



EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS, SERVICES AND SUPPORT FOR GIFTED STUDENTS IN TURKEY

(TÜRKİYE'DE ÜSTÜN ZEKALI ÖĞRENCİLER İÇİN EĞİTİMSEL PROGRAMLAR, HİZMETLER VE DESTEKLER)

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ABSTRACT

It was begun to be given more importance to gifted education in Turkey after the early 2000s. The aim of this article is to describe the characteristics of gifted education in Turkey. The study, literature review method have been used. The article focuses on societal dynamics influencing the programs, educational laws and policies, special schools for gifted students, supporting actions for gifted students, and examples of good practices. Also, proposals included in the Parliamentary Investigation Commission Reports, which reflect the future vision on gifted education in Turkey and strategic goals included in Gifted Children Action Plan (2012– 2013) are specified in the study.

Keywords: Gifted, talented, Turkish Education Systems, gifted programs.

ÖZET

Türkiye'de özellikle 2000'li yıllardan sonra üstün zekalı bireylerin eğitimine daha fazla önem verilmeye başlanmıştır. Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'deki üstün zekalı bireylerin eğitiminin özelliklerinin tanımlanmasıdır. Çalışma, literatür taraması yöntemine uygun olarak sürdürülmüştür. Çalışmada; eğitim programlarını etkileyen toplumsal dinamikler, eğitim yasa ve politikaları, üstün zekalı bireyler için özel okullar, üstün zeka eğitimini destekleyen çalışmalar ve iyi uygulama örneklerine odaklanılmıştır. Ayrıca, bu çalışmada Türkiye'nin üstün zekalı öğrencilerin eğitimine ilişkin gelecek vizyonunu yansıtan Meclis Araştırma Komisyonu Raporu'nda yer alan öneriler ve Üstün Yetenekli Çocuklar Eylem Planı'nda (2012-2013) yer alan stratejik hedeflere de değinilmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Üstün zeka, yetenek, Türk Eğitim sistemi, üstün zekalı bireyler için programlar.

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INTRODUCTION

In Turkey, subject area experts often prefer such terms as gifted, exceptionally talented, natural ability, intellectually talented, genius and child prodigy to describe gifted individuals. However, in society, talented/ specific ability is mostly used to describe individuals with a superiority in a non– academic area like arts, sports, leadership and creativity. Individuals with a superiority in an academic area are frequently referred by “gifted” or “giftedness”. However, giftedness and talented terminology are often used both by the subject area experts and the society. The official giftedness/ talented definition is quite similar to the definition in Maryland Report (1972), by MEB (2012) identification, “*Giftedness is defined as performing much better than peers in intelligence, creativity, arts, sports, leadership capacity or special academic areas*”.

The psychological criteria measure the level of intelligence and specific abilities. The psychopedagogical criteria refer to students’ performance. Abilities can be identified by means of psychological and psychopedagogical criteria. In Turkey, the term “ability” is understood as a talent that allows for high achievement in a specific domain such as arts, mathematics, literature, music, creativity or leadership.

Turkish primary school teachers perceptions high performance in one or more of these areas, such as creativity and leadership, as indicators of giftedness (Şahin, 2013, 2015). Turkish culture has some misconceptions and/ or dogmas about giftedness such as gifted students are gifted in all subject areas (omniscient belief); once an individual is born gifted, she/ he remains gifted throughout her/ his life; people are born gifted, they cannot become gifted later in their lives (entity belief); an extraordinary musician is highly talented but not necessarily highly intelligent (unintelligent talent belief); all children are gifted (classless belief); and most gifted people have psychological problems (syndromic belief) (Sak, 2011b). It was impressed that teacher has giftedness perception.

Purpose

The main purpose of this study is to describe the characteristics of gifted education in Turkey. The article review on societal dynamics influencing the curriculum, educational laws and policies, special schools for gifted students, supporting actions for gifted students, and examples of good practices. The study was carried out descriptive pattern and literature review method have been used.

Societal Dynamics Influencing the Curriculum and Programs

Cultural background, societal dynamics, and policies of a society embody the content and format of a gifted education program. Turkey has a rich cultural background on gifted education since the Ottomans (Sak, 2007). The earliest sample of this educational practice was Palace School, which was opened in 1360, during the Ottoman Empire (Enç, 2004a, 2004b, 2005).

Worldwide debates on elitism vs. equity in gifted education affect policy makers' decisions. It is still a controversial topic between subject area experts, politicians and academicians. However, parents (Sak, 2010) and teachers (Şahin & Levent, 2015) advocate the idea that gifted students might be best educated in special classrooms or schools.

One of the factors that affect social dynamics is the developments in information technologies. There is a considerable increase in the internet use. In 2000, 1.785.000 people (3% of the population) (Mestçi, 2007) used in Turkey, where the population was 67.803.967 in that year (TÜİK, 2013). The population increased to 76.667.864 in 2013 and 37.643.921 people (49% of the population) (TÜİK, 2013) use the Internet at present. Besides, there are a lot of virtual platforms where parents with gifted children gather and share their knowledge and experience. With the help of information technologies, every segment of society began to confront with messages about gifted children. As a result, awareness level of the society increased in a short time.

Gifted education has been influenced by the financial and social policies of Justice and Development Party (AKP), which came to power in 2002. AKP government focused on a competition policy in financial life. Gross national product (GNP) per capita was \$ 3.500 in 2002 and it increased to \$ 10.505 in 2012 (TÜİK, 2012). Depending on the education and health reforms; human development index, which was .653 in the early 2000s, increased to .759 (%14) in 2013. However, the world average was .639 in the early 2000s and increased to .702 (%9) in 2013 (UNDP, 2014). As the level of development increases, there has been an expectation for children to get better education. On the other hand, financial developments also influence the labor demand. There has been more demand on the employment of qualified labor. Both the developments in information technologies and social and financial policies forced policy-makers to do more about gifted education.

Educational Laws and Policies in Turkey

The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey ensures equal access to education for citizens with various educational needs. The 1982 Constitution Act of the Turkish Republic, Law No. 42 regards special education, including the gifted education, as one of the governmental responsibilities with this statement: “... *The government provides financially– disadvantaged but successful students with scholarships or other means in order to ensure that they continue their education. ... The government take the essential precautions to make individuals who need special education because of their specific conditions socially beneficial individuals.*”

The needs of gifted students are supported by public corporation. Many acts and foundations have taken place in the development of gifted education area. The following are some laws on education in a chronological order: in 1929–student exchange; in 1940, village institutes; between 1948– 1956–student exchange; in

1959–talent groups; in 1962 science high schools; in 1964–special classes; in 1970–Anatolian high schools; in 1989–Anatolian fine arts high schools; in 1994–Science and Art Centers (BİLSEM); in 1997–Act 573. This act includes children with special needs, direct or indirect services for them, and schools, institutes and programs that ensure these services (Baykoc, Uyaroglu, Aydemir & Seval, 2012).

The primary policy makers on gifted education in Turkey are the State Planning Organization (DPT) and the Ministry of National Education (MEB). DPT serves as the consulting body of the government and makes decisions for all sectors as well as it directs educational policies by using development plans. MEB carries out its policies through the National Education Council, its consulting body, and the primary responsibility of this council is to determine educational policies.

When the reports of both policy-maker institutions are examined, it can be seen that decisions on identification (DPT, 1963, 1973, 2000, 2001; MEB, 2012a), financial support for gifted students (DPT, 1963, 1985, 1990, 2000, 2007; MEB, 1982, 1988, 2006), gifted education teacher training (DPT, 1985; MEB, 2006, 2012a), guidance and counselling services for gifted students (DPT, 2000; MEB, 2012a), education models, programs and educational environment (DPT, 2000; MEB, 1988, 2006, 2012a) and support for private sector initiatives (DPT, 1996) have been made.

Turkish Education System

Turkish education system has a hierarchical structure. Final decisions on educational policies and practices are made by the MEB. Implementation, observation and examination of the decisions are the responsibility of the provincial directorates for national education. In Turkey, the compulsory education was extended to 12 years, which had been 8 years before, in 2012 with a legislative regulation. The education system is divided into three stages. The first 4-year long stage (grade 1 to 4) is called primary education, the second 4-year long stage (grade 5 to 8) is called secondary education and the third 4-year long stage (grade 9 to 12) is called high school education. The following stages are bachelor's degree and postgraduate degree (TÜBİTAK, 2004).

Primary and secondary school curricula are standard in Turkey. However, after the education reform in 2013, up to 20% of the program could be enriched with the elective courses. These courses are opened if schools have adequate capabilities and students' parents demand. Content of the elective and compulsory courses are standard (TÜBİTAK, 2004).

Pre-school education consists 0–5 age group children, who are too young to start compulsory primary education. 0–3 age group children get nursery school education and 3–5 age group children get pre-school education. Main goals of pre-school education are to build a system of values, develop social and personal skills, and shape a sense of belonging to a community, family, or national community. However, no different public education service is provided for gifted pupils (TÜBİTAK, 2004).

By the school year of 2012–2013, children who are older than 66 months old have to begin primary school in Turkey. Children between 60–65 months might begin primary school depending on their parents' demand (MEB, 2012c). Primary education are from grade 1 to 4. Its aims to provide students with the necessary knowledge, abilities, behaviors and attitudes to be a good citizen and prepare students to life and the following education within the direction of their interests and abilities (For detailed information, see MEB, 2003). For gifted primary school students, acceleration options such as early entrance, and grade skipping are available options. However, acceleration is rarely used.

Students get secondary education from grade 5 to 8. Main aims of secondary education are similar to primary education. Eighth grade students make their school preference according to their results in a nationwide aptitude–achievement exam. Also, identified intellectually gifted pupils (with 130+ IQ level) might go to Science and Art Centers (BİLSEM). Apart from this, gifted secondary school students might join several interest clubs, also called enrichment, such as social work, photography, chess, which are open to all students.

High school education continues from grade 9 to 12 (students aged between 14–17). High school is divided into two parts: public and vocational–technical. Public high schools aim to bring up individuals who are familiar with social problems and who contribute to economical, social and cultural development of the society as well as to prepare them for university education. Public high schools include Anatolian high schools, science high schools, Anatolian teacher training high schools, sports high schools, Anatolian fine arts high schools and multi–program high schools. Vocational–technical high schools aim to bring up qualified labor force for the area of business and to prepare students for university education. Various kinds of vocational–technical high schools include boys' technical high school, girls' technical high schools, commercial high schools, tourism high schools and religious high schools. Only private schools are available for gifted students at high school education. Science and social sciences high schools were established for academically gifted students, fine arts for artistically talented students, sports for students talented at sports (Sak, 2010).

University education has two levels: associate's degree and bachelor's degree. Associate's degree education, which is also called vocational school, lasts two years. The main aim of bachelor's degree education programs is to train intermediate staff needed by the business world. Graduates of vocational–technical high schools are primarily eligible when students are placed in these programs. Students are also able to get further education in a bachelor's degree program on condition that they have a great academic degree at school and pass a nationwide aptitude–achievement test. Thus, after two years of additional education, they are able to get a bachelor's degree. Bachelor's degree education, depending on the preferred field of study, lasts 4, 5 or 6 years. Some associate's degree and bachelor's degree programs have an extra one–year long preparatory education. However, students who pass the proficiency exam might be exempt from preparatory

education. The main aim of bachelor's degree education is to provide students with the necessary knowledge, skills and experience for their jobs. Bachelor's degree graduates are able to get master's degree and doctorate degree education successively. Public associate's degree, bachelor's degree, postgraduate programs are open to all students, free of charge.

Special Schools for Gifted Students

Science High Schools

Science high schools in Turkey were founded in 1963. The main aim of science high schools is to prepare gifted students in science and maths for university education in these fields. They are day/ boarding and mixed-sex schools. Throughout Turkey, there were 144 science high schools by the school year of 2011–2012 where 13.391 students were educated (MEB, 2013c).

In order to be enrolled to a science high school, 8th grade students need to get quite high score in a nationwide aptitude– achievement test. They also need to be good at Turkish, Maths and Science classes in grade 6 and 7. Education at science high schools lasts five years, including the preparatory class.

The greatest difference between public high schools and science high schools is the curriculum, especially the content area. Unlike at public high schools, content of the courses are accelerated, challenging, abstract and deep at science high schools. Moreover, the number of weekly course hours at science high schools is 40 whereas it is 35 hours at public high schools.

Science high schools are popular schools in Turkey. Generally, highest-rank students, who are in the top 1–2 percentile of success, are enrolled to these schools. Upon graduation, students enrol to top universities, where students with highest exam results are accepted. However, it is criticized that teachers who work in these schools do not get pre-service training on gifted students and the curriculum does not contain enough creative thinking activities (Sak, 2010). Also, within the last five years, the number of science high schools nearly tripled, and it causes a dramatic decrease in the student quality. Some recently-opened science high schools accepted students who are in 11 percentile of success (MEB, 2013c).

Social Sciences High Schools

Social sciences high schools were founded in 2003. The main aim of social sciences high schools is to prepare students who are highly talented and interested in literature and social sciences for university education in these fields. They are day/ boarding and mixed- sex schools. Throughout Turkey, there were 32 science high schools by the school year of 2011–2012 where 8.266 students were educated (MEB, 2013c).

In order to be enrolled to a social sciences high school, grade 8 students need to get quite high points in a nationwide aptitude– achievement test. They also need to be good at Turkish, Maths and Social Sciences classes in grade 6 and 7.

Education at science high schools lasts five years, including the preparatory English language class.

The greatest difference between public high schools and social sciences high schools, just like science high schools, is the curriculum, especially the content area. Language and social science lessons are accelerated, more challenging, more abstract and deeper at social sciences high schools than at public high schools. Moreover, the number of weekly course hours is more than public high schools. At least 60% of the weekly course hours are languages and social sciences. Another difference is that social sciences high schools might implement International Baccalaureate Program (IB). Maths and Science lessons are taught in a foreign language at schools which implement IB program (MEB, 2013b).

Private schools are the second most popular school type in Turkey. These schools are criticized in that the curriculum do not contain enough creative thinking activities and teachers who work in these schools do not have enough knowledge on gifted education (Sak, 2009).

Fine Arts and Sport High Schools

The main aim of fine arts high schools is to train students who have a superior/ special talent in fine arts in the direction of their interests and abilities. This kind of high schools have two different parts: music and visual arts. The main aim of sports high schools is to train students who are interested and talented in sports for a further education (MEB, 2013c). Students are enrolled to fine arts and sports high schools after an aptitude test. Throughout Turkey, there were 91 Anatolian fine arts high schools and sports high schools by the school year of 2012–2013 where 20.840 students were educated (MEB, 2013c).

The number of weekly course hours in both school types is 40 hours. The number of major area course hours ranges between 5 and 20. Visual arts graduates can apply for the fine arts aptitude tests, music graduates can apply for the conservatory aptitude tests and sports graduates can apply for the physical education and sports aptitude tests of universities. Also, on condition that these learners pass the university entrance exam, a nationwide aptitude–achievement test, they have a right to enrol to any faculty at university. However, enrolling to a different faculty is not very probable.

Both kinds of high schools are a new phenomenon in Turkey. These schools have importance in that they are places where talented students in arts, music and sports might enhance their talents. These schools reflect the transformation of education system as well as they follow intellectual ability approach, which dates back to the Ottoman Empire.

Supporting Actions for Gifted Students

It can be said that efforts on gifted education have increased in Turkey especially for the last ten years. Individualization of standart curricula has been partly supported after an education reform in 2013. That is to say, gifted students in

general classrooms now have the right to take elective courses in line with their field of interests. Elective courses contain lessons such as mind games and thinking education in which gifted students improve their thinking skills.

Another factor which indirectly influences gifted education is that The Scientific and Technology Research Council (TUBİTAK) arranges different competitions at different education levels and gives awards. Scholarships and awards are seen as an encouragement for gifted/ talented students. Within the body of TUBİTAK, math and science olympiads for K1–12 students at national and international primary schools and research project competitions such as Information Technology, Biology, Physics, Applied Physics, Math, Geography, Sociology and History for high school students are organized. Students who are among the top three in the international science olympiads have the opportunity to enrol to any university without an aptitude– achievement test. TUBİTAK also has a lot of scholarship, incentive and support programs for bachelor’s degree and postgraduate students.

TUBİTAK national research competitions have been organized since 1969, and interest in these competitions and the number of participants have been increasing day by day. For instance, the number of participants has risen from nearly 1.100 in 2005 to 10.418 in 2014. Besides, various olympiads, competitions, contests and tournaments are held by MEB, non– governmental organizations and private sector institutions for students on different educational levels and in different fields.

The weakest aspect of gifted education in Turkey is teachers’ qualifications who work with gifted students. Teacher training standards haven’t been built up yet. When in–service training plans of the MEB after 2005 were investigated, it was found out that there weren’t any training or certificate programs for gifted education (MEB, 2013a, 2014; MEB, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 in cited by Şahin & Kargın, 2013) and primary school candidate teachers didn’t get any training on gifted education after being appointed to the job (before they begin to work). As a result, it can be said that teachers do not have enough knowledge on gifted students (Şahin & Kargın, 2013) and lack knowledge on teaching strategies to use for gifted education in their classes (Şahin & Levent, 2015).

EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICES

There are two different programs which work systematically for the gifted, in which they can improve their talents. These programs can be named as weekday/ weekend programs and summer programs. One of them is a public program while the other one is within the body of a university.

Science and Arts Centers

BİLSEM serves in association with the MEB. It was founded in 1994. Throughout Turkey, there are 72 BİLSEM offices in 65 provinces by 2014, and there are 15.000 enrolled students in these centers. Intellectually gifted secondary

school students (grade 5 to 8) are accepted to BİLSEM. In these centers, the mentioned students are educated to explore and improve their interests and talents.

A step-by-step evaluation system is used to select students for BİLSEM. Firstly, teachers use an observation form to refer students. All the secondary school students around the country are scanned via this form. Secondly, selected students take the group intelligence test. “Primary Mental Abilities Test (7–11 Form)” is used as the group intelligence test. According to the group intelligence test results, successful students take the individual intelligence test. “Weschler Intelligence Scale For Children (WISC–R)” is used as the individual intelligence test.

Group intelligence test cut-off point might change depending on the intensity of applicants. After the individual intelligence test, students with an IQ of 130+, final evaluation of the students is carried out by the placement committee. The capacity of a center in a province and students’ group and individual intelligence test results are assessed and the final decision is made by the committee.

A kind of pull-out-enrichment program is applied at BİLSEM. Students in these centers attend a gradual education program which has orientation, support education (social skills, problem-solving techniques, group study techniques, scientific research techniques, and social activities), discovery of personal skills, development of specific talents, and project steps (MEB, 2007). The program has a modular structure. It takes, on average, 2 years for a student to pass from project to generation level.

Generation and development of projects constitute the basic activities of these centers. In order to provide students with the necessary information and skills on project preparation and development, teachers ensure pre-learning activities and present sample projects with project instructions. At the determination, selection and assessment of project themes and during project development phase, there is collaboration with work offices, universities and other institutions (Baykoc, Uyaroglu, Aydemir & Seval, 2012). BİLSEM programs do not include nation-wide standard goals. The program is individualized according to students’ interests, needs and learning pace. The greatest difference between BİLSEM programs and general education program is the process. Higher levels of thinking, open-endedness, discovery and invention, freedom of choice, and group work seem to be the main elements of the process in these centers (Sak, 2010).

BİLSEM is quite popular among students and their parents. However, courses taken at BİLSEM are not credited and not counted for general education degrees, which decrease students’ motivation. Furthermore, area experts, apart from civil servants, are not employed as permanent teachers due to legislations and restricted budget, and teachers in-service do not have the necessary skills and knowledge on gifted students, which constitute the other important deficiencies.

Education Programs for Talented Students Model (EPTS)

EPTS was founded within the body of Anadolu University in 2007. EPTS, which was developed for gifted students to get individualized education, is a

university– based program and is in parallel with formal training. Students can attend the program either at the weekend or in summer. It has 6 components: identification, curriculum, program type, teaching, evaluation and teacher training (Sak, 2009).

The EPTS identification model has 4 components: domain specific assesment of talents, multiple criteria utilization, sampling–based identification and natural selection– adaptive sorting. As the program is prepared for maths and science, students in the program are assessed in these areas. As the multiple criteria, Creative Mathematical Ability Test and Creative Scientific Ability Test (Detailed: Sak & Ayas, 2013; Ayas & Sak, 2014) are used along with the success in maths and science lessons. Program applicants are considered as samples and assessment is done on the basis of these students. Students who do not succeed as well as the ones who do not show enough interest in the program are eliminated on their own desire (Sak, 2011a). The EPTS curriculum is composed of analytical, creative, practical and knowledge components and 44 problem–solving and thinking skills in total. The program is a combination of enrichment and acceleration approaches (Sak, 2011b).

Within teacher training, EPTS includes conceptions of giftedness, curriculum development, differentiation strategies, and teaching techniques, methods and strategies. Evaluation system is another component of EPTS. Creative Mathematical Ability Test and Creative Scientific Ability Test, which are already used during student selection, are used as the post–test. Also, “the EPTS Evaluations Student Form” is used to measure social validity (Sak, 2011b).

According to the studies in which EPTS is investigated, participants are highly satisfied with the program (Sak, 2011b), and mathematics instruction has medium to large effects on students’ fluency, flexibility and creativity in mathematics after attending the spring and summer programs of the EPTS (Sak, 2013).

FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH AND PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned in the previous parts of the study, there has been an increasing interest in gifted education in Turkey. Gifted education is among the privileged areas of study according to the Supreme Council for Science and Technology (Başbakanlık, 2009). A Parliamentary Research Commission for gifted education has been established by the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, which is an indirect reflection of the decision above. The commission completed its researches in November 2012 and published a report (TBMM, 2012). Another study on gifted education is the political text, “the Strategy and Implementation Plan for Gifted Children 2013–2017”, which was prepared by the Ministry of National Education (MEB, 2013d). The mentioned report and activity plan are different from the previous DPT and MEB council decisions in that they deal with the subject from a holistic point of view and they lay a strong emphasis on gifted education.

Parliamentary Research Commission Report

Parliamentary Research Commission Report (2012) considers the best practice samples and proposes suggestions in 6 different topics to support gifted education. The first suggestion is on educational policies. Within this scope, a graduate degree program is thought to be established. It has been decided to include the following topics in the graduate degree program: educational policy and strategy development on gifted education, doing research and development studies, setting standards, identification tools development, educational program and model development, educational material development, preparing teacher training programs, parental education program development, and regular practice evaluation.

The second important suggestion is on identification. It has been suggested to actualize earliness principle, form mechanisms in order to monitor children in their early childhood, develop identification tools for multiple–talent evaluation, consider other domain apart from intelligence such as creativity, and leadership, determine national norms for identification tools and ensure coherence and consistency between educational programs/ services and identification mechanisms/ tools. Also, it has been found necessary to used alternative evaluation methods such as performance evaluation and portfolio evaluation.

There have also been suggestions on educational practices. Within this scope, it has been suggested to attach importance to inclusive education, start education at an early age in order to define children’s potential, interests and talents as soon as possible, develop different educational models for gifted education within formal and mass education, provide students with environments and opportunities that help students explore their interests and support the available ones, increase teacher quality at schools where gifted students are educated, develop the infrastructure of educational institutions, encourage academic studies on this field, and enrich, differentiate and accelerate individualized educational programs at each grade level.

Human resources is the fourth sub–topic. Within this scope, there have been some suggestions to do positive discrimination for students who want to get further education on giftedness in student–exchange programs, include compulsory giftedness classes in the faculty of education curriculum, provide teachers with in–service training and certificate programs, and improve teachers’ knowledge and skills on gifted education.

Family and society is the fifth sub–topic. Within this scope, it has been suggested to increase parental awareness in order to monitor children’s early development, develop and implement programs to provide parents with the knowledge and skills on living together with a gifted child and encouraging him/ her.

Within the scope of employment, the sixth sub–topic, there are some suggestions to prevent brain drain, provide scholarships, awards and sponsorships in

order to increase productivity, and form a vocational counselling system in order to lead gifted students to the most appropriate jobs.

Strategic Action Plan for Gifted Students

Strategic action plan for gifted students, published under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education is a first in Turkey. Three strategic goals have been clarified in the Strategic Action Plan (2013–2017), the first of which is education models. This strategic goal aims to provide students with the encouraging environments and opportunities to explore and improve their interests and talents. Areas to be supported during the education process can be classified as general intellectual talent, special academic talent, leadership, creativity, visual and auditory arts and psychomotor talents.

It is also proposed to focus on parental education programs to improve pre-school students' talents, and similar talent classification should be made for the gifted primary school students in the same classroom and these students should be supported with group-work strategies such as resource room and weekday/ weekend studies. In addition to the BİLSEM, gifted secondary school students will be supported with weekday/ weekend talent studios which are being planned. Boarding schools/ day schools to-be-opened will serve for gifted high school students, as well as BİLSEM and talent studios. Also, mentorship system will be launched in coordination with the provincial directorates of youth and sports, provincial directorates of culture and tourism, universities and other related institutions for K1–K12 students who are exceptionally talented at psychomotor and music areas.

The second strategic goal is human resources. This strategic goal aims to improve parents', teachers' and school directors' knowledge and skills on gifted students and gifted education. It is also stated that there will be student-exchange programs to improve teacher-quality, and there will be more postgraduate degree programs and students.

Prevalence and sustainability is the third strategic goal. Within the scope of this goal, there will be activities to increase social awareness, and programs with best practice samples for gifted education; materials and models will be developed; national standards will be set, and mechanisms to follow gifted individuals throughout their lives.

CONCLUSION

Gifted students have been deemed mostly to be the intellectual capital of the nation at the global level (Sak, 2010). This traditional approach, which began during the Ottoman Empire, kept its effect in Turkey until the early 2000s. As a reflection of this approach, science high schools, the first private schools, were opened in Turkey in the 1960s. However, this perception has been gradually changing over the last fifteen years. Private schools for talented students' education in areas such as arts and sports have been opened.

The Parliamentary Research Commission Report and the Strategic Action Plan for Gifted Students (2013–2017) are of great importance in that they indicate basic future policies and applications for gifted students in Turkey. Decisions in the mentioned report and plan can be summarised as:

- ✓ The understanding of multiple talent for gifted students will be widely accepted in the near future.
- ✓ A parental education intensive model will be adopted for gifted pre– school students.
- ✓ Developments in service quality, parent participation and increased program variety are being anticipated.
- ✓ Different models will be used for students at different levels.
- ✓ Human resources education is among the privileged educational areas.
- ✓ Employment opportunities for gifted people need to be increased.

The Parliamentary Research Commission Report and the Strategic Action Plan for Gifted Students describes future expectations and tendencies systematically in Turkey. According to the researcher, the greatest obstacle in front of the implementation of the strategic plan is the lack of academicians who study in this field. It restricts the number and variety of undergraduate and postgraduate programs on giftedness field. The available qualified human power is able to meet only a small part of the need. The great restriction on qualified human power seems to be the greatest obstacle which prevents the anticipated strategic goals in the action plan from being reached at the predetermined dates.

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