

**THE CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION**  
**ARMENIAN COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT**

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**TEACHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM - LEBANON**

PROVIDING CONTINUOUS DEVELOPMENT FOR  
IN-SERVICE TEACHERS WHO INSTRUCT IN WESTERN ARMENIAN

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## 1. Introduction:

The Armenian Communities Department of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation (henceforth CGF) has long supported Armenian Schools and students around the world; Armenian Schools in the Middle East have particularly been a focal point.

In 2019, CGF developed a targeted strategy regarding Armenian schools and educational programs in Lebanon, with a special focus on the effective teaching and transmission of the Western Armenian language. It is in this context that CGF seeks to create a university level *In-Service Teacher Development Program* specifically for teachers who use Western Armenian as a language of instruction in Armenian schools in Lebanon today. The creation of a teacher development program constitutes one of the five pillars of CGF's broader educational strategy for Lebanon.

## 2. Background & Context:

The existing practice through which Western Armenian is taught today in Lebanon (as well as elsewhere in the Diaspora) faces complex and multifaceted challenges, and addressing these is equally complex. For CGF, addressing these problems in general and in Lebanon specifically goes beyond merely sending funds to schools; it rather requires addressing the inherent problems collectively. CGF hopes to take part in helping meet some of these challenges by investing in the schools and the teachers – having the effective transmission of the Western Armenian language as a priority, in order to ensure its vitality.

It is important to note that during the last few decades, Western Armenian has almost always been offered to its learners solely within the Armenian national context and less as a language of creativity and a language of the world. For understandable reasons and taking into consideration the historical and current social and political contexts, Armenian Schools in Lebanon have adopted a stance which mainly aims at simply preserving the language and using it as a means to transmit traditional and cultural values, however this stance can no longer ensure the vitality of the Armenian language, and these methods and objectives of transmission are becoming increasingly ineffective. CGF deems it necessary to bring about a pedagogic reform that would enhance the emergence of a new Western Armenian speaking generation that can *internalize* the language and *create* in it. In other words, learning the language must go beyond being a “duty” and in order to stay vital, the language must become a medium of creative living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

To ensure the effective transmission of Western Armenian to new generations, it is imperative to have instructors who can resourcefully teach using the language. As the most important element in any educational program, teachers are the ones who are mainly responsible for the implementation of the “educational process” and thus teacher performance is the most crucial input in the field of education. As such, CGF would like to provide continuous education for teachers in Lebanon who use Western Armenian as a language of instruction, so they can continuously grow and acquire new skills to effectively instruct in and transmit the Western Armenian language.

CGF is aware that it would be difficult to find an appropriate teacher development program in Lebanon that would meet the specific needs of today's teachers who already teach in the Western Armenian language. CGF would thus like to fund the creation of an **in-service teacher development program**, in collaboration with a local Lebanese university (or universities). By collaborating with a local university (or universities) to design a custom-made in-service teacher development program, CGF hopes to foster a culture of innovative language teaching that will be continuously updated and improved, which will help make education and specifically the acquisition of the Western Armenian language and culture active, interesting, and relevant to contemporary life again.

### 3. Objectives:

For the creation of such an in-service teacher development program (henceforth Program), we believe it is important to understand the Lebanese-Armenian “educational” context and the major factors involved. In 2014, the Armenian Communities Department commissioned and published a report about Armenian schools in Lebanon: *Fostering a New Culture of Learning, Teaching, and Practice: Armenian Schools and Education in Lebanon*, which identifies the key issues concerning education in the Lebanese-Armenian context, while also making some recommendations. During the 2015-16 academic year, CGF supported the schools to undertake a self-evaluation exercise, with the help of an expert local advisory committee closely monitoring the process. In 2017, CGF funded the *Professional Development Program for Teachers of the Armenian Schools in Lebanon*, in partnership with the Haigazian University in Lebanon, which provided professional development opportunities for about 120 teachers from different Armenian schools in Lebanon. The experience gained from these initiatives, as well as CGF’s consultations with key individuals in Lebanon and on-going observations, should serve as a basis on which the current Program can be built.

#### Main objectives

The Program envisioned by CGF targets the professional development of the teachers, focusing on pedagogical needs, current teaching/learning methodologies, recent professional developments, future challenges, as well as the Western Armenian content. To realize these objectives, CGF seeks to collaborate with a local university (or universities) in order to create an appropriate Program that would tend to the needs of the in-service teachers of Armenian schools in Lebanon. The primary purpose of the Program is to enable teachers to acquire new understanding and instructional skills. Its focus should be on creating learning environments that would enable teachers to develop effectiveness in the classroom.

In CGF’s vision, the Program is to encompass, to some extent, instruction design, sound educational theory, and professional skills, wherein:

- 1- **Instruction Design** would include providing training and practice in the different methodologies and approaches that would help the teachers to plan and impart instruction. It would include effective classroom management skills, as well as communication skills.
- 2- **Educational Theory** would include the cognitive, behavioral, and social developmental considerations that would enable the teachers to have a sound basis for practicing the teaching skills.
- 3- **Professional Skills** would include the techniques and approaches that would help teachers to refresh their practice. It would include soft skills, interpersonal skills, as well as computer and information retrieving skills, and above all lifelong learning skills.

Besides the development of some of the above-mentioned fundamental teaching, pedagogical, and professional skills, the Program should also provide opportunities for:

- Developing capacities for self-directed learning and the ability to think, be self-critical, and to work in groups.
- Developing capacities for self-analysis, self-evaluation, adaptability, flexibility, creativity and innovation.
- Enhancing understanding, knowledge, and examining disciplinary knowledge and social realities, relating subject matter with the social milieu and developing critical thinking.
- Developing professional skills in documentation, analysis, and reflective inquiry.
- Making proper use of instructional facilities/technology.
- Acquiring an understanding of child psychology and an understanding of school culture.

## 4. Constituent Parts & Organization of the Teacher Development Program:

### - The principles of the in-service teacher development program

Learning is a lifelong process and, in this context, we regard further and continuous education as a central precondition for personal and professional development necessary for current and future teachers. In offering a teacher development program, our objective is to offer support to participating teachers whilst helping them develop their own professional competencies.

The call for application to partake in this Program will be open to all teachers in Lebanon who currently use Western Armenian as a language of instruction, including teachers of all sections (from kindergarten to high school), who teach the language, history, religion, art, math, science, social studies, physical education or any other subject in Western Armenian. CGF will also consider giving scholarships to teachers who wish to participate in the Program.

### - Constituent parts and organization of the teacher development program

The in-service teacher development program, as an important and integral feature of school development and effective language transmission, can be organized into four main components wherein the following activities are envisioned:

- 4.1 The main course component offered by the partner university, developed in consultation with CGF.
- 4.2 The Western Armenian content course, which is as an auxiliary to the university course.
- 4.3 A classroom observation course.
- 4.4 A pedagogic or teacher manual.

#### 4.1 The main course component offered by the partner university

In collaboration with a local university (or universities), CGF seeks to develop a custom-made in-service teacher development program for those who currently teach in the Western Armenian language at different Armenian schools in Lebanon. The main objectives of this Program are to offer teachers teaching skills, pedagogic theories/methodologies, and professional skills. CGF relies on the partner university (or universities) to put its knowledge and high competences in the field of Education and Teacher Education into developing an effective Program to arm different teachers of Armenian schools in Lebanon with the necessary tools for efficient teaching.

#### 4.2 Western Armenian content course - an auxiliary to the university course

Within the framework of this in-service teacher development program, CGF envisions creating a Western Armenian content course(s). The main aim of this course(s), which can be in the form of a yearly seminar, an online course, or another appropriate mechanism, is to provide further support to the teachers involved in the Program with relation to the Western Armenian language. CGF will collaborate with local and international professionals in the field to develop an Armenian language/culture content course that would be incorporated into the Program with the aim of developing the participants' linguistic, cultural, analytic, and critical thinking skills *in* the Western Armenian language.

#### 4.3 A classroom observation course

At a later stage in the Program, a classroom observation course should be incorporated into the Program. Classroom observations are effective in supporting the process of the development of the specific teaching mechanisms, concepts, and the testing of the implementation processes wherein the difficulties would be discussed, and appropriate strategies would be developed. Such on-site observation would help ensure that different perspectives and competences are included in the teacher development process.

#### 4.4 A pedagogic or teacher manual

Two years into the Program, CGF believes that it would be very beneficial to develop a pedagogic or teacher “manual” which would feature the outcomes of the Program, analyzing the challenges and the achievements; this would help other teachers from different Armenian schools in Lebanon, as well as teachers in the Diaspora. The manual could be based on identifying teacher needs and successful language transmission instances, it can simply be a collection of some of the courses and lectures (especially those taught or given *in* the Armenian language, if any), the lessons and lesson plans, the challenges faced and solutions found, and any other similar content that has been developed during the implementation of the Program.