

# THE ROLE OF THE FEMALE KINDERGARTEN PRINCIPALS IN DEVELOPING THE GIFTS OF THE KINDERGARTEN CHILDREN: A QUALITATIVE STUDY CONDUCTED FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE FEMALE KINDERGARTEN PRINCIPALS AND TEACHERS

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## Abstract:

**background:** Providing the gifted children with care and support is considered one of the pillars needed for developing societies in all areas. Due to the significance of providing those children with care, the researchers aimed to explore the role of the female kindergarten principals in developing the gifts of the kindergarten children from the perspective of the female kindergarten principals and teachers.

**Material And Mehods:** The researchers adopted the qualitative approach. They interviewed ten (10) female kindergarten principals and ten (10) female kindergarten teachers. The participants were chosen from several kindergartens in Mafraq, Jordan.

**Results:** Most of the female principals are capable of identifying the gifted children based on their excellent academic achievement, and engagement in extracurricular and curricular activities. Despite that, some principals added that they have poor knowledge about the identification of gifted children. Some principals added that they lack knowledge about the instruments needed for such identification. On the other hand, almost all the teachers confirmed that they are capable of identifying the gifted children through classroom activities and academic games.

**Conclusion:** It was found that the female kindergarten principals play a significant role in developing the gifts of kindergarten children.

**Keywords:** Gift development, kindergarten children, principals, teachers

## INTRODUCTION:

Gift development has been receiving much attention. It refers to the process of teaching and training the gifted learners in order to develop their innate abilities and gifts and enable those learners to transform their abilities and gifts into tangible achievements. That can be done through enrolling those learners in goal-oriented educational programs and providing them with ongoing training, and the appropriate psychological guidance (Al-Khatib, 2022)

Providing the gifted children with care during the early childhood stage is one of the pillars of achieving scientific and economic development in societies. Identifying the gifted children at an early age plays a crucial role in developing their capabilities and gifts. It enables those children to show excellence and creativity.

Based on the relevant literature, kindergartens provide children with a learning environment that allows educators to identify the gifted children. They provide children with opportunities for developing their gifts. That makes the role of the female kindergarten principals considered as a vital role in the teaching-learning process during the kindergarten stage.

People in ancient civilizations show much attention to gifts and developing them. For instance, Plato developed a special educational system for teaching the ones with advanced intellectual capabilities. In addition, people in the ancient Roman civilization used to show attention to the identification of the gifted young people and training them. Such a training may include training in the field of law, or training in the field of politics, or training in the field of military (Alqafari, 2021). In addition, people in the ancient Islamic civilizations used mosques as centers for teaching the gifted individuals and expanding their knowledge about the fields of science or art. That contributed to developing

the Islamic civilization in the fields of art and science (Aleqraiti, 2013). In the light of the current scientific advancements, providing the gifted people with care became one of the standards used for assessing the progress of any nation. It serves as a method for providing nations with human capital who are capable of handling the faced challenges (Ad-Daljaw, 2019)

In Jordan gift education has been receiving much attention since the educational development conference in (1987). The latter conference encouraged decision makers and legislators to show attention to gifted students and take the differences between gifted and ordinary students into consideration. Later on, the Code of the Jordanian Ministry of Education No. (3) of 1994 was issued. Article (5) of the latter code suggests that schools should include special educational programs that target gifted students. After issuing this law, schools in Jordan started developing special educational programs that target gifted students. Such programs take the cognitive and emotional characteristics of gifted students into consideration. They aim at developing the gifted students' personalities and encouraging them to engage in social interactions. They aim at expanding the knowledge of gifted students and developing their skills and gifts. The learning outcomes of such programs are represented in literary works, creative thoughts, theories, handcrafts, original instruments or scientific contributions (Shaheen, 2021)

In educational studies, there are various definitions for the term (gift). For instance, As-Soroor (2010) adds that (gift) refers to a collection of complex cognitive features that enable one to make excellent achievements. As for Bader (2010), he defines (gift) as an innate aptitude within one. He adds that the ones with this aptitude must be provided with an appropriate learning environment. Gallagher (1985) adds that (gift) refers to a wide spectrum of abilities. Such abilities include: abilities in the fields of creative thinking, academic readiness, leadership, arts, and motor skills. As for Ar-Rusan (2001), he adds that the term (gift) refers to an advanced ability possessed by one. This ability distinguishes one from his/her peers. It may involve advanced mental or creative ability, ability to make achievements or ability to show excellent academic achievement. It may involve ability to exercise distinguished skills (e.g. artistic, athletic, and language skills). It may involve the ability to show much perseverance, commitment, and flexibility. It may involve having a high motivation level, and independent thinking skills (Ar-Rusan, 2001)

The gifted children are characterized by several characteristics that distinguish them from their peers. Such characteristics include: having excellent analysis skills, a love for exploration, a rapid learning ability, and independent thinking skills (Maqousi, and Waheeba, 2018). From a social perspective, the gifted children are more cooperative than others. They tend to play in organized games. They have a sense of humor. They have self-criticism tendencies. Several programs were developed for providing the gifted children with care. Such programs include: the group-based programs (At-Tantawi, 2012), the academic acceleration programs (Ash-Sherbini, and Sadiq, 2002), and the enrichment programs (Suleiman, and At-Tantawi, 2001)

In this context, it should be noted that educational leadership plays a significant role in designing and implementing the programs that target the gifted people. In this regard, Hannah (2010) sheds a light on the importance of having principals who are capable of achieving a balance between administrative and educational works. She sheds a light on the importance of having principals who are capable of employing the human and material resources for improving the quality of the education delivered to the gifted students.

McDonald (2014) adds that the principal who plays an effective role is the one who provides students with a learning environment that motivates them. He adds that this principal is the one who offers equal support for teachers, students, and parents. Al-Aql and Al-Owaid (2025) and Altamirano and Bayron (2017) add that identifying and developing the gifted students in schools are affected by the extent of having effective initiatives by the administrations of schools. Such initiatives must include: activities, acts of communication, and personalized plans. Al-Daljaw (2019) found that school principals don't have a specific mechanism for providing the gifted students with care. However, he found that school principals realize the significance of gifted children in society.

There are various studies that shed a light on the roles of principals in developing the gifts of school students. However, most of those studies target the primary and secondary schools. None of them targeted the role of the administrative staff at kindergartens. Furthermore, the majority of these studies either used a quantitative approach or a descriptive approach. Thus, there is a need to conduct a qualitative study about the actual practices carried out the female kindergarten principals for developing the gifts of children. That should be done to acquire a better understanding for such practices. Thus, the researchers conducted this study.

The significance of the present study arises from the significance of exploring the role of the female kindergarten principals in developing the gifts of the kindergarten children from the perspective of the female kindergarten principals and teachers. This study is significant because it offers an understanding about the administrative and educational practices that aim at developing the gifted children and developing their capabilities in the kindergarten

environment. For instance, it aimed to acquire such an understanding based on the experiences of the educational leaders in field.

Identifying the gifted children during the early childhood stage and providing them with a supportive environment for developing their gifts are considered challenging for the modern educational systems. There has been an increasing attention shown to those two things due to having an increasing interest worldwide in investing in the human capital starting from the early years of one's life. Based on many studies, the kindergarten stage is considered the most appropriate stage for detecting the early signs of giftedness. For instance, the early signs of giftedness manifest when doing activities, playing games and interacting socially with others. Detecting such signs requires having much educational and administrative awareness among the members of the staff working at the institutions delivering the early childhood education. The female kindergarten principals are the ones who must have such awareness the most.

Ad-Daljawi (2019) found that there are shortcomings in the way in which the principals provide the gifted children with care. He found that there isn't any specific clear mechanism for identifying the gifted children nor providing them with guidance. Al-Ghamdi (2019) found that the lack of funding and the absence of specialized training plans are amongst the most prominent challenges that hinder school administrations from implementing the programs supporting the gifted children. In this regard, Altamirano and Bayron (2017) found that the effectiveness of the gifted educational programs is correlated directly with the degree to which the school administration is involved in the planning process. They found that the effectiveness of such programs is correlated directly with the degree to which the school administration coordinates with the teachers and the students' parents. Such planning and coordination shall increase the probabilities of identifying the gifted children with excellent capabilities at an early age.

However, most of the aforementioned studies target the primary and secondary school education without paying sufficient attention to the kindergarten stage. However, the kindergarten stage plays a crucial role in shaping the children's intellectual and emotional orientations. During this stage, the individual differences between children start to manifest. In addition, most of the aforementioned studies either adopt the quantitative or descriptive approach. However, due to nature of interaction in kindergartens, the researchers of the aforementioned studies should have adopted the qualitative approach. Adopting the qualitative approach would have enabled those researchers to examine the real-life experiences of kindergarten principals and teachers in everyday situations.

Based on the experiences and direct observations of the researchers of the present study in the educational field, it has been found that there is a significant discrepancy between the kindergartens' extent of attention shown to the gifted children. It has been found that many female principals and teachers lack the tools or the training needed for identifying or developing the children's gifts in a systematic manner. That raises questions about the actual role of the female kindergarten principals in this regard, especially in light of the absence of qualitative local studies addressing this topic. The researchers of the present study noticed that none of the researchers conducted a study about the role of the female kindergarten principals in developing the gifts of the kindergarten children in Jordan. Thus, they found that it's necessary to conduct a study about that. Conducting such a study shall contribute to improving the quality of the education delivered for gifted children in Jordan. It shall fill a gap in the relevant literature. Thus, the present study aimed to answer the following main question:

What is the role of the female kindergarten principals in developing the gifts of the kindergarten children from the perspective of the female kindergarten principals and teachers?

Conducting this study is significant because it shall contribute to activating the role of principals in developing the gifts of the kindergarten children. It shall contribute to providing decision makers with knowledge about the role of principals in this regard.

In the light of the aforementioned information, it should be noted that the present study is significant due to the reasons listed below:

#### **First: Theoretical significance**

1)- This study is significant because it sheds a light on a new topic. As far as the researchers know, it is one of the few qualitative studies that examined the role of the female kindergarten principals in developing the gifts of the kindergarten children. Professionals often overlook meeting the special needs of the kindergarten children when conducting studies about creativity, and cognitive excellence.

2)- The study highlights the importance of identifying the gifts of children in the kindergarten environment at an early age. Identifying the gifts of children shall contribute to improving the implementation of the educational visions suggesting that the care of the gifted students should be embedded in into the educational programs targeting children during the early childhood. It is considered important by many international agreements and conventions that protect the child's right to receive education of high quality and specialized care.

3)- This study contributes to enriching the educational literature conducted in the field of educational leadership at kindergartens. It includes a theoretical framework that can be used in the future by researchers for examining the role of the educational administrations in nurturing the gifts of children.

**Second: Practical Significance:**

1)- The findings of this study are beneficial for the makers of educational decisions and the kindergarten supervisors. For instance, they provide those decision makers and supervisors with information about the reality of the practices of female principals in terms of identifying and supporting the gifted students. They enable those decision makers and supervisors to set training plans and supportive policies in this area.

2)- This study draws the attention of kindergarten principals and teachers to the importance of their educational role in developing the gifts of children. Doing that may contribute to developing the daily educational work methods and practices in kindergartens. It shall make those principals and teachers focus on carrying out goal-oriented activities, making thoughtful observation, and engaging in effective communication with parents and the relevant institutions.

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### The Study's Design

The researchers adopted the qualitative approach. According to Creswell (2023), the latter approach enables researchers to gain a better understanding for social phenomena. It enables researchers to analyze the personal experiences of the respondents and examine the social context without using statistical or quantitative data (Creswell, 2023).

In this study, the researchers conducted open interviews with several female kindergarten principals and teachers in Mafraq in order to examine their views and actual experiences that are related to the development of the gifts of children.

Through adopting this approach, the researchers identified the study's problems, objectives, and questions and reviewed the relevant theoretical and conceptual framework. Through adopting this approach, they developed the study's instrument and chose the interviewees based on several criteria. Through adopting this approach, they conducted interviews and analyzed the collected data obtained. They also summarized such data to reach results and offer recommendation.

The data were collected during the academic year (2024 / 2025). They were acquired from several kindergartens that are located in Mafraq, Jordan. They were conducted to answer the following question:

(What is the role of the female kindergarten principals in developing the gifts of the kindergarten children from the perspective of the female kindergarten principals and teachers?)

It should be noted that the following sub-questions are derived from the aforementioned main question:

Q.1. How do the female kindergarten principals and teachers identify the gifted children through curricular and extracurricular activities?

Q.2. What are the practices carried out by the female kindergarten principals to support and guide the female teachers in carrying out the process of developing the gifts of children?

Q.3. How do the classroom environment and the educational activities contribute to supporting the gifted children in kindergartens?

Q.4. What are the challenges that hinder the female kindergarten principals from identifying the gifted children and developing the children's gifts?

Q.5. What are the mechanisms suggested by the female kindergarten principals and teachers in order to strengthen the role of the kindergartens in providing the gifted children with care?

To be specific, the present study aimed to:

- Identify the role of the female kindergarten principals in developing the gifts of the kindergarten children from the perspectives of the female kindergarten principals and teachers.
- Explore the mechanisms used for identifying the gifted children in the kindergarten stage through curricular and extracurricular activities.
- Identify the practices carried out by the female kindergarten principals in the aim of supporting the female kindergarten teachers in carrying out the process of developing the children's gifts in classroom.
- Explore the role of communication between the kindergarten administration from one hand and the local community, and the Ministry of Education from another hand in supporting the programs that provide the gifted children with care.
- Present key suggestions that contribute to activating the role of the female kindergarten principals and teachers in identifying and developing the gifts of children

### Population and Sample

The population consists of all the female kindergarten principals and teachers in Jordan. The sample of this study consists of twenty (20) participants. To be specific, it consists of ten (10) female kindergarten principals and ten (10) female kindergarten teachers. Those principals and teachers were chosen from several kindergartens located in Mafrq, Jordan. They were chosen through using the purposive sampling method. Data were obtained about the participants. They include: data about the kindergarten type, academic qualification and the number of the years of experience in the field of kindergarten education. The table below presents the demographic characteristics of the sampled female kindergarten principals.

**Table (1): Distribution of the sampled female kindergarten principals in accordance with the demographic characteristics**

Type of kindergarten	Academic qualification	Number of the years of experience
Public kindergarten	BA degree	6
Public kindergarten	MA degree	10
Public kindergarten	MA degree	20
Public kindergarten	BA degree	7
Public kindergarten	MA degree	12
Private kindergarten	BA degree	3
Private kindergarten	PhD degree	11
Private kindergarten	BA degree	6
Private kindergarten	BA degree	5
Private kindergarten	MA degree	16

The table below presents the demographic characteristics of the sampled female kindergarten teachers.

**Table (2): Distribution of the sampled female kindergarten teachers in accordance with the demographic characteristics**

Type of kindergarten	Academic qualification	Number of the years of experience
Public kindergarten	MA degree	8
Public kindergarten	MA degree	11
Public kindergarten	MA degree	15
Public kindergarten	BA degree	2
Public kindergarten	BA degree	12
Private kindergarten	MA degree	5
Private kindergarten	BA degree	7
Private kindergarten	BA degree	5
Private kindergarten	BA degree	6
Private kindergarten	MA degree	4

Based on the data shown in table (1) and table (2), the researchers of the present study chose interviewees who differ from each other in terms of the years of experiences, academic qualification and kindergarten types

### Data collection tool and techniques

The researchers collected data in this study through conducting semi-structured interviews. This data collection method fits with the nature of the qualitative approach. To be specific, the researchers collected data from ten (10) female kindergarten principals and ten (10) female kindergarten teachers.



The researchers of the present study drafted the interview questions based on the relevant theoretical literature and previous studies. Such literature and studies are related to the role of the school administration in providing the gifted students with care. They include: the studies of Ad-Daljawi (2019), Al-Jamal (2019), and Altamirano and Bayron (2017). The researchers made sure to include questions about the way of identifying the gifted children, the educational practices being carried out, and the administrative factors. Such factors include: (the ones with a positive impact and the ones with a negative impact).

#### **Data analysis**

In order to check the content validity of the interview question sheet, the researchers passed this sheet to several experts in the field of education, and several female kindergarten principals of much experience. Those experts and principals were asked to assess the data collect instrument. They provided the researchers with comments about the way of drafting the questions, relatedness to the study's areas and comprehensiveness. Several changes were made to the instrument based on the comments of those experts and principals.

The interviews were conducted in the chosen kindergartens. That contributed to ensuring that the interviewees' privacy is protected. It ensured that the interviewees were feeling comfortable during the interviews. Each interview lasted for a duration that ranges from thirty (30) minutes to forty (40) minutes. Data were documented through using an audio recording technology. That was done after obtaining a written consent from each participant in this regard. In addition, the researchers took notes while conducting the interviews. That was done to ensure having an accurate transmission for the intended meaning and message. It was done to carry out an in-depth analysis for the collected data in a manner that reflects the real-life experiences of the interviewees in the educational field.

The answers of the respondents were coded to avoid having any bias in the data analysis process. Each code is represented in a number and a letter (e.g. A-1 and B-1). Letter A refers to principals and letter B refers to teachers). Then, the collected data were administered to a computer program with using codes). After that, they were analyzed and summarized.

Regarding the validity of the interview question sheet, it was checked after conducting interviews with ten (10) female kindergarten principals and ten (10) female kindergarten teachers. The researchers analyzed the answers of the interviewees through conducting a qualitative analysis that is based on the coding method.

To check the internal validity of the instrument, the analyzed data were passed to two experts who work as faculty members. Those experts are specialized in the educational field and have much expertise in the qualitative research field. They were asked to re-analyze to selection several interviews to analyze them in an independent manner. A comparison was conducted between the results of the experts' analysis and the results of the researchers' analysis.

Based on the results of this analysis, it was found that there is a ninety percent (90%) agreement between the results of the experts' analysis and the results of the researchers' analysis. Such an agreement reflects that there is a high level of reliability and much consistency in the qualitative data analysis. It reinforces the credibility of the findings reached through the interviews.

#### **Ethical consideration**

The researchers informed the participants that their names shall remain confidential. They informed the participants about the goal of the study before interviewing them.

## **RESULTS**

### **Results Related to the First Question: (The way in which kindergarten principals and teachers identify the gifted children through curricular and extracurricular activities):**

Q.1. How do the female kindergarten principals and teachers identify the gifted children through curricular and extracurricular activities?

Based on the results of the interviews, it was found that most of the female kindergarten principals and teachers realize the importance of the curricular and extracurricular activities as primary methods for identifying the gifted children. However, there are evident differences between the interviewees' capabilities to use these activities to detect the signs of giftedness. There are evident differences between the interviewees' extent of confidence in their abilities to carry out such activities.

About 80% of the female kindergarten principals (i.e. 8 principals) added that the diverse kindergarten activities contribute much to identifying the children's interests and creative abilities. That applies particularly the art, movement, and expressive storytelling activities.

However, 20% of the female kindergarten principals (i.e. 2 principals) added that there are challenges related to the lack of standardized instruments or specialized training on the identification of the state of giftedness.

100% of the sampled teachers (i.e. 10 teachers) added that they can notice the early signs of giftedness among children within the classroom. They added that they are capable of noticing such signs through having a direct interaction with the child while doing educational activities. One of the female teachers has twelve (12) years of experience.

Sixty percent (60 %) of the female teachers (i.e. 6 teachers) added that the intelligence games are effective means for detecting the presence of advanced thinking skills among some children. Such games include: the games involving assembling shapes, the games involving mazes, and the games involving spotting the differences between several things. Forty percent (40 %) of those teachers added that they rely on the periodic documentation of the individual observations made about each child's behavior in the classroom settings.

All the participants agreed on the fact that teachers are often the first ones who notice that the child is gifted and distinguished from his/her peers. That highlights the importance of developing the teachers' competencies. It highlights the importance of providing teachers with training on the instruments that can be used for identifying the gifted children at an early age. It highlights the importance of providing the principals with support during the process of creating an environment that supports educators when carrying out the activities that aim at identifying the state of giftedness and developing gifts.

**Results related to the second question (The practices carried out by the kindergarten principals to support and guide the female teachers in carrying out the process of developing the gifts of children)**

Q.2. What are the practices carried out by the female kindergarten principals to support and guide the female teachers in carrying out the process of developing the gifts of children?

There are differences between the female kindergarten principals' opinions about the existence of clear school plans for providing the gifted children with care. About 50% of the principals (i.e. 5 principals) added that the annual plans used in the kindergarten include elements that allow them to take the individual differences between children into account. They added that such plans include items that aim at supporting the gifted children through providing them with resources and guiding teachers in the process of developing the appropriate educational activities.

On the other hand, 50% of the other principals (i.e. 5 principals) added that there isn't any clear educational plan for gift development. They added that most of the efforts exerted in this regard are individual, unsystematic efforts. Some of those principals added that the budgets allocated for their kindergartens don't include a specific item for supporting the programs targeting the gifted children.

80% of the teachers (i.e. 8 teachers) added that they aren't satisfied due to the absence of an actual plan for supporting the gifted children. Most of the teachers described the adopted plans as being (random, unsystematic plans). They added that the adopted plans lack either clear goals or an administrative following up process.

The participants added that the staff at their kindergartens often rely on routine activities (e.g. daily radio broadcasts) and some general classroom games. They added that such activities aren't sufficient for identifying the gifted students nor developing their gifts and abilities. One of the teachers has been working for eleven (11) years. She added the following: *"There isn't any plan dedicated for supporting the gifted students in the kindergarten... Each teacher works at her own discretion. The administration doesn't provide real support in this regard."*

Several teachers also added that the extracurricular activities that were carried out before (e.g. exhibitions and festivals) have been recently halted due to several circumstances (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic) and some administrative restrictions. That led to limiting the number of the available opportunities offered to the gifted children.

To sum up, there is a gap between the theoretical orientations and the written plans from one hand and the actual implementation within kindergartens from another hand. The identification of gifted children and the development of children's gifts are mainly based on the individual initiatives of teachers and the awareness of the principals. That is attributed to the absence of systematic policies and the lack of institutional support.

**Results related to the third question (The way in which the classroom environment and the educational activities contribute to supporting the gifted children in kindergartens)**

Q.3. How do the classroom environment and the educational activities contribute to supporting the gifted children in kindergartens?

Based on the results of the interviews, there is an evident discrepancy between the opinions of the kindergarten principals and the opinions of the kindergarten teachers about the nature of the classroom environment and its suitability for the development of gifts. There is an evident discrepancy between the opinions of the kindergarten principals and opinions of the teachers about the role of the educational activities in developing the abilities of the gifted children.

Most of the female kindergarten principals (i.e. .70% approximately (7 principals)) added that the classroom environments in their kindergartens are considered supportive and motivational for children. That is because such environments include learning corners and several places designated for activities (such as art, science, or drama activities). Such learning corners and places allow children to express themselves and discover their abilities and gifts. Some principals added that there is flexibility in the way of organizing the classes. They added that the classes are organized in a manner that takes the individual differences between students into consideration.

In contrast, a large percentage of teachers believed that preparing the classroom environment is mainly the responsibility of the kindergarten teacher herself. The kindergarten teachers exert individual effort to adapt the learning corners and activities in a manner that fits with the children's abilities. Sixty percent (60 %) of them (i.e. 6 teachers) confirmed that the classroom environment is not always an ideal environment. That's attributed to having overcrowded classes, or limited materials, or time.

As for the curricular and extracurricular activities, 80% of the female kindergarten principals (i.e. 8 principals) emphasized the importance of educational activities. Such activities include: theatrical performances, singing songs, making daily radio broadcasts, and participating in art exhibitions, and heritage days. They highlight the children's gifts, particularly in the areas of rhythmic movements, artistic expression, and singing. The latter female kindergarten principals added that such activities contribute to raising the children's self-confidence level and encouraging children to excel.

Based on the interviews, the researchers found that the staff at the private kindergartens show greater attention to organizing these activities. Such an attention manifests through inviting parents to participate in the children's activities and letting the parents see their children's works. That shall reinforce the children's value within their social environment. Meanwhile, the researchers found that the activities in the public kindergartens are less organized. They found that the activities in the public kindergartens are often affected by several factors (e.g. having limited resources or intensive workload).

Most of the teachers (90 %) (i.e. 9 teachers) added that the extracurricular activities and the special events are amongst the most effective means for identifying and supporting the gifted children. According to those teachers, in such activities and events, the children with potentials that aren't apparent in classroom shall stand out.

Based on these results, it is important to perceive the classroom environment and the goal-oriented activities as major tools that contribute to developing the gifts of children. It is necessary to provide teachers with support and empower them. It is necessary to provide teachers with permanent, flexible resources within the kindergarten.

**Results related to the fourth question: (The challenges that hinder the female kindergarten principals from identifying the gifted children and developing the children's gifts)**

Q.4. What are the challenges that hinder the female kindergarten principals from identifying the gifted children and developing the children's gifts?

Based on the results of the interview, there is a general agreement among the female kindergarten principals on the importance of communicating with the staff at the Ministry of Education. All the principals added that such a communication serves as one of the primary means for supporting the activities that contribute to developing the children's gifts. They added that they involve the students at their kindergartens in events that are organized by the Ministry of Education whenever circumstances permit. Such events include: exhibitions, national events, and competitions.

Despite this, the principals added that they face societal barriers sometimes, especially when dealing with children who come from conservative environments. For instance, the parents sometimes refuse to engage their children – especially the female children – in some activities.

As for the teachers, their stands vary. For instance, some teachers added that they carry out individual initiatives. However, other teachers added that they comply with the institutional plans and activities without making any individual initiative. Several teachers added that they make personal initiatives to communicate with the local community organizations to provide the gifted children with support.

In contrast, some female teachers added that some colleagues show poor interaction with children. They added that some colleagues aren't willing to exert additional effort in this regard. One of the female teachers mentioned a comment made by her colleague. She said: *"One of my colleagues said: 'Why would I give myself a headache? Neither the Ministry of Education nor the students' parents exert effort. Hence, I prefer to remain silent'"*. That indicates that there is a discrepancy between the teachers' professional motivation levels.

Despite these discrepancies, all the female principals and teachers agreed on the importance of having ongoing communication with parents, especially for holding discussions with them on educational and behavioral aspects. They added that they are keen on inviting parents to attend the activities and the exhibitions that show the works of the gifted



children. Inviting parents to such activities and exhibitions shall strengthen the partnership between the kindergarten staff and the students' families.

However, all the female principals and teachers added that these practices were affected during period of the COVID-19 pandemic. During this period, the number of the ones attending such activities and exhibitions in-person was reduced. During this period, the ones attending such activities and exhibitions in-person were limited to the kindergarten staff and the students. During this period, such activities and exhibitions were presented through using the social media platforms of each kindergarten.

These findings highlight the need to promote a culture of community cooperation. They highlight the need to provide the kindergarten principals and the teachers with training programs on the way of creating supportive partnerships with the local authorities and families. Creating such partnerships shall contribute to developing an integrated system for providing the gifted people with care during the early childhood stage.

**Results related to the fifth question: (The mechanisms suggested by the female kindergarten principals and teachers in order to strengthen the role of the kindergartens in providing the gifted children with care)**

Q.5. What are the mechanisms suggested by the female kindergarten principals and teachers in order to strengthen the role of the kindergartens in providing the gifted children with care?

The participants in this study presented several practical suggestions that contribute to strengthening the role of the kindergartens in identifying the gifted children and developing their gifts. All the participants agreed that the activation of this role requires having an organized institutional support and a continuous professional development.

Most of the female kindergarten principals emphasized the need to dedicate a separate budget within the kindergarten for supporting the programs targeting the gifted children. They added that dedicating such a budget shall provide educational materials and specialized activities that fit with the abilities of the gifted children. They also recommended providing support by the Ministry of Education through providing the kindergarten staff with specialized training courses and workshops. Such courses and workshops should deepen the understanding of kindergarten staff for the meaning of the term (gift). They should provide them with more knowledge on the methods of identifying the gifted children and the way of dealing with those children during this sensitive stage (i.e. the early childhood stage).

As for the teachers, their suggestions focus on certain topics only. Such topics include: encouraging the kindergarten principal to motivate the gifted children in an ongoing manner. They include: providing the gifted children with opportunities to participate in distinguished events and activities (including the ones in the kindergarten environment and the ones in the local community). Most of the teachers emphasized the importance of providing the gifted children with moral support and positive reinforcement. That's because such support and reinforcement have a profound, positive impact on raising the motivation and self-confidence levels of those children.

Some teachers also called for appointing a specialized teacher or a gift coordinator within the kindergarten. This coordinator would be responsible for following up the performance of the gifted children, and setting plans for the activities that fit with those children. She would be responsible for communicating with the relevant authorities to provide those children with support.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that it is significant to provide a sustainable institutional infrastructure within kindergartens in order to provide the gifted children with care. Such an infrastructure should include: training, measures for motivating the staff, financial support, and the distribution of roles in a clear manner. It shall contribute to activating and developing the potentials of kindergarten children in a systematic manner.

## DISCUSSION

**Discussion related to the first question (The way in which kindergarten principals and teachers identify the gifted children through curricular and extracurricular activities)**

Q.1. How do the female kindergarten principals and teachers identify the gifted children through curricular and extracurricular activities?

Based on the study's results, there is a significant disparity between the participants' understanding for the methods of identifying the gifted children and implementation of such methods.

It was found that some principals don't have a precise knowledge on the meaning of the term (gift) and the mechanisms used for identifying the gifted children. Those principals often use the general activities and the apparent excellence as the primary criteria for identifying the gifted children rather than using standardized instruments or evident

indicators. This shortcoming is attributed to the absence of specialized training programs in this field. This finding is consistent with the finding reached by Al-Maharmeh (2009). For instance, the latter researcher found that school leaders aren't provided with sufficient training courses on the way of dealing with the gifted students. He found that the responsibility of showing support to the gifted children is assigned mainly to parties outside the school environment.

In contrast, it was found that the teachers have more knowledge than principals about the detection of the early signs of giftedness among children. It was found that the teachers show more accuracy than principals in making such a detection. That's attributed to having a direct daily interaction between the teachers and the children within the classroom environment. Such an interaction enables teachers to notice the children's patterns of behavior, ways of thinking, and atypical responses.

Some teachers also demonstrated their personal skills in employing simplified instruments (e.g. educational games or intelligence tests) for detecting gifted children. That reflects that those teachers have individual interest in professional development. Some of those teachers have higher academic qualifications. Some of those teachers were enrolled in postgraduate programs at the time of interviewing them. The latter result indicates that providing teachers with scholarships to enroll in post-graduate programs shall provide them with more knowledge about the way of carrying out activities to detect gifted children. It indicates that providing teachers with training courses shall provide them with more knowledge about the way of carrying out activities to detect gifted children.

The result in this regard is consistent with the result of Al-Farhan (2021). The latter researcher found that the male and female teachers are highly efficient in identifying the gifted students through using the method of assessing behavioral traits.

The excellent performance of the sampled female teachers in this area may be attributed to their experience in dealing and interacting with students in a daily manner. It may be attributed to the use of the direct learning and observation methods. As for the administrative staff, they are often preoccupied in following up the process of carrying out organizational and logistical tasks. That indicates that there is a need for re-identifying the roles of the educational leaders in kindergartens. Through re-identifying such roles, such roles must be more connected with the technical and educational areas rather than being connected with the administrative area only.

Based on the results, it is necessary to provide the female kindergarten principals with training on the identification of the gifted students. It is also necessary to deepen their theoretical and practical understanding for the early signs of mental and behavioral excellence among the pre-school children. It is also necessary to provide those principals with knowledge on the appropriate instruments that enable them to identify the gifted children.

#### **Discussion related to the second question (The practices carried out by the kindergarten principals to support and guide the female teachers in carrying out the process of developing the gifts of children)**

Q.2. What are the practices carried out by the female kindergarten principals to support and guide the female teachers in carrying out the process of developing the gifts of children?

Based on the results, there is a gap between the views of the administrative staff and the actual implementation of the kindergarten plan that's related to the provision of the gifted children with care. Half of the sampled principals added that there is an educational plan that includes general items related to taking the individual differences between the students into consideration and providing the gifted students with activities. In contrast, most of the teachers added that there isn't any clear or activated plan in this regard. They added that the efforts exerted for developing the gifts of children are random and individual effort. They added that such efforts are exerted without having any institutional guidance nor a real support by the administration.

The latter result may be attributed to the absence of effective policies that oblige the principals to provide the kindergarten teachers with guide and support when carrying out the process of developing the gifts of children. It may be attributed to the fact that many principals don't believe that it's important to provide kindergarten teachers with guide and support when carrying out this process.

The latter result may be attributed to having a difference between the roles of teachers and the roles of principals. For instance, the kindergarten administrations tend to use an idealistic discourse that reflects a perfect institutional image before the official authorities. However, the teachers use a discourse that reflects the actual reality within the classroom. That's because teachers are the ones who interact directly with children and implement the educational programs. That enables teachers to acquire a realistic understanding for the extent of effectiveness of the plans.

This finding is consistent with the finding reached by Ad- Daljawi (2019). The latter researcher found that there isn't any clear mechanism for supporting the gifted students in schools. He found that there isn't any systematic plan for regulating the way of dealing with the gifted students in schools. The results in this regard are consistent with the result reached by Al-Ghamdi (2019). The latter researcher found that one of the most prominent obstacles facing the

implementation of the programs targeting the gifted children is the lack of the financial allocations and budgets. This obstacle negatively affects all the stages of planning, implementation, and evaluation.

The researchers of the present study attribute this result to the lack of awareness among the kindergarten staff about the importance of providing the gifted children with care. They also attribute this result to the lack of awareness among some educational leaders about the positive impacts of such a care on children, families, educational institutions and society. The results in this regard indicate that the Ministry of Education must set clear policies and allocate a separate budget for supporting the programs targeting the gifted children during the early childhood stage. They indicate that it is necessary to make changes to the annual school plans to offer support for the gifted children.

**Discussion related to the third question (The way in which the classroom environment and the educational activities contribute to supporting the gifted children in kindergartens)**

Q.3. How do the classroom environment and the educational activities contribute to supporting the gifted children in kindergartens?

Based on the study's results, it was found that there is a discrepancy between the views of the participants about the appropriateness of the classroom environment and the kindergarten activities for developing the children's gifts. Most of the sampled principals added that they are satisfied with the current classroom environment. They added that the current classroom environments are appropriate and include sufficient corners and activities for supporting the gifted children. However, most of the sampled teachers added that there is a need to make further changes to the classroom environment. They added that there must be more manifestations of creativity in the classroom environment in order to motivate and inspire the gifted children. The latter result may be attributed to the need to provide the classroom environment with tools and equipment that promote creativity among children and facilitate the detection of gifted children. It may be attributed to the need to provide gifted children in classroom with access to computer applications that facilitate the detection of gifted children.

Several teachers added that the daily routine activities – e.g. the conventional games and the morning school radio – aren't sufficient to identify the atypical abilities of children. Furthermore, the classroom environment is considered sometimes constraining due to having a great number of children or having limited resources. That is in agreement with the teachers' observations regarding the absence of a budget that allows the activation of creativity corners within the classroom or carrying out specific activities that aim at developing the innovative thinking and exploration skills of children.

During the interviews, the evident differences between the public and private kindergartens were mentioned. It was concluded that the private kindergartens include classrooms that are decorated with drawings of bright colors, and include corners dedicated for presenting the children's works. It was concluded that the private kindergartens include classrooms that have free spaces in which children are allowed to express themselves freely. The researchers of the present study believe that these practices are strongly correlated with the availability of the financial support and the allocation of flexible budgets. Such support and budgets are more available in the private kindergarten than the public kindergarten.

This finding indicates that the classroom environment is not just a physical space only. In fact, it is one of the elements of the teaching-learning process. Attention must be provided to the classroom environment through offering material and moral support and providing teachers with a specialized training. Providing such support and training shall enable teachers to design effective activities that meet the needs of the gifted children. The absence of clear funding policies in the public kindergartens serves as an obstacle that hinders the development of an educational infrastructure that supports the gifted children.

Therefore, the teachers' suggestions for developing the classroom environment indicate that there is a real need for making changes to the kindergarten budgets. They indicate that there is a real need for engaging the teachers in the process of making plans related to the classroom environment. Teachers should be engaged in this process because they are the ones who are capable the most to identify the needs of the gifted children.

**Discussion related to the fourth question (The challenges that hinder the female kindergarten principals from identifying the gifted children and developing the children's gifts)**

Q.4. What are the challenges that hinder the female kindergarten principals from identifying the gifted children and developing the children's gifts?

Based on the study's results, most of the sampled kindergarten principals and teachers realize the importance of communicating with the staff at the Ministry of Education and the members of the local community in order to increase the amount of care provided for the gifted children. Through using the available resources, they strive to organize educational activities, exhibitions, and events that showcase the children's gifts and engage the children's parents in the teaching-learning process. The participants added that such efforts contribute to raising the children's self-

confidence levels and promoting awareness among the community members about the importance of providing the gifted children starting from an early age.

The most prominent practices amongst these practices are represented in organizing exhibitions for presenting the children's works and art performances. In such performances, the children perform in plays, do dabke<sup>1</sup>, and sing expressive songs. The most prominent practices include communicating with parents and inviting them to attend the kindergarten events. However, the participants added that there are challenges that hinder the teachers-parents cooperation in this regard. Such challenges include: the reluctance of some parents to allow children—especially the female children—to participate in public events. Such a reluctance is usually attributed to cultural or social reasons.

These findings are consistent with the findings reached by Altamirano and Bayron (2017). The latter researchers added that holding exhibitions and open day activities are considered effective means for identifying the gifted children and letting them stand out. Such effectiveness increases when engaging parents and community institutions in such exhibitions and open day activities.

Based on the study's results, it was found that there is a discrepancy between the sampled teachers' willingness to do individual initiatives. For instance, some sampled teachers added that they made individual initiatives through communicating with external institutions for providing a gifted child with care. However, other sampled teachers added that they refrained from doing such individual initiatives. Some of those teachers attributed their refrainment to having work-related stress and other teachers attributed their refrainment to the lack of incentives. The latter result may be attributed to the absence of financial and moral incentives that encourage teachers to do individual initiatives to detect the gifted children and develop their gifts.

The researchers believe these results indicate that there is a need to promote a culture of community partnership in kindergartens. Such results indicate that there is a need to activate the roles of the female principals in building strategic relationships with the local institutions. They indicate that there is a need to provide teachers with organizational and training support to enable them to provide the gifted children with care in a systematic manner. Such support should be provided instead of relying only on individual efforts and seasonal events.

**Discussion related to the fifth question (The mechanisms suggested by the female kindergarten principals and teachers in order to strengthen the role of the kindergartens in providing the gifted children with care)**

Q.5. What are the mechanisms suggested by the female kindergarten principals and teachers in order to strengthen the role of the kindergartens in providing the gifted children with care?

The participants provided the researchers with several practical suggestions that contribute to improving the role of kindergartens in identifying the gifted children and providing them with care. Most of the participants added that the most prominent obstacle hindering the identification of the gifted children in kindergartens is represented in having a confusion between the gifted children and the children who show academic excellence. The latter result may be attributed to the lack of knowledge of those participants about the characteristics of giftedness among children. It may be attributed to the lack of training courses in kindergartens about the characteristics of giftedness among children.

It was found that several participants associate gift with the child's academic achievement level solely with overlooking the creative, artistic, or leadership characteristics shown by the gifted child.

The researchers attribute this result to the absence of a precise understanding for the meaning of the term (gift) and knowledge about the manifestation of gifts during the early childhood stage. The absence of such an understanding indicates that there is a need to carry out evident institutional interventions. Such interventions include: launching training programs and holding specialized workshops by the Ministry of Education. Such programs and workshops must target the kindergarten principals and teachers. They must provide kindergarten principals and teachers with knowledge on the meaning of the term (gift), the methods of identifying the gifted children, and the mechanisms for developing gifts in classroom. The participants also called for training the academic staff on the way of communicating with the members of the local community and the institutions supporting the gifted people in order to create a multi-level support network.

The most important suggestion made by the participants is represented in allocating an independent, permanent budget for supporting the programs targeting the gifted children in kindergartens. That should be done instead of deducting limited amounts of money from the general budget dedicated for activities. This suggested was made by several participants. The sampled teachers emphasized the importance of recruiting a gift coordinator within kindergartens. Such a coordinator must dedicate her effort for monitoring the children with exceptional abilities and setting plans for the activities that take their interests into consideration and develop their skills.

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<sup>1</sup> It is a traditional Levantine group dance. It is popular in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Jordan. It is often performed at celebrations and cultural events.

These findings are consistent with the findings reached by Basher and Nashaat (2019), Al-Jamal (2019), and Al-Ghamdi (2019). The latter researchers recommend creating a learning environment that meets the needs of the gifted students. As for Al-Jamal (2019), he who emphasized the importance of providing support by school principals for the programs targeting the gifted children. Al-Ghamdi (2019) found that the prominent challenges hindering the implementation of the programs providing care for gifted students include: the lack of the financial allocations, and the absence of a specialized staff.

Accordingly, the researchers believe that the activation of the programs targeting the gifted students requires the presence of the several elements. Such elements include: Awareness about theoretical meaning of terms, professional empowerment, and independent financial support. They also include: the integration between the role of the educational leadership, the role of teachers, the role of families, and the role of the community.

To sum up, conducting this study shall contribute to activating the role of principals in developing the gifts of the kindergarten children. It shall contribute to providing decision makers with knowledge about the role of principals in this regard. In addition, it shall contribute to filling a gap in the relevant literature, because there isn't any study that aimed to explore role of the female kindergarten principals in developing the gifts of the kindergarten children from the perspective of the female kindergarten principals and teachers.

## CONCLUSION

It was found that female kindergarten principals play a significant role in developing the gifts of the kindergarten children from the perspective of the female kindergarten principals and teachers. In the light of the results, the researchers recommend

- Holding workshops and training courses by the Ministry of Education for providing the kindergarten principals and teachers with knowledge on gifts-related issues, and the methods of identifying the gifted children.
- Creating a committee in each kindergarten in order to provide the gifted children with care and follow up the development of children's gifts

### Previous publication

The researchers confirm that the article hasn't been published before and isn't being reviewed for publication by any journal

### Ethical statement

The researchers informed the participants that their names shall remain confidential. They informed the participants about the goal of the study

### Declaration of respondent consent

The researchers obtained the approvals needed for conducting the study. They obtained a written consent from each participant. Such a consent suggests that the participants agrees to participate in this study

### Financial support and sponsorship

None

### Conflicts of interest

There isn't any conflict of interest

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