

## OPINIONS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ON THE DEFINITION, IDENTIFICATION AND EDUCATION OF GIFTED CHILDREN

**Ahmet BİLDİREN**

*Assist. Prof. Dr., Adnan Menderes University, abildire@adu.edu.tr  
ORCID Number: 0000-0003-3021-4299*

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### ABSTRACT

Identification and education of gifted children have gained increased importance in our day. Gifted children who are part of the education system in Turkey are nominated by their primary school teachers for identification at the Science and Arts Centers in order to receive special education. The objective of this study was to determine the opinions of primary school teachers regarding the definition, identification and education of gifted children. The sample group of the study was comprised of a total of 13 primary school teachers. Phenomenology pattern was used for an in-depth and detailed examination of the perceptions, tendencies and experiences of primary school teachers on the definition, identification and education of gifted children. The opinions of primary school teachers have been examined under the heading of the definition, identification and education of gifted children and common themes have been formed. It was determined as a result of the study that primary school teachers define gifted children according to their mental talent, special talent, creativity and social communication, that they ascribe the task of identifying gifted children to the families of children, themselves and mostly to specialists.

**Keywords:** Gifted children, primary school teacher, education.

## INTRODUCTION

Identification of talent differs within the historical process depending on the definition of the concept of talent. At first, giftedness that was explained and identified in a simple manner transformed over time into a wider and more flexible structure with many different characteristics. Some theorists have focused on the genetic components of giftedness and intelligence, whereas others have separated giftedness from talent by way of potential, luck and environmental factors. Another group has emphasized multiple intelligence. The definition and concepts of giftedness have been considered to be equivalent with high IQ levels starting from the first years. Terman (1926) developed a general intelligence test applied for identifying gifted children. Intelligence tests have been revised many times after these years and have been used frequently for identifying giftedness. The opinions of these theorists focused on general intelligence tests.

Defining and identifying giftedness by way of intelligence tests have taken a long time (Akarsu, 2001; Ataman, 2004; Metin, 1999). However, opinions towards giftedness started to differ starting from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century as the perspectives of scientists such as Piaget, Vigotsky, Dabrowski towards intelligence and in a more general sense towards mental, affective, psycho-motor, social, artistic and linguistic talents started to change. The concept of intelligence and talent became multi-dimensional during these years in America and Europe (Akarsu, 2001). After these developments, a report was published in the USA in 1972 for determining the policy of the Federal Government regarding gifted individuals (Marland, 1972). According to this report, it was indicated that children would be defined as gifted if they display superior performance in one or more of the fields of general mental talent, special academic talent, creative thinking, leadership skill, skills in visual arts and psychomotor skill. Identification of giftedness also started to change with this definition (Akarsu, 2001). Suggestions such as identifying children according to different fields of talent, using more than one success criteria, spotting potential talent and measurement of motivation have been listed in the National Excellence report prepared by the Federal Government of USA in which was published in 1993 (Ross, 1993).

This differentiation in talent understanding has brought about different giftedness theories. For instance, Abraham Tannenbaum focused his definition of giftedness on children who put forth ideas in areas encompassing the moral, physical, social, emotional or aesthetic aspects of humanity and who have a potential to display performances (Tannenbaum, 2003). Tannenbaum (2003) suggested the Star Model for identifying children. The Star Model is comprised of five interactive factors with contributions to superior behaviors: Superior talent, distinguishing special talent, characteristics outside of intelligence, a challenging environment with different potentials and luck. These five factors interact in different ways to form different categories, but a certain amount of each factor should be present to be able to talk about superiority. It can be stated that children for whom these five categories are combined have a potential to be a superior adult in the future.

Gagne (2003) also put forth the aspect that gifted children can be understood from their behaviors and focused on their potential. However, with a distinction between the terms of gifted and talented. The difference between these two terms forms the center of his definition of giftedness. In the Differentiated Model of

Giftedness and Talent, Gagne (2003) defines giftedness as having a tendency and endowed talent placing the student in the top 10% of age peers in at least one area. Whereas talent is defined as the outstanding performance or competency in one or more fields that places a student in the top 10% of age peers in that field. Moreover, Gagne (2003) classified the giftedness term into four fields as creativity, intellectuality, social effect and sensory motor. Also, talents have been defined in seven different fields as arts, business, entertainment, social activity, sports, technology and academic. According to Gagne (2003), three catalysts of luck, environment and internal factors play an important role in transforming gifts into talent. A developmental process is required for the gifts to transform into talents.

Renzulli developed the Three Ring Model in the field of giftedness and put forth this model with an educational perspective (Renzulli, 2005). Factors of personality and environment are in interaction with three sets of traits. Above average abilities, task commitment and creativity. Especially above average abilities make up 15-20 % of the performance or performance potential. Task commitment is the motivation form of focus. Whereas creativity emphasizes the creative successes of individuals. In this model, Renzulli (2005) emphasized that a single ring or a set do not mean anything by themselves and that all three should be together.

Robert Sternberg, an expert in the field of gifted individuals and the creator of the Triarchic Theory of Intelligence and Howard Gardner, creator of the Multiple Intelligence Theory have also made significant contributions to the multi-dimensional intelligence opinion that has been developed in recent years (Colangelo & Davis, 2003). Sternberg handled intelligence in a sociocultural context suggesting that personal standards are effective in the formation of the talents of individuals (Sternberg, 2003). On the other hand, Gardner (2003) Multiple Intelligence Theory has challenged the scholastic education systems based on traditional IQ tests by emphasizing the importance of abilities in multiple intelligence areas. Gardner put forth the multiple intelligence perspective thus classifying intelligence into nine different categories of linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, kinesthetic, social, naturalist, intrapersonal and existential. Each of these intelligence types is autonomous and operates independently, however in some cases these intelligence types work together thus creating unique individual profiles with strong and weak sides. According to Gardner, a student may be considered gifted when one or several of these areas of intelligence are taken into consideration.

These developments in approaches to giftedness have started affecting educational approaches and applications as well. Education programs are applied according to different approaches in different countries (Akarsu, 2001). Science and Arts Centers have been founded by the Ministry of National Education in Turkey to provide special education to gifted children in accordance with these opinions on giftedness. Science and Arts Centers have played an important role in bringing up the subject of identifying and education of gifted children. Together with this increase in the level of awareness, the means of defining gifted children within the general education system, their identification and education have become a matter of debate (Bildiren & Uzun, 2007;

Erişti, 2012; Kaya, 2013; Keskin, Samancı & Aydın, 2016; Levent & Bakioğlu, 2013; Sak; 2011; Sak et.al., 2015; Şahin & Kargin, 2013; Şahin, 2016; Tarhan & Kılıç, 2014).

The importance of primary school teachers have started to be placed in the focus of these debates (Kurnaz, Tüybek, & Taşkesen, 2009; Şahin, 2013; Şahin & Kargin, 2013). This importance is due to two reasons. The first is that gifted children are nominated to the Science and Arts Centers by their respective primary school teachers (MEB Science and Arts Centers Directorate, 2016). In this regard, it can be stated that the opinions of primary school teachers on giftedness, identification and education of gifted children will have an impact on their selection of children for nomination. Whereas the second reason is that gifted children spend more time in the general education system even when they receive an education at the Science and Arts Center. Moreover, gifted children who have not been nominated for identification or who have not been noticed yet are awaiting to be noticed in the classrooms. It is thought that whether these children receive a differentiated or enriched education in their general education classes depends on the perspectives of their primary school teachers regarding giftedness, identification and education of gifted children.

It has become evident as a result of the studies carried out that teachers do not have sufficient knowledge on the education of gifted children (Hemphill, 2009; İnan, Bayındır, & Demir, 2009; Kıldan, 2011; Şahin, 2013). The knowledge levels of teachers have been analyzed in a quantitative manner in these studies. However, it is thought that providing primary school teachers with an opportunity to make an in-depth and detailed explanation shall contribute to revealing and interpreting their opinions. Accordingly, the objective was to determine the opinions of primary school teachers on the definition, identification and education of gifted children. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought for:

1. How do primary school teachers identify gifted children?
2. How do primary school teachers explain the identification of gifted children?
3. What are the opinions of primary school teachers regarding the education of gifted children?

## METHOD

In this study, phenomenology was used which is among the qualitative research methods. Phenomenology focuses on cases for which we do not have a detailed and in-depth understanding (Creswell, 2013; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). The objective of analyzing data in phenomenology studies is to put forth experiences and meanings. For this purpose, studies are carried out for revealing the themes that will identify the case. Results are conveyed through descriptive expression and direct citations are included. These emerging findings are then interpreted within the context of the revealed themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011). Phenomenology pattern was used in this study for an in-depth and detailed examination of the perceptions, tendencies and experiences of primary school teachers regarding the definition, identification and education of gifted children.

Semi-structured interview form was preferred in the study due to its advantages such as enabling to view the issue from the perspective of the individual and presenting an opportunity for a more detailed and in-depth explanation in comparison with other data acquisition methods. In addition to these advantages, interview forms also provide the interviewee and the researcher flexibility in time. It enables the acquisition of more systematic data from individuals which are suited for analysis. Thus, interviewer bias and subjectivity is decreased (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

### Study group

Primary school teachers working at a private primary school at the city of Aydın make up the study population. Sample group of the study was determined by way of random assignment and was comprised of a total of 13 primary school teachers with 6 from private schools and 7 from public schools. Information on the gender, service duration, education status and institution have been given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Information on the Primary School Teachers in the Study Group

Participants	Gender	Professional Service Duration	Education Status	Institution
Teacher 1	female	12 years	Undergraduate	Private
Teacher 2	male	36 years	Undergraduate	Private
Teacher 3	female	13 years	Undergraduate	Private
Teacher 4	female	17 years	Undergraduate	Private
Teacher 5	female	15 years	Undergraduate	Private
Teacher 6	female	6 years	Undergraduate	Private
Teacher 7	male	10 years	Undergraduate	Public
Teacher 8	Female	18 years	Undergraduate	Public
Teacher 9	Female	16 years	Undergraduate	Public
Teacher 10	female	10 years	Undergraduate	Public
Teacher 11	male	17 years	Undergraduate	Public
Teacher 12	male	26 years	College	Public
Teacher 13	female	10 years	Undergraduate	Public

### Instrumentation

Opinions of teachers who participated in the study on the definition, identification and education of gifted children were collected using the semi-structured questionnaire comprised of open ended questions. The semi-structured questionnaire was presented to the opinions of 3 experts and the form was given its final state. The

questionnaire that was revised in accordance with the opinions of the field expert includes 7 questions. The first four are comprised of questions on the personal information of the teachers (gender, seniority, education and institution). Whereas the other three are open ended questions on the opinions of teachers on the definition, identification and education of gifted children. Pre-applications were carried out prior to the study in order to receive feedback on whether the questions serve the intended purposes or not. Interviews were carried out with 3 primary school teachers for pre-application purposes and it was observed that the interviews lasted about 20 minutes. It was determined as a result of the pre-application that the teachers may comprehend the questions and explain their opinions.

### **Data collection and analysis**

The questionnaire was applied on the teachers in the study group and their answers were recorded in the interview forms. The opinions of primary school teachers on the definition, identification and education of gifted children were analyzed via content analysis. The opinions of primary school teachers were examined under headings of definition, identification and education of gifted children and common themes were formed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The themes obtained as a result of the analysis were categorized using an inductive approach (Stake, 1995). Interview forms were examined by another researcher to ensure the reliability during content analysis and coding was made. Inter-coder reliability was calculated according to the reliability formula by Miles and Huberman (1994) and a value of .85 was obtained. It can be put forth according to this value that the coding has been carried out in a reliable manner (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The interview forms were re-examined based on the codings for which a consensus has been reached and classification was made once again according to the similarities after which themes and sub-themes were determined. The findings were interpreted in accordance with these themes which were supported by citations. Also, codes in the form of T1 were given to each participant in order to hide their identities, and the names of the schools where they work were kept secret.

### **FINDINGS (RESULTS)**

#### **Findings Related with the First Sub-Objective**

In this section, results have been presented for the sub-goal of, "What does the concept of gifted child mean for the primary school teachers? First, the answers given by the teachers are coded. Codings are collected in sub-themes.

**Table 2.** First Theme: Gifted Children as a Concept

Sub-themes	Codings
<b>With regard to having mental abilities</b>	Intelligence score, mental and academic development, being ahead of the age group, ability to exceed what he/she has learned, ability to discover new things from a different portion of the knowledge received, ability to easily learn new vocabulary, having a different perspective, displaying an academic performance, difficulty in directing attention, learning skill, being skilled, advanced thinking system, easily grasping the subjects, individuals who have learned what they should have at an early period.
<b>With regard to having a special talent</b>	May not be successful in every field, high performance in one or more fields, making art, ability outside the scope of ordinary examples, sports, painting, music, mathematics, language, producing something.
<b>With regard to creative thinking skill</b>	Creativity, productive thinking, perspective, imagination, curiosity, ability to put forth different solutions, solving problems from a different path, finding practical solutions, having a different perspective.
<b>With regard to social relations</b>	Sensitive towards other people, social life, having a coping problem, difference in emotional and social development, weak relationship with the age group, having positive relations with older age groups, reserved, active.

Primary school teachers identified gifted children with regard to their mental abilities, special talents, creative thinking skills and social relations in accordance with the data given in Table 2.

***With regard to having mental abilities;***

Teacher (T,1) made a definition as ‘ ..Students with an intelligence score that is above the normal intelligence level.’. Whereas the teacher coded as (T,2) put forth an opinion as, ‘.. Means being distinctively ahead of the same age group with regard to mental and academic development characteristics.’ whereas (T,4) said, ‘I can define gifted students as those who can surpass what they learn, who can discover different things from a

different portion of the knowledge they received .... can learn new vocabular.....'. Whereas (T,13) said ' They are individuals who have learned what they need to learn at their age earlier than their peers. For instance, early talking, walking, playing musical instruments ...' while (T,6) said ' .... it expresses children who have a hard time focusing' thereby putting forth their opinions on gifted children.

***With regard to having a special talent;***

Teacher (T,11) stated his opinions as follows, 'It means that the child is different in one or more fields from the same age group with regard to intelligence, learning skills or behaviors'. Teacher (T,4) said,

'Children who can display abilities outside the scope of their peers come to my mind. I can define gifted children as those who can produce something in areas like sports, painting, music, mathematics, language. For instance, one who can apply a new painting technique in a different field or one who can create new songs without learning any notes or with just a slight bit of information...'

***With regard to creative thinking skills;***

Teacher (T,3) made an evaluation as follows, 'Children with different reactions, perspectives and imaginations'. Again, another teacher (T,4) put forth her opinions as, 'they are children who can solve a problem in a different way... who can generate new solutions to problems and those who have a different perspective', whereas teachers (T,10) and (T,3) said respectively as, ' ...They are children who are different and who can find practical solutions when faced with problems' and '... children with highly developed curiosity'.

***With regard to social relations;***

The opinions of teachers who define gifted children with regard to their social relations were as follows:

'More sensitive towards their environment... May have problems adopting to social life...' (T,3) , '...having different emotional and social progress...' (Ö,4) , '...weak relations with their own age group, have positive communications with older age groups, reserved children.. (T,6).

**Findings Related with the Second Sub-Objective**

In this section, results have been presented for the sub-goal of, "How should gifted children be determined according to primary school teachers?"



**Table 3.** Secondary Themes: Detection of Gifted Children

Sub-Themes	Codings
With regard to inter-school factors	Teacher observations, should start from the pre-school period, school environment, guidance of school counselling, classical education system, different activities, should be evaluated among the same age group, lots of shortcomings.
With regard to specialist studies in the field	Tests applied by experts, identification, competent, reliable institutions, based on objective results, government institutions, scanning of all children, being fair.
With regard to family factor	Parent observations, pre-school period.
With regard to cooperation	Parent, teacher, guidance teacher, right resources, guidance.
With regard to special examinations	Science and Art Center identification, special exams.

All primary school teachers who participated in the study were of the opinion that gifted children should be determined with the help of the elements (experts, activities, peers) that the child is in interaction with at school.

The teacher coded (T,6) made an evaluation as such, 'First of all, observations of nursery class and primary school teacher should be consulted during the primary school when desk activities are more frequent. Observations should be made during different activities in different environments' whereas (T,5) said that 'I think giftedness is a grace, a gift. Of course, it is important who will receive this gift. Mother-father, if not an informed teacher. I think we are lacking in this aspect. I will not defame our classical education system, but we have no such study'. Whereas (T,8) was of the opinion that 'The child should be among his/her peers and should be evaluated as such. We should start observing when he/she makes us feel that he/she is different among the other children'.

Majority of the teachers who work in state schools were of the opinion that identification studies carried out by experts should have priority for determining the talents of gifted children.

While (T,2) said, 'I think it is not possible to determine this in the school environment. It should be identified by experts at competent, reliable institutions' (T,10) made an evaluation as such, 'It should be identified by tests

prepared and applied by experts. All children should be scanned. In this way, none of the gifted children will be overlooked’.

Only two of the teacher were of the opinion that gifted children should be identified by parents prior to starting school. (T,3) ‘They should be evaluated by good observations and measurement taking into consideration their reactions and characteristics before reaching the age for school.’

Teachers who were mostly working at private schools put forth their opinions such that these special children should be identified in accordance with the decisions made by the parents, teacher, guidance teacher and experts in unison and that actions should be taken according to these decisions. However, these opinions are focused on identifying mental talent in a single dimensional manner. The teacher opinions were as follows:

‘Should be observed among the same age group starting from the kindergarten. Objective tests should be applied by experts when differences are observed first by the primary school teacher and then by the guidance teacher if any. These tests should be carried out by state institutions in a fair manner. (T,11)

‘The parents should observe their children closely. Methods such as observations by primary school teachers at schools and proper guidance by school counselling can be applied. (T,4).

One of the teachers who participated in the study stated that Special examinations should be used for identifying gifted children. (T,12) ‘Gifted children are identified by the Bilsem Examination... They can be identified by special examinations.’

#### **Findings Related with the Third Sub-Objective**

In this section, results have been presented for the sub-goal of, “How should the education of gifted children be according to primary school teachers?”

Table 4. Third Theme: Education of Gifted Children

Sub-Themes	Codings
With regard to inclusive education	Special education and mixed education, in general education classrooms, a certain plan, with individuals who are experts in special education, additional works, 'TEVİTÖL', other children, should not be separated, preventing psychological problems, required for adopting to life, being together with normal age group.
With regard to separated education	Guidance according to talent, academic success should not be insisted upon, there should be talent specific schools, separated, classroom or schools, schools for gifted children in each city, together with the peers, student group suited to the talent level, special institution, to avoid negative impact on the moral and motivations of the other children, these children losing time, blunting their own talents, getting bored of learning, losing time in vain. Putting forth projects that cannot be isolated from life.
With regard to the quality of the educators	A good educator, good education, becoming a leader, guidance, raising awareness.
With regard to the scope of education programs	Insufficient for general education curriculum, daily and weekly individualized works, personality, social and emotional development, focus should not be only on the talents, courses with lots of projects for increasing productivity, required education, curriculum suited to the level.

Majority of the teachers emphasized the importance for gifted students to receive inclusive education including formal and special education. Opinions of teachers on inclusive education were as follows:

'They should continue their education in normal classrooms. However, in-class activities do not fully support the development of such children. Additional studies should be carried out by experts in special education within a certain plan. Or such children should be directed to 'TEVİTÖL'. They should continue formal education during the primary and secondary education and leave during high school. Because I think that they will be happier and complete their mental developments faster with people who think like themselves. (T,1)'

They should not be separated from other children. They should not feel that they are superior than other children nor that the other children are less valuable. Regardless of how superior their intelligence and talents are, they should gain experience by observing the obstacles of life on others and individuals should not be raised with bad psychologies. (T,12)'

(T,8) 'Gifted children need a special school or classroom. I think that being with their own age group is required for adopting to life.' 'They should spend some portion of the day in special education and the other in mixed education. They can have problems since they will live in a mixed society after completing their education. They will not lead lives separated by others in their future. It will be beneficial for them to adopt to this from the start. (T,6)'

According to teachers majority of whom work in national education, the best education system for these children is the separated education system where they receive education from experts together with children of their own intelligence level. Of the teachers, (T,7) evaluated the situation as such,

'They should receive education according to their talents identified at an early age from expert teachers in classrooms for only gifted children. I believe that they spend time in vain and that their talents are dulled when they receive the same education with normal developing children. I am of the opinion that these children get bored of learning at school in this way'.

Similarly, (T,9) shared her opinions as,

'They should receive education in classrooms or schools dedicated only to gifted children. There should be a school for gifted children in every city. Such children cannot receive the required education in crowded classrooms' whereas (T,11) said, 'I think gifted children should receive a separate education. I think that the morals and motivations of the other children are affected adversely when they receive education together with gifted children'.

The teacher (T,5) who put forth as an example the schools that are structured according to the separated education program emphasized by stating that, 'The child should be directed towards whatever his/her talent is. For example, let's say that the child is extraordinary in gymnastics, he/she should not be forced towards academic success. There should be talent based schools for this purpose. For instance, students in Europe select whichever field they are talented in'.

The teacher (T,5) drew attention to raising the awareness of educators who will provide education to gifted children for ensuring that their education is of high quality also stated her evaluations as such 'I am not against them being in separate or same environments. A good educator may spot this talent and may lead or guide these students. For this purpose, a good education is a must for the teachers. For some reason, we are always focused on attention deficit. I think our awareness should be increased'.

The teachers are of the opinion that the content of education programs that direct the education process is insufficient. They have stated that the education quality of gifted children will increase when the curriculum is enriched and developed further. While (T,9) stated that, 'The normal curriculum is not enough for these children. They need an enriched curriculum with lots of projects and courses that will increase productivity' teacher (T,4) stated her opinions in this manner, 'The focus should not be only on the talents of gifted children. Their personality, social and emotional developments should also be taken into consideration. They should perform daily or weekly activities individualized according to their talents and they should take part in studies together with children who have the same skills as themselves. Whereas teacher (T,3) said, 'However, it is very important that they receive an education tailored according to their talents with a curriculum that is different from those of normal developing children'.

### CONCLUSION and DISCUSSION

The 3 main themes used in this study are: Gifted children as a concept, identification of gifted children and education of gifted children. Primary school teachers who participated in the interview defined gifted children according to their various different characteristics. The characteristics they used in their definitions were; mental talent, special talent, creativity and social communication skills.

The teachers defined gifted teachers according to their mental skills as follows:

- Superior mental and academic success,
- Has a certain intelligence score,
- Not content with what he/she learns,
- Ability to discover new things from a different portion of the knowledge received,
- Ability to easily learn new vocabulary,
- Having a different perspective
- Having a different perspective,
- Difficulty in directing attention,
- Advanced thinking system,
- Easily grasping the subjects,
- Individuals who have learned what they should have at an early period.

According to the primary school teachers, it is not sufficient for students to display superiority in only the mental area to be considered as gifted. They have also put forth the necessity for such students to display their abilities with a successful performance. Displaying high performance in more than one or a special field, having special talents outside the standard examples have been sufficient for the teachers to identify children as gifted. Sports, painting, music, mathematics, language are some of the various areas in which gifted children will display their special talents.

At the same time, the teachers also define gifted children as creative individuals with skills such as creative thinking, ability to evaluate situations with a different perspective, finding new solutions, curiosity and a practical and wide imagination. Social communication is also among the categories for teachers when defining gifted children. These children are reserved and active individuals who are more sensitive towards other people, have a weaker relationship with their own age group, experience coping problems and have positive relations with older age groups.

When the themes are taken into consideration in a general manner, it can be stated that primary school teachers do not have sufficient knowledge on identifying gifted children. This finding is parallel to the results of literature (Şahin, 2016; Şahin & Çetinkaya, 2015) . It is observed that giftedness is taken into consideration as a multi-dimensional concept especially when contemporary skill theories are taken into consideration (Gagne, 2003; Colangelo & Davis; 2003; Renzulli, 2005; Tannenbaum, 2003). Many researchers who work on gifted children have come to an agreement that potential may be identified in some children and that the superiority may be examined in wider categories when this potential develops towards different characteristics (Gagne, 2003; Gardner, 2003; Sternberg, 2003; Renzulli, 1984; Stenberg & Zhang, 2004; Tannenbaum, 2003). The primary school teachers in the study group define gifted children with regard to their mental skills, special talents, creative thinking and social relations, however, they have indicated identification in these four areas more as intelligence, academic success, product and performance in a certain area. This definition indicates that primary school teachers evaluate gifted children in a narrower scope. Since gifted children are nominated to the Science and Arts Centers by their primary school teachers, the manner with which primary school teachers handle this issue is more important in comparison with other teachers. Thus, primary school teachers may nominate the right children if they receive support on the characteristics of gifted children.

It was observed that while primary school teachers working at public schools mostly define gifted children according to their mental skills, primary school teachers working at private schools made definitions related with fourth sub-themes. The special talents of children may emerge more easily in private schools since there are more interdisciplinary activities in private schools such as painting, music, sports, drama in addition to physical environments which enable children to carry out experiments. Primary school teachers who participated in the study emphasized the use of the following when identifying gifted children:

- Limited teacher opinions
- Activities
- Expert opinions
- Family opinions
- Cooperation
- Various resources such as special examinations.

According to the information acquired in this study, majority of the teachers lay the burden of identifying gifted children to themselves and experts other than the family of the child. However, the abilities of such children

start to become apparent from the time of their birth (Bloom, 1982; Clark, 2002; Davis & Rimm, 2004; Renzulli et.al. 2002). In addition, gifted children put forth developmental differences in such areas as physical, cognitive, linguistic, social/emotional in comparison with average children (Clark, 2002; Manning, 2006; Renzulli et.al., 2002). These characteristics may be observed by teachers during the school time since the child spends most of his/her time at school. It cannot be expected that all gifted children will display similar characteristics, however it seems possible that perception, memory, extraordinary thinking, task commitment, creativity may be observed by the teacher. Primary school teachers may support the identification of gifted children in class as well as the gifted children for receiving different education by being more active in this regard in the classroom.

It was observed in the study that teachers working at public schools exclude themselves from the identification of gifted children as well as from environments where the education of gifted children takes place. Since they stated that gifted students should be evaluated by competent and specialist educators and continue their education in completely separated environments, it can be stated that these teachers have a weak awareness in this field and that they do not consider themselves capable enough.

Many studies have revealed that the performance of gifted children will not increase when they are included in programs together with normal developing children since they will not come across any application which will challenge them (Freeman; 1997; Gross, 2002; Harrison, 2005; Sankar–DeLeeuw, 2002; Scruggs, Mastropieri, Cook, & Escobar 1986; Siegle & McCoach, 2005). It is indicated that gifted children who are education in general education classes may experience adaptation, failure and disinterest problems since the school curriculum is not arranged according to their performance levels and fields of interest (Gross, 1999).

Therefore, it is expected when the roles of teachers in differentiating the programs in the school environment for gifted children are taken into consideration that they are expected to have a high level of awareness on the education of gifted children. The time that children spend in general education is much more than the time they will spend in a special education institution. Gifted children are able to receive 5-6 course hours of special education support per week at Science and Arts Centers. However, the same children receive a general education of 30 hours per week. It is probable that the roles of primary school teachers in their general education classes will be of utmost importance in order to discover and develop the skills of children.

## SUGGESTIONS

It can be stated according to the results of this study that primary school teachers in the sample group do not have sufficient knowledge on the definition, identification and education of gifted children. All primary school teachers in the study group have graduated from faculties of education except 1. Special education course is obligatory at faculties of education. Gifted children are included in the 1st unit of this course. It is possible that this time frame will not be enough when the education of both the disabled and the gifted groups are taken into consideration. When the importance of the education of gifted children who will be the leaders, artists and scientists of the future are taken into consideration, it can be suggested to provide a separate education on

gifted children at the faculties of education. It can be stated that there is a need to increase the knowledge of primary school teachers on the education of gifted children in an effective manner.

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