



# Thirty-three Years of Teacher Preparation in Counseling and Assessment

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## Abstract

*From 1990 till 2023, the Lebanese Association for Rehabilitation & Development (TAAHEEL) has been focusing on the most important pillar of the school, the Teacher. Continuous Professional Development Workshops (PDW) Series were established to meet the various needs of teachers. This Paper identifies five PDW series: The First (1992) focused on training teachers to career counsel their students through IRSHAD CAREER INTEREST INVENTORY (ICII). The Second (1994) focused on preparing teachers to become Teacher Counselors in their classrooms. Third (2004) focused on accrediting teachers in assessment of special needs students utilizing the Battery of Developmental Assessment (BDA). Fourth (2020) Interactive E Booklets of I Play & Learn Series were composed to assist teachers deliver the learning material to students (aged 3 – 9) during Covid - 19 epidemic. Fifth (2022) focused on introducing Gifted Education in schools of Lebanon and MENA Region.*

**Keywords:** Professional Development Workshops (PDW), IRSHAD CAREER INTEREST INVENTORY (ICII), Teacher Counselor Training Program (TCTP), Battery of Developmental Assessment (BDA), Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM), Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

## 1. Introduction

Since 1990, the Middle East Counseling & Development Center (IRSHAD) and the Lebanese Association for Rehabilitation & Development (TAAHEEL) have been focusing on the most important pillar of school, the “Teacher”. Continuous Professional Development Workshop (PDW) Series were established to meet the various needs of teachers. In this paper, five topics of the PDW will be identified reflecting the specific needs of the Lebanese educational sector over a period of thirty-three years (1990 – 2023). More specifically, the following PDW Series have been conducted for the purpose of teacher preparation in Lebanon.

## 2. The first PDW [1990- Present]

In 1990, Hussein Bibi started introducing career counseling services in Lebanese schools. High school teachers have an important role to play in providing career counseling services. For this, PDW have been conducted to train teachers administer Irshad Career Interest Inventory (ICII) to help students know more about their personality type, and consequently make the appropriate decision in selecting the most suitable field of study. This was the first service that IRSHAD offered in career counseling services to high school and college students. Marcia [1966] affirmed that most of these students start experiencing anxiety and stress at this phase of identity development. They feel lost and confused about their identity and have many unanswered questions about what major to focus on and career track to follow. In coordination with the school administrators, students were exposed to a wide variety of specializations and job descriptions, master their abilities using modern internationally recognized assessment tools such as ICII, will objectively determine individual interests and abilities. Special tests are conducted in accordance with the standards of the American Counseling Association (ACA). In 2019, and during the Covid-19 epidemic, ICII has been revisited and an electronic on- line application has been designed to provide students with career services.

## 3. The Second PDW [1994- Present]

These PDW series focus on introducing Teacher Counselor Training Program (TCTP) in schools. Hussein Bibi [2012) emphasized in her book: How to Become a Teacher Counselor, the importance of preparing teachers to teach, mentor and counsel students. Some students need support services



whereas others need enrichment programs. To avoid scholastic delay, teachers got trained to attend to the various needs of students with mild Learning Difficulties. The main objective is to train teachers in the regular classrooms to attend to their students' individual differences, and counsel them towards optimal development psychologically and cognitively.

#### 4. The Third PDW [2004-Present]

These series focus on training teachers in assessing students who are differently abled. The Battery of Developmental Assessment (BDA) has been constructed specifically to assist teachers in assessing the perceptual abilities of students (4–14 years old). The BDA is a dynamic tool that focuses on the student's positive traits and abilities. It emphasizes the student's social, emotional, and mental abilities. It targets students who are suffering scholastic delays, because they are either gifted or have learning difficulties. Teachers are trained to administer the BDA to Arabic speaking students in the Arab World. Research showed that 20 percent of the students have special needs, unfortunately, the available tests are not attuned to Arab cultures. More than two-thirds of the assessment tools used for the purpose of screening, identification and diagnosis are not culture fair, and do not possess appropriate psychometric specifications for reliable and valid measurements. The BDA is a tool that is culturally fair and standardized to meet the norms and values of Arab communities.

With rapid evolution of technology in daily life, transforming the assessment tool into an interactive solution that leverages modern technology and mobility became a necessity. The overall approach was not to build an 'app' or self - service platform, but instead to enhance the usefulness of the assessment toolkit using technology. Considering the traditional kit is rich with many tools, initial focus was centered on 'digitizing' the various sections of the BDA, but it was quickly the case that overall user experience took center stage.

The BDA assesses:

- 1- Mental abilities and readiness performance tests
- 2- Pyramid of psychological Health and well - being Checklist
- 3- Academic Achievement Tests

#### 4.1 Readiness and Ability Tests (BDA Manual, 2005)

There are many Group Intelligence Tests, but in Lebanon and the Arab World we are suffering from a dearth of developed and standardized Group Intelligence Tests to be applied in the environment. In this regard, the BDA remains to be the most prominent test to be applied in Lebanon. Children with Special Needs deviate from the normal curve in one or more of the following developmental domains: cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and sensory – motor. Some could be experiencing some learning difficulties, sensory/ motor deficits, auditory or visual perception problems, problems with adaptive behavior, or suffer from speech and language disorders, which may lead to school delay; while others may be experiencing frustration and boredom in classrooms, as the result of the presence of a certain gift or talent in Cognition, Language or Psycho motor domains:



Fig. 4.1. Readiness and ability tests



#### 4.2 Pyramid of Psychological Health & Needs (BDA Manual, 2005)

The assessor will interview the child to explore whether his/her values have been met. Thus, will be able to identify the student's psychological health and well – being, and design an Individual Education Plan (IEP) accordingly.

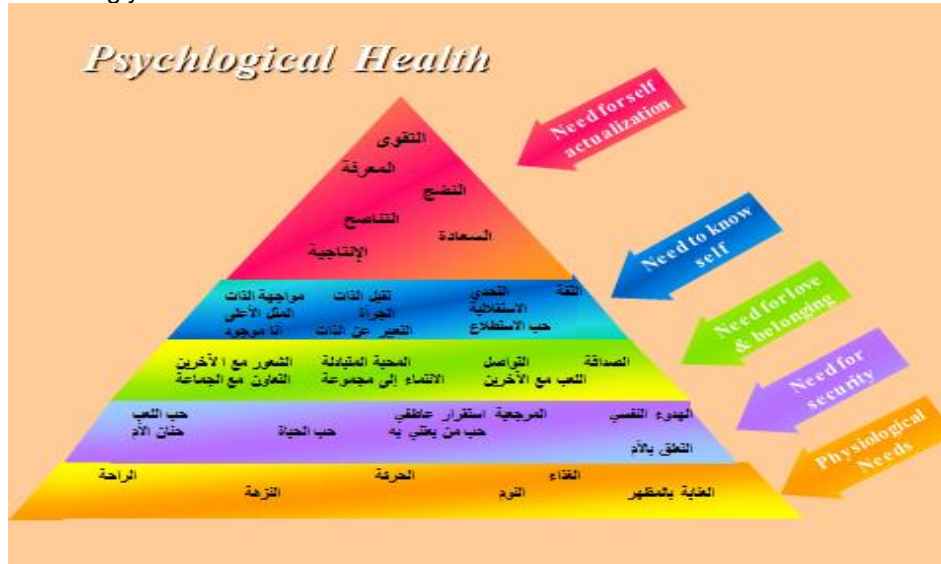


Fig. 4.2. Psychological health

#### 4.3 Academic Achievement Tests [BDA Manual, 2005]

These tests are used to determine whether the skills have been mastered in Arabic Language and Mathematics, in accordance with the National Curriculum. They are used with the students of different levels starting from the primary level till the high studies level. They vary in terms of nature of materials and the student's level, as well as the difference in standards and its validity and reliability standards. In reference to BDA chapter 3 which consists of academic achievement tests of two core subject matter (Arabic and Math), that are curriculum based referenced tests from grades 1 – 5.



Fig. 4.3 Academic Achievements Skills

The dual device approach provided a smooth uninterrupted experience for the child by utilizing more interactive and lively assessment props and at the same time significantly improved the educator's process of conducting the test, recording the results, and building counseling strategies and goals.



Alongside the advancement in the assessment toolkit, E-learning would transform the way educators are trained to utilize the BDA with distance learning, online virtual classrooms, and collaborative learning.

## 5. The Fourth PDW [2021- Present]

Husseini Bibi [2021] believes that cognitive and emotional development is optimal among learners between the ages of 3 and 9 years. Considering the current crisis, the world is passing through, and the catastrophic effect of Covid-19 on the educational sector mostly on the development of the young learners in KGs and Primary Grades (1-3), teachers suffered in delivering quality education to these students. Parents also failed in providing the most suitable environment for learning to occur. For this, and in collaboration with NTC Eduware, TAAHEEL team composed 16 interactive E-Booklets of I Play & Learn that contain activities in Math, Arabic and English Language. The best learning strategy for young learners is learning through play. The young learner will be able to play and learn alone and move on from one activity to the other and from one Booklet to the other, smoothly and without the help of parents or teachers. In addition, children will get immediate feedback to their responses, work at their own pace, and without feeling bored. Our intention was to acquaint teachers with these booklets and utilize them as supplementary to their teaching.



**Taaheel Association**  
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## I PLAY & LEARN

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Electronic Interactive  
Booklets for Early and  
Intermediate Childhood

**About the Program**

Covid-19 pandemic conquered the whole world and confined all educators and parents in their homes.

The Ministry of Education took a brave step by advocating teaching on-line. Unfortunately, this step was faced by many difficulties especially for young learners. Thus, Taaheel team thought of preparing "I Play and Learn," taking into consideration the required skills for preschool, and first, second and third grades. The main objective is to enable the child to learn while playing, the best way of learning.

The booklets are full of activities and exercises in Arabic, English, Math and Science. When using these booklets, the learner cannot proceed from one level to the other without mastering the previ-

ous level. After mastering the skill, a word of praise is given to the child for motivation.

The program needs the supervision of parents. Some activities are enriched by voice-over that gives clear directions. The learner gains self-confidence and at the same time awareness of his abilities.

The activities can be accelerated, he can move in

that sense, to a higher level. The mastery of the skill is evaluated by his success regardless of the learner's age and condition. The parents can follow his performance from the activities he finishes.

<https://tinyurl.com/2mpwy6w8>

**Benefits of I Play & Learn Program**

- For the Student**
  - Motivated to learn
  - Happy to play
  - Achieves and succeeds
- For the Parents**
  - Less involved in child's learning
  - More focused on their personal matters
  - Less anxious and stressed out
- For the Teacher**
  - Can identify the student's exact level of performance
  - Amount of instruction time is minimal
  - Able to explore the quality and quantity of acquired learning



Fig. 5 I Play and Learn book series.

## 6. The Fifth PDW [2017- Present]

Husseini Bibi [2017] stated that one of the many services that teachers need to deal with, are gifted and talented learners. Some may need counseling services, and others may require special education programs. Like other learners, they need help to become more active to play productive roles in society. Many have been misdiagnosed or misled or deprived of the opportunity to excel and be productive to the maximum of their abilities. Parents of these learners need to be aware of how they can assist them towards being happy and successful. Most importantly, educators working with these learners require continuous PDWs that provide them with the most updated findings in the field of Gifted Education.

Regarding the need for Gifted Education in Lebanon, IRSHAD & TAAHEEL have conducted twelve research studies and presented them during national and international conferences. These studies proved an urgent need for Gifted Education Program (GEP). As a result, SEM-MENA ACADEMY has been established in 2023 to implement Joseph Renzulli's Schoolwide Enrichment Model (SEM) in the



Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, to prepare teachers apply SEM in their schools. Our vision is to serve our country by focusing on developing our economy to make it prosperous by fostering the gifts and talents of every student and share these with other countries in the Arab World. Our mission states that we are agents of change making a difference in the education sector, by Introducing (SEM) where enjoyment, engagement, enrichment, and enthusiasm are in every classroom. The objectives of the Academy are:

- 1- Introduce SEM to school Principals and Academics in Arab countries,
- 2- Identify the characteristics of the Enrichment Triad Model and its implementation for all students in classrooms,
- 3- Define Comprehensive Strength Assessment that teachers may utilize,
- 4- Describe Curriculum Compacting and its benefits while mentoring highly gifted students,
- 5- Provide educators with Enrichment clusters and diversity of resources that teachers may use,
- 6- Explain Enrichment infusion and the importance of integrating it into the curriculum.
- 7- Orient teachers about various technology apps that they can integrate in their sessions to enrich the instructional process.

### Conclusion

It was my pleasure to share my thirty-three years' experience in providing continuous PDWs for teachers in counseling and assessment. My intention is to present a model of practice for other educators to consider and apply.

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