Teacher Perceptions and Responses to the Implementation of the Gifted and Talented Initiative in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Primary Schools

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Abstract

The central importance of primary school teacher attitudes and expertise in optimising learning outcomes for gifted children is well documented. The literature review critically analysed current studies in this field and pointed to the need for further research in the application of the Gifted and Talented initiative. The Gifted and Talented initiative was a government education policy aiming to recognise and provide for more able children in primary and secondary grant maintained schools in England and Wales. This study aimed to discover how this initiative has been received in selected primary schools by presenting a snapshot of how teachers are identifying and providing for gifted pupils in the local area.

As talented primary school pupils are provided with a range of activities on a regular basis, this study focused on the academically gifted cohort, where much resistance has been well recognised relating to elitism and stereotypical attitudes towards this more able group.

The qualitative study took the form of five individual teacher/coordinator semi-structured interviews in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, aiming to understand from a primary school teacher's perspective their interpretation and application of the policy documents relating to gifted children. The purpose of the study was to discover if gifted children are being identified, how they are being identified and, if so, what type of provision is being offered.

The interview material consisted of transcripts and associated documents provided by teacher/coordinators and others obtained through research. Analysis was undertaken through thematic coding scrutiny and document comparisons of transcripts, where subjectivity is recognised due to prior involvement in education -situated knowledge. The findings suggest that the majority of schools in the local area are responding to the needs of gifted children, but the level of response differs significantly with individual school approaches and situational factors. Due to OfSTED inspection regimes that necessitate appropriate challenge for all pupils, including the gifted, teachers who may be sceptical are obliged to conform to a degree.

Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed …[redacted]Date …11/02/2014

Abbreviations:

BACE	Brunel Able Children's Education
BPVS	British Picture Vocabulary Scale
CCEA	Council of Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment
CfBT	Centre for British Teachers
CPR	Cambridge Primary Review
CQS	Classroom Quality Standards
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
ECHA	European Council for High Ability
EiC	Excellence in Cities
G & T	Gifted and Talented
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectors
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
IQS	Institutional Quality Standards
LAQS	Local Authority Quality Standards
NACE	National Association for Able Children in Education
NAGC	National Association for Gifted Children
NAGTY	National Association for Gifted and Talented Youth
OfSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PD	Professional Development
SAT's	Standard Attainment Tests
SEN	Special Educational Needs
TA	Teaching Assistant
UK	United Kingdom
USA	United States of America
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment

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Teacher Perceptions and Responses to the Implementation of the Gifted and Talented Initiative in Wiltshire and Gloucestershire Primary Schools

Chapter 1

Introduction

Much research has been conducted throughout the last century regarding the general educational needs of gifted and talented school children (Hollingworth, 1927; Renzulli, 1977; Gardener, 1983; Gagné, 1985; Feldhusen and Goldsmith, 1996; Van Tassel-Baska; 2001; Winstanley 2004). However, at the point of writing this thesis, little research has specifically focused on how the Gifted and Talented Initiative (DfEE, 1999) has been received in primary schools in England, over the period of 2000 – 2010 (Thomas, 2002; Koshy, Pinheiro-Torres and Portman-Smith, 2010).

It is of significant concern when all schools are required to identify between 5 -10% of their gifted or talented pupils, with some schools claiming zero %, some school as many as 100% (Smithers and Robinson) and other schools resisting the identification process (OfSTED, 2001, 2004, 2009). The present research focuses not on the politics or the Gifted and Talented (G & T) policy itself, but on whether primary school teachers are implementing this policy.

Focus on the implementation of the G & T initiative stems not only from my personal interest as an educator, but also from the firm belief that equity in education provision is essential if all children are to reach their potential, whatever their age or level of ability. Gifted children can make a significant contribution to society providing their ability is able to flourish and become responsible, productive adults (Gross, 2004). These more able pupils are potentially future scientists, engineers and economic experts who can play

a major role in how our country is able to advance and compete in a highly competitive global market (Bates and Munday, 2005).

Having scrutinised some of the associated literature, themes have evolved which provide the framework through which much of this paper will be structured. This qualitative study aims to address this issue through primary school teacher interviews, in order to provide a local snapshot of how educators have perceived and received this policy in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Although this research refers to the G & T initiative, the focus will be on addressing the academically gifted cohort as opposed to talented pupils. Talented needs are addressed consistently through extracurricular activities and supplementary in-school sessions that are well established and accepted in schools throughout England (Winstanley, 2004). In this study the term 'gifted' will be used as re-defined by DfES (2006): Gifted learners are those who have the ability to excel academically in subjects such as literacy, mathematics, science and ICT. Pupils classified as talented are those who excel in such areas as sport, art, drama or music.

Context of the study: How the Gifted and Talented Initiative evolved

During 1926 the first textbook on gifted education was published in America called Gifted Child: Their Nature and Nurture (Hollingworth, 1927) indicating that interest in the educational needs of more able students was being addressed in the United States of America (USA). It took however, until 1998 in England for the National Association for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) to publish Gifted Programme Standards for gifted and talented students. Concern for the lack of recognition, provision and sufficient challenge for gifted students in primary schools in the United Kingdom (UK) has existed for over 30 years, as outlined by Her Majesty's Inspectorate (HMI) in 1978, 1979 and 1992. A government initiated report by Alexander, Rose and Woodhead (1992) articulated that provision for more able students was lacking due to educators' fear of 'elitism' accusations. A later report by Office for Standards in Education (OfSTED) (2001) confirmed that the identification of gifted pupils continues to be seen by some parents and teachers as 'divisive.'

When the Labour Party formed government in 1997, they promptly produced a White Paper (DfEE, 1997) which introduced the Gifted and Talented initiative for schools in the England (Eyre and McClure, 2001; Bates and Munday, 2005; Koshy *et al*., 2010). The schools minister Estelle Morris stated the government's objectives:

> The government is committed to improving educational standards for all children ... we fail to identify many of our most able children and we don't challenge them enough. We owe it to these children to help them realise their potential. That means working with schools, parents and local authorities to establish practice. We must celebrate the abilities of our most able children and encourage them to achieve at the highest level. The attitude that gifted children can cope with themselves has let down too many young people. (Koshy *et al.*, 2010, p.2).

An inquiry by the House of Commons (1999) found lack of provision due to the following factors:

- the needs of children of high ability are not seen as a priority by teachers and schools;
- schools do not set high enough levels of expectation for their pupils;
- the ethos of schools (and, more widely, society) does not value high academic or intellectual achievement;
- teachers are unsure about the most effective ways of recognising high potential or of teaching the most able children;
- resources for providing the best education for such children are not available.

(Eyre and McClure, 2001, p.viii).

Funding for this government gifted and talented initiative was provided through the Excellence in Cities (EiC, 1999) programme, providing resources which were initially targeted at raising standards in inner-city areas, then extended to all schools in all areas for ages 4-19 in England and Wales (Haight, 2006; Koshy *et al*., 2010). School coordinators were organised at individual school and local authority levels to support and advise teaching staff (Bates and Munday, 2005). Associated documentation was distributed

including the G & T guidelines for evaluating teaching and learning named the Institutional Quality Standards (IQS) with the expectation that the identification and provision for the top 5% of pupils would be implemented at all levels (Koshy *et al*., 2010). The National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) was established by the government intending to provide support for the gifted cohort; however as Evans (2010) clarifies, this responsibility was redirected to the Centre for British Teachers (CfBT) a few years later in 2007.

During this period all schools were expected to construct individual G & T school policies and to set up registers for gifted pupils (Haight, 2006). According to Koshy *et al*. (2010) primary (and secondary) school teachers were required to identify between 5 -10% of the most able pupils in each school and to provide the appropriate, high quality, learning activities to target individual needs. Guidance documentation for teachers was provided from prior research by Clark and Callow (1998); Kennard (1998); Koshy and Casey (1998); and Lee-Corbin and Denicolo (1998).

In May 2010, the Conservative and the Liberal parties combined to form the new Coalition Government in the UK, committed to a focus of reducing the deficit after the 'financial storm' banking crisis left UK with over a trillion pounds in debt (Cable, 2009). This resulted in cuts in the education budget with the majority of the G & T initiative funding being withdrawn in 2010 (Evans, 2010; Koshy *et al*., 2010).

It was cause for concern that the G & T programmes, formerly coordinated by the charity Centre for British Teachers (CfBT), ceased to exist on March 31st 2010 (CfBT; 2010), as did the majority of G & T funding provision and support networks (Evans, 2010; Eyre, 2010).

Also of concern is the fact that the "Parent and Pupil Guarantee," as outlined in the white paper *Your Children, Your School, Our Future: Building a 21st Century Schools System,* which contained specific rights and expectation for gifted pupil provision (DCSF, 2009) has been abandoned (Evans, 2010, p.2).

The Government Education website that used to hold substantial information relating to gifted (and talented) children has been significantly simplified and now states that individual schools are responsible for decisions on

accommodating the needs of gifted pupils (Direct.gov. 2011). As highlighted by Eyre (2010, p.5) there are “no national, regional or local change managers (for example local authority G & T staff or regional bodies) and no mechanism for changing the attitudes and culture in society towards the value of investing in these children.”

Also of interest are newspaper headlines such as: ‘Farewell to the gifted and talented scheme’ (Guardian, 2010), ‘Ministers pull the plug on gifted and talented academy’ (Telegraph, 2010), ‘Bright children “being held back” at school’ (Telegraph, 2010), ‘The scandalous neglect of Gifted and Talented Pupils’ (Guardian, 2010), ‘Clever children matter too’ (Guardian, 2010) and ‘Gifted and talented programmes face “decimation” as funding dries up’ (TES, 2011), highlighting perspectives on how government financial constraints may have impacted on the provision for gifted children in schools in England.

Statement of the problem

At the time of writing this thesis we have inadequate understanding of whether the G & T initiative is being implemented and, if so, to what extent gifted children are identified and provided for in local primary schools.

Much research worldwide has concentrated on definitions of giftedness (George, 1992; McAlpine, 1996; Porter, 1999; Sternberg, 2004), identification strategies or models to be considered and the variety of classroom techniques available in providing for this cohort. However, the focus on attending to the needs of gifted children in England is only a relatively recent phenomenon.

One of the few studies into how teachers are responding and implementing the G & T policy in England and Wales was conducted by Koshy *et al.* and published in 2010, where they stated minimal related research has been carried out on this issue. Koshy’s study was quantitative using surveys for the generation of data. In contrast, Thomas (2002) wrote a qualitative paper focusing on the political decision making of the G & T policy and implications for high schools and colleges.

A great deal of research has been conducted in USA (Feldhusen and Moon,1992; Winner, 2000; Sternberg and Davidson, 2005; Caraisco, 2007)

and in Australia (Reis, 1991; Gross,1994,1997,1999, 2004; McDonough 2002; Rogers, 2007) with regard to identifying and providing for gifted children. However, few studies directly address how many children are being identified, the types of provision that are offered and teacher attitudes towards educating gifted children in England.

The importance of reliable, specific criteria for identifying gifted children is emphasised by Eyre and McClure (2001), taking into account the differing needs and attributes of individual ability levels and areas of achievement. Teaching and learning are dynamic, multi-faceted procedures and processes, therefore effective outcomes are facilitated by incorporating an eclectic choice of techniques to accommodate the range of ability in a primary classroom (Chessman, 2010).

The quality of general learning in a classroom is dependent upon the expertise of the teacher in optimising learning, but also combined with teacher attitudes when gifted pupils are involved. Primary school children depend on their teachers to understand their needs and to provide appropriate strategies that will maximise individual potential. Therefore, study of teacher attitudes towards academically gifted students is crucial if many children throughout England are not to be side-lined due to issues of elitism or bias emanating from stereotypical teacher attitudes of childhood ‘giftedness’ (Winstanley, 2004; Chessman, 2010).

The current study is founded on the belief that educators hold the ethical responsibility not to treat gifted children as more important or an elite group, but of equal value when setting challenge and accessing the curriculum (Winstanley, 2004). If children are to reach their potential it is essential that teachers identify gifted pupils and present opportunities for them to demonstrate their ability. Current provision, according to Winstanley (2004, p.102), is “patchy (in England) and lacks coherence … [particularly] for underachievers.”

Approach to the problem

Studies in how the G & T initiative in England has been received are few and more research is needed to understand teacher attitudes and practices in local primary schools.

With regard to provision for gifted children, the following assumptions underpin this study:

- individual teachers construct their own beliefs and will therefore approach providing for gifted pupils in different ways;
- using appropriate methods it is possible to gain insights into teacher perceptions to understand how they are providing for gifted children;
- it is of value for teachers to share their interpretations of the G & T policy and provide insights into the progress in attending to the needs of gifted children;
- teachers can inspire all pupils by creating a positive classroom atmosphere where achievement is valued;
- there is at least one gifted child in every classroom.

At the core of this research was an assumption that teachers construct their own interpretations and understandings (Patton, 2002) of this policy, dependent upon their individual perceptions and attitudes towards educating gifted children.

Therefore, this qualitative study intends to:

- provide a local snapshot to understand if teachers are implementing this policy and if so, to what extent;
- understand what effect the aforementioned political and economic changes have exacted on the recognition and provision for gifted and talented primary school pupils over the last ten years.

The objectives for this research are:

1. To investigate the extent of recognition and provision for gifted primary school children in selected local schools through interviews and document analysis.

2. To establish any changes/progress over the last decade through interviews and document analysis.

The literature review produced two basic research questions that encapsulate the core of the study:

1. How do primary school teachers perceive the current position of recognition and provision for gifted and talented children in selected local schools?
2. Since implementation of initiatives for primary school gifted and talented students in England, what, if any, progress in recognition and provision has been achieved in the schools selected for study?

Therefore five individual, primary school teacher semi-structured interviews took place over a six week period during May and June 2012, using a set of fourteen questions that evolved from and directly related to the research questions.

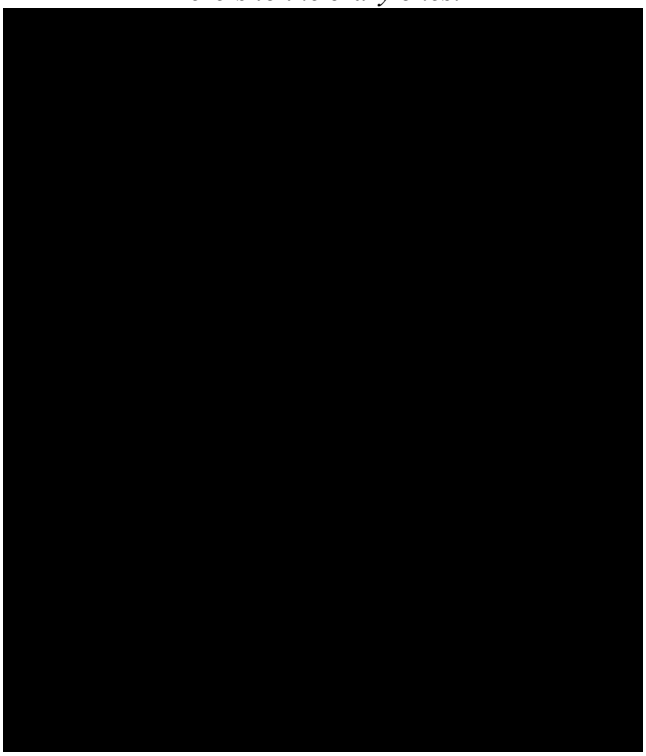
This research was designed to facilitate teachers/coordinators sharing their individual attitudes and perceptions about educating gifted children in primary classroom settings, as most other similar studies used questionnaires or surveys. The semi-structured interview format enabled teachers to provide their views on how best to accommodate the needs of gifted children through preferred identification procedures and the choice of strategies for provision.

The research findings add to a better understanding of how teachers are applying the G & T policy, the changes that have occurred over the last decade and processes and procedures that are being implemented with the benefit of the gifted child in mind.

In Chapter 2, a review of the literature will explore teacher attitudes towards academically gifted children in general. The identification process and its complexity will be exposed as will the various types of provision teachers can consider for individual children in their care. The qualitative approach taken for this study will be explained in Chapter 3, with the interviewing preparation and procedures outlined for the reader. The content of Chapter 4 will elucidate the findings from the five primary school interviews, presented under individually

coded school headings. The information generated fully reflecting the key elements that directly relate to the purpose of the study. Discussion in Chapter 5 will interpret and clarify how teachers are providing for gifted primary school children in the local area; painting a picture that captures a flavour of the implementation of the G & T initiative.

Here's to the crazy ones.



Steve Jobs 1955-2011.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Gifted-education research in England has an important objective in the need to understand what impact the government's G & T initiative has achieved, since the EiC launch in 1999. This initiative provided funding and resources for gifted and talented education in England and Wales.

Although this literature review discusses the G & T initiative, as talented primary school pupils in England are generally provided with extra-curricular activities on a regular basis, the focus in this instance is on the academically gifted pupil to highlight potential inequity in educational opportunities for this cohort.

This chapter will review the current literature under thematic headings which have evolved from existing giftedness studies, namely: identification, provision and teacher attitudes. The themes and directly related sub themes will be discussed and explored to gain insight and understanding of the current situation and any changes that have eventuated for gifted primary school children, over the period of 2000-2010.

> *Gifted education is a worldwide concern. Although there is no internationally accepted definition of giftedness, there is most certainly a wide range of students with gifted learning needs, in any given school, in any given country, as well as many others who might be helped to develop gifted-level abilities with the right kind of support and opportunities to learn.* *Borland (2009, p.6).*

Perceptions of giftedness

Theories and perceptions of giftedness will be introduced, followed by the timeline for the implementation of the gifted and talented initiative, outlined as a precursor to establishing the main areas in gifted education.

Since Terman's (1925) book *Studies of Genius* many theories have developed as to the origins of giftedness and how best to recognise and accommodate these abilities through educational channels, for example: Hollingworth (1927), Galton (1969), Renzulli (1977 - 2012), Freeman (1979 - 2006), Gagné (1983 - 2007), Simonton (1984 - 2007) and Sternberg (1984 - 2004).

Giftedness in the past and currently tends to be generally perceived as an innate permanent ability that manifests across all domains of intellectual development and is recognised through IQ tests (Robinson, Zigler and Gallagher, 2000). Other studies maintain that giftedness also develops through other aspects such as tenacity, creativity and enthusiasm (Renzulli, 1977), whereas Gladwell (2008) and Coyle (2009) claim that chance and repeated practice are the keys to excellence.

Balchin, Hymer and Matthews (2009, p.xxii) question the meaning and assessment of the terms: "giftedness, creativity or intelligence," whilst not ignoring the importance of "psychological development, ethical, moral, social and emotional development." However, Smithers and Robinson (2012, p.2) suggest it is critical to clarify "what constitutes top performance... [and] in which fields, as the sporting, music and drama areas know what to look for and how to proceed." The lack of consensus in definitions for giftedness or identifying gifted pupils indicates variations across the country in provision for more able students (Bailey, Pearce, Winstanley, Sutherland, Smith, Stack and Dickenson, 2008). This disparity needs to be investigated at the earliest opportunity.

The Gifted and Talented Initiative (EiC, 1999) evolved and declined through a range of successive related policies and decision making, as the following chart reveals.

Establishing the Gifted and Talented policy in England

The timeline affecting the implementation and cessation of the gifted and talented initiative over the last decade would include the following points:

March 1999	Excellence in Cities programme launched, including Gifted and Talented strand.(DfEE)
September 2001	White Paper, *Schools Achieving Success*, announces Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth.
2002	National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth set up at the University of Warwick.
2005	Nine regional partnerships for gifted and talented established as an extension to NAGTY
2006	Schools required to record percentages of gifted and talented on the annual January census returns. Introduction of IQS and CQS.
March 2007	A new National Programme for Gifted and Talented Education (YG&T) launched with CfBT as the managing contractor for three years.
May 2007	Funding totalling £3.6m over four years for nine Excellence Hubs formed by universities, schools and others to run summer schools and offer other provision.
August 2007	Contract with University of Warwick ends.
September 2007	Young Gifted and Talented Learner Academy for 14-19 -years –olds set up and run by CfBT.
2008	Gifted and Talented becomes priority for High Performing Specialist Schools. The National Strategies Team given responsibility for supporting LAs and schools.
July 2008	Gifted and Talented strand of City Challenge announced with funding for three years to raise attainment and aspirations in London, the Black Country and Manchester.
February 2009	National Register of Gifted and Talented launched – discontinued in February 2010.
July 2009	Government announces a move away from centralised YG&T programme to more locally based activities.
January 2010	Pupil and parent guarantees with every school required to confirm its gifted and talented pupils and the provisions it will make, collapsed in the May 2010 election.
February 2010 March 2010	House of Commons select committee reported policy implementation *inconsistent* and provision for gifted and talented as *patchy*. Contract for CfBT programme ends.
March 2011	Funding for National Strategies ends. G & T resources transferred to an online archive. Funding for G & T re-routed through Dedicated Schools Grant revenue stream for schools.

(Smithers and Robinson, 2012, p.2; Koshy and Pinheiro-Torres, 2012, p.7).

Defining the gifted child

> *One of the basic characteristics of the gifted is their intensity and an expanded field of their subjective experience. The intensity, in particular; must be understood as a qualitatively distinct characteristic. It is not a matter of degree, but of a different quality of experience: vivid, absorbing, penetrating, encompassing, complex, commanding – a way of being quiveringly alive.*
>
> *Piechowski (1991, p.181).*

"Giftedness is not a single thing... [it involves] more than just high IQ ... [therefore] the way we conceptualise giftedness greatly influences who will have greater and lesser opportunities to contribute to future society" (Sternberg, 2004, p.xxv). However, defining giftedness appears to present a problem for experts and educators alike (Subotnik, Olszewski-Kubilius and Worrell, 2011). There is a bewildering array of definitions for giftedness (Ziegler and Raul, 2000; Cross and Coleman, 2009). George (1992) has located over 200 different definitions which tend to vary dependent upon conceptual variations and approaches from cognitive or psychological positions (Porter, 1999; Balchin *et al*., 2009). For example: Sternberg (2004) approaches the giftedness definition from a neuroscience and cognitive perspective, stating the view of Ross (1993, p.3) that gifted pupils are "children and youth who show the potential for performing at remarkably high levels of accomplishment when compared with others of the same age." In the opinion of Gagné (1997, p.49) "giftedness is an innate capacity or advanced development of potential." These definitions are very broad, impersonal and lacking in clarity, therefore of little practical value in the classroom. As Eyre and McClure (2001, p.xi) emphasise "Educational provision should reflect our understanding of what it means to be gifted." Runco (2004, p.295) concurs, suggesting definitions "should be optimally specific and operational." This is supported by Plucker and Barab (2005, p. 201) who propose that "giftedness is shaped by multiple influences... [therefore] specific definitions are required." A comprehensive and pragmatic approach to the giftedness definition has been constructed by Subotnik *et al*. (2011) claiming to cover all domains of giftedness and which incorporates a level of consensus from various perspectives.

Research from experts included in Sternberg and Davidson's (1986; 2005) texts provides a range of conceptions of giftedness, including Borland (2005, p.1) proposing to dispense with the concept of giftedness. He suggests providing gifted education through programmes that reflect differing levels of ability found in all classrooms. Robinson (2005) also believes that the terms gifted and talented are dispensable, as efforts have been made for decades to define giftedness but accord is absent (Gagné, 1985, 1995; Feldhusen, 1999). However, comparison with peers, involving categorisation and grouping of pupils commensurate with their level of ability, is inevitable whether or not the definition of gifted is applied. For example, the Differentiated Model of Giftedness (DMG) described by Gagné (1985, 1999) relies on giftedness being identified in order to transform gifts into talent. Renzulli's (1977, 2005) Enrichment Triad Model includes the combination of creativity, task commitment and above average ability, prompting a need to define and identify these elements. As Mandelman, Tan, Aljughaiman and Grigorenko. (2010) confirm, any learning system supporting gifted education has to resolve how to select and group children.

Balchin (2009) confirms that teachers find the DFES (2006) definition of gifted and talented education a real dilemma, highlighting the need for clear descriptors to be established for each cohort, as the definition and identification of the more able are intimately linked (Eyre, 1997). The lack of clarity in defining giftedness could inhibit the process of recognition and therefore the identification and effective provision for academically able primary school pupils. The National Strategies have produced the Institutional Quality Standards (IQS, 2010, p.2) which at the school level advocates that "the school has an agreed definition of gifted and talented… providing the opportunity for teachers to consider what gifts and talents look like in their classrooms." Therefore, this study aims to understand if individual school descriptors have allowed teachers to progress towards defining giftedness and identifying academically able pupils.

Recognition – through identification

> *"Children develop at different rates and in different ways...this assumes that human variation is multifaceted and multi-dimensional... (and that) the average child is educationally different from other 'average' children... (this then) affects how and how well they deal with the traditional formal curriculum"* *(Borland, 2005, p.6).*

This study aims to understand teacher perceptions and the extent of identification of gifted pupils in a selection of local primary schools. One of the most important aspects for teachers is deciding *why, how* and *when* identification of gifted pupils should be approached (Heller, 2004; Renzulli, 2004). The gifted pupil descriptor can cover differing levels of ability, ranging from the mildly quicker child through the spectrum to exceptionally able or even the genius level category (Renzulli, 2004; Sternberg, 2005; Geake and Gross, 2008). Recognising gifted children in England usually commences with structuring a school G & T policy, outlining clear definitions of giftedness and stating methods for identifying the more able cohort and establishing alternative strategies for suitable provision. The IQS (2010, p.2) at the school level states that "provision is the key to identification… using a broad range of quantitative and qualitative data… that are regularly reviewed." The National Strategies at the classroom level Class Room Quality Standards (CQS, 2008) recommends that procedures for identification are transparent and that progress through target setting is regularly agreed and updated with pupils.

Identification

Although there is no international consensus on what gifted means (Balchin *et al*., 2009), teachers in England are expected to identify between 5 - 10% of primary school children as gifted (and/or talented). Some schools have refused to participate, reporting their percentages to be either zero or 100% (Smithers and Robinson, 2012). Adonis (2008, p.2) confirms that "national records show that 25% of primary schools in England have ignored this

programme... some schools had not identified a single G & T pupil." Balchin *et al*. (2009) claim that identifying a set percentage of pupils is outdated and teachers in Balchin's (2007) study complained that government guidelines should include a national criterion for G & T identification to encourage consistency and that the fixed percentage often resulted in children being included who were not gifted. Smithers and Robinson (2012, p.1) also criticise the fixed percentage requirement in the policy, as "funding and staff time were very limited… [and] school intakes vary considerably" confirming potential problems across classrooms and countrywide when a fixed quota is required. Conversely, Renzulli (2004) points out that for logistical purposes, in general there needs to be a limited selection of pupils for specific gifted programme opportunities. Given these inconsistencies, Bates and Munday (2005, p.16) maintain that "identification should be in the school context and not within a national context" and Identification also takes place in an (educational) social context where "the construct of giftedness is shaped by multiple influences" (Plucker and Barab, 2005, p.202). However, as school policies are individual in England and teachers enjoy the professional freedom to identify and provide for their pupils as they deem appropriate (Koshy *et al.*, 2010) inconsistencies appear inevitable where a fixed percentage is required.

Giftedness nominations through well informed, expert opinion of teachers should direct the selection process (Renzulli, 2004) and according to Davis and Rimm (1989) are encouraged by schools. However, research by Gagné (1994) and Powell and Siegle (2004) suggest teacher nominations to be unreliable unless educators had participated in identification training programmes. A senior school study by Haight (2006) concluded that identification strategies appeared to be more effective and comprehensive as teachers became more adept with the identification process.

There appear to be contrasting views regarding identification of younger more able children. According to Simonton (2009) hardly anything is known about methods for recognising younger gifted school children and should be avoided. Plucker and Barab (2005) argue that there may be potential but not gifted characteristics in young pupils. In contrast, Winner (2000) asserts that young highly gifted can demonstrate extraordinary ability from the beginning

and Gross (1999) details developmental indicators for young highly gifted children. She claims they are at risk due to an inadequate curriculum and poorly trained teachers who are not able to recognise advanced levels of ability or potential.

Identification techniques

There is a wide range of strategies and approaches for teachers to consider in the identification of gifted pupils in the primary school classroom. Some experts claim that Terman's (1925) IQ tests only measured specific kinds of ability, therefore these tests present problems as they omit to capture all the dynamic and multi-dimensional nature of ability in gifted children (Simon, 1978; Sternberg, 2004; Cathcart, 2005; White, 2006; Koshy and Pinheiro-Torres, 2012). According to Renzulli (2004) and Sternberg (2004) there is now general acceptance by researchers that a wide, eclectic, ongoing selection of assessment techniques and products is important to identify the range of ability in primary classrooms. However, concern has been raised in England by Gillborn (2005) and Warwick (2009) and by Renzulli (2004) in the USA that racial inequalities have resulted in the under-representation of minority ethinic groups in gifted programmes, due to a culturally biased selection process. There are also studies (Gallagher, 2005; Ford and Moore, 2006) suggesting a more wide-ranging criterion is necessary for identification of the gifted pupil to accommodate the diverse composition of today's multi-cultural society. Dynamic assessment (Feuerstein, Rand and Hoffman, 1979) based on Vygotsky's (1978) *zone of proximal development* has been utilised beneficially in identifying giftedness for disadvantaged groups of pupils according to Borland and Wright (1994). Sternberg (2004) proposes that tracking pupil task results is advantageous and recommends the ongoing assessment approach by Passow and Tannebaum (1978) including specific enrichment programmes to enhance identification practices. Administering tests above average grade level is recommended by Brody and Stanley (2005) to capture suitable pupils ready for advanced level learning opportunities. Whereas compiling portfolios of student work is recommended by other experts (Kingore, 1993; Van Tassel- Baska, 2005; Koshy and Pinheiro-Torres, 2012) aiming to evaluate a wide range of skills and knowledge as well as creative tendencies.

Labels

A label is used to describe a condition in a social context in the view of Freeman (1979). She continues to suspect that as the gifted are a relatively small group outside the norm in society, they are viewed through a negative, stereotypical lens.

The UK government's decision in 1999 (DfEE) to utilise the labels of gifted and talented met with opposition from teachers at the outset, due to "the implications of fixed ability and unearned privilege" (Freeman, 2005, p.88). According to Bailey, Pearce, Winstanley, Sutherland, Smith, Stack & Dickenson (2008) the terms gifted and talented (DCSF, 2008) were functional to encourage a wider interpretation and focus on the range of higher ability. Resistance to the gifted label has produced a variety of substitute terminology for example: able, more able, highly able, bright, very bright, high potential, superior, exceptional, precocious among many others (Mandelman *et al*., 2010, p.288). However, these terms could also be considered divisive as they also categorise students into who is accomplished and who is not. Koshy and Pinheiro-Torres (2012, p.16) found in their study that labels are "largely unhelpful" due to the inequitable implications of the 'gifted' term and in the view of Freeman (2005) labelling may reduce a child's happiness and feelings of self-worth . Conversely, other studies by Neihart, Reiss, Robinson and Moon (2002) and Richards, Encel and Shute (2003) found positive effects on self-esteem from labelling gifted pupils.

Studies by Freeman (1991, 1998) and Thomas, Casey and Koshy (1996) both confirm teacher unease with the use of the term gifted and its connotations presenting an ongoing dilemma. Although there are many criticisms of labelling gifted children, it is assumed schools will categorise and group pupils according to ability, whatever terminology is applied, and establish a school G & T register.

Registers

The G & T registers were initially intended for implementation in schools in 2009 with the stipulation that content was shared with parents (IQS,

2010) however, Koshy and Pinheiro-Torres (2012, p.17) found that only just over 50% of schools had conformed to this requirement. Reasons given for neglecting the use of registers included:

- unrealistic expectations of parents;
- competition amongst parents to have their child(ren) on the register;
- affluent pushy parent problems;
- selecting a fixed percentage was seen as impractical;
- some coordinators viewed registers as inadequate and a further imposition of paperwork for political gain from media reports.

These researchers also speculate whether gifts and talents should be seen as fixed or as a developmental process that can change over time and vary with domain, thus influencing whether a child remains on the register when performance changes. However, IQS (2010, p.3) states that "all teachers should contribute to ongoing records… [and] provide focus on inclusivity and equality of opportunity for all able pupils." The register also aids programme objectives, the tracking process and can be used to improve the quality of quantitative information (Dracup, 2007), therefore this could be seen as a useful tool for educators in tackling underachievement or hidden potential. My study will endeavour to understand if primary school teachers are using a register to list G & T pupils and if parents of gifted children are informed and updated on a regular basis.

Environmental and social concerns

In 2008, DCSF (p.6/7) confirmed that gifted (and talented) pupils can be found in "every culture and every economic group… [therefore] providing for the gifted and talented pupils is a question of equity… for low socio-economic groups… [those] who need support to learn English and those with special educational needs." Freeman (1991, p.6) contends that children's ability levels are highly dependent upon the capacity they are born with, and, which is rated at approximately 70% of their potential. Howe (1999, p.20) emphasises the variations in home experiences and their significant impact

upon student learning levels. He claims exposure to language varied with social class, resulting in some disadvantaged young pupils only being exposed to 10 million words and others from professional homes as many as 30 million words. As Freeman (1991, p.6) confirms “the brighter children are, the more they can absorb… their abilities depend on the language they hear and use… [and] the environment they live in.” She also highlights that home background be considered when comparisons of ability are made and her in-depth research (Gulbenkian Project) confirms that “the gifted do have special education needs” Gifted children are highly dependent upon environmental influences, demonstrating the need for appropriate situational factors as a crucial part of the school identification and provision procedures.

Provision for gifted pupils

> *“Educators must, to be effective and ethical, provide educational experiences that reflect the inescapable fact of individual differences in how and how well school students learn at a given time in a given subject. A one-size-fits-all curriculum makes no more sense to me than would a one-size-fits-all shoe”*
>
> *Borland (2005, p.1).*

Through interviewing local educators, my research study aims to understand how teachers are providing learning opportunities for the more academically able children in their schools. Government education departments have produced guidance for gifted and talented provision in primary schools. For example, The IQS (2010, p.2) recognises the direct link at the whole school level between identification and provision for gifted pupils. The provision section also suggests that lessons for gifted children need to “consistently challenge and inspire… [and to] incorporate the breadth, depth and pace… to support exceptional rates of progress.” At the classroom level, layer two of the CQS (2008) provides subject area guidance in three levels of provision: entry, developing and exemplary.

A draft statement from the Gifted and Talented Education Team prescribes a personalised, integrated learning model (Dracup DSCF, 2007, p.4) "aiming to reduce disparity between different social and ethnic groups and creating an improved stance between excellence and equity." This approach reflects the personalised learning focus "on the needs of the individual child" from the Schools White Paper (2006, p.14). However, Hymer (2005, p.3) criticises the EiC (1999) and DSCF (2007) for insisting on the process of identifying gifted pupils through a raft of "quantitative and qualitative measures before providing them with a distinct teaching and learning programme." Hymer sees this approach to provision as sending a strong indicator of the innate, fixed intelligence theory process, utilising the 'gifted and talented' policy as opposed to the theoretically based 'challenge and engagement' method. Further criticism from Freeman (2001) and Smithers and Robinson (2012, p.1) claim that provision for gifted pupils is far from satisfactory or consistent in England due to "the lack of clarity and the difficulties of identification." Others air their concerns regarding the decline in ratings for UK compared with over seventy other countries, as published in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA, 2009). PISA is a worldwide, three year cyclical programme testing critical thinking skills in mathematics, science and reading for 15 years old pupils. The 2009 tests (appendix 8) reveals that in the UK the mathematics average was 1.7% compared with 3.1% for Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries, 8.7% in Flemish Belgium and 7.8% in Switzerland. Moreover, reading results are at the OECD average for UK but only one third achieved the highest level when compared with New Zealand and only half compared with Australia (Subotnik *et al.*, 2011; The Confederation of British Industry report (CBI) 2012; Smithers and Robinson, 2012). This disparity is worthy of investigation at the earliest opportunity to assess whether inadequate provision for academically gifted pupils has contributed to UK's decline in ratings.

Influences on provision

Much research by Renzulli (1978, 2002) Gardner (1983, 1999) Sternberg (1984, 2004, 2005) and Gagné (1985, 1993, 2003) has influenced teaching practice over the last 50 years. Interest and research into gifted education has grown to produce a proliferation of models based on differing

perceptions and opposing theoretical positions towards providing for more able pupils (Schlighter, 1981; Balchin *et al*., 2009; Subotnik *et al*., 2011; Koshy and Pinheiro-Torres, 2012). Some experts see giftedness as an innate, fixed ability (Dweck, 2009) requiring IQ tests which identify a fixed percentage of students for specific gifted programmes in various subject areas (Simonton, 2009). According to Borland (2005) this is a 20th century approach to provision. On the other hand the 'environmental approach' aims to provide opportunities for all pupils to succeed and rejecting the use of identification and labelling of gifted children (Freeman, Raffan and Warwick, 2010). However, a combinational approach appears to be favoured with policy makers in England, by incorporating identification and labelling of gifted students and also including the personalised learning approach (Dracup, DSCF, 2007; CQS, 2008).

The differing perceptions and theoretical approaches in provision indicate a serious challenge and time consuming complexity for classroom teachers in implementing the personalised learning agenda. At a practical level, it could be useful to investigate whether schools are able to provide for gifted students as the policy (CQS, 2008; IQS, 2010) outlines.

Modes of provision

Although there is a range of alternative approaches, the main three modes of attending to variations in ability levels are differentiation, acceleration and enrichment.

Differentiation

Differentiation involves planning classroom activities to correspond with various levels of ability in a classroom (Macintyre, 2008), responding to learning styles and adjusting pace in the recognition that gifted children "comprehend more complex ideas and learn more rapidly… than their peers" (Heller, Perleth and Lim, 2005, p.12). Differentiation provides the opportunity for depth of understanding through concept development (Van Tassel-Baska, 2008) where all pupils are extended, challenged and involved in learning (Hymer, 2009). This mode of provision recognises that gifted pupils are not a homogeneous group (Freeman, 2001; Winstanley, 2004) and findings by

Bailey *et al.* (2008) confirm that differentiation can be an effective method of learning for gifted students. OfSTED (2009) reported that teachers were reluctant to use differentiation due to the possibility that implementation may be to the detriment of other pupils, and also due to the lack of support for teachers in effective programming. However, Bailey *et al.* (2008) argue that problems with effective differentiation and diversity of needs can be addressed through vertical streaming, claiming highly effective outcomes in mathematics performance by gifted pupils using this less popular method.

Acceleration

There are many different types of acceleration (Rogers, 2007; Colangelo and Assouline, 2009) and this mode of provision "is simply matching the curriculum to the learning rate and level of mastery of the student… in response to a gifted student's accelerated pace of learning" (Silverman, 2013, p.1). Findings from research have accumulated for over half a century (Terman and Oden, 1947; Stanley, 1977; Clark, 1997) confirming that many gifted pupils would benefit from accelerated learning (Cathcart, 2005; Gallagher, 1996; Gross 1997; Kirby and Townsend, 2004). According to Colangelo and Assouline (2009) acceleration is beneficial in an *age or grade locked* classroom situation, as groups of similar ability levels, regardless of age, outperformed classes of mixed ability (Bailey *et al.,* 2008). On the one hand educators appear unconvinced of the merits of acceleration by findings from research (Cornell, Callahan, Bassin and Ramsay, 1991; Rogers, 1992; Gallagher, 1996), on the other hand a definite increase in academic achievement using acceleration is confirmed from meta-studies by Kulik and Kulik (1984) and further studies by Vialle, Ashton, Carlon and Rankin (2001). However, Cathcart (2005, p.33) does urge caution, as acceleration in practice may be no more than a change of location, and emphasises that gifted pupils not only learn faster but are "qualitatively different… being more likely to question, infer, generalise, compare and synthesise information."

Concerns about the effects of acceleration on student wellbeing have been studied, with many experts confirming findings that acceleration has produced positive effects on socialisation and emotional development (Robinson, 1981;

Brody and Benbow, 1987; Southern and Jones, 1991; Clark, 1997; Vialle *et al.,* 2001).

Enrichment

Enrichment involves in-school, or extracurricular activities, aiming to challenge students through: creative opportunities, investigations or activities to further thinking skills (Treffinger, Nassab and Selby2009). Although some authors have doubted the effectiveness of enrichment (Renzulli, 1977; Grossi, 1980) others claim that in-class enrichment can benefit more able pupils through the greater depth and breadth of learning involving individual or small group study (Clark and Zimmerman, 1994; Winstanley, 2004; Cathcart, 2005). Ability grouping for enrichment can produce substantial academic gains for gifted pupils (George, 1983; Kulik and Kulik, 1984, 1990; Vaughn, Feldhusen and Asher, 1991); however, Cathcart (2005) points out that curriculum modification is often inadequate, neglecting to stimulate and motivate pupils. Motivation to learn will decrease if tasks are too easy or too complex, therefore it is essential to provide challenging, apposite opportunities if pupils are to maximise their potential (George, 1983; Feldhusen and Moon, 1992, p.63). According to Kulik and Kulik (1992) the focus has turned away from enrichment towards providing daily challenge (Rogers, 2007, Bailey *et al.,* 2008; OfSTED, 2013).

> At the heart of the personalisation agenda is the individual child. Every teacher knows that truly effective teaching focuses on individual children, their strengths, their weaknesses, their needs and the approaches that engage, motivate and inspire them. Gifted and talented individuals have considerable strengths but they may also have areas of weakness and effective provision for them involves addressing both (DCSF, 2008).

Teachers' perceptions and attitudes towards gifted education

> *Teachers treat students differently based on teacher expectancies of student ability, often resulting in increased or decreased student achievement.*
>
> *Jussim and Eccles, 1995 (Sternberg & Davidson 2005, p.205).*

At the heart of my study is the aim to understand teacher perceptions regarding the current position of recognition and provision for gifted children, together with any changes in attending to gifted students that have taken place over the last decade. Provision for gifted children as prescribed by the Excellence in Cities policy document (1999) is inadequate according to OfSTED (2001/2004) and Adonis (2008) who report that many schools have clearly resisted and neglected the identification of able pupils, therefore, this study aims to investigate these claims of lack of provision in five local primary schools.

Attitudes are shaped by beliefs according to Gross (1997) but situational pressures can also affect decisions and responses (Chessman, 2010). Situational pressures which can impose constraints may include meeting targets for SATs examinations, focussing on specific areas in school development plans, or financial shortages in the education system. Balchin (2007, p.32) found misdiagnosis of gifted pupils was due to a "wide range of traits and states that the teachers and the students themselves possess or are affected by."

Studies by Geake and Gross (2008) concerning teacher attitudes expose that attending to the needs of talented students in sport, art, drama or music pupils presents few objections, unlike provision for academically gifted children. Several other studies suggest that the 'gifted' label and perceptions or stereotypical attitudes held by educators can directly affect provision and performance of gifted pupils (Batten, Marland and Khamis, 1993; Richardson, 1994; Plunkett, 2000; Megay-Nespoli, 2001; McCoach and Siegle, 2007). Attitudes of gifted (and talented) co-coordinators could result in different

interpretations of policy, thus affecting the identification and provision for students (Koshy and Pinheiro-Torres, 2012).

The problem of inconsistent attention to the needs of more able pupils is similar in Australia and America and described as “a quiet crisis” by Ross (1993, p.5), as many children demonstrate gifts and talents that are not recognised, due to the barriers in education, anti-elitism and stereotypical attitudes. Gallagher (1997) and Mandelman *et al.* (2010) discuss in political terms the indifference to gifted education as part of a struggle between the commitment to egalitarianism and meritocracy**.** Other experts (Gross, 2004; Reis and Renzulli, 2004) found that a resentment of inherited ‘unfair advantage’ or a fear of being seen as an elitist by attending to the needs of gifted pupils can dramatically affect teacher nomination for gifted status. Elitism is also discussed by Freeman (1985), confirming the future benefits to society of gifted student, while Delisle (2001, p.1) strongly supports elitism and attending to gifted pupil needs. He criticises the ‘politically correct’ egalitarian stance of Gardner’s (1983) Multiple Intelligences (MI), accepted by educators worldwide, diluting the notion of intelligence to ‘common behavior’ in all pupils and thus scrapping gifted programmes.

Stereotyping is defined by Carman (2011, p.792) as “the unconscious or conscious application of knowledge of a group in judging a member of the group… Stereotypes are used for cognitive efficiency… informing people of typical traits… [and] affect how information is processed... [as well as] the decisions made by the individual holding those thoughts.” It should be noted that stereotypical images can be positive or negative with corresponding results for gifted children. Stereotypical images of gifted children may include: learns easily, good memory, inquisitive, good sense of humour, asks unusual questions, as well as more negative connotations such as precocious, argumentative and superior attitude (Macintyre, 2008).

Research findings connected with teacher attitudes have shown mixed results. However, a common theme appears to be that teachers understand the need to attend to gifted pupils but there are variances on what approach should be taken (Gagné, 1983; Eyre and Geake, 2002; Chessman, 2010).

Professional development

Teacher professional development (PD) is also seen by some authors as a factor in teacher attitudes towards provision for gifted children. Geake and Gross (2008), found that negative attitudes can be reduced significantly through PD programmes, whereas McCoach and Siegle (2007) found no impact on teachers' attitudes towards the gifted, but interestingly there were positive perceptions by the teachers of themselves as gifted after training. In contrast Bégin and Gagné (1994) found an over 60% positive relationship between attending PD courses and positive teacher attitudes towards providing for gifted pupils in their studies. Furthermore, McCoach and Siegle (2007) maintain that educators who see family members as gifted, or have prior contact with giftedness, tend to be more proactive towards academically gifted pupils and programme implementation.

Socioeconomic status and contact with giftedness are two demographic predictors of teacher attitudes identified by Gagné and Nadeau (1985; Paule, 2003; Winstanley, 2004) confirming that the higher the socioeconomic status and more contact with giftedness the more positive attitudes flourished. These class divisions and predictors reflect the Neighbourhood Effect discussed by Cox, Reynolds and Rokkan (1974) where people who have regular close contact tend to think and behave in a similar fashion. It is clear that the consequences of negative teacher attitudes indicate that there could be many gifted children in numerous schools unable to progress in England.

Koshy *et al*. (2010) report that age and years of teaching experience are not predictors of positive teacher attitudes; however females with postgraduate training and G & T responsibilities were indicators of positive and successful provision for gifted pupils. How much of an impact PD training could have with teachers from more demanding inner-city areas would pose a rewarding and interesting research investigation.

Teacher attitudes researched by Koshy *et al*. (2010) showed a significant reduction in teacher resistance to labelling children as gifted: from 86% in 1996, down to 62% by 2009, partially explained by the preferred use of the tag

‘more able’ instead of ‘gifted.’ However some of Koshy’s statistics should be viewed with caution when considering generalising findings:

- 96% of participants claim to have identified gifted (and talented) pupils
- 84% of participants had received PD training
- 90% of schools had produced school policies.

These percentages appear high, which may indicate that the majority of schools that participated were the schools who had already implemented the policy and were not necessarily representative of the area. This could imply that schools who are still in the process of establishing procedures or just setting up systems did not participate in this survey, making generalisations questionable.

Teacher attitudes are also affected by the consequences of ‘inclusion,’ a policy which was produced as a result of the Warnock Report in 1978, which then prompted the Education Act (1981) that set the foundations for the policy of ‘inclusion’ in primary schools in UK. Inclusion is the position where “pupils, no matter what their particular needs or learning disabilities, belong together with their same age in the educational mainstream” (MacBeath, Galton, Steward, MacBeath and Page, 2006, p.2). The impact of inclusion on teachers in a climate where pupil behaviour was deteriorating in many classrooms was recognised as cause for concern by Humphrey, Bartolo, Callejab, Hofsaess, Janikova, Mol Lous, Vilkiener and Westo (2006 and MacBeath *et al*. (2006) leaving teachers feeling disempowered and demoralised (Bates and Munday, 2005).

> Increasing the range of needs and abilities within the ‘mainstream’ classroom without addressing curriculum, testing and ‘standards’-driven accountability, has had a major impact on the nature and balance of teachers’ work (MacBeath *et al*., 2006, p.3).

An analysis of how teachers perceive their responsibilities would provide a valuable insight in teacher attitudes and educator prioritisation with high demands on their limited time schedule.

As the G & T policy in the UK is relatively recent in educational terms and the few prior studies in England having indicated that educators tended to be unsympathetic towards centering attention on gifted pupils (Thomas, Casey and Koshy, 1996), the extent of the implementation of the G &T initiative is worthy of close attention. An analysis of individual teacher attitudes and perceptions, and issues of identification and provision, combined with school philosophy towards the education of 'gifted' pupils, will provide a most rewarding and enlightening investigative outcome in this research study. It is important to understand teacher perceptions as they have a direct bearing on achievement for more able children. Eyre and McClure (2001), Morgan (2007), Koshy *et al*. (2010) assert that little research has focused on how the G & T initiative has been received in primary schools in England, which this study aims to address by answering the following research questions:

1. How do primary school teachers perceive the current position of recognition and provision for gifted and talented children in selected local schools?
2. Since implementation of initiatives for primary school gifted and talented students in England, what, if any, progress in recognition and provision has been achieved in the schools selected for study?

Summary

This literature review has presented a wide range of theories on the various characteristics of giftedness and numerous approaches to the recognition and provision for gifted pupils in primary school learning environments.

The complexities and challenges for individual schools and educators include: selecting and grouping pupils for instruction, the implications of labels, the variation in individual development levels, potential effects of social standings and potential influences of the home and the school environment.

Teacher attitudes have a significant bearing, not only on whether children are identified, but on underlying perceptions of giftedness that can have a long-term effect on learning for more able pupils. Combating resistance to educating gifted pupils through professional development appears problematic, with mixed findings. Inclusion combined with other circumstantial factors has imposed a distinct challenge for teachers in accommodating diverse needs in a regular classroom setting.

It is imperative for children to have full teacher support facilitating high quality productive learning opportunities for all gifted students. Therefore, it is necessary to understand how teachers perceive the current policy and their position on recognising and providing for gifted education in the local area. Also, since the implementation of the G & T initiative what, if any progress has been achieved in gifted education over the period of 2000-2010? These two questions are the essence of the intended research study as examined in a snapshot sample of five local schools.

> *The biggest mistake of the past centuries in teaching has been to treat all children as if they were variants of the same individual, and thus to feel justified in teaching them the same subjects in the same ways.*
>
> *Howard Gardner (Siegle and* Shaughnessy *1994, p.566)*

Chapter 3

Research design and method

Methodology: theoretical frameworks, strategies and techniques of the research

As previously indicated, this study involves the following objectives:

1. To investigate the extent of recognition and provision for gifted primary school children in selected local schools through interviews and document analysis.
2. To establish any changes/progress over the last decade through interviews and document analysis.

Information collection directly involved individual one hour interviews with five primary school teachers or G & T coordinators in the local area, with the aim of discovering if they were actually identifying and providing for gifted pupils and attending to policy guidelines. This research design was structured to elicit teacher perceptions and responses directly addressing the research objectives, as this chapter will examine in detail.

This chapter will elaborate on the qualitative nature of this study, outlining: the theoretical perspectives, the qualitative foundations, research procedures and demonstrating the importance of the purpose of the research and its relatedness to its theoretical underpinnings.

Theoretical perspectives and foundations of the research

The dialogue of research methodology commences with a framework of the theoretical foundations underpinning this study, whilst outlining the associated assumptions connected with this stance. This discussion is conducted through the relevant and pertinent terminology as follows: qualitative, interpretive, constructivist, and phenomenological. As Schwandt, (1994) confirms, it is recognised that researchers may approach these terms

from different perspectives, whereas in this instance these terms are used in the context of how they relate to the purpose of the present study.

Qualitative/interpretive foundations of research

This thesis is based on the qualitative paradigm, intending to understand and explain the meaning of a shared phenomenon in the context of an educational experience (Gall, Gall and Borg, 2007). Although there is no specific 'theory or paradigm' method or practices attached to qualitative research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p.9) and "qualitative research is not a unitary, static concept" (Spodek and Saracho, 2006, p.497), this study can be considered qualitative or interpretive in nature as it is "the study of the immediate and local meanings of social actions for the actors involved in them" (Gall *et al*., 2007, p.31). Gall further elaborates, indicating that this definition is also similar to 'constructivist epistemology' and notes that the label of interpretive research is synonymous with qualitative research.

The interview, as method of information collection, can be classified as qualitative in character as this method includes the principles of qualitative data collection described by Patton (1990, p.10) as: "in-depth interviews and written documents... capturing and communicating someone else's experience ... finding out what people know, think and feel by interviewing and analysing documents**."** However the method alone is not indicative of a qualitative study as interpretivism assumes that meaning is central to understanding human actions (Schwandt, 2001), in this instance to comprehend the meaning from individual teachers' application of the G & T policy.

This qualitative/interpretive approach sets the stage that will direct and focus research positioning and design strategies.

Qualitative and constructivist foundations of the study

The qualitative position elected in this study is not viewed as a fixed prescriptive element, it is seen as the preferred scaffold to best underpin and set the direction for understanding individual interpretations about how

people's social worlds are constructed (Thomas, 2009). In the educational context, Anderson clarifies (2010, p.1) that:

> Complex educational situations demand complex understanding ... [therefore] qualitative research can provide a better understanding of the nature of educational problems and thus provide insight into teaching and learning in a number of contexts.

The interpretive paradigm contrasts markedly with the positivist, quantitative, deductive viewpoint where fundamental principles aim to predict, explain and generalise findings using highly structured surveys and experiments involving variables and hypothesis testing. The positivist approach would be contrary to the "insider... [focus which] interacts with participants... [to gain insight into] feelings, ideas... [and] perceptions" that culminate in interpretation of the understandings in an inductive process (Thomas, 2009, p.78).

The research questions stem from a wish to understand whether primary school teachers are implementing the G & T initiative and if so, to what extent. Therefore, this need to understand was met and best achieved through the qualitative/interpretive framework. The qualitative paradigm has traditions from psychology, sociology and anthropology, each area holding assumptions about people, society and the appropriate associated methodology. Under the associated ontological inferences, it is assumed in this study that primary school teachers in England have access to the G & T policy documentation and comprehend the expectations involved in identifying and providing for gifted children in their care. These assumptions underpin the researcher's engagement with the participants and influence the context of the study (Thomas, 2009).

In this instance the key elements of a qualitative study include:

1. understanding the *meaning* of an experience;
2. the *primary instrument* for information collection is the researcher;
3. the *fieldwork* approach involves direct contact in a natural setting;
4. the *descriptive* element produces a thick description;
5. the *inductive* nature of a qualitative inquiry.

This approach involves building theories as opposed to testing existing theories (Merriam, 1988, p.17). These key elements are the core of this educational study and although Merriam concentrates on case study research, many of the elements are equally attributable to the qualitative interview.

Firstly, this study has concentrated on the *process* of how the teachers have interpreted and responded to the G & T initiative. It also focused on what is happening at the present time with regard to recognition of gifted pupils and how many children have been being identified. It also looked at what provision was being offered to the gifted cohort and what, if any, changes in provision have eventuated over the ten years since the initiative was launched.

Secondly, to extract the *meaning* it was necessary to understand teacher perceptions towards the term 'gifted' and to explore individual teacher attitudes on implementing the G & T policy. Comprehending how the educators interpreted the G & T experience in their school environments and how these teachers perceived their educator responsibilities in the classroom, was considered as extracting meaning.

The third element in this study was to elicit the information from the participants through the researcher; therefore the researcher was the *primary instrument* in the accumulation of material, as opposed to the rigidity and impersonal nature of questionnaires, surveys or email contact style data collections. The researcher was fully involved in direct face-to-face contact with the participants and able to interact, vary questioning and respond in different ways, probing, encouraging and permitting extensive in-depth responses to questions. This *meaning* making process involved adjusting as the conversation evolved, adapting to this dynamic interaction and using the thinking/processing procedure to extend, clarify and direct the content of the conversation.

Fourthly, the *descriptive* element involved the use of wordsmith skills, in reflecting and interpreting what had been gleaned from the interviews and analytical process, concerning individual teacher's perceptions of the identification process for gifted children in local primary schools. This descriptive narrative element contrasts significantly with the quantitative

approach of statistically analysing and reporting in numerical format. The product of the interpretive study is a rich 'thick description' of the phenomenon under scrutiny (Thomas, 2009).

Finally, the *inductive* reasoning process is typical of qualitative inquiry, approached in a discovery style mode with the intention of producing theoretical implications from the findings. The inductive/emergent process was utilised in this qualitative study, gradually accumulating material, then analysing, interpreting and collating content to produce theoretical inferences from the relationships within the information collected. This contrasts markedly with the deductive strategy of initially selecting a theory, often producing a hypothesis, then measuring and comparing data to agree or disprove the original theory.

These key elements were crucial in gaining insight into how people think and form their ideas and in gaining understanding of teacher's individual perceptions relating to identifying and providing for gifted pupils (Thomas, 2009).

Although the term qualitative may tend to imply the exclusion of quantitative content, Erickson (1986) considers that some quantification can be included under the interpretive framework. A minimal amount of numerical information was involved when asking teachers the quantity of pupils identified as gifted or talented in their school setting.

For Patton (2002, p.95), qualitative/interpretive inquiry is intrinsically "constructionist or phenomenological in perspective." Further, Gray (2009, p.21) claims that "in terms of epistemology, interpretivism is closely linked to constructivism." In this educational study the intention is to assume subjective multiple perspectives, reflecting the complexity in "the different ways people construct their own understandings of the world through experience and maturation" (Gall *et al*., 2007, p.22).

> Qualitative research assumes there are multiple realities... that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perceptions...in this paradigm there are no

predetermined hypotheses, no treatments and no restrictions on the end product (Merriam, 1988, p.17).

This study did not seek a solitary viewpoint, but has assumed “multiple perspectives and multiple ‘truths’ depending on different points of view” (Patton, 1987, p.166). Thus linking with the social constructivist premise, it was anticipated that teachers would construct their own interpretations of the phenomenon; therefore these multiple realities were explored for teacher perceptions of how the G & T initiative has been received (McDonough, 2002). The researcher also constructs and writes findings of the study, constructing an interpretation and deciding how to present and report it for the reader. As Gall *et al*. (2007) confirm, researchers can establish this co-constructive role by including their level of involvement in the reporting process. This is known as reflexivity.

In positivism and the scientific, deductive approach to study, knowledge is seen as ‘out there’ waiting to be discovered. In stark contrast, the constructivism epistemological doctrine sees “truth and meaning... [as being] created by the subject’s interaction with the world... where meaning is individually constructed not discovered” (Gray, 2009, p.18). The knowledge that this research aims to interpret will be most appropriate under the constructivist paradigm. Spodek and Saracho (2006, p.511) confirm how “the power... [of constructivist studies] is the capacity to take the readers inside the thinking and actions of the teachers working in the kinds of settings that have come to define classroom life.”

The constructivist approach in cognitive psychology aligns with the Piagetian theory of intellectual development where Gall *et al*. (2007, p.22) claim that children do not assimilate information directly from formal teaching methods, but gradually build knowledge and understanding through interaction with their environment. This knowledge building/constructing process is significant in the identification and provision for gifted pupils, where teacher attitudes and classroom strategies significantly affect pupil attainment levels (McCoach and Siegle, 2007).

As this study utilises a qualitative/interpretive underpinning and incorporates a constructivist lens, the subcategory of phenomenology confirms a combinational approach of methodology and theoretical frameworks, due to this study not fitting precisely into one category. The phenomenological perspectives will now be discussed.

Theoretical perspectives - the phenomenological link

Phenomenological research involves studying how reality appears to people, the way they conceptualise the world, concerning the total experience, feelings and reflections. In the opinion of Ary, Jacobs Razavieh and Sorensen (2006, p.25) "qualitative research is rooted in *phenomenology* which sees social reality as unique... [where] the individual and his or her world [are] so interconnected" as to be inseparable. Ary *et al*. also state the assumption of multiple realities with phenomenological studies, where the researcher aims to discover the participant's thoughts, feelings and the nature of individual meanings related to the phenomenon under study. Phenomenology aligns with other qualitative approaches on how to understand reality as *constructed* by individuals (Gall *et al*., 2007). These proposals confirm the relationship between: the constructionism epistemological stance, a qualitative/interpretive theoretical perspective, a phenomenology methodology linking to the interview as a method and position where this study is based (Crotty, 1998). Crotty also maintains how constructionism and phenomenology are so closely related that it is impossible to claim an objective or a subjective perspective. This study does not claim either entire subjectivity or objectivity, believing that there is a continuum which adjusted as the study unfolded.

Conversely, the philosophical basis of phenomenology, in the opinion of Patton (2002, p.107), emphasises the use of 'bracketing' to conduct a thorough analysis aiming to expose the common threads of participant experiences. Phenomenology, as interpreted by Gray (2009), asserts that any previous experiences of the researcher will influence how meaning is constructed from interaction with the participant; therefore 'bracketing' of prior experiences is preferred to extract an unbiased, 'fresh perception.' This objectivity described as bracketing is at odds with the naturalistic approach to

inquiry. As Thomas (2009, p.76) reiterates, the researcher takes the "centrality of subjectivity... acknowledging... that our opinions, intentions, likes and dislikes – are an essential part of what we see and hear." Thomas adds that it is perfectly possible to be rigorous and even-handed without claiming complete objectivity or complete subjectivity in research. There is a balance to be obtained in this procedure. This stance is confirmed by Crotty (1998. p.12) who explains how being completely objective intimates a positivist approach to research.

A fundamental characteristic of phenomenological inquiry is the concept of a shared experience of a phenomenon; asking "What is the structure and essence of experience of the phenomenon for these people?" (Patton, 1990, p.106) There are similarities in writing from the individual participant perspective with the interpretivist and phenomenological research perspectives; however the latter perspective also incorporates similarities in participant experiences, which enables comparisons to be drawn. In this study it was essential to grasp the essence of these shared primary school teacher experiences and their individual approaches in applying the G & T policy. This study incorporates gaining insights into individual teacher perceptions of the phenomenon for example, how the G & T initiative has been received and implemented in primary schools in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. The appropriate approach of phenomenological research methodology will ensure that the intended interviews link tightly for an apposite method.

Although similarities exist between this study and the phenomenological research perspective, this study is not entirely consistent with phenomenology as there are differences. Emphasis is made on writing from a shared perspective in phenomenology, whereas in this study, although some shared perspective is involved for comparative purposes, in general the focus is on individual perceptions of experiences (McDonough, 2002). Further considerations arise when shared experience accounts in phenomenological inquiry are depicted as articulate, perceptive and persuasive (van Manen, 1990), whereas this report writing concentrates on the analysis of individual teacher perceptions and reflections of their experiences. Therefore, although

writing may be considered persuasive and perceptive with regard to understanding educational situations and procedures, this report would not be considered articulate in van Manen's criteria (McDonough, 2002).

In summary, interpretive research aims to understand individual perceptions of a phenomenon, utilising constructionism in assuming teachers construct their own meanings relating to the topic under study and incorporating some common characteristics of the phenomenological approach to give depth of meaning, feeling, reflections and perceptions. Directly relating to the aforementioned theoretical frameworks and perspectives, the method of information gathering will now be outlined.

Research method

The chosen research method is an integral part of the research structure and planning process that must align and harmonize with the elements underpinning the philosophical framework, the theoretical perspectives, and thus produce material that can be analysed and reported consistent within this framework (Silverman, 2011). This qualitative 'emergent' method described by Patton (2002) involves locating and enlisting research participants, the generation of information and the analysis of material accumulated. This discussion will directly relate to the aims, objectives and unit of study.

Locating suitable informants

Qualitative inquiry tends to concentrate on depth of understanding from a small sample and "purposive sampling focuses on selecting information rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study" (Patton, 2002, p.230). Reflecting this premise, it was essential to locate specific people who possessed the position and experience that directly relates to the purpose of this study. In this instance, educators with primary school teacher experience, currently operating in the local area.

Over sixty state-run primary school head teachers were contacted by letter with follow-up telephone calls and emails, achieving five head-teacher or teacher /coordinator interviews. Privately run schools were not included in order to retain an unbiased approach to selection. Four out of five informants

were female, but as the majority of primary school teaching staff are female this did not represent a problem in terms of a fair representation.

The generation of information

The method of information collection deemed to be most appropriate for this qualitative educational study was the technique of individual teacher interviews implemented in the local areas of Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Related documents were also obtained to support interview content. The design of this research was specifically to explore whether primary school teachers are attending to the needs of gifted pupils and implementing the G & T policy. In order to achieve previously outlined aims and objectives five one hour face-to-face primary school teacher interviews were arranged over a period of six weeks. These were conducted according to ethical principles as outlined in Appendix 7 and fully reflecting legal requirements as stated by the University of Gloucestershire Handbook (2011).

Interviews are widely used as an information gathering method in educational studies. For example, the 'key informant interview' format was used by Lynch, Lewis and Murphy in 1992, relating to their study in special needs education as outlined by Gall *et al*. (2007, p.243). In contrast with impersonal questionnaires and surveys, the technique of interviewing in this study involves direct contact between the researcher and the participant. As Patton (2002, p.340) confirms, this personal contact "allows us to enter the other person's perspective... [and] we interview people to find out what we cannot directly observe."

Interviews can be unstructured, structured or semi-structured, the choice being dependent upon the purpose and phenomenon being investigated (Patton, 2002). In this study the interview was semi-structured to provide the format of uniform questions utilised from the structured approach, whilst incorporating the opportunity for the expansion of thoughts, ideas and answers by introducing appropriate probes from the unstructured interview format. The semi-structured interview technique was the most effective and efficient method of collecting information for this research project as it facilitated the opportunity for in-depth interaction relating to educator perceptions and experiences of the phenomenon in the time limit imposed. As

previously mentioned, although there are common elements between this study and phenomenological approaches, there are also differences. Semi-structured interviews were carried out on this occasion whereas Ary *et al*. (2006) suggest the unstructured interview method to meet the assumptions of multiple perspectives and to obtain depth of informant feelings. Informant feelings were taken into account but interviews were not based on teacher feelings. The focus in this instance is whether teachers are implementing the G & T policy and on teacher attitudes towards educating gifted pupils.

Five semi-structured interviews were carried out in local primary schools, where classroom teachers and/or gifted and talented coordinators cooperated in communicating their perceptions of how, and to what extent, the G & T initiative has been addressed. This design met the qualitative interview criteria in conducting a "person-to-person encounter between the researched and the researcher and containing ethical considerations involving the researcher's role... to gain direct access to an interviewee's experience" (Schwandt, 2001, p.136) and the meaning of those experiences (Erickson, 1986). As confirmed by Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p.62) interviews are no longer seen as "neutral tools of data gathering... but active interactions... leading to negotiated, contextually based results."

Interview questions were structured to obtain the maximum amount of information from the participants that directly related to the purpose of this study and overall research questions. Basic demographic questions established the informant's name, teaching experience and length of time in the current primary school position. However, to elicit in-depth information and to gain insight into the three main themes that evolved from the literature review, fourteen open-ended questions were posed and probes inserted at opportune moments to confirm, explain, clarify or to expand on answers provided (Patton, 2002, Ritchie and Lewis, 2003).

Three approaches to questioning suggested by Gray (2004, p.35) were incorporated and included: exploratory 'what' questions aiming to understand a new concept, descriptive questions including the 'how' and 'who' to explain circumstances and positions, with explanatory questions clarifying 'why' events occurred. The focus not just being on the *what* is happening in

people's lives but *how* incidents, experiences or activities eventuated (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002).

Through the inclusion of the *what* and *how* of a dynamic social interaction, several authors argue that this aligns with story-telling and consequently, like a plot, a reflexive approach to interviews is required that involves analytic bracketing (Dingwall, 1997; Gubrium and Holstein, 2002; Silverman, 2011). In this study analytic bracketing to separate the how and why type questions were not structured in this manner, therefore interview coherence and diversity were not achieved to the depth outlined by these authors. However, using a combination of questioning techniques helped to produce insightful, in-depth answers from informants.

Reflection became a valuable tool during this study. Stepping back and reflecting regularly became part of the process. For example, self-evaluation and thinking about events, discussions, the way questions were asked or probes inserted, the reactions from informants was a practical and useful process. Patton (2002) confirms that self-reflection contributes to 'creative syntheses' in communicating the findings of the study.

The analysis of information generated

Although one-hour time slot appointments were made, some interviews did last longer than others, dependent upon after-interview participant commitments. All informants were asked the same set of questions in the same order however, probes were inserted differently dependent upon explanations supplied. Voice recorder interviews were all transcribed after each interview and additional note taking containing non-verbal information incorporated methodically to add to meaning (Ary *et al*., 2006). Analysis proceeded after sound familiarisation with the information, using thematic strands to identify key concepts and phrases. Content extracted was repeatedly checked and rechecked for accuracy, then colour coding was utilised to produce categories and sub-categories of relevant material. Pertinent content was then transferred to an A3 matrix for further examination ensuring the "information was useful, reliable and authentic" (Patton, 2002, p.384). Thorough analysis, validity and reliability are systematically addressed as detailed in Chapter 5. Analysis in line with interpretivism allowed the picture

of whether teachers were identifying and providing for gifted pupils to develop. Incorporating the phenomenological element of treating all information with equal importance (Patton, 2002) helped to locate further meaning and understanding of teacher attitudes in providing for gifted children.

Documents obtained from the interviews and further information from associated school websites were also analysed and compared with the interview conversations to clarify, confirm or conflict with information supplied.

Validity and reliability

The issues of validity and reliability are judged to be of considerable importance in this qualitative/interpretive educational study. As with the quantitative, scientific approach to inquiry, qualitative research also incorporates strategies to ensure credible and legitimate findings that accurately reflect events (McDonough, 2002; Silverman, 2011). There have been changes in the range of terminology relating to traditional evaluation in qualitative studies concerning reliability and validity. These include: truth, value, cogency, consistency, dependability, justifiability, authenticity, credibility, confirmability and transferability; all of which have been closely connected with qualitative study (McDonough, 2002; Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). However, in this study discussion will use the more conventional evaluative terms of validity and reliability associated with qualitative inquiry.

Validity

Validity is a criterion for setting standards for inquiry in social science (Schwandt, 2001) and depends upon the researcher as the primary instrument in qualitative study (Patton, 2002). It is equally important to demonstrate the principles of trustworthiness and rigour in qualitative studies as it is in the quantitative view (McDonough, 2002).

Two forms of validity are:

- internal validity involving how the outcomes of a study match the reality of the situation;
- external validity in qualitative study which is provided through “clear, in-depth details,” enabling the assessment of ‘typicality’ instead of

quantifiable ‘generalisations’ (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000, p.109).

In this study the principles used in this instance are outlined under these two categories of validity.

Internal validity

Internal validity applies to this study in whether the content is plausible and credible in the context of the research issue. Techniques recommended by Patton (2002) have been incorporated including: post-interview analysis, reflection and self-evaluation.

Post-interview analysis:

- accurate transcriptions and note-taking;
- any problems that occurred and ways of improving interviewing techniques;
- whether all the issues were covered in sufficient depth;
- was follow-up contact for documents or confirmation/clarifications needed?

Reflection:

- the quality of the interview information produced;
- authenticity and reliability of the informant and information they presented;
- whether the issues were covered in sufficient detail on each occasion;
- the interview setting – interruptions, layout, atmosphere, power plays, conditions;
- considering observations of participant actions and reactions, non-verbal communication in posture, facial changes and body language.

Self-evaluation concentrated on performance:

- questioning;
- probe insertion;
- whether rapport was established;
- intuitive elements to add to note taking for further reference.

The techniques above were seen as ensuring the information generated met the criteria of being plausible, credible, reliable and incorporating "the rigour of qualitative inquiry" (Patton, 2002, p.384).

External validity

External validity criteria are met in the in-depth descriptions in the findings and discussion chapters that will enable the reader to judge to what extent the findings can be transferred and compared to other similar situations or educational settings. Generalisability adheres to the quantitative domain in research which is not feasible in this naturalistic and interpretive study.

With regard to triangulation, according to Patton (2002, p.247) there are four basic types which aim to test consistency, namely:

- data triangulation (the most common);
- theory triangulation;
- investigator triangulation;
- methodological triangulation.

The use of multiple data sources (data triangulation) has also been incorporated here in order to add to consistency in this study, as school policies, G & T registers and such documents that support (or oppose) the interviewee's interpretation of the phenomenon, were collected and collated. In addition to this, recent OfSTED publications, which revealed opposing views or support findings, also added to the overall understanding of the material being analysed.

Reliability

Reliability in research is seen by Schwandt (2001) as when the account under study is confirmed as being reproducible by another person, whereas Cohen *et al*. (2000) propose that although quantitative study replication is feasible, in qualitative unique style research, reliability is not practicable to any significant extent. Silverman (2011) continues to argue that if the social world is continuously changing and evolving then this would make it impossible to accurately assess findings as nothing is stable. In this instance a local snapshot of understanding primary school teachers attitudes and approaches

to the G & T policy, should reflect changes that have eventuated over the last ten years.

One aim when interviewing was to put participants at ease, enabling open, relaxed conversations which would not necessarily be replicated by other researchers due to personality variations.

Digital voice recordings were transcribed word for word which reflect the assumption of reliability by eliminating any reconstruction of events by the researcher (Silverman, 2011).

Silverman (2011) claims that reliability is obtained through the use of structured interview style questions. However this study partially met this claim by incorporating structured questions posed for all participants but including probes to elicit further explanations in the semi-structured format.

Cohen *et al*. (2000, p.119) suggest that external reliability may be acceptable by attending to:

1. the status position of the researcher;
2. the choice of informant/respondents;
3. the social situations and conditions;
4. the analytic constructs and premises that are used;
5. the methods of data collection and analysis.

Researcher status position, choice of informants, social situations and conditions with analytic constructs and premises are discussed below, whereas details of the data collection and analysis will be discussed further in Chapters 4 and 5.

It is claimed by Nunan (2007) that the *researcher status position* is clarified through the social position they hold in the investigation. In this instance the researcher position is, having been employed in primary school education for many years and visiting primary school locations for interviews, indicative of a strong insider relationship from the common experience and common interest viewpoint. However, no contact (apart from telephone or emails) with any of the participants previous to this situation was encountered, thus confirming

that prior friendships did not exist so this research could be replicated to a reasonable degree by another teacher, with similar experience.

Informant choices relates to the participation of some informants whilst eliminating others. In this study primary school teachers were deliberately invited and enlisted as they alone were able to present perceptions relating to the research questions (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). The five teachers who were enlisted were the only ones to reply to invitations, so selection was by convenience and others precluded by their choice not to respond. This situation of limited responses is not unique, as the 10% response was similar to that received by Koshy *et al.* (2010).

The *social situations and conditions* influencing the type of information divulged and the extent to which an informant will reveal information (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982) is not a major concern in this research. The personality of the researcher and the way in which the questions were asked, along with the mood of both parties at that time, cannot be replicated (McDonough, 2002). Therefore, another researcher would produce what would be considered as a secondary interpretation (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982).

Analytic constructs and premises involve the precise assumptions that the study is based on, to assist in replication (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). As assumptions, methodologies and methods have been clearly outlined, the background information and the purpose and contextual basis would indicate full compliance with premises. With regard to analytic constructs, McDonough (2002) claims that by developing themes and clarifying the analytical framework the replication process will be enhanced. In this study the individual teachers were the units of analysis and the identification, provision and teacher attitudes towards educating G & T pupils are the major categories. Furthermore, sub categories were produced by the researcher in response to the interview outcomes. These categories emerged from the information given in response to questions posed to the participants.

Methods of data collection and analysis relates to the scope and descriptions of the strategies used to collect data (LeCompte and Goetz, 1982). Although

this interpretive study involved a level of intuitive personal explanations and understandings, the method detailed within this chapter and the audio recordings of interviews, combined with additional paperwork collected, attends to this section for replication criteria. In addition, this research entailed a deliberate attempt at the core of this study, to understand the thoughts and meanings (Spradley, 1980) of educators' perceptions and therefore analysis is centred on teacher experiences (McDonough, 2002).

In summary, this discussion has outlined the five criteria for addressing external reliability, described by LeCompte and Goetz (1982) as needed for potential replication in the reporting and analysing of a phenomenon. At the core of this qualitative/interpretive study, is the aim to produce a full and accurate picture of the phenomena as it exists; a serious attempt to understand and report, whilst adhering to the principles of validity and reliability (Patton, 2002).

Conclusion

The study is designed to discover whether primary school teachers are implementing the G & T initiative. Therefore, this study is designed to understand teacher attitudes and practices relating to the education of academically gifted pupils and the extent of identification and provision in the local area.

This chapter has presented the character of the qualitative inquiry style foundations of this study and clarified the direct links between the methodology and choice of method for information generation. The importance of the purpose of the research and its relationship to its theoretical underpinnings has been explained, as well as addressing the issues of validity and reliability as they relate to this educational study. The findings from five primary school teacher interviews will be provided in Chapter 4 and the associated discussion is presented in Chapter 5.

Thoughts of gifted children:

I just think more - I think too much.
I can learn fast and understand things above my age.
Not much difference. Just that we can think past our normal level.
Physically no, mentally yes.
We just think completely differently, like we have different views of the world and sort of compute things faster.
I think non-gifted people tend to think in a straight line but I tend to think 'if this happens then what else could happen?'
I'm the best in the class - me and another girl are the only people who [do] all our own stuff that the teacher sets us.

"Okay, I'm different — just let me show you HOW DIFFERENT I can be."

Kirby and Townsend (2004, p.4).

Chapter 4

Findings

If I were good at sports, on sports day everyone would clap and I may even get a medal or a silver cup, but because I am good at maths and science I have to keep quiet about it.

Comment by pupil, related by teacher during interview, 2012.

Introduction

The current research focused on accessing five primary school educators for individual interviewing sessions, aimed at gaining insights into the themes that evolved from the literature review and the questions that arose from these concepts, as outlined in Chapter 1.

These include:

1. teacher attitudes towards providing for gifted pupils;
2. the identification process applied;
3. the types of provision being implemented;
4. sub-themes that related to the policy.

I did not intend to report all information collected, but rather to identify the key elements within the transcriptions that directly related to the research questions and the purpose of the study. This approach provides:

- awareness of the current position;
- illumination of current teacher perceptions; and
- contextual background for this educational study (Thomas, 2009).

The five interviews in this study reflect the character of qualitative inquiry, involving a naturalistic, inductive approach, using participant interviews with open-ended questions, and taking place in natural settings. (Schwandt, 2001; Patton, 2002) Patton suggests that the inductive, discovery oriented approach limits researcher control of the setting and the findings that may eventuate. However, initial inductive analysis allowed classification and regularities to

emerge, followed by deductive analysis, incorporated to confirm patterns or variances and using abductive strategies in making inferences based on available information (Schwandt, 2001: Patton, 2002).

The five schools have been coded, to ensure confidentiality in the protection of individual schools, individual teacher identity and for practical application from the researcher's point of view. The codes in order of interviewing are: C1, S1, G1, S2 and C2. I interviewed five teachers for a minimum of an hour on each occasion. Five audio tapes were transcribed fully and accurately with supplementary notes pertaining to additional perceptions and observational information.

Although the method involved teacher interviews, participant observation played a large part in constructing the fuller picture that evolved overall, in particular, with regard to teacher attitudes (Patton, 2002). Examples of observations and reflections of this experience from the researcher's perspective are now included in a narrative style. "The validity of the story is attested to by its rich detail and revealing descriptions" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p.484).

I will now outline a summary of these interpretations and results obtained under individual headings utilising a narrative approach as outlined by Schwandt (2001) and aiming to illuminate personal experiences and perceptions of the phenomena under study (Thomas, 2009).

Interview one – C1

Contextual background

The first primary school coded as C1, was located in an affluent area of Gloucestershire where many "professional parents and some precocious children" (C1) reside. This one hour interview was with a highly experienced head teacher/gifted coordinator, who has taken responsibility in the current school for eight years in providing educational opportunities for approximately 270 children.

Identification

The staff had identified 10% of children enrolled as gifted and/or talented which aligns with G & T policy (1999) guidelines. The identification process appears well established and initial identification is achieved through use of teacher assessment and tests in different subject areas, as proposed by Davis and Rimm (1989) and Renzulli (2004 see p.16). An integral part of the process was confirmation through the use of observation, portfolio construction and government supplied documentation, for example: DFES, DFEE, NACE, QCA, IQS, CQS and BPVS testing. “Children show what they have achieved, demonstrated in the results of their work” (C1) thus conforming to techniques suggested by other experts (Kingore, 1993, see p.17). This head teacher /coordinator confirmed that all staff are continuously checking for signs of giftedness in all children, thereby conforming to IQS (2010, see p.19).

Concern in this school was shown for the identification of very young children (Simonton, 2009, see p.16) preferring to commence more formal identification gradually during KS1 learning situations. The participant explained how children enter school between 4 – 5 years of age; “There is a huge gap –they have 1/5 more life – therefore we can identify some children and miss others as, due to age, their development is further ahead.” In this area it is expected that children will start school with better language skills and a good vocabulary; however they are not always gifted or more able, as pupil skills were generally acquired from a rich, supportive home environment. The staff at C1 were said to be highly competent and experienced, as it had been found that “less experienced teachers were not able to identify and provide for more able children as effectively,” agreeing with Haight (2006, see p.16) and Chessman (2010).

Labels

The respondent confirmed that they are comfortable in using the ‘more able’ and ‘gifted’ terminology to cover above average ability categories, partially in line with DfEE (1999; DCSF, 2008) guidelines. She confirmed that the staff holds the view that the academically gifted cohort is seen as a special

needs category, requiring their needs to be met. This view is in line with Freeman's (1991) findings in her Gulbenkian Project.

Registers

The G & T register is detailed and there is regular contact with parents regarding pupil gifted status. "We have to inform parents... [and do so] through normal home communication," thus aligning with IQS (2010). However, the respondent did comment that some parents find it hard when they are told their child is not gifted, so "this has to be put over in a positive way."

Provision

In this more affluent neighbourhood, the C1 coordinator confirmed that they "were already doing lots for gifted pupils before the initiative – no change really except that we have to provide registers and inform parents." Teachers were continuously checking children as it was part of their School Improvement Plan, with differentiation incorporated to attend to individual needs. "Teachers here have to do what is required... they are expected to attend to all needs, no matter what their level of ability." This broad approach reflects the personalised learning models as outlined by the Schools White Paper (2006) and Dracup DSCF (2007, see p.21) but omitting to incorporate any acceleration as mentioned previously (see p.23). This school used the 'must, should, could approach' (explained further p. 58) when setting age related targets, moving on to individual targets in pupil work books. Although enrichment is mentioned on the school website, no detail of content for after school clubs is available.

According to the interviewee, if there is a gap the staff would very soon recognise it, respond and attend to any necessary adjustment in provision. This philosophy complies with key elements of classroom organisation and flexibility (Freeman, 2001) and other recommendations by Eyre and McClure (2001).

Teacher attitudes

The interviewee confirmed that initially staff found attending to talented needs much easier to accept than attending to academically gifted pupil needs, adding that one member of staff objected to providing for gifted pupils,

seeing the gifted education strategy as elitist. The coordinator continued, “they had no option – they had to do it... [even though] some may feel threatened when very bright children come in here.” She explained that due to having her own child who read at the age of 2 ½ she was incentivised to read all information pertaining to gifted children. A positive learning and teaching environment is emphasised by the head teacher/coordinator, thereby directly affecting identification and provision (Koshy and Pinheiro-Torres, 2012). Without support and training teacher resentment could affect teacher nominations for gifted status as previously outlined (Gross, 2004; Reis and Renzulli, 2004).

Professional development

As the gifted coordinator, the head teacher has participated in furthering her own education, attending PD courses and provided ongoing training for all staff. She reported the staff as competent even though “they all have strengths and weaknesses but all are self-confident regarding training.” The strong leadership and ongoing training could contribute to positive teacher attitudes as previously indicated by Geake and Gross (2008, see p.27) but another element could hold an influence; the affluent neighbourhood predictor as outlined by Gagné and Nadeau (1985, see p.27).

Additional information

The strength of the G & T initiative is seen by this participant as the early identification of children previously sidelined, “due to OfSTED monitoring, schools are now forced to actively attend to all student needs” (C1). The coordinator noted a weakness in the initiative policy in identifying younger children as gifted, as advanced vocabulary can be due to home environment and the interaction with older siblings, therefore indicators may be confusing. The biggest changes over the last ten years from this interviewee’s view has been the extent of parent involvement, the focus on gifted pupils and the close monitoring of registers. The interviewee continued that personally she felt no real changes due to financial constraints, claiming that staff had always received training in attending to the range of pupil needs in the classroom.

Documents

The supplied copy of the combined gifted and talented register provides detailed information for each pupil, including confirmation of each parent being informed of the pupil's gifted (or talented) status. The content shows how many Reception level children can count – some up to 100 – along with the ability to read, write and the possession of good ICT skills, reflecting the affluent neighbourhood where this school is situated. This level of skill acquisition may suggest there could well be more than the stated 10% of children categorised as gifted or talented. An 'excellent' OfSTED (2009) rating in this instance refers to the 'excellent provision, providing very high quality education for its pupils' with learning difficulties being below the national average. The most recent governors' report was supplied showing the latest information on pupils with special needs including the children identified as gifted. Also supplied was the school gifted (and talented) identification sheet procedures, that appear to be a summary of the IQS and CQS documents, including questions to ask, actions to take and the intended purpose of identification.

> *We are altogether too easily deceived by the time-worn argument that the gifted student, 'the genius' perhaps, will 'get along somehow without much teaching. The fact is, the gifted... and the brilliant... are the ones who need the closest attention of the skilful mechanic.*
>
> *F. W. Jones (1912, p.90).*

Interview 2 - S1

Contextual background

The second interview was with the gifted and talented coordinator in a large primary school of over 400 pupils, located in Wiltshire and coded as S1. This school was situated where the majority of accommodation appeared to be older style, high density housing, where "a significant proportion of parents could not afford outings" and many children enjoyed free school meals. This participant had approximately two years experience as gifted coordinator, with

fourteen years teaching experience altogether. Her organisation, processes and procedures, full explanations and examples appeared to reflect her aim to provide the best possible learning opportunities for all children. Although the school was well-used with worn floor coverings and long corridors with old fashioned wooden doors punctuating the different coloured uneven walls, the atmosphere on this occasion was happy and positive.

Identification

The staff at school at S1 has identified 10% of pupils as gifted and/or talented, utlising checklists, a variety of work samples and tests as IQS and CQS prescribe. This 'in school' context for identification is confirmed as necessary by Bates and Munday (2005, see p.16), the variety of integrated procedures reflects the notion that "giftedness is shaped by multiple influences" (Plucker and Barab, 2005, see p.16) and that IQ tests alone are insufficient for the multi-dimensional nature of giftedness (Sternberg, 2004; White, 2006, see p.17).The coordinator commented that she appreciated that ability levels across schools would not be the same, (Bailey *et al.,* 2008, see p.11). She added that they were able to quickly identify children not making progress through use of a continuum and ongoing consultation with parents ensures an in-depth analysis of ability levels for all pupils. This participant has lifted suggestions for identification from the National Strategies document for gifted pupils (NQS) as "it includes all the features of giftedness that the staff thought as usable." She added that this school concentrated on the identification process, followed by individual tracking across the school to ensure challenge and progression. Most of the identification and provision strategies may have been established at an earlier time, as the coordinator commented that "it is what we have always done – just more focus on the gifted children."

Labels

Although the coordinator from S1 said that they "treat all children the same," nevertheless, enrichment activities and acceleration opportunities were provided only to high ability students. This appears to contradict the recommendation by Dracup (DSCF, 2007) suggesting a personalised approach for accommodating pupil needs. Categorising pupils as gifted was

not seen as problematic and parents were kept fully informed of pupil ability status. The support for labelling contradicts claims by Freeman (1992, see p.18).

Registers

Registers in this school are compiled jointly by teachers and parents and updated bi-annually in February and November. Register content includes: any changes over the year, pupil names, levels and subjects, pupils with potential who may not be performing and reasons for being on the register as recommended by IQS. This detail provides the qualitative and quantitative information for close tracking as outlined by Dracup (2007, see p.19). The coordinator confirmed that parents receive reports every term and find that with regular contact any further student help needed is recognised and dealt with. “If we tell the parents what is happening they have the opportunity to offer support” (S1).

Provision

The participant at S1 demonstrated well established processes and procedures in provision for gifted pupils. She related that due to the size of the school (almost 400 pupils) they were able to operate a setting arrangement of three classes in each year group for core subjects: literacy, numeracy and science - starting with Year 2. She emphasised that setting arrangement had achieved success results for all children, with the more able “really moving on well” (S1). Setting for foundation subjects was included where appropriate. In all classrooms they operated the ability level tasks known as ‘must, should and could’ levels, where additional challenges were incorporated for higher achievers (see fig. 1 below). Each child in S1 had individual targets with skills and knowledge recorded via tracking on a continuum, linked to National Curriculum levels (1999). An example of acceleration provided was with several year 5s working regularly with year 6s most successfully, a strategy as endorsed by Gallagher (1996; Gross, 1997, see p.23). This school has also provided enrichment opportunities as endorsed by Treffinger *et al*. (2009, see p.24), with many external trips; to Bath University for mini teaching sessions and a tour, the Science Museum in London, as well as linking with the local secondary school for an engineering club, maths days, communication days

and writing sessions. Extracurricular activities included sports, art and drama clubs, however, academic clubs were not offered. This S1 coordinator stressed that “the key for success was teamwork, consultation and communication.”

Figure 1 below is an example of the three stages of challenge set at S1. The one star is the ‘must be able to’ do task, the second two star is the ‘should be able to’ do task with the three star ‘could do’ activity to challenge the more able category and anyone else who wants to try.

Figure 1

As the illustration above shows, gifted children are not a homogenous group (Freeman, 2001, see p.22) and so should be treated as different with different needs and levels of ability.

Joad's reflections upon being a gifted child underline the need for teachers to recognise this:

> *I have come to the conclusion that the degree of my difference from most people exceeds the average of most people's difference from one another; or, to put it more briefly, that my reactions to many things don't conform to popular patterns.*
>
> *C.E.M. Joad, 1947 (Gross, 1998 p.1).*

Teacher attitudes

The participant emphasised that a strong teamwork spirit existed in the S1 school-wide approach of aiming to optimise achievement for all pupils, an approach which according to Wright, Horn and Sanders (1997) can have a significant positive impact on learning. When asked how teachers had responded to education for gifted children, the S1 coordinator replied "all our teachers have taken this on board... they became part of the whole process through their planning... [and] the focus on teamwork and consultation means progress for all pupils... [this] is just part of good teaching practice."

The coordinator's description infers a positive and supportive environment with high expectations of teachers and pupils alike, which contradicts the claim by Gagné and Nadeau (1985, see p.27) that teachers from more challenging areas demonstrate negative attitudes towards gifted children.

Professional development

The interviewee reported that all teachers had taken part in extensive PD and that "it was a must do" as tracking achievement levels is just one of several essential procedures. Some training was through the local council on learning styles and also included regular sessions with the coordinator to build up specific skills in school which was highly beneficial, as proposed by Bégin and Gagné (1994). The main focus of the school development plan was literacy, and the related PD has included how to identify gifted pupils, how to recognise the next steps and how to move children forward.

Additional information

The strength of the G & T policy is seen as more focus on the gifted end of the ability spectrum; however this coordinator recognised no weaknesses, commenting “we have always done this, just more focus on gifted pupils.”

The impact of funding withdrawal (see page 4) in the view of S1 has meant the significant reduction of enrichment activities for gifted pupils as parents in this area cannot afford to pay for outings. LA support has been withdrawn, coordinators network meetings have disbanded, lack of PD leave coordinators trying to provide support for each other and take control of in-school development for teachers. It is hoped that further links with secondary schools can be arranged, aiming to provide group activities and learning opportunities for gifted pupils.

Documents

The school G & T policy clearly set out all relevant aspects for gifted provision in key stages. Samples of the detailed G & T register and original copies of the gifted tracking grid tend to support that gifted pupil needs are being implemented consistently in line with policy. To verify this position, I accessed the school’s latest OfSTED report (2010) where leadership and management were described as ‘good’ and confirmed that good assessment procedures and detailed tracking of pupil’s progress provides an accurate picture of pupil needs. The school was rated as ‘good’ in some areas and ‘satisfactory’ in others with attainment rising rapidly. The latter comment reflects the coordinator’s claim that “the gifted children are moving on well.” The OfSTED report noted that one-third of pupils have special needs and confirms that this school is situated in a deprived area. Further comments corroborated the wide range of enrichment and extracurricular activities for all children, but KS2 need to be challenged more to maximise learning. Therefore, this report confirms that systems are well established and effective, particularly in Early Years and KS1. In this case the documents corresponded with the interview content.

Interview 3 – G1

Contextual background

This gifted coordinator had been teaching since 1974, spending the last 5 years in the current primary school coded as G1, located in a mixed socioeconomic area of Gloucestershire. This participant confirmed she had been recently installed as the first gifted coordinator, which gave the impression of little prior attention to more able pupils in this school of 360 children. This participant openly admitted she was new to the job which was reinforced by her not being able to find the socket to plug in her computer and, in particular, when she did not know any names of government policy documents. However, the corridors of the school were festooned with quality, framed, colourful examples of children's work and tended to contrast with the coordinator's comments of being the first gifted coordinator.

Identification

The interviewee confirmed that she found giftedness definitions and identification of gifted pupils the "trickiest... most difficult and biggest concern." This comment concurs with Balchin's (2009, see p.14) claim that teachers find definitions of giftedness a real dilemma. The staff held meetings to discuss common characteristics of giftedness, aiming to define how they would recognise children with exceptional ability out of the 360 pupils in this school. Jointly discussing these broad definitions brought the staff together "so we were all singing from the same hymn sheet." However, the staff recognised how giftedness in one school area may be at a totally different level from a school in another location, as emphasised by Bailey *et al.* (2008, see p.11). The coordinator commented how some gifted pupils were easy to identify, for example when "a child in Year 4 writes plays and had some of her work published," while the identification of other gifted pupils was a much more complex task. She also related how one teacher had experienced a training course for G & T and was contributing with advice, but a boxful of policy documents and G & T information was yet to be tackled. The staff had identified 12.5% of pupils in this school as gifted.

Labels

This participant confirmed that the Reception level teaching staff do not want to label children, due to some children being 'hot housed' and appearing ahead when "just advanced due to home input," in their ability to communicate effectively. She added that other teachers were hesitant, preferring to use alternative 'more able' terminology as suggested by Mandelman *et al*. (2010, see p.18).

Registers

A basic outline of a tracking sheet for the G & T register has been produced and the staff intend to use SAT's and optional SAT's results to update the register. This document has space for names, year level, class, provision and end of year level achieved, including IQS (2010) recommending that all teachers should contribute to ongoing records (see p.19). There was concern about communicating gifted status to parents as teachers thought parents' expectations would rise resulting in pressure on the children to perform. Also, prior experience of sending pupils on a science detective programme to a secondary school resulted in the receiving school contacting parents to say their child was gifted. This created a problem amongst competitive parents as outlined by Koshy and Pinheiro-Torres (2012, p.19). The local authority was expecting the updated register three times a year and this was seen as a "tricky" task.

Provision

"Teachers do the best they can to provide but some do more than others" the participant confirmed, adding that some teachers of pupils with advanced mathematics had contacted the high school for advice on provision for advanced ability levels. She continued to suggest that teachers were also reluctant to provide activities for gifted students until after the SAT's – as meeting minimum targets was involved in the timing problem. She stated that there was general consensus that it was part of their job to do the very best for all children and staff were prepared to research for appropriate materials in order to be effective. According to IQS (2010, see p.15) provision is the key to identification.

Teacher attitudes

Many teachers in this school were highly sceptical about identifying and labelling children, the participant disclosed, but talented children were easier to identify and well provided for with the choir, orchestra, arts, music and sports. The gifted coordinator has a gifted child of her own yet had misgivings about labelling gifted pupils or identifying young children, as “they should be developing social and emotional skills, building boxes and such like... they will catch up with academic stuff later on.” Quality teaching standards were confirmed when being shown down passage ways, where through open doors of classrooms, children appeared to be thoroughly enjoying a wide variety of learning activities. There was laughing, chanting, reciting, talking, singing and listening with enthusiasm amongst colourful banners, wall charts, ceiling spelling lists and interactive white-board learning sessions that were in progress. The combination of observations and interviewee input suggested this school to be an impressively rich, quality learning environment for primary school children.

Professional development

Observation and discussion confirmed that this school was in the setting up stages of recognising and providing for gifted pupils. The coordinator confirmed that professional development was also in the cultivation phase, where meetings were taking place but much more depth and breadth was needed through close attention to policy documents and application thereof.

Additional information

From this coordinator’s view the strength of the G & T initiative was seen to be providing a much higher profile for gifted children. A positive influence was also seen with OfSTED checking for progress and ‘challenge’ “the new buzzword” and with the LA monitoring register content for progress and tracking of academically gifted pupils. A weakness was seen to be “no time in the curriculum for so many things the teachers and schools would like to include but cannot” (G1).

The funding withdrawal for gifted education has impacted the school by having to make a staff member redundant “but G & T will still go on” (G1).

Documents

The staff had structured a basic school policy in February 2009 with little detail and titled Gifted, Talented, and More Able Policy, but were unable to provide further supporting documents. This could be attributed to the fact that the G & T coordinator had only been in the role for a matter of months. Nevertheless, the consecutive 'outstanding' OfSTED (2007, 2011) reports related to pupils' academic performance, pupil attendance and teacher effectiveness, suggesting that standards have been consistently high for some years with regard to providing for all pupil needs.

Interview 4 –S2

Contextual background information

The fourth interview was with a head teacher/gifted coordinator in a primary school of 263 pupils in Wiltshire, coded as S2. This was his 5th year as head teacher in this mixed socioeconomic area and he had taught for 18 years in total. This school had received substantial local training in identification and provision for gifted pupils and had set up appropriate systems which were being implemented. He also emphasised more than once the pressures that his hard working, trustworthy staff were under with paperwork, reports and time issues.

Identification

The staff in this school had identified 20% of pupils as gifted, justifying this decision by reinforcing comments made by other participants that the top 10% in one school can be operating on a completely different level from the top 10% in another school. The interviewee explained "therefore, I have made comparisons so I am confident that my 20% are definitely gifted or talented," thus demonstrating the professional freedom in identification as described by Koshy *et al.* (2010, see p.16). This school had received local training in identification of gifted pupils and had set up appropriate systems which were being implemented. This head teacher/coordinator confirmed that the key elements for staff were agreeing on defining what giftedness means, deciding how to identify these more able pupils, then building a G & T policy around those details. He also confirmed that they follow the NQS for identification provided by the LA expert. Aiming for cross-school consistency they have built

their own identification policy and structured the principles behind it, thus endorsing the view of Eyre and McClure (2001, see p.13).

Provision

The participant revealed that provision in the S2 school was approached through setting in maths and five-way differentiation (Hymer, 2009, see p.22) with pupil work samples collected in a portfolio system of record keeping as suggested by Van Tassel-Baska (2005, see p.17). A consistent approach to provision across the school was emphasised here, as the School Development Plan contained key actions and success criteria in support of provision for gifted pupils. As this school was relatively small (263 pupils) few setting arrangements were incorporated; however, linking with local secondary schools provided: maths challenges, master classes and extended writing activities. He commented that teachers did feel the pressure to ensure minimum year 6 SAT's were met, but ongoing tracking (IQS, 2020) of individual pupil progress provided target setting at the beginning of each year. Apart from the usual extracurricular activities they also provided "a girls' football team, aiming for all round development in all children in their care" (S2).

Labels

In the beginning "many [teachers] were highly sceptical of providing for gifted pupils," admitting to not being really sure what the terms represented, with some teachers claiming that "all children are gifted" (S2). However, labelling pupils after training was not seen as a problem in this school, with G & T policy documents confirming it is "OK to be bright."

Registers

The participant confirmed that a G & T register is maintained and updated regularly, including individual pupil information and the subject areas where high ability is identified. Regular communication is also maintained with parents where children's portfolios of achievement are presented.

Teacher attitudes

Although some teachers may feel threatened when encountering academically gifted pupils, the respondent advised that "they have no choice

with identification and provision – it is part of their job and what they do – it is what the job is – attending to pupil needs." He added that some teachers had resisted the initiative for academically gifted pupils, yet accepted the talented cohort more readily, emphasising the importance of consistency in applying procedures by teachers across the school and having to bring the staff along with him whatever their personal feelings. "There is a huge pressure to perform; to get all children to a minimum level in Year 6 SATs and pressure to perform for OfSTED in the 'snapshot' they take during inspections" (S2).

Professional development

This head teacher/coordinator had strong guidance from the local G & T advisor to: set up procedures, managing registers, structuring tracking systems, identification strategies, options for provision, school policy and for ongoing training for teachers. He confirmed how beneficial this support and training had been for the whole school and that ongoing teacher support was necessary to ensure across school consistency, to refine procedures and to establish sound routines. Through training teacher resistance has reduced, but it was a case of "work in progress" to ensure pupil needs were met on a daily basis.

Additional information

In the opinion of this interviewee, "the G & T initiative shows us exactly where children are in their progress and also where schools should be" in addition effective identification and provision strategies for learning are seen as the strengths of policy. In contrast, the weakness of the initiative for this participant is that "continuity is missing," as this "snappy idea" prompts action, "then again, all things change, every time." Therefore concern was emphasised for the long term for gifted children.

According to this coordinator changes over the last decade include:

- pressure of time for teachers in attempting to maximise individual pupil progress;
- load of paperwork pressure on teachers for OfSTED inspections for a "snapshot" of the school;
- less contact now with secondary schools as there are more academies and free schools in last 4 years;

- funding withdrawal therefore problems with the general budget – need to prioritise (e.g. either new carpets or maintenance);
- lack of resources meaning the needs of all pupils cannot be met;
- pressure on schools and teachers to perform (S2).

Documents

The school's OfSTED reports (2008/2011) indicated 'good' overall teaching and learning with areas for improvement suggested in the setting of targets, improved tracking and challenge for more able pupils, suggesting this school had consistently demonstrated competent standards over a few years. The well structured school G & T policy includes an ethos of it is "O.K to be bright," in addition to a detailed checklist for identification procedures, both of which were readily supplied. This head teacher/coordinator also provided copies of the NQS standards for G & T education which they follow. The documents are all in place and it appears that needs are being attended to, however, the school site lists all school clubs targeted at talented as opposed to gifted pupils. In this instance, the supporting documents confirmed that good practices were already established and that processes and procedures were in the stages of being addressed and refined.

Interview 5 – C2

Contextual background

The fifth interview was with the "inclusion coordinator" in the final primary school interview, located in an affluent area in Gloucestershire, coded as C2. This interview took place in an open plan style staff room adjoining the head teacher's office, overlooking the playground occupied by 200 pupils.

Identification

The coordinator claimed they had structured a G & T school policy and "used a checklist constructed by using combined efforts from other schools ideas, or teacher intuition" to identify 10% of G & T children. Using basic checklists and teacher nomination/intuition aligns with Winstanley's (2004) claim that teacher assessment is the most widely used identification process in England. The coordinator at C2 had recently transferred from a secondary school environment and was possibly not too au fait with setting up primary school strategies and the needs of the age groups involved.

Labels

The interviewee in this instance claimed that the gifted label was not appropriate as it held elitist connotations and could be extremely divisive. “Parents can be very awkward... there is a high proportion of special needs in this school so we have to be sensitive to parent feelings. There are 4.5% SEN in this in a school of 200 children, the average for schools is 2.7%.” This attitude aligns with findings from Freeman (1998, see p.18) and teacher discomfort with the gifted label.

Registers

The use of registers as recommended by IQS (see p.19) was not incorporated in this instance, supporting findings by Koshy *et al.* (2010), that many schools do not conform to register policy requirements. Several contradictory statements were made during our conversation. For example, she stated that registers are used at the beginning of the year to track pupil progress and are very fluid. Later in the conversation the coordinator then stated that no child ever comes off the register, adding that “there is no separate register for G & T... most parents do not know the register exists.” A further contradiction arose when relating that at parent meetings, staff inform parents that the register is used for tracking to maximise individual potential.

Provision

The inclusivity coordinator at C2 had set up a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) for all pupils to access different levels of challenge in games and puzzles. Differentiation was incorporated in core subject areas, but grade skipping or setting was not considered as the emphasis was on target setting, challenging and tracking for all students. “Well you wouldn’t put a year 6 pupil working below his class down into year 3, so why would you put a year 3 up with year 4 or 5, or 6?” (C2). She added that teaching assistants work with all groups; the less able and the more able. One child who is working well above her class is occasionally taken out for individual tuition, as with the less able children.

> If children are taken out to a science event, then some gifted may go but also others who may enjoy the experience, so parents do not really know who the gifted pupils are. We do not advertise them anymore

than you would advertise the less able children. It would not be inappropriate [to advertise the gifted children] we treat all children the same (C2).

This inclusivity approach of ensuring “all children are treated the same and ignoring differences” is not what was recommended for inclusion. Inclusion is defined by Warnock (2005, p.38) as “the process of maximising the entitlement of all pupils to a broad, relevant and stimulating curriculum... it is about adequate provision to meet each pupil’s needs with the most appropriate provision.”

Provision for talented children appeared more socially accepted by teaching staff in C2, readily providing school facilities for a talented dancer to practice.

Teacher attitudes

Initial reactions to providing for gifted children among the staff were “very, very uneasy... [considering that it was] a government sop to appease middle class parents... giftedness holds connotations and can be extremely divisive... teachers hold different perceptions of what giftedness is” (C2).The firm focus on inclusivity had helped with teacher attitudes and the “planning is part of the non-negotiables and has to include all ability levels... if we don’t attend to their needs we would be failing them” (C2). The coordinator admitted she had a gifted daughter herself, yet repeated that all children had to be treated the same.

Professional development

The participant confirmed that a consultant had recently been enlisted to advise the school and train staff in how to provide some depth and bring children on to the next level. She added that training had impacted on teacher attitudes but that resistance still existed in attending to academically gifted children.

Additional information

The strengths of the G & T initiative were seen as focusing the minds of teachers on identifying and tracking more able children through planning and “joined up thinking” (C2). The problems from this participant’s perspectives

were that teachers were “bogged down in paperwork... but really, just a journey to be experienced... and attending to all needs.”

Changes over the last decade include how G & T used to be just teacher intuition, so progress is being made with testing and assessing where children really are. She added that “changes go in cycles... at first ‘gifted’ was a dirty word and not accepted... [now] OfSTED and LA are expecting individual challenge and progress, therefore, schools have to look at pupil ability in much more detail” (C2).

Documents

As the participant’s computer was ‘not operating’ at the time of the interview it was not possible to view any identification, provision or policy examples and the documents to be forwarded have not been received, therefore claims of setting up systems, processes and procedures cannot be verified. However the latest online OfSTED report confirmed there had been ‘concerns’ at this school. The coordinator admitted during conversation that the head teacher had been replaced fairly recently and advisors brought in, which tends to support the ‘new page not yet completed – a few more brushstrokes needed’ impression of the school’s progress on this visit.

The findings from five primary school interviews have been summarised in order to provide the basis for further analysis to be conducted in the discussion chapter to follow.

Chapter 5

Discussion

This section will summarise findings, draw inferences and discuss results in relation to the research questions and previous research in the field of gifted education. The limitations of the study will be set out, as will

suggestions of possible further investigation connected with this topic. Insights into findings will be demonstrated and results will be interpreted by bringing together the voices of the participants. The researcher's voice will also be heard, aiming to contextualise perceptions and to facilitate the readers' understanding.

Summary of research purposes

The purpose of this qualitative study was to discover whether primary school teachers have recognised and provided for gifted pupils in the local area. This research was developed from two main objectives that are at the core of this investigation:

1. To investigate the extent of recognition and provision for gifted primary school children in selected local schools through interviews and document analysis.
2. To establish any changes/progress over the last decade through interviews and document analysis.

To fulfil these objectives five individual teacher/G & T coordinator interviews were conducted in local primary schools, combining the qualitative/interpretive ethos with responsible ethical considerations of the participant position. Using the semi-structured interviewing style, I was constantly and genuinely searching for answers and utilising probes while actively listening to replies and explanations from participants (Radnor, 1994; Patton, 2002).

Additional information was collected in the form of documents: school policies, G & T policies, identification methods/checklists, G & T registers, tracking systems and the most recent individual school OfSTED reports.

Reflections and considerations in qualitative study

Reflecting on the interviewing procedures and the analytical process, I was very much aware of my limited experience at the start of interviewing, as well as the various forms of bias to be minimised (Thomas, 2009).

Selection bias did not apply as the participants were directly involved in education and therefore representative of the population. Measurement bias and intervention bias are not relevant in this case, due to all participants being presented with the same opportunities in similar settings and the audio recording accompanied by accurate transcriptions of content (Hartman, Forsen, Wallace and Neely, 2002).

Participants were enlisted from three different towns, in two different counties and from schools with three different levels of socioeconomic standing, resulting in obtaining a fair cross section of society and educational institutions. Two participants were head teacher/coordinators; two were G & T teacher/coordinators and one inclusion teacher/coordinator, in local primary schools. One head teacher was male, all other participants were female. All participants were from the same ethnic group and had experience ranging from 14 – 30 years in the teaching profession.

Mutual trust was established to varying degrees in each interview situation, which Daly and Lumley (2002) claim contributes to the validity of the information. Due to people's differing personality traits and mood on the day, I did not expect to receive an equally warm, deep and open conversation with all participants to the same degree. However, the ease of opening conversations, presenting questions and probe penetration improved as the interviews progressed; this was a valuable personal learning curve for further qualitative research.

In keeping with qualitative/interpretive traditions active listening (Radnor, 1994) to informant responses was incorporated as this, "can assist in ensuring the participant's own voice is heard" (Polkinghorne, 2007, p.12). Furthermore, I will contextualise these perceptions to facilitate understanding, by recognising that it is inevitable that the researcher's own voice impinges upon the analysis of the findings because of individual situation and cognizance. This study reflects that of the researcher aiming to extract information and remain objective, combined with the educator/insider who is interacting and relating to the participant (Silverman, 2011). Although Moustakas (1994) emphasises setting aside all prior beliefs in research relating to phenomenological inquiry, this was unrealistic in practice. As a teacher I have

been “socialised into a discipline that has its own vocabulary, concepts and theories” (Merriam, 1988, p.54). This socialisation is closely associated with ‘theoretical orientation’ described by Merriam (1988, p.54) as the “assumptions, concepts or propositions that orient thinking” of the researcher which affect the whole study. Consequently, in this study the insider – outsider was not a fixed dimension, but a continuum and a dynamic interaction between the two points as endorsed by Mercer (2007) and Nielsen (2008).

The advantages of ‘insider’ knowledge were many; enabling interaction, understanding and empathy with explanations. During the five interviews, I utilised my prior knowledge and experience to communicate effectively on the appropriate educator level, enabling fuller and more immediate understanding and insights into informant dialogue. This absorption, accommodation and assimilation of information meant that I was able to ‘actively listen’ (Tangen, 2008), to draw inferences and to maximise the ‘observer’ role. Therefore, the ‘insider’ aspect held advantages in the chance to “pursue [the research] with vigour and curiosity” as suggested by Hockey (1993, p.204). The five participants were “experts in their own lives... only teachers can understand what it is to be a teacher” (Tangen, 2008, p.4). According to Tangen (2008, p.157), ‘insider epistemology’ forms the foundation for much research in education relating to teaching practices.

I was aware that my mind was not a blank page and that the motivation for this research evolved from my prior primary school teaching experiences; initially aiming to highlight inequity in education for more able children. Therefore, subjectivity is acknowledged as being involved in this study and may colour the interpretation and outcomes to a degree (Gadamer, 1989; Thomas, 2009).

Reflecting on the people I met during interviewing, where I met them and how they responded is well documented in this study, however, I also analysed my own performance and contribution to this research. Although I had all the paperwork ready with the tape recorder and I was clear about what I wanted to find out, I was lacking in interview expertise. In the second interview I was assisted greatly by a friendly, welcoming coordinator who readily explained and provided examples of her well established processes and procedures. In

this more relaxed, open atmosphere I was able to insert probes more effectively into the conversation, gaining valuable material in an extended timeframe. There was a fine balance between the interrogative researcher and the teacher – colleague relationship. I found myself 'changing hats' continuously, aiming to maintain control of the conversation whilst sustaining a quality, professional interaction.

Time limits were also an issue for the head teacher/coordinator interviews, where once the hour was completed they were getting edgy with staff reminding them of ongoing school maintenance in progress, or parent enquiries. These interruptions and tight schedules meant that interviews were not completed as fully as preferred; however both head teachers readily supplied further information.

Pupil gender was not under scrutiny in this instance and as Bégin and Gagné (1994) suggest a weak association between gender and teacher attitudes.

This study reflects a qualitative/interpretive approach to inquiry in understanding and explaining the meaning of a shared educational phenomenon, undertaken in an inductive mode (Patton, 2002).

Analysis, validity and reliability

Analysis of the transcripts and notes recorded during interview conversations through May and June 2012 was conducted through repetitive scrutiny. The 'sense-making' content analysis combined with 'Heuristic inquiry' approach described by Patton (2002, p.453) was utilised to discover and identify "core consistencies and meanings." Phenomenological, Heuristic analysis involved being immersed in the information gathered as opposed to Husserl's (1931) objective 'bracketing' of experiences. It also entailed returning to the information repeatedly to ensure depth of meaning was elicited from individual transcripts to compose a full picture; a synthesis of the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

I used colour coding to categorise relevant elements and to identify key words and concepts from the transcripts. To grasp the overall meaning and understanding of the content as a whole I checked and rechecked content for

accuracy and reliability (Patton, 2002; Thomas, 2009). I constructed an A3 size matrix for each transcript and ‘immersed’ myself in the material. Locating pertinent phrases, sentences and key concepts that related to the essence of the inquiry, I systematically transferred details into each cell from the transcripts and notes. This simple but straightforward approach aimed to ensure external reliability; where this research could basically be replicated by others (Schwandt, 2001).

Quiet reflection was then incorporated to assimilate, reflect, ponder and gain insights from the material, described by Patton (2002, p.486) as the ‘incubation’ phase. I then returned to the text repeatedly, examining the language used and circling vital words, phrases and sections. In this ‘illumination phase’ I was looking for depth of meaning, for themes and patterns to surface; aiming to elicit the very nature and substance of the experiences. The ‘explication’ phase was then implemented, concentrating on exacting further detail and clarification of patterns, themes and concepts, enabling the ‘creative synthesis’ stage of communicating the web of findings (Patton, 2002). This thorough and highly ethical approach incorporating consistent, solid, accurate judgments aims to ensure internal validity, where the outcomes will match the reality of the situation (Merriam, 1988).

I also analysed documents obtained from participants and relevant policies from my own searches, ensuring data triangulation for validity (Patton, 2002; Thomas, 2009). Reliability of findings was incorporated by cross referencing, comparing and contrasting claims of participants with the written information in a methodical and meticulous manner.

Given the purpose of the study, the choice of data collection and analytical approach reflect the underlying assumptions of “multiple, socially constructed realities,” aiming to paint an accurate image; constructing a faithful synthesis of the different voices and their experiences (Radnor, 1994, p. 8). I therefore believe that validity and reliability along with integrity have been addressed to an acceptable degree and according to ethical requirements (Cohen *et al*., 2000; Silverman, 2011).

The impact of coordinators on the implementation of the G & T initiative

The interviewing experience highlighted the significant impact that gifted coordinators have had on the implementation of the G & T initiative. A substantial quantity of management, organisation, expertise and implementation has been observed.

For example:

1. reading, assimilating and disseminating policy documents;
2. researching for, locating and distributing suitable resources;
3. setting up policies, processes and procedures;
4. implementing strategies across the school through staff contact and staff management;
5. organising and implementing training;
6. setting up G & T registers;
7. liaising with head teachers, governors and parents.

The role of the G & T coordinator is to develop and enable the implementation of the identification process and the provision strategies, as well as to inform and update parents and governors on progress (Bates and Munday, 2005).

The first research question asked what the current position is with regard to recognition and provision for gifted primary school children in selected local school, producing three main themes: identification, provision and teacher attitudes. These three themes will now be discussed.

Identification

It is not within the scope of this paper to discuss the character of ability from either the nature or nurture angle, but to discover if and how children are being identified in local primary schools. Eyre and McClure (2001) Heller (2004) and Bates and Munday (2005) considered that identification of giftedness was problematic due to the differing level of ability and the complexity of models under consideration. This study firmly agrees with the nature of identification being confusing and the most challenging aspect of attending to gifted pupil needs. One school confirming that teachers got

“bogged down in all the paperwork with trying to identify pupils” (C2) other schools saying it was the major concern and “very tricky” and another mentioned that some teachers just use their ‘intuition’ to identify pupils. The difficulty encountered may be partially due to the vague identification principles provided by official documents, as mentioned by Haight (2006).

Informants admitted a distinct initial apprehension, wondering what to identify, when and how it should be accomplished. Heller (2004) noted this problem of not knowing where to commence with identification. Some participants reported that initial staff meetings to discuss and clarify the gifted definitions and building a chart of what to look for helped to simplify the process. All schools had produced a type of checklist, but the majority also found that the government documents recommending individual continuum style tracking, visually representing progress in literacy, numeracy and science, helped to identify some more able students in subject areas.

All schools had identified their gifted and talented groups with varying reasons for their chosen percentages. As one school had identified 12.5% (the normal is 5 -10% recommendation), had received ‘outstanding’ OfSTED reports on several occasions and is well known for high standards this 12.5% percent could be considered quite plausible. In contrast another school claiming 1/5 of the school as gifted (or talented) and being located in a mixed housing area appears rather high by comparison. This higher assessment in identification is confirmed by Koshy *et al*. (2010) with schools claiming as many as 1/3 gifted or talented. The variation in the percentage of children identified as gifted (or talented) will vary from school to school when individual school policies decide on their own definitions and criteria for those who are (or not) gifted. Borland (2005, p.8) adds that by teachers having the freedom to use different sets of ‘values’ and ‘policies’ to classify and identify giftedness, results in practices that are “anything but logical, systematic or scientific.”

Schools had different methods for assessing children with the majority using a combination of tests to confirm gifted achievement levels. This ‘global’ approach is recommended by Macintyre (2008) who also agrees with the majority of informants in this study, who find it difficult and questionable whether to identify younger children as being gifted.

Provision

There are views of giftedness that imply a natural, effortless ability, however the opportunity for practice is seen by Howe (1999) as essential. Howe indicates that the amount of time spent concentrating and practising was a good predictor in the level of skills or knowledge acquired. Therefore, the quality of provision and the opportunity to develop and demonstrate ability is crucial for all children.

This study found that differentiation was the most popular method of providing for gifted pupils with only one (larger) school using acceleration and setting arrangements to advantage in core subject areas (S1). Winstanley (2004) supports the streaming/setting arrangements incorporated by S1 as it solves differentiation problems by combining like-groups and reducing the range of ability catered for in a regular classroom. Recognition of individual levels of ability through the application of differentiation is popular as all activities remain in the classroom, yet Eyre (1997) sees effective differentiation as a goal seldom achieved. This claim by Eyre may be referring to the wide use of worksheets in differentiation as opposed to providing a range of activities targeting varying levels of ability. The latter being exceptionally demanding on teacher time in setting up appropriate resources for each core subject area, consequently in practice ICT can be utilised (as in C2) to add another level of challenge. It is the quality of intervention that is important (Bates and Munday, 2005). In the opinion of MacBeath *et al*. (2006) for less confident or experienced teachers, differentiation and maintaining control is preferable to other strategies of provision. The opinion of MacBeath may reflect quite accurately the position for less established gifted provision, but does not explain lack of acceleration or other strategies from the more affluent and experienced C1 school.

Although previous research emphasises the benefits of acceleration (Kulik and Kulik, 1984; Vaughn, *et al.,*1991) the reason for the lack of use of acceleration according to Borland (2005, p.10) is that it is “controversial, misunderstood and even feared.” Acceleration involves more organisation and often coordination with other classes to accommodate pupils above their chronological age, as with S1 year 5 pupils, working with year 6 children.

There can be several reasons for the lack of acceleration in the four other schools in this study. However, as Winstanley (2004) highlights, teachers are reluctant to lose control over what is learnt or face accusations of preferential treatment of pupils involved. The latter claim is particularly relevant for the C2 school where there is a higher than average proportion of SEN pupils and where it was felt it would be politically unpalatable for parents to accept any perceived preferential treatment for gifted pupils.

Enrichment is claimed by most schools with in-school and extracurricular activities that are mainly focused on talented pupil clubs, as highlighted by Eyre and McClure (2001) and Winstanley (2004). More clubs and excursions did emerge in response to the focus on gifted pupil needs, reflecting the 'holistic' approach to education described by Bates and Munday (2005) and confirmed by S2 as "all round development."

Teacher attitudes

In general there appears to be a relatively positive attitude towards providing for gifted children in the five Gloucestershire and Wiltshire primary schools visited. However, there are differing attitudes between teachers and coordinators towards gifted provision.

Although the majority of participants were positive and proactive in providing for gifted children, individual teachers behind the scenes appeared to present a mixed picture. Where the teaching staff were involved from the ground-up in decision making towards facilitating the needs of gifted pupils, this tended to imply less resistance, whereas when gifted provision was imposed on staff some resistance may be submerged and still exist as in C1 and S2. Resistance may be due to stereotypical attitudes (Gross, 1997) or due to perceptions of elitism (Winstanley, 2004) and hostile staff are unlikely to enrol in PD sessions unless imposed by school head teachers (Eyre and Geake, 2002). The social structure power position enjoyed by head teachers and educational institutions can involve an inequitable, hierarchical arrangement, influencing behaviour and decision making on staff with a lower status (Cohen *et al*., 2000). It could be assumed that this imposition was a necessary element in implementing the G & T policy, until sufficient experience or PD was encountered.

Reflecting on teacher attitudes, there appeared to be a conflict of interest for school staff in C2 when competitive, more affluent parents imposed pressures through directly expressed views and expectations of teachers and their child(ren's) performance – whether gifted or special needs categories. It appeared that gifted children were 'hidden statistically' and made anonymous by the inclusion coordinator, due to a higher than average proportion of SEN in the school. Therefore, even though the coordinator had a gifted child herself, to maintain a perception of balance, neither ends of the spectrum were highlighted resulting in fewer opportunities for gifted children. The inclusion coordinator had received less PD than the other participants, potentially contributing to the different focus. In contrast, the S1 coordinator handled parent expectations in a lower socioeconomic area very differently, by providing three levels of challenge open to all pupils who were sufficiently interested and motivated to attempt more advanced operations. Parents were always informed if their child was on the G & T register in S1, C1and S2 but not in C2 or G1. These findings reflect Croft's (2003) claim that effective teacher decisions indicate an in-depth understanding of the gifted student requirements and learning styles.

Positive more proactive attitudes towards giftedness through contact with gifted family members as found by McCoach and Siegle (2007) were not found to be consistent in this study, or that teachers from more challenging school environments were resistant in providing for the gifted cohort, as found by Paule (2003). Years of teaching experience was not a predictor of positive attitudes as confirmed by findings of Koshy *et al*. (2010). However, the coordinators interviewed had received PD training to varying degrees and were involved in training staff themselves, resulting in more positive attitudes towards giftedness (Geake and Gross, 2008). The more familiar with processes, procedure and strategies, the more positive teachers became towards educating gifted children (Chessman, 2010).

Teacher attitudes towards educating gifted and talented children could be seen as reflected in the form of after-school clubs provided by the participating school. After school clubs and extra-curricular activities in sports, art, music and drama were the more popular options; fewer clubs involved anything

related to academically gifted pupil potential interests. The reluctance to offer equal opportunities to gifted children is well documented in past studies (Bégin and Gagné, 1994; Gross, 1997, 2004; Geake and Gross, 2008). It does appear however, that over the last decade and more focus on giftedness, some maths, engineering and extended writing clubs have been offered, usually through liaison with high school teacher contacts. School excursions have been offered to pupils in S1 and found to be a highly beneficial experience for the children in this deprived area.

The narrow focus of inclusion interpreted as treating all children the same regardless of ability was the minority view of informants. The majority of informants tended to focus on attending to and challenging all children thereby interpreting the broader view of inclusivity as noted by Haight (2006). There were however a few comments to align with the politically correct position of treating all children the same; reflecting the egalitarian pose of all children being of equal value (Winstanley, 2004; Mandelman *et al.,* 2020). Conversely one participant (S2) did include in the school G & T Policy that it is "O.K. to be bright."

Labelling children still appears a contentious issue in this study. This is suggested by comments received and from individual schools policies including the more socially acceptable terms of 'able' 'more able' and 'highly able' replacing 'gifted', reflecting the findings of several authors (Eyre and McClure, 2001; Geake and Gross, 2008; Koshy *et al*., 2010). A measure of ambiguity is highlighted by Winstanley (2004, p.5) where although the title is the Gifted and Talented Initiative, the term 'gifted' is not used in the rest of the document only 'able.' A report from the Council of Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA, 2006, p.7) clarified that "the term 'able' and variations of it are used frequently in the educational literature as it is felt to be more appropriate and less emotive."

Several authors comment about the difficulties and challenges teachers face in the complex and dynamic primary school learning environment (Eyre and McClure, 2001; Winstanley, 2004; Bates and Munday, 2005). For effective teaching and learning Cathcart (2005, p.31) highlights the fact that "We already work under intense pressure. The demands on our time and energy

are enormous." The additional paperwork and changes in practices has caused increased pressure on teaching staff according to S2 and G1.

Participants also saw some pupil behaviour and attitudes towards learning being a problem stemming from the home environment and set before the time they enter school. Howe (1999, p.21) discusses home influence confirming that "the ways in which children develop in their early years are affected by the degree to which their parents assume the role of teacher or guide."

Teacher attitudes towards providing for academically gifted children in primary schools appear to be influenced by expectations of G & T coordinators, OfSTED and LA monitoring and to some extent PD courses. Further close observation over a period of time would enable a clearer picture as to whether conscientious, accurate and diligent teacher identification of gifted pupils is practiced and, to what extent suitable, individual provision is actually being implemented.

Synthesising findings and drawing inferences

It would be erroneous to generalise findings of this study with how the G & T policy is being addressed across England, as interpretations from five educators are only sufficient for a small, local snapshot. However, based on the responses from this small study involving primary school teacher interviews I can draw the following inferences:

- There was firm initial resistance by some teaching staff towards the implementation of the 'gifted' element of the G & T initiative.
- Most teachers did appear to be cooperating in attempting to accommodate the whole range of needs from the less able through to gifted pupils, although in some instances personal feelings or resistance maybe submerged and over- ridden by having to comply with OfSTED and LA requirements.
- It appears that schools have commenced attending to gifted needs, but they were at very different stages of implementing policy and compiling supporting processes and procedures.

- There is still some discomfort with labelling children as ‘gifted’ with some teachers feeling more comfortable using the terms ‘able,’ ‘more able’ or ‘highly able.’
- The majority of after school clubs and extracurricular activities were for talented students; fewer clubs provide for gifted children.
- PD training indicated mixed results with regard to teacher attitudes towards attending to the needs of gifted children. In this instance socioeconomic location, contact with giftedness and levels of education were not firm indicators of positive teacher attitudes.
- It is well recognised by coordinators that ongoing staff PD is essential to maintain gifted provision.
- Issues of inclusion were approached from different perspectives; on the one hand there was emphasis on treating all children the same regardless of ability, on the other hand all pupils were challenged, but excellence and high achievement was encouraged.
- Although policy requires identification of between 5-10% of pupils, some schools keep the level of 10% whereas others have 20% on their registers.
- Most teachers found identification of gifted pupils difficult, needing written guidelines in checklist form, or structure from National Guidelines to provide across school consistency.
- Identification was generally confirmed through SATs, National Quality Standard levels, some portfolio collection, teacher tests and intuition.
- There did appear to be a serious attempt to identify different levels of ability, with tracking of progress revealing levels of attainment and subsequently suggesting potentially appropriate provision.
- Larger schools had the opportunity to use setting arrangements to target groups more effectively.
- Differentiation was the most common form of provision for gifted pupils aiming to incorporate the ‘challenge’ OfSTED is looking for.
- The majority of schools took gifted children on out of school excursions but with restricted finances these visits were declining.
- Most schools claim they liaised with secondary schools or academies to offer additional support or enrichment.

- Most schools have combined G & T registers established and update their LA as requested, but not all schools inform parents as policy required.
- Documentation supplied by agencies was being utilised on a needs-must basis.
- Schools are finding they need to be much more creative and proactive due to lack of funding for G & T. However, sincere efforts appear to ensure the gifted children were not left out as in previous times, with some coordinators arranging their own meetings to update and inform continuing PD training.
- The main strength of the G & T initiative was seen as the firm focus on highlighting individual needs of more able students, who were previously sidelined.
- Weaknesses of the G & T initiative were seen as doubts whether the momentum for gifted provision will continue in the long term. The imposition of paperwork loads relating to registers, identification and provision is claimed to be very time consuming. Fitting all that is required into an already overloaded timetable is said to be creating pressure on educators.
- Changes over the last ten years include: more rigorous assessment, tracking of individual progress, PD training, focus on attending to needs of all children including gifted pupils under the 'inclusion' banner, pressures on teachers from the inspection regime and difficulty in meeting all demands on school timetabling.

Progress achieved since implementation of the G & T Initiative

Question two in this study asked, what, if any, progress has been achieved over the last decade since the implementation of initiatives for gifted primary school pupils?

Findings suggest that although schools in this study appear to be in different stages of establishing policies all coordinators are attempting to implement gifted policy as the following chart implies.

Responses to gifted policy:	C1	C2	S1	S2	G1
ID tests	*		*	*	
ID % established	*	*	*	*	*
Labels approved	*		*	*	
Register approved and parents informed	*		*	*	
Giftedness accepted			*		
Talent accepted	*	*	*	*	*
Differentiation	*	*	*	*	
Acceleration			*		
Enrichment	*		*	*	
PD success	*		*		
Total boxes ticked:	8	3	10	7	2

Findings suggest that significant changes have taken place over the period of 2000-2010. Progress has been found in recognising and providing for more able pupils, leading to a better understanding in the nature of individual needs. As Chessman (2010, p.179) states "the first step is to acknowledge that differences... [in individual ability] exists." Professional development, OfSTED and LA involvement has enabled more focus on academically gifted pupils, through: G & T school policies, identification techniques, strategies for provision, registers, target setting and tracking of individual performance levels.

Initial G & T funding provided considerable support from LA's for coordinator training and networking facilities, teacher PD and school enrichment activities. However, with the change of government in 2010, funding has reduced leaving individual schools to prioritise needs, leaving some schools to question if resources are adequate (S1, S2) or if the attention to the needs of gifted pupils will continue.

Limitations and further study

The main limitation of this study was the low response rate of 10% of contacts replying and agreeing to participate in this research, as five interviews, instead of the ten envisaged, limited the quality and quantity of

information generated. Whether there is support, apathy or resistance to gifted education for the majority of schools in this area is not known; this can impact significantly on findings. Consequently, it is not possible to generalise or make any recommendations in this study. I intend that these findings will provide a snapshot of the local area, raise some relevant issues and cautiously make some deductions.

A further limitation is the one hour time limit teachers would allow for the interview process. Several prospective interviewees retreated when 'in depth' conversation was mentioned, commenting upon the time element involved. One hour was insufficient to cover all aspects in sufficient depth, particularly with interruptions during some interviews.

Further extended study on what provision is actually being implemented in classrooms is needed, as opposed to broad claims and policy statements which are easy to supply. Teachers could just be paying 'lip-service' in identifying and providing for gifted pupils, or being very 'selective.' Another area is to what extent 'intuition' is being used by teachers in the identification process, therefore quantitative approach of methods and observations could also help to clarify teaching practices in this challenging area.

Schools which are non compliant with research need investigating at the earliest opportunity, to more accurately assess what practices have been established for gifted students across England. A further consideration is whether teachers have sufficient support in their endeavours to attend to children across the whole spectrum of individual needs. In addition, it may be possible to modify the curriculum and associated policies to embed more effective provision to include more able student needs.

Achievement of the purpose

The purpose of the research, as outlined in Chapter 1, was to discover if primary school teachers are providing for gifted pupils in the local area. The associated research of the research as stated in Chapter 1 were:

1. To investigate the extent of recognition and provision for gifted primary school children in selected local schools through interviews and document analysis.
2. To establish any changes/progress over the last decade through interviews and document analysis.

Each of these objectives was achieved within the parameters of this study. There is now a better understanding as to what extent the G & T initiative has been accepted and implemented by a selection of schools in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Through five teacher/coordinator semi-structured interviews I was able to ascertain their perceptions as to what has been accomplished over the last decade from 2000 – 2010.

The study produced individual teacher/coordinator approaches to the implementation of the G & T policy, demonstrating an honest account through examples of actual recorded interview excerpts, reflecting a faithful explanation of the teacher/coordinator interaction. The research established that identification of gifted children is being implemented in these schools and that provision is being offered - mainly through differentiation style strategies. As well as obtaining an understanding of processes and procedures, teacher attitudes were also explored, confirming that the positive lead and management by coordinators has impacted on teaching practices in providing for academically gifted pupils.

The use of individual teacher interviews and the implementation of 'repetitive scrutiny' analytical procedures led to a detailed interpretation and insight into how teachers were implementing the G & T policy in local schools. The insights and understandings gained add to previous research and point to the potential for wider research on how the academically gifted cohort's needs are being addressed.

George Bernard Shaw's comment on his experiences illustrates the importance of improving understanding of, and provision for, the gifted:

> *… complicated by a deeper strangeness which has made me all my life a sojourner on this planet rather than a native of it. Whether it be that I was*

born mad or a little too sane, my kingdom was not of this world; I was at home only in the realm of my imagination, and at ease only with the mighty dead… Therefore I had to become an actor and create for myself a fantastic personality fit and apt for dealing with men, and adaptable to the various parts I had to play as author, journalist, orator; politician, committee man, man of the world, and so forth.

Shaw (1952, p.65).

Conclusion

Although much research has focused on different aspects of giftedness, few studies have addressed the extent of recognition and provision for gifted primary school children and to establish any changes or progress that has occurred over the last decade since the Gifted and Talented Initiative was established. This interpretive study aimed to fill this gap in knowledge by incorporating the key elements of qualitative research, to provide findings from five individual semi-structured primary school coordinator interviews and documentary evidence.

Schools in this instance appear to be at various stages of actually implementing the G & T initiative. Some schools have well established teaching practices, whereas other schools are still generating and refining processes and procedures to attend to the needs of gifted students.

Findings in this instance suggest that teachers are attempting to identify gifted pupils but the confusing array of definitions and complexities in differing levels of ability, the variation of learning styles, with single or multiple domains of giftedness, tends to make the identification process difficult to implement for many teachers. Provision appears to be tentative, with differentiation by far the more popular strategy, as only one school out of five was using acceleration and setting arrangements in this instance.

This study has revealed the central importance of teacher attitudes towards educating academically gifted children and how these attitudes can hold a long-term impact on attainment levels for the more able cohort. There are indications that teacher attitudes appear to be fairly responsive in the need to provide challenging activities for all children including the gifted group. Labelling children as gifted appears to be resisted in most instances, with only one school policy demonstrating positive encouragement for more able attainment.

Changes over the last decade have included more focus on processes and procedures in catering for the gifted cohort, as well as the less able pupils in primary schools. Advantages with these procedures are seen as the immediate identification of ability levels for individuals and in relation to their peers. Local authority monitoring and OfSTED scrutinising opportunities and challenge for *all* children have had a positive impact on pushing forward the educational opportunities for gifted children. However, since the withdrawal of funding for the initiative, there is sincere concern as to how long the momentum will continue, especially now that teacher PD and other support services no longer exist.

Participants also voiced concerns about the pressure on teachers to provide opportunities for the range of ability in classrooms, the time limits of the

timetable in accommodating the demands of the curriculum and the volume of paperwork necessary to appease inspections.

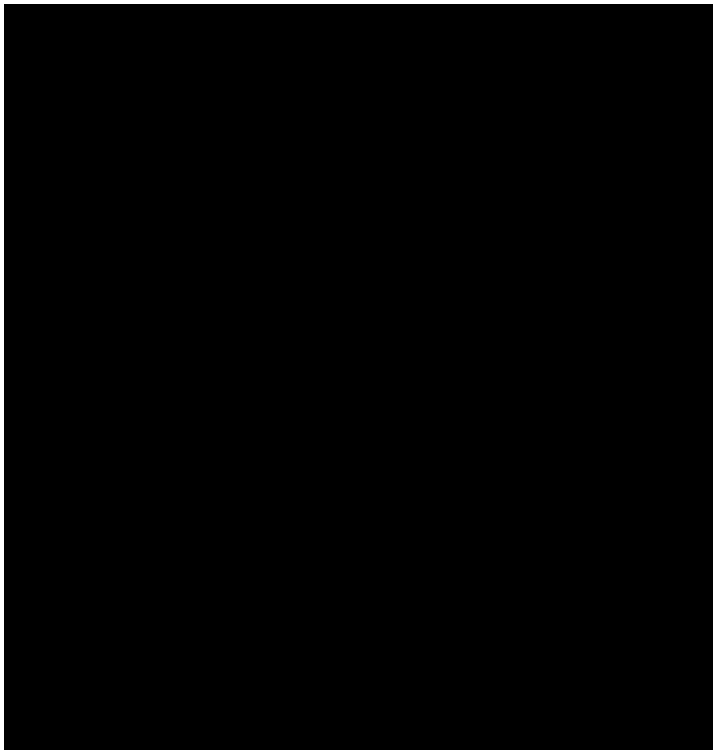
The importance of quality intervention is clear from the literature that has been cited on the issue of education for academically gifted pupils, if more able pupils are to receive equal access to the opportunity for success. This approach needs to be different from the normal classroom planning.

This qualitative/interpretative study has provided a local picture of five primary school gifted coordinator perceptions as to how the gifted and talented initiative has been received in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. Deeper and longer term research needs to be carried out to grasp what practices are actually being implemented in England as a whole. This Master of Research study has produced an ethically sound paper, adhering to the appropriate methodology and philosophical framework and providing important implications for teaching practices and recommendations for further educational study.

Children are unique; genetic and environmental factors contribute to varying degrees of ability in different domains for each individual human being. Children learn in different ways at a different pace, therefore pupils need to be treated as individuals. In primary schools children demonstrate their strengths (and weaknesses); consequently it is important to identify and nurture the strengths in all students. Providing for academically gifted children can lead to high levels of individual satisfaction and self-actualisation, reflecting positively on their peers in inspiring higher expectations and attainment levels. In every primary school classroom throughout England, there can be academically gifted children who also deserve the opportunity to maximise their potential.

Frustration
Frustration is there, everyway I look,

[redacted]



Anna age 8. *(Gross,1998, p.5).*

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Appendix

1.....Letter of approach to solicit school participation

2.....Consent form used with individual participants

3.....Information sheet for individual participants

4.....Example of interview transcript

5.....Example of field notes

6.....Example of coding structure applied to transcripts

7..... Ethical considerations in research

8..... PISA report 2009

9..... Interview questions format for all interviews.

1. *Sample Letter of Approach to Solicit School Participation*

122 Arle Road

Cheltenham, GL51 8LF

ginap95@gmail.com

01242 694328 / 07735629201

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE
at CHELTENHAM and GLOUCESTER

20th April, 2012

[redacted]

Dear Mr [redacted]

Your school is formally invited to participate in a University of Gloucestershire's research study, into how the Gifted and Talented initiative has been received in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire during the period of 2000-2010.

As little research has been completed on this topic, it is intended to interview individual primary school teachers during May and June 2010, to understand from their perspectives, to what extent the Gifted and Talented initiative has been received and implemented in the local area. Interviews lasting for approximately 1 hour would be recorded on a voice recorder and I wish to assure you in line with University of Gloucestershire Ethical Guidelines, this research thesis would be completely anonymous with all interview material password protected, then destroyed at the completion of the data analysis.

Supervisors for this Master of Research project are Professor Mary Fuller and Dr Lynn Nichol who would be willing to confirm that I am a bona fide student at the university. They can be contacted by email, as follows: mfuller@glos.ac.uk; lnichol@glos.ac.uk or by phone as follows: Professor Fuller on 714735 and Dr Nichol on 714286.

I look forward to contacting your office in the next few weeks to answer any questions you may have regarding this research study.

Yours truly

I G Barrington

2 Consent Form for Individual Participants

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE
at CHELTENHAM and GLOUCESTER

CONSENT FORM

Title: Teacher Perceptions and Responses to the Implementation of the Gifted and Talented Initiative in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Primary Schools.

The Gifted and Talented Initiative – Teacher Perceptions

Contact details:

Gina Barrington – Research Student

122 Arle Road

Cheltenham, GL51 8LF.

ginap95@gmail.com

01242 694328 / 07735629201

Please initial box

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason. ☐

I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Yes/ No

I agree to the interview / focus group / consultation being audio recorded ☐ ☐

_____ _____ _____

Name of Participant Date Signature

_____ _____ _____

Name of Researcher Date Signature

3 *Participant Information Sheet*

Research Title**:** Teacher Perceptions and Responses to the Implementation of the Gifted and Talented Initiative in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Primary Schools.

You are being invited to take part in a research study based at the University of Gloucestershire. Before you decide whether to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it involves. Please take time to read the following information carefully.

- This is a Master of Research study aiming to interview 10 primary school teachers in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire to ascertain from their perspectives, how the Gifted

and Talented initiative has been received and implemented. This qualitative study will conclude with a thesis by the end of this year – 2012, aiming for a snapshot of the local landscape.

- Taking part in this research is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any stage.

- The data collection will be through a one hour individual teacher interview where an audio recorder will be used, to ensure accuracy in understanding and analysis of information.

- The advantages in taking part are the potential contributions to understanding from the educator perspective about the G & T policy, as well as contributing to knowledge about what has been accomplished in local primary schools.

- The disadvantage is the time involved for educators to contribute to this study.

- All information gathered is subject to the University of Gloucestershire's Ethics Policy involving complete confidentiality and anonymity. All notes and recordings will be destroyed at the completion of the study and in the interim period, data will be safely stored on a computer that is password protected.

- The results of this study will be published in the form of a thesis which will be offered to you at the completion of publication.

- If you wish to participate then an hour slot can be arranged at your convenience.

- If you wish to contact me or my supervisors please feel free to do so.

Supervisors: They can be contacted by email, as follows: mfuller@glos.ac.uk; lnichol@glos.ac.uk or by phone as follows: Professor Fuller on 714735 and Dr Nichol on 714286.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.

4 Interview Transcript Example – S2

Interview with [redacted] Head Teacher, at [redacted]. 12/6/2012

(Initial introductions and paperwork completed. Digital recorder switched on.)

[* = question by interviewer]

*May I ask you first of all how long you have been teaching?

This is my 5th year as head teacher in S[redacted] and 18 years teaching altogether

Previously I spent 5 years teaching in Cairo Egypt, previously in Istanbul for four years .....and I started my career teaching in West London

1). *How in general do you feel about the G & T initiative?

What do you mean by the initiative as in this school we do our own G & T here from the information provided by L A advisor [redacted] as she was leading some of the G & T work in this school and we have taken her advice and her understanding of how you provide for G & T pupils and how you identify which is the key thing – we had training on how to identify a gifted or talented person and once we had done that we had something to go to the staff with to say this is how we can go about identifying our pupils this is what gifted and talented actually means. What gifted means and what talented means. Then once we had agreed how we identify the child who is gifted and the child who may be talented then we built our policy around that – that was the first important thing to do for across school consistency. Because in some teacher's eyes all children are gifted aren't they, or talented, so we need to make sure we had a policy so we could identify them and built around that.

> * I agree there – some teachers do think that all children are gifted but on the other hand research has reported that others tend to resist the academically gifted programmes – in your opinion do some teachers feel threatened at all by giftedness?

I would agree on that yes may would feel threatened but also there is a pressure there to perform – at the end of your six there is a test and all children need to get a level 3, 4 or 5 etc., but it that is important to many teachers. Although you have these more able – because their schooling and the teachers are good, but there always seems to be a ceiling and you teach to that because it has a political impact you worry that if anything that this school would be criticised for is that we get very good results that are above local and national averages we would probably be scrutinised by Ofsted on how do we provide for the more able and we need to prove we have a robust identification policy and then which we identify them through this system and that it is continuously updated as well.

> *May I ask if you have a specific method of identification or do you follow a model?

I follow what [redacted] gave us what [redacted] gave us not sure where it is (on computer) it is important we all follow it for consistency and as I said before if people think that everyone is talented because they can kick a

football that may just be a personal opinion put forward so because I found that when I first came here. Reception - lots of children in the infants were identified as gifted and talented – so one was it teacher knowledge? They wanted to identify them but the teacher was not following anything, it was not clear enough who to identify – it is more work as well isn't it – when some teachers want to show off and say I have got 6/7 gifted or talented so that is why I needed to make sure that this identification process was there for consistency. I will see if I can find it on the computer (the identification procedure sheet). I can forward it to you if you like?

*Yes please. So you have a standard format they all work to, a list – a check list they can follow?

Yes, we follow the national quality standards (NQS) for identification so we followed all the documentation that [redacted] gave us and still do but still trying to find this so we have.. what we do here as well we have our own policy for G & T and procedures for identification our principles behind it – in maths we have stars and we make sure we include them as part of the government census we have to put on a data base those who are already gifted and talented.

*So is that on your website – your G & T policy

> No... what I can do if I email - if you leave me your email address I will give you that as well.
>
> And then we ..what we do is we have a G & T school development plan that gives us a focus and key actions and success criteria that supports us in making sure we address G & T and that's really right from policy documentation to dissemination to curriculum need because one thing I talked about with the gifted advisor [redacted] is individual subjects – G & T in each subject, that should be part of the focus - just as a whole focus across the board.

*It sounds as though you are making good progress.

Yes and one other thing we do ... we have set up a portfolio of work a G & T portfolio which shows parents of what people have done in some of the subjects to meet the needs of their gifts shall we say. So some people have support from secondary schools other extra reading writing for example and some maths classes, quiz challenges and have some comments that are appropriate to their needs as well. So provision for talented we have a girl's football team we run from here aiming for all round development gives pupils the opportunity to play but now that we have some local academies they have to go into town now, so developments all round. We, also as part of our tracking progress we have a lot of times throughout the year when teachers

have to provide us with progression data assessment data and say whether they have made progress against their targets set from the start of the year.

*So you set targets at the beginning of the year

Yes at the beginning of the year we check them periodically for example we check reading and maths 3 times a year and we check writing 6 time a year and that is to make sure these pupils are making progress which is that I suppose we the teachers are meeting our targets and students are making progress. If not met why not, it is like a challenge meeting – you have to say the pupil's target were this .... and how they are making progress and whether you need more help with planning or resources Interruption with nose of vacuum cleaner outside room – both laugh as he closed the door.

*So the teachers keep you up to date and you know what progress is being made.

Q 2. In your experience how has this initiative been received?

I do hope so I am en executive head of another school supporting another school that is struggling, has cause for concern and I can see that there is a need for more identification um... of G & T pupils . I can't speak for anyone else but I do feel that it is the needs of the school, there does need to be a particular focus on what is going on in a school there may be in an area where they have to raise the results of the others so the G & T -back to meeting minimum targets- are not addressed as they should be because you have to get the average across the certain floor standards so the inspectors are not on your back so that .. have they identified the G & T there, may be, but have they the time to address their needs – may be – but because of this other focus they are still in the main stream – still developing more able but we are starting to stretch them and challenging them to the ceiling of their capacity ..

*There can also be hidden ability – locating underachievers can be tricky can't it?

We have our pupils who are on the register.

*So you hold a register and inform parents?

Yes parents are kept updated on a regular basis. On our register with that we break it down into individual pupil information that then gives .. as this here – this pupil's information for this year see you have [redacted] who is there on the register for numeracy base here she is working a year above her level so she has participated in maths challenges, attended master classes, so this is collecting evidence that we are providing for her. I also check the planning and the actual planning of the work so on a day to day basis the work is

differentiated, for example we have booster classes for people like [redacted] who has done the level 6 test as well.

*And do you liaise with your local high schools?

Yes we do there is good transition and if we give them our levels and they come in and talk to the pupils we can provide them the high school a good grounding - with a good idea of where the pupils should be.

*So there is regular contact with the secondary schools

Yes but not so much this year with the academies shooting up and finances etc., and free schools, but over the last year at least we have had a healthy relationships with a local secondary school where they have had say that our children could go along and do some extended writing with them as well so we are glad to have their support as it is difficult to provide many different activities such as pay for authors/writers to come in outside the school due to finances and we have to *juggle* to make ends meet.

*How many children do you have in this school at the moment?

We have 263 yes 263

*I believe that some school are finding that money is getting really tight and that they have to *juggle* things around too.

Yes... it is not easy.

3) *So what kinds of supporting documents have you received?

Yes mainly from [redacted] - the things that would normally come from national sources I have the National Quality Standards (NQS) for G & T education,

*Do you find those useful?

Yes, with the staff, we have completed a school development plan with a focus on G & T.

4) * How satisfied are you with the G & T Initiative?

I think it comes down to the individual school and it comes down to 2 things.

I am not happy with not having enough time - not enough time to really sit down and make sure that each individual programme to make sure each one is challenged and their gifts are explored in depth or a better way. Two it comes down to money to provide - we are a community school and we don't just provide for the average we are inclusive and we have to be very aware that we have to provide for both ends of the spectrum but sometimes some particular gifts it may need extra support from someone because you don't have the resource within the school.

5) *Ok that's very helpful, thank you. What is your opinion on how the initiative has been received in your school? Or in general?

Umm I think teachers don't have much choice because it is part and parcel of what their job is. They have no choice with identification and provision – it is part of their job and what they do – it is what the job is – attending to pupil needs. I have to have the staff, to bring the staff along with me, whatever their personal feelings may be.

*I ask because in the literature Koshy, Pinheiro-Torres and Casey suggest that in their surveys in some areas there was some resistance to attending to the needs of academically gifted, whereas happy to provide extra-curricular activities for talented pupils in sport, art, music specialists coming in etc.

Well... in the beginning many [teachers] were highly sceptical of providing for gifted pupils, some were also resistant but yes they accepted talent much easier. Not so threatening work-wise either. It is so often their perception is what gifted and talented is – yes that is why it is so important to have an identification a standard and consistent identification method because those children can go through, they may be quiet, they may be well behaved but and they are not stretching themselves as much as they could. Resistance does appear to be less but it is work in progress to meet pupils' daily needs.

*So they are not being sufficiently challenged?

No, many may not be.

6) *What has this experience been like for you?

It is part of the job to be honest! (Both laugh) You know I have external pressures to make sure that the school is the best it possibly can be and you know inspections, but the biggest pressure is from the children because you want to make sure that they have the potential met.

*They are all so different in their needs

Yes absolutely it is a tough task – a constant challenge - you go home and wonder if you are doing enough, in the class and like the typical thing where the naughty boy gets lots of attention for being told off all the time whereas others just sit there and take it , you get so much time wasted because you are telling the naughty boy off.

*Over the last 6/7 years behaviour appears to be a concern for teachers – do you find teaching time is lost?

Absolutely – we have a good standard here where parents and children mainly do value education, they have to take responsibility for the way they choose to behave it reflects upon the community and the school too.

I have had a few classes in the past where I have gone home in tears the behaviour was so bad.

*So teachers in this school are compliant because it is part of their job.

Yep.

9) *What kinds of programmes have you implemented for the G & T and what % have you identified in this school?

It is obvious that the top 10% in one school may be very different from the top 10% in another school in another area. In % we have about 20% G & T I have made comparisons therefore, I am confident that my 20% are definitely gifted or talented. Because of the area we have parents who can afford extra clubs so talented in gymnastics and rugby for instance is pushed up I think that is the higher side we have, but do we really meet the needs of the G & T on a daily basis – I do not think so.

*In the others schools they include setting arrangements do you incorporate setting?

That is where the benefits come in and we do set where we can, but with a smaller school it can be difficult because they are all in together, here they are all in together and it comes down to the skill of the teacher and what we can provide.

The school in Cairo the 6th form had specialist music, art ICT and PE teachers so the actual provision was better, the teacher used to set anyway in English and Maths so specialist teachers but the class teacher was with them too but the setting ..well you could see the benefits. What then is the priority – do you want a nice primary school where it is one class one teacher or do you want to stretch them.

The things I would like to do here are .. well there may be more things we can do for those who do have a gift – fine motor skills perhaps and can play an instrument but of course it comes down to money and time so that is it. You feel as though at times you may not be giving them as much as possible but we do what is practical to make sure we meet the needs of all pupils.

*So what types of provision are the teachers offering in their planning at the moment?

Obviously it is differentiation – as much as 5 ways in a class – and setting in maths as much as possible and where appropriate. We try to ensure that provision is consistent across the school in line with the school development plan.

*11). Withdrawal of funding – has it made a big difference to you here?

The money comes in a general budget and you just have to prioritise depending upon what you need. As the priority is the children then general maintenance just has to wait. It just means I can't buy carpet or something else. If that makes sense?

12)*Very much so. What do you think the strengths of the initiative are for you in your experience?

In terms of G & T it shows us where the children are provides a focus on where schools should be and where they are, what should be happening, what is effective provision, actually identifying the G & T. In terms of policy and assessment of learning as well.

*The top 10% in one school could be very different in another school though, so you have rated your school at 20%?

Yes. It can be a problem when teachers are doing moderating a piece of work as 2C even though it is from the national standards, the work can be very different, in one person's perception can be very different from another's perspective, even though they have met the criteria, their writing may not be neat or on the lines consistently or presentation be different.

What about the weaknesses you have found?

It also occurs to me that things are not prolonged, this government push is all action and snappy the idea is good then it is all change again like everything else it is all change gain as now. We do what is best for the children in this school. I worry that nothings seems long term so we just do what's best for pupils.

*Yes this has been a bolt on that can be removed

Yes it is happening all the time.

*And OfSTED is monitoring of challenge and what is happening with G & T I understand.

Yes, in this school I have a 100% belief in the staff they all work very hard and I trust them completely to do a really good job, they do more than they get paid for, then there is too much pressure not just with moderation but the inspections. They are very good at the teaching and producing all the paperwork but th4y do need ongoing support. They are very experienced and really they don't need to do all the paperwork. That is where valuable time is lost they just don't need that. I am sure we are due for another inspection shortly and the paperwork part I am dreading, staff just do not need that pressure. But in some schools – well they need to be monitored and brought up to standard I am afraid that is reality. Here we have more and more paperwork to do, which is more pressure and lots of it really isn't necessary

except that the inspectors want to see paperwork! There is a huge pressure to perform; to get all children to a minimum level in Year 6 SATs and pressure to perform for OfSTED in the 'snapshot' they take during inspections. More paperwork, that is where time is lost and that time is so valuable for the children. I know what is going on in this school and I trust the teachers fully but unfortunately it is not the same everywhere. The school – at a recent school - where I took over was not as robust in leadership as it should have been which is not good for the children. I think that the parents tend to trust the school so monitoring has to be done. There are so many inconsistencies across the country this has to be done.

*So you think inspections are necessary?

They – OfSTED just take a snapshot of what is going on and when they (the teachers) are so conscientious they do not necessarily perform as well as they are capable of – pressure. If the parents have a problem they come to us and we deal with it that's just the way it is.

13) *What changes have you noticed with provision for G & T over the last 10 years?

The G & T initiative shows us exactly where children are in their progress and also where schools should be. I think with the National Standards coming out in mid 2005 it is much more robust with school policies constructed and the focus being on challenge and achievement for G & T making sure there is differentiation and assessment but now it has gone out of the window again hasn't it. So it is off the radar again.

The disadvantages are now, the pressure on teachers and on schools to perform and now the lack of resources too makes it difficult to make we can meet the needs of all pupils. The general budget is difficult too, we have to decide whether to spend money on maintenance or carpets etc. No continuity for this snappy idea – what about gifted and talented in the future – for the long term?

14) *What in your opinion are any other factors that could contribute to the G & T initiative?

If they invest then they need to know what impact is taking place. I don't know – I don't know if you know – with all the money that has gone into these national standards and the initiative what impact has it made?

*That is why this research is taking place – very little study has been done to assess the impact.

The problem is attitude towards learning comes from home. I have a child myself, he is in this school in fact, but we have books at home, we read to him from the time he could sit up, so he has been moulded as all children are from

a very early age, so those first few years have such a great impact that teachers can never undo. What you put into them in their first few years of life never leaves them, so if children come to school they have preformed attitudes and behaviours so we have them here for such a short time we can never change, and parents do not realise that and the impact of those few crucial years. Schools are not the cure for social ills it is the parents and the government has missed the trick it is the investment in the early years – early years being prior three years old. It is the parenting that has to change. If children came to school with respect and showing good values they carry on with those attitudes.

The electrician came back so the head teacher had to go. I switched off the recorder. He apologised and said he would forward documents as promised, I thanked him, packed up and thanked the office staff as I left.

NB. Email received with documents attached.

Thank you letter sent to participant.

5 Field Notes Sample

The second school in S..... Wiltshire

Interview with head teacher/coordinator .....Tuesday 12th June, 2012. 4 pm.

263 pupils. Mixed socio economic area

Notes – 5:15 pm. In car and further notes at home.

The area is mixed housing, some roads near the school wide and spacious with semi-detached and detached housing, whilst another area nearby with flats, older style shops, older style plain fronted houses with cracked rendered coverings, front gardens some with tall weeds and rubbish in one street.

The school has well maintained fencing, with the main front gate open but little parking room. The side gate at the side entrance was still open but only a few children around (smart uniforms) just leaving the side entrance gate. I parked at the side of the school near to the side gate on a road opposite older style homes set back behind a wide grassed area. School sign smart, a long winding pathway led to the reception area. The grounds looked well maintained, flowers in a border and some colourful shrubs.

I waited patiently in the reception area, looking at various leaflets on a revolving stand – local area support networks and club activities, noting the order of the leaflets in the stand – all tidy and in line. Two middle-aged administrators were busy on computers and answering the telephone. One lady had a problem with the computer as it wouldn't accept the information she was trying to enter. Head teacher came into the office and said he would do it don't worry, but the secretary insisted she would do it somehow and keep trying.

A tall slim gentleman, obviously busy as his secretary had a problem he was helping with, as well as electrical work being organised on school premises. He had a strong handshake and a direct look, moving easily and talking quickly clearly in a welcoming mode, yet distance – perhaps formality – possibly pre-occupied - was perceived. I was led past a few classrooms to his office at the front of the building. It was difficult to enter into introductory conversation – I got the impression that he just wanted to get on with the questions/interview. Yet he elaborated on all sorts of topics at different times during the interview.

No separate G & T co-ordinator in this school. Two female teachers left through the reception area with bag-full's of books/marking/afterhours paperwork.

The head teacher is the gifted and talented coordinator. All others - female staff going by staff list observed on wall.

The interview took place in his office. I sat in a low armless easy chair with a table next to me, facing the head teacher. He sat in a swivel chair with a couple of hundred small individual photographs of the school children behind him. Lots of smiling faces over his shoulder. The room was very tidy, quite small, with a bookcase containing a neat row of files and with a window overlooking the front entrance of the school - a slatted blind at the window, off white walls.

He was happy to provide the interview, to sign consent form, scanned information sheet and provide permission for audio tape to be used.

As I asked questions he tended to consult his computer (the only item on the table) – on the table next to me - for answers several times. Very polite and helpful. No power play was perceived – he didn't talk down to me, I didn't feel uncomfortable just felt I needed to keep to the point as I was very aware of the interview time limit of one hour. He arrived exactly on time and kept an eye on the clocks as we proceeded.

We were interrupted by an electrician wanting to know where to locate lights. He replied they had been marked out but his admin assistant would show him.

Two more teachers walked past the open door and said goodnight – they also had baskets/bags full of books. He smiled at them in a professional yet caring manner – supportive of them - said a few times how hard they worked and the pressure on them from Ofsted, the curriculum, pressure to perform and loads of paperwork.

Cleaner using vacuum rather noisy – he closed the door so we could talk.

He said that an LA Gifted Advisor had provided training at the school so they had been shown how set up systems to identify and provide for gifted pupils, but her job had finished due to financial cuts. There had been initial resistance as some teachers thought all children were gifted but by working with the LA advisor they had achieved a level of agreement of what gifted and talented meant- enabling them to form a school policy and to provide consistency across the school in identification and provision for gifted children.

Policy says ok to be bright! (Check this). OfSTED is 'good' report he says. G& T policy to be forwarded by email.

Check school policy online and OfSTED inspections to clarify what has been said.)

Head teacher also co-manages (executive head) another school a few miles away that is in 'special measures? ' – offering support and practical advice. (Could that be why he classifies this school with 20% gifted/talented compared with the other school?)

School development focus – key actions and criteria - check if anything related online?

Overall impression – a well run, highly organised school. Appears supportive of staff – appreciates the pressures on them - from his actions and what was said. He emphasised consistency in identification techniques across the school a few times. Head teacher obviously very conscientious, capable and organised too. He tried to be helpful and was in a good mood – felt as though

he was honest but obviously felt strongly about teacher pressure and time. Going by the need to consult the computer and not have items to hand that implementation of policy is in progress - ongoing.

Concerns: pupil behaviour and attitudes, whether gifted provision will be sustained, pressure on staff. Obviously very aware of children's needs, of teacher ability and what they produce. Regular checks on planning – differentiation – gives the impression he appears to know exactly what is going on in the school He didn't always answer the questions directly but most information covered successfully. A rewarding and experience building exercise in interviewing.

Obtained a good idea as to what the position is with G & T in this school.

Sounds as though they have set up systems for G & T, but still refining and improving procedures – check transcript and OfSTED reports for any information/confirmation.

Still some cars in staff car-park as I passed.

NB *Coded: S2*

6 Example of Coding Structure Applied to Transcripts

Interview transcripts were repeatedly inspected for relevant information and highlighted in ten different colours, enabling full extraction of content information into relevant cells.

Colour coding: brown = terminology/labelling, purple = PD training, black = Identification, pink = teacher opinions/perceptions/attitudes, royal blue = provision, orange = document related, green = teaching approaches/engagement, red = registers, light blue = funding withdrawal, grey = last ten years with strengths and weaknesses of G & T policy.

15/5/2012

Interview *Mrs* [redacted] *(Head Teacher)* [redacted] *School. Cheltenham Glos GL*[redacted]

Experience – taught for almost 40 years

8th year this school

Position: head-teacher/G & T coordinator - 3rd headship position.

Question 1). How do you feel about the G & T initiative?

We were already doing lots – we were already making provision G & T – we have some good experienced teachers in this school – no change except have to register G & T and inform parents. But we have found that infants can be much more difficult to identify... if they come in school here at 4 – 5 years of age, there can be a huge gap – some know much more, they know more as some have experienced much more – up to 1/5 longer – we find we can ID some children and miss others as their age development further ahead. We call ... categorise children as able gifted and/or talented ... we have identified 10% of pupils in this category... as is required.

Probe – in this area I presume you would have some professional parents?

Yes. Especially in this area of many professional parents... and with that some precocious children... the children's language is usually above the average but it can be just usage though ... it can often be just normal home communication and contact with older siblings, the children are not necessarily gifted or more able.

Question 2). In your experience how has this initiative been received?

We have done all that is required in this school. I read all information as I am really interested – so took the time to attend to do what had to be done. I have attended PD myself and I have trained my staff. It is ongoing training to maintain confidence and consistency as not all staff are in favour – one thinks it is elitist. I was very interested in gifted children as I myself had a gifted child. My own son at 2 ½ could read – so I had direct contact with giftedness. He was definitely gifted – for example he read books very early, he also talked well early on so can relate to and absorb concepts readily.

Probe- How have you found academic giftedness is accepted here in this school?

Not all staff feel the same as sport recognition is fine even way back when I was a girl – sporting girls put on pedestal but academic achievement is still ...almost distasteful... elitist. Footballers – ok to pay them millions a year but especially with recession do not like to think money being spent on R & D – we appear to follow USA, not that I like or approve of this path.

Question 3). What kinds of supporting documents have you received?

We have 'Early Years,' 'G & T Pupils in schools,' 'Classroom quality standards', also NACE lot of stuff got from DfEE or DfES. 'Identifying children – getting started,' tried the NACE challenge award scheme but with so many criteria to meet and examples written and provided, with all other requirements much too time consuming. We do however attend to the NACE Action Plan.

7 *Ethical Approach Taken in Research*

Ethical Considerations and Routines for Research Connected with Primary School Teacher Interviews

The development of the social sciences in recent years has also brought attention to the methods used by researchers and the increase in regulation by controlling bodies (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2000). It is now essential that ethical considerations in accessing information, generating and accumulating material must be taken into account when conducting research (Thomas, 2009). The activity sequence entailed in the generation of material is described by Creswell (2007, p.118) as the Data Collection Circle consisting of: "locating the site/individual, purposefully sampling, gaining access and making rapport, collecting data, recording information, resolving any field issues and storing data." These interrelated activities highlight the need for continuous, serious and sensitive ethical considerations to avoid "exploitation, deception, researching vulnerable people, revealing people's identities or participating in dubious bargains" as listed by Silverman, (2011, p.90).

An ethical framework for dealing with issues is outlined by Patton (2002) suggesting that most fieldwork is venturing into the unknown, therefore when conducting interviews it is crucial to carefully consider how the researcher will handle events sensitively and effectively. "Interviews are interventions. They affect people. A good interview lays open thoughts, feelings, knowledge and experience" (Patton, 2002, p.405). Therefore a pilot interview with a local school in Gloucestershire was arranged with the aim of obtaining first-hand experience in teacher interviewing, recording, interpreting and analysing material. This valuable encounter provided the opportunity to understand the processes and procedures entailed in educational research practices that are now outlined.

Patton provides an ethical checklist including:

- explaining purpose;
- promises and reciprocity;
- risk assessment;
- confidentiality;
- informed consent;
- interviewer vulnerabilities;
- data collection boundaries;
- ethical versus legal considerations

(Patton, 2002, p.408).

In order to minimise risk of any harm to participants through damage to their safety or reputation, the University Code of Ethics was meticulously examined for relevant information pertaining to interviewing primary school educators (Silverman, 2011). "Researchers must be guided by the ethics of their discipline" (Patton, 2002, p.311). This University Code formed the ethical framework for the entire research process. A CRB check was not required as children were not directly involved in this study and official University permission obtained to proceed through an RD1 and supervisors' approval of

the research questions, the interview questions and the letter of introduction to school head teachers was gained as part of the planning procedure.

Qualitative research involves purposive sampling that aligns with the objective of understanding the view and feelings of a participant who is in a position to provide the specific information under study. Therefore, this homogeneous group of primary school teacher participants was selected using the convenience approach (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2007). This style can be seen as time saving, however Miles and Huberman (1994, p.28) note that information and credibility may pose some risk using this quick, easy method. As generalisations were not intended in this study, convenience sampling was seen as appropriate in this instance, as access to appropriate individuals and genuinely understanding their views and experiences was an essential element.

Locating the site and negotiating entry was accomplished through letters of introduction and invitation to participate in this study, sent out to over 60 local schools in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire and initially addressed to primary school head teachers. This approach ensured participants were contacted through the correct channels, aiming to adhere to normal protocol of hierarchical establishments, ensuring that participation is voluntary (Silverman, 2011) and providing the opportunity to present the purpose of the research (Cohen *et al.,* 2000).

Keeping in mind that the conduct of the researcher is paramount (Cohen *et al*., 2000) the collection of data in this study was through individual semi-structured interviews, requiring informed consent (see appendix 2) and participant information sheets (see appendix 3).

Part of the ethical routine was to fully inform the participants through a participant's information sheet containing:

- the study title;
- invitation paragraph;
- the purpose of the study;
- why this person has been invited to take part;
- the voluntary nature of the event;
- what will happen if the participant agrees;
- the advantages and risks in participation;
- agreement for confidentiality (Creswell, 2007, p.134).

As participants needed to make an informed choice, assurances were made that deception or covert activity was definitely not to be considered, their confidentiality would be maintained and their vulnerability closely monitored.

As Thomas (2009, p.149) confirms, consent is the participant agreeing to be involved whereas informed consent includes the participant "understanding

what they are agreeing to... including the option for a potential participant to choose to take part or not." Acquiring or incorporating informed consent is criticised by Mitchell (1993) due to the participant being informed in advance of content thus restricting a spontaneous outcome. Mitchell makes a convincing argument for secrecy claiming that interconnected groups may be against open enquiry in some circumstances. Conversely, participants may want to be recognised as contributors to specific research as noted by Silverman (2011). Due to the importance of confidentiality in these interviews and with the protection of participants in mind, informed consent was incorporated in this study. After reading and a receiving a verbal explanation to clarify interview content details, the participants signed under the opting in facility, thus making an informed choice to attend interviews (Thomas, 2009).

Patton (2002, p.302) emphasises that taking field notes is not an option but fundamental to the research process. Field notes provided highly descriptive accounts of observations, feelings and social interactions involved on each interviewing opportunity. Detailed field notes were taken (see example appendix 5) as digital voice recorders negate to register any nonverbal information such as nodding, nervous movements, facial expressions or details of the location (Cohen *et al*., 2000). The digital voice recorder did inhibit free-flowing conversation at times; participants tended to hesitate on occasions glancing at the device, showing awareness of their contributions being on permanent record. The information on this recorder was deleted and triple checked that all folders on this device were completely cleared before being returning the recorder to the University library.

Creswell (2007) emphasises the importance of ethical issues connected to sensitive information and sharing personal experiences, consequently in order to maintain trust, no covert activities were enacted and nothing harmful or embarrassing was included in this study. Storage of material collected and transcribed was computer password protected and original analysis paperwork kept securely under lock and key; ensuring confidentiality and minimising vulnerability as suggested by Cohen *et al*. (2000), Creswell (2007), Thomas (2009) and Silverman (2011). Sensitivity as outlined by Cohen *et al*. (2000) was incorporated throughout all interviews to build trust and encourage open conversation. This approach included; showing respect, courtesy, consideration when hesitation or reticence to answer in-depth probes, when observing nervous body language and also by personally displaying gratitude for individual time and input. As these writers add, if uneasy or feeling threatened, participants will hold back information resulting in lack of communication and where cooperation may be limited. These authors also allude to a potential imbalance in power relationships between the interviewer and the participant. In this instance the relationship was one of equals. My status was an insider; leading the conversation and looking for specific information.

Participant vulnerability was also considered carefully, especially with regard to what they were able to say during the interview. As one participant interview took place in a staff room which was used regularly and the head teacher's office door opened off this room, the participant could be overheard and potentially embarrassed. Therefore, vulnerability was considered sensitively when there was hesitation, repetition, nervous body language or avoidance of questions and probes. Watts (2008, p.1) supports this stance stating that "ethical research processed must be responsive to the circumstances of the research." In another setting, this participant may have supplied more in depth information.

As integrity was a central principle underpinning this study, analysis was also conducted in a thoroughly ethical manner. Transcripts and field notes were studied, accurately and painstakingly examined to "ensure truth telling... [and to] reject any duplicity or deceit" as described by Watts (2008, p.1).

During the writing phase of this educational study, the schools and participants were carefully and systematically coded to ensure confidentiality. Great care was taken to make certain that staff members or schools could be not traced or recognised in the final thesis (Patton, 2002; Creswell, 2007; Silverman, 2011).

At every stage of the research process it is vital that ethical considerations to minimise risk of harm to the participant "and act is such a way as to preserve their dignity as human beings" (Cohen *et al*., 2000, p.142). During this study, ethics and integrity were considered throughout the research process namely: negotiating entry to an appropriate site; accessing suitable participants; recording individual experiences; field notes written; analyse and produce findings that fully reflect the reality of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Although ethical research and integrity in practice can be complex and multi-faceted, these principles formed an integral framework for this educational research project.

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8. PISA Report

Figure 1.
COMPARING COUNTRIES' AND ECONOMIES' PERFORMANCE

Statistically significantly **above** the OECD average
Not statistically significantly different from the OECD average
Statistically significantly **below** the OECD average

	On the overall reading scale	On the reading subscales					On the mathematics scale	On the science scale
		Access and retrieve	*Integrate and interpret*	*Reflect and evaluate*	Continuous texts	Non-continuous texts		
OECD average	493	495	493	494	494	492	496	501
Shanghai-China	556	549	558	557	564	539	600	575
Korea	539	542	541	542	538	542	546	538
Finland	536	532	538	536	535	535	541	554
Hong Kong-China	533	530	530	540	538	522	555	549
Singapore	526	526	525	529	522	539	562	542
Canada	524	517	522	535	524	527	527	529
New Zealand	521	521	517	531	518	532	519	532
Japan	520	530	520	521	520	518	529	539
Australia	515	513	513	523	513	524	514	527
Netherlands	508	519	504	510	506	514	526	522
Belgium	506	513	504	505	504	511	515	507
Norway	503	512	502	505	505	498	498	500
Estonia	501	503	500	503	497	512	512	528
Switzerland	501	505	502	497	498	505	534	517
Poland	500	500	503	498	502	496	495	508
Iceland	500	507	503	496	501	499	507	496
United States	500	492	495	512	500	503	487	502
Liechtenstein	499	508	498	498	495	506	536	520
Sweden	497	505	494	502	499	498	494	495
Germany	497	501	501	491	496	497	513	520
Ireland	496	498	494	502	497	496	487	508
France	496	492	497	495	493	498	497	498
Chinese Taipei	495	486	499	493	496	500	543	520
Denmark	495	502	492	493	496	493	503	499
United Kingdom	494	491	491	503	492	506	492	514
Hungary	494	501	496	489	497	487	490	503
Portugal	489	488	497	496	492	486	487	493
Macao-China	487	493	498	481	488	491	525	511
Italy	486	482	490	482	489	476	483	489
Latvia	484	474	484	492	484	487	482	494
Slovenia	483	489	489	470	484	476	501	512
Greece	483	468	484	499	487	472	466	470
Spain	481	480	481	483	484	473	483	488
Czech Republic	478	479	488	462	479	474	493	500
Slovak Republic	477	493	481	466	479	471	497	490
Croatia	476	493	472	471	478	472	460	486
Israel	474	463	473	483	477	467	447	455
Luxembourg	472	471	475	471	471	472	489	484
Austria	470	477	471	463	470	472	496	494
Lithuania	468	476	469	463	470	462	477	491
Turkey	464	467	459	473	466	461	445	454
Dubai (UAE)	458	458	457	466	461	460	453	466
Russian Federation	459	469	467	441	461	452	468	478
Chile	449	444	452	452	453	444	421	447
Serbia	442	449	445	430	444	438	442	443
Bulgaria	429	430	436	417	433	421	428	439
Uruguay	426	424	423	436	429	421	427	427
Mexico	425	433	418	432	426	424	419	416
Romania	424	423	425	426	423	424	427	428
Thailand	421	431	416	420	423	423	419	425
Trinidad and Tobago	416	413	419	413	418	417	414	410
Colombia	413	404	411	422	415	409	381	402
Brazil	412	407	406	424	414	408	386	405
Montenegro	408	408	420	383	411	398	403	401
Jordan	405	394	410	407	417	387	387	415
Tunisia	404	393	393	427	408	393	371	401
Indonesia	402	399	397	409	405	399	371	383
Argentina	398	394	398	402	400	391	388	401
Kazakhstan	390	397	397	373	390	371	405	400
Albania	385	380	393	376	390	366	377	391
Qatar	372	354	379	376	375	361	368	379
Panama	371	363	372	377	373	359	360	376
Peru	370	364	371	368	374	356	365	369
Azerbaijan	362	361	373	335	362	351	431	373
Kyrgyzstan	314	299	327	300	319	293	331	330

Source: OECD, *PISA 2009 Database*.
StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932343342

9. *Interview Questions – Standard Format for all Interviews*

Interview questions:

1. *How do you feel about* the G & T initiative?
2. In your experience how has this initiative been received?
3. What kinds of supporting documents have you received?
4. How satisfied are you with the G & T initiative?
5. *What is your opinion* as to how this initiative has been received? (In this school, in general?)
6. What has this experience been like for you?
7. How do you feel about attending to the needs of G & T pupils?
8. What are the feelings in general in this school?
9. What kinds of programmes have been implemented? What percentage of G & T in this school?
10. How do you feel about your participation in this initiative?
11. *What do you think of* the withdrawal of funding for G & T pupils? Will make a difference to you?
12. What is your opinion of the strengths of this initiative? What is your opinion of the weaknesses?
13. What changes in G & T provision have you encountered over the last ten years?
14. What in your opinion are other factors that could contribute the implementation of the initiative?