

Research Article

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Teachers' Competency in Managing Gifted In-school Adolescents from the Perspective of School Principals

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Abstract

Background/purpose. The need to recognize and support in-school adolescents with giftedness who could drive Africa's economic progress is critical to the continent's future. This concern motivated the present study, which assessed teachers' competency to manage gifted adolescents in schools from the perspective of school principals.

Materials/methods. The study adopted a mixed-methods research approach. A total of 102 school principals and five 5 teachers were sampled for the study, comprising 63.7% females and 36.3% males, were sampled for the study. The Data collected was analyzed using frequency distributions, thematic analysis, and multiple regression.

Results. The findings revealed that school principals perceive their teachers as lacking the pedagogical abilities to manage gifted adolescents. The qualitative inquiry with the teachers themselves confirmed that they lack the pedagogical skills required, have insufficient knowledge of giftedness and inadequate cognitive abilities, and are unable to provide the support necessary for gifted adolescents. Furthermore, the results showed that giftedness knowledge contributes the most to the management of gifted adolescents ($\beta = 0.508$; $t = 8.775$; $p < 0.05$), followed by the support provided ($\beta = 0.401$; $t = 6.218$; $p < 0.05$), the cognitive abilities of the teachers ($\beta = 0.339$; $t = 5.885$; $p < 0.05$), and their pedagogical abilities, which made an inverse contribution ($\beta = -0.122$; $t = -2.043$; $p < 0.05$)

Conclusion. The study concludes that teachers urgently need professional development in pedagogy, focusing on adolescent giftedness characteristics, to ensure the full development of young individuals with special abilities.



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1. Introduction

One major characteristic of a developed society is its ability to identify and nurture exceptionally able or gifted and talented individuals who are exceptional thinkers with the capacity to generate groundbreaking ideas that drive innovations. It is interesting to note that gifted individuals have the extensive ability to provide the leadership, innovation, and creativity required to drive societies forward, ensuring continuous growth and adaptation in a rapidly changing world (Reis & Renzulli, 2010). Mambetalina et al. (2024) allude that recognizing and developing gifted individuals is crucial for societal progress, as it taps into a pool of exceptional talent that is needed to address the complex challenges of modern times. Exceptional abilities tend to be more enduring and profound during adolescence, a phase characterized by excitement, exploration, and volatility, more so than in early childhood (Lawrence, 2021). Generically, adolescence is considered the period of preparation for independence, which is central to adolescents becoming well-adjusted adults. Stemming from its Latin origin, *adolescere*, meaning "to grow up" or "to mature" (Slee, Campbell & Spears, 2012), adolescence is a transitional stage marked by significant changes, including physical growth, biological development, increased cognitive sophistication, and shifts in psychosocial skills (Hlongwane & Lawrence, 2021). It is, therefore, no surprise that adolescents with exceptional abilities become more self-aware, capable of appreciating abstract concepts, capable of information technology (ICT) advancement, and interested in new ideas, and often emerge as passionate leaders of the causes they believe in.

Effective management of gifted adolescents enables them to excel in diverse domains, including intellectual pursuits, artistic creativity, ICT, and physical accomplishments, ultimately leading to rich and fulfilling lives (Zaia, Nakano & Peixoto, 2018). Gifted and talented adolescents possess exceptional abilities that allow them to perform at a high level in areas such as ICT, creative thinking, leadership, and visual and performing arts, and they have specific academic aptitudes, enhanced intellectual abilities, and enhanced psychomotor skills. Their exceptional abilities are usually identified by professionally qualified individuals, typically teachers (Endepohls-Ulpe, 2009). Despite Africa's abundance of exceptionally talented young minds (Dolan & Rajak, 2018) with the potential to transform the continent and create a poverty-free, marginalized-free, debt-free, and regenerative environment, the region has struggled to develop an educational system that can identify, nurture, protect, and sustain these gifted individuals effectively (Okpako, Lawrence & Falaye, 2021). Lamentably, intellectually precocious adolescents and individuals tend to look beyond the shores of Africa to developed societies that foster the overall development of intelligence. In other words, the continent of Africa consistently supplies developed nations with its few gifted and talented youths once they have been identified. This is depriving the continent of its most promising assets and perpetuating mediocrity. Unfortunately, the actions within African societies are perhaps key reasons why many African nations have yet to overcome their socioeconomic burdens and technological redundancy, a gap that this current study intends to bridge.

Teachers play a crucial role in managing exceptionally able individuals who have the potential to address global challenges and contribute to a sustainable future. However, the education programs in Africa have failed to focus on pedagogical standards to ensure, promote, harness, and nurture intellectual exceptionalities that lead to societal and infrastructural development (Oswald & De Villiers, 2013). Evidently, this lack of pedagogical focus on the proper identification and nurturing of gifted learners negates the principles of inclusive education expounded by Adigun (2021). The programs fail to address the specific needs of gifted and talented adolescents, who tend to learn quickly, become bored, and eventually lose motivation due to their advanced cognitive processes (Ataman, 2003). Many teachers struggle to cope with adolescents of exceptional ability due to their unique characteristics, such as asynchrony, argumentativeness, a keen sense of humour that may not be understood, advancement in certain subjects, rapid comprehension, hypersensitivity, empathy, a

strong sense of justice, goal-directed behaviour, curiosity, challenging authority, perfectionism, self-criticism, and emotional intensity (Callahan, 2017).

Recognizing and supporting gifted adolescents in schools requires teachers with the appropriate skills and capabilities for effective guidance, benefiting both the individuals' and society's development. Notably, existing research in Africa has largely overlooked teacher competency in managing gifted adolescents, which is the primary focus of this study. This study is desirable, especially now that America, Russia, China, and the European nations are contending for the economic soul of Africa. This study thus examines the level of teachers' competency in managing gifted adolescents.

2. Literature Review

Few studies have examined teachers' classroom management abilities when dealing with gifted adolescent students (Akar, 2020). Most available research focuses on identifying giftedness in elementary or kindergarten students (Bildiren, 2018; Mambetalina et al., 2024). For this study, efforts have been made to review a few of the studies that are related to the study. For instance, Akar (2020) noted that managing gifted adolescent students in a regular classroom presented a significant challenge for successful education, particularly for classroom teachers. This aligns with Sisk's (2009) view, which suggested that coping with gifted students felt like a myth for some teachers. The study raised concerns that classroom teachers often struggled to manage gifted adolescents without specific support systems in place. A study conducted in the United States among 7,300 third- and fourth-grade students found that teachers in both public and private schools reported that they had never received any training on teaching gifted students (Archambault et al., 1993). A retrospective study on the effects of a long-term program for gifted youths admitted that middle school teachers and principals had very little if any, competence in managing gifted students in their schools (Moon, Feldhusen & Dillon, 1994).

In a systematic review, Reis and Renzulli (2010) concluded that the needs of many gifted and talented students were not addressed in regular classroom settings across the United States due to a lack of trained and competent teachers who could provide the necessary support for this population. More recently, Akar (2021) conducted a qualitative study on teachers' competencies in supporting gifted students in regular classrooms in Turkey. The study highlighted certain teacher competencies, including the ability to understand giftedness, support talent, address individual differences, and master basic knowledge regarding gifted education. However, incompetent and untrained teachers were likely to experience difficulties in managing gifted adolescents in regular classrooms (Moratta-Garcia, 2011). As a result, the needs of gifted and talented adolescents have remained largely unaddressed in many regular classrooms, including those in Africa.

Research emphasizes the importance of school principals' abilities in managing teachers, pedagogy, and meeting the needs of gifted students, including hiring teachers and collaborating with external resources (Weber, Colarulli-Daniels, & Leinhauser, 2003). Ricciardi, Haag-Wolf, and Winsler (2020) conducted a longitudinal study and found that school readiness assessments were useful in predicting giftedness, with the majority of gifted students identified by second grade. Gaines (2018) surveyed elementary school principals and found a significant but weak relationship between their perceptions and the importance they placed on implementing gifted education practices.

Research focused on school principals' perspectives of teachers' abilities in managing gifted adolescents is scarce, though related studies were reviewed in this study. For instance, a research study conducted in the United States examined how educators supported gifted students in 411 public schools. The study found significant differences between administrators and specialists in gifted education, on the one hand, and regular classroom teachers, on the other, regarding the effective management of gifted students and the use of teacher nominations as a method for

identifying students for gifted programs (Schroth & Helfer, 2008). In a subsequent study by Schroth and Helfer (2009), which explored the factors influencing the composition of classrooms and schools for academically talented and gifted students, school administrators highly valued gifted education specialists and regular classroom teachers who worked with such students. The study concluded that classroom leaders were expected to use standardized test scores to identify and nominate students for gifted programs.

Another study by Brigandi et al. (2016) investigated gifted secondary school students in terms of enrichment and the evaluation of their goals. Using a qualitative case study approach, the study found a correlation between participation in enrichment activities and goal-setting. It concluded that designing gifted education programs tailored to the specific needs of gifted secondary school learners was crucial. However, the involvement of teachers in the effectiveness of these gifted education programs was not highlighted in the study. More recently, Al-Mahdi, Yaakub, and Abouzeid (2021) examined school principals' perceptions regarding teachers' abilities to manage gifted adolescent students among 29 school principals in Bahrain. The findings indicated that these principals primarily viewed giftedness from an academic and school-centered perspective. However, there was a discrepancy between their perceptions of giftedness and teachers' support for gifted students in their schools.

Regrettably, in Africa, no known studies have focused specifically on principals' perspectives of teachers' abilities in managing gifted adolescents, although a few related studies were found. For instance, Dube (2015) investigated primary school teachers' education initiatives for managing gifted learners in Zimbabwe as part of efforts to ensure education for all. The study found that teacher education training programs lacked specific training on gifted education, leaving trainee teachers unequipped to handle gifted learners effectively. Jiyane (2018) explored teachers' perceptions of their ability to meet the needs of gifted learners in mainstream classrooms. It was discovered that the teachers often faced overwhelming challenges that hindered equal and meaningful engagement with all of the learners in their classrooms. The study recommended adequate teacher training at both pre-service and in-service levels to address the specific needs of gifted learners. Allotey et al. (2023) examined teachers' perspectives on support for gifted children in Ghana. This qualitative study found that gifted children were often overlooked. Teachers misunderstood key teaching techniques, such as acceleration, differentiation, and identification, and failed to apply them when developing gifted children. Based on the studies reviewed, it was evident that research on school principals' perceptions of teachers' abilities in managing giftedness among school-aged adolescents was either lacking or very limited.

2.1. Theoretical lens

This study is grounded in Tomlinson's Differentiated Instruction Theory (DIT), which emphasizes teachers' ability to adapt their instruction to meet diverse learner needs, including those of gifted adolescents (Tomlinson, 2001; 2004c; 2005). According to Tomlinson, differentiating instruction based on learners' unique abilities enables teachers to maximize every student's learning potential. The theory also highlights the importance of teachers' willingness to adopt effective strategies when responding to students' diverse needs (Tomlinson, 2000, 2005). Tomlinson (2000) asserts that the DIT is not merely an instructional strategy but an innovative approach to teaching and learning. Competent teachers should acknowledge students' varied backgrounds, giftedness characteristics, interests, and learning profiles when addressing the needs of gifted adolescents (Hall, 2002). This theory views learning as a social and collaborative experience between teachers and learners (Tomlinson, 2004c). This study adopts the DIT due to its potential to enhance teachers' competency in identifying and managing gifted adolescent students' unique needs. Applying the DIT can also provide insight into principals' perceptions of teachers' abilities in managing gifted adolescents and inform effective strategies for enhancing teacher capacity. Thus, using the DIT as a theoretical

framework, this study investigates principals' perceptions of teachers' abilities in managing giftedness among school-aged adolescents.

2.2. Study intention

Despite the growing population of exceptionally able young minds in Africa (Dolan & Rajak, 2018), with the potential to shape the continent's future for sustainable development, the region continues to struggle with poverty, marginalization, economic hardship, and technological redundancy. Worse still is the lack of research focusing on teachers' abilities to manage and address the needs of gifted and talented in-school adolescents who possess exceptional abilities in areas such as ICT, creative thinking, general intellectual ability, leadership, specific academic aptitude, visual and performing arts, and psychomotor skills. This study was therefore designed to bridge this research gap by examining the teachers' levels of competency in managing gifted adolescents through the lens of school principals and to determine the contribution of the factors related to the teachers' competency to the adolescents' giftedness. The expected outcomes of this study will be valuable in promoting teachers' professional development and serve as an eye-opener for many adolescents struggling to cope with the school environment due to their exceptional potential and contemplating dropping out of school. The study additionally aims to inform better educational policy decisions and promote the practice of specific education for gifted and talented adolescents in Africa. Furthermore, while this study contributes to the existing literature on education for gifted and talented students, it will also provide school administrators with insight into effective management of the education for gifted and talented students.

2.3. Research questions

The following research questions guided the study:

RQ1: What was the level of the teachers' competency in relation to adolescents' giftedness in schools?

RQ2: Did giftedness knowledge, cognitive ability, pedagogical ability, and emotional support contribute significantly to teachers' competency in the management of adolescents' giftedness in schools?

3. Methodology

3.1. Design and participants

The mixed-methods design enabled a nuanced understanding of the research problem, combining the depth of qualitative insights with the breadth of quantitative analysis. The population consisted of school principals and teachers in government-based schools in a selected South African province. Using a non-probability sampling procedure, 102 heads of schools and 5 teachers were purposively selected for the quantitative phase. The sample comprised 63.7% females and 36.3% males. This sampling technique involved selecting a sample from a readily available population (Elfil & Negida, 2017; Jagers et al., 2017).

3.2. Instruments

The quantitative phase of the study aimed to assess the teachers' competency in the classroom in terms of managing gifted adolescents. The questionnaire completed by the school principals consisted of two sections. Section A assessed the principals' perceptions of the teachers' competency using a self-developed instrument comprising 12 items. This scale evaluated their perceptions of the teachers' abilities in managing school-going adolescents in relation to giftedness across four dimensions: giftedness knowledge, cognitive ability, pedagogy, and support provided. The participants rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale ('extremely effective' to 'not effective'). A pilot

study among 30 non-participant teachers ensured cultural compatibility and internal consistency, yielding a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.86. Sample items included: "How would you rate teachers' understanding and knowledge of gifted education?"; "To what extent can teachers identify gifted adolescents' specific needs?"; and "How effectively do teachers build positive relationships and offer career guidance?"

Section B was concerned with the characteristics of gifted adolescents. The Modified Characteristics of Giftedness Scale (MCGS), developed by Schmitt et al. (2019), was adapted for this study. The scale included 20 items related to high cognitive abilities, social abilities, and academic achievement, measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale. Examples of the items included: "Is easily able to reason through problems"; "Succeeds with little effort in specific subject areas (e.g., mathematics, the sciences, language, arts, etc.)"; and "Displays a wide variety of interests (e.g., enjoys playing different sports and games, drawing, reading, conducting science experiments, solving math problems, etc.)". The scale's internal consistency using Cronbach's alpha rating was 0.89.

The qualitative phase employed in-depth, semi-structured interviews with five participants to explore their experiences and perspectives on managing gifted learners. The interviews were transcribed verbatim.

3.3. Ethical considerations

Ethical research protocols were followed strictly, with ethical clearance obtained from both the author's affiliated university and the school district's Department of Basic Education (DBE). In line with international research ethics, the participants were assured that all information collected would remain confidential. They were also informed that participation was entirely voluntary, allowing them the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time. The participants were additionally assured that the data gathered would be used exclusively for research purposes.

3.4. Data analysis

The data collected was analyzed using several methods. A frequency count was conducted to assess the teachers' competency in managing gifted adolescents, while multiple regression was used to examine the contribution by various competency factors to the dependent variable, adolescents' giftedness. A qualitative thematic content analysis was also performed, following the approach described by Nieuwenhuis (2014) as an inductive and direct process of uncovering facts about a specific phenomenon, in this case, the teachers' competency in managing gifted and talented adolescents with great potential in schools.

4. Results

RQ1: What was the level of the teachers' competency in relation to adolescents' giftedness in schools?

In response to research question one, Table 1 reveals the level of the teachers' competency in managing gifted adolescents. It is clear from the results that according to the school principals, the teachers' competency in terms of management of gifted adolescents in schools was low, as only 3 out of 12 items rated above the average mean estimate of 3.71, while the remaining 9 items scored mean values below the average mean score. Item 9, which focused on giftedness knowledge, "How would you rate the teachers' level of awareness regarding the characteristics of gifted and talented adolescents at your school?" yielded the highest score ($M = 4.07$). This was followed by item 4, which focused on support: "How effectively do the teachers in your school build positive relationships with and offer career guidance to gifted adolescents?" ($M = 4.01$). This was followed by item 2, which measured cognitive ability: "Evaluate the critical thinking and analytical abilities of the teachers who work with gifted adolescents at your school" ($M = 3.98$). However, 9 items were indicative of low

levels of teachers' competency to manage gifted adolescents in schools. The lowest item was item 1, which measured giftedness knowledge: "To what extent can the teachers at your school identify the specific needs of gifted adolescents in their classrooms?" (M = 3.42). This was followed by item 12 on support: "How well do the teachers in your school support the social-emotional needs of gifted adolescents?" (M = 3.55). Item 8 on support followed: "How would you rate the teachers' ability to provide psychological support to the gifted adolescents in your school?" (M = 3.55). This was followed by items 11, 7, and 3, which measured pedagogical ability: "How would you evaluate the teachers' qualifications and expertise in supporting gifted adolescents at your school?" (M = 3.60); "Evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching strategies used by the teachers in your school to develop the talents of gifted adolescents within the regular classroom setting" (M = 3.65); and "How would you rate the level of professional preparation of the teachers to work with gifted adolescents?" (M = 3.66). Additionally, two items, 10 and 6, that focused on cognitive ability, also scored lower than the estimated mean: "How would you evaluate the creativity and innovation of teachers teaching gifted adolescents?" (M = 3.67); and "To what extent do you believe the teachers in your school are more advanced in specific subjects than the gifted adolescents in their classrooms?" (M = 3.68). Lastly, item 5 on giftedness knowledge, "How would you rate the teachers at your school on their understanding and knowledge of gifted education and supporting gifted students?" had a mean score of M = 3.69.

4.1. Qualitative phase

In-depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted with five teachers to further support the results and assess the competency of the teachers. The interviews explored their experiences and perspectives on managing gifted learners. They expressed the following:

"It takes courage and a lot of professional training to work with gifted adolescents because they can be troublesome. Unfortunately, none of us are trained to identify and manage gifted adolescents. While it's worth the effort, honestly, we lack the pedagogical ability to manage them" (Teacher 2).

"Sometimes I ask myself, who is teaching whom? Working with the gifted is highly demanding but also enriching. If you're not cognitively sharp, the learners could outsmart you" (Teacher 4).

"Working with gifted adolescents doesn't just require higher degrees, but also adequate knowledge of the characteristics of gifted adolescents" (Teacher 5).

"Working with gifted adolescents is a challenge, both personally and professionally. To support them, I see them as my younger siblings or children. I relate to them and provide career guidance that might be useful" (Teacher 3).

"Although we do our best at school, the learner's current stage adolescences, and family background are also important. Role models, family, social media influencers, and other factors are more influential" (Teacher 1).

"Working with the gifted means being more advanced in certain subjects or activities. They grasp concepts quickly. Unfortunately, what I studied in school is not what I'm teaching due to a lack of teachers. This is very challenging" (Teacher 3).

"I know every learner has a specific talent. Our main aim is to discover it and identify gifted learners as early as possible to develop them for the future, but we don't have the strategy to do so" (Teacher 5).

Notably, the results indicate that the school principals perceived their teachers as incompetent in terms of their pedagogical ability to manage gifted adolescents. None of the three items measuring pedagogical abilities exceeded the established mean value. Furthermore, three items related to other indicators of teacher competency, such as giftedness knowledge, cognitive abilities, and support, were rated below the average mean. This suggests that teachers' competency in managing gifted

adolescents is low. Supporting this view, the qualitative inquiry with the teachers themselves confirmed that they lack pedagogical skills, have insufficient knowledge of giftedness and inadequate cognitive abilities, and are unable to provide the necessary support for gifted adolescents.

RQ2: Did giftedness knowledge, cognitive ability, pedagogical ability, and emotional support contribute significantly to the teachers' competency in managing adolescents' giftedness in schools?

Table 1. Averages, standard deviations, ranks and competency of teachers to manage gifted adolescents in schools from school principals' perspectives in descending order

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Ranking
9 k	How would you rate the teachers' level of awareness regarding the characteristics of gifted and talented adolescents at your school?	4.07	0.93	1
4s	How effectively do teachers in your school build positive relationships with and offer career guidance to gifted adolescents?	4.01	1.01	2
2 c	Evaluate the critical thinking and analytical abilities of the teachers who work with gifted adolescents at your school.	3.98	0.91	3
5k	How would you rate the teachers at your school on their understanding and knowledge of gifted education and supporting gifted students?	3.69	0.98	4
6c	To what extent do you believe the teachers in your school are more advanced in specific subjects than the gifted adolescents in their classrooms?	3.68	0.93	5
10c	How would you evaluate the creativity and innovation of teachers teaching gifted adolescents?	3.67	1.01	6
3p	How would you rate the level of professional preparation of the teachers to work with gifted adolescents?	3.66	1.02	7
7p	Evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching strategies used by teachers in your school to develop the talents of gifted adolescents within the regular classroom setting.	3.65	1.03	8
11 p	How would you rate the teachers' qualifications and expertise in supporting gifted adolescents at your school?	3.60	0.99	9
8s	How would you rate the teachers' ability to provide psychological support to gifted adolescents in your school?	3.59	0.93	10
12s	How well do the teachers in your school support the social-emotional needs of gifted adolescents?	3.55	0.99	11

1k	To what extent can the teachers at your school identify the specific needs of gifted adolescents in their classrooms?	3.42	1.01	12
Average mean value		3.71		

Table 2 addresses RQ2 and presents the regression analysis of the collective and relative contributions of the teachers' competency factors (giftedness knowledge, cognitive ability, pedagogical ability, and support) to adolescent giftedness. The results established that the four predictive measures contributed collectively and significantly to managing adolescent giftedness in the current study. The regression analysis yielded a coefficient of multiple regression $R = 0.611$ and multiple $R^2 = 0.391$, indicating that the combined measures accounted for 39.1% (Adj. $R^2 = 0.365$) of the variance in predicting adolescent giftedness management among the study's participants. The remaining 60.9% variance was attributed to factors outside this study's scope. Furthermore, the Analysis of Covariance (ANOVA) results showed that the predictive measures contributed significantly to the response measure, $F(4, 98) = 15.300$, $p < 0.001$. When ascertaining the relative contribution of each predictive measure, the results revealed that giftedness knowledge contributed the most to adolescent giftedness management ($\beta = 0.508$; $t = 8.775$; $p < 0.05$), followed by the support provided ($\beta = 0.401$; $t = 6.218$; $p < 0.05$); cognitive abilities ($\beta = 0.339$; $t = 5.885$; $p < 0.05$); and pedagogical abilities ($\beta = -0.122$; $t = -2.043$; $p < 0.05$). This implies that although all the indices of the teachers' competency contribute significantly to the outcome measure, pedagogical abilities exhibit an inverse relationship with adolescent giftedness management in this study.

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis of the teachers' competency factors to predict giftedness

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Standard error of estimate			
	.611	.391	.365	5.542			
Analysis of variance							
	Sum of square (SS)	Df	Mean square	F	P	Remark	
Regression	3759.277	4	469.910	15.300	.000	Sig.	
Residual	5866.243	98	30.713				
Total	9625.520	98					
Relative contribution of the independent variables to the prediction							
	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		t	P	
Model	B	Standard error	Beta				
Constant	1.333	2.93			.46	.000	
Giftedness knowledge	.779	.09	.508		8.78	.000	
Cognitive ability	.356	.06	.339		5.89	.000	

Pedagogical ability	-.058	-.03	-.122	-2.04	-.042
Supports	.001	.07	.401	6.22	.020

Dependent variable: Giftedness in adolescent

5. Discussion

There is no doubt that Africa is home to numerous young people who are exceptionally gifted and capable of contributing to the continent's development and addressing long-standing issues such as poor governance, economic hardship, marginalization, poverty, and technological stagnation. Unfortunately, the continent has not made a concerted effort to identify, develop, and manage these gifted adolescents who could drive its progress. Instead, Africa continues to supply developed nations with its best talent. This study assessed the competency levels of the agents of change responsible for nurturing the next generation by examining teachers' levels of competency in managing gifted in-school adolescents from the perspectives of school principals. The study also examined the potential indicators of teachers' competency. The first research question sought to assess the level of the teachers' competency in relation to adolescents' giftedness in schools, and the findings revealed a concerning trend in the school principals' perceptions of the teachers' competency. Specifically, the pedagogical abilities necessary for managing gifted adolescents fell short of the established mean. Moreover, two items each from the indicators of teachers' competency, namely giftedness knowledge and cognitive abilities and psychological and emotional support, were rated below the average means. The findings from the in-depth, one-on-one interviews conducted also affirmed this outcome. These results suggest a need for targeted professional development to enhance teachers' capacity to support gifted adolescents. These findings support previous studies that have established that African teachers lack the specific training required and are unequipped to handle gifted learners effectively (Dube, 2015). Jiyane (2018) found that their inability to engage meaningfully with gifted learners in classrooms was due to inadequate training on managing their specific needs. The current finding also aligns with a qualitative study conducted in Ghana by Allotey et al. (2023) on teachers' perspectives on providing support for gifted learners. The study affirmed that gifted children are often overlooked in schools due to teachers' inability to apply giftedness management skills, such as identification, acceleration, and differentiation.

Another notable finding was the contribution of each indicator of the teachers' competency in managing gifted adolescents in schools. All four indicators made significant collective contributions to adolescent giftedness. When determining the direction of these contributions, giftedness knowledge accounted for the highest significant contribution, followed by support and cognitive ability. Notably, pedagogical ability made an inverse contribution to managing the giftedness in adolescents. This suggests that school heads perceive teachers as lacking the pedagogical skills to effectively manage gifted adolescents.

Importantly, there is limited evidence specifically supporting these results, aside from the theoretical framework reviewed in this study and the few related studies. For instance, these findings align with the Differentiated Instruction Theory (DIT) adopted in this study, which emphasizes the importance of teachers' willingness to adopt effective strategies to address students' diverse needs (Tomlinson, 2000, 2005). Similarly, Moratta-Garcia (2011) revealed that a lack of pedagogical ability was responsible for difficulties in managing gifted adolescents in regular classrooms. Akar (2021) found negative contributions by giftedness knowledge and support for gifted education. Other related studies include the study by Paschal (2022), who found that teacher awareness contributed to managing giftedness, and the studies by Hoppey and McLeskey (2013) and Ivarsson (2023), who discovered that the support provided by teachers is important for managing giftedness in schools.

6. Conclusion

The findings of this research highlighted that teachers lacked the competency required to manage gifted adolescents in their classrooms. It was necessary to ensure that the principals were not biased in their assessments; hence, a qualitative inquiry was conducted with the teachers themselves. They confirmed their lack of pedagogical ability to manage gifted adolescents, insufficient knowledge of giftedness, inadequate cognitive abilities, and their inability to provide these gifted students with the support necessary for them to thrive and remain engaged in the classroom. The study further established that giftedness knowledge made the most significant contribution to predicting the outcomes for gifted adolescents, followed by support and cognitive ability. Notably, pedagogical ability showed an inverse contribution to managing giftedness in adolescents. Therefore, there is an urgent need for professional development in pedagogy, focusing on adolescent giftedness characteristics, cognitive ability development, and psychological and emotional support to ensure the full development of young individuals with special abilities. It is important to note that these findings may not necessarily reflect the abilities of all teachers in Africa, as the study was conducted in one country. However, this study should serve as a foundation for future research on teachers' ability to manage gifted adolescents.

7. Suggestion

Based on the outcomes, it is recommended that future studies be replicated in other regions with larger sample sizes for broader generalization. Overall, this study sheds light on the previously overlooked importance of teachers' competencies in managing gifted adolescents in schools.

Declarations

Author Contributions. This is a single author manuscript.

Conflicts of Interest. No conflicting interest.

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Ethical Approval. Ethical clearance was granted by from both the author's affiliated university and the school district's Department of Basic Education (DBE) with reference number (FEDSRECC05-09-22). The authors adhered to all the terms as contained in the institutional guidelines and in accordance with the international ethics of research as applicable to human participants.

Data Availability Statement. Data are available upon request.

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