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Creativity in Saudi Arabian Preschool Settings: Teachers' Perspectives.

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Abstract

The study aimed to explore the perspectives on creativity among preschool teachers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). Creativity has gained enormous attention in recent years in education. With all the emphasis being placed on creativity in many parts of the world, it has not been largely explored in Saudi Arabia. Childhood education provision in Saudi Arabia has increased in the last thirty years. Changes to the preschool curriculum have been on the governmental agenda and the preschool curriculum has undergone some reform through specially commissioned projects (Tatweer, 2016). However, creativity was not considered by these projects and it is not on any educational plan for development in the 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 many different perceptions of creativity were held by the preschool teachers. Three common perceptions emerged, that were found to describe creativity as being artistic, being intelligent and being gifted and unique. Significantly, creativity was linked with arts and more often with intelligence. Teachers were aware of the importance of their own creativity and its effect on children's creative thinking. 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 focusses more 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, the Self Learning Curriculum (SLC), 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.

The findings have many implications for preschool educators and for professional development in the country under study as well as some recommendations for future studies. In view of the attention given to preschool education by the official authorities in Saudi Arabia, it is hoped that this research will highlight the importance of creativity, its value and relevance for preschool education, with a view to looking at how best creativity can be achieved in preschool education.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

This is a study of creativity in childhood education in Saudi Arabia. The focus is exclusively on preschool teachers' perceptions of the concept of creativity and its application in practice. This introductory chapter covers four main points. Firstly, it explores the research background with some essential facts about the subject matter in order to explain the orientation and justification of the study. Secondly, it gives a brief outline of the analytical frameworks upon which the researcher drew on. Thirdly, the outline of the thesis is provided to indicate what was planned to be achieved in this study, and how. Finally, a description of the institutional context of preschool education in Saudi Arabia is presented, which provides the preliminary background information to place the study in context.

1.1 Background to the study

There has been much interest recently in the concept of creativity and its relevance in education. A considerable body of research, focussing on creativity in education, gives a great deal of attention and consideration to creativity in children because of its positive impact on their educational future and in developing their daily life skills (Robinson, 2001; Craft, 2002; Craft et. al., 2007; Resnick, 2007).

Many researchers in the field of education agree that creativity is a phenomenon that all children share regardless of their age, gender, or academic ability (Craft et al., 2007; Richards, 2009; Cremin et al., 2013). However, this aspect of child development had not been given much attention in the educational system in the Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia (KSA) (Alfaisal, 2009; Al Omar, 2013). The preschool curriculum in the KSA has developed over the last thirty years in Saudi Arabia, and this will be discussed in detail in this chapter. However, when exploring the context of the study, over this same period the interest in creativity has remained a low priority and studies on creativity in preschool education are rare (Alfaisal, 2009; Aljabreen & Lash, 2016). Most of the published work that can be found in the literature pertaining to the overall preschool system in Saudi Arabia, focusses on the curriculum and pedagogical practices, and makes limited reference to creativity (Al-Mogbel, 2014; Aljabreen & Lash, 2016). This lack of attention to creativity could be viewed as a result of the fact that cyclical changes or reviews of education in Saudi Arabia have not really emphasised pedagogical practices. As such, there are minimal measures in place to monitor the development of creativity, which in turn has meant schools have not felt the need to consider the promotion of creativity as part of their teaching. Equally, in a country where schools expect intervention or change to be defined directly by the government, if the development of creativity is not specifically mentioned it is unlikely to be given any detailed consideration. Whatever the reason, development of creativity within preschools has been given limited consideration and this research aims to start to try to address this.

1.2 Analytical framework of the study

The aim of this study is to explore the different perspectives of creativity held by a range of female teachers from several public and private preschool settings in the KSA.

On this basis, three research questions were formulated:

1. How do teachers in Saudi Arabian preschool settings perceive the concept of creativity?

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

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

In order to answer these questions, it was necessary to first collect narrative data, using 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. The researcher based the general principles of creativity, that involved in explaining creativity and creative pedagogical practices in the school environment, 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. (2013), 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 study. There is extensive literature on creativity in the field of childhood education, to which the researcher will refer in the next chapter.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The remaining chapters are organised as follows. Chapter 2 contextualises the study in the relevant literature. Chapter 3 is an account of the research design to explain the methodology and the methods. In Chapter 4, the results from the data are analysed and presented according to the research questions. While in Chapter 5, a detailed discussion of the findings is provided, to explain the significance of the results. Finally,

in Chapter 6, the implications of the different insights of creativity are considered in the context of a review of this study and a consideration of the educational meanings which are constructed through the findings. This leads to some recommendations for future studies.

Considering all these points, some context is required about the initial findings on creativity, which may prove to be of some value. Therefore, much of this chapter focuses on explaining the context of the research in some detail.

1.4 Description of the context for the study

In order to examine teachers' perspectives on creativity in preschool settings in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), it is important to detail the nature of the research context, starting with the researcher's positionality, followed by some explanation of the social reality of the study, as this will provide an insight into how these perspectives are formed and influenced. The section on educational context describes the educational system in the country under study in more detail, starting with a general description of the educational system in the KSA, followed by the most important features of the preschool stage as well as contextual factors that might need to be deliberated when considering the notion of creativity within this environment.

The information that follows has been structured under three sequential and interdependent subheadings:

- Researcher positionality
- Social reality of the research
- The educational context of the research

1.4.1 Researcher positionality

The central argument of the research is based on the researcher's personal experience as a preschool practitioner as well as that of an academic who has been working in the field of education for almost twelve years in the KSA. The researcher's position is that she is a native of Saudi Arabia, who was born and raised there, and has studied and worked in the KSA. This first-hand experience and understanding of the educational environment in Saudi Arabia, including its strengths and weaknesses, has given the researcher some direct insight into how the Saudi Arabian educational system operates. The researcher, through her professional experience as an educator, has been able to closely observe and notice that creativity is not being recognised nor has it been introduced clearly into the Saudi Arabian teaching arena. The researcher's professional observations and judgment of the preschool curriculum was where the original idea manifested and she decided to look at creativity in the early years curriculum, from the perspective of the teacher.

The researcher's position has been further advantaged by the fact that she is also a mother of five children and this experience of being a parent has played an important role in shaping ideas for the research. The researcher moved to the UK with her family for study purposes and through this she gained further insights connected to her research through the educational journey and experiences of her children. The researcher's children attended schools and colleges in the UK over the course of a 10-year period and have been transitioning between life in the UK and the KSA. These additional insights and experiences contributed towards the idea to pursue research in this area further.

The researcher thought that it would be useful to access the UK's early years curriculum to obtain a closer look at how it works and to build a much deeper understanding about the differences that exist between the KSA and the UK preschool curriculums. One way to achieve this was to engage directly with a UK school and so the researcher applied to be a school governor. The researcher served as a school governor for almost three years. This role allowed the researcher an opportunity to understand how certain aspects of an early years curriculum function and it was beneficial to get this insight from inside an educational institution. Besides supporting the school, the researcher provided assistance to the school and tried to help them understand what issues impact international students when they access education in the west.

The researcher noted many differences in educational approaches in the UK compared to those practised in Saudi Arabia. Her own experience as an international student who has studied in the UK, coupled with the experiences of her children who have also had first-hand experience of a western education system, led the researcher to reflect on some valuable and interesting insights, which later stimulated ideas for her research.

Some of the most significant differences discussed and overcome with the school were associated with the obvious and general cultural differences and norms of both countries, as well as differences in teaching approaches that exist within each respective educational system (in the UK and Saudi Arabia). For instance, in the UK, there is a greater focus on independent learning, as reflected in the overarching principles of the statutory early years framework (DfE, 2017). This approach of

allowing more autonomy seems to foster responsibility for self-learning and children adapt to being much more self-reliant.

The researcher observed that there appears to be much more of an informal relationship between students and teachers in the UK, whereas this type of relationship is far more formal in Saudi Arabia. Another important element that the researcher closely observed is the way in which children in the preschool setting are encouraged to question things and are not expected to take what they learn at face value. This approachability in teachers shows their willingness to encourage children to think more creatively from an early age and supports them to be more inquisitive, allowing them to question and challenge concepts. The teachers' willingness and preparedness to accept responses from children, which may at times appear to be out of the ordinary and sometimes unusual, shows that in the researcher's experience the educators in the UK are much more at ease and flexible in accepting the unexpected and that they are willing to explore new concepts with them.

The researcher's work as a school governor proved to be valuable for all parties. The dialogue and exchange of information between school staff and the researcher allowed for demystifying of various concepts and ideas that affected the school in being able to meet the needs of their international students. The school enrols a considerable number of Middle Eastern students and often language barriers appear to have prevented parents from being able to fully explain their children's cultural, religious and educational needs to teachers. Furthermore, teachers seemed able to better convey cultural expectations from an English perspective. In the researcher's view, this led to improved relationships between all parties, and multiple barriers were overcome concerning matters that may have been overlooked or misunderstood

before. Sharing experiences and providing background information on cultural practices revealed some interesting findings about the social reality of studying in English schools and this had a positive impact for both the international students at the school, as well as for the teaching staff.

The immediate impact on the school was that teachers appeared to begin to understand the nature of the relationship children had with their teachers in Saudi Arabia and to realise the differences in teaching approaches between British and other cultures' schools. For instance, it was highlighted that Saudi Arabian children were used to a more formal relationship with their teachers and wider boundaries existed between teacher and student. In the researcher's experience, in Saudi Arabian schools teaching is much more teacher led (Alfaisal, 2009). If children have previously engaged in rote learning, then they may be less likely to work independently and may need much more guidance from the teacher. Another cultural difference concerns making eye contact with people. If one makes direct eye contact with elders this can be viewed as being disrespectful or being too forward, especially towards one's elders in Saudi Arabian culture. Therefore, some international students may be less likely to make extensive eye contact with adults or teachers outside of their familiar surroundings. Western teachers may perceive this as the child not engaging fully in direct conversation or perhaps may view the child as being aloof, but all of these subtle and more obvious cultural differences affect how people are viewed and perceived by society.

Having reflected on the many observations the researcher either experienced herself or experienced through feedback on classroom activities with her children, the researcher began to analyse, question and compare teaching approaches that take

place in Saudi Arabia. The researcher felt that whilst certain elements of preschool teaching were very similar between the UK and Saudi Arabia, there were certain concepts in preschool learning that were less developed and did not appear to be formally included in the preschool curriculum in Saudi Arabia. Whilst the researcher recognised that creativity was taking place in preschools across Saudi Arabia, what she could not find was any reference to it in the Saudi Arabian preschool curriculum. This whole experience of studying and living in the UK allowed the researcher the ability and a first-hand opportunity to reflect on and understand the differences that exist in preschool education among the educational systems of both countries. The researcher identified that whilst creative teaching and creative play exists among teachers and children in Saudi Arabian schools, it does not necessarily have a formal place or recognition in the curriculum. To be more specific, the researcher clearly identified that the concept of creativity among children had far greater importance in the UK and exists within the observed approaches preschool staff use and the expected preschool curriculum, for example, within expectations relating to learning to explore and to 'think about problems' (DfE, 2017:9), as well as very directly through the expressive arts and design elements on the curriculum (DfE, 2017). Yet in contrast, this concept had no place within the Saudi Arabian preschool curriculum. The researcher identified that the concept of developing and fostering creativity in preschool children could prove to be an important component of research especially, concerning the aspect of developing creativity in children and this is what inspired the researcher to conduct her study on creativity in Saudi Arabian preschools.

The researcher agrees with Saracho's idea (2010) that individuals do not necessarily have to have an explicit theory in mind when they engage in creative activity. However, the implicit ideas about creativity are expected to guide their thoughts and actions.

She also believes that the development of creativity is subject to the insights held by the adults around the child and depends on the school environment in which the child grows up around.

1.4.2 Social reality of the research

From the researcher's position as a Saudi Arabian woman, who was raised, educated and had worked in the KSA, whilst combining her knowledge and experience about early years education in the UK, due to her own children studying in the UK, the researcher felt confident that she would be able to conduct the study in Saudi Arabia without many complications. Having a wide and comprehensive understanding of the social reality of the country under study made it easier to avoid potential obstacles the researcher could have faced whilst conducting the research. For example, such as being fully aware of the cultural norms of Saudi Arabia, having an appreciation of the religious expectations, as well as knowing where to seek permission from before carrying out the research and further complying with the protocols and boundaries set by the Ministry of Education when conducting the research. One of the motivating points that the researcher noticed regarding creativity in the early years classrooms was how creativity was positively supported in children in the UK. Based on the researcher's experience as an educator, she believed that similar support could be given by the preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia, providing that creativity was clearly presented in the curriculum. As the researcher considered the topic in question further, she realised that it was necessary to carry out this research. The researcher's experience of schools in the UK helped her to realise the potential value in supporting creativity in children. She saw for herself how the support built pupils confidence and helped nurture their ideas further, enabling them to produce interesting ideas and

work. The researcher wanted to apply the concept of supporting creativity in children in Saudi Arabia, where it is not given prominence due to its lack of mention in curricula. As the idea evolved, the importance of exploring the position of creativity in the early years stage in Saudi Arabia became even more vital for the researcher.

This research was conducted in the KSA, given the fact that the concept of creativity in the preschool curriculum was non-existent. Looking at the teachers' perspectives was the initial step taken in trying to understand the position of creativity in preschool settings. The teachers' perspectives was an important element to start the research with because it was they who worked directly and closely with children on a daily basis, so it was important to investigate their viewpoints. It was inevitable that the researcher would only be meeting female teachers for this research, since all preschool teachers in both the private and public sectors in Saudi Arabia are female. Saudi women tend to make employment choices in specialities that do not conflict with the primary role of women, which is orientated towards the responsibility and care of the family (Al Rawaf and Simmons, 1991). However, there have been shifts to encourage women to take other active roles in public as well as in their private lives similar to changes in the UK. It is a fact that the highest numbers of females in KSA colleges are studying in the fields of the humanities, social sciences and education (Ministry of Education, 2013). The researcher does not view this gender specific situation to be a problem for her research, given that culturally it is the females who typically work in early years education in Saudi Arabia. In fact, what would be unusual is to find male teachers employed in early years roles in Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the researcher is content that the sample under study is appropriate to this research. The researcher believed that this position is not an issue exclusive to Saudi society; it seems to be a widespread situation. Peeters (2007) investigated the reasons why females occupied early

childcare and educational jobs, as this seemed to be the case in five European countries: Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Belgium and the UK. Peeters (2007) confirmed in his study that childcare is usually seen as females' work, which could be an effect of culture or something innate and natural to women. Al Rawaf and Simmons (1991) found that a similar reason lies behind women's choices to enter similar professions in Saudi Arabia.

Another social reality related to Saudi Arabia as an Islamic-run state, is that having a strong religious foundation is fundamental for its citizens and carries great importance alongside secular education. Therefore, a substantial amount of attention is given to guiding and teaching pupils about their religious and moral duties in parallel to their other secular educational needs. Religious knowledge is embedded within the different teaching themes and is an integral part of the learning schemes written up by teachers and is closely governed by the higher authorities in Saudi Arabia. For example, in a preschool framework called the Self-Learning Curriculum (SLC), which is in use in most of the preschools in Saudi Arabia, when children are being taught about the concepts of water, the religious facts related to water are also presented to the child by the teacher in parallel to general and scientific information (Ministry of Education, 2005). The researcher believes that the relationship of religion with the different themes is skillfully integrated to support and develop the child's religious understanding within each theme.

The religious beliefs held by the teachers are expected to be in agreement with what the Islamic teachings and guidance convey for the believers of Islam. Aspects of the faith have to be taught in school in order to train and guide individuals to be observant Muslims and to be good, law abiding and kind citizens from an early age. Religious

teachings run parallel to the secular subjects in the KSA, sharing the Islamic guidance and reminding believers about God, as well as assisting them to make connections about all that God created. For instance, when a lesson takes place about the rain cycle, children learn about the process of rain formation from a scientific perspective, just as any child around the world would learn at school. In terms of a religious reminder, the uniqueness of classes in an Islamic environment is that children are also informed about how the rain exists by the will and mercy of God. If children wish to express something creative, then they are naturally allowed to do so.

Perhaps the issue about creativity may lie in whether the teacher is able to acknowledge and recognise unique ideas and thoughts and whether she is creative or not. This may be attributed to her teaching style and how she deals with new ideas, or how flexible she is in accepting unexpected responses. This does not mean that every teacher delivers in the same way, just because she is Muslim does not mean that each teacher is as rigid in her teaching methodology as another, nor does it mean that every teacher will be as creative as another. It may be that certain delivery approaches exist in the way topics are taught and teachers themselves may not have discovered a creative way of teaching a topic due to their potentially outdated or embedded practice. This is a common aspect among teachers who are comfortable teaching from familiar resources and are often unwilling to change their methods. In other instances, there are also teachers who enjoy switching things around and trying out new ways of engaging learners. It may be about how passionate a teacher is in making learning interesting and exciting for children and how far she is prepared to go in achieving extraordinary outcomes. There is possibly some impact from the teachers' own childhood conditioning and traditional ways of how she learnt and how she might have been taught, which could influence the way in which she teaches others.

Individuals may be inclined to pass on knowledge in the way it was delivered to them. Some people evolve in how they manage to deliver the information or skills and some simply are not able to relate it any differently to how they were taught themselves. Every teacher has her own personality and drive and it may only be those who are more daring or risk takers that deviate from curriculum guidelines and teach differently and deliver their lessons in more exciting and thought-provoking ways.

It is possible that if the teacher is not convinced with an idea, then it is less likely to be encouraged or even considered relevant. This fact is applicable with most areas of life. For instance, if a person is not convinced with the functionality of a product, he or she is less likely to purchase it. Similarly, if a teacher believes her practice works well and gets the desired results she is expecting, then she is less likely to encourage new ways of learning, or it may be that the teacher is reluctant to accept change and is unwilling to consider new methods or approaches in teaching. This leads the researcher to be more convinced with the idea of supporting and encouraging continued professional development. If we are left to continue to practice in teaching without being evaluated or monitored for professionality and outcomes, then there is a risk that as practitioners we can lose our spark and motivation. It is important to regularly monitor and review our teaching practices and further share ideas and methodologies from different societies that result in positive outcomes and growth in children's learning.

The researcher's experiences have led her to the view that promotion and encouragement of creativity lie in the motivation and beliefs held by the practitioners. If they themselves are not convinced and motivated by the idea, then they are less likely to promote it or be swayed by its impact. Promoting new ideas, such as

encouraging creativity, will inevitably require support and teacher development for them to be promoted, followed by a review to look at how successful their implementation has been and what further training needs might be required.

The religious element of the curriculum is expected to be delivered in schools and will run regardless of any secular studies (Ministry of Education, 2013). Islam is deeply rooted in Saudi Arabia and this is unlikely to change, due to the personal, social, spiritual and historical significance of the faith. With regard to the religious requirements in teaching impacting on this research, for example, the willingness or ability to embrace creativity, the researcher believes that there are no clashes between the two elements of the curriculum. No teacher showed resistance to creativity because of her religious standing, nor did they express any inhibitions in relation to creativity because of the religious teachings. The researcher's experience of social norms in Saudi Arabia suggests that developing creativity should not be inhibited because of religious teachings.

Creativity either exists in people or can be cultivated by individuals. This can be achieved or encouraged in various ways, such as by casual questioning of expected outcomes of regular activities or predicting how things will turn out according to observed or tested processes. Creativity can also be encouraged by allowing individuals to be free with their thoughts and ideas and to be able to present them in a form or manner they envisage, rather than the teacher or facilitator leading them in a desired direction influenced by their expectations for an outcome, it is therefore important to discuss whatever has been created by a child in a positive and nurturing way. In Saudi Arabia promoting the growth and development of its citizens has progressed considerably over the years in many areas for example in enabling them

access to education outside of the country with this opportunity being open to both men and women (Saudi Vison 2030, 2018).

The researcher believes that creativity has existed in education and has even been indirectly or directly promoted, but the missing link has been a formal recognition of the concept and little has been done to structure and formalise its importance within Saudi Arabian curricula. Had creativity not been in existence, then one can ask how would Saudi Arabia have intellectual people and innovators of design and technology or have medical staff that are at the forefront of new and pioneering procedures? The concept of creativity exists, and has been taught, perhaps more passively than overtly and it is hoped that this research will facilitate the concept and development of creativity to be more formally recognised, researched and developed further for the good and benefit of the future generations of Saudi citizens.

This research aims to get a better understanding of creativity as perceived by teachers who work in the preschool environment whilst working within the boundaries of the social reality described earlier. This may have influence and impact on their teaching styles, perspectives, and actions.

1.4.3 The educational context of the research

1.4.3.1 Education in Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is a very large country, taking up as much as four-fifths of the Arabian Peninsula. Saudi Arabia's landscape is far-reaching and open and the kingdom is famous for its deserts. However, as well as barren open landscapes, the country has grasslands, mountains and forests (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). At the end of 2015, the KSA was reported to have a population of 31,742,308, with a growth rate of

approximately 2.54%, a majority of which are young adults under the age of 30. The main and official language of Saudi Arabia is Arabic (General Authority for Statistics, 2016). In Saudi Arabia, only two seasons are experienced: winter and summer. Winter temperatures can drop to below freezing and these extremes normally occur in the northern and central parts of the country. Summer is quite different; temperatures can be expected to exceed 40°C. There is very little rainfall and, if it does rain, it tends to be limited to a few districts in the country (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2016). The climate of Saudi Arabia has been closely considered and evaluated when designing the school schedule. The extreme weather conditions of the country, of summer temperatures exceeding 40 °C and winters below freezing, are critical when designing a daily schedule for schools (Alqassem et al., 2016).

There have been considerable changes to the Saudi Arabian education system over the last 50 years, with a key development being equality of access to education across genders. This has meant that more girls and women have been able to access education, where traditionally it has predominantly been males who have received a formal education. As a result of the government's drive to raise education levels, during the last twenty-five years, literacy rates have improved dramatically. For example, in 1992, the literacy rate for males was 79.97% and 57.28% for females; present-day figures are 94.7% for men and 91.1% for women (UNESCO, 2016). Today, the government spends over 25% of its total public expenditure on the education sector. Whilst not compulsory, education is free and greater efforts are being made to educate those who are blind, deaf, and disabled. Saudi Arabia has also concentrated its efforts in raising educational standards amongst students who require specialised physical therapy or schooling (Ministry of Education, 2015).

The number of females participating in education today far exceeds those of males, and this is the case in schools as well as in universities. This rise occurred due to the equality of access measures taken by the government but is also due to changing trends and views among Saudi communities. Society has gradually abandoned traditional practices of typically allowing access to education mainly to males and moved forward in deciding and recognising the value of raising the educational levels of women. However, the genders are still separated for their education at all stages except in preschool, where classes can be of mixed gender (Ministry of Education, 2015).

The objectives of the Saudi educational policy are to meet the religious, economic and social needs of the people, ensuring that education provides religious, intellectual and moral training to create well-educated, responsible citizens who are aware of their rights and duties and can contribute towards maintaining a positive and healthy Islamic society (Ministry of Education, 2015). Religious and cultural norms are of great importance in education in Saudi Arabia and are addressed within the national framework of preschool education.

Islam is the main religion of the inhabitants of Saudi Arabia and so it is inevitable that the faith is regulated and taught in schools. The way that the education system is set up in the KSA currently works for its citizens and of course, like any other place in the world, it is not without its fair share of societal problems. However, in following this religion, there are boundaries and limits for what Muslims can and cannot engage in. Just like in secular society, people have rules and regulations to follow, for instance one cannot drive a car without a licence, vote or get married until they reach a certain age. Every society has its own set of rules and social codes which people are expected

to conform to and what it finds acceptable or unacceptable in terms of behaviours and actions. Similarly, the religion of Islam has specific rulings and exceptions that are set out. It could be argued, that creative expression or creative potential may well be limited because of the religious boundaries that Muslims abide by. These rulings govern a Muslim's life and it is not oppressive in anyway. Therefore, it does not hinder creativity, people can be creative within their ideas, so long as it does not transgress the rules in Islam. For instance, one can be expressive in their creativity as they want, so long as it does not promote lewdness or cross moral boundaries.

The Saudi Arabian education system is founded upon two categories: general and higher education. The general education system consists of several stages:

- Preschool education - learning starts by the age of 3 and continues to the age of 6.
- Primary school starts at age 6 and continues to 12 years old. Children remain in primary education for 6 years.
- Secondary school - lasts from the age of 12 to 15. Children remain in study at this stage for 3 years.
- High school - covers students who are aged between 15 and 18. They remain in high school for 3 years (Ministry of Education, 2015).

It is important to provide information concerning higher education provision in Saudi Arabia, as well as to give some insight into the background of the higher education provision for preschool teacher training in the KSA. Higher education covers both college and university stages and time spent at these institutes can differ depending on the nature of the courses undertaken by the students. Saudi Arabia has a system of educational establishments, boasting 25 public and 27 private universities, as well as multiple colleges and other institutions, which offer a variety of courses, covering many specialities and offering a range of accreditations. Higher education has become

increasingly popular and accessible. In 1970, only 7,000 students were reported to have been enrolled at either a college or university, whereas in 2015 the figures were remarkably higher: around 1 million students were recorded as being enrolled on courses across universities in Saudi Arabia (Ministry of Education, 2015). Higher education provision for preschool training in the KSA has undergone a transition from training initially delivered by teacher education institutes to training later being offered by universities. Students on Preschool Teacher Training programmes have also been able to access special needs training and many teachers have graduated as special needs teachers. According to Al-Jadidi (2012), seventeen of the twenty-five public universities offer bachelor's degrees in preschool education, specialising in early childhood education training. The programme consists of 4 years of study and includes theoretical and practical modules in addition to field training, which is offered in the fourth year of the course. The Ministry of Education has also funded the provision of at least four training centres dedicated to the purpose of in-service training. These centres offer continuous early childhood professional development programmes for teachers (King Saud University, 2016). From the researcher's experience in teaching at King Saud University in Riyadh, it is worth mentioning that none of these courses provide training on creativity or creative thinking, either as an educational subject or as an element within any taught module.

Studies have proven that training on creativity can have a positive effect on a teacher's performance. In a recent study by Alzoubi et al. (2016), conducted in Jordan, where researchers considered the influence of creative thinking training in enhancing creative self-efficacy and cognitive motivation, the researchers found that there were major differences between the experimental and control groups in terms of creativity and its related dimensions. The experimental group who had received input from a unit on

creative thinking showed greater creative self-efficacy and cognitive motivation. The researcher sees the lack of consideration of creativity and creative thinking as a gap in the training of preschool teachers and an objective of this research is to address this in the hope that its findings will assist academics and specialists to work together in bringing forward a plan to address this training need.

1.4.3.2 Preschool Education in Saudi Arabia

When the idea of preschool education was officially introduced in 1980, there was very little provision for it. Classes were formed as small centres attached to some of the larger schools and they only accommodated the teachers' own children. These classes increased in popularity and proved to be successful. This popularity attracted interest and attention from the government, leading to them introducing the formal establishment of preschool education (Aljabreen & Lash, 2016).

From the official opening of preschools in 1980, with 19 settings accessed by 2,000 children and supported by 166 teachers, the importance attributed to this education sector developed to 2,559 preschools in 2014 and 182,556 children accessing preschool education. Approximately 22,189 teachers worked across both the public and private sectors, the split in schools comprising 1,617 public preschools and 942 private ones. However, despite there being only 942 privately run schools, their enrolments and classes were much higher compared with public preschools. Currently in Saudi Arabia, a typical class can comprise of about fifteen children to one teacher (Ministry of Education, 2015). Based on Saudi Arabia's 5-year strategic plan, the government has planned to increase the provision of preschool education. Over a 5-year period, the government aims to build around 1500 preschool in the country, 300

schools every year, raising the total number of preschool settings from 3684 to 5184 by the year 2020 (Alqassem et al., 2016).

A study by Al-Mogbel (2014) provides a proposal for the development of preschool education in the KSA. The study examined the preschool education systems of South Korea and Malaysia and identified similarities and differences through a review of experiences in the two countries. He then examined the results and considered the position of preschool education in the KSA with a view to reforming the country's preschool education delivery. The study recommended that preschools build stronger relationships with the private sector and facilitate pilot programmes and projects in collaboration with private investors. It also suggested ways of maintaining the quality of programmes already being offered with the introduction and implementation of enhancements to the curricula, such as allowing for a greater use of technology, paying more attention to the child in building self-respect and self-confidence skills, the promotion of cooperative learning and role-playing. The study further proposed benefits that Saudi Arabia could derive from adopting a more creative approach, such as is the case in Malaysia and South Korea, based on the educational values of fulfilling the needs of children (Al-Mogbel, 2014).

According to Al-Mogbel (2014), when reflecting on future changes expected in Saudi society, there is an increase in the demand for preschools. The Ministry of Education has received many requests to establish more preschool institutions in the country. This is partially because of the rapid rise in the birth rate, the awareness Saudi families have regarding the importance of preschool education for children and because of the rise in the number of working females necessitating more school provision. The latter is a result of a shift in Saudi family dynamics, whereby people have moved away from

living as part of extended families to being nuclear families. Al-Mogbel further proposed that it was imperative for preschool education to evaluate and review all areas related to aspects of teaching and delivery meticulously, starting from reviewing the curriculum, improving lesson planning, teaching and delivery, assessing resources, as well as considering the learning environment. Emphasis on reviewing such matters was stressed because of how these factors have an impact on a child's learning and life. Al-Mogbel indicated that developmental changes must consider the acquisition of new skills, taking on new responsibilities and specific competencies, as well as having in place an effective system to manage and incorporate assessment for further growth. Applying these strategies, schools would have improved mechanisms that could work in collaboration with one another and which would set the scene for a pragmatic agenda contributing towards setting better operational plans. The need to have better clarity concerning teachers' responsibilities would result in the ownership of duties and allow an openness and willingness to consider advances in scientific research in relation to education, and therefore, reinforce this key stage of educational development. Decision makers in Saudi Arabia are concerned about the importance of the vital stage of preschool learning and the impact it has on the child's psychological, educational and social development. By consensus, policy makers in Saudi Arabia have implemented a systematic, integrated programme, which consists of several educational projects (Al-Mogbel, 2014).

Since the Saudi Arabian government started to pay more attention to the needs of preschool educational reform (Ministry of Education, 2013) there have been a range of improvements implemented. These include areas such as student enrolment, and changes to the quality and style of teaching. For example, shifts in teaching methods have taken place, such as moving away from rote delivery, the application of pragmatic

changes, such as moves from being very teacher-centred to being more student-centred, as well as delivering a much more professional curriculum. More recently, the government commissioned the Professional Development of the Childhood Curriculum Project (Tatweer, 2016). This is part of the major scheme being implemented which forms part of a strategic plan for the development of public education in Saudi Arabia. This project aims to deliver an advanced preschool curriculum and provide professional development for practitioners (Tatweer, 2016).

One of the most recent works of the above project is the setting of Preschool Developmental Standards (Tatweer, 2016). This project aims to form a set of learning standards for every child in Saudi Arabia according to his/her growth characteristics and developmental needs, something that could be considered as an individual learning plan. These standards will be used as a reference point in preschool settings and it is believed that the standards will give teachers more flexibility and options in their teaching while working closely with children. Leading educators and supervisors in preschool education from the Ministry of Education have worked hard to develop these standards. Many institutions from within Saudi Arabia have contributed towards material related to the standards by making scientific and linguistic revisions to educational material and have worked in close collaboration with a non-profit organisation based in the United States: the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) (Tatweer, 2016). However, creativity as a characteristic of effective teaching and learning has still not been given clear attention within these standards, as it is not considered as one of the areas of child development. Likewise, it is important to mention that creativity is not currently being studied in any project within the present educational national plan in the education system in Saudi Arabia. However, the researcher intends that the work carried out in this study, together with

the results derived from it, will contribute towards curriculum development, specifically in relation to creativity at the preschool stage.

1.4.3.3 Preschool Curricula in Saudi Arabia

The development of the preschool curriculum in Saudi Arabia has undergone three stages. These stages of reform characterise the pedagogical shifts that have occurred and demonstrate the transition from being very teacher-centred towards becoming more learner-centred (Al Omar, 2013). According to Al Omar (2013), the first stage is the traditional approach, in which early childhood education comprised independent, individual practice. The content of the curriculum mainly depended on the teacher's personal decision about what to teach children and was chosen from a range of books available, such as reading, writing and mathematics textbooks. The project approach was the second stage, which was introduced in 1980 (Al Omar, 2013). Whilst it did not vary considerably from the traditional approach, it did however, pay more attention to improving children's basic literacy skills, aiming to teach children how to read and write. The third change was introduced in 2005, with the implementation of the SLC, The Self Learning Curriculum. Some improvements were made to the curriculum framework and were released along with a Teacher's Guide, which is still actively used today (Ministry of Education, 2005).

The SLC was prepared by the Ministry of Education in Saudi Arabia for the preschool stage and was built on a scientific basis that considered the child's environment and developmental needs. The framework was designed to be compatible with the reality of the preschool situation in the KSA at the time that it was introduced but has not been formally changed since (Ministry of Education, 2005). This framework is seen as

a reliable source containing all the technical information necessary for teachers and was formulated according to specific educational goals (Al shaer, 2008).

It is important to clarify that the SLC is followed by all public preschools in Saudi Arabia, as well as some of the private schools, known as national private preschools. However, other private settings, called international private preschools, follow one of two methods: they either partially follow the national curriculum (the SLC) or they focus solely on academic subjects. When the international settings partially follow the SLC, they combine it with a series of subject-related books in English, covering academic subjects such as science, mathematics and the English language. These subjects are mainly taught to children in English.

The framework of the SLC consists of a Teacher's Guide detailing ten practical teaching units (Ministry of Education, 2005). Each unit deals with a specific subject, describing the activities in detail. There are ten modules, which are divided into two parts: five comprehensive units and five shorter units (Figure 1). Each of the comprehensive units is bound in a separate book. The five units cover the topics of water, sand, food and life at home. The five shorter units are bound together as another book and the units contained within it cover the topics of friends, health and safety, clothing and the family (Ministry of Education, 2005).

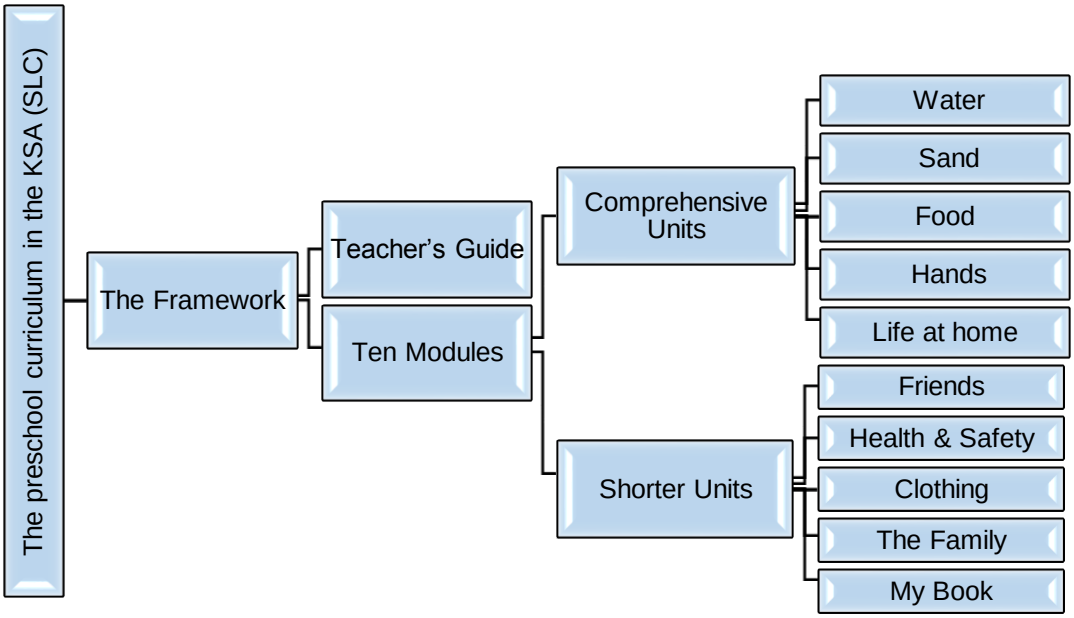

Figure 1: Framework of the Self Learning Curriculum (SLC) for preschools in the KSA

The recommended time for the implementation and completion of each of the comprehensive units is between three and four weeks, while the shorter units can take less than three weeks to complete, depending on how long the activities take and whether the objectives of the unit have been met within that timescale. Each unit is designed to explore a different topic, as well as any related concepts, and includes various activities, all with the aim of improving and stimulating the child's development from all angles: cognitive, physical and emotional.

The classrooms in both sectors are structured and organised in a way that supports the curriculum, examples of which are shown in Figure 2. Private preschool classrooms mainly consist of a smartboard, tables and chairs and most of the private preschools have a standard classroom layout with tables and chairs in either rows or assembled as clusters (without any activity corners) to teach academic subjects such as Arabic and English, science and mathematics.

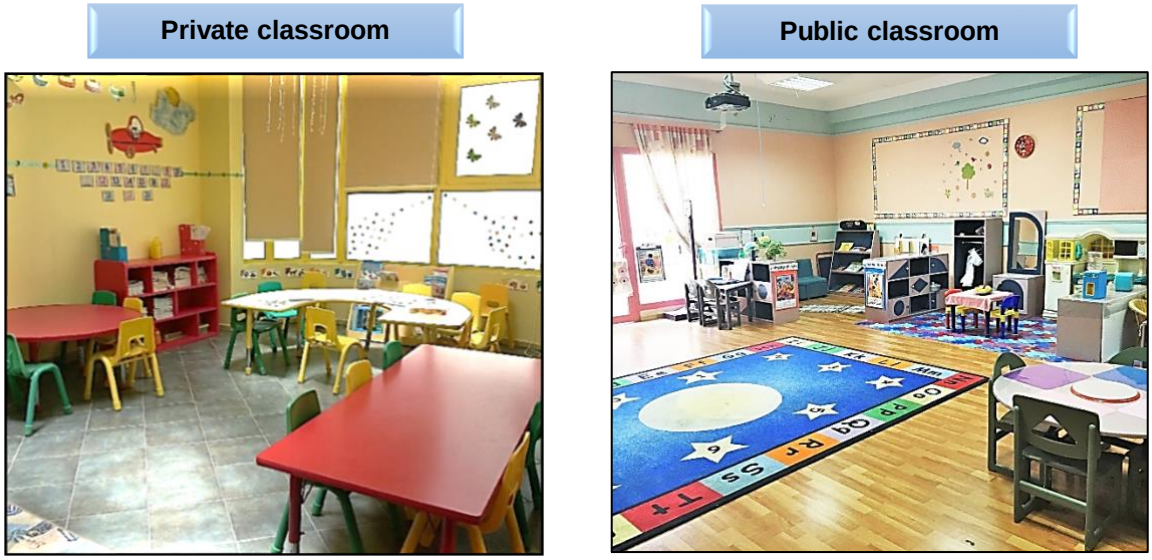

Figure 2: Example of a private classroom with tables and chairs set out in a more traditional style and a further example showing the layout of a public classroom with activity corners

Private preschools may also have at least one classroom structured in the form of an activity corner. Children are expected to study each subject for at least one session every day, often referred to as directed learning. Each child is issued with his/her own subject booklet, stamped with the school name and logo.

However, the national curriculum, the SLC, is implemented in classrooms and manifests in the form of educational corners, otherwise referred to as 'activity corners'. These types of classroom are present in all public settings in Saudi Arabia but this is not the case for all of the private settings (Al Omar, 2013). Research carried out in Jordan by Abdul-Haq and Al-Felfely (2014) investigated the effects of activity corners when formed as part of the classroom and the impact of such a set-up on the development of creative thinking among preschool children in Jordan. The research endorsed that classrooms with educational activity corners provided a rich environment for learning. With the inclusion of a range of resources and materials, these classrooms made a significant positive impact on the development of creative

thinking among the children who were enrolled in these kinds of schools. For example, children demonstrated the ability to write stories, perform plays, and build some complicated constructions in building block corners.

It might be worth clarifying why certain studies from Jordan have been referred to in this study and used as references. They have been referred to for several reasons. First and foremost because the preschool educational system in Jordan is the closest in comparison to the Saudi Arabian schooling system. Secondly, according to Al omari and Nawafle (2011), Jordan has some publications in the field of educational research, which makes it a source of information in the Arab World, for example, the Scientific Research Support Fund, which supports twenty-two scientific journals in various fields in Jordan, including education and humanities, such as Jordan Journal of Educational Sciences (Jordan E-gov, 2013). Therefore, their lead in research offers an opportunity to compare educational settings and teaching practices between both countries. Given that there is a distinct lack of research about creativity in Saudi Arabia, looking into Jordan's research of preschools may offer some interesting insights that could have some bearing on the development of this study. The research carried out in Jordan is also important because it presents some relevant insights that might share some relevance for this study, such as the geographical location and the similarity it has to the KSA. The researcher has first-hand experience and understanding of what the teaching trends are in Jordan, as she has covered material concerning it in lectures she has delivered on the topic as part of a training module at King Saud University, entitled: Comparative studies on education among Arab countries. The methodologies and practices that are applied in Jordan’s education sector are similar to other Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia. There are other related facts concerning Arab World based schooling systems that could be advantageous for this study.

Most of the preschool classrooms in Saudi Arabia are structured in the form of 'activity corners' and consist of seven separate areas: an arts and crafts area, a cognitive activities corner, a role-play and imaginative play area, a building blocks area, a reading zone, a discovery corner, and a directed learning corner (Ministry of Education, 2005). Images in Figure 3 depict scenes of children in play in a few of the activity corners.

Figure 3: A sample of activity corners in use: arts and crafts, a building blocks area and a reading zone

Each of the activity corners is described in some detail in the Teacher's Guide textbook (Ministry of Education, 2005) and a summary is provided below to highlight how classrooms are arranged in the activity corners layout.

Arts and crafts area

This area supports and trains children in using their motor skills as well as their senses. Supporting children's skills, for example, enabling them to hold writing tools such as a pencil, prepares them for the coming years of their general education. It also aims to help build their personality and promote self-confidence as they produce their own work and feel proud of what they are doing (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Cognitive activities area

The second corner is the cognitive activities corner. This is an area in which children can play with a variety of educational toys in order to improve their cognitive skills. The resources used by the children in this area are designed to improve their cognitive abilities and aid in developing a correlation between motor skills and the use of senses. This corner is recommended for all classrooms that follow the SLC (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Imaginative play corner

In the imaginative play corner, children are free to play and dress up in any role they choose. The layout and content of this corner is frequently changed by the classroom teacher to represent a specific topic being taught from each learning unit within the curriculum. For example, the corner can be turned into a bakery (from the food unit), a clinic (from the health and safety unit) or it can represent the seaside (from the water unit). This flexibility in being able to adapt this corner in accordance with the teaching units, enriches the children's experiences and is designed to help them better understand real-life situations and environments (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Building blocks area

This is considered as one of the main corners for play and it is rare to find any classroom without one. It is believed that children gain many benefits from spending time playing with blocks. This area supports children in developing their social, mental and physical skills. In addition, children can be taught a great deal of scientific information through playing in this corner. They can be taught about aspects relating to weight, gravity, balance, numeracy, as well as other important scientific themes and facts (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Reading zone

In this area of the classroom, children can read books and stories, with one another, independently or as a group with the teacher. Some of the books placed in the reading zone are related to the subject being taught, whilst other books are of a more general kind. According to the Teacher's Guide (Ministry of Education, 2005) the reading zone is an important area because it is a place in which children can have fun and be imaginative. It is an opportunity for them to develop their vocabulary and learn new words and phrases. It is an activity through which they can increase their general knowledge. Reading stories enhances children's imagination, triggers their thinking skills and prepares them for the next stages of educational input (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Discovery corner

This corner is where children can try simple experiments, observe objects closely and discover answers about questions related to their surroundings and environment. According to the Teacher's Guide (Ministry of Education, 2005), teachers are expected to supply the corner with tools and materials that stimulate the child to think, such as a scientific experiment, a pet or a plant.

Directed learning area

Work in this area is very teacher-led. There is much more direction from teachers and students are expected to follow instructions in this area. The teachers also support students on a one-to-one basis thereby working more closely with the children. They might for instance help them to master the coordination of writing tools or work on other aspects of their literacy and numeracy skills. It is the only place, in accordance

with the SLC standards, where children are guided through academic subjects, such as literacy and numeracy (Ministry of Education, 2005).

Both public and private school settings teach children aged between three and six years old. The private settings offer an academic-based education, paying far more attention to academic achievement. While public schools offer a more relaxed environment and teach children through directed play in a resource rich environment. Due to the attention and importance given to academic achievement in the private settings, their daily timetable is rigorously organised with set periods for subjects such as science, mathematics and languages. However, in public school settings, these subjects are taught indirectly and are embedded through children's interaction with activities from their programme.

The class timetable also has specific components to the lessons, which are outlined and defined by the curriculum. These components must be covered at specific times during the day in what is known as the ‘daily schedule’. According to the Teacher’s Guide (Ministry of Education, 2005) the daily schedule was specified to indicate teachers’ roles in providing and implementing activities throughout the day. The schedule covers all the lessons in order to improve children’s skills and develop their abilities. However, the order of the lessons within the schedule can vary from one school to another. In public preschools, the general running order of the daily schedule is as follows:

- Morning brief (45 minutes): the day begins with a short briefing to outline the concept, which is to be covered that day. For example, the teacher will explain what the day’s topic will be. It could be that the water cycle is chosen from the water unit.

- Engagement in the educational activity corners (60 minutes): free play in the classroom, for children to explore practical activities around the learning concept for the day. Resources and activities are laid out in the different corners of the classroom for children to explore and play with.
- Playground activities (60 minutes): children engage in outside play.
- Lunchtime and break (90 minutes).
- Oriented education or directed learning (60 minutes): children are taught numeracy, literacy and languages.
- End-of-day assembly (45 minutes): the final component, in which the day's learning is reviewed with the children (Ministry of Education, 2005).

The daily schedule in private preschool settings differs from the one in public settings and this can vary between each setting according to the school's curriculum and objectives.

- National private preschools mostly follow a similar version of the above-mentioned schedule with the possibility of additional activities.
- In the international private schools, each day mainly has a scheduled lesson for each subject, such as science, mathematics and languages, along with breaks and mealtimes.

The main facilities in most of the public and private preschool settings in Saudi Arabia consist of an admissions office, staff rooms, classrooms, a medical room, a dining hall, a library (which observations have shown is visited by the children regularly), a teaching aids storage area for educational resources, as well as children's play areas. There are two play areas in most of the preschools in Saudi Arabia: an outdoor playground and an indoor play area. The indoor play area is usually fitted with a soft

floor for the safety of children during play. The outdoor playground is divided into several different sectors, for instance, a general play area with slides and swings, a sand pit, a mini football pitch, as well as a cycling track complete with a central area marked out as a road with realistic road markings. The facilities can vary slightly across settings according to the vision and potential (including the financial capability) of the school (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Examples of outdoor and indoor play areas in Saudi preschools, in both the public and private sectors

The researcher has worked in education with children for almost ten years and for two years has worked as a lecturer at the King Saud University in Riyadh. Over this period, she has worked in both public and private school settings. This experience has given her the opportunity to visit a wide range of public and private preschool settings, providing a degree of authority when comparing public and many private schools. The former is typically built around activity corners, whereas the latter have limited access to these activities, often due to the limited space to exploit them and having to implement a more rigid/academic timetable. The researcher feels that activity corners grant children the freedom to be more explorative, they have much more flexibility in

play as well as the choice to engage in activities they enjoy. This therefore, could improve the child's mood and results in the display of a child who is much more willing to engage in learning, this is supported by Abdul-Haq and Al-Felfely's research (2014) mentioned earlier in this chapter. This study also confirmed a positive impact of the activity corners on young children's creative thinking. The researcher, from her experience, has also noticed that the children in the activity corners classrooms tend to be much more open to new ways of looking at different concepts. Children seem to be much more at ease with the areas they play in and interact better with other children, thereby building confidence in working with others as well as enabling them to adopt ideas from the other children in the classroom. The researcher's experience in private schools, as previously noted, reflects key differences in comparison with the public schools. In private schools the majority of lessons are geared to more formal, academic delivery of subjects; teachers are driven by school/parent expectations to achieve; and the schools are more results/goal orientated. As a result of all this, the researcher's view is that the schools offer limited time for children to explore or experiment on their own and have little opportunity to be creative. The more formal regime, whilst potentially promoting more discipline, in the researcher's view, can also result in pressure on children to succeed academically. The researcher believes that this instils an unhealthy competitiveness and offers little time for self-expression.

When comparing this to public schools, the researcher believes that these schools offer a more appropriate early education for children leading to natural play and exploration as would be common in children of this age. Many researchers confirm that creativity can increase or decrease depending on the type of education that a child receives (Craft et al., 2007; Eason et al., 2009; Piffer, 2012).

Whilst space and time for creativity is far more predominant in public preschool settings it is still not, in the researcher's view, as central as it could be in promoting children's learning, in either these or private settings. The research therefore hopes to ascertain why this is the case and in so doing offer insight into how increasing the opportunity for creativity might be achieved in both settings.

1.5 Summary

This introductory chapter offered an overview of the research. It provides background information concerning the subject of the study. This chapter presents the significance of the study, the research aims and questions and explains the content of the research and how it has been structured. The contextual information about the Saudi Arabian preschool educational system has been described in detail to give a good understanding to the research context.

In conclusion, the concept of childhood creativity is a new idea for Saudi Arabia and the aim of this study was to explore the perceptions held by preschool teachers and to examine how aware teachers were of the concept and whether it was being applied in schools. Creativity as a concept has been well researched globally, however it has not been largely explored in Saudi Arabia.

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 in other countries, such as the UK, Jordan and the USA. 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 significant 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 job market, which in most cases this would not have happened due to restrictions in traditional norms. Saudi Arabia gives a high regard to the importance of education and what is unique about Saudi education is that it is balanced in providing a secular education whilst meeting the needs of its citizens by offering an Islamic education too, thereby secular and Islamic education comfortably running side by side. This is typical of a religious state-run country where religious values are highly regarded and form part of daily life.

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 all of these improvements, creativity as a concept has not been addressed or formally adopted.

Changes to the preschool 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 tailor 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.

This research will consider the potential importance of creativity and raise awareness to the value and benefits of the idea, as well as demonstrate the relevance and impact it can have for preschool education with a view to looking at how best creativity can be achieved and introduced into mainstream preschool education in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

This research addresses teachers' perspectives regarding creativity in the preschool setting in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). This chapter identifies key aspects from the research and literature concerning creativity in education, paying particular attention to the preschool phase. It considers a range of aspects from the perspectives of education, philosophy, psychology and sociology.

The literature review is organised into seven main parts. The first covers relevant theoretical perspectives from the child development literature, summarising the most relevant viewpoints to the researcher and to the current research. The second considers the links between child development and models of creativity. The third part addresses what the researcher sees as the importance of creativity. The fourth looks at definitions of creativity to gain insights about the concept of creativity and to acquire an understanding of the notion of creativity. The fifth explores the theories and models of creativity in more detail and the next identifies the factors which are believed to have a possible influence on creativity in children. The final point raised is the place of a creative pedagogy in education.

2.1 The theoretical perspectives of child development

Although there are a range of child development theories, the interest for this research lies in those which support the idea of creativity as being a process of construction of connections by a child either through individual experimentation or through social interaction with others, both peers and teachers. In this sense the theory of operant

conditioning, developed by the behaviourist Skinner (1976), whereby a child's behaviour is conditioned using reinforcements or punishments, is considered inappropriate. This theory provides no place for experimentation or thoughts or feelings of a child that might influence their development, as its focus is only on how experience shapes a child's development.

In his initial work, Bandura's social learning theory (Bandura,1977) supported operant conditioning but also argued that just as important in understanding child development is the role observation plays and how a child mediates any treatment they are subjected to. The researcher sees observation of others as being an integral part of promoting creativity but argues that subjecting a child to any form of operant conditioning would seem to contrast with the idea started with of creativity being a process of construction exploiting a child's own thoughts and feelings. It is important to note that after the initial development of his social learning theory, Bandura came to recognise the cognitive control children could have over their actions. As a result, to accommodate this he renamed his theory Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986), thereby reflecting the learning that occurs as a result of social experiences. This was an important development as it led to him being viewed as a key influence in the transition between the behavioural theories and those of cognitive psychology which the researcher regards as being the most relevant to this research and which will be discussed next.

Arguably the most celebrated psychologist associated with cognitive development is Piaget (1936). The significance of his cognitive development theory to this research is that it is specifically concerned with children. Piaget's view was that children learn best through doing and actively exploring, thereby building up their understanding of their

environment. This, I would argue, incorporates the opportunity for the development of creative ways of coping with the differences they find between what they already know and what they discover.

Although Piaget's theory is often seen as having three components, my view is that two of these can be conflated – that of schemas and those of accommodation and assimilation. Piaget (1952: 7) defined a schema as: "a cohesive, repeatable action sequence possessing component actions that are tightly interconnected and governed by a core meaning". In other words, basic building blocks around a given theme which enable a child to form a view of their world. As these schema change or increase and get ever more detailed so does the child's ability to think logically and grapple with abstract concepts. Changes to schema are where the components of 'assimilation' and 'accommodation' come into play. Put simply, where something new arises which fits within an existing schema then it is assimilated into the existing schema, and arguably little learning takes place. Where this new occurrence causes dissonance with the existing schema, then it needs to be 'accommodated' leading to formation of a new schema, and new learning. Given this, then enabling the opportunity for creativity to flourish in early childhood education should help to promote the development of schema and thereby the development of the child.

In his theory Piaget (1936) proposes 'four stages of cognitive development'- sensorimotor, preoperational, concrete operational and formal operational period. He argues that all children need to consecutively go through these stages, albeit at different rates depending on the provision of the right environment and level of stimuli given at appropriate times, for complete cognitive development. Given the wide acceptance of his theory, it follows that providing an environment where the stage

most associated with children who will be at preschool, the ‘preoperational stage’ can develop, will be significant. It is important to note that Piaget’s theory, and his stages, are not without critics. For example, Weiten (1992) challenges the idea that the stages are separate. Edwards et al. (2000) are critical of the use of unscientific methods and lack of consideration of potential cultural aspects in their design and Wood et.al. (2008) argue they underestimate the difference in ability of children.

The ‘preoperational’ stage needs to promote an environment where children can think about things symbolically: that is to make one thing - a word or an object - stand for something else. This again provides an argument for providing the opportunity for children to be creative and building up their schema to enable them to move on to the next stage of their cognitive development.

Inhelder and Piaget (1958), note that assimilation and accommodation require an active learner, not a passive one, because problem-solving skills cannot be taught, they must be discovered. Therefore, within the classroom, learning should be student-centred and accomplished through active discovery learning. The role of the teacher is to facilitate learning, rather than direct tuition, encouraging:

- the process of learning, rather than an end
- active methods that produce useful problems which promote the reconstruction of schema
- both individual and peer-peer and peer-teacher collaborative activities,

Interestingly Piaget (1952) did not explicitly relate his theory to education, and as I have noted his work is not without its critics with respect to his actual research processes and underestimating the abilities of young children or overestimating the abilities of older learners. To counter these latter concerns, the view is that constant

evaluation of the level of a child's development is required, to ensure suitable tasks are always set (Gelman et al., 1986).

Despite criticisms of Piaget's work, it has been extremely influential in developing educational policy and teaching practice. For example, a review of primary education by the UK government in 1966 was based strongly on Piaget's theory. The result of this review led to the publication of the Plowden report (Cace, 1967). More recently the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage in England (DfE, 2017), which has set the standards for learning, development and care for children from birth to five notes that: "In planning and guiding children's activities, practitioners must reflect on the different ways that children learn and reflect these in their practice. Three characteristics of effective teaching and learning are:

- playing and exploring - children investigate and experience things, and 'have a go'
- active learning - children concentrate and keep on trying if they encounter difficulties, and enjoy achievements
- creating and thinking critically - children have and develop their own ideas, make links between ideas, and develop strategies for doing things" (pp.10-11)

These are ideas directly compatible with Piaget's theory. My experiences of observing of early years settings while being based in the UK have helped me to decide on the focus of my research: the examination of the creative opportunities provided for children in preschools in Saudi Arabia where the notion of the value of creativity only receives minimal consideration in the set curriculum for this age group.

The researcher argues that from experience and study of child development theories, only those which reflect a constructivist approach to learning, which consider how

students actively create or ‘construct’ knowledge out of experiences, are appropriate when considering the promotion of creativity. Although the researcher has focussed on the work of Piaget and his cognitive development theory, others have voiced similar views about how students learn. Probably the most significant of these was the philosopher John Dewey, regarded by some as the greatest educational thinker of the 20th century. Dewey, although he did not use the term constructivism, argued that if, as he felt, students learning developed primarily by building their own knowledge, then teachers should adjust the curriculum to fit students’ prior knowledge and interests as fully as possible. However, Dewey was also of the opinion that learning with complete freedom was problematic because pupils often don't know how to structure their own learning experiences and for maximum benefit they need to be guided (Dewey, 1938/1977). Although Dewey based his writings on older children, his views are of equal value when applied to preschool children. Dewey’s position on the importance of guided learning or what could be termed scaffolding, raises a further important theory which has underpinned this research.

Piaget viewed language as secondary to action, which was in direct contrast to a contemporary of his, the Russian psychologist, Les Vygotsky, who argued that social interaction is crucial for cognitive development. Whilst Piaget regarded a child’s ability to learn relied upon interaction with the environment and language played little importance, Vygotsky (1978) emphasised language, and social interaction, as being essential if learning was to take place. As language skills, especially in young children, will be limited, this is where Vygotsky introduced the term scaffolding, referring to the importance of more ‘knowledgeable others’, such as parents and teachers in developing a child’s learning. This is where his often quoted ‘zone of proximal development’ (Christmas et al., 2013) arose: the difference between what a learner

can do without help and what they might achieve with guidance and encouragement from more experienced support. Teachers providing a constructive learning environment is still seen as important, but social interaction, with the opportunity for talk between pupils and the teacher, is given greater prominence.

Vygotsky's ideas can be seen to underpin some key approaches to early years education, including the Reggio Emilia approach, with its notion of teachers as co-learners and collaborators in learning and the importance of the learning environment (Stone, 2012), which also sees children as needing many opportunities to express themselves creatively, to fully develop (McNally & Slutsky, 2017).

What this section has tried to do is consider key child development theories and started to discuss these not only in terms of children's learning but how they link to the notion of creativity. The next section aims to make these links more explicit.

2.2 Child development theories of creativity

Over the last century various models of creative thinking have emerged. Early ideas from Graham Wallas (1926), a social psychologist, presented the creative process as a sub-conscious falling into four separate stages, but not independent of each other; preparation, incubation, illumination and verification. The first stage of preparation was related to the collection of internal information relevant from the external information derived from the environment. The second stage of incubation is associated with the application of unconscious associations. In the illumination stage, ideas are supposedly revealed to the consciousness. In the final stage of verification, comparisons are made between the ideas and what is reality, thus leading to selections.

Whilst this model sees creativity as a sort of magical process, the main models of creativity now see it as developing from conscious effort balancing analysis and imagination. In this view the model by Fritz (1991) has seven elements to it Conception; Vision; Current reality; Take action; Adjust, learn, evaluate, adjust; Building momentum; Completion and Living with your creation. Although some of these terms might seem rather strange, when looking at children's development my analysis suggests that many can be linked to the theoretical perspectives raised form a constructivist viewpoint in the last section. Conception, Vision and Current reality' reflect the existing environment a child is in. Experimentation can evolve from play and social interaction with others. Assimilation and accommodation can be linked with 'Adjust, learn, evaluate (although this might not be within the concept of the child), adjust'. 'Building momentum' can be associated with the development of a new schema and 'Completion' as a satisfying product within the confines of the child's stage of development. 'Living with your creation' reflects satisfaction with the end product irrespective of its connection with reality. In this way the idea of creativity, although it may not result in anything new or 'creative', involves the cognitive development of the child and it is this notion which the researcher intends to explore in their research.

Vygotsky has also produced work on the development and use of creativity. His work, summarised by Smolucha (1992) suggested that "the creative imagination is a goal-directed, culturally mediated psychological system that stems from the internalisation of children's play and the functional interweaving of fantasy and thinking in concepts. Vygotsky wrote extensively on his understanding on the notion of creativity and some of the areas he focussed were on issues such as the development of higher mental functions in general, how tools and sign develop and acquire meaning, the role of the

school and formal education in developing the imagination, the importance of culture and future outlook in psychological growth, as well as the connections between emotions, personal experience, consciousness and creativity. This research will include commentary which links with much of this range of aspects, in terms of how creativity is seen by current teachers in preschool settings in Saudi Arabia.

At the heart of Piaget and Vygotsky's philosophies is the principle for enabling exploration, which was argued can be achieved through playful engagement. Within this, the children's ability to make choices has an important role, on the basis that both exploratory playfulness and practical experiences allow children to learn more creatively. What is integral to these exploratory, playful approaches to learning, is holding a view of the child being creative, in the sense of being the constructor of personal and shared meaning (Craft, 2005).

More recently many approaches to creativity have been developed. Sternberg (2003) asserts that the formation of ideas is inherently creative, suggesting that the evolving ideas can challenge convention and change existing ways in which things are done and thought. Here we can view the child developing their own ideas through personal experimentation and/or social interaction. Sweller (2009) who suggested two steps, which he believed led to the manifestation of the most creative possibilities. The first step is 'blind variation', which is the generating of ideas without expecting any potential success in the applied world: this is known as the generativity phase. We can liken this to a child's experimentation, for example through play. The second step is referring to 'selective retention', that means selecting what to take forward. This suggests the development of a child's schema allowing various alternatives to be discarded based on new evidence. Although there is not space to discuss his research agenda in full,

Simonton (2011) argues that creative achievement needs to combine expertise with individual differences in cognitive abilities along with genetic and environmental factors, and it is these which underlie the development of individual differences. Here the notion of the 'knowledgeable other', along with careful 'planning and guiding children's activities', can be seen as necessary in promoting creativity.

Developing this a little further Cremin et al. (2013) acknowledge how research focused on personality motivation and socio-cultural context to creativity has identified that a creative person often possesses positive traits, such as;

- demonstrating intellectual curiosity
- having deep sense of commitment
- possessing independence in their thoughts and actions
- possessing a strong desire for self-actualisation
- possess a high capacity for emotional involvement with their work
- willing to take risks by stepping out of the norm

These are all traits which theories of cognitive development show as being important in the development of the child.

In addition to creativity being recognised as a social phenomenon, attention has also been given to the ethics of creativity in relation to its ends. Many researchers initiated the examination of creativity and wisdom and stated the importance of looking at the outcomes of creative effort especially in connection to the impact they have, particularly in relation to education (Craft, 2006; Claxton et al., 2008).

Much of the research into everyday creativity has been developed by researchers exploring the area of 'possibility thinking'. In England (Cremin et al., 2006 and Craft et

al., 2012) investigated the concept of ‘possibility thinking’ in a range of early years and primary contexts, including looking at finding problems and solving them. It is argued that possibility thinking occurs when children are involved in curiosity-driven exploration that generates and investigates questions which we can identify with the appropriate intervention of the teacher.

Cremin et al. (2013) confirmed that possibility thinking is motivated by children in playful and frequent narrative contexts involving questions and responses. It has been noted that leading questions lead on to further exploration of the leading question generated by additional follow-through questions which involve micro practical steps that investigate the leading question. These explorations are presented in the form of stories which consist of relational engagement. Children are self-determined and quite often use imagination. When involved in the creative process they take risks and can innovate. Their creativity is based around the degree of inherent possibility within the questions posed (including both narrow and broad) and involves personal, collaborative and collective engagement. Possibility thinking has a chance to be nurtured when teachers provide a stimulating environment, where children are valued and are given the time and space to explore and create.

Everyday creativity in the primary classroom has been explored in England by Jeffrey and Woods (2003), who examined the ways in which children’s creativity is established and what enables it to emerge. They assert that four key features need to be present within a primary classroom, which are relative to children and their teachers, enabling and supporting creativity:

- children need to have a sense of relevance in the experiences they are engaged in

- having control over the articulation of a task
- possessing ownership over their learning
- and having opportunities to innovate

Most of these philosophies share a belief and show commitment to the importance of constructivist experiential learning approaches noted earlier, which subsequently open up further opportunities for children to examine and explore alternative possibilities.

What the first two sections of this chapter have done is tried to set the scene by relating child centred learning theories to the development of creativity, arguing that the latter is important for the future educational growth of the child. Saudi Arabian government guidelines have given minimal attention to the development of creativity within the preschool context. The purpose of this research is to judge how present teachers within preschool settings in Saudi Arabia view the notion of creativity and its importance in the development of the child. The research covers both public and private schools as there is expectation that the latter will show less concern over developing creativity given the lack of government requirement for it and that those sending their children to these schools are likely to be disposed more to achievement in academic subjects. It is hoped that the literature and the findings will provide evidence to convince those responsible for setting preschool curricula that the development of creativity should form a central part.

2.3 The importance of creativity

Although we have discussed the theoretical arguments for the development of creative practices in preschools it is essential to consider the importance of creativity in this area. Views have shifted from where creative ability was once thought only to exist

and be attributed to a select exceptional few. Now, the term is applied more widely and suggests that creative ability is intrinsic in everyone, and this includes young children (Craft, 2002). Craft (2002) views creativity as a phenomenon that all people share regardless of their age, class, gender, race, or ability. It is not exclusive to rich, famous, artistic, or intelligent people. She further maintains that creativity is a key that has significant effects for future societies, whether in relation to producing a multi-role society or coping with the speed of change. 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 this is deemed to be necessary for the well-being of society, as well as for the individual (Craft et al., 2007).

Richards (2009), in considering the importance of creative functioning and development, identified 12 possible benefits of everyday creativity. The benefits are in relation to the idea that when people are creative, they are being: dynamic, conscious, healthy, non-defensive, open, integrating, observing actively, caring, collaborative, androgynous, developing and brave. Richards (2009) held the view that living creatively had many dimensions, such as having a new purpose, the aspect of possible rewards, being able to make connections, enjoying a rich experience, being comfortable with oneself and with others, the idea of having growth in personal development, having deeper knowledge and appreciation of the meaning of life, as well as the aspect of being able to enhance mental and physical well-being. These features seem positive in value as well as transformative in potential. Hence the use of the term benefits.

Robinson (2001), asserts that early years curricula have experienced changes since the first preschool class opened in Germany in 1837, about 200 years ago. In that era, children were drawing pictures, telling stories, building castles, learning to express themselves and were exploring how to contribute to their worlds. Today, this picture has changed a great deal, according to Robinson (2001) preschool becomes similar to the rest of school, where children spend much more time filling worksheets and learning mathematical problems. Likewise, children were not distracted or absorbed by technological gadgetry or advancements, as we see with the modern-day child. Children in past times utilised more of the natural resources they had around them and were able to engage in much simpler activities and yet still be creative. It could be argued that this shift has the potential to stifle the creativity of children in today's times.

With regard to the changes that the preschool curriculum has undergone, Resnick (2007) agrees with views of Robinson (2001) as stated earlier. More importantly though, Resnick (2007) confirmed that creativity allows children to be able to meet the challenges and empowers them to cope with change. The need to give more consideration to the development of creativity could be considered a necessity in order to accommodate the rapid changes in everyday life which social, economic and technical developments have been recognised as causing. Robinson (2001) argues that these changes cannot be predicted. He asserts that the social and economic revolutions that communities are facing now are similar to the Industrial Revolution in the 19th century. According to his perspective, in order to survive this revolution, a great deal of attention should be paid to supporting creativity. Creativity should be viewed as a human resource and talent which should not be wasted and that individual capabilities ought to be explored.

In recent times, research in the areas of creativity and early childhood has undergone vast changes and development, which has altered the way in which we understand children's development and how creativity can be conceptualised. The progress made in research in these areas has had a positive impact on the way in which creative thinking in children is explored in preschool settings (Cremin et al., 2013).

According to Aljabreen and Lash (2016), despite the importance given to creativity in many parts of the world, educational research in Saudi Arabia has not given the area of creativity enough attention. Alfaisal (2009) commented that in Saudi Arabian schools, it is difficult to recognise creativity, and this might create a serious situation within which creativity and talent may disappear, especially in the early stages of a child's development. He noted that there is a lack of programmes designed to discover and enhance creativity, as well as a lack of methods and tools which would enable teachers to identify potentially creative children or aspects of their creativity. In addition, there is a need to provide adequate educational programmes and to prepare teachers with the right skills and knowledge to work with students in these circumstances. This could be because of the distinct lack of research in the field of creativity in the KSA and which is why the researcher has felt a need to embark upon this research.

2.4 Definitions and conceptualisations of creativity

There are many definitions of creativity, as the study of it extends far back into human history (Craft, 2005). Many theorists, psychologists and educators have contributed a great deal in order to generate a specific definition of creativity, each definition showing an important aspect of creativity as everyone considers it from a different angle (Sharp, 2004). It could be argued that the diversity and ambiguity that emerge when searching

for a definition of creativity are a positive sign, as this reflects the nature of creativity, with flexibility being one of its features.

It is important to present some of the definitions to demonstrate how much diversity exists in defining what creativity means. Some definitions are concerned with the process of creativity, others are based on the person who is being creative, and another group of definitions consider the products of creativity, whilst there are some additional insights into creativity that explore the context and environment in which creativity takes place. Torrance (1962:16) defined creativity as “the process of sensing gaps or disturbing missing elements; forming ideas or hypotheses concerning them; testing these hypotheses; and communicating the results; possibly modifying and retesting the hypotheses”. This definition deals with creativity as a process. According to Houtz (2003), the Torrance definition of creativity is clear and concrete because it focuses on practical skills that can be taught and improved through thoughtful teaching and other related activities.

Another definition of creativity by Kaufman and Sternberg (2010:55) is that creativity is “a creative response to a problem that is new, good and relevant”. This definition is concerned with the products of creativity. A notable definition given by the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education (NACCCE) in the UK is that “creativity is an imaginative activity fashioned in order to produce outcomes that are both original and of value” (NACCCE, 1999:30). This definition has many important components: imagination, purpose, originality and value.

However, it could be argued that most of the above definitions do not reflect upon creativity at the preschool age. It was suggested by Craft (2005) that when it comes to providing a definition of creativity in children, the whole concept takes on a different

prominence, in which less attention is paid to outcomes. According to many studies, when it comes to considering children's creativity, much more consideration is given to the environment in which creativity actually takes place, in the belief that all children have the potential to be creative (Meadows, 1993; Robinson, 2001; Craft, 2002). Craft (2002:2), a leading researcher, defined creativity as "far more than the arts, it is a way of thinking, doing and knowing", therefore expanding the scope of creativity to go beyond being limited just to the arts. Sharp (2004) reported that all children should be considered as having a creative potential. Every child is unique in his/her own way and according to Krausz et al. (2009), just because one is unique, it does not necessarily explain what being more extraordinary or outstanding is. There is something positive about being unique and the term itself suggests there is value in being different (Krausz et al., 2009). Glăveanu (2011) supported the conclusion that all children are active and creative individuals in a unique form, they can develop forms of creative connections in interactions with adults as well as through play. He also confirmed that, despite the importance of creativity, very little is known about it in children; this is not only because of the complexity of the phenomenon, but also because of people's general thoughts about children and about creativity itself (Glăveanu, 2011).

Despite the differences in the definitions in the literature, there are some varied conceptions concerning creativity which have been addressed by researchers. One of the most common ideas about the concept of creativity is that it is rigidly associated with the arts (Robinson, 2001; Fumoto et al., 2012). Robinson (2001) argued that this is one of the reasons and misconceptions that have restricted attention being paid to the creativity of children in the school curricula and, consequently, opportunities open to children to be creative have become limited and incomplete. In much recent work,

Fumoto et al. (2012) felt that this traditional notion about the relationship between the arts and creativity has not changed and that this was worrying for the overall holistic development of creativity.

Creativity seems to be at the forefront of teachers' minds in the UK and what schools wish to provide for their students and it is also what successive governments and industry want to see in the workforce (Alexander et al., 2010). In Saudi Arabia, the reality is somewhat different, and creativity does not have the same value as it does elsewhere (Almoqbel, 2014). From the researcher's perspective, this could be due to the KSA's traditional ethos and didactic methodology of teaching, in which there might be a reluctance to change, as well as the fact that creativity has not been given much attention. However, things are changing. The Saudi Arabian government has a new focus and vision for the development of the country and its workforce and this is being achieved through a national transformation programme in Saudi Arabia called 'Vision 2030' (Vision 2030, 2016). Saudi Arabia is working on a future vision for the betterment of the country and some of the planned themes are for it to have an ambitious and vibrant society, as well as a thriving economy. For these ideas to be effective, the government seeks to invest more heavily in its nationals and the younger generations, who are expected to be the forerunners in the country's future success. In order to produce better graduates, it is vital to invest in improving students' educational experiences and support their capabilities and creative potentials (Vision 2030, 2016).

A vast amount of research is available about creativity in the classroom and this has been developed by several academics in various parts of the world (Craft, 2005; Cremin et al., 2006; Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009; Craft et al., 2012). Jeffrey and Woods (2003) looked at the concept of everyday creativity in the primary setting in a much

broader sense, they examined how creativity occurred in children and identified what the possible causes were for that creative spark to take place. In their findings, they suggested four vital components of creativity and this encompassed both the teacher and the students. Firstly, they asserted that it was vital for children to understand the relevance of the activities that they are engaged in. Secondly, they regarded the ownership of the learning to be placed with children so that they could feel some sense control of their own work. Thirdly, they felt it was important for children to be allowed to explore and make changes to what they are engaged in. The final point raised by the researchers was that they advocated for allowing children to have control over the expression and presentation of their own work. In this sense, creativity in this research is concerned with the position of creativity in early childhood, examining the everyday actions which come under the notion of 'little c' creativity (Craft, 2003; Beghetto & Kaufman, 2007). The concept of 'little c' creativity underpins Craft's (2005) viewpoint about creativity being present in the everyday occurrences that are a guiding force for children in the early years.

A typical feature of the concept of creativity is its complexity, which is reflected in the variety of definitions presented in this section of the literature review. However, it is important to consider that creativity in this research is regarded as an everyday activity, which means that it is one of the powerful capacities all humans possess, affecting their health and well-being, offering richness and alternatives in what they do and helping individuals to move further in their creative and personal development (Richards, 2009).

2.5 Theories and models of creativity in education

In order to understand creativity as a concept, it is necessary to understand and give value to the theories and models of creativity. According to Owen (2010), models and theories help educators and interested individuals in the field of creativity in education to understand the actions of creativity, how to plan and promote it and how to create more suitable environments that would enrich experiences for children. A brief background concerning the development of creativity is addressed in the next part of the literature review. An initial focus is given to the most relevant theories for the purpose of this research.

Creativity theories are not all alike. Reasons vary as to why they are different: it could be that the topic is broad and rich and it may be because a number of individuals of varying forms of understanding have contributed towards them. Furthermore, the subject has several definitions and concepts and research may have been applied through different disciplines, as well as in different contexts. Hence, when such variations of perceptions exist, the need to consider common themes among them becomes important (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2010).

Two of the most common theories of creativity are referred to as ‘little c’ and ‘big c’ creativity. However, despite their popularity of use, some mystery surrounds where the theories originated. Merrotsy (2013) found that whilst ‘big c’ and ‘little c’ creativity had been written about during the previous 15 years, authors were unable to quote their source. Further investigations by Merrotsy led him to contact people who were associated with the field of creativity and asked them about a possible source for the concepts. Of those who replied, several of them simply stated that they had used the theories without really knowing who the originator/s were. However, several people

seemed to be convinced that the originator of the theories was Csikszentmihalyi (1996).

Regardless of the origins of the theory, what is important here is how the concepts of 'little c' and 'big c' creativity focus on the scale of creativity. The 'little c' concept is concerned with subjective creativity, whilst 'big c' is more concerned with objective creativity. Richards (2009) argued that when researchers focused on the genius of 'big c' creativity, it caused them to overlook the difference between the creative experience and the creative product. The creative experience characterises more personal forms of creativity. By overlooking these personal experiences and focusing more on the objective creative products, it can give a skewed view and we can be left with a partial result of creative occurrences. When exploring theories concerning creativity, it becomes necessary to consider the differences between internal and external points of reference. When making such distinctions, Kaufman and Sternberg (2010) argued that it allows for an unblemished understanding of the nature, limitations and possibility of the theoretical approach being reflected upon. Creativity in the early years has less importance in terms of outcomes, which means that the 'little c' notion can be valuable for addressing perceptions related to creativity within the early years phase (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009).

As a way forward in addressing the limitations of 'little c' and 'big c' theory, Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) argued for the use of two additional categories: 'mini c' and 'pro c'. In their research, "Beyond Big and Little: The Four C Model of Creativity", the researchers put forward a 'four c' model of creativity. They introduced the idea of 'mini c' creativity, which is all about how individuals attach personal and meaningful interpretations to their experiences, actions or events. They considered 'mini c'

creativity as being integral to the learning process and put forward a further notion of ‘pro c’, which is a progression from ‘little c’. ‘Pro c’ signifies a professional level of expertise in any creative area. The researchers discussed the varying transitions and stages of the four c’s in their creativity model and then continued to comment on their advantages (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009).

Mel Rhodes (1961) broke new ground with his approach to creativity in his model called The Four Ps of Creativity. This theory has continued to be popular with various researchers, such as Anderson (2013), Glăveanu (2013) and Vogel (2014) working in the area of creativity and revolves around four elements that can affect creativity and represent the foundations required for research on creativity. The four Ps of the model are: Person, Process, Press and Product. It is important to reflect upon each of the four Ps in this part of the literature review because it reflects the difference in perceiving creativity according to the angle from which it is seen. This position is considered in the current research and, therefore, the four Ps are discussed in detail in the next paragraphs.

2.5.1 Creativity and the Person

Starting with theories that focus on the creative person and the personality of creative people that began in the early 20th century, specialists at the time argued that an individual was either born creative or was not and research dominated around the perspectives of the creative person (Vogel, 2014).

Psychologists such as Torrance (1962) and Guilford (1967) studied the individual creativity articulated by those persons they considered as being creative. They took note of any unique characteristics which were apparent in the individuals under

observation. For instance, Guilford (1967) is one of the theorists who believed that thinking is more complex than any of the other intelligence skills. He explained creativity as being able to manipulate ideas in original, fluent, flexible and elaborate ways. In his model, the “structure of intellect”, Guilford talked for the first time about divergent thinking. The aim of this model was to identify and explain all the possible varieties of human thought. The model includes 120 different thinking skills in a three-dimensional taxonomy of cognitive skills. The key factors in his model are “divergent production skills”. Guilford believed that these skills are important parts of creative thinking. Torrance’s earlier research (1962) is one of the most memorable because of his studies on how to support children's creativity and his tests to measure creativity, named the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT). These tests achieved widespread recognition over the years and are still used today (Prieto et al., 2006). Torrance (1962) identified characteristics of creative actions: fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. Fluency refers to the number of different ideas that a person can produce, flexibility is the diversity of ideas that a person can produce, and originality means producing something unusual and of great value for the community. Originality is not expected to be the same for children as it is for adults, as the value should change to suit the child's age and stage of development (Sharp, 2004). Elaboration refers to the richness of detail in the ideas that a person produces. Duffy (2006) made a similar point when he reported that children should be raised into adults equipped with the ability to deal with unexpected situations. They should be able to connect different pieces of information together in one context, be flexible in their thinking, be able to collaborate with people, be positive towards others and apply their current knowledge to new situations, as well as being able to cope with changes.

2.5.2 Creativity and Process

As well as the creative person, the aspect of ‘process’ warrants some attention when examining creativity (Rhodes, 1961). Kaufman and Sternberg (2010) argued that theories related to process are intended to understand the way in which mental mechanisms arise when an individual engages in creative thinking. Sharp (2004) suggested that the creative process includes a number of features, which can be summarised as follows (in sequential order): imagination, originality (which is the skill of coming up with new and unusual ideas), productivity (which is the skill of generating a variety of different ideas), problem solving and, finally, the ability to produce a valuable outcome. In a similar model, Cutler (2005), cited in Palaiologou (2010), adopted a new model called the Four Phase Stepped Progression Model of Creative Learning, in order to study how to encourage children’s creative thinking. The model can be used as a hypothetical framework to understand the contextual factors of creativity. The four phases of the model are: input, doing, showing and reflecting. The first phase of the model is ‘input’, which includes all the elements introduced in the process of creativity. These elements consist of an idea, language, environment, resources, qualities and values. In the second, ‘doing’ phase, seven features have been listed:

- the ability to identify and/or make problems
- the ability to think divergently
- the ability to take risks
- being open to experiences
- the ability to use skills and stretch them
- the ability to play with an idea
- the ability to suggest

The third stage, called ‘showing’, reflects the actual time the action is demonstrated, such as through solving problems, generating new ideas, the capacity to learn, being engaged, being confident and using new skills. The last stage of this model is ‘reflection’, which refers to the changes for a school, its teachers and children in terms of input, doing and showing (Palaiologou, 2010).

The previous models were highlighted as examples of theories that exist that address process-level themes. However, when dealing with children, the focus is expected to be on the process of working through a solution and not just on the final result (Craft, 2005). The greater the age of a child, the greater his or her ability to produce unique and valuable solutions (Mayesky, 2003). Craft (2005) argued that creativity of young children reflected the process of children’s thinking and not the products they bring home. Creativity may not always have a complete product to evaluate. Teachers should learn to value the process and pay more attention to the thinking that takes place, as well as giving attention to the way in which a child solves a problem (Craft et al., 2007). In the same context, Sharp (2004) emphasised that the ‘creative process’ is much more important than the ‘quality’ of the final products, for the simple reason that the creativity of a product depends largely on the skills of the child, who, incidentally, may not have fully mastered the necessary skills.

2.5.3 Creativity and Product

Possibly, the most objective approach to creativity focuses on the product. The result of a creative activity in any particular discipline or field is known as the product (Rhodes, 1961). In creativity research, vital notions are used to provide an explanation of what it means to identify whether a piece of work or a product is creative. For a product to be accepted as being creative, it should exhibit some essential

characteristics. For example, the creative product is supposed to reflect creative thinking, exhibit aptitude, show problem solving, reflect imagination, be innovative, or reflect some element of originality (Vogel, 2014). Considering creativity as a product requires an assessment of some kind and involves a sound judgement from a qualified and/or specialised person, group or organisation according to the type of product. This method could be criticised because the creative aspect of a product or piece of work can be difficult to assess and does not have fixed standards. Creativity is also often subject to different educational and cultural norms. What is considered to be creative by one person might not be deemed to be so by another.

2.5.4 Creativity and Place

By comparison, other researchers have examined a step beyond individual differences and creative processes by assessing the environment in which creativity takes place. Csikszentmihalyi (1996) asserted that it was not possible to study creativity without considering the cultural and social environment in which creativity takes place. He maintained that creativity is part of a system containing a creator and a domain. Research concerning places is invaluable when it comes to describing the relationship between individuals and their environments. More recently Kaufman and Sternberg (2010) have reconfirmed Csikszentmihalyi work by noting that the opportunity for creativity flourishes when independence or exploration is permitted in a suitable environment.

The four Ps theory has been explained above in order to give an overall understanding of creativity as a notion, which might justify the diversity of definitions about creativity because of the differences in the angles from which creativity is discussed. It is

possible to state that when considering creativity in the context of a person, process, product or place, the concept will focus on the final result of creativity.

2.6 Factors of creativity in education

Creativity in individuals is made possible by a convergence of variables, such as cognitive, emotional, environmental and motivational factors (Houtz, 2003). The study of creativity has generated much debate between researchers as to what is important in the field of creativity; that such variety exists is both frustrating and encouraging (Houtz, 2003). Sharp (2004) confirmed that there is a connection between creativity and psychological elements. He suggested three features that are involved in creative activities: personality characteristics, emotional behaviours and cognitive abilities. Personality characteristics include self-confidence and motivation, emotional behaviours are concerned with being involved in and being challenged by tasks, and cognitive abilities include divergent thinking, understanding problems and making judgements. Sharp (2004) further assumed that children may prefer not to engage in creative activity because of a lack of one or more of these elements. The role of adults around the child at this point is to identify the cause of this reluctance and to help the child to overcome obstacles and contribute to such activities positively. A later study conducted by Cremin et al. (2006) examined issues concerning creative teaching and they identified three key elements that affect creative practice. They recognised that aspects such as the teacher's attributes, their preferred pedagogy along with the school and class ethos, all play fundamental roles when it comes to having an appreciation of what creative practice is. The researchers asserted that their model offers an effective framework to support further research in this domain.

From the literature, the three key factors which are deemed to have an impact on how

creativity is stimulated are the intellectual, environmental, and personal and emotional factors. Each of these areas has different theoretical views, methods and instrumentations, which have added different theoretical approaches to the field. In this part of the literature review, factors concerning the intellect, the personal and emotional states, as well as the environment are examined. They are explained in some detail in order to understand the important aspects of the theoretical background and to comprehend the research matter.

2.6.1 Intellectual factors

Intellectual elements, such as intelligence, imagination and having problem- solving ability, can influence creativity. This part of the literature review aims to shed light upon cognitive aspects related to creativity, starting with an examination of studies on the brain, thinking, intelligence, imagination and problem solving.

All humans are born with remarkable natural abilities ranging across different types of intelligence. According to Robinson (2001), the way of using these capacities can highly affect and have an impact on people's development through life. To understand the creativity process and how it emerges, it is essential to understand how thinking happens and how the brain works. Ellyatt (2010) confirmed that understanding children's needs and demands entails having knowledge of brain development. There are two major findings about how the brain works: the first point is an understanding of the functions of the brain regions and how they interact; the second concerns new information about the electrical processes of the brain at the molecular level. Both of these areas have implications for thinking and creativity (Eysenck & Keane, 2010).

Essentially, the brain consists of the cerebral cortex as the outer shell. Most of the advanced cognitive processes are controlled by this part of the brain. The cerebral cortex contains several parts (lobes), which are highly connected to each other and more than one lobe can participate in one cognitive process (Groom et al., 1999). In contrast, there is an assumption that the cognitive system contains some independent modules or processing operators; this signifies that every lobe is responsible for a specific cognitive process (Eysenck & Keane, 2010). This can be demonstrated by the fact that if damage occurs to some parts of the brain, this may cause specific impairments in cognitive functions. For example, after a traumatic brain injury, it is common for people to experience problems with attention, concentration, speech and language, learning and memory, reasoning, planning and problem solving. All of these are cognitive disorders that affect the learning ability of the child (Eysenck & Keane, 2010).

Creativity is considered by many researchers as one of the habits of the mind; it is something which is acquired and is not instinctive or innate (Costa & Kallick, 2008; Anderson, 2013). Anderson (2013) stated that, as humans, we become accustomed to sleeping early or brushing our teeth at certain times and eventually get used to the practice of applying analytical skills and mental strategies to perform actions. Creativity is one of the habits that can be acquired with training. Habits of mind consist of a group of at least sixteen different life skills that people can apply when solving problems. They are groups of behaviours that we draw upon and apply to a number of situations in life. For instance, applying past knowledge to new situations to solve a new and different issue, or the act of thinking flexibly, where one has the ability to change their own perspective on an issue, consider other people's ideas, or weigh up alternatives. It is where people may prefer one habit of mind over another and involves selecting

the appropriate skill or behaviour to solve a matter. A habit of mind equips the individual to respond to a problem using certain cues and applying a strategy to problem solve effectively according to each circumstance they are faced with. Habits of mind are dispositions that are skilfully and mindfully applied by the most successful people in society when pursuing goals that require effort. In terms of the curriculum, it is beneficial for students to select an appropriate habit of mind in order to complete cognitive tasks and in doing so students must keep in mind that if they are to positively complete a task, they need to internally assess which habit of mind is best to apply for the situation they are in. By being alert and aware of the choices they make, students will gradually notice how their habits improve across their other subject areas. All human beings have the potential to generate unique and ingenious products, solutions and techniques if that capability is developed (Sternberg, 2006). Creativity in this sense is applicable to every individual and supports the view that every child can be creative.

Another benefit of including studies of the brain in this literature review is that they emphasise the diversity of intelligence and offer explanations regarding thinking, intelligence, and creativity. Research about the brain suggests three characteristics of intelligence that have a high impact on understanding the nature of creativity. These characteristics are that intelligence is multifaceted, intelligence is dynamic, and every person has a different kind of intelligence and creative skills (Robinson, 2001). Whatever is perceived by the senses from the surrounding environment makes intelligence more diverse. Consequently, this will affect the development of creativity. For example, painters express their ideas by drawing; musicians express themselves and their perception of the world using sounds. Spencer et al. (2012) compared creativity with intelligence in several ways and concluded that creativity exists in every

individual but to varying degrees. Creativity occurs in different levels; for example, it is possible to question ‘how creative a person is’ or ‘how intelligent he or she is’ and the fact that both creativity and intelligence can be developed further and can be expressed in various ways. To summarise, creativity is a function of intelligence and may occur in any human intelligence activity. There appears to be a link between creativity and intelligence in that they have an impact on one another (Robinson, 2001). According to Benedek et al. (2014) intelligence and creativity have an association with one another, which indicates that they have a shared cognitive root. Kim (2005) confirmed that a relationship between creativity and intelligence among young children exists, however it is weaker than for any other age group. which might be a result of the influence of education over the use of their cognitive abilities.

In contrast, it could be argued that intelligence and creativity do not reflect the same ability, as they are two different capabilities, which means that not every intelligent child is necessarily creative and vice versa (Sharp, 2004). However, it is still possible to say that people who show a higher level of creativity may well have a higher level of intelligence as confirmed by Banaji et al. (2010).

In a similar context, it could be argued that creativity and imagination are two different elements but maintain a link with one another (Duffy, 2006). Fleer (2011) pointed out that imagination is the ability of the brain to combine elements, which is the basis of any creative activity. It is thought that imagination refers to what is not actually true and that it does not correspond to reality, but, in fact, Fleer (2011) explained that imagination is the foundation level of all creative activity and is an integral and important aspect of life, as it helps shape how individuals develop and grow through life. Everything that is created in everyday life is the result of someone having used

his or her imagination. Sharp (2004) believed that it is easy to identify creative processes in children at their earliest ages, particularly in the area of play, where creative processes are noticeable. During play, a child combines both experience and imagination and uses them to construct a new reality. In this sense, drawing and telling stories are other examples of imagination and creativity in action. Fundamentally, the child is creating a situation by making connections between his or her previous experiences and his or her needs and desires. The child already recognises the experiences, while the combination of these elements becomes the new component and it is this which forms the basis of creativity and demonstrates the child's ability to combine old experiences or ideas in new ways (Fleer, 2011).

Problem solving is the last cognitive aspect to be discussed in this section of the literature review. Problem solving and its role in creativity is a common element of creative thinking found across definitions in the literature (Burnard & Younker, 2004). Robinson (2001), affirms that problem solving forms part of the creative process. In order to learn about the connection that lies between problem solving and creativity the researcher suggests that it is important to consider what gives rise to creative problem solving being creative. The creative thinking process involves many dynamic stages, which include: sensing, defining, clarifying or understanding a problem, moving between divergent and convergent thinking, while creating solutions and/or identifying a final solution (Guildford, 1967).

2.6.2 Personal and emotional factors

Research has shown how personality characteristics can have an important role to play within creativity. The term 'personality' applies to sets of behaviours, feelings, thoughts and motives that characterise an individual (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2010).

Certain features may play a role in making creative thought more likely to happen. Kaufman and Sternberg (2010) considered some core features and noted that there are many personality characteristics and that those most relative to creativity are grouped into cognitive and motivational affective groups. Cognitive characteristics include aspects such as openness, cognitive flexibility, social characteristics, norm-doubting, independence, hostility, aloofness, coldness, non-conformity, dominance and self-confidence. Whilst motivational affective characteristics are defined as behaviours such as drive, persistence, intrinsic motivation and positive effect (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2010).

Attributes such as perseverance, risk-taking, being open to new experiences and individuality, have been recognised as being some of the key characteristics that are influential to creativity. Amabile's research (1998) suggested that extrinsic motivation does not necessarily support creativity but, rather, being interested in the activity itself is thought to be the factor that facilitates it. Moreover, motivation is another characteristic which has been thought to have an important role to play within creativity. Cremin et al. (2013) argued that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation can have an impact on creativity but in opposite ways. Intrinsic motivation, such as curiosity, contributes positively towards creativity, while extrinsic motivation, involving prizes and awards by adults around the child, for example, can have a negative effect on creativity (Cremin et al., 2013). Amabile (1998) held a similar view in relation to extrinsic motivation, arguing that, in general terms, it can have a disastrous impact on the creative ability, especially on higher-order problem solving. It is argued that when activity is more complex, there is a greater likelihood that extrinsic motivation will hinder creativity (Amabile, 1998). If students notice that their performance is linked to winning prizes, they will view the activity simply as a means to an end in order to win

a prize. The impact of this is that it lessens their potential to be creative because the focus on prize winning is at the forefront of their motivation. Kelsey's research (2010) supported the idea that the giving of praise could manipulate children's actions and possibly hinder their creativity. However, a view that goes against the idea of the negative impact of rewarding and praising in education, a study carried out by Byron and Khazanchi (2012) which confirmed that rewards tend to increase creative performance within students.

Creative opportunities surround individuals every day and allow them to become involved in being creative. Russ (1999) studied the creativity and emotional expressiveness of children aged between five and seven and discovered that there was a frequency of emotional themes and variety in play that were linked to divergent thinking. Further, it was noted that gender seemed to play a role in the variation of emotional creativity. In a study by Fredrickson (2004) concerning the consequences of positive emotions, such as joy, interest and love, Fredrickson found that such emotions promoted the discovery of novel and creative actions and ideas as well as social bonds. This result is supported by a relatively new study by Newton (2013), in which the researcher found that certain emotions can either hinder or support creativity and also revealed which of us can perform more creatively on a daily basis. Emotions such as excitement, being energetic or feeling enthusiastic were considered to be more beneficial and supportive of being creative. These emotions come under the high-activation positive emotions group. Other emotions clustered under medium-low activation positive emotions are ones such as happiness and being in a state of relaxation. They were found to be helpful to creativity, although not as strongly as the high-activation emotional states. Interestingly, negative emotional states were incompatible with creativity. People with a higher level of openness were reported to

have the most creativity and this was linked to their emotions: they were more creative when they were feeling more positive and were less so when they were in an emotionally negative state of mind. These discoveries suggest that being in a more positive emotional state stimulates higher levels of creativity and thus people who are more open are likely to be more creative.

2.6.3 Environmental factors

The environment could be regarded as the physical surroundings in which creativity takes place or a cultural environment. Both environments are discussed in this section of the literature review, as both are believed to have an impact on children's creativity.

In relation to cultural environment, Bruner (2006:231) confirmed that "culture shapes the minds of individuals and it provides them with the tool kit by which they build, not only their worlds but also their idea of themselves and their powers". Robinson (2001) mentioned that cultural factors play an important role in the growth of creativity because they affect how children perceive the surrounding influences and the world around them. In a study by Chin and Hui (2010), it was supposed that in preschool classrooms the environmental factors mainly depend on the teacher's concept and his/her ability to be creative. Eason et al. (2009) emphasised that early childhood teachers should be given specific training to cultivate children at that stage and they should be granted autonomy to be able to exercise any necessary changes to their curriculums in order to cater better for their learners needs.

Similarly, Hondzel and Gulliksen (2015) asserted that cultural traditions that value creativity play a significant role in developing talents and skills in particular domains. In this sense, culture includes languages, belief systems, perceptions and social-

cognitive systems of organisation. It infiltrates and influences the ways in which individuals' reason, solve problems, categorise, judge and predict future events. The researchers analysed the marks obtained by 8-year-old students living in different-sized communities in Norway and Canada. The students were measured using the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking (TTCT). Results from multivariate analysis indicated significant statistical differences between the Norwegian and Canadian children on several Torrance Test subscales. There were also surprising relationships noted between the size of the community in which the children lived and the scores they obtained.

It could be argued that a child develops as a social creature and is not egocentric and that the child's intellectual development cannot be considered in a social vacuum, which means that cognitive development happens as a result of the interaction between children and those who have contact with them socially. Vygotsky (1978) offers some interesting insights about how best education could be delivered. A key aspect which features in the Vygotskian approach is the idea of incorporating peer collaboration. Vygotsky claimed that the interactions between the child and the skilled individuals and peers around the child, which is known as the zone of proximal development, affected the child's learning and cognitive development. Ashman and Conway (1997) asserted that rather than offering educational experiences limited within the learner's assessed level of ability, education could be enhanced for the learner by tailoring it to the child's cognitive development. Keenan and Evans (2009) described Vygotsky's idea about children's cooperative learning environment, which is applied in today's educational systems around the world. The idea is centred on a special technique whereby the learning environment is structured so that students work together in small groups towards a shared learning goal. The groups are

composed of children who have mixed abilities, including some who are more skilful at specific tasks, as well as children who are less skilled than their peers (Kozulin et al., 2003).

Creativity seems to need the support of a society that values innovation. In parallel to that, the role of creativity in society depends, in part, on the society in which a potential for creativity exists and so it seems to be a two-way paradigm (Kaufman & Sternberg, 2010). Ng (2003) asserted that culture can have a positive or negative influence on a person's creativity and determines to what extent that individual becomes involved. If promoted positively, it could attract a person to engage in creativity, whilst, on the other hand, if it is not encouraged, someone may remain uncreative and non-conforming. Craft (2005) stressed that creativity and its positive associations are stimulated by involving learners and arouses them to accepting something that presents itself as the norm when in fact it is not. Craft added that creativity need not necessarily be taught in any cultural context nor as a common idea. She asserted that it is in fact something that is, by its very nature, unconventional and inconceivable. Culture offers an opportunity to assess the merit of a creative outcome by making an allowance to consider the effect of any new idea (Craft, 2005). Cremin et al. (2013) identified that there are many factors that affect not only the structure but also the content of early childhood curricula. The factors they identified were things such as culture, procedures and policies as well as curriculums. These issues can also have an impact on the pedagogical practices of teaching staff too. The researchers therefore argued that it is imperative to study creativity in education within a cultural context. Consideration should also be given to individual teachers' underpinning attitudes and beliefs towards creativity.

Moving to the physical environment, it is important to mention that encouraging creativity in educational settings is not an easy task, as it has its own difficulties and problems in both practical and theoretical ways. Furthermore, in pedagogical terms, it has its own complications when dealing with creativity (Meadows, 1993).

Some 30 years ago in the USA, research showed that individual creativity was influenced by the particular institution's own ethos (Amabile, 1996); the school ethos influenced what was generated by teachers in their classrooms and, consequently, this had an impact on creative teaching and learning. The pedagogical vision was reflected in the physical environment and was supportive of those working within it. This position has been re-confirmed by Fumoto et al. (2012), who held the opinion that leading children to create is the best way to stimulate children's creativity. This is achieved through arranging and providing environments which are full of exploratory opportunities and for imagining within, where many varying activities are offered, allowing children the freedom to choose between them.

Similarly, Desailly (2012) confirmed that it is necessary to give attention to the physical environment because it is the surrounding in which the child learns the skills and gains experience in how to be creative. She asserted that when selecting and creating an appropriate environment for creativity, thought needs to be given to the layout of the classroom, as this is fundamental to creativity. Desailly (2012) recommended some key points which need to be established within a classroom in which creative teaching and learning can take place and be supported in relation to growth and enhancement. Firstly, it is suggested that an appropriate ethos be defined and established for learners, such as the need for children to be valued, their opinions heard and where they are given respect. Secondly, children need to feel comfortable and confident in

their capabilities and, therefore, it is imperative that the environment in which they learn provides this in order to promote creative thought. Lastly, the environment should encourage and support children to be trusting of the risks they take as they present new ideas, irrespective of the value assigned to the idea. Studies have revealed that when a child has developed the skill of ownership, this improves creative thinking, so much so that the child begins to learn for him/herself and not from the teacher or from parents and this demonstrates self-determination and self-control (Cremin et al., 2006; Craft et al., 2012). Abdul-Haq and Al-Felfely (2014), conducting their study 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 study confirmed the positive impact activity corners can have on young children's creative thinking. In a more recent study, Al-Sagrat and Abu As'ad's (2015) investigated the influence a preschool curriculum can have on the development of creative thinking skills among children in Jordan. The study considered the curricula of both private and public preschools and explored whether they had any influence on improving children's creative thinking skills and ability. The results showed 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.

Concerning classroom layout and structure, Desailly (2012) made it clear that consideration should be given to aspects such as how to arrange seating and the placement of tables and chairs, and whether the layout should accommodate a group-style arrangement or be established as single rows. A carpeted area is believed to offer flexibility even when it comes to older children and so importance should also be given to this part of the room. Another vital opinion believed to inspire creativity is the

presence and importance of having different activity areas and to have displays in these areas, as well as all around the classroom. Displays make a room more appealing and stimulating for children to be in.

Fumoto et al. (2012) proposed that the creativity of young children can easily be seen in the everyday, in the way they play or talk to each other. The researchers suggested that complexity may arise from how teachers expand and develop this potential in children during their time at school over the course of their school day and includes all aspects and contexts. Teachers' support covers every angle, from how they think about setting up their classroom environment to how and where children's ideas are to be given value, as well as the skill of training children to be risk-takers and to be persistent, through to how they are acknowledged and appreciated. Finally, some thought and time should be given to the way in which the lesson is closed, allowing children to reflect on their own thinking and learning**.** A majority of these principles can be applied to lessons that take place indoors as well as outdoors (Fumoto et al., 2012).

2.7 The creative pedagogy

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.

In the following part of the theoretical review, the two approaches to creativity in pedagogy are explored. It has to be stressed here that it is vital not to draw contrasts whilst differentiating between the two practices of teaching creatively and teaching for creativity because they overlap, and one may emerge from the influence of the other.

2.7.1 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). According to Cheung and Leung (2013), teachers work from their own experiences and beliefs which play a role in their planning, teaching and assessing students. Other 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 (2004) recommended that teaching creatively should involve the use of imaginative approaches and ensuring learning is both interesting and effective. According to Eason et al. (2009) teachers in preschool education oversee the activities offered to children in their classes and are familiar with the way in which they think and interact. Eckhoff's investigation, which was carried out in the USA (2012), revealed that most teachers tend to value creative thinking. However, they were concerned and unclear about their own understandings of how to support children's creative development in complex classroom environments. Furthermore, this research suggests that early childhood educators must consider the development of teachers' understandings about the relationships between content, pedagogy, and creativity in early childhood classrooms. In a similar study in Hong Kong, Cheung and Mok (2012)

demonstrated that early childhood teachers ascribed high importance to some meanings of creativity such as imagination, multiple perspectives and curiosity. In addition, they found that teachers with different teaching backgrounds shared very similar concepts of creativity. Regardless of their teaching background, they still seemed to unite and identify with similar values and concepts about creativity. In their study, Hong et al. (2005) identified nine key aspects that affected the teachers' creative behaviour, these are as follows: the teacher's personality trait, whether the teacher is assertive and confident or whether they are closed and shy, their thinking style, their educational experiences, their teaching beliefs, their family factors, such as, upbringing and social environment, personal effort and motivation for their work as well as possessing professional knowledge and their environment factors, where they teach and how they are affected by their immediate environment. Hong et al.'s study, while clarifying the factors that may affect the creative performance of teachers, is at the same time asserting that it is not possible to study creativity independently of the surrounding environment. In this study, emphasis was placed on explaining the context in the first chapter for this reason.

If teachers are not aware of the importance of creativity, training is a useful method to help them to recognise their own creativity and to be able to teach creatively. In a recent study by Alzoubi et al. (2016), the researchers showed that training teachers on creative thinking enhanced their creative skills and abilities, creating a positive mindset in teachers could enable them to be responsive to creativity and recognise its impact on the future of children's development. This research supports the idea of training teachers

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 most 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 and reform is being considered at a national level (Tatweer, 2016). Some developments in this area are expected in the coming years as already explained in the contextual review in the first chapter.

Some key issues have been discussed in the educational literature in relation to how to teach children creatively. One of these themes is around flexibility and freedom in the classroom. Flexibility is a common characteristic when talking about teaching creatively. However, it is important to stress that this does not mean that the teachers

have any disregard for having structure or support in their classes; rather, the skill they demonstrate is of flexibility within their lessons whilst maintaining a structure. This level of focus concerning the provision and allowance of time and space for experimentation has been acknowledged as a distinct pedagogical practice, which fosters possibility thinking and is essential to creativity (Cremin et al., 2006). It is very important that children take some ownership of their work, whether that is about instances in which they have achieved well or in circumstances in which the results might not have been as positive. Children should also be encouraged to accept all outcomes and be allowed to make mistakes. It could be from the very errors that occur in their work that a creative spark allows them to change course and improve their work, thereby allowing them the opportunity to draw something positive from what was typically perceived as a negative outcome. Children need to be encouraged to understand that mistakes are acceptable, and that perfection is not the goal, but rather that something that can be drawn out of and learnt from unforeseen results is just as valuable. The ability to be able to 'carry on' on a positive note despite having experienced a negative outcome should be encouraged and viewed as a gift to our creative thinking. 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.

Copying and imitating is another issue related to teaching creatively that requires some explanation. Humans have the capability to learn by imitating others. Hopper

(2010) considered imitation to be a valuable teaching tool for teachers as a way of boosting the learning experience for children. However, Bartel (2014) disputed this and argued that in the changing world in which people live, imitation may be a skill that loses its appeal and diminishes. Imitating is a method that can be applied to acquire skills and he argued that it is not a method from which creativity can occur. He went on to stress that imitating others does not open the mind to critical thinking, nor does it develop the creative approaches students could be capable of utilising. It becomes necessary for the present generation of students to tap into their creative potential and strive to be critical thinkers. Bartel related that when teachers apply imitation as an approach to their teaching, they need to apply further thought to supplement it with more appropriate techniques that demand a certain level of thinking and analysis in generating fresh ideas and involves problem solving as well as ensuring room for critical reviewing to take place.

The other issue is considering arts subjects to be essential in the development of creativity. Alexander (2010) claimed that the idea that both creativity and artistic ability are irrefutably intertwined results in a general confusion regarding the matter. 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.

2.7.2 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 and Craft, 2004).

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 study 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.

Craft (2009) discussed a substantial number of varying strategies noted for their importance, for use in pedagogical application in relation to creativity. For instance: ensuring that there is enough time and space; supporting and boosting self-esteem as well as self-worth; giving learners opportunities to work with mentors in exploring creative approaches; equipping children with the ability to think at enhanced levels; inspiring and boosting the generation of ideas through a range of mediums, embedding and presenting core subject material through relevant contextualised topics; and allowing children to make connections and realise the relevance in their own lives. Research supports the idea of linking learning with real life for children to making learning more applicable and understandable for them, such as the research by Grainger et al. (2004) and Heath and Wolf (2004).

It could be argued that using new information technology IT in teaching and learning considered as important tool that should be used more frequently with young children to make learning more relevant to them. This is a debatable topic, however, according to Craft (2012) IT is a driving force for educational provision. One dimension of this force is that it provides an educational programme which keeps children safe, parallel to which it incorporates the use of digital media alongside the traditional media children

are ordinarily familiar with outside the classroom domain and which seems to be favoured and adopted by educationalists.

Bartel (2014) also identifies 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, reassurance, and praise, as often when they initiate ideas, they tend to fall into self-doubt about their suggestions or ideas.
- Refer 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 without necessarily coming to a conclusion.

In relation to the last suggestion, research concerning good practice in promoting creativity conducted by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe), an executive agency in Scotland, confirmed that creativity tended to be at its optimum with the development of inquisitive children and when many questions are posed in the learning environment (HMIe, 2006). 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.

2.8 Summary

In conclusion, the literature review chapter has presented a number of ideas about the concept of creativity in general terms and, in particular, concerning the area of childhood, it has discussed creativity in children. It could be argued that children are innately creative, and their creativity develops based on a variety of influences, such as intellectual, environmental, personal and emotional factors. The purpose of including these factors is to help understand the concept of creativity with particular reference to children in the preschool stage. From this research perspective, creativity is a developmental phenomenon that can be enhanced and encouraged but perhaps not taught directly. Creativity is an everyday skill that all children have, as Kaufman and Sternberg (2010) reason that creativity and education are naturally linked together, and it is the educator's role to make this more apparent.

Most of the theories and models of creativity mentioned in this chapter have been beneficial in putting the concept of creativity into an understandable framework. It has become clear that when dealing with creativity in children, educators need to focus on the process and not on the product. Duffy (2006) asserted that when applying the concepts of creativity and imagination in children, it could be argued that in judging the

creativity of a child's production or ideas, these do not necessarily have to be perceived as new by the adults around the child; it is simply enough for them to be new from the child's perspective alone in order for them to be classed as creative. This research focuses on everyday creativity, which is regarded as having less of an emphasis on outcomes or products.

A creative pedagogy with the ideas recommended in the literature (Sharp, 2018) concerning two approaches – teaching creatively and teaching for creativity – has contributed to the formulation of the overall structure of this study. It has also contributed towards the analysis of the findings of the research.

The lack of research in Saudi Arabia concerning preschool education, mentioned earlier by researchers such as (Alfaisal, 2009; Al Omar, 2013; Al-Mogbel, 2014) has led to the to the decision to focus this research on the position of creativity in Saudi Arabian preschools, whilst considering creativity from the teachers' perspectives.

Chapter 3: Research Design

3.0 Introduction

This chapter addresses the research design and the content of the chapter is organised into seven main parts; the worldview behind the research which underpins the philosophical position of the study, reflected by the ontology of the research, the epistemology of the research, the research methodology, the research methods, the data analysis process and the ethical issues related to the research.

The philosophical position addresses the fundamental assumptions concerning: ontology and epistemology which influence the researcher's choices of methodology and methods (Sikes, 2004; Scotland, 2012). The ontology section explores the assumptions of the reality of the Saudi context, while the epistemology offers an overview of the nature of the study and the theory of knowledge behind it.

In light of the previous assumptions, the research methodology is presented in this chapter, explaining the aim of the research, the research questions and a description of the sample and how it was accessed. The following section in this chapter concerns the research methods. It explains the chosen procedures in detail in order to provide a justification of the relationships between the research questions and the selected methods. The next section is to explain the data analysis process followed by the ethical considerations that were considered before applying them to the research.

3.1 Research worldview

Prior to conducting the research, the researcher explored the notion of worldviews or paradigms as referred to in some references, by reading about them to understand

and consider their relevance to her research. This exploration enabled the researcher to choose the most appropriate approach for her research, ensuring that the chosen worldview reflected the research position, and integrated well with the overall aims of the research.

A worldview can be viewed as “the basic belief systems based on ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions” (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:107). A worldview defines the nature of the world for its holder, as well as offering a range of possible relationships that are connected to that world (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). A worldview has many other definitions in the literature, such as ‘a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts, or propositions that orient thinking and research’ (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998:22), or ‘the philosophical intent or motivation for undertaking a study' (Cohen and Manion 1994:38). Two contrasting worldviews, positivism and constructivism (interpretivism), and their applicability to the present study are discussed.

Positivism, as a worldview, is based on the premise that with the careful control of variables and the collection of significant amounts of data from repeatable observations, and application of appropriate measures, one can arrive at absolute truths. In short it is based on the application of experimental techniques, using quantitative methods of data collection and analysis, and as such is often referred to as a scientific method or scientific based research (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006). Positivism is based on the rationalist concept (that reason, rather than experience or belief provides the basis for knowledge) and empiricist concept (that empirical evidence is paramount in the development of ideas, over the idea of innate ideas or traditions) and reflects a viewpoint that causes are most likely to control effects or

outcomes (Creswell, 2009). Mertens (2005), argues that positivism can be applied to the social world in the same way as the natural world; it is a method for studying the social world that is value free, and where explanations of a fundamental nature can be provided. However, in this worldview attributes such as thoughts, creativity, feelings, beliefs, values and relationships are considered as irrelevant, and to the social scientist this is an anathema. Research which values, and regards the social world as being created by such personal attributes, is based on a different worldview, constructivism.

Constructivism takes the opposing position, that the aim of research should be to understand the world of human experiences (Cohen and Manion, 1994). In this context, Mertens (2005) suggests that reality is socially constructed. From Creswell's point of view (2009), the constructivist/interpretivist researcher sees the participants' views of the idea under study as paramount, and recognises the impact that their knowledge and experiences of life can have on the research. Unlike positivists, constructivists do not start with a theory, they generate or develop a theory during the research process (Creswell, 2009). The constructivist researcher primarily relies on qualitative data collection methods, although does not dismiss more quantitative methods employing the collection of numerical data to support or expand upon qualitative data in such a way that it deepens the explanation of the content. As the aim for constructivism is to understand a phenomenon from people's perspectives, the methodology seeks the explanation of the interaction between those people and their context, historically and culturally. Value free knowledge is not possible in the constructivist worldview. In this case, the researcher clearly states his or her beliefs on several factors such as when deciding upon the research subject, how the research is to be carried out and how the data will be interpreted once it has been collected.

When applying a constructivist worldview, the procedures involved usually tend to generate qualitative data as these are more appropriate in explaining behaviours and actions from the participants' perspectives (Scotland, 2012).

The objective of this research is to explore the understanding of pre-school teachers' views of the notion of creativity and how it is, or could be, promoted in the development of young children in their care. Anecdotally my personal experiences suggest that despite the concept of creativity receiving very little attention in government curriculum guidelines many pre-school teachers still look to promoting it in their workplace. Given this position, and the fact that the literature review has identified the importance of providing an environment conducive to promoting creativity in young children, the aim of this research is to try and secure evidence in an attempt to get government curriculum guidelines for pre-schools modified to include the requirement to promote creativity.

In the researcher's view such evidence needs to be constructed from the opinions and experiences of those working in pre-schools. Their views of creativity; why, or if, it should be promoted; how they see this being achieved within their teaching environment especially when it is not a requirement of the pre-school curriculum; are key if the incorporation of the concept of creativity in pre-schools is to be attained.

The objective of this research therefore fits squarely into the worldview of constructivism and the employment of those qualitative methods most pertinent to this worldview, interviews and observations.

3.2 Research ontology

Ontology refers to the nature of social reality. From the perspective of the worldview of positivism the ontological assumption is one of realism, which means that objects and the discoverable reality have an existence independent of the researcher (Cohen, 2011). In other words, the social world is viewed as 'external, independent, given and objectively real' (Sikes, 2004: 20). Given the researcher is seeking to explicitly explore teachers' views of creativity as an educational and social phenomenon, the view is that this can only be achieved by recognising the context in which it occurs.

Recognising contextual factors is particularly important for this study for two reasons. Firstly, there exists a complicated situation for preschool and other stages of education in the KSA, as poor coordination between government agencies has caused duplication of programmes and lack of clarity in laws and regulations that define the roles for each (Aljabreen and Lash, 2016:317). This lack of clarity has led to some uncertainty over the application of the curriculum in preschools in Saudi Arabia. As a consequence, some important aspects, such as the improvement of creativity in children (Abduljawad et al., 2008), have been neglected. Understanding the implications of this for the promotion of creativity in the preschool will be critical if any recommendations are to be made to government agencies for change.

Secondly, there is an argument that in contrast this lack of clarity of role from central government, coupled with the more bureaucratic administrative system in the upper stages of education in the KSA, could lead to less central control and hence more freedom at the preschool stage, allowing them to adopt different practices with children. How this possible lessening of central control might impact upon the

development of creativity is therefore equally important to try and understand from the teacher's perspective.

Ontologically, positivism as a world view does not fit well with the study the researcher is undertaking. Constructivism, as a worldview, considers realities to be subjective and its ontological position is one of relativism (Cohen et al., 2011). Relativism deals with reality as an idea that can be seen and explained differently between individuals (Guba and Lincoln, 1994), or as Sikes notes, 'socially constructed, subjectively experienced and the result of human thought as expressed through language' (Sikes, 2004 :p. 20).

Relativism therefore provides the framework which will support the researcher in trying to understand the position of the teachers with respect to their perceptions of creativity and how they see it being implemented in reality in the Saudi context. Taking this ontological position has clear implications for the procedures the researcher has chosen to conduct her study.

Respecting the importance of getting individual insights into the view of the place of creativity in preschools, the researcher has used observations to achieve a clearer picture of school settings and how the promotion of creativity is undertaken by teachers. Similarly, interviews were used, across public and private preschools, to explore individual teacher's views on not only the importance of promoting creativity but how they viewed it as being possible to implement.

It is important to note that in taking the ontological stance associated with constructivist worldview the researcher acknowledges their own position in order to address any bias that might be possible in their account of their research. The researcher has already noted her background and it would be irresponsible to deny her interest and

enthusiasm for promoting creativity in the preschool setting. However, recognising this, observations and interviews were faithfully reported and checked for accuracy with participants so as to minimise any influence the researcher might have on the findings.

3.3 Research epistemology

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and considers what constitutes knowledge. It is concerned with what we can know and understand and importantly re-present. The researcher has already established that what is important to her study is gaining an understanding of individuals' perspectives on the research questions posed. There is no intention of seeking to achieve predictions and generalisations of any findings through the use of scientific methods (Scotland, 2012) and an epistemological stance which has this as its aim, such as that from a positivistic worldview, is inappropriate.

The researcher is interested in ascertaining teachers' views, values, and beliefs, in terms of promoting creativity within preschools as well as within the social reality which has already been presented in the research ontology. The researcher believed that in order to study creativity in Saudi Arabian preschools a deep and thoughtful approach was required to gain a full understanding of the subject matter. The concept of creativity is a relatively new topic for the Saudi Arabian educational system. This is evidenced by the lack of research addressing the subject and further that the concept lacks mention in existing educational literature. Therefore, to access this knowledge it requires operating within an interpretive paradigm and applying certain procedures. According to Scotland (2012), the constructivist (interpretive) epistemology is concerned with real world phenomenon In this study, the real world phenomenon

under investigation relates to the way in which creativity is constructed in different ways by different individuals.

This infers the researcher's epistemological position to view knowledge as personal and subjectively as possible.

Interest in this topic was also generated from the researcher's personal experience as a teacher practitioner who has worked in the field of preschool education for several years in Saudi Arabia. Creativity, as the researcher believes, is a phenomenon, which can be seen every day in every child, just like the rest of the abilities that a child possesses. The researcher adopted two notions: 'everyday' creativity and 'little c' creativity, in order to explain the meaning of creativity in this study. The concept of everyday creativity considers every individual to be creative in all places, at any time (Richards, 2009). This type of creativity is believed to have some benefits for individuals, on their personality and on how they deal with life in the future. Yet, if this idea is to be applied with children, it needs to be understood and their needs must be nurtured and supported appropriately. The idea of everyday creativity can be applicable at the preschool stage in practical ways when it links in with the so-called 'little c' creativity, which is concerned with the everyday details and focuses more on the process of how to think creatively and not just on the final product of creativity (Craft, 2005).

Creativity as a concept has a variety of meanings which has led the researcher to believe that adopting one specific explanation or a set of definitions would conflict with the purpose of the study as well as with the research paradigm. Therefore, it was important to start looking at such a relatively new topic by considering teachers' explicit

views concerning creativity and whether it was possible to understand whether these ideas had any impact on the teachers' actions or not.

Argument has been made for employing a constructivist worldview to this research. Given the researcher had the advantage of the language of the country under study and also had a pre-established understanding of the educational system of the country this meant that she was reasonably confident that her research would be possible. Had this research been carried out outside of the KSA, things may have been different and may have taken longer to undertake at various stages of the process, due to unfamiliarity of systems and procedures. In the researcher's view, the teachers presented their ideas clearly and offered their thoughts freely and comfortably. The teachers also appeared to contribute very positively towards the data and their views could be considered as reflective of the national changes that are taking place in Saudi society. The view of the researcher is that the overall development in the country is having an impact on the research community in generating positive interaction between individuals and information across all levels, from the official authorities that the researcher dealt with, right down to the people in the environment under study.

3.4 Research methodology

In this section of the chapter, the research methodology is explained in some detail, covering the aim of the study, the research questions and information about the research sample.

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).

3.4.1 Research objective

The research intends to explore the different perspectives of creativity held by twenty female teachers from a number of preschools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, comprising of two public and two private settings. It seeks to gather the different opinions from preschool teachers to show creativity as a concept for the participants and how it could be promoted in children within the Saudi educational context.

3.4.2 Research questions

The main research questions are:

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

3.4.3 Research sample

The aim of the study is to explore creativity and given that this is a relatively new idea to the Saudi Arabian educational system, it is possible to say that all teachers working in public or private preschool settings can be regarded as the research population. Teachers are considered as invaluable sources from whom relevant information can

be gathered and purposefully contribute to the study. 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.

The focus of this research is on gaining a better understanding of teachers' views of creativity and its development, more than it is in generalising the findings. According to Fusch and Ness (2015) there is no agreement in the literature about how large or small the sample needs to be for qualitative research, as this is mainly dependent on the aim of the study. However, having a range in the sample size allows the researcher to ascertain if there are some common views about creativity. Therefore, the sample of the study was selected to match the purpose and the theoretical framework of the study, as well as considering what was practical. To meet the adequacy of the sample it was important to consider the information saturation, which means looking at the richness of the information from the selected sample. It is argued that saturation is a subjective idea that can only be understood when it is linked to the purpose of the study and the theoretical framework (Shaker, 2002). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), when designing a study, nothing is more important than making the right decisions for the sample selection. In collating the data, if only one school had been selected it would not have allowed for common views to be considered. According to Shaker (2002), relying on only one institution or place could demonstrate a lack of consistency with a similar research framework. If too many schools were involved, then the problem arises of data overload and difficulties in analysis. The researcher was keen to understand the differences between the public and private school views. The choice of schools was slightly out of the hands of the researcher as they had been offered by the Ministry of Education. The researcher wrote to all the schools and

received positive interest from head teachers who were willing and interested to have their schools involved in the study. Given there is often a reticence to be involved in research, the willingness of these schools to take part suggested that they were likely to be frank and open about their views and based on their interest, the researcher was confident that they would also be very open about their practices.

In the end, the researcher used purposeful sampling, choosing four schools from four different regions in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, two of which were public and two private ones. A small sample can have an impact on representation and therefore have the potential to undermine the validity of any findings. However, considering that qualitative studies tend to have a small sample size due to the in-depth nature of data and as the objective of the research was to ascertain teachers' views on the promotion of creativity, having those keen to be involved was deemed paramount.

The researcher selected twenty female teachers, across the four selected schools, as a representative sample to answer the research questions. This was based on the researcher's practical knowledge of the research area, and the available literature. The purposeful sample has been considered by the researcher to be a more intellectual strategy for this research, as opposed to choosing strategies that are theoretically simple and convenient to use, as confirmed by Marshall (1996). The chosen sample was deemed representative according to the knowledge of the researcher in relation to the educational system in Saudi Arabia, as well as the experience the researcher holds concerning the circumstances around its preschool settings. The researcher has worked in both public and private schools in Saudi Arabia for many years before she entered the academic field of teaching in a university setting. The researcher has been working as a university lecturer for the past 12 years.

The reason why the chosen sample was female is because all educational practitioners specialising and working in the field of childhood education in the KSA are female (Ministry of Education, 2015). Facts concerning why preschool teaching practitioners are female have been discussed in detail in the first chapter of the research.

These schools were selected in order to provide a balanced representation in the study covering both private and public sectors (Table 1).

School name	Location	Established	Size of school	Teaching staff
Anwar School (Private)	Eastern region	2007	14 classes	40 teachers
Sunrise School (Private)	Western region	1968	16 classes	36 teachers
Happy Child School (Public)	Northern region	2006	4 classes	12 teachers
New Dawn School (Public)	Southern region	1995	6 classes	12 teachers

Table 1: Summary information: brief overview of the four schools under study

In order to provide an acceptable representation, the schools were selected on the basis of a school from each of the four educational regions of Riyadh. Each region has its own management team, all of whom are overseen and governed by the Ministry of Education (Ministry of Education, 2015). Another reason why Riyadh was chosen as the location for the study, was because it has the largest number of preschools from both the public and private sectors. The preschools are also representative of the

variety of preschools available in the country, in terms of the type, size and the practices that occur within these settings.

Given the researcher's position that views of what constitutes creativity are as a result of personal interpretation, then it is important to gather as much data as possible to ascertain if there are any common viewpoints. The researcher's

Type of school	Name of school	Name of teacher	Assigned code
Private (Pr)	Anwar School (A)	Amal	Pr A1
		Arwa	Pr A2
		Abeer	Pr A3
		Amira	Pr A4
		Aya	Pr A5
	Sunrise School (S)	Sara	Pr S1
		Siba	Pr S2
		Suzan	Pr S3
		Sally	Pr S4
		Sahar	Pr S5
Public (P)	Happy Child School (H)	Hessa	P H1
		Hana	P H2
		Hiba	P H3
		Hind	P H4
		Hala	P H5
	New Dawn School (N)	Nessrin	P N1
		Nora	P N2
		Nada	P N3
		Nuha	P N4
		Najla	P N5

Table 2: The schools and teachers involved in the research

choice of twenty teachers was deemed a suitable sample size to achieve a variety of viewpoints. In order to access the targeted sample, the researcher requested a visit to the KSA for fieldwork to collect the data. The visit was planned and carried out in the

academic year of 2014, in the second semester of the Saudi Arabian academic calendar. This would be equivalent to a spring term in the UK's school timetabling.

The previous table illustrates the context of the schools and lists all of the teachers who were involved (Table 2). The four schools that 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. The four schools have been referenced according to whether they are a public or private establishment. Here follows a description of how the codes have been applied; for instance, 'P' represents the public schools and 'Pr' represents the private schools. The identification for each individual school has been referenced by taking the first initial from the school's name, for instance Sunrise School has been denoted by the letter 'S' and then each of the teachers from this school has been allocated a number from one to five. For example, Sahar is number five from the Sunrise School, which is a private school and so is represented as Pr S5.

3.5 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, as well as to look at the associated practices employed in classrooms across, both the public and private schools (Table 3).

Method	Actions	Data and analysis
Interviews	Circulation and implementation of interviews with the twenty teachers from the four preschools.	Narrative data and some numerical data from the semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions. Data analysed using the NVivo programme.
Observations	Carry out observations in the twenty classrooms, for each of the twenty teachers.	Narrative data and descriptions of the classroom environment and some of the activities being run at the time of observations. All integrated and analysed manually to answer the research questions.

Table 3: Data collection methods of the study

In positivist research one tries to control what is being researched and as such confidence in its findings is measured by their reliability, '… achieving consistency of results across a range of settings, and if used by a range of researchers' and validity 'does the test or a research tool actually measures what it is supposed to measure', (Wellington, 2000:200). Neither of these terms are well suited to constructivist research and what is more important is considered its adherence to terms, such as credibility, rigour, and trustworthiness (Golafshani, 2003). Lincoln and Guba (2013) argue that supporting the trustworthiness of research depends on certain criteria and use the terms credibility and dependability in place of reliability and validity and confirmability, as providing an equivalence of objectivity.

To achieve trustworthiness the researcher worked across public and private schools to achieve a level of credibility and employed triangulation using observations and

interviews to offer a degree of dependability. Discussing the transcripts of the interviews with the research participants and checking that the interpretations of the observations of them undertaken were true reflections, provided the level of confirmability of the findings.

According to Hamilton (2011) the use of interviews and observations allows for the triangulation of the data to reduce weaknesses that a single method would have given rise to. She also asserts that the use of more than one method of data collection is characteristic of a high-quality study, providing more weight to the validity of the results. The choice of two procedures is supported by Frost (2011) who stated that each method reveals a different facet of the problem and answers a different question of the research. The information was then integrated in the interpretation of the overall results. It is important to note that describing and interpreting data are influenced by the contexts within which they occur. Therefore, the context and functions have been described as much as possible at all stages of this qualitative study.

The research tools were initially designed, conducted and written in Arabic, which is the language of the country under study. The data was then translated into English, which is the main language of the research. The Arabic language contains certain terminology/phrases, which cannot be directly translated into English and even if this was attempted, the intended meaning is at risk of being lost in translation. Therefore, the researcher made every possible effort to accurately translate any data from Arabic into English without losing the essence of the original meaning. Table (4) shows the procedural information for both the interviews and the observations.

	Interviews	Observations
When did interviews and observations take place?	Interviews were conducted at the start of the data collection stage, which occurred at the end of April in 2014. The interviews were conducted over a period of approximately one month, during May, in 2014.	The observations followed directly on after the interviews in terms of timescale and were conducted throughout the month of June in 2014.
How were interviews and observations conducted?	Each teacher was interviewed once and in conclusion, a total of twenty teachers were interviewed. Each interview lasted between 50 and 60 minutes.	Each participating teacher was observed once. The length of each observation ranged from between 45 to 60 minutes. The observation covered at least one session from the school's daily schedule. The teachers had the autonomy to select which of their lessons they wanted to be observed during.
Where did the interviews and observations take place?	Each interview took place in the preschool settings where each teacher worked, in a quiet room provided by the school director.	The observations were conducted in the participants' usual classroom location.

Table 4: Procedural information regarding the interviews and observations conducted for this study

In the next section, each method is explained fully, explaining how the procedure was outlined, how it was conducted and how the data was collected, organised and analysed in detail.

3.5.1 Interview

The researcher applied a semi-structured interview to fit in with the objectives and the methodology of the study. 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, to achieve as much

personal insight as possible. The interview questions were established according to the theoretical framework of the study, where the researcher had an outline of the questions, which were partially structured (Appendix A). 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

3.5.1.1 Stage 1: Identifying the interview outline

According to Eckhoff (2012), organising the main topics of the interview into themes keeps both the researcher and the participant focused on the research subject. Therefore, the researcher structured the interview into three main sections. Each section had a set of open-ended questions, apart from the first set of questions, which were concerning the participant's general personal information. These were posed to firstly identify the participants but also these initial questions helped the participants to settle and get used to the process, before more detailed and specific questions were asked. The first section of the interview included questions that addressed the general perceptions of the term creativity. The second section was related to 'creativity in the classroom' and included questions about teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. The last set of questions discussed creativity in the context of the classroom and school environment such as the classroom layout, the resources available and

any other facilities in the school environment believed to be important to enhance children's creativity.

3.5.1.2 Stage 2: Conducting the interviews

The interview questions were piloted in Saudi Arabia with several independent professionals not linked to the study sample. The professionals chosen were two preschool teachers, who were approached to examine the appropriateness, clarity and effectiveness of the questions. Most of the questions were approved to be suitable, except for two questions, which were amended slightly to make them clearer according to the recommendations made by the two independent professionals.

One interview was conducted with every teacher, making a total of twenty interviews. The researcher presented the questions as clearly as possible during interviews and ensured that the interviews were carried out within a reasonable timeframe. Each interview took approximately an hour to complete, and the researcher was conscious of making sure that the teachers' time was respected and that any lesson disruptions were kept to an absolute minimum. In addition to that, the researcher allowed enough time to collect the data, making sure that nothing was rushed unnecessarily. This was done to minimise the potential risk of missing out on collecting vital information.

All the interviews were recorded as audio files, then transcribed and later translated into the English language (Appendix B). The transcription for every interview took about four hours and the translations took approximately two to four days for each interview to be completed. All the translations were anonymised before delegating the work to the independent reviewer for proof reading. The researcher wanted the translations reviewed, firstly, ensure the accuracy of the translations and secondly, to

ensure that the translations were free from any unintentional misinterpretation made by the researcher.

3.5.1.3 Stage 3: Organising and analysing the collected data

When utilising a method such as in interviews, it is expected that a large amount of data will be collected, which means that a well-planned system must be implemented and followed by the researcher to enable the organisation of the data and its preparation for analysis. The NVivo software programme was used to structure and analyse the data. Several steps were taken. Firstly, the twenty interviews were added to the software. Next, each interview was carefully coded and this resulted in about seventy nodes to work from. Once the nodes were ready, the researcher moved onto another step of the data analysis, which was to search for and collate all the common ideas that appeared in the data and these were grouped into specific categories. Every category fell under a certain theme and each of these themes was related to answering the research questions. Using the software helped the researcher to organise and structure the data without missing any important information. The researcher continued to save the reports from the programme whilst developing the analysis. This stage took about a year to complete and the categories that emerged were gradually modified. All the information was integrated into the final themes to enable answering the research questions.

3.5.2 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.

During observations, the researcher felt that her presence did not appear to impact upon the children or the teacher behaviours. The reason behind this feeling is possibly because of the experience the researcher has in carrying out observations and is skilled at choosing the right place to sit, away from the children's attention. The children showed a familiarity with the researcher’s presence and accepted it, which could indicate that they were used to observers being present in their classrooms. The reality is that the welcoming of visitors is a part of the common practice in preschools in Saudi Arabia, where it is expected as part of the enrichment activities in the Self Learning Curriculum (SLC). Those practices state that visitors should be welcomed in

accordance with the unit being studied in class and that the visitors should be a source of information for enriching the children's knowledge (Ministry of Education, 2005). As for the teachers, the researcher did not undertake any observations until the teacher's consent had been acquired. Further, observations were only started once teachers had received an explanation of the purpose of the study and it was made clear to them that the purpose of the observations was not to evaluate their performance but was for the purpose of collecting data for the study. The assurance given was expected to help teachers feel comfortable and relaxed enough to act and teach as naturally as they would do every day.

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

3.5.2.1 Stage 1: Identifying the observation outline

The observation in this research is qualitative in nature, therefore including the narratives was essential. Observations took into consideration three main aspects, and any note taking did not restrict the observations in any way (Appendix C). The three aspects were:

- Classroom layout and environment
- Pedagogical practices (examples of activities)
- Interactions between the teacher and children

3.5.2.2 Stage 2: Conducting the observations

Communication between the researcher and the study participants was conducted in Arabic. During the observations, the researcher took notes and wrote down any comments made by the teachers. It is possible that some aspects may have been missed whilst notetaking, nevertheless every effort was made to capture as much of what was going on as possible. An option that may have been possible would have been to video or tape record the events. However, the use of video recording is highly restricted by the authorities in Saudi Arabia. Notetaking was the preferred option for the researcher and this was done in Arabic. This assisted the researcher in organising the transcripts concerning the activities for later translation into English for analysis purposes. Prior to starting the observations, the researcher ensured that the necessary permissions had been granted concerning the taking of any necessary photographs that could later support any of the data.

The observed activities and the times that the observations took place were all selected by the teacher under observation and were therefore not influenced by the researcher in any way. There is a small possibility that the teachers' choice of the times and selection of activities could have influenced what the researcher saw. However, overall the researcher does not feel that activities or the timings of the observations were engineered to show what they wanted to show or to mislead in relation to what practices generally take place. Rather, the researcher feels that there was a genuine representation of a typical school day and this was openly conveyed by the teachers as they worked through their school day.

Many researchers emphasise the necessity of reassuring participants that they will not be affected negatively because of their contributions to a study in any way (Burton and

Bartlett, 2009; Scott and Usher, 2011). The researcher limited the risk of any potential offence being caused to the teachers and tried to remain aware and alert of any sensitivities or issues which existed, or which could possibly arise. For example, the researcher took great care in informing all the participants that the purpose of the observation was to explore the environment where creativity was anticipated to take place and that the researcher was not there to make judgements on their professional practice or conduct. They were assured about this several times to make them feel more comfortable and relaxed.

3.5.2.3 Stage 3: Organising and analysing the observational notes

The researcher analysed the observational data manually, by gathering the most significant facts related to each of the twenty observations and organised them into a table of information. This was done in order to help the representation and arrangement of specific aspects and facts noted during observations. Following that, a summary was created of all the observations carried out in each of the four preschools visited (Appendix D). This summary served the purpose of exploring whether any patterns existed concerning the ideas that were shared by the teachers and it helped the researcher to look at the environment in which creativity could potentially be supported. Some photographs were taken during observations and have been presented in this research with a view to supporting the researcher's ideas. The researcher worked hard to ensure that most of the collected data was recorded, analysed and written up carefully in detail and was supported by evidence as much as possible to reflect the reality of the aspects under study.

3.6 Data analysis

At the stage of analysing the data, the researcher followed the inductive approach, rather than using a deductive style, which is based on a structured framework. The inductive style was favoured as it is not based on a structured framework set by the researcher. The inductive approach was very detailed and time-consuming, however, the researcher found it to be the most appropriate method for analysing the data. Furthermore, the researcher's knowledge about research phenomena in general was limited at the time. However, when applying these new skills and newly gained knowledge, the researcher gradually gained confidence in the application of this method and increased in her competency of it during the analysis process.

The analysis of the data went through various stages of development:

Step 1. Transcribing of the data collected from both the interviews and observations. Transcription of the data meant converting audio data into a textual form. This was followed by translating the textual data from the Arabic language into the English language.

Step 2. After transcribing the data, the researcher had a large amount of information that needed to be organised and categorised correctly. At this stage, the researcher found it beneficial to make use of the NVivo programme. NVivo is computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software that enables the user to categorise material easily and effectively. Whilst the initial categorisation of the interview transcripts was completed manually thereby retaining the ownership of the data, using NVivo assisted the researcher in analysing and organising the data much more effectively. Using NVivo also enabled cross-checking of various categories and allowed for the

classification and storage of both the interviews and observational data. Once this was complete, it was ready for the coding stage, which was the next step in the process.

Step 3. The researcher used the NVivo software again to code the interview data, while the observational data was analysed manually. Next came the categorising of the codes into various concepts, followed by the generation of central themes according to the research objectives. Subsequently, the researcher looked at the categories further to discover possible patterns within the codes in order to understand them better. By analysing the material in this manner, the researcher was able to formulate the main themes, where every category fell under a certain theme. It is important to mention that the researcher was aware of the validation of the research through the analysis process, taking extra care of the accuracy of the procedures and the results that were generated from it, monitoring the truthfulness of the data making sure it reflected the language of the teachers who participated in the study. All of the precautions that were applied to the actions taken in each step or stage ensured a greater reliability of the findings.

Step 4: Concluding the data analysis was the final stage of the process, it meant that the outcomes were based on the research objectives and were presented accurately to answer the research questions. It was important to find a valid likeness between the analysed data and the research questions which was eventually successfully achieved after several attempts.

3.7 Ethics

There were many ethical considerations that needed to be adhered to at nearly every stage of this research. The researcher approached the project with a sound awareness

and full appreciation of the ethical issues relevant to all stages of the process. Cohen et al., (2011) confirmed that research with human topics requires acting in an ethical way. The dignity, privacy and interests of the participants should be respected and protected at all times. Thus, the researcher ensured that the following points were covered and applied appropriately at every relevant stage of the project:

- The researcher went through a formal ethical review process at the University of Hull to demonstrate to the university panel that the required levels of ethics had been fully met and the necessary permission had been acquired to conduct the interviews and observations.
- Permission to apply the study started off by requesting a permit from the official educational authorities in the KSA. The said authorities are the Ministry of Education (Appendix E), King Saud University (Appendix F). Permission was also sought from the University of Hull in the UK (Appendix G). Once the permit had been successfully granted, the researcher travelled to Saudi Arabia and carried out the research.
- Consent was also sought from the nominated preschools before starting the data collection. According to Burton and Bartlett (2009) the informed consent is a key term in research ethics. All participating teachers gave their consent to take part in the research after the following points had been explained and made clear to them (Appendix H):
  - the purpose of the study
  - why they had been approached and selected to take part
  - how important their contributions were to the study
  - they were fully appraised about all of the tasks they would be expected or asked to perform concerning the interviews and observations

  - participants were informed about their right to withdraw from the study at any time
  - they were provided with information about how the data would be recorded, stored and used
- The researcher maintained a high level of confidentiality and security towards the research material at all times. The names of teachers and settings were anonymised. Any information and collated data has been carefully and securely stored. Participants were clearly informed that any data used would be for research purposes only (Frost, 2011).
- The results of the research would be accessible to all of the teachers who participated in the study. Each school involved in the study would be provided with a copy of the thesis (after its approval).

The methods for data collection are expected to raise some ethical issues as confirmed by Mukherji and Albon (2010). The researcher then was conscious about the ethical considerations whilst conducting the interviews as well as during observations, which is already explained within the section of the methods in this chapter.

3.8 Summary

In conclusion, the researcher has paid as much attention as possible to the general integrity of the research by studying all of the possibilities related to the design of the research. The research design is explained in detail, starting from the impact of any philosophical considerations on the research design right up to the ethical issues of the research. That includes the ontological and epistemological assumptions, which have also been described in some detail.

This research was conducted from the standpoint of an interpretive methodology, which is believed to be the most appropriate methodology commensurate with the nature of the research. It is believed to meet the research objectives and expected to help to answer the research questions. Teachers are expected to present a variety of perceptions, ideas and practices in relation to creativity in preschool settings based on their personal ideas and beliefs.

This chapter also provides an explanation of the chosen procedures: the interviews and the observations, and how they were planned and conducted in order to gather the necessary data in order to answer the research questions. All of the ethical issues were given consideration by the researcher and have been mentioned in this chapter for clarification purposes.

Chapter 4: Results

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the qualitative data collected from twenty practitioners who contributed to the study. The twenty teachers participated from four different preschools in Riyadh, two private and two public settings. The procedures utilised were observations and interviews.

The aim of this research is to try and establish where creativity stands within preschool teachers' practice in Saudi Arabia. The main research questions are:

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

This chapter presents the results in a thematic analysis format. As explained in the methodology chapter, the data were analysed electronically (the interviews) and manually (the observations). NVivo, a qualitative data analysis software program, was used to help organise the data in order to understand of the information available.

During the analysis process, a number of codes were generated, and further analysis revealed certain sub-categories. These sub-categories were further analysed and the

findings from these facilitated the writing of the results under three main themes, linked to the research questions:

- Teachers' perceptions of the concept of creativity.
- Teachers' views of creative pedagogical practices.
- Teachers' perceptions of the creative school environment.

The researcher considered most of the ideas generated by the teachers as being important and most of their contributions have been presented as far as possible. Further discussion will serve to draw conclusions regarding the position of creativity: whether it is concerned with everyday creativity or whether it is tied to possessing a unique ability that only some children have. This might be an important first step for policy makers and educators who are dedicated to facilitating pedagogical changes in Saudi Arabia.

4.1 Theme 1 - Teachers' perceptions of creativity

This part of the results, addresses the following research question:
How do teachers in Saudi Arabian preschool settings perceive the concept of creativity?

Whenever teachers are asked about how they perceive creativity, there is a strong likelihood that they will provide a variety of responses. Desailly (2012) confirmed that creativity means different things to different people depending on where they might come from. She also affirmed that, in early years settings, practitioners often struggle to encapsulate what creativity is.

Analysis of the data from the 20 preschool teachers interviewed for this research resulted in three categories emerging with respect to their perceptions about the concept of creativity, as follows:

Category 1 - Creativity is being artistic

Category 2 - Creativity is being intelligent

Category 3 - Creativity is being gifted/unique

4.1.1 Category 1 - Creativity is being artistic

> Creativity is one of the beautiful arts like painting. Creativity is art, the way of making a painting, the right choice of colours, it is how the child would translate his/her ideas into a piece of painting or drawing (Pr A1).

The data showed that about half the teachers interviewed from both public and private preschools believed that creativity refers to the artistic ability a child possesses. They linked creativity to some forms of art, painting, drawing and producing an artistic piece of work.

> Creativity is painting, to express oneself in a painting. The child can be creative in the way he/she positions his/her drawing and by his/her choice of colours (Pr S2).

> Creativity is an artistic piece of work or an attractive design by a child (P N3).

From the data, some teachers associated the presence of creativity in children with artwork because they believed that art and craft is an easy skill in which children can demonstrate their creativity compared to any other area. This view was exemplified by one teacher, when she stated:

> Children can show their abilities and their creative side in the art activities more than in other activities (Pr S5).

In other words, as a result of fewer restrictions being placed upon children in such an area compared with others, they can perform freely, using many different materials,

and they have the opportunity to be able to choose between them. The teachers had noted that children were able to be as expressive as they wanted, and this positivity and motivation was heightened further due to the mere fact that there were fewer rules to adhere to before they started art work. In art, the most they might have to master is how to coordinate holding artistic tools, such as pencils, brushes or crayons or any other implements. This is not to suggest that all children can master the use of such tools instantly but, with art, there seems to be more flexibility.

> In the early stages of education, the easiest thing for children is drawing rather than writing and counting. The children can be creative in the way they position their drawings and by their choice of colours. It is difficult for children to express themselves with writing as they are still young and their ability to write has not developed yet, but when they do painting or drawing their ideas becomes clearer (Pr S2).

The teacher above seems to be talking about how children tend to be able to express themselves better through art. The teachers felt that art seems to be a method through which children can express their ideas more fluently and with greater ease, compared to when they have to express themselves through language. Children find it harder to explain or convey their ideas through language because they have not yet been able to master it or use it to advantage themselves through speech. A similar situation could be considered to arise in the learning of mathematics. Children are expected to acquire skills in number recognition and formation before they can perform simple sums so offering little room for creativity.

From the data, it is clear that art is perceived as promoting creativity and in some cases is linked with productivity, in addition to teachers focusing on distinct outcomes produced by the children. The data also revealed that the teachers considered children to be creative when they produced a piece of art. One teacher stated,

> In my opinion, the creative child is the one who produces and comes up with a piece of art, whether painting, colouring or modelling, that is different and unique from that of his/her peers (P N4).

Observations carried out in the preschools under study revealed some interesting interactions and there was indication to support the previous assertion, as some of the teachers had placed a lot of emphasis on outcomes. This was especially evident in the public schools in the art and craft corner. However, Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) argued that, in the early years stage, there should be less stress placed on the importance of outcomes, in order to avoid categorising or labelling children as to whether they are creative or not.

> Creativity is the child's productivity in which he/she shows his/her creativity and it can be in any form when they produce some unique pieces (P N2).

In research carried out by Fumoto et al. (2012), it was argued that it is far more challenging to identify creativity in younger children and that it is easier to recognise it among those of older ages. This assertion about the age at which creativity is more identifiable is made because children lack the ability and range with regard to language and are not, therefore, able to express themselves well. Craft (2003) held similar views to this and asserted that young children may not have developed all the skills they need in order to achieve a successful creative outcome. One teacher shared this view, stating:

> I have noticed the changes in children as they grow older. The older they get the better listeners they become in terms of following the sequences concerning events and linking and relating information, which means being more creative (Pr S1).

In a similar context, the data showed that teachers perceived the creative child to be the one who would be able to create his/her own work without copying or imitating the teacher's work. For example,

> The child who copies his/her teacher is not creative (P N4).

Another teacher held the same beliefs towards copying and imitating when she stated,

> Imitating or copying kills the creativity in a child (P H3).

From the observations, the two public schools had clearly established the arts and craft area as one of the main activity corners in every classroom. The areas were filled with a variety of materials and, during all my observations, I noticed that children showed a keen interest in this area being unrestricted in what they did and being allowed to work independently. In contrast to the public schools, observations of the two private schools revealed that only one school had provision for an activity corner classroom where arts and crafts activities were facilitated. The lessons observed typically focused on academic subjects, such as mathematics, science and phonics lessons, where the children had to follow and learn the rules before they could apply that knowledge to produce any work. The children had closer guidance and monitoring and were given many instructions to aid their skills acquisition in the academic-led subjects. It could be argued that the imposition of having too many rules for children could lead to inhibiting their ability to act creatively.

4.1.2 Category 2 - Creativity is being intelligent

> Creativity is when the child shows his/her own intellectual abilities (P H5).

The second view of creativity that emerged from the data is that creativity is intelligence. The data indicated that six teachers in all, two from the public sector and four from the private sector, considered creativeness to be part of the intellectual ability of the child. There was no apparent difference of this view in either setting, for example,

> I think creativity is an important element in the intellectual development of a child and it helps the teacher to get an idea about the brightness of a child (P N2).

> Creativity can be seen in maths when a child shows an ability to carry out a calculation at first sight in seconds. Children can be creative in an English lesson as well when one of them tries to read a tricky word and figure out, say, the rules of exception, independently (Pr S4).

There are still many unanswered questions in the literature surrounding the significance of creativity and where it fits with regard to intelligence, reflection and one's mental capabilities, as confirmed by Banaji et al. (2010). However, from the data, some practitioners have presumed that there is a relationship between creativity and intelligence, in the sense that creativity affects children's intelligence and improves their intellectual development.

> The child's creativity helps increase his/her intelligence. Creativity is an element that can differ between children (P H4).

> Creativity develops intelligence in children. When we notice the child's abilities and hobbies, we try our best to invest in that and support it (Pr S3).

In a similar context, the data revealed that some teachers believed that creative children are more likely to perform better academically. This was predominantly the case in the private preschools. This result seems consistent with the curriculum in these preschools, which are interested mainly in academic learning. For example,

> I believe that creative children are more likely to be good at education in the later stages (Pr S2).

> When we notice the child's abilities, we try our best to invest in that and support it. For instance, when a child is creative in math or science, we tend to support him/her in that area getting him/her to fulfil his abilities and become an important member of society in the future (Pr S3).

It could be said that, regardless of the relationship between creativity and intelligence, teachers' views in this matter are important, as they might affect the way they promote children's creativity and the manner in which they provide equal opportunities for all children to enhance their creative potential to the maximum possible level. It could

also be argued that considering creativity as intelligence challenges the everyday creativity idea, since it might confine creativity to a particular group of children who possess higher intellectual abilities.

4.1.3 Category 3 - Creativity is being gifted/unique

> Creativity is a gift, in the sense that some children have got it and are very creative, whereas some haven't and we cannot create it in children. We can still try, but we will not make the child creative (Pr A1).

The data highlighted that the third concept among preschool teachers is that children who showed creativity were viewed as being gifted. This view was represented by approximately one-third of the teachers who participated in this research, across both sectors, and held the belief that creativity is having an exceptional talent or natural ability.

> Creativity is a gift that God has given some people and the only thing we can do is to explore it and bring it out (P H2).

The data demonstrated that the word 'unique' is used by teachers as a synonym for the word 'creative' in order to describe a creative child. Meaning that the creative child is a unique child who is different from his/her peers:

> Creativity is the skills that one can have and that makes him/her unique and special (Pr S1).

> Creativity is a unique skill that one can have that differentiates him/her from the rest. It is not intelligence but it is that unique ability that the child can have, either in education or in life in general and makes them unique (Pr S5).

> Creativity is when the child is special in something; he shows his/her unique ability in something that is not usual. For me, I feel the child who is creative is different from the rest, but I don't know how or why (P H1).

Some respondents spoke about creativity in relation to specific skills, such as thinking skills, whether that was in terms of originality, usefulness or the newness of the ideas. All of these notions were reflected in the teachers' responses. For example:

> Other children can be creative in the way they think as they can come up with a very controversial issue that strikes me and makes me wonder how fascinating that is. This differentiates them from children whose way of thinking is somehow limited (Pr S1).

> Creativity means to think freely beyond the existence. It is to look beyond what is in front of you. Creativity is to transfer what is around into something new, beneficial and useful. It is all about how to think differently (Pr A4).

> Creativity is what is beyond expectation. It is the unexpected way of thinking, especially from a child (P N5).

In one of the private classrooms, one teacher stated:

> I do encourage children to think outside the box (Pr A2).

During the observation, the above teacher (Pr A2) picked up a toy car and asked the children to imagine that it was something else, asking them, what could it be? She also picked a tissue box and asked the children what other uses the tissue box could have. The children produced many ideas for using the box differently and they started laughing at some of their unusual ideas.

The data revealed that the meaning of the word 'uniqueness', as described by the teachers, is a child's action or invention/production of something that has been demonstrated beyond his/her age expectations, which might also reflect the intellectual ability in this case:

> Creativity is when the child comes up with things that are not expected at his/her age. For every age range, there are certain things that you expect from the child to be able to do or say and when the child shows that he/she is quite advanced for his/her age, then you consider him/her to be creative and innovative (Pr S4).

In addition, the meaning of being unique as derived from the data is a child's action and/or outcome that is different from that of other children.

> The child is creative when he/she is different from other children. The child is unique as he/she comes up with things that other children do not do. I would say that for me, the synonym of creativity is uniqueness (Pr S3).
>
> Creativity is when you feel that the child who stands in front of you is different from his/her peers, he/she is creative and comes up and produces things that others can not (Pr S4).
>
> In my opinion, the creative child is the one who produces and comes up with pieces of art, whether painting, colouring or modelling, that are different and unique from his/her peers (P N4).

The data demonstrated that creativity was perceived as possessing a special ability, such as having an artistic/intellectual ability, or being gifted or unique. These aspects are what narrowed and defined the teachers' judgements concerning those being capable of being creative to a restricted few.

> Not every child is creative (Pr A1).
>
> Not all children are the same. I noticed some of the children in my class this year are creative, to whom I try to provide extra materials and colouring so they can use them (P N4).
>
> Creativity is important for the children. However, not all children I come across are creative (Pr S5).

Some of the teachers held the belief that only some children were creative, whilst others were not as capable. Those identified as possessing creative ability might be supported and challenged better in order to extend their potential, simply because they were perceived as having a greater artistic ability, were considered talented or gifted in some skill or were perceived to have demonstrated higher levels of intelligence than others. This is excellent for the children who have been identified as such and could enhance their progress and development. However, if other children who are deemed less capable are not offered extra support or nurturing to that of their peers, it could

make them feel less adequate or less valued and hinder their development both cognitively and socially as discussed in child development theories in the literature review.

In contrast, the data showed that some of the other practitioners held an opposing view, that most children are in fact creative:

> Most of the children are creative (Pr A4).
>
> Children are creative everywhere (P H5).

Another respondent supposed that

> Every child is creative (P N3).

In some ways, it can be either limiting or progressive, based on the teacher's own outlook about creativity. This suggests that there are varying views about creativity among teachers and leads to the second theme of the results, in which the teachers' views as creative practitioners are discussed in more detail.

4.2 Theme 2 - Teachers' views of creative pedagogical practices

This section addresses the following research question:
What do preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia perceive a creative pedagogy to be?

This part 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.

For the purpose of this part of the chapter, 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)

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. Five teachers out of the seven were from the public school. 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).

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

The other eight teachers, equally from both settings, 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. Despite the focus on academic subjects, teachers in the private sector still reflected the importance of taking a creative approach to their teaching.

> 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).

> Creativity depends on the teacher and how she delivers the information. This can be in an innovative creative way depending on her methods and ways of teaching (Pr S3).

Given, almost half of the fifteen teachers who felt that a teacher's own creative ability is an important factor for teaching creatively were from the private sector this data showed, that despite the pressure on these staff to deliver a detailed curriculum they still felt teaching creatively was important.

Both considerations of teacher's creativity 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.

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).
>
> The problem is that the school curriculum cares more about the academic learning process of acquiring letters, words, maths, and sciences and does not support the child in acquiring other skills (Pr A4).

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).
>
> I would say we are restricted by about 90% to follow the curriculum. In my opinion, it is the activities that are outside the curriculum that tend to trigger the child's creativity, which we cannot afford because of the heavy load that we have to deliver to the children on a daily basis (Pr S3).

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. As the teacher from a private school said:

> 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 with its units are brilliant. It gives the teacher the chance to be creative in their own specific way and in how to use it too. Each unit supports and offers specific skills and knowledge. There are units that I wish would change and be more enriched in order to support creativity more (P H3).

> 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).

> The curriculum has included some changes when we add some new ideas/concepts and tasks for children. It is very beneficial and it does help creativity in the first years, KG stages 1, 2 and 3 (P N1).

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:

> My qualification is in pharmaceutics, which is completely different from the educational field. However, I have developed skills in teaching children and how to deal with them. I can attract, stimulate and engage with children and I do not think everyone can do that, which makes me feel creative in my own way (Pr S1).

> 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 from 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, see (Figure 5). The children were put into small groups and asked to explore ways in which to use wheels.

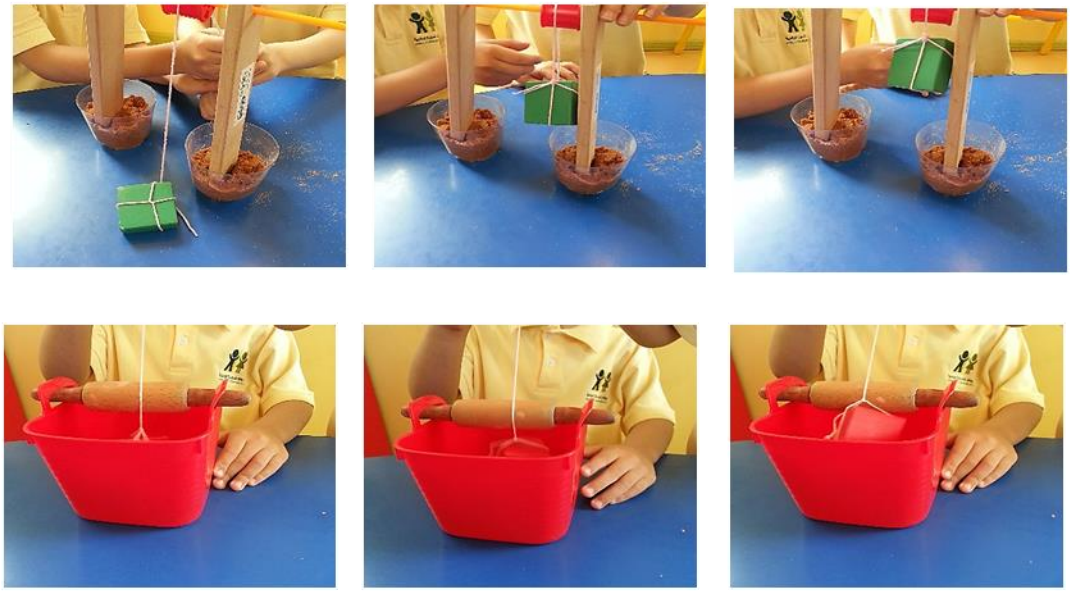

Figure 5: Scenes from a science lesson in a private preschool classroom: the children are experimenting about how wheels can be used in different ways

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 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:

> The management team of the school needs to give the teacher some kind of flexibility so that she can be creative. Sometimes the supervisor would approach me and question why I had not implemented certain things as outlined. I am restricted to delivering everything as it is, regardless of any difficult circumstances (P H2).

> 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.

4.2.2 Category 2 - Teaching for creativity (pedagogical practices)

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

4.2.2.1 Considering children's ideas and interests

The data showed that the first and most highly recommended approach by teachers was to consider children's ideas about how best to learn. Teachers across both types of schools believed that if they incorporated ideas as indicated by the children into their lesson plans, it could be a way of gauging and influencing how best the children learn. They felt that accommodating a specific theme, topic or style of teaching as preferred by the children could enhance their learning. The teachers involved in the study felt that this was an important approach, which should be followed and adopted

by practitioners in order to involve and engage students fully, enabling children to create new ideas or items to reach their higher potentials. For example,

> The children have sometimes expressed their views about my teaching technique and they suggest a specific one that they believe to be better. In that case, I have then changed my way to theirs, in order to obtain more creative ideas from them (Pr A3).
>
> For me, creative planning is when the teacher can plan depending on the children's interests, abilities and needs (P N4).
>
> Sometimes the children make me come up with new plans in order to produce things that meet their demands and needs (Pr S4).

In one of the observed lessons, the researcher recalls how one of the teachers (Pr A1) demonstrated reacting quickly to meet children's interests when they made a request for an alternative activity. This took place during a mathematics lesson and the teacher took some cups reserved for a counting activity and turned them into target landing areas for a ball game. This demonstrated how she was able to think quickly on her feet and how she found an alternative use for an existing resource in order to keep the children interested and engaged. What is important to note here is that the lesson did not drift off course, as it still met the objectives of the mathematics lesson (counting) but was achieved through an unplanned activity in a very creative way. This satisfied the children and, at the same time, the teacher was still able to facilitate the achievement of the expected learning outcomes for the children in her lesson.

In summary, findings from both interviews and observations indicated that some teachers support their learners by demonstrating a genuine interest and showed respect and understanding in relation to children's work.

4.2.2.2 The use of questioning

From the data, the second strategy proposed by the teachers is to apply more questioning in the classroom. The teachers believed that questions allow children to be inquisitive and expressive, which might also be called curiosity. The type of questions posed are important. For example, open-ended questions invite wider and more detailed answers, whereas closed questions will result in limited information and require further questioning. The results revealed that it is beneficial for the teacher to ask a range of questions to help lead children into generating ideas. Alternatively, it is advantageous to ask questions that lead to the target objective of learning that the teacher has set for the children to achieve. This route of exploration helps children to enquire about different possibilities before reaching a conclusion and can help expand their thinking and reasoning skills. This is illustrated in the following:

> The main technique I use to help children to be creative is to make them wonder what I do. For instance, I tend to put some new items in one of the corners, a gold fish for example, in the exploring corner, in order to draw their attention. They are then likely to ask a lot of questions and once they have got used to this concept I tend to bring in something new again (P H4).
>
> Opening conversations with children that include questions is very important and asking them about their opinion is very stimulating. Sometimes, when I ask them some open-ended questions, they get really excited and express themselves in such creative ways (P H5).
>
> I do encourage the children to be inquisitive. When I raise a subject, the children ask why, how, and when. They usually ask a lot of questions, so what I do sometimes in order to enhance the questioning is not give them the answer and ask them to find it. For example, if I am telling a story, I ask them what they think the ending could be (Pr A2).

During one observation, teacher (Pr A2) relied on asking a number of questions during her lesson. The teacher started with a lead question: ’Can a car move without wheels?’. She then placed the children into groups of three. The teacher proceeded to give the children some objects and asked them to think about the uses of those

objects. Many conversations could be heard in the classroom about the benefits and use of wheels. The teacher worked hard to pose a variety of questions. This is not the only example of the use of questions by teachers to enhance children's thinking ability. The observations revealed that most of the teachers used questions in their lessons. For instance, teacher P H4 moved between all the corners and asked the children a number of questions about their chosen activity and about their feelings towards it. Similarly, teacher P N2 asked the children a lot of questions during her lesson and responded to questions the children asked about books.

4.2.2.3 Having a range of resources

The data showed that providing a variety of materials and tools in the classroom for children to try, explore and discover is a vital aspect in promoting creativity within children. The teachers interviewed strongly felt that a variety of materials triggers children's curiosity and enriches the environment in a way that is commensurate with the individual differences between children. When each child can find something interesting, it will help him or her to think creatively:

> Children interact creatively when they use materials that encourage them to use their senses, they become more inquisitive and responsive (P N3).

> I do feel limited somehow at times when there is not enough supply of materials. This affects and limits the child's creativity. We would like to have some storage, like a built-in cupboard in the classroom where different materials are available and which the teacher can access in order to be able to vary the activities in the different corners in her classroom (P N1).

> The cognitive games attract the children's attention along with anything that is new. Materials and items stimulate their interest and make them ask a lot of questions (P N5).

The case seemed to be different concerning one of the private settings in which the classrooms did not contain a variety of materials for children to use. This might have

been because of the intense academic curriculum that teachers have to deliver and it could be due to the classroom layout, which is explained in detail in the next part of the results chapter. The following views of teacher Pr S4 show the reality of her classroom situation:

> I wish I could have lots of materials in my classroom, such as toys, building blocks, crayons and painting brushes; where they could be available to the kids all day and not just in art sessions. I think having a room like this would make such a difference in promoting children's creative abilities. This will enable the children to explore, learn and develop their creative capacities to their maximum (Pr S4).

One resource which is now ever-present in schools is information technology (IT) and the teachers gave some interesting insights about this area. Teachers' opinions differed concerning the use of IT as an educational tool in relation to creativity. One group of teachers positively affirmed in their responses that they felt the use of IT stimulates creativity:

> Using new technology tools supports children's creativity. In my experience, I noticed that children concentrate while using an iPad. For every subject, we use iPads, as we are in a technological era. We cannot prohibit the children from it but what we tend to do is allow them to use it in a very educational and beneficial way (Pr A5).

> We have a computer that the children can use as well as the iPad. Every classroom is fully equipped with a computer and a projector, which helps the children to be more creative (Pr H4).

> We are dealing with children whom we can describe as the 'iPad generation'. The use of technology is needed in order to stimulate their creativity (P N4).

> Linking subjects with their own experience, either from what they have seen on the TV or on the iPad, and I do believe that nowadays technology plays a big role in creativity. Before children were only receptive of what the teacher offered in terms of target knowledge, whereas now and because of the technology and the changes in life, the child has got an input in their own learning and is being more creative (P N3).

> When I use an iPad or mobile phone to search for something and I get the children involved in the process, I feel they are more inquisitive and able to think creatively as the tool is both auditory and visual (P H1).

Interestingly only one teacher differed in her view regarding the use of technology. Her belief was that relying excessively on information technology has a negative impact on children's creative abilities:

> I feel that children's brains have frozen from the amount of time they use on iPads and other electronic gadgets. I have noticed that children in recent years have become lazy in making any intellectual effort to learn due to the increase in the use of iPads and iPhones they own, which I believe freezes the child's brain (Pr A1).

It is clear that a majority of the teachers were very positive about the use of IT in their lessons and the impact it can have on creativity within children. Eight teachers, from both sectors equally, suggested that they were open to the use of information technology. As a way forward, the results suggest that IT could easily be exploited further and used more regularly within lessons, as the children seemed to be very receptive to its use and were familiar with the devices. The schools appear to be well equipped, as they have access to computers and projectors and these could be utilised more to benefit and aid the children in further developing their creative capabilities.

4.2.2.4 Linking theory with real life

The data revealed another interesting strategy, which was that teachers stressed the necessity of linking theory with real life as a pedagogical strategy to enhance creativity within children. In common with past research (Grainger et al., 2004; Heath & Wolf, 2004) the findings from this research indicated that teachers saw creativity being enhanced by making classwork relevant through establishing links to what is happening in children's own lives and through personalised teaching. For example,

> Children enjoy the interaction with their teacher and like to be involved, especially when the teacher uses examples from daily life that make them feel connected. It is then that they start to think differently and try to contribute and participate in the classroom in a creative way (Pr S5).

> Creativity can even be noticed in the time we spend in the morning with the children chatting about our daily plan. Some children are very good at communicating and linking subjects with their own experiences (P N3).

> I always try to make them relate to what we are learning. Therefore, if, for example, we are learning about science, I relate that to their life and families and listen to each one of them talking. So, they get creative and connect the idea in a very creative way. By using this practice, I am helping them to think creatively (Pr S2).

The data suggested two different ways to link theory with real life in order to achieve the best possible stimulation of children's creative thinking. The first strategy is to make a connection to real-life examples as much as possible during the teaching of new information. Teachers believed that the use of real-life examples attracts children's attention and interests more than any other educational tool used in the classroom:

> Real educational tools stimulate children's creativity. I believe that using real things in the classroom stimulates children's thinking the most and encourages them to think creatively. Sometimes when I find something related to the lesson, I bring it from home so that they can touch and feel it with their hands and play with it. By doing this, they understand the concept much better than if I had just explained it to them (Pr A5).

> I tend to get them involved in the classroom and ask them to bring things from home that I think might help (Pr S3).

> Teaching through theories alone does not stimulate children's creativity. The teacher needs to use real things as much as she can so that they get encouraged to think creatively as the tool is more related to their real life (P N1).

The second suggestion posed by the teachers interviewed was to link theory with real life by planning enrichment activities, such as trips and outside activities, which also play a vital role in children's creative development. For example,

> The trips are the most encouraging and a motivational element in creativity in children (Pr A3).

> The school trips are good too, as they enhance the children's creativity and help them relate the overall meaning of what they are learning to the real world they live in (P N1).

> The trips help in encouraging the children and widen their imagination, which helps them to be more creative (P N4).

We can see from the data that the enrichment activities were seen to add a lot of value and quality to the children's creative learning and development. The activities enabled them to make essential links between real life and the learning that was taking place inside their classrooms. Creativity was linked with stimulating imagination, encouraging and motivating the children, and enabling them to make rational connections with real-life experiences.

4.2.2.5 Praising and rewarding

> The most important thing that attracts the child's attention and his/her creative thinking is the motivational tools that we use (Pr A5).

A reward chart was present in all the observed private school classrooms, as a result of the teachers' belief regarding the benefits of rewarding children. Surprisingly, the teachers confirmed that one of the benefits of praising and rewarding is boosting children's creativity. They explained that they saw rewarding as encouraging competitiveness, which generates more creativity:

> I would say praising. The children love praise, even when they get it wrong. When the child contributes in the classroom with a small idea and you praise them for doing that, then you feel that you have just boosted their confidence (Pr S4).

> The most important technique is the use of rewarding. When the child bonds with the teacher, they start a special relationship where they are always trying to please the teacher and do good in order to get praise and reward for their effort and creative work. This can be in the form of a sticker or any other reward (Pr S3).

Observations in the private school classrooms revealed that a high level of attention was being given to the reward system. This might be a result of a standard system in these settings, whereby teachers have been directed by the management to use this type of praising and rewarding. However, most importantly, the observations revealed that a greater number of teachers from the public preschool settings relied on the use of verbal praise to encourage and motivate the children. Teachers (P N1), (P N3) and (P H4) all used a range of praise words and other positive verbal feedback during the observed lessons to inspire children while working in the corners. In the researcher's experience of being a native of Saudi Arabia, both public and private schools acknowledge and give different forms of praise. This can include both verbal comments and non-verbal praise, such as giving a thumbs-up sign or a wink or other positive gesture, and they also offer physical praise, such as by presenting children with certificates, stickers and other awards. Although this type of physical praise was not observed during the observation period for this study, it does not mean that it does not happen. Given the researcher's experience of the schooling systems in Saudi Arabia, it is true to say that a range of praising methods exists, but to what extent each is applied depends very much on the school or the teacher, as well as time constraints.

> Praising is a very good idea to encourage children's creativity. Praising the child's work makes them like what they are doing and boosts their creativity at the same time. For instance, when I say to a child what a beautiful red colour he/she used, that encourages him/her to do more colouring and to add more new things to his/her drawing in order to make it more beautiful, it is like a motivational aspect (P N2).

4.3 Theme 3 - The creative school environment

This part 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 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).

When the teachers 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.

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 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. The teachers' views represent clearly the idea that creativity is not restricted to any subject or area of the school; rather, it is possible in all areas and in all subjects. The teachers also expressed their views about the varying levels of creativity children possess and hinted at some factors that may influence those levels.

It is important to note that the majority of teachers representing this view were from the public schools:

> 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).

> 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).

Only one teacher from the private sector offered a similar comment to those above about where creativity can occur:

> 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. The data also suggested that teachers believed that offering a sense of freedom within the classroom 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. 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 in preschool classroom.

Observational data indicated that lessons that were observed in the classrooms in public schools 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 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 teachers' roles in both private and public settings. 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.

4.4 Summary

Having analysed the data, it can be concluded that creativity seems to hold a variety of meanings and expectations for the teachers who participated in this research. Across the four preschool settings the three most common concepts which emerged from the data were that creativity is being artistic, being intelligent, and being gifted or unique. This might work against the notion of everyday creativity because it prevents the application of the idea that every child can be creative.

Some teachers identified creativity with particular subjects or areas of the curriculum, with one widely supported view being that creativity was linked very closely with having artistic abilities. Others argued that there were opportunities for children to be creative in all curriculum areas. Some of these teachers also restricted creativity to a few talented, intelligent or gifted children, while others saw all children as being creative. Some thought that creativity was promoted through environments; others emphasised the importance of particular learning and teaching approaches in promoting creativity. There was a discussion about how creativity linked with other aspects of cognitive development. Some teachers argued that very young children were particularly creative because they saw the world in fresh and unconstrained ways.

The results revealed that a number of teachers have a clear understanding regarding the importance of their own creativity and what value and influence it may have on developing children's creative capabilities. They expressed agreement about the importance of teachers being confident about their own creative skills and how they

are able to implement those beliefs appropriately in everyday actions, regardless of any barriers they might face. The general statements made by teachers, suggest that the Saudi Self Learning Curriculum (SLC) seems to be a more favourable choice in supporting the concept of everyday creativity. In contrast to the SLC, the International Curriculum followed by private schools tends to be more focused on skills acquisition and is extremely academically driven. This results in additional pressures on teachers who are expected to deliver large volumes of detailed learning materials, leaving teachers with little or no time to plan for and introduce or apply alternative activities which may enrich the minds of young children and stimulate their creative capabilities.

Creativity also relies upon the skills and degree of creativity a teacher may or may not possess and whether or not they are flexible and courageous enough to try new and exciting methods or activities in order to stimulate and challenge their learners. Equally, having the freedom to be themselves and unrestricted in their activities featured strongly amongst teachers' views who saw it as a key factor in generating much more creativity in classrooms. Another element related to creativity that emerged was the necessity for teachers to be allowed a degree of flexibility in the approach to their delivery, for example being able to cater for any unexpected aspects of learning to take place, whilst ensuring that they maintained an organised structure for the lesson.

The data represented common features of creative pedagogical practice as noted by teachers from the settings in this study. However, these practices do not operate in isolation; they need an environment in which they can be allowed to grow.

The results chapter has presented the perceptions of creativity in Saudi Arabian preschool settings. In the next chapter, connections between all three themes are

made and linked to the literature presented, to draw a final picture of teachers' perceptions of creativity in preschool settings in Saudi Arabia.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a discussion of the main findings presented in the previous chapter, with the objective of answering the major research questions of this study. Each research question is presented at the beginning of each section, followed by a detailed discussion of the relevant findings from the teachers' responses and will include the interview and observation material which was gathered in classrooms across the four schools that took part in the study. In addition to this material, the most significant and relevant information from previous findings, as well as from other independent studies, will be referred to wherever applicable.

This chapter is divided into three sections and addresses each of the research questions thoroughly. The first section discusses the perceptions of the preschool teachers who took part in this study of the notion of creativity, followed by a discussion of any significant creative pedagogical practices adopted by them. Finally, the discussion in the last section concentrates on the teachers' perceptions of a creative school environment. The main ideas from all three sections are then connected together to enable the drawing of conclusions concerning creativity as perceived by preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia.

5.1 Teachers' perceptions of creativity

How do teachers in Saudi Arabian preschool settings perceive the concept of creativity?

Creativity seems to hold different meanings and expectations for the different practitioners in this study. The data showed that teachers across the four preschools held a range of views towards creativity and what it stands for. The three most common ~~concepts~~ views which emerged from the data were that creativity is about being artistic, being intelligent, or being gifted and unique. The fact that the teachers had a range of views about creativity is perhaps not unexpected. As Desailly (2012) notes, given creativity is considered to be a complex and debatable subject, a shared understanding is unlikely to exist.

5.1.1 Creativity is about being artistic

Almost half the sample in the study and including teachers in both public and private sector preschools, viewed creativity as being linked to the artistic ability that a child possesses. In the researcher's opinion, creativity is not limited to just the arts or to any other subject. It is significantly important to reflect upon this position because it reveals the way in which the teachers have perceived creativity to be present in children. There is no doubt that arts activities in preschool classrooms play an important role in enhancing creativity in children. From the researcher's experience, having worked with young children for twelve years, she also has little doubt of the positive impact of arts and crafts activities in the development of creativity, a position confirmed by others such as Prentice et al., (2007). However, Fumoto et al. (2012) and Alexander (2010) argue that seeing creativity and artistic ability as being irrefutably intertwined results in a general confusion regarding the matter leading it to becoming a common belief. The question that needs to be asked is: What if the child does not have an interest in these types of activities? The risk then lies in excluding those children from being given the opportunity to express their creativeness according to this classification. Various

researchers have confirmed the positive impact other activities can have on children's ability to be creative for example in music and movement (Riga & Chronopoulou, 2012). Sharp (2004) provides a useful article exploring the research around developing young children's creativity noting that, "Although creativity is often associated with 'creative' subjects, such as art and music, creativity is not subject specific (p.9)". This reflects Duffy's view (2006), when she reminds us that creativity is relevant across all aspects of learning. It is a way of approaching problem solving that can be exercised in different areas.

It is then arguable that being creative is not the same as being artistic and it is necessary to distinguish between creativity and artistic ability. According to Alexander (2010) if teachers do not make a distinction between being creative and having artistic ability, they might judge children's creative potential incorrectly.

The researcher spotted this view reflected in the observations conducted for this study, revealing the way in which classrooms were arranged. All public classrooms comprised an arts and crafts activity corner, equipped with lots of materials for the children to use, but not all private classrooms had the same arrangement. The data also confirmed that some of the teachers from the public preschools believed that copying and imitating worked against improving creativity in children. One of the teachers described the negative impact of copying and imitating by stating that 'it kills creativity in children' (P H3).

However, despite the availability of the resources, certain practices noted during observations in some of the classrooms appeared to go against supporting the development of creativity. For example, one teacher (P N5) showed her class an arts and craft object as a sample. She then proceeded by explaining how to make the item

and gave a demonstration to the class about how it should be reproduced. The teacher then asked the children to make an identical copy using the materials she had provided. In this situation, the researcher noted that the task was somewhat limiting: all that the children were expected to do was to copy and produce an identical item based on the teacher's ideas and they were not given any real freedom to produce something independently. In the researcher's view this cancelled the purpose of having an arts activity corner in the classroom is to give children an opportunity to express themselves in their own way, allowing them the freedom to choose between a variety of materials and tools in order to produce a unique piece of work. The researcher believes that there are few benefits to be gained by imitating and that they are limiting for children, as they are based on activities and associated skills directed by the teacher. Whilst the teacher might perceive their teaching to be creativity enhancing, it fails to take into account any ideas or individual skills children may have or be able to express in producing an independent piece of work.

In the example quoted of reproducing an arts and crafts object, what the researcher noted painted a different picture, in which the teacher's authority left no room for the children to divert away from how she wanted the outcome of the task to be. This could be seen in how the children simply followed the teacher's orders and showed no readiness to adapt what they had been instructed to produce. Almost all the children conformed to what the teacher wanted.

Copying and imitation has its place. Hopper (2010) sees such activity as an important form of 'social learning', invaluable in acquiring new skills. Through imitating, children learn how to copy and acquire new skills and learn new ways of doing things. If it was not for imitation, children would perhaps struggle in all sorts of ways, such as

development of literacy skills and acquisition of physical skills such as with dance or different types of sports. Although the researcher agrees with the views of Hopper (2010), whether imitation has a place in relation to the development of creativity is, from her observations, questionable. For example, in the class asked to reproduce an arts and carts object as shown by the teacher, one or two children asked if they could add other materials, but the teacher was reluctant to accept their ideas, indicating that they had to produce an exact copy of the demonstrated object. The teacher did not introduce any new materials, nor did she ask if the children wanted to choose any additional materials themselves. The researcher felt that self-expression could have been encouraged more by asking the children if they wanted to modify their model in any way or by asking them questions to draw out further ideas about how the object could be adapted or finished and then have allowed those changes to take place. In the researcher's opinion, the task was very controlled and limited the possibility, as Bartel (2014) also asserts, to help children to think critically, explore new and exciting ideas, in short, to promote their creativity.

5.1.2 Creativity is about being intelligent

The second key concept that emerged from the data was that creativity is about being intelligent. Six teachers from both sectors shared their views concerning creativity in children and felt that it was about the child's intellectual ability. This is indicated by the statement made by one of the teachers who said 'I believe that creative children are more likely to be good at education in the later stages' (Pr S2). Some researchers would support these teacher's views arguing that there is possibly an association between the two concepts of intelligence and creativity (Banaji et al., 2010; Benedek et al., 2014). Banaji et al. indicated that it might be possible to suppose that people

who show a higher level of creativity may well have a higher level of intelligence. Benedik's research explored connections between the two aspects and concluded that intelligence and creativity have an association with one another, suggesting that they have a shared cognitive root. However, the researcher views intelligence as distinct from creativity, which may be considered as being representative of a more generic set of abilities, applicable to a range of domains. In support of this view, Kim (2005) found that the relationship between creativity and intelligence among younger children was weaker than for any other age group.

The researcher is of the view that when creativity is perceived as being equivalent to intelligence, it could possibly lead to creativity being linked with academic achievement. This is problematic from the researcher's view as although most children observed in this research showed the ability to be creative, when given the opportunity, they had a range of academic ability, indicating the two concepts should not be tied to each other. The researcher's viewed is supported by others who argue that creativity is something distinctly different from intelligence (Robinson, 2001; Sharp, 2004). For instance, Sharp claimed that creativity should not be another way of talking about intelligence or talent. For Robinson the notion of multiple intelligences suggests that people may have a particular intelligence or potential in relation to a given field of endeavour.

5.1.3 Creativity is about being gifted or unique

The third concept of creativity held by the group of teachers was that it is about a child being gifted or unique. Approximately one-quarter of the teachers from both public and private preschools described creativity as a 'gift' and the creative child as being 'unique and special'. The researcher believes that having a talent or being gifted is usually

referred to as the possession of a high degree of aptitude and skill in a given area, such as in mathematics or art, but this would not necessarily imply that an ability to exhibit creativity was not possible outside that specific area. From the researcher's point of view, to some extent, this perspective of creativity lacks clarity. Although the words and phrases used by the teachers to describe a creative child felt somewhat positive, they did not exactly explain what creativity is. For instance, one of the teachers described a creative child as 'The child who shows his/her unique ability in something that is not usual', and later expressed, 'but I don't know how or why' (P H1). Another teacher described a creative child as being different from his/her peers but did not specify in what sense the child was different. According to Krausz et al. (2009), if being unique is regarded as being different, then this in itself does not increase our understanding of the meaning of creativity or suggest they are somehow likely to be more creative. They pointed out that just because one is unique, it does not necessarily explain what being more extraordinary or outstanding is. Some teachers explained such a distinctive aptitude of a child as being his/her ability to think differently and to produce new ideas and that 'Creativity is the unexpected way of thinking, especially from a child' (P N5). This idea would need to be more specific than just describing a child as being different. There was no elaboration by this teacher in terms of what exactly made a child different and what the possible reasons could be.

5.1.4 Teachers' perceptions of creativity – the challenges

From the researcher's point of view, the three key concepts of creativity, as perceived by the preschool teachers, face two main challenges. The first of these is that the three suggested ideas of creativity seem to limit the notion of anyone affirmed as being creative to a certain group of children who have a specific set of skills, whether that

concerns the arts, intelligence or any other special talent. This could also lead to the assumption that children come to school carrying a characteristic or trait of being creative and it is not, therefore, the teacher's responsibility to deal with or improve it. As a result, if teachers do not take this responsibility, there is a risk that children may lose the opportunities to learn how to be creative. As such their cognitive development could be hindered and, through the social interaction that the process of being creative can cause, it may hinder them from learning how to solve problems they face in positive ways. For example, ‘Not every child is creative’ (Pr A1) is a statement which was expressed by a number of teachers from both public and private preschools. It could be argued that, by holding this view, those teachers potentially disregarded a group of children as not being creative, and this may limit their general potential just because a teacher deemed them not to be as capable as the others. The researcher’s observations showed examples of where those singled out for additional support had been recognised as possessing a certain creative ability and to extend their potential they were given extra help or attention based on the perception that they had a greater artistic ability or were considered talented or gifted in one or more skills. For instance, one teacher stated, ‘Not all children are the same, I noticed some of the children in my class this year are creative, to whom I try to provide extra materials and colouring so they can use them’ (P N4). In a similar context, during a classroom observation in one of the private preschools, the researcher noticed that the teacher engaged more with children who spoke more and with those who asked more questions than the quieter ones. This might be a normal occurrence with teachers for a certain amount of time, but the researcher feels it is not acceptable to carry on giving attention to a selected few for almost the whole lesson as was the case, ignoring those considered less active.

The perceptions of creativity being held by teachers are then, in contrast with the idea that all children can be creative and have creative potential supported by other research studies such as (Sharp, 2004; Beghetto & Kaufman, 2007; Craft, 2003, 2009), suggesting creativity is not necessarily restricted to a select few who may be deemed gifted. It is therefore important for educators and practitioners to consider that all children are creative and every child has distinct abilities, which children are capable of improving if they receive the right support at the right time, not only from their teachers, but also from other significant adults around them. Although not discussed in the interviews, in this context the researcher views additional teacher classroom support as likely to be an advantage in supporting the development of creativity for all children.

The second challenge is that in considering the three key ideas about creativity held by the preschool teachers a focus is often placed on product, rather than process. From the researcher's point of view, when perceiving creativity as being artistic, the focus then falls on the children's abilities in producing a piece of art. Whether it is a painting or an arts and crafts piece of work, it is the product or a final result of a creative action which is deemed important. One teacher stated, 'The creative child is the one who produces and comes up with pieces of art whether painting, colouring or modelling' (P N4). Likewise, perceiving creativity in children as possessing intelligence places an emphasises on them having a high IQ with creativity being linked to a final result. As one teacher said 'Creativity can be seen in maths when a child shows an ability to carry out a calculation at first sight in seconds' (Pr S4).

The same can apply when perceiving creative children as being gifted and/or unique; they are considered as being able to produce something beyond their age and beyond

the expectations of their peers. Again, this also focuses on an end product. The researcher believes that by focusing on the process of creativity instead of the final results, children can learn skills in how to be creative. These very skills can be used throughout their entire lives and not just whilst they are still at school. Many studies have stressed that when dealing with children's creativity, the emphasis should be put on the process rather than the product (Sharp, 2004; Craft et al., 2007; Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009).

The three main ideas also seem to be in contrast with the view of everyday creativity, which considers every child is creative, along with the belief that creativity is not limited to a subject, place or time (Richards, 2009). In the researcher's opinion, perceiving creativity as an everyday activity opens the doors to all children being creative in their own way, on the grounds that every moment a child learns something new and is given the opportunity to solve a problem, the child is learning how to be creative. This could be the most appropriate way to deal with children's creativity in order to enhance their performance during the school day and this is the type of creativity educators should be concerned with for the benefit of the cognitive development of children. According to Richards (2009), everyday creativity is one of the most powerful capabilities people possess. It helps individuals come alive at every moment. It affects their health and well-being, it provides richness and possibilities in whatever they do, as well as helping them to move forward in their personal and creative development.

The last point to be considered in this part of the discussion concerns the terminology used in the expression of the concept of creativity among teachers. A general note which caught the researcher's attention during the analysis of the data was that two associated terms appeared to be missing or were hardly mentioned by the teachers

when explaining their own perceptions of creativity. These terms are ‘imagination’ and ‘problem solving’. The researcher found that these two ideas are considered to be highly important and are frequently mentioned in the literature concerning creativity in children. Jeffrey and Craft (2004) asserted that imagination in preschool education is one of the very significant factors that triggers creativity at this particular age. Problem solving considered an important element of creative thinking found across definitions and models of creativity in the literature (Guildford, 1967; Robinson, 2001; Burnard & Younker, 2004). Only two teachers, from a public setting, out of the twenty practitioners involved in the study mentioned imagination as a concept related to creativity and both from a public setting. One commenting that ‘for me, creativity reflects the rich imagination the child has’ (P N5), and the other explaining that, in her view, ‘The creative child imagines beautiful things that he/she wants to apply and bring to life’ (P N3). In contrast, no mention was made by the teachers regarding problem solving as an idea related to creativity.

In the researcher’s opinion, the curriculum structure in preschools in Saudi Arabia is possibly one of the factors influencing the perception of creativity among teachers. For instance, the national curriculum, the Self-Learning Curriculum (SLC), suggests the provision of many activities in a free learning space in the educational activity corners, as this is expected to contribute positively to the growth of young children. However, the word ‘creativity’ only appears once in the document and that is in the section concerning the ‘arts corner’ (Ministry of Education, 2005). Thus, it could be argued that the teachers’ judgements are influenced and directed by this and may explain why they follow it rigorously, leading half of the research sample to believe that arts activities are the most important way to reveal creativity in children and that creativity is the artistic ability a child holds.

Interestingly, having considered the latest document of Preschool Standards, which was developed as a result of a new project to improve the preschool curriculum in Saudi Arabia called the 'Preschool Development Programme' (Tatweer, 2016), it is disappointing to see that the content in relation to creativity has not been changed when comparing it with the previous document. The new Standards document appears to have had only cosmetic changes made to it, in terms of the colour, structure and layout. Furthermore, what is more concerning is that creativity is still referred to and connected with art as its related subject. This position has to be prioritised for review if creativity is to be promoted successfully in Saudi preschool settings. In a similar context, the heavy emphasis on cognitive skills and academic subjects in the structure of the International Curriculum may have the same impact in directing teachers to believe that creativity is the intelligent skill a child possesses.

5.2 Teachers' views of creative pedagogical practices

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

Having considered preschool teachers' perceptions of creativity, the study 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.

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).

5.2.1 Teaching creatively (teachers as creative practitioners)

The data showed two significant points which have some 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 NACCCE report (1999) also acknowledged this relationship, identifying that teaching for creativity involves teaching creatively.

The teachers involved in the study 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). It is worth noting that out of the seven of the fifteen teachers who shared the same idea five were from public schools, which might reflect the environment in which this group of teachers worked, in that they seem to have more flexibility and freedom to be creative through changing their teaching plans according to the situation, than those in the private schools. 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.

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 eight 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). Another said 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) this data showed, that despite the pressure on staff, in private settings, to deliver a detailed curriculum they still felt teaching creatively was important. Few of them further stated 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 (Pr S1, Pr A2, Pr A5).

The ability of teachers to facilitate creativity is viewed by Desailly (2012) as needing teachers to be able understand their own creative ability and being able to demonstrate this to children, 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.

However, the ability to be able to demonstrate creativity was challenged by a teacher from the same private setting who 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 the international curriculum can have on teachers' abilities to be creative. This is a view also noted by the NACCCE (1999) who reported that teachers cannot develop the creative abilities of their pupils if their own creative abilities are suppressed.

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. Various studies support these views

advocating 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, as the results of this research showed (Craft, 2005; Cremin et al., 2006; Cremin et al., 2013).

The results of the research reported on here are also supported by other studies which discuss teachers and their own creative abilities and how those skills are considered and utilised in order to improve children's creativity. Jeffery and Craft (2004) noted 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.

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. What is worth noting is that although those in the private schools felt they had less opportunity to be creative, this did not necessarily stop them trying to be creative. This ties in with the research of Eason et al. (2009) concerning creativity in public and private schools, who found that teachers who considered themselves as being very creative equally assessed their own learners as being similar. However, according to the data, the

results did not show a relationship between this belief and the teachers' perceptions of a creative child.

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 the sector they came from. The results showed that the majority of the teachers from public preschools were satisfied with the national curriculum, the Self Learning Curriculum, 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 teachers' 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 contained many resources and materials, which appeared to give 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, was 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 from a public setting:

> 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 results presented that there was no indication that any important statistical differences existed children from private and public preschools concerning their creative thinking ability and self-efficacy. Additionally, the curricula from both the public and private preschools did not have influence on children's creative thinking. These findings are in direct contrast with the results of the present study, which suggests that an influence from the curriculum does exist and has an impact on the creativity of children and teachers. It was stated clearly from the data that the international curriculum in the private preschools in Saudi Arabia are very academically driven which overwhelmed teachers and left them with no room for extra activities to support children's creative thinking. This is not the case in Jordan's preschools where both public and private settings are applying a similar curriculum according to Al-Sagrat and Abu As'ad's study.

5.2.2 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 such as:

- considering the children's ideas and interests
- the use of questioning
- having a range of resources
- linking theory with real life
- praising and rewarding

5.2.2.1 Considering children's ideas and interests

According to some of the participants of the study, the idea of giving children the chance to contribute to their own learning was considered an important pedagogical practice, believed to enhance the development of their creativity. This idea was mentioned repeatedly by a number of teachers from both sectors. Attracting children's attention and raising their interest during the school day were just two of the ways that were deemed to demonstrate the teacher's own creativity and these aspects were mentioned in the previous section. In this section, some teachers suggested the idea again, considering it a vital pedagogical practice thought to enhance children's creativity. Observations revealed that the children in the public preschools were more able to talk about their own feelings and were able to express their ideas freely while playing in the activity corners in the classrooms. This opportunity seemed to be less available for children in the private preschools due to the rigidly scheduled pre-planned lessons, and this was the case across many of the other subjects that had to be delivered during the observations.

It could be argued that the practice of allowing children to contribute to their own learning might facilitate independent learning in children and lead to the feeling of ownership, which encourages children to think more creatively. Other research supports this, recognising the importance of developing children's creativity by paying attention to what interests and motivates them (Jeffrey and Craft, 2004; Bartel, 2014). Equally important is that the teacher does not take over the children's ideas or lead them in directions they do not intend to explore, so that they can fully appreciate the children's original thoughts and perspectives. However, this does not mean that a teacher should not facilitate a lesson for children to allow them to explore alternative possibilities related to their initial thoughts or generated ideas, as this in itself may reveal further creative approaches or outcomes. Moreover, as referred to above, various studies confirm that facilitating independent learning instils a sense of confidence deep within children to trust and manage their own learning, which generates more creativity in the classroom (Craft, 2005; Cremin et al., 2006; Cremin et al., 2013).

5.2.2.2 The use of questioning

The sharing of questions between a teacher and the children in the class was the second pedagogical practice proposed by the teachers as promoting creative thinking in children. Eight of the twenty teachers classified 'asking questions' as an important practice that needs to be applied with children in order to achieve creativity in the classroom. Seven of these eight practitioners were from public preschools. The view of the researcher is that they were able to ask more questions as a result of the flexibility they had in their SLC. Given also that they were able to plan ahead for the activity corners, the perception was that they had more time to observe their students

and draw more out from them by implementing a range of questions. This does not mean the teachers from the private schools did not ask questions in their classrooms, as, during observations, it was evident there was a relatively similar amount of questioning that took place in classrooms across both sectors. However, there were two distinct differences between the public and private schools in relation to the questions heard during the course of the observations. The differences in questioning were in respect of the quality and the direction of the questioning. The quality of the questions posed in the private classrooms mostly measured the level of proficiency the children had achieved in relation to the information that had been taught during the lesson. As most of the lessons observed in the private preschools covered the subjects of mathematics, science and phonics, and pressure from parents is concerned with academic achievement, this is perhaps not a surprising position.

The majority of questions in the public preschool classes were more about the experiences and feelings of the children during their school day, especially when they were working in the activity corners. For instance, one of the teachers had told the children a story in the reading zone involving a hero called Ali and asked, ‘How do you feel about Ali?’ (P N4). Questions were designed as a way of measuring cognitive skills and ascertaining how a child had interpreted this information. In another example, a child was playing in the discovery corner with a water pot and some small objects, experimenting with sinking and floating. The teacher asked him, ‘Why do you think the plastic apple floats to the top?’ (P H1). Then the child started looking for causes to find similarities between the objects that floated and those that sank. This difference in questioning also seemed to be influenced by whichever curriculum was being used by each respective school.

The other difference between the public and private schools regarding the use of questions as a pedagogical practice was the direction of the questions, meaning who had posed them. In the private preschool classes, most of the questions heard were directed by the teacher to the children, while in the public preschool classrooms, the questions flowed in both directions between the children and the teachers. In many cases during the course of lessons in the public preschools, the researcher heard teachers answering children's questions with another question, guiding them to reach the right answer independently. Again, the researcher felt that the variation in the use of questioning carried out by teachers in the public and private preschools could have been that the teachers in the private preschools may have felt under pressure to conclude their lesson objectives within the time frame they had and did not have enough time to become involved in lengthy conversations with the children. The often observed hurried questioning adds to the view that teachers were under stress attributed to the intensive curriculum they had to deliver, in a language other than their mother tongue. In contrast, public preschool teachers had much more flexibility to deliver material and did so in their mother tongue (Arabic).

Many studies support the use of questions as an important practice to promote children's creative thinking. Bartel (2014) noted the value of answering questions with questions to increase children's confidence and to help them explore alternative ways of doing things. Craft (2009) suggested that questions in different forms had been successfully recorded by practitioners as a way of promoting children's creativity. The posing of wide-ranging questions frames a structure for learners, guiding them and helping them to explore various and alternative possibilities and, to some extent, guides their possibility thinking. The research by Cremin et al. (2006) highlighted that teachers who are creative need to question children with open questions to enhance

their creativity. Similarly, it was found that questions could be directly posed aloud and they could also be posed through inference, often through play. These types of questions seemed to hold a great deal of value amongst practitioners, as they successfully promoted creativity, and were observed in some of the practices in the public preschool classrooms.

5.2.2.3 Having a range of resources

Eleven teachers suggested that having a range of materials and resources in the classroom was a way of enhancing children's creativity. Nine of the teachers who expressed this view were from public preschools. Although only two teachers from the private preschools raised this idea, they still believed in its importance. However, this did not necessarily mean that the private preschools were under resourced. During the observations, classrooms in private preschools appeared to have fewer materials available for children to use, especially when compared with the resources available in the public preschool settings. In three of the lessons in private school settings, there was no variation in the quality or quantity of the materials, although what was available seemed to serve the purpose of the lesson and the curriculum being taught.

Observations were useful when comparing the two types of preschool in the study. The quantity and variety of materials differed, whether these were books, arts and crafts materials or other learning resources, such as educational toys. For example, the requirement of the Self Learning Curriculum concerning the minimum number of tools and materials necessary in each corner of the classroom is based on there being triple the quantity, whilst factoring in the quota of children allowed in any one corner at any one time. For instance, the maximum number of children permitted in the reading zone is five; this means that fifteen books must be made available in this corner

(Ministry of Education, 2005). Reflecting on this observation, the variety of resources available in the public classrooms seemed to provide children with far more options to choose from and opportunities to discover and try out ideas, which is thought to enhance their creative thinking during the time spent in the activity corners. From the researcher's experience, in order to stimulate creativity within children, teachers need to provide a selection of materials and resources to make the classroom as rich as possible for children to learn, enjoy and create during the day.

The use of IT was regarded as an important educational tool for teachers to utilise in the classrooms by eight teachers across both sectors. From the observations, the use of IT was seen in most of the preschools visited in both sectors. For example, in the 'S' private school, there is an information and communication technology (ICT) laboratory which the children can visit according to a specific schedule. In this laboratory, each child has a computer on which to learn skills in the use of computers, and to play educational games under the teacher's supervision. Another example from the 'N' public setting was that each classroom had a projector for use during the day. Eight teachers from both sectors believed that it is not right to separate children from reality, as now most children have access to IT, whether they have their own gadgets or use equipment belonging to their parents or siblings at home. Using IT to widen children's range of information and to support skills can encourage them to be more creative (Craft, 2012). Teachers explained the necessity of training children in how to use IT properly and to direct those to what is useful for them instead of preventing them from using technology. Only one private preschool teacher was against the use of IT, believing that excessive use of technology negatively affects children's creativity. She justified her point of view by saying,

> I have noticed that children in recent years have become lazy in making any intellectual effort to learn, due to the increase in their use of IT, which I believe does freeze the child's brain (Pr A1).

She further added,

> The excess use of technology negatively affects creativity. I feel that children's brains have frozen from the amount of time they spend on iPads as well as other electronic gadgets. I believe that children will lose their creative abilities gradually, as long as they rely on those iPads (Pr A1).

The use of technology in education has been a long ongoing debate, as there are advantages and disadvantages (Craft, 2012). On one hand, parents and educators are concerned about the amount of exposure a child should have to technology. On the other hand, you have the manufacturers' and promoters' perspectives; children and young people are seen as consumers and so they are catered for in the market. Another perspective is that technology is empowering and enables children to prepare themselves for the real world by interacting as active producers whilst being consumers of goods at the same time.

5.2.2.4 Linking theory with real life

Almost half the teachers across both school sectors suggested that linking theory with real life was a key pedagogical practice that was necessary in supporting children's creativity. Teachers proposed two ways to best link the ideas been taught in classrooms to real life. They suggested that the use of real-life examples was important while teaching children, along with the inclusion of enrichment activities such as trips. School trips received the same attention from teachers in both sectors, on the grounds that trips help children to connect the theoretical information they learn at school with real-life situations or examples outside the school domain. This is believed by teachers to stimulate and trigger children's creative thinking.

It is also possible that the use of actual physical materials and other teaching aids with young children can assist in attracting their attention more, stimulate their thinking and encourage them to interact better with the item or tool provided for them by the teacher. This in turn may support their understanding better than can be achieved through verbal/theoretical explanations of the concept being studied and it may also make them more interested and engaged in their learning.

Research, such as that carried out by Grainger et al. (2004) and Heath and Wolf (2004), supports the necessity of linking learning with real life as much as possible and making it more applicable and understandable for young children. Both studies came to a similar conclusion, confirming that whatever children learn in the classroom, if it is linked to their own lives, this will make learning more relevant to them and help enhance their creative thinking.

5.2.2.5 Praising and rewarding

Rewarding is a practice that was consistently carried out and suggested by teachers from both sectors. They regarded it as being one of the most important practices that encourage young children to be more creative. Rewarding and praising were suggested by seven of the teachers, five of them from private preschools. The majority of teachers rely on giving verbal praise although providing gifts as rewards was a practice more prevalent in the private schools.

Recalling the observations, the rewards chart was a clear feature displayed on the walls of every classroom in the two private preschools, which showed that it was an established practice and something that was consistently being used by all the teachers in those two specific preschool settings. A possible reason for adopting a

physical rewards system of this type may be the expectations parents have for their children to be given better attention. When fee-paying parents expect this for their children, the school then puts more interest into materialistic rewards to make parents feel that the school is rewarding and encouraging their children and giving them the attention they deserve. The use of materialistic rewards may appease parents further, giving them the feeling that they are getting value for money concerning their child's education. In public preschools, teachers seemed to put more emphasis on verbal rewards to enhance children's creativity rather than on physical rewards. This was evident in two of the public preschools during observations and was also evident in the data collected from the interviews with teachers working in these settings, that verbal rewards offer students incentives and motivate them to participate in activities. It can also encourage children to be competitive, it gives them a sense of accomplishment or approval and this can also prompt them to try harder and begin to extend their creative potential.

A study carried out by Byron and Khazanchi (2012) confirmed that rewards tend to increase creative performance. What distinguishes this study from the current research are the conditions placed on the reward for it to be effective, which are that the reward should be in the form of positive feedback in order to increase creativity. From the data available, this may not entirely apply to the classrooms in the private preschools. As previously discussed, the rewards used by teachers in those classrooms were in the form of points to encourage achievement. In the public settings, the rewards were more in the form of positive verbal feedback in a more relaxed environment.

It could be argued that praising children for any incorrect attempts is also important in boosting children's confidence and encouraging them to try again until they succeed without feeling embarrassed or discouraged, thus opening up the opportunity to produce more creative ideas and solutions to the challenges they face during learning. However, when the teachers were referring to the notion of rewarding as a beneficial pedagogical practice to enhance creativity within children, none of the teachers from either sector mentioned rewarding children for unsuccessful attempts or efforts.

There is, however, a view that goes against the idea of rewarding and praising in education. Kelsey's research (2010) indicates that the giving of praise could manipulate children's actions and possibly hinder their creativity. In offering verbal praise, such as with the phrase 'Good job', it could be considered as being similar to a reward and could be thought to be manipulative. Kohn argues that good values need to be nurtured and reflected from within the person, rather than being formed from the outside. In other words, self-motivation is more important.

5.3 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 physical environment of a school establishment is a prime source of stimulation for both creative pupils and teachers alike (Desailly, 2012). 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 study 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 the classrooms in the private schools did not have activity corners, several teachers from these settings supported having a classroom laid out in this way, believing that it is a good structure for enhancing children's 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.

The above result is clearly linked with previous findings discussed earlier in this chapter, which relate to the teachers' views of the curriculum. 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 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 study

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 study confirmed the positive impact activity corners can have on young children's creative thinking. The findings of the previous study 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 would seem to indicate that teachers' perceptions of creativity are 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, where creativity 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).

5.4 Summary

The discussion revealed that the teachers' ideas reflected certain differences between the two sectors with regard to creativity, whether it was in relation to the curriculum itself, the school environment, or the suggested pedagogical practices in their general perceptions of creativity. This led to a variation of beliefs between teachers from the two sectors.

Concerning teachers' perceptions of creativity, the three most common concepts among preschool teachers in Saudi Arabia are that creativity is about being artistic, creativity is about being intelligent, and creativity is about being gifted and unique. All these aspects have been discussed thoroughly above. The three key perceptions are faced by two challenges: firstly, explaining creativity by one of the three perceptions suggested by the teachers seems to limit the notion of creativity to a group of children who have a specific set of skills; and secondly, these three perceptions are often focused more on the final product than on the process of creativity. This contrasts with previous studies which emphasise the need to focus more on the process than on the final result and this also contrasts with the everyday creativity which appears to be the most appropriate view of dealing with creativity in children.

In this chapter, teachers' ideas about their own creativity were discussed along with further suggestions concerning the pedagogical practices necessary to promote creativity within children. The five pedagogical practices are: considering children's ideas and interests, the use of questions, having a range of resources, linking theory with real life, and praising and rewarding.

The last part of the discussion chapter was allocated to discussing the views concerning the school environment and its relation to creativity in children. The main conclusions are as follows:

- Classrooms with an activity corners layout are believed to be the best option for promoting children's creativity.
- The size of the classroom is suggested as being an important factor when concerning creativity in the school environment.
- Freedom and flexibility were found to be two common concepts among teachers when describing an appropriate school environment in relation to creativity.

It was clear from the discussion of the most significant results of the research that teachers' perceptions of creativity are influenced by two aspects: their work environment and the type of curriculum they are following in their preschool settings.

It is worth mentioning that, from the researcher's experience as a university lecturer employed by King Saud University in Riyadh, creativity as a concept is not currently included or even mentioned in the teacher training programmes. This means that most of the perceptions and practices noted in this research are considered to be personal interpretations of the teachers' views, because interest in the topic of creativity in the education sector in Saudi Arabia is still in the early stages when compared to other parts of the world, such as the UK.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.0 Introduction

This chapter is the last section of the research. It is a recapitulation of the study where information is provided to give a general review of the research. The first part contains a brief summary of the findings and their relationship to previous work in the area of creativity. The second part discusses the limitations of the research and the problems that arose whilst conducting the study. The third area in this chapter presents the recommendations, which are divided into two types. Some recommendations are concerned with future actions that can be taken and some have been made in relation to future research that could be carried out.

6.1 Summary of findings

The purpose of the study was to explore preschool teachers' perceptions of creativity in Saudi Arabia. It was designed to gather opinions of preschool teachers concerning creativity from three main angles; the notion of creativity, the creative pedagogical practices and the creative school environment, in order to understand creativity as a concept in Saudi Arabia and how it could be promoted in children in preschools within this context. Three main questions were put forward for investigation in an attempt to achieve the objectives of the study.

The first research question asked:

How do teachers in Saudi Arabian preschool settings perceive the concept of creativity?

Whilst their opinions were varied, there were three commonly shared views among teachers. These were that creativity was perceived as being linked to the:

- artistic ability that a child possesses
- intelligence level of a child or
- unique ability a child may have, also noted by teachers as the innate gift a child possesses

These findings generally differ from the many definitions of creativity noted in the literature and appear to work against the notions of the importance of 'little c' creativity, the small ideas which, whilst not leading to any major change are important for cognitive development (Craft, 2003; Craft, 2005; Beghetto, and Kaufman, 2007) or what Richards (2009) calls 'everyday' creativity (Richards, 2009). Small "c" creativity also often develops as a result of environment and social interaction. Therefore, as the teachers in this study commonly saw creativity linked to specific qualities of a child, this may limit, or slow up, the cognitive development of those who are not seen to possess such qualities. Similarly, although not a position held by all teachers in the study, several allocated creativities to some subjects and to the outcomes the child can produce. This leads again to the idea that not every child is creative, and this is seen as an important aspect if creativity is to be nourished in all children. It is, as others have noted (Sharp, 2009), important not to assign creativity to any specific subject, area or ability if creativity is to be allowed to develop in all children.

The second research question asked:

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

The findings related to this question were presented under two main points, teaching creatively and teaching for creativity. Teaching creatively is concerned with teachers' perceptions of their role as creative practitioners. The outcomes of this research suggest that if the teachers are confident about their own creative skills then their confidence can be a strong motivational factor for stimulating children's creative capabilities. These results tie in with other research that has been carried out by other researchers, such as Craft et al. (2007), Karwowski et al. (2007), Chin & Hui (2010) and Piffer (2012), and this reflects the literature.

What the research showed was that the structure of the curriculum had a clear negative effect on a teacher's ability to promote creativity in the classroom. This is very different from a teacher's creative skills that she may or may not possess. Evidence suggested that for a number of reasons, including pressure on academic results and more formal classroom layouts, that the International Curriculum, which is followed by some of the private preschools, was believed to be a barrier that hindered teachers from applying alternative creative activities. This particular curriculum focuses more on skills acquisition and is enormously academically driven for youngsters of preschool age. In contrast to the international curriculum, the national curriculum, the Self Learning Curriculum (SLC), seemed to be a more favourable choice in supporting creativity within children.

With respect to teaching for creativity, the main focus was on pedagogical practices. It is important to indicate that despite the curriculum barriers experienced in some schools, teachers from both sectors suggested a number of practices to enhance children's creativity, as follows:

- to consider the children's ideas and interests

- to use a variety of questions
- to have a range of resources
- to link theory with real life
- to praise and reward children

The above suggestions resonate with work that has been carried out by other researchers such as Craft (2009), Cheung (2010), Lin (2011) and Bartel (2014). who describe the value of similar pedagogical practices in relation to supporting creativity.

The third research question asked:

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

Two main aspects emerged from the data. They are: the classroom layout and the classroom size. What the results showed was that teachers from both sectors had a clear preference for the classroom structure and layout to be in the form of 'activity corners'. This seems to be supported by the work carried out by Abdul-Haq and Al-Felfely (2014), where their results, from a study of the effect of learning corners on developing creative thinking of kindergarten children which has a relevance to this study, confirm how activity corners can have a positive impact on children's creativity.

Teachers also confirmed that the classroom size is an important factor in generating more creativity in the classroom, as having a large classroom is necessary for the young children to be able to move freely and to learn in a suitable environment for creativity to be promoted. However, the aspect of classroom size is not to be considered in isolation, literature suggests that it be considered alongside other factors such as the type of activities available for children and the ethos of the classroom,

which are thought to make a difference and encourage creativity within children (Desailly, 2012).

6.2 Limitations of the research

Firstly, having gone through the appropriate educational channels and invited ten schools to be involved in the study the research was finally limited to four schools who agreed to participate. All schools were in the city of Riyadh, as the Ministry of Education had only granted approval for working in this region.

Four schools might not be considered representative, as the limited time spent within the schools meant that it is possible that the researcher may have missed certain aspects. It would have been useful to have been able to visit other schools but the non-response and limitations set by the Ministry of Education made this impossible. However, having the opportunity to see both private and public schools meant that reasonable representation of the views of creativity and limits on its development could be obtained.

Another of the limitations concerned a feature of the research design. This was about the decision to carry out one observation for each of the twenty teachers who participated in the study. Whilst only one observation was ~~planned and~~ carried out in every classroom, the researcher believes that two observations would have probably provided greater analysis to the data and it might have allowed for better explanations of certain aspects such as the impact of any features of the school environment on creativity. At the time of data collection, the researcher did consider the idea of adding in a second observation to the data collection plan. However, it was impossible due to health concerns that arose at the time of the visit. At the time the researcher was in

Saudi Arabia, an outbreak of swine flu occurred, and this caused preschools to break up early from their scheduled semester end dates. Some preschool children in Riyadh ended their semester at least three weeks earlier than expected. Consequently, this meant that the researcher could only then complete the one observation that had originally been planned in.

A third issue was also related to the research design. It was the decision to rely only on note taking during observations, rather than on using video recordings. There was a justified reason for this decision, which was that Saudi schools are governed by tight security and there are restrictions for making video recordings in the schools. The researcher believes that having a visual record of the observations could have better supported the analytical assumptions, especially those concerning the interactions between children and teachers. However, in order to avoid violating the rules concerning video recordings the researcher adhered to following the governmental permissions that had been originally approved for carrying out the research.

The findings of this research cannot be taken as evidence for teachers' creative performance and the nature of the data does not allow the researcher to determine whether teachers are creative or not. The researcher believes that this study is an early attempt to discover creativity in preschool education and to generate interest towards creativity, as well as to look at how it might be promoted in children in the future. The researcher also believes that this study might generate interest for creativity to be considered within all stages of education and not just be limited to the stages of preschool.

Several problems and difficulties arose when the research was conducted that required an effort from the researcher to overcome, so as not to affect the quality of

the data. The first difficulty was about the location where the data was to be collected from. The researcher resides in the UK and the research was to be conducted in Saudi Arabia. This factor caused some delay at certain stages, such as at the data collection stage. It was necessary for the researcher to travel to Saudi Arabia to gather the data from the preschool settings. In addition to this, two languages were involved in the data collection stage. The researcher felt it would make sense to conduct the research in the language spoken by the participants of the research. The main language spoken in Saudi Arabia is Arabic, so all of the research instruments were designed, conducted and written up in Arabic. The researcher herself is a citizen of Saudi Arabia and speaks Arabic fluently and this made interviewing easier too. Once the data had been collected in Arabic it was then translated into English. The Arabic language contains certain terminology, which cannot be directly translated into English. Therefore, the researcher paid careful attention to accurately translate the data from Arabic into English. Whilst translating, the researcher worked hard to maintain as much of the essence of the original meanings as intended by the participants during the interviews.

Another difficulty surrounded the issues the researcher faced in not being able to have access to a wide range of research material, resources or updated information about creativity in education in Saudi Arabia and particularly for the preschool phase. On the one hand, this made it difficult for the researcher to find relevant and appropriate references from Saudi Arabia to support the data. Some research carried out in Jordan was available, which is another Arab country that shares some similarities with the Saudi Arabian educational system. On the other hand, exploring such a new subject in the Saudi educational system is believed to increase the originality of the study, as the concept itself and its impact on children's performance remain unfamiliar to many educators in the KSA. Therefore, the researcher hopes that the findings of this study

may attract the attention of other preschool teachers' towards looking into this concept further.

6.3 Recommendations

6.3.1 Recommendations for future action

The following recommendations are offered for educators in the field of preschool education. The results of this study highlighted some important aspects in relation to creativity in preschool settings in Saudi Arabia, which leads to a number of recommendations in this area.

1. **A review of the curricula content of preschools to help ensure it does not hinder the promotion of creativity in children.**

   A key aspect that arose from this research was how the International Curriculum, followed by private schools, had a negative impact on the teachers' ability to promote creativity in children. It is therefore recommended that the content of the International Curriculum be reconsidered and reviewed concerning the way it is applied and used in practice. The aim would be to create an improved balance of experiences between knowledge and skills that are provided for children in such settings. It might be useful to adopt teaching strategies that show more flexibility and that are more appropriate for children who are at the age of preschool. This balance could allow teachers to add more variety in relation to the activities they offer to enhance children's creativity and it could open up opportunities to add in other crucial practical skills rather than having an enormous focus on managing achievements in academic subjects.

There have been recent reviews, by the KSA Ministry of Education, to improve the national preschool curriculum. One of the most recent being the Preschool Developmental Standards and the Professional Development of the Childhood Curriculum Project (Tatweer, 2016). However, from the researcher's perspective, studying the content of this project, and others, suggests there is little reference to the promotion of creative thinking within the Saudi Arabia education system. This is almost certainly a consequence of little academic research into this aspect of pedagogy. As such, a further recommendation is to also look at the national preschool curriculum to address this limited reference to creativity and in doing so consider greater engagement with other world research and scientific studies related to creativity in early childhood and then promoting internal research to consider its application within the Saudi Arabian context.

2. **That early training in the importance of 'everyday' creativity or 'little c' creativity for the cognitive development of children is provided.**

The perceptions held by practitioners did not reflect the importance generally shared by other researchers on this matter. Therefore, clarity about the concept of children's creativity among preschool teachers is required and this could be achieved through their initial training. A study by Alzoubi et al. (2016) showed that training teachers on creative thinking enhanced their creative skills and abilities, creating a positive mindset in teachers could enable them to be responsive to creativity and recognise its impact on the future of children's development. This awareness of creativity could be achieved either directly or indirectly whilst trainee teachers are on the university course programmes. It

could be taught to them directly by teaching them about creativity as an educational concept and it could also be taught indirectly through enhancing their learning experiences with creative teaching methods and by motivating their own creative abilities during their training. For teachers who are already in-service, it is important to ensure that they too are made aware of how everyday creativity can have a positive impact on children's learning experiences through the provision of continuous professional development. Therefore, shorter workshops or seminars could be offered for those who are already working as qualified teachers. In-service training courses could be exploited positively in order to enrich the teachers' own creativity and this could be more effective if it is planned in carefully to provide teachers with rich examples of the most powerful pedagogical practices available, so that they can implement them in their classrooms once they return to their work places. Training could be beneficial for the teachers of tomorrow to develop their creative awareness and equip them with the necessary theory and practical skills, so as to enable them to foster creativity better in young children. It might provide practitioners with the necessary theoretical and practical tools, which could be useful for successful creative teaching.

3. **That consideration of the design of classroom environments be made with a view to ensuring they promote the development of creativity.**

This research has highlighted the fact that creative development of children is best achieved where they have access to a conducive environment for this to take place. One that: offers: access to a wide range of resources; the opportunity to experiment trying out their own ideas; a place where they can

make mistakes; the opportunity for social interaction with each other and their teacher.

Although this kind of environment was observed in the public schools in the form of 'activity corners', this was far less the case in the private schools, where classes were arranged more formally. The researcher realises the pressure on private schools to deliver academic success, but observation suggest this, often, is taking priority, with the loss of the opportunity to promote creativity amongst their pupils. Given the growth of the number of private schools in Saudi Arabia, without change to the classroom environment then increasing numbers of young children may be denied the opportunity to be creative supporting their cognitive development.

6.3.2 Recommendation for future research

This research involved a detailed study of only four schools and their teachers in Riyadh, in Saudi Arabia. It would be useful to establish the validity of the findings across a range of other preschool settings across wider parts of Saudi Arabia. In doing so the creation of a database of useful pedagogical practices for promoting creativity with young children could be developed for implementation in future preschool curricula.

This research only considered the views of teachers and the researcher recognises the importance of parents in the promotion of change. If creativity is to be promoted, then the research into the view of parents of the importance of developing creativity in their child is likely to be important to undertake. This in turn could lead to support

structures for parents to help them appreciate the importance of promoting creativity and how they can support this development in their child.

6.4 Conclusion

What the current research has succeeded in doing is to identify how creativity is perceived by teachers. 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.

If Saudi Arabia is to find its place in the international community then development of its people to be able to think and work more creatively will be important. Such development, this research suggests, needs to be a key aspect of the teaching and learning environment, and start with promoting children's creative ability at preschool age. Whether the content of this research is considered to useful for ministers and policy makers in the design of future preschool curricula remains to be seen.

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Appendices

Appendix A

An outline of the semi-structured interview questions

Interview questions

After obtaining consent from the participants, the interview will be conducted to acquire the information needed to answer the research questions. The interview will be partly structured according to the following outline.

General information (to help participants settle in)

Questions

- What is your name?
- What level are you teaching?
- How long you have been teaching in preschool?
- What are you enjoying the most?

<u>Theme 1</u>: teachers' perceptions of creativity as a concept

Questions

- What is the word or sentence that comes to your mind when you hear the word creativity?
- What do you think the synonyms of the word creativity are?
- How would you describe creativity from your point of view?
- In your opinion, who is the creative child?

<u>Theme 2:</u> teachers' perceptions of creative pedagogy

Questions

- In your point of view, what type of teacher is a creative teacher?
- Can you describe the most creative lesson in your classroom? - What kind of resources are you using in the classroom to stimulate children's ideas?

- What activity do you feel would generate more creativity in children?
- Do you think that children are capable of devising their own learning experiences?
- What do you think is more important, knowledge or skills?
- Do you think that the curriculum allows you the freedom to use your professionalism to develop creative teaching methods? If yes, how? If no, why not?
- What does a teacher need in the classroom to be creative?

<u>Theme 3</u>: teachers' perceptions of the creative school environment

Questions

- What do you feel is the most important component to have in the classroom in order to promote creativity?
- When do you feel children are being most creative?
- In your view, what is the best place in the school for creativity to be supported?

Appendix B

An example of the interview transcript (Arabic and English)

Anwar Private School

Name: Amal (Pr A1)

The Researcher: When I say the word “creativity” what comes to your mind?

The Teacher: Creativity is arts. It can even be in how you put a puzzle together or play a game or sing a song. It is the input in that beautiful and special way of writing or the way you can tell a story.

The Researcher: What is your general view and perception about creativity in life?

The Teacher: My view is Creativity is one of the beautiful arts like painting. Creativity is art, the way of making a painting, the right choice of colours, it is how the child would translate his/her ideas into a piece of painting or drawing

The Researcher: Ok. Do you personally believe that creativity is important in Education?

The Teacher: In general, creativity is important but not everybody has got this characteristic. Not every child is creative. It is a gift from god in the sense that some children have got it and are very creative, whereas some haven’t and we cannot create it in children. We can still try but we will not make the child creative.

The Researcher: Can you please explain to me how some children have it?

The Teacher: There are children who have different interests and their abilities are quite limited, they might be very creative in different areas but it won’t be where I have assumed or think it would be. For instance, I had children who were very creative in drawing and colouring and I had others who didn’t share the same interests. Sometimes a child would claim that he doesn’t know how to draw, or colour, yet one finds that he is very creative and innovative in the way he would tell a story or be very

good at math and this is his side of creativity. Everyone is creative in his own way it doesn't need to be in art.

The Researcher: In your opinion, is there a specific place or area in the school that is more suitable for creativity?

The Teacher: I cannot pick a specific area as I think all the school areas are suitable for creativity. It just depends on the child himself. A child in the sport session can be creative and innovative. For instance, this year the children had a yoga session and they were very creative. I had children who were very creative at drawing in a very special and fascinating way. I had others who were good at puzzles, you would give them a puzzle and they will figure out quickly how to put it together and complete it and others who are very good at communicating and debating with you.

The Researcher: Right, so it depends on the child and the subject. So, do you think that creativity can be included in every subject in the school?

The Teacher: Of course. With children, you need time to discover their interest and the areas where they are creative. There is no child without any interest unless the parents believe that. In order to discover the creative area, I need to put them in different activities. Creativity varies from child to child. Some are extremely creative and innovative and some average and some are not but we can develop it in them.

The Researcher: Inside your class do you have a technique that you use with children and that helps you be more creative and you feel is better than any other technique?

The Teacher: Building blocks. All children in my class have so much interest in building blocks and building castles and rush to the area as they enjoy it the most. A small number of children tend to like drawing or colouring even though they are not that creative but they have the willingness in doing the drawing or the painting. Sometimes when the child is frustrated he will express himself and tell you that he doesn't want to do any drawing or he will express himself through his colouring as he will use black to communicate that frustration even though you know that he is usually really good at using his colours.

The Researcher: As a teacher, what is the method you use with children that you feel supports their creativity or encourages them to come up with ideas and interact in a very creative way?

The Teacher: Persistence. The school procedure was that if the class earn a certain number of stars then the class could win a trophy. Through persistence and encouraging them to believe in wining even though initially they were quite hopeless as if they had some problem, they did win eventually as they believed that they can do it and that happens through encouragement.

Sometimes when a child approaches me and says that he doesn't know, I would say" don't say I don't know but we will know "when you convince the child that he is able to learn and to achieve and when he keeps hearing this he believes and will keep trying till he achieves. In my opinion this is a very fruitful method that I have been using, this showed a lot of good results in different cases. When you create a positive thought or way of thinking in the child and you keep drilling that thought and keep encouraging the child that helps him internally. I feel that children's brains have frozen from the amount of time they use on iPads and other electronic gadgets. I have noticed that children in recent years have become lazy in making any intellectual effort to learn due to the increase in the use of iPads and iPhones they own, which I believe freezes the child's brain. I had a case where a child was feeling shy and won't speak in English, I did explain to him that I know he can do it and will wait for him and in fact by the end of the week he just did and overcame his shyness. In a lot of other cases this method did work wonders.

The Researcher: How do you prepare for the lesson? Does it need to be in writing?

The Teacher: We need to do it in writing, print it out and hand it in to the supervisor and we call it a plan. We have a weekly plan and a daily plan. As for my personal preparation, I would outline the major points on paper so I won't forget the order. However, I won't do it so detailed that I can't change it at any time. For instance, in the session where we have to teach addition to children they put that I have to demonstrate through using pens, like two pens plus one pen is equal to three, yet sometimes I would use the children themselves so I would put them in sub groups and add them to each other in order to explain the addition to them. Sometimes the children are not willing to learn or are not ready.

The Researcher: You omitted?

The Teacher: No I don't omit it but I will just delay it. Sometimes I would give the lesson one and three but I will delay delivering lesson two as I feel that children are not yet ready to receive that information. I can repeat the same idea once, twice and more but in a different way as some children understand through presentation, some through touching the material and having a close grab of it, and some either way but I still can try my best with them. In my opinion some children have the ability to absorb and remember the information, whereas others need more some and more drilling.

The Researcher: Tell me about your conviction about the curriculum you teach. Do you believe it supports creativity in any way?

The Teacher: The curriculum has a lot of difficulties and a great amount of information. I believe that children from the age of one till four years need to learn through exploring, and then we can introduce a curriculum like this. For children at this age it depends on their senses. I think if you give them the chance to explore, and then introduce this curriculum then they will be more creative. Our problem is that we don't give children the chance to explore as we are so busy concentrating on the amount of knowledge we want them to gain and we don't focus on the life skills.

The Researcher: Do you have some flexibility in making some changes to the lesson like adding or omitting or changing major points or maybe the content of the lesson or postponing a lesson?

The Teacher: When I notice that the children fully understood the target information I can then just try to expand it a little bit. For example, in the lesson of sorting, I can ask the child to talk about his own home and if they can sort in groups the things he has got in his bedroom.

Frankly, the curriculum is difficult and I have noticed that children in the recent years have become lazy in making any intellectual effort to learn due to the increase in the use of I pad and I phone by them, which I believe does freeze the child's brain. I tend to warn parents of this and ask them to limit the time to half an hour to an hour at the most and to encourage the child to use things that involve exploring and creativity. I encourage parents to read stories or listen to them.

الاسم: أمل (Pr A1)

الباحث: لو قلت لك الإبداع ماذا يخطر فيّ بالك لمَّا تسمعي هذه الكلمة؟.

المعلمة: الإبداع نوع من أنواع الفنون الجميلة مثل الرسم أو يكون تطبيق كبزل كلعبة مثلا أو أغنية. أو الكتابة الرائعة المتميزة أو طريقة سرد قصة.

الباحث: ماهي نظرتك العامة له وتصورك له في الحياة العامة ؟

المعلمة: نظرتي له كنظرة العالم له إنه هو الفنون، طريقة الرسم الصحيحة اختيار الألوان الصحيحة، تعطي طبعًا أفق بعيد للطفل أو بأي لون سوف أرسم الرسمة، أو الفكرة اللي عندي أود أن أترجمها لرسمة، يعني ترجمة الأفكار إلى رسومات.

الباحث: تمام، هل تعتقدين شخصيًا أن الإبداع مهم فيّ التعليم؟

المعلمة: بشكل عام، الإبداع ضروري بس هذه الصفة ليست لدى كل الناس هي موهبة من عند رب العالمين يعني ممكن يكون موجود بالطفل وممكن ما تكون موجودة، لا نستطيع أن نختلقها، ممكن نحاول فيها بس ما نصل إلى مرحلة الإبداع.

الباحث: ممكن تشرحين لي كيف تكون موجودة عند بعض الأطفال؟

المعلمة: في أطفال ميولهم مختلفة وقدراتهم محدودة يعني ممكن إبداعه يكون بمجالات ثانية ما يكون الإبداع اللي أنا تصورته، ، مثال: كان عندي أطفال مبدعين بطريقة رسم وتلوين متميزة، أطفال ثانيين ما عندهم هذه الميول، يقول لي الطفل(ما بعرف أرسم ما بعرف ألون) عنده إبداع مثلاً بطريقة سرد قصة عنده إبداع بالحسابات هذا إبداعه. يعني كل شخص عنده إبداع بس بجهة معينة مو شرط أنه يكون فني.

الباحث: بإعتقادك انت هل يوجد مكان معين في المدرسة مناسب للإبداع أكثر من غيره من الأماكن؟

المعلمة: ما بقدر أحدد لك كل المدرسة فيها إبداع فيّ أماكن معنية لكل طفل مثلاً إذا كانت خاصة بالطفل، طفل مثلا بحصة الرياضة ممكن يكون فيّ إبداع هذه السنة عملوا حركات اليوجا وكان عندهم إبداع فيها، فيّ كان عندي أطفال بالرسم متميزين بطريقة غير طبيعية، فيّ أطفال بألعاب البزل، تحطي لهم بزل يطلع لك الصور وطريقة تركيبها، فيّ أطفال أثناء النقاش والحوار مبدعين.

الباحث: إذا حسب الطفل وحسب نوع النشاط، بالتالي تعتقدين أنه يمكن أن يدخل فيّ أي مكان فيّ المدرسة؟

المعلمة: طبعًا؛ لأن الطفل تحتاجي وقت حتى تعرفي وين الإبداع ممكن يظهر منه، يعني ما فيّ طفل فاضي، إلا إذا كان أهله مقنعينه أنه فاضي، وحتى تعرفي نوع إبداعه لازم تحطيه بعدة أماكن وعدة أنشطة حتى تقدري تظهري هذا الإبداع، ويتراوح عند الاطفال في منهم مبدعين بنسبة عالية فيّ نسبة قليلة في، وفي أطفال مو موجودة لكن ممكن ننميها.

الباحث: داخل صفك هل يوجدوسيلة معينة تستخدميها تشعرين إنها تساعدك على الإبداع أو تساعد الأطفال أكثر من غيرها؟

المعلمة: ألعاب التركيب الكل يتهافت أنه يقعد يركب يعمل أشكال ويعمل قصور بطريقة البناء، هذا الصفة السائدة عندي بالفصل. فيّ نسبة قليلة منهم يحبون الرسم لو ما عندهم إبداع بس عندهم الرغبة فيّ أن يرسموا، في أطفال مثلاً متضايق يظهر بطريقة التلوين والرسم أو يقول لك: ما بدي ألون، بس هو مضايق بده يظهر شيء فيمسك الأسود يلون، تعرفي، ، يعني مع أنه بيعرف يرسم ويعرف يلون بس هو خلاص متضايق منزعج فيعبر باللون الأسود

الباحث: أنت كمعلمة ما هو أكثر أسلوب أو طريقة لمَّا تستخدميها تشعرين أنك نميتي إبداع الأطفال اللي قدامك أو ساعدتيهم على أنهم يقولون أفكار كثيرة أويتجاوبوا معك بطريقة مبدعة؟

المعلمة: الإصرار، يعني مثلاً كان النظام عندنا إذا نأخذ نسبة معينة من النجوم حتى نأخذ الكأس، تشجيعهم كان بطريقة الإصرار إنه نحن سنأخذ، وكان ميئوس منهم أنهم يأخذوا بصراحة؛ لأنه فيّ عندهم كتير مشكلات، لكن بالتشجيع والاصرار وتكرار كلمة إنه نحن هنأخذها فعلاً أخذوها.

حتى لما يقول لي الطفل أنا ما أعرف قلت له: لا تقل لي ما أعرف، نحن سوف نعرف، يعني إقناع الطفل أنك أنت قادر أنك تعمل، هو لمَّا يسمع كلمة يعرف يستمر بالمحاولة فينتج، هذه الطريقة فعالة بنظري وأثبتت نجاحها في كثير من الحالات، أي فكرة إيجابية تكرريها عليهم تنغرس فيهم ويقتنعوا فيها وطريقة تشجيعهم تحفز مخ الطفل داخليا، لأن الأطفال الآن أشعر كإن مخهم تصلب من كثرة استخدام الآيبادات والأجهزة الالكترونية. في واحدة من الحالات ما كان يعرف يتكلم إنجليزي ويخجل قلت له: أنت تعرف وأنا أستناك وفعلاً آخر الاسبوع تكلم بدون أي مساعدة ومنطلق جدا. وأكثر من حالة انطبق عليها هذا الكلام.

الباحث: إذا كان سألتك عن طريقة تحضيرك للدرس، هل أنت مطالبة أنك تحضرين كتابتا، ما هي طريقة تحضيرك؟

المعلمة: لازم نحضر كتابة مطبوعة ونسلمها للمشرفة نسميها خطة مو تحضير،فيّ عندنا خطة أسبوعية وفي عندنا يومية. لكن تحضيري الخاص أنا أعطي النقاط الرئيسية مثلاً مكتوبة على ورقة حتى ما أنسى الترتيب، لكن مو تحضير بالتفصيل لإني ممكن بأي لحظة أغير يعني مثلا بدرس الجمع حاطين لي إنه بتحطي قلمين زائد قلم يعطيك ثلاثة، أنا ممكن ما أستخدم أقلام، ممكن أنا أستخدم الأطفال نفسهم، نعملهم مجموعات مثلاً المجموعة الأولى كم طفل فيها المجموعة الثانية؟ أضمهم مع بعضهم كلهم ويتعلم الاطفال الجمع. فيّ بعض الأحيان الاطفال ما عندهم رغبة أنهم يأخذوا دروس.

الباحث: تلغينها؟

المعلمة: ما ألغيها أأجلها، فممكن أعطي الدرس الأول و الثالث بس الثاني ما أعطيه لأنه لسه ما عنده إمكانية أنه يتقبل هذه المعلومة، ممكن أعيد المعلومة مرة واثنين وثلاثة بس بطرق مختلفة لأنه فيّ أطفال يستوعبوا بمجرد الكلام الشفهي وفي أطفال لازم يلمسوا مادة بيديهم، وفيّ أولاد لا هيك ولا هيك بس يعني نحاول معهم.

وأنا برأيي أن الطفل فيّ بعض الأحيان على المدى البعيد ممكن يتذكرها، يعني ذاكرته تخزن، فيّ أطفال لازم تعيدي حتى يرسخ فيّ ذهنه المعلومة.

الباحث: إحكي لي عن قناعتك الشخصية في المنج اللي تقومين بتدريسه للأطفال؟ هل تعتقدين أنه يدعم الابداع بأي شكل من الأشكال؟

المعلمة: المنهج فيه صعوبة وفيه كم كبير من المعلومات، وأنا أرى أن الطفل من السنة إلى الأربع سنين لازم يتعلم عن طريق الاستكشاف، بعدين نعطيه هيك المنهج، لأن بهذا السن الطفل يعتمد على الحواس، لمَّا بيكتشف ثم تعطيه هذا المنهج يبدع معك، مشكلتنا هنا نحن ما نبدأ بالاستكشاف نحن عم نحاول بشتى الوسائل نعلم الطفل كم هائل من المعلومات. أما مهارات الحياة ما نركز عليها.

الباحث: هل عندك المرونة الكافية أنك أنت تغيرين في الدرس مثلاً تأجلين شيء تغيرين هدف أساسي من الدرس تبدلين محتوى الدرس تغيرين كيفية إعطاء الدرس؟

المعلمة: لمَّا أشوف الطفل فاهم الفكرة موضوع التصنيف مثلا أنا ممكن أوسعها للبيت أنت شو عندك بالبيت؟ شو ممكن تقدر تصنف لي بالبيت بغرفتك؟ أو أختصرها لكن ما ألغيها تماما. يعني ممكن معلومة تأخذ ثلاثة أيام أنا ممكن أعطيه إياها بساعة ما أعيد عليها كثير علشان الطفل ما يمل منها.

بصراحة المنهج صعب.. والأطفال في السنتين الأخيرة لاحظت عدم رغبتهم ببذل مجهود فكري وأظن السبب هو اعتمادهم على الآيباد والآيفون اللي أشعر إنها بتوقف المخ، ودائما نحذر منها أنه بس ساعة واحدة أو نصف ساعة بالكثير، ولو أصر الطفل لازم يتعود يشوف أشياء فيها استكشاف شغلات إبداع، يعني أنا بشجع الأهالي إنهم يعتمدوا كثير على قراءة وسماع القصص.

Appendix C

A completed example of the observation form

Observation Form

Name of school: Anwar School (A) - Private (Pr)

Teacher's name	Date	Time	Class level	No. of children
Abeer (3)	Wednesday 30/4/2014	10:30-11:30	KG 3	20

	Description	Researcher's notes and comments	Observation – supporting images
Classroom layout and environment	The classroom was set up with group tables and chairs to accommodate 5 children per area. The white board was the focal point. The classroom had a bookshelf and some posters were displayed on the walls. A Motivational Wall Chart was present in every classroom visited, which aimed to encourage children to achieve. There was no carpeted area for children to use. When the classroom was entered into, children were seated in small groups and were listening to the teacher. However, they were working individually.	The most important feature is how the tables and chairs are arranged. There was not much flexibility in the seating arrangements. A carpeted area could be very useful. Having a carpeted area presents the possibility to do informal work. Some children find it hard to sit at a table for long periods. Although the tables were arranged as small clusters, however, no group work took place during the lesson.	 

Interactions between the teacher and children	A child interrupted the teacher whilst she was talking: S: I want to build something. T: oh really, what do you want to build? S: A school T: Why? S: Because I love the school. No further questions were asked and the teacher moved onto another child and asked the same question. The teacher's voice was calm. The children were quiet and were repeating key words altogether after the teacher.	The teacher required children to respond quickly to questions and would often move onto other children if she did not get a speedy response. Children were not given time to plan, develop ideas or to evaluate what they were doing. The teacher saw a girl put her head on the table and asked her a question. Then commented: it is not bed time yet.	
Teacher's pedagogical practises (examples of activities)	The lesson was about builder's tools, the teacher told them a story about a builder. Then posed some questions. Who liked the story and who did not, why? Then they sang a song. The teacher presented the builder's tools using flash cards. Then brought an actual tool box. She told them a story then sang a song using the projector for visual aid.	She gave children the chance to see the tool box. The children were laughing while singing with her, moving in their seats.	

Appendix D

A summary of all observations

Summary of observations

Observation notes: Anwar School (A) - Private School (Pr)

	Classroom layout and environment	Pedagogical practices (examples of activities)	Interactions between the teacher and children
Pr A1	Tables and chairs. Rewards chart displayed on the wall.	Science lesson Resource: foam shaped, plastic cups and story books Children asked for an activity (unplanned request) the teacher responded. The story was exciting. No extra materials available accept the tools for the lesson.	When it became too noisy, teacher said "can't hear you" then the class fell silent. Children were interacting with each other, standing, talking, dancing and moving freely. A child tried to say something, teacher moved in closer towards him and listened carefully. Lots of questions initiated from teacher.
Pr A2	Tables and chairs. Rewards chart displayed on the wall.	Science lesson Started with a question (can the car move without wheels?) Children placed into groups of 3, given some objects and were asked to think what could be done with it. Lots of experiments in the classroom about benefits and use of wheels. Went outside in a line to see the escalator.	Children were moving about in the classroom. Lots of questions posed by the teacher. Children raised hands to answer. Not enough opportunity for every child to respond. Teacher engaged more with those children who spoke more than the quieter ones.
Pr A3	Not much flexibility in seating arrangements.	Science lesson	Limited space for children to move about in (dancing

	Tables set up for groups but no group work. Reward chart displayed on wall.	No extra materials available accept the tools for the lesson. The children enjoyed the story and song more than the actual lesson.	while seated on chairs). Lots of instructions. Teacher rushed in giving answers.
Pr A4	Low lighting. Tables and chairs. Rewards chart displayed on the wall.	Maths lesson One resource for the whole lesson: number cards, plus the whiteboard. No additional materials available. Children play numbers game	Teacher's voice was loud and clear. Children had to raise hands to answer questions. Tt moved eye contact away from child to another one before completing conversation.
Pr A5	Activity corners classroom 7 corners with a variety of materials in each one.	Observation only took place in the activities corners classroom Minimal instructions: not to enter without their corner badge. The children were playing freely. Moved from one activity to another with excitement and enthusiasm.	The greatest interaction was in the building blocks corner (building a zoo). Teacher supervised the children, intervened when necessary. The teacher was relaxed, quiet and kind with the smaller children. All children took part in tidying up and returned everything back to its place.
Comments about the observation	Classroom layout in 4 of the 5 classrooms observed seemed to be inflexible, children were huddled close to one another and the surrounding chairs and tables. The fifth observation was conducted in the classroom containing the activity corners. The layout appeared to be suitable for children to move around freely, try out many different	Materials available for children to use were less than what was expected. In three of the lessons there was no variation in quality or quantity of the materials, I believe that in order to stimulate creativity within children, teachers should provide a selection of materials and resources to make the classroom as rich as possible for children to learn, enjoy and create all day long. Teacher Pr A2 used an experimental technique in her science lesson (this was her regular classroom). Children were placed into small groups and were excited about	Some teachers displayed examples of teachers who 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. At other times, they moved away from students who were still engaged in conversation with them, and moved to speak to others in the classroom.

	things, and play freely (with minimal instructions).	exploring ways in which to use wheels. They asked lots of questions, tried many different ways to find out the best solution, ended up with very creative ideas. This is an example of the teacher's creative pedagogy regardless of the surrounding environment.	

Observation notes: Sunrise School (S) - Private School (Pr)

	Classroom layout and environment	**Pedagogical practices (examples of activities)**	**Interactions between the teacher and children**
Pr S1	Chairs and tables set up in rows in front of a whiteboard. Children remained seated for almost an hour	Maths lesson (subtraction) The teacher used cups, plates, pens and magnets to teach the children the rules of subtraction.	Teacher reminded the children of the classroom rules before starting the lesson. Children repeated the rules in chorus in a loud tone. They responded to the teacher's questions altogether. They asked some questions which were answered by the teacher.
Pr S2	Children sat in three groups, facing each other. The classroom size was small.	Phonics lesson When I entered the room, children were writing in their books. No additional resources were used to facilitate the lesson. The teacher explained it was practise for yesterday's lesson, no new information was introduced.	Very quiet teacher and similarly very quiet children. There was very little movement that went on in the classroom and equally children worked very quietly.
Pr S3	Tables and chairs were set up as two groups but no group work was done. It was quite a small classroom to accommodate 20 children, there didn't seem enough space	Phonics lesson Visual phonics by hand incorporated into stories to teach sounds of the letters. A child read part of the story, followed by the teacher who stated the letter sound firmly, children repeat it after her.	Children sang out the rules altogether at the beginning of the lesson. Teacher shouted out the letter sound and asked the children to repeat the sound. Children answered her questions very quickly.

	for them to move about in. The children remained seated for the whole of the lesson.	The whiteboard was used to write out the letters for reinforcement.	Strict teaching style with enforcement of firm rules.
Pr S4	20 desktops in the I.T. room. Each child had access to a computer.	I.C.T lesson Children learnt how to turn computers on and off properly. Some games and activities were played on computers. Teacher explained the task, then start moving between the children to see how they were doing. The teacher was assessed each child using a form.	Children were very excited when they entered the I.T. room. Teacher reminded them about the rules.
Pr S5	Playground area, equipped with some swings and slides for motor play Another open area for P.E.	Playground time The children played happily in the playground. Jumped, ran, played games together (with their hands singing songs).	Teacher only supervised children, did not play or engage with them.
Comments about the observation	Children are happy in nature, but in 3 of the classrooms I did not see any laughter, the only place where they played happily and freely was the playground.	Teachers seemed to be overwhelmed with the content and did not appear to have time to provide any extra activity other than the planned ones regulated by the curriculum.	Lots of rules and instructions. Lots of reciting and repetition of information, (Rote learning).

Observation notes: Happy Child School (H) - Public School (P)

	Classroom layout and environment	**Pedagogical practices (examples of activities)**	**Interactions between the teacher and children**
P H1	Quite a large classroom with 7 activity corners. Carpeted area and a utilities area attached to the classroom (toilets and storage).	Lesson about water. 7 different activities all related to water. For instance, building a swimming pool in the building blocks corner. Experiments about sinking and floating in the	A new child was playing randomly which annoyed the other kids, the teacher asked them to explain the rules for their friend as he was new. In the discovery corner the water flowed out of the pot causing some spillage, the

		discovery corner and lots of books about water in the reading zone The teacher supervised the children and then moved over to the building blocks area, which attracted the children to follow her. She allowed them to stay, ignoring the 'number rule' (where only set numbers of children are allowed to work in any given corner). The teacher moved between corners during the session.	teacher asked the children to mop it up with a towel then allowed them to continue working on their experiment.
P H2	A large classroom containing 7 corners filled with many resources and materials in each corner. This class also has a cosy carpeted area.	A visit to the main library in the school to choose more books to add to the reading zone in the classroom. When the children entered the classroom they showed excitement with their new books and placed them in the reading corner. They then started moving between corners and tried out different activities. A group of children mainly played in the 'pretend play area' for most of the lesson and role played parental roles, acted as grandparents, siblings etc.	The teacher did not enter any corner during the time of observation. Was watching the children from distance. The children worked and played together in harmony.
P H3	A large classroom with 7 corners and a carpeted area. An activity conducted in each corner related to the subject of water organisms.	The children were moving freely from one activity to another with no restrictions. They seemed to be aware of the rules of the session.	During the lesson there was a knock at the door and a child had to leave for an appointment. His sister had come to pick him up who warmly welcomed by the assistant teacher. When she left, the teacher remarked that she had been the teacher of the young lady who came to pick her brother up and instilled confidence in them by saying that she believed that they would all grow up to be successful people in future too. The children were engaged in fluent conversation with one

			another within each of the corners.
P H4	Another large classroom with 7 activity corners, as well as a carpeted area. A different activity had been organised in each corner by the teacher.	The teacher moved between all the corners and asked children many questions about their chosen activity and about their feelings towards it.	Children played quietly. A child ruined the building in the building blocks area. The teacher intervened swiftly and calmed them all down. She asked the disruptive child to come out of the corner to explain the consequences of his actions. Later, the child apologised to his peers and was allowed to return to work together.
P H5	This was a large classroom quipped with the 7 activity corners and a carpeted area. A different activity had been organised in each corner by the teacher.	The teacher's role at the time of observation was to observe the children whilst they worked in the activity corners.	When the class became too noisy the teacher held up a card with the words 'quiet please', written on it in Arabic Once the children paid attention to this, they quietened down and went back to working more quietly. There were some instructions children had to abide by. Each corner had a limit as to how many children were allowed to play there at any given time.
Comments about the observation	Generally, the activity corner classrooms were believed to be more beneficial and suitable for the children than the regular standard classroom (which did not contain corner activities). One of the noticeable aspects is that most the observed classrooms were similar in contents. Nothing special about each teacher rather than the way she is dealing with the children.	Children had the opportunities to choose between many different options of play and learning, according to their interests, abilities and mood. They felt free moving between corners and were given minimal instructions. There were not too many restrictions either. The classroom was rich with beneficial resources and materials, which gave children the variety needed to find an activity suitable and interesting to them.	Teachers seemed to be more relaxed. Lots of positive interactions between teachers and children.

Observation notes: New Dawn School (N) - Public School (P)

	Classroom layout and environment	Pedagogical practices (examples of activities)	Interactions between the teacher and children
P N1	A relatively large classroom, with a carpeted area in the middle of the classroom. Six static corners with the flexibility of adding a mobile corner, dependant on the subject being taught from the curriculum unit. (The option of having a mobile corner is that it can be wheeled into space and be filled with relevant resources according to the lesson topic.	The corners were filled with a number of activities prepared by the teacher each containing a selection of materials and resources. Children enjoyed working in the corners. The teacher mointored the children whilst they worked away in the corners.	The teacher used many positive words of encouragement during the session (in Arabic). The light was turned off as an indication of marking the end of the session. Children worked together to tidy up the room, then sat on the carpet. The children were warm and welcoming to me and treated me as a familiar person keen to show me their work.
P N2	The classroom is very large with 6 activity corners. The children were sat on the carpeted area with the teacher explaining the subject of the day (which happened to be about the content of a book being discussed).	The teacher handed out a book to each child. All of the books were different and the task was for the children to find out and note down the writer, publisher, as well as to list the information from the first and last pages of the book they each had. The teacher asked many questions and responded to questions the children asked about books.	One of the children refused to choose a book, the teacher accepted the child's choice not to take one, and did not pressure her further to choose a book. They had to raise their hands to answer questions. The children were familiar with their class timetable as they answered promptly, when the teacher asked them what activity was coming up next. The next session happened be time in the playground followed by the activity corners. So the teacher reminded them about the playground rules before they left the classroom.
P N3	A relatively large classroom, with a carpeted area quipped with the 6 activity corners. Lots of activities and materials for children to use.	The lesson was about books. The extra corner was a role-play corner designed as a classroom, where children were acting out a teacher's role. The teacher entered one of the corners to support a child with his task.	The children sat on the carpet before starting working in the activity corners, this was so that they could be reminded of the rules of play and engagement. The teacher's voice was clear and firm yet low in tone at the same time.

			The teacher was sat on the floor, close to the children.
P N4	A large classroom with quipped with the 6 activity and a carpeted rea corners. This classroom, as with the rest of the observed classes, was rich with materials and resources for children to learn, enjoy and create.	The teacher prepared a new art and craft idea for the day's lesson. She presented the idea at the beginning of the session but did not force the children into doing it. Children themselves decided to enter the art and craft corner and later took their paintings and stick on the display wall, (a special area for presenting their work) The teacher sat on the floor in the reading zone and read a story with group of children.	The teacher asked the children to raise their hands if they needed any help while working in the corners. Teacher used encouraging words in the art and craft corner. Children started singing a song while tidying up the room at the end of the session.
P N5	A medium sized classroom (smaller than the others), containing 7 activity corners, each with different materials to support the subject was about books.	The teacher stayed in the art and craft corner for most of the time. When she left, she went to the discovery corner to offer help to one of the children who asked for support.	The teacher resolved a problem between two children who fell into a dispute in the building blocks area. Children moved freely between corners having completed their work/play in each one.
Comments about the observation	The addition of the extra corner gave teachers the opportunity to create their own unique corner related to the subject matter within each unit from the curriculum. This might reveal some interesting information about the flexibility teachers have in this school which help them to their creative ability.	Of those classrooms observed I noticed that the teacher's roles were to prepare the activities in advance and to supervise children during the course of day, which I believe has an impact on their being in a relaxed state during the teaching day. I did not observe the teachers rushing about to get activities arranged nor did I 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.	Teachers relied on the use of verbal praise to encourage and motivate the children. They used a range of positive praise words and other verbal feedback.

Appendix E

Letter from the Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia

المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة التربية والتعليم
٢٨٠
لإدارة العامة للتربية والتعليم بمنطقة الرياض
إدارة التخطيط والتطوير

وزارة التربية والتعليم
Ministry of Education

الرقـــم : .....
التاريـخ : .....
المرفقات : .....

إفادة

اسم الدارسة	السجل المدني
هنادي بنت نايف الجشعم	١٠٠٤٨١٥٠٣٩

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته وبعد :

تلبية لطلب الدارسة الموضحة بياناتهه أعلاه ؛ فإنه لا مانع لدى إدارة التخطيط والتطوير بالإدارة العامة للتربية والتعليم بمنطقة الرياض من تطبيق دراستها في مدينة الرياض

والتي هي بعنوان :

(الإبداع في رياض الاطفال في المملكة العربية السعودية من وجهة نظر المعلمات)

والله ولي التوفيق

إدارة التخطيط والتطوير

إدارة التخطيط والتطوير

Appendix F

Letter from King Saud University in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
Ministry of Higher Education
King Saud University
Code 034
College of Education

المملكة العربية السعودية
وزارة التعليم العالي
جامعة الملك سعود
رمزها ٠٣٤
كلية التربية

Date: ..... التاريخ: No.: ..... الرقم:

الفاضلة الاستاذة / هنادي بنت نايف الجشعم

- مبتعثة قسم السياسات التربوية- حفظها الله

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته ... وبعد:

بالإشارة الى الخطاب الوارد من مدير ادارة تنمية الموارد البشرية بالجامعة والمتضمن رغبتك في القيام برحلة علمية الى المملكة ، افيدك بأنه تم عرض الموضوع على لجنة الاحتياجات بالقسم واوصت بالموافقة على قيامك بالرحلة بغرض جمع المعلومات المتعلقة ببحثك للدكتوراه اعتبارا من ٠٧/٠٤/١٤٣٥ ولمدة ثلاثة أشهر ، وبناء على طلبك تمت كتابة هذا الخطاب لتقديمه الى الملحقية الثقافية لحين الانهاء من الاجراءات الادارية الخاصة بالقرار.

متمنيا لك التوفيق ،، والسلام عليكم ـــا

رئيس قسم السياسات التربوية

عبدالله بن حمد العباد

BUREAU VERITAS Certification

P. O. Box 2458, Riyadh 11451 Tel 4674821 Fax.: 4676045
ص.ب ٢٤٥٨ الرياض ١١٤٥١ هاتف: ٤٦٧٤٨٢١ فاكس: ٤٦٧٦٠٤٥
www.ksu.edu.sa

Appendix G

Letter from the University of Hull, UK

UNIVERSITY OF Hull

Faculty of Education
Centre for Educational Studies
T: 01482 465292
F: 01482 466133
E: s.wood@hull.ac.uk

sjw
29th January 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

HANADI ALJASHAAM (201107678)

I am writing to confirm that the above named is currently a full-time student on the PhD in Education. As part of her programme of study Hanadi is expected to undertake fieldwork in her home country of Saudi Arabia in order to collect data for her thesis.

The Centre for Educational Studies Department has given Hanadi an Approved Absence from 28th April 2014 until 31st July 2014 to allow her to travel home to carry out her fieldwork. She would then be expected to return to the UK to analyse her collected data and write up the thesis.

If you need any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Sam Wood
CES Postgraduate Office

UNIVERSITY OF Hull
Faculty of Education
Centre for Educational Studies

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Appendix H

Letter of consent and information sheet

Information Sheet

Research Project Title

Creativity in the Saudi Arabian Preschool Settings: Teachers' perspectives.

Introduction

You are being invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Do take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the research's purpose?

I am currently working towards a Doctorate Degree in Education at the University of Hull in the UK. This research will be the basis for my thesis.

The research is to take place in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in Riyadh, in preschools that agree to take part in the study, both from the private and public sectors.

The aim of the research is to explore what the teachers' perspectives of creativity are, focusing on the preschool phase.

The study will examine whether teachers are able to identify elements of creativity and to what extent creativity is reflected in the activities to promote children's creative ability.

Why have I been chosen?

As a preschool practitioner working in a preschool setting and one who applies the Self-Learning Curriculum your teaching practice in relation to the identifying, planning and delivering of ‘creativity’ within your lessons is of great importance and value to the research.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this research is completely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time without giving any reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

Initially, you will be invited to take part in an interview. The interview is to be conducted during the school day, in the preschool settings. The focus area of the study will be on the topic of creativity. You will be asked to respond to a set number of questions based around the topic of creativity within your teaching field. The interview will be recorded, after which it will be analysed for the data and information required.

Participants will be further invited to be observed during their teaching practice. This means that overall 20 teachers will be observed during their teaching. One observation per teacher is planned to be carried out, where each observation is expected to last around 60 minutes.

If I choose to take part what do I have to do?

- Take part in an initial interview
- To be observed during your teaching practise.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

If you decide to participate then your time is what you will offer. This will involve the period when you engage in the interview and it will involve more time where you agree to be observed in your teaching environment. There may be a slight possibility that you may feel apprehensive about being observed and you may feel that your teaching practice is under question. It is important to make clear here that YOUR teaching practice is NOT the focus of the observation, nor is it the subject for any criticism or judgement.

However, if at any point you feel apprehensive or change your mind for any other reason you are free to stop taking part in the observation.

What are the possible advantages of taking part?

You will be contributing valuably to research within the preschool settings with a particular focus on the element of 'creativity' within your teaching field. I think you will find the subject matter of interest in particular, your contribution may be inspiring and may help support positive changes to your area of teaching within the sphere of creativity.

What happens if the research study stops earlier than expected?

In the unlikely event that this may happen, you will be given an explanation in full.

Will my participation be confidential?

All of the information collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. Please be assured that you will not be able to be identified in any reports or publications. Every endeavour will be made to ensure that any material used for the study which you have directly contributed to, will not make you easily identifiable.

What will happen to the results of my research?

The study will form the thesis of my Doctorate in Education, and I may seek to publish the results in an academic journal or present them to a conference.

Will I be recorded by any form of media tools?

All of your participation will be paper based, in the case of the interviews, it will be handwritten responses and in terms of the observations, the researcher will conduct them and there is no planned use of any media to record the observations. The researcher will however be making notes during the observations. Any notes transferred to the researcher's computer will be protected.

Who has ethically reviewed the research?

The research idea has been approved by the ethics review procedure by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee, University of Hull, UK.

For further information contact:

Hanadi Aljashaam

Email:H.N.Aljashaam@2011.hull.ac.uk Tel: 00447735061406

You will be given a copy of the information sheet and, if you agree to participate, you will also receive a copy of the signed consent form to keep.

Thank you for taking time to read this and for considering to take part in the study.

Date: _____

Name of Applicant: _____