



مجلة كلية التربية . جامعة طنطا
ISSN (Print):- 1110-1237
ISSN (Online):- 2735-3761
<https://mkmgmt.journals.ekb.eg>
Volume (84) October 2021



Creative Pedagogy and Environment in the Saudi Arabian Preschool Settings: Teachers' Perspectives

Prepare

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Volume (84) Issue (Fourth) Part (I) October 2021

Abstract:

The study aimed to explore the creative pedagogy and environment among preschool teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Qualitative methods were applied, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observations, to explore the different perspectives held by a range of female preschool teachers in the KSA. The sample comprised of twenty early childhood practitioners from four different preschool settings, two private and two public schools. The analysis of the narrative data sources was undertaken using the Nvivo software, where all the meaningful components of data from interviews and observations was coded and assembled into themes. The researcher then followed the interview results with observation outcomes to counter and minimise any impact on the participants as well as the data. The information was then integrated in the interpretation of the overall results. Findings from both the interview and observation qualitative analysis processes indicated that teachers exposed their own understandings of creative pedagogy as they suggested several methods and pedagogical practices to be used in the classroom to enhance the young children's creativity. Surprisingly, teachers from private schools believed that the curriculum focuses on knowledge more than on skills, as the curriculum is more academically driven. On the other hand, the teachers in public schools considered the national curriculum as the best in supporting children's creativity. The majority of teachers, from both public and private sectors, have demonstrated their beliefs about the positive impact classroom structure has on creativity. Most teachers held the view that the classroom in the form of activity corners is the most supportive classroom environment for creativity.

Keywords: Creative Pedagogy, Creative Environment, Preschool Settings, Teachers' Perspectives.

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The study aimed to explore the creative pedagogy and environment among preschool teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Qualitative methods were applied, and data were collected through semi-structured interviews and observations, to explore the different perspectives held by a range of female preschool teachers in the KSA. The sample comprised of twenty early childhood practitioners from four different preschool settings, two private and two public schools. The analysis of the narrative data sources was undertaken using the Nvivo software, where all the meaningful components of data from interviews and observations was coded and assembled into themes. The researcher then followed the interview results with observation outcomes to counter and minimise any impact on the participants as well as the data. The information was then integrated in the interpretation of the overall results. Findings from both the interview and observation qualitative analysis processes indicated that teachers exposed their own understandings of creative pedagogy as they suggested several methods and pedagogical practices to be used in the classroom to enhance the young children's creativity. Surprisingly, teachers from private schools believed that the curriculum focuses on knowledge more than on skills, as the curriculum is more academically driven. On the other hand, the teachers in public schools considered the national curriculum as the best in supporting children's creativity. The majority of teachers, from both public and private sectors, have demonstrated their beliefs about the positive impact classroom structure has on creativity. Most teachers held the view that the classroom in the form of activity corners is the most supportive classroom environment for creativity.

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المستخلص:

هدفت الدراسة إلى استكشاف التربية الإبداعية والبيئة الإبداعية لدى معلمي مرحلة ما قبل المدرسة في المملكة العربية السعودية. ولقد اعتمد البحث على المدخل الكيفي وتم جمع البيانات من خلال المقابلات شبه المقيّدة والملاحظات شبه، لاستكشاف وجهات النظر المختلفة التي تتبناها مجموعة من معلمات رياض الأطفال في المملكة العربية السعودية. تألفت العينة من عشرين معلمة للطفولة المبكرة من أربعة أماكن مختلفة لمرحلة ما قبل المدرسة، ومدرستان خاصتان ومدرستان حكوميتان، تم إجراء تحليل مصادر البيانات السردية باستخدام برنامج NVivo ، حيث تم ترميز جميع مكونات البيانات ذات المغزى من المقابلات والملاحظات وتجميعها في موضوعات، أعقبها تتبع نتائج المقابلة مع نتائج الملاحظة لمواجهة وتقليل أي تأثير على المشاركين وكذلك البيانات، ثم تم دمج المعلومات في تفسير النتائج الإجمالية، ولقد أشارت النتائج أن المعلمين اقترحوا عدة طرق وممارسات تربوية لاستخدامها في الفصل لتعزيز إبداع الأطفال الصغار، كما أن المعلمين من المدارس الخاصة يعتقدون أن المناهج الدراسية تركز على المعرفة أكثر من التركيز على المهارات، حيث أن المنهج الدراسي موجه بشكل أكاديمي أكثر، من ناحية أخرى ، اعتبر المعلمون في المدارس الحكومية أن المناهج الوطنية هي الأفضل في دعم إبداع الأطفال، وقد أظهر غالبية المعلمين، من القطاعين العام والخاص، معتقداتهم حول التأثير الإيجابي لهيكل الفصل الدراسي على الإبداع، ويعتقد معظم المعلمين أن الفصل الدراسي في شكل زوايا النشاط هو البيئة الصفية الأكثر دعمًا للإبداع.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التربية الإبداعية، البيئة الإبداعية، ما قبل المدرسة،

تصورات المعلمين.

Research Background

Research has shown that creativity can have a huge impact on people (Robinson 2001; Craft 2002) and that in fact all children possess it. Creativity has a place of importance in educational curriculums of other countries, such as the UK, Jordan, the USA and countries like Malaysia and Korea have started to consider its importance and effect on childhood education. Whilst Saudi Arabia's education system has evolved and undergone some changes over the last 50 years, it has mainly been about access to education, where shifts have occurred in societal norms, more women have started accessing education and have also entered the workforce, which in most cases this would not have happened due to traditional norms.

Childhood education provision in Saudi Arabia has increased in the last thirty years and interest in this field is much greater than before. Typically it is women who enter the field of teaching, in particular preschool. Women have naturally opted for roles that do not conflict with their natural roles as responsible homemakers and have entered into fields such as humanities, social science and education. This is also the case for some European countries like Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the UK (Al Rawaf and Simmons 1991; Peeters 2007).

In 2005, Saudi preschools saw the introduction of a curriculum framework for teachers, known as the SLC which came with a support guide referred to as the Teacher's Guide and this is still actively being used. The SLC framework is viewed as a reliable source containing all key information to enable teachers to deliver their lessons and is applied by all public preschools and some private ones. In the case of the latter, they tend to partially adopt the SLC whilst paying greater attention to achievement on academic subjects. Despite these improvements, creativity as a concept has not been formally adopted.

Changes to the pre-school curriculum have been on the governmental agenda and the preschool curriculum has undergone some reform through a specially commissioned project aiming to deliver an advanced preschool curriculum and professional

development for practitioners (Tatweer, 2016). A key development of the commissioned project was to develop what is termed as the Preschool Developmental Standards, which allows teachers some flexibility to tailoring education to the individual needs of a child. However, creativity was not considered by this project and it is not on any educational plan for development in the KSA.

Purpose of the Research

The aim of this research is to explore the different perspectives of creativity in terms of the two following questions:

1. What do preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia perceive a creative pedagogy to be?
2. What perceptions do preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia have about the role of the school environment in promoting creativity?

In order to answer the questions, it was necessary first to collect narrative data, through the use of interviews and observations. The three research questions demanded an interpretive, qualitative, analytical focus. Views on creativity as perceived by preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia were categorised and organised. For the general principles involved in explaining creativity and the creative pedagogical practices in the school environment, the researcher based them on two concepts; ‘everyday’ creativity and ‘little c’ creativity (Craft, 2003; Craft, 2005; Beghetto and Kaufman, 2007; Kaufman and Beghetto, 2009; Richards, 2009). The researcher also looked to the work of many authors, including Cremin et al. (2006), Craft et al. (2012), Desailly (2012) and many others in the field of childhood education. All have been used to develop the researcher’s insight about the concept and underpinning the whole research.

Theoretical Framework

Craft (2005) explained the relationship between pedagogy and creativity based on a report by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) as the inclusion of suitable and justifiable professional decisions about how teaching is undertaken and how learning is nurtured. This also includes both teaching for creativity and teaching creatively. To elaborate on creative teaching, this is concerned with the teacher’s practice,

whereas teaching for creativity concentrates on how to incorporate different methods of teaching designed to promote and develop young learners' individual creative behaviours.

Jeffrey and Craft (2004) offered three suggestions for analysing the relationship between teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. The first suggestion is that teachers who work creatively apply aspects of both creative teaching and teaching for creativity. The second idea is that teaching for creativity may emerge naturally from teaching situations when it was not necessarily intended and, finally, they assumed that teaching for creativity is more likely to transpire in a creative teaching setting.

Brinkman (2010) believed that it is important to be able to teach or facilitate people to be creative and felt that it is a task which is neglected. He argued that if teachers taught creatively, it would not only keep them motivated and interested in their work, but would also act as a mechanism to keep learners interested. Many teachers, for example, are satisfied with the standards of their lessons, especially where they observe progress and that achievement in learning has taken place. Brinkman stressed that one can teach with a view to supporting one's students to achieve but, at the same time, students can also be taught how to be more creative in their work.

Teaching Creatively

Many studies have confirmed that the teacher has a key role in establishing a classroom context that facilitates creative thinking (Craft et al., 2007; Karwowski et al., 2007; Chin & Hui, 2010; Piffer, 2012). Researchers have confirmed that teachers who are encouraged to empower all children to develop and reach their greatest potential do so by fostering and nurturing children into creative ways of thinking, allowing them the space to explore, experiment and question things. Most of these suggested practices are believed to enable children to live more creative lives (Karwowski et al., 2007).

Similarly, Houtz (2003) supposed that it was important for teachers to be trained to identify and support creative thinking among all children. Furthermore, He asserted that this recognition,

support and promotion of creative thinking should be made available to every child. Consequently, teachers have to realise that understanding creativity will lead to the acceptance and appreciation of creativity in children. This acceptance is important because it will help children to develop their creative thinking (Mayesky, 2003). Prentice (2000) has emphasised the need for creative teachers to show curiosity as well as for them to participate in children's activities, thereby allowing themselves to be open and accessible to being receptive to the ideas and thoughts of the children. Prentice further advocated the use of flexible and creative pedagogical styles to nurture creativity within children. Jeffrey and Craft (2003) recommended that teaching creatively should involve the use of imaginative approaches and ensuring learning is both interesting and effective. It is known that teachers in preschool education are generally aware of and are in charge of the activities offered to children. They are also familiar with the way in which children think and interact (Eason et al., 2009).

Mayesky (2003) has also stressed that it is not easy for teachers to determine creativity and history is full of examples of creative people who were not recognised for being exceptional in any way during their school years and were not appreciated by the adults around them. For example, Thomas Edison, the inventor, was described as 'stupid' by his teacher but later, through his work, proved to be quite the opposite. Albert Einstein, the theoretical physicist, was not able to speak until he reached the age of four and did not begin to read until he reached the age of seven. Despite a slow start in developing his communication skills and academic ability, Einstein excelled and managed to leave a prominent mark in history through his achievements in the field of science (Torrance, 1965).

Robinson (2001) went further and supposed that schools kill creativity. He justified his view with two reasons: the first he put forward is the traditional classification of science and arts in education, and the second is the relationship between education and the economy. He further asserted that the majority of educational systems place science subjects, such as mathematics and science, at

the top of the pyramid, whilst arts and humanities are generally placed at the bottom. Although this opinion was published 15 years ago, some recent studies demonstrate that this situation continues to exist in the Saudi Arabian educational system (Almoqbel, 2014; Aljabreen and Lash, 2016). Change is likely to occur in Saudi Arabia, especially with respect to the preschool curriculum. Attempts to bring reform are in the making and this is likely to happen on a national level.

Bartel (2014) supported the idea of having autonomy and the opportunity to decide about what feels important. If the opportunity to make choices is taken away from children as well as their autonomy over their ideas and actions, it will have a negative impact on their motivation to be creative or continue with the task. Bartel believed that if children are given excessive direction or their choices are limited, this not only distances them from the learning, but also contributes to their being uninterested in completing the work.

The other issue is considering arts subjects to be essential in the development of creativity. Many studies confirm arts subjects as being essential in the development of creativity (Prentice et al., 2007; Riga & Chronopoulou, 2012). The views of others show that creativity should not be determined in a particular subject; rather, creativity is a way of thinking based on the method of problem solving, which can be applied through all subjects (Mayesky, 2003; Craft et al., 2007). Sharp (2004) noted that this does not eliminate the importance that arts have in the development of creativity and it should not be limited to these topics alone; otherwise, there is a possibility that it will reduce children's opportunities for creativity.

Teaching for Creativity

The teaching for creativity principles as revealed by the NACCCE (1999) are that teachers are expected to empower young people to believe in their own creative identity, to recognise creative abilities in young people and to nurture creativity by developing aspects such as curiosity. Teachers should also identify gaps and develop their own understanding and knowledge of creative processes that enhance creative development, as well as providing

additional opportunities to be more creative. All of this can be made possible, firstly by making teaching and learning more relevant and secondly by encouraging ownership of learning, followed thirdly by handing back control to the learner and, finally, encouraging children by inspiring them to make innovative contributions (Jeffrey & Craft, 2003).

There are many studies in the literature recommending a specific pedagogical practice or set of practices in order to enhance creativity in children. Claxton and Lucas (2004) proposed that the teachers who are creative and confident are those who tend to allow room for the unexpected to happen in their classrooms or lessons. Research carried out in Hong Kong by Cheung (2010) analysed what effects creative movement activities had on fostering children's creative ability and the teachers' perceptions of those activities. The movement activity is a physical-based activity highlighting essential movements and their differences. Cheung's research involved three Hong Kong kindergartens in which the creative movement activity was applied and sought to investigate children's creativity. Their research results revealed that children's movement developed more varied reactions, surprising their teachers. Frustrations that the Hong Kong early years teachers experienced were based upon the lack of the necessary skills in trying to foster children's creativity. Another research was carried out in China by Lin (2011) concerning how creativity could be fostered through education and attempted to establish a conceptual framework of creative pedagogy. The findings of this research suggest a three-element framework of creative pedagogy: to provide much more practice towards improving creativity through teaching, to cover the aspect of creative learning which was overlooked in the past and to present an alternative explanation in view of certain arguments about teaching creatively.

Bartel (2014) also shed light on certain methods which promote and inspire creativity. The suggestions are detailed below:

- Allow for practice – it has been suggested to allow time within lessons for early mistakes to take place, to ensure that they are not mistaken for creative ideas.

- Allow involvement with materials and processes – having the scope to have enough practice with resources has the potential to lead to a final product which is creative.
- Allow opportunities for students to think about processes rather than focusing on the end product. If the end product is revealed with a view to assisting in the explanation of a matter, there is a risk of bypassing creativity. To enable students to think about the creative process, allow them to question things thoroughly before providing the answers. By allowing them to question independently, we allow them the opportunity to readily receive the answers for which they are looking.
- Consider the tone of your voice and how you respond to students' ideas – if children are expected to be confident, they require a lot of encouragement and reassurance, as well as praise. When they initiate ideas, they have a tendency to fall into self-doubt about their suggestions or ideas.
- Make reference to familiar things and avoid out-of-the ordinary concepts. When choosing topics for lessons, refer to common experiences and issues with which children will be familiar.
- Consider answering questions with questions. Children tend to be very inquisitive and often ask for ideas related to their work. Be prepared to ask a lot of questions and give them reassurance to increase their confidence in being able to explore alternative ways of doing things or coming to a conclusion.

It could be argued that most of Bartel's ideas are practical pedagogical approaches which can be used with young children in their classrooms in order to promote creativity.

Research Design

Research methodology

This research is based on an interpretive methodology as it is directed at understanding the phenomenon from an individual's perspective, investigating interactions among individuals as well as looking at the historical and cultural contexts that people inhabit. This research is qualitative in nature and the purpose of conducting qualitative research is to provide a better understanding of a situation or a subject as confirmed by Denzin and Lincoln (2003).

Research sample

Teachers are considered as invaluable sources from whom relevant information can be gathered and then be purposefully contributed to the research. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) confirmed that it is possible to learn something from almost any given case or situation. However, there needs to be a well thought out strategy for selecting the sample and this should be defined before implementing the research. Therefore, the sample of the research was selected to match the purpose and the theoretical framework of the research, taking into account what was practical. Four schools took part in the research, including the twenty teachers within those schools, have been categorised with codes to ensure anonymity and allow for clearer analysis.

Research Methods

By choosing the interpretive paradigm, interpretivist knowledge is required to answer the research questions. This type of knowledge and information is believed to be acquired best through the use of interviews and observations (Scotland, 2012). It is worth noting that these two procedures were acceptable to the interviewees/schools and they were planned to enable the researcher to gain insight into what the preschool teachers thought and believed about creativity

Interview

The researcher applied a semi-structured interview to fit in with the objectives and the methodology of the research. This type of interviewing is considered by many researchers to be one of the most appropriate methods for the interpretive paradigm (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Scotland, 2012). The nature of semi-structured interviews is that interviewees are usually asked an initial question, which may well lead into another question. Whilst ensuring that key pieces of information were collated the researcher also allowed the interviewees to expand upon their comments so as to achieve as much personal insight as possible. The interview questions were established according to the theoretical framework of the research, where the researcher had an outline of the questions, which were partially structured. This left the researcher further opportunity to

ask any additional questions as and when necessary. This also provided more breadth to the data.

On the basis of a semi-structured approach, the researcher set up the interview in three stages.

Stage 1: Identifying the interview outline

Stage 2: Conducting the interview

Stage 3: Organising and analysing the collated data

Observations

An unstructured observation was conducted in order to triangulate the information to answer the research questions. One observation was carried out for each of the participating teachers in their usual classroom locations. It is worth mentioning that the researcher has worked as a ‘supervisor of field training’ for four years in a childhood department, in the Faculty of Education at King Saud University. Field training is a compulsory requirement for any teaching undergraduate and this takes place in the fourth academic year of the teacher training courses. As an experienced observer of field training, the researcher has acquired certain essential skills, such as observing and recording events, providing constructive feedback to trainee teachers, as well as monitoring the behaviours and activities of children and adults.

The researcher had three main aspects to concentrate on during observation, those are:

- the classroom layout and structure
- the type of activities that took place in the classes
- the interactions between teachers and children in the classroom

In addition, some general information was noted about the school environment, all in relation to creativity. The researcher believed that any additional information would help in providing a better understanding of the subject matter.

Observations also went through similar stages as that of the interviews, in order to be applied in this research:

Stage 1: Identifying the observation outline

Stage 2: Conducting the observations

Stage 3: Organising and analysing the observational notes

Results of the Research

Teachers' views of creative pedagogical practices

This section of the results explores preschool teachers' views concerning the creative pedagogical practices applied in their classrooms. The results are divided into two categories: teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. Teaching creatively is associated with a teacher's attributes and approaches to making learning more interesting and effective. Teaching for creativity is related to children's creative development. Both categories were explored to identify whether they supported the notions of 'everyday' creativity and 'little c' creativity or suppressed them. The two notions are trying to convey that even though individuals may not be aware of it, most have the potential to be creative in different domains of their lives. Creativity can be seen in small actions and is not limited to anyone who is talented or particularly good at art. Rather, creativity can occur in all the everyday experiences in life.

An NACCCE report (1999) acknowledged that a relationship existed between the two strands: teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. They identified that teaching for creativity involves teaching creatively. They further distinguished that young people's creative abilities are most likely to be developed in an atmosphere in which the teacher's creative abilities are properly engaged (NACCCE, 1999). Jeffery and Craft (2004) asserted a comparable view, in which they noted the associated differences between creative practice and practice that fosters creativity. In creative practice, teachers are generating original and inspiring ideas and working out methodologies for how to engage with children. Comparatively, when addressing practice which fosters creativity, this is about the attention teachers give to making sure the child's creative capability is explored and stretched by encouraging and allowing free thought and expression and ensuring that their ideas or expressions are not suppressed in any way (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004; Brinkman, 2010).

For the purpose of this part, the results are presented under two categories, as they emerged from the data:

Category 1 - Teaching creatively (teachers as creative practitioners)

Category 2 - Teaching for creativity (pedagogical practices)

This part, therefore, addresses the following research question:

What do preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia perceive a creative pedagogy to be?

4.2.1 Category 1 - Teaching creatively (teachers as creative practitioners)

Creativity in the classroom depends on the teacher and how she delivers the information creatively (Pr S3).

The data revealed that fifteen of the twenty teachers across both types of schools felt that a teacher's own creative ability is an important factor for teaching creatively and that a creative ability is a vital skill to possess in order to establish creativity in the classroom and instil it within the children. Seven of the 15 teachers considered the teacher's creativity to be the ability to deal with the unexpected during the teaching day. They reflected upon a teacher's creativity as being her flexibility in taking advantage of situations in a positive and flexible manner to support children's creativity.

My personal opinion is that creativity depends on the teacher's ability to innovate and to adapt to any condition and to be able to create something from nothing (P H1).

The other eight teachers considered the creative practitioner to be a teacher who is able to attract children's attention and raise their interest during the school day by using new and interesting teaching practices.

Teacher's creativity is, her methods and skills in teaching is what is important in order to achieve creativity with children. It is her methods and how she delivers the idea to the children (Pr A2).

Both considerations are valued and show the awareness which exists among teachers about how important it is for the teachers themselves to be creative whilst teaching young children. This view is supported by Desailly (2012), who claimed that when teachers understand their own creative ability with children and are able to demonstrate this to them, only then are they in a position to facilitate their progress and be able to unlock the creative potential in children

and further support them to excel to their fullest. According to Cheung and Leung (2013), teachers work from their own conditioned experiences and beliefs and these essentially play a vital role in their decision making about how they plan, teach and assess students and, further, how they judge student outcomes. Eason et al. (2009), in their research concerning creativity in public and private schools, found that teachers who considered themselves as being very creative equally assessed their own learners as being similar. The NACCCE (1999) reported that teachers cannot develop the creative abilities of their pupils if their own creative abilities are suppressed.

During this research, some of the questions posed to teachers were centred on the teachers' views regarding the curricula they were following at the time the research was being conducted. They were asked whether the curricula they were following could easily support or accommodate creativity in everyday activities within their respective schools. The data showed that teachers' ideas directly reflected the differences between the two sectors in relation to creativity in the curriculum. This led to the variation of beliefs between teachers from both sectors.

The data representing the teachers' opinions from the private schools regarding the curriculum in relation to creativity showed that the International Curriculum adopted in the two private preschools focused more on knowledge than on practical skills:

The curriculum focuses on the knowledge more than on practical skills (Pr S1).

It was clear from the data that the teachers from private schools were overwhelmed by the pressure imposed upon them and often felt burdened by the large volume of information they needed to comprehend in order to teach the children. They felt this prevented or hindered them from being able to be creative practitioners.

The curriculum is a very intense one and time is limited. We are restricted by time and need to cover many subjects. The only solution if we want to support creativity in children is by omitting and amending things in the curriculum so that we can allow some time to work on that (Pr S2).

This result was supported by the observational data which were collated from the two private schools. The data demonstrated that six of the ten teachers observed seemed to be overwhelmed with the content and did not appear to have time to provide any additional activity other than the ones planned and regulated by the curriculum. The observed lessons included classes on key academic subjects, such as mathematics, science and phonics. During the observations, the researcher noted that most of the subjects taught in the private classrooms involved more rigid learning and the memorisation of material. The observations also revealed that some teachers were in a rush to complete tasks; they did not allow enough time for the children to respond to questions and jumped in quite quickly with their answers or feedback. They also imposed lots of rules and instructions, as well as using rote learning methods involving lots of reciting and repetition of information in chorus, either with the whole class or with part of the class. These disciplines or practices might give an indication of the issues that teachers in private settings are facing because of curricular pressures and the volume of information that is expected to be delivered to children. This outcome shows a conflict with the research of Eason et al. (2009), which examined the differences in teachers' perspectives in both public and private schools in the US state of Tennessee. The researchers found that there was a tendency for teachers from private schools to give higher credit or value for creativity to their students. ~This seems to contradict the current result that has been demonstrated by teachers' views from private preschools in this research:

I believe that the schools which follow the International Curriculum in teaching children subjects such as reading, science and maths are actually not meeting the children's needs, nor helping or supporting them to become creative or innovative (Pr A3).

In contrast to the results from the private schools, the data showed that the teachers from the public schools were relatively satisfied with and accepting of the manner in which they delivered material to students during the school day:

The curriculum is very suitable for creativity. I think that the curriculum is very suitable for developing the children's creative skills and capacities (P N3).

Ten lessons were observed in public classrooms and most of the teachers exhibited satisfaction and contentment with their roles. All of them were involved in preparing activities in advance and supervising children during the course of the day. Sufficient pre-planning and organising of work and activities impacted positively on their physical and mental states, as they were visibly relaxed during the teaching day. None of the teachers from the public schools showed any signs of panic, tiredness or distress during the course of the observations.

Another interesting point which emerged from the data is that a few of the teachers from the private preschools believed that a creative teacher is still capable of supporting creativity in children even if the curriculum is restrictive. Meaning that even with a less creative or creativity-free curriculum, there is still potential for the teacher to be creative. Some teachers from the private preschools believed that no matter the extent to which the curriculum supported creativity, it was of no benefit unless the teacher was able to be creative:

The curriculum is very direct, very ordinary and boring sometimes, it is upon the teacher to make it innovative and interesting. I consider teaching like the sea waves, sometimes they can be high, sometimes low and in teaching we do not want to swim against the waves or we are going to drown and this is the technique that stimulates the child rather than repeating ourselves the whole day, regardless of the fact that the child has already lost interest (Pr S1).

In addition to the previous view, the data demonstrated that those teachers further felt that the qualifications or experience held by a teacher did not necessarily have to be relevant to teaching creatively. Teachers believed that an individual who had the right set of skills and who understood working with children using appropriate methods could just as easily be a creative educator:

There are teachers in this field who do exactly what the curriculum states without having their own input and there are others who go

the extra mile in order to ensure their special unique touch, input and influence is applied (Pr A5).

An example of creative teaching without any influence from the surrounding environment can be demonstrated in the example of the teacher referred to as (Pr A2). In her observed lesson, she delivered a science lesson from her regular classroom. She used an experimental technique in her science lesson to teach the children the benefits of using wheels. The children were put into small groups and asked to explore ways in which to use wheels.

They asked a lot of questions, explored many different possibilities to find the best solution and generated some very interesting and creative ideas. The teacher simply put the idea to the children, without the need for any gadgetry, and allowed them to explore without any pressure upon relating it to outcomes. She encouraged them throughout, using verbal praise as well as non-verbal cues, such as showing approval by nodding and making positive facial expressions. She motivated the children by allowing them to answer at their own pace, acknowledged all their responses and did not reject even the simplest of their ideas. The influence of her openness and power to inspire through her creative teaching approach was an influential factor in such a positive lesson, carried out with only a few resources.

This next respondent went a step further, holding the view that following the curriculum rigidly without adding a personal creative touch was a sign that the teacher had limited capabilities:

If the teacher is not creative, then creativity will not manifest in the children. For me as a teacher, if I just follow the curriculum accordingly without putting my own creative touch, then I will not see any improvement in the children's abilities (Pr A5).

Teachers from one of the public school settings acknowledged that there were restrictions imposed on them by the school management team, whether by the head teacher or by the head of the preschool department. Teachers reflected upon how restricted they felt,

explaining that these restrictions created an obstacle that prevented them being creative:

We are instructed to plan daily and restricted by it, which I think is quite discouraging for the teachers and prevents them from being creative (P H4).

A noticeable aspect is that most of the classrooms observed in the 'H' Public Preschool were similar in their resources and classroom content. There was nothing distinguishing the teachers other than the way in which each dealt with the children. This might be indicative of the restrictions imposed by the management team over this particular setting, in which the teachers are expected to plan together and adhere to their lesson plan. However, in comparison with the 'H' Public Preschool, teachers from the 'N' Public Preschool had additional corners in their classrooms. These corners gave teachers the opportunity to create their own unique corner related to the subject matter taken from the teaching units in the curriculum. This might reveal some interesting information about the level of flexibility teachers have in the 'N' Public Preschool which helps them to express their creative ability.

Teaching for creativity (pedagogical practices)

Many strategies and pedagogical practices were suggested by the preschool teachers in order to support creativity in children in the classroom. This part of the results presents the second category of the teachers' views on creative pedagogical practices: teaching for creativity. Craft (2005:41) defined pedagogies as 'encompassing, appropriate and defensible professional judgments about how teaching is undertaken and learning nurtured'.

From analysing the data, the results revealed that the teachers believed in a number of pedagogical practices which could enhance creativity within children. The practices are all explored in the next section and a connection is made to establish whether the suggested strategies play any role in the application of the everyday creativity concept in the preschool settings involved in this research. The suggested pedagogical practices which were viewed as promoting children's creativity were:

- considering children's ideas and interests;

- the use of questioning;
- having a range of resources;
- linking theory with real life
- praising and rewarding

The creative school environment

The classroom, with its corners and activities, is the best place for creativity. In my opinion, the children are more creative while experimenting and exploring in the corners, as it is the time where they can be free to try different activities and learn in different ways too (P N1).

The physical environment of a school establishment is a prime source of stimulation for both creative pupils and teachers alike (Barnes, 2004). When practitioners were asked about their views on a creative school environment, there were differing opinions. Some held the belief that creativity is best exhibited and thrives in a specific location, whilst others were of the view that no specific place is necessary to encourage creativity. This section presents both ideas in some detail to signify teachers' perceptions of a creative school environment.

This part, therefore, addresses the following research question:

What perceptions do preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia have about the role of the school environment in promoting creativity?

The data showed that the majority of the teachers (three-quarters of the participants) supported the layout of the classroom in the form of activity corners as being the best structure for promoting creativity in the school. Their perceptions stressed clearly that the variety of tools and resources provided in such classroom arrangements enhanced the learning environment. Their justification for this choice was related to the freedom that the children have in this stimuli-enriched environment:

Creativity is supported in a very good way in the corners. We renew the contents of the corners every week; the materials, tools, educational games and stories, in order to support creativity. We used to add new educational tools and every year we tend to update from the previous year and omit the tools that did not meet the children's needs... In my opinion, the corners are the best suited

element in the curriculum, as it has the flexibility needed to trigger creativity (P H2).

Creativity is more noticeable in children while working in the activity corners, the art and craft corner, the exploring corner and the building corner (P N3).

Data showed that the teachers from private schools shared the same desire to have a classroom with a layout that included activity corners, which they did not have in their present setting. They too believed that this layout was the best place for children's creativity to be supported and enhanced. Having observed both the private and public school settings, one aspect that was prevalent in the private schools was that all the main classrooms were arranged with tables and chairs, and the set-up for seating was either as rows or arranged in clusters for the facilitation of group work. Interestingly, there was no provision for either a carpeted area or somewhere for children to engage in alternative activities. On the contrary, all the classrooms observed in the public schools were organised and managed in the form of activity corners.

The corners area is the most suitable area for creativity as it provides the children with different materials to choose from. The children have the freedom to choose where they want to work and the materials that they enjoy using. In my opinion, the corners are the most suitable for creativity for children as it gives different choices but with freedom (Pr A4).

I wish our classroom could be in the form of educational corners and have all the materials and tools to support the child's creativity (Pr S4).

If I am to support creativity, then I need special corners to offer different types of free activities that run every day so that the child who likes art can do art and the child who likes physical activities can do those too (Pr S5).

I wish to have educational corners within the classroom where the child can learn creatively through play and exploring rather than being restricted, sitting down at a table and looking at the board. The children tend to learn through enjoyment once they have the freedom, and once the teacher recognises each child's abilities, she can then give the right support for creativity (Pr S3).

Furthermore, the data indicated that some teachers held a view about some specific corners, more than any other area in the classroom, as being the best places to support children's creativity. Most teachers' ideas were confined to three particular corners: the art area, the building area and the exploring area, in which creativity can be supported.

Most of the children tend to show creativity more in art and building blocks or Lego when they produce some unique pieces (P N2).

Creativity is generally more noticeable in children while working in the activity corners but mostly in the art and craft corner, exploring corner and the building corner (P N3).

I would say the corners and especially the art corner, where the children spend time working freely using different tools and materials to produce whatever they want (P N4).

Another view which emerged from the data was represented by one-quarter of the respondents, which was that creativity is not limited to any subject, place or time in the school. This means that it can take place anywhere within the setting or even outside the school premises. This clearly shows that creativity is not just linked to the arts but can exist anywhere. It might be important to note that this view was represented by the teachers from public schools only.

I do not think there is a specific area suitable for creativity, as all places in the schools are suitable, even the playground outside. It is possible to be creative in all areas. Creativity is not limited just in art as some people think, but it can be implemented in nursery from the beginning of the day until the end (P H2).

When a child is creative, he/she is creative in everything. Creativity is not limited to a specific place, area or subject. I think it is wrong to associate creativity to arts, as some people do or believe (P H3).

I think that the curriculum needs to support creativity in all subjects, not just be limited to the corners session. Creativity is not limited to one subject or one specific time during the school day (P N4).

Creativity is not limited to any age or subject. Creativity can take place in every domain of life (P H5).

In the HMIe report (2006), it was established that creativity is not restricted to any one subject or area of the school; rather, it is possible in all areas and in all subjects. However, this does not mean that the potential for creativity will by any means be identical in these areas.

Some of the teachers' views match well with the findings in the report above and with the assertions made by Duffy (2006) that creativity is possible everywhere. The teachers also expressed their views about the varying levels of creativity children possess and hinted at some factors that may influence those levels.

All the areas and corners within the school are suitable for innovation and creativity and it all depends on the child in terms of his/her abilities and upbringing but there are areas where some children are more creative than others, depending on their abilities (P H1).

I consider creativity as being everywhere, but of course it depends on the child and where his/her creative abilities lie. Some children shine in a physical sense, some on an intellectual level, it does differ depending on the child's personality (Pr A2).

The data revealed that, when describing the best environment for creativity, freedom and flexibility were found to be two common concepts among teachers across both sectors. Freedom in the school

environment is the most important factor in the manifestation of creativity, according to the data. Freedom in the learning environment promotes special moments in which children may just do something quite spectacular, and these ‘moments’ could well be a result of having the freedom to act without restriction (ERIC, 2006). The data also suggested that teachers believed that, by having some degree of flexibility and freedom within the classroom, it somehow allowed for generating more creativity in the class. They believed this was a key factor in the child’s creative development. It was felt that because children had an unrestricted environment, it gave them better surroundings within which to perform more creatively. Creativity is linked with freedom, the child discovers, explores, develops their abilities and their creative capacities by themselves (P N3).

The children tend to learn through enjoyment and when they have the freedom. Once the teacher recognises each child’s abilities, she can then give the right support (Pr S3).

In my opinion, it [having activity corners] is the best classroom condition children can learn in, as it combines exploring, enjoying themselves, having freedom and playing. It is much better than the traditional classroom (P N5).

In my opinion, the children are more creative while experimenting and exploring in the corners, as it is the time where they can be free to try different activities and learn in different ways too (P N1).

According to the data, flexibility was the other concept related to creativity in the school environment. For teachers to be able to provide the freedom necessary for children to be creative, they themselves need to be flexible too. The data reflect ideas about the teachers’ own skills and capabilities, as well as the restrictions or freedom allowed by their schools in order to have autonomy. This can have an impact on what material is delivered and how it is delivered to children.

Every teacher has their own personal skills and capabilities that can be applied, but how much they are restricted makes a difference in supporting children's creativity. When a teacher has a sense of creativity and good capabilities, she needs to be flexible in order to create a positive environment for the children (P N2).

Creativity is to deal with unexpected things when teaching children, in the sense that the teacher has to be flexible to be creative in the classroom (P H2).

It is worth stressing that having flexibility does not suggest teaching without an organised structure or plan. It is accepted that a certain degree of choice is necessary in promoting and inspiring creative play. In contrast, an excess of choice can result in having the opposite effect, which goes against many prevalent creativity theories. This is also an opinion held by Craft (2008), which is that having a considerable amount of structure limits children in their self-determination. Moreover, Craft takes the standpoint that a large degree of freedom can be challenging and that a model could support the organising of children's ideas. It is difficult to strike the right balance when facilitating lessons which have both structure and are able to accommodate a certain level of flexibility, allowing children more freedom. Managing this can be challenging as teachers have a plan in order for children to achieve outcomes and targets during the lesson and, if too much freedom is allowed or if it is not structured-in well, it could lead to a chaotic and pointless lesson. Therefore, when planning lessons, a considerable amount of strategy and skill is necessary in assessing how the two elements can be accommodated and managed to work together (Craft, 2008).

Observational data indicated that lessons that were observed in the public school classrooms were closer to achieving the required balance between strategy and skills than those lessons observed in classrooms in the private school settings. In most of the public school classrooms, the layout was viewed as more beneficial and suitable for children than the regular standard classrooms of the private schools. In addition, the amount of resources available for

children to use in the public schools was far greater than those provided in the private school classrooms. The observations also took note of the expectations and demands of the teacher's roles in both the private and public school provisions. The public school teachers were tasked with preparing activities in advance and supervising children during the course of the day, which is believed to have an impact on the teachers being in a relaxed state during the teaching day. However, in the private school settings, the teachers' roles in most of the observed classrooms were rather different. They were tasked with delivering a set quantity of information in relation to the subject being taught, whether it was for mathematics, science or phonics. They had no room or flexibility to allow for extra activities to support children's creativity.

Discussion of the Results

5.2 Teachers' views of creative pedagogical practices

What do preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia perceive a creative pedagogy to be?

Having considered different views on creativity among preschool teachers, the research noted a number of practices and activities believed to support creativity in children. The discussion relating to this second question is structured under two sub-headings: the first sub-heading is teaching creatively, and discusses the main findings concerning teachers' perceptions of their own creativity; the second is teaching for creativity, which discusses the most significant pedagogical practices and their related issues as suggested by the teachers.

Teaching creatively (teachers as creative practitioners)

In this part of the discussion, the data show two significant points which have some significant value in being discussed in detail. The first point concerns the teachers' own creativity and the second is the role the curriculum plays in supporting creativity in both public and private preschools.

The majority of teachers from both sectors (fifteen out of twenty teachers) stressed the importance of the teacher's own creative ability in order to teach creatively, and the impact this has on enhancing creativity in children. The teachers involved in the

research identified a creative teacher in two ways. Firstly, the creative teacher is one who can deal with unexpected situations in a positive and flexible manner. For instance, one of the teachers stated that ‘Creativity is to deal with unexpected things when teaching children, in the sense that teacher has to be flexible to be creative in the classroom’ (P H2). Five of the seven teachers who shared the same idea were from public preschools, which might reflect the environment in which both groups of teachers worked, in that they seem to have some flexibility and freedom to change their teaching plans according to the situation. This was noticeable in the public preschools during the observations, especially in the ‘N’ Public School, where teachers had the addition of an extra corner in their classrooms. This gave them the opportunity to create their own unique corner and tailor it in relation to the subject matter scheduled to be taught from each unit in the curriculum. This might reveal some of the flexibility teachers have in this school, which helps them to reach their creative ability.

The second way in which to identify a creative practitioner is the idea held by another group of teachers, who believed that the creative practitioner is one who is able to attract the children’s attention and raise their interest during the school day, such as by using new and interesting teaching practices. Four out of six teachers who adopted this idea were from private preschools. For instance, one teacher from a private preschool clarified: ‘I can attract and stimulate the children and I can fully engage with them, I don’t think everyone can do that, which makes me creative in my own way’ (Pr S1). In contrast, another teacher from the same private setting made it clear that the working conditions imposed on them left them with barely any chance to apply any ideas they had to improve creativity in the children. The teacher stated: ‘I always try to think about how I can attract the child’s interest and I try to implement the ideas in the classroom’ (Pr S4). She further added, ‘Unfortunately, I can’t apply every idea because of the heavy load I have’. This point is related to the impact a rigorous curriculum can have on teachers’ abilities to be creative. This point is discussed in more detail later in this section.

Two of the teachers held the view that a creative teacher is one who is able to attract children's attention when delivering information using new methods or is flexible in her delivery and able to change the teaching plan when necessary to tailor it to the children's interests and needs. For instance, one of the teachers believed that 'A teacher's creativity is her methods and how she delivers the idea to the children', later adding, 'Sometimes during the class I can come up with things that are not written in the plan to stimulate the children, for example, certain games or even having little chats with the children' (Pr A2).

The researcher believes that the two ways to identify a teacher's creativity suggested by the practitioners are as follows: a creative teacher is one who can deal with unexpected situations in a positive and flexible manner; and the creative teacher is able to attract the children's attention and raise their interest by using new and interesting teaching practices. Both ideas seem to complement each other, on the grounds that teachers who use innovative educational techniques in a flexible manner can raise children's interest and enthusiasm. Both views are valid and considered important in the literature. Various studies advocate that teachers who are dedicated and passionate about facilitating independent learning and growth in children will better support their learners by demonstrating a genuine interest and by showing respect and understanding for the students' work. This instils a sense of confidence deep within children to trust and manage their own learning and this is what the results emphasised (Craft, 2005; Cremin et al., 2006; Cremin et al., 2013). Flexibility within a lesson is a common characteristic when talking about teaching creatively (Cremin et al., 2006). Following attractive teaching methods and paying attention to pupils' interests are also considered to be important strategies when dealing with children (Craft, 2009).

There are various studies which support the idea of teachers and their own creative abilities and how those skills are considered and utilised in order to improve children's creativity. Teachers need to believe in their own creative ability and work with children on that basis (Desailly, 2012; Cheung & Leung, 2013). Eason et al.

(2009), in their research regarding creativity in public and private schools, confirmed that teachers who believe in their own creativity considered their students to be equally creative. The result of the current research showed that the teachers supported the view of the importance of the teacher's own creativity in promoting children's creativity. However, according to the data, the results did not show a relationship between this belief and the teachers' perceptions of a creative child. Perhaps this was because it was not the aim of the research to explore this kind of relationship.

The data showed that the curriculum followed by a school has an impact on the teachers' views in relation to creativity. The majority of the teachers interviewed confirmed that the curriculum plays a key role in the teacher's ability to perform creatively. However, the answers were completely different between teachers according to sector. The results showed that the majority of the teachers from public preschools were satisfied with the national curriculum, the SLC, in relation to creativity. According to the results, the public preschool teachers felt satisfied with their curriculum for the following reasons:

- it allows time for planning and implementing lessons comfortably;
 - it fits in with the needs of the children and their abilities;
- it also provides a variety of activities to support the individual differences between children.

These features are expected to help the creative development in children. It was clear from the observations that the teachers in the public preschools seemed content and satisfied with how their curriculum worked. They seemed comfortable in carrying out their roles and duties according to what the curriculum had specified and this was evident during the observations. The researcher could see how carefully teachers had adhered to the recommendations concerning the setting up of activities and how they managed their teaching day. Of those classrooms observed in the public schools, the researcher noticed that the teacher's roles were to prepare the activities in advance and to supervise children during the course of the day. The systematic planning in advance and getting activities organised early may well be factors contributing to the teachers

being comfortable and having a calm state of mind during the school day. Ordinarily, one can expect teachers to have a very hectic and possibly stressful day in a typical preschool setting. The researcher did not observe the teachers rushing to get activities arranged, nor did she see any signs of panic or distress in teachers trying to gather resources or manage last-minute shortfalls in their resource requirements for their classes. During the time of the observations, children had opportunities to choose between many different options of play and learning, according to their interests, abilities and mood. Children appeared to be content and free to move between the different corners and it was clear that they were given minimal instructions. The classrooms were rich in beneficial resources and materials, which gave children the variety they needed to find an activity that was suitable and interesting. All these aspects led the researcher to feel that the teachers promoted adequate opportunity for children to be creative.

In contrast, the majority of the teachers from the private preschools followed the International Curriculum. The focus with this curriculum is on academic subjects such as mathematics and science. Teachers expressed their dissatisfaction with the curriculum in respect of creativity. In their view, the curriculum, as currently structured, is not conducive to creative development, either for themselves or for the children, whom they considered were being driven too academically, focusing more on knowledge acquisition than on building other skills. The teachers from private schools complained about the pressure that was put on them, leaving them with hardly any opportunity to engage in any additional activities to support creativity in their classrooms. This result was evident at the time of the observations, whereby teachers in the private preschools presented as being overwhelmed by the content and did not appear to have time to provide any additional activities other than the ones planned and regulated by the curriculum. For instance, some teachers spoke of peers who were in a rush to complete tasks. Some teachers did not allow enough time for the children to respond to questions and jumped in very quickly with their answers or feedback. At other times, teachers moved away from students who

were still engaged in conversation with them and relocated to speak to other students in the classroom.

It could be argued that one of the reasons behind the strong interest or concern regarding academic subjects in private preschools in Saudi Arabia is wanting to meet parents' expectations. This is confirmed by one of the teachers:

In the private schools, the classrooms are big despite the fact that they focus on academic education instead of improving children's skills because they want to meet the parents' expectations and requirements (P H1).

One of the most related studies is Al-Sagrat and Abu As'ad's research (2015) about the influence a preschool curriculum can have on the development of creative thinking skills among children in Jordan. The research considered the curricula of both private and public preschools and explored whether the respective curricula had any influence on improving children's creative thinking skills and ability. The results were remarkable, in the sense that there were no findings to suggest that any important statistical differences existed between both groups of children concerning their creative thinking ability and self-efficacy. Furthermore, surprisingly, the curricula from both the public and private schools did not have any influence on creative thinking. These findings are in direct contrast with the results of the present research, which suggests that an influence from the curriculum does exist and has an impact on the creativity of children and teachers. That was evidenced across the two similar private preschools participated in this research.

Teaching for creativity (pedagogical practices)

Some teachers from both the public and private schools proposed a number of practices believed to be supportive of promoting creativity in children. Practitioners suggested the following pedagogical practices:

- considering the children's ideas and interests
- the use of questioning
- having a range of resources

- linking theory with real life
- praising and rewarding

Teachers' perceptions of the creative school environment

What perceptions do preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia have of the role of the school environment in relation to promoting creativity?

The most significant result to be discussed among teachers across both sectors in this section is having a preference for classrooms with the activity corners layout. Fifteen of the twenty teachers who participated in the research voiced their support for having activity corners in the classroom in order to create the best environment for the children's creative development. The results showed that even though many of their own classrooms did not have activity corners, several teachers from private schools supported having a classroom laid out in this way, believing that it is a good structure for enhancing children's creativity. Before going further into the discussion, it is important to clarify that teachers may have a range of different experiences from which they draw, which can have an impact on their approach to creativity.

During the observations, most of the classrooms in the private preschools were suitably furnished with tables and chairs facing a whiteboard. In the 'A' private setting, children had the opportunity for free play in the activity corners room once every few days according to a pre-set schedule. This frequency of exposure to the activity corners was set in a specific way because of the influence of the curriculum being followed by the school. It has been stated before that the private preschools are highly focused on the teaching of academic subjects, such as science, mathematics and phonics, and, therefore, pay less attention to creative play or general learning. On the other hand, observations in the public preschools showed that every single classroom was structured with an activity corners layout, where the children were offered far more access to a range of activities provided for them on a daily basis. The researcher saw this as helping to promote creativity in children more than the classroom structures available in the private school settings.

Teachers from the public settings demonstrated their overall satisfaction with the SLC in relation to creativity. Other teachers from the two private settings expressed their dislike of feeling under pressure induced by the rigid International Curriculum they were following. In their view, in following the structure of this curriculum, opportunities for providing activities for younger children within which to develop their creativity are reduced. A research conducted by Abdul-Haq and Al-Felfely (2014) in public and private preschools in Jordan examined the effect of learning corners on developing the creative thinking of preschool children by using the Torrance Test of Creative Thinking. Their research confirmed the positive impact activity corners can have on young children's creative thinking. The findings of the previous research support those of this research of teachers' preferences for classrooms in the form of activity corners to enhance creativity in children.

Another factor that teachers deemed as being beneficial in relation to an environment for supporting creativity was classroom size. Ten of the twenty teachers from both sectors emphasised the importance of the size of the classroom in order to better enhance creativity. For instance, one of the teachers emphasised that, 'In my opinion, the classroom is of a very good size and offers good varieties and the corners are very suitable for the children to get creative' (P H4). This was based on the concept that having more space would give young children the opportunity to move freely and would help the teacher to add more activities, materials and resources for the children to use. During the observations conducted for this research, classrooms in the private preschools were smaller than those in the public settings. This could be due to the content and structure of the classrooms. For instance, classrooms in public settings mainly consist of about seven activity corners. Each corner contains materials, tools and resources for the children to work with, in addition to a carpeted area in all classrooms. However, observations in the private schools revealed that the main contents of every classroom were tables, chairs and a whiteboard. This illustrates how much space children had in both sectors and might

explain the teachers' points of view concerning the importance of classroom size.

It could be said that the size of a classroom is not the only issue in providing an appropriate environment for creativity; attention and importance should also be given to the layout and content, which are believed to be guided by curriculum requirements. A teacher from one of the private preschools simplified the matter, stating,

I am fortunate because the size of my classroom is big. It is suitable for teaching but does not support creativity. I wish to have activity corners within the classroom where the children can learn creatively through play and exploring rather than being restricted, sitting down at a table or looking at the board (Pr S3).

The last point to be discussed in this section concerns a key result which emerged from the data, which was that creativity is not limited to a place, time or subject. This perception was held by at least one-quarter of the sample, all of whom were from one sector. Interestingly, this viewpoint was only put forward by teachers from the public preschools and was not mentioned by any teacher from the private sector. This might indicate that teachers' perceptions of creativity can be influenced by their work environment and the type of curriculum they follow in their preschool establishment. This might also go to explain why teachers from the private sector did not see creativity as a concept that could be implemented in every place, at any time or within any subject.

The above idea might be regarded as a reflection of the concept of everyday creativity, which is acknowledged by researchers to be an appropriate way to deal with creativity in children (Fumoto et al., 2012). Creativity is applied to everyday norms through the ways in which people problem-solve and how they are more innovative in the ways in which they express themselves and interact with their social and physical environments. Much more precedence is given to thinking and behaving more creatively, and it is deemed to be necessary for the well-being of society as a whole, as well as for the individual (Craft et al., 2007).

Recommendations for future research

The following recommendations are offered regarding related research that could be carried out in the field of creativity in preschool education in the future.

This research involved a detailed research of a specific number of schools and teachers in Riyadh, in Saudi Arabia. Looking at the possibility for future research, it will be important to establish the validity of the findings across a range of other preschool settings across wider parts of Saudi Arabia as well cover older stages of childhood education, beyond the preschool stage. Similar research across the KSA may give rise to creating a database with useful results concerning creativity that could be used to support creativity at all stages of public education and not just be limited to the stages of preschool. There may also be significant differences in the pedagogical practices for promoting creativity at primary and secondary school levels. Therefore, this could lead to developing curriculum changes for the higher stages of education to support the promotion of creative thinking in older children.

What the current research has succeeded in doing is to identify how creativity is perceived by teachers. This can be considered as a first step towards understanding the phenomena. Creativity is a wide concept that has many dimensions and can be affected by many factors, without further research into the impact of each factor on creativity in children, it might not be possible to fully understand the notion to support it in young children. For future research, it would be advantageous to look at the effects of everyday creativity on children's performance in preschool settings in Saudi Arabia.

If Saudi Arabia is to find its place in the international creative teaching and learning community perhaps some of the content of this research would be useful for ministers and policy makers to consider. Likewise, there could be some benefit in investigating different models of creativity for comparing standards in international education and examine them within the Saudi context, with the purpose of developing children's creative ability at preschool age.

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مجلة كلية التربية . جامعة طنطا

ISSN (Print):- 1110-1237

ISSN (Online):- 2735-3761

<https://mkmgmt.journals.ekb.eg>

Volume (84) October 2021



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