is the most advanced level and allows the students to participate in investigative activities and artistic production. Type III was designed to allow gifted students to work at as advanced a professional level as possible (p.181).

The Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM), which was developed from the original Enrichment Triad model, promotes engagement using three types of enjoyable, challenging, and interest-based, enrichment experiences. According to Reis and Renzulli (2003), 30 years of investigations and separate studies on the SEM have “demonstrated its effectiveness in schools with widely differing socio-economic levels and program organization patterns” (Reis & Renzulli, 2003, p. 199). Similarly, Field (2009) (as cited in Reis & Renzulli, 2013) conducted an experimental study with both gifted and non-gifted students who participated in the enrichment program and used Renzulli Learning for 2-3 hours per week. Results indicated that students who participated in the program showed significantly higher growth in reading comprehension, reading fluency, and social studies than the control students.

Another study done by Olszewski-Kubilius and Lee (2004) surveyed responses from 187 parents of gifted students who attended a Saturday Enrichment Program (SEP). Their study showed that in general, parents had a favorable attitude towards the effects of the program, especially in the academic areas. They also noted that their children were more motivated to learn. In sum, the effectiveness of enrichment programs is effective at serving gifted students and they provide enrichment in a variety of educational settings.

## ***2. Acceleration Model***

Acceleration has received great publicity as an appropriate intervention for gifted students since the publication of *Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students* (Colangelo, Assouline, & Gross, 2004). This publication recognizes 18 types of acceleration. The authors of this article suggest that subject-specific acceleration is the most efficient and effective ways that benefit gifted students the most. However, despite all the positive findings on acceleration, some teachers are still hesitant to use acceleration with their



gifted students, even though their teacher-based belief has no basis in research (Colangelo & Davis, 2003).

However, what is acceleration exactly? In their book *Handbook of Gifted Education*, Colangelo and Davis (2003) differentiate between two types of acceleration: service delivery and curriculum delivery. The service delivery model includes, “early entrance to kindergarten or to college; grade-skipping; or part-time grade acceleration, in which a student enters a higher grade level for part of the school day to receive advanced instruction in one or more content areas” (p. 165). As for acceleration as a curriculum model, it involves speeding up the pace at which the material of the curriculum is given. In other words, it takes the form of telescoping, which means that two or more years of work is completed in just one year. Mostly, this type of acceleration takes the form of self-paced studies by the students. This type of acceleration may occur in a regular classroom, a resource room, or in special classes (Colangelo & Davis, 2003).

Acceleration may sound like the best solution to meeting the needs of gifted students, but is it? There are some disadvantages for each model. Let us take early entrance to kindergarten as our first example. Even though entering kindergarten early or first grade is beneficial to the student in the sense that they match the student’s capabilities, and allows them to finish schooling at a relatively young age which gives the student more time to develop professionally, however, early entrance may tax the physical maturity of these students (Colangelo & Davis, 2003). In addition, they are more likely to feel frustrated due to their level of psychomotor development, which means that their fine motor coordination may be underdeveloped by kindergarten standards, which results in the child’s having difficulty with holding a crayon or pencil properly. Another disadvantage is that the gifted child may not find other gifted children in the same class, or someone who matches their own intellect. For example, a 5-year-old child

does not think that same way as a 4-year-old does. Similarly, early entrance to college adds the same disadvantages as early entrance to kindergarten; however the difference is that the intellectual stimulation and challenges of difficult college courses can override the initial disappointment (Colangelo & Davis, 2003).

Grade-skipping (or full time acceleration) is an efficient and economical way to provide stimulation and challenges for the gifted learners. This is great news for students usually at the elementary cycle. However as the child gets older and starts to mature physically, they will encounter similar problems as those faced by the kindergartner. Specifically, when the physical maturation of the child determines the athletic competence, and influences the child's self-esteem when compared to other students (Colangelo & Davis, 2003).

One of the main problems encountered in acceleration is that it fails to give differentiated curriculum. It is true that the material would be harder because the gifted child would be taking classes at a higher level than he is (for example he would be in Grade 4, but taking grade 5 material), however, this does not necessarily match the capabilities of the gifted child. The pace and the content would have remained the same, except that s/he is experiencing the content at a younger age. The basic assumption of acceleration, is that the student needs instruction at the same pace in all content areas and activities, but this assumption does not take into consideration that gifted students' development is 'asynchronous' (Colangelo & Davis, 2003; Silverman, 1998). Interestingly, a study by Siegle (2007) showed that special education teachers compared to regular teachers have "lower support for gifted education and lower attitudes towards acceleration" (p. 253). However, he contended that his results were not generalizable.

On the other hand, telescoping curriculum content covers more material in less time, and it focuses more on self-paced learning. With this type of acceleration, the gifted student feels great about his/her accomplishments. The problem though, with this type of acceleration, is more for teachers and administrators than for the students, because in order to plan for a self-paced content acceleration for each and every student, requires a lot of planning time and requisite skills (Colangelo & Davis, 2003). In summary, accelerated curriculum offers no change in the learning processes, content and expected outcome. The only variables that change are the onset and the pace of the curriculum coverage.

On the other hand, in Terman's studies that were mentioned earlier, he concluded that children in elementary and in secondary schools who were allowed to accelerate according to their potential were more successful than those who were not allowed to accelerate. Those gifted students who were not allowed to accelerate developed poor working habits and wrecked college careers (Davis et al., 2011). However, not all researchers agree.

Other models include cluster grouping. Cluster grouping, as defined by Bernal (2003) as "placing a group of gifted, high-ability, or high-achieving students together in a general education classroom with other students and a teacher who is qualified to provide appropriately challenging curriculum and instruction" (p. 213). According to Renzulli (2005), cluster grouping is becoming very popular in its capacity to meet the needs of gifted students. When gifted students have the opportunity to learn and work together, this increases their motivation, interest and achievement through a combination of intellectual challenge, advanced subject matter, and the use of high-level thinking skills (Bernal, 2003; Feldhusen, 1998). Studies show that results are conflicting when deciding whether this approach is beneficial or not. For example, Oakes (1985) stated that ability grouping is the "cause of America's failing schools" (p. 75), whereas

Kulik, (2003) concludes that “without ability grouping, both high- and low- ability students would be harmed” (p. 214).

### ***3. Examples of International Programs***

#### **a. Russian Programs**

In Russia, there is a tradition called Olympiads (Jeltova & Grigorenko, 2005). Olympiads are a series of festivals related to various scholastic disciplines that involves competitions that allow children to show off their creativity and talent. In order for the students to be chosen to enter this competition, they go through a set of written assignments, and these assignments are then scored by a panel of judges. Finalists participate in the national competition, and the winners of that round, represent Russia in the international Olympiads (Jeltova & Grigorenka, 2005).

Also in Russia, there are several specialized schools that are especially set up in order to help students develop their special talents. At the secondary level (meaning ages 12 and up), there is a wide range of different boarding schools for scholastic disciplines where students work from 7:30 a.m. to 11 p.m. (Jeltova & Grigorenko, 2005). These programs follow the acceleration model, and in addition to a set of mandatory classes, students have to attend special seminars in their major. These students are then expected to participate in the Olympiads specific to their area of giftedness (Jeltova & Grigorenko, 2005). These students attend the most prestigious schools in all of Russia.

#### **b. Children's Palaces of China**

According to Freeman (2005), there is a growing trend nowadays of high-level learning that offers open-access and non-selective opportunities in which no keen student is turned away without at least a chance if they show potential. One such program is the Children's Palaces of

China. Freeman explained, "This program provides non-selective, inexpensive, high-level out-of-schools education for students who are 'prepared to put in the effort'" (p. 9). These centers are of very high standard, accommodating various types of skills, and accommodations varying from a converted house to purpose-built skyscrapers. The way that the program is done is by clustering different resources across different disciplines, which enables students to discover activities they did not know existed (Freeman, 2005).

Other programs include the American Renaissance Quest Camps, and these programs are designed for the whole family. They offer educational means and support to take interests to any height. These two examples show that the concept of giftedness is neither fixed nor are the children preselected, and it allows the possibility of unrecognized gifts to emerge with encouragement and motivation (Freeman, 2005).

## **Conclusion**

Definitions of giftedness have developed overtime, ranging from pure IQ test scores to more elaborate definitions that include motivation, humor, persistence, social skills and logical thinking. Although the literature on giftedness has expanded, as we have seen, many cultures still adopt the traditional definition of giftedness today; teachers still nominate students based on high IQ scores. Not only are the definitions of giftedness unclear, but there are still many cases where underrepresentation of minority populations and students from different socioeconomic background that are not being identified because of cultural, language, and stereotype barriers. This is very important. As presented in the literature, African American, Asian American, and Caucasian students were underrepresented because of their race. White teachers could not perceive that a student with a different background than their own could be labeled as gifted. Not

many studies were found on the Middle East. Moreover, the study done by Elhoweris et al. (2005), where 207 elementary school teachers were asked to make referrals to students to gifted programs, the study found a strong association between the students' race or ethnicity and gifted program referrals. Cultural factors are important when identifying and referring gifted students.

The literature is rich in gifted student characteristics, namely intellectual characteristics (such as precocious Language and thought, logical thinking, early math, art and music, motivation, persistence and advanced interests), and affective characteristics (such as social skills, personal adjustment, self-concepts, independence, self-confidence, internal control, preferred styles of learning, instruction, thinking and expression, humor, and finally high moral thinking and empathy). Of course each gifted student has different characteristics, and not all gifted students are the same. For example, as already stated, some gifted students have poor reading skills. However, what are the characteristics that teachers look for in gifted students? It was already mentioned that despite the richness of the literature in gifted student characteristics, students who excel academically seems to dominate the other characteristics in many cases. As for the methods of identification, there are several found in the literature including the SRBCSS, CAB and others that aim to identify gifted students in spite of behavior and language difficulties. Since there are such tools that exist, are they being used in Lebanon?

Finally, there are many different gifted programs and methods used in the literature that nurture gifted students' needs. Such examples are enrichment programs, grade skipping, acceleration, Olympian program and many others. Although each program has their advantages and disadvantages, however they were made to nurture gifted students' skills and increase their motivation. There was very little research on gifted programs in the Middle East, much less Lebanon.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter incorporates the research questions guiding the study, with a description of the adopted research design, method, population, participants, and the selection process. In addition, included is a description of the data collection procedures that were used, the tools, and the data analysis procedures.

#### **A. Purpose of the Study**

There is a large trend nowadays that focuses on Special Educational programs in schools across Lebanon. These services usually include catering for students with intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities, and other types of disabilities. However, there seems to be a lack of services and research on students who are gifted (Sarouphim, 2010). When researching about gifted students in Lebanon, very few studies were found, in contrast to studies pertaining to students with disabilities. The purpose of this study was to investigate and explore the current understanding and conception of giftedness of teachers in schools in Lebanon. In addition, it explores the current identification procedures and services that are offered, if any, to these students who are gifted. Hence, our aims are threefold: (1) explore the perceptions that teachers currently have on attributes and characteristics of gifted students in Lebanese schools, (2) survey the current school practices of identification for gifted students; and (3) explore the available services and programs provided for gifted and talented students in Lebanese schools.

## **B. Research Questions**

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. What are Lebanese private, elementary school teachers' conceptions of the attributes of gifted students?
2. What are the current practices of identification of gifted students?
3. What are the available curricular and program services for gifted students in private elementary Lebanese schools?

## **C. Research Design**

This study adopted a mixed-method approach that explores the aims of this research through a combination of quantitative and qualitative measures. Gall, Gall and Borg (2010) define mixed methods research study as “a type of study that uses both quantitative and qualitative techniques for data collection and analysis, either concurrently or sequentially, to address the same or related research questions (p. 461)”. The bulk of this research adopts qualitative research design because of its focus on revealing individual understandings or conceptions (Lee, 2006).

One of the aims of this study is thus to explore teachers' perceptions of attributes of gifted students. Consequently, we used qualitative measures to survey the current practices of identification of gifted students. Finally, qualitative and quantitative measures were used to identify what the available curricular and service options for gifted students are in private Lebanese schools. Private schools were selected in this study, because



## **D. Study Site**

This study was aimed at five private schools in the Greater Beirut Area, however, in order to reach our target of 150 surveys, the surveys were distributed to six private schools. The FGDs and interviews were conducted in five schools. These schools are private, and they meet the educational needs of the middle and upper-middle class community. In addition, these schools are bilingual in their elementary school level. All schools in this study provide classes from Nursery to Grade 12. One accommodates more than 1200 students who attend classes from Nursery to Grade 12. Other schools cater 600 to 1200 students. Two of the schools implement the IB (International Baccalaureate). All of the schools in this study enrich students' knowledge of languages by teaching French as a second foreign language, starting from Grade 1. In another school, they have five-story building built in the early sixties, serving kindergarten to grade 4. This same school has its own library, computer center, auditorium and the Early Years and Elementary administrative wing. Adjacent to the building are the kindergarten playgrounds. In addition, all of these schools have "special support personnel" as one school terms it as who provide special educational services to students with special needs. All these schools provide their own auditorium, music room and a school cafeteria.

## **E. Method**

### ***1. Participants***

A total of 150 surveys were distributed to elementary private school teachers in six schools. We received 140 surveys in total. The participants of the surveys, interviews and focus group discussions consisted of elementary private school teachers who accepted to participate in the study. We chose elementary teachers for our study is because we believe that the earlier we

identify the gifted student, the earlier we can support and nurture the students' giftedness. Participants were selected according to the following criterion: the participants must be working at the elementary cycle, and should be in a private school. As for selecting key informants, we selected participants in this study that are directly involved with the students, who are the teachers. Therefore, our participants consisted of teachers at the elementary cycle. The researcher used purposeful sampling that includes elementary male and female teachers of different subjects (e.g. math, science, English). Overall, three teachers per school were interviewed, leading up to a total of 15 teachers, and a total of five focus group discussions (FDGs) took place. Participation in this study was completely voluntary, and the teachers who responded to the surveys were all elementary teachers who teach in private schools. From this selection, three teachers per school volunteered to participate in the interviews, and 8 to 12 teachers participated in the FGD. Below is Table 1 that illustrates the number of male and female teachers that completed the surveys, and participated in the FGDs and interviews.

Table 1

*Composition of Sample by Gender and School*

Method	Gender	School	School	School	School	School	School	Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	
Surveys	Male	1	2	4	2	3	0	12
	Female	15	19	20	18	32	24	128
	Total	16	21	24	20	35	24	<b>140</b>
FGDs	Male	3	4	2	3	1	-	13
	Female	5	5	10	9	9	-	38
	Total	8	9	12	12	10	-	<b>51</b>
Interviews	Male	0	0	1	1	1	-	3
	Female	3	3	2	2	2	-	12

Total	3	3	3	3	3	-	<b>15</b>
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## **F. Data Collection**

There were three data collection tools used in this research. Triangulation of the results occurred by use of informal, open-ended, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. Surveys were used to collect samples of teaching experiences, age of participants, whether they have ever had a gifted student in their class, if yes, was this student male or female, and so on. The interviews and focus groups were audio taped. We had another interviewer present during the focus group discussions in order to compare notes. Interviews and FDGs were conducted, because we believe that in speaking directly to the stakeholders (i.e., the teachers) involved in the daily experience of the school, they will effectively portray directly the issues involved in the decision of referring a student into a gifted program and on what basis. The language of the surveys and the language of communication in the semi-structured interviews and FDGs was English.

The data collection took place in five different private schools and was based on the elementary teachers' perspectives on the attributes of giftedness, in order for our results to be more comprehensive and validated. In order to reach our 150 surveys target, we sent the surveys to six schools, however the qualitative data collection took place in five schools. Ten schools were contacted, and asked if they would like to participate in this study. These schools were given the surveys to complete and followed by the surveys, interviews and FDGs was held for those elementary teachers who would like to participate in the study. The schools were contacted and permission was obtained by the participants and teachers. Five FDGs were conducted, one in

each school. Finally, three elementary teachers per school were randomly chosen from the teachers who accepted to participate in the study. However, the selection took into consideration teacher's background and experience. Priority was given to teachers with more experience for example. Below is a description of the advantages and disadvantages of each tool, and hence the rationale of using these tools in the present study.

### **1. Perceptions of Giftedness Survey**

The survey is titled 'Perceptions of Giftedness Survey'. According to Kelley, Clark, Brown, and Sitzia et al. (2003), the term survey is defined as, "the selection of a relatively large sample of people from a pre-determined population (the 'population of interest'; this is the wide group of people in whom the researcher is interested in a particular study), followed by the collection of a relatively small amount of data from those individuals. One important element to consider with surveys is that they are designed to provide a "snapshot of how things are at a specific time" (p. 261). However, major changes are taking place in survey research. Although web surveys provide a time- and cost-saving option for data collection (Dillman, 2000), paper and pencil surveys were used instead, for several reasons. One reason is that some individuals may not have equal access to the Web (Umbach, 2004), especially in Lebanon, thereby limiting or preventing them from completing a survey. Another reason is that because completing an online survey is completed at the participants own convenience, the completing of the surveys may take a long time (Sax, Gilmartin & Bryant, 2003). In their study, Sax et al. (2003) concluded, "Across the four modes of administration, response rates were highest among students who received a paper survey with the option to complete the survey online" (p. 423). Finally, limited access of internet connection, difficulties in assuring anonymity and

confidentiality, and technical problems present other setbacks (Sax et al. 2003). Therefore, paper-pencil surveys were used in this study.

There are several advantages pertaining to using surveys. One important advantage of using surveys in this study is due to that fact that the data were obtained based on real-world observations and empirical data (Kelley, Clark, Brown & Sitzia, 2003). Another advantage is that by using surveys, we can cover a wide range of people and events, and this means that it is more likely than other approaches to obtain data based on a representative sample, and can therefore, make a generalization to a population. Finally, surveys can produce a large amount of data in a short time at a fairly low cost. This consequently means that the researcher can set a limit to the time-span for the data collection, and this can assist with the planning and delivering of the final results (Kelley et al., 2003). The purpose of using the survey in this study is for gathering information about the participants' characteristics, university degrees, years of experience, and so on. The surveys help with forming general responses to our three research questions, so that these responses can be looked into deeper with the focus group discussions and interviews.

Despite its advantages, surveys can also pose several disadvantages. One disadvantage is that the data produced from the surveys alone will lack sufficient details and depth in our topic. This is why focus group discussions and interviews were be included as part of the data collection tools. Since this study is about perceptions, having surveys alone to measure perceptions is not enough (Kelley et al., 2003). Though this is a controversial issue, this study adopted the paper and pencil survey method instead of web-based surveying, due to its quickness in obtaining results.

The survey that was used was a compilation of Neumeister, Adam, Pierce, Cassady, & Dixon's in 2007 entitled "Fourth-grade teachers' perceptions of giftedness: Implications for identifying and serving diverse gifted students" and Lee's (2006) study entitled "Teachers' Conceptions of Gifted and Talented Young Children, High Ability Studies". In our survey, we modified some of the characteristics listed in original survey, in order to fit our purposes. For example, we removed the frequency section in Neumeister et al.'s survey, and we made several additions to Lee's survey, and removed the items that we did not need, as some characteristics were redundant. Sections such as 'Family Circumstance' for example, were deleted in our survey. Thus, the survey is divided into three parts: (1) Demographics, (2) Conceptions and Definitions of Giftedness (teachers' beliefs about the meaning and manifestation of giftedness), (3) Characteristics and Prevalence (teachers' belief about what characteristics are most important in identifying gifted students). The first part of the survey consists of general information about teachers, including their years of experience, grades that they teach, their level of education, and so on. In the second part, teachers had to decide how easy it is for them to imagine a gifted elementary student who has the stated characteristics by circling the appropriate number. The last part of the survey, teachers had to indicate how likely they would be to identify a student as gifted if that student exhibited the characteristics that are listed, by circling the number corresponding to their response. Finally, there are two questions that ask the participant if they would like to participate in the FGD and the interview (See Appendix I). The rationale for choosing the survey is because data can be collected from more teachers, (in this case, 140), in contrast to the 15 interviews.

## ***2. Focus Group Discussions***

Although surveys and interviews are common methods for gathering data, focus group discussions (FDGs) is becoming increasingly popular as well, especially in qualitative research. FDGs is a dynamic assessment, semi-structured data gathering method in which a purposively selected set of participants gather to discuss issues and concerns based on a list of key themes drawn up by the moderator/facilitator (Rennekamp & Nall, 2008). Because the study is mainly about exploring teachers' concepts, it was more appropriate to include focus group discussion in the methodology, to get a more in-depth analysis and discussion at how teachers perceive and recognize gifted students in Lebanese schools. The participants in the focus group are elementary teachers who agreed to participate in the study, and who teach at the elementary cycles in private schools. The FDGs were conducted at their schools, at their convenient time after consultation with school principals. The number participants in each FGD was between 8 and 12 female and male teachers. Moreover, the duration was between 90 and 120 minutes. The bulk of the FDG was for the discussion of the different themes, and the remaining time was dedicated to the introduction, the conclusion. The themes that were discussed were their cultural understandings of attributes of giftedness, giftedness characteristics, prevalence, their recommendations in identifying and defining gifted students, the services and programs that are already available and their recommendations for further programs (see Appendix B).

FDGs were used in this study as one of the main advantages of FDG is that the dialogue between the participants takes on a life of its own. The discussion is in group form rather than in individuals. Participants tend to "piggy-back" on others comments, which add richness to the discussion (Rennekamp & Nall, 2008). Other advantages include efficiency; this is because one can include the views of a number of people at the same time. More importantly, participants

often express their views that they might not otherwise express in other settings, because of the spontaneous nature of the responses. For example, when discussing identification procedures, the teachers each had their own method, and so they added richness to the discussion. Flexibility is an advantage as well, as the facilitator is able to probe for clarification or for extra detail. Another main advantage is that FDGs generally work well with a range of populations, including for example, participants with low self-esteem or those who lack experience in expressing their personal views. Some teachers might feel that they are not the only ones who have had to deal with identifying a gifted student and may feel comfortable sharing their experiences. Finally and most importantly, the whole aim and function of the FDG is to gather information about constructions and perceptions of the group members (Rennekamp & Nall, 2008), which is exactly what this paper is studying. Therefore FDG is appropriate for exploring teachers' perceptions of the attributes of giftedness and our other research questions. As previously mentioned, giftedness can be found in all cultures and is expressed through a variety of behaviors (Baldwin, 2005). What sort of behaviors do Lebanese teachers look for in their students in order to identify them as gifted? The FDGs assisted in exploring Lebanese teachers' understandings and conceptions of giftedness.

However, there are some disadvantages in using FDGs. One major disadvantage is that the success of the discussion depends greatly on the skill the moderator in how they can stimulate and manage the group discussion, and whether they can have the discussion flow freely. This is why there was another person with the researcher during the discussion, as well as an audiotape. This should eliminate this disadvantage, as the moderator was not alone. The moderator helped in taking notes, during the FGDs. Another disadvantage is that it proved to be difficult to assemble the groups in the first place, as it was difficult to persuade participants to



give up their time for the discussion, or to find a common time for all to meet. The researcher should provide a comfortable, secure and relaxing atmosphere. Another major disadvantage is that each individual response can be independent of the other responses, and the group dynamic may vary significantly.

Unlike interviews, in FGDs, the moderator has less control over the discussion. For example, there might be some form of pressure in the group to conform to the group 'norm', and therefore, many important opinions might not be expressed. In order to keep track during the session, while at the same time allowing the participants to discuss freely and spontaneously, the facilitator used a discussion guide that lists the main themes to be covered in the session. This list however, was kept at a minimum, in order to leave enough time for insightful and in-depth discussion.

The discussion moved from general to specific topics, and focused on relevant issues. After introductions took place, and the aim of the FDG was clarified, the discussion moved through four parts: definition and concepts, characteristics and prevalence, identification and assessment, and finally, services and programs. Definition and concepts pertains to the first research question. The discussion on Characteristics and Attributes, Identification and Assessment, pertain to the second research question, and finally, Services and Programs relate to the third research question. The discussion started general, and included questions such as "What is your definition of giftedness? How does a gifted student look like?" and then moved to more specific questions such as "What attributes do you look for in a gifted student? If a student excels in music, would you consider this student gifted?" Teachers were asked to provide their recommendations as to "how the definition of giftedness should be ideally"? Is this definition applied in Lebanon or in their school? (see appendix B)

The discussion then moved to the second part of the FDG which includes the Characteristics and Prevalence. The discussion was triggered by questions such as "How many gifted students have you had in your class? What do you look for when identifying the gifted students?" Then the questions were more specific, such as "can you give an example of a gifted student in your class? What was s/he like?" The second part of the FDG focuses more on prevalence and identifying the gifted students and talking about them in general, whereas in the third part of the FDG, the discussion is more specific. Teachers were expected to provide specific examples and recommendations. Finally, the last part of the FDG focused on Services and Programs. What happens to the student after they have been identified? Are there any services that exist that pertain to the needs of these students? Does the school provide any means to accelerate or improve the gifted student? Do they have talent shows? What kinds of activities exist?

When the teachers completed the surveys, there was a question at the very end of the survey which inquired whether the teacher would like to participate in the FDG and the interview, and the participant ticked either 'Yes' or 'No'. Those who responded with a 'Yes', in order to get optimum results, permission was obtained from the participating schools, and after permission has been granted, the participants were contacted in advance; around one to two weeks before conducting the session, and a letter of invitation was sent to each individual. A reminder was sent as well one day before the session. As for the group composition, the group members consisted of teachers from different subject matters, gender, and years of experience at the elementary school. In sum, five FDGs were conducted with 8 to 12 teachers in each. Name tags were distributed among the participants as well, to encourage friendliness and ease among

the group (Escalada, 1997). FGDs help analyse teacher's perceptions in depth, as the teachers speak directly about their opinions and rationales, more so than just the survey.

### ***3. Semi-Structured Interviews***

The purpose of conducting interviews is to “gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena” (Opdenakker, 2006, p. 11). According to Quai (2003), there are three types of interviews: unstructured, semi-structured and structured. Unstructured interviews provide a "broad purpose statement that is used in lieu of a guide; respondents determine subject matter. Semi-structured interviews are topic areas which are used to form a discussion guide outline, yet no specific questions are included. Structured interviews are a defined set of questions (i.e. guidelines) used to guide the discussion” (p. 6). For this study, we used semi-structured interviews, with open-ended questions. The study used open-ended questions because they allow participants to answer from different angles, and also they give participants opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings (and perceptions) based on their specific situation (Escalada, 1997). Individual interviews can often provide in-depth context, stories, and discussion related to one or more topic. This is why we chose to have interviews in this study. Although face-to-face interviewing is a more costly and time-consuming method than surveys, the researcher can select the sample of participants, in this case, male and female elementary school teachers teaching different subjects, and having different years of experience, to balance the demographic profile of the sample (Kelley et al., 2003). There are many advantages and disadvantages pertaining to conducting interviews.

Interviews generally allow for focused discussions and follow-up questions. In addition, several participants offer more information in interviews than they would in a group context. The teachers will feel more comfortable discussing the issues when they are one-on-one with the researcher. They might include more recommendations and insight than when discussing the issues in front of their peers. Furthermore, usually, interviews are a great source for stories and context. More importantly, the interviewer can observe the non-verbal behaviors of the interviewee (WBI Evaluation Group, 2007). At the practical level, an important advantage is that interviews allow more flexibility in location, scheduling and range than FGDs (Quai, 2003). Another important advantage of conducting interviews over FGDs is that the structure of interviews helps to avoid interpersonal group dynamics that influence responses through group pressures or a strong and persuasive group member (Quai, 2003). Finally, some individuals may appreciate the additional personal attention that the interview can offer as opposed to FGDs or surveys.

Although conducting interviews has many advantages, there are some disadvantages. Some disadvantages include the time requirements for interviewers and interviewees, which can be significant. Especially for teachers who have children. Another main disadvantage is the wide geographical access; meaning that interviews may prove very expensive and take too much time. In addition to this, it may be hard to reach some populations (Opdenakker, 2006), for examples, some of the teachers are mothers at home with small children. Furthermore, there is the issue of sensitivity, where participants may have some personal issues that they may not want to discuss with the interviewer (WBI Evaluation Group, 2007). Finally, access to dangerous or politically sensitive sites (as in the case in Lebanon) therefore, some areas may be sensitive and difficult to reach (Opdenakker, 2006).

However, in the present study, the advantages outweighed the disadvantages, so interviews were part of our data collection procedure. In order to have comprehensive results, all three methods discussed above were included in the data collection procedure. This eliminated the disadvantages of each method. As already mentioned, triangulation of our results occurred by FGDs, followed by interviewing each participant separately. We also used the surveys to back the responses up. This is to check whether there is consistency within the answers. Moreover, triangulation of the results occurred by use of informal, open-ended, semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys. Triangulation is important because data was collected from more than one source, therefore consistency and validity will be achieved.

The interview was divided into four parts, namely: definitions and concepts, characteristics and prevalence, identification and assessment, and services and programs. Each of these parts pertains to the study's research questions. For the first part of the interview, definitions and concepts, questions began with broad definitions of giftedness, and how the school and the Lebanese teacher define giftedness. The teacher then in his or her own words defined what giftedness means, and how she would perceive a gifted student in her class, and on what basis. The interview goes on to ask for a recommendation on what the definition of giftedness should be. These definitions relate to the first research question in this study. The interview then proceeded to the next section which is characteristics and prevalence. Questions such as "What are the main characteristics a gifted student should have in your opinion? How does a gifted person look like? How many gifted students are in your class? What are the attributes that you look for in the gifted student? Are there more gifted boys or gifted girls in your class?" These questions pertain to first and second research questions. Questions also include: "What is the procedure that you follow once you identify a gifted student in your class?"

What steps do you take? What is your recommendation on the identification procedure?" These questions helped the researcher understand the attributes that teachers look for in their students when identifying them as gifted.

The third part of the interview focused also on the second research question on identification procedures. Identification and assessment relates to how the teachers identify the gifted students in their class, and what procedure, if any, do they follow once that student has been identified. Questions such as, "How do you identify the gifted students in your class? Is there any procedure or protocol that you follow? How do you assess your students for giftedness? Please give a recommendation as how you would identify the student then refer them." Some questions are repeated as to ensure consistency and in case the teacher wants to add something further. The last part of the interview is relevant to the final research question on services and programs. Now that student has been identified, what next? The interview goes on to ask the teachers questions such as, "Do you have any curricular or program services available in your school? (If yes, please specify), Do you have any referral services in your school? Have you ever had to refer a gifted student in your class? If yes, what was the procedure that you follow? What services are available in your region? What are your recommendations?" These questions will aid us in exploring the available options that gifted students have in Lebanon (if any). Preceding the interview questions, was an introduction made by the interviewer about the aim of the study and the research questions, and why this study is being conducted (see Appendix C).

## **F. Data Collection Procedure**

A total of 150 surveys was distributed to six private schools in the Greater Beirut area, so around 30 teachers per school responded to the survey. Then the FDGs were conducted with the teachers who are interested. There was a question at the end of the survey which asks the teachers whether they would like to participate in the FDG discussion and the follow-up interviews. Finally, there was a follow-up with semi-structured interviews. School and teachers permission was obtained, and the date and time was assigned to those who accepted to participate in the study. The duration of FDGs was up to 90 - 120 minutes each, and included about 8 to 12 participants from each school. A protocol of open-ended questions was initiated at the discussion because they allowed the participants to answer at different angles, and also gave the participants opportunities to express their thoughts and feelings based on their experience. A digital-voice recorder was available, and a research assistant was present during the focus group discussion, taking notes. Following up on that, one -hour interviews were conducted in order to collect data on a different day. Participants then verified the interview transcripts, and these were be read and re-read numerous times to identify the major categories of description. One recurring question that was asked throughout the interviews is: "How does this teacher see gifted children?" There was 15 interviews in total, and three teachers per school.

## **H. Data Analysis**

As for data analysis, we used interpretational analysis for our study, and used the following steps: first, we recorded all the data that we collected from our interviews and focus groups. Then we had to break down the texts into segments. After that we defined specific categories (or themes) in order to reflect each important conceptual element which appears.

Then, we coded each segment for all the categories that apply to that segment. Once we had all the data segments into categories, we refined our set through constant comparison. We did this by comparing each code across the segments in order to explore and discover commonalities in the data that reflect the underlying meaning of, and/or the relationship among, the coding categories. This helped us interpret our data in order to find out the common conceptions and misconceptions that teachers have about the attributes of students who are gifted.

### ***1. Trustworthiness of results***

We used six criteria to evaluate our study: usefulness, inclusion of quantitative data, triangulation, chain of evidence, member checks, and contextual completeness. Because there is no common criteria for which to detect gifted students from in Lebanon, this is why this study would be considered useful. No studies have been done to this effect. It can help policy makers make use of the results to come up with a plan to help students who are gifted. We also included quantitative data used to detect the number of schools that provided special educational services and whether or not they have acceleration programs or any program for gifted students. As for Triangulation, we conducted FDGs in each school, and then interviewed each participant separately. We used the surveys to as well to check whether there is consistency within the answers. In order to test the chain of events, we kept a written record that documents all procedures in data collection and analysis, and will be clearly defined and related to each other. Other researchers can use the same methodology and replicate the study. The advisor for this thesis checked the report for accuracy and completeness to check for Member Checks. Finally, in order to check for contextual completeness, we provided an in depth description of the history, setting, participants, and culture of the schools and research participants.



## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

The results in this chapter are divided into three parts in order to answer the research questions in this study. The first part concentrates on the various definitions that surfaced from the interviews and focus group discussions, backed up by the survey results. The second part focuses on the identification procedures, and the third is about the current programs and services available in Lebanon. The results of this study are thematically presented, and each section is a combination of the survey results, semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions. To maintain the confidentiality of data provided by participants, all names used below are pseudonyms.

#### **A. Definitions of Giftedness**

The first section pertains to the various responses of perceptions of definitions of giftedness. After asking each teacher to define what giftedness is to them, they were asked to come up with a definition that is relevant to the Lebanese context. There were several definitions that the teachers gave in the FGDs and interviews, along with some recommendations. However, there is no official Lebanese definition because there the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) does not have a policy on gifted and talented children and adolescents. It is from the teachers' practice that they view how schools and society understand and practice giftedness. As in the case in Lebanon, the definitions and attributes listed in the following sections are based on the teachers' own personal understanding and beliefs that accumulated through practice. All the

responses in this section are based on all the common themes that surfaced on all three of the data collection tools, which were the surveys, FGDs and interviews. The responses are a triangulation of the results.

The responses were categorized into the following themes: What creates giftedness, high intellectual ability, high academic performance, leadership, and social Intelligence. As Lina, a grade 4 science teacher explains,

I think personally, you cannot define it so simply, you have to make a very long research. First of all, you need to look at the psychological and the sociological context that exists in Lebanon, in order to define what is a gifted Lebanese child, which is probably completely different than an American or European.

### ***1. What Creates Giftedness?***

There was a debate among several teachers as reported below, of whether giftedness is innate or if it is nurtured.

a. Innate/God Given. The reason that this theme is mentioned here is because it was mentioned five times throughout the interviews and FGDs, while the rest of the teachers regarded giftedness as something that is "nurtured". Three teachers explained that giftedness is both innate and nurtured. In this section, the focus will be on innate intelligence, and the next section will focus on nurturing the giftedness. Some of the responses are illustrated below.

Rania, a homeroom teacher in School 2, mentioned, "Giftedness is something that is innate... I would say.... Something that a child has... You cannot teach a child to be gifted, it's

something within them". Similarly, Christina who teaches math for Grade 4 in School 5 said, "Giftedness is something God given. It is an innate quality and makes that student smarter, faster and asks more intelligent answers than the other students". Teachers in School 1 during the FGD used the term "God given" throughout the discussion. Teachers in School 5, similarly to School 1, referred to giftedness as "God given intelligence". They used the terms 'intelligence' and 'giftedness' interchangeably. During the FGD in School 2, the teachers added, "God given" intelligence alone is not enough and that nurturing the giftedness helps develop the giftedness more. As one teacher summarized during the FGD in School 2, "It is that the gifted child is born this way. They are born with this and through practice they will get more [giftedness]".

b. Nurturing Giftedness. Although five teachers insisted that giftedness is something that is innate, three teachers concurred with this view, but also stated that giftedness has to be nurtured. Raghida who teaches English for Grade 5 in School 5 suggested that, "His society helps nurture his giftedness". During the FGD in School 2 for example, Maria who is a homeroom teacher in Grade 2 was talking about how God gives a child their gifted abilities, then added that teachers should be able to "get it [giftedness] out of them". Similarly, during the FGD in School 2, Susan who is a Grade 1 homeroom teacher stated, "We need to keep on developing the student's giftedness, otherwise it will freeze at a certain time". Nour, who is a grade 5 math teacher in School 1 mentioned,

Now maybe we can develop his [or her] skills more, and if he [or she] is outstanding in a subject, let us say in English, we can work harder on developing these skills, because maybe he's going to end up being a very important author later, or a journalist. So you develop these things.

## ***2. High Intellectual Ability***

One of the definitions that the teachers talked about was the importance of having a high intellectual ability. Two teachers in two of the interviews felt strongly about this, and mentioned that giftedness without a very high intellectual ability should not be considered as being gifted. Hiba, and Grade 4 science teacher said, "I'm basing my gifted student on the IQ test". Caroline who is a homeroom teacher in Grade 1 from the same school mentioned,

I would come up with a number for the report card, that will say that everyone that has a higher average than 90% on the report card let us say... and with IQ test bigger than 130, greater than 130, then we can consider him [or her] as a gifted student.

On the other hand, Nour, grade 5 math teacher who teaches in School 1, mentioned that high intellectual abilities accompanied by high academic achievement, is what should be considered as a definition for gifted students. She also stated that she identifies gifted student in her class, according to their "high grades and high IQ". Similarly, Fatima, a math teacher for Grade 6 in School 3 said, "I feel that IQ tests accompanied by the academic results, is what will determine giftedness. There should be a set format for these things".

Some teachers used intelligence and giftedness interchangeably, although nowadays, based on contemporary broad definitions of giftedness, they should not be used interchangeably, as they are two different things. A grade 4 Science teacher, Lina, for example, mentioned, "In order for a student to be classified as being gifted, no matter what he does or his ambition, having a very high IQ score is one, if not the only, determinant of identifying him as gifted".

Similar to previous gifted definitions, four teachers discussed how teachers in Lebanon believe that the higher the IQ, the more gifted you are. Nour, Grade 5 math teacher in School 1, surmised,

I would have to say that high IQ scores are definitely relevant to the Lebanese context. How else would we know? And he [the student] should always take high grades too. We don't have any other standardized test that I know of to test his level of giftedness. So I would have to say... high IQ and high grades in school.

Maria, a homeroom teacher in the same school also focused on high IQ and “[academically] advanced students”. Ibrahim, a math teacher in School 4 also concurred that the Lebanese common perception is as, “Someone who gets really high grades”. However, Ibrahim does not agree with this definition. He explained, “In my opinion, a gifted student is someone who shines in his own way in the field that he is best at. I don't agree with the common Lebanese perception of giftedness of being only a student of high grades”. Another point made during the FGDs in School 3 and 4 that a high IQ is not necessarily the only criterion in determining giftedness. One teacher said, “So what if he has a high IQ? There are many people who have a high IQ, but cannot construct a proper sentence, or stutter, or are not good in social situations. To me, this is ridiculous”. Other teachers spoke of bullying and how students with high IQ might hide their giftedness so not to be bullied. In a FGD in School 3, one science teacher explained,

High IQ! But maybe they have a brilliant IQ scores, but not very gifted in class.

So it's not relevant. But the general atmosphere helps also. If a student is gifted, he might not show his giftedness in order not to be bullied. There is a fashion these days that if the students studies, then he is a 'nerd'. This is the latest fashion. It's not 'cool'.

Only one teacher mentioned that the gifted student should be logical. Yasmina, a homeroom teacher, talked about how a student must have high logical thinking to be gifted. She said, "He must be logical in his answers and his questions, and in his thinking". Logical thinking (finding one answer for the solution) corresponds with the academic intelligence. In other words, although it was mentioned by one teacher as a logical thinking ability, but it was emphasized earlier by many teachers when they used the term "academic intelligence" or IQ.

### ***3. High Academic Performance***

When asked to provide a definition of giftedness, five out of the fifteen interviewees mentioned "High academic performance". For example, Maria, a homeroom teacher in School 2 described the gifted child as the one who is "More academically advanced than other students". When asked to provide a definition within the Lebanese context, she reiterated, "Advanced students with good academic qualities". Caroline, a homeroom teacher in School 1, responded as,

Somebody who is advanced compared to his [or her] classmates, and somebody who is able maybe to understand the lesson maybe from the first time. Sometimes before you start talking, if you write the title on the board only, they are able to understand what you are going to talk about. I notice this about them.

Ibrahim, a math teacher in School 4 explained that the school Lebanese definition perceived the gifted child as "someone who gets high grades". However, Ibrahim made it clear that he opposes this narrow definition of giftedness.

a. Gifted in only one subject area.

Four teachers said that a gifted student is "brilliant" in only one subject. Hiba, a science teacher in School 1 said, "Giftedness could be in one area or in one subject like calculation in math maybe, not [necessary] so good in writing an essay, or in answering comprehension questions or vice versa". Ahmad, a science teacher in School 3 said, "The student should be gifted in one subject [at least]. He will be excellent in it". This group of teachers believes that a student who is gifted is expected to excel in one subject.

b. Gifted in all subject areas

On the other hand, many teachers believe that a gifted student is expected to be excelling in all subjects. The following responses illustrate this. Nour, a grade 5 math teacher, explained,

I feel that a gifted student has to be smart in everything. And even you know, if I'm basing my gifted student on the IQ test, then I'm not just specifying only in math or in English, it has to be in all.

Interestingly, Yasmina, a homeroom teacher in School 4, stated that not only should a gifted student exhibit excellence in one subject-matter, but excellence in all subjects of the Lebanese curriculum because it is "the most difficult curriculum in my opinion", she added,

Because the Lebanese curriculum is more difficult than other curricula, so a gifted student should be able to excel in it, and excel higher than his [grade] level. He knows more. He grasps quickly, from books, T.V., etc. He knows too much. He should excel in all subjects.

c. Gifted only in the sciences.

Three math teachers, two science teachers and one homeroom teacher mentioned the importance of high achievement, mainly in the scientific subjects, i.e. mathematics and the

sciences. Subjects like language arts, physical education (PE), and the arts were not considered by these teachers to be a prominent factor in determining giftedness. In fact, one math teacher in School 3, Fatima, specifically mentioned that if a student is excellent in the English subject, for example, then s/he is not necessarily considered gifted. She added,

Only if he is excellent in math and science, can I describe this student as being gifted. If he is good in English or P.E., he is not gifted; he might show talent or interest. But a really gifted student only excels in subjects that need outstanding logic.

Maria, homeroom teacher in School 2 stated that giftedness is more prevailing "In scientific subjects... math, science and ... more than P.E.". Christina, math teacher in School 5 illustrates this further, when asked if she considers a student gifted if he or she was good in P.E. and Language Arts:

P.E. no... P.E is a talent. Language arts is a subject, so if he is good in a subject, even in English, then I guess he would be considered smart. But if he was better in the sciences, he is more gifted.

Karim, a science teacher in School 5, seconds this opinion that perceives the gifted child as the one who excels in sciences not language arts or P.E. He explained, "No, for language arts, he should be gifted in the sciences. Also, no for P.E., because P.E. is something physical not mental...". Giftedness in these responses is considered to be more of a "mental intelligence" than a "physical intelligence". Therefore, they considered math and science subjects as needing more logic and intelligence than subjects like P.E. that needs physical stamina or even Language arts. The survey responses concur with the above findings.



Table 2

*Teachers' Perceptions of the Importance of Math Skills*

Item	Very Likely		Somewhat Likely		Not Likely	
	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%
Possesses more advanced math skills than most students	79	57	52	37	9	6

In Table 2, 57 percent of the responses (almost half of the 140 participants), said that it was very likely that a gifted student possess more advanced math skills. Thirty seven percent said that it was somewhat likely. Only 6 percent of the teachers responded 'not likely' that a gifted student has advanced mathematical skills. This correlates with what the teachers discussed in the interviews and FDGs. We can therefore conclude that a student, according to the teachers in this study, must be gifted in math and the sciences in order to be considered as gifted.

*"Doctor or Engineer" syndrome.* Two teachers talked about what we can call the “doctor or engineer” syndrome. This entails that gifted students are those who choose to major in engineering or medicine. Raghida, Grade 5 English teacher in School 5, and Fatima, Grade 6 math teacher in School 3, both mentioned this. Raghida stated, “Lebanese people think that if you are a doctor or engineer, then it is likely you are a rocket scientist”, to which Fatima added, “I do not really agree with this definition, but I think many Lebanese still think this way”. The teachers' perceptions are impacted by this socially constructed syndrome.

d. Multiple areas of giftedness.

This definition, contrary to the above definition, is that a student can be excellent in any subject, not just in the sciences. This definition was prevalent across all the schools in this study. For example, Language arts, music, P.E. are all subjects that a student can excel in and still be considered gifted. This is because with music and language arts for example, the student must be creative in solving problems and coming up with new ideas. For example, the FGD in School 2 believe that,

No, it doesn't matter, sometimes we have in Learning Support a student who is gifted in a special area (There are gifted). Yes, they are considered gifted if they are good in P.E. The gifted child is gifted in any subject. Doesn't matter which subject.... even P.E. in arts. They don't have to be gifted in only [academic] studies, that's what I think.

Similarly, participants from School 4 FGD also focused on the issue that giftedness does not necessarily mean that a student will be only gifted in the sciences. Language Arts is also a subject, and if a student is excellent in it, then they could be considered gifted as well. An English teacher in grade 4 explained, "A long time ago, it was shameful if a student was good in language arts or grammar, only math and science. Now, they discovered that people who excel in languages are geniuses. That is because they need creativity and logic in language arts. How much he can read and understand the concepts. Give them problem solving, and create many ways to solve the problem." This teacher, similar to three other language teachers in this study, believe that creativity is very important, hence excelling in language arts, music, art or P.E. is a sure sign of giftedness.

Only Yasmina, homeroom teacher in School 4 mentioned the Lebanese curriculum as relevant to the Lebanese context. However, it was extensively discussed as a main factor in

determining giftedness, because of the level of difficulty of the Lebanese curriculum. She said that not only should the student excel in the curriculum, but a gifted student is expected to excel in all the subjects, "Not only should this student excel in one subject, by in my opinion, a gifted student should be brilliant in all the subjects of the Lebanese curriculum. This is how I know if he is gifted. Of course IQ tests also".

#### ***4. Social Intelligence***

To be 'socially gifted' was repeatedly mentioned. When teachers were asked what kind of giftedness would characterize the Lebanese context, the majority teachers mentioned that it is the "social intelligence". This view was supported by Lina, a science teacher in School 4, who stressed how Lebanese prioritize 'socialization', meaning how you treat others, how aware you are of your surroundings, political situations, and so on. Social intelligence was explained by the teachers in three FGDs in two ways. The first explanation of social intelligence means that the student will know how to cut in line in supermarkets and bargain for cheaper prices. As homeroom teacher Rania explained, "socially gifted students" are able to know a lot about "how to get ahead in the line", and "how to bargain and get a cheaper price". Another meaning behind the term "socially gifted", as Lina, a science teacher explained, is when a child knows all about politics, religion, and history. Lina in School 4 explained,

I think that the priority in Lebanon is to be gifted socially, because we have a huge lack... socially, I mean in classrooms, religion, and with accepting others etc..... This particular part is very important.

Table 3 depicts the total number of respondents who found it easy or difficult to imagine a gifted student with high social intelligence.

Table 3

*Perceptions of Social Intelligence*

Item	Very Easy to Imagine		Easy to Imagine		Difficult to Imagine		Cannot Imagine	
	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of Responses	%	No. of responses	%
	Has high social intelligence (i.e., knows the names and roles of individuals in the surrounding community).	53	38	69	49	15	11	3

As shown in Table 3, 87 percent out of the total 140 participants from the survey responded that it was easy/very easy to imagine that a gifted student has high social intelligence. This concurs with the results in the interviews and FGDs, where the majority of the interviewees mentioned social intelligence throughout the discussions. However, when asked for recommendations for a definition of giftedness within the Lebanese context, Christina, a Grade 4 math teacher in School 5 suggested that Lebanese should, “Focus on other aspects of giftedness, other than social intelligence”. Social giftedness was not considered as the sole indicator of giftedness. However, they played a huge role in determining whether a student was gifted or not.

**B. Characteristics and Attributes**

This section portrays all the main characteristics that surfaced during the interviews and FGDs. There were many prevalent characteristics that were shared by many elementary teachers and help portray how they perceive giftedness. Many of these items concur with the survey results. The tables below, portrays selected sections of the survey that were mentioned in the

FGDs and interviews. The figures are the total number of 140 responses of all six schools that completed the surveys.

***1. Early Finishers***

One of the most frequent responses for listing character traits that students who are gifted should exhibit was that they "finish earlier than his classmates" or "early finishers", or "quick finishers". This trait was mentioned by four teachers and in three FGDs. During the FGDs, all teachers mentioned this trait as an important factor determining giftedness. If we compare this to the survey results in Table 4, we find that 94 percent of the teachers find it very easy to imagine/easy to imagine gifted students completing their work faster than their classmates.

Table 4

*Perceptions of Speediness of Assignment Completion*

Item	Very Easy to Imagine		Easy to Imagine		Difficult to Imagine		Cannot Imagine	
	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of Responses	%	No. of responses	%
	Completes assignments faster than same age peers	73	52	58	42	6	4	3

## ***2. Eager to Learn or "Thirst for Knowledge"***

The second most frequent response for characteristics was "eager to learn", followed directly by "s/he has a thirst for knowledge". Ahmad, a science teacher in School 3 illustrated, "You feel like they [gifted students] are so eager to learn... like they want to know everything... You can see that they have a thirst for knowledge". Seven teachers made similar comments, and this was mentioned in three FGDs. In one FGD, one teacher said, "You feel that he needs more, he needs more knowledge [and] he has 'thirst' for knowledge and information". In other words, in order to be identified as gifted, teachers agreed that the student should have curiosity and a 'thirst' for knowledge that regular students do not have.

## ***3. Sharpness/ Speediness***

The word "sharp" was used in all FGDs, and in three interviews. Most teachers described the gifted as "Somebody who is sharp". Speediness in answering was regarded as another important characteristic. This includes the speed of answering questions, to creative responses that gifted students are perceived to exhibit. For the first part, many comments included "quick in answering". The teachers regarded the time in which the teacher asks a question, to the time the student responds should be very quick.

Another prevalent characteristic, "absorb information rapidly" is another way of how teachers explained sharpness. Teachers in one FGD mentioned that a student who is gifted, understands the lesson from the first time. Christina, a grade 4 math teacher in School 5 stated, "A gifted student understands what the lesson is about directly. It could be even right after I write the title on the board".

Table 5

*Total number of responses for Absorbing Information Rapidly*

Item	Very Likely		Somewhat Likely		Not Likely	
	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%
Learns easily and quickly	86	62	42	30	12	8

If we look at Table 5, out of the 140 respondents, 62 percent considered "learns quickly and easily" as 'very likely', and 30 percent responded as 'somewhat likely'. Therefore, the majority of the teachers believe the speediness of learning and completion of work is one of the characteristics of a gifted student.

**4. "Twinkle or Sparkle in Their Eye"**

This exact phrase was mentioned many times throughout the interviews, especially in School 1. Hiba, a grade 4 science teacher in School 1, for example, said, "You can see it in their eyes... there is intelligence, like a spark! It's as if they have a twinkle in their eye". Similar comments were made with three other teachers and one FGD. Ahmad in School 3 said, "You can feel it from their [eyes]... may be a twinkle in their eyes". Karim in School 5 says, "They have a special sparkle in their eyes". Many teachers focused on the eyes, and stressed that a teacher can tell whether a student is gifted or not, by looking into their students eyes. In one FGD, teachers summarized, "sometimes [you see it in] their eyes, they know more".

### 5. Creativity and Problem Solving Skills

Other characteristics that were prevalent were creativity and problem solving skills. This could range from asking creative questions, to coming up with creative solutions.

Table 6

*Total number of Responses on Creativity and Solving Problems*

Item	Very Easy to Imagine		Easy to Imagine		Difficult to Imagine		Cannot Imagine	
	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of Responses	%	No. of responses	%
	Can devise strategies to solve problems	51	37	80	57	9	6	0

As Table 6 shows, 37 percent of the teachers find it 'very easy to imagine' a gifted student who is able to create solutions to any given problem, and 57 percent of the teachers find it 'easy to imagine', which leads up to a total of 94 percent of the teachers. Only 6 percent of the teachers find it 'difficult to imagine'. To support this view, Ibrahim, a math teacher, described the gifted child as "Someone who is so creative.... Has his own way of solving problems. Very creative in solving problems, unlike other students who does it the teacher's way, and the way she taught him. Not photocopy of the teacher". Another math teacher mentioned that the gifted child should be "genuinely creative". Many teachers considered that the creatively gifted is the one who thinks divergently by finding more than one solution for the problem. To be creative, it means that one can come up with "advanced answers".

A couple of teachers mentioned critical thinking as an important aspect in characterizing giftedness. Lina, science teacher in School 4 for example, views the gifted student as "Someone



who has critical thinking and his critical thinking is really high. It should be in everything, in all subjects” Fatima, Grade 6 math teacher, considers "high level critical thinking is [an] essential [characteristics of giftedness]”.

Table 7

*Total Number of Responses to Finding Solutions*

Item	Very Likely		Somewhat Likely		Not Likely	
	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%
Able to produce solutions when no one else can.	103	74	30	21	7	5

In order to further support this view, if we take a look at Table 7, a total of 74 percent of the teachers find it 'very likely' that a gifted student is able to produce solutions, when no one else can.

Lina, a science teacher explained that the gifted child is the one who “is able to create more than one solution to a problem, whether in math, or in his social life. If a student said a bad word to him, he can create a solution to this problem.... Or he can create a solution if the computer isn't working or the overhead projector ".Therefore, creativity does not only mean to be creative only in academic domains, but also in real life situations.

**6. General Knowledge**

All teachers in the interviews and FGDs agreed that the “wide general knowledge” is what characterizes gifted learners at schools. Classroom participation and 'knowing all the answers' is also characterized as having general knowledge, but viewed in a different way. For

example, Ahmed, a science teacher in School 3 said, "[The gifted learner] has to have general knowledge. For example he will know a lot about scientific things, and even politics, religion, social things, the news, everything. He should be well informed". As Table 8 illustrates, 72 percent of the teachers who responded to the survey also regard general knowledge as an important characteristic.

Table 8

*Total Number of Responses to General Knowledge*

Item	Very Likely		Somewhat Likely		Not Likely	
	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%
Has a large amount of general information	101	72	32	23	7	5

As for classroom participation, thirteen of the teachers said that the students who participated in classes are the most able students, and their skills appear through answering or asking questions, or helping other students. Teachers did not elaborate much on this characteristic however, it was repeatedly mentioned by many teachers in the FGDs.

Normally followed by the participation comments, were responses about how a gifted students always know all the answers, and this leads them to participate more. Mira in School 3 explained, "When a student knows more than the rest, they tend to participate more than the others. Usually, gifted students know all the answers".

On the other hand, other teachers, such as Fatima and Ahmad, math and science teachers respectively, kept this as separate from participation, and they believe that a gifted student should

always know the answers for any question. The most common responses were “he knows all the answers”.

### ***7. Wittiness***

Teachers from two schools, during the interviews and FGD, focused on the importance of wittiness. Although they did not go into detail, they were mentioning it casually throughout the interviews and the focus group discussions. For example, homeroom teacher Maria stated that wittiness was among one of the most important characteristics, and that she finds wittiness to be very common among students that she perceives as gifted.

### ***8. Perfectionism***

Three teachers mentioned perfectionism as one of the characteristics. Mira, a math teacher in School 3, described the gifted child as the one who wants everything he does to be perfect. Interestingly, another teacher stated that gifted students are those who dress immaculately, and are always neat and tidy and appear to be "perfect dressers". This will be mentioned in further detail in later sections.

### ***9. Leadership***

Table 9 portrays the total number of teachers that believe that leadership is an important characteristic of a gifted student. The table also portrays different behavior characteristics that teachers regard as gifted behaviors, such as 'is shy' or 'misbehaves'.

Table 9

## Total Number of Responses for Leadership and Behavior characteristics

Item	Very Easy to Imagine		Easy to Imagine		Difficult to Imagine		Cannot Imagine	
	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of Responses	%	No. of responses	%
Is a follower (seldom takes the lead)	16	12	69	49	46	33	9	6
Has poor social skills	26	19	75	54	34	24	5	3
Is shy	37	27	73	52	23	16	7	5
Misbehaves in school	28	20	81	58	23	16	8	6
Cannot work independently	17	12	60	43	47	34	16	11
Demonstrates leadership skills	32	23	83	59	25	18	0	0

Teachers in one of the FGDs emphasized leadership as one of the main characteristics. The teachers talked about how gifted student takes initiative, and shows leadership in group activities. Math teacher, Mira, said, "The [gifted] student will take charge of the group", Ahmad, a science teacher added, "You feel that he is a natural born leader". This is shown as well in Table 9. For the 'demonstrates leadership skills', 82 percent of the teachers found it easy or very

easy to imagine, and only 18 percent of the teachers found it difficult to imagine. No teacher responded as 'cannot imagine' to a student having leadership qualities. However, for the survey item "is a follower (seldom takes the lead)", 61 percent of the teachers responded that they can imagine the gifted student being a follower and not a leader, and 33 percent of the teachers found difficulty in imagining this. Only 6 percent responded as 'cannot imagine'. This contradicts the earlier findings that the majority of teachers believe that a gifted student has leadership qualities.

Table 10

*Total Number of Responses to Leadership and Behavioral Characteristics - continued*

Item	Very Likely		Somewhat Likely		Not Likely	
	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%	No. of responses	%
Is well-liked by classmates.	29	21	80	57	31	22
Takes the lead in small groups	50	36	72	51	18	13
Behaves well in class.	44	31	65	47	31	22
Has a lot of energy and may have difficulty remaining in seat.	48	34	73	52	19	14

However, in Table 10 almost half the participants (51 percent) responded 'somewhat likely' to the characteristic of 'takes the lead in small groups, and 36 percent of the teachers responded as 'very likely'. This in turn attests to the earlier belief that gifted students present leadership qualities.

## ***10. Special Behavioral Characteristics***

This is a very important aspect because there was much controversy regarding the behavioral traits and patterns of gifted individuals in the FGDs and interviews. Eight teachers in the interviews described the gifted as a "calm and well-mannered" student, while the other seven regarded gifted students as "messy and self-conceited". Other teachers from the FGDs explained that each case is different, and it depends on the student; that there is no standard behavior that a gifted student exhibits; Lina, a teacher of science explained, "He could be very calm and quiet. He could be very active. It depends". Mira makes a similar observation, she said, "It depends on the child. Behavior does not have to do with being gifted. If he's interested, he will behave. If they aren't, they will misbehave. If the lesson is repetitive, he will misbehave. I know this from last year".

A quick debate that was made between two teachers during the FGDs in School 1, regarding the difference of opinion on how a gifted student behaves:

- ***Teacher 1:*** "Sometimes, the giftedness can be a drawback for the student, because it puts him in a.. like in a self-conceit. He becomes self-conceited. So, this is a drawback for him, feeling different from other students around him. He needs to learn how to make it. He has to learn how to take himself back to reality, we have to bring him back to the fact that, okay you are gifted, but you are not different from others.

- ***Teacher 2:*** Noo on the contrary! They help the teacher, you feel that they don't waste time, and they help the teacher. You feel as if they are your lawyer. They give a lot of energy to the class, and the gifted helps the teacher a lot.

- ***Teacher 1:*** There are many students who are treated unfairly, they become the dynamo of the class. And they waste the class time because they always need

something, and you are still explaining to the other students in the class. They are loners or they show off, and get all the teacher's attention. So they misbehave".

Three teachers mentioned that their perceived gifted student was "hyper". Fatima elaborated, "My student was very hyper. He would not sit down, and when he finishes first, he would get busy bullying other students. I always had to have work ready for him". Lina seconds this opinion, and has noted that she had trouble with a "very smart student because he was extremely active and hyper, and he always disrupted the class". Other teachers emphasized the importance of the 'students' style', which was explained by Susan (homeroom teacher), as whether the student is 'nerdy', 'hyper' or 'organized'. Maria, grade 2 homeroom teacher for example, explained that her gifted student was bullied by other classmates because he was perceived as a 'nerd'. She elaborated, that his behavioral problems stemmed from not adapting well with other classmates because he was 'smarter' than his classmates, and so they bullied him. Bullying also occurred because he disrupts the classroom when he finishes his class work early and consequently gets bored. In Table 9, 78 percent of the teachers believe that gifted students misbehave in class, while only 22 percent of the teachers found difficulty or cannot imagine this. In addition, 73 percent of the teachers believed that gifted students have 'poor social skills', meaning that they do not know how to 'behave properly', for example, the student might interrupt the teacher while she is explaining, or he/she might bully or be bullied by another student.

On the other hand, four teachers had the opposite impression. They described gifted students as "Quiet (which entails that he does not interrupt the class), well-behaved, good manners, clean, neat and organized". Yasmina, a homeroom teacher in School 4, described gifted students in the following way, "Oh a gifted student is very neat and organized in his writing, and in his manners. And he is very polite". Science teacher Hiba also elaborated that gifted students

are the most polite. Table 10 demonstrates this as well; 57 percent of the teachers find it 'somewhat likely' that gifted students are well-liked by classmates, and 47 percent of the teachers also find it 'somewhat likely' that a gifted child behaves well in class. However, only 21 percent of the teachers responded that gifted students are well liked by classmates, and 22 percent did not find it likely. It seems that it is a controversy of how a gifted student behaves. There is no official standard to how a gifted student is expected to act and behave in class.

### ***11. Physical appearance***

Only two teachers described a gifted student as "He's not stylish. He looks weird". Susan, a grade 1 homeroom teacher, gave an example of a student in her class,

I don't know if he's gifted; he studied a lot, and he looked weird... that's why he had many difficulties with us. First of all, jealousy. Second, he's not stylish, you know? They say that he studied a lot but he keeps not going out with us, things like that.

Ibrahim, a math teacher, makes a similar statement, "They [gifted children] are very unorganized. Tendency of being disorganized in their clothes... Very hectic".

Conversely, other teachers regarded students as being "neat and organized". Raghida describes her student as "Clean, healthy, organized, chooses his clothes". Karim, who teaches science, concurs with this belief and added, "He can be a very polite child, or a student with a lot of manners". The rest of the teachers did not find any difference in physical appearance between a gifted student and a regular child.



## **C. Identification and Assessment**

This section portrays the results of the perceptions of the current identification procedures for gifted students. The section includes how teachers identify their gifted students, what protocol (if any) do they follow, the number of gifted students in their class (if any), and if they have ever had to refer a gifted student in their classrooms. These were discussed in depth during the interviews and FGDs. All the teachers responded that they have never referred a gifted student in their class.

### ***1. Current Identification Procedures***

How can teachers tell if they have a gifted student in their class, and when they identify this student, what happens next? According to 13 teachers out of the 15 that were interviewed, they all mentioned that they would "talk to other teachers and ask their opinions". A few mentioned that they would talk to the counselor and/or head principal. During the School 1 FGD, teachers mentioned that they talk among each other about their gifted students especially during the meeting and sometimes they talk to the concerned parents about their children.

Nour, a math teacher, stated this problem well, she said, "We don't have a procedure in school. We don't have one. But if I was to do a procedure, we have to accommodate with the requirements I have just said. The IQ, plus academics... We don't have this, but you [the researcher] opened our eyes for this".

Maria, a homeroom teacher in School 2, discussed the identification issue in more detail. Six other teachers also touched on this topic, however Maria gave a more elaborate answer. She explained that was gifted students are frequently not identified due to their misbehaviors in class. Because they find the material easy in class, they start to misbehave, and therefore disrupt the

class. Consequently, they are not taken seriously, frequently overlooked as gifted and labeled as misbehaving students. Maria added,

Normally, the schools suffer from this, especially strict schools. They don't admit that the student is gifted, they don't admit that these kids are causing them problems. This is what happens most of the time. But they are supposed to have a special program for them, specific for gifted students to recognize them as really students who are gifted, not those who are making problems for us.

## ***2. Identifying the gifted student***

What do the teachers look for when identifying a gifted student in their class? Fourteen out of the 15 interviewees explained that they would refer to the scores on the report card. As one teacher in a FGD mentioned, "Honestly, I would see if their grades were all above 90 or 95". This statement was made more or less throughout the discussions.

Over half of the teachers replied that they identify gifted students according to their "hunch". Two teachers, Caroline and Hiba, mentioned that they identify the student who reads a lot in their classes. Caroline stated that "If he reads a lot in my class and he is a good reader, then I would identify him as gifted". Other responses included participation, eagerness, and "spark" in their eyes.

## ***3. Early Identification***

There was a debate regarding this question: Do teachers identify giftedness during the elementary cycle, or in kindergarten?

***Elementary cycle.*** The majority of the teachers concurred that the best age for identifying giftedness is during the elementary cycle. Reasons suggested for this were because in

elementary, the students are able to read, draw, talk, and write. One teacher in the FGD of School 3 explained, "Sometimes it shows in early ages, but you don't have proofs yet". Therefore, even though some students may show signs of giftedness at early stages, there is no way to "prove" that the child is gifted. As Christina, a grade 4 math teacher explained "actual learning starts in elementary, so the giftedness will show more them".

**Kindergarten.** As for kindergarten, only a few teachers identify giftedness at the kindergarten level. During the FGD in School 2, for example, a homeroom teacher was explaining how you can identify gifted students at Kindergarten level, by the way they color between the lines, sound the alphabet, and ability to share things. The debate took place in School 5 during the FGD, where 3 teachers claimed that during kindergarten, some students have a 'gifted look', which means that they 'pay attention' to the teachers instructions, play fairly, and color inside the lines and 'neatly'. Fives teachers during the same FGD stated that all the above signs are not signs of giftedness, and that a teacher cannot identify giftedness until the student is able to read and write.

#### ***4. Gifted Girls versus Gifted Boys***

One third of the teachers replied to the question 'Are there more gifted boys or gifted girls in your class?' as "no difference". The other two thirds of the teachers mentioned that there are more gifted boys than gifted girls, given that these teachers were all female. Lina, a science teacher said, "I am very convinced that math and science are boys directed. Don't get me wrong, but this is what I think". She also mentioned that there are more gifted boys than gifted girls.

Table 11

*Total Number of Responses to Gender Differentiation (all figures are in percentage %)*

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Undecided
Boys are more likely to show their giftedness through activities that tap mathematical/logical ability.	6	40	21	27	6
Girls are more likely to show their giftedness through activities that tap verbal abilities.	6	46	17	27	4

\*Note: N = 139, one teacher did not answer this part of the survey

Table 11 depicts the total number of responses for subject-related giftedness for boys and girls. For example, the table shows that a total of 46 percent of respondents agree or strongly agree that boys are more likely to show their giftedness through activities that tap mathematical/logical ability, whereas 48 percent disagree to strongly disagree with this statement. Therefore, almost half of the participants in the survey believe that boys have a higher logical/mathematical ability than girls.

On the other hand, during the FGD in School 3, one teacher said, "the Lebanese consider that the male brain is bigger, but the girl uses more parts of her brain; she analyzes more, much more than boys". This correlates with the 48 percent of the respondents in Table 11 who disagree that the male is more capable of logical/mathematical thinking than girls. However, it is also interesting to note that throughout all the interviews and all the FGDs, gifted students were always referred by using 'he' or 'his', which refer to males. All the references to giftedness were applied to the male student. Another explanation is that they might have been using 'he' as a universal pronoun.

Not surprisingly, during one FGD that took place in School 1, for example, the teachers talked about how "only males are recognized if they are gifted in class". On math teacher during the discussion, talked about how if there was a boy and a girl in her class, and they were both very good in math, she identify the boy as gifted instead of the girl. If the girl was just as good, she would give credit to her parents or would be sure that someone is helping her at home. A homeroom teacher in the same discussion added, "Gender is not a factor, is it socially constructed male society". And these men, especially those who are gifted, become self-conceited. They should use their giftedness for "good". Susan in School 2 also mentioned that the Lebanese society and Lebanese school practices views gifted students as "mostly boys".

## ***5. Assessment***

In order to understand how teachers assess their students for giftedness, the question 'How do you assess your students for giftedness?' was asked. All teachers stated that there is no standard assessment procedure in their schools. This makes sense because there is no government policy about giftedness. Only one homeroom teacher during the School 3 FGD said that she would assess the student by means of report cards and extra activities, as this is the only way she knows how. Many teachers did not understand the question. Ahmad, who teaches science in grade 6, explains the situation as, "We don't have in our school [assessment protocol]... No assessment [procedure], just grades". In all FGDs, comments such as "Observation, talking to colleagues, and talking to parents" were frequently reported. Lina explained, "I'm sure there are special tests, but I cannot do it". Only one teacher, Rania, who is a homeroom teacher in School 2, with three years of experience, elaborated on this subject,

"Okay, we have assessments, and I usually do that through observational checklists, because I set up different stations in the class. So every English and

math station depends on the level of the student, and so I would have one that's at their level, I have one that's above average to challenge them, and I have one based on, let's say, their creativity, test their skills, and such. So when I do that, depending on what station that they excel in, I'm aware of what their level is. So if I see a student with the challenging one, (I have a challenging center), he's able to complete it in less than that class hour, and then he gets bored easily and he want more and it's all correct, then I say okay, this child, he needs to be challenged more, so that's when I do an extended work in the class.

Ibrahim mentioned the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) test. Although this is not specifically catered to gifted students' needs, it was what is currently available, he added,

As a school, we assess all students the same way. We have to follow the Grade 3 school procedure. Only this year, we started using ACER test, which is a standardized test, but I don't agree with it, because each country is different. So it doesn't cater to everyone's needs.

It is important to note that the tests that are used are not adapted to the Lebanese context.

#### **D. Services and Programs**

This section covers the current services and programs that are provided for gifted students. The findings show that there are no official services provided at the private Lebanese schools participating in this study. This section is divided into three parts: Classroom activities, school activities, and referral services.

### ***1. Classroom Activities***

This section refers to classroom activities that teachers do with their gifted students, if any. Results indicated that not many activities take place, except extra worksheets. In addition, the aim of the extra worksheets was to keep the gifted students 'busy', as not to interrupt the classroom. As Mira responded, for example, "We do more activities like give them extra worksheets. Sometimes, I let them distribute something like papers or pencils just to keep him busy, or else he will be bored". Yasmina gave the responses of "No. but we give extra worksheets, extra problem solving, to keep them busy". The other 13 responses talked about giving extra worksheets to keep the students 'busy', as not to disrupt the class. Only one math teacher said, "More activities, focus on his interests and nurture them".

### ***2. School Activities***

Various responses such as talent shows, spelling bees, sports day, math day and such were mentioned throughout. Although these activities were said to not target gifted students specifically, but they are meant to encourage all students equally. Only two of the five schools engage in these activities. The other three schools engage in these activities once every term.

### ***3. Referral Services***

No official referral services were reported. Only Rania mentioned that she believes that her school does have services, "Yes, we have referral services, and we have a referral form that we fill out. We have these forms at the secretary administration. We take them and we fill them out, then it's seen by the director and by our head of learning support. We also have a list of referral places that they can go to." When asked to elaborate further, she said that she didn't

know the names of any of the referral places. All other teachers in her school responded with 'No' when being asked if they have any referral services in their school.

## **E. Summary of Findings**

It is important to note the difference between “common Lebanese perceptions of giftedness as perceived by teachers” and the teachers' definitions. The common Lebanese perception of giftedness in Lebanon is not an official definition, but it is how the teachers view it. They are referring to the 'doctor and engineer' definitions of giftedness, and how Lebanon is a male dominant society. Some teachers agreed with their perception of this definition, and other teachers had their own view of giftedness.

As the results indicated, there is no state mandated Lebanese definition for giftedness. Teachers' perceptions of definitions varied from whether giftedness is nurtured or 'God-given', to definitions that included social intelligence, High intellectual ability, high academic performance, and having leadership skills.

The teachers' perceptions of the main characteristics of a gifted student listed that were gathered from the interviews and discussions were early finishers, eagerness to learn, sharp, “twinkle in their eye”, creative, problem solvers, knows a lot of general knowledge, participates, knows all the answers, witty, understands from the first time, perfectionist, has high critical thinking, and has leadership skills. While discussing the behavioral characteristics, there was a debate among the teachers. Some said that a gifted student is “neat and polite”, while others insisted that they are “messy and self-conceited”. Similarly, when discussing the physical



appearance of the gifted students, teachers also had a debate. Some said that they are “neat and well-organized in their clothes”, while others said that 'they look weird and messy'.

Regarding identification and assessment, most of the teachers identify their students by means of grades and report cards. In addition, there is no official and standard identification procedure. What usually happens is, as reported by the teachers, is that they consult with their colleagues or the counselor.

As for services and programs, no program seems to exist in Lebanon and in schools. What tends to happen is that teachers give extra work and activities to those students who they perceive as gifted, or give extra bonus questions. No other option has been discussed. However, schools do offer activities like talent shows, spelling bees, sports day, and similar activities, in order to encourage 'talent'. However, these are all not specifically catered to meet the needs of gifted students.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study explores the perceptions of elementary teachers on defining and identifying gifted students, and on the current services and programs that are provided in Lebanon, in order to understand how Lebanese teachers view giftedness in order to come up with a combined definition. The purpose of this chapter is three-fold: discussing the results obtained, drawing conclusions grounded in the participants' perspectives and connect them to the literature, and at providing implications for research and practice. We did not take a stance in this study, because we wanted to present the findings of teachers' perceptions alone, as they are, as the study is about the teachers' perceptions.

#### **A. Discussion**

The first aim of our study was to explore the perceptions teachers currently have on attributes of gifted students. Consequently, this section discusses the results that were obtained in relation to the three research questions of the study. Therefore this section entails a discussion on teachers' combined perceptions of gifted students and their attributes; the current identification procedures for gifted students; and the available programs and services in Lebanon at this current time. Following this is the conclusion, implications, and finally the limitations of the study.

This section focuses on the three main purposes of this study. The Definitions for giftedness varied from one school to another. However, the definition that we put together in the

next paragraph, is based on the findings and evidence of this study, and is a suggested definition that could be adopted in Lebanon.

### ***1. The Constructed Definition of Lebanese Teachers' Perceptions***

Giftedness is a combination of three parts: High intellectual ability, high academic performance, and social intelligence. High intellectual ability includes high logical thinking, and that the gifted student's scores on the report cards should be the highest among the class. High academic performance means that gifted students excel in one or more academic or subject area. Giftedness also encompasses social intelligence, which means that the student should be a natural leader, take charge of small groups, and be able to deal with real life situations that are mainly applicable in Lebanon, for example, the ability to bargain for better prices, and cutting in line to get the service or product faster.

Adding to this definition, a gifted student has other factors such as high levels of motivation, persistence, and could excel in one or more academic or non-academic areas. In the case of Lebanon, the society encourages the child to be 'better than others' or 'the best in class'. This also means that society encourages certain behaviors, such as '*shatara*' in Arabic, or 'out-smarting', which means, having the skill to manipulate a person or a thing to get the desired results, usually by putting little effort in the endeavor. This is a combination of social intelligence and creativity.

### ***2. Lebanese Teacher's Perceptions and the Literature***

The Lebanese teachers' definition above shares some aspects of Renzulli's three-ring model, and Sternberg's WISC model. For example, Renzulli hypothesized, that giftedness is an interaction between three clusters of basic traits: above-average general ability, high levels of

creativity, and high levels of motivation (task commitment). Above-average ability and high levels of creativity were stressed in the Lebanese teachers' perceptions, such as a gifted student is expected to create solutions to any problem, and above average ability, pertaining to high intellectual ability and high academic achievement. However, the Lebanese teachers did not mention high levels of motivation, as Renzulli hypothesized in his model. Renzulli discusses the importance of high task commitment as part of the interaction between the three traits, but the teachers focused more on the students' high intellectual abilities and creativity rather than having high levels of motivation as well. Thus, although the Lebanese teachers' perceptions of giftedness share some aspects of Renzulli's model, they do not match completely. Sternberg's Triarchic Theory of Intelligence divides intelligence into three components, which are the analytical (academic) intelligence, practical (social) intelligence, and creative (synthesis) intelligence. Recently, he added a fourth type of intelligence, which he named the WISC which is an acronym standing for wisdom, intelligence, and creativity, synthesized. Although only one teacher talked about wisdom, the other parts of Sternberg's WISC model of giftedness, intelligence and creativity, are closely linked to the teachers' perceptions, where, again, the teachers discussed high intellectual ability and the importance of creativity.

### ***3. Misconceptions of Characteristics of Giftedness***

One of the major misconceptions that came up in the study was what we called, the 'doctor and engineer' syndrome, which is a socially constructed idea influenced by the Lebanese culture. Contemporary definitions of theorists, such as Renzulli, Gardner, and Sternberg, indicate that there are many types of giftedness, and it is not only limited to being excellent in the sciences. Another major misconception that surfaced was that there are more gifted boys than gifted girls. Perhaps this idea stems from the fact that Lebanon is a male dominant society.

Moreover, when a man is successful, as stated by a teacher, the society praises his intellect and skills, whereas if a woman was successful, the society gives praise to external factors that have nothing to do with the woman's intellect. However, because we are looking at Lebanon's cultural definition, we cannot really state that the Western perspective is truer, because, as Sarouphim (2010) states, this phenomenon has never been visited in Lebanon before, therefore teachers have no pre-conceived notion of what giftedness is about, so we are at a 'clean-slate' stage in the definition. Further studies on students' perceptions and other stakeholders need to take place in order to really understand the misconceptions in the Lebanese perspectives.

#### ***4. Current Identification Procedures***

Regarding identification and assessment, there is no identification procedure because of the absence of an official definition, or a commonly accepted definition of giftedness. In addition, there is no official and standard identification procedure in schools. What usually happens is, as reported by the teachers, is that they consult with their colleagues or the counselor. Most of the teachers identify their students by means of grades and report cards. However, all teachers in the interviews and FGDs said that they do not have an official identification procedure in their school.

#### ***5. Services and Programs***

As for services and programs, no program seems to exist in Lebanon and in schools. What tends to happen is that teachers give extra work and activities to those students who they perceive as gifted, or give extra bonus questions. No other option has been discussed. However, schools do offer activities like talent shows, spelling bees, sports day, and similar activities, in order to encourage 'talent'. However, these are all not specifically catered to meet the needs of

gifted students. These services are left for each school to decide. They are using some individual initiatives but not theoretically-based or evidenced-based. Moreover, the services depend on the teachers, principals and their enthusiasms but not based on a well-structured program and plan. We also can conclude that we are losing a lot of students for not being identified then served, and those students are our lost prizes. The schools seemed that they are not willing to take the risk and serve a child that was misdiagnosed as gifted. Teachers and principals seemed to not be prepared for this issue.

## ***6. A Lebanese Definition***

The main themes that surfaced during the interviews, focus group discussions and surveys, are high intellectual ability, high academic performance and social giftedness. However, no state official definition exists in Lebanon. The findings portray the perceptions of teachers about giftedness. However, no common definition was particularly agreed on, and many debates occurred during the FGDS. This section discusses the themes in more detail.

### **a. High Intellectual Ability**

High IQ was a characteristic that was mentioned consistently in this study. Note that IQ, which is the abbreviation of Intelligence Quotient, is a formula used in the IQ tests to measure high intellectual ability. Teachers were talking about high intellectual ability as measured by IQ tests, and therefore, this is what they mean by intellectual ability. Although IQ is an important factor, it alone is not the sole indicator of giftedness. However, many teachers believed that it was. These findings are similar to the results found in Soriano de Alencar, et al. study (2009), which indicated that teachers in Argentina nominated students for gifted programs based solely on high intellectual ability and academic achievement above mean scores. This shows that these

teachers perceive academic achievement and high scores is what truly defines a gifted student. This goes back to earlier definitions of giftedness that were used from the very beginning. Unfortunately, many people still rely on this definition. Hollingworth for example, believed that the top 1 percent (IQ 130 to 180) are considered gifted. Moreover, unfortunately, until now, many researchers, psychologists, educators and people in general believe that IQ tests are a major factor in determining and measuring intelligence and giftedness (Sarouhim, 1999). This seems to be a similar perception across cultural borders.

b. High Academic Performance

Not only is this an important attribute considered by Lebanese teachers in this study, but having high academic performance is prevalent even in the literature. For example, Silverman (1993a, 1993b, 2002, 2003), refers to intellectual giftedness as ‘asynchronous’ development characterized by advanced cognitive abilities.

High academic performance is mentioned in most of the theories on giftedness. One of the main types of intelligences in Sternberg's (1985, 2004) Triarchic Theory, for example, was Analytical giftedness, which is the academic talent measured by typical intelligence tests, particularly analytical reasoning and reading comprehension. Gardner's (1983) Theory of Multiple Intelligences (MI) included linguistic (verbal) intelligence, which includes verbal comprehension, syntax, semantics, and written and oral expression, and logical mathematical intelligence, which includes inductive and deductive reasoning, as part of his seven Intelligences. These intelligences correlate with school subjects. Moving on to more definitions, according to Renzulli (1986), gifted children are “characterized by three interlocking clusters of ability, these clusters being above average (though not necessarily superior) ability, task commitment, and creativity (p. 9)”. Renzulli goes on to describe that above average ability (high ability) is defined

as having high levels of verbal and numerical reasoning, high levels of abstract thinking, spatial relations, memory and fluency. High ability is again included in the definition. Creativity can also be linked to having high ability. Finally, some teachers regarded high position statuses like 'doctor' or logical-mathematical majors such as 'engineering' as indications for giftedness. However, this can be linked to high IQ and high academic performance, and they can be interrelated. This shows that the Lebanese perceived definition correlates to some of the existing theories of giftedness.

### c. Social Giftedness

As for the social giftedness, it was raised as an important indicator of giftedness in Lebanon. According to the current study, many teachers sought students who were 'good in bargaining' and 'know all about Lebanese politics, religion and history' as a sign of giftedness. Perhaps this is very relevant, because Lebanese people tend to view 'cutting in line' as a 'very smart move', as Ahmad in this study mentioned. Therefore if a student was able to cut in line for example, instead of waiting, then this would be considered as doing something 'extremely smart'. When we look at similar studies of teachers' perceptions of giftedness made in Africa for example, we find that each country has its own values and definitions that they implement in their country. In Africa for example, Serpell (2000) finds that some African tribes consider intelligence as having cultural values, showing respect for elders, caring for young children, and showing attentiveness, understanding, trustworthiness and obedience. They emphasize more on cooperation and responsibility. This is not mentioned by Lebanese teachers, so they both have different concepts of social intelligence. Therefore, each culture has its own set of values and prioritizes different aspects of life skills that are needed in order to be considered gifted.



#### d. Characteristics and Attributes that form Additional Concepts of Giftedness

Creativity and Leadership Giftedness are two other concepts of giftedness that were mentioned by Lebanese teachers as both a definition and characteristic. They were interrelated. Thus, even though the teachers provided creativity and leadership as characteristics of gifted children, we can infer that this tells about their concepts of giftedness. Other theorists mention creativity and leadership when discussing giftedness. For example, in 1972, when a committee formed by the U.S. office of Education proposed a definition of giftedness that included performance domains as well as academic domains, children could be considered gifted if they showed high abilities in creative thinking and leadership ability. Other definitions include “creative performance, unusual leadership capacity, demonstrated high understanding in certain academic fields as well as scores on standardized tests” (Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008 p. 298). Many of these attributes were also present in the Lebanese perceptions of the definition of giftedness, such as general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative thinking, and leadership ability. Leadership and creativity are discussed in detail below, as intellectual and academic abilities were already discussed in the definition section of this chapter. Other main characteristics that surfaced during the interviews and FGDs will also be discussed below.

#### e. Creativity

In this study, creativity is mentioned extensively, and 131 teachers out of 140 could easily imagine a gifted student having high creative abilities. Therefore, creativity does not only mean to be creative only in academic domains, but also in real life situations. The majority of the teachers who participated in this study attested to this. Therefore, creativity is found to be a prominent factor in determining giftedness, as found in this study and in the literature. For example, in Renzulli's (1977) three-ring model, giftedness is an interaction between three

clusters of basic traits: above-average general ability, high levels of creativity, and high levels of motivation (task commitment). In addition, in 1993, Maker proposed that creativity and intelligence can be interlinked. She states that 'creative problem solving' is a characteristic of giftedness. She goes further in 1996, and states that the key element in identifying gifted students is the ability to solve complex problems in the "most efficient, effective, or economical ways" (p. 44). This idea is likewise repeated in this study as well. Creativity proved to be a very important factor in identifying giftedness in Lebanon as well.

#### f. Leadership Giftedness

Teachers in one of the FGDs emphasized leadership as one of the main characteristics. The teachers talked about how gifted student takes initiative, and shows leadership in group activities. In the other FGDs, when one teacher mentioned leadership qualities, the other teachers readily agreed and stressed on its importance. Leadership is considered important in Lebanon, as it is in the literature.

Gardner (1990), for example, suggested that a leader performs those tasks essential for the achievement of a group's goals. According to Rogers (2009), in 1972, Marland recognized two aspects of leadership in giftedness: (1) the potential to lead and (2) extraordinary performance in a leadership role. The Chinese for example, accepted a multiple-talent concept of giftedness, valuing literacy ability, leadership, imagination, and originality (Tsuin-chen, 1961). In 1972, a committee formed by the U.S. office of Education proposed that children could be considered gifted if they showed high abilities in several areas, including leadership ability.

#### g. Wittiness, Sharp (speediness), and High level of Critical Thinking

These characteristics were mentioned many times during the FGDs and the interviews, however, they were not discussed in detail. However, as the results illustrate, teachers in one

FGD mentioned that a student who is gifted, understands the lesson from the first time. Renzulli (1986) mentions 'automatization' of information processing; which refers to rapid, accurate, and selective retrieval of information. In other words, they absorb information rapidly. This can be linked to gifted students having more general knowledge than other peers. All teachers in the interviews and FGDs agreed that the "wide general knowledge" is what characterizes gifted learners at schools. Classroom participation and 'knowing all the answers' is also characterized as having general knowledge, but viewed in a different way. They are interrelated, as responses from the teachers and FGDs showed that a gifted student always know all the answers, and this leads them to participate more, and this could be why he absorbs information rapidly. Also, a gifted student was said to be witty, and this was considered one of the characteristics that differentiate a gifted student from a regular student.

#### h. Cultural Differences in Perceptions of Giftedness

In this section, we are comparing the meaning of intelligence between Western culture, African culture and the Lebanese concepts of giftedness (We mean teachers' perspectives when talking about Lebanese). As Serpell (2000) noted, "giftedness includes not only a particular set of mental functions but also the value-laden concepts of appropriateness, competence, and potential" (p. 549). That is to say, each culture has its own set of values, and what might be an attribute of giftedness in one country, does not necessarily mean that the same attribute is relevant and important in another country.

In Lebanon, social intelligence was deemed as an important characteristic by the teachers. Social intelligence was described as the capability of manipulating a person or a thing to get the desired results, usually by putting little effort in the endeavor, such as cutting in line and bargaining for better prices. This is a socially constructed definition. On the other hand, in the

United States and other, English speaking industrialized societies (Gross, 2003), a person with few of the following characteristics, is considered as someone who will succeed in his or her life, such as, the student is expected to be clever, polite, observant, critical, experimental, quick-witted, cunning, wise, judicious, and thorough. In contrast, some African tribes consider intelligence as having cultural values, showing respect for elders, caring for young children, and showing attentiveness, understanding, trustworthiness and obedience, as they emphasize more on cooperation and responsibility.

## **B. Identification Procedures**

The identification of giftedness is very complex, loaded with controversies and is debated extensively (Sarouhim & Maker, 2010). However, “identification procedures in most school districts (about 90%) in the U.S still rely heavily on the scores of standardized tests” (Ford & Harmon, 2001, p. 62). This was proved true in this study. Most teachers reported that they relied on the report card scores, high grades, and IQ results.

### ***1. Methods of Identification***

According to the current study, no official identification procedure exists, and the main method of identification was by means of scores on yearly report cards and IQ scores. Other teachers express that they turn to their colleagues, counselor or the principal for advice when they feel that there is a gifted student in their class. On few occasions, they discuss this student with the parents as well. Half the teachers also mentioned that they rely on their 'hunch' when identifying a gifted student. Only a few teachers talked about how they would identify the gifted student according to how well and how frequently they read. As Sarouhim (2010) states, Lebanon lacks the appropriate assessment and procedures for identifying gifted students.

Moreover, Diab (2006) discusses how the only tests used to assess intelligence in Lebanon are imported from the West (mostly France and the United States) and are then translated into Arabic, which is the native language of the Lebanese. Diab also explains that these tests are administered in English or French, because many Lebanese students are fluent in at least one of these two languages.

## ***2. Gender Identification***

One of the major secondary findings was how gender plays a role in identifying giftedness in Lebanon. Two thirds of the teachers in the study mentioned that there are more gifted boys than gifted girls. Moreover, the Lebanese society and Lebanese school practices views gifted students as mostly boys. According to Freeman (2003), this is not only a Lebanese problem, but an international one, “two boys are chosen for every girl; a strangely stable gender proportion found all over the world, from Britain to China” (p. 2). In Lee's study (2006), results also indicated that "teachers tended to nominate more boys than girls". This is problematic, as Heller (2005) stated, because students who are gifted may feel the continual lack of challenge in their classes and therefore cause major behavioral problems, and isolation due to the lack of possibility in meeting other students who are gifted (especially to some girls who gifted in Math and the Sciences, but cannot say anything due to role expectation).

## ***3. Special Behavioral Characteristics***

It is indeed very interesting on how different the perceptions of gifted students' behavior can be. In the current study, a debate took place of whether a gifted student is generally well behaved and neat, or if the gifted student misbehaves and is messy. No consensus was made as to

how a gifted student should behave. However, as some of the teachers in this study implied, it depends on the personality of the student.

Many studies concur with the argument that gifted students misbehave. As supported by half of the Lebanese teachers in this study, a gifted child is one who misbehaves, disrupts the class, and interrupts the teacher. Similarly, an example of this is by Tobon Wu and Davidson (1989), where they discussed how teachers in the United States identify a gifted child as who behaves antisocially at school. However, a sample of teachers and parents in Japan (another highly industrialized society) counter argued that if a gifted child is so smart, then he/she is expected to behave better. In concurrence with the Lebanese teachers who find that gifted students as those who misbehave, Gross (2003), showed that students with a very high IQ have damaging social skills. The students were aware that they were greatly disliked by the students.

On the other hand, the other half of the Lebanese teachers in this study described a gifted student as well-behaved and neat. As mentioned earlier in the Introduction chapter, we already discussed the results of Terman's study, where teachers had to select gifted students from their class, and the teachers were more likely to choose students who were better-behaved. According to Hollingworth (1942), she found that students with IQs ranging from 140-160 tend to have more friends, were well-adjusted, and more successful in general. This concurs with some Lebanese teachers' perceptions in this study of how a gifted student is 'well-behaved'.

#### ***4. Physical Appearance***

Some teachers discussed perfectionism in terms of the student's clothing. For example, a teacher stated that gifted students are those who dress immaculately, and are always neat and tidy and appear to be "perfect dressers". This was how she described perfectionism. This also

explains the importance of physical appearance. A gifted student could be viewed by some teachers as 'immaculately' dressed. One teacher describes her student as clean, healthy, and organized. This relates to a study by Davis and his colleagues (2011) which concluded how teachers were more likely to choose the 'more pleasant', 'well-behaved', and attractive than other students.

On the other hand, Lombroso in 1895, a few centuries back, claimed that "signs of degeneration in men of genius included stuttering, short stature, general emaciation, sickly color, rickets (leading to club footedness, lameness, or a hunched back) baldness, amnesia, sterility, and that awful symptom of brain degeneration – left handedness" (Davis et al., 2011, p. 32).

In contrast to the United States, in Lebanon, there is no issue of the student's skin color. For example, in the States, many teachers disregard African American students as gifted simply because of their skin color (Carman, 2011; Colangelo & Davis, 2003, Ford, Grantham, & Whiting, 2008; Grantham, 2003; Yoon & Gentry, 2009,). Other students, according to the literature, are underrepresented because they have physical or learning disabilities, not English Language learners, or students living in poverty (Anthony, Bryant, & Calder-Isgrig, 2007; Burney & Beilke, 2008; Cotabish, Robinson, Lockwood, 2007). In this study, we did not attempt to investigate the perceptions of teachers of gifted students who come from different socio-economic, political or religious backgrounds. However, from what we gathered in our results, teachers identify giftedness in different way when it comes to physical appearance. As we mentioned earlier, some teachers would identify a 'clean and organized student' or they would identify students who dress 'messily' and are unorganized.

### **C. Services and Programs**

The final aim of our study was to explore the available services and programs used in schools for students with gifted needs. As the results indicated, virtually no programs or services are provided that are specially catered to gifted students.

The programs offered in some Lebanese schools (though very limited in scope) attempt to nurture high achieving students through enhancement activities (Sarouphim, 2009). The enhancement activities, according to the results in this study, include extra worksheets, extra activities and perhaps one or two school activities such as Sports Day and Talent Shows. However, even these activities are not tailored specifically to gifted students. The extra worksheets were made to keep the student in his/her seat as not to disrupt the class, as discussed by many teachers in this study.

In the literature, many programs and services are available. One such programs is the enrichment programs that are used in order to engage in activities suitable for gifted students' own interests and abilities (Lee, 2006). Other services include the acceleration model. There are two types of acceleration: service delivery and curriculum delivery. The service delivery model includes early entrance to kindergarten or to college; grade-skipping; or part-time grade acceleration, in which a student enters a higher grade level for part of the school day to receive advanced instruction in one or more content areas. As for acceleration as a curriculum model, it involves speeding up the pace at which the material of the curriculum is given. In other words, it takes the form of telescoping, which means that two or more years of work are completed in just one year. Unfortunately, none of the above programs were mentioned by any of the teachers in this study.

All schools in Lebanon, whether public or private, must follow a mandate national curriculum mandated by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). The scope of



special education in Lebanon is limited to students with disabilities only, as there is no mention concerning the issues of gifted education by either the Lebanese law, or the revised national curriculum. Sarouphim (2010) points out that the matter of educating the gifted is not a matter of encouraging gifted education or discouraging it; but a matter of simply ignoring it. This explains why no mention was made about services or programs that are provided in this study, because they simply do not exist. The only activity that was reported in this study was the excessive use of extra worksheets.

## **B. Conclusion**

This section is about the implications, recommendations, and limitations of the study.

### ***1. Implications***

This section focuses on suggesting implications for practice, planning, and implications for further research.

#### **a. Implications for Practice and Planning**

Many teachers admitted that they never gave giftedness much thought before, so at least now they are aware of the giftedness. Now that the perceptions of teachers are clearer, and a definition was formed, we can go on from here and provide more workshops and seminars in order to make more teachers aware of gifted students characteristics and identification procedures. More importantly, we should cater the needs of gifted students as best as we can, using cultural factors and tools that are culturally sensitive, while at the same time nurturing the needs of these students.

## b. Implications for Further Research

In this study, we gathered teachers' perceptions of giftedness and combined them to come up with one clear definition of how Lebanese teachers perceive giftedness. There is no one common definition to giftedness. There is one advantage to the lack of gifted programs in Lebanon according to Sarouphim (2009). She labeled this advantage as the "clean slate" phenomenon, which means that instead of fixing the problem, we can start over and begin a new because there are no programs in the first place. Since this study has helped conceptualize the current views on giftedness, the next research studies could include more in depth analysis of identification procedures. This study was very general, as it asked the participants to define giftedness, and how they identify gifted students in their classrooms. Services and programs were said to not exist. However, perhaps there are a few programs, but teachers were not aware of them. Perhaps the future studies could also survey all available programs for the gifted students in Lebanon. Further study is needed to learn about giftedness from students' and parents' perspectives as well, in addition to other school stakeholders (e.g. counselors and principals). In addition, further studies could target other school levels, for example, middle and secondary schools.

## ***2. Recommendations***

Many teachers have admitted that they have never thought about the issue of giftedness until now. They enjoyed the topic and said that they are willing to set up meetings for this for the next academic year. In addition, some of the teachers talked about the need for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) to provide a standard checklist or something that teachers can use, and to provide facilities for gifted students. This was a recommendation done

by some of the teachers. Thus, one recommendation for policy makers and decision makers in the MEHE, is that they can set up workshops and seminars about gifted education, so that teachers can have a broader definition of what giftedness entails, and will have a clearer idea of how to identify a gifted student, while taking the Lebanese culture into consideration, without solely relying on scores on the report card, or only focus on intellectual ability. Awareness campaigns for gifted education could be initiated, along with keeping more up-to-date on the current gifted literature.

Counselors and diagnosticians can also use multiple criteria for assessing gifted students, and not just focus on scores. They can also teach the teachers how to assess and identify gifted students and work together to meet the students' needs.

The MEHE can promote the current gifted services and programs that are already available, as most of the teachers were not aware if any program exists for gifted students in Lebanon, and build on them.

### ***3. Limitations of the Study***

There were various limitations in this study. One limitation is that the members of the same focus group discussion might have been influenced by what their colleagues are saying, so they have been giving responses that might please their colleagues or bias them. Stemming from this limitation, is that some teachers did not approve to be audio taped in the interviews, so we had to make sure that we recorded all that was said by hand. Perhaps another limitation is that there were more females than males in the study, so this might have influenced the results. However, this goes beyond the control of the researcher because most teachers at the elementary

levels in Lebanese schools are females. Another limitation is that it would be better next time to include counselors and principals in the study, as they are important school stakeholders as well.

Another limitation is that this study is done in private schools only. Although private schools have the advantage that teachers represent a large population of bilingual teachers who are exposed to different cultures, but it does not represent all. It would benefit the study to also interview teachers from public schools as well, as gifted students are found everywhere, not just in private schools. Moreover, public schools are also part of the Lebanese education. In addition, this study was conducted in Beirut area only. Because this study about teachers' perceptions in Lebanon, it would be better to include more cities and town. Finally, we only aimed at studying elementary schools. Although we stated before that the reason for choosing elementary teachers in our study, it will be helpful investigate the perceptions of teachers at intermediate and secondary schools levels as well.

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# APPENDIX A

## Perceptions of Giftedness Survey

### I. Demographics

Please indicate your answer by circling the corresponding number.

1. Gender

Male	01
Female	02

2. How many years have you taught in total in the nearest year? Please include Part-Time teaching if applicable. \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed? Please circle only ONE number.

a. High school certificate	01
b. Bachelor's	02
c. Education specialist or professional diploma based on at least one year of course work past a Master's degree level.	03
d. Master's	04
e. Doctorate	05
f. Other (Please specify)	06
_____	

4. In what areas are you certified? Please circle ONE number on each line.

	YES	NO
a. Childhood education	01	02
b. Elementary education	01	02
c. Secondary education	01	02
d. Special education	01	02
e. English education	01	02
f. Science education	01	02
g. Math education	01	02
c. Other (Please specify)	01	02
_____		

5. What subject do you teach? \_\_\_\_\_

## II. Conceptions and Definitions of Giftedness

In the following set of items, decide how easy it is for you to imagine a gifted elementary student who has the stated characteristics by circling the appropriate number. For example, if it is easy for you to imagine a gifted elementary student who learns at a slow pace, then circle 4 which represents "Very easy to imagine." If you cannot imagine a gifted elementary student who learns at a slow pace, then circle 1 which represents "Cannot Imagine."

1. How easily can you imagine a gifted elementary student who...?

	<b>Very Easy to Imagine</b>	<b>Easy to Imagine</b>	<b>Difficult to Imagine</b>	<b>Cannot Imagine</b>
1. learns at a slow pace	4	3	2	1
2. transfers learning into other subjects or real life situations	4	3	2	1
3. has difficulty with reasoning skills (such as seeing connections between ideas, solving problems without help)	4	3	2	1
4. has high social intelligence (i.e., knows the names and roles of individuals in the surrounding community).	4	3	2	1
5. is a follower (seldom takes the lead)	4	3	2	1
6. has poor social skills.	4	3	2	1
7. works hard.	4	3	2	1
8. has a short attention span.	4	3	2	1
9. pays attention to detail.	4	3	2	1
10. is shy.	4	3	2	1
11. misbehaves in school.	4	3	2	1
12. has a large store of general knowledge.	4	3	2	1
13. is not motivated.	4	3	2	1
14. can successfully carry out multiple verbal instructions.	4	3	2	1
15. completes assignments faster than same age peers.	4	3	2	1
16. tries to understand the how and why's of things.	4	3	2	1
17. has skill deficits in one or more academic area	4	3	2	1
18. cannot work independently.	4	3	2	1
19. has unusual interests for their age (for example, they take interest in studying the weather and walled cities).	4	3	2	1
20. demonstrates leadership skills	4	3	2	1
21. dislikes drills and practice.	4	3	2	1
22. is bilingual.	4	3	2	1
23. can devise strategies to solve problems.	4	3	2	1

2. In the following set of items, we would like for you to focus on your personal beliefs. Indicate your level of agreement by circling the corresponding number.

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>
24. The potential for giftedness is present in equal proportions in all cultural/sectarian/political groups in our Lebanese society.	5	4	3	2	1
25. The potential for giftedness is present in equal proportions in all socioeconomic groups in our Lebanese society.	5	4	3	2	1
26. Boys are more likely to show their giftedness through activities that tap mathematical/logical ability.	5	4	3	2	1
27. Girls are more likely to show their giftedness through activities that tap verbal abilities.	5	4	3	2	1

### III. Characteristics and Prevalence

For the following sets of items, imagine that you have been asked to identify gifted students in your classroom. Indicate how likely you would be to identify a student as gifted if that student exhibited the following characteristics, by circling the number corresponding to your response.

1. How likely would you be to identify a student as gifted if the student...

	<b>Very Likely</b>	<b>Somewhat Likely</b>	<b>Not Likely</b>
1. learns easily and quickly	3	2	1
2. uses details in stories and pictures	3	2	1
3. has an advanced vocabulary for age	3	2	1
4. has a large amount of general information	3	2	1
5. has high interest in specialty topic	3	2	1
6. possesses more advanced math skills than most students	3	2	1
7. has a high interest in school	3	2	1
8. uses expressive language	3	2	1
9. is easily bored with routine tasks	3	2	1
10. can carry out a multi-step command	3	2	1
11. asks a lot of questions	3	2	1
12. can apply his/her understandings of concepts in new contexts	3	2	1

13. able to produce solutions when no one else can.	3	2	1
14. has unusual emotional understanding	3	2	1
15. is self-motivated	3	2	1
16. is able to see another's point of view	3	2	1
17. is well-liked by classmates	3	2	1
18. likes to work alone	3	2	1
19. has an awareness of issues related to his/her community	3	2	1
20. takes the lead in small groups	3	2	1
21. is flexible in the face of change	3	2	1
22. behaves well in class	3	2	1
23. has a lot of energy and may have difficulty remaining in seat.	3	2	1

2. Please answer the following questions:

a) What is the total number of students in your class(es)? \_\_\_\_\_

b) In your opinion, what is the number/ratio of gifted students in your class(es)?

\_\_\_\_\_

c) In your opinion, how many of your students can be identified and labelled as gifted?

\_\_\_\_\_

- We are planning to conduct focus group discussions with teachers in schools and would like to know if this participant is interested in this discussion. Please tick one of the following:

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

-We are planning to conduct individual interviews with teachers in schools and would like to know if this participant is interested in this discussion. Please tick one of the following:

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### Protocol of Focus Group Discussion with Teachers

1. *Purpose of the Focus Group Discussion (2 minutes)*

2. *Introduction of Participants and Facilitators. (5 minutes)*

Good morning, and welcome to our focus group session on teachers' perceptions of giftedness. Thank you for taking the time to come here. My name is Sarah El-Khoury and I am a Master student at the American University of Beirut. I would like to understand your views on giftedness, and what determines whether a student is gifted or not in your opinion, and what are the services or referral programs that you use if any. Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, but rather your perceptions. Please feel free to share your point of view even if others share a different perception or outlook. Before we start, allow me to remind you to please talk one at a time, and to keep in mind that I am interested in everything you have to say, whether it is positive or negative. All comments are helpful.

Our session will last between 90 to 120 minutes. Before we begin, I would like to get to know more about you. Hello, please tell me your name and how long you have been teaching..

3. *Discussion Themes*

#### **Theme 1: Definition of Giftedness**

Guide Question(s):

- How does your school define giftedness?
- What is your recommendation for the definition of giftedness in the Lebanese context?
- What would the definition include and what are its components?

- How would you define a gifted child? If you were to come up with a definition that is relevant to the Lebanese context right now, what would it be?

## **Theme 2: Characteristics**

Guide Question(s):

- How do you identify the gifted students in your class?
- What are the characteristics that you look for when identifying a student as being gifted?
- What sort of behavior do you expect your gifted student to have?
- How does a gifted person look like?
- If a student excelled in the Language Arts, would you consider them as being gifted?

## **Theme 3: Prevalence**

Guide Question(s):

- How many gifted students are there in your class?
- Are there more gifted boys or gifted girls in your class?

## **Theme 4: Current Identification Practices**

Guide Question(s):

- What are the current practices in identifying the gifted students in your class? For example, is there a type of protocol that you follow?
- Does your school identify students as gifted at the Kindergarten/Elementary level?
- Describe a student that you consider(ed) gifted. Include his/her characteristics and what particularly stood out about him/her that led you to think s/he was gifted.



- How do you assess your students for giftedness?
- Have you ever had to refer a gifted student in your class? If yes, what was the procedure?

### **Theme 5: Curricular and Program Services**

Guide Question(s):

- What are the available curricular and program services for gifted students in your school?
- What sort of activities does your school offer students with different talents (e.g., talent shows, acceleration, grade skipping, tracking, show and tell, etc.)?
- Do you have any referral services in your school?
- Do you have resource rooms? What kind of activities do you have for enhancing highly able students?

### *3. Summary of Discussion Points (10 minutes)*

Thank you for participating in this study. All the information here is confidential. Would you like to add anything further?

## APPENDIX C

### Teacher Interview Protocol

Good morning, and welcome to our interview session on teachers' perceptions of giftedness. Thank you for taking the time to come here.

My name is Sarah El-Khoury and I am a Master student at the American University of Beirut. I would like to understand your views on giftedness, and what determines whether a student is gifted or not in your opinion, and what are the services or referral programs that you use if any.

Remember, there are no right or wrong answers, but rather your perceptions. Please feel free to share your point of view even if others share a different perception or outlook. Before we start, allow me to remind you that I am interested in everything you have to say, whether it is positive or negative. All comments are helpful.

Our session will last about an hour. Before we begin, I would like to get to know more about you. Hello, please tell me your name and how long you have been teaching..

#### **Definition and Concepts**

- How would you define giftedness in general?
- Would you consider a student as being gifted if s/he excelled in Language Arts? What about P.E.?
- Do you have a common definition of giftedness in your school?
- How would you define a gifted child? If you were to come up with a definition that is relevant to the Lebanese context right now, what would it be?

- What is your recommendation for a definition of giftedness within the Lebanese context?

### **Characteristics and Prevalence**

- What are the main characteristics a gifted student should have in your opinion?
- What are the attributes that you look for when identifying that student has gifted?
- What sort of behaviors does the gifted student exhibit?
- How does a gifted person look like?
- How many gifted students are in your class?
- Were there more gifted boys or girls in your class?

### **Identification and Assessment**

- How do you identify the gifted students in your class?
- Is there any procedure that you follow?
- How do you assess your students for giftedness?

### **Services and Programs**

- Do you have any curricular or program services available in your school? (If yes, please specify)
  - Do you have any referral services in your school? (If yes, please specify)
  - As a teacher, what do you do when you feel that you have a gifted student in your class?
  - Have you ever had to refer a gifted student in your class? If yes, what was the procedure?
- Do you have any resource rooms? What kind of activities do you have for enhancing highly able students?

