

**Perceptions of the actions, initiatives, policies and successes, or otherwise, of the post 1997 UK Government for the education of gifted and talented children, as outlined in its Excellence in Cities proposals**

by

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**Abstract**

This paper enquires into the implementation of the Government's directives for the education of the 'gifted and talented', as specified in the 'Excellence in Cities' (EiC) document. The term 'gifted and talented' (GaT) has been determined by government *diktat* and its appropriateness is examined, as are the arguments about precise definitions, the identification of such children and the rationale for the Government choice. The current concern has its roots in the past, demanding an examination of the political and educational *raison d'être* for the evolving policies. The assessment of the results of such policies and arrangements sheds light on their suitability and relevance for the future and are thus considered. The experience of others to provide an appropriate education and the arrangements needed to facilitate the process justify a consideration of an international perspective. The examination of the philosophy, current arrangements made elsewhere and innovative proposals for the future of the education of the able aids the establishment of the criteria with which to judge the viability and implementation of the EiC arrangements. The methodology used to obtain research data involves interviews with those responsible for implementing the EiC directives at both City and school/college level. Their answers illuminate their approach and aspirations for the education of the GaT. The success of the policy and its implementation is assessed by means of a critical analysis of the management decisions taken, and the consequences at both City and School/College level. Triangulation is accomplished by the additional use of the data gained from expert witnesses, thus helping to determine the viability and practicality of the arrangements made and envisaged. The post modernist stance of the author, coupled with a qualitative methodology, and a possible initial bias towards a revisionist view of how the education of the able should be organised, should not necessarily invalidate the conclusions reached.

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**List of acronyms**

AERA	American Educational Research Association
CATS	Cognitive Ability Tests
CIS	Chief Inspector of Schools
CTC	City Technology Colleges
DFEE	Department for Education and Employment
DES	Department for Education and Science
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EAZ	Education Action Zone
EC	Education Challenge
EiC	Excellence in Cities
DGS	Direct Grant Schools
GMS	Grant Maintained Schools
GaT	Gifted and Talented
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HE	Higher Education
HMI	Her Majesty's Inspectorate
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
INSET	In-service Training
LEA	Local Education Authority
NACE	National Association for Able children in Education
NQT	Newly Qualified Teacher
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PE	Physical Education
LC	Lead/School Coordinator
PM	Prime Minister
SATS	Statutory Assessment Tests
SC	Strand Coordinator
SMT	Senior Management Team
SOS	Secretary of State
SS	Specialist Schools

## FOREWORD

The choice of research topic stems not only from the author's interest in political decision making and the formulation of national and local policies, but also from a strong belief in the cardinal importance of ensuring that all children are educated according to their age, aptitude and ability. Such a belief is based on the Christian ethic that the care of children, in all its forms, must ensure that all should have whatever talents they possess nurtured and developed to the full.

Notwithstanding this creed, the means by which the nation can prosper so as to ensure that it is in a position to continue to fulfil its responsibilities to its citizens must be of paramount concern to those who direct its policies. A small but highly developed industrialised nation such as Britain is unlikely to maintain its level of prosperity if it fails to ensure that it possesses within its workforce sufficient numbers of people highly trained, highly educated and capable of ensuring that the nation continues to prosper. The education of the most able of a nation's children is central to its future success.

**... human capital<sup>1</sup> is widely regarded as one of the most important factors in the process of production. ... a considerable amount of growth rate can be explained as the yield on human capital. ... if the accumulation of human capital can be accelerated, the rate of growth will be increased** (Encyclopedia Britannica, 15<sup>th</sup> Edition, Vol 18, 106).

An amalgam of creed and the experience of a lifetime involvement in the education of gifted and talented children and of military élites engendered and supports a personal conviction that irrespective of political dogma, the education of the most able in society should not be put at risk. Each person should have the opportunity for personal fulfilment and no country should ignore its most important natural resource, the ability and talents of its young.

To concentrate one's interest on the education of the most able is not an indication of élitism, nor does it mean that the education of those at the opposite end of the ability continuum should not demand an equal interest in their own right. Any suggestion to the contrary would be an affront to the present researcher. As highlighted by Kerry and Kerry (2000a, 13)

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<sup>1</sup> Human capital: acquired human ingenuity and skill.

**the charges of élitism often made against those who attempt to educate the able more effectively only add to the problem,**

of trying to achieve what hopefully all would consider valuable i.e. the enviable position of educating all according to their needs.

The charge that '**cosy elitism**' arising out of '**snobbery**' held back vocational education is an only too recent example of such a comment<sup>2</sup>

However, above all else, pragmatism dictates that the practicalities involved in carrying out the research must be achievable in the circumstances in which the author finds himself. Additionally, the extent of the proposed research must be manageable in the time space available, and hopefully the intended outcomes must be feasible.

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<sup>2</sup> PM Blair, Manchester, 23 March 2002

**GLOSSARY**

Able	Academically able
Gifted	‘Gifted’ refers to those with high ability or potential in academic subjects.
Talented	‘Talented’ refers to those with high ability or potential in the expressive or creative arts or sport.
Gifted and talented (GaT)	‘Gifted and talented’ cohort should be approximately 7 per cent ‘gifted’ and 3 per cent ‘talented’, making up the prescribed total of a 10 per cent cohort of pupils within each secondary school.
Pupils with ‘special needs’	Pupils who required provision beyond that which was normally provided within the school

## Introduction

A current political concern amongst the British electorate is the condition of ‘State Education’, many considering the ability of the State to meet the perceived educational needs of both individuals and that of the nation to be of cardinal importance.

The emphasis placed by the present government in its 1997 General Election Manifesto was predominantly on education. Its successes in the polls of 1997 and 2001 and its efforts to attempt to improve, change and invigorate the system have stimulated the author to try to assess critically the proposals, initiatives, and successes/or failures of one specific aspect of one of the many Government educational initiatives, introduced since 1997.

The chosen area of investigation covered in this dissertation deals with the provision made and the implementation arrangements for the education of the gifted and talented, as outlined in the Excellence in Cities (EiC) (1999) policy document. A policy designed to alleviate many of the concerns expressed not only by parents but by politicians, industrialists and academics as to the adequacy, appropriateness and relevance of the current arrangements in this regard.

The arrangements made for the provision of mass education from the latter part of the nineteenth century to the present by the Government of the day, originally concentrated on elementary education, but increasingly the claims of secondary education and eventually further and higher education made greater and greater inroads into the education budget. The introduction of free secondary education in 1944, effectively introduced an *elitist* element into the provision: greater financial resources were ploughed into the education of those perceived by the state to be the most able and in consequence the education of the majority of the population was deemed by many to have been unfairly treated. This growing belief in the unjust and socially divisive arrangements led to the movement in the last forty years of the twentieth century to the more egalitarian approach for the provision of secondary education, by the adoption of a non-selective system of neighbourhood schools.

It is with the general belief, held by many, that such arrangements have failed to meet the needs of the most able children, that the political powers of today are trying to grapple. As far back as 1979 Musgrove wrote **‘The English working class has been betrayed twice in my lifetime, first in the General Strike of 1926 and then forty years later when the grammar schools went “comprehensive”**’. Woodhead (2002a, 197) understands the former because of its **‘perfectly good political sense’** but is puzzled by the latter. To him the **‘the Labour Party did not abolish the Great Public schools,**

**the obvious strongholds of upper-class privilege ... [but] they extinguished the only serious hope of working class parity. ... the upper classes kept their public schools ; the working classes lost theirs'.** The specific proposals of the EiC, in respect of the education of the gifted and talented (GaT), are, therefore, of interest and importance as indicators of government intentions and its perceptions of how to reorganise the present system in order to improve that which it provides.

## **Chapter 1 Statement of the problem**

This is an analytical study about a feature of Government policy: the education of the able i.e. the ‘gifted and talented’. It is based on research in the area of the EiC policy initiative. This research is contextualised by a survey of shifts in Government policy in relation to the able. The research itself explores whether and to what extent and how effectively, policy is managed by those charged to implement it.

The intention of the researcher is to review the working of EiC policy initiative from the perspective of those involved in it and to subject it to critical analysis.

By means of questioning those responsible for enacting the proposals and taking soundings as to the viability of the policy and triangulating the collected data with that obtained from experts in the field, some insight might be gained as to the progress and wisdom of such an initiative.

### **1. What are today’s imperatives?**

The cry goes out from the British electorate: ‘Education, Education, Education’, and the Government responds by a whole welter of policies, initiatives and directives. The time is now, but it only reflects in many ways what has gone before.

The history of educational provision is one in which the pressure from the public, political interests, industrial needs etc has hastened the hand of government.

**The men who made and mended the machines were the *élite* of the Industrial Revolution...they were on the average more intelligent, and they took the lead in educational movements ... From 1823 onwards the mechanic’s institutes begun in Scotland by Dr Birkbeck<sup>3</sup> spread through industrial England).** (Trevelyan, 1964, 40-41).

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<sup>3</sup> George Birkbeck, (1776-1841), Founder of the London Mechanic’s Institution, forerunner of Birkbeck College.

and the organising strength of Henry Brougham's<sup>4</sup> political career encouraged the general view that there was a need for such education. A similar spirit led to the foundation of London University in 1828, but spurred on by the exclusion of nonconformists and secularists from both Oxford and Cambridge Universities. Today, the cry is for better standards and the present Government is responding to the call. Hence, a new policy, one of many in the recent past:

**Schools will be given greater freedom to innovate and raise standards as a result of today's Education Bill.** (Morris, Estelle. SOS. 2001).

## **2. What is the place of politics in policy making?**

Educational provision in Britain has developed in an *ad hoc* manner. Witness: for example, the number of Education Acts, each with its new policies:

**The Acts of 1870,1902,1918,1936,and 1944, taken together afford an excellent example of what Dicey (1905) calls 'our inveterate prejudice for fragmentary and gradual legislation.'** (Barnard, 1968, 301).

Witness also the list of recent Government initiatives aimed at gifted children and recorded by NACE (2001) in (Table 1.1). It consists of a proliferation of initiatives set out in an absolute tangible form, but it lacks coherence between one and another, being composed of little bits of *ad hoc* experiments unconnected with each other.

The growth and demise of the Direct Grant Schools(DGS) in the twentieth century, as a consequence of policy changes (Barnard, *op.cit.*, 243. Whitaker's Almanack, 1971, 567) can also be considered.

The creation of City Technology Colleges (CTC), the introduction of Grant Maintained Schools (GMS) and Specialist Schools (SS), as 'creatures' of a new political policy, are also factors. (Baker, 1993, 178. Stewart, 1994, 10. Freeman, 2001, 230.)

There is also the ongoing debate over failed schools<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Henry Brougham, later Lord (1778-1868) Parliamentarian, instigator of the 1816 Parliamentary Committee set up to enquire into 'The Education of the Lower Orders'.

<sup>5</sup> 'Three Wise Men's' Report December 1992, cited in Woodhead and Clare,2001. Mitchell, 2002. 12.

Estelle Morris, Schools Standards Minister, cited by Lightfoot, L., 2000.

Kealey, T., Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buckingham, 2001, 28.

An understanding of how the changing social and political climates of the past affected the policies concerning educational provision for the more able can help to place in perspective the current moves that are being introduced for their education. This understanding can come from an amalgam of historical detail (Richardson, 2000, 17-35), political analysis and literary comment. It is to this end that considerable stress is placed in the review chapter (Chapter 3, pp. 49-63) on the politics that appertained within the time period in which the historical review of relevant events and actions were taking place. Despite the often-heard cry that politics should be taken out of education, such a desire, is in fact, an impossibility, educational provision being influenced by a particular set of ideas i.e. by the very stuff of politics.

**...it is impossible to consider education any longer primarily as a personal consumer good, or a charitable offering, or an avocation. It is also a business of politics and economics.** (Boyd and King, 1975, 451).

Arguably, political polemics are therefore, an inevitable feature in any analysis or discussion of proposed or established policies and procedures designed to provide education, including that of the able.

Press, political and educational pundits claim that the condition of State Education is amongst the foremost current political concerns of the British electorate. The ability of the State to meet the perceived educational needs of individuals of all abilities and aptitudes and those of the nation, is therefore considered by many to be its prime duty.

### **3. What wider aspects impinge on policy making for able pupils' education?**

Whilst undeniably there is a political aspect to all decisions as to what educational provision should be made for the education of the able, there are other issues which have a rightful place in the discussions:

- The criteria on which the identification of the able should be based i.e. Who are these able children?
- The method by which the able should be identified and by whom i.e. How does one identify them and who should do it?

- The need to improve the attainment and motivation of the most able children (particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds who are under-represented in higher education).
- The creation of a positive perception of inner-city education amongst parents and the wider community.
- The uneven attainment and curricular interest across the gender gap.
- The underachievement of a number of children.

The issues highlighted above crystallise under three headings concerning the able child: identification of, opportunities for, and their standards of attainment.

### Issues of identification

Before provision is made for the able, it is, of course, essential to have identified them: it is then that the problem is at its most critical. Many argue that only the top 1 per cent of the population qualify, whilst others take the top 5 per cent, (of which the DfES consider 10 per cent to be underachieving) and

**...some American States describe the top 30 per cent as gifted.** (Freeman, 2001 *op.cit.*, 11).

As Freeman (2001 *op.cit.* 12) points out, mistakes in categorisation or failure to categorise, can lead to disappointment.

In the literature writers do not adopt any agreed conventions which makes it very hard to sustain consistency of argument. The existence of so many definitions Chapter 2, pp. 20-28 makes the task of identification exceedingly difficult, by whom or for an extended discussion by which criteria whatsoever, it is undertaken.

### Issues about opportunities

Lampl, founder of the Sutton Trust, entrepreneur and philanthropist, decries the recent tendency to make his

**...old University [Oxford] revert to something close to a finishing school for the rich...Where had the two thirds of the students from state or state-funded schools who were there in the sixties (now going)? ... Where were the students who came from the Welsh valleys?** (Lampl, 2000, 23).

The contribution of the Sutton Trust to try to remedy the situation in the form of Summer Schools now has Government support and features in its programme for increasing accessibility to HE for the able but from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The declared policy intention of the Government is to ensure that increasingly the education provided should offer the opportunity to all to achieve their potential and by a multiplicity of programmes such as the Education Challenge (EC) and EiC it is endeavouring within its own political philosophy to achieve its intention. Nevertheless, the evidence is that Summer Schools do not produce the desired results (OFSTED, 2001, 5, 31, 32, 37).

### Issues about standards of attainment

The perceived standard of attainment of all children has become a *cause célèbre* in the body politic, replacing what had hitherto, in the third quarter of the twentieth century, been seen as paramount, to ensure that all children, irrespective of ability, attended the same type of school.

In the political and social climate of the latter part of the twentieth century, the concern for the educational needs of those who were classified as requiring special education provision, effectively amounted to a concern for those, who, for whatever reason, exhibited low learning abilities. The special educational needs of the more able children failed to signify to any effective level in the annals of public, political or educational circles.

Whether or not 'standards' in education have deteriorated is more easily alleged than proved. Despite such fears of reduction in the late 1960s and early 1970s a critical review of the six regional and national research surveys of reading performances reported: '**No justification was found for a belief that standards are declining**'. (Clegg, 1972, 175)

Further:

**The findings of the Bullock<sup>6</sup> Report (1975) more or less confirmed this; the general picture was one of rising reading scores through the 1950s and 1960s with a slight decline in the average score by 1970.** (Richmond, 1978, 19).

However, although the reading standards at eleven gave no indication for concern, the Bullock Report disclosed:

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<sup>6</sup> Bullock, Sir Alan. Later Baron. Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University.

**Widespread functional illiteracy in the adult population and possibly a growing proportion of poor readers among the children of unskilled and semi-skilled parentage ...[but] the report rightly acknowledged ... that any findings needed to be treated with caution.** (Richmond, *op. cit.* 19).

In practice the advice was largely ignored and alarmist publicity heralded the appearance of rumours of falling standards, which Richmond (*op. cit.* 19) believed were ill-founded.

Ill-founded or not, the incoming SOS for Education and Science in 1986 was convinced that much was wrong with the provision of state education:

**...[in] the DES ... there was a clear 1960s ethos and a very clear agenda which permeated virtually all the civil servants. It was rooted in 'progressive' orthodoxies, in egalitarianism and in the comprehensive school system. It was devoutly anti-excellence, anti-selection, and anti-market.** (Baker, *op. cit.*, 168).

The political colour of the ruling Government party has changed since 'Baker'<sup>7</sup> but the belief that the standard of attainment in British schools is still deficient persists in Government thinking, as intimated by SOS Estelle Morris in her foreword to the September 2001 HM Government White Paper<sup>8</sup>.

**As a country, we are still wasting an enormous amount of talent by denying some of our children the quality of education that would make a real difference to their lives.**

This concern for standards has now given impetus to the presentation to Parliament of new policies in the Education Bill (2001), which the SOS describes thus:

**This Bill would give teachers and heads the flexibility to build on the best in our comprehensive system. We want headteachers to have the confidence to introduce innovative new ideas into their schools. They'd be supported by increased investment in schools by a Government that recognises the true value of education and the professional role of the teachers.** (Estelle Morris, 23 November 2001).

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<sup>7</sup> Baker, Kenneth, later Baron, SOS for Education and Science, 1986-1989.

<sup>8</sup> 'Schools achieving success'

Hubbard<sup>9</sup>, (2002, 21), faced with the dichotomy that education standards are generally perceived to be rising, yet widely held to be falling, suggests that an explanation lies in that **‘...pupils are missing out on creative thought as teachers concentrate on passing exams’**. He attributes this phenomenon to the need of teachers and schools to succeed in the ‘Examinations League Tables’ and, on that basis, as measured by public examinations the pupils are indeed achieving high standards. However, he suggests that;

- although the national curriculum requirements and examination syllabi were neither narrow nor limiting, (calling for problem-solving and independent judgement), the actual teaching undertaken concentrates on a much narrower syllabus, the ‘hidden syllabus’, as revealed by the examination and marking system and illuminated by sample examination papers, and
- the introduction in the early eighties of a criterion-based grading system as a replacement of the previous system where mark and grade criteria used in public exams had been secret and the grades were, at least in part, awarded to given proportions of candidates,

together resulted in making examining and its outcomes more predictable. Hence, the coaching of pupils for the specific requirements of examination questions has become more successful than hitherto.

To Hubbard, the effective emergence of totally predictable criteria for success introduces the danger of pupils experiencing not the broad and deep curriculum that the syllabus intended but instead the experience needed to pass an examination.

**What then falls (*sic*) by the wayside are those aspects of a subject that require scholarship or creative thought, where there are no predictable answers or where originality and independence are sought – the very things needed to challenge the most able.** (Hubbard, *op. cit.*, 21).

It is, therefore, a possibility that the policy whereby the ‘instruments’ of tests and league tables, chosen by Government to drive up standards of attainment in reality contribute to the fall of genuine standards whilst being accompanied by an improvement in examination results, thus helping to explain an apparent dichotomy.

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<sup>9</sup> Director of Independent Schools Inspectorate

## International echoes of British concerns for 'standards of attainment'

The recognition of the national importance of ensuring that the education of the more able of the nation's children is appropriate has also become a recurring policy theme among international educationalists: a concern which is a by-product of the growing importance of maintaining and/or establishing a successful modern industrial/knowledge based economy.

**A global consensus is emerging on expectations for schools, if documents from key international institutions and the espoused policies of governments are taken as a guide (Chapman (1997), Chapman and Aspin (1997), Delors (1996).) It goes something like this. All students in every setting should be literate and numerate and should acquire a capacity for lifelong learning, leading to successful and satisfying work in a knowledge society and a global economy. (Caldwell, 1999, 2).**

In this context the aspirations for improving the educational standards of different countries are of interest to us in Britain. A major concern for many is with the reticence of able girls to become involved in science and mathematics. This was exemplified by the research contributions presented by (Tirri (2001), Seeokhee and Hongwon (2001), Lengfelder and Heller (2001), Feng, Campbell and Verna (2001), and Dai (2001), at the AERA Meeting (2001). A review of what they considered necessary to remedy the situation elsewhere has a rightful place in a specific search for what is needed, if here in Britain the determination to ensure that the able of both sexes is adequately provided for (Chapter 2, pp. 31, 32, 36-38).

### **4. What is the EiC policy initiative?**

The issues already highlighted above and which crystallise under the three headings appertaining to the needs of the able child, re: identification of, opportunities for, and their standard of attainment, constitute a current educational problem facing the nation. It is this problem which the current Government initiative, termed EiC is designed to address.

#### **EiC Policy Aims**

**EiC policy sets out an ambitious three-year programme to improve the education of city children. The aim is to:**

- **drive up standards in schools in major cities higher and faster to match the standards of excellence found in our best schools.**

- **ensure** (*sic*) **City parents and children should expect and gain as much from their schools as those anywhere else in the country.**
- **insist that** (*sic*) **Excellence must be the norm.** (The Standards Site EiC <http://www.> [accessed 5 June 2001]).

### EiC Policy Strands

There are seven EiC policy strands:

- City Learning Centres,
- Specialist Schools,
- Able children,
- Beacon schools,
- Learning Mentors,
- Learning Support Units, and
- Education Action Zones.

What follows is a summary of the third policy strand, which deals with the three-year programme to improve the arrangements for the educational special needs of the able cohort identified as ‘gifted and talented’ (GaT).

### The EiC defined, cohort of GaT children.

The GaT children of secondary school age in six<sup>10</sup> designated areas:

- Inner London,
- Manchester/Salford,
- Liverpool/Knowsley,
- Birmingham,
- Leeds/Bradford, and
- Sheffield/Rotherham,

fall within the EiC target. The children so designated are the most able 5 to 10 per cent of pupils in their schools.

EiC’s broad policy objectives are to help improve the attainment and motivation of the most able children in each inner city secondary school (particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds). They are to improve the ability of inner-city secondary schools to make effective provision for their most able children, partly by developing local support networks based on a by which cluster of neighbouring schools. They

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<sup>10</sup> The original number extended in 2000 and 2002.

also aim to create a positive perception of inner-city education amongst parents and the wider community.

The EiC policy initiative delivers cash to the schools. It finances the appointment of a Strand Coordinator (SC) at each of the six Cities to draw up plans and oversee their execution. Additionally it finances a GaT Coordinator at each of the 450 participating secondary schools to carry out the management of the arrangements and organise a distinctive teaching and learning programme and an extensive programme of out of hours study support opportunities for the most able cohort.

### **5. What are the assumptions of the Government, which underpin underlying EiC policies?**

During the last quarter of the twentieth century, the growing perception that both the education and health provision in Britain were not meeting the aspirations of the people, nor providing what society needed and required for its greater good, appeared to become commonplace. Such unease invites political interest, and consequentially both areas of social concern became the joint cardinal policy issues in both the 1997 and 2001 general elections.

The EiC policies initiative, as one of a number recently introduced, must therefore inevitably be viewed as not only an attempt to remedy the educational shortcomings of the *status quo*, but also to satisfy a political imperative. The ‘political baggage’ accompanying any political party on coming into power may or may not be ‘dumped’ in the face of political reality and expediency. The traditional stance of the Labour Party over the last forty years with regard to education has been to promote a policy of a non-selective system of secondary schools, with no particular emphasis on ensuring that the more able children were specifically catered for.

However, on taking office in 1997, they realised that there had been a failure to alter significantly the perception of HE as being largely the preserve of the middle classes. Few children from disadvantaged backgrounds were entering Universities and Colleges. The clarion call of industry and business was for improved standards of literacy and numeracy amongst potential and incumbent employees, to meet the changing challenge of the technological/information economy. Together with an ascendancy of a malaise in society with increasing levels of criminal behaviour, and

the discrepancy between the level of achievement across the genders, these were all urgent issues that demanded attention. Additionally they also had a considerable political dimension with a bearing on the potential success of the in coming government. Government intervention became inevitable.

It is no criticism of any Government that it acts for political reasons, such is the nature of democracy, but it is also wise to be aware of the possibility that motives other than purely educational ones might be present. The recent hints by the Government of disquiet with the outcomes of a comprehensive system of education may indicate that the old shibboleths are under review. The policy changes introduced by the Government to add variety and alternatives to a **'bog standard comprehensive'**<sup>11</sup> education for able children maybe tentative and exploratory attempts to placate and test the political/educational climate amongst its grass roots supporters. Whatever the political motives might be, one can only surmise and try to assess the actions for clues.

The aspirations, however, of the Government, as illustrated in the scope of its policy proposals, for the education of the most able 5 to 10 per cent in the cohort in all EiC areas are apparently based on a number of assumptions:

- the most able children fall within an arbitrary percentage band of any cohort,
- British primary school pupils perform poorly by comparison with their peers in other parts of the industrialised world,
- there is an under-representation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in HE, just 1 per cent come from social class five (Woodhead, 2001, 3),
- the setting up of improved links between schools, colleges and universities, will facilitate the access to HE.

## **6. What are the special needs of the able child?**

**In Britain, the need for an appropriate education for the very able is becoming recognised, although this is far from evenly spread across education authorities** (Freeman, 1998, 56).

Freeman was able to make such a devastating comment seventeen years after the 1981 Education Act, which in its concern for those pupils **'who required**

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<sup>11</sup> Campbell, A, PM. Blair's Press Secretary, Downing Street Press Conference statement. 2001.

**provision beyond that which was normally provided'** within the school, characterised them as 'pupils with special needs'.

It is within this category that the very able child lies, which thus echoes the even earlier but hitherto largely ignored findings of the Plowden Report (1967). Interestingly she also recommended a national policy of positive discrimination in favour of areas where children were most deprived socially.

Although the needs of the less able have attracted much needed attention and provision, unfortunately it is only relatively recently that English able pupils have attracted an increasing and needed attention to their special needs.

After an inquiry<sup>12</sup> by the House of Commons Education and Employment Committee into provision for very able children, its 1999 report recorded that:

**'much evidence noted that provision for the highly able was not satisfactory in the majority of English schools,' and dissented from what it described as a commonly held view that they – highly able children, can get by on their own, emphasising that they have as much of an entitlement to have their needs addressed as do other children.** (OFSTED, 2001, *op. cit.* 1).

## **7. Is underachievement a gender issue?**

Underachievement is to be deplored at every level of ability and across the genders. It is not exclusively associated with able children. It is, however, the underachievement by the able, which is an essential consideration of the GaT strand of the EiC policy initiative. In the Government's attempt to solve a specific problem facing it, i.e. the ability of the State to meet the perceived educational needs of able individuals, it must attempt to ameliorate any uneven attainment and curricular interest across the gender gap.

The well-rehearsed view that boys are now underachieving in comparison with girls is an apocryphal assumption which many partisan, as well as political opponents, believe. Kerry (2001) in a review of work by Dean (1998), Way (1997), Budge (1998), Lawrence (1997), Powers *et al.* (1997), Plummer *et al.* (1998), Gardiner (1997), Lepkowska (1998), Mason (1999), Cassidy (1999) and Bell, (1998.) draws attention to the multiplicity of conflicting evidence, which neither confirms nor debunks the belief.

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<sup>12</sup> Highly Able Children;(1999) Third Report from the Education and Employment Committee 1998-99, HMSO, London,

Boys have had successes, and girls may not have performed as well as trumpeted. Indeed, there is a suspicion among researchers that what has been measured are not the effects of gender when girls perform well, but other variables such as class and school traditions. Nor is it wholly obvious that boys have performed so conspicuously less well than one might have expected. Indeed, it might be suggested that while boys appeared in the past to out-perform girls, this was actually a myth. (Kerry, 2001, *op. cit.*, 204).

This latest concern coupled with the perceived failure of the often criticised state-provided-almost-universal comprehensive system of English secondary education, crystallised, when described so inelegantly as '**bog standard comprehensives**'<sup>13</sup>. The imperative to meet the needs of many and, in particular, those of the able, is seen not only as a political nightmare, but also as a central policy issue for a successful future of English State Education provision. An answer to the problem provided by the government is EiC.

It is this shared concern that has stimulated the author to try to assess critically the success or failure of the management implications of one of the Government's educational policy initiatives, for the education of the gifted. Specifically, the 1999 EiC policy strand dealing with the education of the able (GaT), forms the chosen area of investigation covered in this dissertation.

## **8. What are the management implications of the EiC GaT policy?**

In an oft quoted Parliamentary interchange, the then Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher (1989), retorted '**Advisors advise. Ministers decide**'<sup>14</sup>. The implications are clear. Government policies, whilst possibly originated by civil servants and advisors, become the directives of Ministers, who then rely on bureaucrats to interpret, action and manage his/her policy.

This formula is replicated no less in education than in business and industry. In an ideal situation Tomlinson's, (1978) plea for educational thinking and change to be made '**a connected continuum – not a dichotomy of policy-makers and operatives**', would probably find universal favour. Arguably the *actualité* in many if not most situations diverges radically from this ideal, but as an aspiration it attracts.

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<sup>13</sup> Campbell, A, PM. Blair's Press Secretary, Downing Street Press Conference statement. 2001.

<sup>14</sup> House of Commons, 26 October 1989. Respective roles of PM Thatcher's personal Economics advisor and her Chancellor (who resigned next day).

In the context of this study, the policy is Government inspired, centrally financed, and centrally controlled, but planned, coordinated and managed by locally recruited city-centred bureaucrats. Professional practising teachers coordinate and manage the directed and desired action in their own and small school clusters, but the final operatives in the chain are the teachers confronting the pupils. This is a classic example of a master and agent relationship which is a commonplace scenario and which could if sensitively applied provide the desired continuum and avoid the undesired dichotomy. It is, however, an example of an increasing tendency for decision making to gravitate towards the centre of power, despite the declared intention to the contrary.

To deliver the required action in classrooms and outside them demands the goodwill, cooperation, resources and professional ability by the teachers, the operatives. Additionally it requires:

- the managerial competences of the schools to facilitate the work of the operatives, and
- the leadership and management ability of the City-centred Strand Coordinator to implement the policy, conceived at Government level, in his/her city strategic plan.

The purpose of this study was to explore to what extent and how effectively the EiC policy for GaT was managed by those charged with implementing it. At this stage, however, of formulating the problem the likely Research Questions were only beginning to emerge in embryonic form in the author's thoughts and having crystallised in their final form after undertaking the Literature Review (Chapter 3, pp. 40-71) are thus given in Chapter 4, pp. 73-74.

A guide to the development of this dissertation is now specified:

- Definitions of terms specific to this research are considered in Chapter 2 (pp. 19-39) and in the opening glossary (p. x), whilst the delimitations procedure adopted to ensure manageability of the research is reviewed in Chapter 5 (pp. 82-84).
- A justification of the methodological approach adopted is given in Chapter 5 (pp. 82-88).
- The findings in Chapter 6 (pp.88-130) derived as a consequence of the perceptions of those intimately involved in originating and/or fructifying management policies within the bureaucratic machines seeking to implement

EiC policies at the two different levels (City and Schools) serve internally to validate each other.

- External validation of the perceptions of those involved at City and School level emerges out of the perceptions of independent expert witnesses as revealed in Chapter 7 (pp. 131-147) and from the findings of the OFSTED Report (2001) as listed in Tables 5.4 and 8.2 in Appendix 1 (pp. 194, 198).
- Any congruency of view that emerges from within these cited perceptions and reports adds credence to the possible generalisation of the findings issuing from the data collected, and it is from such findings that the educational significance of the research becomes apparent, giving rise to the resulting recommendations listed in Chapter 9 (pp. 171-172).

Notwithstanding, however, appropriate teaching and managerial competences, the success of the EiC GaT policy strand depends on the identification of those children who can rightly be discerned as GaT and it is the question of an appropriate definition and their identification that is now to be discussed.

## A NOTE ON DEFINITIONS

### **A. Is there a *raison d'être* for the EiC choice of definition of 'giftedness' ?**

Whilst many people would claim to have an intuitive understanding of what constitutes giftedness and to be able to recognise with relative ease obvious talents in one or more fields of human activity and endeavour, a difficulty arises in achieving a consensus definition of what constitutes them in children.

The myriad of definitions of giftedness that have emerged in the literature indicates some instability of understanding. Government action in choosing a definition of giftedness as dictated in EiC policy initiative which involves a specific percentage of pupils from each school within the same age range automatically defines that each school, irrespective of social or ethnic makeup, has gifted pupils within its clientele. Semantics have, therefore, no part to play in a school's

interpretation of the definition and no possible disinclination to participate based on a philosophical interpretation of the term giftedness is viable.

**B. The implications of the EiC policy initiative choice of definition of ‘giftedness’.**

The government’s preferred policy choice imposes a constraint, categorically identifying the cohort to which its EiC policy initiative applies as the most able 5 to 10 per cent of the school population.

Whether the government’s choice of definition is a compromise one or not, it will inevitably be subject to the consequences of all such choices: e.g.

Questions will arise as to:

- (1) The basis on which the policy choice was made i.e. political or pedagogical ?
- (2) The reasons for the choice of the specific 5 to 10 per cent range ?
- (3) The appropriateness of the choice and its workability ?
- (4) The ability of the chosen policy to meet any, some, or all of the needs of individual children, the aspirations of parents and the ability of Britain to retain its competitive edge as a global economic competitor ?

The pedagogical implications of its decision:

- (1) To base its choice on a certain fixed percentage range of the population as opposed to some other fixed percentage range.
- (2) Not to use any of the other alternative pedagogical bases for the identification of the able.
- (3) To retain, with some changes, the present system of secondary education.

The political implications of having made:

- (1) An uneven allocation of financial and other resources.
- (2) A compromise choice of definition, if such it be.
- (3) A possible disastrous and/or divisive policy decision leading to future discontent.

These issues are dealt with at length in Chapters 2 and 3, pp. 19-71.

## **Chapter 2 Issues of definition and identification of the able**

The normal rules for understanding apply in order to crystallise any discussion. There needs to be a clear and unambiguous terminology, which all participants to the dialogue accept. In the field of inter-human affairs such acceptance is often **‘more honour’d in the breach than the observance’**<sup>15</sup>, but currently there is a growing universal acceptance of the terminology to be used when discussing those who have an apparent high ability, even if agreement on precise definitions is elusive.

### **1. ‘Ability’ and its terminology**

Now that the identification of and the educative needs of such children is being increasingly recognized as important and tending to become central to present educational provision, ambiguity arising from inexactitude of definition would at the very least be unhelpful and possibly destructive of future plans.

**As almost all international researchers use the term ‘gifted’ it would be verging on the deviant to avoid it.** (Freeman, 1998, *op. cit.*, 1).

Accordingly, the Government choice of terminology in its EiC proposals might be seen as appropriate, even if only from a pragmatic point of view.

### **2. OFSTED’s evaluation of the effects of EiC GaT policy strand**

During the course of the research, the OFSTED Report (2001, *op. cit.*)<sup>16</sup> was published and it echoes the concerns that underpin the research undertaken in this study. Although the OFSTED inspection on which the report is based had a wider remit than just the GaT strand of EiC, HMI visited forty-three secondary schools in

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<sup>15</sup> Shakespeare: Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 4, Hamlet’s reply to Horatio.

<sup>16</sup> Providing for gifted and talented pupils: An evaluation of Excellence in Cities and other grant-funded programmes.

EiC areas to see the work undertaken within the GaT strand and further evidence was collected from sixty-seven secondary schools' OFSTED inspections in EiC areas.

Eager to find the **'effects on the progress of pupils'**, the report uses its collected evidence to answer four self-imposed questions:

- (1) **How are the GaT pupils identified?**
- (2) **What is on offer for GaT pupils?**
- (3) **What does good teaching of GaT pupils involve?**
- (4) **How well is provision managed? (OFSTED, 2001, *op. cit.*, 8-38)**

The main findings relevant to the EiC GaT policy strand are reproduced in Table 2.1, whilst the issues that OFSTED considered needed particular attention are reproduced in Table 2.2.

In Chapter 5, p.83, it is indicated that items from this latest report were incorporated in the research by their inclusion in the questioning format of the interviewees.

#### Giftedness: a need for its definition

As indicated above in accordance with international fashion, it seems appropriate to adopt the term gifted to characterise those children who fall within the group to which the author intends to limit this work.

The relevant definition of giftedness is the one used by the EiC. In the original EiC initiative, gifted children were characterized as the most able 5 to 10 per cent of each age group in each secondary school within the chosen city areas. Ability in which aspect was not indicated. Only later was the term gifted further refined to indicate that it implied academic ability, and that the term talented was appropriate for those displaying prowess in the arts or sport.

**The DfEE adopted the phrase 'gifted and talented' to define the pupils with whom the [EiC] strategy is concerned. 'Gifted' refers to those with high ability or potential in academic subjects and 'talented' to those with high ability or potential in the expressive or creative arts or sport. The phrase was adopted in the OFSTED framework for the inspection of schools from January 2000<sup>17</sup>. (OFSTED, 2001, *op. cit.* 2).**

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<sup>17</sup> 'The framework for the inspection of schools', OFSTED 2000

Further the split between GaT should be approximately 7 per cent gifted and 3 per cent talented, making up the prescribed total of 10 per cent.

The criteria on which the assessment of ability was to be made was not prescribed; the announcement of the initiative, the call for return bids by head teachers to join the scheme were required within a matter of weeks (over a period coinciding with school summer holidays), but the basis for and identification of such children appeared to be unconsidered.

The Government choice of definition for the preferred terminology is now prescribed and must, therefore, be used and acted upon.

Although the Government's decisions are a *fait accompli*, the reasons for their choice are of pertinence:

- (1) Why was the terminology GaT preferred to a number of other alternative labels, might be asked.
- (2) Why was this specific definition chosen as opposed to one of the many possible alternative ones?

The implications of the choice are most certainly not irrelevant. As what is envisioned and provided, and to whom, is now prescribed, then by default what is not available to the excluded cohort is also delineated. The adoption of the popular interpretation of the concept of the 'meritocracy'<sup>18</sup>, similarly delineates what is available to those of presumed lesser merit.

A judgment as to the appropriateness and wisdom of such a choice demands a familiarity with the alternative definitions which were available, but which in consequence of the choice, have been rejected.

Few would doubt that abilities are unevenly distributed amongst both children and adults: intellectual, motor, practical and social skills and abilities etc vary between and within humans. It would be perverse not to recognise that high ability takes a myriad of forms, and is manifested in as many ways; consequently definitions of giftedness abound. It is to a sample that one now turns in order to seek some common ground as to what constitutes giftedness and hence maybe to some means whereby those who are thereby endowed might be identified by some rational process.

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<sup>18</sup> p. 53 refers

### Giftedness: an elusive quality to define?

Within the literature, the terms ‘able’ and ‘gifted’, with or without additional adjectives are used in what may appear an indiscriminate way, and no precise definition has universal recognition. Arguments about precise definitions and the identification of such children are long standing but Freeman believes that it is:

**educationally more productive (and more scientific) to look at achievements in terms of the dynamic interaction between individuals and their opportunities for learning throughout life.** (Freeman, 1998. *op. cit.*, 1).

The definitions of giftedness adopted by various researchers and government agencies have varied over time and between sources, and a recent example is the one adopted by OFSTED.

**The very able are defined ... as those who either demonstrate exceptionally high-level performance, whether across a range of endeavours or in a limited field, or whose potential for excellence has not yet been recognised by either tests or experts.** [It may well be that such children are recognized] **by their precociousness in comparison with others of the same age.** (Freeman, 1998. *op. cit.*, 1).

Freeman further intimates that whilst the giftedness of children is usually seen in the form of precociousness, that of adults **‘is seen in performance, based on many years of dedication in a chosen area.’** (Freeman, 2001. *op. cit.*, 1).

### Giftedness and talented: their many definitions.

By whichever basis giftedness is defined it can be argued that statistically it will approximate to a certain percentage if not the same percentage of the population and within that band some will be more gifted than others.

Freeman (2001. *op.cit.*, vii-viii) chooses to isolate the term talented and restrict its use to those who have high ability in the arts, and whilst such a differentiation might appear to be a sensible one it has no universal application.

Further she describes the top 1 per cent as highly gifted, the top 5 to 1 per cent as gifted, the top 20 to 5 per cent as above average, reserving the term average for those within the middle band of about 20 per cent of the national average.

Acknowledging that such terminological usage is convenient she warns against their

rigorous application because of possible overlap of un-measurable talents and abilities.

The general characteristics of able children, together with the subject specific ones in particular curriculum areas, do give an indication of what is generally regarded as reasonable, and can be helpful, not only in identifying such children, but also in the design of appropriate curriculum and syllabi.

The ever-increasing interest in the concept of giftedness has seen the growth in the number of articles and research papers, and

**consequently there are about 100 definitions of giftedness around, almost all of which refer to children's precocity, either in psychological constructs, such as intelligence and creativity, but more usually in terms of high marks in school subjects.** (Hany, 1993. cited in Freeman, 1998. *op.cit.*, 2).

In a seminal book, edited by Sternberg (1986), an attempt is made to reassess what is meant by giftedness, and some different conceptions of what the term means are analysed. Some conceptions being more useful than others, the best leads to favourable consequences whilst the worst can lead to valuable talent waste and possibly the fostering of the less valuable.

A benefit arising from the work of a number of authors within the book is the grouping together under two meaningful titles of those theories which have a certain commonality of approach:

**Implicit-theoretical approaches** indicate that the definitions enunciated all lie within the heads of the subscribers, which they then seek to exemplify.

**Explicit-theoretical approaches** presuppose definitions and attempt to interrelate them to psychological or educational theory and mostly include those conceptions, which have a cognitive focus.

The first approach, '**being definitional can not be empirically tested**', [whilst the second] '**is testable by empirical means and thus may be falsified.**' (Sternberg, *op.cit.*, 3)

#### Implicit-theoretical approaches to a giftedness definition.

Within this first group lie the constructs of **five** prominent exemplar approaches by:

- (a) Tannenbaum (1986)
- (b) Renzulli (1986)

(c) Gallagher and Courtright (1986)

(d) Feldhusen (1986)

(e) Haensly, Reynolds and Nash (1986)

The essential elements of each approach are précised in Table 2.3

In (c) Gallagher and Courtright's (1986 *op. cit.*) two domain theory of giftedness, the first i.e. psychological domain has been highlighted by the considerations of the pertinent inputs of (d), Feldhusen, and (e), Haensly, Reynolds and Nash (1986), but their educational domain of giftedness now comes under scrutiny.

The earliest concerns with giftedness were the prerogative of philosophers: Plato regarding giftedness as a quality that was the duty of the state to encourage. Much later educational definitions of giftedness focused on individual or superior differences.

These arose from the constructs of social scientists exploring mental operations and the assessment of individual development. Dabrowski (1964) saw giftedness as an abnormal development and it is from such sources that one can intuitively trace the paths which led to an educational definition of giftedness which depended on the measurement of individual differences.

Galton (1883), researching into high intellectual ability, regarded genius as the greatest deviation from the average in achieving eminence, and correspondingly idiots deviated negatively by an equal amount.

Binet (1909) with Simon developed tests of a multi-faceted type (rather than tests consisting of a single list of one-type enquiries). These were extremely usable in that they relied upon the handy criterion of mental age as evidenced by large numbers of normal children.

Binet proposed that mental tests should be complex, measuring the variety of processes that constitute higher mental activities. To him

**intelligence is contained in these words:**

- **comprehension,**
- **invention,**
- **direction and criticism.** (Binet, 1909).

He did not, however, believe that intelligence was fixed at a specific level, but it could be developed with practice, enthusiasm and with method; one could increase

one's attention, memory and judgement. Moreover, an individual's performance in processing information was measurable and could be compared with others of the same and different chronological ages.

Terman and Oden (1947) developed the Binet concept and as a result of his experimentation his tests became standard as measurers of IQ, and came to be judged responsible for the concept that **'Intelligence is what intelligence measures!'**

In a more recent movement, away from the measurement of mental processes, focused on information processing and from a clearer understanding of how the brain works six different mental operations have been identified (Table 2.4):

**In terms of intellectual development, therefore giftedness can be defined as superior or precocious performance in [each of] these six operations.** (Gallagher and Courtright, *op.cit.* 98).

Whilst the above educational definition based on the measurement of individual differences of giftedness holds sway, another second somewhat different approach to an educational definition based on academic advancement also finds fashion in present education circles. It is to this interpretation that we now turn.

A definition of giftedness, enunciated in the USA by Marland (1972), has considerable merit as it is somewhat in line with current British concern for the education of children with special needs of the gifted and talented variety.

**[GaT] children are those identified by professionally qualified persons who by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance. These are children who require differentiated educational programs and/or services beyond those normally provided by the regular school programs in order to realize their contribution to self and society. Children capable of high performance include those with demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in any of the following areas, singly or in combination [listed in Table 2.5].** (Marland, 1972).

These two approaches to an educational definition of giftedness, (the one based on the measurement of individual differences and the other on academic advancement), should in Gallagher and Courtright's (1986. *op. cit.*) opinion give rise to the use of two terms, gifted and academically advanced as identified in Table 2.6.

To Gallagher and Courtright the use of these two different terms, 'gifted' and 'academically advanced' would be an aiding factor in how schools identify the

chosen cohorts of pupils and what end goal their adopted strategies and programmes should aim to achieve.

The deliberations of the chosen listed exemplars in Table 2.3, in their labours towards a definition of giftedness, indicate that they subscribe to an implicit-theoretical conception of giftedness: their definitions lying within their heads which they then seek to exemplify.

An indication of what each of the individual construct themes specify in common, are listed and précised in Table 2.7:

Marland's (1972) definition of giftedness found favour in the USA and was adopted by a Federal Special Projects Act to shape the schools' approach to the education of the GaT.

It is an open question whether or not the instigators of the EiC proposals for the GaT were also influenced by the American experience, but the aims and objectives of EiC bear a strong resemblance to the American philosophy. It is, however, clear that the EiC initiative does not distinguish between the 'gifted' and 'academically advanced' as suggested by Gallagher and Courtright (1986, *op. cit.*) but coalesces the two groups as one gifted group with special educational needs. The term talented it reserves for visual and performing arts and sport.

Leaving the first group of constructs labelled 'Implicit-theoretical approaches' it would be well to remember that being definitional they can not be empirically tested (Sternberg, *op.cit.*, 3)

The second group of definitions of giftedness are characterized as being explicit-theoretical approaches.

### Explicit-theoretical approaches to a giftedness definition.

Within this second group and listed in Table 2.8 lie the constructs of eight prominent exemplars of explicit-theoretical approaches which emphasise one or other of the following three theories:

- (a) **Cognitive.**
- (b) **Developmental,**
- (c) **Domain-specific.**

The essential elements of each approach, (a), (b) and (c) are précised in Tables 2.9, 2.10, and 2.11 respectively.

Sternberg, (1986, *op. cit.*, 9-11) highlights the agreement which exists between the **cognitive theorists** who try to concentrate on the internal cognitive antecedents of giftedness rather than on the use of the term giftedness. Moreover, they support

the importance of the isolation-of- variables strategy in any research designed to aid the understanding of the cognitive mechanisms of giftedness, which to them implies the intellectual form of giftedness rather than that of leadership or artistic talent.

Concentrating on the higher-level, rather than the lower-level processes involved in the understanding of giftedness they regard theory-driven empirical research as central to their approach to such understanding.

A recurrent theme in the **developmental theories** approach to an understanding of giftedness is the recognition not only that it exists at birth but that it emerges as a consequence of development, even of life-long duration.

Whilst the proponents of the development aspects of giftedness do not deny some universal aspects of giftedness they do see gifted people excelling in one or possibly more domains of talent. The significance of societal influences in defining and shaping giftedness is acknowledged, so that giftedness is seen as an amalgam of both what is inside the head together with the consequential effect of outside agencies. It is, therefore, unsurprising that amongst the adherents to this approach the belief that socio-emotional influences as well as cognitive processes are at play in the development of giftedness.

The work of **domain-specific theorists** Benbow and Stanley (1980, 1982, 1983a, 1983b, 1983c) emphasise the early precocity of giftedness amongst mathematically able young children and their interventions to aid the development of this giftedness. Their contribution is as a guide to how to identify children with the potential for mathematical prowess and how to provide the conditions and impetus for motivation and even greater development. Their cry goes out that for such pupils motivation for mathematics is negatively affected by forcing such children to proceed at the normal pace.

Unlike Stanley and Benbow, (1986) who worked with children who exhibited mathematical promise, Bamberger (1986, 388-389, 410-412) studied giftedness amongst children as exhibited by extraordinary musical ability. She stated that the early prodigiousness of young children depended on an internalised representation of musical relations in multiple ways, which are not distinct but intertwined and intersecting. Subsequently these transform on reaching adolescence via a midlife crisis into a more formal, more analytical and less intertwined and separable one necessitating a cognitive rebirth if giftedness is to continue. Her theory has resonance.

Sternberg's comment (1986, *op. cit.*, 18) that further analysis with musical protégés is needed to place Bamberger's theory in its proper context and wonders if her findings might have a wider relevance in other domains appears apposite.

### **3. The identification of gifted children**

The four most frequent methods of identifying able children are:

- **Intelligence**
- **teacher recommendation**
- **parent recommendation, and**
- **peer nomination.** (Freeman, 1998, *op.cit.* 4-21).

IQ tests despite having a long history of use in defining children's intelligence and hence categorising their ability, have their detractors, and increasingly so. The old concept of intelligence as fixed properties which could be measured by an IQ test is being superseded by the view that intelligence is an individual way of organising and using knowledge, and which, therefore, demands different methods of measurement for the many components of intelligence: ability profiling is now in the ascendancy.

The ability of teachers to identify pupils' abilities can be challenged in the light of the wide variation between objective measures of ability and teacher judgement of the child. Tempest (1974) concluded that teacher recommendation alone was not reliable, and the work of Hany (*op. cit.*) and a myriad of others would add credence to that conclusion.

Hany, however, highlights

**previous investigations that have shown that teachers have a clear idea of the typical characteristics of gifted pupils: ... logical thinking, quick comprehension and intellectual curiosity.** (Hany, *op. cit.*, 196).

Additionally, verbal skill, creativity, a good memory and very good school performance are often recognized and highlighted by teachers as good indicators of ability. Experienced teachers are also able to distinguish between different kinds of giftedness, Copenhaver and McIntyre (1992), Schack and Starko (1990), but logical and analytical skills do not necessarily coincide with social skills or creativity, Dahme and Eggers (1988), Guskin, Peng and Simon (1992).

Hany, however, does indicate that teachers generally have a one-sided academic view of giftedness.

Logical thinking, quick comprehension and intellectual curiosity play a part in the way teachers identify the gifted. Hany's (1993, *op.cit.*) research results indicate that teachers identify gifted pupils not only by means of individual personality features, (on the basis of which all pupils can be compared), but also on the comparative closeness of a complete feature profile to a prototype of the gifted or above average pupil which are stored as stable cognitive structures in their own long-term memory.

Hany also believes that teachers' subjective assumptions about the enormous talents and outstanding performance of gifted pupils play an important role when teachers have to select pupils for gifted programmes, and in their approach to the teaching of the gifted.

Freeman's (2001. *op.cit.*) work indicates that amongst those children identified by parents as gifted, 10 per cent were only of average ability (measured on IQ tests), but were much more disposed to have emotional problems than children otherwise nominated.

In investigating peer nomination of class mates according to ability in specific categories <sup>19</sup>, Gagne (1995) concluded that peer judgements were correct, but no comparisons were made with any objective tests of ability. Subhi (1997 as cited by Freeman 1998, *op. cit.*) found that peer and teacher recommendations were identical.

The listed methods of the most popular means adopted to identify the gifted omitted a more recent recommended method, which Freeman (1998, *op. cit.*) calls The Sports Approach: identification by provision. In her thesis she sees advantage in adopting many of the underlying mores that underpin how the special needs of sports people and others perceived to possess non-academic special abilities are identified. e.g. She sees no reason why the chemistry laboratory of a school should not be open in out-of-school hours to those who wish to avail themselves of what it might offer. She offers suggestions, listed in Table 2.12 of how her approach might be practised:

Is there a relevant international perspective on the education of the able, to help achieve a common goal?

England's problem of catering for the educational needs of the more able has its counterparts on the international scene. To ignore the policies, practices, comments

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<sup>19</sup> p. 33

and aspirations of other parallel societies on what may be construed as relevant common problems would be foolhardy. To accept without demur all that such societies might believe, action and practice could be similarly described, but from comparative studies much may be learned (Broadfoot, 1999). Likened to a walk in another's garden, where one may admire and appreciate much, it is only wise to transplant those plants which are suitable to one's own garden soil, so in the field of education.

The mores, common language, somewhat of a common heritage, binding loyalties and political and social ties, makes USA a candidate, possibly the prime candidate, from which one is likely to find some transplantable ideas, but New Zealand, Australia, Singapore, other countries of the Commonwealth and Europe are societies from which one may also find rich pickings.

The trend toward a global science and information-based economy in the developed countries is accompanied by the demand for increased academic achievement for their nationals.

**The technology and global interaction of the current era requires that students are able to gather information and resources to create new information.** (Kennedy, 1994a as cited in Tieso, 2001, 1).

The same concern about the education of the most able in society exists in most of the western democracies. A comparative assessment of the problems and possible solutions attempted and/or under consideration internationally is, therefore, likely to illuminate what might be considered as appropriate for England.

Whilst the need to educate the able of both genders appropriately is increasingly occupying the attention of educators, politicians, and parents here in Britain, also from international reports and personal contacts one is aware that certain issues are common and paramount on the international scene. Amongst the issues of concern are what the indicators of ability are, how such children may be identified, how they are best educated and the disparity between boys and girls in the interest shown in mathematics and science (this seems to be of the of greatest concern).

It is to these issues that some relevant international inputs are now addressed.

## Indicators of ability; International perspective

Schwartz (1997) encapsulates much of the American view that the hitherto narrow view of intelligence defined only by those qualities measurable by an IQ test, is now being replaced by the concept of talent, which is an indication of future achievement and a potential to be nurtured. The application of Gardiner's (1983) concept of multiple intelligences gives rise to many indicators of talent, including the possibility that some talented people may manifest their abilities through a single talent, such as music or mathematics.

Griffin (1992), Clasen (1993), and Coleman and Gallagher (1995) itemise the following, as indicators of superior intelligence:

- **The ability to manipulate a symbol system.**
- **The ability to think logically.**
- **The ability to use stored knowledge to solve problems.**
- **The ability to reason by analogy.**
- **The ability to extrapolate knowledge to different circumstances.**
- **Creativity and artistic ability.**
- **Resiliency: the ability to cope with school while living in poverty with dysfunctional families.**
- **The ability to take on adult roles at home, such as managing the household and supervising siblings, even at the expense of school attendance and achievement.**
- **A strong sense of self, pride, and worth.**
- **Leadership ability and an independent mind.**
- **An understanding of one's cultural heritage.** (Schwartz, *op. cit.*).

As a consequence of a research project involving the in-depth interviewing of six male and six female highly able Finnish successful Olympians in Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry, Tirri (2001, 2-17) found that

**the common factors that contributed to the talent development of both females and males included: a strong inner drive in learning, a positive school experience (most had been excellent students), and an enjoyment of intellectual challenges (all had been independent learners at school).**

Both the Finnish males and females reported that they had enjoyed academic competitions, but there were significant differences between the responses of male and female interviewees. Such differences will be considered in a later sub-paragraph pp. 36-38 and in the paragraph on gender in Chapter 3 pp. 69-70.

In a German research project which questioned twenty-three German International Olympians,

**a majority ascribed at least 50 per cent or more of their talent development to genetic determination and showed an interest in the improvement of the system of advice, help and training for gifted students and their parents. Additionally, many participants had stated, that the main source of talent development lies in oneself (i.e. in one's motivation, effort, initiative and curiosity).** (Lengfelder, *et al.* 2001, 5).

In a Korean investigation of a similar kind but for their own Olympians,

**both male and female students regarded self-learning through books was the most helpful and the next experience was friends, alumni and parents.** (Seokhee and Hangwon, 2001, 12).

The testimony of the above three groups of science and mathematics Olympians all had a resonant flavour with each other and interestingly stressed the prime attribute for their success had been self-reliance.

#### Identification of the Able: International perspective

The most frequent methods used in the identification of the very able (Freeman, 1998. *op. cit.* 4-21) have been listed on page 28.

Whichever method is adopted inevitably results in a different identified cohort of children, with possible different consequences in education and self-concepts for those so identified.

Whilst the most common basis on which identification of the able is undertaken remains by the use of IQ tests (Freeman, 1998. *op. cit.*, 4), its underlying concept of fixed capacities has now been challenged at Harvard by Gardiner's Multiple Intelligence theory

**...very few educators [now] cling tenaciously to a straight IQ or purely academic definition of giftedness. Multiple talent and multiple criteria are almost bywords of the present-day gifted student movement.** (Renzulli, 1986, *op. cit.* 64).

Gardner's, (1983) original seven intelligences have been augmented by him with the addition of a further four in 1988, whilst Canada's Gagne (1995, *op. cit.*) has made contradictory proposals, comprising of four aptitude and four talented

fields. As the acceptance of these extended definitions of giftedness which move from what can be measured by objective tests for intelligence, achievement and academic aptitude, then the obvious difficulties associated with subjective measurement become ever more apparent.

High on the list of the preferred methods adopted to identify the very able where the newer wider interpretations of ability hold sway are the recommendations methods. Where teacher recommendations form the basis on which the very able are identified

**...there can be wide variations between teacher judgements and objective methods. ...how teachers perceive and thus identify the gifted has been seen to vary considerably between different cultures. ...German secondary [school] teachers estimated 3.5 per cent of children as gifted, the Americans 6.4 per cent and Indonesians 17.4 per cent. ... in the USA, percentages of the child population identified as gifted vary between 5 per cent and 10 per cent across the states.** (Freeman, 1998. *op. cit.*, 9).

The possibility of misjudgements exist no matter what system of identification is adopted, and teacher recommendation can be no exception, but in England

**...the SOSE proposes to place sole reliance on teacher assessment for the award of levels [SATs at Key stage 4] to exceptionally able pupils.** (DFEE, 1996, 4, as cited in Freeman, 1998, *op. cit.*, 10).

The use of checklists, of which there are many, to assist teachers to make suitable recommendations have the inbuilt disadvantages that the checklists reflect the opinions of their devisors, and are, therefore, prone to the possibility of failing to identify those children outside the perceived pattern but who are nevertheless very able.

When in England the parents' recommendation method of identification of their supposed very able but previously untested children was used, it revealed that 90 per cent were in fact so, when tested on IQ tests and specific talent tests, even in the advent of teachers dismissal of exceptional potential (Freeman 1998, *op. cit.*, 14).

In Gagne's (1995, *op. cit.*) Canadian research involving 4400 mixed ability and mixed gender pupils, the results of peer recommendations in his estimation reflected the actual talents of the children involved, but no comparisons were made of the results with any objective tests or children's self-estimates. To Freeman the

likelihood of classmates discovering hidden potential seemed slight (Freeman, 1998, *op.cit.*, 14). Confirmation of this view arose from research in Jordan, by Subhi (1997) as cited by Freeman, which found that none of the Jordanian peers nominated anyone differently from those identified by their teachers.

It is only where and/or when subjectivity is acceptable as a basis on which ability is judged will the newer wider interpretation of ability be acceptable and the alternatives to IQ testing be wholly or partially involved in the identification process. (Renzulli, 1986 *op. cit.*).

The system by which, in Britain, children who have an interest or above average ability in (e.g. sport) are given extra tuition, facilities and opportunities so as to develop that talent, usually free of charge, is described by Freeman (1989.*op.cit.*, 18) as the 'Sports Approach' and referred to earlier on page 29. To her the extension of such a system to a wider clientele who have the ability and desire to extend their experience in the arts, sciences and humanities by using many of the already existing facilities is to be encouraged. It is, in fact, another way of identifying the able, by a system of provision.

#### How best to educate the able: International perspective.

The ability of the British Central Government to enforce effectively its will on the practice and provision of education in England is an ever growing one (Woodhead, 2002a, *op. cit.* 118-135). The insistence on literacy and numeracy hours and on a national curriculum are cases in point.

The existence of a Federal structure in the USA precludes such central direction and in consequence

**diversity is probably the norm in today's American classrooms where teachers work with students whose interests, learning styles, and cognitive abilities span the continuum.** (Tieso, 2001, 1).

Despite the diversity, however, the common practice in most American schools is for large group instruction, using common sets of resources, learning activities, and assignments for all students, regardless of their prior knowledge or levels of motivation. This is borne out by Cuban, (1984), and Goodlad, (1984).

Recent American research activities have tended to focus increasingly on the administration, class size and management structure which have been shown to be conducive to the improvement of student performance. Such findings as grouping

students for part of their instructional day (Westberg, *et al.* 1993) and the use of differentiated curricula in heterogeneous classrooms enhanced the academic achievement of all students (Archambault, *et al.*, 1993).

These findings have a partial echo in Winner (1996, 270), as cited in Kerry (1997, 89), who advocated individualising instruction for able pupils within regular classrooms, (so as to avoid *élite* groups). He saw self-pacing as important, rather than acceleration to an older group.

More recently Tieso, (2001. *op. cit.*), acknowledges that when the practices, recommended by pedagogues of gifted education i.e., ability grouping, curriculum differentiation, concept-based instruction and problem-based learning are adopted in practice, moderate gains have been achieved in academic ability.

Such findings present no surprises to readers of Freeman *et al.* (1995), as cited in Kerry and Shelton-Mayes (1997, *op.cit.* 89) concerning the research of De Corte (1995). He advocated the creation of powerful learning environments which are characterised by:

- **A balance between discovery and personal learning on the one hand, and instruction on the other, with a view to achieving cumulative and goal-orientated acquisition of learning.**
- **Progressive movements by students towards becoming agents of their own learning.**
- **Varied situations for constructive learning.**
- **Meeting individual needs, both cognitive and emotional.**
- **The acquisition of general learning and thinking skills embedded in the different subject-matter domains of the curriculum.**

The experience, research findings and policies advocated by teachers, researchers and administrators in other countries must illuminate but not dictate our own. That there are inconsistencies between the findings and conclusions of so many teachers as to the merits and demerits of specific teaching strategies for the successful teaching of able students as highlighted by Kerry (1997. *op.cit.*) is beyond doubt. To be surprised would be to fail to acknowledge that the study of teaching methods and strategies is an inexact science-if science it be at all. As Kerry so rightly suggests the case for large scale research into the education of able children within both primary and secondary classrooms with an empirical evaluation of the methods used is made by the self-evident inconsistencies of so much received wisdom.

To every educational innovation aimed to enhance the opportunities for the GaT children in society there always appears to be some inevitable downside, which so often takes precedence over the implementation of what might be actually needed to solve the problem. In the USA, as here in England, current social and educational discussions and debates have raised concerns over these potential gains. Seeing student self-esteem as a potential victim of such grouping practices, many politicians, religious leaders, social workers, educationalists, parents and teachers have hesitated to address the diverse learning needs of students for fear of causing harm to such self-esteem (Oakes, 1985; Slavin, 1987)., and thus failing to react positively to the *zeitgeist*.

### Gender implications: International perspective

It being a commonplace in the developed and developing countries, that the education of both sexes should aim to satisfy the aspirations of all irrespective of gender, a common theme in the education of the able, occurring in the research findings of a number of countries is that girls are little represented in the sciences. European, North and South America, and Asian countries which traditionally enter student teams to the International Olympiads in Mathematics, Chemistry, and Physics, designed for the able eighteen year olds, find that many fewer girls than boys become involved. They neither enter their own National Olympiads nor qualify for entry into the appropriate specialist International Olympiads. One may, therefore, justly enquire whether or not gender does have implications for educational provision.

The existence of National Olympiads and corresponding International Olympiads in Mathematics, and in each of the three sciences, has generated some research into various aspects in the education of the very highly able in a number of participating countries and the question of why there are so few Female Olympians has become an important one. The *raison d'être* for such a situation has interested researchers, not only in the USA (Feng, Campbell, and Verna, 2001 *op. cit.*), but also in Korea (Seeokhee, and Hongwon, 2001). Although dealing with different cultures, they, nevertheless, found a certain amount of common ground, and Feng, *et al.*'s report is précised in Table 2.13

The qualitative research of Feng, *et. al.* whereby female American Olympians were interviewed in depth, elucidated from them some ideas that might ameliorate the situation. These are précised in Table 2. 14.

A perspective on what factors influenced Korean boys and girls to become National Olympians is highlighted by Seokhee. (2001. *op.cit.*). It is interesting to note that as in the USA, Korean girls were subject to parental pressure, directing them away from mathematics and the sciences as career areas, whilst male children were encouraged to shine in mathematics and science.

Sixteen Korean Science High Schools for boys only were established in 1983, with girls in small but increasing numbers being allowed in since 1987. Currently 35 per cent of the total numbers of students attending these schools are girls, the entrance examination having changed from being exclusively in maths and science, to include other criteria, e.g. records of achievement, school records. The Korean establishment of specialist science secondary schools, where entry is based on selection by ability in mathematics and science demonstrated in an examination, is their way of dealing with the educational needs of the very able.

The series of in-depth interviews with German Science Olympians and referred to on p. 32 also gave rise to concern about the low number of female participants involved over the period of time in which they have operated. Lengfelder, *et al.* (2001. *op. cit.* 6) report that

**all participants [in the interviews] thought it would be worthwhile to develop strategies to enhance female participation in math and science work. The suggestions ranged through paying more attention to girls and separate education of girls and boys in math and science, to delaying coeducation until an age when proper math and science ability self concept had been developed.**

Harking back to an earlier paragraph (page 31) on Tirri's investigation of Finnish Olympians, she highlighted those factors which were pertinent to the development of ability. Additionally drawing attention to

**...the advanced status enjoyed by Finnish women, both nationally and internationally and assuming that talented women in Finland are in control of their own lives, [the balance between the] genders choice of career is heavily skewed and has remained so over the last couple of decades. 80 per cent of all new students in veterinary medicine, health care, pharmacology and educational science in 1995 were women and an equal per cent of students taking technical subjects were men. The same gender bias concerning the disciplines has been reported for American women. (Tirri, 2001 *op. cit.*3).**

In her conclusions as to why there should be any reluctance on the part of able women to choose careers in the technical sciences Tirri highlights helping others as a motivator to attract them to the biosciences and health in particular. She suggests that on entering academia women realise that there are male-led hierarchies in research and fewer opportunities for women, both being global phenomena. She considers that females define success in different terms to men, i.e. in terms of feelings of peace, happiness and creativity, with relation to both work and family life, whilst men put work-related accomplishments as their greatest achievement. Finally she says that more academic women in Nordic countries tend to be married and have children than, for example, in the USA.

#### **4. Conclusions**

A progression of definitions of giftedness and talent have run the gauntlet of evolving ideas. The inputs of philosophers, psychologists, social scientists, practising and non- practising educators, have had and continue to have an input into the ever present discussion about what constitutes giftedness. The question is probably in strict terms unanswerable, but for those concerned with planning and organizing the education of the gifted and for those whose responsibility it is to implement the *actualité*, it is most certainly not irrelevant. Insight is gained from an interchange and discussion of ideas even if a complete consensus is not achieved.

The identification of those judged to be gifted is not only an educational question but it also has wider social and political implications. The methods advocated have primarily focused on educational grounds, but in the scheme of our society such considerations can only feature, but not necessarily predominate, in decision making.

The EiC proposals for the GaT have delineated them as the most able 5 to 10 per cent of the age group. The policy is predicated on the belief that the student body should be educated/prepared for the world of the future. Previous predictions for a future world have a notorious history for inaccuracy, but for the purposes of future planning such 'stargazing' is somewhat inevitable. It is an inherent part of established government policy to plan for an information-based economy. Its aim within the EiC initiatives is to increase the numbers of children proceeding to HE from deprived backgrounds. This is intended to ensure that the population will be

properly prepared and in sufficient numbers to maintain Britain's place in the new environment. The choices the government, therefore, makes must depend on a considerable amount of 'future's thinking' if wrong footing is to be averted.

**An enhanced role for education implies many things, both philosophical and practical. For example, since technological innovation creates new jobs as it destroys old ones, developed countries which do not possess a national system for training and retraining—on the lines of Germany's apprenticeship scheme or of Sweden's methods of preparing discharged workers to learn a new skill—will probably find themselves more disadvantaged than they are now.** (Kennedy, 1994b, 340)

The stress placed in EiC on improving opportunities to enter higher education may, in fact, be an inappropriate aim (Woodhead, 2002a, *op. cit.*141). Perhaps the stress should be placed elsewhere in the educational programme of the nation. This is an issue which will feature in the evaluation of government policy (pp. 163, 172), which will follow after the collection of evidence from educationalists in the field.

It is now, however, appropriate to place the present endeavours of educational reform in their historical, political and educational context.

### **Chapter 3 Policy issues in GaT education: an historical, political and educational review of the literature**

At the start of a new millennium from which so much is expected, it is appropriate for the Nation to take stock of its resources and to make plans for how it wishes to proceed. It is, therefore, apposite to reinvigorate our sense of the past and thereby give fresh meanings and interpretations to current problems which often seem familiar and even stale (Crook, and Aldrich, 2000, ix). Thus in this dissertation the policy has been adopted to produce a contextual review of the history covering the broad policy issues that have guided able pupil education in this country for a period of over half a century. From the past much may be learnt which will illuminate the strengths and/or weaknesses of the current GaT strand policy and help to validate its potency.

Education, regarded as a basic activity of society, conditions society and is itself conditioned by the activities of that society.

**...the educational system of a country is closely bound up with the contemporary social and economic conditions and can be only understood in relation to them.** (Barnard, 1968, *op. cit.* xi).

**We need to compete in world markets to pay for the imports on which the country survives and to do so effectively we need large numbers of skilled workers.** (Technology Colleges Trust, 1997).

**Productivity growth in Britain continues to lag behind that of its major industrial competitors, as UK workers fail to achieve the education levels of their rivals, a major think-tank** (The National Institute of Economic and Social Research) **said yesterday.** (Litterick, 1 February 2002).

Education policy is only understandable in the light of the prevailing conditions i.e. education exists in a given context, and any educational policy initiative has its

roots in a historical, social, political, economic and literary past. The policy for the education of the gifted is no exception.

### **1. The roots of the problem: a historical review.**

The Industrial revolution and its educational aftermath.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw the greatest educational advances of any comparative historical period; in short, they form the most crowded period in the long record available of human education. The two centuries possessed a quality of drama, the main plot being the creation in England and Wales, from quite unpromising beginnings of a unified integrated national system of education. Characters involved were Bell<sup>20</sup>, Robert Owen<sup>21</sup>, Thomas Arnold (Copley, 2002 375), Thring (Barnard, *op. cit.* 152-3), Ruskin (Barnard, *op. cit.* 148-9). Carlyle (Trevelyan, 1964. 95), Sir James Kay Shuttleworth (Barnard, *op. cit.* 148-9) and R.A. Butler<sup>22</sup>.

Their contribution to educational policy development is attributable to their gifts of ability and vision and contemporary and succeeding generations benefited. Cultivating ability in one generation may secure benefits for succeeding ones and thus a generation pays its debt to its forebears. (Shades of '**for their tomorrow we gave our today**' ?)<sup>23</sup> (Edmonds, 1919)

**Throughout the last seventy years of the nineteenth century the State was rapidly undertaking new social functions ... but the real strength ... of the Victorian age lay in the self-discipline and self-reliance of ... individual Englishmen.** (Trevelyan, 1964. *op. cit.* 85).

Within two generations of the nineteenth century, England was transformed from a rural to an industrial community. The Industrial Revolution having been accomplished, the general social economic conditions associated prevailed.

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<sup>20</sup> Bell, Andrew. (1753-1832). Anglican cleric. In Madras, as an experiment he put classes in the care of senior pupils. Monitorial system later adopted by Lancaster (1778-1838).

<sup>21</sup> Owen, Robert (1771-1858). Cotton mill owner. Socialist. Provided free education for his workers' children from five to ten years old. Initially adopted the monitorial system, but later jettisoned it in favour of more progressive means.

<sup>22</sup> Butler, R. A., (1900-1983). President of the Board of Education. Responsible for steering the 1944 Education Act through Parliament.

<sup>23</sup> Kohima Memorial to the Burma Campaign of the Second W.W.

England's 'green and pleasant land'<sup>24</sup> was transformed into the infamous Birminghams and Widneses.

**The accession of George III (1760) marked [what may be considered to be] the start of modern times. Hitherto, most towns were small, most people lived in the country in self sufficient villages, [but] after 1760 the economic condition of England underwent a swift and marked change, [what we] call the industrial revolution had begun.** (Barnard, *op. cit.* xii-xiii).

As with the French Revolution, its victims were not the aristocrats but the children. Virtually two nations, country and town, were created and there were no schools for the children. They were employed in factories in appalling conditions, aiding the revolution's prosperity through the degradation of the labourer. Thus the plight of the children became the abiding challenge to nineteenth century education which the contemporary resources were woefully unable to meet, although the seeds of Adult Education were embedded. Fear that the excesses of the French Revolution might find root in English soil was, perhaps, the main catalyst in the succeeding enthusiasm for educational policy innovation.

A free, national, compulsory elementary education system<sup>25</sup> emerged, as did the the revival of the ancient universities (Trevelyan, *op. cit.* 201), the extension of the university movement<sup>26</sup>, the revival of the public schools (Barnard, *op. cit.* 76) and the development of a democratic secondary education<sup>27</sup>. Training Colleges<sup>28</sup>, technical education and the education of women<sup>29</sup>, heralded a more progressive civilised society.

Except for elementary education, implicit in this was that the policy only involved an element of society. Selection, whether by money, privilege or position, was an inherent part. Ability did not feature!

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<sup>24</sup> William Blake: 'Jerusalem'

<sup>25</sup> The 1870 Education Act was a compromise. It did not create a new national system of education or a completely compulsory system, or a free system. It left room for voluntary effort and school fees and private donation. The 1880 Act made school attendance compulsory between five and ten. The Fisher Act of 1918 abolished fees in elementary schools. (Barnard, *op. cit.* 170).

<sup>26</sup> In 1902, England possessed six universities. In addition to Oxford and Cambridge, there were Durham, London, Birmingham and the federal university of Victoria. Most of the universities were founded later still, in the first years of the twentieth century. (Barnard, *op. cit.* 249, and Trevelyan, *op. cit.* 201).

<sup>27</sup> The 1902 Act made it the responsibility of county and county borough councils to consider the education needs of their area, and to supply or aid the supply of education other than elementary. (Barnard, *op. cit.* 210).

<sup>28</sup> 1838. Kay-Shuttleworth opens Training College at Norwood.

<sup>29</sup> 1872. Girls Public Day School Trust founded, and in 1875 Newnham College Cambridge founded.

The ‘utilitarianism’ of the third, fourth and fifth decade of the nineteenth century required that everything proved its value, best achieved by the state assuming responsibility for the policy for education.

The First HM Government Education Vote (1833) of £20,000 was given as a Government grant for school buildings in aid of a private subsidy and channelled through the National Society and the British and Foreign School Society which together with the Foster Education Act (1870) were the first instruments which reduced but did not remove private involvement.

### Educational repercussions of the two world wars.

The First World War, its subsequent poverty and ‘depression’ heralded a concern for education. The Hadow Report (1926) on the ‘Education of children up to the age of 15 years, other than those in Secondary Schools’ and the Spens Report (1938) on ‘Secondary Education’ proved this concern. The advent of the Second World War, obliterated thought of legislation.

In 1943 the HM Government White Paper on Educational Reconstruction and the Norwood Report<sup>30</sup> coupled with the findings in 1944 of the Fleming Report<sup>31</sup> and the McNair<sup>32</sup> report, were crowned by the passing of the 1944 Education Act, incorporating many of the aspirations of the Reports published prior to 1944.

**‘England’ wrote Sir Richard Livingstone<sup>33</sup> in 1943 ‘has probably never been so interested in education as today ... our democracy is very ill-educated’ ... Education needed to be extended if equality of opportunity was to be more than a phrase.** (Livingstone, 1943, as cited by Robbins, K., 1994).

### The beginning of the modern period.

In 1944, the Coalition government, after years of pre-war procrastination, brought about an educational policy change by legislation. The immediacy of its initiative may be attributable to the dramatic light thrown on the abysmal level of literacy and numeracy amongst those called up for active service. Their poor educational performance was regarded as a failure of the educational system to meet the needs of, not only individuals and society, but also of the nation. Further

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<sup>30</sup> Sir Cyril Norwood, chairman, of a special committee set up to “consider suggested changes in the Secondary School curriculum and the question of School Examinations in relation thereto.”

<sup>31</sup> Lord Fleming, chairman of a committee resulting in the ‘The Public Schools and the General Educational System’ Report

<sup>32</sup> Sir Arnold McNair, chairman of a committee, resulting in the Report on Teacher recruitment.

<sup>33</sup> President of an Oxford College

**the sociological evidence in the Survey of National Service Recruits revealed that only 12 per cent of the boys and girls came from homes in which both parents had received a longer education than the legal limit.** (Richmond, 1978, *op. cit.* 90).

There was also the realisation that Britain had available a hitherto untapped source of ability and talent but which had remained dormant, until the advent of the '39 war:

**War woke people up to the fact that the nation possessed a supply of ability never ordinarily used to the full. Every child from an elementary school who became an officer in the Hitler war— many as they were, once merit rather than parentage became the test—was an argument for educational reform.** (Young, M., 1958. 26).

The competitive demands of war, both in the military and supporting industry, were the spur needed for reform:

**To withstand international competition the country had to make better use of its human material, above all, of [its] talent. Schools and industries were progressively thrown open to merit, so that the clever children of each generation had opportunity for ascent.** (Young, M., 1958. *op. cit.* 12).

Echoing the nineteenth century, the mores of contemporary twentieth century thought influenced the educational policy changes brought about by the '44 Act: the common man came out of the war uncommonly good; he deserved a better chance, and what was even more likely was that he would demand it. Given the Godless days between the wars, the slide into the second war, the conviction that they would like a better world, not for themselves but for their children, it is unsurprising that the '44 Act was born of fright, and that Disraeli's<sup>34</sup> declamation that '**upon the education of the people, the fate of this country depends**', held sway.

Post the 1944 Education Act,

On the passing of the 1944 Education Act

**which was deliberately formulated not just as one set of specific requirements, but as a broad context for all foreseeable future developments** (Fletcher, 1984 118),

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<sup>34</sup> House of Commons, 15 June 1874

free secondary education appropriate to the age, aptitude and ability of the child became mandatory. In a departure from historical precedent, the whole of the child population became entitled to this educational munificence, and not only age and aptitude but ability were to be the determining factors in the appropriateness of the provision, the three Rs of the hitherto narrow view of education being replaced by the three As. Now it was the right of every child to receive an appropriate secondary education; surely an early indication of the growing egalitarianism of contemporary society.

The system intended to enable both boys and girls, free of fees to proceed on ability from primary to an appropriate secondary school was now in place. Some of the hurdles to the passage of able children from primary to a selective secondary were:

- The need to pass an examination, the precise type depending on the vagaries of the LEA.

**The Eleven-Plus examination was one of the grandest experiments in education ... based on the results, its splendid aims were to educate children according to their 'age, ability and aptitude.'** (Freeman, 2001 *op. cit.* 226).

- The number of available places within the local maintained Grammar School, or Direct Grant School (DGS), some areas admitting a low percentage whilst others admitted many more,

**Gateshead 8 per cent, Merionethshire (*Sic*) 60 per cent, but on average 25 per cent were selected for academic study.** (Freeman, 2001.*op.cit.* 227).

- The disincentive prospect facing parents that they would forfeit the potential income of a working child who would need to stay in full-time education beyond the normal school leaving age.
- The added financial cost to parents of purchasing school uniform, sports kit, etc.

**Taking up a 'free' Grammar school place meant buying uniform, games kit, outings, etc., unless the LEA had a fund for poor children, and it was more than poor people could manage.** (Freeman, 2001, *op.cit.*, 178).

- The social/class perception of selective secondary education and its demands.

**'I passed for the grammar school, but my mother, who was traditionally Irish, didn't think it was a good idea for a girl to start there and go on to university. And so I wasted all those years after I was eleven.'**

**...a highly gifted boy refused to go to university (at no cost then) because 'it's not for the likes of me.'** (Freeman, 2001, *op. cit.* 177).

To fulfil the aspirations of providing an academic secondary education for the selected able children, certain essential prerequisites needed to be available but were in short supply. There was a need for appropriate buildings, enemy action, 1939-45, having destroyed 200,000 places (Barnard, *op. cit.*, 304), an increase in the number of grammar schools, so necessitating the need for highly qualified graduate specialist teachers, included in a total of 70,000 extra teachers. (Barnard, *op. cit.*, 304). Smaller sized classes were deemed appropriate as regulations decreed maximum sized secondary school classes of thirty but even as late as 1959, classes of forty were not unknown (Barnard, *op.cit.*, 321).

**...putting the Act into operation will be more difficult in that it will have to be carried out during a period of economic and social dislocation and simultaneously with other massive schemes of reconstruction.** (Dent, H., C., 1944, 3).

The problems arising out of these most important shortages concentrated the efforts of Government to meet the challenge, which, although alleviated, were not eradicated even sixty years later.

The policy for the education of the able demanded for its success the specialist graduate teachers, of mathematics, the sciences and foreign languages. The McNair Report recommended substantial salaries and prospects for such secondary school teachers should be equated to those of the administrative and executive branches of the Civil Service, or with those of the School Medical or Dental Services. No such salary arrangements were or have subsequently been made and the failure to attract teachers of the right calibre has been and remains a recurrent problem (Woodhead, 2002a, *op. cit.* 90-93) with inevitable consequences for achievable standards.

The need for an increased number of highly educated able people to meet the needs of the Nation was apparent from the war-time experience of prevailing educational inadequacies. The technological complexity of modern life became

recognised and hence the need to widen the social class from which University graduates could be drawn saw the payment of University teaching fees being made the responsibility of the student's LEA. The extension of the State Scholarship scheme in 1947 by doubling the number of awards available and the increased availability of means tested LEA grants was accompanied by increased University provision<sup>35</sup>.

At a time of the economic difficulties as a result of the aftermath of war, an attempt was being made to try to provide educational opportunities for able children to enter selective secondary schools and to make financial arrangements for higher education based on ability and financial need.

### The developing social/political pressures

**The Britain of a century ago squandered its resources by condemning even talented people to manual work; and blocked the efforts of members of the lower classes to obtain just recognition for their abilities. ... Education was very far from proportioned to merit. ... For the most part there was no selection for jobs; there was only inheritance. ... Until the Butler Act began to take effect in the 1970s and 80s, Britain was outstanding among industrial countries as the home and fount of nepotism.** (Young, *op.cit.*, 12,17,19,20).

The egalitarianism of the third quarter of the twentieth century, (having grown in the 1950s and 1960s) and socialism which was in the ascendancy, overshadowed the provision of secondary education.

**Till the middle of the century practical socialists identified equality with advancement for merit. ... The trouble started when the left wing emphasised a different interpretation of equality, and ignoring differences in human ability, urged that everyone, those with talent as well as those without, should attend the same schools and receive the same basic education.** (Young, *op.cit.*, 33).

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<sup>35</sup> University Colleges at Nottingham (1948) Southampton (1952), Hull (1954), Exeter (1955), and Leicester (1957) were made into independent universities and the University College of North Staffordshire at Keele was created.

The growth of a comprehensive<sup>36</sup> system of schools and the near death of the bipartite one, were seen as both the engine of change and a consequence of its success.

As the industrial base of the economy weakened in the last quarter of the twentieth century, so disillusion set in with the attractions of socialism. The change in political climate culminating in the election of a Conservative Government in 1979 coincided with the emergence of, and partly created, a service-based and communications-based economy. This new, technological and knowledge-based economy began making different demands on the educational provision policy needed to sustain it. As the political mood of the nation changed, so did the perceived means needed to satisfy that demand begin to change. The plethora of educational policy change initiatives, introduced during the last twenty years of the twentieth century, are an attempt to meet the very different needs of the present and the future.

**The success of our children at school is crucial to the economic health and social cohesion of the country. ... A generation ago Britain tolerated an education system with a long tail of poor achievement because there was a plentiful supply of unskilled and semi-skilled jobs. This is no longer the case. ...To prosper in the twenty-first century competitive global economy, Britain must transform the knowledge and skills of its population. Every child, whatever their circumstances, requires an education that equips them for work and prepares them to succeed in the wider economy and in society.** (HM Government White Paper, 2001. *op. cit.* 5.).

The continuing debate launched in 1978 by PM Callaghan<sup>37</sup> as to the ability of our arrangements to ensure the existence of a viable educated working force capable of sustaining Britain's place in the new order implicitly questioned whether the education of the most able was being adequately addressed. It is this dilemma that has subsequently challenged the governments of this country. The jury is still out on whether or not the challenge is being met in a sufficiently robust way.

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<sup>36</sup> DES Circular 10, (1965), *The Organisation of Secondary Education*, HMSO issued by the Labour Government required LEAs to prepare and submit schemes for reorganising secondary education in their areas on comprehensive lines.

<sup>37</sup> p. 55 refers

## **2. The increasing political dimension of educational provision**

Legislation for the provision of education: its relevant significance for the education of the able.

Educational provision cannot be regarded solely as the consequence of a chronicle of Education Acts, i.e. as a product of political decisions. As we have seen,

**Till the middle of the century [twentieth] practical socialists identified equality with advancement for merit** (Young, *op.cit.*, 33) and after the '44 Act, ... **children were educated according to their 'age, ability and aptitude', those with greater ability getting more education.** (Young, *op.cit.*, 29).

The strong belief in the importance of the concept of equality of opportunity did not sit uncomfortably with a selective system of education provided it was based on ability and not heredity. But the educational provision for the able, particularly since the sixties has been increasingly intertwined with that provided for the rest of society. An understanding of the legislative progression through which the educational provision policy has evolved and its inter-dependence with the contemporary political movements alone, cannot uniquely inform on the general provision or on the implications for the education of the able.

The effectiveness of 'people political power'.

Pages 41-43 refer to the fact that political and educational imperatives, largely outside parliament fermented the agitation for educational policy change in the nineteenth century. The government initiatives and Acts followed in their wake and similarly in the run-up to the 1944 Act, the expectations of men and women at war concentrated the mind of the coalition government on what would be demanded (pp. 43-48) as a reward for the hardships endured and the anticipated new order to come. Borne out of the political will of the coalition Government of PM Churchill, it incorporated and acted upon the findings of inter-war government reports.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> p. 43 refers.

### The educational 'new ball game' of the 1944 Act.

The English class system based on the monarchy, aristocracy, and a feudal system of heredity whilst not unchanged, still lingered on. Prior to the '44 Act and the liberating influences of the Second World War the social class system with its expectations and prejudices helped perpetuate an educational class system.

**In the 1930s only a minority of able low-class children had more than the most primitive education; [but] twenty years later practically all clever children were installed in the seats of learning.** (Young, *op.cit.*, 45).

Floud, *et al.*, (1956) in a sociological study were able to report that

**In very many, if not in most, parts of the country the chances of children at a given level of ability entering grammar schools are no longer dependent on their social origins.**

The policy underlying the purpose of the '44 Act was to recast completely the education system of the country, enlarging it, and extending to many what had previously been the privilege of the few. The setting up, however, of a system for getting able children from the lower classes into a grammar school by no means guaranteed that they remained there, the attraction of good wages, coupled with low unemployment attracting many to leave early. In the case of the superior classes the situation was reversed because they

**... took for granted that their children should enjoy higher education; the difficulty was not to get the able to stay at school, but to get the stupid to leave and put up with the manual jobs for which their intelligence fitted them.** (Young, *op. cit.* 46).

The '44 Act did not remove the educational privileges associated with wealth, power and class; it now provided an avenue by which the hitherto largely closed doors to such education might open not as before to a small percentage of the able from the lower classes, but to all able children. Arguably the most comprehensive and greatest of all education acts, its impact is with us even today.

### Selection by ability, not social class.

Generally believing that children were either academically inclined, or had some technical skills, or possessed lesser academic talent than others, the Local Authorities responded to the requirements of the 1944 Act, in ways largely irrespective of their political views. The 1944 Act gave to the LEAs *carte blanche* in their choice of which secondary school system to adopt, giving no direction as to what specific types of secondary schools to provide. Practically all the political parties, however, supported a system of selection at eleven years of age, whereby the brighter children were selected by ability for an academic education at Maintained Grammar Schools. In a few areas, those deemed to be likely to benefit from a technical education went to Technical schools, but the majority went to Secondary Modern schools. The precise percentage of children selected for an academic education differing considerably from area to area, a 5 to more than 20 per cent variation was not unknown.

**Around 25 per cent of all children were selected for academic study in Grammar Schools, while the remaining 75 per cent received a more practical training (e.g. domestic science and woodwork) in Secondary Modern Schools.**

(Vernon, 1957, as cited in Freeman, 2001, *op. cit.*, 226).

### The 1944 Act's recognition of the special educational needs of the able.

Whilst the tripartite or bipartite system of education prevailed, and even now 163 Maintained Grammar Schools<sup>39</sup> still exist, the able children, now defined as GaT, were, and are, in fact, receiving an education deemed appropriate to their superior ability. Apart from those schools were the other secondary schools, which in the parlance of the present PM's Press Secretary might have been termed '**bog standard**' (Robbins, T., 2001) secondary modern schools. Here the vast majority of children were being taught what amounted to a less demanding academic curriculum and in a manner which seemed more suitable to their age, aptitude and ability. Implicit in the system adopted (but not overtly expressed) was a belief that the more able child had special educational needs - a belief underpinned by the findings of inter-war government reports (Hadow 1926, Spens 1939, and Norwood 1943), and that this was best provided by separating the more able children from the less able for separate educational treatment.

Legislated by a coalition government the 1944 Act had the full consent and

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<sup>39</sup> e.g. Lincolnshire, Buckinghamshire, Kent, and in parts of Cheshire and Lancashire.

agreement of the Labour Party. The Labour Government of PM Major Clement Attlee, post the Second World War, were firmly bound in their belief that the educational well-being of the brightest children receiving an education within the free maintained sector were best served by a selective system. Championing the tripartite system as meritocratic the Minister of Education said:

**People have said that by talking in terms of three types of school we are promulgating a wrong social philosophy. I do not agree. By abolishing fees in maintained schools we have ensured that entry to these schools shall be on the basis of merit. ...I cannot agree with those people who say that by setting up distinction of brains between people you are only producing another kind of distinction. I am glad to think that we are not all born the same.** (Wilkinson, E., 1946).

Attempts in the early fifties by the more radical members of the Labour Party in successive Labour Party Conferences to end selection and introduce Bilateral Schools or Multilateral ones were firmly rebuffed by the Party when in Government and later when in opposition. They would have ‘no truck’ with such ideas. To them the well-being of the children of their own supporters benefited most from the provision of an academic education in specialist i.e. grammar schools. To them the ‘Tories’, who, they believed, largely sent their children to Public Schools, cared little about the type of system adopted for the children of the masses. One should not avoid over-stressing, however, the fact that the great Education Act of 1944 was introduced by a National Government led by a Conservative PM and conceived by a Conservative President of the Board of Education, Mr. R. A. Butler, to whom the provision of an apt free state education for all was an abiding passion. Whilst at any particular time there can be no unanimous political consensus, the passing of the ’44 Act was practically so. A policy of selection of the more able for special educational treatment was not a political issue.

The demise of the policy of the perceived virtue of selection by ability.

**[Until 1951] ... political opinion on both sides of the House of Commons and in the country at large had been more or less agreed that any move which threatened the grammar school's pride of place, let alone its destruction, was totally undesirable.** (Richmond. W. K., 1978, 71).

During the thirteen years (1951 to 1964) of Conservative Governments under four PM's<sup>40</sup>, the Labour Party in opposition began to adopt a more socialistic policy and uncompromisingly egalitarian political stance. Such a stance:

**maintains that observed differences in individual ability and status are almost entirely determined by environmental influences** (Richmond, *op. cit.*, 77),

and consequently leads to the belief that no special provision was needed to cater for the needs of the most able: they would fend for themselves. Increasingly this view became the predominantly held one amongst both the political and educational establishments.

Additionally the growing opposition to the eleven-plus examination by those who regarded it as unfair, or undesirable and divisive helped to sustain the argument in favour of the comprehensive school in that such schools obviated the necessity for a selection test. In a satirical history of British Society, Young, (later Lord Young of Darlington) did a lot to persuade educationalists that the eleven-plus ought to be abolished, arguing that the grammar school system established a pecking order even more divisive than the old class-based system had been; dividing society by IQ instead of by wealth. Coining a word meritocracy (a comical mixture of Latin and Greek), which he had meant to imply something nasty for an 'undesirable élitism', the word was widely misunderstood and was regarded by socialists as a good thing and adopted by conservatives and made their own. (Obituary, Young, 2002).

The failure to realise that the needs of the able were being sacrificed on the policy altar of political/sociological ideology is the door at which many would now place the responsibility for the present perceived inability to meet the needs of this section of the student population, and hence of society in general.

The social and political benefits attributed to non-selection were now perceived by the Labour Opposition to be more fitting to their idea of a socialist society.

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<sup>40</sup> Sir Winston S Churchill (1951 – 1955)  
 Sir Anthony Eden (1955 – 1957)  
 Mr Harold McMillan (1957 – 1963)  
 Sir Alec Douglas Home (1963 – 1964)

**Had England been putting too many of its eggs in one basket, lavishing resources on the one type of secondary schooling which enjoyed a monopoly of social esteem? And was the ethos of the traditional grammar school's culture somehow out of sympathy with the subculture of many first-generation pupils?** (Richmond, *op. cit.* 91).

A political/quasi-educational crusade to change public opinion and hence force the LEA's to change their education policy and to reorganise secondary education on comprehensive lines then ensued, the left wing of the Labour party being then in the ascendancy.

The doomed attempt to impose a policy for a national comprehensive system of secondary education.

The opportunity to attempt to usurp the LEAs right to chose its own system for providing free secondary school education according to the age, aptitude and ability of the child, came as a result of Labour's election victory in 1964 and was inherent in the circular issued by Labour PM Wilson, (DES Circular 10/1965, 1). It is important to remember that the issuing of a circular does not make its provisions mandatory, and the universal compliance of LEAs to this circular's proposals was not forthcoming. The return of the Labour Government in 1966 did not give it the political clout and wherewithal to force the compliance needed to allow the SOS for Education in PM Wilson's first government, Anthony Crosland, to have his wish, which was so graphically encapsulated in his comment: **'I shall destroy every f.....g grammar school in England'** (Crosland, 1982, 148). To him, a policy of selection was anathema; as a political objective, grammar schools and selection had to go.

**In the 1960s, the concept of the comprehensive school had been established. It had been sold to the British public on the basis that selection was divisive, that some children would be permanently excluded from the best, and that every comprehensive school would be as good as the grammar schools.** (Baker, 1993, *op. cit.* 223).

The 'great education debate': PM Callaghan, a man for the moment.

The return of the Conservatives (1970) to power, under PM Heath, put an end to the policy with its forced attempt to make non-selective education compulsory. A further attempt under the succeeding Labour Government was made, but because of the ignominious rebuff in the courts of the government's

proposals for mandatory legislation, the lack of parliamentary time and an impending General Election, the attempt failed. The phasing out of the DGS in 1976, most of which rejected the option of going comprehensive, but became instead independent selective schools reduced the number of places hitherto available on academic merit to able but poor children.

Although the need for a radical re-think of the policy for educational provision in Britain had its spur in PM Callaghan's Ruskin College speech (1976), the cudgels were not taken up immediately upon the election (1979) of a new government under PM Thatcher. Only after a protracted period of indecision and discussion did she call for such a policy manoeuvre.

The findings of an HMI survey of secondary schools, (1979) published seven months after Thatcher came to power

**...cut across the conventional wisdom of her party: i.e. Their (sic) reliance on academic examinations, on strict discipline and on traditional teaching methods being in clear conflict with the inspectors more expensive recommendations.** (Stevens, A., 1980, 167).

Stevens, the Education Correspondent of the Observer, wrote in 1980 that her

**...hypothesis, based on a scrutiny of the figures, on general rhetoric and on her impression of the schools is this: the cleverest group are no longer reaching the same level of detailed, disciplined academic work at the age they reached it before, [but] at the same time, the middle range of children have gained self-confidence and certificated success in a whole range of courses, conventional and unconventional. The success of the middle group of children ... has been bought at the expense of ... early academic laurels for the old A and upper B stream pupils.** (Stevens, *op.cit.*, 159).

It is interesting to note that Stevens, despite her misgivings expressed above, did not want to **'unpick the comprehensive system or even substantially to modify the principle, by reverting to an older academic approach.'** (Stevens, *op.cit.*, 162).

Whilst HMI and education pundits, as we see, were broadly not too critical of the comprehensive system and the educational establishment were strongly in favour of it, the concern for the education of the gifted once more started to

resurface in earnest. Non-selective schools were beginning to be seen by an increasing public opinion to be failing that section of our children who were classified as able.

**...what chiefly gives rise to misgivings is the thought that the objective of achieving 'good academic standards' may be hopelessly compromised by the insistence on achieving 'good social standards'. Rightly or wrongly, the feeling persists that only the first is 'educational'; and the fear is that the effect of any common course will be to enable the less able to do rather better than they did before and the gifted ones considerably worse. In other words, unstreaming will reduce the spread of scholastic attainment but only by a regression towards the mean. It is at this point more than any other that the value judgements of élitists and egalitarians are at loggerheads.** (Richmond, *op.cit.*, 104).

SOS Baker (1993, *op. cit.*, 165) records in his autobiography his amazement that England had abandoned its bipartite educational structure, and

**...as each year passed [1986] it became clearer that the high hopes of the comprehensive movement had not been fulfilled. ... Comparisons with other countries [were made]. In West Germany, nine out of ten 16 year olds got a Hauptschule certificate covering Maths, German, a foreign language and two other subjects, [but] the equivalent in England was the CSE grade 4, and only four out of ten English school leavers achieved this standard. The staying-on rate of our 16 year olds was one of the lowest in the developed world. Employers complained continually about the low levels of basic literacy and numeracy of job applicants. The proportion of working-class students at [Oxbridge] was lower than it had been in the late 1940s. Only 12 per cent of our 18 year olds went on into higher education.** (Baker, *op. cit.*, 165).

### The long fight back: away from the brink?

In an attempt to replace the DGS Scheme, abolished under a previous Labour SOS Shirley Williams, the introduction of the APS (1981) was a policy designed to offer high quality education to the most able in Independent Schools.

Under the scheme, suitable Independent schools could offer to able pupils places in both the primary and secondary stages on a means tested basis, and funded directly from the central government.

**Over 75,000 pupils have received such assistance from public funds at a cost of over £150 million per annum, serving 1 per cent of the school population.** (Freeman, 1998, *op. cit.* 48).

Edwards *et al* (1989) reporting on the social profile of those able children on the APS, indicated that:

- **Fewer than 10 per cent had fathers who were manual workers.**
- **50 per cent had fathers in service class occupations (e.g. teachers).**
- **The largest category came from single-parent families.**
- **Unemployed, black and Asian families were poorly represented.**

To the chagrin, however, of the many able children and their parents who had or hoped to benefit from this admirable but rather inadequate answer to so big a possible need nationally, the policy and its scheme were terminated by the incoming Blair Government of 1997.

#### **A policy initiative to raise standards and its temporary setback.**

SOS for Education Baker in 1986, introduced a policy to establish a pilot network of twenty CTC, a revolutionary new type of school, independent of LEAs, and funded by sponsors from industry and the DES.

**In one swoop the CTC were thus an attack on LEAs, on comprehensive education...and on traditional state maintained education as it had developed over the previous forty years.** (Walford and Miller, 1991 ).

His policy decision to introduce CTC was **‘to make them beacons of excellence and exemplar models for what could be done in other state schools.’** (Baker, *op. cit.*, 178).

The hidden intention of SOS Baker’s policy, was the wish to kill comprehensive schools, the CTC being a contributory way to achieve this (Davies, 1999, 1, 4-5). The example of magnet schools in America, visited by Baker in 1987, became for him part of the basis on which the CTC would be built, in order: **‘...to legitimise inequality of provision, selection and competition.’** (Baker *op.cit.*, 178-179).

Applauded by some but pilloried by his political opponents and some educational activists, the leader of one teaching union<sup>41</sup> supported the policy initiative;

**Far from the Technology Colleges movement asset stripping the public purse and the common good, history may say that it is the most important radical initiative which has yet taken place in technological and vocational education.**

(City Technology Colleges Trust, 2000, 12).

The inability of the Conservative government, however, to obtain sufficient funding from industry, together with the reluctance of LEAs to sell unused and unwanted real-estate, and the further complications introduced by the refusal by hostile authorities to grant planning permission, necessitated a rethink by the DES. The CTC were rebranded as SS by PM Major's government in 1994. The Technology Schools' Initiative, launched in 1991, aimed to spread a CTC-style curriculum throughout the maintained sector, and the TC Trust Affiliation Scheme of 1992 had increased the network of like-minded schools to 600 in 1998.

#### The rehabilitation of a policy initiative: CTC as a part of the solution.

The initial hostile reactions to CTC of the Labour Party changed after 1997 when in government. After the idea had taken root, it became politically acceptable to Labour politicians; the educational virtues of the original policy proposals remained the same but their virtue now appeared to have a relevance previously obscured to them. The policy and scheme has now been extended and widened with the whole-hearted support of the present government:

**Technology Colleges will lead the way by spreading the benefits of their expertise and facilities throughout their communities---The network of schools affiliated to the Technology Trust, along with their sponsors, have a crucial role to play.** (Blunkett, 1997a. 6).

**...they [the CTC] are at the heart of my vision...they will help to modernise the comprehensive school principle by sharing their expertise and facilities with all schools.** (Blunkett *op.cit.*, Technology Colleges Trust Annual Lecture, Nov. 1997b. 6).

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<sup>41</sup> Smith, P. General Secretary, Association of Teachers and Lecturers.

### The impact of political realism on educational policy: The key issues.

The realisation that education would be and was an issue in the 1997 election and mattered a great deal to the electorate helped to crystallise the new government's concern for improved standards in schools.

Among the key educational policy issues which the educational and national press highlighted as of major concerns to parents, employers, and educationalists and therefore in consequence for the government are listed in Table 3.1.

On assuming power in 1997 the new Government started to plan and initiate programmes and policies to mitigate against what it perceived to be the most pressing inadequacies of the provision available. Whilst not all the issues listed affect the provision for the most able children, quite a number do, both directly and indirectly. It is, however, the proposals and actions of the Government with regard to the education of the able within its EiC policy, which is of concern to this researcher, and which is currently spearheading the assault on the education of the able in city conurbations.

The political climate, since 1997, in no way resembles that which faced PMs Wilson or Callaghan. Neither had the commanding eminence of the present PM within his party or in the government. PM Blair, with his large majority in Parliament, so recently reinforced by the June 2001 General Election can issue and, in fact, is issuing educational policy directives and initiatives to try to change what is now generally accepted i.e. **‘that the educational needs of the most able cannot be best met in a “bog standard comprehensive.”’**<sup>42</sup>

Particularly dismayed by the realisation that the educational performance of boys was inferior to that of girls, and that their esteem of education was low, the New Labour PM Blair has suggested that there has to be a rethink of the policies and practicalities of operating comprehensive schools. His intention appears to be to ‘de-comprehensivise’ the schools, and so help raise the less than expected and required performance of some children. The existence of SS and the extension of the system, with their ability to select some of their pupils might be just one indication of such a policy intention for the future.

The new government has introduced a number of policy initiatives, documents and directives, most of which have been largely governed by the government's concern about standards in schools and the means of improving them, many of

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<sup>42</sup> Campbell, A, PM. Blair's Press Secretary, Downing Street Press Conference statement. 2001.

which have allegedly produced a surfeit of bureaucracy amongst teachers and parents.

**The flood of initiatives, the plethora of targets, the policies and the paperwork have not delivered. Or, rather, they have delivered an unprecedented degree of demoralisation.** (Woodhead, 2002b, 23).

Post 1997 election-victory political/educational policy decisions affecting the education of the able

Two policy decisions of the new Government that changed the existing arrangements for the education of the able and which gave an interesting insight into its then philosophy, affected the existence of maintained grammar schools and the APS.

Immediately on taking office by cancelling the APS, it removed what had allowed GaT children from any background to attend schools, which by consensus provided those children with an excellent and appropriate education.

It also legislated for existing maintained grammar schools, under certain circumstances, to be abolished. i.e. by these two policy actions in the first few months of office it removed some educational opportunities from the able. An argument as to the motives being political and not educational inevitably followed.

A later policy decision, however, made the education of the GaT a case for special treatment, by its inclusion in the EiC project: additional financial resources were allocated to education, including initiatives that cost money to provide extra resources for the education of the GaT. Notwithstanding that they apply only to those in specific targeted areas by EiC, the policy recognition of the special needs of the able as a legitimate call on Government appeared to be a new departure.

The schizophrenia of political policy decisions and actions with regard to the education of the able.

The exigencies of political realities, coupled with the over-riding need for any political party to achieve power, can cast a cynical cloud on the twists and turns of those in government. Such behaviour is not the exclusive prerogative of any one party, but is the very essence of what so often happens. As an exemplar, the decision in 2000 by the Government to allow maintained schools in certain circumstances to be organised and administered by private organisations, for the benefit of children being educated at public expense is at variance with the Government's original

abhorrence with any provision by the private sector in such activities and would appear to be an apt example.

Whilst such behaviour appears so often to be the norm and is subliminally accepted by many as no more than can be expected, it is, nevertheless, a behaviour pattern that so often brings politics into contempt, whilst introducing uncertainty and turbulence into educational provision policy; both destructive of good education.

Loosely defining the contemporary context as 1965 to the present conveniently encapsulates two diverging policy proposals by two different Labour Governments.

- The first was to persuade all LEAs to end selection by ability in secondary schools, and introduce comprehensive schools for all (PM Wilson, Circular 10/1965).
- The second, thirty-four years later by PM Blair, set out effectively to ‘de-comprehensivise’ comprehensives, thus by implication acknowledging the special needs of the able.

Over an overlapping time span the Conservative Party has also been ambivalent about its education policy as far as selection and hence the education of the able is concerned.

- It was in favour of grammar schools whilst in government in the fifties and early sixties.
- In the time of Opposition (late sixties) under shadow SOS Boyle, it favoured the comprehensive system and supported its adoption.
- When returned to power under PM Heath in 1970, the then SOS Thatcher continued to allow the onward march of comprehensivisation.
- When in power herself (post 1979), only then did PM Thatcher begin to act to try to redress the inadequacies in the education of the more able.
- The rhetoric for the return of the grammar schools in large numbers did not match the realities, and no policy move was made to abandon in any way the comprehensive system.

The pattern of apparent dichotomies between the policies adopted at two different times by the same party for the education of the able, as exemplified above, illustrates the ambivalence of party politicians with regard to an adherence to a previously held view. Regarded by some as a strength and an indication of an open mind and hence an example of pragmatism at its best it can allow previously rejected policies to be re-evaluated on their merit and, if necessary, resuscitated. A case in

point is the one considered earlier, i.e. the extension of the CTC and the birth of its offspring: SS.

Although against the CTC in opposition, in Government they subsequently altered their approach and effectively widened and extended the scheme, in a policy attempt to cater for children with special abilities and talents, and soon after PM Blair took power in 1997, New Labour's enthusiasm for the specialist model was set out in a White Paper. There are now 536 SS in England: 313 in SS technology, ninety-nine in languages, sixty-seven in sports and fifty-seven in the arts. In February 2001, the government's green paper on the future of education announced targets of 1,000 SS by 2003 and 1,500 by 2006, i.e. 40 per cent of the 3,550 state secondary schools in England, and in April 2001 PM Blair promised a further injection of £33m to ensure 820 SS by September 2002. The ceiling on the number of schools wanting to specialise is abolished, Specialism being now a Whitehall mantra. In order to earn specialist status, the school must raise £50,000 of sponsorship from the private sector, the government then providing £100,000, plus £123 per pupil per year, for four years. The schools will still teach the national curriculum, but are expected to add facilities and employ expert teachers.

#### Education provision policy 'decision time': are the politicians ready to act?

As this review of the political changes and developments has indicated, so many of the educational policy imperatives have partly reflected those changes and partly instigated them. The current interest in the education of the GaT can be attributed to the political fallout arising from the need to ensure that the nation can maintain its place in the global economic position, (now so heavily dependent on a highly educated workforce), and the pressure for improvements in educational provision by an electorate unhappy with the *status quo*.

The possession of such people being now regarded as a prerequisite makes political interest in the education of the most able of the children a paramount concern. The concern of parents inflamed by public discussion in the media, the relationship drawn by the public between the perceived lack of educational progress with the financial commitment to education and the supposed demise of discipline in society, inevitably focuses the political eye on what might appease such alienation.

As the present government enters (June 2001) its second period in office and conflicting opinions as to the success or failure of its policies are being considered by the pundits, parents and public, so the policy initiatives continue to emanate from

the Government. Among them, the September 2001 HM Government White Paper<sup>43</sup> has been followed by the publication in November 2001 of the proposed new Education Bill. In recommending the bill the new SOS Estelle Morris is quoted as saying;

**We want to ensure that every child is given world-class education by encouraging innovation ... Teachers and Heads know what works in their own classrooms. They know the individual support their pupils need to succeed. ... This Bill would give teachers and heads the flexibility to build on the best of our comprehensive system.** (Morris, 2001b).

This follows on from the EiC policy introduced in 1999 and which had so important an element within it for the education of the GaT.

It is this government's recurrent theme about standards and its sometimes trumpeted disquiet about the suitability of comprehensive schools to meet the needs of the more able that now engulfs the ambience of English education. It is, however, clear that despite such disquiet the declared policy of the Government remains the same: to retain the system of comprehensive schools.

### **3. Review of the 'non-political' literature**

To regard educational literature as purely apolitical many would consider naïve. To do so in the case of the literature concerning the educational provision for the more able would rightly bring charges of refusing to face the reality of present day Britain. Educational provision *per se* is foremost a political issue, and that of the more able particularly so. It is with such an insight that much of the current debate should be viewed.

#### **Relevant early stirrings: the case for and against vouchers**

By the end of the 1960s 35 per cent of the secondary-age group were in comprehensive schools and the proportion continued to rise.

**Privilege and inequality were allegedly undermined by the comprehensive principle, but even those who supported it feared that standards would be undermined too.** (Robbins, K., 1994, *op. cit.* 23).

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<sup>43</sup> Schools achieving success

Coupled with the changes and disruption brought about with general reorganisation, were changes in school design and syllabi, and the increasing emphasis on discovery rather than the inculcation of established verities. i.e. the progressive approach. The appearance of sixth form colleges, the introduction of the Certificate of Secondary Education, with the accompanying influence that teachers now had in operating and shaping the examinations, were among the innovations that did not go unchallenged.

**Critical Black Papers were produced – not all of which were written by men of the right.** (Robbins, K., *op. cit.*, 324).

The industrial unrest of the late 1960s, culminating in the '70s with the three day week, coupled with a growing general unease about what to many appeared to be undesirable social trends, was the watershed which saw the emergence of the largely hostile Black papers. It is to these early stirrings that we now turn.

The Black Papers on Education (1969 to 1975), co-authored by Professor Brian Cox<sup>44</sup>, and Anthony Howard Dyson began to lay the ground for a growing apprehension with regard to the educational provision policy for an academic *élite*. The contribution by Dr Rhodes Boyson, the then headmaster of a successful London Comprehensive School and subsequently a minister in the DES favoured choice as a means of sustaining standards. The relevant discussions at the time oscillated between Boyson's preferred options, which were either an extension of fee-paying (private or State) education following either a cutback in taxation to leave more money to fructify in the pockets of the people and generous scholarships for children from poorer families and/or a voucher scheme. Under such a scheme parents would be given a voucher equal to the cost of the State education of their child and this could be used to buy his/her education in State or private schools, parents adding money to meet private fees. As Boyson pontificated

**Such a system of education vouchers would transform the educational scene. Schools and parents would no longer be at the mercy of progressive but unrealistic idealists.** (Boyson, 1970).

Strong words which were echoed by West (1970, 272-273), but which later failed to find favour when Boyson was himself a Minister of Education in the DES

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<sup>44</sup> Manchester University

under SOS Sir Keith Joseph. West believed that the policy which introduced Government funding in 1833 had been unnecessary, as private provision was in fact adequate. He decried the past and contemporary state involvement in the provision of education. He further suggested that if taxation (both direct and indirect) was reduced, the money released would be available to parents to spend on education. This could be supplemented by an education voucher.

A major policy argument employed for its adoption was that it was merely an extension of an already existing voucher system. Such a system (called grants and free tuition fees) already operated very successfully in HE, but the objections won.

The criticism of the proposals were based on a range of considerations:

Philosophical/moral.

Social.

Economic.

Administrative.

Political.

Educational.

It was not always easy to keep the arguments in self-contained departments, but at the time, the State had hitherto never run the schools, this being left to the heads and advisory service, leaving the State to provide the money. The voucher scheme would not depart from this tradition, much to the chagrin of those who wished for the State to become more involved in the running of the schools.

The main objection to the policy proposals, however, was based on the grounds that middle class parents and their children would gain an unfair advantage over working class parents and their children. The wider experience of the educational system of the middle class parents would enable them to make informed choices, taking advantage at the expense of the working class in their choice of the best schools, thus leaving the poorer schools for the working class. Class distinctions would be perpetuated, schools would play a lesser part than hitherto in homogenizing the various strata of society at an early age, possibly playing less of a full part as a social focus for the community.

The pedagogical implications of the parents' influence, 'he who pays the price, calls the tune', were seen as counter productive and an eventual source of undesirable conflict. The world in which the expert knows best would be challenged, an uncomfortable possibility for many.

The assumption inherent in the policy proposals involved the prediction that extra money from parental contributions, to bolster the value of the voucher, would

enable taxation to be reduced. Such a reduction of income tax would not benefit the non-tax payers, but would favour the higher income groups. If the reduction was in purchase tax, all would benefit but probably less so for the lower income groups.

In an age (the 1970s) of growing acceptance of more state involvement and more state provided welfare, the political climate was not in place to accept such a radical solution. It is tempting to ask if the voucher system was an idea before its time. Many would now argue that it was. Woodhead, (2002a. *op. cit.*), makes a radical call for the education system to be totally privatised by giving every parent a voucher worth the full cost of sending their children to a private, profit-making school offering a high quality education.

### Pedagogical findings: Separate Schools or Specialist schools for the able?

The evidence gained from academic results achieved by British pupils in differently organised educational systems has been used by both pro and anti wings of the debate about the relative merits of **two** different systems:

- (1) the system in which the able attend separate schools,
- (2) the one in which the able attend SS in which only a fraction of the pupils are selected according to aptitude.

The argument for a policy of teaching the more able in separate schools has found support from the Sutton Trust (2001) and in the results achieved e.g. in Northern Ireland schools<sup>45</sup>, which have as yet not abandoned its policy for separate schools provision, based on an assessment of the ability of its intake.

The alternative strategy in which SS are in operation and which are allowed to select a fixed percentage of their intake have been studied by Professor David Jesson<sup>46</sup>(2002). Early evidence suggests<sup>47</sup> that SS do get better results. In a performance evaluation report Jesson found that SS achieved 5 per cent more GCSE passes than the aptitude of the children at eleven might have predicted.

SS can select 10 per cent of pupils, whilst the remainder is chosen in the same way as a comprehensive, but on the same scale Jesson found that comprehensives achieved 1 per cent fewer passes than expected.

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<sup>45</sup> Daily Telegraph 18 August 01

<sup>46</sup> York University, March 2001.

<sup>47</sup> 'Value Added and the Benefits of Specialism' [www.tctrust.org.uk](http://www.tctrust.org.uk) accessed 1 May 2002

## The growing objections to SS.

Given the open hostility that became apparent on the unexpected resignation of the CIS in 2000, it came as no surprise that a deep chasm existed between his approach and that of the DfES. A major disagreement about educational provision policy was a contributory cause of his departure from office.

The former CIS, under both Labour and Conservative Governments, now questions the flagship policy of SS. Although choosing the arbitrary figure of 10 per cent as the ceiling figure for the number of pupils they can select according to aptitude and not ability, (a concept he believes is meaningless), he asserts that only 7 per cent of SS select at all. It is his argument that the policy does not work, being an attempt by the government to appeal to opposite ends of the spectrum within the labour party, i.e. an attempt to square the ideological policy circle. Further, he regards SS:

**as a fudge, they do not add up to the death knell of the comprehensive school, much as the PM would like middle England to think otherwise, but is the product of a government that has neither the conviction nor the courage to achieve the reforms it pretends to pursue.** (Woodhead, 2001, *op. cit.* 25).

Members of the National Union of Teachers condemned every aspect of the SS scheme at their April 2001 Conference, its General Secretary, McAvoy, declaiming:

**The specialist status deifies a school, as the government is effectively saying that it is better than one down the road. This is a two-tier system.** (Robbins, T., 2001, *op. citr.* 14).

and in September 2001 Mr McAvoy reiterated his condemnation; **‘specialist schools would create a multi-tiered, divided secondary system.’** (Clair, J. 2001)

The belief that children are too young at eleven years of age to decide in which area they wish to specialize is a commonly held view and one that is expressed succinctly by John Dunford<sup>48</sup>, as cited by Robbins, (2001. *op. cit.*, 14.

**This is a nonsense. What happens if, two years later, you have a brilliant musician at a business specialist school?**

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<sup>48</sup> General secretary of the Secondary Heads' Association.

Whilst it cannot be denied that the possibility of the right specialism for a talented child existing in their area is a lottery, the argument that ‘if you can’t provide it for everyone you should not provide it for anyone’ has been lost: SS are now in fashion.

The comprehensive system remains in place: Government policy decision:

The policy decision has been taken. The government has chosen not to depart from a comprehensive system of schools. The policy position remains unchanged, despite a change in SOS in June 2001.

Some secondary schools, however, (46 per cent in 2006) will be given extra funding, and will cater for a 90 per cent or more comprehensive intake, but will be allowed to select up to 10 per cent of their pupils on an aptitude basis.

**From September 2001 there will be 684 specialist schools and we are working towards a target of 1000 by September 2003. The Government’s target of 1500 specialist schools by September 2006 represents 46 per cent. of secondary schools in England.** (Hansard, 2001, Estelle Morris).

Whether businesses will be able to sponsor so many schools is an obvious possible dilemma, in some areas more than in others.

Government rebuttal of objections to its Specialist schools policy

The opposing view to that of the ex-CIS is expressed by Ministers, who deny that they are creating a two-tier system,

**rejoicing in the non-debatable fact that only 7 per cent of specialist schools select at all, but claim a beneficial knock-on effect on the whole area, by training teachers from other schools in their specialism.** (Robbins, T., *op. cit.*, 14).

A government claim as to the improvement in the ethos of SS is, of course, only to be judged by subjective means and by those with personal experience of them. The policy of setting up of SS and Beacon Schools, however, is intended to improve the education of the most able 5 to 10 per cent of pupils in every secondary school. As documented in government statements and asserted earlier in first chapter the:

**The EiC is designed to improve access to Higher Education for bright young students from poorer backgrounds whilst maintaining entry standards.**

### Current policy responses: second thoughts on the education of the able?

Whilst in opposition and during its first term in office one of the Government's favourite educational policy slogan was '**Standards not Structures**': the policy aim was not to re-organise the system but to raise the overall level of achievement in all schools. Another aphorism, '**Excellence for Everyone**', made it clear that their belief in equality was more desirable than diversity, diversity implying selection at the start of schooling and unacceptable variations in outcome. Enforcing uniformity in the nation's classrooms, not only in curriculum content but also in teaching methodology, appeared paramount.

The Government's new education White Paper (September 2001 *op. cit.* ), however, appears to represent a change from the approach of the previous SOS, in that it includes a chapter entitled '**Excellence, innovation and diversity**', which emphasises the need for individual schools to create their own ethos and establish their own academic priorities, whilst in another chapter, '**Modernising our structures**', it acknowledges that without elements of re-organisation i.e. diversity, creating new categories of SS would be impossible. The prevalent belief that parents want a real choice between differing kinds of school is however, being recognised by the Government, because the SS is one way of offering such a choice.

The apparent inconsistency in the Government's education policy, identified above, is a possible echo of another previous example<sup>49</sup>. The actions of the government concerning the education of the more able child can be viewed as rather inconsistent; i.e. as a rather hasty set of judgments (abolition of APS, and the abolition threat to Maintained Grammar School), taken at the beginning of their time in office, which with hindsight they may be beginning to regret. They now appear to accept that the education of the able requires special measures which do not lie easily with the basic egalitarian principles that hitherto had been the corner stone of Labour beliefs, values and educational policy.

### Gender: Implications for educational provision, an over view.

In the review of the background literature on the education of the able, particularly in mathematics and the sciences, concern is international. One running theme is the reason why female involvement is low, and all are concerned with means to redress the situation. For some of those who have first hand experience in the education of very able girls, the German suggestion of single sex education is one

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<sup>49</sup> p. 60 refers

that attracts. The American model of coeducation comprehensive secondary schools is unchallenged, but to achieve for girls the desired emphasis envisaged by Feng *et al.* (1999. *op. cit.*), as listed earlier in Table 2.14, is undoubtedly difficult in an unreformed approach to the education of girls in a mixed school.

That the education of the GaT of both sexes is important is axiomatic. The belief that there are possibly motivational factors at play that hinder the maximum development of gifted girls' potential is one that demands further research. Dai (2001 *op. cit.*) hypothesises about possible causes and reviews the relevant literature, which seems to indicate to him that all his hypotheses reflect legitimate concerns. His insight suggests that the biological-evolutionary, cognitive developmental, and the social-cognitive perspectives might be keys to unlocking the vault of understanding, which will help generate the guiding principles required when designing the education and arrangements for GaT girls. His advocacy for further research is well placed.

In England the general acceptance that girls out-perform boys in school examinations up to the age of sixteen, and then at the post sixteen and tertiary stages are out-performed by boys, is now being challenged by the *actualité*. The positioning of single sexed schools in UK league tables might indicate that such segregated schools, which were commonplace in the English system but are now a relative rarity in the maintained sector, have a claim to being restored as a way of improving standards generally and additionally the education of the able, (particularly that of girls).

Apart from the desirability of ensuring that the education of able girls in any society is appropriate and effective, no nation can ignore the need to educate the most able of both genders in the most effective way. The creation of science specialist high schools in Korea may be a way of achieving a positive result, in maximising the ability of the most able. Here in England the CTC might develop, as may the SS of PM Blair, into establishments in which the able can achieve their full potential.

#### **4. Conclusions**

The overview of the sociological and political issues that have played an important historical role in the arrangements made for the education of the able indicates that the present continuing divergence between the underlying philosophies of the two main opposing spectrums of British political thinking are deeply

entrenched in the past. The constant re visitation of the policy issues of whether the education of the able can and should be together with, or separate from the majority, conjures up pedagogical, sociological and political perspectives with each in their own time taking precedence. The current general acceptance that the possession of ability gives rise to a special educational need and that special arrangements are of the essence, hopefully bodes well for future provision.

The research aspect of this dissertation is concerned with the EiC policy concerning the special measures being undertaken for the education of the Government's defined cohort of GaT children. The historical, and political context in which these measures are being fructified, must have been input forming elements in the embryonic deliberations of the EiC policy forming team and thus, the history and politics, appertaining to educational provision have an important place in understanding what is now planned by EiC. The review in this chapter, coupled with the definitions of 'giftedness' in Chapter 2 pp. 21-27, together help to illuminate the appropriateness of what the Government now chooses to provide in its EiC policy directive.

## **Chapter 4 The Research questions.**

### **1. The *raison d'être* for the choice of questions**

The philosophical basis on which the contemporaneous arrangements for educational provision in England are based, has its roots nurtured in the pressures of a historical, religious, pedagogical, social and political miasma. The pictures drawn in Chapter 1 and enlarged in Chapters 2 and 3 give an indication of the flux with which, in their time of precedence, they have influenced the prevailing educational and social mood; a mood reflected in the concerns of those who decided the cardinal issues in education, as they questioned who should benefit, how they should be identified, what should be provided, by whom it should be done and in which way?

As has been seen the concern for the education of the able, irrespective of social class or religious conviction, largely grew out of the prevailing mores of the late nineteenth and earlier years of the twentieth centuries. The *raison d'être* for contemporary concern is a complex amalgam of the identified pressures enumerated in pp. 5-6 of the first Chapter, but it is the contention of the author that the political realities are the prime instigating influence in the decision making process of Government.

The present apprehension amongst parents, pundits, and public opinion with the perceived apparent failure of the educational system to provide what they consider to be needed, has inevitably produced a political reaction.

As one of the more pressing perceived failures is considered to be the inappropriate and/or inadequate education provided for the more able, then so has there been a welter of Government initiatives designed to ameliorate that situation.

This was a situation in which the underachievement of able children demands that there is a need to improve their attainment and motivation. The underrepresentation of people from disadvantaged backgrounds in higher education also needs to be remedied. There is a need to create a positive perception of city education amongst parents and the wider community. The uneven attainment and

curricular interest across the gender gap causes the relative poor performance of boys to be an urgent issue.

In tracing the actions taken since 1944 by governments of different political hue and at different times to meet their educational obligations, it has been seen that their concern for the educational provision for the able has vacillated between an apparent complete indifference to their special educational needs, to one in which ability (together with aptitude and age) were the only determinants for provision.

The current realisation by the Government that the 'nettle had to be grasped' of providing an appropriate education for the able, termed the GaT, has culminated in an attempt to provide a solution. The vehicle chosen is the EiC initiative, particularly under the GaT policy strand.

The EiC initiative with regard to the special arrangements to deal with the provision of an appropriate education for the GaT within the designated city areas is a radical departure from the hitherto prevailing philosophy of the Labour party. This apparent *volte-face* is intriguing and this research is intended to provide a critical appraisal of the resulting management proposals, implications and arrangements for the implementation of this policy.

The responsibility to plan, manage and oversee the arrangements to fructify the EiC policy rests with both DfES SC at City level and the GaT Coordinators at school/college levels and it is from them that one may gain an insight into the Government intentions. (Is not 'the proof of the pudding is in the eating', an adage with some truth in it?).

Since an assessment of their suitability and success could influence informed opinion, and the findings that may emerge from the assessment of the effect of their plans and programmes might add to the considerations of those who have responsibility for government policy in this regard, and hence its implementation, so the author chose this area of research. As a means of ascertaining information the resulting questions were formulated.

## **2. The Research Questions**

The following questions, regarding the education of the GaT are to be addressed in this research study:

1. To what extent are the policy decisions for the education of the GaT as outlined in EiC. being implemented at a 'local' level by the:
  - (a) City level manager (SC), and

- (b) School/College management person (GaT Coordinator)?
- 2. What practical management decisions and actions have been, or are being, taken to effect the:
  - (a) Policy pronouncements made in EiC, at City level, and
  - (b) Policy direction emanating from the City by the School/College GaT Coordinator?
- 3. How effective are the management decisions taken in achieving their objectives at
  - (a) City level, and
  - (b) School/College level?
- 4 Is the Government's policy working: to what extent and how might it be amended and improved?
- 5. What inferences can be drawn as to the Government's intentions regarding the future provision for the education of the nation's more able children?

These questions are also reproduced in Table 4.1 in Appendix 1 to allow for easier reference when used for analysis purposes in Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

The chosen research questions do have a bearing but not an exclusive one on the research technology and methodology adopted and it is to these aspects that we now progress.

## **Chapter 5 Research techniques and design.**

### **1. Universal guidelines for research**

Conventional wisdom dictates that a researcher should ensure that the reader, or any one who might be influenced by the findings of any research, has a clear understanding of;

- the reasons for his/her choice of topic or specific area for research,
- the rationale for considering that such research is of importance,
- the justification for his/her choice of methodology, and
- the writer's personal philosophy or if relevant his/her political viewpoint and experience,

because they might be influencing factors in the way the research was conducted and in its findings.

An indication of some of these factors will have been gleaned from the content of the Foreword to this work and from the opening paragraph of Chapter 3 pp. 40-41, but they are made explicit here.

### **2. Relevant background information**

#### **Reasons for the choice of topic**

The choice of topic is the direct result of the author's personal interests, arising mainly out of teaching and administrative experience, an experience largely concerned with that of able/very able girls and boys of school age and of young men and women in military graduate and postgraduate engineering education.

The chosen area of research is that of the GaT, because of a belief that in the future as in the past we need to make particularly sure that the most able and in all probability the leaders of the future have all their talents developed to the full, irrespective of social or financial position.

The moral purposes here are the parallel of those highlighted by Hopkins (2001). In his context the moral purpose he sees

**in outstanding teachers and schools is the unending quest for the highest of standards, a low tolerance of failure and a commitment to student learning** (Hopkins, 2001, 201).

Nothing less is demanded of any policy which is intended to cater for the education of the GaT. Likewise, the moral imperative for the researcher is that his/her findings should have a similar echo. As Hopkins so rightly points out

**this is no wishy-washy idealism but a ruthless commitment to the learning of children at both an individual and institutional level.** (Hopkins, *op. cit.* 201).

#### Bias: its avoidance

If familiar with some of the experiences encountered by the able and their tutors at first-hand, then no one working in such an environment could fail to have formed an opinion as to the best method of undertaking the education of the GaT, and such is the experience of the author.

As a product of a selective system of free education and as an adult observer of a non-selective system, the avoidance of any suggestion of a prejudicial approach has to be foremost in the researcher's mind.

Uppermost in the mind of this researcher is the combined need to provide **all** children with an education suited to their needs and the needs of society.

### **3. The Researcher's personal philosophy**

It has been argued earlier (pp. 40-41) that education, its form and its content are increasingly becoming the very essence of politics: the politics of education provision and content are the meat of the daily menu of the quality press. The means by which the capital of a nation is to be formed, (because that is what the nation's children are) in an ever increasingly technologically advanced economy is of the very greatest importance and hence rightly is at the very centre of political argument and debate. The place of party politics in deciding on educational issues, decried by many, is, therefore, inevitably involved, but it has no place in the investigation undertaken in this research.

The policy of the EiC for the GaT has already been determined by government decree: it is its implementation and effectiveness that forms the basis of this work, which can, it is suggested be objectively determined. Personal political interests should, therefore, be of little or no consequence.

The approach of Physicists/of Engineers, of which the researcher is one, to research normally involves the pursuance of evidence (mainly experimental and quantitative) so as to substantiate a hypothesis (often an intuitive but educated hunch). An alternative method, which has heralded many breakthroughs and great advances in the understanding of the physical world, has been the result of intellectual insight after deliberation and observation, an approach in keeping with calling Physics, Natural Philosophy, a tradition still adhered to in some Scottish Universities.

This author holds to a post modernist philosophy, rejecting both a positivist and modernist one as forming too rigid a paradigm for research in this area. Consequently, the same emphasis is not placed on quantitative data as might be expected from his professional background, believing that qualitative data, if deemed relevant, is of equal significance in an appropriate context.

#### **4. The post modernist approach: an appropriate choice**

The positivist philosophical belief reflects the traditional scientific approach, and its paradigm (Easterby-Smith, 1994, *et al.*, 77) seems inappropriate as a methodology to research an area in which the context is unlikely to be value free. Extending the positivist tradition, the modernist philosophical argument implies that the findings of the research should be applicable in all similar circumstances and could form the basis of resultant action.

The dichotomy that exists between modernism and post modernism philosophies/methodologies, arises because the first would claim that the outcome of acceptable research must have a universal validity, the findings would be unambiguous, and further that there would be a single underpinning theory to them. Contrarily the post modernist philosophy does admit that the values held by the author could alter the results of the research, and that the technology of the research method would not be uniquely quantitative.

Thus the post modernist and opposing view expressed in these two philosophies can be considered to give researchers a greater degree of freedom in how they carry

out their research, but is likely to tend towards the qualitative/narrative method, possibly reflecting the more liberal outlook of society in general, during the latter years of the twentieth century. (Usher, 1996, 25)

Additionally, the post modernist paradigm (Usher, *op. cit.*) sees

**society as pluralistic, it recognises that each individual is of equal worth, and accommodates precisely the philosophical approach of the researcher.**

In the mind of this researcher all three aspects are paramount in his personal philosophy. An interest in the education of the gifted does not preclude a desire for other groups to receive an equally appropriate one, (i.e. a pluralistic view of society which acknowledges the equal worth of all), and this should not be interpreted as such by reproaches from those who would regard the singling out of the gifted as *elitist*. (i.e. the needs of both extremes of ability from the most to the least able should not be at the expense of either, but should be appropriate to the special needs of each).

It is, therefore, unsurprising that this researcher finds a comfortable 'niche' in which his approach can be accommodated i.e. under the 'flag' of postmodernism.

## **5. The Case Study model; a definition and defence**

The generic term, case study, is descriptive of a number of widely differing research approaches but which can be categorised under four main headings:

- **Ethnographic studies, which are the accounts of researchers immersed in the situation.**
- **Evaluative studies, which investigate situations with a view to giving their specific audience data on which to judge the effectiveness of an activity, policy procedure or innovation.**
- **Action Research studies, which involve the participant-researcher in the activities related to the case.**
- **Illuminative studies, in which the researcher attempts to describe and explore the actions, thinking and discourse of educators and to relate to existing or new theories of education/management** (Male and Kerry, January 2000, 98).

Further, Male and Kerry suggest that:

**Most definitions of case study agree about the fundamental components of it. A case study is the study in depth of an instance. In other words [it looks] in detail, using a variety of instruments, at a specific aspect of management.** (Male and Kerry, *op. cit.*, 93).

Earlier antagonism against the acceptance of case study research, claimed that the findings ‘lacked rigour’ and had ‘little basis for scientific generalisation’. Although still present amongst the academic community, it is now somewhat less vociferous than hitherto.

The reasons for this amelioration may be attributable to the contributions of a number of researchers among whom are Goetz and LeCompte (1994, 228) as cited by Male and Kerry (2000, *op. cit.*, 96), who favour replacing ‘external validation’ as a criterion by an alternative criterion, namely the concept of ‘transferability’, which they define as

**...the degree to which components of a study – including the units of analysis, concepts generated, population characteristics, and settings – are sufficiently well described and defined that other researchers can use the results of the study as a basis for comparison.**

A similar contribution by Lincoln and Guba (1985, 296-319) suggests other ways of overcoming the traditional claim that such research lacks standards for rigour. The concepts proposed by them are: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Their standard of *credibility* was the extent to which the findings and interpretations could be seen as credible by those who were the sources of the data and *transferability* would be ensured by the time and suitability of the context in which the data was collected, so allowing others to judge whether the findings might be applied to different sites. The attribute of *dependability* was the extent to which any findings could be judged to be grounded in the data and could be repeated with other similar participants in similar contexts, whilst to them *confirmability* involved the extent to which the findings were the attributes of the participants and context and not of the researcher.

Acknowledging the contribution of Yin (1993, 1994) on the importance of *boundaries, context* and *trustworthiness* Bassey (1999, 57-91), in an extensive review of the significance, methodology and viability of the case studies' approach gives a description of what an educational case study is and the means to assess its validity. He defines an educational case study as an empirical enquiry conducted within a localized boundary of space and time (i.e. a singularity) into interesting aspects of an educational activity, or programme, or institution, or system, mainly in its natural context and within an ethic of respect for persons. Its purpose is to inform the judgements and decisions of practitioners or policy-makers or of theoreticians. Sufficient data must be collected for the researcher to be able to explore significant features of the case to create plausible and trustworthy interpretations of what is found and thereby construct a worthwhile argument or story. Relating this argument or story to any relevant research in the literature convincingly adds to its conveyance to an audience and provides an audit trail by which other researchers may validate or challenge the findings, or construct alternative arguments. Inevitably the terms *interesting, significant, plausible, worthwhile* and *convincingly* entail value judgements being made by the researcher.

Table 5.1, which is reproduced from his book (1999, *op. cit.* 58) highlights three types of educational case studies: Theory-seeking and theory-testing, Story-telling and picture-drawing, and Evaluative. The research carried out by this researcher falls within the description of Evaluative Case Study enquiring as it does into an educational programme to determine its worthiness as judged by analysis and subsequently the conclusions conveyed to an interested audience.

Much of Bassey's approach has resonance with his support and belief in the concept of 'fuzzy generalisations' and 'fuzzy propositions' which is a reassertion of the belief that the supposed preciseness of interpretive research methods can be inappropriate in complex educational settings.

The citing in Table 5.2 of Male and Kerry's (*op. cit.*, 99) list of the real strengths and values of a case study helps crystallize the acceptance of its relevance and its pertinence in the author's chosen study. The decision to adopt a case study approach under the description of an 'Evaluative' one for this task seemed eminently correct for the research contemplated and well suited to the temperament, inclination and personal convenience of the author.

Despite the opposition of a number of protagonists among whom Hargreaves, (1996), Tooley and Darby(1998) and Woodhead (2002a. *op. cit.*, 76, 2002c) are vociferous,

**the £50-£60 million we spend annually on educational research is poor value for money in terms of improving the quality of education provided in schools,** (Hargreaves, 1996. 1)

in their vituperative comments on Educational Research, its findings, applicability and intrinsic worth, based on their belief that much of it is individualistic and does not contribute to a cumulative body of knowledge, Bassey (1999, *op. cit.* 1-37 ) makes his counter claim, advocating

**the use of educational case studies as a prime strategy for developing theory which illuminates educational policy and enhances educational practice.** (Sikes, P., 1999, xii)

It is this claim by Bassey, which so resonated that it determined the methodology of the research undertaken by this researcher. His definitive criteria for an educational case study that it should be conducted within a localized boundary of space and time (i.e. a singularity) into interesting aspects of an educational activity, or programme were met in the choice of city locations and the Government's vanguard EiC initiative. Data collection was undertaken in the natural context in which the EiC initiative was being actuated, with an ethic of respect for the persons being consulted by the courtesy extended to them of the prior knowledge of the questions to be asked and the assurance of confidentiality. Sufficient data was collected from the city and school coordinators, which with the triangulation of the evidence evinced from the expert witnesses allowed the researcher to explore significant features of the case: thus creating a plausible and trustworthy interpretation of what was found. Within the context of the literary review the researcher was enabled to construct a worthwhile and convincing argument for the recommendations so as to inform the judgements and decisions of practitioners or policy-makers. It also opened up the possibility of an audit trail for other researchers to emulate.

Later in this chapter in paragraphs 7-11 the details given appertaining to the interview procedures adopted for the collection of data and its assimilation, together with the identification details of the participants all help to signify that a viable case study has been undertaken. The EiC initiative is specifically designed to apply to City conurbations, and both Cities designated in this research as Cities M and L were of comparable size and population distribution. Both had their drug and crime

problems with the customary associated social deprivations. Neither city possessed schools which featured highly in any educational league tables and the schools involved were inner-city ones whose population make-up consisted of an ethnic mix. The area of investigation was limited to the implementation of EiC in Cities M and L and relied on the unattributable evidence of professionals in the field, triangulated with that of two eminent expert witnesses and the OFSTED(2001, *op.cit.*) Report, thus delineated the context, boundary and trustworthiness of the research.

## **6. Data: Quantitative or qualitative?**

The arguments in favour of the collection of each type of data are well rehearsed. Both qualitative and quantitative measures are valid to illuminate the processes of educational management. The strengths of a qualitative approach, however, as enumerated in Table 5.3 (Male and Kerry, *op. cit.*, 92) makes a strong case for its adoption by a researcher engaged in a case study of the planning and management arrangements of those appointed at both City and school/college levels to implement the Government's EiC GaT initiative. The post modernist basis of the researcher's philosophical approach makes such a choice practically inevitable and sits comfortably within the researcher's chosen methodology.

## **7. The desired outcomes of the research and the methodological approaches designed for their achievement**

Any serious research needs to be preceded by an attempt to understand the reasons why the intended research is important, what circumstances led to the now perceived need to investigate the matter, and hence consideration and justification of the intended research methodology to be adopted.

The historical/political/literature search is, therefore, an essential requirement to give the author an understanding of the background and the current relevant thinking, which are such essential ingredients for constructive thought and from which to make a critical analysis of the problem. This part of the methodology included the accessing of as much published material as possible, not only preceding the collection of data, but also ongoing throughout, so as to continue to illuminate the researcher's thinking.

The policies and plans, introduced in EiC with regard to the specific educational needs of the GaT, demanded certain responses and actions on the part of City, and school/ college coordinators. The views of these coordinators on what was and is required of them, what detailed plans and policies they had or were developing to meet those demands, and what level of success they have or hope to achieve needed to be ascertained by the researcher. These were intended to be learnt from face to face in-depth interviews by the researcher with the coordinators specifically tasked at both City and school/college level, with implementing the strategy.

The time constraints, externally imposed, limited the total number of interviews to six: two with City SC, two with school/college GaT coordinators and a further two with expert witnesses.

The posed research questions<sup>50</sup> formed the basis on which the semi-structured interviews were conducted, which were tape-recorded and later transcribed.

In the time between the conception of this topic for research and carrying out the author's research, OFSTED(2001, *op.cit.*) reported on an investigation of their own,<sup>51</sup> which has already been referred to in this text (Chapter 2). Their summary of evidence from visits made was a relevant consideration in the formulation of the questions posed by the author to the interviewees and is reproduced in Table 5.4.

Copies of the posed questions presented to the interviewees at both City and school/college level and to the expert witnesses are listed in Appendices 2, 3 and 4. respectively and were given to the interviewees a number of days prior to the interviews.

The views and comments of two 'Expert Witnesses' were ascertained on the policies and plans outlined in the Government's proposals and these were obtained by direct interviews with two such witnesses, using a semi-structured interview technique. Such an approach provided the triangulation needed to add credence to the findings. All were assured of the confidentiality that would be preserved as to their identity.

As all research is bound by its feasibility, the practical details of time and finance were factors in the choice of which two EiC areas were to be researched, but the overriding consideration was the willingness of the coordinators to participate.

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<sup>50</sup> pp.73-74 and Table 4.1

<sup>51</sup> An evaluation of EiC and other grant-funded programmes.

The data collected from all the witnesses was of a qualitative kind and was subject to the researcher's critical analysis so as to elucidate an understanding of the proposals, policies, plans and successes of the Government's initiative.

The decision not to include student views was made on the pragmatic grounds of the practical difficulty in obtaining a response from a cross-sectional representative group of students and the additional time needed to interview them.

### **8. Some ways are better than others: a justification for the one chosen**

This study is looking at the implementation of policy and, therefore, an investigation of how that policy is being managed on the ground is an essential element of the methodology. However, having looked at how the people designated as managers are managing the consequent required delivery actions there is a need for a form of reference both back and forward, a reference back to what the policy is and how it became the policy and a reference forwards by looking at the management, and thus asking the question. Given this management is the policy working?

The methodological approach adopted was one that allowed the discussion between the researcher and witnesses to develop into an interchange of ideas, so enhancing the understanding of the issues, difficulties and intentions of the Government's initiative.

This is a qualitative study: Marshall, and Rossman (1994) believe that such methods are good for uncovering the unexpected, and that in-depth interviews are an appropriate method from which to uncover and describe the respondent's perspectives on events. The author subscribes to this view and believes that the findings and experience gained from previous investigations support a definite belief and decision to adopt this approach both then and now.

The EiC proposals, being relatively recent ones, will, like all such innovations, take time to put into practice and cannot bear any fruit until a certain time has elapsed. Quantitative data is not available; the only available information that could be expected would be:

- in the form of opinion,
- value judgements,
- in anticipated effects.

Such data can only be realistically obtained from face-to-face discussion with those responsible for implementing the initiative, and those respected experts who can take a detached view of the realities of a situation. The philosophy underlying this approach places equal value on informed qualitative opinion as other researchers might place on quantitative data collected in different circumstances in different research situations.

The appropriate people to question about the implementation of the government's policies are the ones intimately involved in the planning necessary for their implementation, and those responsible for activating those plans. Only they, who are actively engaged in the field or who are acknowledged experts, will have the intimate knowledge and experience to form the credible value judgements needed to bring this research to a viable conclusion.

### **9. The resources that were needed**

In most research undertakings, the important resource is the researcher. Usually researcher time is of the essence, and access to informants might be difficult to arrange. Financial considerations usually have implications on what can be undertaken and external pressures determine the total time available for the exercise, concentrating the mind of the researcher, and possibly enforcing a choice of research area. In this particular undertaking, the cost involved was not in any way prohibitive, the researcher's personal circumstances did not curtail his time availability, and the externally imposed available time constraint were not unreasonable for the task in hand.

The author's access to the Internet, the availability of suitable library support, and the information about the whereabouts of suitable interviewees and their willingness to cooperate meant that all the resources needed materialised.

### **10. The limitations experienced**

EiC being a relatively recent government priority imposed on the educational system one other initiative amongst a welter of initiatives imposed during the first four years of the government. Popular and informed opinion considers the spate of

directives emanating from central government to have had an exhaustive effect on teachers, administrators, schools and colleges.

The consequent possible effect of such a climate on the ability and willingness of those involved to 'dance readily' to the tune of yet another initiative is unclear: all educational progress and change in the end succeed or fail through the work carried out in the classroom by specific teachers. Who knows the subliminal effect on the morale of teachers of the conditions of service which may have the effect of limiting the possible effectiveness of the proposals and the perception of their relevance? The jury must of necessity be still out, and no authoritative conclusion is possible.

### **11. The kind of data/information collected and the ways in which it was treated.**

The data emanating from the critical review of the literature of EiC documents is largely factual as regards the information taken from the Government's statements, but largely subjective from the references dealing with the philosophy of the educational needs of the GaT.

The data collected from the City and school/college coordinators was a mixture of information and opinion as was that collected from the expert witnesses.

All the data was critically assessed, reflected upon and evaluated by the researcher; the judgement as to the appropriateness of the plans and their implementation needed to fulfil the letter and spirit of the government's EiC policies followed.

This evaluative case study is an empirical enquiry;

**this means that it is not in the realms of reflective or creative research and that data collection is the starting point. It is also conducted within a localized boundary of space and time, into interesting aspects of an educational programme, mainly in its natural context and within an ethic of respect for persons, in order to inform the judgements, in such a way that sufficient data are collected to explore significant features of the case and to create plausible interpretations of what is found,** (Bassey, *op. cit.*, 59)

and as such fulfils completely the conditions that Bassey requires of an acceptable example of case study research.

Case study research, having no specific method for data collection or analysis, allows the researcher to choose that method which seems appropriate (Bassey, *op.*

*cit.*, 71). The justification for the author's use of the semi-structured interview has been made earlier and thus requires no further justification.

Having given each interviewee a schedule of the questions to be asked, the face-to-face form of the tape recorded interview allowed the author to attend to direction rather than the detail of the discussion, which was listened to later. A transcript of the tapes was undertaken by a professional stenographer and shorn of some of its extraneous/or part finished sentences by the author on listening to the tapes with the stenographer's transcript available for checking.

The answers to individual questions by the two City SC, the two school/college coordinators, and the two expert witnesses, were separated by category of job and summarised and assimilated to give the consensus view and hence used in an attempt to answer each of the research questions. Focussing on the original problem the relevant findings were adduced from an interpretation of the information deduced from the data collected.

The viability of the programme for the education of the GaT and its relevance to the needs of society thus became the subject of considered comment.

The semi-structured interviews conducted by the author were carried out on the basis of a promise of confidentiality and that all comments would be non attributable. The two city conurbations in which the interviews were conducted were Cities M and L. When referring to the City and School Coordinators pseudonyms are used. Details are given in Table 5.5

In addition to the interviews conducted with coordinators and expert witnesses, a day visit was paid to Oxford Brookes University to learn about the training undertaken by them of EiC GaT coordinators. Information gleaned from contacts made that day was also tape-recorded and forms part of the impression gained about the pertinence of the training.

Having tape recorded the interviews, transcripts of the conversations were made and scrutinised. In relation to each research question in turn, relevant interviewee comments by the coordinators were highlighted and colour coded. The extent to which the answers of the coordinators working in both cities, M and L, were in agreement and/or in contrast was considered and recorded. These together with some further highlighted quotations, which, although outside the immediate confines of the research questions, added to the understanding of the problems and policies, which then formed the basis of the findings recorded in Chapter 6

Dealing with the transcripts of the interviews of the two expert witnesses in a similar fashion but with the additional intention of contrasting their answers with

those of the coordinators in both cities, the knowledge gained formed the basis of Chapter7.

The effect of the procedure detailed above allowed the data to inform us on EiC initiative policy and its implementation.

## **Chapter 6 The Findings: perceptions of the EiC coordinators**

The perceptions, illuminated by the responses of the interviewed strand and school/lead coordinators relevant to each research question (Table 4.1 in Appendix 1) form the basis of this chapter.

### **1. Research Question 1.**

**‘To what extent are the policy decisions for the education of the GaT as outlined in EiC. being implemented at a ‘local’ level by the:**

- (a) City level manager (SC), and**
- (b) School/College management person (GaT Coordinator)?’**

In City M, contrary to DfES directive, no SC had been appointed during the first twelve months, the task being shared amongst three lead (cluster) coordinators. Albert, the present incumbent was appointed at the beginning of the second year. Betty, becoming City L’s SC six months into the project, like Albert, had had no involvement in establishing plans or in their introduction, but Albert believed that all that had been demanded of City M, by DfES had now been actioned. Likewise, Betty was satisfied that the requirements placed on the City SC to put in place the plans for the GaT within City L had been met. However, neither Albert nor Betty were complacent about the effectiveness of the plans.

In effect both SCs, Albert and Betty, believed that the EiC policy directives to which they were subject had been put into place. These policies required them to ensure that:

- All secondary schools had a school GaT coordinator, and that having delineated school clusters that they too had such coordinators (lead coordinators) and that with their monitoring sufficient time was given to such coordinators to do their work.
- The Oxford Brookes University, ‘National Coordinator Training Programme’ was undertaken by their coordinators.
- All secondary schools identified the 10 per cent cohort of pupils to be designated as GaT.

- Schools developed a whole-school policy appertaining to the education of the GaT but they themselves were required through LC's, to oversee and monitor the development of teaching/learning programmes in the mainstream work of the school, in study support and work outside normal school hours.

Whilst there was unanimity between Albert and Betty about what each was required to do and what they were responsible for, there was some difference in the level of satisfaction expressed by each as to the success of their efforts. Additionally, difficulties in implementing the practicalities of the policies on the ground were apparent from some of the responses of the coordinators questioned. Albert's comment;

**...all of those things (listed above) have basically been done, but where there are problems is actually in the workings of those operations,**

spoke not only for his own view but also for those of both Clair and David, his two lead/cluster coordinators, one of whom, Clair, had only recently relinquished a school coordinator role within the same cluster.

It is to the four areas of:

- Coordinators
- Training
- Cohort identification, and
- Whole-school policy

that attention is now drawn.

### Coordinator roles

Albert was concerned about the difficulty in ensuring that all coordinators were being given the time to do the job, as some were clearly not being afforded that necessity by the schools. Further, he was concerned with the turbulence and loss of continuity resulting from the movement of coordinators in and out of position. Betty also indicated that in some of her schools the coordinators were not being allowed sacrosanct time to carry out their duties, contrary to the directives which demanded one day 'off-timetable' per week.

Cluster/lead coordinators by the nature of their role are concerned with across cluster initiatives and with monitoring in schools other than the one in which they are personally based. The practical response to this requirement is dependent on the

attitude of individual headteachers to those outside their direct jurisdiction having a pertinent input into the running of their schools.

Clair felt she was a welcome participant in her cluster schools having initiated the policies, frameworks and schemes of work and monitored them across three schools, being a member of the SMT in one school, but Edward felt that his role was an ambiguous one,

**This was a bone of contention. The headmistress of [School X] did not want me in the chain of command ... she would have no control over me.**

i.e. At least one Head disputed his role as an advisor or support and resented and refused to tolerate any direct input from him, whilst Betty, his SC on being questioned about her power to insist on a specific status for coordinators within the city schools said: **'I wouldn't have the power. I think it's very difficult....'** Effectively this made Edward's monitoring and initiating role within that specific school within his cluster impossible to do.

An aspect of the Oxford Brookes Training is a 'face-to-face' day and it was as a result of attendance at such a day that Edward could say: **'I came across this huge wave of dissatisfaction'**, when referring to the anecdotal comments of fellow delegates on the inadequacies of their experience as coordinators with regard to their being **'dumped in without the time, financial allowance or anything'**.

The requirement to initiate the EiC policy programme in an exceedingly short time was a recurrent theme raised in the interviews held in both the City areas visited. Edward claimed that:

**No information came out at all to any of the appointed coordinators. There was no information available for my job, including job description...not even in the September.**

All believed that the Government initiative had been rushed through without adequate warning or time for considered thought and preparation. In consequence a re-evaluation of many of the initial procedures was being considered and many were now undertaken.

## Coordinator training

The inadequacy of the time warning between the announcement that EiC was being introduced and the start of the programme inevitably meant that the imperative for all coordinators to undergo prior training was a practical impossibility for most coordinators, some of whom had yet to be appointed.

Albert also questioned the quality of the training on offer to coordinators. He comments:

**The uptake in City M of the Oxford Brookes National Coordinators' Training programme has been quite low and there has been a lot of misgivings about the quality of the training courses .... very little of what I have attended [training] has helped me to do my job.**

As in City M, the number of coordinators in City L, having undergone the Oxford Brookes training, was as low as a half, but according to Betty, the intention was for the other half to complete the training during the current year. A spokesperson for the Oxford Brookes Training Course intimated to the author that in his opinion delegates to the EiC training were looking for

**'tips for teachers' rather than understanding and a conceptual framework, a process they were and had resisted and that the delegates were to some extent conscripts.**

However, under their own volition and not that of the DfES as stakeholders, a process of evaluation of the EiC training (not of EiC) had been initiated and was on-going at present.

## Identification of the cohorts

Clair highlighted the facts that in the original documentation, the DfES guideline amounted to a one line definition for gifted pupils with no reference to talent: gifted pupils showed academic potential, but in subsequent documentation, somewhat surreptitiously, the term talented was introduced. Such pupils were those who showed ability or potential in sport or the creative arts and were now to be included as an integral part of the original 10 per cent cohort.

The identification of a 10 per cent cohort of pupils deemed to be GaT in each and every school within a cluster with lists of their names drawn up and published had in some cases been resisted to the extent that they were not overtly published. A number of teachers in both Cities regarded such identification as *élitist* and to be resisted, but after the exertion of administrative pressure such identification was taking place. Using somewhat similar identifying measures as the basis of identification the required balance of about three to two of gifted to talented pupils was being generally adhered to in both EiC city areas.

Clair outlined the identification procedure adopted in City M. Gifted pupils were identified by using data from primary schools, cognitive ability test (CATS) results, yearly examination results, Year Head assessments, and subject teacher recommendations all had their part to play. However, she claimed that she knew some teachers: **'who never do** [nominate pupils]', but in her view subject teacher recommendations in their own subject area were **'very, very good and reliable'**. Talented pupil identification took many forms, PE and art were subject areas in which a specific talent may become easily identified, but talent related to dance and/or drama may only become apparent and identified as a result of a pupil audit. In such an audit children are asked to indicate themselves anything they take part in, or have an interest in outside school. Parental input as to a pupil's specific talent also had a part to play in identification procedures.

Edward outlined their identification process. For the identification of the gifted, SATS results at Key Stage 2 were available. However, to his mind, they were inconsistent. He preferred to rely more on CATS testing, regarding them as valuable in assessing the potential of under achievers. Faculties also carried out their own testing, but he placed great store by teacher recommendations, which often relied on **'...a gut feeling that this pupil is in need of it** [being placed in the selected cohort]'. He did, however, stress that no one identifier was by itself reliable and that one had to: **'have a broad based system which takes a little from everywhere'**. Some talent identification problems caused concern in boys' schools: dance, because of the prevailing culture norms which regarded it as **'...not macho and cool'** was a case in point.

In both city areas visited because of the concern felt that by selecting a 10 per cent cohort of pupils one was denying to others what might be of benefit to them, there had developed a somewhat flexible approach to the identification process. David had chosen to run subsidiary subject lists although it was not decided policy. He acknowledged that:

**...some of the teaching staff haven't come on board fully-they've regarded it and still do as *élitist*. The way we have tried to overcome that was just to talk about, giving each child, allowing each child to reach its potential, within the comprehensive ... but there is still a difficulty with some people to interpret a word which still seems to them an *élitist* term.**

Edward had convinced his SC to adopt a city wide approach by including in a shadow cohort other pupils who were allowed/encouraged to participate in the activities on offer.

The question of whether to inform parents and/or pupils as to whom had been selected and classified as GaT had given and was still giving rise to concern as to the desirability of such action.

Edward, recognising the political nuances of the question, maintained that schools in City L

**...had taken on different lines now as to how they allow children to know. The cohort list is available but to what extent they flag it up as being available is variable. So it is a tricky one but the DfES and OFSTED have said that parents and kids should know.**

In City M, Clair saw the topic as

**...a bone of contention ... because originally we were told not to inform the parents, ... then we were told to inform parents and pupils...so each school has found its own way through. So when we've looked to get information to parents we're not saying a child is on the register any more than we say your child is on the SEN register. We would say your child can benefit from this particular division or being involved in this kind of activity.**

The requirement to identify a cohort for special treatment caused concern and opposition and raised difficulties for the coordinators, which ran through the evidence gathered in the two EiC City areas. An intriguing aspect was one highlighted by David in City M who said:

**...I think, if there was a reluctance amongst staff to do anything with it, apart from regarding it as *élitist*, [it was because] there was a reluctance for people to identify children as GaT because they didn't think they were, they thought they had to be a Mozart ... to be within that cohort. ... Children of this area don't achieve—that's an inner thought.**

Such an approach might, in a curious way, reflect an arrogant assertion of élitism by inferring that an inner-city child could not be so endowed.

Betty drew attention to a DfES requirement that the cohorts

**should be as far as possible representative of the main social background. ... this is an issue. ... in one school we have some very high achievers and we very much like to ensure they all get included in the cohort but if they do that they will have a socially unbalanced cohort. ... so a much bigger proportion of your student body is in the studies activity, sport and after school ... than the original 10 per cent.**

Because the strict adherence to a 10 per cent cohort is not generally regarded as in the best interests of their pupils, a rather liberal interpretation of the regulations has developed in both cities. More pupils are allowed to partake in the activities arranged than officially designed for: flexibility of interpretation being paramount.

### Whole school policy

The need for schools to have, with the backing of the governors, a ‘whole school’ policy for the education of the GaT is an EiC requirement. This, as Albert stated involves:

**...looking at teaching/learning programmes for those students (which is basically what goes on in a normal school day for those students)and also at the study support (which is work outside of normal school hours) ... [so] developing a whole school policy ... agreed by departments etc.**

### To him

**...the real issue is about engaging people across the school to get involved. ... one intention is about raising academic standards and to me I think [my city's] big problem is academic standards rather than the fact that its talented youngsters aren't moving on. They've still managed on the whole to find a route through. ... whatever your ability you should be able to move on, but I don't think that is the case.... I think the High Schools' academic standards have to rise in order to meet any of these things.**

Whilst not overtly stated to be the policy of EiC, target setting with regard to GCSE grades has apparently become an inevitable local requirement in both Cities and, from anecdotal accounts elsewhere in the country.

Albert in recounting:

**We're also set targets, ... for development in A to C grades, A, A\* grades etc. and there are also school level target areas within departments within schools,**

raised no apparent hostility or disapproval of this requirement in him.

David saw it as:

**...the big issue for us at the minute ... coordinating the efforts of three schools ... we are involved for example in setting in motion our answer to the A to A\* targets for the schools, Key Stage 3 scores etc ... we are working on a combined cluster action plan to get all the schools moving forward in terms of academic achievement for those kids.**

The reaction of Edward was somewhat different. From his face-to-face meeting at Oxford Brookes with coordinators from across EiC areas, anecdotal accounts of what was expected concerned him.

**...I was unhappy, ... some saw this as a straightforward way of improving 'A style grades', and this worried me, because that seemed to me to be a by-product almost of what the initiative was about.**

The disquiet amongst school-based coordinators as to the difficulty of performing their roles raises the spectre of what an appropriate whole school policy should be with regard to their status.

Only in one instance, which Clair acknowledged was rather unique, were any of the coordinators in City M members of SMT and in her case she had no teaching role and was allowed three days a week to engage in her cluster (lead) coordinator activities. All colleague school coordinators were to receive two scale points and one day per week off time-table.

In City L the school coordinators were similarly relieved of teaching but were to be allotted three points and were to undertake no other responsibilities for three years. Assured by Edward that these were national rules that had not been followed nationally nor in City L, he recounted anecdotal evidence that in some areas Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs) were being appointed coordinators and that some were neither receiving points nor the intended time to do their duties.

On reflection the ideal status for a school coordinator according to the SCs asked, was up to Assistant Head Teacher level with representation on the SMT, but according to Edward, an LC, it should be **‘say second in Department which should give him some authority’**. However, both Clair and David favoured a much more senior status for school coordinators reflecting the position of the SC’s view that membership of SMT at Deputy or Assistant Head level would give the enhanced status needed to allow their influence to be brought to bear on GaT issues.

Whilst the author was visiting City M, the trappings of an enhanced status of the SC were much in evidence. Backed by a staff, he had the resources to flourish. In City L the lone SC had a desk in a communal office with no administrative help whatsoever. Whether such apparent differences in accorded status to the SCs implied a difference in their ability to influence their superiors was an area of conversation the author felt better to avoid. However, it was interesting to note that in City M only two points were awarded to their school coordinators whilst in City L three points were available, in inverse relation to the apparent status of the SCs in each city.

## **2. Research Question 2.**

**‘What practical management decisions and actions have been, or are being, taken to effect the:**

- (a) Policy pronouncements made in EiC, at City level, and**
- (b) Policy direction emanating from the City by the School/College GaT Coordinator?’**

The policy pronouncements emanating from DfES as EiC requirements, demanded of its agent, the City education authority, the appropriate managerial decisions and actions. The response to such demands during the inauguration period, in appointing staff, organising staff training and in financial matters being some of the main ones are illustrated below.

### **The inauguration period**

The *raison d’être* for setting the scene in which the EiC initiative began is that it should help make an objective understanding of the managerial decisions and actions taken possible.

The EiC initiative was first brought into play in September 1999, with a few weeks warning time. City M was one of the Phase 1 areas whilst City L came on stream in Phase 2, i.e. September 2000. Thus at the time of the interviews, City M

had been involved for approximately two and a half years in the EiC programme, whilst City L had one and a half year's involvement.

The policies emanating from within the EiC initiative demanded certain City based managerial decisions, which would have demanded immediate action. Unfortunately, the author had no access to a SC who had been in post at the relevant start time in either City.

Albert, had been in post approximately six months i.e. he joined two years into the programme, and was the present strand coordinator for the EiC GaT 11 to 16 age group. He was currently also filling a similar role within the EC initiative for 16 to 19 year-olds. His superior's present appointment had been created by splitting up his previous all encompassing solo role into his own new overall position and two assistant strand coordinators of which Albert was one, and another, who was involved in primary school GaT initiatives.

Effectively the work of the SC, prior to Albert's appointment had been done as a shared task between lead (cluster) coordinators. Thus the directive to have in place a SC, whose sole responsibility would be to work within EiC was obviously not being adhered to in City M either initially or since Albert's appointment.

Betty, the SC in City L, was appointed after six months into the initiative and had, therefore, been in post approximately one year. She was the first holder of her office as no appointment had previously been made. As a consequence, the setting-up of the EiC organisation was undertaken in an *ad hoc* manner by two consecutive predecessors from the city's own education personnel. Again it would appear that as in City M the intended managerial and administrative arrangements underpinning the policy emanating from the DfES were not being followed at City level.

For reasons explained above, the only contemporary evidence data appertaining to the embryonic beginnings of EiC in the two cities available to the author was from Edward, a cluster coordinator in City L, (who had been in post from the very start of Phase 2) and Clair in City M. She was at present a cluster (lead) coordinator but who had been from the start a school coordinator in the city.

Information about the Cities' initial managerial response to the call of EiC policy directives gives an indication as to the urgency, efficiency and attitude of those charged with its implementation. Edward recalls the rather haphazard way that an initial first invitation was made by the city education authorities to the secondary school heads to attend a meeting about the EiC initiative. Not all invited

headteachers attended: the time warning for the meeting was short and it was to be held at a busy and inconvenient time i.e. towards the end of the Summer term.

**...the Heads met at a meeting to be told that the bid [for EiC] had been accepted and that EiC status had been granted ... Heads sent as many or as few or none at all representatives to the meeting as they didn't realise what was going to go on there. ... Our school actually went---the entire SMT ... at the meeting the LEA representatives turned round and said ... we need a school that's prepared to stand within the sixteen schools as the lead school for GaT. Our Head said straight away that he would do GaT. ... so therefore the Heads that weren't there weren't in a position to bid for that and were later very angry about that. ... It has to be said that the EiC thing was brought in very, very hurriedly at the end of the school year. ... The initial bids that the heads were asked to write was done before that ... When the bid was accepted, the actual putting in place of the mechanism to run it by September was ridiculously short.**

From little acorns mighty oaks grow is an adage that might apply to the organisational growth in the administration of City M's EiC programme. From a one-man-band at the start, the SC's role for the city is now a three man team. Clair indicates the ambiance of the initial period as she recounts:

**The directives came and they needed to be done yesterday, as it were. Basically there were various people who had become partnership coordinators who were passing them [the directives] on to us. ... Then because things moved on so**

**quickly, six of us lead coordinators took on the role of being "Albert" for a year in order to try and put strategy into the process in City M, whilst [the then overall person] concentrated on the learning mentor side of the primary inclusion. We were not the head, we were not the strategy group [but] we tried to put some order into GaT.**

From the tone of the recollections that two people had of the initial stages in which EiC was launched, whether in Phase 1 or Phase 2 in two different city locations, the unspoken but underlying impression is one of managerial ineptitude by those charged at city level with the implementation of DfES EiC policy. Haphazard, rushed and inadequately thought-out procedures were instituted and to some extent chaos seemed to flourish.

However, a detached assessment of what appertained at the time might lay most of the blame for what happened elsewhere. Any initiative of the magnitude of EiC needs time, time for thought, time for drawing up plans, time to appoint staff, and time to re-educate the attitudes of the teachers who were to put in place such a radical change of approach to that which appertained heretofore.

No such time allocation was possible due to the speed with which the EiC initiative was launched. It would be surprising if any other impression of local managerial competences could have been gained to the one drawn by the interviewees quoted.

### Staff Appointments

The very existence in both cities of strand and cluster coordinators is an indication that the cardinal practical management decisions to appoint such people have been taken. However, Edward made plain that:

**No information came out at all to any of the appointed coordinators. ... Even at the beginning of September some of the coordinators had not been appointed.**

Clair, when listing her responsibilities, disclosed that her allotted task was much wider than one would have expected of someone primarily employed as a lead coordinator for the GaT strand of EiC based in one of the schools within the cluster. The explanation lay in the fact that she was involved in:

**all the strands of EiC, a small EAZ, a learning centre, Beacon Schools, and in a specialist role in one Beacon School.**

The managerial actions involved in appointing staff to carry out their duties appeared not to have been expediently carried out in City L, and in City M had possibly diluted the direct impact of the lead coordinator by widening her remit. The effect was to reduce the time at her disposal for GaT tasks and this removed her from day to day contact with teacher colleagues undertaking the teaching task.

The criticism of managerial competences lies in the time it took to appoint some of the staff, the breadth of their remit and in the lack of clarity in what they were required to do.

Noting the difference in the trappings of office between the SC in City M and the one in City L the author has already commented on the apparent status afforded to the SC's, by their employers. The practical implications for Betty in City L would be that without clerical help, without the peace afforded by having one's own space, the task of leading and thinking about the initiative must be considerably more difficult than it need be. It might also be an indication of the relative importance of the initiative and her role in it, in the concepts of her superiors and in the level of their support for the initiative.

**No, I do not have my own cadre of people. I am it. Yes. ...and I use the LEA admin. support. What we are asking for really is for an EiC team.** (Betty, City L).

The ability of a school coordinator to actuate the policy decisions that emanate from DfES or from the SC depends extensively on:

- the resources at his/her disposal both financial and/or personnel,
- the status position accorded to them in the school,
- the time afforded them and needed to prepare and organise the teaching and necessary monitoring,
- the cooperation of the teachers, and
- the ethos of the school towards the education of the GaT .

Whilst the competence of the individual school coordinator will, to a large extent, depend on his/her personal abilities, much will also depend on the managerial decisions taken by others who control his/her working environment.

The school coordinator's ability to influence the choice of staff employed, the amount of the finance available, the time he/she has off time-table and the climate of the school towards the education of the GaT is likely to be minimal. Without the appropriate level of experience and maturity the school coordinator is unlikely to be very influential in his/her allotted task. Much depends on the management decisions taken at school level in appointing suitable staff, the working conditions afforded the school coordinator and hence their ability to function appropriately. The directives cascaded down to the schools from the city SCs as a consequence of the policy initiatives of DfES require the support and commitment of the schools for their supportive interpretation.

The financial reward afforded to the appointee, their power status and the degree of support offered by the Head may, in effect, be the determining factors in the success or failure to fructify the policy decisions.

Clair, made clear:

**I am at senior management level and therefore what I say has to be done. Whereas some school coordinators who are basic teachers with extra responsibility would not be able to go in and say, 'I am not happy with what I see.'**

Edward when asked about the channelling of finances in schools opined:

**It was [channelled properly] initially. I mean by that in terms of the wages bill ... the schools have had the money to pay for that member of staff ... and to have a day off time-table. ... [but] that has been unevenly applied in City L, but not as badly as elsewhere ... the worry there is 'where in the school has that money gone,' ... for instance for an NQT to have a lesson off per week.**

He further intimated that the support he received from the SMT was to say the very least variable. An invitation to a Deputy Head to attend a training session in progress in his school to show solidarity and interest in the education of the GaT had been refused on what appeared rather nebulous grounds<sup>52</sup>.

The question of leadership qualities as illuminated by managerial action and commitment level by a school's SMT are to be seen as essential to the ability of school coordinators to raise the level of awareness of the importance of this initiative for the education of the GaT in the life of the mainstream activity of the school.

### Staff training

The managerial requirement to oversee the DfES prescribed coordinator training is an ongoing requirement and as indicated in the comments recorded in the answers to Research Question 1<sup>53</sup> above has to a certain extent resulted in a partial take-up of what is provided by Oxford Brookes University.

The practical arrangements needed to train teachers in subject specialist areas on how to teach in such a way that the needs of the GaT in mainstream classes are

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<sup>52</sup> p. 114 refers

<sup>53</sup> p. 92

properly met have, as will be revealed, been somewhat inadequate or even non-existent.

Albert, confirmed that: **'...the uptake in City M of the National Training Programme has been quite low'** whilst Betty, stated she **'had financed the supply covers for approximately half the cluster and school coordinators to attend'**.

Additionally, she had organised and financed central network days and was in the process of organising workshops for groups of subject staff. From within the City, both the strand and cluster coordinators had been on a training programme organised jointly by the LEA and DfES. Edward recalls:

**We went away and looked at Australia. ... ten days, a week in the holidays. ... In Adelaide they have a chap called [James] who is well versed in the introduction of high order thinking skills in schools. We came back with various books that he'd outlined. ... He led us to believe that INSET for the staff would be beneficial. ... I found him very useful, so I set my cluster [on to it].**

The OFSTED report (December 2001, *op. cit.* 44) highlighted a need for the:

**professional development that increases teacher's confidence and capability in designing classroom practice with GaT pupils in mind.**

Within neither City did the author find that any subject teacher had had such help, training or guidance. That such a need might be necessary appeared to be conceded by an answer given by David:

**We did have some sessions on that earlier in the initiative within the city but actually to get the numbers of teachers who could be released to attend, --- that was minimal. ... So [I am] looking to effect, as you were saying, training subject staff, --- that's the sort of training I would like to see put in place. ...**

Similarly, Clair vouched that no money had been spent in actually training specialist subject teachers in how to deal with teaching their subject in such a way as to meet the desired criteria.

**We haven't been able to do [that] because we haven't been able to release anyone. We wanted to, but unfortunately, it didn't happen because of the fact of staff cover and absence we couldn't. ... Every department has a link person and I**

**meet regularly with that link person and we look at strategies that are being used in that department and sharing practice in that way.**(Clair in City M).

Additionally she said such training could not have taken place on ‘training days’, as all such days had been taken up for literacy and numeracy training.

The financial funding appeared to have been available, but two and a half years into the initiative no managerial decisions or actions had been taken in City M at either SC level or cluster coordinator level to initiate such training. This unhappy state of affairs also prevailed in City L after one and a half years into the initiative.

### Cohort identification

The edict to identify GaT pupils having gone out from the SCs, or whoever was in charge at the time of the inauguration of the initiative, was heard with somewhat deaf ears at some schools. The initial reluctance to identify GaT pupils was apparently attributable to an anathema on the part of some teachers to pander to what they regarded as an *élitist* concept: **‘To begin with yes, a significant number, but less now’** (Clair), **‘...a very small minority of staff [now]’** (David)

Such opposition has now been largely overcome and in principle appears no longer to be an issue. The managerial action needed to achieve such a change was attributed by David thus:

**That’s been a bone of contention within the schools about identifying pupils, ... that’s why it is necessary, if its going to work properly, [that] schools do need to have that internal discussion about what is a GaT pupil, who’s in the cohort, and who isn’t.**

However, if the requirement to identify a 10 per cent cohort of GaT has been met, it does not necessarily guarantee that its membership has been correctly identified. The OFSTED Report (2001, *op. cit.* 44) indicates the importance of a need for an effective school to **‘work on developing assessment within subjects so that teachers become more adept at recognising latent high ability’**.

Acknowledging that in City M the appointed SC had initially received some training in how to identify the gifted pupils, Clair commented: **‘...but we do have worries, we’re not happy with the idea of identification being purely academic and frequently changed’** and her colleague, David added: **‘I’ve no training at all, No’**.

The identification criteria for all the schools in City L, other than those laid down as the ground rules by DfES were arrived at in concert by the newly appointed

school coordinators and the original stand-in City staff. Betty, the present SC, said that the resulting agreement with the schools was that they would use CATS and also use their own tests. Edward's account of the *actualité* in the city schools confirms that the agreed policy for the procedure to be followed has effectively been managed successfully.

The policy directive emanating from DfES governing the composition of the cohort (and the amount of finance available) was quite explicit. Betty made the position clear: '**...DfES you know, have been quite firm about [it] ...as far as possible [they must be] representative of the main social background**' and Edward, in his exposition said: '**the Government wants the free school meal aspect and ethnicity used as criteria**'. Betty believes that: '**... hand on heart I could say all my schools have done a very good analysis of this. ... on the whole coordinators haven't had a problem balancing their cohorts**' but Edward, a cluster coordinator in the same city, claimed:

**that's caused consternation because in reality the ethnic make-up of the school, (which we are told should be reflected exactly), affects the percentage of ethnic/free meals pupils in the 10 per cent cohort.**

The difference of view between the SC and one of her lead coordinators as to the difficulty or lack of it in trying to follow the DfES edict in this regard had been ameliorated somewhat by a policy decision taken by the schools in City L to have shadow cohorts.

Betty made clear that a new action plan was being introduced that by having shadow cohorts in addition to the focussed '10 per cent' cohort one could run a 'quality event' to include additional identified pupils rather than just the small numbers in the focussed group. She claimed that this was being done without effectively reducing the amount of money that should be directed towards the focussed group.

This imaginative and constructive approach is an example of how the difficulties associated with actuating a policy can, with an appropriate managerial initiative by a leader, be ameliorated, and in this case lessened the disquiet in the teachers involved in the identification process.

## Finance

One thing that surprised the interviewer in his conversations with strand and cluster coordinators was that none of them had any knowledge of the total finance budget for the schools in their sphere of concern. No-one was *au fait* with the basis on which the money for the initiative was allocated. Although they were aware of the amount of money at their disposal within the EiC initiative, they did not have any conception of what percentage of the relevant budget their allocation of money was

The City education authorities were the channels through which EiC initiative allocated money was made available to the City SC and to the heads at the schools. Betty was uncertain of the precise details but said:

**What I do know very firmly is that on the whole each school [sixteen schools] gets somewhere around £20,000 ... what you have to know as well, [is that] I keep £30,000 for the centre, so I keep a very small sum really to provide the training.**

**Can I just throw in a little bit of a complication into that? The funding comes in, £30,000 remains with me, the rest is delegated to schools. ... 60 per cent of what is delegated to any school is then called 'cluster pot', ... the smaller clusters**

**[three schools each ] have about £50,000 and the larger clusters [five schools each] have about £80,000.**

Edward, one of Betty's smaller cluster coordinators, however, stated that; '**his budget allowance was £40,000,**' which shows a 25 per cent difference to what the centre claimed was his allowance.

Albert in confirming that the city had twenty three schools, each receiving a share of £988,000 and with a central budget of £52,000, also confirmed that the money came from London to him, which he then distributed to the schools and said the amount

**...is dependent on free meal numbers, on [the number of] pupils attending the school on free school meals as a proportion and that's how the money is allocated. Some schools would have a greater proportion than others.**

Both Clair and David, cluster coordinators in the same city quoted their schools allocations as:

**£51,000**, [in Clair's school], **over £41,000 in one school and over £43,000** [in the other school in Clair's three school cluster], whilst David's schools received **£43,000, £51,000 and £39,000**.

The total money allocated to City M amounted to £1,040,000 to cover the expenses of the EiC initiative in twenty three schools i.e approx. £45,000 per school whilst it would seem that the total money allocated to City L was approximately £830,000 for sixteen schools i.e. £52,000 per school. No detailed knowledge of the basis on which the allocation of funds is made at DfES, apparently exists at either City or school level but there is a difference in the size of the allocated money of approximately £7000 per school in the two cities. No managerial questioning of the *raison d'être* for the basis on which its allocation was made appeared to have occurred in either City.

It should not be presumed, without evidence, that the level of social deprivation must be greater in City L than in City M, and/or that the school size must be considerably larger in City L than in City M, but the anecdotal basis on which this initiative is said to be funded is indeed on school size and level of social deprivation. Whether comparative evidence as to the level of social deprivation in the two cities exists is not known to the author, but a knowledge of the size of school populations in both cities will be in the public domain. An indifference to acquiring a full understanding of how one's budget is decided might indicate a less than total commitment to the initiative at the leadership level at City Hall.

The use to which the allocated school funds have been put has varied between cities, but these are scheduled to cover; the cost of one day off time-table per week for the coordinators, the expenses for those attending training, training costs, and the cost of any additional expenditure involved in the initiative.

Whilst Clair in City M said she had '**spent every penny**', Edward in City L acknowledged that :

**I actually spent very little initially out of my £40,000. ... I would be looking to spend a third of my £40,000 on training as a priority in my action plan.**

Betty at the end of the first year carried out an evaluation of

**all the strands of EiC. That actually involved myself and the lead learning mentor and coordinator in pairs visiting all our secondary schools with a checklist which**

**schools had had in advance; looking at some data, looking at the processes and looking at this sort of impact, if any, at that very early stage,**

and Edward, one of the City L cluster coordinators whose Head was so visited, without the presence of the staff, commented:

**It came to a head really when at the end of last year there was awarded a traffic light signal from the strand coordinator. ... Heads didn't realise what the answers [supplied previously] were going to be used for ... certain questions were raised.**

Edward recalled that some schools were awarded a red or amber warning but that his school **'was pretty safe ... one or two things we had not done'**. The take-up of the offer of training he had made in the first year was small **'because there was not enough interest in GaT ... Now I think there is a far greater acknowledgement by staff ...'**

The evaluation exercise carried out in City L revealed the fact that a significant amount of allocated money had not been utilised to provide the training that the initiative demanded in at least one school. This monitoring exercise on the use of financial resources revealed a failure, which has resulted in a revitalised action plan and an intention to use the funds fully in the current year. A question then arises as to why within the management arrangements at the school was not this breach of intention not realised and rectified by the exercise of the normal process of management.

The comments of the interviewees, either directly or by inference and sometimes by innuendo, revealed a range of managerial decisions and actions that resulted from policies emanating from sources above them in the pecking-order in which they were administratively placed. The ones which appeared the most relevant have been thus chosen as illustrations of the actions taken at both City and school level in the areas chosen for discussion.

### **3. Research Question 3**

**'How effective are the management decisions taken in achieving their objectives at**  
**(a) City level, and**  
**(b) School/College level? '**

An objective set should be the determining factor which gives rise to a management decision. Such decisions, if effective, could be expected to instigate the intended measurable or observable benefits and/or consequences, which

experience informs and dictates are more likely to be achieved as a consequence of commensurate preparation and planning.

On the presumption that the effectiveness of management decisions taken as a consequence of an educational initiative's objectives can be assessed, a possible basis for adjudication can be derived from a military metaphor. It is according to their distinguishing features of effectiveness, which also in common appertain as an indication of effectiveness in an educational environment that the management decisions taken at Cities M and L are measured.

The staff at school level, all of whom should be involved in the EiC initiative, can be regarded as the front-line troops in what has been likened to a pseudo military action to bring about in quick time an improving change in the education of the GaT pupils in inner-city secondary schools. Such staff comprise the equivalent soldiery (teachers) with their controlling middle ranking officers (cluster and school coordinators and SMT).

The City SC working in the equivalent of Brigade Headquarters has a parallel role to that of a Brigade Commander, i.e. actuating directives, interpreting the policy emanating from a political and civil service directorate and issuing management directives to their equivalent front-line troops in order to achieve a successful objectives' outcome.

Military troops in action are expected to act so as to achieve the objective set for them by actioning the managerial decisions to which they are subject, and act when necessary on their own initiative to help achieve the aim.

No serious military action is undertaken without, planning, preparation, adequate resources, and training

Final military success is dependant on good morale, good leadership and planning, proper and thorough training, the efficient use of resources at the disposal of the troops, and good luck. For practical humanitarian reasons, a minimum of incidental human harm should be inflicted on those engaged directly or indirectly in the conflict.

In the execution of the EiC GaT initiative, school staffs, like the military but in somewhat different circumstances, are required to action a managerial decision, by identifying a 10 per cent cohort of GaT pupils destined to receive a somewhat different educational experience from their less able peers. Additionally they must engage in an innovative exercise in planning and ultimately execute the front-line task of educating i.e. teaching the chosen cohort of pupils, if the pupils are to benefit from the whole exercise.

As in the military metaphor, similarly in an educational initiative, success is unlikely without the following prerequisites, good and adequate planning, proper preparation, adequate resources, and appropriate training. Additionally a successful educational initiative also depends on, good morale, good leadership and good luck.

The light cast on the effectiveness of the decisions taken under the EiC umbrella in achieving their objectives, by some pertinent comments and responses of the interviewees, is now considered under the above highlighted prerequisites and desirable pervading influences.

### Planning

An essential element of proper planning is the recognition that time is needed if any subsequent directives are to be circulated, resourced and activated. This applies irrespective of whether such directives emanated from DfES or from City or school level.

The *actualité* commented on in a querulous manner by Albert the SC in City M raised the point:

**...often people are pressurised from other things. For example, someone who is given an allocation of time to do a job and then their being asked to do someone else's job through cover or through some other thing that's passed on ... ,**

and might indicate an inadequate assessment of the conditions prevailing at the relevant 'sharp end' of the action.

The timing of the introduction of the EiC initiative at the behest of DfES was commented on by Edward of City L:

**It has to be said that the EiC thing was brought in very very hurriedly at the end of a school year** and he further enlarged on the implication of the importance of time: **... it was a typical City L initiative, 'fire the gun and then aim'. A little unfair but it certainly was a reflection of how they went into the GaT. One major complaint: it was the speed that all cluster co-ordinators [were] thrown in and encouraged to spend with little guidance. I would have loved the opportunity in that [first] summer holiday to have been given some opportunity to be informed as to what Phase 1 schools had done or even to get ahead with Oxford Brooks training.**

The cry from the heart that time is an essential commodity to do a proper job is a recurrent theme at all levels and stages of the initiative, as David recounts: **‘I wish I had more time to go into schools as regularly in order to monitor anything’**. It is not suggested that time is the only aspect of planning that is important, foresight being an essential instrument in the planners’ armoury. Its possession should have foreseen the probable likelihood of antagonism in the teaching profession to the introduction of selection into a hitherto egalitarian philosophy of non-selective education. If such foresight did exist, no meaningful dialogue occurred with the teachers to allay their fear of a charge of élitism. Some teachers were extremely dilatory in actioning the decision directive to identify the 10 per cent cohort.

The inter-dependency of time and foresight are not the only aspects of planning which contribute to its effectiveness, but together they impinge dramatically, either positively or negatively, on the perception that those involved in the execution of the plan have of its effectiveness. Time or rather the lack of it formed a constant refrain in both informal and formal contacts with the interviewees. On the basis of this criteria it would be difficult to claim that the EiC initiative had been successful.

## Preparation

As in the military metaphor, so in an educational initiative, preparation is the key to eventual effectiveness. It includes the aspects of acquiring the necessary material goods and appropriate human resources and the detailed planning, organisation and training to perform the task effectively.

As an exercise which depended on detailed preparation, it was launched with somewhat inadequate definitions, e.g. the term gifted alone appeared as a descriptor of the 10 per cent cohort to be identified with its one-line definition:

**Originally the DfES guideline was one line for gifted pupils which was those pupils showing academic potential, and for talented there was no definition or criteria at all. ... We had to know ourselves how to identify this set. What I did in my school was basically to go to the Head of Department and say ‘you have a gifted child in your department, what would you expect that child to be capable of doing?’ What would you expect? They wrote their own criteria in their own policy and framework. ... What eventually came out from them [DfES] through I can’t remember now which circular it was, was that talented meant those showing potential within Art, Music or Drama. (Clair).**

An essence of successful preparation deals with not only the prevailing conditions but those that present trends indicate might appertain when the planned initiative is launched. The chronic shortage of teachers in specialist subjects has been endemic in England<sup>54</sup> for many years, which short-term palliative initiatives have failed to redress to any significant extent. The EiC GaT initiative would depend for its effectiveness on the availability of such staff and on the training deemed to be needed by those who would be organising and carrying out the teaching. The training of staff in teaching posts implies their relief from classes, which in turn demands the supply of replacements whilst engaged on their own training. In reality such replacement staff proved to be not only prohibitively expensive but also difficult to recruit. Additionally, as school and cluster coordinators were to be relieved of teaching for one day per week an extra demand would be placed on teacher recruitment. Edward, recalls:

**What I hadn't reckoned on was teacher shortages. That has put up the cost of supply. ... [the Agencies] are taking a huge cut. It got to a crunch situation before I sent out a paper to Deputy Heads. The Deputy Head who is in charge of cover, who I go to see is faced with the situation where he can't find cover and its increasing cost. That brought a lot of initiatives to a halt ... because a lot of the initiatives means that lots of Head of Faculty going out of school. Well, that was a negative, in the sense that where we thought we could find opportunities for staff to go for training [they could not now be released].**

## Resources

The EiC initiative for the GaT within the chosen inner-city areas, is designed to improve the education of 10 per cent of the age group, eleven to sixteen years, which in City M covered twenty-three schools in six clusters and in City L, sixteen schools in five clusters. The total extra money made available for both cities amounted to £1,870,000; destined to include not only the cost of the additional staff employed in non teaching roles at both city and school level but also the additional spend on teachers and resources for approximately 4000 pupils, this would amount to an allocation of under £500 per pupil. An alternative interpretation would indicate that the extra allocation of under £50,000 per school per year, if entirely spent on additional teachers is unlikely to support more than one to one and a quarter extra teachers in each school. Thus the extra financial resources made available to try to

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<sup>54</sup> p. 46 refers

overcome the inadequacies in the education of a 10 per cent cohort of inner-city school pupils may not be as generous as many politicians have claimed it to be, nor adequate for its intended purposes. However, as Clair said:

**The one thing that is a definite benefit is the fact of having more money in school to facilitate things for children.**

### Training

As cited previously<sup>55</sup>, the absence of any training, prior to the start of the initiative, and in the perceived inadequacies of the National Training Programme<sup>56</sup> as conveyed in the comments by both Albert and Edward doubts must be cast as to the suitability of the training on offer.

The OFSTED Report (2001, *op. cit.* 4) among its findings stated:

**Training has usually been confined to lead and school coordinators in the first instance and there is a need for local partnerships to make training available to all teachers, especially with regard to subject-specific work.**

and Albert is of the same opinion when he states:

**The way that I see it is, I think, that what is required is subject related training within the context of what goes on in the school day.**

However, Clair in answer to a question confirmed that none had taken place:

**Not within subject areas, no. There has been no specific training of classroom procedure for practising teachers [to enable them] to deal with the difficulties and to train them how to teach their subject in such a way as to meet the criteria required.**

The need for a rethink about what training is required is the central plank in Oxford Brookes University present re-evaluation of its current National Training Programme.

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<sup>55</sup> pp. 92

<sup>56</sup> p. 91

## Leadership, morale, and luck

The military metaphor practically ordains that for management decisions, however well planned, in order to be effective they demand good leadership, from which good morale is derived. Luck, of course, enters into the equation and in modern warfare the reduction of collateral damage is of paramount political and humanitarian concern.

From the opportunities offered to the author to assess the qualities of leadership in the people met in the appointments they occupied, no such judgement is possible. However, an essential attribute of a leader is the ability to chose and/or appoint to a task a person of commensurate status, experience and ability with what he/she is required to achieve on behalf of the leader. The decision nationally to appoint coordinators at the relatively lowly assistant teacher grade with two points and no guaranteed status position in the organisation's hierarchical structure is an indication of how little the appreciation of the coordinator's role must be amongst the decision takers. Additionally, any Head who appointed an NQT to the coordinator's role must be singularly inept in his decision taking role.

**... and there are schools in [City X] where no financial reward is offered. ...classroom observation is fraught with difficulties ... bearing in mind if the coordinator is an NQT who is supposed to be going in there to observe and write down ... (Edward).**

The implication of a lack of leadership in at least one member of a controlling SMT was made by Edward<sup>57</sup> in recalling the lack of interest shown by a Deputy Head in the GaT initiative: he refused on what appeared rather nebulous grounds to attend a training session in progress in his school, thereby missing an opportunity to display leadership and solidarity with his staff.

One undoubted attribute of poor leadership is a consequential malaise and poor morale. From the overwhelming public clamour made in the national press the anecdotal evidence is present for judging that the general morale in the teaching profession is low. Those involved in the EiC initiative are not divorced from rest of the teaching profession and if the general morale is indeed low, they, too, will be within its ambit. The impression that the morale amongst those directly involved in EiC was indeed low came from the comments of Edward reporting on those fellow

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<sup>57</sup> p. 101

coordinators he met at the Oxford Brookes University training course. **'I came across this huge wave of dissatisfaction.'** He also volunteered:

**It's (paperwork) partly coming from DfES requirements which we also have to review, monitor, evaluate and they got bogged down with paperwork to the extent that some (coordinators) have resigned.**

Whilst the coordinators are responsible for overseeing the operation of EiC, it is the ordinary teachers who carry out the teaching and it is their morale which impinges most on the effectiveness of classroom practice.

In all activities involving the personal and professional attributes of those engaged in a leadership role and in a people centred activity inevitably luck will have its part to play in determining the eventual assessment of the effectiveness of the activity. The EiC initiative was launched at an opportune time, a flag ship initiative of the Government, it was unlikely to be cancelled at a following General Election: the ruling party was widely believed to be unassailable. The eventual electoral reality reflected the supposition; the Government was returned to power. The change of SOS at the DfES after the election did not herald a change in policy towards the EiC initiative: its luck continued. The EiC initiative survived the vagaries of political changes and decisions.

Political correctness and humanitarian considerations have an increasing influence on what is permissible in modern military operations. Likewise in a modern democratic society no action which is for the benefit of a minority is considered politically acceptable if it inflicts on the others some harm. In some political quarters such harm is considered to be possible if only as a by-product of giving to one faction of the population an education which is suited to its ability, even if at the same time a different but suitable education is provided for all. On such a basis EiC in its conception must by its nature be harmful and by implication will fall foul of such a charge. The EiC initiative in such political circles stands so accused.

On the basis of such a definition of incidental harm one would need to be assured that a benefit had indeed been obtained by the 10 per cent cohort which was not available to the other 90 per cent of the school population, for such a charge to be substantiated. Possible means by which such an assessment might be made would need to discover if, for example, there had been:

a relative improvement in examination results by the 10 per cent cohort over and above any improvement that might have occurred in the examination results of the majority cadre, or

a relative improvement in the quality of teaching available to the 10 per cent cohort which had not been apparent in the teaching of the others, or

a relatively more beneficial and appropriate educational environment for the small cohort than had been available to the others, or

relatively more resources put at the disposal of the chosen cohort than had been made available for the others.

In the discussions held by the interviewer with the interviewees, some relevant comments quoted below do throw some light which help to form a subjective judgement as to whether any of the above benefits had indeed materialised as consequence of the EiC initiative:

**Heads are looking for enhancing improvements. For me and the faculties certainly there will be some reflection on exam results.** (Edward)

**We can give quite a few examples of academic achievement, for example, from year eleven, we can talk about the uptake of higher education and the involvement of kids in activities they would not otherwise have been involved in etc.** (David).

**Yes. It is a concern** (improving the main stream teaching) **I had from the beginning. This is a 'hot potato' that's been given us. Is it happening in the classroom? – that's where it's really got to happen ... how do you find out? How we are being told to find out is classroom observation. Classroom observation is fraught with difficulties in terms of the time allowed us, but also bearing in mind that ... the Unions are at the moment very edgy about that.** (Edward).

**But in order to evaluate properly, to have the kind of data that's going to prove the difference that a lot of us can see in certain areas but know is not happening in others, to have the hard evidence, it's just not there and I think it will take, you know, a bit more organisation to gather it.** (David).

**I think it's too early to say** (if it has produced better learning or not) **is the answer. I see things happening** (but) **I couldn't say** --- I mean if you're talking about sets of results for instance, we really only have the set of results at the end of the first year and to be honest, an awful lot of the first year wasn't policy identification (but) **I would hope by the end of this year, I would be able to collect data ... well what I have got here** --- I wrote it down here 'largely anecdotal evidence about increased motivation'. ... Yes. It varies from school to school. You know, I think there are schools --- certainly one school I told you about where youngsters are knocking on the door. On the other extreme, there is a school which really struggles to get their youngsters involved. (Betty).

**I can't help but think we're going back to the education system that we had ... [like] the French system where you make division ...** (Clair).

**Yes** (there have been disadvantages). **Yes I think part of the key is to think** (that) **the idea of 10 per cent is over simplistic and I think schools have to find a way of managing that within a range of cohorts and children holding special abilities** (have) **said they obviously felt very comfortable being able to actually say "I really enjoy reading and I hated this book, it was absolute rubbish" and it was acceptable to do, and I think that's really important.** (Betty).

**It's a requirement certainly of the initiative that the money is very tightly focussed on GaT.** (David).

Additionally some quoted comments do give pointers as to whether or not any claim of incidental harm might be justified.

**...a lot of the early criticism to do with the 10 per cent cohort was that some people missed out on some of the things, because there is a grey area on identification. For maybe 3, 4 or 5 percent of those identified, people would not disagree with those being identified as gifted and talented pupils, but then there is a huge grey area where there's not a lot of difference, or it might be between the subjects and things....** (Albert)

The author, however, is not persuaded that necessarily negative benefits accrue to those who are denied something, or even excluded from something, for what is offered may be inappropriate of itself and also the very nature of the recipient may be similarly assessed. It is, however, believed by the author to be immoral to decide to divide the nation's financial cake, collected by taxes from all

the population, to provide a different level of financial resources to one group at the expense of another. On these grounds the EiC initiative is guilty of inflicting harm on the majority of school pupils.

#### 4. Research Question 4

**‘Is the Government’s policy working: to what extent and how might it be amended and improved?’**

The EiC initiative surfaced in 1999 as the Government’s *pièce de résistance* in its continuing attack on the inadequacies, as perceived by it to be, of the educational system to meet the needs of the nation. Its primary concern is today, as it was when the EiC was first launched and encapsulated by the present SOS at the DfES when a Minister in the DfES when she stated that:

**State schools have been told to raise their sights and emulate those in the independent sector which have high expectations of all children.** (Estelle Morris, Schools Standards Minister, cited by Lightfoot, L., 2000).

An echo in a similar sentiment is to be found in what is suspected to be from a different political camp from that of the Government:

**The sad truth is that the government’s schools have failed too many of its pupils.** (Kealey, T., Vice-Chancellor of the University of Buckingham, 2001, *op. cit.* 28).

With the schools within its sights the Government’s chosen weapon to improve their performance (EiC) has as its aims, within a three year period, a desire to:

- **drive up standards in schools in major cities higher and faster to match the standards of excellence found in our best schools.**
- **ensure (*sic*) City parents and children should expect and gain as much from their schools as those anywhere else in the country.**
- **insist that (*sic*) Excellence must be the norm.**

(EiC <http://www>. [accessed 5 June 2001].

It is against these aims that the Government will eventually be judged as to whether or not it has succeeded. It would, however, be unreasonable to hold the Government to account against these aims at an interim period in the initiative and,

even after a period of three years, a definitive judgement is probably difficult to envisage.

## First Aim

**To drive up standards in schools in major cities higher and faster to match the standards of excellence found in our best schools.**

Quantitative data appertaining to standards as measured by examination results to help prove or disprove that the first enumerated aim has been achieved could be available within two years, but examination standards are not necessarily the only measure of desirable standards. However, in the prevailing political, utilitarian and rather philistine climate those measures of standards will, in all probability, be the ones against which performance will be judged. This view is supported by interviewee comments:

**Well, to be perfectly honest I think that over the time scale, --- you are looking now into the summer, ... at the end of three years we should really be able to [know whether the plans are working]. [However,] the fact is that we're not [able to]. ...I'm being honest about the way that it is. But into the end of this year, we should be starting to get a little bit more of a picture but more into the next academic year. So if you were to get me to chuck in a date, I would say 2003. (Albert).**

**I would say another year from now we will actually start to see, at the end of 2003, I think we will actually see all of these areas joining together – the links are there. (David).**

**But in order to evaluate properly, to have the kind of data that's going to prove the difference that a lot of us can see in certain areas but know is not happening in others, [we have] to have the hard evidence, [but] it's just not there and I think it will take, you know a bit more organisation to gather it. (Albert).**

**I don't think it's necessary, just [to have] the hard data and the hard evidence. There has been progress. It has started to work, but we're looking at soft targets, rather than hard targets. The DfES, unfortunately, don't seem to want to take that into consideration, --- but we have made a change in a lot of lifestyles for a lot of these youngsters, we really have opened up areas for them that they would never have dreamt of looking at before. I feel that there has been progress made [but] that we cannot necessarily account for [it] because it's not hard data. (David).**

This first EiC aim to drive up standards faster and higher, so as to match the standards of excellence found in our best schools is an extremely demanding one to achieve, especially in the compass of a three year period. If this criteria of success is to be applied, an analysis of examination results will be the yardstick by which a judgement will be formed. No such data as yet is available: no such judgement is, therefore, demanded.

To suggest that the probable basis for eventual judgement by the Government will be on the basis of examination results does not mean that at this juncture in time other indicators of excellence are inappropriate. Standards of excellence in schools is an all-encompassing concept which includes not only the accomplishments of the pupils but also the standards of achievement and behaviour pattern of the teaching and non-teaching staff.

This paper has already highlighted some interviewee comments intimating the perceived short-comings amongst SMT in their decision roles as exemplified by:

- some inappropriate appointments of coordinators<sup>58</sup>,
- delays in actioning the appointment of some coordinators<sup>59</sup>,
- the non-recognition of a need for a suitable status for some coordinators,<sup>60</sup> and
- a dereliction of a duty of leadership<sup>61</sup>.

Whilst the standard of excellence to be achieved is undeniably associated with the ambience created in schools, it is also crucially linked to the competence of teachers in their primary task of teaching. A judgement as to the competence of teachers in a classroom can be made from a welter of sources of incidental items of information, but such a judgement can only be a partial one. The essential ingredient needed to make such a judgement is a classroom visitation and monitoring exercise by a suitably senior and experienced practitioner of the teacher's teaching. If such monitoring does not take place no reliable and convincing assessment of teacher competence is likely.

**The actual monitoring that has gone on so far has been very limited. Essentially that was down to the fact that there was [only] one coordinator and the lady I told you about before who was the Head here throughout [the time] when basically the role of EiC was not seen as an inspector's role. You didn't**

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<sup>58</sup> p. 101

<sup>59</sup> p. 98

<sup>60</sup> p. 96

<sup>61</sup> p.102

go in and scrutinise everything, --- you just basically saw what's gone on, --- so it was quite superficial to a certain extent There were people who, if they wanted to try and say "everything's great, everything's fine" they could do so and it was OK and, they moved on. ... So specifically [that was the] monitoring at school level, but [now] at this stage we are trying to address the issue. We have started to look at it to a certain extent. (Albert).

**We do classroom observations.** [You do?] **Yes. ...Well we did...**(Clair).

**Classroom observation is fraught with difficulties in terms of the time allowed us.** (Edward).

**I think one of the problems with students in a High School context is that often in teaching situations, for whatever reason, they are sitting there bored out of their skulls because what's going on is not appropriate for them. Being disruptive, [because they are] not having the teaching they should have.**

**I think, in a lot of schools the way that it's pushed, [its] not [being] pushed enough on the academic ... I think the High Schools' academic standards have to rise in order to meet any of these things.** (Albert).

**It's been much easier to make an impact on the add-on bits than making an impact in the normal school day. It has been a weakness. So we've got to focus on what we can do to change the culture in schools and make effective practice [the norm] in the classroom, and make it [classroom practice] improve. So we are looking at the sharing of good practice and in particular focus on the development of the distinct curriculum.** (Albert).

**Yes. Insufficient aspirations for the children that are in front of them. Pre-judging if you like.** (David).

**I was going to say, stereotyping isn't it? Children of this area don't achieve – that's an inner thought....**(Clair ).

**A lot of the monitoring we had last year in a particular school was of the financial arrangements.** (David).

The apparent reluctance of schools to undertake classroom observation and monitoring of classroom performance by teachers teaching, is revealed from the foregoing interviewee comments. If such be the case, it would be cause for concern to those, such as Albert, who from his recent school experience as a Deputy Head concluded that a major cause for concern within schools was to do with the competence of teachers and the suitability of the curriculum for some of the pupils.

To raise standards, a knowledge of the capabilities of the teachers to teach is a prerequisite for those responsible for its control and direction. Excellence in education depends on the competence of those who undertake the teaching. It might be considered a dereliction of duty on the part of those responsible not to take whatever action is needed to ensure such competence.

## Second aim

**To ensure (*sic*) that City parents and children should expect and gain as much from their schools as those anywhere else in the country.**

The likelihood of parents and children gaining as much from their inner-city schools as those from anywhere else in the country by the end of this three-year pilot scheme is an extremely demanding aim to set before the schools. Nevertheless, demanding aims can set before those responsible a challenge that can be the spur to eventual success and no one should demur from such a challenge. Whether such gain has occurred by this time, or will be the consequence by the end of the pilot scheme cannot be assessed by the author from the data collected in this research undertaking. A comparative study of measurable gain by pupils from EiC inner-city schools and from schools outside such areas will be needed.

However, interviewee comments indicating a measure of change in the schools give succour to those who hope that the possibility of more change is likely

**I think one of the little changes that has been is that people have thought a little bit more about even more subjects about setting and not so much a general setting but perhaps a thing of putting GaT pupils into sets and having the rest mixed ability where appropriate.** (Albert).

**It is only a couple of years and a bit into it, but I think that to me the whole aspect of what the GaT thing is all about is – that whatever your ability you should be able to, move on, but I don't think that is the case [now].** (Albert).

**If you were measuring the impact of the initiative as being in terms of the switch in teacher attitude --- because that's been one of the things that certainly I've noticed here, and [I've] tried to intervene with challenging [their, the teachers] idea that the kids aren't good enough, or the kids can't be chosen. Because a lot of it is about not just looking at the children who are already doing well and therefore should be in the 10 per cent [cohort] but looking at the ones who perhaps aren't,**

**and are perhaps disaffected, whatever would need to be brought on as it were.**

(David).

‘Motherhood and apple pie’ and all its connotations is a concept which is unlikely to be contentious in most circles in a democratic enlightened society. Such unanimity of aspirations normally pass unheralded and do not need repetition being a part of the fundamental understandings of society in general. Such concepts are the basis on which our society rejoices. The aspiration that inner-city parents and their children should expect as much from their schools as those elsewhere in the Kingdom is, of course, entirely laudable, if somewhat embarrassing to those who had believed that such an aim was an integral part of the inter-dependence of people of different social classes and different living areas within our democracy. The realisation that such an aim needed to be stated overtly was surprising, as most people would have normally taken it as read.

The expectations that parents have of the educational system will undoubtedly differ between and amongst them. Albert expressed his sentiments thus

**I kind of feel that this whole thing’s success will be measured when people in the City are happy to send their children to the local comprehensive rather than ‘if I’ve got the money I’ll send them to the independent sector, because it’s better’. My whole principle in being involved in education is I don’t think you need to pay for it. It should be down to pure ability. So if you put that in the context of the City, I think for a majority of our High Schools there is a provision for students, particularly of the more able students, but it’s not good enough in that way.**

To Edward, however, the prime concern:

**... is for me to continue to make sure it [GaT] doesn’t jump out at you as a special. It has become about the fairness of the needs of a particular group of people. It’s got to be meshed in – that to me would be the ideal and [it should] become part of the primary and secondary ...**

Surely such an approach can but help to secure in the minds of all that an attempt is being made to make the second aim of EiC a possible reality.

Third aim

**To insist that (*sic*) Excellence must be the norm.**

The insistence that the normative standard expected in all the outcomes of an educational system is one of excellence is unlikely to be achieved if the methods adopted to organise the educational system and the schools themselves are not conducive to such an outcome. Additionally, the resources put at the disposal of the system in the form of material goods and finance coupled with the ability to employ adequate numbers of suitably trained and experienced personnel are all crucially involved if such be the desired outcome of this EiC initiative.

Whilst it is conceded that most of the enumerated elements are not in the gift of either the City or the schools but are within the sphere of influence of the DfES to provide, the schools themselves do have a direct control of what internal organisation they choose to have. They also have a measure of financial flexibility to direct available finance for their own chosen priorities and of paramount importance is their ability to set acceptable standards of behaviour, of educational integrity and of social conscience.

What they do not have, which is in all probability the key to achieving the excellence desired, is a control over the social and material environment in which the school population live, or the cultural mores of many who now reside in the inner-city conurbations.

The practicalities of school organisation do have implications for the effectiveness of the teaching and some consideration is being given to those implications. Quoted earlier<sup>62</sup>, Albert further explained:

**I think one of the little changes that has been is that people have thought a little bit more about even more subjects, about setting and not so much a general setting but perhaps a thing of putting GaT pupils into sets and having the rest mixed ability where appropriate.**

Clair believed that future school organisation should be considering a more flexible approach to provision arrangements:

**It is not so much starting with the main-stream provision [that] we already have but starting with the notion of a child that does come to the school who we know ought to be achieving well. What provision would you want to put in place for that child in order to get the best out of the main stream provision that it can accept? And we are now trying to encourage people within my classrooms to**

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<sup>62</sup> p. 122

think about that at the moment. And [we need to] put in place other strategies for it. So it might be a new timetable which means that some of the classes are taught at a university, some are taught at independent schools, some are taught within their own school, some of it is done at home, some of it is distance learning. What might all that be?---Flexibility of the curriculum. And there is also a strong strand in looking at the co-operation between schools, --- actually at what that might be, because nobody actually knows – we're all trying to work towards that.

Edward also saw that flexibility and enrichment of what was available was a means of enhancing the experience of pupils and of increasing the chances of satisfying the parents with what schools provided.

**Heads are looking for enhancing improvements. For me the effectiveness will be looking at the curriculum. I think the school should have a 'buzz' about it that reflects the fact that there are lots of different things going on: a widening of after-school activities that are not on the curriculum [but are now] as a result of GaT. ... a greater amount of things [are] going on. I think there should be handfuls of out-of-classroom activities, as those reflect the fact that education is a lot of the ideas that teachers have. It's effectiveness [assessed] in terms of me looking at my own programme ... [and asking] is this all that is happening? ... From whose point of view? My satisfaction? Parent satisfaction?**

### Satisfaction level

The extent to which the EiC policies are working is not easy to ascertain but an indication of their relevance and possible success might be the degree to which others involved in the 'education industry' but who are not eligible for the Government's largess might express covetousness or admiration for what is intended and/or achieved.

**'I don't begrudge the cities what they've got because they need it, but we have exactly the same sorts of levels of deprivation.'** (Wilce, H., 2002, 26).

is a cry from the heart from a Head whose school is just outside the EiC boundary.

Suggestions of possible improvements or amendments to the policy, which arose out of the comments of the interviewees, were largely to do with the mechanics of smooth administration.

**The real issue is about engaging people across the school to get involved. In particular developing communication systems. Developing monitoring systems as well as what's going on. What we are desperately short of which isn't here is a City wide-open [system] particularly of data information coming through. We're not in a position to evaluate properly what's gone on because we don't have specifically all of the data that's required. Consolidating the good things that are going on, because a lot of good things have happened, but often they've happened in isolation. People don't know about them.** (Albert).

All the interviewees were intimately involved in an initiative with which they had voluntarily decided to become associated. All had a vested interest in ensuring its success but reservations were expressed about identifying a cohort of the GaT . To have such a reservation might imply a fundamental disagreement with the EiC initiative basic policy, which has at its very centre the concept of identification and differentiation based on the ability of pupils. No such condemnation was explicitly made by any of the interviewees. All made clear that they supported the initiative and made perfectly clear that in no way would they be associated in any way with a policy which they considered to be *élitist*. One may be tempted to suggest that in an attempt to over compensate he '**doth protest too much, methinks**'<sup>63</sup> might be an apt epithet.

**I interpreted and defined it [GaT] myself and if anyone holds a special ability it should be developed and that's also my answer when people say this is *élitist*. Particularly I wouldn't be part of something that I thought was *élitist* in that sense.** (Edward).

**We do have worries. We're not happy with the idea of identification being purely academic.** (Clair).

Whilst all the interviewees had reservations about the concept of identifying cohorts of GaT pupils and/or expressed the view that the mechanics of selection presented problems they were nevertheless in favour of a policy which used identification by ability as a central cog in its machinery. When interviewees were asked if they considered whether an alternative educational system, which organised schools on a selective basis, might be a possible way of ensuring that the GaT were properly cared for, no one supported the idea. Edward had an open mind, seeing some disadvantages in that it might select the obvious able, but he was concerned

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<sup>63</sup> Shakespeare: Hamlet.

that many of the able would not be selected and would slip through the net. In his view it would select the obvious, whilst Clair expressed her view that:

**If you were to go down that road of selection what you have to bear in mind is with maturity children change and develop and that has to be borne in mind as well.**

An aspect of policy which found favour in both Cities, which Edward and David saw as needed, was to ensure a smooth transition between the primary and secondary stages of a child's education.

**We are actually looking at this at the minute as far as secondary level, [but] of course the work of identification [and] the provision is going in at junior school. That's beginning to happen in City M. A lot more primary schools are coming on board but the allocation of finances within the junior schools is another issue because not all the junior schools, if any, have money for GaT. (David).**

**I went to a very interesting meeting as part of the Oxford Brookes [course], an interesting talk about the big gulf [that exists at the time ] of transfer, between the belief at Primary school that all the sorts of efforts they make through junior schools, [are not taken into account], but equally so from the Secondary schools [point of view] as they were equally aghast over the grades they [the primary schools] were giving and therefore there needed to be far more [contact with] level 6 teachers, e.g. Physics teachers in Primary schools. (Edward).**

Whilst the policy of EiC was to advocate and require schools to collaborate with each other in ways that help provide challenging experiences for the pupils, the policy did have problems which Edward recounted as an example of what may be a wider problem.

**It's a particular difficulty that I came across very quickly as a cluster co-ordinator because in trying to set up collaborative activities, the two schools, X and Y because of their situation both have a very similar catchment areas, so we're both successful schools at the top end and we both draw heavily on the wealthiest areas. So the ability range of both those schools is fairly similar except for the difference between boys and girls. School Z is at the top end of a much lower [social] level and there have been problems. This became apparent in collaborative activities where they felt that in their activities, some pupils don't benefit as much as others. And this is a problem and my immediate way round that has been to arrange collaborative, well not collaborative activities but the same activities in three schools so that they don't feel isolated.**

The EiC initiative is as yet in its infancy, but there appears to be hope, optimism and a determination on the part of those involved to make a sea-change possible.

### **5. Research Question 5**

**‘What inferences can be drawn as to the Government’s intentions regarding the future provision for the education of the nation’s more able children?’**

In British political terms increasingly the term ‘future’, denotes the life-time period of a current Government Administration. UK general elections have in recent times tended to occur during the last sixteen months of a possible Administration’s maximum life of five years. The present Government is a year into its second Administration and, therefore, has a probable life expectancy of another two and a half years before the Nation goes to the polls. The EiC initiative was launched in 1999 two years into the present Government’s first Administration and survived into the second largely unscathed and continued to receive the support of the current but different DfES SOS.

The history of recent Government education initiatives has tended to engender massive support, money injection and then in a number of cases followed by a rejection and cancellation; the recent experiment with Education Action Zones (EAZ) illustrated the tendency where they have either been closed or subsumed, in this example into the EiC scheme.

To second guess what any British Government will do when its current people’s remit is finished is to delve into an unknown quantity and to draw conclusions which have little or no basis for certainty. However, if money has been already promised and allocated to a project, that might be taken to indicate some degree of assurance that until that allocation has been used the project will continue.

The EiC GaT strand is only one of the strands that have a bearing on the provision of education with the aim of reviving education in failing city schools, and money for the whole seven strands has been allocated for the current (£200M) and following year (£300M) i.e. until 2004. Albert in referring to the GaT strand in confirmation believed: **‘I think the budget is guaranteed to 2004.’**

The anxiety of the Treasury, and mirrored by the DfES has repercussions on the Cities as Albert continued:

**I mean a review is coming up now and I think there is a little bit of pressure, through the documents that you've probably read from DfES, that building on success 'cos they're getting the same little nudge from the people who give out money, like 'What is happening'? 'We're putting this money away. Where is the benefit? ... Kind of thing.**

What the review will reveal is an unknown quantity, but the financial commitment of the Government is so high that it might be electorally unwise to withdraw financial support and in consequence the initiative might continue to be supported and extended. As Wilce (2002, *op. cit.* 27) opines and questions:

**It is an ambitious agenda for a policy which most agree is bringing much needed benefits to inner-city schools. But the big question is whether there is enough money to go around.**

Beyond expressing a hope that the EiC initiative will continue into the future no one, including the interviewees, outside Government can know if the hope will fructify.

However, what shape the educational provision for the able will take is an object of concern and an area in which legitimate constructive thought can be indulged in. Clair opined:

**I feel that the whole structure of the school day is going to have change in order to deliver what the Government requires of us. If we're looking at the vocational GCSE's for example that are coming in and the whole new set up of 14 to 19 education to deliver, and the present school curriculum and the flexibility where children are educated off-site, where they are working in industry, where there are these links with business it's going to have to change. The ideas of today will not fit in with the working model, so we have to experiment with a couple to have flexibility. Therefore, it will have a knock-on effect and the flexibility not only of pupils but of teachers' time and is going to mean more teacher time in learning a different style of teaching. Universities are already changing in many respects in the wider participation that's taking place, so I feel that there has to be a number of different routes because not every single person can benefit [at present].**

The stated ultimate aim of the Government for widening the access to University education to 50 per cent of the year group must have repercussions on the nature of university education, its purpose and function and/or the raising of the ability level of a much bigger cadre of people from that achieved at present to that

traditionally associated with the much smaller cohort of university entrants. (Woodhead, 2002a, *op. cit.* 137-157). Such a requirement costs money. The Government has decided that the provision of school education will remain as at present based on a comprehensive system, but has been tinkering at the edges with schools that are permitted an element of selection and of some private involvement. What system will eventually materialise finally will probably be, as in the past, a result of a series of *ad hoc* arrangements designed to plug any obvious gaps that appear in the provision and will in the last resort be a consequence of a political decision, which the Government of the day considers politically expedient to encourage and finance.

The views of the ‘operatives’ (strand coordinators) at City level charged with the responsibility of management planning for the execution of the DfES EiC GaT policy initiative, together with those of the GaT coordinators at school/cluster level appointed to manage their implementation in the schools, all have a relevance, but as employees within the system they also have vested interests in the perception, continuance and expansion of the EiC initiative. Such a possibility can not be levelled at independent expert witnesses and it is from their evidence, analysed in the next chapter that ‘triangulation’ of the findings is sought.

## **Chapter 7 The Findings: perceptions of Expert witnesses.**

Two expert witnesses kindly agreed to be interviewed and the mechanics of dealing with the transcripts of their interviews followed a similar pattern to that adopted for the coordinator ones but with the additional intention of contrasting their answers with those of the coordinators in both cities. The knowledge gained so forms the basis of this Chapter. Both witnesses, Ms Belle Wallace and Professor Joan Freeman, chose to allow their evidence to be attributable. As both expert witnesses were chosen deliberately to be persons who were not involved in any way with the organisation or administration of EiC they have no insider knowledge or personal axes to grind but from a perusal of their abbreviated *curricula vitarum* given in Table 7.1, they may be perceived to have a claim to be regarded as expert witnesses.

The author is indebted to both for their interest, their willingness to be interviewed, for the integrity of their views and the wisdom displayed in their opinions.

Adopting a similar approach to that used in the last chapter, expert witnesses' perceptions relevant to each research question (Table 4.1) form the basis of this chapter.

### **1. Research Question 1.**

**'To what extent are the policy decisions for the education of the GaT as outlined in EiC. being implemented at a 'local' level by the:**

- (a) City level manager (SC), and**
- (b) School/College management person (GaT Coordinator)?'**

The implementation of the EiC policy at City and school level as previously seen<sup>64</sup> essentially involves the following four areas: Coordinators, Training, Cohort identification, and Whole-school policy. These areas are now considered.

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<sup>64</sup> p. 90

## Coordinators

It is Wallace's conviction that for an appointed coordinator at either city or school level to be effective and, therefore, in a position to implement any policy directives for which he/she was appointed to do, then the key to any hope for success lies in **two** things: the appropriateness of the status associated with the appointments, and the adequacy of the time the chosen individuals are allowed to perform their tasks.

In Wallace's words:

**Well, let's think first of all what a co-ordinator needs to do. A co-ordinator needs to have sufficient status to:**

- **be able to make recommendations to the Head about the flexibility of organisation and of the structure,**
- **be able to go to a Head of Department and say 'Are you building into your departmental [teaching], problem solving and higher order thinking skills'?**
- **have credibility with other teachers as a Master (quite a lot of co-ordinators are not even middle management let alone senior management). Because I run a help line many [coordinators] are e-mailing me and [saying things like] 'I can't get things moving. ... The Head is not approachable. ... Various Heads of Department don't welcome me into their meetings. or Teachers are not willing to think about [GaT]'.**

**In reality it is a high status influential [job], that the person [appointed] has to have influence on all of those key areas.**

**Some [appointed coordinators] are not experienced and more importantly, [they] don't have the time.**

As Freeman succinctly agreed:

**You can't be low status if you've got to be telling people what to do, you can't, you need some status.**

The extent to which both of these conditions are being satisfied as indicated by the strand and cluster coordinators in both Cities by Albert, Clair, David, Betty and Edward gave a strong indication that neither an appropriate coordinator status was being offered,<sup>65</sup> nor sufficient time to carry out the tasks had been or was being

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<sup>65</sup> pp. 96-97

allocated to the incumbents<sup>66</sup>. Doubt being thus cast on the efficacy of the possible implementation of policy.

## Training

The national training programme for EiC run at Oxford Brookes University required the attendance of all coordinators as a means of ensuring that EiC directives would be undertaken so as to expedite the adherence to the directing policies. The criticisms voiced by those coordinators interviewed by the author, who had attended at Oxford centred around the basic philosophy of the course. The emphasis on theory as opposed to a practical guide to what was required of a coordinator was a major criticism levelled.

The decision by DfES to contract Brookes University to carry out the National Training programme was based in Freeman's view on a premise of the uniqueness of what Oxford Brookes University could do:

**...it was felt, I think, in Government circles that they were the only people who could, whereas there are plenty of teacher training courses all over the country which have enabled children. I don't know why it was only given to this one tiny, tiny [example]. Oxford Brookes have been given this job and they themselves have been training teachers through NACE stationed there. The Government is in a way directive in saying, 'You do this and you do that' but [in the case of] Oxford Brooks it is on its own.**

The lack of appropriate training for subject specialists in how to manage their teaching skills in mainstream education, highlighted by the OFSTED Report (2001, *op. cit.*)<sup>67</sup>, and acknowledged by the interviewees to be an essential missing element in the armoury of practising teachers<sup>68</sup>, is seen by Wallace for what it is: a lack of experience and teacher expertise that has not been provided for at either city or school level:

**... subject teachers need practical training in how to extend their [the pupils] main problem solving and higher order thinking skills. They don't know how to do it largely.**

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<sup>66</sup> pp. 100, 110 refer

<sup>67</sup> p. 103 refers

<sup>68</sup> p. 104 refers

The DfES, (using Oxford Brookes University as its agent for training coordinators) is accountable for the appropriateness, or otherwise, of the course content, and the University is responsible for the adequacy of its administration and teaching methods and standards. However, it is the responsibility of the Cities and schools to organise and provide the required training to enable subject specialist teachers to improve mainstream practice for high-ability pupils; i.e. to gain good information on what is effective in the practice of different subjects. This they have conspicuously failed to do to any meaningful extent.

### Cohort identification

The basic philosophy inherent in the EiC initiative GaT strand depends on the identification of a 10 per cent cohort of such pupils and, although undertaken at the schools by the teachers, has not been universally welcomed as an attractive and desirable thing to do. Moral scruples have been listed by the interviewees at cities M and L as grounds for objecting to what many teachers have regarded as an *élitist* undertaking. The methods used for identification have been based on a combination of CATS, SATS<sup>69</sup>, subject examinations and teacher recommendations thus following DfES guidelines and thus implementing the policy directives.

However, the softening of the edges of the requirement for selecting a 10 per cent cohort has been achieved in both Cities by recourse to flexible devices (e.g. shadow cohorts) thus catering for additional pupil inclusion<sup>70</sup>, incidentally ameliorating teacher objections, and<sup>71</sup> thereby attempting to avoid the overt stressing of labelling and categorisation of pupils. Such procedures should find support in the philosophy expressed by Wallace who opined:

**Labelling and categorising children is not educationally sound, [however] diagnosing children's needs is educationally sound. There is nothing wrong in identifying what children need to improve their learning ... flexible grouping is fine. If we acknowledge [the] strengths and weaknesses [and] support the weaknesses and celebrate the strengths [then] it's fine. What we need to do as an alternative is to give schools greater freedom in some areas of the curriculum and stability in other areas of the curriculum [and] grouping according to need which is better in areas where youngsters who need to go to greater depth than breadth...**

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<sup>69</sup> p.93 refers

<sup>70</sup> p.94 refers

<sup>71</sup> p. 94 refers

However Freeman had a very strong preference for identifying children. When asked:

**‘What do you think about the method of identifying the cohort by a strict percentage, or is there a better way of going about it?’ replied:**

**Yes, definitely [there is] a better way of going about it. I would recommend far more involvement of the children. When you have teacher selection it is inevitably flawed by all the things that teachers are looking for, it’s flawed by stereotyping which I’ve described and it’s not as effective as when the children select themselves as they do in other countries. In fact my attitude to this whole business of giftedness is that if you select in, you select out, so if you take 10 per cent in, you have rejected 90 per cent and within that 90 per cent there are inevitably gifted children and within the 10 per cent that you select, there are inevitably some that are not. i.e. there’s an error and there’s always error when you select and I would far rather have set up something like, for example, a resource centre to which children could go voluntarily, [the sports approach<sup>72</sup>]. I think it’s much cheaper, much more effective and if you give children the opportunity, they come along and they try, and if they don’t like it, they go away but I don’t think you do get swamped by children who can’t keep up. If they can’t keep up they drop out. You set your standard high up. It would be an additional content. How can you take intelligent, competent, keen children and not ask them what they want, or what they’re good at or what they would like to do?**

### Whole-school policy

Not only did the interviewees in both Cities and the OFSTED Report (2001, *op. cit.*) stress the importance of developing an ethos<sup>73</sup> where academic and creative achievement is expected and celebrated, Wallace puts it as a central plank in her assessment of what is needed for the policies of the EiC initiative to fructify;

**What I’m saying across the country is that the first and most important thing is to get the ethos of the school right so that excellence across Gardner’s multiple intelligences<sup>74</sup> is there.**

She further acknowledges that the EiC initiative has merit in that: **‘I think as an awareness raising initiative it’s [EiC] very positive because for the first time many**

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<sup>72</sup> Table 2.12

<sup>73</sup> p. 95 refers

<sup>74</sup> p. 32 refers

**teachers/parents are talking about the needs of their art.'** However, she expressed her reservations thus:

**Yes. In summary, it's a good initiative from the point of view of awareness but it's insufficient. It's not really addressing the seat of the problems. Well, what I'm stressing nationally is that until the Government puts money into pre-school and foundation phase, everything else is tackling the symptoms and not the cause and that intellectual ability and emotional strength is fostered initially in the home situation and it's unfair to expect teachers to be able to deal with all of those problems at a much later stage. Now education for GCSE's alone won't do very much for [the] disadvantaged.**

Freeman on balance approved of the Government's initiative but had certain reservations.

**My major complaint would be that it's piecemeal – that it is not a concerted policy in that schools are not being told quite what to do. They are to some extent being given money and told work something out for yourselves, particularly about who are the GaT in the first place. My major quibble is lack of research. At the very least you can do a 'before' and 'after', at very least, and that isn't being done and what they call assessment is how many kids remain throughout the course, how many turn up on time, will the teachers think or feel it is successful. I don't consider that good enough. You need to do it properly. Before investigation, you need proper control groups and you need to see how your control groups and your pupils who have taken your experimental courses are working at the end. You also need opinions. Without proper structure and research behind the structure you are wasting a lot of money.**

It is the responsibility of the head teacher to decide on the whole-school policy to be adopted for the organisation of classes and pupils within his/her school. Streaming, setting, acceleration, differentiation and mixed ability teaching all find a place in modern school arrangements to a greater or lesser extent. Wallace expressed a condemning view of the mixed ability approach in answer to a question put by the interviewer:

[Interviewer: The practicalities are such, in your view, that it is very difficult to achieve anything in a mixed ability group? That's really what you're saying, isn't it?]

**Yes.**

What we need to do as an alternative is to give schools greater freedom in some areas of the curriculum and stability in other areas of the curriculum, grouping according to need which is better in areas where youngsters who need to go to greater depth than breadth.

Yes. Mixed ability needs longer periods, a vast range of resources that teachers can call on in order to offer differentiation. The content laden nature of curriculum generally doesn't make it easier for teachers to differentiate with regard to in depth mixed ability setting. It ought to be possible to work with some groups at a much lower level and with other groups at a much deeper complex level. You need time and you need expertise. Greater freedom to have flexible organisation and that relates to time.

Unless teachers, either in mixed ability or in a set situation, (because as you said earlier even in a set situation there's mixed ability across a narrower range), unless the teacher is deliberately building in higher order thinking skills, problem solving, opportunities across multiple intelligence, unless the teacher is taking the youngsters off the repetitive work of the national curriculum, then nothing in the main stream is altering. So what needs to happen is that teachers work all towards assessing what learners already know and assessing from that.

The freedom to decide on what particular system of class and pupil organisation places a heavy responsibility on the headteacher and in England such decisions may or may not be taken on entirely pedagogical grounds. Political and ethical considerations may be involved to a greater or lesser degree, but the chosen pattern will have a bearing on the arrangements needed to placate EiC expectations.

The assessment by Wallace that the rightful place to ensure that children have the opportunity to develop their abilities to the full starts at an earlier stage than at secondary level echoes the plea made by the interviewees in both Cities<sup>75</sup>. The EiC GaT strand fails in that regard.

## **2. Research Question 2.**

**'What practical management decisions and actions have been, or are being, taken to effect the:**

- (c) Policy pronouncements made in EiC, at City level, and**
- (d) Policy direction emanating from the City by the School/College GaT Coordinator?'**

The policy pronouncements emanating from DfES as EiC GaT requirements demanded appropriate managerial decisions, most of which can be categorised under the following headings:

- The inauguration period

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<sup>75</sup> p. 127

- Appointing staff
- Staff training
- Finance

### The inauguration period

The EiC initiative announced and launched by the Government at an inopportune time, shortly before the end of the Summer term in 1999 to be up and running by the start of the Autumn Term in September, gave an inadequate time for people to be appointed as strand, lead or school coordinators, let alone any training or teacher preparation. An inevitable time lag occurred between the start date and when any response was possible, which was extremely tardy and incomplete until staffs were eventually appointed. Some unfortunate consequences of a too hasty initial announcement followed by a consequent tardiness were evident from the comments of the strand and lead coordinators in both Cities<sup>76</sup>. These, together with the considered view of Wallace, essentially condemn the DfES for such hasty action which precipitated City and school authorities into uncharted waters.

Edward recalls:

**...it certainly was a reflection of how they went into the GaT. One major complaint, it was the speed that all cluster co-ordinators were thrown in and encouraged to spend with little guidance.**

and Wallace (March 2002) endorses that view in her comments:

**... it's got major limitations and the limitations arise from the speed with which all of this has been implemented and this has resulted in: insufficient teacher training, not enough work with parents and the community as a whole and the social and emotional development of youngsters.**

**Again it's a question of time ... [what] teachers are saying to me is that they need time and re-thinking. What seems to me to be happening is that there's no shortage of money, but there is shortage of time for teachers who are very hard pressed to stand back from the day to day routine and re-think and re-create.**

The timing of the introduction of the EiC initiative was criticised by Freeman as:

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<sup>76</sup> p. 99

Far, far too rushed. I mean the academy was announced within months. It's supposed to be processing something like 900 children this summer. They don't know where their desks are yet. It's all part of the same set-up. Warwick University has been given £20M to set up an academy for gifted youths. They have nobody on their staff whatsoever who has any experience whatsoever in this field. Why has it gone to Warwick? Nobody knows. [Interviewer; To train teachers to do with gifted children?] No. To take gifted children for summer camps, special education but they are associated with other universities.

### Appointing staff

Whilst the appointment of coordinators was a drawn out procedure, with inadequate job descriptions<sup>77</sup> and an uncertainty about their role, the formal status accorded to them is a source of contention and makes for despair and a feeling of inadequacy on the part of the coordinators themselves. Additionally, the shortage of suitably trained and qualified subject specialist teachers is well documented nationally and as reported by Edward<sup>78</sup> has had implications for the release of Heads of Department for training purposes. Wallace encapsulates the predicament that teachers find themselves in:

#### Two points:

- You have to be in a classroom in any inner city to really understand the pressures [on teachers].
- Most professionals don't work with thirty immature children/adolescents. Most professionals work with a group of adults or are in control of whatever situation they are working in which is quite different [to what a teacher experiences].

Now in inner-cities particularly: the problems of indiscipline, anti-social behaviour, lack of motivation, lack of parental involvement, means that those teachers are exhausted, and on top of that, to think creatively and work flexibly takes a tremendous amount of energy.

Most teachers don't have that residue of energy any more. What I'm meeting is exhaustion. Together with that, if you want patterns of behaviour to change in the teaching profession, then they need time. Change can't happen over night. [The] building of the teacher's self concept as an agent [is] what the national curriculum has done. Yes, it [the National Curriculum] gave a framework which was needed but teachers didn't need a straightjacket. What has happened is that teachers have felt they are de-professionalised. They have been required to work within a very tight framework and suddenly to expect them to work creatively

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<sup>77</sup> p.100

<sup>78</sup> p.112

**and flexibly [an EiC requirement] about the curriculum, after years of what is working to a strict technicist framework – the demand is too great.**

She further comments:

**I'm very supportive of teachers, (I've just come back into the Country and I do conferences so I'm looking at the state of British teachers), highly supportive of teachers but I see my role as quite honestly restoring their self-concept and their feeling of ability to make decisions because many of them have said to me how bullied they have felt and how dis-empowered they have felt.**

**The Government has blamed them and criticised them, told them they were inefficient. - They were not. ... I don't really think that's the way that teachers should be treated.**

**Well, what I'm saying is [that] good teachers, if you think of multiple intelligence<sup>79</sup>, some teachers are gifted in the social and emotional intelligences, and therefore are open to grieve in the light of criticism which is the area of their greatest sensitivity.**

**Talking generally, good teachers have always tried to do their best for the children in their care. The fact that society has brought about far greater problems has made the life of the teacher in school extremely difficult, very arduous and very stressful<sup>80</sup>.**

Wallace is also concerned as to the appropriate status of school coordinators:

**Certainly the status has to be Senior Management, but SMT recognised for its good classroom experience also, - up to Senior Management Administration but an expert practitioner, so [that] there's credibility, one from the decision making point of view, and two, from the classroom. I would go as far as to say for example that the co-ordinator needs to know exactly what she or he means by higher order questioning, problem solving thinking skills, and that she or he needs to give a ' This is what I mean...' [type of demonstration].**

The consequences of appointing coordinators with insufficient experience and status to insist on school staffs adhering to the directives for the education of the GaT under the EiC auspices in some Cities may be likened to sending a child to do a man's/woman's job.

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<sup>79</sup> p.32 refer

<sup>80</sup> pp. 110, 114-115

## Staff training

In response to a question as to what training was needed to help teachers identify those pupils who should be regarded as gifted, Wallace opined:

**The first most important thing is to develop teacher awareness [of giftedness], because if you ask most teachers ‘What do they mean by gifted’, they will say ‘Well maybe I’ve met few...’ [If you] ask teachers what they think ‘very able means’, then they will talk about the ‘high achieving’, ‘often conforming’, ‘often neat and tidy [pupils]’, ‘give a task and the child performs....’. What we need to do is to develop teacher awareness that [there are others who are gifted] .... and I think we’ve got to talk about general characteristics and subjects specific. This ties in very much with the multiple intelligences<sup>81</sup>.**

## Finance

Freeman opined about the financial help available to schools:

**It’s very little but if it’s used well, it could be used more effectively. A lot of it goes to waste because people [coordinators] don’t know what they’re doing<sup>82</sup>, and some of them are floundering around because the guidelines given to them are not specific enough about the management of the money that they’ve got. And I think one wants to see results**

To Wallace the totality of the money allocated to EiC was not an issue but rather the use to which that money had been put came in for question. Money spent on add-ons to the curriculum whilst welcome had not added to what she and the OFSTED Report (2001, *op. cit.*) considered to be imperative, i.e. the ability of teachers to identify the GaT and to help subject teachers to extend and modify mainstream teaching.

**The EiC schools that I’ve worked with seem to have the money ... Now what has happened with the money to date [is that it] has largely been [spent on] add on activities [in clusters] ... but even in a main school, one school activity, an add on activity or a weekend activity or holiday activity enriches any child who attends and all children should have access but it doesn’t do anything to extend the main curriculum.**

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<sup>81</sup> p. 32

<sup>82</sup> pp. 102, 110

The management decisions taken to fructify the EiC policies pronouncements in the above chosen areas for discussion all have necessitated schools in changing some of their previous approaches. It is, however, apparent that as in all politically inspired change the one thing that is always missing is the necessary time to allow plans, thoughts and considered deliberation to take place so that the best way of using both human and material resources are realised. The introduction of EiC was no exception.

### **3. Research Question 3**

**‘How effective are the management decisions taken in achieving their objectives at**

**(a) City level, and**

**(b) School/College level? ’**

A cardinal objective of EiC policy is to create a positive perception of city education amongst parents and the wider community hopefully as a consequence of an achieved improvement in standards. Freeman when asked about the appropriateness of the EiC initiative in this regard intimated that it would:

**I think it is actually – yes. I do think it is a very good idea of the Government to start at the most difficult spot which is inner-cities. It would have been relative easy to start in the suburbs but they have taken the bull by the horns and gone for it. It takes a lot of time for the public to know what the Government is actually doing and I don't think they've promoted it terribly well - the EiC, but perhaps all the people who live in the inner-cities are actually aware of what's going on.**

**Yes, I think it's a good idea that it should have started at secondary level. I think that's where the problems are. What this Government seems to me to tend to do is to go, say more superficially, that is tackle the problems at face value, I mean in theory you should start at birth but in fact the problems really arrive at secondary level. It is too late. In a sense they should start earlier but it will move backwards, it will continue earlier but they just wanted, I think, to get the worst of it tackled immediately. Yes, it is too late. No I take that back. It's not too late, it's late, but it's not too late because I believe that if it isn't already having an effect, it will have an effect – a good effect.**

As previously stated and recorded in Chapter 7<sup>83</sup>, Albert believed that:

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<sup>83</sup> p. 123

**this whole thing's success will be measured when people in the City are happy to send their children to the local comprehensive rather than 'if I've got the money I'll send them to the independent sector, because it's better.'**

It was with a similar sentiment that Wallace expressed her answer to a question about the effect of EiC initiative on the perception that people have of inner-city education:

**Parents who could afford to buy education, most of them have always bought it. There are some excellent inner-city schools. I think the best that we can hope for the initiative is to provide children with what they've got but better. [The] independent schools are always going [to be there and parents are] always going to use them if they can afford it and I think that's a reality. [Interviewer: You don't think that this policy is going to have any effect at all in altering that?]. No. I really don't think [that it will]. The best that one could hope for ... (So just to clarify that point) If schools are given a little more time and encouragement then those inner-city schools can improve. They can provide opportunities for more that they can do with their lives. On the other hand if you labelled children to 10 percent against a 90 percent majority, it's got to be handled very carefully. There's the peer group [pressure] and there's the climate of academic hard work and that [difference in] climate is a very real one.**

**What I'm saying across the country is that [the] first and most important thing is to get the ethos of the school right so that excellence across the multiple intelligences is there. Particularly with a boy there is [this need, because a] boy can easily [be influenced by] a peer group. It's a very [real pressure]. If his parents are not supportive either ... . That's why I drew attention to this in the very beginning, the social and emotional needs of disadvantaged, in fact this takes priority. Everything else is far less effective than it could be.**

This last sentiment expressed by Wallace echoes the view held by Anthony Smith, (2001)<sup>84</sup> when he wrote:

**Very able working-class children will come forward [into higher education] in larger numbers only when the level of encouragement provided by family and school improves. Educational deficiency has much more to do with family than with school and begins before the children even reach school.**

**So, improve the cities and streets where children live, ensure that their fathers have jobs, reduce the huge disparities of income in Britain, restore the quality of television, cut off the supply of drugs and reduce the level of social violence. All**

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<sup>84</sup> President of Magdalen College

**that would be a good start.**

In an indirect way both Wallace and Smith are endorsing what was highlighted earlier<sup>85</sup> in the comparison with the military metaphor, i.e. the part played by humanitarian considerations in good morale. The key to helping the disadvantaged to benefit from the EiC policy is to ensure good morale, which is unlikely to prevail if the social conditions in which the disadvantaged live and work are not conducive to education and social improvement.

#### **4. Research Question 4**

**‘Is the Government’s policy working: to what extent and how might it be amended and improved?’**

A key element in the EiC initiative is the directive that schools must be grouped to form clusters. By so doing much benefit, it is believed, may accrue to the participating pupils. Whilst the coordinators in both Cities endorsed that view, the importance of ensuring that the participating schools were geographically close was self evident but also difficulties could arise when the schools were too dissimilar. As recounted earlier<sup>86</sup>, Edward in City L commented:

**It’s a particular difficulty that I came across very quickly as a cluster co-ordinator because in trying to set up collaborative activities, two [of the] schools, because of their situation both have a very similar catchment so we’re both successful schools at the top end and we both draw heavily on the wealthiest areas, we both draw from the same catchment areas so the ability range of both those schools is fairly similar except for the difference between boys and girls. [The third school] is at the top end of a much lower level and there have been problems. This became apparent in collaborative activities where they felt that in their activities, some pupils don’t benefit as much as others.**

Wallace was of a similar view and emphasised the importance of good leadership and of matching the cluster schools:

**Clusters can work if there is good leadership and there isn’t a rivalry [between the schools] to interfere and if the needs of the children are not disparate. I’ve worked with clusters very effectively but [only] when [the] aims of the cluster have been**

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<sup>85</sup> p. 115

<sup>86</sup> p. 127

worked out. Apparently because of the league tables there is enormous competition to developing good clusters. Before, as an advisor ... I would rather work in a cluster, with schools sharing resources and materials and staff expertise and putting on courses that children can opt to go for. That makes the best use of utilising the best of what you have. As you said, where there are differences it's quite difficult, [it] takes a tremendous effort ... It can have strengths if there is good leadership and if the climate for co-operation has been made.

In Freeman's view the advantages accruing from clustering schools far outweighed the disadvantages:

**As far as I know and for all my worldwide research, it is that when you group schools together, you do get more for special programmes for the gifted or special individuals, but isolated they wouldn't have as much clout. Yes, I do. think it's a good idea.** [Interviewer: What may be suitable for one school's 10 per cent, is quite unsuitable for the other school within the cluster because they had a different general level of ability in those two schools and so when they had combined activities, really they didn't succeed. This was a complaint from one of the people that I interviewed] **I could understand the complaint because when you get, you know, in basic psychology, you have an 'in group' and 'out group', which you utilise, we all do, Are you one of us? – Are you not one of us? and this happens within schools. Each school is different, ethos and such. I still approve very much of the grouping because I think to break these barriers is much better and if you are mixing children who are from one school and a better quality population and others from a lower, I think it's very good. I think anything which breaks down barriers in education is better than that which builds up barriers between people.**

Whilst the organisation delineated for much of the add-on element envisaged by EiC relies on the cluster concept, the policy of identification of pupils to form the 10 per cent cohort has had its critics amongst the teachers and coordinators interviewed<sup>87</sup>. Additionally, Wallace adds weight in a somewhat critical view of the concept:

**The second major limitation is that most of the youngsters who have been identified are already relatively [good achievers], I say relatively because I'm talking about a comparison with the peers in a particular school. If you look at their performance on a national grid then they're not highly achieving. Within the peer group and within the school, they are. Now that's good because any support that**

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<sup>87</sup> p.94

**they can have will lift them beyond a very mediocre or below average performance compared with other high achievers. But it's not addressing the needs of chronic under-achievers or the disaffected, or the de-motivated.**

Improvements or amendments to the EiC initiative to satisfy its perceived shortcomings as evinced by the interviewees would need to address the main criticisms that have surfaced throughout this collection of evidence by the author. An overriding theme that has emerged as a major concern is encapsulated by a reply given by Wallace to a question posed by the author.

[Interviewer: There are obviously strengths and weaknesses of this EiC. What else, do you think, if you were advising the Government, and you do, would you press for?]

**To allocate more time to practical. One day spent often, allowing teachers time to plan and prepare yields more than all the paper initiatives that come out. That's what I did and teachers need time.**

[Interviewer: Time, and that means money because time is money, isn't it?]

**Yes, but the ripples that come from giving teachers more time yield much richer results, genuine change then instead of hypothetical. It would have been better spent right at the beginning ...**

[Interviewer: By going to pre-school education?]

**And basing the initiative much earlier. The Government was after a quick result.**

The assessment of the extent to which the EiC policies are working can only be subjective one. As such it relies on qualitative evidence as evinced by the comments and opinions of those involved in it on a day by day basis and by experienced and informed opinion. An interesting comment by Wallace on the relative merit of qualitative as opposed to quantitative data in an appropriate context adds credence to the worth of the qualitative data which forms the basis of this research:

**Well for me it's [qualitative data] more valid because how do you quantify social ease, feeling an internal assessment?--- You put that in a qualitative way by interviewing parents.**

[Interviewer: I don't think politicians think that there is as much credence in qualitative assessment as quantitative.]

**It's because they are after hard facts of money, they think that there isn't any worth.... Whereas Einstein said that 'there are many things that you can measure that are worthless and most things that are worthwhile are immeasurable.'**

The quantitative evidence is not available. The pilot scheme is unfinished, there can be no definitive judgement at this stage. The anecdotal evidence is mixed.

If the agenda for the EiC is educational the quantitative evidence is not yet available. If the agenda is political, then the omens are on the side of it being judged a success: witness the election success in 2001 as an endorsement of Government education policy of which EiC is in the vanguard.

## **5. Research Question 5**

**‘What inferences can be drawn as to the Government’s intentions regarding the future provision for the education of the nation’s more able children?’**

None of the interviewees at City or school level can be in a position to know what the intentions of the Government are regarding future educational provision for the able. However, an inspired assessment of any published intentions and an experience of working directly with DfES and OFSTED puts Freeman in a relatively strong position to second guess DfES intention. In answer to the interviewer’s questioning she intimated that the Government was no longer bound to the comprehensive system and that all the Government initiatives of SS and Beacon schools etc indicated such.

**That’s not what they are doing at all. They’re not actually doing that. Estelle Morris said they’ve got masses of SS. Well, they are self-selected to a large extent, to some extent, but they say they are *not* selective. But if you self-select you get brighter children and ambitious parents. You don’t have to go to a SS if you don’t want to. But that is the way things are going. Magnet schools, SS, CTC, all those things so there is going to be much more variety (and it was Alistair Campbell who talked about ‘bog-standard comprehensives’) comprehensives are not going to be in anymore. Comprehensive in the sense that they are not going to be selected by ability but these schools, some of them, [nevertheless] do have a small amount of selection.**

The degree to which the information gathered from both expert witnesses echo that obtained from the coordinators at both city and school level has its rightful place in the overall analysis, discussion, conclusions and recommendations of the last two chapters.

## **Chapter 8 Analysis and discussion**

Like all research the basis for the investigation in this dissertation lies in the research questions posed. The *raison d'être* for arranging the collection of the data deemed likely to help answer these questions by means of face-to-face semi-structured interviews lay in the belief that;

- only a case study approach involving the gathering of qualitative data based on the opinion and the experience of those directly involved in the management of the implementation of the EiC GaT policy strand, and
- an unbiased assessment by detached expert witnesses of both the policy and its implementation,

could realistically shed light on the relevant issues.

**The use of educational case studies as a prime strategy for developing theory --- illuminates educational policy and enhances educational practice.** (Bassey, 1999, 1-37, cited in Sikes, P., 1999, xii).

**Well for me it's [qualitative data] more valid because how do you quantify social ease, feeling, an internal assessment?** (Wallace)<sup>88</sup>.

It is, therefore, reasonable to base the analysis and discussion relating to the policy and management of the EiC initiative for the GaT appertaining to each research question taken in turn on:

- (1) The qualitative data emanating from the practical experience of the coordinators at both the city and school level, in contrast and comparison with each other.
- (2) A comparison of this evidence with both the theoretical EiC policy model as envisaged by the DfES and the relevant vision arising from the literature review of what is desirable for such a cohort.

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<sup>88</sup> p.146

- (3) The data resulting from the contribution of the expert witnesses which is available as an independent assessment comparator of not only the theoretical EiC GaT policy model but also of the practical management arrangements envisaged and actuated to implement the policy.

The author craves the reader's indulgence that references to interviewee responses involve for clarification purposes repeating some previously highlighted quotations.

### **1. Research Question 1.**

**'To what extent are the policy decisions for the education of the GaT as outlined in EiC. being implemented at a 'local' level by the:**

- (a) City level manager (SC), and**
- (b) School/College management person (GaT Coordinator)?'**

#### **Appointment, employment and effectiveness of coordinators**

A central plank on which the implementation of the directed policy rests is the establishment and employment of strand and school based coordinators. Although extreme tardiness in making such appointments at both levels was apparent from the start, such appointments are now in place and to that extent the policy directive is being satisfied.

The repercussions of the failure from the start to appoint SC but alternatively to make do and mend apparently with temporary stand-ins was regarded by the school/cluster coordinators, who experienced the consequences as unfortunate, and the cause of much dissatisfaction. Additionally, the SC were aware of the negative effects of the initial failure and the now consequent need to reassess the working and suitability of the established plans.

The reported feeling of a school coordinator of a **'huge wave of dissatisfaction'** and of being **'dumped in without the time, financial allowance or anything'**, was an indication of the general opinion amongst the interviewed participating coordinators and echoed the unanimity of feeling amongst both strand and school based coordinators that the initial introduction of the EiC initiative had been undertaken at a rush without sufficient time to make the necessary appointments at either city or school level. Hence the inability to draw up well thought out plans soon became apparent as a prime cause of concern. In this regard one could not infer that the policy envisaged had been implemented sensitively and effectively and in

consequence neither of the two city SC interviewed was complacent about the effectiveness of the plans drawn up in their cities.

Support for the view that time, in particular its absence at the crucial moment when it was a vital ingredient, had been denied to those required to implement the EiC policy directives was a recurring theme in the views expressed by both the expert witnesses interviewed. The time to rethink, readjust and plan for such a radical new approach to the education, not only of the GaT 10 per cent cohort but of the other 90 per cent majority, was the essential ingredient which was denied those involved in planning and implementing the new strategy. The complete unanimity of view of the coordinators and experts was that the denial of adequate time to those who were required to implement the EiC initiative had been an unmitigated misfortune.

For coordinators at either city or school level to carry out their duties of planning, direction, monitoring and inspiring a new whole-school approach to the education of the GaT, a sometimes regarded *élitist* approach by many teachers in a largely hostile egalitarian atmosphere demands that their status must be commensurate with the task. Complete unanimity of view existed not only amongst the coordinators at both levels but also with the experts, who recognised that the task of coordinator was a high status, managerial appointment.

**You can't be low status if you've got to be telling people what to do, you can't, you need some status.**

In this comment Freeman acquiesced entirely with the sympathy expressed by the other interviewees. The work of a coordinator could not be done by anyone without the recognised status not only to inspire but if necessary to demand that certain actions be undertaken even if at variance with the wishes and desires of those who were required to respond. The directive emanating from DfES that school coordinators should receive three points on the salary scale and one day off time-table per week to carry out their task, a directive apparently often dispensed with in practice, and in which no reference as to their role or involvement in senior management occurred, was seen as a cause for considerable concern and likely to mitigate against the successful application of the EiC initiative.

The status accorded to city SC appeared to be at the discretion of the employing agency and from the direct observation by the author one implication of which was in the level of administrative support afforded the incumbent.

In this regard of status and hence the effectiveness with which both strand and school coordinators could be expected to operate, the managerial consequences of the failure to appoint coordinators of sufficient seniority and/or experience must be an indication of a lack of appreciation of what task the coordinators need to do and of the level of power needed to be at their disposal for the accomplishment of that task. The cry '**I wouldn't have the power. I think it's very difficult....**' by a SC was a telling indication of a lack of status and hence power. The consequences for any new initiative of a failure to appreciate the implications of a policy of appointing staff at an inappropriate level could not bode well for success.

## Training

In establishing the EiC GaT policy strand, DfES recognised that as a result of this departure from an egalitarian approach to the education offered of one in which special arrangements had to be made for the education of the able, some training would be required. The provision of appropriate and effective training for coordinators and teachers is a cardinal part of the EiC policy. The effective management of the new policy would depend on the competence of the occupants of the newly established coordinator posts at both city and school level to deliver the new relevant approach. Whilst the intention was laudable the implementation of the training received less than unanimous applause. Witness the SC comment:

**there has been a lot of misgivings about the quality of the training courses....  
...very little of what I have attended [training] has helped me to do my job.**

and the explanation of Freeman, recorded earlier<sup>89</sup> and repeated here of how the course came to be established at Oxford Brookes:

**Oxford Brookes have been given this job and they themselves have been training teachers through NACE stationed there. The Government is in a way directive in saying, 'You do this and you do that' but [in the case of] Oxford Brooks it is on its own.**

The course of training sponsored by DfES and conducted by Oxford Brookes University as its agent, provided a National programme of training for strand, school and cluster coordinators, attendance at which being mandatory, has received a mixed reception as to its suitability and effectiveness from those coordinators who have

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<sup>89</sup> p.133 refers

attended. As a consequence of some of the dissatisfaction expressed the need for a rethink about what training is required is a reason for the current in-house re-evaluation of the National Training Programme.

Whilst the training course was ‘free’ to the cities and schools, the arrangements needed to ensure that it was taken up by the coordinators and the incidental costs for school cover for staff attending the course became the responsibility of the cities and schools. In reality

**the uptake in City M of the Oxford Brookes National Coordinators’ Training programme has been quite low,** (Albert)

an opinion supported by the evidence of Betty in City L, who placed the figure of approximately ‘**50 per cent as the “take up” in their first year**’. The extent therefore to which the policy decisions implicit in EiC training schedules are being actioned at local level appear to be at an unacceptable level for what is a mandatory requirement by DfES.

Whilst a national training programme designed to help coordinators to manage the arrangements needed to organise the new perceived educational approach required by the initiative was at least established by DfES, even if in the event inadequately attended, no such national programme for the training of subject teachers in their new role was arranged. The task for organising such training was to be at the behest of the local authorities. Due to a plethora of reasons cited by strand and school based coordinators, such training had, with an odd exception, not been organised:

**We haven’t been able to do [that] because we haven’t been able to release anyone. We wanted to, but unfortunately, it didn’t happen because of the fact of staff cover and absence we couldn’t.** (Clair)

The need for such training was acknowledged in the form of the adverse criticism by the OFSTED Report (2001) arising from its absence, and echoed by the coordinators and by the expert witnesses:

**Training has usually been confined to lead and school coordinators in the first instance and there is a need for local partnerships to make training available to all teachers, especially with regard to subject-specific work.** (OFSTED Report 2001, *op. cit.* 4).

**What I hadn't reckoned on was teacher shortages. That has put up the cost of supply. ... [the Agencies] are taking a huge cut.** (Edward).

**..subject teachers need practical training in how to extend their [the pupils] main problem solving and higher order thinking skills. They don't know how to do it largely ... [there is] insufficient teacher training.** (Wallace).

Even accepting that in the event the DfES provision of the necessary financial resources, might have been inadequate, the responsibility to provide the teachers in the classrooms with the essential training needed was given to the local authorities. The failure of the cities and/or the schools to meet the challenge and provide specialist teacher training can only be viewed, for whatever reason as a failure to fructify by local management procedures the EiC policy on training and to a certain extent a culpable act of omission.

#### Cohort identification

An apparent built-in aversion on the part of teachers to select and identify initially a cohort of the most gifted children (i.e. defined as those who showed academic potential), in their school and which was only later enlarged to include those children termed talented (i.e. those who showed ability in sport or the creative arts), was based on the precept of an abhorrence of élitism. This caused a great deal of animosity and opposition amongst them to the concept of selection and became a hindrance to the practicalities of carrying out the policy of EiC.

**...but we do have worries, we're not happy with the idea of identification being purely academic.** (Clair).

[There has] **been a bone of contention within the schools about identifying pupils.** (David).

The reluctance to identify children and label them as GaT and on which the EiC policy rests is not confined to the teachers but found support from the two expert witnesses:

**Labelling and categorising children is not educationally sound.** (Wallace).

**... if you select in, you select out, so if you take 10 per cent in, you have rejected 90 per cent and within that 90 per cent there are inevitably gifted children and**

**within the 10 per cent that you select, there are inevitably some that are not. i.e. there's an error and there's always error when you select.** (Freeman).

The basis on which identification and selection of a GaT cohort can be made has been a considerable bone of contention in the literature and continues to attract comment and research. The underlying concept of fixed capacities has been challenged at Harvard by Gardiner's Multiple Intelligence theory<sup>90</sup>

**...very few educators [now] cling tenaciously to a straight IQ or purely academic definition of giftedness. Multiple talent and multiple criteria are almost bywords of the present-day gifted student movement,** (Renzulli, 1986, 64)

but the EiC decision to identify a 10 per cent cohort based on a combination of teacher recommendations, performance in SATS, CATS and internal examinations places some doubt on their suitability as identifiers of potential, a view finding a resonance in both Wallace and Freeman.

A reluctance by schools to comply with the EiC directive that lists should be drawn of the names of children included in the identified cohort and that both children and parents be made aware of their inclusion illustrates an intention to frustrate an EiC policy intention on the part of the local managers of the initiative.

**The cohort list is available but to what extent they flag it up as being available is variable. So it is a tricky one but the DfES and OFSTED have said that parents and kids should know.** (Edward).

The hostility to an initiative is often ameliorated by a mixture of incentives and pressure and the EiC initiative appears to have been no exception. A failure to identify a cohort would have meant being denied the money and opportunities on offer. The EiC policy of insisting that the cohorts represented the main social background and that the cohort comprised 10 per cent of the age range in effect could deny inclusion in the cohort of more able children who were in the minority social group of a school.

**... the Government wants the free school meal aspect and ethnicity used as criteria.** (Edward).

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<sup>90</sup> p. 32

Compromise was the answer and the creation of shadow cohorts, was one way of allowing more children to benefit from the money originally designated for the GaT. The liberal interpretation of the regulations, which in some way might be considered laudable, involves, nevertheless, the misuse of otherwise designated funds:

**The widening participation element can offer a lot more of what's going on to other students and I know that in a lot of schools people will push students through the activities whether they are in the cohort or not.** (Albert).

It is questionable on moral grounds that whilst accepting money for an initiative that the recipient should endeavour to find subterfuges to subvert the intention of the giver to suit one's own specific inclinations. On this basis local management failed to carry out the intention of DfES policy, not necessarily by being inefficient by any hesitancy on its part, but by deliberate intention to subvert the application of the policy as conceived. Within a democratic society such action is of debatable merit.

### Whole-school policy

The success of the EiC initiative demands from a school the wholehearted support, not only of its teachers but also of its directing SMT. Such support would be expected to be manifested in a whole welter of ways, not least of which is that the coordinator's role should be given status and power. Additionally, the initiative should command an appropriate allocation of time, the ethos of the school should be one that supports excellence in all its forms and that the monies allocated should always be used for their designated purpose.

The evidence emanating from the data collected cast doubt about each of the identified prerequisites being at the forefront of the priorities in the *actualité* of school senior management thinking and actions.

[A coordinator], **in reality it is a high status influential [job], that the person [appointed] has to have influence on all of those key areas.** [but] **some [appointed coordinators] are not experienced, and more importantly, [they] don't have the time.** (Wallace).

**The real issue is about engaging people across the school to get involved. In particular developing communication systems. So we've got to focus on what we can do to change the culture in schools and make effective practice [the norm] in**

**the classroom, and make it [classroom practice] improve ...the real issue is about engaging people across the school to get involved. ... one intention is about raising academic standards and to me I think [my city's] big problem is academic standards ... I think the High Schools' academic standards have to rise in order to meet any of these things.** (Albert).

**the worry there is 'where in the school has that money gone?'**(Edward).

As viewed by those working within the system to organise and manage the policy of the EiC, there are, as previously recorded, deficiencies in the present arrangements and standards of management within the whole-school ethos and approach to enable the advances hoped for by EiC to be fully achieved.

An outsider view as to whether the EiC policy intentions are being effectively managed and achieving the objectives set is a mixed one but a recent Times Educational Supplement view that:

**It is an ambitious agenda for a policy which most agree is bringing much needed benefits to inner-city schools. But the big question is whether there is enough money to go around,** (Wilce (2002, op. cit. 27)

if true, must signify that the management of the policy locally has, despite weaknesses, achieved the intentions of the policies to a significant extent.

## **2. Research Question 2.**

**'What practical management decisions and actions have been, or are being, taken to effect the:**

- i. Policy pronouncements made in EiC, at City level, and**
- ii. Policy direction emanating from the City by the School/College GaT Coordinator?'**

The practical management decisions taken at city and school level designed to put EiC policy into practice involved, appointing staff, organising their subsequent training and channelling finance from central Government to cities and schools. No period more likely to inform on their ability to do so was the inaugural period of the initiative.

### **Staff appointments**

In neither of the two cities did the city authorities comply with the directive to appoint strand coordinators at the start of the phase in which they were involved. *Ad*

*hoc* measures taken involved job sharing amongst existing staff, leading to inefficiencies, the adoption of less than ideal programmes and hence for a later review and amended programmes. Confusion appeared to exist at the initial meeting in City L which later had repercussions amongst Heads who had not attended the meeting.

**Heads sent as many or as few or none at all representatives to the meeting, as they didn't realise what was going to go on there. So, therefore, the Heads that weren't there weren't in a position to bid for that and were later very angry about that.** (Edward).

**We were not the head, we were not the strategy group [but] we tried to put some order into GaT.** (Clair).

**No information came out at all to any of the appointed coordinators.**(Edward).

**So [I am now] looking to effect, as you were saying, training subject staff, --- that's the sort of training I would like to see put in place.** (David).

Six months after her appointment but twelve months into the programme, Betty carried out an evaluation:

**all the strands of EiC actually involved myself and the lead learning mentor and coordinator in pairs visiting all our secondary schools with a checklist which schools had had in advance; looking at some data, looking at the processes and looking at this sort of impact, if any, at that very early stage,**

and as a consequence:

**it came to a head really when at the end of last year there was awarded a traffic light signal from the strand coordinator** [to some schools].

Some of the inadequacies highlighted by the interviewees might be blamed upon those whose responsibility it was to appoint appropriate staff to undertake vital initial decisions. It, would however, be unreasonable to ignore the effect on the managerial decisions which had to be taken to fructify the policy initiatives of the rush with which the EiC was launched by the politicians at the DfES

**Far, far too rushed. My major complaint would be that it's piecemeal – that it is not a concerted policy in that schools are not being told quite what to do.** (Freeman).

**... it's got major limitations and the limitations arise from the speed with which all of this has been implemented and this has resulted in insufficient teacher training. Not enough work [has been done] with either the parents and the community as a whole or with the social and emotional development of youngsters.** (Wallace).

Throughout the data collecting interviews the thematic concept of time appeared to be central to the evidence emerging from not only the coordinators at both city and school levels but also amongst the expert witnesses. All saw the lack of time that had been available to those who had to effect the policies emanating from DfES as a cardinal reason for many of the managerial shortcomings that had been so evident to them.

## Training

The managerial decision for choosing Oxford Brookes University as the venue for the National training programme for coordinators was taken by DfES, but the managerial decisions appertaining to the take-up of such training was the responsibility of city and school coordinators. The statistics show that there has been a less than adequate number of coordinators attending at Oxford.

The training of subject teachers, not only in the necessary teaching skills required to improve their ability to teach the more able pupils in their main stream classes but also in ways of improving their ability to identify such pupils and those with the potential to be so, is the responsibility of coordinators at school level to arrange. It is, however, the duty of the 'management' of these schools to make the necessary support available for the teachers to be released to attend. The evidence of the interviewees and that of the OFSTED Report (2001, *op. cit.*) indicates that this has not been done.

The failure to provide such training can be regarded as a major contribution to the reported short comings of the EiC initiative in improving the learning achieved in main stream classes. The OFSTED Report (2001, *op. cit.*) makes the following pertinent comments

- **The essential need continues to be that schools examine and improve what they do for their high-ability pupils through the teaching of the mainstream curriculum, as well as through additional activities. The planning of teaching to increase the pace, breadth and depth of learning for high-ability pupils needs to be more deliberate in many schools.**
- **Schools would benefit more generally from greater help on assessment and forms of teaching which support higher achievement at an earlier stage. Exemplification of effective approaches within individual subjects is a clear need.**
- **To date, methods of identification have generally been rudimentary and have not yet solved the problem of recognising latent high ability, particularly among pupils who are underachieving generally.**

## Finance

The treasury decision to allocate the funds and the amount to be available to cities and through them to the schools to empower the EiC initiative is one that the treasury alone controls. The channelling of these funds to the schools is the responsibility of the SC and in neither city M nor L in which the author conducted his interviews was any doubt cast as to any possible inadequacies in the management arrangements established for such activity but they all conceded that teacher training had been neglected in their arrangements.

The main uses to which the money allocated was devoted were:

- SC salaries.
- Staffing costs associated with the coordinator day off time-table.
- Training costs associated with coordinator training.
- Enrichment programmes as additional to mainstream teaching.

The absence of training for subject teachers in this list to which some money was intended to be used would suggest that some managerial decisions had been taken which in effect had misused some of the provided finance on purposes other than those for which they had been intended.

This lack of training for improvement in mainstream activity is now considered to have been a major deficiency of the EiC and a cause for concern.

Management decisions appertaining to the areas considered revealed that some with hindsight might have been different but in the context in which the initial decisions were taken many would have been considered expedient. The opportunity for reflection on the full implication of the imperatives behind the initiative or for consideration of alternatives, was not available in the time period allowed by DfES

to action their policy decisions. The pressures emanating from DfES to introduce the policies without delay inevitably took their toll in the appropriateness of some of the decisions and actions taken.

### **3. Research Question 3**

**‘How effective are the management decisions taken in achieving their objectives at**

**(a) City level, and**

**(b) School/College level? ’**

The effectiveness of management decisions is a commodity that might be measured by an application of the old adage ‘The proof of the pudding is in the eating’, but few managers would welcome so direct an assessment method of their own effectiveness, particularly when as in this case the initiative is still on-going. The OFSTED Report (2001, *op. cit.*) acknowledged that the time was not yet ripe for a judgement to be made:

**The focus and funding of the EiC strand for GaT pupils have had positive effects. There is still much to be done to fulfil the objectives of the programme. It is too early to see sustained impact on attainment in tests and examinations.**

However, whilst attainment in tests and examinations might be inappropriate as measures of effectiveness at this stage in the initiative, anecdotal evidence of some changes in attainment might indicate whether a substantial improvement is underway.

**... but we’re looking at soft targets, rather than hard targets. The DfES, unfortunately, don’t seem to want to take that into consideration. We have made a change in a lot of lifestyles for a lot of these youngsters, we really have opened up areas for them that they would never have dreamt of looking at before.**  
(Albert).

A supportive view by both expert witnesses placed an emphasis on the benefits that were accruing from the EiC initiative and gave their blessing, at least in principle, to what was being achieved as a consequence of the policies being implemented at local level.

**...but even in a main school, one school activity, an add-on activity or a weekend activity or holiday activity enriches any child who attends and all children should have access.** (Wallace).

**I do think it is a very good idea of the Government to start at the most difficult spot which is inner-cities ... they have taken the bull by the horns and gone for it. ... it's a good idea that it should have started at secondary level. I think that's where the problems are.** (Freeman).

The EiC policy objectives were quite explicit and were primarily concerned with the raising of standards of achievement, and pupil and parent aspirations.

The hard evidence to judge whether the first objective is being achieved is by general agreement not yet available, but some encouraging statistics in the OFSTED 2001 Report and shown in Table 8.1 give cause for optimism that standards of achievement are being raised in EiC schools.

The perception that pupils and parents have of what is on offer as part of the EiC initiative and by inference what perception they might have of inner-city schools is unlikely to be enhanced if they are not kept fully informed and involved in what is being offered and to whom. The tendency to avoid telling pupils that they had been selected for inclusion in the 10 per cent cohort and to enlist the support of parents for the work that was being done was deplored by OFSTED in its 2001 Report. The evidence from Cities M and L in no way differed from what OFSTED reported.

**The cohort is available but to what extent they flag it up as being available is variable.** (Edward).

#### **4. Research Question 4**

**'Is the Government's policy working: to what extent and how might it be amended and improved?'**

The Government's policy is undoubtedly working to the extent that the bureaucracy it conceived to actuate its EiC initiative is in place throughout the designated areas. The finance it earmarked for the policy is being spent. The establishment of clusters of schools has been done. Cohorts of pupils in the inner-city schools have been identified. Some training of coordinators has taken place. Additional provision has been made, often out of school hours for pupils of high

ability, but as highlighted in the OFSTED Report (2001, *op. cit.*) there are some considerable inadequacies in the provision and to at least some extent the Government's policy is not working. i.e. the policy is not achieving the full objectives the Government set out for itself. Table 2.2 highlights a number of issues that OFSTED considered merited particular attention and by implication if such issues were to be successfully addressed the success of the EiC initiative might be more widely acclaimed.

Whilst the author has chosen to draw attention to OFSTED's list of issues, they are all issues that the evidence from coordinators and expert witnesses have identified as of relevance in either their work or in the case of the experts in their assessment of the working of the EiC. The congruence of the identification of these issues (as exemplified by the thoughts and comments quoted below), by the coordinators and the expert witnesses interviewed, with those raised by the OFSTED inspectorate gives added credence to their general validity as areas in which those engaged in EiC initiative activities must increasingly concentrate on addressing.

**That's been a bone of contention within the schools about identifying pupils, ... that's why it is necessary, if its going to work properly, [that] schools do need to have that internal discussion about what is a GaT pupil, who's in the cohort and who isn't. (David).**

**When you have teacher selection it is inevitably flawed by all the things that teachers are looking for, it's flawed by stereotyping which I've described and it's not as effective as when the children select themselves as they do in other countries. I would recommend far more involvement of the children. How can you take intelligent, competent, keen children and not ask them what they want, or what they're good at or what they would like to do? (Freeman).**

**originally we were told not to inform the parents. (Edward).**

**The way that I see it is, I think, that what is required is subject related training within the context of what goes on in the school day. (Albert).**

**..subject teachers need practical training in how to extend their [the pupils] main problem solving and higher order thinking skills. They don't know how to do it largely. (Wallace).**

**What I hadn't reckoned on was teacher shortages. That has put up the cost of supply. (Edward).**

**We haven't been able to release anyone. We wanted to, but unfortunately, it didn't happen because of the fact of staff cover and absence we couldn't.** (Clair).

**I think one of the problems with students in a High School context is that often in teaching situations, for whatever reason, they are sitting there bored out of their skulls because what's going on is not appropriate for them, being disruptive, [because they are ] not having the teaching they should have. So we've got to focus on what we can do to change the culture in schools and make effective practice [the norm] in the classroom, and make it [classroom practice] improve.** (Albert).

**Classroom observation is fraught with difficulties in terms of the time allowed us, but also bearing in mind that ... the Unions are at the moment very edgy about that.** (Edward).

**I think one of the little changes that has been is that people have thought a little bit more about even more subjects, about setting and not so much a general setting but perhaps a thing of putting GaT pupils into sets and having the rest mixed ability where appropriate.** (Albert).

Whilst the above may be central to eventual success, many would argue that it might not be sufficient. The cardinal key to success might be none of the above but rather the willingness and ability of the children to avail themselves of what is offered to them. That there is an under-representation of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in HE (Woodhead, 2001, *op. cit.* 3) is a primary concern of the Government. The supposed link between the poor take-up by pupils of HE and their social and cultural deprivation, together with the suggested improvement of social and welfare provision for them and their families as an antidote to their reluctance to move into HE, has been made earlier. The present stress placed in EiC on improving opportunities to enter HE may, in fact, be an inappropriate aim, and consideration should be given to an alternative more appropriate antidote to their reluctance to continue in education in the form of appropriate vocational post sixteen education. As David of City M conjectured

**Universities are already changing in many respects in the wider participation that's taking place so I feel that there has to be a number of different routes because not every single person can benefit [from an academic education].**

## **5. Research Question 5**

**‘What inferences can be drawn as to the Government’s intentions regarding the future provision for the education of the nation’s more able children?’**

An underlying reason why the present Government’s EiC initiative was conceived was the realisation that there was general concern about the standard of educational attainment particularly in inner-city areas and which many thought was particularly acute amongst boys.

The cry amongst the pundits often attributed the malaise to what many considered to be the reason i.e. the organisation of education on comprehensive lines. Adonis and Pollard (1997, 50) encapsulated the perception prevalent when the new Government came into power in 1997:

**One in five seven-year-olds in London state schools scores zero in reading tests. In state schools serving the most disadvantaged areas, less than 10 per cent of pupils achieve five or more GCSE grades A—C. The best schools in such areas achieve average GCSE scores per pupil which are just one-third of that of schools in more advantaged areas. On average, children of parents in social groups D and E obtain only a third as many GCSE grades A-C as do state-educated children from higher social groups. The plain fact is that the divide between state and private schools is today stronger than at any other time since 1944. The divide between the classes is not narrowing, as the educational reformers of the 1950s and 60s assured us it would following the introduction of comprehensive schools, but widening, as those at the top perform steadily better in their private and selective state schools, while the mass of ‘white working-class males’ - to take the group defined by Chris Woodhead, the Chief Inspector of Schools - continue to languish in an almost anti-education culture in underperforming comprehensive schools.**

**So bad is the situation that the Chief Inspector of Schools feels compelled to write that:**

**‘the failure of boys, and in particular white working-class boys, is one of the most disturbing problems we face within the whole education system. Research shows that white working-class boys are the least likely to participate in full-time education after the age of sixteen, and that white boys are the most likely to be completely unqualified on leaving compulsory education. The fact is that our most disadvantaged children, especially boys, remain disadvantaged at the end of their schooling.’**

Facing the realities of political life the Government reacted to allay public concern with a number of initiatives of which the EiC GaT strand may be considered to be the pinnacle. It tries to neutralize the perceived inadequacies of the present comprehensive system which Adonis and Pollard (1997, *op.cit.* 54) describe:

**The comprehensive revolution, tragically, destroyed much of the excellent without improving the rest. Comprehensive schools have largely replaced selection by ability with selection by class and house price. Middle-class children now go to middle-class comprehensives, whose catchment areas comprise middle-class neighbourhoods, while working-class children are mostly left to fester in the inner-city comprehensive their parents cannot afford to move away from.**

Whilst the proclaimed public policy of the Government is to retain comprehensive schools throughout the land, in accordance with its oft proclaimed rejection of selection in all its forms (witness the oft quoted phrase “watch my lips” by the then Education SOS, David Blunkett) in an appeasing aside to fellow party delegates, the reality appears somewhat different. In the view of Freeman the Government is no longer bound to a comprehensive system:

**That’s not what they are doing at all. They’re not actually doing that. Estelle Morris said they’ve got masses of specialist schools.**

As so often happens, words don’t always convey the real truth in what often appears to be a farcical interpretation of the political verities.

## **Chapter 9 Conclusions and recommendations**

The policy decision of the EiC initiative to limit the definition of GaT to a fixed percentage of an age group within each secondary school is an obvious bureaucratic convenience. Many might consider it to be politically motivated but few would subscribe to the view that such a definition would encompass all able pupils or that it could yield consistency of selection from school to school.

Few would not welcome the desirable aims of driving up standards in major cities to match the very best or to ensure that city parents and pupils had as high aspirations as parents elsewhere. These aims of the EiC in themselves have received general approval, being considered as worthy of a democratic society. To think otherwise would effectively be as if one were against ‘apple pie and sunny days’.

### **Conclusions**

As a means of attaining the EiC GaT aims<sup>91</sup> the policy objectives demanded not only an improvement in the attainment and motivation of the most able in each secondary school (particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds) but also an improvement in the ability of inner-city secondary schools to make effective provision for their most able children, partly by developing local support networks based on a cluster of neighbouring schools. The creation of a positive perception of city education amongst parents and the wider community is seen as of paramount importance.

If the aim were for the standards achieved in major inner-city schools to equate to those achieved by the very best elsewhere within the compass of the time span of the pilot EiC GaT initiative then that aim has not been achieved as judged by OFSTED (2001) inspection reports<sup>92</sup>, performance in public examinations, or in the qualitative assessment perception of coordinators<sup>93</sup> and expert witnesses:

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<sup>91</sup> P. 10 refers

<sup>92</sup> Table 8.1 refers

<sup>93</sup> p. 95 refers

However, if the realistic expectation were that within the time frame of the pilot scheme the EiC initiative should help to improve standards of achievements then the judgement is less harsh. The consensus view of the coordinators<sup>94</sup> interviewed for this study was that the standard of achievement in certain areas was improving, a view supported by both Wallace and Freeman and by the OFSTED Report (2001, *op. cit.*). Together they give succour and encouragement to those endeavouring within the inner-cities to redress the situation pertaining and establish a pattern of improvement in attainment and may thus be considered as at least an endorsement that EiC GaT is producing beneficial performance and progress results.

It would be a proud boast indeed if one could claim that the aim of ensuring that City parents and children should expect and gain as much from their schools as those anywhere else in the country had been met as a consequence of the EiC GaT initiative. However, it is from 'small acorns that mighty oaks grow' and the first 'small shoots of a forthcoming spring' have been seen and acclaimed as the beginning of a promising harvest to come: a recent article<sup>95</sup> by Wilce (2002) certainly believes in its merits.

An actual gain in standard of achievement can be quantitatively assessed by a whole range of measures, the performance in examinations being only one method but one which, in reality, Wallace<sup>96</sup> intimated might ultimately be the only yardstick by which the Government might be prepared to judge the effectiveness of its initiative. However true that may be, an expectation of a gain is quite another matter, depending as it undoubtedly does on perception, which is a notoriously fickle concept to detect. To gauge the perception that parents and pupils hold of what their school offers and how it compares with what other schools offer might be possible if by choice they were to patronise their local school in preference to others. Colourfully expressed by Albert<sup>97</sup> in City M, he believed that EiC would be perceived by parents to be a success when people in the City were happy to send their children to the local comprehensive in preference (finances permitting) to an independent school because it was better. If indeed Albert's criterion is an acceptable and realistic one for measuring the perception of parents in the inner-city, the EiC GaT initiative has been a failure. However, both expert witnesses believed that, irrespective of the success or otherwise that the EiC GaT initiative might bring, the

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<sup>94</sup> p. 116 refers

<sup>95</sup> p. 125 refers

<sup>96</sup> p. 146 refers

<sup>97</sup> p. 123 refers

wealthy middle classes would continue to do what they had always done, i.e. opt out of the state provision in favour of the independent sector<sup>98</sup>.

Whilst Albert's comment may reflect a counsel of despair in the eyes of those whose mission it is to try to fructify the Government directives<sup>99</sup> in their EiC initiative, a more upbeat comment of Wallace<sup>100</sup> does give a little succour in that she believes that the initiative is an awareness-raising one, because for the first time many teachers/parents are talking about the needs of their art.

The success or failure of any policy initiative is inextricably linked to the management decisions designed to carry out those policies. The evidence emanating from much of the data collected by interview placed some considerable doubt on the wisdom of some of the management decisions that appertained particularly at the start of the pilot scheme. Undesirable consequences of some decisions led to later reassessments of what had been done and much blame was attached to the Government by the underlying criticism of the haste and speed with which it introduced its initiative. The OFSTED Report (2001, *op. cit.*) also had reservations about the management of the policies. It emphasised the correspondence between eventual success and appropriate management, drawing attention to their conclusion that although management of the EiC GaT programme was good in two thirds of the schools visited and satisfactory in most of the others, four key management issues had emerged:

- the support of senior managers is vital in underpinning the authority of coordinators, not all of whom are in senior positions.
- the responsibilities of subject leaders in relation to the initiative need to be clarified.
- there is a need for local partnerships to make training available to all teachers, especially with regard to subject-specific work.
- monitoring of the benefits of the additional programmes is rarely evident.

All four of these issues find resonance with the coordinators and expert witnesses interviewed<sup>101</sup> in this study and give added credence to the validity of their evidence.

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<sup>98</sup> p. 143 refers

<sup>99</sup> p. 118 Lightfoot (2000)

<sup>100</sup> p.136 refers

<sup>101</sup> pp. 102, 113, 121, 132 refer

It is particularly opportune that the fourth issue raised by OFSTED should echo and reinforce the major quibble of Freeman<sup>102</sup>, an acknowledged expert on the education of the able and advisor to OFSTED on such education..

That such good advice, which would have been available to Government should either have been unheeded or not even considered (but certainly not acted upon) seems strange and unworthy of a Government Department about to engage in a costly programme on which so much of its hopes for improving education rested. Wallace intimated<sup>103</sup>, however, that the Government was after a quick result. This probably reflects the political imperatives uppermost in the mind of the Government at the time.

It can only be surmised that the choice of title for this Government initiative of Excellence in Cities was as a result of a deliberate decision, as one of its aims is to insist that Excellence must be the norm.<sup>104</sup> No one would disparage such an objective and few teachers would not think that that was a *raison d'être* for their chosen vocation but many believe that as yet it has been eluded in many schools<sup>105</sup>.

Whilst undoubtedly the criticisms levelled at both the policy and its implementation as a result of management decisions have a basis in fact, it would be churlish in the extreme not to recognise that EiC GaT is a welcome initiative but somewhat of a limited one<sup>106</sup>. Having identified the need for the Government to be concerned about tackling the root cause of educational underachievement, which she identified as requiring money to be put into pre-school and foundation phase<sup>107</sup>, Wallace echoes the feelings expressed by Mr Anthony Smith (2001)<sup>108</sup>.

This research has identified certain inadequacies in the implementation from the beginning of the EiC policies. A prime criticism, from which so many of the problems have emanated has been the pace with which the initiative was introduced. The failure to allocate time for the concept of selection and identification of a core of GaT children by teaching staffs who were somewhat antagonistic<sup>109</sup> to what many considered to be an *elitist* concept and proposed programme, emerged from the research as an indictable failure of both the Government and administrators involved. Arising from a lack of time, a shortage of human resources in the form of teachers and the necessary planning and provisioning of financial resources, the essential

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<sup>102</sup> p. 136 refers

<sup>103</sup> p. 146 refers

<sup>104</sup> p. 11 refers

<sup>105</sup> pp. 121, 136 refer

<sup>106</sup> p.136 refers

<sup>107</sup> p. 136 refers

<sup>108</sup> p.143 refers

<sup>109</sup> p. 93 refers

training of specialist teachers did not materialise to any significant extent. The need for such training caused an adverse comment in the OFSTED (2001) Report which called for it to be provided:

The need to provide children with an appropriate classroom teaching situation was intimated by Albert of City M, in his comment that some were sitting in their classrooms bored out of their skulls because what was going on was not appropriate for them. The CIS in 1997<sup>110</sup> wrote that the failure of boys, and in particular white working-class boys, was one of the most disturbing problems faced within the whole education system. Research showed that white working-class boys were the least likely to participate in full-time education after the age of sixteen, and that white boys were the most likely to be completely unqualified on leaving compulsory education. The fact was that our most disadvantaged children, especially boys, would remain disadvantaged at the end of their schooling.

Clair in City M<sup>111</sup> was of the view that to meet the challenges ahead many other changes would have to come about, for example in the whole structure of the school day, and also to deliver the new 14-19 education. To her the ideas of today would not fit in with the present working model, so flexibility would become a must.

The disquiet in the literature<sup>112</sup>, the press<sup>113</sup>, among the education establishment and many politicians<sup>114</sup> with the poor performance and under achievement of some children, is attributed by many to the disaffection of many teenagers with what is on offer in schools. Coupled with the national shortage of workers in traditional trades and professions this calls for programmes of training and education designed to meet the aspirations of not only those teenagers who would benefit from a vocational education but also of the needs of society.

A major concern about the effectiveness of EiC arose out of the designated status<sup>115</sup> and effectiveness of coordinators and their ability to function appropriately. The hesitancy of teaching staff to endorse wholeheartedly a significant change of emphasis in the prevailing educational philosophy, and to adopt and put into practice what many regarded as an *elitist*<sup>116</sup> rather than an egalitarian educational philosophy without the necessary training<sup>117</sup> to carry out appropriate differentiated mainstream teaching, hindered the progress desired. The introduction of a fresh educational

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<sup>110</sup> p. 164 refers

<sup>111</sup> p.129 refers

<sup>112</sup> p. 164 refers

<sup>113</sup> p.118 refers

<sup>114</sup> p. 56 refers

<sup>115</sup> p. 132 refers

<sup>116</sup> p. 104 refers

<sup>117</sup> p. 103 refers

imperatives without commissioning an appropriate research programme to test the efficacy<sup>118</sup> of what was about to be put into immediate effect at breakneck speed inevitably caused a certain amount of mayhem with some unfortunate decisions and actions to follow. The introduction of the EiC to operate at secondary school level without a parallel initiative to provide a pre-school enrichment programme for those from a disadvantaged background so helping to avoid social deprivation calls for a suitable Government response<sup>119</sup>. The perceived failure of some schools to stimulate an interest in some adolescents in the present school curriculum and their dissatisfaction with what is at present on offer to them also calls for thought and consideration of what suitable alternative programmes of education should be provided.

The corollary to the contextual discussion demands that the recommendations which arise out of the analysis are aimed either to ameliorate any perceived shortcomings or to suggest alternative and/or new approaches which could with benefit be implemented. It is in the light of this that the final recommendations in the next paragraph are made. Additionally, it would be well to recall that the educational experiment of providing a comprehensive system of schools has operated in England for over forty years and an argument can be sustained that the time is now appropriate to reconsider its virtues and failings in order to reassess its present appropriateness and continued suitability to meet the needs of children and society.

It is, therefore, tempting to ask one further question. Does the EiC initiative fail to grasp the real nettle of the poor performance in so many ways of the non-selective system of comprehensive schooling? The pro-selective schools' lobby would claim that it does not.

### **Recommendations**

Acknowledging that the policy of the Government for its EiC GaT strand is a *fait accompli*, its eventual success will depend amongst other things on the appropriateness and efficiency of how it is managed, which might be bettered by resorting to a number of recommendations:

- **Raise the status of school and cluster coordinators to at least Senior Management level, as a condition of a school receiving the financial**

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<sup>118</sup> p.136 refers

<sup>119</sup> p. 136 refers

**rewards of EiC, rewarding the coordinators with commensurate employment conditions.**

- **Make the Heads of schools directly accountable to the City Strand Coordinator for the whole hearted support and involvement of his/her staff in implementing the policy appertaining to mainstream and add-on programmes.**
  - **As a stake holder initiate a process of evaluation of the EiC National Training Programme for Coordinators at present provided by Oxford Brookes University and if necessary modify its content, method of delivery and location.**
  - **Remove the responsibility of providing subject related teacher training necessary to teach able children from local to a National responsibility, and arrange for its provision.**
  - **Commission an independent research programme to determine the effectiveness of the two main arms of its present provision within the EiC model: mainstream teaching and add-on enrichment activities.**
  - **Widen the ambit of the EiC initiative to include pre-school and primary pupils in the attempt to counter the negative effects of deprivation and a disadvantaged background at their source.**
  - **Introduce and adopt a prestigious alternative form of post sixteen education on vocational lines at sub degree, technician level.**
  - **Re visit its relatively recent (forty years) objections to a selective system of secondary education and its apparent reluctance to support single-sexed secondary schools.**
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## **AFTERWORD**

After concluding this dissertation, the SOS Estelle Morris in an article in the Observer, 23 June 2002, and in an address next day to the Social Market Foundation made significant promises about future secondary school provision. Based on a highly critical assessment of the performance of comprehensive schools and their failure to meet the needs of the Nation, she sees the future as one in which:

**We have to get away from the perception that one-size fits all schools and of ready-to-wear, off-the-shelf comprehensives. In the fight for equal opportunity we may have emphasised the equality too much and the opportunity too little. This is characterised in our attitude to excellence. Too often it is confused with élitism and the failure to understand that recognising and celebrating those who achieve does not hold back others.**

Heralded as a *volte-face* to the clarion call of forty years ago ‘opportunity for all’, much is now in play for yet more change, innovation and hopefully an improved system. Time will tell.

## **Appendix 1. Tables**

**Table 1.1 The National agenda - an overview**

<b><u>Initiative</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>	<b><u>Timescale</u></b>
Excellence in Cities	A distinct in-school teaching and learning programme for the most able 5-10% of pupils in each secondary school and Y5/6 in Primary schools within EiC areas Use of learning mentors. Extensive out of hours learning opportunities for the same cohort, provided through local networks.	September 99 – 2004
DfES/QCA guidance	Generic guidance plus subject specific covering all key stages and statutory subjects <a href="http://www.nc.uk.net/gt/">www.nc.uk.net/gt/</a>	Published November 2001
Literacy / numeracy guidance	Primary guidance issued in January 2000. Supporting exemplification for KS1 and KS2 published in November 2001. KS1/2 Book of Challenges and Puzzles for the more able in schools September 2000.	2000/2001
National Research Survey	NFER/Westminster Institute collaboration - will map the range and quality of good practice.	2002?
World Class Tests	World Class Tests in mathematics and problem solving calibrated against the performance of the best 10% of pupils aged 9 and 13 in the highest performing countries identified through international	November 2001
Advanced Extension Awards	Tests designed to challenge the most able 18 year olds by requiring a greater depth of understanding and the ability to think critically at a level higher than AL.	Summer 2002
Key Stage 3 Strategies	KS3 strategies in English, mathematics, science, ICT and Teaching and Learning in the Foundation subjects. For pupils of all abilities. Guidance to support schools re gifted and talented planned 2002 onwards	September 2001 onwards
Summer Schools programme	500 summer schools across all LEAs, EAZs and VEAZs. For gifted and talented Y6 -Y9. 50% of pupils at the end of Y6.	Summer 2000 onwards
Masterclasses	Two year pilot linked to 10 specialist schools. Programme of activities linked to the school's specialism. Evenings and Saturday mornings. HMI evaluating the programme.	1998-2000
Advanced Maths Centres	Aimed at gifted Y5/6 children	Currently being piloted
Beacon Schools	A number of Beacon schools will have gifted and talented as one of their areas of expertise. An important strand of EiC.	Ongoing
Specialist Schools	Eligible for community focus funding which can be spent on study support activities for gifted and talented.	800 by 2002/3
Advanced Skills Teachers	A teacher can be designated as an AST for gifted and talented pupils.	Ongoing
Music, Ballet and Drama scholarships	Number of scholarships to the specialist schools for MBD has increased to 1,500 for September 2000 and will go up to 2,200 by 2001.	2000/1
Out of School Hours Learning	There is a vast development of out of school activities much of it funded in the future by them New Opportunities Fund. The emphasis is on study support, homework clubs, use of mentors and the involvement of various partners such as museums, galleries, libraries, sports clubs, theatres etc.	Ongoing
ICT	Launch of Xcalibre - a database of subject specific resources for all key stages. <a href="http://www.xcalibre.ac.uk">www.xcalibre.ac.uk</a>	November 2001
National Standards	All have or will have explicit references to gifted and talented	Ongoing
HMI Report	Based on Ofsted reports, observations and comments form HMI re standards in schools re gifted and talented pupils	January 2001
OFSTED	Revised framework makes explicit references to gifted and talented and it is one of the categories of underachievement	January 2000
Early Years	Following an invitational conference on gifted and talented in the early years, Westminster institute to produce an evaluative report	Spring 2002

( Sue Mordecal.- updated for **NACE** Autumn 2001)

**Table 2.1 OFSTED's main findings on the EiC GaT strand**

1. The focus and funding of the Excellence in Cities strand for gifted and talented pupils have had positive effects. There is still much to be done to fulfil the objectives of the programme. It is too early to see sustained impact on attainment in tests and examinations.
2. The identification of gifted and talented pupils has presented difficulties for schools. To date, methods of identification have generally been rudimentary and have not yet solved the problem of recognising latent high ability, particularly among pupils who are underachieving generally
3. The development of distinct curriculum programmes for gifted and talented pupils is at an early stage. Most of the early work in schools has consisted of activities to enrich the mainstream curriculum, but these need to be better integrated if they are to have long-term effect. There has been little significant change in the organisation or the teaching of mainstream classes. In general, schools have chosen successful departments to spearhead the development; the task now is to develop better practice across all departments.
4. Management of the Excellence in Cities programme was good in two thirds of the schools visited and satisfactory in most of the others. Three key management issues emerge:
  - the support of senior managers is vital in underpinning the authority of co-ordinators, not all of whom are in senior positions
  - the responsibilities of subject leaders in relation to the initiative need to be clarified
  - monitoring of the benefits of the additional programmes is rarely evident.
5. Training has usually been confined to lead and school co-ordinators in the first instance and there is a need for local partnerships to make training available to all teachers, especially with regard to subject-specific work.

(OFSTED, 2001, *op. cit.*, 3,4)

**Table 2.2 OFSTED's report: issues for attention**

A number of issues emerging from inspection of the programmes merit particular attention. They include:

- improving methods for identifying gifted and talented pupils
- engaging parents and pupils
- developing subject-specific approaches
- giving earlier attention to the skills of independent learning
- making the most of additional provision
- recognising the implications for staffing
- improving monitoring and most importantly,
- establishing a secure basis for improving mainstream school practice.

(OFSTED, 2001, *op. cit.*,5)

**Table 2.3 Exemplars of *implicit-theoretical approaches* to the definition of giftedness**

<p><b><u>(a) Tannenbaum</u></b> (1986)</p> <p>A psychosocial definition of giftedness, which suggests that giftedness is comprised of <b>four</b> distinct kinds of talent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scarcity talent: possessed by those who make a unique science discovery.</li> <li>• Surplus talent: possessed by those who enrich but do not change the world (e.g. Bach).</li> <li>• Quota talent: possessed by those who specialise in high powered skills to provide goods or services. (e.g. physicians, teachers).</li> <li>• Anomalous: possessed by those who society may not particularly value or even disvalue, such as by those who may achieve notoriety or fame for a specific ability. (e.g. drink beer very quickly).</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>(b) Renzulli</u></b> (1986)</p> <p>A construct of giftedness which focuses on the individual rather than on society, but without ignoring the effects of tasks and situations. Taking a partially consistent but different approach to Tannenbaum (1986. op. cit.), his definition has <b>three</b> elements;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability (above average but not exceptional).</li> <li>• Creativity.</li> <li>• Task commitment.</li> </ul> <p>The inconsistency between the two constructs of Tannenbaum's and Renzulli's, arises because many anomalous talented activities fit into Tannenbaum's construct but fail to be accommodated in Renzulli's because of their lack of creativity.</p>
<p><b><u>(c) Gallagher and Courtwright</u></b> (1986)</p> <p>Accommodating somewhat the recognized inconsistency between Tannenbaum and Renzulli, their concept of giftedness has <b>two</b> distinct elements or domains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• psychological, (to which Renzulli's approach more closely approximates), and</li> <li>• educational, an element more narrowly defined than Tannenbaum's psychosocial definition but which could be accommodated with other spheres such as the arts, politics etc within Tannenbaum's construct.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>(d) Feldhusen</u></b> (1986)</p> <p>Falling into line with the psychological domain of Gallagher and Courtwright, but also reflecting (if in a rather more restrictive way) Renzulli's view, the construct has <b>four</b> elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• general intellectual ability,</li> <li>• positive self-concept,</li> <li>• achievement motivation, and</li> <li>• special talent(s).</li> </ul> <p>To Feldhusen all these elements would be essential for an individual to be regarded as gifted.</p>
<p><b><u>(e) Haensly, Reynolds and Nash</u></b> (1986)</p> <p>Contrasting with Feldhusen's construct, (being more ecologically but less individually based), it is in line with Tannenbaum's, as both constructs define giftedness within a societal context, i.e. <b>gifted people only develop in a special way in response to the pressures of the environment - they do not develop in a stimulus free vacuum.</b></p> <p>The construct has four elements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• coalescence,</li> <li>• context,</li> <li>• conflict,</li> <li>• commitment.</li> </ul>	

**Table 2.4 Mental operations involved in an educational definition of giftedness**  
(Gallagher and Courtright)

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Memory:</b> storage of information in a complex system in both the long and short term, so that a scan supplies the response to the question asked.</li><li>• <b>Association:</b> the linking of facts from memory and /or experience through the analysis of their attributes.</li><li>• <b>Classification:</b> the ability to assemble and so group ideas according to some criteria.</li><li>• <b>Reasoning:</b> the set of rules and strategies which allow new knowledge to be generated, by the logical organization of existing information.</li><li>• <b>Evaluation:</b> the process of applying a criterion and comparing a given element against it, and</li><li>• <b>Executive function;</b> which controls the attention, mental strategies and response choice.</li></ul> |
|---|

**Table 2.5 Gifted and talented children: Marland's identifiers**

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>General intellectual ability.</b></li><li>• <b>Specific academic aptitude.</b></li><li>• <b>Creative or productive thinking.</b></li><li>• <b>Leadership ability.</b></li><li>• <b>Visual and performing arts.</b></li><li>• <b>Psychomotor ability</b> [later dropped]</li></ul> |
|--|

**Table 2.6 Educational definition of giftedness: Gallagher and Courtright's identifiers**

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Gifted:</b> reserved for extraordinary rapid development in those channels of individual differences, which in a given characteristic rarely exceeds more than five per cent of the population in a given characteristic.</li><li>• <b>Academically advanced:</b> reserved for students needing special educational attention and which might include ten or an even greater percentage of the population.</li></ul> |
|---|

**Table 2.7 Common features exhibited in the exemplars of the *implicit-theoretical approach* to a conception of giftedness (Sternberg, op, cit. 7)**

All the exemplar theories specify:

- **The basic domain** on which their definition rests, whether it be individual or societal.
- **That cognitive abilities** are an essential part of giftedness.
- **The prerequisite for giftedness is motivation** in the form of task commitment.
- **That the way an individual reacts to the rewards,** non-rewards and punishments awarded by society to him/her, determines wholly or in part whether or not he/she is recognized as gifted and the way that he/she is identified.
- **The importance of the coalescence of the individual's own abilities** working together in a motivated way with the societal forces that give the desired direction to the expression of these abilities.

**Table 2.8 Exemplars of *explicit-theoretical approaches* to a giftedness definition.**

- |  |
|--|
| 1 Jackson and Butterfield (1986)       |
| 2 Borkowski and Peck (1986)            |
| 3 Davidson (1986)                      |
| 4 Sternberg (1986, <i>op.cit.</i> )    |
| 5 Gruber (1986)                        |
| 6 Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1986) |
| 7 Albert and Runco (1986)              |
| 8 Stanley and Benbow (1986)            |
| 9 Bamberger (1986)                     |

**Table 2.9 Exemplars of *cognitive explicit-theoretical* approaches to the definition of giftedness**

**(a) Cognitive theories**

**(i) Jackson and Butterfield (1986)**

They believe that:

- metacognition ability is probably a key component of giftedness,
- superordinate processes regulating task analysis and self-management of problem-solving behaviour may be important components differentiating gifted from average performance,
- higher-order cognitive processes select and guide the use of lower-order cognitive processes,
- because gifted children out-perform average children it is a sufficient reason to suggest that their superior results might be due to metacognitive factors.

**(ii) Borkowski and Peck (1986)**

Their definition;

- emphasises metacognition as a key element, but
- they concentrate on one specific aspect of metacognition i.e. metamemory (the knowledge within one's memory and its control).

**(iii) Davidson (1986)**

She identifies one specific aspect, insight as a crucial factor for giftedness, and attributes both major and minor contributions to civilization as the consequence of the involvement of insight to a greater or lesser degree.

She identifies three kinds of insight:

- selective encoding, distinguishing relevant information from the irrelevant for one's purpose,
- selective combination, putting together relevant pieces of information in just the right way, and
- selective comparison, relating these pieces of information to that already stored in one's memory.

Like other researchers she does not believe that one variable can account for all intellectual giftedness.

**(v) Sternberg (1986, op.cit.)**

He does not accept that giftedness is any single thing, but interprets giftedness as consisting of three aspects:

- cognitive and internal to the individual, (whereby superior metacognition including metamemory and insight aspects are at play),
- experimental, in that information processing becomes automated by virtue of experience and thereby rendered rapid and outside deliberate conscious control, and
- intellectual functioning mediated by experience in a reality context.

**Table 2.10 Exemplars of *developmental explicit-theoretical approaches to the definition of giftedness***

**(b) Developmental theories**

**(v) Gruber (1986)**

Gruber maintains that four strands are involved in understanding giftedness:

- understanding the process by which children and especially adults develop, (which he believes is best achieved by a research strategy to study the lives of a small number of extraordinary individuals).
- familiarity with the activities and interests of an individual under scrutiny as they provide the main force in his/her development, (because Gruber subscribes to the view that giftedness is a creation on the part of the person himself/herself).
- the value and meaning of a particular kind of gift depends on the historical and social context
- the close scrutiny of extraordinary lives informs on the nature of giftedness.

**(vi) Csikszentmihalyi and Robinson (1986)**

In a similar pose to that of Gruber they identify giftedness as:

- a developing trait and,
- therefore, an unstable one.

To them as one's capacity for action and the contextual cultural demands change over a lifetime, so does the level of giftedness i.e. it unfolds along life's way. They subscribe to the concept of four **time lines**, which proceed in parallel with each other to produce in some people giftedness;

- life-span transitions: as the tasks confronting an individual develop through his/her life so does the kind of contribution the individual makes in response.
- cognitive development: performance generated by an individual depends on his/her level of cognitive development
- progression in a given domain of endeavour: early development in an activity progresses through the transition stages of growth in that area, which with increasing familiarity and experience allows the development of increasing creativity in the activity. i.e. from novice, through apprenticeship, to competency and eventual mastership.
- progression in the field as a social structure: as the competency of an individual in an activity develops, so does the acceptance level of his/her competency become recognized, approved, and assimilated into his/her social environment.

**(vii) Albert and Runco (1986)**

A conception of giftedness derived from seven basic assumptions forms Albert and Runco's understanding of giftedness:

- intelligence and creativity are not strictly separable when one is considering high levels of mental ability and talent.
- for eminence to be achieved, one's early giftedness must be transformed into an appropriate set of drives and skills.
- from gifted creativity to eminence: the transformation begins within the family structure, refined by formal and informal education as well as one's early career efforts.
- for potential giftedness to become a reality, one needs those aspects of information that will enable one to be steered by others or oneself to the appropriate career.
- the values, personalities and socioeconomic status of family members will provide the experience-producing and experience-selecting attributes needed for potential giftedness to be actualised.
- the concurrent inter-developing history of a family influences the development of each family member, including the gifted ones.
- the enveloping environment of the gifted person's family is mobilised to the advantage or disadvantage of developing giftedness, by
- the biological inheritance and the interplay between family members as organizers of the individual's gifts focuses the enveloping environment in either a positive or negative manner for giftedness to be developed.

**Table 2.11 Exemplars of domain-specific explicit-theoretical approaches to the definition of giftedness**

**(c) Domain-specific theories**

**(viii) Stanley and Benbow (1986)**

A construct applying to those who show giftedness in one specific domain e.g. music, mathematics or art.

Stanley and Benbow in their study of precocious mathematical ability in youth:

concentrated their efforts on

- helping those who reason exceptionally well mathematically and
- devising novel educational alternatives for them.

The youths:

- were identified by achieving a high score at an early age in a specific test (IQ tests were purposely not used, believing them to be unreliable as indicators of mathematical reasoning).
- many of whom despite being unfamiliar with the specific mathematic topics tested, displayed high mathematical reasoning ability.

They concluded that:

- the success of certain very young students in exhibiting startlingly high levels of mathematical reasoning does not appear to be dependent on the maturing experience gained from chronological age, which is necessary in other intellectual fields like the study of philosophy.
- the early identification of such pupils is important because they can master pre-calculus mathematics at a much faster pace than normally employed in school programmes.

It is because of this that Stanley and Benbow emphasise the importance of acceleration as a means of allowing such precocious mathematics ability to develop.

They believe that;

- for such pupils motivation for mathematics is negatively affected by forcing such children to proceed at the normal pace
- acceleration as opposed to enrichment is the best way of helping positively

They reject enrichment on the premise that enrichment so often consists of the following:

- **Busywork:** the gifted doing more of the subject already mastered, as the others in the class go on with their regular work.
- **Irrelevant academic enrichment:** the gifted being given different alternative academic and/or non-academic courses.
- **Cultural enrichment:** experiences beyond normal school curricula.
- **Relevant academic:** normally given for short period of time and then the pupils returned to their chronological peers to become bored and frustrated.

**(ix) Bamberger (1986)**

Based on the study of musically gifted children, the findings were:

- Young gifted performers represent musical relations to themselves in multiple ways, which are not distinct but intertwined and intersecting.
- On reaching adolescence these representations are transformed into more formal, more analytical and less intertwined and separable ones: the earlier relationships now no longer exist.
- This transformation forms a midlife crisis, which either the adolescent overcomes and which then leads through a continuation of prodigiousness to mature artistry or if he fails leads to the end of development of his giftedness.
- For successfully overcoming this midlife crisis the gifted adolescence must carry out a cognitive reorganization of the now new and separate musical dimensions so that he develops a means of coordinating these new representations to act once more as a single entity.

**Table 2.12 The *sports approach*: identification by provision**

1. Identification should be process-based and continuous.
2. Identification should be by multiple criteria, including provision for learning and outcome.
3. Indicators should be validated for each course of action and provision.
4. The pupil's abilities should be presented as a profile rather than a single figure.
5. Increasingly sharper criteria should be employed at subsequent learning stages.
6. Recognition should be given to attitudes possibly affected by outside influences such as culture and gender.
7. The pupils must be involved in educational decision-making, notably in areas of their own interest.

**Table 2.13 Feng, *et al.*'s report**

In the USA (Feng, *et al.*) report that:

1 Benbow and Stanley, (1980, 1982, 1983a, 1983b, 1983c) believed that the gender gaps among the precocious children in mathematics were attributable to boys' superiority of mathematic ability.

2 Plomin (1990, 1997) saw the gender gaps as a product of interactions between genetic and environmental factors.

3 Harding and Surtoris (1984) provided an explanation from a developmental perspective that girls were inclined to seek person-oriented relationships, whereas boys were object-oriented and preferred autonomous activities.

4 Eccles, (1983), Campbell & Beaudry, (1998), argued that socialisation practices were responsible for the differential pattern of achievement and career choice.

5 Adams (1996) had identified six sources of possible explanation for the under-participation of gifted girls in science fields as:

disparity in cognitive abilities

personal characteristics

attitudes toward sciences

differences between in and out-of-school learning experiences.

gender differences in mathematics preparation

socialization factors.

6 Fox, Sadker, and Engle (1999) examined the sexism in school curriculum and the subtle interaction between students and teachers in classrooms, concluding that the biased curriculum as well as the quantity and quality of teachers' feedback favoured boys, which produced detrimental effects on gifted girls' further pursuit of academic and career success in sciences and technological fields.

**Table.2 14 Feng, *et al.*'s report on female American olympians ideas.**

- 1 Broaden the goals of these programs.
- 2 De-emphasize the competition aspect.
- 3 Encourage girls to take more math and sciences courses.
- 4 Encourage them for sake of their interests instead of for the political purposes.
- 5 Recognise females' achievement in mathematics and sciences positively.
- 6 Make the qualifying exams accessible at the basic level.
- 7 Hold high expectation for both boys and girls.
- 8 Inform parents and let them know impact of differential child-rearing practices.
- 9 Inform teachers and let them be aware of the educational differences between boys and girls.
- 10 Recognize these differences.
- 11 Allow girls their own way.
- 12 Provide a program for young women which they will find fun.
- 13 Support and reform the Olympiad.
- 14 Include team work by allowing group collaboration.

**Table 3.1 Major educational concerns at the end of the twentieth century**

- 1.The provision of appropriate educational opportunities.
- 2.The perception that inner-city schools were failing to provide.
- 3.The education required, particularly by the upper end of the ability range.
- 4.The standard of attainment, particularly of boys, with special concern for the underachievement of black Afro-Caribbean boys.
- 5.The under-representation in higher education of able children from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- 6.The role of private organisations in educational provision.
- 7.The 'de-comprehensivisation' of comprehensive schools.
- 8.The continuing existence in certain areas, of maintained grammar schools.
- 9.The very existence of CTC and SS.
- 10.The APS.
- 11.The discrepancy between the requirements of industry and business and the educational accomplishments of school leavers currently in their employ and those who on leaving full time education are potential candidates for employment.

**Table 4.1 The research questions**

- 1 To what extent are the policy decisions for the education of the GaT as outlined in EiC. being implemented at a 'local' level by the:
  - (a) City level manager, SC, and
  - (b) School/College management person (GaT Coordinator)?
- 2 What practical management decisions and actions have been, or are being, taken to effect the:
  - (a) Policy pronouncements made in EiC, at City level, and
  - (b) Policy direction emanating from the City by the School/College GaT Coordinator?
- 3 How effective are the management decisions taken in achieving their objectives at
  - (a) City level, and
  - (b) School/College level?
- 4 Is the Government's policy working: to what extent and how might it be amended and improved?
5. What inferences can be drawn as to the Government's intentions regarding the future provision for the education of the nation's more able children?

**Table 5.1 Educational case study.**

At least three types of educational case study can be conceived.

- **Theory-seeking** and theory-testing case studies: particular studies of general issues - aiming to lead to fuzzy propositions (more tentative) or fuzzy generalizations (less tentative) and conveying these, their context and the evidence leading to them to interested audiences.
- **Story-telling** and picture-drawing case studies: narrative stories and descriptive accounts of educational events, projects, programmes, institutions or systems which deserve to be told to interested audiences, after careful analysis.
- **Evaluative** case studies: enquiries into educational programmes, systems, projects, or events to determine their worthwhileness, as judged by analysis by researchers, and to convey this to interested audiences.

(Bassey, *op. cit.*, 58)

**Table 5.2 Case study: its real strengths and values****A case study is...**

- Strong on reality and born out of living events
- Able to deal with subtlety and complex ranges of data
- Context-strong
- Able to represent a range of feeling and opinion
- Rooted in the world of action
- Readable and accessible to a range of audiences
- Capable of supporting or developing theory
- Potentially at least, generalisable

(Male and Kerry, 2000, 99)

**Table5.3 Qualitative research: its strengths****Qualitative research has particular strengths:**

- It can probe the detail and nuances of a situation in depth and from a number of angles.
- It can reveal complexities in situations rather than reducing them to measures.
- It is specially suitable in conveying feelings.
- It provides a contextualised framework within which the researched topic can be judged.
- In qualitative studies the data challenges the researcher and demands further exploration rather than being an end in itself.
- Qualitative approaches encourage a kind of 'dialogue' between the emerging data and the researcher.
- Qualitative approaches encourage creative thinking.

(Male and Kerry, *op. cit.*, 92)

**Table 5.4 Effective approach to improving the provision for the GaT**

- Developing an ethos where academic and creative achievement is expected and celebrated.
- Being open with parents and pupils about what the school is trying to do in this regard and actively enlisting their support and involvement.
- Adopting a management structure which involves all departments and ensures sufficient authority for a coordinator to work effectively with senior staff to influence classroom practice.
- Careful analysis of data on pupil performance and of pupils' approaches to learning in subjects as a basis for effective identification.
- Work on developing assessment within subjects so that teachers become more adept at recognising latent high ability.
- Active strategies to ensure equality of opportunity, most especially where pupil mobility is high and for those pupils reluctant to engage.
- Flexible attitude to the composition of the groups targeted, recognising that pupils' abilities are not static.
- Professional development that increases teachers' confidence and capability in designing classroom practice with gifted and talented pupils in mind.
- Working early on the skills of independent learning.
- Involving pupils directly in evaluating their own progress and contributing to their future targets.
- Working with local schools and community organisers to improve area-wide provision and to share expertise.
- Systematic monitoring as a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of the provision made.

(OFSTED Report. December 2001)

**Table. 5.5 Pseudonym names of interviewees.**

<b><u>Appointment/Position</u></b>	<b><u>EiC area, City M</u></b>	<b><u>EiC area, City</u></b>
City Coordinator	Albert	Betty
School/Cluster Coordinator based in schools	Clair and David	Edward

**Table 7.1 Expert witnesses: *curricula vitarum***

<b><u>Ms Belle Wallace</u></b>	<b><u>Professor Joan Freeman</u></b>
<p>Ms Belle Wallace is active in the education of very able children as an:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International Lecturer/Trainer on ‘The Education of Very Able Children’,</li> <li>• Consultant, Broadcaster on Radio and Television on the ‘Needs of Very Able Children’,</li> <li>• Consultant to LEAs and Schools on ‘Developing a Policy in Practice for Very Able children’</li> <li>• Editor of ‘Gifted Educational International’: a tri-annual Journal on the ‘Education of Very Able Children’.</li> <li>• Author of major publications on the teaching of the very able child.</li> </ul>	<p>Professor Joan Freeman is a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• University Professor,</li> <li>• Distinguished chartered psychologist,</li> <li>• OFSTED and DfES advisor heavily involved in the education of able children and</li> <li>• Author of many authoritative books and articles on the education of gifted children, including ‘Educating the Very Able. Current International Research: OFSTED’ and ‘Gifted Children Grown Up’.</li> </ul>

**Table 8.1 OFSTED report (2001) statistics**

1. Pupils in phase 1 Excellence in Cities schools performed at a lower rate than other schools in Key Stage 3 tests and General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations over the three years to 2000.
2. Based on an aggregation of performance in all core subjects at Key Stage 3, the schools improved at a faster rate (+1.3 percentage points) between 1998 and 2000 than other maintained schools (+0.8).
3. Gifted and talented pupils:
  - Made good or better progress in Key Stage 3 in 36% of schools in phase 1 Excellence in Cities areas, compared with 39% of other schools.
  - At Key Stage 4, their progress was good or better in 42% of Excellence in Cities schools, compared with 44% elsewhere.
4. Progress was judged unsatisfactory or poor in a smaller percentage (5%) of Excellence in Cities schools than elsewhere (8%).

## **Appendix 2. Questions to be put to City Strand Coordinator**

### **Pre-amble:**

### **Purpose of the Research.**

The EiC initiative with regard to the special arrangements to deal with the provision of an appropriate education for the gifted and talented within the six designated city areas is a radical departure from hitherto prevailing philosophy.

This research is intended to provide a critical appraisal of the resulting management proposals, implications and arrangements for the implementation of this policy at both City Strand Coordinator level and Gifted and talented Coordinator levels and thus gain an insight into the Government intentions

An assessment of their suitability and success could influence informed opinion. The consequent effect of such findings as may emerge might, therefore, add to the considerations of those who have responsibility for government policy in this regard, and hence its implementation.

### **Questions**

1. Can you outline for me what the Government's EiC policy directive for the education of the gifted and talented requires you to do in your position as the Strand Coordinator?
2. Would you describe what you have done, or are planning to do, to implement this policy directive?
3. How do you identify the top 10 percent cohort of children?
4. How are the criteria adopted for identification decided?
  - a. Could a specific child in School X be chosen, yet might, if he/she were in School Y, not qualify for selection?
  - b. What criteria is used for identifying the gifted (defined by DfES as with high ability or potential in academic subjects)?
  - c. What criteria is used to identify the talented (defined by DfES as those with high ability or potential in the expressive, or creative arts, or sports)?
5. Do you act as the agent through whom the Government Grants are funnelled to the Schools/Colleges?

.....Yes      .....No

If so: can you say:

- a. What is your total EiC gifted and talented budget for the City?
  - b. What fraction of the total education budget for this City does the extra finance amount to?
  - c. How is the finance being administered from the DfES to the City, and then on to the Schools/Colleges?
  - d. How is the division of finance between the City and the recipient Schools/Colleges decided?
  - e. On what basis is the allocation of finance made to each School/College cluster?
  - f. Have you spent money on training?
6. Is your feeling that the money spent on training delivered better learning?
- .....Yes                      .....No
7. What evidence do you have for your answer to No 6?
  8. What training have you commissioned or provided for school/college staffs to enable them better to identify both the gifted and talented?
  9. What training is planned, or has been given, to enable staffs involved in the teaching of these children to obtain the skills/knowledge to perform well?
  10. What specific programmes have been developed in this City to establish a secure basis for improving mainstream school practice?
  11. What monitoring procedures have you installed to check/oversee that your directives are being implemented at School/College level?
  12. To what extent is the operation of your plan working?
  13. In your view, how successful are the Schools/Colleges in your City in putting your plans into effect?

### **Appendix 3. Questions to be put to School/Colleges Gifted and Talented Coordinators**

#### **Pre-ample:**

#### **Purpose of the Research.**

The EiC initiative with regard to the special arrangements to deal with the provision of an appropriate education for the gifted and talented within the six designated city areas is a radical departure from hitherto prevailing philosophy.

This research is intended to provide a critical appraisal of the resulting management proposals, implications and arrangements for the implementation of this policy at both City Strand Coordinator level and Gifted and talented Coordinator levels and thus gain an insight into the Government intentions

An assessment of their suitability and success could influence informed opinion. The consequent effect of such findings as may emerge might, therefore, add to the considerations of those who have responsibility for government policy in this regard, and hence its implementation.

#### **Questions**

1. Can you outline for me what the City's EiC directing plan for the education of the gifted and talented requires you to do as Coordinator?
2. Would you describe what you have done, or are planning to do, to implement this directive from the City?
3. How do you identify the top 10 percent cohort of children in your School/College?
4. How are the criteria adopted for identification decided?
  - (a) Could a specific child in your School/College be chosen but might, if he/she were in School Y, not qualify for selection?
  - (b) What criteria is used for identifying the gifted (defined by DfES as with high ability or potential in academic subjects)?
  - (c) What criteria is used to identify the talented (defined by DfES as those with high ability or potential in the expressive, or creative arts, or sports)?

5. Do you act as the agent of the City through whom the Government Grants are funnelled to the Schools/Colleges?

.....Yes      ....No

If so: can you say:

- (a) What is your total EiC gifted and talented budget for the School/College?
  - (b) What fraction of the total education budget for this School/College does the extra finance amount to?
  - (c) How is the finance being administered from you (the Coordinator), to the work done for the gifted and talented cohort in your School/College?
  - (d) How is the division of finance between the various needs decided in your School/College?
  - (e) On what basis is the allocation of finance made to each aspect i.e. gifted and/or talented as defined by DfES in your School/College?
  - (f) Have you spent money on training?
6. Is it your feeling that the money spent on training delivered better learning?
- ....Yes      ....No
7. What evidence do you have for your answer in No 6?
8. What training have you commissioned or provide for school/college staffs to enable them better to identify both the gifted and talented?
9. What training is planned, or has been given, to enable staffs involved in the teaching of these children to obtain the skills/knowledge to perform well?
10. What monitoring procedure have you installed to check/oversee that your directives are being implemented at Teacher and Head of Department level?
11. To what extent is the operation of your plan working?
12. In your view how successful is the strategy applied by the City to your School/College in putting their plans into effect for the defined 10 percent cohort?
13. In your view have the children in your School/College benefited, or have some even de-benefited from the policy?
14. How has your management action affected classroom practice/
15. How do you know the answer to No 14 above?
16. What are the next steps, needs, relationship to other pupils, that you consider might add to the eventual success of the EiC initiative?

## **Appendix 4. Questions to be put to Expert Witnesses on the EiC Gifted and Talented Policy Strand**

### **Pre-ample:**

### **Purpose of the Research.**

The EiC initiative with regard to the special arrangements to deal with the provision of an appropriate education for the gifted and talented within the six designated city areas is a radical departure from hitherto prevailing philosophy.

This research is intended to provide a critical appraisal of the resulting management proposals, implications and arrangements for the implementation of this policy at both the City level and School/College gifted and talented Coordinator levels and thus gain an insight into the Government intentions

An assessment of their suitability and success could influence informed opinion. The consequent effect of such findings as may emerge might, therefore, add to the considerations of those who have responsibility for government policy in this regard, and hence its implementation.

The collection of research data has been by semi-structured interviews with both City and School level coordinators.

Expert witnesses in the area of the education of the able will have a detached view as to the suitability of the EiC gifted and talented strand policy to meet the stated aims of the Government and the management arrangements made at both city and school level to fructify the policy.

### **The EiC Policy Aims**

EiC policy sets out an ambitious three-year programme to improve the education of city children. The aim is to:

- drive up standards in schools in major cities higher and faster to match the standards of excellence found in our best schools.
- ensure (sic) City parents and children should expect and gain as much from their schools as those anywhere else in the country.
- insist that (sic) Excellence must be the norm. (EiC <http://www>. [accessed 5 June 2001].

**EiC's broad policy objectives are to:**

- help improve the attainment and motivation of the most able children in each inner city secondary school (particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds),
- improve the ability of inner city secondary schools to make effective provision for their most able children, partly by developing local support networks based on a cluster of neighbouring schools, and
- create a positive perception of city education amongst parents and the wider community.

**Questions**

1. In the light of the policy objectives of the Government to improve the attainment and motivation of able inner city secondary school children from disadvantaged backgrounds, what do you think of the suitability of the EiC gifted and talented policy as a means of achieving that objective?
2. What is your opinion of the suitability of the required/designated arrangements being put in place as a means to improve the ability of schools to provide effectively for able children?
3. In your opinion what is the likelihood of these arrangements creating a positive perception of inner city education amongst parents and the community?
4. What is your view as to the desirability and practicality of an approach which is partly dependent on the creation of clusters of schools as a means to meet the aim of improving the education of the able within their own school?
5. Given the EiC policy, are the financial arrangements adequate to achieve the Government objectives?
6. Is the decision of the Government to identify 10 percent of an age group as gifted talented in each school a suitable way of identifying those who might benefit from their policy?
7. What training should be commissioned or provided for school/college staffs to enable them better to identify both the gifted and talented?
8. In your opinion are there better alternatives to the Government's EiC policy for the education of the gifted and talented which would meet the stated objectives? Would selection, streaming etc be in your view an effective alternative?

9. The OFSTED Report (2001) on the working of EiC criticises the progress made in the mainstream teaching of the able. Is this criticism justified? Is it possible for teachers to meet the needs of children of a wide range of abilities on a continuous basis in a mixed ability class?
10. What is your opinion as to the desired status of a school coordinator in the hierarchy in order to facilitate his/her work?
11. What is your opinion of the arrangements in place to train coordinators in their allotted tasks?
12. What training should be available to ensure that subject teachers can deliver mainstream education to meet the needs of the gifted and talented within the existing system?
13. In your opinion what else needs to be done if the aims and objectives of EiC gifted and talented strand are to be met?

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