Gifted Education Policies and Practices across Three Ethiopian Cities

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Abstract: *Gifted education in Ethiopia has gained increasing policy attention through the 2022 Special Needs/Inclusive Education Guideline and the 2023 Revised Education and Training Policy. However, the provision of appropriate identification and educational services remains uneven, because of limited preparedness, inadequate identification procedures, scarce resources, and weak implementation of policy provisions. This study examined educators' perceptions of gifted education, focusing on its status, educators' knowledge, identification practices, educational services, and available programs. A mixed-methods survey design was employed. Quantitative data were collected from 920 teachers and school principals selected through systematic random sampling, while six participants were purposively selected for qualitative interviews. Data were collected using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and independent-samples t-tests, while qualitative findings were used to contextualize and explain the quantitative results. The findings revealed significant variations in educators' perceptions across the three cities, with educators in Mekele and Adama generally reporting more positive perceptions than those in Addis Ababa. Differences were also observed in educators' knowledge, views, and experiences regarding the identification and support of gifted learners. Identification practices were often inadequately organized, and available educational services did not consistently correspond to learners' needs. The findings further demonstrated a gap between policy provisions and their implementation in schools. The study concludes that effective gifted education requires context-sensitive approaches rather than a uniform national model. Strengthening teacher and school staff training, engaging families, developing fair and locally appropriate identification procedures, expanding quality educational programs and services, and translating policy commitments into effective classroom practices are essential to ensuring equitable opportunities for gifted learners in Ethiopia.*

***Key words**: Gifted and talented, Identification, Perception, Support, Policies, and Practice*

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Introduction

Although the historical focus of education in Ethiopia has largely been on expanding access for populations, such as children from low-income families and learners with disabilities, gifted, and talented education has lately gained more attention from policymakers. Important policy documents, including the 1994 Education and Training Policy, the 2022 Special Needs/Inclusive Education Guideline and the 2023 Revised Education and Training Policy acknowledge the learning needs of gifted students with special talents. There is a large gap between the promises of policy and practice in schools. Modern views indicate giftedness as a changing idea that can differ at different ages and in different cultures. In Ethiopia, however, finding learners has often depended mainly on academic scores and test results which may miss other types of talent such as creativity, leadership, artistic skill, and problem-solving ability. Teachers may then find it hard to spot learners when tests focus only on exam performance. In addition, limited funds, access to teacher training and the lack of clear and relevant ways to identify gifted learners cause big differences in how gifted and talented education is provided. This study looks at teachers' views and practices about gifted and talented education in three major cities - Addis Ababa, Adama and Mekele.

Background of the Study

Gifted and talented students are one of the critical yet neglected populations in education systems in general. Current gifted education programs accept that gifted students can have exceptional potential in various domains, ranging from intellectual or academic potential to artistic, leadership, creative, social, and any other forms of potential. However, the identification and development of such potential require the provision of educational opportunities, appropriate assessments, teachers' training, and conducive educational environments. High potential by itself does not mean high achievements and expertise development since the former is the result of educational intervention (Subotnik et al., 2011; Dai, 2020).

In Ethiopia, the development of gifted education took place in connection with the overall development of the country's education and inclusive education system. In historical terms, the priorities of educational policy and practice lay in the field of increasing access to educational institutions and meeting the needs of those groups of the population that had been historically excluded, including girls, disadvantaged children, children with disabilities, and others (UNESCO, 2020). Even though it was critical in terms of increasing educational equality, there was a little attention paid to exceptional students' needs. The perception of their ability to achieve success regardless of additional educational support might be considered a reason.

One notable achievement in terms of policy happened in the form of the Education and Training Policy of 1994 that acknowledged the existence of learners with *special talents and abilities*, along with learners who had disabilities (MoE, 1994). Although the inclusion of gifted learners in the national education policy is one major milestone, the policy does not provide adequate guidelines for the identification of gifted learners, differentiated instruction, development of their talents, and specialized educational services (Tirussew, 2005; Beyene, 2018).

The development of inclusive education policies gave a wider frame of reference to address learner diversity. For instance, the Special Needs/Inclusive Education Strategy of 2012 called for creating a flexible educational environment that can respond to varying needs of learners (MoE, 2012). Despite this, the application and focus of the policy was mainly on learners with disabilities while the specific educational needs of gifted learners such as enrichment, acceleration, advanced learning, and talent development received inadequate attention (Beyene, 2018). Also, the Master Plan for Inclusive Education for 2016-2025 emphasized inclusive classroom, teachers, and participation although without sufficient focus on gifted education (MoE, 2017).

Explicitly acknowledging the needs of gifted learners was achieved by the publication of the Special Needs/Inclusive Education Guideline in 2022,

where the gifted learners were explicitly addressed under the category of the wider group of learners whose education requires special attention (MoE, 2022). This guideline addressed differentiated instruction, assessment, cooperation, and responsiveness to the needs of the diverse learners. It is important to note that this is an important step towards inclusiveness and learner-centered education. The revised Education and Training Policy in 2023 emphasized the recognition and nurturing of diverse abilities and skills of the learners in the areas of academics, creativity, leadership, and social-emotional (MoE, 2023).

This implies that the issue of gifted education has gained some recognition and importance in Ethiopia in recent years. However, recognizing the policy issues related to gifted education does not necessarily imply its successful implementation in practice. The level of awareness of the educators about the policies on gifted education, implementation of the policies in the schools, teacher training, etc., is insufficiently documented. Therefore, there is a need for empirical study of this topic.

There are additional considerations related to the Ethiopian context that make the identification of gifted learners challenging. The traditional methods often equate giftedness with good grades or good examination scores, among other similar parameters. This method is likely to miss students who excel due to creativity, leadership, performing arts, practical problem-solving skills, and other areas. In addition, such an approach can disadvantage those learners who are limited in their educational opportunities due to their poor living conditions, rural setting, language, or lack of educational opportunities (Kabtyimer & Zhao, 2024). Multidimensional identification strategies involving teacher observation, classroom performance, creativity, portfolios, family information, and other criteria have been recommended (Gerbi, 2023; Medina-Castro, Lee, & Khoury, 2024).

There are some signs of emerging local practices in Ethiopia. Thus, the nomination, screening, and placement strategy used in Tigray has included the identification of gifted learners by classroom teachers (Tigrai Online,

2023). It shows that locally appropriate identification practices can be developed. The question is how systematic, sustainable, and widespread are these practices.

Likewise, the provision of educational support for gifted learners may significantly vary among schools and locations in terms of availability and quality. Lack of adequate teaching professionals, proper evaluation techniques, different curricula, enrichment programs, teaching tools, technological assistance, and other necessary conditions can impede the process of implementation. In some schools, gifted education may be considered as the delivery of extra or advanced assignments to high-performing learners rather than talent cultivation (Tadesse, 2021).

The problem of inadequate involvement of gifted learners in research and decision making deserves separate attention as well. Discussions of research findings and policies have been often centered on the opinions and views of teachers, school officials, experts, and policymakers with little regard to the experiences of gifted learners in terms of identification, instruction, assistance, challenges, and aspirations (Gerbi, 2023; Kabtyimer & Zhao, 2024). Therefore, learner-centered approach is critical for designing effective programs.

Overall, despite some significant achievements in terms of policy development, there are still several issues related to interpretation and implementation of gifted education in schools. Such problems are especially crucial when it comes to comparisons between urban settings with varied resources, capabilities, teacher training, and exposure to new educational approaches. The need for such an examination explains the necessity of conducting this study on gifted education policies and practices in three Ethiopian cities. Of course, understanding the theoretical assumptions that inform the issue before moving on with the detailed statement of the problem is crucial.

Theoretical underpinnings of gifted and talented education

The theoretical underpinnings of gifted and talented education have developed from rather limited understandings mainly based on intelligence and academic performance to more holistic viewpoints which view giftedness as being multi-dimensional, developmental, situational, and opportunity-based (Dai, 2020; Subotnik et al., 2011). Theoretical framework such as Spearman's theory of gifted factor, Thurstone's (1938) primary mental abilities, and Cattell's (1963) theory of fluid and crystallized intelligence laid the groundwork for appreciating individual differences in cognition. Nonetheless, present theories recognize that exceptional aptitude is often manifested in varied forms and cannot be captured by intelligence quotient alone or through an academic test.

Multiple and successful intelligence theories have further expanded the definition of giftedness. Multiple intelligences theory as proposed by Gardner consists of linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic skills (Gardner, 2011). In a similar vein, Successful Intelligence theory developed by Sternberg stresses the importance of analytical, creative, and practical skills (Sternberg, 2005). Such theories offer an underlying theoretical justification for identifying types of exceptional skills that cannot be considered by simply relying on traditional academic success. They are especially applicable to varied learning settings where students can exhibit their skills in socially or culturally different ways.

Giftedness theories have increasingly focused on how potential gets transformed into talent. In the Three Ring Conception by Renzulli, giftedness is explained through the interaction of high-level ability, creativity, and task commitment (Renzulli, 2005). In the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT), Gagné differentiates between gifts, which are natural abilities, and talents, which are systematically developed abilities and the effects of the influence of catalysts such as the environment, relationships, intrapersonal processes, and chance (Gagné, 2004, 2015). Similarly,

according to Subotnik et al., (2011), giftedness is seen as a developmental process that can lead potential to expertise and creative productivity. Thus, these theories have focused attention away from labeling and identification towards creation of conducive learning environments for gifted learners.

Theories of learning constitute another platform of support in gifted education. The socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky (1978), which entails the Zone of Proximal Development, posits that students can perform at higher levels when they are exposed to challenging tasks with good instruction and interaction. In the case of gifted students, this involves learning experiences that go above their independent level of performance. Constructivism is also based on inquiry, problem solving, experimentation, independent learning, and real-world tasks. The taxonomy of Bloom (1985), which has been updated to the revised form, can be used in the facilitation of increasingly complex cognitive activities such as remembering, understanding, application, analysis, evaluation, and creation (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001).

From motivational points of view, giftedness does not necessarily lead to consistent engagement and achievement. In self-determination theory, autonomy, competence, and relatedness are key determinants of motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2020). On the other hand, growth mindset theory points at the potential of abilities to grow due to efforts, strategic planning, feedback, and proper environment (Dweck, 2006). It implies that the field of gifted education should consider not only cognitive factors but also motivational and psychological factors such as motivation, perseverance, self-regulation, social relationships, and emotional aspects.

It is crucial to apply the ecological and socio-cultural theory in the context of giftedness among Ethiopian students. Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecology highlights the interaction between development and various systems including the family, school, community, socio-economic background, culture, and others (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the case of Ethiopia, the geographical background, language, socio-economic situation, educational facilities, teacher training, and other aspects may impact identification and

development of giftedness. It is necessary to take a culturally sensitive approach in this regard.

These theories have important implications for identification and provision in education. First, the notion of multidimensionality and development of giftedness is relevant for utilizing different sources of evidence, such as cognitive and academic assessment, nominations by parents and teachers, classroom observations, creativity testing, portfolios, interviewing, performance tests, and indicators of motivation and commitment to the task. Forms of educational provision include curricular differentiation, enrichment, acceleration, flexing grouping, mentoring, individualized learning, research, and creative problem solving. For the case of Ethiopia, such foundations offer a framework for evaluating how the policies and practices are concerned about the diverse kinds of giftedness, use inclusive identification strategies, prepare teachers effectively, and provide equal access to talent development. Consequently, the whole concept of education for gifted and talented students can be described as a developmentally oriented, multidimensional, culturally sensitive, inclusive, and equitable process, in which the process of identification is just the starting point of talent development, which is one of the foci of the present study.

Statement of the Problem

While the identification and integration of gifted and talented students in Ethiopia's education sector has been gaining increasing recognition, little has been done in terms of empirical research that would provide evidence about the ways the concept of gifted education is being perceived and implemented in educational institutions at the school level. The mere existence of policies and provisions regarding the issue does not guarantee the existence of proper mechanisms for identification, differentiation, enrichment and acceleration, and talent development and progress monitoring.

It seems clear that one of the serious issues here is the lack of systematic evidence regarding how the identification process is taking place. The

identification may be based on traditional criteria such as *grades* and exam results. This may not be enough to identify all kinds of giftedness or gifted learners who may not be readily recognizable due to differences in education and learning environments. Nevertheless, the use of multiple sources of evidence in Ethiopian schools in the process of identification has not yet been sufficiently documented.

The next issue relates to the ability of schools and teachers to respond to the identified potential. Learners who have the gift should have access to a differential curriculum, enriched learning environments, challenging learning situations, mentoring, opportunities to inquire independently and to be assessed appropriately. The provision of these elements will depend on the training of the teacher, school administration, learning materials and access to specialist support, among other factors. However, the comparative research on the characteristics of these provisions is very limited, at least for Ethiopia.

Equity is another aspect of the problem. Variation in the ability of institutions to provide support, variation in resources, teacher knowledge, and other factors may lead to inequities in the opportunities that gifted learners have to receive support. Not only identification may be a problem but also opportunities to receive enriched learning experiences, advanced learning, mentoring and other types of support. However, there has been little research on whether and how such variation takes place.

Moreover, the experiences of the gifted learners themselves have not been taken into consideration. It is important to understand how the learners perceive identification, education, support, and challenges so that it can be established if there are any gaps between the provisions and actual needs of the learners. Likewise, the differences in the way that teachers, school administrators, parents, and other stakeholders perceive giftedness may impact the process of identification and educational provision.

Thus, the main problem that should be addressed through this research is the lack of empirical evidence about how gifted education is understood and

implemented in the urban context of Ethiopia. The research entitled *Gifted Education Policies and Practices across Three Ethiopian Cities* is aimed at filling this gap through investigating the perceptions of the stakeholders, practices of identification, educational provisions, implementation challenges, experiences of learners, and differences in the selected cities. The comparative analysis of these factors will help to better understand the link between policy intentions and the way the policy is implemented and will highlight those issues which should be further paid attention to. Here are the research questions used to analyze the problems:

- What is happening now with how teachers in the selected urban primary schools in Ethiopia feel about their own knowledge, how they see their ability to spot gifted students the classes they have for gifted students and the help they get for gifted education?
- Do teachers in Addis Ababa and Adama and Mekele have ideas and different knowledge and different ways of recognizing students who are gifted and different thoughts about whether there are programs for gifted students?
- Do male teachers and female teachers have different ideas and different knowledge and different ways of recognizing students who are gifted and different thoughts about whether there are programs, for gifted students?
- Do teachers of different ages have different thoughts and levels of knowledge about gifted education?
- How do teachers' thoughts about gifted education, their knowledge, how they identify gifted students and what support is available change based on how much education they have?
- What do the stories from interviews with school principals and teachers say about the differences that were found in the numbers between cities between different groups of people and, in different situations where things are being done?

Independent and dependent variables

From the research questions as indicated above, it is possible to identify both independent and dependent variables. The independent variables are teachers' knowledge and training, perceptions of giftedness, gift education policies' awareness and implementation, resources and assessment facilities at schools, school contexts, and parental/institutional support. These variables are viewed as the potential predictors of the process of identifying and supporting gifted and talented students. The dependent variables are the quality of the identification process, availability and quality of educational support provided, support programs' effectiveness, and educational outcomes of the gifted and talented students in terms of academic success, involvement, motivation, and talent development.

Operational definition

The *gifted and talented learner* is defined as those demonstrating unusually high abilities, achievements, creativity, or potential in one or more areas. The indicator of gifted and talented education in Ethiopia will be measured through academic achievement, creativity, problem-solving, leadership, artistic ability, and teacher/parent nominations.

Status of talented education provision means how well schools and educators understand and meet the special needs of students who are gifted and talented. It includes the policies in place, the ways students are identified and tested, the programs offered and the support provided by the school or institution.

Identification is the process of identifying gifted and talented learners systematically. It will be measured through teacher and parent nominations, academic records, classroom observation, test results of standardized and school-based assessments, creativity test results, portfolios, and the process of identification.

Perception is the knowledge, attitude, belief, and understanding of stakeholders on gifted and talented learners. It will be measured through the indicators of awareness of giftedness, attitude toward gifted education,

understanding of learners' needs, and the perception of importance of identification and support of the learners.

Support is defined as the availability and utilization of educational, psychosocial, material, and institutional provisions for the gifted and talented. The measurement indicators are differentiated teaching, curriculum enrichment/acceleration, mentoring, counseling, learning materials, ICTs, extracurricular activities, and parental involvement.

Policies are the regulations and provisions on laws, policies, strategies, and institutional provisions regarding gifted and talented education. The measurement indicators are the existence of policies, access to policies, awareness about policies, clarity of policies, resource provision, policy implementation, and policy monitoring.

Practices are the actual processes employed by teachers/schools in the identification, teaching, development, and support of gifted and talented individuals. The measurement indicators are screening processes, differentiated teaching, enrichment, acceleration, individualized learning, mentoring, assessment practices, parental involvement, and monitoring of learner development.

Significance of the study

This study is important because it gives evidence about the rules and ways used in gifted and talented education in Ethiopia. Gifted education focuses on teachers' knowledge how they spot gifted students what learning material is available and how rules are put into action. Gifted education also shows gaps in how teachers are prepared in the supplies they have in the ways gifted students are found and in the help that is offered in the three cities.

The findings can help those who create rules for schools and school leaders to make gifted education rules stronger to train teachers better to create kinds of ways that fit the culture to spot gifted students and to give every

gifted learner a fair chance. Gifted education also gives a foundation for making the 2022 Special Needs/Inclusive Education Guideline and the 2023 Revised Education and Training Policy work better.

Finally, this study adds to the real studies about gifted education in Ethiopia. Gifted education can be a guide, for researchers' teacher trainers and those who work with students, who want to find gifted learners help them grow and give them support.

Methodology

The present study utilizes a mixed-methods design rooted in survey methodology to explore gifted education in three Ethiopian cities. The quantitative component allows for assessment of recognition, identification, and support for the gifted students, providing generalizable findings in diverse urban settings. Statistical comparison and the determination of patterns, differences, and predictors of variance in practice are allowed with the application of this methodology. Creswell (2014) contends that quantitative methods prove effective in hypothesis testing, measurement of variables, and development of general insights. Combining qualitative elements further deepens understanding by retaining teachers' experience and contextual nuances.

Research Design

In this study, the cross-sectional mixed methods research design which involves the use of both quantitative and qualitative designs in investigating the process of identification, perceptions, policy implementation and support practices for the gifted and talented education was employed. In the quantitative approach, there was the use of cross-sectional survey whereby data was collected from teachers and school administrators at one time and used to measure relationships and differences between study variables. In the qualitative approach, there was the use of semi structured interviews with selected teachers and principals for collection of in-depth information on issues of gifted and talented education.

Sampling and Sample Size

The participants of the study involved 920 individuals who were chosen from three selected cities namely, Addis Ababa (648, 70.4%), Adama (162, 17.6%), and Mekelle (110, 12.0%). The sample size of the study was chosen to make sure that there is proper representation of the teachers and school principals teaching the learners of Grades 4-8, as well as for conducting a proper statistical analysis of the differences and relationships between the variables studied in the research. There were 761 teachers and 88 school principals in the final sample, but some of them did not specify their occupation. Moreover, 525 individuals were male and 388 were female participants, while seven respondents did not reveal their sex.

For the quantitative part of the study, a multistage sampling technique was used. Firstly, the three cities were chosen in order to represent the geographical contexts of Addis Ababa, Oromia (Adama), and Tigray (Mekelle). Secondly, schools were chosen with consideration of the type of the school and its socio-economic context. Thirdly, teachers and school principals serving Grades 4-8 were chosen from these schools.

In the case of the qualitative aspect of the study, purposive sampling was employed in selecting teachers and principals from Addis Ababa, Adama, and Mekelle who had some experience or connection with gifted education. The participants were chosen based on their capability of offering extensive information on the topic of identification, facilitation of services, and policies for gifted learners. Interviews in this section were carried out until enough information was acquired.

Instrumentation and Data Collection

A well-structured questionnaire survey was then developed from the literature review on gifted and talented education as well as the theoretical framework provided by Renzulli (2005), Serpell (2011), and Medina-Castro et al. (2024). The questionnaire had six different sections. The first section

gathered the demographic data of the respondents, while S*ections II-VI* had a total of 32 Likert-type items, with six items belonging to each of the five different constructs. The scale used for answering all the items was 1-4, where 1 refers to strongly disagree, 2 refers to disagree, 3 refers to agree, and 4 refers to strongly agree.

Section II measured the present status and recognition of gifted education based on six items that pertained to awareness of the needs of gifted students, the value placed on the achievements in gifted education, presence of any policies in this area, experience in providing gifted education, identification of gifted children and their assessment, and existing support programs for gifted learners. Responses to these questions were aggregated into a composite measure of present status and recognition of gifted education, where high scores meant more recognition and provision of gifted education.

Section III evaluated teachers' self-perceived knowledge of gifted and talented students. There were six items in this section, which asked about teachers' perception of characteristics, needs, diversity, identification, and appropriate support of gifted students. As these items were not objective questions and had no right or wrong answers, but were just Likert-type statements, the construct measures teachers' self-perceived knowledge and understanding, not objectively measured knowledge. The questions reflecting misconceptions were reverse-coded, so high scores always indicated greater knowledge and understanding.

In *Section IV*, identification, and provision of services to gifted and talented learners was evaluated using six questions. The questions covered practices of identification of gifted learners and providing relevant educational services and provision to these learners. The answers were used to provide a composite score, and the higher mean score reflected more identification and provision of services to gifted and talented learners.

In *Section V*, perceptions of current educational provisions to gifted learners were investigated. The six questions covered the adequacy of current

provisions, the need for specialized programs, availability of appropriate resources, early admissions, subject acceleration, and grade skipping. Answers were rated on the four-point Likert scale, and higher scores reflected positive perceptions regarding current educational provisions.

In *Section VI*, perceptions of further educational provisions and policies for gifted learners were evaluated. The six questions were related to need for adequate educational provisions, need for specialized program for gifted learners, provision of education of gifted learners in special and inclusive environments, the significance of gifted education, extra services in addition to normal education provision and equal education for learners with different achievement levels.

Hence, five constructs were measured with six items each, namely: (1) status and recognition of gifted education; (2) teachers' self-knowledge and understanding of giftedness; (3) identification and service provision; (4) perceptions of existing educational provisions; and (5) support for future gifted education provisions and policies. The answers received on all the six items were aggregated for each construct into either sum score or mean score. In case of the use of the latter, the range of obtained scores varied from 1.00 to 4.00, with a higher mean score meaning a higher degree of the corresponding characteristic. An important aspect of methodology is the issue of measurement of knowledge in Section III. If knowledge of giftedness of teachers is supposed to be an objective independent or dependent variable, then the six statements of the Likert scale should be transformed into knowledge questions having objectively correct and wrong answers. On the other hand, under the existing structure of the questionnaire, it is more appropriate to describe this scale as "teachers' self-reported knowledge and understanding of giftedness."

The questionnaire underwent expert review, pilot testing, translation review, and reliability assessment prior to the main data collection process. The reliability values varied a little from one language version to another; they were as follows: Amharic (α = .88), Afaan Oromo (α = .85), and Tigrigna (α =

.81). Such differences may be attributed to translation issues, linguistic peculiarities, respondents' understanding of some specific items, the correlation between items, and participants who took part in pilot testing. Even though all three versions consisted of the same 32 items, such factors as mentioned above can influence the correlation between the items and thus the internal consistency value. However, all Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeded the acceptable value of .70, which proves good internal consistency of the questionnaire. Therefore, it should be stated that the questionnaire demonstrated sufficient reliability in all three language versions. Considering the results of expert review, pilot testing, translation review, and reliability assessment, needed corrections were made to the instruments.

Data Analysis

After the surveys of teachers and principals in three cities of Ethiopia were completed, data were carefully tabulated and analyzed to highlight significant trends and differences. The initial frequency statistics produced overall patterns, for instance, which schools recognized gifted students, support systems established, and educators' familiarity with national policies, to provide a clear image of gifted education within varied settings. To explore differences within zones, the researchers utilized ANOVA (Analysis of Variance), which found differences in policy implementation, perceptions of giftedness, and challenges, notably between metropolitan regions and less-resourced areas. Independent t-tests also contrasted the responses among groups such as teachers and principals or governments and private schools to measure the effects of school types and titles of occupation on support for gifted students. SPSS data processing for reliability guaranteed accuracy. This collective analysis offers a general impression of strengths and weaknesses of gifted education in Ethiopia, which leads to improved teacher training, identification, and policy implementation (Bryman, 2016; Creswell, 2014).

Ethical Considerations

The study is in accordance with principles of educational research ethics. Participants had been given informed consent, and their answers were anonymized for ensuring confidentiality. Data were kept confidentially and for academic purposes only. Ethical clearance sought from the appropriate institutional review board (IRB) and, when necessary, the local education authorities of each city.

Result

Demographic data

Table 1. *Consolidated Demographic Data (N = 920)*

Category	Group	Frequency	Valid Percent
Addis Ababa	All 10 Sub-Cities Combined	648	70.4%
Oromia	Adama	162	17.6%
Tigray	Mekele	110	12.0%
Employment Sector	Government	504	54.8%
	Private	416	45.2%
	Male	525	57.5%
Sex	Female	388	42.5%
	Missing	7	—
	18–30	474	55.8%
Age Group	31–40	206	24.3%
	41–50	100	11.8%
	51–60	69	8.1%
	Missing	71	—
	Certificate	39	4.3%
Education Level	Diploma	431	47.5%
	First Degree	411	45.3%
	Master's Degree	26	2.9%
	Missing	13	—
Type of Job	Teacher	761	89.6%
	Principal	88	10.4%
	Missing	71	—

Respondent population gives important background to appreciate the findings on identifying and supporting gifted students. Over 70% of the respondents are from Addis Ababa, followed by large numbers of respondents from Adama and a little over 12% from Mekele in Tigray. Since most of the respondents are from urban areas, the findings reflect largely urban conditions and may not be a full picture of rural conditions. Employment is relatively balanced, approximately 45% private sector and 55% government sector, offering feedback from both. There are 57.5% males in the sample, with females also being well-represented. The population is relatively young: over half are between the ages of 18-30, with nearly 80% being under the age of 40. While this offers fresh thinking, there may be a lack of feedback from older, more experienced staff. Most have Diplomas or First Degrees (93%), but few (2.9%) have Master's degrees. About 90% are class teachers, so the information mainly reflects class-level opinion.

Current Status of Gifted Education

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics by Cities and Variable*

City	Participants	Current Status of Gifted Education provision Mean (SD)	Knowledge about Gifted & Talented Mean (SD)	Identification & Service Provisions Mean (SD)	Perceived Programs Received Mean (SD)
Addis Ababa	647	12.33 (±3.66)	12.15 (±2.94)	13.10 (±3.49)	12.32 (±3.69)
Adama	160	12.99 (±3.68)	12.69 (±3.36)	14.48 (±4.75)	13.11 (±4.38)
Mekele	110	13.42 (±4.16)	13.15 (±3.56)	13.99 (±4.53)	13.24 (±4.59)
Overall Average	916	12.62 (±3.75)	12.48 (±3.12)	13.40 (±3.92)	12.56 (±3.96)

Interpreting the results, the mean values were categorized into three different levels based on the range of the possible value between 4 and 20: 4.00 to

9.33 = low; 9.34 to 14.66 = moderate; 14.67 to 20.00 = high. Hence, all mean values presented in Table 2, lie within the moderate level. Consequently, it can be said that the findings show moderate perceptions and not high or low perceptions within the four dimensions of gifted education.

The sample included 916 people in total: 647 teachers in Addis Ababa, 160 in Adama, and 110 in Mekele. In general, it can be stated that the teachers had a moderate perception about the current state of gifted education in the country, with an overall mean value of 12.62 (SD = 3.75). Out of the three cities, Mekele scored the highest (13.42, SD = 4.16), followed by Adama (12.99, SD = 3.68) and Addis Ababa (12.33, SD = 3.66).

In terms of knowledge related to gifted and talented education, the mean of the three cities was 12.48 (SD = 3.12), representing a moderately good score. The city of Mekele scored the highest mean (13.15, SD = 3.56), followed by Adama (12.69, SD = 3.36) and Addis Ababa (12.15, SD = 2.94). Therefore, teachers from the three cities had a moderate knowledge level, with Mekele having the highest mean among the cities.

Regarding identification and services, the mean was 13.40 (SD = 3.92), which can be considered moderate. The highest mean came from the city of Adama (14.48, SD = 4.75), followed by Mekele (13.99, SD = 4.53) and Addis Ababa (13.10, SD = 3.49). It is worth mentioning that the mean of Adama was near the upper limit of the moderate category, but still far from the level of 14.67. Concerning the perceived programs received by the gifted and talented learners, the overall mean was 12.56 (SD = 3.96), which is still a moderate score. The city of Mekele showed the highest mean score (13.24, SD = 4.59) followed by Adama (13.11, SD = 4.38) and Addis Ababa (12.32, SD = 3.69). Therefore, the findings indicate a moderate level of program provision in all three cities.

Generally, the findings show consistent scores of teacher perceptions in all four dimensions of gifted education. The mean values at the city level reveal some differences: Mekele has the highest means in all three areas (current

state of education provision, knowledge, and perceived program received), while Adama has the highest mean on identification and service provision. Addis Ababa has the lowest means in all four dimensions. These differences can be described but not explained because no significance test was conducted.

Analysis of Variance

Table 3. *ANOVA between and within groups*

Variable	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. (p-value)
Current Status of Gifted Education provision	Between Groups	443.177	11	40.289	2.925	0.001
	Within Groups	12451.324	904	13.774		
	Total	12894.501	915			
Understanding about Gifted and Talented	Between Groups	425.642	11	38.695	4.122	0.000
	Within Groups	8476.773	903	9.387		
	Total	8902.415	914			
Identification and Service Provisions	Between Groups	637.404	11	57.946	3.909	0.000
	Within Groups	13398.948	904	14.822		
	Total	14036.353	915			
Perceived Programs for gifted and Talented students	Between Groups	532.957	11	48.451	3.174	0.000
	Within Groups	13737.846	900	15.264		
	Total	14270.803	911			

This study explored the experience of gifted education in Addis Ababa, Adama, and Mekele cities of Ethiopia by analyzing teachers' responses using one-way ANOVA. It addressed four aspects: the overall state of gifted education provision, teachers' understanding of gifted students, identification and support of gifted students, and the view of current programs. The findings showed clear differences between the cities, which were likely influenced by local leadership, resources, and how national policies were implemented. The most striking difference was in teacher training: educators in Mekele and Adama felt more prepared to teach gifted learners than those in Addis Ababa. This indicates uneven access to professional development, especially in larger, more complex school systems.

Adama stood out as doing better at identifying and providing for gifted students, possibly due to more focused local efforts. By comparison, Addis Ababa teachers described opportunistic and confused planning. Another issue of concern was the narrow definition of giftedness, often limited to academic success. This overlooks creativity, leadership, and emotional strengths. Overall, the study calls for more open national policy, better teacher preparation, and more equitable, holistic approaches to gifted student identification and support across the country.

Gender Differences in Gifted Education Measures

Table 4. *Independent-Samples t-Test of Gifted Education Measures by Gender*

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	t-value	Df	p-value
Perceived Current Status/Adequacy of Gifted Education Provision	Male	522	12.39	3.68	0.161	-2.073	907	.038*
	Female	387	12.91	3.82	0.194			
Knowledge of Gifted & Talented Education	Male	523	12.27	3.05	0.133	-2.439	906	.015*
	Female	385	12.78	3.20	0.163			
Perceived Adequacy of Identification and Service Provision for Gifted and Talented Learners	Male	523	13.21	3.88	0.170	-1.791	907	.074
	Female	386	13.68	3.95	0.201			
Perceived Availability of Educational Programs & Services for Gifted & Talented Learners	Male	521	12.44	3.84	0.168	-1.090	903	.276
	Female	384	12.73	4.11	0.210			

Note. *t* = independent-samples t-test statistic; df = degrees of freedom; *p* = two-tailed significance value. $p < .05$. *N* varies slightly across variables because of missing responses.

An independent-samples t test was performed to investigate any possible gender difference in teachers' perceptions of gifted education on four indicators. It is evident that there was a significant gender difference in two out of the four indicators.

Specifically, with regard to perceived current status/adequacy of gifted education provision, it emerged that female teachers showed a higher mean score (M = 12.91, SD = 3.82) than male teachers (M = 12.39, SD = 3.68), $t(907) = -2.073$, $p = .038$. The same holds true for knowledge of gifted and talented education: the mean score was significantly higher for females (M =

12.78, SD = 3.20) compared with males (M = 12.27, SD = 3.05), t(906) = −2.439, p = .015.

As for the third indicator, there was no significant gender difference in the perceived adequacy of identification and service provision for gifted and talented learners, even though female teachers were found to have a higher mean score (M = 13.68, SD = 3.95) than male teachers (M = 13.21, SD = 3.88), t (907) = −1.791, p = .074. The same is true about the fourth indicator, where female teachers also scored higher (M = 12.73, SD = 4.11) than males (M = 12.44, SD = 3.84), t (903) = −1.090, p = .276.

In summary, the results show that female teachers scored significantly higher than male teachers with respect to perceived current status/adequacy of gifted education provisions and knowledge about gifted and talented education. On the other hand, there were no significant differences between perceptions of both sexes concerning adequacy of identification and services provision as well as availability of educational programs and services. The above results are merely descriptive and should not be regarded as proof that gender plays a role in teachers' knowledge and perceptions.

As explained by a principal of Addis Ababa: *Our women teachers tend to be more involved in working with students who have different strengths, may be because of this their concept of giftedness is deeper than that of male teachers*. Another principal of Adama said: *At our school, female teachers are generally more interested in early childhood education and in communication with parents. Men teachers work mostly with older children and prepare them for testing. It is not that men teachers cannot spot giftedness,* stated a principal of Mekele, *if male teachers receive proper training, then this gap is bound to diminish.* The above observations clearly show that the differences are due not to gender itself, but professional duties and responsibilities and training. In order to bridge the gap, all educators regardless of their sex need equal training.

Age-Group Differences in Teachers' Perceptions of Gifted Education

Table 5. *Descriptive Statistics and One-Way ANOVA of Gifted Education Measures by Age Group*

Variable	Age group	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*df*	*P*
Current Status of Gifted Education	18–30	471	12.36	3.55	2.010	3, 842	.111
	31–40	206	12.40	3.45			
	41–50	100	13.19	3.88			
	51–60	69	13.07	4.48			
	Total	846	12.53	3.66			
Knowledge About Gifted and Talented Education	18–30	470	12.41	2.95	0.197	3, 841	.899
	31–40	206	12.45	3.19			
	41–50	100	12.26	3.42			
	51–60	69	12.62	3.20			
	Total	845	12.42	3.08			
Identification and Service Provisions	18–30	472	13.36	3.58	0.105	3, 842	.957
	31–40	206	13.18	4.13			
	41–50	100	13.27	4.07			
	51–60	68	13.34	4.30			
	Total	846	13.30	3.83			
Perceived Programs Gifted and Talented Learners Are Receiving	18–30	470	12.49	3.74	0.334	3, 839	.801
	31–40	204	12.46	3.98			
	41–50	100	12.31	3.98			
	51–60	69	12.01	4.44			
	Total	843	12.42	3.88			

Note: N = sample size; M = mean; SD = deviation; F = one-way analysis of variance statistic; df = degrees of freedom; p = significance value. P is less than 0.05. Sample sizes differ a little for each variable because some answers were missing.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to see if teachers' perceptions of education vary among four age groups: 18-30, 31-40, 41-50 and 51-60 years. Four aspects were considered: the status of gifted

education; teachers' knowledge, about gifted and talented education; how teachers identify and provide services; and the programs teachers think gifted and talented learners receive.

For the status of gifted education teachers between 18 and 30 years old reported an average score of 12.36 (SD = 3.55). Teachers between 31 and 40 years old reported an average of 12.40 (SD = 3.45). Teachers between 41 and 50 years old reported an average of 13.19 (SD = 3.88). Teachers between 51 and 60 years old reported an average of 13.07 (SD = 4.48). Even though the numbers show higher scores for teachers between 41 and 50 years old and those between 51 and 60 years old the differences between the age groups were not statistically significant F (3 842) = 2.01, p =.111.

For knowledge about talented education the average scores were pretty much the same across all four age groups. Teachers between 18 and 30 years old had a score of 12.41 (SD = 2.95). Teachers between 31 and 40 years old had an average of 12.45 (SD = 3.19). Teachers between 41 and 50 years old had an average of 12.26 (SD = 3.42). Teachers between 51 and 60 years had an average of 12.62 (SD = 3.20). The ANOVA showed that the differences between the age groups were not statistically significant, F (3 841) = 0.20, p =.899.

The same was true for identification and service provisions. Teachers between 18 and 30 years old reported a score of 13.36 (SD = 3.58). Teachers between 31 and 40 years old reported 13.18 (SD = 4.13). Teachers between 41 and 50 years old reported 13.27 (SD = 4.07). Teachers between 51 and 60 years old reported 13.34 (SD = 4.30). The differences were not statistically significant F(3 842) = 0.11, p =.957.

For the perceived programs that gifted and talented learners are receiving teachers between 18 and 30 years old reported the average score (M = 12.49, SD = 3.74). Teachers between 31 and 40 years old reported (M = 12.46, SD = 3.98). Teachers between 41 and 50 years old reported (M = 12.31, SD = 3.98). Teachers between 51 and 60 years old reported (M =

12.01, SD = 4.44). However, the differences were not statistically significant F (3 839) = 0.33, p =.801.

Overall, the one-way ANOVA results showed that none of the four measures differed significantly between the four age groups (ps >.05). Some small differences were seen, in views about the current status of gifted education. These differences were not big enough to be considered statistically significant. So, the findings do not support the idea that teachers view on education depend on their age group.

The similar average scores across age groups suggest that teachers had opinions and knowledge about gifted education. The lack of statistically significant differences should not mean that age has no effect on teachers' views. Instead, the results show that age group was not linked to differences in the four gifted-education measures studied.

The results also suggest that professional development about education can be offered to all teachers not just those in specific age groups. However, decisions about development should also consider other factors, such, as teachers' education, teaching experience, prior training, their job roles and how much they have been exposed to gifted education.

Differences in Gifted Education Measures by Educational Qualification

Table 6. *Descriptive Statistics and One-Way ANOVA of Gifted Education Measures by Educational Qualification*

Variable	Qualification	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*df*	*p*
Current Status of Gifted Education	Certificate	39	13.64	4.61	1.448	3, 899	.228
	Diploma	428	12.66	3.66			
	First Degree	410	12.42	3.71			
	MA	26	12.27	3.05			
	Total	**903**	**12.58**	**3.71**			
Knowledge About Gifted and Talented Education	Certificate	39	12.85	3.88	1.614	3, 898	.185
	Diploma	428	12.66	3.06			
	First Degree	409	12.22	3.03			
	MA	26	12.38	3.41			
	Total	**902**	**12.46**	**3.10**			
Identification and Service Provisions	Certificate	38	14.50	4.40	3.951	3, 899	.008*
	Diploma	429	13.72	4.09			
	First Degree	410	13.03	3.66			
	MA	26	12.27	2.84			
	Total	**903**	**13.40**	**3.90**			
Perceived Programs Gifted and Talented Learners Are Receiving	Certificate	39	11.97	4.23	2.935	3, 895	.033*
	Diploma	425	12.93	3.97			
	First Degree	409	12.17	3.86			
	MA	26	12.58	3.24			
	Total	**899**	**12.53**	**3.93**			

Note. n = sample size; M = mean; SD = standard deviation; F = one-way analysis of variance statistic; df = degrees of freedom; p = significance value. $p < .05$.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine whether teachers' perceptions of education differed according to educational qualification. The four qualification groups were Certificate, Diploma, First Degree and MA. Four measures were examined: status of gifted education knowledge about gifted and talented education, identification and service provisions and perceived programs received by gifted and talented learners.

For status of gifted education teachers with a Certificate reported the highest mean score (M = 13.64, SD = 4.61) followed by Diploma holders (M = 12.66, SD = 3.66) First Degree holders (M = 12.42, SD = 3.71) and MA holders (M = 12.27, SD = 3.05). However, the differences, among the four qualification groups were not statistically significant F (3, 899) = 1.45, p =.228.

Similarly, the data showed that knowledge about talented education did not differ in a statistically significant way among educational qualification groups, F (3, 898) = 1.61, p =.185. The average scores were 12.85 (SD = 3.88) for Certificate holders 12.66 (SD = 3.06) for Diploma holders 12.22 (SD = 3.03) for First Degree holders and 12.38 (SD = 3.41) for MA holders.

However, a significant difference was found for identification and service provisions, F (3, 899) = 3.95, p =.008. Certificate holders gave the average score of 14.50 (SD = 4.40) followed by Diploma holders with 13.72 (SD = 4.09) First Degree holders with 13.03 (SD = 3.66) and MA holders, with 12.27 (SD = 2.84). Thus, perceptions of identification and service provisions differed significantly across educational qualification groups. Still the overall ANOVA does not tell which specific educational qualification groups differ from each other. To find the pairwise differences post hoc comparisons would be necessary.

A significant difference was also found in the way people thought the programs for gifted and talented students were being delivered, F(3 895) = 2.94, p =.033. People who had a diploma gave the average score (M = 12.93, SD = 3.97) then those with a MA (M = 12.58 SD = 3.24) then those with a first degree (M = 12.17, SD = 3.86) and finally those with a certificate (M = 11.97 SD = 4.23). Again, the significant overall ANOVA shows that at least two groups with different qualifications were different but it does not say which groups exactly. Post hoc tests would be needed for a clearer understanding.

Overall, the results show that educational qualification was not strongly connected to teachers' views about how gifted education's doing or their knowledge of gifted and talented education. However, there were

differences, in how identification and the services offered to gifted and talented students were seen. These results suggest that educational qualification might be related to parts of what teachers think about gifted education. The exact direction of this link and which groups are different should not be guessed just from the overall ANOVA.

Differences in the means give clues about how people answered but those clues should be looked at on their own, not mixed with the significance tests. For example, Certificate holders gave a high mean for identification and service provisions. Diploma holders gave a high mean for perceived programs. These high numbers do not automatically mean that these groups think positively or more accurately. We need analysis after the main test and we must think about other factors before drawing a firm conclusion.

Important: If your supervisor wants columns for t, df and p you will have to redesign the analysis to compare two groups. For instance, you could compare Certificate/Diploma with First Degree/MA. Only if that grouping makes real sense. Do not turn the four-group ANOVA F values, into t values because that would be statistically wrong.

Because educational qualification contains four groups – Certificate, Diploma, First Degree and MA – an independent-samples t test is not suitable. A t test can only compare two groups. The proper APA analysis for this design is a one-way ANOVA. Therefore, the inferential columns should list F, df and p values, not t, df and p. I have built the table in line with these standards. Updated the report to reflect the real statistics.

For this analysis the presence of four experience groups means that the correct test is still a one-way ANOVA, not a t test. I have merged the inferential data into a single APA-style table and rewritten the narrative to follow the APA reporting guidelines. I have also eliminated any claims that are not supported by the results.

Differences in Gifted Education Measures by Years of Teaching Experience

Table 7. *Descriptive. One-Way ANOVA of Gifted Education Measures, by Years of Teaching Experience*

Variable	Experience group	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*F*	*df*	*P*
Current Status of Gifted Education	1–10 years	593	12.52	3.65	3.04	3, 891	.028*
	11–20 years	175	12.17	3.69			
	21–30 years	62	13.65	3.68			
	31–40 years	65	13.18	4.42			
	Total	895	12.58	3.73			
Knowledge about Gifted and Talented Education	1–10 years	592	12.51	2.91	0.50	3, 890	.679
	11–20 years	175	12.19	3.55			
	21–30 years	62	12.42	3.18			
	31–40 years	65	12.58	3.25			
	Total	894	12.44	3.09			
Identification and Service Provisions	1–10 years	594	13.48	3.72	1.01	3, 891	.386
	11–20 years	175	12.99	4.32			
	21–30 years	62	13.77	3.89			
	31–40 years	64	13.14	4.23			
	Total	895	13.38	3.89			
Perceived Programs Gifted and Talented Learners are Receiving	1–10 years	592	12.65	3.83	1.89	3, 888	.130
	11–20 years	173	12.09	3.85			
	21–30 years	62	12.98	3.84			
	31–40 years	65	11.83	4.55			
	Total	892	12.50	3.90			

Note. N = sample size; M = mean; SD = standard deviation; F = one-way analysis of variance statistic; df = degrees of freedom; p = significance value. P <.05. Sample sizes vary slightly across measures because of missing responses.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine whether teachers' perceptions of education differed according to years of teaching experience. Teachers were divided into four groups based on teaching experience: 1–10 years, 11–20 years 21–30 years and 31–40

years. Four areas were studied: the status of gifted education knowledge, about gifted and talented education, identification and service provisions and perceived programs received by gifted and talented learners.

For the status of gifted education teachers with 1–10 years of experience had a mean score of 12.52 (SD = 3.65). Those with 11–20 years scored 12.17 (SD = 3.69). Teachers with 21–30 years of experience had a mean of 13.65 (SD = 3.68) and those with 31–40 years scored 13.18 (SD = 4.42). A one-way ANOVA showed a significant difference between these four groups, F(3 891) = 3.04, p =.028.

For knowledge about talented education the mean scores varied from 12.19 (SD = 3.55) for teachers with 11–20 years of experience to 12.58 (SD = 3.25) for those with 31–40 years. The one-way ANOVA found no difference, among the four groups, F (3 890) = 0.50, p =.679.

Similarly, there was no difference in how well people were identified and the services they received between the different groups of teachers. The average scores went from 12.99 (SD = 4.32) for teachers who had 11 to 20 years of experience to 13.77 (SD = 3.89) for teachers who had 21 to 30 years of experience. The ANOVA test did not show any difference F(3, 891) = 1.01, p =.386.

For how teachers see the programs that gifted and talented learners are getting teachers who had 21 to 30 years of experience said the highest average score (M = 12.98, SD = 3.84) while teachers who had 31 to 40 years of experience said the lowest (M = 11.83, SD = 4.55). The difference between the four groups was not important F (3, 888) = 1.89, p =.130.

Overall, the results show that the number of years teaching was related to how teachers see the state of gifted education F (3, 891) = 3.04, p =.028. But the number of years teaching was not related to teachers' knowledge, about talented education how well people are identified, the services they get or

how they see the programs that gifted and talented learners are getting (ps >.05).

Although the descriptive means show that teachers with 21–30 years of experience gave the rating for the current status of gifted education the significant omnibus ANOVA alone does not show which experience groups differ from each other. Therefore post hoc comparisons are needed to find the pairwise differences behind the significant ANOVA result.

The findings should therefore be seen as proof of a difference among experience groups for how teachers view the current status of gifted education rather than proof that more teaching experience automatically leads to more positive or more negative views. The other three measures did not show significant differences among experience groups.

Years of teaching experience were strongly linked to teachers' perceptions of the status of gifted education but not to teachers' knowledge about gifted and talented education, identification and service provisions or the programs that teachers think gifted and talented learners receive.

Also, because the ANOVA for the status was significant (p =.028) the next step should be a post hoc test, such, as Tukey HSD if the needed assumptions are met, to find out which of the four experience groups differ significantly from each other.

Discussion and Conclusion

Teachers' perception about Gifted Education

This study explored how Ethiopian educators, classroom teachers, department chairs, and principals, view gifted education as affected by variables including age, gender, education level, years of experience, and professional rank. Ironically, the research found that attitudes are more determined by experience in dealing with schools in the real world, years of teaching students, and exposure to training.

A sure trend was that teachers with 21 to 30 years of service, and most of whom are at the top of their professional hierarchy, are more optimistic about gifted education. This may be because they have seen incremental development of the system after decades. Endepohls-Ulpe and Ruf (2024) refer to this as *pedagogical maturity*, when teachers develop a balanced view of strengths and weaknesses after decades of professional experience.

Conversely, experienced teachers with a mid-career tenure of 11-20 years' experience frustration. Kabtyimer and Zhao (2024) explain that this category is likely to experience a disconnect between what policy espouses and the stark reality of having no support and infrastructure, leading to critical perceptions. Conversely, a majority of those with 10 or fewer years of experience will lean more in favor of or uncertain about identifying and supporting gifted pupils, possibly due to a lack of significant exposure to gifted education by way of training or experience, a factor mentioned by Tadesse (2021).

Training background also plays a role. Those teachers who possess certificates or diplomas—usually generalists or beginning teachers, usually have a more positive attitude towards identifying and working with able pupils. On the other hand, bachelor's, and master's degree holders, often in leadership or specialist roles, are more critical, likely because advanced education makes them more aware of systemic shortcomings. This supports Renzulli's (2005) idea that a deeper understanding of giftedness, including creative and social-emotional aspects, sharpens awareness of gaps in practice.

All groups surprisingly shared the same knowledge about giftedness per se, regardless of education or experience. However, Medina-Castro et al. (2024) warn that without professional development, teacher knowledge plateaus. Kabtyimer and Zhao (2024) also document unequal access to training in gifted education, most notably for rural compared to urban teachers.

Gender did not have a strong effect on perceptions, with minor differences, as noted in research by Gerbi (2023) and Medina-Castro et al. (2024), emphasizing that training and hands-on experience matter more than gender. Age was also not a strong factor; instead, involvement in educational transformation and inclusive approaches mattered more in terms of opinions.

Overall, the study highlights that attitude of Ethiopian teachers toward gifted education are more influenced by their experience of teaching rather than demographic factors. They are positive if they are experienced, feel frustrated with gaps in implementation if they are mid-career teachers, and are more critical if they are master teachers. Although leaders are concerned with system-level problems, classroom teachers are concerned with problems of daily living. There is a clear need for increased practical support, culturally relevant identification methods, and accessible training for all teachers. As Renzulli (2005), Tadesse (2021), and Ngara and Porath (2020) assert, gifted education must go beyond policy documents to address teachers' day-to-day concerns and equip them with the tools and support they need in order to address the different needs of students.

Knowledge Levels

This study revealed a surprising yet critical trend: educators in Ethiopia, regardless of age, gender, qualification, and years of service, job title, or working environment, tend to have the same amount of knowledge about gifted education. While this may reflect a shared knowledge base, it reflects a more widespread insufficient knowledge, more in-depth, lack of up-to-date training across the system.

Teachers, principals, and support staff may know the basics, but their ability to apply that knowledge daily depends on their professional roles. Principals, for instance, may be responsible for gifted programs but have minimal direct involvement in gifted student identification. Classroom teachers, on the other hand, are the ones making daily, on-the-spot decisions about students' potential. Yet access to professional development and support varies greatly, those in private or urban schools have greater chances of training and

professional development than those in rural schools or public schools (Kabtyimer & Zhao, 2024; Tadesse, 2021).

Experience does not always mean more knowledge. A first-year teacher who has just completed a gifted education course may be more knowledgeable than a veteran teacher who has not had current training in years (Medina-Castro et al., 2024). While veteran teachers enjoy the advantage of practical wisdom, or what has been described as "pedagogical maturity" (Endepohls Ulpe & Ruf, 2024), the truth is that without continued training, formal knowledge plateaus.

Interestingly, the data revealed that possessing a bachelor's or master's degree failed to increase knowledge of gifted education, highlighting that the topic is not covered in most degree programs. Gender differences were also insignificant, which suggests equal baseline knowledge among male and female teachers (Gerbi, 2023).

Last, the consistency of knowledge illustrates systemic gaps. To provide a stronger foundation for gifted education in Ethiopia, ongoing, culturally responsive, and accessible training for all educators, regardless of where they work or what they are named, must be a priority.

Identification Practices Show Systemic Gaps

This study revealed a clear, collective interest among Ethiopian teachers in the identification of gifted learners. Regardless of their age, sex, educational qualification, professional status, or workplace, many teachers indicated critical or cautious attitudes. Rather than isolated opinions, these concerns represent underlying, systemic problems in the country's education system.

At all levels of experience, teachers and school leaders shared confusion or frustration at the lack of clear, consistent standards for identifying gifted students. Not even seasoned professionals seemed more confident in the process, suggesting that field experience alone is not enough when the

training and instruments to do it right are not forthcoming. This aligns with Renzulli's (2005) model, which emphasizes that identifying giftedness goes beyond academics and should also include creativity and motivation, areas that require more than just classroom intuition.

Educators with higher qualifications like bachelor's or master's degrees tended to be more critical of current identification practices. This likely stems from exposure to more theoretical models and international norms, but without special training, even they don't feel prepared to apply these ideas to real-world situations (Kabtyimer & Zhao, 2024). Those teaching in public or rural schools face further challenges in the form of bigger classes and fewer resources (Tadesse, 2021), and principals or district officials are out of touch with what's happening in classrooms (Gerbi, 2023).

Gender did not appear to affect perceptions in any significant manner though international research still cautions against insidious bias in how giftedness would be defined (Peters et al., 2014). Added to this complexity is the cultural element. Educators recognize that Western models will not necessarily access abilities of intelligence valued in Ethiopian culture, such as leadership ability or artistic ability (Ngara & Porath, 2020).

Lastly, educators' concerns put forward the necessity for further culturally suitable identification processes and support for the individuals responsible for detecting and developing gifted learners.

Cultural Relevance Counts

This study revealed a very much lived issue on the part of Ethiopian educators: current systems for the identification of gifted students, mostly imported in the guise of Western models, cannot handle the vast diversity of talent and cultural capabilities available within the classrooms of Ethiopia. Teachers across the country complained that they all observed the same thing: that very few Ethiopian notions of giftedness such as leadership, creative storytelling, or social sensitivity, for example are being discovered

because tests used measure academic or IQ-related skills, and these are not necessarily culturally specific (Ngara & Porath, 2020).

This sense of disconnection crosses all populations. Whether they are experienced teachers who've survived decades of foreign school reforms or newer trained ones educated to international standards, however, all are agreed that Western models overlook culturally appropriate signs of giftedness. Graduate-degree teachers are perhaps even more judgmental in that they were taught international theory and are likely to know where these models go wrong in Ethiopian realities. On the other hand, certificate or diploma-trained colleagues tend to express a preference for locally grounded solutions, solutions that are respectful of values and experience in communities.

Where they teach matters too; teachers in urban or private schools sometimes have more freedom in identification resources and tools. Public or rural school teachers report having to work around stagnant systems that ignore community languages, traditions, and Indigenous knowledge (Tadesse, 2021). Classroom teachers also report feeling disconnected from top-down policy that ignores what they notice every day in students' behavior and potential (Gerbi, 2023).

Looking to the future, educators across Ethiopia are calling for a change. Educators do not reject global best practice but demand that it be rooted in its context in order to suit the culture of diversity and rich understandings of talent in Ethiopia. This entails developing identification practices that are responsive to local values and practice and reinforced by targeted training and support. By doing so, schools can identify and nurture all forms of giftedness, not just those that meet the traditional criteria, and make sure the talents of each student are seen, appreciated, and given room to grow.

Policy vs. Practice Gaps

Although Ethiopia's Master Plan on Inclusive Education sets out clearly enough a robust commitment to the building of gifted education, teachers in the nation consistently report a dire disjuncture between policy statements and everyday teaching practice. This disjuncture is even more pronounced as we explore the ways in which age, gender, qualifications, employment type, and location all screen the everyday experienced reality of these policies.

Veteran teachers, educators with 21 to 30 years of teaching experience, tend to like the spirit of the policies. These teachers have witnessed reforms come and go over the years, and yet they commonly express frustration that change happens at a glacial rate or doesn't stick in actual classrooms (Endepohls-Ulpe & Ruf, 2024). Conversely, newer graduates are filled with fresh learning about inclusion and gifted education, only to run headlong into barriers like few resources and minimal training (Tadesse, 2021). Such juxtaposition illustrates a clear need for mentorship and professional development that bridge theory and practice.

Gender adds another dimension to this challenge. While both female and male teachers are troubled by the policy gap, female teachers, especially those in more rural areas, feel these gaps more acutely, carrying heavier workloads and facing social obstacles to accessing training (Gerbi, 2023).

Academic background also colors perceptions. Bachelor's- and master's degree-holders see the policy-practice gap more strongly, likely because they're more exposed to global standards in education and can't help but notice where Ethiopia's system falls short (Kabtyimer & Zhao, 2024). Certificate- or diploma-bearing teachers are more prone to be pragmatic; viewing what is workable in their context.

Where teachers teach also has an impact. Classroom teachers in public schools routinely lament the lack of training and support, teaching with empty toolkits and too many expectations (Tigrai Online, 2023). School leaders

might understand policy, but without authority or resources, they cannot make it real. In contrast, private and international schools, spurred on by parental demand and finance, can implement gifted programs more readily, but at the cost of potentially adding to inequity if only elite students benefit (Medina-Castro et al., 2024).

Geography compounds these problems. Teachers in cities can attend workshops and draw on resources, but their rural counterparts are usually isolated, with poorer infrastructure and less scope for development. Such a growing capacity gap only cements inequities in gifted education (Tadesse, 2021). Finally, educators across Ethiopia are telling us the same thing: policy is as good as implementation. To close the gap, we must invest in thoughtful, inclusive professional development, equitable resource distribution, and community-based programs that make gifted education a reality in every classroom, no matter where it is, or who walks through the door.

Conclusion

This study gives a clear picture of the current status of gifted education in Ethiopia from the perspectives of teachers and school leaders who work with the students daily. Their stories reflect hope and frustration. Most experienced educators have seen things change over time and remain hopeful, while less experienced teachers feel the system does not support them or their students sufficiently. Despite these distinctions, the demand continues for more applied support and improved tools for the identification and development of gifted learners.

Among the biggest challenges is a lack of ongoing, realistic training. Teachers need more than theory, the requirement is for professional development that addresses teachers' own problems in classrooms, mainly in recognizing different kinds of giftedness. Many believe that giftedness must not be quantified by academic achievement only but needs to include creativity, leadership, emotional intelligence, and other special aptitudes that are overlooked.

Resources are also a significant barrier. Teachers in rural or less resourced schools often must fight with reduced resources, less opportunity for professional development, and poor infrastructure. This leads to inequity of quality between schools by geography. In order to bridge this gap, it is critical that education leaders be having close dialogue with teachers, listening to them, and providing the support and investment needed to turn policy into real change.

While this study is focused on teacher attitude rather than directly measuring outcomes for students, it poses some hard choices for the future. Gifted education in Ethiopia must be more practical, inclusive, and culturally responsive. All teachers, wherever they are, must be trained and supported, and giftedness needs to be defined within an approach that honors local values and experiences.

Ultimately, then, to make gifted education work in a real sense, it is about connecting policy and classroom levels. It is about hearing teachers' voices, providing their continuous professional development, and equipping all schools to be able to meet the entire needs of gifted learners. Only then can Ethiopia draw out the potential of all its students and bring them to succeed.

The study has some limitations. First the study was carried out in three urban cities: Addis Ababa, Adama and Mekele and this may limit how well the study findings apply to areas and other parts of Ethiopia. Second the cross-sectional design of the study gives information about education only at a single point in time and does not capture how policies and practices may change over time. Third most of the data in the study came from participants' self-reported perceptions and knowledge and these may be affected by personal experiences or by the desire to please others. Fourth the study mainly focused on teachers and education stakeholders. Therefore, it may not fully reflect the experiences and perspectives of gifted and talented learners their parents and other relevant stakeholders. Finally differences in language educational context and local practices, across the three cities may have influenced how participants interpreted the translated research instruments in the study.

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