CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Background

Australia is a culturally diverse country that has been providing English as second language (hereafter ESL) school-based instruction for over forty years across all of its states and territories to students for whom English is not their mother tongue. Through policy, educational authorities in all states and territories have mapped out provisions for these English-language learners (hereafter ELLs); similarly, state and territory policies also exist to support gifted students. Little research exists, however, on how the consequences of these policies and current school arrangements best meet the educational needs of gifted ELLs within the Australian context. The exploration of the experiences and educational needs of gifted ELLs and how these are being met forms the basis for my inquiry.

The existing situation for the majority of ELLs in Australian schools was captured in a 2006 study compiled by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2006b) titled *Where Immigrant Students Succeed – A Comparative Review of Performance and Engagement in PISA 2003*. This report presented a snapshot of the educational situation for immigrant students by collecting and comparing data from 17 different countries, including Australia, which had participated in the 2003 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA). This report considered that overall the lack of proficiency in the receiving country's official language was seen to be the main hurdle for the integration of immigrant students into the school system. Inclusion is the main approach used in Australia, with the acquisition of English by all ELLs seen as a priority.

Australia's approach to the acquisition of English by all ELLs has been labelled as "immersion with systematic language support" (OECD, 2006b, p. 10), consisting of "immersion programmes with a preparatory phase in the language of instruction" (p. 10) occurring. Specialist ESL teachers and/or ESL aides provide ESL programs for newly-arrived immigrant students as well as Australian-born ELLs. In most schools students are included in mainstream classes and receive support from ESL teachers working in partnership with the class teacher. This arrangement is most common in metropolitan schools due to the availability of specialist staff; however in many rural schools a Learning and Support Teacher may perform a similar function. Intensive ESL tuition is offered through diverse grouping practices, allowing for newly-arrived students to experience specific language learning. In secondary education, Intensive English High

Schools (IEHS) and Intensive English Centres (IECs) in several states provide full-time English language tuition for students as well as orientation and welfare programs supported by bilingual support staff and counsellors. Class sizes are small and students may stay up to nine months, receiving support in the context of the secondary curriculum areas in preparation for integration into mainstream high schools where they will receive further (though less) support from ESL teachers (OECD, 2006b). The focus in these centres is on equipping the students with English-language skills to function in mainstream schools.

Australian educational authorities across all states and territories promote their intent of assisting ELLs to reach their full potential as independent learners. They believe this result can be achieved by assisting students to gain competency in the use of Standard Australian English (SAE), which is the core language of instruction in Australian schools, in order for students to access the curriculum (see Department of Education, Victoria, 2006; Education Queensland, 2003; New South Wales Department of Education and Training (NSW DET), Multicultural Programs Unit, 2004). Similarly, documentation exists from many of these same authorities that outlines how gifted and talented learners are to be given maximum opportunities to achieve their potential in challenging and supportive learning environments (see Education Queensland, 2004; NSW DET, Curriculum K–12 Directorate, 2004a). In spite of the assertions in the professional literature and in policy statements about differentiation of the curriculum for gifted students (Gross, Urquhart, Doyle, Juratowitch, & Matheson, 2011) and support for ELLs (Hertzberg, 2012), little research appears to have been directed towards how differentiation unfolds for gifted ELLs.

ELLs themselves do not form a homogeneous group but rather come from a variety of backgrounds, as acknowledged by several state, territory, and national documents (Australian Curriculum, Assessment, and Reporting Authority (ACARA), 2011; Education Queensland, 2003; NSW DET, Multicultural Programs Unit, 2004; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007) as well as in more recent publications (Hammond & Miller, 2015b). The main groups identified include ELLs from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, those of migrant heritage born in Australia and other English-speaking countries, and those from non-English speaking countries (ACARA, 2011). My inquiry will concentrate on non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups.

Little account has been taken of students who have experienced such background issues as war-related suffering, forced or multiple migrations, and re-settlement distress, who may have the added disadvantage of coming from low literacy backgrounds due to interrupted schooling or lack of access to schools (Hammond & Miller, 2015a; Westoby, 2009). No research exists, either,

regarding ELLs from high socio-economic backgrounds whose families have chosen an Australian education for their children who are highly literate in their home language/s, or regarding any advantages that have been gained because of this background. Policies and their application must expand to include the educational needs of these different sub-populations (Gifford, Correa-Velez, & Sampson, 2009), where gifted students can also be found. In order to achieve this goal, the diversity of the ELLs needs to be acknowledged and catered for (Gonski, Boston, Greiner, Lawrence, Scales, & Tannock, 2011), and further, gifted ELLs need to be identified and supported.

There is little understanding, also, of what the students themselves perceive as their most pressing and significant educational needs, complicated in part by the variety of their individual background experiences. There is a danger, then, of ignoring the voice of gifted ELLs because of the continuing assimilationist approach prioritising the acquisition of English (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007) without considering the possible differing priorities of the students themselves. Indeed, much current research in education seeks to garner and represent the worlds of students by including their voices in the learning process (Smyth, 2012; Tierney & Dilley, 2001) as well as in research into their contexts (Smyth, 2012).

Aims and Rationale

Using Habermas's theory of communicative action as the conceptual framework my inquiry aims to identify the experiences and educational needs of gifted ELLs and explore how these needs are being met in Australian secondary schools. The objective is to explore the emancipatory interest, termed by Habermas as "the human interest in autonomy and responsibility" (Habermas, 1972, pp. 261–262), with the purpose of expanding the scope of autonomy for gifted ELLs and reducing the domination of Australian policies implemented without full and thorough consultation with relevant stakeholders. The intent is to be able to make recommendations based on the findings for the reconstruction of this particular aspect of the Australian educational system so that power and justice can be more equitably distributed (see Figures 1.1 and 1.2).
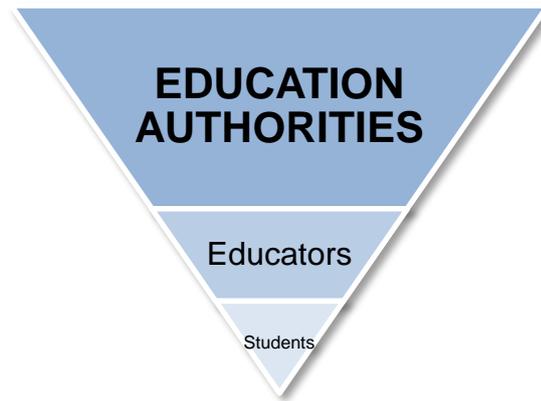
*Figure 1.1.* Existing distribution of power within the education system.
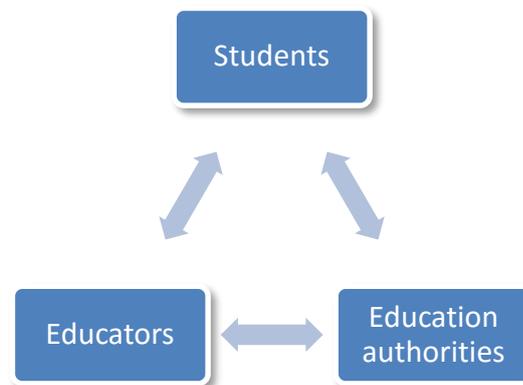
Figure 1.2. More equitable distribution of power within the education system.

Research in the area of gifted ELLs in the Australian context is minimal, with the focus mainly on the barriers to achieving excellence (Little, 1995). Similarly, little research exists on how policies, and the organisations meant to implement them, best serve the educational needs of gifted ELLs in an Australasian setting (Carnellor, 1996; Ferguson, 2006) with the emphasis being on a top-down approach. No research is evidenced in policy documents from the individual Australian states' and territories' education departments to indicate that any other stance exists beyond that of an intent to see students acquire sufficient English to participate in a curriculum delivered exclusively in SAE (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007) with no other special provision made for gifted ELLs in this area noted. It has also been acknowledged that the students' perspective is often missing from educational research, even though this perspective has been judged to be a

critical element in determining educational opportunities and guiding future support (Nieto, 2009).

International research, mostly based in the United States, is more varied but also suffers from limitations (Granada, 2003). In essence, it is concerned with several themes that have emerged over the last 30 years, including identification, underrepresentation, deracination, and educational provision with regards to gifted ELLs, predominantly from Latino backgrounds (Castellano & Diaz, 2002a). This research is often intertwined with studies of students from mostly low socio-economic backgrounds; however, in recent times there has been a move away from socio-economic to socio-cultural contexts (Kitano, 2010). While much of this international information is applicable to the Australian context, transferability is not always viable. The challenge arises from Australia and the United States serving different populations of gifted ELLs receiving education in vastly different settings and responding to differing political agendas. In order to develop quality educational programs and practices within the fields of gifted and ESL education in the Australian context that is authentic, equitable, and just, more research needs to be undertaken in that very setting.

Research Questions

The intent of my inquiry, then, is to explore the current educational landscape in Australia with regards to gifted ELLs and to situate this group of students within it to determine stakeholder perceptions of existing programs and practices. To guide the inquiry the following questions were posed:

What are the educational experiences of gifted English-language learners in New South Wales public secondary schools?

What are the needs of these gifted English-language learners and how are they being met?

Theoretical Framework

Critical theory. My inquiry will use critical theory as the starting point for reflection about the research and its context (Smyth, 2004). This approach is described in its simplest form as a critique of society and culture that draws from knowledge across the humanities and social sciences. Critical theory concerns itself "with issues of power and justice and the ways the

economy; matters of race, class and gender; ideologies; discourses; education; religion and other social institutions; and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p. 87).

Critical theory lends itself authentically to my inquiry because of its concern with the analysis of "competing power interests between groups and individuals within a society [for the purpose of] identifying who gains and who loses in specific situations" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2002, p. 93). Within my inquiry critical theory will assist in examining the different understandings that educational authorities and gifted ELLs have of the students' experiences and educational needs and in identifying where the power lies, in order to guide change for the benefit of the disempowered. Critical theory's purpose, to "identify, challenge and change the process by which a grossly iniquitous society uses dominant ideology to convince people this is a normal state of affairs" (Brookfield, 2005, p. viii), aligns well with the intent of my inquiry, as education is not only a technical enterprise but also a political one (Torres, 1999). The perceived needs of gifted ELLs as determined by the dominant ideology and represented in the educational authorities' worldview needs to be examined, challenged, and politicised further in order for change to occur that will benefit gifted ELLs.

Under the terms of critical theory the current scenario for gifted ELLs can be described as one where they are entrapped in a system of "domination or dependence" (Popkewitz, 1999, p. 6) that can and must be challenged. Australian educational authorities have predetermined what the educational needs of gifted students are, and also of ELLs; however, it appears that there is very little Australian-based research that identifies the experiences and educational needs of gifted ELLs. Recent searches using the ProQuest database and Google Scholar revealed a limited number of articles that focused on gifted ELLs in the Australian context; these articles concentrated mainly on gifted Aboriginal students and their use of non-standard English (Garvis, 2006), a population of students that is outside of the scope of my inquiry. A solid grounding in research, then, is preferable so that informed decisions that meet the needs of gifted ELLs might be made. It is envisaged that my inquiry may begin to fill the gap in the research, and would therefore have the potential for supporting transformation within the educational system for the benefit of gifted ELLs as underrepresented members of society, giving them a voice to communicate their authentic educational needs. Critical theorists might conceive of this kind of project as pursuing the practical intention of "the self-emancipation of people from domination" (Held, 1980, p. 250).

Habermas's theory of communicative action. Within critical theory sit the writings of one of its most prolific proponents, Jürgen Habermas, a German social theorist and philosopher. Habermas believed that "in contemporary philosophy … interest is directed to the formal conditions of rationality in knowing, in reaching understanding through language, and in acting, both in everyday contexts and at the level of methodically organized experience or systematically organized discourse" (Habermas, 1984, p. 2) and he has argued for a theory of rationality stemming from the interrelation of these aspects. The theory of rationality has an internal connection with social theory, he has suggested, through "the rationality implications of sociological concepts of action current today" (p. 7) and requires a theory of communicative action for clarification and interpretation.

Through his theory of communicative action, first published in German in 1981, Habermas described an "expansive critical social theory" (Johnson, 1991, p. 181) that has been applied to areas as diverse as political science (Head, 2008; Wehrenfennig, 2008), education (Han, 2002; Heslep, 2001), and medicine (Walseth & Schei, 2011). Habermas sought to understand and critique modernity, with its economic inequity, racism, gender, and class discriminations, reproduced through the dissemination of the dominant ideology, by advocating a communicative approach to reason and ethics (Brookfield, 2005; White, 1995). This theory forms the framework for my inquiry and is used to identify and critically examine how the educational needs of gifted ELLs are being met, as perceived by educational authorities and the students.

Habermas (1984) considered rational action to be instrumental, strategic (both oriented to success), or communicative (oriented to reaching understanding). With its focus on the latter, his theory of communicative action was based on the premise that it is the communicative use of language that brings about cultural production and re-production, social integration, solidarity, and socialisation, thus creating a framework for common understandings (Brookfield, 2005; Welch, 1999). Because all human action involves language and acts are linguistically constituted, all speech acts and linguistic utterances happen within this context as people interact with the intent of understanding each other (Heslep, 2001; Wehrenfennig, 2008; Welch, 1999). These linguistic acts and the way people use them to come to "communicative agreements" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 242) serve the purpose of reproducing the *lifeworld*, the shared assumptions that frame how people understand the common systems that make up the experience of life and how they convey this experience to others (Brookfield, 2005; Dryzek, 1995; Rehg, 1996).

The purpose of communicative action according to Habermas (1984) is to achieve emancipation through a process of mutual understandings or consensus. This consensus is seen as

being distinct from both strategic compromise (i.e., bargaining) and normative consensus (i.e., social norms) (Johnson, 1991; Walseth & Schei, 2011). In order to achieve consensus the theory premises the understanding of other people's points of view as being necessary to bring about this kind of change (Risse, 2004). Through communicative acts people attempt to view the world from others' points of view by stepping outside their normal frames of reference. This behaviour plays an important role when trying to reach common agreements with other people (Brookfield, 2005; Rehg, 1996).

Habermas's theory of communicative action makes reference to the imbalance of power between groups and its oppressive role. Both Welch (1999) and White (1995) agreed that Habermas believed that consensus should be arrived at via communication free from domination, with participants granted equal opportunities to present their claims about what they hold to be truth. This stance is important because language "has the ability to coordinate action in a consensual or cooperative way as opposed to a forced or manipulated one" (Warnke, 1995, p. 120). To accomplish this goal, engagement in critical reflection to reveal the sources of oppression and ideological distortion is necessary.

For language acts to communicate meaning at any point they are evaluated in terms of "the intersubjective recognition of validity claims" (Habermas, 1990, p. 58). These validity claims are centred on the concepts of comprehensibility, truth, appropriateness, and authenticity (Habermas, 1998). Meaning comes about because language makes understanding possible through the validity basis of speech; in other words, that what we agree or decide on in a conversation is based on our acknowledging that what others are saying has merit. Therefore, it is necessary to be able to explain how one's assertions and proposals are comprehensible, sincere, truthful, and appropriately expressed to fulfil validity claims (Brookfield, 2005).

When these validity claims are challenged, a different type of communicative interaction ensues where the claims need to be justified and defended. According to Habermas (1990), the rules that guide this form of discourse state that every participant must have an equal chance to initiate and participate; they must be able to challenge justifications and defend validity claims; no coercion should be exercised on participants; and everyone should be allowed to express their attitudes, feelings, desires, and needs. Achievement of these aims creates a scenario where ultimately the force of the better argument may prevail (Erman, 2006; Head, 2008; Risse, 2004).

Criticisms of Habermas's theory of communicative action have included its lack of clarification of how consent operates as a coordinating mechanism for social interactions, how

time constraints impact on the achievement of consensus, and the difficulties for participants to determine how to interpret failed attempts at consensus (Johnson, 1991). The theory has also been judged as being unable to explain intersubjectivity, and of neglecting the place of emotion in communication (Heslep, 2001).

Following Han (2002), my inquiry uses Habermas's theory of communicative action to identify the experiences and educational needs of gifted ELLs and how these needs are being met by providing a defining and delimiting framework for the context, the participants, and their interactions. First, it is grounded on the premise that education is a kind of communication for a group of people to interact with each other for the purposes of changing who they are and what they know, with the intent of development and improvement (Han, 2002). Second, schools, and in particular classrooms, can be considered to be an aspect of the *lifeworld*, where teachers and students interact communicatively to reach understandings about knowledge in shared, but often unequal power relationships. Indeed, it has been suggested that students should be considered as their own minority group "compared to the adults who order and control their lives" (Eder & Fingerson, 2001, p. 182). Third, there is an understanding that agreements need to be established between stakeholders as to what is being taught and learnt, and these agreements can be scrutinised according to Habermas's validity claims in terms of mutual comprehension, shared knowledge, reciprocal trust, and accord with one another (Han, 2002). Fourth, as and when the validity claims are challenged, their justification and defence need to be undertaken to reach a consensus where the better argument is the prevailing one. Finally, external constraints, imbalances between groups, and issues of domination and coercion need to be unveiled. That is not to say that equal status needs to be granted to both students and educational authorities, but rather that legitimacy can be reached if all parties are included; if voices are silenced then conditions for legitimacy are not present (Head, 2008).

In summary, the theory of communicative action is of relevance to my inquiry because of its suitability for evaluating the current context with regards to identifying the experiences and educational needs of gifted ELLs and how these needs are being met in Australian secondary schools. The theory can serve to promote consciousness-raising, exposing both explicit and hidden sources of power and domination. This analysis can lead to further communicative action in the search for fuller consensus that can result in emancipatory action and change. The ultimate aim is both to provide voice opportunities to the various stakeholders and to tap into the problem-solving capacity of educational authorities through communication and consensus-reaching (Risse, 2004).

School Context of the Study

The state of New South Wales was chosen as the geographical focus for this research and in particular secondary schools that come under the jurisprudence of the New South Wales Department of Education, called at the time of writing the NSW Department of Education and Communities (hereafter NSW DEC; at the time of the data-gathering, the Department was called the Department of Education and Training, NSW DET). These schools were selected owing to their high numbers of students from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE) (28.8% of all their enrolments in 2009, up from 28.4% in the previous year (NSW DET, Planning and Innovation Directorate, 2009)). Schools that purported to meet the needs of gifted ELLs were chosen in order to uncover from their students existing needs and any previously undetected needs. Policy documents from the NSW DEC outlining specific guidelines for both giftedness and English-language learning were used as documentary references. These policy documents were supplemented by annual school reports provided by each school.

Definitions of Terms

My inquiry adopts definitions of giftedness and talent based on Gagné's (2003, revised 2008) differentiated model of giftedness and talent (DMGT 2.0) (Appendix A) (Gagné, 2012), also used by the NSW DEC that has governance over the secondary schools from where the participants were drawn. Terms relating to the acquisition of an additional language or dialect, students who are English-language learners, and programs and educational approaches implemented reflect their current understanding and usage in the Australian context.

English as a Second Language (ESL): More appropriately used to describe a particular type of program or educational approach than a label for a student (Matthews, 2014), this is the descriptor given to ELLs, support programs, and specialist teachers by the NSW DEC (NSW DET, Multicultural Programs Unit, 2004). This term is currently being replaced Australia-wide within the Australian Curriculum (Hertzberg, 2012) by *EAL/D*. In my inquiry *ESL* is the preferred term when making reference to a job title, policy document, or type of in-school support program named or created pre-2012.

English as an Additional Language or Dialect (EAL/D): Term used in the Australian Curriculum to replace ESL, as it acknowledges the students who already can communicate in one or more languages or dialects, and also suggests an additive function to the acquisition of English

as well as validating a student's existing language/s and/or dialect/s (Hertzberg, 2012). In my inquiry *EAL/D* is the preferred term used when ESL does not apply.

English-language learners (ELLs): Those students from language backgrounds other than English who are learning English as a second or additional language (Matthews, 2006).

Giftedness: "Designates the possession and use of outstanding *natural* abilities, called aptitudes, in at least one ability *domain*, to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of age peers" (Gagné, 2008, p. 1).

Language Background Other Than English (LBOTE): This term is used by the NSW DEC as a descriptor of students in whose home a language other than English is spoken (NSW DET, Multicultural Program Unit, 2004).

Opportunity Classes (OCs): Selective classes offered by the NSW DEC to allow academically gifted students in Years 5 and 6 to access a challenging curriculum and interact with students of similar ability and maturity.

Partially selective high schools: Those comprehensive high schools that cater for highly achieving, academically talented students by grouping them in an educationally enriched classroom environment. These schools also offer mainstream and often special education groupings as well.

Selective high schools: Those schools operating under the governance of the NSW DEC (NSW DEC, Curriculum and Learning Innovation Centre, 2011) that provide a challenging curriculum for students with high academic ability. Entry to these schools is competitive, and the order of merit for placement is determined by the combination of school assessments in the areas of English and Mathematics as well as the results of the Selective High School Placement Test. A selection committee from each school makes the placement decisions, usually limited by quotas. There are currently 47 selective high schools including 17 fully selective schools, 25 high schools with selective classes, and four selective agricultural high schools in New South Wales and a virtual selective high school, offering English, Maths, and Science, with other subjects studied at the student's local high school (NSW DEC, 2014b; NSW DET, 2010).

Streaming: Referred to as *tracking* in the United States, this concept is considered to be a contentious issue in Australian schools as it is seen as "an issue of equity or social justice" (Forgasz, 2010, p. 31). Used synonymously with the term *ability grouping*, the practice involves placing students in groups or classrooms according to some set criteria based on similarity or dissimilarity, e.g., ability or achievement (Tracking in Schools, 2008).

Talent: "Designates the outstanding mastery of *systematically developed* abilities, called competencies (knowledge and skills), in at least one *field* of human activity to a degree that places an individual at least among the top 10% of age peers who are or have been active in that field" (Gagné, 2008, p. 1).

Contribution to the Field of Research and Significance of the Study

It is envisaged that my inquiry will make a theoretical contribution to the limited body of knowledge in Australia related to an understanding of the educational experiences and needs of gifted ELLs and how these needs are being met in order to bring about change and emancipatory action. I intend my inquiry to do this through the exploration of a limited number of specific cases identified through purposive sampling. Since innovation in gifted education, apart from the study of individuals, cannot be made apart from the schools (Bernal & Garcia, 2009; Gonzalez, 2002), research needs to be conducted in these very settings. Researchers have continually found that children with high ability and special talents thrive in a child-centred environment, where motivational level is high and continuous progress is supported (Carnellor, 1999). Therefore, an understanding of how gifted ELLs perceive such an environment meets their learning needs is highly relevant.

Given the number of ELLs already in Australia and predicted increasing global migration trends as noted by the OECD (2006b) as well as the profile of gifted students in general, research in this field is necessary for gaining a better understanding of the educational experiences and needs of these students. The key intent is to support transformation within the educational system for the benefit of these underrepresented members of society, giving them a voice and an opportunity to share their experiences and what their authentic educational needs are, and to have these needs met appropriately. Therefore, the findings from my inquiry might lead to better-informed classroom and support services for this group of students and raise awareness of their individual needs. Such consideration for the welfare of gifted ELLs may also help to further enlighten and modernise educational authorities' agendas and raise the status of Australia's education system in the global community.

Overview of Thesis

Chapter I: Introduction. The purpose of this chapter is to act as a guide to the research. It covers the background, aims and rationale, research questions, theoretical framework, school context, definitions of terms, contribution to the field of research and significance of the study, and thesis organisation.

Chapter II Parts A and B: Literature Review. These chapters deal with the review of the related literature. Using historical and contemporary information Part A covers multiple aspects of the research to date in the field of giftedness, whilst Part B directs more specific focus to English-language learners, and how the educational needs of these students have been addressed in the Australian and global contexts using historical and contemporary information.

Chapter III: Research Design and Methodology. This chapter outlines the methodological considerations that were taken into account in the research. It covers the approach used; validity, reliability, and objectivity issues; the design of the study; sampling issues; data collection procedures; cultural considerations; data analysis procedures; and ethical considerations.

Chapters IV, V, and VI: Results of the Study. These chapters examine the information collected from documents and interviews in order to describe the major findings uncovered in the research. Chapter IV contains general data about the participants and the schools, including individual pen portraits. Chapter V explores student narratives with a focus on the findings from the interviews, allowing the student voices to tell the stories. Chapter VI shifts the focus to teacher and administrator voices, which speak about what teachers and schools are doing to meet the needs of gifted ELLs and any shortfalls they perceive. The voice of the school and the education system, as told in documentary form, will be interwoven in these narratives to add a further layer to the stories.

Chapter VII: Discussion. This chapter explores and discusses the main themes arising from the research, reporting on the findings pertinent to students, teachers, and administrators, in order to identify examples of successful programs and practices.

Chapter VIII: Conclusion. This section reports on the implications from the findings and offers future recommendations for institutional improvement. It also discusses methodological strengths and limitations of the study, makes reference to the unheard narratives of my inquiry, and offers recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW – PART A

The purpose of the literature review is to examine historical and current thinking and research in the field of gifted education as presented in Part A, before drawing attention to findings that focus more specifically on gifted ELLs in Part B. This review will provide the foundation for my inquiry (Clinkenbeard, 1991; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), lay down the groundwork for the exploration of how the educational needs of gifted ELLs in Australian secondary schools are being met, and discuss the extant research findings with rigour, reference, and scholarship (Koshy, 2005).

Research indicates that in the last three decades the general themes found in the literature on gifted and talented education have tended to revolve around multiple dimensions, including conceptualisation, identification, special provision, and evaluation (Bakken, Obiakor, & Rotatori, 2014; Garcia, 2002; Sternberg, Jarvin, & Grigorenko, 2011). More specific concerns include underrepresentation, underachievement (Davis, 2009), socio-cultural differences (Phillipson & McCann, 2007), and the study of particular populations including girls (Kerr & Nicpon, 2003), twice-exceptional students (Lupart & Toy, 2009; Silverman, 2003), and those linked to poverty and low socio-economic status, particularly indigenous populations and ELLs (Swanson, 2006; VanTassel-Baska, 2010c; VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2007). Literature on gifted gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (GLBTI) students is also emerging (Friedrichs, 2009). The impacts of provisions such as acceleration (Gross, 2009), enrichment (Renzulli & Reis, 2003), and differentiation (Maker & Schiever, 2010; Tomlinson, 2004), combined with other themes have received particular attention and include affective and socio-emotional perspectives (Rance-Roney, 2004). The vast majority of studies are based in the United States, though Europe, the Middle East, and the Asia-Pacific region are also exploring dimensions relevant to their populations (e.g., Heller, 2009; Jeltova, Lukin, & Grigorenko, 2009; Sarouphim, 2015; Vrignaud, Bonora, & Dreux, 2009; Wang, 2009). This growing body of literature has led to significant contributions being made towards an increased understanding of the multifaceted concept that is giftedness.

Conceptualisations of Giftedness

In order to explore the term *giftedness* it is appropriate to review the evolving understandings of the term *intelligence* and how new interpretations have given shape to our

modern conceptualisations of both these key terms. Early records indicate that ancient Greek philosophers explored the concept of νοῦς (nous) as *intelligence,* defined as *understanding* and *reason*, which were linked to the metaphysical cosmological theories of teleological scholasticism. The Romans favoured the verb *intelligere*, meaning to *pick out* or *discern*, whilst medieval scholars preferred the term *intellectus* when describing someone with good understanding (Goldstein, 2013). Outstanding thinkers from these eras who pondered the question of intelligence include Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, and Aquinas.

During the Renaissance period philosophers, scientists, and thinkers explored, advanced, and even rejected these varied interpretations in line with the intellectual transformations of the time. These transformations were driven by the revolution in thought that emerged throughout this era and produced and inspired advances in the understanding of the world and the place of humanity within it, with the exploration of human intelligence an integrated component. Those who influenced the development of the understanding of intelligence from this period include Hobbes, Pascal, Kant, Huarte, Itard, and Smith among others, and their work formed the foundation for modern explorations of intelligence (Plucker, 2013).

These emerging understandings and approaches to the exploration of human intelligence paved the way during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries for the development of the discipline of psychology as distinct from other fields, though still with integral influence from the fields of mathematics, biology, and philosophy (Plucker, 2013). It was in this type of environment during the mid-eighteenth century that the idea of intelligence as being fixed began to be explored more thoroughly. One of the earliest researchers in this field was the psychometrician Sir Francis Galton who, influenced by his cousin Charles Darwin's work, proposed that intelligence was not only fixed but primarily genetic and therefore inherited; he then sought ways in which to measure it (Chitty, 2013; Delisle & Lewis, 2003; Stoeger, 2009).

Following on from these earlier considerations, Binet in the 1900s as well as Terman in the 1910s and Spearman in the 1920s delved further into the notion of intelligence and provided some of the modern theoretical explanations of intellectual functioning, attempting to describe intellectual ability in terms of a variable, g (Davis & Rimm, 2004; Freebody, Watters, & Lummis, 2002; Goldstein, 2013). It was not until the 1950s that efforts to define and measure specific factors of intelligence more precisely were increased. The development of measurement scales such as those still in use today in revised editions (e.g., the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children) is a legacy of this era (Goldstein, 2013).

Alongside these attempts to measure and define intelligence, researchers and educators were studying high-ability children and exploring ways of best meeting their needs. A pioneer in this field, Hollingworth taught in the 1930s in the first public school for the gifted in the United States with a focus on both the intellectual and affective needs of gifted students (Beaupeurt, 2007; Davis, Rimm, & Siegle, 2011; Robinson & Clinkenbeard, 2008). In the 1950s Roeper began a pre-Kindergarten to Grade 12 school for gifted students in Michigan developing the self-actualised interdependence model, also with a focus on intellectual and affective needs. Mainstream schools in general, however, paid little attention to the needs of gifted students, and the inconclusiveness of theories of intelligence at the time had only limited transference to the broader educational setting. One notable model that emerged in this era was based on Benjamin Bloom's *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* published in 1956, with its focus on six types of thinking (or cognitive processes) that build upon one another in terms of complexity (Delisle & Lewis, 2003). This model has been revised and amplified (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Anderson & Sosniak, 1994) and is still a staple in classrooms worldwide as a teaching and learning model for gifted education.

A review of the contemporary history of gifted education shows that it has generally only been since the 1970s that there has been a resurgence of interest in the field (Boxall, 1991; Braggett, 1993; Colangelo & Davis, 2003). In this time researchers have endeavoured to put forward more complex definitions of the term *giftedness* and develop models with the intent to define, identify, and support the needs of the gifted. Key to these new efforts has been the development of an understanding of intelligence beyond a unitary concept, with the exploration of not only the analytical, creative, and practical aspects of intelligence (Sternberg, 1985) but also multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983). Researchers also delved into new understandings about crystallised and fluid intelligence to propose that intelligence (g) could be strengthened or weakened (Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002). With the advent of new technologies, educational neuroscience (as a recent emergent sub-discipline of cognitive neuroscience) has paved the way for investigations into "educationally inspired research questions" (Geake, 2009, p. 12) to explore answers to how the brains of high-ability students differ from the brains of neurotypical students and how these high-ability students best learn.

These evolving understandings about intelligence and giftedness influenced attitudes towards the education of gifted students and in 1972 the Marland Report was put forward to the U.S. Congress as a response to investigations into the status of gifted and talented education in the United States at that time (Coleman & Cross, 2001; O'Connell, 2003). It proposed a definition of

gifted and talented children as those who "by virtue of outstanding abilities are capable of high performance" (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1972, as cited in Assouline, 2003, p. 128) and included demonstrated achievement and/or potential ability in areas such as general intellectual ability, specific academic aptitude, creative thinking, leadership, the arts, and psychomotor ability (Marland, 1972). The Report also narrowed down percentage-wise who might be considered as gifted, suggesting a band as small as 3 to 5% of the school population.

In the 1970s Renzulli proposed a new conceptualisation of giftedness that challenged the boundaries of conservative definitions at that time. Existing descriptions limited the concept to attributes that could be measured only by tests of intelligence and achievement and evidenced as academic aptitude. Renzulli proposed a new conceptualisation to recognise a broader spectrum of human abilities. Renzulli's three-ring conception of giftedness (Figure 2.1) considered "the main dimensions of human potential for creative productivity" (Renzulli, 2005, p. 257) and noted that it was the interaction among three basic clusters of human traits, namely above-average ability, high levels of task commitment, and high levels of creativity that form the basis for the concept of giftedness (Renzulli, 1978). His conception of giftedness was supported by a number of research studies that examined the effectiveness of identification practices based on this conception. These studies also aimed to evaluate existing educational opportunities and services provided to students that focused on promoting creative–productive giftedness. With Reis, Renzulli also developed the schoolwide enrichment model for the educational enrichment of all students (Renzulli & Reis, 1985).
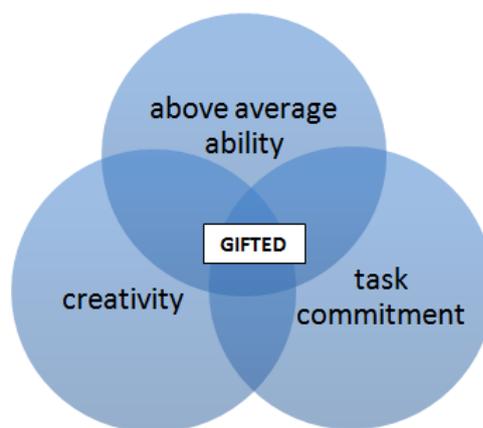
*Figure 2.1.* Renzulli's three-ring conception of giftedness. Adapted from "What makes giftedness? Reexamining a definition," by J. Renzulli, 1978, *The Phi Delta Kappan, 60*(3), p. 182. Copyright 1978 by Joseph S. Renzulli. Adapted with permission.

Renzulli's conception of giftedness has been challenged on several of its premises. First, it has been said that this conception disallows the presence of gifted underachievers who often lack task commitment. Furthermore, fields of performance that do not require creativity also provide exceptions to this model (Gross, Sleap, & Pretorius, 1999; Moon & Dixon, 2006).

Sternberg's 1985 triarchic theory of intelligence (Figure 2.2) also had a significant impact on the field of psychology and contributed greatly to the advancement of broader understandings about intelligence (Sternberg, 2000). This theory arose from the information-processing perspective on human learning (Stoeger, 2009) and played a significant part in the developing understandings of giftedness because it broke away from the psychometric approach to intelligence to embrace a broader cognitive approach. It discussed three sub-theories that "seek to specify the precise mechanisms and processes involved in intelligence" (Baldwin & Vialle, 1999, p. xiv), namely analytical intelligence (generally measured by IQ tests), creative intelligence (dealing with new and unusual situations), and practical intelligence (adaptations to everyday life) (Sternberg, 1985). This latter sub-theory, practical intelligence, has come under intense scrutiny by Gottfredson (2003) who has described a lack of evidence to support Sternberg's assertions.
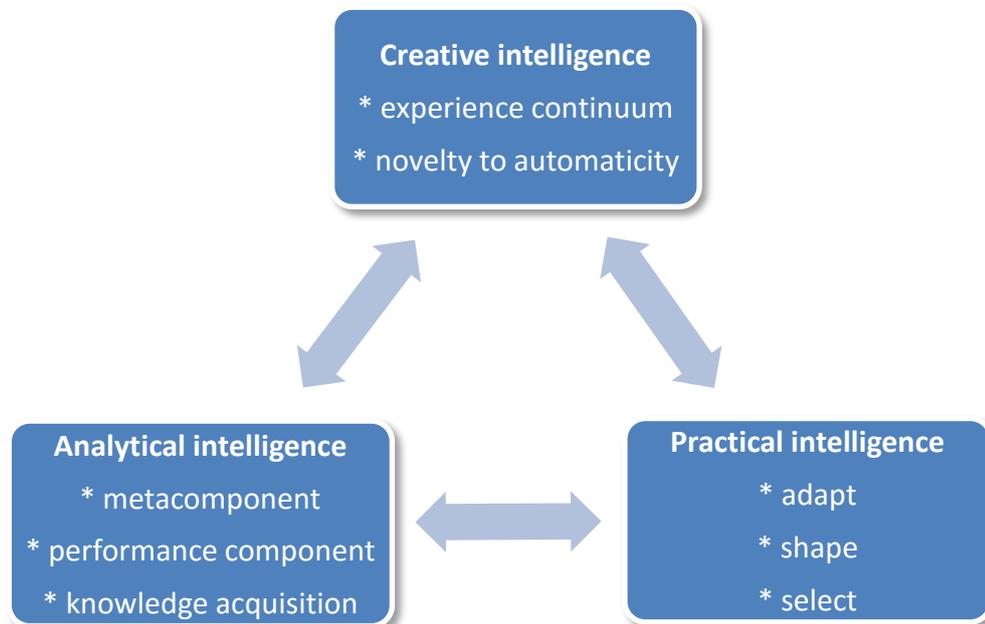

Figure 2.2. Sternberg's triarchic theory of intelligence. Adapted from *"Beyond IQ: A triarchic theory of intelligence,"* by Robert. J. Sternberg. Copyright 1985 by Cambridge University Press. Adapted with permission.

Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (MI), which emerged around the same time, arose as a critique of the view of intelligence as a single concept (*g*) (Gardner, 1983). In his 1983 ground-breaking book *Frames of Mind* he proposed an understanding of intelligence that extended it to originally seven then later eight types of intelligences (Gardner, 1999), with more types currently under consideration. The interpersonal, intrapersonal, bodily-kinaesthetic, spatial, musical, linguistic, logical-mathematical, and naturalist intelligences represent different ways of processing information and of thinking (Sousa, 2009) and were selected according to criteria that were intended to go beyond psychometric assessments (Gardner, 1999). Advocates of MI theory have constructed a definition of giftedness as exceptional competence in one or more of the intelligences, drawing attention to individual differences (Calik & Birgili, 2014). Little evidence from neuroscience exists to support Gardner's theory (Geake, 2009; Sousa, 2009) and the selections themselves have come under scrutiny (White, 2008). Nevertheless, Gardner's MI theory has been well received in the educational field since its emergence and has engendered much discussion about the nature of intelligence (e.g., Walton, 2014).

A further definition that has had a considerable impact on the general understanding of giftedness was proposed by the Columbus Group in 1991. This definition arose as a response to the emerging tendencies of the time for defining giftedness in terms of behaviours, achievements, or products, all external to the individual (Morelock, 1992). This definition conceptualised giftedness as "asynchronous development in which advanced cognitive abilities and heightened intensity combine to create inner experiences and awareness that are qualitatively different from the norm" (The Columbus Group, 1991, as cited in Porter, 2005, p. 36). The Columbus Group's definition has, however, been criticised by Gagné as being flawed for its choice of precocious development over outstanding human abilities as the "essence of giftedness" (1997, p. 76), leading to further debate on the matter by the authors (e.g., Morelock, 1997).

More recently, Gagné's differentiated model of giftedness and talent (DMGT), first proposed in the early 1980s, has come to the fore for its separation of giftedness (natural abilities) and talent (systematically developed skills) as well as for its identification of factors that have an impact on development (Appendix A). Having been subsequently revised and rebranded as DMGT 2.0 (Gagné, 2012), this model forms the foundation for gifted and talented policies in all Australian states and has been accepted by educational authorities in many countries (Freebody et al., 2002). The most current update to this model has explored several biological underpinnings, including anatomical (exo) phenotypes, physiological (endo) phenotypes, and genotypic foundations (Gagné, 2013). From these underpinnings, Gagné has proposed two new models, the

developmental model for natural abilities (DMNA) and the expanded model of talent development (EMTD).

The DMGT 2.0 achieved significant break-throughs in the field of gifted education. First, it overrode predominantly performance-based definitions of giftedness which disadvantage underachievers, non-native language speakers, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Second, it defined and separated *giftedness* from *talent* and *potential* from *performance*, organising them sequentially rather than synonymously. Third, it highlighted that there are gifts other than intellectual ones by including creative, socio-affective, and sensorimotor domains of natural abilities (Gross, 2004b).

Whilst Gagné's definition has had positive implications for the identification of gifted students from underrepresented cultural and socio-economic groups, the Columbus Group's definition is more applicable to gifted children with learning disabilities or difficulties (the *twice exceptional* or *2e*), gifted underachievers, and also the highly gifted. These groups of students have the largest disparities in their development and their giftedness is often masked or goes unrecognised within achievement-based school contexts (Silverman, 2007; Yewchuk & Lupart, 2000).

Other contemporary models of giftedness include Carroll's three-stratum theory that views intelligence as a multifactorial and relatively fixed entity, Piirto's pyramid of talent development which combines "genes, personality attributes, intelligence, a talent, the thorn, and environmental factors" (Piirto, 2000, p. 29), as well as Tannenbaum's star model and Simonton's emergenic-epigenetic model that apply the influence of nurture to the transformation of genetically endowed abilities or potentials into outstanding achievement (Davidson, 2009). The Munich model of giftedness as developed by Heller, Perleth, and Hany during the 1980s has similar components to the DMGT; however, a series of instruments has been developed to measure these components (Sousa, 2009). Other models that are shaping and advancing the conception of giftedness focus on "gender, personality traits, chance, and characteristics related to social responsibility, in addition to cognitive skills" (Davidson, 2009, p. 95).

Carman (2013) reasoned that with these broad interpretations of the term *giftedness* "it should come as no surprise that there is no consensus in the field about the definition of giftedness" (p. 53). Stoeger (2009) noted:

Regardless of whether intelligence, cognitive abilities or achievement are included in the conception of giftedness, presently, multi-dimensional approaches to giftedness are highly favoured. In most cases, these multi-dimensional models also feature additional personality traits such as motivation, creativity, or wisdom. In some cases environmental conditions, such as socio-economic status, are also introduced. (p. 22)

Giftedness – the Australian Perspective

McCann (2007) summarised the history of giftedness in Australia, critically noting its strengths and weaknesses in light of historical, social, and political changes over the last two centuries. She considered how Australia, with its cultural origins in the mix of British convict and free settlers who invaded and displaced much of the indigenous population from 1788 onwards, has developed its own particular approach to the understanding of the concept of giftedness. With its subsequent waves of immigration that brought people from all nations to create its unique multicultural profile, Australia has always presented itself to the world as the nation of "the fair go" (Halloran, 2007, p. 4). Despite this attitude, the cultural phenomenon described as the *tall poppy syndrome* (Feather, 1989) has often been used to add legitimacy to the resentment and criticism accorded to people of genuine merit because of their achievements or talents. Australia's conservative egalitarian approach is often at odds with its adolescent-like disrespect for those outside the mainstream, which has created a climate where this phenomenon has flourished. Based on a unique sense of entitlement that has arisen due to geographical and historical circumstances, the laid-back collectivist ideology that "values mateship, equality and group solidarity.... and refer[s] to an anti-intellectual bias that is assumed to be ingrained within the Australian culture" (Feather, 1989, p. 242) has prevailed in all aspects of Australian society since colonisation.

This tension between the collectivist and achievement values that form part of the Australian identity has meant that it was not until 1975 that attempts were made to discuss gifted students as deserving of special consideration, particularly with Australia's participation at the first conference of the World Council for the Gifted and Talented that year (Baldwin & Vialle, 1999). Gross (2004a) noted Braggett's (1985, p. 30) description of the situation in Australia at that time:

These [difficulties] include the egalitarian belief that provision should not be made for able students because of the more pressing needs of other more visibly disadvantaged groups, a lack of educational commitment to the concept of providing effectively for individual differences, a lack of awareness among Australian teachers of the specific needs of gifted and talented children, and an educational philosophy in which social factors are sometimes considered to be more important than other factors.

The 1976 meeting of the Australian Education Council was successful in promoting a growing acceptance of the notion of special provision for gifted children, with most states and territories formally releasing policy statements on gifted education by 1985, Victoria being the only state not to have a policy in place until later. The 1988 Senate Select Committee on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children made a number of recommendations regarding Commonwealth support for special provision, professional learning for teachers, and the establishment of the Gifted Education Research, Resource, and Information Centre (GERRIC) at the University of New South Wales (Baldwin & Vialle, 1999).

GERRIC has, over the years, partnered with various schools and associations to explore better outcomes for gifted students. In 1996, for example, a three-year collaborative project between Hawkesbury High School, MLC School, and GERRIC was undertaken, funded by the Australian Council for Educational Research. The aim of this project was to develop a range of programs and curricula to respond to the needs of gifted and talented secondary students. A teacher professional learning package and three teacher resource books on differentiating the curriculum emerged as a major outcome, designed to support schools both beginning their journey to support gifted students as well as those that had already developed a range of initiatives (Gross, Sleap, & Pretorius, 1999). GERRIC continues to contribute to many aspects of the education and development of gifted individuals through research, courses, seminars, programs, conferences, and experiences for students, teachers, parents, and others interested in the field of giftedness.

Not until the 2001 Senate Inquiry (Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee, 2001) were there recommendations to define giftedness and its place within Australian society and in particular the different states' education systems (McCann, 2007) and to make proposals to address shortcomings. Gross (2004a, p. 31) summarised the resistance evident during this era:

> The equation of intellectual giftedness with social and economic privilege, and the consequent distrust and resentment of the intellectually gifted, has had significant effects on the development of gifted education in Australia. Co-existing with the national resistance to anything that can be construed as 'elitism' is a genuine fear that, if one fosters the individual talents of a student, one will do him a disservice through setting him apart from his peers.

Understandings of giftedness in the Australian states' education systems have continued to lag behind those in the United States, yet it was from America in the main that these understandings were adopted. The 1972 Marland Report acted as a springboard for early policy writing in the 1980s, when the separate terms *gifted* and *talented* began to appear. Renzulli's three-ring conception of giftedness also had a considerable influence on the identification of gifted students in Australia during this time (Gross, 2004a). Gardner's multiple intelligences (MI) theory gained broader recognition as it allowed for a more egalitarian perception of giftedness (McCann, 2007). All Australian states and territories now possess more robust documents with definitions of the terms *gifted* and *talented* more likely to be influenced by Gagné's DMGT 2.0 (Gross, 2004a; Gross, Sleap, & Pretorius, 1999). Some individual states have also conducted formal inquiries into the education of gifted and talented students (see Parliament of Victoria, 2012). A long history of anti-intellectualism is still present, however, in Australian society and impacts on all aspects of the social and political canvas (Glasson, 2012), including educational policy-making.

Characteristics of Gifted Students

The identification of the characteristics of gifted students and in particular their cognitive traits has received much attention in the literature. Researchers of general intelligence theory have focused on the study of common abilities of gifted students in all domains of knowledge, multiple intelligence theorists have explored domain-specific characteristics, and neo-Piagetian researchers have proposed combining general and domain-specific characteristics (Song & Porath, 2006). Whilst these variations influence determinations of the key cognitive characteristics of gifted students, many researchers have focused on identification by either studying how gifted students demonstrate specific characteristics in comparison to their non-gifted peers, or by studying specific populations of gifted students to identify traits common to them. What is in agreement is

that the overriding cognitive trait of gifted students is that they are developmentally advanced, with the terms *precocity, intensity,* and *complexity* suggested by VanTassel-Baska (2003) often used as key descriptors.

Gifted students, like any other grouping, have a number of characteristics that are particular to many, but not necessarily to all of the members of the group. Since a wide variation exists among them (Gross, Sleap, & Pretorius, 1999), many researchers have tended to describe the types of general behaviours displayed by students considered to be gifted in particular culturally valued domains and whose development outstrips that of mainstream students. Davis and Rimm (2004) collected descriptors from a variety of sources and experts in the field in order to identify a number of key areas where advanced skills or their early emergence in varied domains were used as benchmarks. These traits included cognitive characteristics, such as advanced general intellectual ability. Key indicators of such ability included advanced language skills (Guilford, Scheuerle, & Shonburn, 1981), sophisticated logical thinking processes (Yang, Park, Kim, Choi, & Noh, 2011), longer concentration and attention spans, quicker pace and speed of learning (Geake, 2009), excellent memory (Sanders, 2011), advanced interest in ethics (Roeper, 1989) and morality (Tirri, Nokelainen, & Mahkonen, 2009), and persistence and achievement (Duckworth, Kirby, Tsukayama, Bernstein, & Ericsson, 2011). Other domains, such as the creative, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and psychomotor fields, were furnished with characteristics deemed particular to the gifted, including an alert and subtle sense of humour (Shade, 1999), high degree of personal responsibility and task commitment, and a preference for unusual, original, and creative responses (White, 2014). Negative characteristics were also noted, such as underachievement (McCoach & Siegle, 2003), nonconformity (Neihart, 2002), perfectionism (Fletcher & Speirs Neumeister, 2012), self-criticism, self-doubt, variable frustration, anger (Pfeiffer & Stocking, 2000), sadness and loneliness (Vialle, Heaven, & Ciarrochi, 2007), and depression (Mueller, 2009).

These positive and negative characteristics have been explored and documented in both ancient and modern times. Davis and Rimm (2004) presented an overview of giftedness in ancient Sparta, Athens, Rome, Early China and Japan, and Renaissance Europe, listing various differing traits deemed of value to those cultures, and where people who exhibited those traits were considered gifted. Early modern research included Terman's longitudinal study of gifted individuals which began in 1925, documenting their physical, intellectual, and emotional development and characteristics. This study was published as *Genetic Studies of Genius* (1925-1959) where he dispelled many myths about gifted individuals (Delisle & Lewis, 2003; Robinson

& Clinkenbeard, 2008). Through this study Terman was able to determine how the group's superior mental and physical characteristics continued into adulthood (Cravens, 1992). More recently Geake (2009) undertook a neuropsychological approach to giftedness and strove to identify characteristics of gifted students through research that involved neuroimaging studies. He identified that the neural dynamics of gifted students' brains, in particular the frontal cortices, were different from those of their peers and thought that this difference could be attributed to an early maturation of the frontal lobes. He also noted that gifted students had more recourse to bilateral brain function which might account for the way they allocated more neural resources to support their advanced learning abilities. He also identified that gifted students had the ability for rapid information processing and required less repetition for comprehension but paradoxically needed more time to formulate responses due to the processing of larger quantities of information. Furthermore, he noted their preference for top-down understanding and a passion for knowledge, as well as a predilection for creative thinking (Geake, 2009).

Whilst many of the characteristics listed by Davis and Rimm (2004) recur frequently in the literature, VanTassel-Baska (1998) warned that not all gifted students will display all of them as they often tend to cluster, they vary from student to student, and they need to be viewed as developmental. Some characteristics may also only reveal themselves upon student engagement and students may choose to mask these characteristics for a variety of reasons (VanTassel-Baska, 1998). Emotional, personality, and motivational characteristics also come into play as well as external factors including, among others, socio-economic status, family, instruction, and chance.

The social and emotional characteristics of gifted students have also been accounted for in the literature. Some key themes have emerged, including the experience of asynchronous development (Silverman, 1997) and a tendency towards perfectionism (Freebody et al., 2002). Whilst research has indicated that gifted students as a general rule are as well or better adjusted than mainstream students and have better self-concepts and greater overall self-actualisation, much of the success depends on the type of giftedness, the educational fit, and the student's personal characteristics (Neihart, 1999). Research into asynchronous development, for example, has demonstrated that students with extremely high IQ have unique academic, social, and personal experiences, including social adjustment problems with age peers (Dai, 2009; Gross, 2004a; Sousa, 2009).

Studies of the emotional, personality, and motivational characteristics of gifted students have highlighted both a range of positive traits that act as catalysts for achievement as well as factors which hinder it. Favourable traits may include more positive academic and behavioural

self-concepts (Friedman-Nimz & Skyba, 2009) and developing learning styles that "match their frequent characteristics of high motivation, persistence, self-confidence, independence, and high internal control" (Davis & Rimm, 2004, p. 38). Highly gifted students are also more likely to display intrinsic than extrinsic motivation (Friedman-Nimz & Skyba, 2009; Gross, 2009). Factors that can hinder achievement may include learning difficulties, psychological challenges, and difficult family circumstances (Friedman-Nimz & Skyba, 2009). Studies of resilience have, however, yielded certain characteristics of positive functioning such as resourcefulness, optimism, self-efficacy, and self-reliance, skills that are often attributed to gifted students (Friedman-Nimz & Skyba, 2009; Sekowski, Siekanska, & Klinkosz, 2009).

Gross (2004a) reiterated Hollingsworth's (1942) assertions that moderately gifted students have been identified as having fewer difficulties with peer relationships than those identified as highly gifted as they generally tend to develop coping strategies, both positive and negative. Rudasill, Foust, and Callahan (2007) administered a social coping questionnaire to 600 gifted students from grades 5 to 11 and identified six key strategies students used, namely, helping others, minimising one's focus on popularity, conformity to mask giftedness, denying negative impact of giftedness on peer acceptance, hiding giftedness, and denial of giftedness. Gross (2009) also noted that unlike moderately gifted students, exceptionally gifted students experience social isolation thought to be caused by "the absence of a suitable peer group with whom to relate" (p. 342). She further surmised: "Intellectually gifted children may not only be seeking the intellectual compatibility of mental age-peers but also be looking for children whose conceptions and expectations of friendship are similar to their own" (Gross, 2009, p. 344).

Gifted students may also exhibit traits defined by elevated degrees of intensity, sensitivity, and overexcitability. Dabrowski's theory of positive disintegration draws attention to the combination of innate abilities and higher levels of intelligence combined with overexcitabilities as predictors of potential for higher-level development (Jackson, Moyle, & Piechowski, 2009; Sousa, 2009). Studies conducted over the past 20 years have supported the application of Dabrowski's theory to gifted students, particularly in the imaginational, intellectual, and emotional overexcitabilities (Mendaglio & Tillier, 2006).

Specific interventions and counselling for the gifted have been recommended (Bireley & Genshaft, 1991a; Dai & Renzulli, 2000; Jackson, Moyle, & Piechowski, 2009), particularly with regard to the development of self-concept (Plucker & Stocking, 2001), multipotentiality (Sajjadi, Rejskind, & Shore, 2001), underachievement (Rubenstein, Siegle, Reis, McCoach, & Burton, 2012), perfectionism (Wang, Fu, & Rice, 2012), as well as career counselling in the adolescent

years (Landrum, 1987; Assouline & Colangelo, 2006). Jung, McCormick, and Gross (2012) also warned of the need for support for students dealing with the *forced-choice dilemma*, where intellectually gifted students believe that they need to choose between academic achievement and peer acceptance, and have proposed a model to provide insights for educators, families, and counsellors. Assisting gifted adolescents to also understand self-perceptions and relationships with others, including family and peers, is paramount for their future well-being and success (Colangelo, 2003).

As discussed, many authors have contributed to the research on the identification of key characteristics of gifted students. Silverman and Golon (2008) summarised a number of these attributes, noting in particular the ability of gifted students to reason well and learn quickly. They also described them as being good thinkers, with an excellent memory and a vivid imagination. Other characteristics highlighted included having a long attention span and a good sense of humour, displaying a strong curiosity and a high degree of energy, as well as being morally sensitive, intense, and perfectionistic. They also noted a preference for older companions or adults and an inclination to question authority. High levels of creativity, a facility with numbers, and an extensive vocabulary were also included in their summary (Silverman & Golon, 2008).

Identification of Gifted Students

The identification of gifted students has been described in the contemporary literature as problematic (McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012). Davis and Rimm (2004) have suggested that the variety of identification methods used has not always had an holistic approach or made broad enough accommodations for all gifted students. Historically, identification methods have been strongly linked to evolving conceptualisations of giftedness and influenced by varying socio-political understandings. An unfortunate consequence has been the mislabelling, underidentification, and exclusion of gifted students (Webb et al., 2005). At the beginning of the twentieth century, for example, giftedness was associated with high intelligence and exceptional performance (Robinson & Clinkenbeard, 2008) and IQ tests were the norm for identification for many decades. Though conceptions of giftedness have since moved away from a single IQ score to multiple criteria and a broadening of categories (McClain & Pfeiffer, 2012), IQ is still viewed as the prime identifier in school systems today (Borland, 2009) owing in part to the extensive research literature supporting its validity in predicting academic achievement (Neisser et al., 1996).

The issue of identification has continued to attract interest from researchers and is still a much debated topic. *Gifted Child Quarterly* in 2009 welcomed contributions from leading scholars who re-examined a number of myths about gifted education that had been published in a 1982 edition of the journal. Of the 19 myths addressed, six were relevant to the identification of gifted students, covering aspects such as homogeneity of the gifted and talented (Reis & Renzulli, 2009); giftedness being equated to high IQ and only applicable to 3–5% of the population (Borland, 2009); the existence of a silver bullet in identification, with winners and losers (Callahan, 2009); the use of a single test score (Worrell, 2009); creativity being too difficult to measure (Treffinger, 2009); and the cosmetic use of multiple selection criteria (Friedman-Nimz, 2009). This single edition of one academic journal in the field highlighted the complexity of the issue, which has concerned psychologists, educators, families, and students for decades.

Further, Dai, Swanson, and Cheng (2011) considered the state of research on giftedness and gifted education by examining 1234 empirical studies published during the years 1998 to 2010. They found that identification of gifted students was one of the four most researched topics during this period, with the identification of minority and underrepresented students featuring prominently. Of the 144 studies on identification, 14 were focused on identification during the preschool years. Measurement and psychometrics were topics of intense focus, with 49 studies dedicated to them. Overall, 17 studies placed identification in the context of conceptions of giftedness, while only seven studies explicitly used IQ as a criterion for identification.

Friedman-Nimz considered the question of the identification of gifted students, summarising some of the difficulties thus:

> Issues within the field include the following: no unified theory of giftedness/talent in young people, disagreements within the field about who is being identified and for what purpose(s), inaccurate assumptions about identification, and difficulty in assessing the value of different identification processes. (2009, p. 249)

Despite the challenges faced by the evolving understandings of the purposes of identification, educational communities continue to reference the research in order to implement best practice. It has been recommended that initially within each education setting policies and procedures should be drawn up at school level that clearly outline the main purposes for identifying gifted students (Coleman & Cross, 2001; Feldhusen, 1992). Multiple measures comprising a combination of reliable and valid objective and subjective measures have been

suggested (Coleman & Cross, 2001; Feldhusen, 2003), which must link back directly to the school's policies. Equity of procedures for the consideration of students from different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds is also paramount (Coleman & Cross, 2001; Davis & Rimm, 2004). Ultimately, the key purpose of identification should be "to serve the students with a program and curriculum that meet their needs" (Merrick & Targett, 2004, p. 1).

Practices common to Australian schools include a range of both objective and subjective measures. Objective measures come in a range of formats and are intended to measure aptitude and achievement. They usually provide scores that can be used to compare students with others from their age group or cohort (Coleman & Cross, 2001). In Australian schools some of the most commonly used measures include psychometric assessment, aptitude testing, standardised achievement tests, tests of creativity, teacher-made tests and assessments, and off-level testing (i.e., testing against norms for older students). Different tests have been recommended for different ages and groups and also to investigate different dimensions or aspects of giftedness. For example, non-verbal tests have been considered to be fairer both culturally and linguistically (Coleman & Cross, 2001; Merrick & Targett, 2004), while dynamic testing has been found to be useful in identifying giftedness masked by underachievement (Chaffey, Bailey, & Vine, 2003; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002). Individual schools have been found to include a variety of assessments when collecting evidence for the identification of gifted students (Parliament of Victoria, 2012).

Subjective measures currently in use in Australian schools include both parent and teacher nominations as well as peer and self-identification processes. Parents (or significant others) and teachers are often joint decision-makers, as parents bring knowledge of their child's early developmental stages, whilst teachers are able to observe the student in an academic setting (Lee & Olszewski-Kubilius, 2006). It has been suggested that both parents and teachers benefit immensely from acquiring knowledge and understanding of the characteristics and traits of gifted students in order to facilitate this process (Davis & Rimm, 2004). Much research exists to confirm that not only have parents tended to underestimate their child's abilities (Clark & Shore, 1998; Coleman & Cross, 2001) but also that teachers have been poor at identifying gifted students, particularly if they only associate giftedness with high performance (Gear, 1976) and identify mostly the *teacher pleasers* (Davis & Rimm, 2004, p. 93; Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee, 2001, § 3.9). Other subjective measures such as peer- and self-identification exist (Clark & Shore, 1998; Coleman & Cross, 2001); however, such measures are considered to be more useful for older students. In younger

students identification by characteristics and traits has been more useful as it allows for different types of giftedness to be identified, but this method should always be considered in combination with other measures to form a more effective matrix of identification procedures (Gross, 1999b).

Most Australian schools and systems have developed checklists and guides that assist teachers and parents to make decisions about identifying gifted students, but the process is neither consistent across all states nor across all school sectors. A recent inquiry into the education of the gifted and talented in the state of Victoria, for example, noted a disturbing lack of systematic processes for the identification of gifted students in its public schools, with schools that had established formal assessment processes being the exception rather than the rule (Parliament of Victoria, 2012). Schools from the independent sector were reported as being more successful in identifying gifted students through the use of more appropriate mechanisms during their enrolment processes. The inquiry committee surmised that "the present practices are not adequately identifying Victoria's gifted students" (Parliament of Victoria, 2012, p. 81) and made a number of recommendations for future implementation that is more consistent with research in the field.

Special Provisions for Gifted Students

It has been well documented in the literature on giftedness that the regular school curriculum has not been meeting the needs of gifted students (Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 1993). Therefore, it is no surprise that gifted students have been described as amongst the most educationally disadvantaged groups in education (Gross, 1999a). To counteract this situation research has been focused on developing effective interventions for gifted students that aim to meet their broader educational needs (e.g., Maker & Nielson, 1996; Rogers, 1991; Tomlinson, 1999; VanTassel-Baska, 2003; Ward, 1980). Research centres such as the Centre for Gifted Education at the College of William and Mary and the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented at the University of Connecticut in the United States and the Gifted Education Research, Resource, and Information Centre at the University of New South Wales in Australia have contributed to advancing knowledge in the field as well as developing practical models for classroom implementation.

In order to develop appropriate provisions for gifted students it has been acknowledged that these accommodations must be directly relevant to their needs, which are fundamentally

based on their individual characteristics and identified potential. Merrotsy (2008a) summarised three basic educational needs of gifted students. First, they require a substantially differentiated curriculum that is matched to the needs of the individual student. Second, the learning experiences must be enriched and challenging, carefully planned, and with content to the level of each student's ability. Last, counselling and guidance for cognitive and affective growth must be provided. Callahan (2006) has noted that several modern curriculum models such as the autonomous learner model (Betts & Neihart, 1986) are founded on these three premises and propose strategies and interventions based on these recommendations.

Examination of the particular characteristics of gifted students has led to the emergence of a variety of support frameworks that aim to cater to different needs of gifted students. Arrangements such as differentiation through acceleration, enrichment, or grouping have been endorsed for well over 20 years as strategies that take into consideration the characteristics of gifted students such as varied interests, intense curiosity, and the ability to learn in more sophisticated ways than their age peers (Braggett, 1993; VanTassel-Baska, 2008). Comparisons between these types of adjustments highlight the fact that some have served gifted students more comprehensively than others, some have been more accepted by the wider educational community, and some have produced better results than others. These three themes undergird many of the attitudes towards these practices for gifted students.

Equally important has been the need to include support and counselling for their social and emotional needs, as this particular area merits closer attention for gifted students (Colangelo, 2003; Silverman, 1993). Self-help and counselling with families have become more commonplace approaches for supporting gifted students (Colangelo, 2003). However, any type of counselling that involves gifted students should be carried out by individuals sensitive to the affective characteristics and needs of this population (Colangelo & Assouline, 2000; Ignat, 2011; Wood, 2010).

Of the educational provisions that have been noted, academic acceleration is one that has merited special consideration. Although well grounded in research for meeting gifted students' educational needs (Assouline, Colangelo, VanTassel-Baska, & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2015; Hattie, 2009), academic acceleration still often meets resistance due to concerns regarding social and emotional development (Feldhusen, 1998; Merrotsy, 2008a), though attitudes have been improving (Gross, Urquhart, Doyle, Juratowitch, & Matheson, 2011). Defined as "any of the ways by which a gifted student engages in the study of new material that is typically taught at a higher grade level than the one in which the child is currently enrolled, and covers more material in a

shorter time" (Merrotsy, 2008a, p. 5), acceleration has been seen as a fundamental need. The *Iowa Acceleration Scale* (2003) developed by Assouline, Colangelo, Lupkowski-Shoplik, Lipscomb, and Forstadt provides a comprehensive evidence-based resource to assist in the decision-making process for acceleration for gifted students in the primary years. Examples of acceleration that are practised in Australian schools include early admission, grade skipping, enrolment in tertiary units of study whilst still attending secondary school, and early entrance into university (Merrotsy, 2003).

Differentiation of the curriculum to meet the academic needs of gifted students has been supported by a number of researchers including Maker (1982; Maker & Schiever, 2010) who recommended appropriate modification of content, process, product, and learning environment; Kaplan (2009) who recommended programs that include depth, complexity, and interdisciplinary connections; and Gagné (2007) who suggested that increased density, difficulty, depth, and diversity are paramount. Even so, classroom-based studies have indicated that little differentiation occurs for gifted students in mainstream classrooms (Archambault, Westberg, Brown, Hallmark, Zhang, & Emmons, 1993) despite students themselves having advocated for it. Kanevsky (2011), for example, examined preferred ways of learning of 416 gifted students and 230 not identified as gifted. She found that whilst students from both groups preferred a personalised process of learning, gifted students favoured complex content, pursuing their own interests, understanding the interconnections between ideas, finding creative solutions to challenging problems, and determining the format of their product as preferred modifications. Kanevsky noted that overall the learning preferences of gifted students differed from students not identified as gifted in ways consistent with the cognitive profiles of gifted students, including thinking in more complex ways and faster pace of learning.

Examples of differentiation that are evidenced in Australian schools include part-time withdrawal and curriculum compacting as well as variations based on higher-order thinking skills (e.g., NSW DET, Curriculum K-12 Directorate, 2004d; State Government of Victoria, Department of Education and Training, 2014b). Part-time withdrawal has been an ever-popular program design for gifted students, providing them with an opportunity out of the mainstream classroom to develop high-level skills. Despite these various models being available, some students dislike being visibly separated from their peers and labelled, as well as being held responsible for catching up on work missed as a result of withdrawal (Davis & Rimm, 2004). The practice of curriculum compacting, "reducing the core curriculum to only those skills or content areas that are not already mastered" (Gross, Sleap, & Pretorius, 1999, p. 26), focuses on pre-

testing and the elimination of practice and drill and has increased in use in the secondary school system (Gross, Sleap, & Pretorius, 1999). Differentiating the curriculum on the basis of higher-order thinking skills has been an on-going feature of the International Baccalaureate (IB) (Frank-Gemmill, 2013; International Baccalaureate Organization, 2010), which is a growing program in Australia (Doherty, 2009).

Ability grouping has also been endorsed as beneficial for the academic development of gifted students by researchers such as Rogers and Kulik and Kulik. After examining 13 research syntheses on grouping for enrichment, cooperative learning, and acceleration, Rogers (2002) confirmed that like-ability grouping practices for gifted students returned positive results. Indeed, meta-analyses of the effects of ability grouping have been conducted since the 1980s, highlighting benefits not only in achievement but in the attitudes of gifted students in particular (Kulik & Kulik, 1982). In Australia ability grouping had for many decades been considered as "elitist" (Gross, 2003, p. 553; Vasilevska, 2001, p. 27), and worldwide its very presence has been resistive to the detracking reform that insists on inclusive heterogeneous classes (Colangelo & Davis, 2003; Fielder, Lange, & Winebrenner, 1993). Ability grouping has continued to have a troubled history (Baer, 2013).

Australia, and in particular the state of New South Wales, has since 1991 put in place additional special provisions for gifted students in the form of opportunity classes (OCs), selective and semi-selective high schools, and selective agricultural high schools (Carnellor, 1999). Not only have these arrangements contributed to the academic success of gifted students but they have also provided environments that are conducive to positive social interactions (Gross, 2003; Merrotsy, 2003). Opportunity Classes offer gifted students in Years 5 and 6 academic pathways into secondary and tertiary education by providing them with a challenging curriculum and grouping with students of similar ability and maturity. Entry is through a placement test in English, Mathematics, and general ability administered every year (NSW DEC, 2013) and is subject to quotas. There are currently 47 selective high schools in New South Wales, 17 of which are fully selective, whilst 25 are high schools with selective classes, four are selective agricultural high schools, as well as a virtual selective class provision in the Western NSW region (NSW DEC, 2013) that has been extended in 2015 into a state-wide virtual provision for rural and remote students. Selective high schools aim to "provide an educationally enriched environment for highly achieving, academically gifted students" (NSW DEC, n.d.-c). Over 13,000 applicants for 4,126 places in 2011 (NSW DEC, n.d.-c) is an indication of the high demand (Campbell, Proctor, & Sherington, 2009).

Teachers of Gifted Students

The characteristics of effective teachers of gifted students have been explored in the literature, with early recommendations suggesting that "gifted pupils require gifted teachers" (Wessel, 1956, p. 54). More recently, in 2001 the *Roeper Review* published a special issue on teachers of gifted learners, with a variety of contributions highlighting "how one initiates and matures in that special occupation of gifted teacher, how teachers might enhance their abilities toward becoming gifted in their teaching, and how that occupation relates to the nurturance of gifted learners" (Haensly, 2001, p. 189). Interviews with teachers (e.g., Joffe, 2001), case studies (e.g., Miranda & Landmann, 2001), and reflections about teaching gifted students (e.g., Hildreth & Sawyer, 2001) featured prominently.

Broader themes across the literature on teachers of gifted students focus on an understanding of the characteristics and behaviours of gifted students, knowledge of identification processes, ability to differentiate the curriculum, attention to emotional and socio-affective needs, and engagement in on-going professional learning as key attributes (Cheung & Phillipson, 2008; Ford & Trotman, 2001; Mills, 2003; Rash & Miller, 2000). Being knowledgeable, flexible, intelligent, and achievement-oriented were personal attributes considered to be desirable (Feldhusen, 1997). Effective teacher preparation, recruitment, and retention have also been noted as being advantageous (Bernal, 2002), whilst experience in working with gifted students has been found to be the best predictor of the desired characteristics for teaching this population of students (Cheung & Phillipson, 2008).

The Study of Particular Populations

Because issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic status, ethnicity, and other socio-cultural variables have shaped not only education in general but also gifted education, research has been conducted to explore the impact of these factors on special populations of gifted students. Specifically, the general literature has focused on gifted girls, twice-exceptional students, African-American and indigenous students, students from backgrounds of poverty, and students from non-English speaking backgrounds; literature on gifted gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (GLBTI) students is also emerging. Focus will be given to groups relevant to my inquiry.

Gifted girls and eminent women are populations that have received specific attention in the research (e.g., Arnold, Noble, & Subotnik, 1996; Kerr, 1985; Reis, 2005); however this special

consideration has not always been the case. Davis and Rimm (2004) noted that the education of gifted women historically has been limited, with emphasis placed on their subservience to men and preparation for domestic roles. With the change in the status of women over the last century, equity in terms of access and opportunity and the removal of barriers caused by stereotyping, bias, and discrimination have improved but equity is still being sought for all women. These changes have also had an impact on the education of gifted girls (Kerr, 1997).

Several authors have concerned themselves with investigating factors that have prevented gifted girls from reaching their full potential. Barbara Kerr (1985) has extensively examined cultural, educational, and personal factors, as has Linda Silverman (Silverman & Miller, 2009). Sally Reis (2006) and Leonie Kronborg (2010) explored talent development in women and identified similar factors impeding goal attainment. Factors that have been identified in the literature include family expectations and role modelling as important influences on the achievement orientation of gifted girls, peer attitudes and expectations that depress female achievement, school expectations and teacher bias, self-perceptions and self-expectations including understandings about their own potential and aspirations, low sense of competence, low achievement motivation, and perfectionism (Davis & Rimm, 2004). The risk of suicide (Hull-Banks, Kerr, & Robinson Kurpius, 2004), links with higher drug use in adulthood (White & Batty, 2011), and the increasing emphasis on sexuality in the media (Gruber & Grube, 2000) have all affected gifted girls negatively. Successful women have also found themselves having to negotiate the home–career dilemma, often making compromises to fit family needs (Arnold, 1993) as well as responding to the ambivalent attitudes of significant others in their lives (Noble, 1987).

The reversal of underachievement patterns in gifted girls has been a goal of many educators and researchers. Silverman and Miller (2009) have recommended redefining the concept of achievement for the gifted by broadening what is valued as domains of achievement "so as to include those emotional/relational spheres in which many gifted women choose to devote their energies" (p. 122). Women's models of success, they noted, include individual self-actualisation, volunteerism, and community service. Other recommendations made at the school level include, among others: interventions such as early and consistent identification and programming; specific counselling; using successful females as mentors and role models; career development models; female-only groupings, classes, and schools; the use of teaching models that stress connectedness, independence, and creativity; the use of discipline-specific models that value the contributions of women; family education; and the early systematic intervention in mathematics and science programs (Noble, 1987; VanTassel-Baska, 1998).

Twice-exceptional (2e) students have also received coverage in the literature and have been identified under various labels including "gifted-handicapped" (Maker, 1977), "gifted/learning disabled" (Wright, 1997), and "children with disabilities" (Cline & Hegeman, 2001), depending on the era. The variety of labels has aligned with the development of special education since its emergence in the mid-1940s; indeed, until the 1970s *giftedness* and *disability* were considered to be mutually exclusive terms (Davis & Rimm, 2004). Contemporary definitions consider 2e students to be those "who have two seemingly contradictory sets of traits: those related to their high intellectual or artistic abilities, and those related to their limitations or deficits" (Neumann, 2009, p. 906).

Research on 2e students has tended to focus on gifted students with identified learning difficulties (Crepeau-Hobson & Bianco, 2013; Nielsen, 2002), autism spectrum disorders (Assouline, Nicpon, & Dockery, 2012; Assouline, Nicpon, & Doobay, 2009), attention deficit hyperactivity disorders (Flint, 2001; Rinn & Reynolds, 2012), as well as those with hearing, visual, and physical impairments (Lupart & Toy, 2009). Individual program plans have been recommended for this population of students that incorporate "strategies for enrichment of gifts and talents, strategies for remediation of and compensation for deficits, and strategies for enhancing personal development" (Lupart & Toy, 2009, p. 511). Research has indicated that 2e students should be provided with emotional support, external scaffolding, and advocacy (Lupart & Toy, 2009). The authors have suggested that emotional and behavioural issues may arise as a result of the interactions between positive and negative characteristics. A dependent pattern of behaviour may also emerge as a result of too much focus on their disability and a neglect of their intellectual ability. Maker has worked extensively on developing curriculum to meet the needs of special populations, including 2e students (Delisle & Lewis, 2003).

Beckley (1998) has suggested another two categories of 2e students. First, there are the students who are often overlooked in educational settings, who are underserved and therefore who underachieve. These students can be both gifted and have a subtle disability or difficulty, their abilities and disabilities masking each other. These disabilities may be learning, developmental, social or emotional, or a combination of these (Merrotsy, 2008b) and they impede students from performing to their cognitive potential (Ashman & Merrotsy, 2012). The second group includes students whose exceptional abilities have never been identified or addressed. These students generally perform at grade level, but may well be performing below their potential. This underidentification may be due to inadequate assessments or depressed IQ scores, so a broad and diverse approach to identification has been recommended (Beckley, 1998).

Poverty has been considered as an insidious barrier to the participation of gifted students in appropriately enriching educational programs. As the overarching variable that leads to underrepresentation of students in gifted programs, poverty has been significantly explored by VanTassel-Baska (2010c). As one of the most critical issues in the field of gifted education poverty affects all cultural groups, applies to students of all genders and sexual orientations in both urban and rural regions, and is responsible for placing students at great risk of a host of social-emotional problems (VanTassel-Baska, 2010c). Advocacy for stronger social support networks for students (Worrell, 2010), assistance for overcoming the consequences of geographic isolation faced by rural poor gifted students (Stambaugh, 2010), value-added education, counselling for psychosocial and academic issues, working with families (Olszewski-Kubilius, 2010), and gifted programs to provide self-confidence and important communication skills (Swanson, 2010b) have been advocated. VanTassel-Baska (2010b) has urged ongoing whole-school nurturance of gifted students with a background of poverty through long-term investment in early and varied forms of identification, dedicated funding to ongoing support services, assistance with career planning, and family support, all at local, regional, state, and national levels.

Gifted Adolescents

Adolescence is a time of significant change in the development of each individual and for gifted students this is no exception. The extent to which intellectual giftedness affects the journey through adolescence has received less attention than giftedness in pre-adolescents (Dillon, 2011; Neber, 2006; Vialle, Heaven, & Ciarrochi, 2007); however, it is an issue of concern (Assouline & Colangelo, 2006; Moon, 2006). An earlier work in the field (Bireley & Genshaft, 1991c) focused on four major themes, namely the adolescent in the family, the developmental needs and potential crises of the adolescent, educational issues, and the unique needs of the culturally different (Bireley & Genshaft, 1991b). A more recent work, *The Handbook of Secondary Gifted Education* (Dixon & Moon, 2006), demonstrates a shift in understandings and priorities in research. It describes four overarching themes: personal issues and individual needs, general talent development models, schooling and instruction, and professional learning of teachers of the gifted (Neber, 2006).

The characteristics of gifted adolescents appear to be similar to those of gifted children, and are equally as varied across families (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993;

Schilling, Sparfeldt, & Rost, 2006), cultures (Neihart, 2006), socio-economic status (VanTassel-Baska, 1989), and gender (Cross, Speirs Neumeister, & Cassady, 2007). Key characteristics include advanced academic development, with Marsh, Chessor, Craven, and Roche (1995) as well as Neihart and Huan (2009) having reported that gifted adolescents have stronger academic self-concepts and higher self-efficacy than their non-gifted peers; however, Tong and Yewchuk (1996) found no differences, and Lea-Wood and Clunies-Ross (1995) have reported in the negative.

Many gifted adolescents also hold high expectations of themselves and display perfectionist traits as a consequence, most in a healthy range but with approximately 30% presenting in the neurotic range, as demonstrated in Schuler's (2000) study. Moreover there has been no evidence to suggest that gifted adolescents are more prone to depression or suicide than other adolescents (Cross, Cassady, & Miller, 2006; Neihart & Huan, 2009), but they are vulnerable to emotional distress (Alsop, 2003; Neihart, Reis, Robinson, & Moon, 2002) and peer pressure (Foust & Booker, 2007). A 2007 study by Vialle, Heaven, and Ciarrochi of a sample of 65 gifted students drawn from an Australian longitudinal study examined the relationships among personality factors, social support, emotional well-being, and academic achievement as potentially important predictors of psychological well-being and academic success. The study found that whilst gifted students reported performing well academically they also reported feeling sadder and more isolated, thus highlighting the need to sustain focus on the social and emotional needs of gifted adolescents.

Numerous studies have focused on understanding the self-concepts of gifted adolescents, which Foust and Booker (2007) found to be almost always positive. Generally though, their social self-concepts have been lower than their academic self-concepts as they are often more sensitive to the pressure of the forced-choice dilemma (also referred to as the *achievement/affiliation conflict*; Neihart, 2006, p. 196). Ford and Harris (1999) identified academic resistance or withdrawal as a common response, particularly when gifted adolescents saw their self-esteem as no longer tied to academic success. Also noted by various authors were the social coping strategies of gifted adolescents as being significantly different from those of their non-gifted peers; however results differ according to gender (Foust & Booker, 2007), ethnicity (Neihart, 2006), and sexual orientation (Peterson & Rischar, 2000). There is little consensus on what interventions are effective in helping gifted adolescents manage these conflicts other than the use of social supports (Csikszentmihalyi, Rathunde, & Whalen, 1993; Rinn, Reynolds, & McQueen, 2011) and even fewer studies to examine their effectiveness (Neihart, 2006; Rinn, Reynolds, & McQueen, 2011).

Underachievement

Hoover-Schultz (2005) reiterated that there is a misconception that gifted students by virtue of their abilities and potential will achieve success in the educational setting regardless of any intervention. The reality is that gifted students by virtue of their potential alone are not automatically guaranteed academic success and, like all students, their academic performance depends on both internal and external factors.

Hattie (2009) has suggested that the teaching methods utilised to facilitate student learning have been one external factor that has had a marked effect on academic achievement, and educational methods for gifted children have varied significantly over time. With "large inter-individual differences even within a group of gifted children" (Luzzo & Gobet, 2011, p. 85) it has been noted that many gifted students underachieve because the teaching methods implemented have not met their particular needs (Merrotsy, 2008b; Peterson & Moon, 2008), with many simply performing at their grade-level expectancy (Seeley, 1998). Student engagement through appropriate teaching techniques, therefore, is a significant issue in the prevention of underachievement among gifted students (Appleton, Christenson, & Furlong, 2008; Landis & Reschly, 2013).

Psychosocial stressors have also been known to contribute to the underachievement of gifted students and exist in many forms. Social stress, feelings of inadequacy, perfectionism, anxiety, and depression have been identified as common concerns that have arisen from gifted students' inquiries into understanding the self as well as from the management of social and family issues. These concerns can further manifest as education and career-related problems that have the potential for life-long consequences (Reis, 2003).

Other factors that can contribute to the underachievement of gifted students may include a social milieu that does not value and recognise giftedness, which can lead to bullying and lack of friends (Peterson & Moon, 2008; Reis & McCoach, 2000); the cultural context that may include socio-economic factors such as poverty (VanTassel-Baska, 2010a); certain types of home environments, parenting styles, and parental influence (Rimm, 1995); and self-identity issues related to giftedness (Ashman & Merrotsy, 2012). Underachievement may also be the result of the forced-choice dilemma (Gross, 1989; Jung, McCormick, & Gross, 2012) and other peer influences (Reis & McCoach, 2000).

Studies of underachieving gifted students have identified a range of characteristics that are often misinterpreted by educators and parents alike, particularly when compared with high-

achieving gifted students (McCoach & Siegle, 2003). Some have demonstrated that retreating behind a talent mask has had consequences for gifted students' emotional well-being as well as their academic performance and has been strongly linked to lowered self-esteem and self-concept (Gross, 2004a; Rimm, 1995). Other behaviours displayed by gifted underachievers include, among others, a learned helplessness, engagement in avoidance behaviours, procrastination, fear of failure, withdrawal, and extreme rebellion against any kind of authority (Davis & Rimm, 2004). Reis and McCoach (2000) provided a comprehensive reference list of research into the various characteristics of gifted underachievers.

In planning intervention Seeley (1998) recommended the implementation of strategies such as focusing on students' interests and strengths, assisting the development of good self-concept and positive self-esteem, motivating students and assisting in the development of intrinsic motivation, and developing resilience in students. Sylvia Rimm, who has spent much of her career working to reverse underachievement (Rimm, 1986, 1995, 2003, 2008), has supported these recommendations. She has also recommended long-term preventive factors such as appropriate training for teachers and administrators, and a differentiated curriculum tailored to meet all students' needs and that includes subject- and grade-skipping as options (Rimm & Lovance, 1992). She has acknowledged, however, that most strategies have met with limited success (Reis & McCoach, 2000). More research is needed to assist gifted students to cope with underachievement, perfectionism, and learning difficulties (Reis & McCoach, 2000; VanTassel-Baska, 2013).

Summary

As noted in the literature, in terms of the broader exploration of the concept of giftedness contemporary viewpoints have highlighted changing understandings of the term *giftedness* and how gifted individuals are identified, nurtured, supported, and provided for in terms of educational and other special provisions. From the earliest ancient understandings and the definitions of Galton and Terman to the broader conceptualisations of today's multifaceted constructs, the emphasis has shifted away from the pursuit of a single generalisable understanding to the acknowledgement of more multidimensional interpretations. These differing understandings of giftedness and their manifestations as talents that cross all age, gender, social, and cultural divides are more relevant in today's pluralistic and globalised world than ever before. The challenges posed by socio-economic divisions, unequal access to opportunities and experiences,

and still-existent discrimination against and bias towards particular groups of students have meant that further research in the field, promotion of findings, and development of programs to support gifted students not only in general terms but also with regards to special populations will need to be continued. Part B of the literature review turns its focus on gifted ELLs, as well as their particular characteristics and needs.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW – PART B

Who are Gifted ELLs?

From a detailed exploration of the general literature on giftedness and gifted students, the focus in Part B now turns to the population at the centre of my inquiry, gifted ELLs. These students, for the purpose of my inquiry, are defined as students who exhibit the characteristics of giftedness and/or exhibit talents as identified by their school's policy documents in this area, including state policy which has adopted Gagné's DMGT 2.0, and for whom English is the language of instruction but not their mother tongue. They have many of the same baseline characteristics as mainstream ELLs, and both their full abilities and true potential may be hidden behind the language barrier. Because of this masking many gifted ELLs in schools may go unidentified and may be incorrectly placed in remedial or special classes.

As noted in the introductory chapter ELLs do not form a homogeneous group, and there is no unitary description that may define their cultural backgrounds. Different English-dominant countries (e.g., the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia) have received and continue to receive students from diverse countries and cultures as a response to unique social, historical and political antecedents, including legal and illegal immigration, slavery, transportation, colonialism, geographical proximity, political persecution and exile, war and invasion, and a host of other push and pull factors. In the United States, for example, the main cultural groups identified and researched include African-Americans (Perry, Steele, & Hilliard, 2003) (this group is not necessarily in relation to the acquisition of English), Native Americans (Begay & Maker, 2007), Asian-Americans (Yoon & Gentry, 2009) and Hispanic-Americans, with further subdivision of the last group into Puerto Rican-Americans and Mexican-Americans (Cline & Schwartz, 1999). In Australia divisions have been based less on specific cultural backgrounds (except in reference to indigenous Australians) and more on whether the individual of migrant heritage is born in Australia, or in another English-speaking or non-English-speaking country (ACARA, 2011).

Rance-Roney (2004) profiled adolescent gifted ELLs in the United States and identified particular attributes that describe this group of students (Table 2.1). These characteristics are grouped around factors including family and educational backgrounds, place of birth or age of arrival, interstitial identity (through the acculturation process), deficit-centred labelling, self-esteem and emotional well-being issues, different learning styles and ways of learning,

Table 2.1

Characteristics of Gifted ELLs (United States)

Characteristics of Gifted ELLs (United States)	
Background	• arrival after living in one country or may be a global nomad • may have lived within U.S. borders as an indigenous person exposed to U.S. culture • may have been born within the United States but confined to social and linguistic boundaries of the home culture
Educational background	• educational experiences may range from no formal schooling to grade-level equivalence (Faltis, 1993) • English may be their second, third, or even fourth language after the mother tongue • may have some knowledge of English but almost always below the level of English-speaking peers • may have been enrolled in gifted programs or selective high schools in their home country
Labelling	• may be judged on English ability alone, not on academic potential • may be labelled as Limited English Proficient (LEP) (deficit-centred rather than ability-centred)
Self-esteem	• link of self-esteem to self-worth in the academic domain may suffer due to a temporary inability to excel in school • difficulty of language in peer interactions can be emotionally damaging (e.g., limitations in forming new friendships, bullying, racial discrimination) • teachers can damage self-esteem by lowering expectations for achievement because of the challenge of learning within a second language
Emotional well-being	• heightened emotional sensitivity and emotional intensity with long-term consequences as culture shock sets in; can lead to anger and depression • overstimulation and over-excitability as a result of greater sensitivity to differences, comparisons and novel experiences and feelings (Piechowski, 1997) • experiences of cultural fatigue can lead to self-isolation • cultural dissonance can lead to questioning own cultural values and patterns • experiences of negative stereotyping based on first culture stereotypical attitudes (e.g., institutional racism, discrimination, perception of underachievement) can challenge emotional well-being • erosion or loss of home language can be felt more keenly

(table continues)

Characteristics of Gifted ELLs (United States)	
Personal identity	- will need to form a new interstitial identity as the lifelong process of acculturation continues - may experience heightened guilt and loss of home culture and language at the expense of gaining a new identity - camouflaging of identity to conform to new peer group norms can be the push to create a public image of mediocrity and to deny giftedness (Gross, 1998) - achievement of a cohesive identity may be delayed because of the multiplicity of identity facets that emerge in negotiating the transcultural and translingual experience (Harris, 1993) - danger of losing affirmation from peers in the first culture who have not acculturated as quickly - can stay in a "permanent immigrant state" as they realise they will never fully acculturate or reach full native linguistic competence (Walker de Felix, 1986)
Educational experiences	- learning styles and ways of learning may differ radically from those styles fostered within the home culture (e.g., value of memorisation in some cultures) - competency in some areas such as subject matter, but reticent in participatory group work
Second language acquisition	- most move through the process of acquiring a second language fairly rapidly relative to their peers, who generally require six to eight years to achieve academic competence (Collier, 1987) - may develop a greater sense of frustration that acquisition of academic language does not come as quickly as that of social language
Parental understandings	- the value of the student within the family structure may be disproportionately linked to academic or creative achievement in the home culture - seeking educational opportunities for their gifted children - limited knowledge of the structure of the education system; may experience frustration when encountering American educational philosophy of egalitarianism (prioritisation of the education of the majority) - experience English-language communication difficulties
Family dynamics	- often the student takes on the role of the family care-taker and spokesperson, changing and challenging family dynamics - home culture learning styles may differ from those of dominant culture, causing friction within families - pressure to assimilate can lead to disconnect between family life and the outside world

Note. Adapted from "The affective dimension of second culture/second language acquisition in gifted students" by J. A. Rance-Roney, 2004, in D. Boothe & J.C. Stanley (Eds.), *In the eyes of the beholder: Critical issues for diversity in gifted education,* pp. 73–85. Copyright 2004 by Prufrock Press

educational experiences, including second-language acquisition and prior knowledge of English, and parental understandings and family dynamics.

Other attributes and characteristics not highlighted by Rance-Roney but identified in other research include a rapid exit from ESL services (Granada, 2003), constant negotiation between concepts and vocabulary from two linguistic worlds (Robisheaux, 2002), as well as problem-solving and code-switching skills (Hughes, Shaunessy, Brice, Ratliff, & McHatton, 2006) demonstrated earlier and at a much higher degree than in non-gifted bilingual peers (Granada, 2003). Whilst not all the descriptors listed above are common to gifted ELLs in Australia, existing research and resources from the United States still serve as a starting point in order to develop a better understanding of the educational needs of this population of students.

Issues with Identification and Underrepresentation of Gifted ELLs

Whilst the general themes of conceptualisation, identification, special provision, and evaluation outlined in Part A of the literature review are pertinent to gifted ELLs, identification appears to have attracted the largest amount of research with regards to this specific population of students. Passow and Frasier (1996) and Gonzalez (2002) have noted that much of this research has been critical of the reliance on traditional identification procedures such as IQ and other standardised tests for identification of giftedness in ELLs, with data regarding the use of translations being inconsistent, thus not guaranteeing more valid results (Kogan, 2001). Castellano and Diaz (2002a) have criticised this reliance on standardised testing for disadvantaging gifted ELLs because they often do not possess the level of English-language development that they require to achieve success in these types of tests; Kogan (2001) has stated that these tests have also generally been standardised within the major culture.

Identification of gifted ELLs has always been a complex endeavour as it involves the careful consideration of the impact of several factors. Of these factors, Kogan (2001) has asserted that the differing levels of English proficiency of the students have been the most complex to contend with because ascertaining the student's dominant (or preferred) language and their language proficiency (their actual linguistic ability) in each language are complex processes. Other frequently made assumptions that every student from within a cultural group has the same first-language proficiency are also erroneous. The exposure and usage to not only the first language but also to English can differ considerably, and these aspects need to be identified before a student's potential can be gauged.

Several authors have recommended alternative methods of identification of gifted ELLs that encompass a more holistic approach and are more in line with current definitions of giftedness in general (Briggs, Reis, & Sullivan, 2008; Lohman, Korb, & Lakin, 2008; Matthews, 2006) though they have come under some scrutiny in terms of validity and reliability (Granada, 2003; Lohman, 2005, as cited in Carman & Taylor, 2010). Alternative methods have included taking a case study approach to each student through the collection of data from student portfolios, teacher observations, standardised tests, interviews, consultation with parents and students, and the use of different rating scales (Clark & Gonzalez, 1998, as cited in Granada, 2003; Cline & Schwartz, 1999; Kogan, 2001), as well as evaluating non-cognitive skills (Smutny & Danley, 2012) such as responsibility, independence, persistence, emotional maturity, empathy, interpersonal skills, and verbal and non-verbal communication. Many of these methods have been both researched and adopted in school districts in USA–Mexico border states such as New Mexico and Texas, with ethnic populations of up to 97% Hispanic (Granada, 2003). Further north collaboration between the Iowa Department of Education and the Belin-Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development (2008) has led to the development of a manual and CD-ROM titled *Identifying Gifted and Talented English Language Learners Grades K-12*. Its purpose was to seek

> to be a resource for change by providing multimethod/multimeasure indicators of gifted/talented student potential that will prove useful in the assessment of English Language Learners.… [by assisting] educators to confidently identify the English Language Learners' abilities and potential as they are uniquely exhibited in both their heritage and host cultures. (2008, p. 6)

Despite these interventions Galitis (2009) has noted Richert's (1997) concerns regarding criticisms for their risk of assessor bias.

Other authors have suggested the use of dynamic assessment techniques (Chaffey, Bailey, & Vine, 2003; Kirschenbaum, 1998, as cited in Matthews & Shaunessy, 2008; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2002) and have adapted them for the identification of giftedness in diverse populations of students (Chaffey, Bailey, & Vine, 2003). Similarly, Davis (2009) has acknowledged that well-recognised theories of giftedness that come from Terman, Renzulli, Gagné, Sternberg, Carroll, Tannenbaum, and Gardner have also recommended a holistic approach to identification; however, these theories warrant further detailed examination of their consideration of gifted ELLs.

Inadequate identification processes have had a negative follow-on effect for gifted ELLs in accessing appropriate levels of educational support. The underrepresentation of gifted ELLs in gifted programs in mainstream schools and their overrepresentation in special education programs (Castellano & Diaz, 2002a; Davis, 2009; Matthews, 2006) have provided evidence of disadvantage. These placement issues still occur despite the widespread acknowledgement in the literature that giftedness and talents are found in all cultural and socio-economic groups (Castellano & Diaz, 2002a; Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee, 2001).

Teacher beliefs about the potential of culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse gifted students have been mixed, with studies providing contrasting results. Teacher bias has been identified as a barrier for gifted ELLs by Brice and Brice (2004) and Esquierdo and Arreguín-Anderson (2012). A recent US-wide study by de Wet and Gubbins (2011), however, noted that 90% of teachers agreed that culturally, linguistically, and economically diverse gifted students benefitted from inclusion in gifted programs, and that they had the necessary abilities to succeed (de Wet & Gubbins, 2011). Other reasons for the low number of ELLs identified for gifted programs have included selective referrals, deficit-based paradigms, and a lack of multiple criteria and multiple data sources (Castellano & Diaz, 2002a). Ford (2013) has noted that the persistence of underrepresentation despite decades of research has in recent years culminated in an exploration of prejudice — both intentional and unintentional — as a key factor that is still relevant.

Special Provisions for Gifted ELLs

In terms of supporting gifted ELLs, Baldwin (2002) has noted the programs, instructional models, and provisions that have existed in the United States since the 1970s have been varied in terms of implementation, enthusiasm, continuity, and success. Ranging from "pre-gifted" programs such as Project GOTCHA implemented in 15 U.S. states (Aguirre, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 1998) to the more generic arrangements put in place for gifted students in individual mainstream schools, these programs have aimed to combine expertise from the fields of gifted education, bilingual education, and general education (Granada, 2003). Maker's DISCOVER model (Maker, 2005) has been another outstanding program that aims to improve on curriculum design and instruction with its focus on problem-solving as a measure of the ability to learn. This program has been found to be highly effective in identifying gifted students from

different ethnicities (Sarouphim & Maker, 2010). Key concerns have included dropout rates for gifted ELLs (Renzulli & Park, 2000), teacher education programs that do not explicitly teach about the relationship between culture and giftedness (VanTassel-Baska, Feng, Quek, & Struck, 2004), and little program evaluation (Aguirre, 2003; U.S. Department of Education, 1998).

The dual-language approach that has been in use since the 1980s and that incorporates bilingual content enrichment and flexible grouping (Granada, 2003) has underpinned a variety of programs for gifted ELLs in the United States. As well as this approach, Smutny (2012) has advised that curriculum for gifted ELLs should be infused with multicultural and linguistic components reflective of the cultures and the languages of the students being served by the program and should align with provisions in place for the gifted students from the mainstream population. Curriculum for gifted ELLs should also be supported by cumulative learning experiences facilitated by proficient teachers experienced in the practice of continuous assessment for learning (Aguirre, 2003; Granada, 2003). Smutny, Haydon, Bolanos, and Estrada-Danley (2012) have devised a "toolbox of strategies" (Smutny, 2012, p. 3) that can assist Hispanic ELLs, including gifted learners (see Table 2.2). VanTassel-Baska's (2008) integrated curriculum model, Stanley's talent search model (Assouline & Lupkowski-Shoplik, 2012), Renzulli's schoolwide enrichment model (Renzulli & Reis, 1985), and Betts's autonomous learner model (Betts & Neihart, 1986) have also been reviewed as being good instructional models for gifted ELLs (Davis, 2009).

Over time there have been changing attitudes towards improvement of the provision of educational opportunities for gifted students across all Australian states. With its strong national cultural emphasis on *equity* generally interpreted as *sameness* rather than *equality* (Gross, 2004a) the endorsement of special provisions has come through policy and its varying degrees of implementation in schools. A recently published national study with a focus on perceptions by different stakeholders regarding academic acceleration has highlighted a general pattern of enthusiasm for the process tempered by continuing concerns regarding social-emotional outcomes (Gross et al., 2011). Very little conversation regarding what this entails with regards to gifted ELLs has been evident, and provisions for gifted students (including ELLs) vary greatly between education sectors, systems, and individual schools.

Table 2.2

Teaching Tools for Reaching Gifted ELLs

Strategy	Need/Purpose/Reason to Use
Display learning goals and questions in clear direct language with visual images	• Recognise that cultural and linguistic differences increase uneasiness students feel about not knowing what is expected of them • Be sensitive to students' proficiency in English and the limitations this may impose on their learning
Allow choices and encourage adventure	• Provide students with choices, especially in those communicative areas where they feel vulnerable
Determine prior knowledge	• Do not assume language proficiency equates to intellectual ability • Confer with parents and community who know the student • Give students credit for abilities, experiences, and skills gained in their first language or learnt through first language
Prepare ELLs in weaker areas	• Review new units of work for potential linguistic barriers • Prepare students for new vocabulary and consider different ways to share this vocabulary • Look for personal/family experiences that act as bridges to learning of new concepts
Inspire and support new interests	• Incorporate student interests as a powerful motivating effect that propels learning • Design student portfolios where they collect and display work they particularly value
Accommodate pace	• Pre-assess the level of mastery of a topic in the context of a developing fluency in English • Offer alternative media and activities that enable them to use their abilities without linguistic factors acting to hamper them • Present open-ended activities and allow for bilingual versions
Include creativity and the arts	• Celebrate boldness and risk-taking, however great or small • Model and teach coping skills to deal with feelings of frustration, being overwhelmed, and self-doubt • Point out the hidden jewels in student work • Emphasise creativity as an ongoing process
Nurture peer relationships	• Promote interaction with other gifted learners to show them they share similar interests and traits as themselves • Value the gifts and talents of ELLs and native speakers equally • Establish mentoring relationships with other peers or adults
Encourage independent learning	• Consider the level of planning, scaffolding, support, and supervision needed for independent projects where students can feel comfortable and competent • Assist students to develop independent learning skills • Focus on achievement of self-awareness as learners, whilst recognising personal strengths and aptitudes
Find local talent to open students' minds	• Provide opportunities for students to make connections with experts from their own cultural backgrounds, who can inspire them to act on their dreams and passions

Note. Adapted from "Teaching Gifted English Language Learners: Tools for the Regular Classroom" by J. F. Smutny, 2012, *Gifted Education Press Quarterly, 26*(3), pp. 3–7. Copyright 2012 by Gifted Education Press.

The Impact of Cultural Difference on Gifted ELLs

The literature has noted multiple tensions stemming from cultural differences that have affected gifted ELLs. Different cultural groups give differing priorities to certain kinds of talent including leadership and individual initiative (Cline & Schwartz, 1999). The acknowledgement that these priorities may not necessarily align with the dominant culture's values or interpretation of such talents has been significant. Acknowledging that a cultural group's understanding and definition of *intelligence* and *giftedness* work to either limit or support achievement and the growth of learning is paramount. Aguirre (2003) has noted that success has ultimately depended on the evaluation of each cultural group's values and attitudes against those of the dominant culture, potentially problematic for gifted ELLs at different stages of acculturation.

Another concern has been the failure of many education systems and teachers as their agents to be effective identifiers of gifted ELLs. For many years now, authors have suggested that education systems have often penalised gifted students who display different values and attitudes from those of the dominant culture by excluding them from gifted programs (Colanero, 1985; Maker, 1996; Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee, 2001). The research has also noted that teachers have tended to nominate or select only the most acculturated minority students for inclusion in gifted programs (Bernal & Garcia, 2009; Briggs et al., 2008; Geake & Gross, 2008). Attempts have been made to remedy this oversight by being more inclusive of the cultural differences of potentially gifted ELLs; however, research has indicated that even in identification processes using intelligence tests that are purportedly language-free there is a cultural base to the instrument that may work against ELLs (Bernal & Garcia, 2009; Matthews, 2006), challenging their validity for this group (Gonzalez, 2002; Lohman et al., 2008).

Acquisition of English

Globally until the 1980s research into the acquisition of English by gifted ELLs had attracted no interest as general research on gifted ELLs as a population had tended to be based on a deficit model (Carnellor, 1999; Ford & Grantham, 2003). Assumptions were made on the belief that these students needed remediation skills because their home environment (and particularly their first language) would have had a negative impact on their ability to achieve, particularly with regards to the acquisition of English (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Hamers and Blanc (2000) and Hakuta (2000) referred to the seminal work of Cummins (1979) that has indicated that

most ELLs may take up to seven years to attain age-appropriate levels of classroom performance in formal English at a level high enough to be tested in English without bias (Bernal & Garcia, 2009). Gifted ELLs may take less time but no confirmatory studies exist to date and any evidence supporting this claim has been largely anecdotal (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2008). Measuring the ongoing English language proficiency of ELLs is also still problematic (Taherbhai, Seo, & O'Malley, 2014). The varying speed of English acquisition between different sub-populations of ELLs has implications for multiple aspects of teaching and learning that have not been fully explored.

Some research exists on the acquisition of foreign languages by gifted and non-gifted students. Bain, McCallum, Bell, Cochran, and Sawyer (2010) studied a group of 95 university students (of whom 25 had been identified as intellectually gifted) enrolled in introductory Spanish classes in the United States. Their aim was to investigate the existence of a link between general or specific cognitive abilities and foreign-language ability in order to determine whether gifted students found foreign-language learning easier than non-gifted peers. They found that most studies exploring this link were based in countries where fluency in two or more languages was considered a valuable asset for gaining employment (examples included Czechoslovakia, Canada, and Scandinavia; Bain et al, 2010). The literature supported the identification of performance variations based on relative strength of working memory, phonology, orthography, and syntax. Findings from this study showed not only that gifted students had higher scores on the aptitude scales, but that they also displayed a more positive attitude toward learning a foreign language than the non-gifted group, findings which correlate with earlier studies such as that of Sparks and Ganschow (2001). Implications from these findings for gifted ELLs have included considering both their aptitude and attitude in terms of their acquisition of English.

Underachievement of Gifted ELLs

Many gifted ELLs are also at risk of performing significantly below their potential. Whilst the topic of underachievement has been well covered in the literature with regards to the general gifted population (Rimm, 2003; Ryan & Coneybeare, 2013), less research exists in this area regarding gifted ELLs. Some U.S. studies have identified causes of underachievement of gifted ELLs as stemming from differences between mainstream and ethnic cultures, poverty and low socio-economic status, language deficit, low parental education, and parent/child conflicts (Castellano & Diaz, 2002a; Pierce, Adams, Neumeister, Cassady, Dixon, & Cross, 2006). Similar

findings have also been discussed by Chaffey, Bailey, and Vine (2003) in an Australian study concerning the identification of gifted Australian Aboriginal children, which revealed that seven out of 15 children identified as gifted from a sample of 79 were underachieving. Reis, Colbert, and Hébert (2004) have recommended that further research be undertaken in this area, with more emphasis on studying the success (or otherwise) of intervention programs.

The concept of resilience that gifted students may develop as a response to the challenges they face is also noteworthy and has only briefly been touched upon in the literature (Gonzalez, 2002; Reis et al., 2004). Reis, Colbert, and Hébert (2004) conducted a three-year study in the United States of 35 economically disadvantaged, ethnically diverse, academically talented high school students (achievers and underachievers) in order to determine both the protective factors that contributed to the resilience of the achieving students and the risk factors experienced by the underachievers (see Tables 2.3 and 2.4). Their conclusions have supported focusing on "reducing or eliminating risk factors, enhancing protective factors, and developing the mediating mechanisms known to facilitate positive outcomes" (Reis et al., 2004, p. 119). These factors need to be further researched specifically for gifted ELLs.

Table 2.3

Protective Factors Contributing to the Development of Resilience in High Achieving Students

Protective Factors
• Belief in self
• Personal characteristics: ▪ sensitivity   ▪ independence   ▪ determination to succeed   ▪ appreciation of cultural diversity   ▪ inner will
• Support systems: ▪ honours classes   ▪ a network for high achieving students   ▪ family support   ▪ supportive adults
• Participation in: ▪ special programs   ▪ extracurricular activities   ▪ summer enrichment programs
• Appropriately challenging advanced classes

Note. Adapted from "Understanding Resilience in Diverse, Talented Students in an Urban High School" by S. M. Reis, R. D. Colbert, & T. P. Hébert, 2004, *Roeper Review, 27*(2), pp. 110–120. Copyright 2004 by Taylor & Francis.

Table 2.4

Risk Factors Experienced by Underachieving Students

Risk Factors

• Poor engagement and self-efficacy:
  ▪ school experiences are boring
  ▪ insufficient perseverance
  ▪ low self-efficacy
  ▪ difficulties with constructive use of unstructured time
  ▪ developed few strategies for constructively dealing with problems
  ▪ behaviour problems and disciplinary issues
  ▪ too much unstructured time
  ▪ confused or unrealistic aspirations

• Inappropriateness of curriculum:
  ▪ classes do not match preferred learning style
  ▪ inappropriate early curricular experiences
  ▪ absence of opportunities to develop appropriate school work habits
  ▪ bored with curriculum
  ▪ absence of challenge in high school

• Poor inter-personal relationships:
  ▪ negative interactions with teachers
  ▪ questionable counselling experiences
  ▪ negatively influenced by peers and dismal surroundings
  ▪ difficulties establishing positive peer networks
  ▪ absence of a network for high-achieving students

• Inappropriate parent and family support:
  ▪ personal and family problems
  ▪ family dysfunction and conflict
  ▪ difficult relations with family members
  ▪ sibling problems and rivalry
  ▪ inconsistent role models and value systems in the family
  ▪ minimal parental academic guidance and support
  ▪ inconsistent parental monitoring of students' achievement-oriented activities
  ▪ inappropriate parental expectations

Note. Adapted from "Understanding Resilience in Diverse, Talented Students in an Urban High School" by S. M. Reis, R. D. Colbert, & T. P. Hébert, 2004, *Roeper Review, 27*(2), pp. 110–120. Copyright 2004 by Taylor & Francis.

Effects of Poverty and Low Socio-Economic Status on Gifted ELLs

Maker (1996) has suggested that the environmental factors of poverty and low socio-economic status have had the greatest impact on the scholastic performance of gifted ELLs from minority groups. Poverty, understood in economic terms and interrelated with low socio-economic status, can be highly problematic for the development of the learning potential of gifted ELLs (Granada, 2003). Because poverty involves a deficit in the availability of and access to

resources (financial, emotional, intellectual, and physical) it is often the access to and the quality of these resources that influence the outcome and success of gifted ELLs in reaching their full potential. Swanson (2010a) cautioned that negative attitudes by teachers and parents that giftedness cannot exist in students from low socio-economic populations have also hampered progress and the provision of appropriate services for these students.

Poverty has also been considered to be a barrier to family involvement and thus achievement for gifted ELLs. Ford and Harris (1999) noted that families from poverty generally used their limited time and resources to meet basic needs and any further contribution to their child's education was often negligible; it tended therefore to become solely the school's responsibility. The situation was worse for gifted ELLs as their parents often lacked the cultural and linguistic capital, appropriate understanding of their child's educational experiences, and a sense of empowerment and efficacy needed to contribute to the development of home–school relationships (Ford & Harris, 1999). Gillanders, McKinney, and Ritchie (2012) noted that schools, too, had not been successful in engaging low-income parents from diverse cultural backgrounds in traditional parent involvement activities that were based on majority cultural beliefs and values. Souto-Manning (2010) suggested that in order to bridge the gap schools are encouraged to value and integrate students' home strengths, language, beliefs, goals, and practices. These efforts are paramount for gifted ELLs as evidence has attested to family involvement as assisting in improving student outcomes (Deslandes, Royer, Potvin, & Leclerc, 1999), particularly grades, attendance, and classroom behaviour (Christenson, Palan, & Scullin, 2009).

Existing Research on Gifted ELLs

Fragmented research in the field of gifted ELLs has meant that up to the beginning of the twenty-first century there were very few publications that dealt primarily with this population of students (Castellano & Diaz, 2002a) with the focus still on the United States, with its particular societal mix and political agenda. Indeed, research in the United States itself was very much limited to students from Latino backgrounds (Castellano & Diaz, 2002a; Lohman et al., 2008). With regards to Australia, governmental reports had made brief mention of the cultural and linguistic differences of gifted students from non-English speaking backgrounds as far back as 1980 (Schools Commission, 1980) and again in 1984 (Braggett, 1985). The 1990 Carrick Review on education reform (Carnellor, 1999), Braggett's (1993) work on Australian and New Zealand gifted populations, and the 2001 Senate Committee review on the education of gifted and talented

children (Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee, 2001) were among the reviews that focused on the state of gifted education in Australia, as well as the previously mentioned State of Victoria's 2012 review. These inquiries have made unequivocal recommendations to make special provisions for the needs of diverse populations within gifted education, including gifted ELLs.

To date there seem to be only two significant pieces of research on school-age gifted ELLs in the Australian context (Carnellor, 1996; Little, 1995), both approximately 20 years old, as well as Ogonda's (1994) master's thesis on the identification of giftedness in ethnic minority children within the early childhood setting. Carnellor's (1996) qualitative research study used a multiple case study design to investigate the characteristics of gifted students from economically disadvantaged, Aboriginal, and non-English speaking backgrounds. She developed comprehensive intellectual profiles of 52 children aged five to six years as the basis for the development of a proposed gifted program at three school sites in New South Wales. She found that her study had implications for a larger audience as the students were representative of a number of different cultural groups; however the study itself was limited in terms of the non-standardisation of the assessment procedures used to gather data about the students. Little's (1995) research, also based in New South Wales, developed case studies of two children of Turkish background. From data collected and interpreted in her role as teacher–researcher she developed a personal profile for identification purposes. Ogonda's (1994) master's thesis focused on the processes for identification of three gifted ethnic minority children within the context of an Australian preschool, noting cultural-specific behaviours. A behavioural characteristics checklist was developed to assist identification, alongside a portfolio of assessment. Each of these studies has revealed important data, however transferability of their findings is problematic, based on the small number of participants. The lack of replication of these studies has further weakened their intended impact on educational provisions for gifted ELLs.

Further afield into the Australasian arena Ferguson's (2006) study considered case studies of four New Zealand primary schools and their progress towards meeting the needs of gifted and talented students, following the 2005 release of that country's Strategic Framework in Gifted Education. Working from the premise of "policy into practice" (p. 11) Ferguson explored the differences between Maori and other minority cultures and Pakeha (New Zealanders of European descent) students and found positive correlations between their traditional cultural values and their conceptions of giftedness. Poverty, racism, and negative contacts with the dominant group were also found to be factors influencing the identification and development of giftedness but the

acquisition of English or any kind of linguistic advantage or disadvantage was not discussed. Ferguson referenced a larger general population of students but only collected data from between five to seven teachers and/or administrators per school. Also worth noting is that the particular interactions between Maoris, Pacific Islanders, and Pakeha are unique to New Zealand, where the Maori culture is considered to have an important and unique role in the creation and definition of nationhood not only for the Maoris but for all cultural groups in New Zealand (Sibley, Liu, & Khan, 2008).

Most of the research on gifted ELLs has been conducted in the United States (Figure 2.3) where prior to 2002 there were very few publications that dealt primarily with the issues of linguistic diversity, gifted education, and talent development (Castellano & Diaz, 2002a). Torrance, Goff, and Satterfield's (1998) *Multicultural Mentoring of the Gifted and Talented* brought together research on the advantages of mentoring, giftedness and creative potential, and the culture of poverty among students from non-English speaking backgrounds in the United States. Ford and Harris's (1999) *Multicultural Gifted Education* had also gone some way to presenting evidence with regards to the needs of minority students, including gifted ELLs, however the authors acknowledged that "at the time of writing, the term 'minority' is used connotatively for students who are Black, Hispanic American, American Indian, and Asian American" (p. 225) and thus was too broad for the context being studied here. The publication of Castellano and Diaz's (2002b) *Reaching New Horizons* brought together the most up-to-date writings for that time on gifted ELLs; however certain weaknesses were also acknowledged that made this book an incomplete reference for my particular inquiry. First, the authors stated that its primary focus was on students from Latino backgrounds (Castellano & Diaz, 2002a) owing to the significant population of Spanish-speaking students in U.S. schools.

Second, much of the research, including future directions for research, focused on the term *bilingual gifted education* (Garcia, 2002). Indeed, concerns arise with regards to the term *bilingual*, which in its simplest form is considered to refer to attainment of proficiency in two languages; however no consensus exists with regards to its definition and typology (Castellano & Diaz, 2002a; Hamers & Blanc, 2000). Whilst this source comprehensively addressed the interrelationship between giftedness and different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, attempts to translate the research from the United States into the Australian context have not been evident in the Australian literature.

Recent searches using the ProQuest and Informit databases and Google Scholar for scholarly articles in English on gifted ELLs with a focus on research from the last 20 years have

G&T ELLs

US-BASED RESEARCH*

Passow & Frasier 1996

Maker 1996

Castellano & Diaz 2002

Matthews 2006

VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh 2007

Briggs, Reis & Sullivan 2008

Lohman, Korb & Lakin 2008

Harris, Plucker, Rapp & Martinez 2009

Davis 2009

(predominantly gifted Latino students)

* Not all US findings are research-based. Some key texts (e.g. Castellano & Diaz, 2002) include much anecdotal evidence

G&T ELLs (NZ)

Ferguson 2006

This inquiry

G&T ELLs (Aust.)

Ogonda 1994
Little 1995
Carnellor 1996

ESL Research (Aust.)

Kovacev & Shute 2004

Olliff & Couch 2005

Rushton 2008

Sidhu & Taylor 2007, 2009

Oliver, Haigh & Grote 2009

Care, Roberts & Thomas 2009

Gifford, Correa-Velez & Sampson 2009

Hammond 2008, 2012

Figure 2.3. Gifted ELL research

seen a continuing trend in the use of the term *bilingual*, and a continued emphasis on students from Latino backgrounds. For example, Irby and Lara-Alecio's (1996) study of 61 bilingually certified educators in Texas reported on the perceptions of teachers with regards to the characteristics of potentially gifted bilingual Hispanic students. In the same manner, Gonzalez, Bauerle, and Felix-Holt's (1994) study assessed the potential of a qualitative assessment method in identifying gifted bilingual Hispanic students, reporting on a single potentially gifted bilingual Hispanic child as an illustrative case of its effectiveness. Most of these studies have been conducted in selected U.S. schools where bilingual frameworks operate to ensure students have opportunities to be educated in their mother tongue (generally Spanish) as well as English, even if only for a limited time.

Bilingualism is a relatively underexplored concept in Australia. There are only six bilingual public primary schools in NSW (the most populous state), four that are teaching one of the four priority Asian languages (Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, and Mandarin) through language immersion for one-and-a half hours every school day, as well as a French and an Italian bilingual school (NSW DEC, n.d.-a). Victoria has 12 bilingual public schools offering partial immersion programs (State Government of Victoria, Department of Education and Training, 2014a), Queensland has eight public high schools offering language immersion programs (Queensland Government, 2015), and the Australian Capital Territory has three (Australian Capital Territory Government, Education and Training Directorate, 2014). Private bilingual schools across Australia such as the Deutsche Schule in Melbourne and The International French School of Sydney offer a bilingual and bicultural education model. Bilingual programs in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and schools in the Northern Territory were phased out without consultation with the affected communities and against their express wishes (Nicholls, 2001) and finally disbanded in 2008. Ultimately, transferability of findings to the Australian context has not been tenable on multiple levels including organisation of schools, teacher certification and student population, and differences in the socio-political climate of each country.

In the last decade studies and investigations conducted in the United States have continued to concern themselves mainly with identification issues with regards to gifted ELLs (Harris, Plucker, Rapp, & Martinez, 2009; Matthews & Kirsch, 2007) as well as using racial and ethnic distinctions to measure the participation in gifted programs of students (Yoon & Gentry, 2009). Stein, Hetzel, and Beck (2012), for example, found that inflexible administration that excluded an ELL for special gifted services because she fell short by one IQ point challenged understandings of equity and access. The authors also questioned the use of the term *twice exceptional* when

referring to gifted ELLs, proposing the notion that limiting students to one label (in this case "limited English proficient"), whilst not a disability, would leave them underserved in terms of reaching their true potential.

Attempts to explore further afield in terms of diverse gifted student populations have become more evident but the predominance of Latino students (including a deeper research base in terms of numbers) still drives research in the United States to an extent. Yoon and Gentry (2009) focused on gifted Asian-American students using nationwide statistical data collected from three major sources, while Harris et al. (2009) reviewed U.S. demographics and identified that whilst in 2003 nearly one in five students spoke a language other than English at home, Latino students still counted for one third of the national increase in ELLs, justifying basing their research on identification of gifted ELLs on this population. On a global scale, Balchin, Hymer, and Matthews's (2009) edited book *The Routledge International Companion to Gifted Education* collated chapters from leading researchers in the field based on themes of interest in gifted education current in countries as diverse as Germany, France, Sweden, Greece, Russia, Australia, and China, bringing further diversity to the conversation.

A major area of research where there has been significant congruence between the United States and Australia has been in the exploration of the impact of poverty on minority groups, which has also affected a large proportion of gifted ELLs. There is much literature on this topic, with major findings and publications summarised in VanTassel-Baska and Stambaugh's (2007) *Overlooked Gems: A National Perspective on Low-Income Promising Learners*. This monograph highlighted the tensions that exist between poverty, culture, and access to opportunity faced by potentially gifted students in the U.S. context, citing research from experts in the field such as Ford, Baldwin, Bernal, Worrell, and Kitano. Authors identified future directions in research, policy, and practice and a call for action to support early and sustained intervention for students, provision of social support networks, and systematic institutional responses (Stambaugh, 2007). In *Patterns and Profiles of Promising Learners from Poverty* (2010) VanTassel-Baska further explored poverty as the overarching variable that leads to underrepresentation of students in gifted programs.

The concept of acculturation has received a growing amount of coverage in the U.S.-based literature (Borrero & Yeh, 2010; Ng, 2007; Unger et al., 2002) for its impact on gifted ELLs. Unger et al. (2002) made reference to the definition of Berry (1980), who described acculturation as the interchange of cultural attitudes and behaviours that happen when people from differing cultural backgrounds come into contact with one another. The acculturation process, then, has

been shown as having both a detrimental and an enriching effect on student development and achievement of potential. Yoon and Gentry (2009) briefly discussed how the acculturation process into the mainstream culture has significantly impacted in a negative way on Asian-American students' motivation to achieve academically and noted three studies within the last decade that support this finding (Kao & Hébert, 2006; Lee, 2004; Zhang, 2001, as cited in Yoon & Gentry, 2009). On the other hand, Borrero and Yeh (2010) highlighted that as part of their study of 269 ELLs from multi-ethnic backgrounds they found that student navigation between their different social and cultural worlds led to a strengthening of students' academic success, offering positive results from the acculturation process. The findings from these and other similar studies have highlighted the complexity of the effect of acculturation on an individual's potential academic success.

Acculturation is a concept that has also impacted on ELLs in Australia, including gifted students. In the research this concept has been highlighted through recent studies with regards to students from refugee backgrounds. This group of students is beginning to be acknowledged in the literature (Cranitch, 2010, 2015; Kovacev & Shute, 2004; Westoby, 2009) as well as in policies and position papers (Catholic Education Office Sydney, 2006). Kovacev and Shute (2004), for example, explored the relationship between acculturation and social support in relation to the psychosocial adjustment of 83 adolescent refugees from the former Republic of Yugoslavia who migrated to Australia during the 1990s. The study confirmed that adolescents' acculturation attitudes significantly influenced their psychosocial adjustment via their perception of social support but made no reference to student ability or aptitude. Westoby (2009) interacted with the Southern Sudanese community of Brisbane to understand their narratives of distress under the terms of cultural trauma, social trauma, and social distress and explored the development of a social model of healing using culture, community, and power as resources. The educational needs of gifted Southern Sudanese students were outside the scope of Westoby's research. Cranitch (2010) evaluated a literacy transition pilot program and its effectiveness in supporting 11 Sudanese students as they entered secondary school in Sydney, noting challenges arising from culture shock and past trauma. This evaluation acknowledged key gaps in the students' learning including weak experiences of literacy and numeracy, limited content knowledge of the world, and little experience of problem-based learning as well as a low tolerance for open-ended tasks, all likely to have been brought about by disrupted schooling and unique life experiences. Whilst Cranitch was able to note that two of the students in the research showed potential for giftedness, no further comment was noted with regards to these particular students.

The most substantial piece of research to date from an Australian perspective that explored the needs and experiences of refugee ELLs came from the collaborative work between the La Trobe Refugee Research Centre, La Trobe University, and the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture (Foundation House). Titled *Good Starts for Recently Arrived Youth with Refugee Backgrounds*, it used a mixed-methods approach combining ethnography and social epidemiology to investigate the experiences of settlement among a group of 120 recently arrived youths from refugee backgrounds who settled in Melbourne (Gifford, Correa-Velez, & Sampson, 2009). The study, which was conducted as longitudinal research between 2004 and 2008, included students who ranged in age from 12 to 18 with 24 different language groups represented. Its aim was to tell the overall story of the participants' settlement experiences during their first three to four years in Australia, with data collected via both informal "settlement journals" (a record of personal experiences captured through drawings, photos, and responses to provoking questions) (p. 15) and through validated scales and instruments used to measure key indicators in several areas, including self-esteem, health and well-being, and educational aspiration and participation.

In one of its key chapters the recent research offered a strong comprehensive base for my inquiry. Chapter VI focused on the context of schooling for the students, describing their experiences and reflections of both their time at an English Language School and their transition to and accommodation in mainstream schools (Gifford et al., 2009). The *Good Starts* research, however, did not make any distinction between students' abilities or potential, critical to my inquiry on gifted ELLs, which aims to delve further into this area. Taking into account the idea that participants in the *Good Starts* research saw educational success as crucial to achieving their goals for the future, my inquiry looks in part to build a picture of what educational success and goal achievement might look like for gifted ELLs.

Some research in the area of educational provision for refugee students has emerged in the last decade (Oliver, Haig, & Grote, 2009; Olliff & Couch, 2005; Sidhu & Taylor, 2009). A recent exploration of how Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments in Australia have addressed schooling for refugee youth has also enhanced understanding of the current situation (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007). Using Foucault's governmentality as its theoretical approach, this research analysed understandings and representations of educational equity by exploring publicly available web-based materials relating to the education of refugee youth, including policy documents and statements and guidelines for teachers sourced from education department websites, as well as other government websites. The authors noted the recent prominence of risk discourses framed around transition and settlement, and highlighted interventions such as the development of

functional home–school relationships, the provision of trauma counselling and group support, and some professional learning for teachers. Issues that arose include the possibility of the perpetuation of a deficit view of the students as being at-risk at the expense of highlighting their resilience, and a shift of focus from broader structural and systemic issues to the placing of the majority of the responsibility on individuals and communities themselves. Concern with the widespread practice of governments and policies clustering refugee students with those with different linguistic needs, evidenced by the multiplicity of labels (including *ESL learners*, *newly arrived migrants*, *students from non-English speaking backgrounds* and *students of cultural and linguistic backgrounds other than English*) also called into question the effectiveness of this grouping practice. No distinctions were noted between abilities and potential of students, nor was there specific mention of gifted students.

A recent Australian publication, Hammond and Miller's (2015b) edited book titled *Classrooms of possibility: Supporting at-risk EAL students,* has focused on three key elements with regards to this population of students. First, leading authors explored the needs of at-risk EAL students upon integration into mainstream classrooms, generally with limited support. Second, several chapters reviewed teaching and learning practices used in mainstream classrooms to support students to engage fully and equitably with the school curriculum. Third, specific sections of the book discussed the particular needs of students in their development of academic language and literacy. None of the contributing authors made reference to giftedness in EAL students; however, recommendations for evidence-based pedagogical practices (e.g., Coleman, 2015; Hammond, 2015) and models (e.g., Miller & McCallum, 2015) featured extensively and could be applied to gifted ELLs.

The most comprehensive and authoritative publication in the field of gifted education to date, Shavinina's (2009) *The International Handbook on Giftedness,* devoted a single chapter specifically to gifted ELLs focusing on the advantages of dual-language gifted education as best serving the needs of gifted ELLs, native speakers of English, and gifted bilinguals (Bernal & Garcia, 2009). Again, this focus had little applicability to the Australian context as dual-language gifted education programs are virtually non-existent in Australia. In the same publication, Davis (2009) discussed the future directions for research on giftedness and mentioned the need for more research on gifted ELLs including "evaluating language proficiency, evaluating past opportunities for learning (and whether limited or inappropriate instruction occurred), evaluating educationally relevant cultural and linguistic background factors, reducing bias in testing practices, and linking assessment data to selecting or designing instruction, among others" (Davis, 2009, p. 1038).

Matthews and Castellano's (2014) edited book, *Talent development for English language learners: Identifying and developing potential,* brought together contributions from researchers in the fields of gifted education and language education. The focus was on how collaborative efforts across these fields could give insights into improved support practices for gifted ELLs in inclusive education settings. The book presented perspectives with regards to literacy development (Castellano & Robertson, 2014), cross-cultural issues (Harris, 2014), inclusion in special programs (Salas, Musetti, & Plaisance, 2014), partnerships with schools and communities (Krugman & Iza, 2014), and the development of quality policies and procedures (Castellano & Francis, 2014). Other texts such as Ford and Milner's (2005) *Teaching culturally diverse gifted students* and Lewis, Rivera, and Roby's (2012) *Identifying and serving culturally and linguistically diverse gifted students* offer information and practical strategies for educators and schools.

Summary

In terms of special populations and with specific reference to the focus of my inquiry, the literature on gifted ELLs has indicated that there has been an increasing awareness over time of the needs of this particular group. Over the last 20 to 30 years most new findings have emerged from research studies conducted in the United States and based on mainly Latino populations, predominantly from low socio-economic backgrounds. In essence, it has been noted that discrimination, misunderstanding, disinterest, poor teacher attitudes, inappropriate identification procedures, and other social and economic disadvantages have all impacted on the development of gifted ELLs (Carnellor, 1999; Harris et al., 2009). Research in Australia on gifted ELLs has been limited and there have been no studies to date that directly explore how the educational needs of gifted ELLs are being met. This scarcity of directly relevant literature has meant that this research project will need to draw on different sectors of the current research to construct bridges over the existing gaps in order to put together its argument (see Figure 2.3). To this end, my inquiry seeks to create opportunities for the voices of students to be heard alongside those of educators in identifying the experiences and educational needs of gifted ELLs from Australian secondary schools and how these needs are being met.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The intent of this chapter is to explore the design and methodology elements underpinning my inquiry in order purposefully to delineate its focus and perspective. The chapter begins by describing the key facets of the research method adopted, the narrative approach situated within the qualitative tradition, and in particular the thematic narrative analysis tradition as summarised by Catherine Riessman (2008) that guided the analysis of the data collected. It addresses the most salient validity, reliability, and objectivity questions that have arisen and then describes the details of the design of the study, including elements such as sampling, data collection, and data analysis procedures. It concludes with a discussion of a number of dimensions that impact upon my inquiry, including cultural and ethical considerations.

A Qualitative Approach

My inquiry was located within a qualitative approach to research, which has its focus on the social world and essentially relies on the stories that people tell (Liamputtong, 2009). Key characteristics of this approach include its concentration on the meanings and interpretations of participants, its focus on context, its emphasis on holistic accounts and multiple realities, and its fundamentally interpretive, emergent rather than predetermined, nature (Liamputtong, 2009; Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). Crucially, in qualitative research the focus is on meaning and experience, "the social construction of reality" as Berger and Luckman (1967) have described, and the relationship between the researcher and participants (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). Liamputtong (2009) advised that this approach has been adopted extensively in the social sciences, particularly anthropology and sociology, and in the past few decades in the fields of health and education. Dai, Swanson, and Cheng (2011) have suggested that it has also emerged as a new mode of investigation in gifted education as it allows for more intimate and up-close explorations of individual students, homes, and schools.

A qualitative approach was selected for this study for four reasons. First, it was an attractive choice because of its flexible nature and its emphasis on inductive logic as well as its ability to allow for differing interpretations (Frankel & Devers, 2000b; Liamputtong, 2009), necessary when eliciting life stories from individuals. Second, it allows for knowledge claims to be made based primarily on social constructivist perspectives by studying the various meanings of individual experiences that are socially and historically constructed, with the intention of

developing a theory or pattern (Creswell, 2003; Frankel & Devers, 2000b). For my inquiry it was deemed important that each participant's experiences, reconstructed by the individual in order to be retold through the interview process, be allowed to contribute to the enrichment of theory. Third, qualitative research allows for more silenced voices to be heard, for participants to share their stories, and be empowered (Newby, 2010), which were crucial outcomes of my inquiry. Fourth, qualitative research serves to better explain and capture the complexities of the problems of particular individuals or groups, where existing theories do not do this adequately (Liamputtong, 2009).

Quantitative approaches were considered for this research; however they were found to be less suitable. Unlike qualitative approaches, they conceptualise reality in terms of variables, emphasise the measurement and analysis of these variables, and study the relationships between them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Punch, 2009). Having their foundation in the use of the scientific method for exploring cause and effect relationships between variables, they were rejected for my inquiry for the same reasons that have given rise to the growth of qualitative research over the last century. Simply stated, many questions that have arisen in research, and particularly education research, cannot be studied by experimental design (Punch, 2009); rather it is their meaning and interpretation that need to be explored (Liamputtong, 2009). When quantified, differences among students in terms of key independent variables such as degree and type of intelligence, socio-economic status, or ability to communicate in English may have the potential to reveal data about the relationships between these variables. The multiple meanings of the individual experiences of the students, however, with their complex layers of re-creation and re-construction in the social and historical milieu and with multiple possible interpretations by the researcher and potential reader alike, provide new perspectives and much richer data for analysis.

Narrative Research

Within the qualitative tradition lies narrative research, the main method selected for my inquiry. This method lies within the broader field of narrative inquiry (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Riessman, 2008) and has been described by Riessman (2008) as referring to "a family of approaches to diverse kinds of texts, which have in common a storied form" (p. 1). Narratives "tell the events of human lives, reflect human interest, and support our sense-making processes" (Bold, 2012, p. 16). Narrative research has also been described by Adair (2009) as "research that uses narrative theory and methods in order to answer wider questions, often for the purpose of

effecting change in the social situation being studied" (p. 1). Using this approach people's life experiences, recounted and retold, become the data for the researcher to work with (King & Horrocks, 2010; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Squire, Andrews, & Tamboukou, 2008). In my inquiry each student, teacher, and administrator contributed as key voices to the research through their retelling of relevant aspects of their lives as well as their teaching and learning experiences.

This approach was selected because interviewees often spontaneously provide narratives in interviews when talking about their experiences (Elliott, 2005; King & Horrocks, 2010) so they often reveal more about themselves and their stories than is generally elicited through interviewer-driven closed questions (Elliott, 2005; Holloway & Jefferson, 2000) or where little or no probing based on responses received is undertaken. This approach has also been considered useful because it can give prominence to human agency and is therefore well suited to studies of subjectivity, identity, life experience, and cultural formation (Elliott, 2005; Riessman, 1993; Shacklock & Thorp, 2005), elements relevant to my inquiry.

As my inquiry used Habermas's theory of communicative action as its conceptual framework it was relevant to explore the link between this theory and the narrative approach. Essentially, narrative research has been described by Conle (2001) as a "rational enterprise" (p. 23) that engages in communicative actions in order to allow people to share their life experiences as narrated by the individuals themselves. Habermas's communicative rationality as seen in everyday conversations, when centred on mutual understanding, can serve as that rational anchor for narrative research. Conle (2001) has also suggested that the challenges to truth claims, sincerity claims, and social appropriateness claims that can be made in narrative research can actually serve to prompt narrative discourse, when inquirers act to redeem these claims. Referring to the assertions of Hoy and McCarthy (1994), Conle (2001) reiterated that these claims were not considered to be final, but rather continue to contribute to the dialectical processes. Therefore, if narrative research is considered as communicative action it should be subject to the same challenges, though the response to the challenges may take on a different appearance.

Historically, narrative research has its origins in ancient times in places as diverse as the court of the Zhou dynasty in China over three thousand years ago, and in the first official records of the Greek historian Thucydides (Bamberg, 2012; Liamputtong, 2009). With regards to contemporary narrative research in the social sciences, Squire et al. (2008) have suggested that its antecedents lie in two parallel academic moves of the twentieth century. The first is considered to be the rise during the post-war era of humanist approaches within western sociology and psychology as a response away from positivist modes of inquiry (Riessman, 2005; Squire et al.,

2008). Within this movement the focus has been squarely on holistic, person-centred approaches, including case studies, biographies, and life histories (Liamputtong, 2009; Squire et al., 2008). The second antecedent is based on the Russian structuralist, French poststructuralist, postmodern, psychoanalytic, and deconstructionist approaches to narrative within the humanities, impacting from about the 1970s onwards. Its focus has been more on story structure and content, conscious and unconscious meanings, and power relations within which narratives are situated (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007; Squire et al., 2008).

Despite the differences that have arisen between these humanist and poststructuralist traditions, Squire et al. (2008) have agreed that an area of major convergence is in their "shared tendency to treat narratives as modes of resistance to existing structures of power" (p. 4). This tendency has been made evident in the fields where narrative research has been utilised, ranging from studies of gender, race, and social circumstances to individual and collective storytelling of people living with disadvantage, illness, and disenfranchisement, among others (Bell, 2002; Daniels, 2008; Lindsay & Smith, 2003; Savin-Baden & Van Niekerk, 2007; Sikes & Piper, 2011; Todorova, 2007). Over the last 20 years narrative research has also featured as a popular approach in educational research (Casey, 1995; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Conway, 2003; Hwang, 2011; Meier & Stremmel, 2010; Milner, 2007).

As an experience-centred approach, narrative lent itself to my inquiry in a naturalistic way. It allowed for personal experiences to become part of consciousness through the telling of people's own stories (Bell, 2002; Coulter & Smith, 2009; Squire, 2008). It was also highly suitable to this inquiry because of its focus on aspects such as the sequence and meaning inherent in narratives and the definitive humanity conveyed through them. The possibility of the "re-presentation" of experience as well as its reconstitution and expression and the display of transformation or change (Squire, 2008; Holloway & Jefferson, 2000) interacted together in addressing the main research questions of identifying the experiences and educational needs of gifted ELLs and exploring how these needs were being met in Australian secondary schools.

As noted, narrative research attends to people's life experiences by incorporating both the *telling* and the *told*. Grbich (2004) has defined narrative research as a window into human interactions and relationships that is consistent with the ways individuals make sense of their lived experiences. Through this method, generally both process and content are analysed and interpretation that is derived from the researcher's own experiences is applied, often added as surrounding text to the story being told. A typical representational strategy in thematic narrative analysis and used in my inquiry involves examining the data to develop a typology of narratives

organised by theme, with case studies or vignettes as recommended by Riessman (2005) used to provide illustration. However, because the narrative analysis is essentially thematic, sections of text that narrated a separate story or an event within each individual interview were sorted into categories of umbrella and subthemes, which were interpreted as representing an aspect of the phenomenon being explored. Patterns in the data were also recognised by comparing discovered themes with prior experience with the phenomenon, or with literature about the inquiry, as has been recommended by Floersch, Longhofer, Kranke, and Townsend (2010). This general approach was adopted in my inquiry and is evidenced in the organisation of the subsequent chapters.

Coulter and Smith (2009) have suggested that narrative research differs from traditional empiricist research with regards to purpose. Whilst empiricist research has purported to discover and verify knowledge and truth about the world, narrative research is more concerned with people's experiences, common understandings, and interpretations. Indeed, narrative research is satisfied with multiple interpretations by multiple readers, which sits in contrast to the quest of traditional empiricist research for logic and evidence to uncover truth. Narrative research is less concerned with describing the world how it is and is more interested in looking for connections between events (King & Horrocks, 2010) and redescribing these retrospectively (Freeman, 2007, as cited in Coulter & Smith, 2009) through collaborative interpretations between researchers, participants, evidence, and the social context (Coulter & Smith, 2009). It is the exploration of where these connections lie that makes narrative research best suited to my inquiry.

Limitations of using a narrative approach. Riessman (2008) has noted that one of the strengths of narrative inquiry is its extreme diversity and complexity in terms of how to conduct research, however there are also certain limitations. Of these, most salient are a lack of a clear definition of the term *narrative*, a lack of specific rules about suitable materials or modes of investigation (Riessman, 1993; Squire et al., 2008), and its overuse and oversimplification in popular culture (Riessman, 2008; Squire et al., 2008). In addition, narrative analysis is best suited to oral, first-hand accounts of experience; Riessman (1993) has suggested adaptations that may need to be made for other types of narratives. Also, because of the large amount of data that are generally generated through the interview process narrative analysis is considered to be too detailed and time-consuming for studies of large numbers (Bell, 2002; Riessman, 2001).

Other limitations of narrative inquiry that have been identified relate to its objectivity and generalisability. With regards to the first, interpretive authority over the voice of the participant is often far from objective as the individual must be viewed within the social context, with this social reality understood through the lens of language (Riessman, 2008; Rogers 2007). Secondly, because of the close attention to individual cases, with individual action and biography acting as the starting point for analysis (Riessman, 1993), it is sometimes challenging to argue the generalisability of findings to larger population groups.

Squire et al. (2008) have stated that researchers working with narratives have valued the way that they can explore and expose sometimes contradictory layers of meaning, bringing them into useful dialogue with each other and thus coming to a greater understanding of individuals and social change. This exploration can be more complex when applied to the interpretation and analysis of narratives that differ from our own knowledge, context, and experience because of cultural boundaries and challenges (Andrews, 2007; Wiklund-Gustin, 2010). My inquiry encounters this complexity several times with the narratives of the gifted ELLs, and in my attempts as researcher to interpret their meanings, as well as those of the other stakeholders, in a coherent and valid manner.

The design of my inquiry is intended to minimise any negative implications arising from these limitations through thorough planning and careful consideration of them and through focusing on the positive aspects that this type of research embraces. Holloway and Jefferson (2000) have suggested that "while stories are obviously not providing a transparent account through which we learn truths, story-telling stays closer to actual life-events than methods that elicit explanations" (p. 32). More specific limitations will be addressed in relevant chapter sections.

Addressing Validity, Reliability, and Objectivity in the Data Collection Process

One of the most significant challenges to qualitative research has been the application of the positivist concepts of *validity*, *reliability*, and *objectivity* in the evaluation of the quality of the research. Validity refers to the data collection process as being an accurate reflection of the aspects that it is meant to measure, while reliability addresses the stability over time of the outcomes of the measurement (McNeill & Chapman, 2005; Newby, 2010; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). Objectivity refers to the detachment of the researcher with regards to his or her

judgment, meaning that another researcher would reach the same conclusions when attending to the same data (Newby, 2010).

It has been suggested that these concepts are incompatible with the epistemological, ontological, and methodological foundations of qualitative research (Carpenter & Suto, 2008; Whittemore, Chase, & Mandle, 2001). Whittemore et al. (2001) have made reference to the work of Lincoln and Guba (1985) whose translation of these terms as a response to these challenges has led to the use of *credibility* for internal validity, *transferability* for external validity*, dependability* for reliability, and *conformability* for objectivity. These revised terms have been considered to be more reflective of the challenges to qualitative research, including "the need to demonstrate the truth values of multiple perspectives, the dependability of findings amid variability, the applicability of findings to broader contexts, and freedom from bias in the research process" (Whittemore et al., 2001, p. 524). The translation of these terms, however, has received criticism (Newby, 2010; Whittemore et al., 2001) because of the broad applicability of the term *validity*. Consequently, the quality of the data collected for my inquiry and the techniques used to analyse them will be evaluated through a combination of these terms. Ideally, qualitative research considers validity issues throughout the entire process of inquiry but particularly in the planning and analytical stages (Whittemore et al., 2001).

Credibility in qualitative research has been described as "the conscious effort to establish confidence in an accurate interpretation of the meaning of the data" (Whittemore et al., 2001, p. 530) and is comparable to internal validity (Liamputtong, 2009), that is, ensuring that all aspects of the inquiry are authentic, believable, and trustworthy. My inquiry began to address this issue through purposive sampling, as the participants for my inquiry were deliberately selected for their unique characteristics (namely identified as both gifted and/or talented, and English language learners), a strategy that Liamputtong (2009) has considered as giving credibility to research.

In the narrative research tradition credibility is not necessarily achieved through producing conclusions of certainty but rather looks for these conclusions to be well grounded and supportable, founded on the rich details that each narrative produces. As Webster and Mertova (2007) have stated, narrative research "does not claim to represent the exact 'truth', but rather aims for results that have the appearance of truth or reality" (p. 4); therefore, it is in the interpretation of the stories that this appearance of truth or reality earns its credibility. In order to merit credibility the incorporation of thick description into the research design through the collection of data from interviews and document reviews was invaluable. This process is the qualitative equivalent of triangulation.

Thick description is a technique that has often been used in qualitative research to enhance credibility. Introduced into the literature in the early 1970s by Geertz, it involves in the first instance "looking at the rich details of the case, sorting out the complex layers of understanding that structure the social world" (Dawson, 2010, p. 942). Its intent is to guide the researcher into taking into account not just the immediate behaviours of the participants but also their contextual and experiential understandings. Thick description has been considered to be inherently interpretive, prompting Denzin to coin the phrase "thick interpretation" (Dawson, 2010, p. 942; Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2008, p. 881) that involves a balance between description and analysis of actions, behaviours, and words for the participants involved (Dawson, 2010). For my inquiry thick description meant widening the research lens to incorporate the voices of the key stakeholders in both oral and document formats. With a focus on each individual's story, thick description ensured that matters such as backgrounds, context, and history were made equally relevant, a process which ultimately has the potential to reveal richer and more complex data.

Transferability makes reference to the ability to make generalisations from the inquiry (Trochim & Donnelly, 2007; Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). Unlike the external validity sought in quantitative research, Sandelowski (2004) has noted that in qualitative research the emphasis of transferability is on the potential to promote the application of the theoretical knowledge gained from the research to other similar groups, individuals, or situations. My inquiry focused on identifying the educational needs of a specific group of students within NSW DEC schools; other states and territories are responsible for school systems that include gifted ELLs among their populations too. In this matter, transferability of findings may resonate with educators in other secondary schools throughout Australia, thus enhancing my inquiry's purposefulness.

Dependability aligns with reliability and seeks to acknowledge "the degree of fit" (Liamputtong, 2009, p. 22) between the data and the research findings. Developing an audit trail is an appropriate research technique that provides a documented and traceable process for the examination of the dependability of the data. An audit trail seeks to identify the consistency of methods used, the conditions, and the results (Kumar, 2011; Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). For my inquiry documentary evidence of each step in the process was collated, examined by me, shared with my supervisors, and reviewed and revised for proof of dependability. Any concerns or inconsistencies were examined; again supervisors were approached for input and guidance and any changes were carefully annotated and documented. Throughout my inquiry the intent has been to leave a careful audit trail in order to facilitate any scrutiny.

Confirmability speaks to the claim of objectivity or neutrality (Liamputtong, 2009) and Kumar (2011) has emphasised that it is similar to reliability in quantitative research. In qualitative research there is a need on the part of the researcher to make an overt declaration of his or her conscious recognition of issues such as personal bias and point of view (Babbie, 2010) to justify that findings emerge from the data and not from one's own predispositions (Shenton, 2004). In narrative inquiry Babbie (2010) has proposed that because researchers pay special attention to understanding life as the participants see it, the claim that what is reported is error-free, totally objective, and absolutely neutral is an unrealistic one and not likely to be made. Due to the interpretative and subjective nature of narrative inquiry as a research method it is more important that the researcher declare his or her stance, position, prejudices, and interpretations as part of the ongoing story. In my inquiry I have endeavoured to openly declare my philosophical and methodological position in my approach to this endeavour. I have also disclosed an affinity between my personal background and the reasons for my interest in the students at the centre of my inquiry. My philosophical and methodological position will be addressed in further sections of this chapter.

In the process of confirming the quality of the research the accuracy of the findings of qualitative studies is subjected to assessment. This assessment requires the use of multiple strategies and techniques that Frankel and Devers (2000a) have suggested serve to enhance rigour and trustworthiness. The choice of technique is often based on the context of the research in terms of how it best reflects specific validity criteria (Whittemore et al., 2001). My inquiry has relied on commonly used techniques such as purposive sampling and thick description already discussed as well as member checks. Also known as participant validation, these member checks are conducted by seeking the clarification of the accuracy of data with the participants themselves (Carpenter & Suto, 2008). My keeping of a reflective journal also added a further dimension, as Creswell (1998) has advised that such a practice serves to ensure authenticity and objectivity in the data analysis and also acts as another element of the audit trail.

Torrance (2008) has warned that the use of qualitative data has come under question by neopositivist researchers who argue that it lacks both validity and reliability. Liamputtong (2009) has noted Hammersley's (1992) support for the reliability of qualitative research that has suggested that qualitative data are in fact reliable because rather than presenting a picture of the world from the point of view of the researcher, they do so from the point of view of the people being studied. This line of reasoning, however, needs further scrutiny as it does not describe the effects of researcher bias, interpretation by the researcher, nor indeed the reader, aspects that

cannot be fully accounted for during the research process but nevertheless have an impact on the final product. Ultimately there is a need for continuing discourse with regard to the validity and reliability of using qualitative data.

Research Design: Data Collection

Data collection procedures. In order to address the main questions of my inquiry, I conducted conversations with key stakeholders, namely administrators, teachers, and students. Semi-structured open-ended questions were posed to prompt participants to speak about their personal stories, life journeys, interpretations, and beliefs about the experiences and educational needs of gifted ELLs and how they thought these needs were being addressed. The voice of the education system was added to these conversations through publicly available annual school reports and NSW DET policy guidelines current at that point in time.

After engaging in preliminary correspondence and establishing contact with individual prospective schools that were interested in participating (Appendix B), I gained the necessary ethical approvals from the University of New England's Human Research Ethics Committee (Appendix C) for both the pilot study and the main inquiry as well as from the NSW DEC's State Education Research Approval Process (SERAP) (Appendix D) for the main inquiry. Next, a professional relationship was established with a staff member at each school, who not only acted as a contact person for the exchange of correspondence but who also volunteered to coordinate and manage the distribution of documentation before interviews were conducted as well as arrange the processes and procedures for the day of the interviews.

A key responsibility of the contact person was to nominate a number of potential participants most likely to be representative of the population of gifted ELLs. For the pilot study, nominations were made by the Gifted and Talented Coordinator at the participating school. For the main inquiry, the nomination form, titled *Student Selection Criteria Sheet* (Appendix E) asked staff to indicate whether the selection of students for participation had been made according to selective high schools' criteria, NSW DET gifted and talented policy guidelines, NSW DET ESL policy guidelines, or another method. These justifications were used to ensure consistency and that each nominated student fitted the description of gifted ELL in an authentic manner. Once students were selected, the contact person approached them about voluntary participation in the research study. In all instances the contact person had already established trust relationships with the students and their families through their existing role within each school. Relevant information

sheets and consent forms were distributed (Appendices F & G). Similarly, the contact person was asked to suggest as participants for my inquiry members of the school administration as well as teachers with direct responsibility for working with gifted ELLs. Information sheets and consent forms were also distributed to those participants who volunteered (Appendix H).

With the collection of data from different sources enhancing both the dependability (reliability) and the credibility (validity) of the findings (Moon, 1991), a preferred sample included at least one member of the administration team of each school, at least one teacher per school who worked with gifted ELLs, and at least five gifted ELL students from each school site. The decision to limit the numbers was made for logistical purposes, most particularly for the manageability of time allocated to data collection, particularly as this manageability had already been noted by Riessman (1993) as a limitation with narrative research. Whilst these numbers were in the end not obtained, a total of 30 interviews was conducted, providing a reasonably even distribution of participants from the various categories across the five participating schools.

Another management issue that required substantial time allocation was the preparation of documentation for students and parents from different language backgrounds, including information sheets and consent forms. As many Australian secondary schools have students from different nationalities it was necessary to know the linguistic background of participants ahead of time in order to ensure information letters and approval documents were translated into the appropriate languages and that interpreters were made available at interview time, should they be necessary. Once the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of the participants had been determined it was envisaged that translators would initially be sourced from the supportive network upon which each school draws. As an option, Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS) could be made available at a fee (Australian Government, Department of Immigration and Citizenship, n.d.). Eventually I was able to source, at no cost, the translating services of undergraduate language students at a local university to assist with translation of information sheets, consent and assent forms for the languages required. These students were known to be sufficiently competent in each language as confirmed by their language tutors. Distance to each site was also an impediment that had to be overcome as the schools that volunteered to participate were all located interstate from my location.

After the relevant consent forms were received, data and information were gathered in four stages (Table 3.1). In stage I a review was undertaken of NSW DET policy guidelines and school documents that impact upon gifted ELLs. This review involved accessing publicly available NSW DET policy documents and individual schools' annual reports directly from their websites. As this

review was conducted in early 2012, the 2011 annual school reports had not yet been made available by all the participating schools so the 2010 documents were accessed.

Table 3.1

Data Collection Stages and Strategies

STAGE	DATA COLLECTION	TIMEFRAME
I	Document reviews: a) NSW DET, Multicultural Programs Unit (2004) *English as a Second Language* b) NSW DET, Curriculum K–12 Directorate (2004a) *Policy and Implementation Strategies for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students* c) Individual schools' 2010 *Annual School Reports*	End April 2012
II	Pilot study: Eagle Heights College, Brisbane, Queensland	End June 2012
III	Individual open-ended and semi-structured interviews: • At individual school sites • With administrators, teachers, and individual students	End July 2012
IV	Member checks: • Correspondence with participants to confirm accuracy of data collected in main inquiry	End September 2012

In stage II a pilot study was conducted at Eagle Heights College, the pseudonym for a co-educational independent P–12 school in Brisbane, Queensland. Through interviews with two staff members, Max, the Gifted and Talented Coordinator, and James, an EAL Teacher, research questions were tested and initial data investigated. The aim was ultimately to explore the feasibility of the research topic and methodology for a larger inquiry and to inform study design through the collection of data in an authentic setting. Information on the pilot study can be found in Appendix I.

In stage III open-ended and semi-structured interviews were conducted with administrators, teachers, and students for the main inquiry. Bilingual school staff members were available to assist as interpreters, though their services were not necessary. These interviews were conducted using interview questions that had been developed originally in English by me (Appendix J) and modified from the original questions tested in the pilot study. The questions

were translated by undergraduate language students at no cost. The key or umbrella question was followed by a set of accompanying sub-questions that could serve as prompts and probes as well as to clarify and deconstruct the key question. Deviation from the questions was not discouraged; if participants felt they had something important to contribute as part of their narrative then this was welcomed. The interviews were audio-recorded, then afterwards transcribed, annotated, and coded.

In stage IV, after the transcription process had been completed, follow-up e-mail correspondence with the participants via contact people confirmed that data collected for the main inquiry were accurate. Any necessary adjustments were then made upon the request of participants, and the adjusted transcripts were used in the data analysis process. These adjustments were on the whole minor and limited to minimal typographical errors on my behalf; one student requested her numerous instances of "um" be deleted from the transcript, which did not affect the intent of her contributions, and an administrator requested a change of the word "kids" to "students" as she felt this term was more respectful and formal.

Sampling considerations: Sites. The context for the main inquiry was a number of Australian secondary schools from the government educational sector in the state of New South Wales. This choice was deliberate as documentation from the NSW sector reported that in 2012 a slightly higher than the state average number of its enrolled students (30.2%) were from language backgrounds other than English (NSW DEC, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2012). Across Australia approximately one in four students is learning English as a second or additional language or dialect (De Courcy, Dooley, Jackson, Miller, & Rushton, 2012). In addition, for the purposes of both consistency and accessibility the geographical area targeted for sampling was the greater Sydney metropolitan area. The reasons for this choice were twofold and directly related. First, this geographical area has a high density of ELLs in the age group nominated for this study (NSW DEC, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2012). Second, the greatest number of selective high schools can be found within this geographical location (NSW DEC, 2014b; NSW DEC, Curriculum and Learning Innovation Centre, 2011; NSW DET, 2010). Selecting schools from the same educational sector from one particular state also meant more cohesion as all these schools operate under the governance of the same governmental department and are informed by the same policy documents. One of the five schools was located in the South Western Sydney region that, with 66.0% of the enrolments being students of language background other than English, has the highest number of all the New South

Wales regions. Two of the schools were from the Northern Sydney region, where the average stands at 38.4%, whilst the final two schools were located in the Sydney (48.2%) and Western Sydney (38.8%) regions (Figure 3.1). Each individual school's percentage of LBOTE (Language Background Other Than English) students is noted separately (Table 3.2). Each school suggested a pseudonym of its own choice for the purposes of confidentiality; Guenther (2009) has stated that it is an empowering act to allow participants (individuals as well as institutions) to choose their own pseudonyms.

Using different schools and particular individuals within them as cases served as a purposeful strategy for my inquiry. Case studies, according to Punch (2009), should be considered more of a strategy than a method. Case studies focus their attention on single instances of some
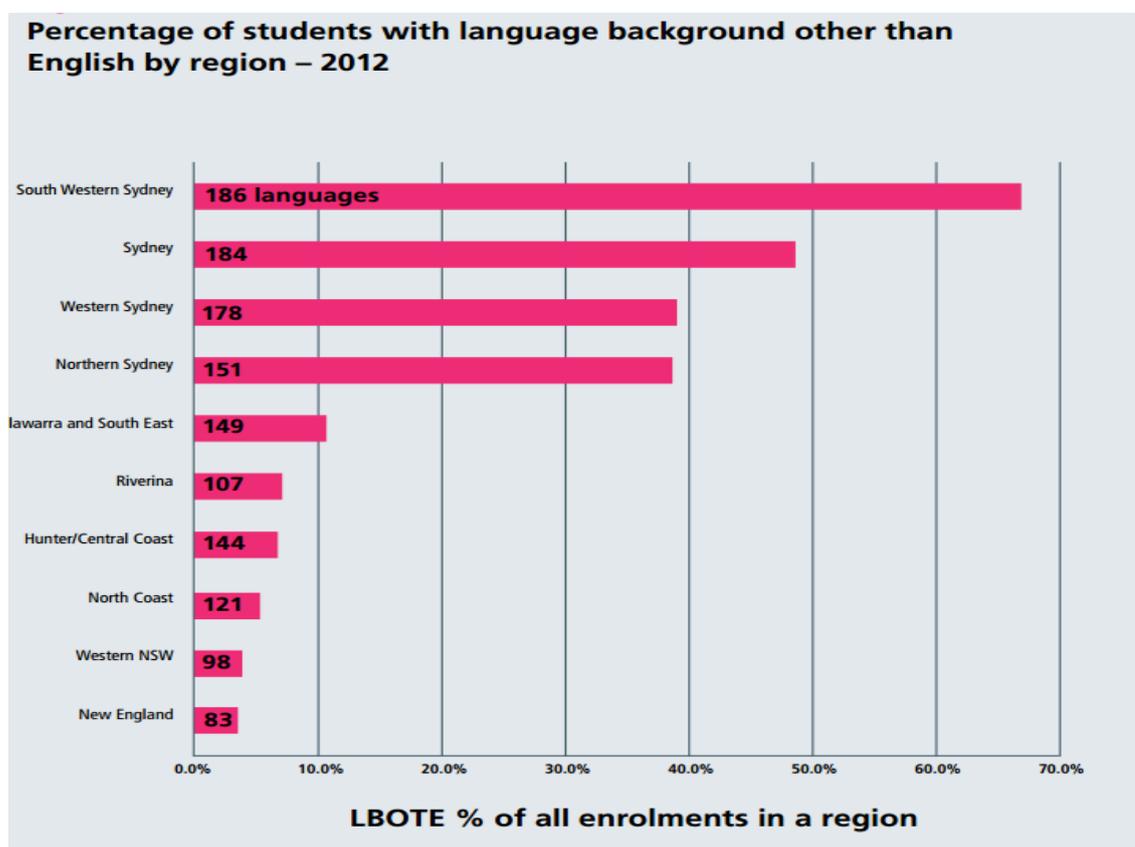
Figure 3.1. Percentage of students with language background other than English by region – 2012. Reprinted from "Language diversity in NSW Government schools in 2012" by New South Wales Department of Education and Communities, Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation, 2012, p. 5. Copyright 2012 State of New South Wales through the NSW Department of Education and Communities, Office of Education.

Table 3.2

Participating Schools' Data (2010)

School	ICSEA*	Est.	Type	Student gender	Student Pop.	% LBOTE	Teaching staff	G&T Offerings	ESL support
Dickens Boys High School	972	1918	Comprehensive (formerly selective)	Boys	494	87	44	Classroom differentiation; Extension programs; Co-curricular and extra-curricular enrichment programs	In-class and specialist support; CLOs**
Colonial Girls High School	1051	1934	Comprehensive	Girls	1035	89	72	Classroom differentiation; Extension programs; Gifted classes (Yr 7) Co-curricular and extra-curricular enrichment programs	In-class and specialist support; CLOs
McMahon High School	958	1984	Comprehensive (partially selective)	Co-Ed	923	74	66	Selective classes; Extension programs; Co-curricular and extra-curricular enrichment programs	In-class and specialist support; CLOs
Riverview Secondary College	1094	1965	Comprehensive (partially selective)	Co-Ed	970	67	69	Selective classes; G&T and mainstream classes; Extension programs; Co-curricular and extra-curricular enrichment programs	In-class and small group support from specialist
Minerva Girls High School	1192	1930	Selective	Girls	736	86	54	Fully selective classes; Co-curricular and extra-curricular enrichment programs	In-class and specialist support

*Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (mean=1000); **Community Liaison Officers

social phenomenon (Babbie, 2010) and aim to understand specific cases in depth and in their natural settings, recognising their complexity and context (Punch, 2009). In my inquiry, targeting schools that were either partially or fully selective allowed for purposive sampling of potentially information-rich cases within each of the schools that provided the greatest insight into the research questions (Best & Kahn, 2006; Devers & Frankel, 2000). Accessing gifted students within comprehensive schools served to broaden the scope of my inquiry and allowed for further comparisons between and across schools. Ultimately, using purposive sampling for my inquiry meant accessing schools that had opportunities for gifted and talented students with a sufficient population of ELLs participating in these programs. More than two decades ago Moon (1991) reported that case studies had been considered to be a cornerstone of research on giftedness for over eighty years, and continue to be so.

Sampling considerations: Participants. Administrators, teachers, and students were the key participants in my inquiry. First, administrators became important sources of data owing to their leadership position within the schools. The positions of the six participating administrators within the schools included two Principals, three Deputies and one Head Teacher (Teaching and Learning). Second, teachers were selected for interview owing to their unique position as not only were they part of each school's decision-making team but they also had the responsibility of putting into action the directives of policies as well as upholding and communicating the philosophy of the school. Most significantly, they were responsible for the day-to-day interactions in teaching and learning and in assisting gifted ELLs to develop their potential in often diverse and challenging classrooms. Whilst a small number of teachers presupposed certain limitations, the variety of the data collected from them through narrative inquiry methods ensured a certain richness that, whilst perhaps not reaching saturation point, still contributed to the credibility of their offerings. Finally, of particular importance, those students identified as gifted ELLs were the key sources of data for my inquiry, as one of its main purposes was to allow gifted ELLs to give voice to "their own interpretations and thoughts" rather than rely solely on "adult interpretations of their lives" (Eder & Fingerson, 2001, p. 181). Together, the voices of administrators, teachers, and students represented the main stakeholders in my inquiry.

Data Collection: Documents. Policy documents and school reports were selected for scrutiny in my inquiry due to the richness and availability of documentary data (Cohen, Manion,

& Morrison, 2007; Sproule, 2006) particularly in the field of education. This unobtrusive research method is commonly used for collecting and analysing information and was selected to supplement the more interactive methods of data collection utilised, namely semi-structured interviews with human participants. Policy documents that informed the teaching and learning of gifted ELLs in NSW schools were the main focus of document analysis, as well as the mandatory annual school reports released by the participating schools.

In order to gauge the position of education authorities with reference to the needs of gifted ELLs the then current policy documents in these two areas were scrutinised. The two pertinent documents produced by the NSW DET were *Policy and Implementation Strategies for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students* (2004a) produced by the Curriculum K–12 Directorate, and *English as a Second Language: Guidelines for Schools* (2004) produced by the Multicultural Programs Unit, both publicly available through the NSW DEC's website. These policy documents presented the NSW DEC's view of the educational needs of gifted students and of ELLs and as such the findings of these analyses will be reported in the results chapters alongside those of other voices.

With the introduction of the Australian Curriculum, phased in from 2011 onwards, the national document implemented in all Australian schools from 2014 is ACARA's *English as an additional language or dialect teacher resource: Overview and EAL/D learning progression* (2011). This document was considered for examination because of its more up-to-date position on supporting teaching and learning programs for students for whom English is an additional language or dialect within the context of the Australian Curriculum (ACARA, 2011). At the time of conducting this inquiry this document was publicly available, however there was no expectation that it would be implemented in NSW DEC schools until a future date; therefore, as it did not represent the then current voice of the NSW DEC, it was excluded from analysis. This document, however, was still accessed and referenced in other sections of my inquiry.

Each school's 2010 *Annual School Report* was also accessed from their public websites as the next step in the documentary analysis. Production of these documents has been a mandatory requirement for NSW DEC schools to inform their parents and communities since 1997 as part of their School Accountability and Improvement Program. The Program has emphasised "school self-evaluation, reporting whole-of-school information to parents, school reviews and reviews of state-wide issues such as the education of particular groups of students" (New South Wales Audit Office, 2004, p. 8). The annual school report has been an important component of a school's accountability requirements to its parents and community, to the NSW DEC, and to the

Commonwealth Government's Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations (NSW DEC, 2011), and has also been endorsed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as an important tool for accountability in education (Anderson, 2005).

There have been both advantages and disadvantages in using these reports for documentary analysis. Advantages have included their use as a consistent and uniform set of documents that provided a snapshot for the purposes of my inquiry. This consistency was achieved by schools having to address mandatory sections that cover aspects of school performance in terms of NAPLAN (National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy) and HSC (Higher School Certificate) as well as having to report on key targets and goals for the school and the feedback from annual evaluations. This consistency assisted in maintaining the validity of this aspect of the research and allowed these documents to act as the voices of the schools. Disadvantages include weaknesses that have been identified by the NSW Audit Office (2004) with regards to how the annual school reports give feedback to their key stakeholders in terms of what aspects are included and excluded. Similarly, some concerns arise with regards to the two state policy documents selected as these are now over a decade old, which may raise questions as to their relevance and lack of grounding in more recent research.

When scrutinising documents, McNeill and Chapman (2005) noted that there is the opportunity to analyse each text for meaning and also to explore other socio-linguistic factors that influence text creation, such as the social production and the social organisation of documents. Punch (2009) referred to Finnegan's (1996) view that an exploration of social production of documents would involve not only taking into account the constraints of particular social, historical, and administrative conditions and structures imposed upon the selected documents, but also understanding how these factors affect its interpretation. An understanding of the social organisation of the proposed documents was also crucial, as these policy documents and annual school reports were written, each with a distinctive style, in consideration of specific audiences and purposes.

Data collection: Interviews. Conversations in the form of interviews with individuals constituted the main data-collection process for my inquiry. It was important to hear first-hand from those directly impacted by the implementation of policies, in particular students, teachers, and administrators, and to give them a voice in order to be able to contribute to future dialogues.

Both Liamputtong (2009) and Punch (2009) have considered interviews to be the most prominent data-collection tools in qualitative research, eliciting rich information usually through face-to-face and one-on-one interaction between the researcher and the participant (Warren, 2001). Interviews were most appropriate for my inquiry because, as Jones (1985) has elaborated, it is through the process of interviewing that the researcher is best able to gain insights into people's perceptions, understandings, meanings, thoughts, and constructs of reality. Interviewing is also considered to be both interactive and humanistic, as it looks for the involvement of the participants in the data collection with the researcher seeking to build rapport and credibility with the individuals (Creswell, 2003; Travers, 2006).

In order to generate narrative data, open-ended semi-structured interviews were conducted with key stakeholders. These types of interviews are considered by Daly (2007) to be "conversations with an agenda" (p. 139) as they allow for more personal dialogues to emerge whist still providing a structure and focus for data collection (Newby, 2010; Travers, 2006). Rogers (2007) has referred to Mishler's (1986) assertion that this consideration is of particular relevance for the practice of interviewing in narrative research, where interviews are considered to be much more than a stimulus–response exchange in the posing of questions and the receiving of answers. Warren (2001) has reiterated Mishler's (1986) definition of an interview as a "speech event" (p. 83) jointly produced by the asking and answering of questions within a social context. Therefore, it is a type of discourse (Mishler, 1986, cited in Rogers, 2007). Interviewees need to be invited into a collaborative role in the creation of this discourse and semi-structured interviews facilitate this process.

It was vital for my inquiry for the focus to remain on eliciting narratives, which according to King and Horrocks (2010) should be done by providing participants with time and space to make their own connections in a way that makes sense to them (p. 220). Wiklund-Gustin (2010) referred to Ricoeur's (1992) assertion that narration is also a way to connect to another person, to reveal personal experiences and thereby interpret oneself. Rather than being in control of what happens, researchers need to be not only present and attentive to the story but they must also assist the narrators in conveying their stories by allowing these stories to emerge as they are (Wiklund-Gustin, 2010). This honouring of the relational aspect of narrative inquiry creates an opportunity for rich data to emerge.

In the conducting of interviews for my inquiry certain practicalities needed to be addressed, including issues of access, interview guides and protocols, and audio-recording. It is common practice in qualitative research that conversations take place at sites where the

participants feel the most comfortable (Eder & Fingerson, 2001; Liamputtong, 2009), therefore all interviews were conducted at each individual school, following a semi-structured interview guide that I had developed (see Appendix J). Interviews with administrators and teachers were conducted in quiet settings including private offices and empty classrooms. Interviews with students were conducted in school libraries, meeting rooms, or vacant classrooms, all generally quiet locations and most within sight (but not hearing) of a supervising teacher from the school. At one school the contact person sat in the room as a potential assistant to a student with poor English vocabulary, and gave him one prompt by volunteering the phrase *work placement*, after his attempts to describe the program left him pausing and hesitating as he searched for the appropriate vocabulary. Not only were quiet settings necessary for clarity in the recording process but they also served to protect the confidentiality of the participant by limiting the possibility of being overheard by others. McNeill and Chapman (2005) have advised that location also affects validity as students have the potential to respond differently in different settings.

The questions that were posed were revisions of the original questions from the pilot study, which had been re-evaluated and adjusted for the main inquiry after being tested (see Appendix I). These updated questions focused specifically on the three different groups of people being interviewed and similar interview guides were developed for each group (see Appendix J). Administrators were asked to clarify from their perspective each school's agenda and arrangements for gifted ELLs, then to reflect on how students' voices were heard at their school. They were also asked to share their expertise and understanding of their students' needs to consider how the population of students under consideration could better be served. Teachers were asked to describe from their perspective what type of support was in place at the school to assist gifted ELLs, to clarify their own role in this support, and to reflect on their understanding of student voice on the matter. They were also asked to provide suggestions for improvement in this area. Students were asked to share their backgrounds and to report on the support and assistance given by the school. They were also asked to reflect on their understanding of expectations of parents and school and on their futures.

Core prompts such as "Tell me about the arrangements that exist within the school that support gifted English language learners" for administrators, and "Tell me how this school helps you to learn" for students were open-ended and allowed for the participants to digress from the main intent of the question when they wanted to share further examples or follow a different train of thought. Often, these divergences were encouraged with a simple suggestive probe. These core questions and probes enabled focus to be maintained while allowing the flexibility to ask further

questions to clarify points raised by the participants or to explore more deeply lines of interest. In this way, Bold (2012) has suggested, some analysis and interpretation could already be taking place as each interview progressed.

The audio-recording of the interview was an authentic way of capturing the words, tones, pauses, and emotions of the participants in a permanent form. Kvale (2007) has stated that audio-recordings are of benefit as they can be returned to again and again for re-listening. They also allow the researcher to concentrate fully on the interview rather than on note-taking (Bold, 2012; Travers, 2006). Audio-recording also provided the basis for an audit trail to support credibility. A digital voice recorder that stores files in an mp3 format was utilised due to its size, reliability, and ease of transferability of audio files through digital dictation software to both transcribe and store the data. Audio-recording also supported the accuracy of the data-analysis process in that it provided a direct and easily accessible record of the data that were used, rather than relying on the researcher's own notes.

Conducting interviews to collect data for research had certain advantages. The most salient of these relevant to my inquiry included, among others: the flexibility of interviewing for exploring research topics when little is known about them; the value of interviews in assisting the researcher to address the issues from the subjective experiences of the participants (Travers, 2006); giving the participants more power and control over what they say and how it is said; providing opportunities for probing and exploration in greater depth, including following up and seeking clarification in real time; and the overall flexibility of the method.

For my inquiry, early in the proceedings each school nominated a contact person to facilitate all facets of the interviewing process. Following e-mail and telephone contact with each school representative, procedures were put in place in each school so that on the day of interviewing all aspects of the process could unfold in a smooth manner. These aspects ranged from being welcomed into the school, shown my allocated interview space, discussing procedures for the escort of participants to the interview room and back to class, and making set appointments to speak to staff during their release times or around other appointments or classes. All contact persons were welcoming, organised, thorough, thoughtful, and respectful of my role as both colleague and researcher. Unplanned aspects of the research process included needing to post an accidentally unreturned key back to one school, being mistaken for a relief teacher and escorted to a classroom full of waiting students at another, and being invited to share in a celebratory morning tea in a faculty staffroom during a morning tea break.

The process of interviewing encompassed several steps that were adhered to as closely as possible in every interview in order for there to be consistency and to support credibility claims. Conversations began with a welcome to each student and a mention of thanks for their participation, thus creating a particular social context for the interview conversation as recommended by Warren (2001). This step was followed by confirmation that all documentation was in good order and consent had been given before proceeding. General conversation about school life was entered into as students settled themselves in their seats, in each case placed around a table at right angles to myself, with the audio recorder and a hard copy of the interview questions placed between us. Before beginning the audio recording process I outlined to students what would be happening during the interview as well as giving them the option of pausing and/or withdrawing at any time. I felt this was an appropriate way to proceed since narrative research is considered to be a mutual endeavour between the researcher and the participant (the narrator). Yow (2005) has indicated that it is essential that the researcher build rapport and trust by being honest and straightforward about the research and responding honestly and respectfully to any queries.

Once the audio recorder was activated all interviews began formally with identification of self with name and role. Students took my lead and stated their name, year level, and school. I then continued the conversation, outlining for the purposes of the audio record the reasons for my research and the student's participation in it. Students were then encouraged to narrate aspects of their life story, including language and family background, prompted by me for more details as the need arose, depending on the characteristics of the student's personality, willingness to respond, or even level of English proficiency. Indeed, Liamputtong (2009) has recommended that researchers ask questions that will open up issues and allow participants to construct more meaningful responses.

In many interviews students appeared to be comfortable following the questions posed to them that had been distributed earlier with their information sheets and consent forms. With interviews ranging between 5 and 19 minutes a number of students, particularly some of the older ones, chose to deviate away from the main questions after their direct responses had been exhausted, and it was through many of these deviations that their narratives took on a deeper turn than previously anticipated. Through these narratives I was able to gain a richer insight into the workings of their lives and their hopes for their futures. Some younger students' natural shyness or willingness to be perceived as compliant with an authority figure (the researcher) meant that even with further probing their comments were limited to brief responses to set questions. Whilst

brief responses did not provide detailed data they were nevertheless useful as they answered key questions posed to all the students.

Whilst posing questions in plain language then keeping silent to allow the participant to organise their thoughts (Liamputtong, 2009) was the key strategy used throughout the interview process with students, more flexibility was allowed in interviews with staff. These interviews tended to be lengthier and more complex, as in many cases the interview turned into extended narratives of professional experiences with gifted ELLs. These interviews ranged in duration from 18 minutes to 54 minutes as staff shared stories that provided me with data on broader aspects of my inquiry such as special provisions, differentiation, impediments to learning, shortcomings of programs, funding limitations, and other diverse elements relevant to working in educational institutions. This information confirmed the advocacy role that educators play in their role of supporting gifted ELLs and justified their inclusion in my inquiry.

Ways of listening are important for narrative research, as listening must be careful and active (Liamputtong, 2009) in order to prompt for depth to responses, or to seek for further explanation, elaboration, or clarification of points made (Travers, 2006). In the interviewing process for my inquiry non-verbal techniques such as silent assent with limited gestures (e.g., nodding of the head) not only served to validate participants' responses but also to encourage them to continue speaking. Whilst Ryen (2001) has suggested that lack of comprehension and misunderstanding have been noted to occur in both the verbal and non-verbal arenas during cross-cultural interviewing, it was felt that the participants from non-English speaking backgrounds had sufficient grasp of the basic non-verbal gestures used during the interviewing because of their previous exposure to these gestures in the context of the school.

Few communicative challenges were evident between the students and me, despite claims in the literature that they occur naturalistically in cross-cultural interviewing (Ryen, 2001). Assumptions about communication and culture that pose insider–outsider challenges were partly subdued in my inquiry through the brief sharing of my own ELL journey with participants before interviewing commenced. This not only helped to establish rapport with the students but also to sustain it through moments where this rapport was challenged through linguistic difficulties encountered by some students, particularly when attempting to express more abstract ideas, including the previously mentioned attempt at describing the phenomenon of work placement. When interviewing staff members it was my role as educator and researcher that was utilised to create and sustain rapport.

At the conclusion of the interviews participants were thanked for their contributions and were invited to contribute beyond the semi-structured questions. Staff in particular took up this opportunity to express specific and pertinent personal views and opinions, some in a manner indicative of justification of their position. It has been recommended to offer participants this type of opportunity as it is often the case that this kind of situation is interpreted as being freer of constraints than general interviewing (Warren, 2001). The audio recorder was not turned off until the interview had been concluded and many of the younger students were keen to hear their own voices played back simply out of curiosity. Not only was this an activity of general interest to most of them but it also served to confirm the quality and viability of the audio recording.

Data collection: Reflective memos and field notes. Willis (2006) has stated that memos and field notes are important in the documentation of the research process as they assist in the development of a reflexive approach to the research. This conscious awareness by the researcher of his or her position in the research process is necessary to make transparent the ways in which power may be constituted and enacted during the whole research practice, from research design through to data analysis and beyond. By writing short reflections immediately after each interview I was able to explore my own responses to each participant's contribution and consider any potential effects on the research and interpretive processes. This idea of reflecting-on-action has the potential to empower the researcher to question words and actions and challenge accepted truths or claims while considering various alternative ways of interpreting and analysing these different words and actions (Bold, 2012).

By engaging in the process of writing reflective memos and field notes I was able to reflect on certain interpersonal aspects of narrative inquiry, most importantly in the negotiation of relationships with the participants. These were formed, as suggested by Craig and Huber (2007), in "the meeting of diverse lives" (p. 252) in the context of the research, and involved being attentive to the tensions, dilemmas, and inherent possibilities found in the unfolding of the stories. This process was particularly evident when I was faced with giving an account of my own role in the research process, particularly with regards to my assumption of interpretive authority over the voice of the participant (Rogers, 2007). Having been identified as a gifted ELL as a child I found that my personal experiences of the past, and myself in the present, added to the richness of the inquiry. Andrews (2007) has made reference to Bhabha's (1994) description of this positioning as resulting from a process of cultural hybridization that acknowledges "the migrant's double vision" (p. 490) as an individual moves across boundaries of cultural difference. The product of this

hybridization is a new entity not reducible to its component parts but rather an integration of two or more worlds (Selby, 2004, cited in Andrews, 2007). This positioning between cultural borderlands that is part of my personal identity gave me a unique perspective into the lives of the students I was interviewing. It was through the process of keeping reflective memos that I was able to make deeper connections both within the data and subsequent findings and as an aside into my own life and ongoing identity creation. Therefore, memos and field notes served practical purposes apart from a focus on reflexivity, from allowing for the provision of just-in-time commentary on the processes of interviewing, to contextualising data where these were unclear, as well as identifying my own feelings and perceptions.

Memos and field notes have also served to support credibility through their promotion of sustained self-reflection and promotion of critical reflection and reflexivity, though Bold (2012) has suggested that few published research reports appear to use these sources explicitly as research evidence. The information collected can become both primary data as well as secondary data, not only providing an account of events but also supporting the development of theorising about those events through reflexive engagement with the data (Atkinson, 1990, cited in Bold, 2012). Used as tools to improve practice and support the analysis of the research data, in my inquiry the memos and fields notes were often just as important as the interviews themselves, as numerous times I found myself evaluating the reflections I had made, writing these secondary evaluations in a different colour so as to distinguish initial thoughts from the more considered ones. Used in this way this coding became another checking tool to support credibility.

Data collection: Cultural considerations. When interacting with students from backgrounds other than English, consideration needed to be given not only to their developing understanding and ability to use the English language as both a tool for communication and for education but also to their diverse cultural needs and practices. To this end, multiple strategies were put into place before, during, and after the inquiry that were intended to minimise misunderstandings and maximise effective and accurate data collection and analysis. These strategies ranged from supplying parents with translations of documents for ease of comprehension of the intent of the inquiry to the implementation of culturally appropriate practices with regards to interviews between myself (adult female researcher) and the students (both male and female children/young adults), such as investing in rapport-building to convey respect. For example, during one particular interview with a student from a Chinese background I had to be careful in my questioning of his difficulties in determining his current cultural identity

in order to attend to whether I was putting the young man in a position of "losing face" (Fontes, 2008, p. 70); undertaking a more circular approach in my line of questioning allowed him to voice his thoughts without putting the rest of the interview or his personal dignity in jeopardy.

Other considerations included care with stereotyping of students, consideration of which elements of the student's cultural background were relevant (e.g., religious beliefs, gender roles, the view of authority, directness of questioning, and the appropriateness and timing of eye contact, among others) (Wilson & Powell, 2001). Because all the students had spent some time living in Australia there was also a need to assess the degree to which they identified with their home culture, as different elements of the mainstream culture are taken on board by students at different rates. This assessment was initiated during the rapport-building stage through general conversation and evidence often emerged in more detail during the narratives of their early years and family background.

Sensitivity in gaining informed consent through the signing of forms was appropriate for my inquiry as the giving of written consent can be problematic for people from backgrounds other than English. The seeking of this type of consent can be intimidating to people who are refugees or illiterate in their own language (Uptin, 2015). Special consideration for obtaining consent through an oral process has been acknowledged as an option under section 3.1.16 of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (Australian Government National Health and Medical Research Council, Australian Research Council, Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, 2007). In the instance of my inquiry all participants were able to give written consent.

Data Analysis

Data analysis procedures. Data analysis is an ongoing process that involves continual reflection about the data collected in order to reduce them into a clear, insightful, and understandable analysis (Gibbs, 2007). The process involves asking general questions and developing an analysis from the information supplied by the participants whilst searching for themes or issues (Creswell, 2003) through the processes of categorisation, description, and synthesis (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). In qualitative research it often takes place with a small number of participants, in particular contexts, and for specific purposes relative to bringing about changes in practices or improvements in social conditions. It is also understood that in much qualitative research the researcher approaches the research with the likelihood of already having some understanding of the area to be explored (Bold, 2012). Thus the process of data analysis may be

iterative, retrospective, or both, which has significant implications for the final outcome and allows space for variation of interpretation.

For the purposes of my inquiry narrative analysis techniques were applied to the data collected through interviews in order to engage in painting narrative portraits. Data from key NSW DET policy guidelines and each school's annual school reports were similarly scrutinised.. These documentary analyses were undertaken to supplement the information garnered from interviews; together they formed the voice of the participants in my inquiry.

Data analysis: Interviews. After all the interviews were conducted they were transcribed in preparation for analysis. In my inquiry conducting a member check was appropriate (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) and involved follow-up communication with each school and participant in order to verify the data collected during the first visit. Participants were provided with copies of the transcripts of their interviews, asked to provide feedback as to their accuracy, and given the opportunity to have any, all, or parts of their transcripts edited or deleted upon request. All transcriptions and coding were also sent to the other researchers (supervisors) to check the coding as part of the audit trail and give confidence about its dependability.

There is no standard approach or list of procedures that is generally recognised as representing the narrative method of analysis (Bold, 2012; Coulter & Smith, 2009; Elliott, 2005), although Mishler (1995) has suggested that some typologies exist. Boje (2009) has described it as "the sequencing of events and character identities derived by retrospective sensory representation" (para. 1). Its purpose is to represent how different narrators value events, characters, and elements in multiple ways, collated together in a representation that includes both chronological elements as well as structures of interrelated constituent elements that examine how the past shapes the present, and present perspectives act as filters to past events. Simply put, the research aim of narrative analysis is to organise the data collected to create a narrative with a plot that unifies the data (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007), ensuring the preservation of the flow of the story in the process of analysis (Todorova, 2007). Its purpose is to interrogate, as Riessman and Speedy (2007) have stated, "*how* and *why* events are storied, not simply the content to which language refers" (p. 430).

Techniques from socio-linguistics and other related disciplines have been successfully adopted in past studies (Elliott, 2005), particularly through the generalisation from source materials such as interviews, documents, and observations. In many of these studies the analysis has focused on what the substantive elements of the accounts tell us about people and their

worlds, focusing on content. Over recent decades, analysis has shifted to also include a focus on both form and structure as well as content.

Some proponents of narrative research, particularly those from a socio-linguistic background such as Labov, have proposed criteria for the structural analysis of specific oral and personal event and experience narratives (Patterson, 2008; Riessman, 2005). However, my inquiry based itself in the thematic narrative analysis tradition as summarised by Riessman, where content is the exclusive focus (Riessman, 2005, 2008). It has been customary in studies using thematic analysis for the researcher to attend to language as a resource and ignore its form and indeed even the interaction process between the researcher and the interviewee (Riessman, 2008). Whilst there appear to be similarities with grounded theory methods of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Willis, 2006), as researchers "collect many stories and inductively create conceptual groupings from the data" (Riessman, 2005, p. 2), thematic analysis aims to keep a story intact by "theorising from the case rather than from component themes (categories) across cases" (Riessman, 2008, p. 54), though Gibbs (2007) has noted that case-by-case comparisons are encouraged. In the analysis of the interviews in my inquiry both options have been explored.

Using the thematic analysis method, the scrutiny of the interview data began with the transcription process, a crucial part of the analytic process within the bounds of narrative research (Elliott, 2005; Willis, 2006). Transcripts excluded speech practices such as intonation, pauses, rhythm, hesitation, and body language, areas more of concern for those following the Labovian tradition. With regards to the students, however, as much of their oral English was still in a developmental phase, I made a decision to transcribe their contributions without alteration to grammar, and to include their pauses, hesitations, repetitions, and other age-appropriate oral language nuances, unless otherwise requested by the participant. I deemed this "full" transcription important as not only did this become an act of valuing and respecting their developmental journey in terms of their English-language ability but it also gave me insight into how these students organised their thinking and constructed and communicated their ideas in a language that they were still acquiring. The process also helped the students to maintain their power in the research activity by preserving their conceptions and meanings, as suggested by Eder and Fingerson (2001), which has also been respected in the Results chapters through the frequent use of direct quotes from their interviews.

As the researcher I worked with a single interview at a time, isolating and ordering relevant narratives presented in the form of episodes or stories (an example can be found in Appendix K). The construction of these segments of stories for analysis, including their

boundaries, was influenced by my "evolving theories, disciplinary preferences and research questions" (Riessman, 2001, p. 701) and formed an integral part of the analysis. The themes arising from the segments of stories were then developed to identify issues and structure the information gathered throughout the interviews (Bold, 2012). In this manner the evolving stories included the data and corresponding analysis, with an assumption that the sequence and the wealth of detail contained therein was preserved insofar as was practicable (Riessman, 2008).

I focused on the underlying assumptions within each account and coded these iteratively, using *in vivo* codes where possible (the use of terms and names the participants used in their own narratives, and used to preserve participants' meanings) (Charmaz, 2006; Saldaña, 2009). This coding was revisited and refined numerous times as I came across different interpretations of the same idea, concept, or experience from different participants' narratives. The information was collated in an Excel spreadsheet under the title *Code Book* (part of which can be found in Appendix L), where a quantitative record was kept of the different types of codes, the types of participants who had provided data coded under each category, and a total record of coded events. These data assisted in determining overall priorities based on the frequency of speech events corresponding to each code. In order to further support this method, particular cases were selected to illustrate general patterns (Bold, 2012; Riessman, 2008), and specific stories were kept intact and presented in the findings as storied events, placed within frames for easier visual access. Ultimately, the intent was to provide rich descriptive detail and what Saldaña (2009) has referred to as a three-dimensional rendering of participants' stories.

Data analysis: Documents. Two key sets of policy documents as well as annual school reports were accessed for the purpose of collecting further data for my inquiry, and they were scrutinised via thematic analysis methods as per narrative inquiry methodology (an example can be found in Appendix M). The NSW DET's documents relating to policies and implementation strategies for the education of both ESL and gifted and talented students were selected and each school's annual school report for 2010 was also chosen. This scrutiny was undertaken to supplement the information garnered from interviews and to uncover key themes as expressed by the education authorities responsible for meeting the needs of gifted ELLs.

In the process of analysing the documents for my inquiry I initially encountered difficulties in contrast to the analysis of interviews due to the differences in text type structure between the narrated oral story of the individual and the expository nature of a written policy

document and school report. As a means to solving this dilemma I focused on Lin's (1998, as cited in Dodge, Ospina, & Foldy, 2005) determination that "inquiry is less about predicting or generalising behaviour, and more about interpreting intention and meaning in context" (p. 289). Therefore, I set about identifying threads (stories) of intention and meaning from the texts as authored by school personnel (in the case of the annual school reports) and departmental policy-makers (in the case of policy documents). This task was made easier when I attended to the headings and subheadings the authors provided or were restricted to, and used these to determine the intended narrative, which was then subjected to the same method of analysis as the interview transcripts. Once coded and scrutinised, the data they revealed were attached to that garnered from interviews as well as reported in their own section in the Results chapters.

Research Design: Ethical Considerations

Habibis (2006) has made reference to Hopf's (2004) assertion that ethical dilemmas have tended to be more persistent in qualitative than in quantitative research. Since ethical considerations pervade the whole process of research (Cohen et al., 2007) regardless of methods used, attention to the matter was necessary. That is because the primordial purpose of conducting research in an ethical manner is to prevent research participants from being harmed by the researcher and the actual research process (Habibis, 2006; Liamputtong, 2009). These considerations revolve around particular concepts including harm, consent, deception, privacy, and confidentiality of data (Burgess, 1988; Punch, 2009), which needed to be addressed both before beginning the research and throughout the research process. Key areas requiring specific attention included ethics approval, non-identification of participants, and informed consent, with their management summarised in Table 3.3. These areas are discussed further below, along with the positioning of the researcher as an ethical issue.

Table 3.3

Ethical Considerations

ETHICAL ISSUE	ISSUE MANAGEMENT
Strategies for participants to confirm their consent	• Consent forms for participants (co-signed by parents if under 18)
Research involves children, or people younger than 18 years	• Information sheets and consent forms for parents
Parental or carer consent	• Consent forms for students, co-signed by parents
Assent of children	• Consent forms for students, co-signed by parents
Participants quoted either directly or indirectly in the reporting	• Information sheet outlining details given to participants (and parents if under 18) with warning that they may be quoted • Participants (and parents if under 18) signed a consent form indicating permission to use quotes, with confidentiality asserted
Proficiency in the English language	• Students are all English-language learners, therefore translations of all relevant documents were made available to both parents and students in their home language. Translations were made by appropriate school staff and volunteers, by TIS personnel, or other translators
Reimbursement, payment, or rewards for participation	• None; all participation was voluntary
Participant safety	• Interviews with the students conducted during school hours on the school's premises, with a staff member present • Police checks undertaken through SERAP process and noted in authorisation letter
Consent method: • Written informed consent • Parent, Guardian or Carer consent • Child's assent with parent or guardian consent • Young person's (16–17 years) consent • Child less than 16 years assent	• Consent forms (in English and respective home languages) accompanied information sheets
Fieldwork or off-campus activities, e.g., interviews	• Covered by each school's relevant public liability insurances and workplace health and safety guidelines

Ethics approval. In narrative research ethics is not merely a matter of abstractly correct behaviour towards participants but, as Josselson (2007) has stated, is a matter of "responsibility in human relationship" (p. 538). Because of this relationship, where participants are offering aspects of their lives for scrutiny, more emphasis is placed on the trust and rapport the researcher builds with the participant than necessarily on documentation and consent forms (Josselson, 2007; Ryen, 2001). Whilst Josselson (2007) has reminded that central to the very possibility of doing narrative research lies the assurance given to participants regarding confidentiality and privacy, the expectation is that this is generally reinforced through documentation. In conducting research through institutions such documentation is a mandatory requirement in accordance with guidelines relating to codes of conduct for research, and also serves the purpose of maintaining uniformity in terms of processes and procedures.

Prior to undertaking research, the University of New England's (UNE) *Code of Conduct for Research (2003)* guidelines were consulted and a submission for ethics approval was made to its Human Research Ethics Committee. It was noted in the submission that all participation would be voluntary, confidentiality would be assured, and withdrawal at any time would be allowed in order to reduce the possibility of causing harm. These ethical processes are all in line with current practices (Cohen et al., 2007; Kumar, 2005). In order for my inquiry to be undertaken in NSW DEC schools, not only was ethical clearance by UNE necessary, but also approval needed to be granted by the Department itself. Clearances from both organisations can be found in Appendices C and D.

Non-identification of participants. The non-identification of participants in research is crucial for the protection of their human rights and to minimise any possible harm arising from the research (Gomm, 2004; McNeill & Chapman, 2005). Key to ensuring these protections are the recommended practices pertaining to confidentiality that have been followed in my inquiry. In the first instance, the confidentiality of each participant was assured by guaranteeing their non-identification as individuals, made explicit in all information letters and other correspondence, with no individual identifying information to be made public as part of the final report. Each participant was advised that he or she would be identified generically by his or her grouping within a category (i.e., administrators, teachers, students) at each school site, and individually by a pseudonym. To support this process, individual and culturally consistent gender-appropriate pseudonyms were either self-nominated or allocated to the participants, and school administrators

were given the right of re-naming their own schools to preserve confidentiality. These practices were consistent with the principles of ethical research on humans (Cohen et al., 2007).

Informed consent. Informed consent is grounded in the principle of respect for people and protection from being harmed and exploited (Gomm, 2004; Kumar, 2011). This principle is underlined by the requirement that human subjects give their free, voluntary, and informed consent to participate in research (Cohen et al., 2007; McNeill & Chapman, 2005; Penslar, 1995). This consent is founded on the understanding that participants are fully informed about what the research pertains to, what will be involved in terms of their participation, and that their decision to participate is made without any kind of coercion (Habibis, 2006; Wiersma & Jurs, 2005). Ensuring that students and parents from non-English speaking backgrounds had an appropriate understanding of the inquiry and what it was they were giving consent to participate in was a matter that needed careful consideration, as it has been shown that it is not always appropriate to presume that this is the case (Warren, 2001). Eder and Fingerson (2001) have also highlighted the importance of finding multiple ways of responding with sensitivity and understanding to the power differential between adult researchers and young participants.

Informed consent was sought from every participant in my inquiry through a step-by-step process. After initial consent was granted by each school principal to conduct research on his or her site and interact with staff and students, ethics approval to continue was obtained from both UNE and the NSW DEC for the main inquiry. Prior to the actual commencement of the data-collection process each school was given an outline of the proposed inquiry and all potential participants were given a letter of introduction in both English and their home language containing detailed information about the nature and aim of the inquiry, and the extent of their involvement. Their signed consent was necessary (see Appendices F, G, and H). Follow-up telephone calls from the school representatives to parents ensured maximum participation from nominated participants.

Ethical considerations also applied after the data-collection and interview-transcription processes were concluded. Participants were given access to the written transcripts of the recorded interviews with the option of commenting, editing, or withdrawing any sections they wished, including full withdrawal of themselves and their contribution before use in my inquiry. Participants were also supplied with the contact details of agencies and organisations such as counsellors and interpreters in order to help minimise any unintended and unforeseen distress and

emotional harm that may have arisen from the research process, a measure appropriate to this type of inquiry (Travers, 2006). All participants agreed to have their interviews used for my inquiry.

Positioning of the researcher. In narrative research the researcher can encounter the possibility of being positioned less objectively than in other methods. Bold (2012) has suggested such an outcome may be a result of the researcher's own assumptions or self-schema of the topic under scrutiny, the nature of the influence he or she might have over the participants, or even the interpretation of their stories, among other reasons. In order for the researcher to act more ethically when in this more subjective position, it is paramount that he or she acknowledges this influence when collecting and analysing data, and accounts for it explicitly in any discussion. Bold (2012) has noted Josselson's (2007) promotion of the development of an ethical attitude on the researcher's part, particularly as some ethical choices need to be made "*in situ* as issues emerge" (p. 55). In this manner the ethics often evolve alongside the research and as part of its process.

In my inquiry, and specifically during the conducting of the interviews, one of the greatest ethical concerns I faced was finding a balance between developing rapport with the participants, specifically students, and inadvertently influencing the responses by leading their answers. In the sharing of my own personal story with students in terms of setting the scene, the concern I had was that my attempt to provide students with a story that would facilitate a point of connection between them and myself would lead to the students' seeing my own narrative as a blue-print or scaffold from which they should construct their own. My reflections on ethical matters exposed during the interviewing process have been addressed in further chapters.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to give an overview of the considerations necessary to conduct my inquiry according to expectations of rigour and formality. It has outlined the necessary elements to justify and describe the approach taken for the collection and analysis of data, taking into account some of the challenges posed in this endeavour. As is appropriate to qualitative research it has also highlighted my approach and perspectives in terms of the interpretation of the findings of the participants, giving justification for my authorial voice in the coming chapters. The next three chapters focus on the findings arising from the data collected during my inquiry, presented as Data narratives, Student narratives, and School narratives.

CHAPTER IV: DATA NARRATIVES

The purpose of the next three chapters is to present the findings arising from the qualitative data collected through document reviews and through interviews conducted at multiple sites. They consider both narrative as data (the content narrative) and the meta-narrative as reported by me as researcher (Bold, 2012). Chapter IV contains data and descriptions of the people and the schools who participated in the qualitative interviews. The narrative continues in Chapter V with analysis of the interviews with students, whilst Chapter VI considers the interviews with teachers and administrators along with the documentary data. As noted previously, names of schools and persons (school administrators, teachers, and students) have been changed to preserve confidentiality.

General Descriptions

The data for my inquiry were collected through 30 live interviews with students, teachers, and administrators. Tables 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 outline the number of participants within each group identified by each school. Interviews were conducted with six administrators — two Principals, three Deputies, one Head Teacher (Teaching and Learning); with three teachers — two ESL teachers, one Humanities teacher; and with 21 students (seven boys and 14 girls). Schools represented were mixed, with one selective, two partially selective and two comprehensive schools (one of which was formerly selective). Administrators and students from every school were interviewed but teachers from only three of the five schools participated in interviews.

Information about the nominated student participants was requested from each school in order to determine which students were suitable for participation in my inquiry. Key to the selection of students was that they be identified both as gifted and/or talented using departmental policies and guidelines as well as considered to be in a particular phase of learning English as additional to their home language, also identified through the application of departmental policies and guidelines. The English competency of each student was reported against the NSW DET, Multicultural Programs Unit's (2004) ESL learner phases, with the majority of students identified as functioning as third-phase ESL learners (Table 4.4). A full summary of student data can be found in Appendix N.

Table 4.1

Administrators by School

School	School Type	Principal	Deputy Principal	Head Teacher
Dickens Boys High School	Comprehensive	1	1	0
Colonial Girls High School	Comprehensive	0	0	1
McMahon High School	Comprehensive (partially selective)	0	1	0
Riverview Secondary College	Comprehensive (partially selective)	1	0	0
Minerva Girls High School	Selective	0	1	0
TOTAL		**2**	**3**	**1**

Table 4.2

Teachers by School

School	School Type	Humanities Teachers	ESL Teachers
Dickens Boys High School	Comprehensive	0	0
Colonial Girls High School	Comprehensive	0	1
McMahon High School	Comprehensive (partially selective)	1	0
Riverview Secondary College	Comprehensive (partially selective)	0	1
Minerva Girls High School	Selective	0	0
TOTAL		**1**	**2**

Table 4.3

Students by School

School	School Type	Gifted ELLs	Boys	Girls	Age range
Dickens Boys High School	Comprehensive	3	3	0	15–17
Colonial Girls High School	Comprehensive	6	0	6	12–13
McMahon High School	Comprehensive (partially selective)	3	1	2	12
Riverview Secondary College	Comprehensive (partially selective)	5	3	2	16–18
Minerva Girls High School	Selective	4	0	4	14–15
TOTAL		**21**	**7**	**14**	

Table 4.4

ESL Learner Phases

ESL LEARNER PHASE (*n*=21)	
Written:	
First phase [a]	0
Second Phase [b]	3
Third phase [c]	18
Spoken:	
First phase [a]	0
Second Phase [b]	3
Third phase [c]	18

[a]First-phase ESL learners are students whose understanding and production of spoken or written English is obviously limited in all social and educational situations.

[b]Second-phase ESL learners are students whose understanding and production of spoken and written English is progressing, but is still limited to a range of familiar social and educational situations.

[c]Third-phase ESL learners are students who generally function fluently and competently in English, but who occasionally need assistance in meeting the particular language and literacy demands of English in specific social and educational situations.

Students involved in my inquiry were being educated wholly in NSW DEC schools but according to different models (Figure 4.1). Whilst nine students attended a comprehensive school, only the three students from Dickens Boys High School were being educated in comprehensive classrooms, whilst the six students from Colonial Girls High School were placed in an extension class identified using criteria set by the school and in alignment with Education Department policies. Of the eight students attending schools that offered gifted and talented opportunities through identifying as partially selective, the three students at McMahon High School were in selective classes, whilst at Riverview Secondary College only one of the five students was enrolled in a selective class, with the other four students enrolled in extension classes (Figure 4.2). Four of the students interviewed were being educated in a fully selective high school, Minerva Girls High School.
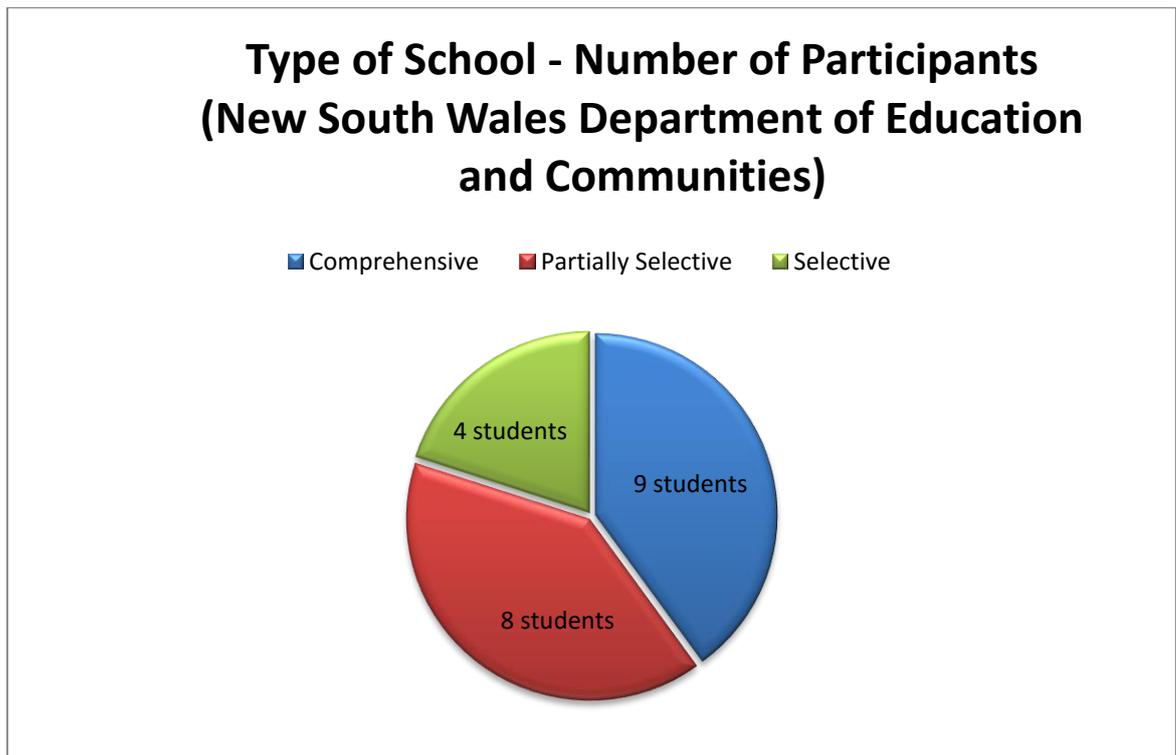
Figure 4.1. Number of participants by type of DEC school.

Type of Class - Number of Participants (New South Wales Department of Education and Communities)

■ Comprehensive   ■ Extension   ■ Selective
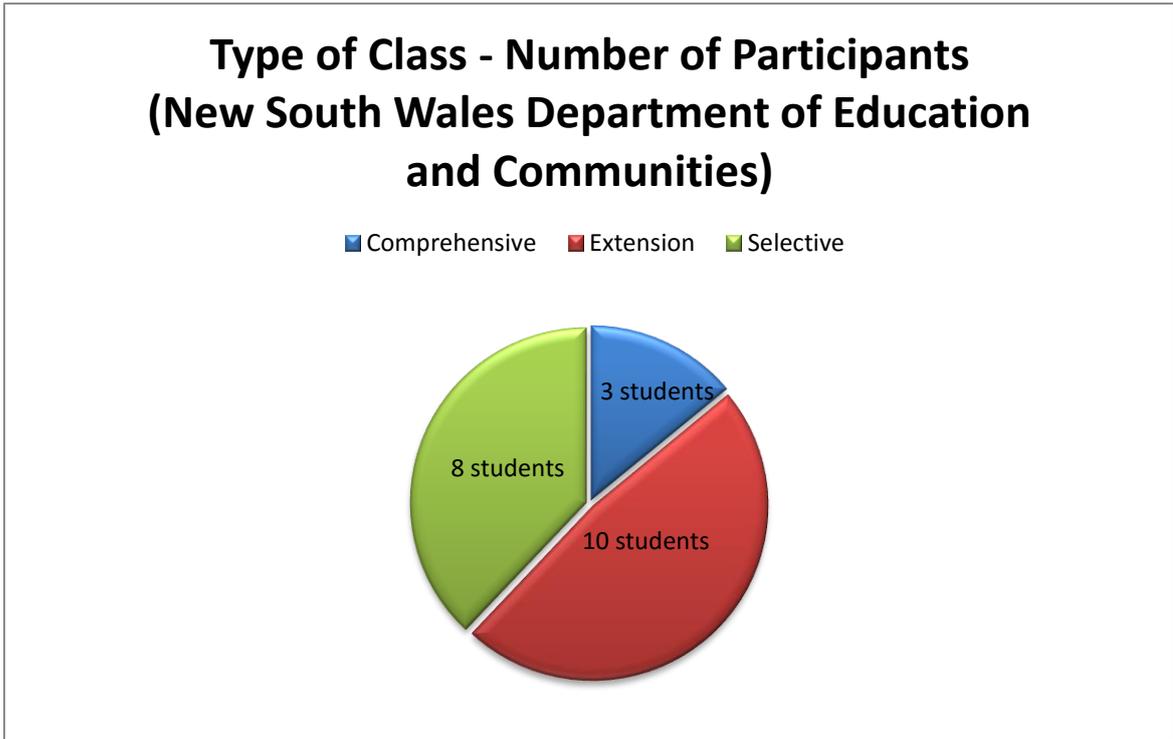
Figure 4.2. Number of participants by type of class.

There was a variation in age and gender in the sample interviewed, significantly in favour of girls, with twice as many girls as boys (14 girls, seven boys). Overall the mean age was 14.2 years (Figure 4.3), with the greatest group represented currently enrolled in Year 7 (Figure 4.4).

Age of Participants
(*n*=21)
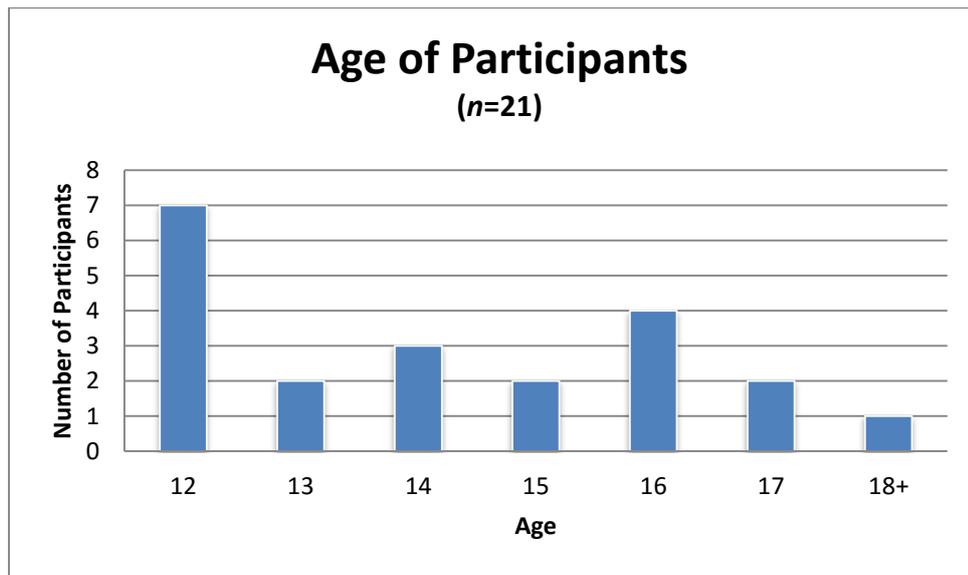
Figure 4.3. Age of student participants.

Participants by Year Level
(*n*=21)

Figure: Bar chart titled "Participants by Year Level (n=21)". Y-axis labelled "Number of Participants" ranging 0 to 10. X-axis labelled "Year Level" with categories Yr 7, Yr 8, Yr 9, Yr 10, Yr 11, Yr 12. Values: Yr 7 = 9, Yr 8 = 0, Yr 9 = 4, Yr 10 = 4, Yr 11 = 2, Yr 12 = 2.
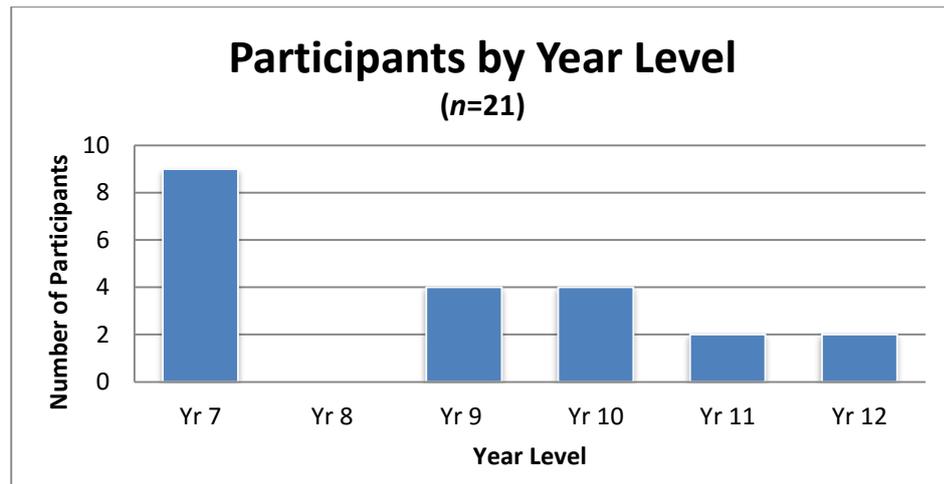
Figure 4.4. Student participants by year level.

Fourteen students had been in Australian schooling for five years or more, with only two students having only one year of schooling in Australia (Figure 4.5).

Length of Time in Australian Schooling

Figure: Bar chart titled "Length of Time in Australian Schooling". Y-axis labelled "Number of Participants" ranging 0 to 16. X-axis labelled "Years" with categories 1 year, 2 years, 3 years, 4 years, 5+ years. Values: 1 year = 2, 2 years = 1, 3 years = 3, 4 years = 1, 5+ years = 14.
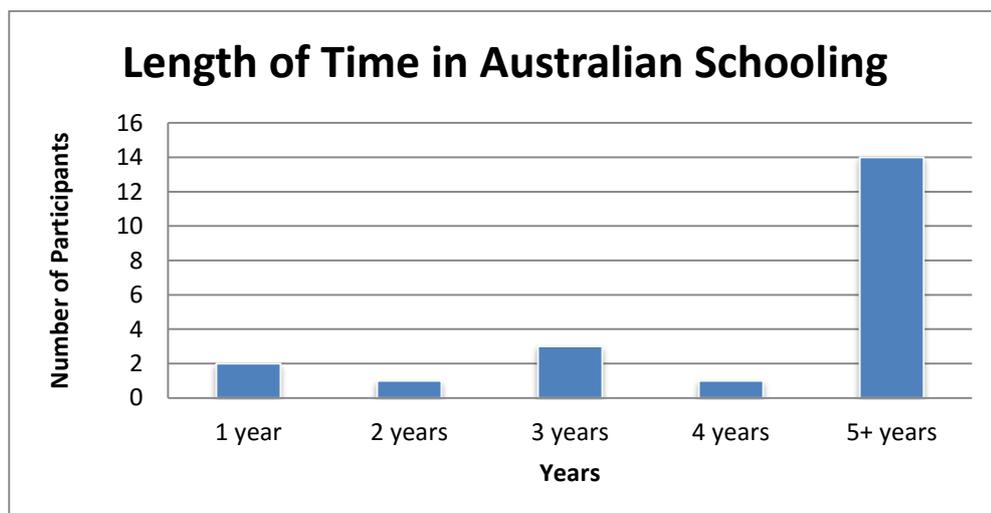
Figure 4.5. Length of time students had been in Australian schooling.

The measurement of the proficiency of the home language was limited to subjective descriptive comments from teachers and based on their professional understandings and experiences with these students. These comments ranged from "proficient" (regarding two students) through to "fluent" (regarding 19 students). Broader descriptors included comments such as "acts as interpreter for parents during parent–teacher interviews" (Sanjeev, Teacher, McMahon High School) to highlight the teacher's understanding of the student's home language

proficiency. Whilst these measures were overwhelmingly subjective, it was useful overall to have some understanding of the language background of the students in order to have a beginning basis for comparison. The evaluation of each student's proficiency in the home language was an activity beyond the scope of my inquiry and was not a necessary measure for the credibility of the findings, as even ELLs who are highly proficient in terms of their home language may still experience communicative difficulties when using English. Proficiency in English was reported with reference to ESL learner phases (Table 4.4).

In order for students to participate in my inquiry they needed to have been identified as gifted and/or talented (Figure 4.6) according to gifted and talented policy guidelines, which may include Selective High Schools' entry criteria. With eight students enrolled in selective classes (Figure 4.2) it was reported that students nominated from Minerva Girls High School and McMahon High School, as well as one student from Riverview Secondary College, had been identified using these procedures for entry. They consist of placement by order of merit determined by the combination of school assessments in English and Mathematics as well as the results from the *Selective High School Placement Test* and are limited by quotas. Decisions as to placement are then made by each school's selection committee (NSW DEC, Curriculum and Learning Innovation Centre, 2011). Entry to selective high schools in Years 8 to 12 does not depend upon a centralised program as entry into Year 7 does but rather is limited to individual applications to up to 4 selective high schools.

Colonial Girls High School was the only school involved that identified students for my inquiry based on its gifted and talented policies and it explained how it used data to add rigour to its identification procedures. With a specific focus on developing authoritative and cogent processes for identification and programs to support its gifted students, the school noted the use of Year 5 NAPLAN data, the administration of standardised testing using the Ravens Progressive Matrices, as well as interviews with previous teachers, and the undertaking of student surveys as tools to assist the placing of students in streamed gifted and talented classes, preferably before the commencement of the new school year.

The three participants from Dickens Boys High School were not reported as gifted and talented students referenced against departmental or school policy guidelines, but rather on more subjective and interpretive measures. Teachers used descriptors such as "motivated, ambitious, enjoys challenges" and "highly motivated, high ability levels" as well as "articulate, highly motivated" (Vanessa, ESL Teacher, Dickens Boys High School) as terminology to justify their inclusion in the sample. Deeper conversations with the staff at the school uncovered narrative

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│     Students participating in this inquiry    │
│                      21                        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Students identified as G&T according to     │
│       Selective High Schools' criteria        │
│                      8                         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Students identified as G&T according to     │
│        Departmental policy guidelines         │
│                      6                         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Students identified as G&T according to     │
│              ESL/LST referrals                 │
│                      6                         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│   Students identified as G&T according to     │
│    other academic standards (e.g., Dux of     │
│                    year)                       │
│                      1                         │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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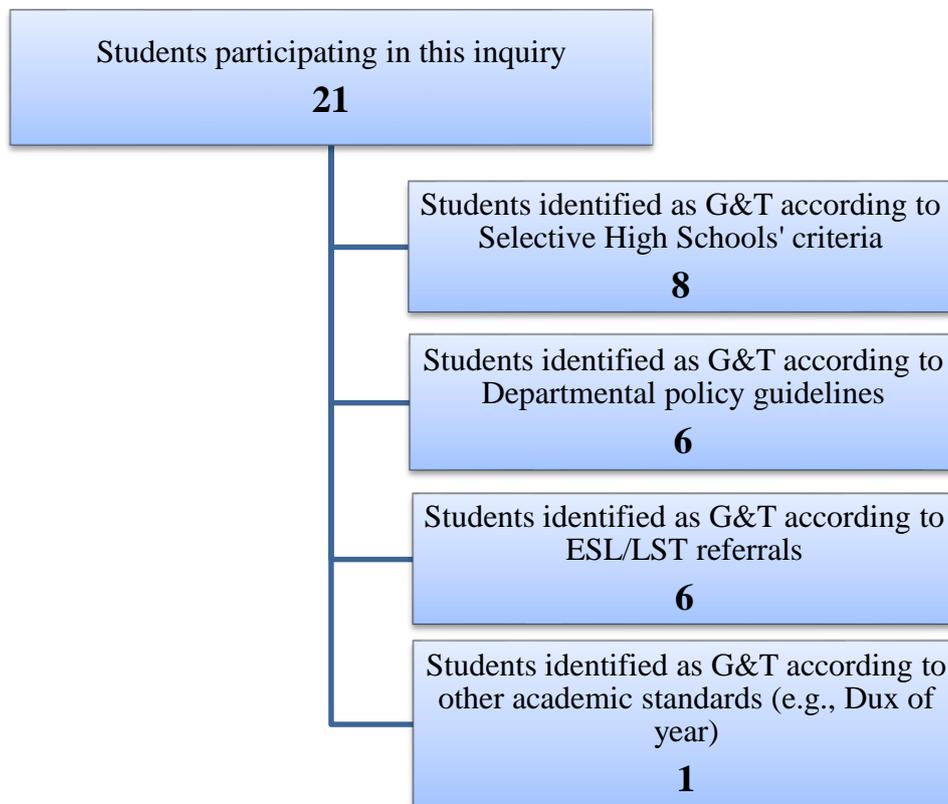
Figure 4.6. Identification of participants (students) as gifted and/or talented.

threads that not only called upon anecdotal evidence about the quality, ease, or speed of student learning but were also justified through teachers' professional judgments. Whilst this method of making judgments about student potential has come under criticism for its lack of rigour and consistency, it has been noted by Castellano (2002b) that the use of multiple-criteria assessment actually enhances the identification of gifted ELLs and that this method of teacher judgment is but one type of criteria recommended.

Similarly, the four Riverview Secondary College students not enrolled in selective classes but who participated in this study were described by staff using descriptive criteria that emphasised motivation for and ease of learning (both of English and through English) as revealed in narrative vignettes that also demonstrated a deep understanding not only of their potential but also of the impediments to their learning. In one case the narrative included why a particular student had been nominated for my inquiry after being named Dux of Year 11 (title given in Australia to the highest-ranking student, usually in a particular year of school). The selection and inclusion of the students from both these aforementioned schools as representative of gifted ELLs

was further supported by the testimony given by the students themselves as to their experiences, aspirations, interests, and acknowledgement of their own giftedness.

Pen Portraits of Students

As my inquiry has prioritised giving gifted ELLs a voice in their own educational journey it is appropriate to briefly describe aspects of each student's lived narrative in a way that is both validating and honouring of individual contributions. These pen portraits are also useful for placing students' comments in context. Overall, the students who participated in this research presented as willing participants, sharing their stories, challenges, aspirations, and hopes for the future. As noted, each student has been identified by either a self-selected pseudonym or by a culturally-appropriate pseudonym that also respects gender.

Yujia. This lively girl is currently attending Year 9 at Minerva Girls High School, a fully selective school to which she gained admission for the start of Year 7. She was born in China and migrated to Australia with her family when she was three years of age. She has been entirely schooled in Australia and at home speaks fluent Mandarin. She loves Drama and Music and might like to learn more languages when she finishes school in order to go travelling overseas, but not back to China because her parents say it is so strict. She says her teachers help her to find her strengths through different skills and she thinks her school is pretty nice. Her teachers describe her as having both academic and musical talents and as operating as an ESL learner at late phase three.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Yujia, Year 9, selective class, MGHS)*

Anna. This student is also studying in Year 9 at Minerva Girls High School. She was born in China and migrated to Australia at the age of nine. She initially felt isolated at her primary school, being the only Chinese girl in the entire grade. She recalls feeling depressed through school as she tried unsuccessfully to fit in with the Australian-born Chinese girls. With support from her father and extra coaching she was able to acquire sufficient English to sit the selective high school entrance exam and gain a place at Minerva Girls High School. She says she still has trouble with the "big words" in English as well as grammar. She nominates her teachers as the best helpers and notes that her parents want her to go to university, though she is as yet unsure of what to study. She says she would like to travel and is critical of the lifestyle in China. Anna has been nominated as being academically, musically, and artistically gifted and is operating in English at late phase three.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Anna, Year 9, selective class, MGHS)*

Amelia. The third student who has attended Minerva Girls High School since Year 7, Amelia is also currently in Year 9. Originally from Korea, she migrated to Australia when she was four or five. Amelia recalls deliberately choosing not to speak English until Year 3 despite tutoring throughout her schooling. Coming from an academic family she tends to downplay her musical and linguistic abilities (she plays the flute, violin, and piano; speaks English and Korean, and studies Japanese) and still attends tutoring so she can fulfil her parents' expectations of a successful university-based career. Amelia would prefer to travel before settling down to study Accountancy or Law. As a late phase three ESL learner she is still appreciative of her teachers' support, especially the written feedback she receives in English. She is considered to be academically, musically, and artistically gifted by her school.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Amelia, Year 9, selective class, MGHS)*

Hattie. A Korean-born student, Hattie came to Australia when she was ten years of age because of her parents' work. Proud of her Korean name she nevertheless uses an Anglicised name in order to fit in. Hattie completed three years of schooling in Australia before coming to Minerva Girls High School as a selective entry student, an achievement she credits to the help she received from her Korean-Australian friends. She thinks Mathematics and Science are her strengths and she also plays piano and flute. She finds solidarity with her Australian-Korean friends, particularly when referring to parental expectations, and loves the respectfulness of other people's cultures that she sees at her school. She describes the unfairness of having to study a curriculum designed for mainstream Australians and be examined without special consideration and still has trouble with English idioms and vocabulary. With tutoring support she receives from outside the school she thinks she might become a vet and realises anything can be achieved through personal effort.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Hattie, Year 9, selective class, MGHS)*

Sopheak. This Cambodian student migrated to Australia four years ago because of his father's research scholarship at a local university. Now in Year 11 at Dickens Boys High School, he spent eight months studying English in a nearby Intensive English Centre (IEC) where he says he learnt about multiculturalism. He acknowledges that even though learning comes easily to him he has learnt to be better at English by looking back at his mistakes and correcting them. Acknowledging that his people have been through many wars, he enjoys Art as an expressive and creative outlet for his understanding of these experiences. Operating as a phase two ESL learner,

he is described by his teachers as a highly motivated, ambitious, and articulate student who enjoys being challenged. He would like to be able to study more subjects such as History, but he can't take that subject at the moment. He credits his English proficiency to the dedication of his teachers and would like to keep his future options open, though being a doctor like his father is a first option.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Sopheak, Year 11, comprehensive class, DBHS)*

Nattapong. This nervous and humble Year 10 student has been in Australia for only a year. Originally from Burma, he studied basic English on Saturdays and Sundays in his home country before coming to Australia, where he spent two terms in an IEC before moving to Dickens Boys High School. With strengths in Computing and Science he credits his success to hours and hours of extra study at home. Whilst actively responding to teacher feedback regarding his work he wishes teachers would respond to his feedback by dealing more efficiently with disruptive classroom behaviour, which he believes impedes his learning. As a phase two ESL learner he appreciates teachers' efforts in helping him to become a doctor in the future, which is also his parents' wish.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Nattapong, Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS)*

Benjamin. He is a Kenyan-born boy of unknown age, perhaps 17, as it is believed that his step-family falsified his documents upon the death of his mother so he could travel to Australia unaccompanied to be reunited with his father. Because he lives in questionable circumstances with an uncle, the school takes an interest in discreetly providing him with sufficient tools for learning as well as basic meals and uniforms. In the two years since his arrival in Australia he has attended three different high schools and one TAFE (Technical and Further Education) institute, in most instances presenting himself to the office unaccompanied to announce his desire to learn. Currently a phase two ESL learner at Dickens Boys High School, he credits his development of English to good teachers who are always willing to help and who are supportive of his emotional states. Whilst his teachers recognise him to be a highly motivated young man with high ability levels in Mathematics and Science he is interested in a career in Public Health. He feels that when he goes to school his worries are left behind.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Benjamin, Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS)*

Nina. This young man's father is also in Australia on a scholarship to undertake a doctorate in Economics and the family has only been in Australia for a year. A top student in Indonesia, as a 16-year-old he acknowledges the change of peer groups to be a bigger hurdle than

learning through English at Riverview Secondary College. With an interest in studying either Business or Psychology, he credits the English he learnt in Indonesia as helping him to deal with the change. Currently identified as a phase three ESL learner, he accords much value to the written feedback his teachers provide on his assignments and appreciates their commitment to explaining things as many times as it takes for him to understand them.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Nina, Year 10, extension class, RSC)*

Harold. Of all the students interviewed, 16-year-old Chinese-born Harold expressed the most confusion about his cultural identity, labelling himself as "not full Australian, not full Chinese". Following in his engineer father's footsteps by migrating to Australia with his mother nearly four years ago, he attended an IEC for three terms until relocating to Riverview Secondary College. Feeling initially culturally and socially isolated, he immersed himself in his mathematical abilities and surrounded himself with only Chinese friends. Now that he can better understand the effects of the English support that he has received from teachers he feels he can communicate better to a wider circle of peers. He intends to become an engineer and return to China, though he is also toying with the idea of being able to work in Australia. Harold is a phase three ESL learner.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Harold, Year 10, extension class, RSC)*

Hussein. This young man from an Iranian background is completing Year 11. Arriving in Australia with limited English and in time to do a term's study in Year 8, he was placed in an IEC where he felt his teacher recognised his gifts and worked hard to push him "to limits". Beginning Year 9 at Riverview Secondary College, he now admits to a degree of arrogance in not accepting the help of the ESL teacher at the time, something he corrected in Year 10 and now acknowledges as being a big boost to his English skills. Academically gifted in the areas of Maths and Science and operating as a phase three ESL learner he sees the HSC as simply permission to go to university, where he intends to follow in his two sisters' footsteps and study Biomedicine or Medical Science. Hussein has deep insights into what motivates him to learn and capitalises on different teachers' teaching styles to get the most out of his classes. He accesses diverse resources both in and out of school and has an extremely positive outlook on life.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC)*

Edgar. As one of the two Year 12 students interviewed for my inquiry, 18-year-old Edgar is preparing himself for final exams. After migrating to Australia from China only three years ago and speaking only Mandarin until then, he attended an IEC for only one term before beginning at

Riverview Secondary College in the last term of Year 9. By the end of Year 11 he had become Dux after what he concedes to have been a "miserable" Year 10, an achievement he notes came about because of his own commitment to overcoming learning obstacles through personal effort. Academically gifted in Social Science, Maths, and Physics, his intention is to become an investment banker after university study. He notes that the greatest help has come from his teachers whom he describes as being generous with their time and committed to student learning as well as providing many excellent resources for learning. He also credits the school with having a good atmosphere that is supportive of and focused on studying. He is operating as a phase three ESL learner.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Edgar, Year 12, extension class, RSC)*

Stella. The second of two Year 12 students participating in my inquiry, Stella is the only student interviewed at Riverview Secondary College from the selective class. Originally from India, she speaks Telugu and Hindi and was able to acquire English at an early age after moving to Australia via New Zealand as a small child. Though she was accepted into the selective program at Riverview Secondary College in Year 7, in Year 10 she got an offer to transfer to another selective high school that she describes as "better academically", an offer that she trialled for a few days and ultimately rejected in favour of continuing at Riverview Secondary College. Highly articulate, she has enjoyed participating in the extra-curricular aspect of school life, involving herself in World Vision, High Resolves (which aims to motivate students to see themselves as purposeful global citizens with the mindsets and skills they will need to lead their communities and the world to a brighter future), and debating among other activities, whilst continuing to maintain high academic standards. She credits both her love of reading and the great connections with teachers that she has forged over the years as the greatest influences on her success at school and in learning English. She plans to enrol in Medicine at university and then perhaps take a gap year to go volunteering in Africa or India. Family ties are strong and parental expectations are high but she still makes time to honour her culture, enjoy the school's broad extra-curricular offerings, and study hard.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Stella, Year 12, selective class, RSC)*

Lucida. This Year 7 student is currently operating as a phase three ESL learner in a selective class at McMahon High School. Born in Cambodia, she has spent all her school life in Australia. Good at French, Japanese, and English, she wants to make her family happy by

becoming a doctor and opening up a practice in a multicultural area. She credits her success to good teachers who are happy to explain things over and over again.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Lucida, Year 7, selective class, MHS)*

Cahn. His mother came to Australia as a child from Vietnam as a *boat person*, an experience about which he has heard stories. Born in Australia, Cahn speaks Vietnamese at home with his mum and step-dad and English at school. He has attended five primary schools and is now in a Year 7 selective class at McMahon High School as a phase three ESL learner. Highly competent in Maths and Sport, he credits his weaker marks in English to his lack of commitment to reading, preferring to play sport. As long as he stays away from "the bad people" and works harder to separate work and play he knows he will make his mum happy by becoming a doctor or the manager of a hospital. He thinks the selective classes get work that is not too easy and therefore a little more challenging, and definitely fun.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Cahn, Year 7, selective class, MHS)*

Qiao. Though her family comes from China, this Year 7 student interviewed at McMahon High School has been speaking English since she could talk and is currently operating as a phase three ESL learner. The only student to speak about competition in the academic arena, she finds that competing against other students from selective classes gives her that extra motivation to try harder at school. She found the selective entry test easy and did no extra study and received no tutoring support. She wants to become a vet when she finishes school and has a thorough understanding of the trajectory she needs to take to achieve this goal. Parental expectations are that she keeps her grades in the top 10% of her cohort, and she acknowledges the assistance of her teachers in helping her to remain there.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Qiao, Year 7, selective class, MHS)*

Ferista. Born in Iran, Ferista moved to Australia six years ago after living in Pakistan for a time. Speaking both English and Persian at home, she credits her English skills to the way the teachers make learning fun at Colonial Girls High School. A good all-rounder, excelling at Maths and Science as acknowledged by her teachers, this phase three ESL learner is aware that she needs these subjects so she can become a doctor after she finishes school. Currently in Year 7, she enjoys the many extra-curricular activities on offer and particularly loves hands-on science experiments.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Ferista, Year 7, extension class, CGHS)*

Lanika. As a Year 7 student at Colonial Girls High School, Lanika was originally from India but came to Australia via New Zealand when she was just over six years old. Excelling in English and Mathematics, she acknowledges being a good writer who still makes grammatical errors and appreciates teacher input into helping her correct them. Knowing that she wants to become an avian vet she wants to do well in Biology and Maths. As a phase three ESL learner she appreciates that teachers use a variety of strategies to help her to learn.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Lanika, Year 7, extension class, CGHS)*

Milinka. The shyest of all the students who participated in my inquiry, Milinka was born in Australia to Serbian parents. She grew up with little contact outside her Serbian community until entering school where she received ESL support to learn English. Now operating as a phase three ESL learner in Year 7 at Colonial Girls High School, she excels at English and Geography according to her teachers, whilst Milinka adds Dance to the list. She finds her teachers to be very helpful, always looking to find easier ways for students to learn. She is not sure about her future plans but she says she might like to become a teacher one day.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Milinka, Year 7, extension class, CGHS)*

Chalnaa. The most articulate of the students interviewed at Colonial Girls High School, Indian-born Chalnaa has been in Australia since she was five years old. Fluent in both Gujarati and Punjabi, she says English came easily to her once she started school, especially with the support of a tutor whom she accessed from Year 3 onwards. Excelling in Maths and Science, this phase three ESL learner has a natural love of learning and consumes the contents of her school textbooks simply because they are at her disposal. Rejecting the use of computers for social networking she prefers to spend her after-school time recapping the day's work and studying further. She believes this is how she will get into a university to study Astronomy and has set her sights on studying at Oxford University. A general love of school, learning, and her teachers is evident in many of Chalnaa's statements.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Chalnaa, Year 7, extension class, CGHS)*

Lily. A Year 7 student at Colonial Girls High School, Lily came to Australia from China when she was three years old. She found learning English difficult in Kindergarten and lacked self-confidence in communicating with her peers. Now as a phase three ESL learner she finds that school is not as hard and she has found her niche in Mathematics, where her teachers are very supportive and encouraging. With plans to become an Accountant she knows that with the support of her school and her parents she will succeed in her dreams.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Lily, Year 7, extension class, CGHS)*

Victoria. Coming from an Indian family Victoria speaks Malayalam at home but was born in Dubai where she was schooled in English until coming to Australia when she was five or six years old. Now in Year 7 at Colonial Girls High School she has found all her teachers to be very helpful, and appreciates after-school support and homework assistance. She excels in Geography and English and also enjoys Maths. She believes in advocating for her own learning needs, even when she can't get the intended message across to her teachers clearly enough. Interested in a teaching career, she notes her mother's inability to become a doctor in her youth owing to lack of educational opportunities as an influence for doing so herself, and would like to combine Medicine and Teaching. A phase three ESL learner, she intends to make the most of all the educational opportunities that are put before her.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Victoria, Year 7, extension class, CGHS)*

Pen Portraits of Teachers and Administrators

Teachers and administrators shared rich insights into the workings of their schools in providing for the needs of their students and were enthusiastic spokespersons on behalf of gifted ELLs. They also came from diverse backgrounds and shared insightful narratives into the profession and their vision as to how their knowledge and experiences might translate into support for gifted ELLs.

Marcus. As Deputy Principal of Minerva Girls High School, Marcus was the only staff member interviewed from this selective high school. Marcus has had extensive experience in managing students from non-English-speaking backgrounds across three previous schools and many years of teaching, being responsible for the supervision of ESL teachers in his previous roles as Deputy Principal and Head Teacher of English as well as teaching the ESL syllabus.

As a result of changing formulas for allocation of funds to first, second, and third phase ESL learners the school has recently lost its ESL funding from the State Government. This situation has not stopped Marcus in acknowledging the need for continued ESL support for students at his school despite their strong academic achievements, and he has over the past two years gained funding from the school's Parents and Citizens organisation to employ a part-time staff member to follow through on any ESL-type issues as they emerge.

Marcus's greatest concern is that though students at his school consistently demonstrate high academic achievement in many areas, he believes many are significantly underachieving

because of certain limitations in their language functioning. He is critical of the State Government's funding model that is purely aimed at students reaching a satisfactory level of functioning as opposed to reaching the level where they are fully functioning and fully able to exploit their potential as gifted and talented students.

Marcus is a great advocate of continuing professional learning for teachers at all stages of their professional career. He feels teachers in selective schools address different needs from those in comprehensive schools and should be supported in their endeavours to do so competently.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Marcus, Deputy Principal, MGHS)*

Robert. As the relieving Highly Accomplished Teacher at Colonial Girls High School his substantive position is that of Head Teacher Teaching and Learning. In his fifth year of teaching he has already completed a Master of Educational Leadership degree with a focus on gifted and talented students. His brief is varied: responsibility for exploring professional learning opportunities for staff, developing whole-school programs to enhance student learning outcomes, data analysis to inform student learning, and enhancing the use of technology. Professional learning has become a staff-driven priority that he is working hard to meet.

Robert acknowledges that the school attracts enrolments from out of area based on its reputation as a centre for learning with few behavioural concerns, and on how it caters for a broad range of needs. A recognition that the needs of gifted and talented students were not being adequately met in mainstream classrooms by teachers with varying understandings of differentiation led to a decision in the previous year that one of the Year 7 classes would be streamed. Robert was responsible for developing an evidence-based process for the identification of students who would be invited into that class. The process was supported by the collection of data from varying sources such as NAPLAN results, Raven's Progressive Matrices testing, and professional conversations with teachers from more than 40 primary feeder schools.

Robert is excited to have the opportunity to explore, trial, and implement a variety of programs to assist gifted students. He has been reflective with regards to streaming and acceleration and is hopeful of continuing to develop processes and practices that cater for the needs of gifted students from Years 8 to 10. He sees that giving students a voice in the decision-making process is a natural progression.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Robert, Head Teacher, CGHS)*

Mariella. With many years' experience as an ESL teacher, Mariella has spent half of her teaching life working in IECs and now works at Colonial Girls High School. She has noted

through her teaching experience that not all gifted ELLs progress quickly; some have to deal with challenges beyond their control such as having to adapt to new learning styles, whilst others "just grab the ball and run with it". She attends not only to the needs of gifted ELLs to acquire new vocabulary but also allows them the opportunity to engage in lateral thinking, to develop their creativity, and to express themselves in different ways.

In her classes she encourages gifted ELLs to express their ideas, hone their skills, and therefore gain confidence. She notes that she often sees those who have the opportunity to participate in gifted programs using this time to soar in order to overcome the stigma that "if they can't speak English then they're dumb". Some students have aimed high and elected to study the Advanced English course even though they qualify for the ESL course.

Ultimately Mariella would like the school to be able to better meet the needs of gifted ELLs who are not achieving to their full potential by exploring and trialling different teaching and learning styles to find out how to engage these students more authentically.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Mariella, ESL Teacher, CGHS)*

Margaret. Dickens Boys High School is Margaret's ninth school; she has taught and led in a wide array of schools ranging from country schools through to technology high schools and single-sex schools. In her current role as Principal, Margaret likes working with boys and describes it as a privilege to walk alongside them as they go through interesting and dynamic times in their lives. She is passionate about unleashing the potential that is within every student and finds the boys at her school very aspirational, despite the disadvantaged backgrounds of many of them. She includes in this category a group of former child soldiers from central Africa who have recently enrolled at her school.

With close to 90% of the school population coming from non-English-speaking backgrounds, Margaret is unceasing in her search for programs and support from all areas of the community with a view to giving all her students the broadest experiences and challenges possible. From creating links with a local surf lifesaving club to reaching out to metropolitan universities, Margaret is determined that the boys gain a broader understanding of the community in which they live.

Accessing academic partners from a local university is one method that Margaret insists upon in order to collect data about her students' learning. With a view to identifying students' needs through focus groups with different year levels, as well as getting staff to reflect on their own practice by listening to their students, she thinks the efforts from the data-collection process

will keep them all accountable, and has seen the benefits of its being in place over the last four years. Margaret tells inspirational stories about individual boys' journeys and is filled with hope and determination that they will succeed.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Margaret, Principal, DBHS)*

Vanessa. As Deputy Principal at Dickens Boys High School, Vanessa has seen many changes to the school over the last 20 years since she was initially employed as a Visual Arts teacher. She is particularly grateful to have seen such major progress as improved classroom management, better structure in the welfare system, and a belief that learning can happen no matter what the students' socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

Catering for gifted ELLs to Vanessa means giving them rich tasks and engaging them in project-based learning, expanding the classroom task so that the student can gain a deeper understanding of the topic, not just more of the same. From her time as a former Visual Arts teacher she recounts examples of students who have been captivated by the ability of the Arts to foster visions of different possibilities. Through encouraging students to connect with the two arms of their culture, that of the traditional homeland as well as their culture in Australia, she sees her role as that of facilitator in that arena.

Following on from Margaret's pursuit of community outreach, Vanessa recounts examples of students who have been given opportunities to engage with professionals in the community such as architects, advertising firms, movie makers, and model-makers who have mentored students with their creative development. She recounts as one of her proudest moments the return of a former art student some years later as a professional in his field to workshop some artistic techniques with the students.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Vanessa, Deputy Principal, DBHS)*

Caroline. A principal with many years' experience in a variety of settings, Caroline has worked in inner-city schools, schools with high Indigenous populations, and high-achieving schools. After receiving a Master of Business Administration degree she undertook lecturing in the field at an Australian university, and notes wryly that this degree will definitely hold her in good stead as she negotiates the current changes in the education system in New South Wales (where more responsibility, including financial responsibility, has been devolved to schools under the *Local schools, local decisions* initiative). Now Principal at Riverview Secondary College, Caroline believes strongly in education as a key investment in students' lives.

Caroline describes her school as being "almost truly comprehensive", with three comprehensive classes, two selective classes, and a gifted and talented class in every year level, as well as a support unit in the school with three classes. She credits this mix as creating a level of humility and a generosity of spirit across the whole student body. Caroline also makes reference to the architectural layout of the school as influencing the nature of its culture: the school's many courtyards provide spaces for each year level to meet on a daily basis, enabling the creation of a culture of commonality.

Caroline considers the teacher professional learning program to be a core element of the school, and training every teacher in the GERRIC program when the school became partially selective (and keeping staff updated as new pedagogies emerge) has become a priority, as she sees differentiation as being the key take-home message. Caroline narrates numerous examples of how the school is working to provide opportunities for gifted students, not only ELLs (around 80% of the students are from non-English speaking backgrounds) but also twice-exceptional students (who have a combination of high intelligence and a learning difficulty). Various strategies are used, both in-class and through the provision of a broad range (over 90) of extra-curricular activities.

The development of community partnerships has enhanced the learning opportunities for students through numerous engagements with chances to showcase their talents. Academically, Caroline is also well aware of the strengths and weaknesses of gifted ELLs, and has supported several initiatives including funding an e-author to encourage gifted girls from non-English speaking backgrounds to develop extended writing pieces. Caroline also advises parents to get behind their children's acquisition of English by encouraging them to engage with more sophisticated forms of language in their everyday world such as watching news programs on the ABC and SBS television networks.

A believer in giving students a voice in all their engagements at school, Caroline describes multiple strategies whereby student decision-making has influenced outcomes in all areas of schooling. Concerned about the impact of the State Government's *Local schools, local decisions* initiative on the future of the school, Caroline still believes in bringing all the pieces of the puzzle together, namely family, community, and school, with the purpose of creating great citizens who will go out and do good things for their communities.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Caroline, Principal, RSC)*

Jill. A staff member of Riverview Secondary College for the past 30 years and originally employed as a Remedial Reading Teacher, Jill has been supporting ESL students for the past 15 years. She describes her role as that of welcoming new students, liaising with the IECs in the area, developing programs, and implementing support structures. Her key priorities are to encourage the students to be independent learners, assist them to extend their vocabulary, and support them to develop their writing skills in their own time.

Jill describes the gifted ELLs as keen learners, who will often seek her out for proof-reading and vocabulary support across all the subject areas they undertake. Reiterating their commitment to their own learning, Jill lists among their characteristics descriptors such as "cooperative in sharing their knowledge", "willing to try out their English on anyone who will listen", "divorcing themselves from students from their own backgrounds to an extent", and "involved in volunteering".

Jill describes certain extra-curricular activities that gifted ELLs tend to gravitate towards, some because of their other talents such as musicianship, and others to help them develop their language skills such as High Resolves, Duke of Edinburgh Scheme, and debating, many choosing the opportunity to immerse themselves in English.

Giving gifted ELLs a voice for Jill means never turning away a request, whether it be for the review of an in-school assessment piece or assistance with filling out Austudy or driver's licence forms. This additional support arises from Jill's sense of awe and respect for her students gained from her knowledge of some of the difficulties they have had to face, including her refugee students. Concerned that insufficient government funding is in part letting gifted ELLs down she hopes to continue to find more creative ways to help these students unleash their potential.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC)*

Sanjeev. Having only recently completed a Master of Teaching degree, Sanjeev is in his first year as a Humanities teacher at McMahon High School. He teaches Geography to the four Year 7 classes, including one selective class. He notes that the linguistic versatility of ELLs, as exemplified by parents' reliance on their translating skills on parent–teacher interview nights, has challenged his initial assumptions about these students and given him a greater insight into their personal lives.

Sanjeev cites his work with the selective class, where he estimates 27 out of 30 students are from non-English-speaking backgrounds, as being different from the other classes even though he is covering similar content. He describes his role with these students as being more that

of a facilitator, assisting students to direct their own learning, and encouraging them to always question assumptions and express their own opinions. He acknowledges his students' preferences for working individually, and strives to create communities of learners by providing for them a purpose for engagement in cooperative learning. A passionate and enthusiastic beginning teacher, rather than having to deal with administrative tasks he wishes he could spend more time with his class, continuing to facilitate deep conversations and prompting the students to explore other options.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Sanjeev, Teacher, MHS)*

Doreen. A born story-teller, Doreen recounts numerous experiences from an entire lifetime (over 40 years) dedicated to teaching. As the relieving Deputy Principal of McMahon High School she has had 20 years in the role of Deputy, working in schools in the rural–urban fringe of south-western Sydney. She has come across innumerable students and shared in their stories and experiences and is still committed to providing the best possible outcomes for all her students.

She recounts her first experiences of working with gifted students from non-English-speaking backgrounds when leading a then recently opened school, where she describes "survival" as being the modus operandi at the time. She believes in training students to realise their full potential through scaffolding, the creation of opportunities for them, and giving them long-term projects to work towards. She also sees major benefits from encouraging students to work as a team. She believes in feeding up, not dumbing down, the curriculum and of giving great teachers the freedom to drive programs further. All staff members at her school have been trained through the GERRIC program and she believes this has given them the inspiration to push the limits not only with regards to expectations from students but also from themselves.

By connecting with local primary schools in the area through Literacy and Art endeavours she hopes to inspire students to choose McMahon High School's selective option first over other selective schools with more established reputations. These Art and Literacy programs continue on through the high school years, looking to meet the needs of gifted ELLs through authentic encounters with authors and artists, as well as publications and displays of students' works. The Science Fiction Writing Club in particular has attracted a high proportion of gifted boys from non-English speaking backgrounds to produce high-quality pieces shared through a variety of media including internet blogs and podcasts. The school also has a strong Physical Education program, with many of its high-achieving former students undertaking tertiary studies in the field.

Doreen notes that some very high-achieving gifted ELLs have experienced emotional turmoil when their academic results have been compared with those of native English speakers' results, usually highlighting poorer grades in English-based subjects. Drawing on the assistance of experienced ESL teachers and with the cooperation of the local ESL consultant she has been able to put in place point-of-need strategies to support these students. She is also concerned about the lack of student voice being heard owing to compliance with parental expectations in areas as diverse as subject or career choices and thinks this is akin to a "psychological time bomb", so she has sought to bring in a local psychiatrist to speak to parents on the matter. Funding for this and other projects continues to be problematic and she notes that the school is constantly being made more and more responsible for addressing wider students' needs.

Ultimately, she thinks gifted ELLs at McMahon High School are likely to be more balanced in their approach to life when they graduate, with the school's offerings promoting a focus on more than just achieving high grades.

In-text reference used henceforth: *(Doreen, Deputy Principal, MHS)*

The descriptions of the people who participated in my inquiry, presented here as pen portraits, claim an important place in the overall findings. First, the summaries of backgrounds, histories, thoughts, and aspirations with relation to the context of my inquiry and bounded by it serve to present the participants as fully actualised individuals, not simply subjects in an inquiry. Second, the pen portraits that I created were achieved through information gathered from the building of trust relationships with the participants, seen as humanisation through the act of research. Paris (2011) has suggested that humanising research is a stance that requires "that our inquiries involve dialogic consciousness-raising and the building of relationships of dignity and care for both researchers and participants" (p. 137). This humanisation also has the potential to increase the validity of the research through the search for understanding across ethnic and linguistic differences (Paris, 2011).

Pen Portraits of Schools

Rousseau and Fried (2001) have noted the importance of contextualisation in research in order to enhance understanding. They have stated that contextualising by "linking observations to a set of relevant facts, events, or points of view… that form part of a larger whole" (p. 1) has the potential to deliver a more robust interpretation of results. By considering the nature of the settings involved, in this case the schools where the participants interact, theoretically interesting

patterns may then emerge. In my inquiry contextualisation involved considering five different schools as described through their annual school reports, with documentary analysis of the reports leading to the following pen portraits for each school.

Dickens Boys High School. This school was established in 1918 in the metropolitan region of Sydney and boasts among its most distinguished past students many notable Australians, particularly in the fields of public service, academia, sport, the Arts, Law, and Medicine. Formally a selective high school, Dickens Boys High School now caters to the needs of all learners in Years 7 to 12 within an inclusive framework. Many of its recent programs have received wide acclaim and awards particularly with regards to the exceptional quality and outstanding achievements of its student welfare program and harmonious endeavours in race relations. The school has also formed many partnerships with a wide range of industries within the local and wider community, including law firms, investment banks, universities, the wider financial sector, construction industry leaders, authors, artists, social workers, youth workers, and police.

In 2010 the school had 44 teaching staff and an enrolment of 494 students of whom 87% were from language backgrounds other than English. In order to support its multicultural student body the school employs Arabic, Pacific Islander, Chinese, and African Community Liaison Officers (CLOs). The school acknowledges that its diversity is a key strength as it works closely with its parent community to facilitate the academic, cultural, and physical development of its students in a safe and harmonious environment.

The foundations of the school's gifted and talented program rest on the school-wide belief that students who display special gifts and talents should benefit from opportunities to explore and develop these further. To this end, classroom differentiation is prioritised to ensure students encounter a rich and challenging curriculum that is intellectually rigorous, with high expectations set. Higher-order thinking skills are promoted through the exploration and manipulation of ideas in different extension programs delivered in the form of multi-discipline units. Other extra-curricular activities such as debating, chess, leadership and mentoring, knock-out sporting competitions, the art studio, and homework centre are also promoted.

This report narrates the story of a school that strives to work hard, in spite of being hampered by the challenges of socio-economic disadvantage, to meet the needs of all its students, to encourage harmony and tolerance in a broad multicultural community, and to provide mentoring and other opportunities to its gifted and talented students, including ELLs. Whilst acknowledging its limitations and shortcomings the school does not shy away from prioritising

the engagement of students, encouraging individual responsibility and autonomy, and seeking and strengthening partnerships with community agencies to seek better outcomes for its students.

Colonial Girls High School. A large metropolitan girls' high school, it is situated on one of the earliest parcels of land granted in Australia to European settlers. The school was established in 1934 and now boasts over 1000 students in Years 7 to 12, of whom 65% are out-of-area enrolments. In 2010 89% of its students came from language backgrounds other than English. This diversity is celebrated through not only a range of whole-school celebrations and events but also through the school's core values that incorporate respect, diversity, and excellence.

The school describes its purpose as that of encouraging young women to achieve their personal best, empowering them with the necessary skills for successful citizenship in an ever-changing world. The school has been declared a *Centre for Excellence* as part of the Smarter Schools National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality, highlighting an exceptional standard of teaching that has contributed to its student outcomes being among the highest in the state.

Among its non-English speaking background population the school acknowledges speakers of Arabic, Cantonese, Hindu, Tamil, Farsi, and Dari as its largest community languages groups. Students receive ESL assistance in the key learning areas of History, Geography, Science, and English both in the classroom and in the design and implementation of teaching and learning programs.

With a focus on advancing the life and leadership skills of students through a variety of school initiatives, outstanding achievements across multiple areas have been attained by encouraging participation and striving for excellence. Data garnered from a review of these programs and initiatives have led to enhanced provisions for students and greater teacher understanding of strategies and practices. These provisions include identification strategies for gifted and talented students, a program implemented in 2012.

Colonial Girls High School's annual report for 2010 narrates a story of success, achievement, and recognition on a school-wide level. It is tempered by a vision that all its students should not only grow personally but should also have a positive influence on the growth of others. As a *Centre of Excellence* the school has been declared a leader in its community, with the vision that students leave the school having made significant improvement in academic areas well above state averages. These aspirations and achievements bode well for gifted ELLs; gifted students are mentioned as being supported in Science endeavours through interactions with universities, and opportunities are sought where they can showcase their talents in various ways.

McMahon High School. McMahon High School is a co-educational comprehensive school that was founded in 1984 and became a partially selective high school in 2010. With an enrolment of 923 students, 74% of them from language backgrounds other than English, the school prides itself on fostering the development of healthy and positive attitudes towards people from all cultural groups. The multicultural diversity of staff and students, representing around 50 different cultural groups, is acknowledged, accepted, and celebrated through a variety of school and community events and activities.

Students at McMahon High School are encouraged to focus on achieving their personal best, taking responsibility for their own learning, and engaging in wide-ranging experiences and opportunities. These encouragements occur within the diverse curriculum on offer that includes both Higher School Certificate (HSC) extension courses as well as a wide range of Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses. The school's aim is to enable students to develop as productive, effective, and valued community members.

To cater to the needs of gifted and talented students, two fully selective classes were established in 2010 for Year 7 students, with two additional selective classes to be added in each of the next five years. This strategy intends to consolidate the school's overall four-year improvement trend in the excellent achievement levels of many students in both the School Certificate and HSC, with a significant proportion of students achieving results in the top 10 to 20% across the state. Students are offered a range of leadership and extra-curricular enrichment programs in areas such as public speaking, debating, music and dance performance, visual arts, and sport, with an ever-increasing number of students excelling at regional, state, and national levels.

The school also acknowledges a strong focus on student welfare and well-being, with the recent employment of five additional learning support and three community liaison/engagement staff to support programs. Other initiatives, involving the establishment of literacy and numeracy support links with local partner primary schools and the continuation of other joint educational development programs with these schools, continue to assist the forging of community links.

As the school with the lowest ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage) in my inquiry, McMahon High School's report highlights a school that places its students' learning at the centre of all that it does, despite economic, social, geographical, or other disadvantages. These disadvantages have not deterred the school from providing numerous opportunities for its students to strive for success and to be celebrated in this endeavour. A

particular hallmark of the school has been the overwhelming number of awards given to its students based on aspects of outstanding contributions to, a positive attitude towards, and commitment to the ideals of their chosen field/area, rather than only for high achievement. This approach fits in with one of the key 2010 targets that merits special attention: that of encouraging students to "value their own education and take greater responsibility for their own learning as [the school] continue[s] to build a strong culture of recognition and celebration of student achievement" (McMahon High School, 2010, p. 17).

Riverview Secondary College. This partially selective comprehensive co-educational high school enrols students from diverse cultural backgrounds and with a wide range of abilities who work together to achieve their academic, creative, physical, and social potentials. Each individual is valued and is provided with an array of learning opportunities within a caring and supportive environment, with a strong focus on respect, cooperation, responsibility, and leadership. The current enrolment is 970 students with 67% of students from non-English speaking backgrounds and over 40 nationalities represented.

The College offers a broad and engaging curriculum with a strong focus on multicultural perspectives that is seen as one of the College's greatest strengths. These multicultural perspectives are celebrated through their explicit emphasis in subject areas such as English, Human Society and Its Environment, Languages Other Than English, and Creative and Performing Arts. The College's involvement in the High Resolves Global Leadership Program also works to promote harmony and understanding.

In 2002 the first Year 7 cohort of academically selected students was established, with two classes at each year level now in place. There is also a gifted and talented (non-selective) class in each of the junior years, with outstanding results achieved by students in both selective and non-selective groups.

There is a strong focus across the College on literacy development to enable all students to learn, especially those from non-English speaking backgrounds. The EAL/D support in the College is therefore provided via individual as well as small-group assistance, both within the classroom and with coursework across the curriculum.

The cultural diversity of the school is recognised and celebrated as exemplified through the numerous community links forged with various multicultural and Indigenous community groups as well as through the programs and practices that address the education and welfare needs of its diverse population. This focus has significantly contributed to the creation of a harmonious

culture and tone to the school as well as the building of respectful relationships between members of the school community.

Riverview Secondary College presents as a broadly comprehensive school, looking to consider the best of what it has to offer all its students and to celebrate its strengths. It allows for its achievements and offerings to speak for themselves, with its students as its best ambassadors within the community in which it serves. Success is lauded alongside participation and effort, and this continues to be a characteristic that attracts new students each year.

Minerva Girls High School. This academically selective school, founded in 1930, is situated in the central part of a northern Sydney suburb. It has an outstanding reputation for excellent academic achievement and was ranked in the top tier of achieving schools in the state in 2010, with girls placed first in the state in three subjects and 25 students gaining an Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR) of 99+. Emphasis is placed upon the development of young women who strive not only for excellence in academic pursuits but who also utilise the opportunity to participate in over 180 co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities in order to develop into well-rounded, articulate, and informed citizens prepared to be leaders and active participants of society in the future. Some of these achievements include participation of over 55% of the eligible school population in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, winning awards in robotics competitions both in Australia and the United States, winning medals in the national aerobics championships, as well as numerous achievements by choral groups, dance groups, debating teams, instrumental ensemble groups, chess teams, and partnerships forged with organisations such as Oxfam.

The school is very proud of its cohesive and harmonious spirit, a key feature reflected in the outstanding intercultural understandings and cooperation among all of its students. Students from 48 different cultural backgrounds and from a wide distribution of Sydney suburbs represent a broad range of socio-economic backgrounds.

Because of its academically selective nature the school acknowledges that its role is to create opportunities for students to achieve their maximum potential in an environment where each person's individual gifts and talents are identified, valued, and given the opportunity to develop. These opportunities are provided through enriching learning environments designed to foster autonomous decision-making, promote independent lifelong learning skills, and engender self-confidence. In particular, the school's English faculty operates under a gifted and talented policy that influences the teaching and learning programs across the school, as evidenced in the

Advanced and Extension English courses that are offered in Years 11 and 12 as well as in other curriculum areas. This faculty's commitment to excellence in English is driven by the school's English Head Teacher, a recent recipient of an Award for Excellence in the Teaching of English in New South Wales.

The report narrates a story of a school where gifted students, including a very high proportion of ELLs, experience a multitude of benefits gained from not only the academic offerings and challenges of a selective high school but also from the co-curricular and extra-curricular offerings that serve as a vehicle for engaging, extending, and elevating students' potential, including leadership potential. The acknowledgement and celebration of the school's holistic philosophy of education demonstrates what appears to be a positive intermingling of student potential, student engagement, and supportive structures (including physical resources and human capital); in essence, where Gagné's intrapersonal and environmental catalysts can be said to be in place and operating at an optimum level.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to present the context and background information of participants and settings to assist in describing, understanding, and explaining the findings in my inquiry. The information collected from interviews and documents and then analysed has produced data presented here as tables and figures that group and summarise information about individuals and their schools. Narrative descriptions of participants in the form of pen portraits, specifically about individuals and schools, have further enhanced the "data narratives". These pen portraits have been a suitable way of representing this data, as Riessman (1993) has suggested that "all forms of representation of experience are limited portraits" (p. 15). Furthermore, the aspects captured in this chapter about individuals have served the purpose of suggesting biographical patterns and social structures located within narrative frames that can be used to both create collective stories as well as tell individual ones. The act of double narration, the re-telling by the researcher of aspects of each individual's told story, has allowed for both similarities and differences to be visible and present through the re-interpretation, not only across stories but also across tellings.

CHAPTER V: STUDENT NARRATIVES

In the previous chapter "data narratives" presented an overview of data and descriptions of the people and the schools who participated in the qualitative interviews. In this chapter, the student information briefly presented in Chapter IV will be expanded into "student narratives". These narratives are an important data source to help answer the research questions:

What are the educational experiences of gifted English language learners in New South Wales public secondary schools?

What are the needs of these gifted English language learners and how are they being met?

Throughout my inquiry the intent has been to engage directly with participants in order to create opportunities for them to retell their own stories, experiences, thoughts, and ideas, in response to the guiding prompts provided (Appendix J). The information that arose from the interviews was rich and detailed, with participants sharing of themselves and their lives. Oral competency in English was not a determining factor of quality or quantity; two of the participants who shared some of the deepest insights had been participating in Australian education systems for fewer than two years and were less proficient in spoken English.

The intent of identifying the experiences and educational needs of gifted ELLs and how these needs were being met meant that the driving force for this endeavour was about giving students the opportunity to voice their thoughts, opinions, and ideas. In the field of education the student voice movement has been gathering momentum over recent decades in the areas of theory, research, and practice in order to bring together all the stakeholders, and in particular the students themselves, to co-construct meanings of what they do and what they know about learners in their world. Bound up with ideals of social justice and democracy, Czerniawski and Kidd (2011) have suggested that student voice has the potential to transform education by redressing the "invisibility" of the stories of teachers and learners themselves (p. xxxvi). Whilst competing interpretations of the definition, value, and promises of student voice exist, viewpoints are unanimously held that student voice is a means to transformation, growth, and evolution on individual, institutional, and societal levels. Smyth (2012) has noted that to ignore student voice is to lose the opportunity to hear the issues as they are experienced by young people, to miss the chance to embrace aspects of their lives considered to be outside the school domain but that have a profound effect on their learning, and to lose the opportunity to develop meaningful and relevant curriculum and pedagogy that seek to engage and not alienate students.

The interview data collected, yielding approximately 76,000 words of information to be examined, presented several challenges with regards to its organisation and interpretation. In the process of configuring the data the transcripts were read and re-read many times as patterns started to emerge that pointed to the construction of narratives that appeared to be greater than the sum of their parts. In my initial attempts to harness the information into more manageable chunks I came to understand that I had limited control over the stories; the stories had already been "told" by the people who were living them and the "telling" had made them "living". The insights they revealed also appeared to resist attempts at reductionism; instead they settled more smoothly into the configuration of a broader story based on commonalities across stories that could be grouped by themes. This realisation confirmed my understanding that "the results of narrative analyses are thus a set of perspectives to answer research questions and represent the central topics of an inquiry" (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004, p. xviii) rather than a short-list of conclusions.

These naturalistic groupings by themes formed the "thread" of the story being told and are presented within this chapter from the student perspective. At times, teacher and administrator voices are heard where their stories intersect with the students' narratives or they advocate on their behalf; at other times, it is where these stories sit in juxtaposition that they are best heard. Student voice continues to be woven into the following chapter, where teacher and administrator narratives will be explored in more detail and where the voices of the schools emerging from the documents will also be heard.

Students sharing their stories...

Narratives have been described by Bamberg (2012) as the "new but central formatting device for the organisation of self and (modern) identity" (p. 79). Under this definition and throughout all my conversations with the students they each demonstrated the importance of fixing their identity by responding to my prompt about where they had come from (including linguistic, geographic, and cultural origins) and how they had come to their current school. Length of responses varied in proportion to the complexity of their individual and family journeys and highlighted the family and school groups as being pivotal to their sense of self and belonging in narrating their story. Examples from students abounded, some describing the complexity of journeying to Australia through various countries and over different lengths of time (e.g., Ferista, Year 7, extension class, CGHS, travelling from Iran via several years in Pakistan before arriving in Australia), others discussing the time spent in an Intensive English Centre (IEC) and making new friends (e.g., Sopheak, Year 11, comprehensive class, DBHS). Evident in their responses,

too, were concerns relevant to their individual circumstances but appropriate for their age and situation, such as living with a step-father (Cahn, Year 7, selective class, MHS) and changing schools (Stella, Year 12, selective class, RSC), whilst others described circumstances unique to ELLs, such as the nature of the linguistic interactions with siblings (e.g., Chalnaa, Year 7, extension class, CGHS, who speaks Punjabi with her parents but English with her younger brother) and exposure to English (e.g., Lucida, Year 7, selective class, MHS, who was born in Australia but spoke Khmer exclusively before entering school). What was most evident about these narratives was that the stories were as varied and individual as they were similar and comparable.

Students who participated in the interviews were loosely categorised into three distinct groups centred around their age of arrival and entry into Australian schooling: (1) those born in Australia or who arrived in Australia before commencing formal education, growing up bi-cultural and bilingual, or else initially monolingual with limited or no exposure to English in the home, undertaking their whole schooling journey in English (e.g., Lucida, Year 7, selective class, MHS; Amelia, Year 9, selective class, MGHS; Yujia, Year 9, selective class, MGHS); (2) those who arrived in their mid- to late-primary school years and acquired sufficient mastery of the English language in two to three years to pass selective high school entrance exams (e.g., Hattie, Year 9, selective class, MGHS; Anna, Year 9, selective class, MGHS); and (3) those who arrived as adolescents, some spending time in an IEC before moving to mainstream schools and demonstrating potential and achievement in these contexts (e.g., Harold, Year 10, extension class, RSC; Nattapong, Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS; Sopheak, Year 11, comprehensive class, DBHS; Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC; Edgar, Year 12, extension class, RSC). This variety echoes the ACARA definition of EAL/D students in that it acknowledges a range of experiences and language proficiency (in home and with subsequent languages) within the broader definition; the ACARA definition, however, is focused more on pragmatics and proficiency (ACARA, 2011) rather than potential for or rate of learning.

…about their home country. Many students began retelling their personal history in a natural chronological order as a response to the rapport-building questions that I asked. They discussed where they were born and their family's cultural origins, often speaking about them with a sense of pride. In the same manner they were able to share information about their home language with me, with extensive detail often offered relating to degree of fluency of and usage with family members with respect to the home language (or languages) and English. Some

students politely illuminated me on the origins of some of the languages they spoke, particularly with reference to a number of languages spoken in India:

> *Well, I'm from India, in a part called Gujarat. We mainly speak Gujarati there but my family's actually Punjabi so in my house we usually speak Punjabi but with my brother, he's in Year 3 right now, um, I speak, um, with him in English because he finds it more easier (Chalnaa, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

> *I was born in India, in Hyderabad. My native language is Telugu but the national language in India is actually Hindi. I'm fluent in Telugu, sort of fluent in Hindi, not very much (Stella, Year 12, selective class, RSC).*

As language is such a profound indicator of identity, more potent by far than cultural artefacts (Wardhaugh, 2006), the positive representations the students gave of their home language and its usage and their willingness to share this with me in the interview setting appeared to be indicative of a strong sense of self-identity not eroded by the pressing need to acquire English for success in schooling in Australia.

Students who were partly educated in their home country's schooling system prior to arrival in Australia spoke about their learning experiences and made comparisons with the Australian system. Some noted variations in homework and academic expectations; many discussed differing attitudes and responses to educational expectations from their parents in terms of academic work completed in both education systems:

> *[My parents] don't have a good understanding of Australia's school. It's quite different in China. Here it's like, all the systems are different, and, and, they, they think that we should have more homework, like those Asian, like, um, schools, but we don't (Harold, Year 10, extension class, RSC).*

Several students who received part of their education in their home country noted that exposure to some English had had some impact in preparing them for their education in Australia. In the majority of instances, however, students felt that the level of English acquired in their home country was less than satisfactory for their entrance into Australian schooling:

> *Yeah, I learn… I did learn English in China but it wasn't very… it wasn't enough for me to, like, converse, make conversations. So like, I can say "what's that?" and make simple words like "big" and "small" and stuff like that, but I didn't actually know a lot of English words and my grammar was pretty horrible (Anna, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

> *Um, they do have some learning courses but mostly it was just about the, learning the vocabs and grammars and stuff. Not really about how you can communicate with other people in that particular language (Edgar Year 12, extension class, RSC).*

In general, students reported positive experiences from being born into and belonging to another culture, even if their place of birth was Australia or they had very few or non-existent memories of their country of birth.

School journey. Each student shared aspects of their personal and/or family circumstances including their journey through their primary school years, whether conducted in Australia, overseas, or in combination. These stories ranged from simple descriptions of chronological facts to more detailed representations that tied in with previously shared information about their country of birth or countries of heritage and background. Links to parents' choices, opportunities, decisions, and dreams were cited in most cases as the main reasons that explained the direction of each student's educational journey:

> *Yep, um, my nationality is Cambodian. So, um, I came here with my dad because he's under a scholarship (Sopheak, Year 11, comprehensive class, DBHS).*

> *Um, I'm from China. Uh, my dad is a engineer and he migrated to Australia three years ago and my mum and I followed him (Harold, Year 10, extension class, RSC).*

> *I was born in Australia in Auburn Hospital. My mum, yeah, my mum's family came over to Australia [from Vietnam] like, when she was nine years old, by boat, and stayed here ever since (Cahn, Year 7, selective class, MHS).*

Many students born overseas were able to place the time of their arrival in Australia by linking it to a particular age or year level of entry into school, highlighting the importance of the school journey as a reference marker for the passing of time or events. Students were also able to comment on the degree and quality of English that they had arrived with and made reference to it in light of their current functioning in the English language:

> *I had a bit of English because my Aunty would tell me English words and if I needed to know any words I would ask her… It was difficult to pronounce some words because I wasn't used to saying any of those words. And, I, it was, I found a, I found it a bit hard to remember the meanings, but now it's easier (Lucida, Year 7, selective class, MHS).*

> *I can't remember much because I was really young, but the basic stuff I learnt was, like, really useful, like, you know, conversations, you know, the stuff you use in everyday conversations; that was really useful when I first came. So I didn't really struggle to do like, you know when you go, you want to go to office to like, do something, do some paperwork, I didn't really need someone to do it for me. I could do it myself because I had, like, knowledge of background in English (Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC).*

School commencement for students who had been born in Australia was often described in a matter-of-fact way; however, it was students who had arrived at an older age who were able to comment on and reflect upon this event as a pivotal point in their life and their schooling:

> *Okay, my language background is Persian, or Farsi, because I'm Iranian. I came to Australia when I was in Year 8-ish, end of Year 8. Started school, started high school first term of Year 9, end of first term, and been in Riverview Secondary ever since. So, um, it was a bit hard for me in the beginning, but since I had, I did study English when I was younger, in my country, so it wasn't a massive gap but I still had to work hard to, you know, catch up (Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC).*

Most particularly it was the stories from the five students who had spent some time in an IEC that gave much rich detail and extra insight into how these centres function to meet the needs of their students. It was noteworthy that all students agreed on the effectiveness of the IEC in preparing them to enter mainstream education settings in Australian schools:

> *[The IEC] was actually really good because they give you the information you actually need before you start high school. That was really, I found that really useful because I had a really good teacher that really pushed me to limits… There was a lot of work to do in class as well, and the teacher really gives everyone to, like, you know, everyone was actually listening and working in class (Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC).*

> *[The IEC] is pretty interesting because you get to meet new different people and learn kind of like their tradition and their languages. Because I realise we are all like multiculturalism and stuff. For the first time, you know, I get my [English] experience from there and I become like really brave a lot, talking in front of people (Sopheak, Year 11, comprehensive class, DBHS).*

> *[The IEC] it's like there's, they teach basic style of what high school teach, and it's like with assignment two day, and then you have to change the class every time like English in this classroom, Science and Math in other classroom. They prepare for us to go to high school. Like if some student don't know if some student not ready yet they keep on there (Nattapong, Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS).*

It is also important to highlight that teachers working most directly with these students expressed a preference for their remaining longer in IECs or that at least the same level of intensive support be available to them when commencing mainstream education.

The individual stories of schooling journeys reflected each student's country of origin, arrival or birth in Australia, and length of participation in the Australian education system. Two of the students who participated in my inquiry had been in Australian schooling for one year or less, with one attending an IEC and the other going directly into mainstream education, albeit with ESL support. Each of these students presented a different set of circumstances and outcomes based on a variety of factors, including but not limited to family background, socio-economic factors, and in-school support. Frame 5.1 narrates Nattapong's story, while Frame 5.2 outlines Nina's story.

Frame 5.1

Nattapong's story (Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS)

"I just came there for two terms and then I came here, on this, on this year start."

Nattapong began his school journey in his native Burma, which continued until he reached 15 years of age when his family migrated to Australia. As well as regular schooling since Year 1 he had also been attending weekend English classes, as it was his parents' ambition for him to study English and eventually undertake a professional career. By around Year 8 the regular school workload had intensified to a degree that his parents allowed him to drop his weekend English classes.

Upon arrival in Australia Nattapong was placed in an IEC where he attended for two terms. He notes:

After I studying in one, one term and more I feel like I know some more things about how, how the English was like in Australia. And then they said, "After this term, this class, this class will go to high school."

After having completed two terms in a mainstream high school, Nattapong reflects:

It's like… First, it's like when I go, when I come to this school, it's I feel like this school is really big and lost when I find, finding class, it's like, asking everyone, "Where is this class?" And when I get this class, like, it's it's a bit different from the IEC one. I feel like some student talking, when the teacher talking. In IEC like everyone is listening when the teacher talking it's more, we can more concentrate on one teacher talk. But it's like, here is high school and then there's every multiculture and then every student come from every background. So it's a bit hard when, when you do some subject.

Noteworthy, too, were the narratives of some of the students who were attending selective high schools. These students sat for and passed the rigorous tests set by the Selective Schools Unit of Assessment and Reporting Directorate (NSW DoSE, Executive Services Directorate, 1997). With no concessions made in these tests for students from non-English speaking backgrounds, several students told their stories of arriving in Australia after having begun their schooling in their home country, working hard over a short period of time at developing sufficient English to function academically to sit the selective entry tests, and gaining sought-after positions in selective high schools. These students spoke about motivational and influential factors such as family expectations as the key forces behind this achievement:

> *Well, I'm Chinese. I came from China when I was nine and we went to Melbourne and I stayed there until high school, I think. Yeah, I came to this school in Sydney for high school. I came here for a week to do the selective test then I went back to Melbourne.... My dad kind of gave me half a year coaching kind of thing before the selective test. So, um, basically he got me like this massive pile of like exercises for*

me to do and helped me, and I went to coaching for like half a year, and after the selective exam I didn't do anything (Anna, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).

My mum's really, she's very into academics, because she was first in everything, yeah, and um, I went to college since I was three and then my mum got me ready for the selective exam. She wanted me to get in [to a selective high school] (Amelia, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).

Oh, I've been studying for selective for, I think, two years, and, yeah, I just got a school, so we came here. My mother wanted me to go to a good school (Cahn, Year 7, selective class, MHS).

Frame 5.2

Nina's story (Year 10, extension class, RSC)

"I might return to Indonesia to get a new visa, then I'll come back here for Uni."

Nina began his school journey in Indonesia and came to Australia only a year ago because his father had been awarded a scholarship at a university to complete a doctorate in Economics. Nina credits his strong command of English to the compulsory nature of the subject in Indonesia:

You have to take the [English] exam before you actually can graduate from the high school there. And because I also took, like, an extra-curricular thing, so I can also study from there, for the speaking.

Upon arrival in Australia, Nina undertook testing to determine his suitability for entry into an IEC, and being found to be quite proficient was re-directed to enrol in a mainstream school. After having completed two terms in a mainstream high school, Nina notes:

[The school] is really lovely because, um, the students are very friendly. Yeah, it's really nice and it has a lot of, um, interesting stuff to learn here. Um, the teachers, especially, um, they help me, like when I ask when I don't understand something, I ask them, and they explain it really, um, in a really good explanation to me.

Nina is interested in studying Psychology at university:

I like to interact with people, and ah, I also like to sing, yeah.

What is important to the students themselves (and to the researcher). Throughout the interviews and aside from the semi-structured interview questions, several students chose to speak about topics and/or matters of importance to them. Each time I allowed the conversations to continue along these directions because it was through these narratives that students were often most frank and open, telling their own stories in a manner and method that suited themselves under the circumstances. This procedure meant I allowed for deviation along lines of conversation

that were relevant to them, remembering to guide the conversation back in the general direction of my research questions should there be too much deviation. This relative freedom of conversation — inherent to the narrative inquiry method — brought forth some interesting and unpredictable topics of conversation, some that I requested clarification of for the purposes of my inquiry, others out of curiosity or relevant to other personal or professional aspects of my work. An example was my probing of Amelia where she mentioned not speaking for a number of years:

> *Interviewer: So what was it like for you learning English?*
>
> *Amelia (Year 9, selective class, MGHS): I didn't, I came here [when I was four or five], when I started all my education here but I didn't speak any English until Year 3.*
>
> *Interviewer: Why do you think that was?*
>
> *Amelia: I don't know. Like, I didn't go tutoring college, tutoring, until Year 2 and then after like half a year of it I started speaking so I think the tutoring helped.*
>
> *Interviewer: Do you think maybe you were shy?*
>
> *Amelia: No.*
>
> *Interviewer: Just didn't want to communicate? Why do you think that was?*
>
> *Amelia: I think I was a bit shy because I didn't know anyone, and the teacher was, the teacher was nice. I just, yeah, everyone else was English and then, I didn't know what to speak, so I did it with quiet.*

Having only recently worked with a selectively mute five-year-old Chinese girl in my own working environment I did not wish to pass up the opportunity of inquiring into the topic with a student from a similar background who displayed similar behaviours at a similar age. The fact that Amelia was mostly nonchalant about her mutism provided me with new information that has since helped re-shape my approach towards my young student.

Other examples of topics and themes upon which the students placed added value included conversations about preferred names. These conversations arose both from my probing to clarify some students' identities with reference to names provided to me by staff and consent forms signed by parents and from my personal experiences growing up with a non-Anglicised name. As well as confirming the identity of the interviewee I was able to garner a sense of how these adolescents were shaping their own identity in an Anglicised culture. The preference for being introduced to me by an Anglicised name rather than their given name, but identifying with that given name when formality required, was a personally evocative moment for me.

The sharing of personal areas of giftedness or talents was another aspect where some students chose to engage in lengthy conversations in order to both clarify and amplify. There was no evidence of a sense of entitlement because of particular skills and abilities; rather, all students

spoke humbly and matter-of-factly about their gifts and/or talents. Some students went to great pains to describe the sub-categories within different fields where their strengths lay (e.g., Biology within the Sciences) whilst others purported to be "good" in many areas:

> *I love Social Science but I'm doing all right for, um, Maths, and, this area, Science, Physics. But to be honest I'm not really interested in English but it's kind of the compulsory subject we have to do but it's all right for me, I guess (Edgar, Year 12, extension class, RSC).*

> *My Maths are a bit higher than average… I'm the top, but not, but not the number one or two. Maybe like top five, around top five, yeah. And if I can improve my English more maybe I can go up to top three (Harold, Year 10, extension class, RSC).*

> *I love Science, I'm really good at Science, because it's my passion… When studying Science I actually enjoy studying Science. So I'm really good at Science… Biology and Chem-; ah, all of it, except Physics. I don't really like Physics (Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC).*

> *It's like really exciting because I love Science… I spend most of my time looking at books of Science… We got to get this Science textbook and like I'm going through it right now and it's got new things in it but I, some of the things I've already learnt, (Chalnaa, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

> *I think it's probably Writing, because I used to write a lot because it's place where I can write my best expression. Because if you're upset or anything you can always write it down (Lanika, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

> *I think it's more in languages. And English. Um, I've been learning French and last year I was learning Japanese* [Note: Lucida is also fluent in her first language, Khmer] *(Lucida, Year 7, selective class, MHS).*

> *Art, I really like Art, because my background. We are like, we have been through like lots of wars and histories and we've got a lot of like creativity, and people think… I relate it back to my culture and kind of let out my emotions and stuff, yeah (Sopheak, Year 11, comprehensive class, DBHS).*

The students' comments were of increased interest to me where the concordance was lacking between what their teachers said were their gifts and what they themselves saw as their strengths. In some instances this discrepancy may have directly reflected the students' own understandings of the concept of giftedness, how they saw themselves as gifted, and how others saw them. For example, Anna's teachers from Minerva Girls High School reported that she was talented in the musical field yet even with prompting she chose not to mention her musical ability.

Another topic that students chose to pursue was that of having friends from their own language background and the resulting influence on students' self-perception and sense of belonging. As friendships among adolescents (and particularly girls) tend to begin with perceived commonalities (Carr-Gregg, 2006), students showed a variety of attitudes to friendships with students from their own language backgrounds. Sometimes these friendships were viewed in a

positive way (as in Hattie's case) and sometimes there was a lack of connection (as in Anna's case) despite those language commonalities:

> *When I came here I didn't understand anything fully, but, like I somehow understood what the teacher was saying, and then I had some other Korean friend because it was multicultural. And then she helped me out because she's been here for a while, and then, and she speaks both Korean and English better than me, I mean like better English. And then, yeah, she helped me do my work, and then, yeah (Hattie, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

> *Well I did have some Chinese friends that were in another grade and I tried to speak Chinese to them but they were all, like, "ABC" [Australian Born Chinese] so, like, they were born in Australia so they don't actually enjoy speaking Chinese that much so they kind of ditched me after a few weeks (Anna, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

Boys, too, noted that language commonalities might be a useful connection in order to establish social interactions but they did not always manage to generate deeper friendships. They were able to reflect on the changes they made and the reasons for this:

> *First I came to this school and I think I started hanging out with the people that were like the same as me, I found something common in… I guess the nationality or some things. Something like, something that didn't require any background. And then I realised, "Oh, they, they're not the people I want to hang out with," so then I changed that. And it's always good to, that you know that there are other people you can hang out with and sit with at lunch and recess (Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC).*

When asked about their expectations for their futures, students spoke with hope and shared a positive outlook. Many indicated a desire to continue to study in careers requiring university study and high ATARs such as Genetic Engineering (Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC), Medicine (Stella, Year 12, selective class, RSC; Victoria, Year 7, extension class, CGHS; Ferista, Year 7, extension class, CGHS; Nattapong, Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS), Veterinary Science (Hattie, Year 9, selective class, MGHS), or Law (Amelia, Year 9, selective class, MGHS). Others had embryonic ideas that constituted broad plans for travel and/or living overseas (Lucida, Year 7, selective class, MHS; Anna, Year 9, selective class, MGHS). Many students overall were simply positive that their potential would see them through to careers and life choices consistent with their abilities:

> *It's like, I want to be like my dad, because he's like, a doctor. And it's kind of like creativity, yeah, I want to be an architect. And yeah, I'm into aviation, so I want to be a pilot and stuff like that (Sopheak, Year 11, comprehensive class, DBHS).*

> *Oh, since I love Maths I want to be an accountant (Lily, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

I hope I get into some first tier banks, and be an investment banker, I guess (Edgar, Year 12, extension class, RSC).

I want to learn a doctor's degree in vet, in… and I want to be a vet. But if not a vet, I also want to be a lawyer, or maybe a lawyer that studies in vet, in animals (Qiao, Year 7, selective class, MHS).

A return to the home country was an issue that was discussed at some length by students who were new arrivals in Australia. One student in particular spoke about the loss of his cultural identity by being caught between "being Australian" and "being Chinese" (Harold, Year 10, extension class, RSC). It was evident from his response that this issue was having a significant impact on the development of his interstitial identity (Frame 5.3).

Frame 5.3

Harold's story (Year 10, extension class, RSC)

"Um, I'm kind of like, I'm not fully Australian, but I'm not full Chinese."

Harold's father made the decision to migrate to Australia three years ago and despite his wife's and son's objections expected them to join him soon after. Now in Year 10, Harold was in Year 7 at the time. Harold's initial impressions were not positive:

Ah, it's terrible. At the beginning, yeah, I couldn't speak to anyone and, just couldn't do a lot. And I'm not used to the culture and the people around here, and I really want, I really wanted to go back to China immediately in the first couple of months.

When asked what made it so hard, his thoughtful response was:

Ah, I think that the only thing is language. Yeah, the only thing is language.

When asked if it was hard to decide where to belong he replied:

Yeah, it's hard. I don't know where I belong. When I'm Australia, I thought, I think I'm Chinese. But when I'm in China I kind of feel that I'm not exactly the same as the Chinese people.

Many of his Chinese friends, he reports, feel the same way, and they speak about it sometimes. He believes he now has to meet more friends, improve his English, and "just get used to it". He acknowledges excelling in Maths and would like to study Engineering.

And if possible, I will go back to China, if possible; if possible I want to travel both sides.

It is important to acknowledge the openness and willingness to share stories that the students displayed. They shared information about their families, countries, languages of origin, their journeys through schooling (both in Australia and overseas), their progress at school, what they thought of their teachers and learning, their favourite subjects, things they were good at, their friends, their likes and dislikes, and many personal insights into their individual selves. This delightful group of young people, from the youngest and shyest to the oldest and most loquacious, took obvious pride in communicating to me their successes, their journeys, and the obstacles they have had to overcome to reach their current stage of their learning journey. Their openness and willingness to share provided multiple versions of similar stories, stories as yet unfinished and full of many hopes for the future.

Parental expectations. Comments about what their parents thought elicited varied replies from students, with the overwhelming response being a perceived understanding that all parents had high hopes for their children's academic futures and were very clear in communicating these expectations:

> *Yeah, of course, I think all Asian parents do, and they, they think their child has to be excellent academic and both in other areas, I guess (Edgar, Year 12, extension class, RSC).*

> *They want, they want to school to help me learn properly, like not half-teach me, like (Milinka, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

> *Well they want me, they want, ah, mainly, um, like, can I make a thesis, like they really want me to become like a doctor, and get a good job and with my education (Victoria, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

> *They expect the school to help with my education so I can get high results. So I could be a doctor one day (Lucida, Year 7, selective class, MHS).*

> *They basically would like teachers to teach us according, like, for tests…. Like as in, if you have a HSC, some parents might be like, um, "Just teach the content necessary." But my parents would be more like, more, "What did you have to do to get the best mark in that test?" (Stella, Year 12, selective class, RSC).*

> *My family, oh, they just want, um, me to try not to, like, turn bad, but hang around the good people… And I have to separate from work with play so I can't just play all the time, I can't just work all the time. So I have to have a bit of both. Don't mix it together. Yeah (Cahn, Year 7, selective class, MHS).*

Parental expectations were also acknowledged by school personnel:

> *I suppose a lot of our students come from a background where education is highly valued and we have a lot of parents that are trying to get the best out of their child, their girl, with their education, so we find that a lot of them have a lot of pressure*

put on them. That's particularly the case with our gifted and talented girls (Robert, Head Teacher, CGHS).

One of the problems too is that these kids break down if they don't get, you know, in the very high 90s. And we know where that pressure's coming from, right? The parents… (Doreen, Deputy Principal, MHS).

Gifted adolescents often felt conflicted when trying to respond to the expectations of their parents with the multiple options available to them, which often only served to intensify the problem. Stella gave an honest account of the challenges before her as she was faced with the pressure of completing the HSC exams (Frame 5.4).

Frame 5.4

Stella's challenges (Year 12, selective class, RSC)

"So the pressure's on you. A lot of pressure"

Stella is in Year 12 and about to undertake her HSC exams. Heavily involved in both extra-curricular activities at school and within her cultural community, she recently stopped learning Kuchipudi (a classical Indian dance) in order to concentrate more on studying for her final exams. When asked if she thought the expectations from her parents regarding her studies were reasonable, she qualified them as being "very high". When asked if she was happy to meet them, she replied:

Sometimes it is very difficult, though, because you don't exactly have the same strengths as which everyone would like you to have. And this is, this applying to everyone in the community. Um, for example, my HSC I'm very scared.

Stella explains her family's expectations:

I'm brought up in a very Indian community. But ever since I was a child my parents' friends are mostly Indian, they speak the same language as me, and that's who you grow up with. Um, I've many cousins here. Um, my mum's first cousins are here. And then in India, it's very like close-knit culture. Like, what happens is, over here, it's probably your mum's siblings and your father's siblings and that's what your family is. But over there, oh God, it's like your second cousins and your third cousins, and even like your seventh cousins way down the track; they're all like, together-together if you know what I mean… I've got friends above me and below me. This is just in our culture, our community, and all of them have achieved… Well, some of them, like, all of them have ATARs above 90, pretty much, most of them, and, um, and some of them actually achieved ATARs of 99.95 or whatever it is. Yeah. So the pressure's on you. A lot of pressure… So yes, that's very very very scary. And like you wonder, what if you get an ATAR of 70, like what's everyone going to think of you? Oh my God! Which I hope I won't get, but yeah.

Occasionally students cited parents as being critical of the Australian education system, focusing on a small amount of homework as a key factor:

> *I ask my mum this morning, and she's like, "lots of homework" (Ferista, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

> *My parents would like me to go and tutoring, and so would I, because I need more homework (Chalnaa, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

> *My parents, like, she, they, my father, my mother, they always, like, "Why you didn't do all the work in home?" Like, I sometimes do my work like one hour, and then at my country I, like, I have to do, like if I have one exam I have to study like the whole day, two days, three days. And then my parents ask this, they, like, "Why didn't you study? Why, why are you just looking at computer, playing games?" And then I say, "It's just this work. We just have this one." We just say we a little bit work. And she, she tell us that if, if the school had more work, you would, he, ah, my parent think, you will be better (Nattapong, Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS).*

Parental beliefs and wishes extended beyond the school environment but maintained a focus on the acquisition of English and academic success. A number of students who arrived in Australia after some initial education in their home country noted that they had used tutoring services to assist them in developing sufficient mastery of the English language to successfully gain entry into a selective high school through testing. Some of these students noted that they undertook a number of hours of tutoring, a practice that was sometimes discontinued once entry into selective schools had been gained. Only one student spoke dismissively about tutoring, echoing parental beliefs:

> *Interviewer: And how did you get to come to this school?*

> *Qiao (Year 7, selective class, MHS): I did a selective test and I made selective.*

> *Interviewer: So what was that like? Was it hard?*

> *Qiao: No, it wasn't.*

> *Interviewer: Did you have to study extra for it?*

> *Qiao: No. My parents don't believe in tutoring. So, what I… what my ability was, they just went with it.*

Tutoring continued for some students, often as part of their parents' wishes:

> *Well, tutoring will, like, give me more practice. So I've been to this tutor and I've got Maths and gives me more things so I can learn it and it's a bit harder. So instead of doing Year 7 I'm doing Year 8 in tutoring. And it's much more easier because, because I've, I already know the stuff in Year 7 so the learning, learning the stuff in Year 8 is much easier because you know more stuff and your, you can, like, get more stuff into your brain, yeah (Chalnaa, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

> *Um, my mum… my dad, he's more of, if you're above average, you're doing well. But my mum, she, she wants a lot of feedback, that's all she wants, like, she wants*

feedback so I… so she can send me to tutoring so I can improve… She doesn't have time to teach me at home because she's a nurse and my dad earns a business, so, yeah, no time (Amelia, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).

Whilst parents were excluded from my inquiry for logistical reasons, students were clearly capable of communicating their parents' values, feelings, and expectations, and as young adults passing their own judgments on these where necessary:

I think, like, my, my family want me to open a [medical] practice in, um, a multicultural area, where I can speak different languages if they don't understand English. I'm okay with that (Lucida, Year 7, selective class, MHS).

My parents expect me to get homework. And not only do I have to excel in school, like I have to remain in the top 10% of the grade, and if I don't, then, like… (Qiao, Year 7, selective class, MHS).

Overwhelmingly, students expressed a great deal of respect for their parents' wishes and expectations, and acknowledged their support and encouragement in helping to shape them in their world. These attitudes could be partly due to the varying cultural and traditional understandings of the roles of different family members, as well as differing religious and moral beliefs held by different cultures.

Characteristics of gifted ELLs

Gifted ELLs present with a range of characteristics particular to their group and these have previously been explored by Rance-Roney (2004) (see Table 2.1). Additional insights have emerged from the examination of the data gathered in my inquiry from the interviews. These findings not only support many of Rance-Roney's assertions but they also enhance them by revealing new attributes of gifted ELLs particular to the Australian context. Key findings include:

- a generally positive attitude towards school and learning
- seeking new learning encounters and challenges
- a commitment to learning English and doing well in their subjects
- finding more efficient ways of managing their time and staving off underachievement
- dealing with psychosocial stressors particular to their individual circumstances

and

- determining the degree of peer influence.

These findings are summarised in Table 5.1, with each finding explored in more detail in the following sections.

Table 5.1
Characteristics of Gifted ELLs (Australia): Student Perspectives

Characteristics of Gifted ELLs (Australia): Student Perspectives	
Attitudes towards school and learning	• A positive attitude towards the education process: students "like" their schools • Positive academic and behavioural self-concepts • Find it easy to learn despite a self-awareness they do not have full command of English • Strong commitment to studies, both short-term and long-term • Aware of personal and individual motivational factors: see personal effort as a key contributor to their own success
Seeking new challenges	• Seeking learning challenges for themselves: see the learning of English as a positive challenge to be tackled • Capitalising on ways to accelerate their English learning • Engaging further with academic subjects • Engaging in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities
Commitment to learning English and achieving academically	• Prioritise the need to acquire English to access learning opportunities and to demonstrate potential • Accelerated progress in the acquisition of English: some students electing to study Advanced English courses • Highly valuing of teacher support with text structure, grammar, etc as well as extension • Student resourcefulness (access to staff, equipment, texts, technology, etc)
Time management	• Students reflected on the impact of poor time management skills on their learning and progress • Potential for increase in output (e.g., higher grades) with better time management skills acknowledged • Common adolescent distracters (e.g., television, music, movies, video games) identified
Underachievement	• Self-awareness of factors that contribute to underachievement • Lack of English proficiency noted as key contributor to underachievement
Psychosocial stressors	• Poor English communication skills(e.g., poor accent, grammar, and vocabulary) impacting on social interactions and self-esteem • Compliance with parental expectations, workloads, and exams • Forced cultural transitions due to the effects of migration: cross-cultural stress • Breaking away from familiar people (most notably friends and family) and places (e.g., school): can lead to depression
Peer influences	• Influence of peer group increases significantly during adolescence • Forced-choice dilemma in order to maintain friendships with non-gifted peers • Challenges when thrust into collaboration with peers from the same cultural or linguistic background but at different stages of acculturation: acceptance or rejection • Peers supportive with the acquisition of English

Attitudes towards school and learning. Statements were made by a majority of students that demonstrated a positive attitude towards the education process and their journey through it. Students on the whole described liking their school, and finding it easy to learn despite self-awareness that they did not have a full command of the English language in comparison with some of their peers. Many did not see this is an impediment but rather as a challenge, something that must be tackled as part of their learning journey:

> *Yeah, it's a pretty good school. The teacher really nice and the students are friendly when I came here and they knew I couldn't speak English well and they, they would teach me, and the teacher would support me (Harold, Year 10, extension class, RSC).*

> *Ah, like, I should be thinking that it's really unfair for me, because I came here really late compared to other people, but then again, I chose to come to this school, and I sat the exam, so I should be prepared for it. I should be capable of competing with the others (Hattie, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

Many demonstrated a strong commitment to their studies, both in the short term with regards to completing the year or high school as well as in the long term as evidenced by their future career choices. Indeed, various students spoke about undertaking university study in high-demand courses with limited places and competitive entry. Hussein explained the motivation behind his commitment to study hard:

> *Because HSC is your permission to go to university. If you go, if you have a good HSC that means you get a lot of choices, so that itself motivates me to study more and get a better mark (Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC).*

Students also recognised and prized personal effort as a contributing factor to their success:

> *Personally, I don't expect anything from the school, because like I said, I chose to come. I think that it's personal effort that you have to put in to get better grades and put up with the stuff, or keep up with the stuff (Hattie, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

> *I expect from high school a lot. I, first of all like I have really high expectations of myself. So if I don't get a good score in um, test, I go home and study like really really hard, say why did I get that wrong, I have to get 100% and like that. And yeah, I want, I want to get good marks in the HSC so I can go to university and become an, um, astronomer, or astronaut, because as I said I love science, and yeah (Chalnaa, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

High expectations, however, can have a downside, which will be explored further in the following chapter:

> *Often for these kids the final outcome, when someone will give them a mark, can either be okay, elating for them, or incredibly depressing because they'll have such high expectations (Doreen, Deputy Principal, MHS).*

Seeking challenges. Whether through personal reflection or with encouragement from adults, gifted ELLs were aware of personal and individual motivational factors, with many seeking challenges for themselves (e.g., Sopheak's motivation, Frame 5.5). These challenges included capitalising on ways to accelerate their English learning as well as engaging further with academic subjects. From reading ahead in textbooks to finding new ways to acquire more English, high degrees of motivation (both intrinsic and extrinsic) were evident:

> *My parents actually like the way I'm working. And it's not that my parents want me to do more work but it's that I want to do more work… So, like, I just like working, writing stories, and doing lots of Maths, and yeah. And my parents are actually, ah, happy with that (Chalnaa, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

Teachers, too, recognised and commented on the potential of gifted ELLs:

> *With a lot of these kids… they've got it in them, they just don't realise they have. And I just find that if you just push them that little bit, and, you know, say to them, "Look, I'm here to help, but I want to see you try first." When you sort of make that very clear to them, they then push themselves, which is what you want to see (Sanjeev, Teacher, MHS).*

Frame 5.5

Sopheak's motivation (Year 11, comprehensive class, DBHS)

"It's kind of like I learn more when I challenge myself"

Sopheak is dedicated and committed to doing well at school. Not only does he enjoy learning, but he has also worked out his preferred approach to learning: to challenge himself.

I speak with different people every days and I read lots of books… yeah, I get, like, challenging stuff, get it, and writing essays and looking back at my mistakes and stuff. And I try to correct that, and that's how I learn.

Like I really enjoy everything new, because I like to have a touch on new things and gain new experience and challenge myself. It's kind of like I learn more when I challenge myself. 'Cos when stuff come easily it's just like going to have to actually like practise anything, it's just like you get it, so, yeah.

When learning comes easy to him, he puts into practice his approach:

It's just like practise it, practise it, and then after a while you just, you get it in your head, like, um… When this pop up like, about a certain topic that I'm into for example like Shakespeare and all this it's just like, I just know the character and like what happens in the stories, and stuff…

The concept of competitiveness was touched upon by very few students during interviews. Whilst most students spoke about challenging themselves, in one selective Year 7 class at McMahon High School it was deemed a part of belonging to a selective cohort:

> *Interviewer: How does this school help you to learn?*
>
> *Qiao (Year 7, selective class, MHS): Um, it separates us from the rest of Year 7, and when we do tests or exams it's different. So we're competing against another, like, 59 children [in the selective classes], and, like, if we compete against all the rest of Year 7 we will always be on the top, and it would be smooth sailing from here from now until Year 12. But since we're competing against 59 other children, they're basically the same, um, ability as us, so we have to try harder and push that little bit further.*
>
> *Interviewer: So do you believe that motivates you to learn?*
>
> *Qiao: Yeah.*
>
> *Interviewer: And how do you find that competition? Do you like that competition?*
>
> *Qiao: Yes.*
>
> *Interviewer: Is that… a lot of people in your class like the competition?*
>
> *Qiao: Yes.*

It was evident that gifted ELLs employed a variety of strategies to meet some of their own learning needs, and their efforts to capitalise on a positive attitude towards schooling, their ease of learning and seeking new challenges were noted. Despite these efforts, gifted ELLs had one significant challenge common to all: the need to acquire English to access learning opportunities and to demonstrate their potential. This challenge has been identified in national EAL/D policy documents (ACARA, 2011) and is a pivotal concern in my inquiry.

Learning English. A key topic that arose in conversations with participants centred on students' accelerated progress in the acquisition of English and their response to teacher support in learning English. This topic takes on a central role in the inquiry, as it is acknowledged by all participants that student progress in the acquisition and flexibility of use of English is not only heightened in gifted ELLs, but also is paramount to their overall learning and progress at school. Edgar, for example, recalls his transition from spending the last term of Year 9 in an IEC through a "miserable" Year 10 due initially to poor English skills to becoming Dux of Year 11:

> *Ah, my academic result was pretty miserable in Year 10, because, yep. That's English probably set above to me. I get to, just know what's going on, not really try hard or try to get the top end or be in the top student in the school. But later on I get to… after I know how to do it, learning in English, I get to try harder, pay actual effort in, so I get to the higher level of the academic level, I guess… I have a*

really good academic result in Year 11. I Dux the school. I came first in most of the subjects (Edgar, Year 12, extension class, RSC).

Mariella gave an example of what significant progress in learning English at a senior level means for some gifted ELLs who have made rapid progress in this area:

Students who choose to do their Year 11 and 12 ESL course can only do so if they've been in the country for five years or less. It's to their advantage to do that course, because they're compared then only against students similar to themselves. However, in the past we've had some students, very intelligent students, who've elected to do the Advanced English course, and that's also been wonderful to see them, you know, they're quite capable, being in the country less than five years and yet still competing against Australian-born students who, you know, have all the natural gifts of learning English (Mariella, ESL Teacher, CGHS).

Students were also highly valuing of the methods and techniques teachers used to assist them in their development of English:

Yeah, when I, when I have, like, you know, assignment and when I have finished assignment I just turn to my teacher and then she tell me what more do I need, what grammar, structure like, and then I just fix like that. Every teacher tell me if you need help, just e-mail (Nattapong, Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS).

Not least, student resourcefulness in terms of helping themselves to learn was evidenced in a number of comments. Students knew how to access staff, school equipment, and other resources such as texts, multimedia, and technologies, a skill that was supported and encouraged by staff:

Mainly reading newspapers, and for the fun part I watch a lot of movies, and it was like, a lot. And I really enjoy the TV shows and sometimes I turn the subtitles off just to get involved, like you actually know what's going on without having the subtitles (Edgar, Year 12, extension class, RSC).

[Learning English] is easy, yeah, it come really easy but like I still have some problem with grammar because I'm not like, background English speaker or something. So I just read some grammar books and go through some examples and stuff, yeah (Sopheak, Year 11, comprehensive class, DBHS).

There are so many resources on-line, you know, YouTube… Like every topic I don't understand you just go on YouTube, type in the topic and there's like thousands of videos coming up from different people… (Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC).

Time and again students reported on the positive influence of teacher support in the learning of English:

We had an English teacher who used to do extra work [with me], English work during recess and lunchtimes. So he kinda used to give me the cartoons and kinda short script and then had to read and then explain it to her, and then… So we used to do that, like, every day, maybe one recess a day, and then, yes. She really help me a lot to learn (Benjamin, Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS).

The teachers are really helpful, especially our Maths teacher. She helps us, and all our English teachers are really helpful and they teach us in the way that we can

understand easily so we don't get confused with the language (Lanika, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).

Overall, gifted ELLs and their teachers reported an accelerated rate of acquisition of English, particularly when supported. Teachers have acknowledged gifted ELLs are capable of demonstrating English-language proficiency beyond that of their mainstream ELL peers. Further research into the rate of acquisition of English by gifted ELLs is warranted.

Time management and underachievement. From the interviews with students two interlinked issues arose that were touched upon by students: the question of time management and the concept of underachievement. Both these issues presented gifted ELLs with challenges, compounded by their degree of functioning in the English language.

Time management was a concept expressed as a key concern by students. Some students reflected on how poor time management skills were impacting on their learning and progress, and could see the potential increase in output (higher grades, for example) if this skill were improved. Impediments included common adolescent distracters such as television, music, movies, and video games:

> *First of all, I hate the computer, because it's just a big distraction, absolutely boring. Gaming, absolutely hate it. And social networks, things like Facebook, e-mail, I never go on them anymore. I only use the computer for learning and nothing else (Chalnaa, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

> *It's kind of hard to keep up sometimes, 'cos like, um, in Year 10 I got like heaps of time to do like, stuff like movies and gaming, and now it's like assignment and test and homework just come like every single week. It's just you have to, like, study for it, yep (Sopheak, Year 11, comprehensive class, DBHS).*

Underachievement in general gifted populations has been noted by Reis (1998) as being a bewildering and frustrating challenge for both teachers and parents. It has been even more of a concern for populations of gifted ELLs where other personal and contextual variables as well as situational and environmental factors have come into play. In my inquiry students demonstrated self-awareness of underachievement or at the very least acknowledged factors that either already did or had the potential to contribute to underachievement:

> *But like, English I'm better than many kids in Australia as well. Like, compared to many kids I think I'm better. But they, again, they are better at like, speaking, and like, understanding all these dictations teachers do and videos that they watch. Because sometimes I miss things and then I have to ask my friend for the notes, as in what I've just missed, and then when I ask I miss another thing. It just chain, it goes on and on and on (Hattie, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

Psychosocial stressors. Students participating in my inquiry identified psychosocial stressors across multiple areas. Some were quite forthcoming when discussing particular issues, including some common concerns shared by many regarding the acquisition of English:

> *Is hard at the very beginning talk to people, like you have to be brave to talk to people for, because they might making fun of you because you can't really speak English properly or with a bad accent… After you overcome that, if the people around you are very nice to you, you get to speak up, and, yeah, in this process you actually get to learn English better (Edgar, Year 12, extension class, RSC).*

For some gifted ELLs significant stressors included trying to comply with parental expectations, managing workloads, and exams:

> *My parents, they want me to do more homework and stuff, want to get more homeworks and yep. I think it's kind of enough though, because they, like, I'm under a lot of pressure, doing like heaps of stuff like when, like getting assignment that is due this week and I have to have a diary and keep all, all the date lines, yep (Sopheak, Year 11, comprehensive class, DBHS).*

> *Exams stress me out. I don't know, my brain just gets stressed out. I worry; did I study the right things, did I study enough, am I, am I going to have enough luck? (Amelia, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

For others, psychosocial stressors emerged as a result of forced cultural transitions due to the effects of migration, an ever-increasing global phenomenon (de Block & Buckingham, 2007). Of the students interviewed, Harold demonstrated the most cross-cultural stress of all students who participated in my inquiry. When asked what he missed about China, his response was telling:

> *A lot: my friends, my school, my teachers, and everything (Harold, Year 10, extension class, RSC).*

For Anna, the move was not from another culture or country, but it also involved moving away from her home and familiar places as well as her friendship groups. When Anna moved from Melbourne to attend a selective high school in Sydney she too encountered difficulties in adjusting:

> *Because I moved from Melbourne I kind of had like this short depression thing; I didn't know it was depression until afterwards, like, because in PDHPE [Personal Development, Health, and Physical Education] there was all these symptoms and I'm like, oh, I was that last year. And yeah, because I, like, because in my diary and stuff, I was like saying, "Oh, I miss Melbourne so much," and yeah (Anna, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

On a more positive note, examples of resilience and strength of character were also heard from different students in their broader narratives with regards to how they functioned in order to achieve balance in their lives.

The influence of peers. The developmental stage of adolescence is fraught with challenges and obstacles and has particular consequences for gifted students. During this time the peer group increases in influence and many gifted students may encounter the forced-choice dilemma in order to maintain friendships with non-gifted peers. Gifted ELLs encounter further difficulties when thrust into collaboration with peers from the same cultural or linguistic background but at different stages of acculturation. Depending on the dynamics, acceptance or rejection may arise. In general, however, students who participated in my inquiry reported mostly positive experiences from their interactions with peers. In Edgar's and Anna's experiences, peer support had been most positive in assisting them with the acquisition of English:

> *Lots of good friends. They help me with English. Say I don't understand particular words I can ask them and they will explain in plain terms. Like, I get to know more, whereas some students, I don't know, they, they probably scared about talk to other people, and it's not happened to me (Edgar, Year 12, extension class, RSC).*

> *It was pretty, like, hard for me for the first few months, but um, my friends, like, at school, like, because I was new and I was the only, like, Chinese girl in the entire grade. Yeah, like, all the other people helped me. So, yeah, if I had any troubles doing my work they would just help me to finish it (Anna, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

Anna, Lucida, and Nattapong reflected on how peers were still helping them to learn:

> *Like I, I still have a lot of words that I don't understand, like the big words, kind of... I'll just have to ask people around me; they kind of get annoyed sometimes if I ask too many questions. Or I can just look it up (Anna, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

> *Ah, yes, sometimes I don't get things, but sometimes I either ask the teacher or ask my friends that get it (Lucida, Year 7, selective class, MHS).*

> *At this school I can make a lot of friend and my friend help me whatever I need; whatever I told them they always help me (Nattapong, Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS).*

The gifted ELLs who participated in my inquiry presented with many of the characteristics identified by Rance-Roney (2004) (see Table 2.1). In addition, like most adolescents they were concerned about their friendship groups, progress with their studies, commitment to their families, and seeking balance in their lives. Like many gifted students they dealt with pressure to succeed, underachievement, and finding the right level of challenge in their studies. Like many ELLs they were conscious of their shortcomings in English and overwhelmingly positive with regards to teacher support. Most importantly, however, was their overall sense of a hopeful and positive future ahead for themselves, feeling supported and encouraged by parents and teachers.

The educational needs of gifted ELLs (according to the students)

Focusing on the second research question that asked how the educational needs of gifted English language learners in Australian secondary schools were being met meant it was paramount to identify what the interview data revealed those needs to be. In the interviews and in conversations with all the stakeholders the most prominent concern noted was the need to acquire English as efficiently and promptly as possible in order to function in the Australian schooling system. Students not only stated how important it was to acquire the language but also commented on the ease with which they were doing so whilst acknowledging particular concerns with regards to accessing an appropriately challenging curriculum. The development of student self-management skills and other support needs were also identified.

Inasmuch as students shared information pertaining to their educational needs, they sometimes identified these needs indirectly, particularly by identifying impediments to their learning. As these impediments are equally significant it was important to consider them in their own light and they are therefore discussed in more detail in the following sections. Together with further comments from students these overall findings are summarised at the end of the chapter, in Table 5.2.

The acquisition of English. The priority of the acquisition of English for gifted ELLs cannot be overstated and the rate that this happens has been, in essence, a key element in the academic success of these students. For those students in particular who journeyed through the Intensive English Centres (Sopheak and Nattapong from Dickens Boys High School, and Harold, Hussein, and Edgar from Riverview Secondary College), this time was described as highly productive and most helpful in their progress in the acquisition of English and in their preparation for integration into mainstream high school:

> *I went to the IEC for about a term so I can get myself into the English-speaking community, so I get to speak to other people in English (Edgar, Year 12, extension class, RSC).*
>
> *My teacher [at the IEC] really pushed me to my limits that, that caused me, like, to learn a lot of English in like 3 months (Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC).*

They felt that the support they received at the IEC had sufficiently prepared them to enter mainstream school; however the change in support from the IEC to the mainstream setting left some students with a false sense of competence:

> *First year, I guess in Year 9, there was help but I didn't really use the help. I remember the ESL teacher asking me if I wanted to come, but I didn't really go to*

her the first year. I don't know why. It was probably because I was just selfish, I thought I didn't need help. Then in Year 10 I realised that oh, I actually need to get help. So in Year 10 I actually started having classes, like actual English classes with the ESL teacher, and they really boosted my English, 'til like, helped me a lot, 'til where I am now (Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC).

Beyond the IEC, students recognised that their teachers were there to support them in the acquisition of English and gave multiple examples of how this was done:

When I first came here, um, my skill, my English level was still poor, and the ESL teacher help me a lot. They, um, they send me out of the class, send me out of the Maths class because my Maths are a bit higher than average in, back in Year 7. Then they teach me English one-on-one… In Maths the questions are really easy, yeah, and I couldn't understand half of the words, so as long as my English, um, improved, I think my Maths will improve as well (Harold, Year 10, extension class, RSC).

Miss really ask you, like, she could analyse and find out what you were not good at, and she would give you work about that area, because she's got a lot of experience as well… she knows about ESL students don't really, don't really match up with English. Their languages have like massive difference with English, so like, I don't know. I remember Year 9 we started doing prepositions, which is a gap between English and other languages, so, yeah. I remember that was really useful (Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC).

My teacher, my English teacher, she's very good; she's really enthusiastic, and she, um, well, she states everything very clearly and I understand everything through that (Chalnaa, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).

A challenging curriculum. In some instances students shared their thoughts and opinions about the appropriateness of the curriculum in meeting their learning needs. Chalnaa, for example, described ways she extended herself as a remedy, whilst Sopheak felt hampered by curriculum limitations:

I'm exploring my textbook by myself but the teacher does give us homework sometimes so I research some of that, and then when I'm bored I go through my textbook and sometimes my workbook to see what we've done, to recap everything (Chalnaa, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).

Like the subjects. Some ways I want to do like more subjects in Year 11. Like we get only like to do like 12 unit I think. Because I'm like interested in like History and stuff like that. I don't get to do it because this school is smaller and the subject offer is like different from other school (Sopheak, Year 11, comprehensive class, DBHS).

For students from selective schools or classes an inappropriate curriculum is less likely to be a problem. One selective student noted the streaming arrangements as an important factor:

> *Qiao (Year 7, selective class, MHS): We learn different things from the other Year 7s and when we, when we have troubles, when we ask the teacher, they, she will always explain completely and thoroughly.*
>
> *Interviewer: So how can this school keep your learning going?*
>
> *Qiao: Um, to continue the selective system.*
>
> *Interviewer: Okay; you think that's valuable?*
>
> *Qiao: Yes.*

Self-management and support needs. Both students and teachers identified specific weaknesses that gifted ELLs exhibited during their time at school. As already noted some students had cited time management as a personal concern. Others had commented on their struggles to achieve balance between the different aspects of their lives. Stella (Year 12, selective class, RSC) acknowledged giving up a number of interests in her final year of study including her cultural dancing classes, despite considering herself as being more than capable of achieving high marks and entering the university course of her choice:

> *I stopped learning cultural dance which is Kuchipudi, um, couple of months ago, basically just for my HSC because it consumes a lot of time. I'm involved in less activities which means I have more time for study, so I should be okay… Now that I'm getting close to my HSC I'm thinking I might as well try Med, and if it doesn't work then I could always go for Law as my backup (Stella, Year 12, selective class, RSC).*

Asking students to identify their most pertinent educational needs revealed that there is a strong need for support with regards to three key factors. First, there is a powerful drive for students to acquire sufficient English to be able to unlock their potential as they make their way through the Australian education system. Second, the education system needs to present them with an appropriately challenging curriculum. Third, students need support in the development of self-management skills in order to navigate their way through high school and beyond. These three elements become key themes in identifying how to meet the needs of gifted ELLs.

Impediments to learning

Despite the praise for and recognition of individuals, groups, and programs in supporting gifted ELLs and the special provisions that had been put in place to assist them to overcome barriers and to succeed, impediments to learning were identified by students. These particular

impediments had a sobering effect when taking into account how the educational needs of gifted ELLs were being met. Of the issues discussed throughout the interviews, students were most concerned about the challenges of teaching and learning through English and about teachers' classroom management techniques and teaching practices. Students were also very aware of the challenges presented by cultural and linguistic differences within the curriculum. These impediments to learning described the areas most needing improvement to assist gifted ELLs in their educational journey.

Teaching and learning through English. Both teachers and students identified concerns that had the potential to impede learning and that were directly related to teaching and learning through English. Students self-identified their disadvantage compared to English-speaking students, particularly with regards to acquiring sufficient English to communicate clearly their learning through the written medium, with grammar highlighted as the greatest barrier:

> *Our English teacher, she shows, she's basically really visual style because she showed us PowerPoints and has all the information on the board and she makes us copy it down so you don't forget it…This helps us to learn in our other subject areas where we need vocabs and grammar, or it is too hard not like for English-speaking students. I do need help with my writing. It's like gram-, I make a lot of grammatical errors, and yeah (Lanika, Year 7, extension class, CGHS):*

Students were very particular in their descriptions of times when they found that the teaching and learning being conducted through English left them at a disadvantage compared to the rest of their peers. One student spoke about how she frequently had to weigh up asking for clarification from her peers against missing out on important information being delivered by the teacher during the time of asking. Other students found exam times challenging:

> *Like the exam questions I can understand them because I already learnt them. But with English exam and, like, sometimes when we write essays and stuff I might, like, stuff up my grammar (Anna, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

> *I think that teachers can, like, make you be more prepared to be facing those sorts of questions [on idioms]. Like, because this year was kind of vague and none of us really knew what we would be tested on. Get that way to memorise all these quotes and it was getting all mixed up (Hattie, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

Both teachers and students were fully cognisant that teaching and learning through English presented as the most significant challenge that gifted ELLs faced in their learning journey. Student motivation to acquire English efficiently and quickly in order to engage with the curriculum was identified as a hallmark of gifted ELLs.

Classroom management and teaching practices. Students identified and described situations that they felt were in some ways inhibiting or detrimental to their learning. Of concern to Nattapong and Hussein was how inappropriate and disruptive behaviour on the part of some students encroached on their potential learning time in class. For gifted ELLs with a focus on learning, concern was focused on these preventable and manageable situations.

Casual, supply, and relief teachers, perceived by some students as lacking in authority and knowledge, were criticised as being ineffective in their management of disruptive students who impinged on the learning of gifted ELLs:

> *So the teacher's trying to concentrate and teach and when she sees that some people are like just not learning, or mucking around, she like steps back and tries to, like tries to teach everyone so everyone learns. That's the part when the good people don't really learn much (Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC).*

They also saw teacher absences and replacements as an impediment to their own learning:

> *I come to school every day, like, and then the teacher, some of the subject of the teacher are, keep studying, studying. But some teacher, like, if they absent, we just lose one lesson and, just like, really important. And then one lesson, like, if we miss one lesson, and then we miss all the work. So we left behind the other class. The better would be like if the teacher will be absent, she may say that, "You will have to do this this…" before she comes for next time, and then she will do, give an extra work for that day. And that new teacher can teach this (Nattapong, Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS).*

Teaching practices, too, that students felt did not meet their needs were highlighted as impediments to learning. Students spoke of a clear preference for being prepared by teachers for tests and exams where the content or vocabulary was more abstract:

> *I think they can, like, make you be more prepared for facing those sort of questions… Oh, last year we had like, oh we knew that it was going to be tested on themes, it was based on themes, but this year we didn't know if it was going to be based on our characters, or like the plotline, or like patriarchal society of William Shakespeare's time (Hattie, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

Whilst students were confident that they could continue to learn despite these types of challenges, overall they expressed dissatisfaction with ineffective teaching strategies and classroom management practices that impinged on their learning. They also preferred to be better informed regarding exam content in order to better prepare themselves.

Socio-cultural barriers. Students acknowledged the contribution of predominantly linguistic and socio-cultural differences to their underachievement. They expressed their frustration not only with trying to acquire sufficient command of the English language to

participate fully in the curriculum but also in understanding the socio-cultural context of their own learning. Some students acknowledged that they were not achieving to their fullest potential and expressed their frustration:

> *[Teachers] should be a little bit more considerate of our culture and then put more effort to teach what Australian culture is like… It's just like, when we learn all these stuff and we, like English and History, it's like so different. Like, uh, yeah, some things I can sort of understand. Sometimes I think they really fear to make all those choices, but then again I think Asian culture is really weird as well. Everything's weird from my perspective (Hattie, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

Students were aware that the language and content of the curriculum were significantly oriented towards the dominant language and culture, and they perceived assimilationist intent despite the considerable inclusionist efforts of recent revisions. Special consideration for EAL/D students was not evident for students like Hattie (Frame 5.6).

Frame 5.6

Hattie's concerns (Year 9, selective class, MGHS)

"For ESL students we have to be capable of saying things as fluent as Australian-born people."

Hattie feels strongly about the perceived lack of special consideration for ESL students like herself.

I think the whole curriculum's based on people who's just really capable of English and they just expect you to be as good as them. Because, you know, we sat the [selective] test here and then we're all meant to be really good and everything, sort of. And then, but then, I'm like, one of my English subjects is, English like, yeah, get really… I don't know, I think that I'm capable of it but when I'm actually into exams I just going mind blank and I don't know what I should be writing.

She fully acknowledges cultural barriers:

Because my thinking's a lot based on Korean culture thinking, because at home I speak Korean, fully Korean. And I watch Korean stuff as well. So, yeah. Some of my expressions can be like based on Korean expressions so some people can't understand and I have to like think that they, like, how do you say this in English.

She notes feeling pressure under exam conditions owing to challenges faced with new vocabulary and is disappointed not to be able to take dictionaries into exams with her.

No, so we have to know everything, like, off by heart, and so we, like, for ESL students we have to be capable of saying things as fluent as Australian-born people.

Students were able to clearly articulate significant impediments to their learning, in particular those circumstances that sat in counterbalance to their commitment to learning and personal efforts. In particular, students were aware that compared to their English-speaking peers they were at a disadvantage by having to access the curriculum through English and demonstrate their knowledge in and of English. Despite their rapid rate of acquisition of English being considered a strength, students perceived a lack of special consideration for their learning needs.

What students value

One of the major aims of my inquiry has been to give students a voice, to enable and empower them to describe and explain their strengths, issues, concerns, expectations, and experiences, and most importantly to share their stories as gifted ELLs making their way through the Australian education system. It is therefore appropriate to dedicate a part of my inquiry to describing, interpreting, and explaining what it is that they particularly value about their education.

Above all else, students laid claim to teacher support as the top priority. They acknowledged that the teacher's role was to facilitate their learning and to help meet their individual needs, whether these were academic, social, emotional, or multifaceted. They praised the quality of their teachers and their teaching and were particularly grateful for their teachers' willingness to help beyond immediate classroom and school needs. Students often described a liking for their school, too, absorbing the school atmosphere and participating enthusiastically in a multitude of school offerings. They particularly valued the streaming arrangements and saw them as conducive to productive learning. Students acknowledged ease of learning as a personal attribute, self-aware that schooling was not on the whole so much of a struggle even though their participation was in and through English. They acknowledged that the drive and commitment to study and to achieve needed to come from themselves, which was what ensured good grades, high ATARs and places in specialised degrees in universities. These outcomes not only met their own expectations but also those of their parents as well as fulfilling their schools' desire to shape great citizens. Just as importantly students valued being given a voice to communicate their thoughts, feelings, and ideas about important aspects of their education, and reacted positively to authentic validation of their culture in assisting them in the shaping of their individual multicultural identity.

Their teachers. High on the students' agenda was the support that they received from their teachers in order to assist them with their educational needs. Whilst acknowledging their own competence in acquiring functional and academic English over the course of their studies, they again and again referred to teacher support and how it impacted on their day-to-day life at school as well as on their general progress. In particular, being able to ask teachers for clarification was a priority for many:

> *Ooh, they're really nice and I can, like, ask a question when I feel like, and they're not as strict as the teachers in China (Anna, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

> *And also my Geography teacher, if I have trouble with that, um, I actually, she really helps me because, um, I can ask her questions and she explains it again. And then, yeah, and it's really clear (Chalnaa, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

> *In my class they, the teachers give us extra support so every time we, like we don't understand the question or we find something difficult, so, we can ask, and they teach us always, they are there to help us, so yes (Benjamin, Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS).*

> *Well, the teachers… ah, if I ever need to know something that I don't, that I need to know about, I ask them and they would tell me. And they, they teach well. They teach us stuff that would be in tests and in, if we don't get anything, like, um, people would ask and they would show us and ask if we know, and if we don't they just explain that again (Lucida, Year 7, selective class, MHS).*

For many students the key element was the teacher's willingness to help:

> *The teachers are pretty good at explaining things so we get to understand the concept in class. Maybe if we have a little problem we can go ask the teacher at recess time, so they're pretty generous and give, spare their times for us, and um, so we don't have to go to tutoring and get the actual support, we actually learn at school (Edgar, Year 12, extension class, RSC).*

> *This school has many opportunities to help you so at any time you can go to them, and also after school help. It's like tuition but, like, it's at school. Um, the teachers are really good at teaching. Like they find out your difficulties and like help you in that area. Like they really want to help you (Victoria, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

> *I like the fact that, you know, the people, they're really nice. Also, the way they help you to study is good so you know. Like they give you a lot of homework but it's a good thing, you know, to always improve and you know what you're doing in class, and yeah (Lanika, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

> *It's like, the teachers. They are like, they are very friendly and they, you know, they are very good at like, in a way that when they explain it to you, it's just like you kind of get it, like, I don't know. Like, it's not like, it's still different from like in my country. You have to like keep up with the works and all these, and when you come here the teachers just like, they just taught you, like they feed all the knowledge into your brains. You get, like, the, I don't know, practical work, so you get hand on to it, like you know what they're doing like that (Sopheak, Year 11, comprehensive class, DBHS).*

I guess with the school, um, it's not like the other schools where I just go to school then go back home. I guess with this school, I guess if you don't have something like, you can talk to the teachers and they are very glad to offer you maybe a book or something like that. Maybe sometime, if like the teachers are not busy during recess you can just see the teachers and talk to them about the homework or about the classwork. Or the assignment too, yeah (Benjamin, Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS).

One aspect of teacher support that was highly valued was teacher feedback. Whether written or oral, students often referred to this assistance positively:

They wrote on the exams, um, like, the assessment tasks, what did I do wrong, what should I improve from my assessment tasks, and they also told me that, um, you should do this instead of that, yeah (Nina, Year 10, extension class, RSC).

They help with the comments and like some of the point that they stated that I should look at, and yeah. I could improve like there, like, their expertise, like (Sopheak, Year 11, comprehensive class, DBHS).

The teachers are kind of, um, how should I say this, they, they're very helpful. Like, they're willing to give up their time to, like, talk to us one-on-one and tell us what we need to do, and, um, the English teachers they write a lot on our essay reports so we can kind of learn from that, and… (Amelia, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).

Students acknowledged the efforts teachers went to in supporting their learning needs:

Learning… I haven't come across big obstacles, but, um, I… Challenges… I can't really think about one, because if I have any problems, say, academically, I can ask my teachers. They're very helpful. I think I can always get the help I needed, just in time, so I wouldn't have any big problems with my, in regards to my learning (Edgar, Year 12, extension class, RSC).

They explain the questions thoroughly, and so they don't just skip the whole thing. And, and, they don't go too fast, and they don't go too slow, they go at a steady pace (Cahn, Year 7, selective class, MHS).

Our Maths teacher, she writes, first she writes the question on the board. We have to answer it. If we can't answer it then, you know, we always ask and she'll, even if we, somebody does, doesn't know how to do it or somebody doesn't say it she'll teach us anyway and teach us how to do it…She will always check with every one of us. Check to understand the words too. She remembers our names and what we can do or what we have trouble with. She sometimes knows before she even teach the lesson (Lanika, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).

Throughout my inquiry there were many references to the mutually respectful relationships between teachers and students that attest to these positive relationships. As the relationships forged with teachers have been noted as having a significant impact on a student's development, exerting critical influences (Jerome & Pianta, 2008), it is encouraging that so many gifted ELLs acknowledged the key role played by their teachers in their educational journey.

The school. In a similar vein to comments students made about their teachers they were also overwhelmingly positive in their praise of their school's setting, atmosphere, and offerings, both curricular and extra-curricular. Markers of school social adjustment, such as the specific comment "I really like this school" (Yujia, Year 9, selective class, MGHS), were a positive reflection on students and also the school. Other positive student comments included:

> *The general environment of this school is pretty good. People are actually focused on study, not bludging around. They, the good environment makes you want to learn, like, when you go into the library all the people are studying around you so that makes you want it, to be studying and doing good… (Edgar, Year 12, extension class, RSC).*

> *It is a great school because the school provides lots of things that we need and the teachers also help us in every way they can, so yeah, it's an awesome school (Nina, Year 10, extension class, RSC).*

> *Oh, the, the school doesn't just, like, give you a whole bunch of work and do it by yourself. They make it fun also. So it isn't all work, work, but they add some fun bits (Cahn, Year 7, selective class, MHS).*

> *I like this school very very much. I think that the support network at this school is very very very good. From Year 7 you have your year advisor, you have your Head Teacher… the supportive network is very strong. We've had peer support when we were younger, we have teachers who're part of the welfare team, and they help a lot with buddy systems (Stella, Year 12, selective class, RSC).*

> *This is a good school because teachers understand us and they help us learn better, and it's multicultural because there are different backgrounds coming here (Lucida, Year 7, selective class, MHS).*

In particular, school resources such as physical spaces and equipment were mentioned positively by students:

> *All the facilities like we have like laptops and equipment and stuff (Anna, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

> *There're like, a lot of resources: library, different textbooks, all that (Hussein, Year 11, extension class, RSC).*

Yujia and Stella confirmed wider opportunities available to them through extra-curricular provisions:

> *I'm in after-school drama. I find that's really fun. Teachers normally tell you to join a lot of extra-curricular stuff, to get more involved (Yujia, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

> *The amount of extra-curricular activities this school offers is outrageous. I've been involved in a fair few of them; probably not the sporting ones, I'm not a sporty person, but yeah. And they're great as well, lots of fun. And I think that's a great way to actually make friends and build connections, extra-curricular activities. When you work on one project and you move, you know, you just make, you just bond, and things like that. So in that way this school develops, like, a student's*

strengths, I mean bonds like with everyone else in the community (Stella, Year 12, selective class, RSC).

Teachers, too, validated students' responses:

I came here from a selective high school and I was quite open to it. A lot of people seemed to think it was sort of a step backwards, you know, this school was in a low socio-economic area, a lot of ESL, perceived as not a good school but I found it an amazing school. The colleagues, the work, the atmosphere, there is something magical about this school. Magical things happen in this school and I don't know why. Over the years there are things that just come and it's because it's [Dickens] Boys. The feeling I've… even the atmosphere on assembly, it's there, and I don't know what it is (Vanessa, Deputy Principal, DBHS).

One student reflected on the reasons why she chose to stay at her current school despite a brief trial at a fully selective school that was considered better academically than the one she was attending:

I kind of missed the atmosphere at this school, like, you, know, the teachers, my friends, and all of that as well. And in the four years that I've been here I was involved in many activities: World Vision, debating, other charity things, High Resolves, etc., and I, I've made connections with so many people, including many of the teachers and I wanted to keep those connections, like throughout my high school career, you could say. So that's pretty much why I stayed (Stella, Year 12, selective class, RSC).

A general acknowledgement of the positive role that the school and its offerings play in the life of gifted ELLs was evident in many of their comments. Reflections by students focused on their experiences within the school setting, on the resources, facilities, school atmosphere, extra-curricular activities, teacher support, and ways the school works to meet their learning needs. Students indicated that, on the whole and despite challenges, schools were already providing for many of their specific learning needs from both the gifted and the ELL perspective.

Beyond schooling. Several students shared an awareness of their home culture's traditions and expectations with regards to educational outcomes and beyond school and university. In the main these expectations were focused on achieving high ATARs, gaining entry into competitive courses such as Medicine, and setting themselves up as professionals in their chosen field, often to be undertaken in a linear fashion and with no pause in-between. Whilst students indicated that they were overtly compliant, subtle conflicts can arise between parents and students based on different academic expectations, different understandings of appropriate career choices, and cultural values brought about by the different acculturation processes both groups may have

undergone. Stella (Year 12, selective class, RSC) for example, who is expected to study Medicine, spoke of her intent to participate in the world before participating in university:

> *If I do Med I don't know exactly what I'm going to do, but I think for a year I want to go to abroad to, like some place in Africa, or somewhere like that. Just then, actually, I was at the Careers Expo that I just went to a couple of hours ago, but, um, there was… there was this company there which allows students, even in their gap year, or between university years, to go overseas. You can just teach at like other countries. I looked at the one in India, actually. You can go to Goa and this other place and you basically teach children English. And you just live there for a month in volunteer shelter, learn about the culture a bit more and you kind of do that sort of thing. So I'd like to do that, mainly because I haven't lived in India as such, and that's where I came from, so… (Stella, Year 12, selective class, RSC).*

Generational change, the acculturation process, and shifting cultural values appeared to also impact on gifted ELLs as they continued to make life choices beyond the school. Students seemed to be aware of and sensitive to a variety of push and pull factors and were in the process of navigating their way through the adolescent years and beyond with these factors in mind.

Other important matters. Above and beyond the intended focus of my inquiry and through the conversations with students, I encountered a real sense of validation of the purpose behind the interviews. Student engagement and willingness to answer questions in a deep and detailed way demonstrated that they gave value to being considered for their opinions, feelings, and ideas about what was important to them about their education. Some students, for example, acknowledged how the school gave them opportunities to have their voices heard:

> *Um, the school sometimes takes surveys or asks you if you need help with anything. If you are having problems and, yeah, that's it. It's good… I can say what I think even though I'm only in Year 7 (Milinka, Year 7, extension class, CGHS).*

Students also reacted positively to being asked about their language and cultural backgrounds, and used these prompts as a way of communicating their multicultural identity and how it was being shaped through their educational context. Some interesting comments about their culture arose spontaneously from students:

> *Because this school is also really multicultural we tend to understand each other more, like in certain situations because Asian culture tends to be really different to Australian culture. So like, yeah, like when we get bad marks. Yep, people say Asian parents are most scary. It's true. And we just freak out together. And then sometimes we speak Korean to each other, some of us. And sometimes our parents meet up, like Korean parents meet up, and we just talk about it together; what's happening, this multicultural fair, whatever (Hattie, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).*

Table 5.2

Educational Needs of Gifted ELLs: Student Perspectives

Educational Needs of Gifted ELLs: Student Perspectives	
Acquisition of English	• Spend time in an Intensive English Centre (IEC) • Teacher support with learning English
Challenging curriculum	• Extend themselves through further learning • Sufficiently challenging curriculum offerings • Streaming arrangements through the selective system
Self-management and support	• Support with time management • Support to achieve study-life balance
Teaching and learning through English	• Need to acquire sufficient English to communicate their learning through the written medium • Greater understanding of the English language for learning engagements
Classroom management and teaching practices	• Continuity and stability of teachers as well as preparedness of relief teachers • Effective teaching strategies and classroom management practices • Greater preparation for assessments and exams with regards to content, vocabulary, and abstract terms
Socio-cultural barriers	• Better understanding of the socio-cultural context of their own learning • More culturally inclusive language and content in the curriculum • Special consideration for their learning needs
What students value	• Quality teacher support: academic and pastoral • Teacher feedback • Supportive school: positive environment • Extra-curricular activities • Personal drive and commitment to achieve • Understanding of their navigation of parental expectations • Being heard (student voice) • Authentic validation of their own culture to assist in the shaping of their own multicultural identity

Students on the whole appeared to place most emphasis and value on those particular aspects or topics arising from conversations that resonated deeply with them. These topics ranged from identifying how good teachers helped them to learn in English and through English to discussing how schools catered for their diverse needs as gifted learners. Equally important, students valued the opportunity of having their voices heard, and chose to acknowledge their own responsibility in achieving to their fullest potential whilst meeting wider expectations. Validation of culture by peers and teachers was also seen as important.

Reflection

The purpose of my inquiry has been to identify the experiences and educational needs of gifted ELLs and how these needs are being met. Using narrative research methods, prominence has been given to student voice in uncovering and exploring the different facets of the experiences and needs of gifted ELLs. Finding myself as researcher in the privileged position of both narrator and interpreter of students' voices, it has been my intent in this chapter to collect and represent students' stories as they themselves have striven to identify their own needs. Using narrative thematic analysis techniques, I have kept stories intact, gathered together multiple narrations on themes, and presented vignettes of significant conversations and findings, always with the purpose of allowing students to speak for themselves. Regardless of their capacity to communicate through the English language, their phrases, grammatical choices, and oral language nuances have all been kept intact and represented as faithfully as possible. This has been a deliberate decision, both with respect to the speaker, but also to allow readers to arrive at their own interpretation.

The following chapter will continue exploring the findings from my inquiry, with teacher and administrator voices joining the conversation. This will give the story a layered effect, adding depth and presenting new information obtained from interviews with those directly involved in the education of the gifted ELLs. As in the current chapter, my role will be both narrative and interpretive, with similar narrative analysis techniques being applied to the data. The voice of the education system will also be inserted in the next chapter, as documents will be used to explore its position on gifted ELLs. Together the current and next chapters present the collective findings from the research conducted on identifying the educational experiences and needs of gifted ELLs.

CHAPTER VI: SCHOOL NARRATIVES

The education system per se has been described as a complex adaptive system that is constantly evolving, "responding to changes in the needs of the society of which it is a part, to the interests and goals students have for their lives and, in recent decades, to the political agendas of minority groups" (Voght, 2000, p. 270). Schools, as the places where these narratives take place, are constantly challenged by the shifting paradigms of modernity and, according to Habermasian thinking, must serve two masters simultaneously: the needs of individual students as they take their place in the world, and the requirements of the school system as an agent of the state and society (Johnston, 2012). Indeed, Habermas viewed the role of the school as being both a political or systemic institution and a socialising agency where possibilities for communicative reason can occur (Johnston, 2012).

In the context of the school, Habermas's theory of communicative action serves the enhancement of the narrative of not only the students themselves (Moran & Murphy, 2012) but also of individuals and organisations within the sphere of influence of the student. It allows for both the sharing of assumptions, history, and traditions among all stakeholders, as well as the individual recognition of said stakeholders and their agreement on validity claims as the foundation for accepting or rejecting normative claims (Johnston, 2012; Moran & Murphy, 2012). To this end, teachers and administrators also contributed to the information-gathering process of my inquiry; documents representing the voice of the school and the education system were also accessed.

In my inquiry, alongside the analysis of the transcripts of interviews with teachers and administrators, documents were also scrutinised using narrative inquiry techniques. This exploration posed challenges similar to those experienced when examining transcript data from interviews. First, as there is no standard method of narrative analysis (Bold, 2012), for the sake of consistency I chose to apply the same practices and strategies used during the analysis of participants' transcripts. Therefore I examined each document, section by section, looking for themes and coding them. Evolving and emerging stories were identified in order to determine the education system's understandings of the needs of both gifted and ELLs, and these were interwoven and incorporated with teachers' and educators' views and interpretations. The findings have been presented in this chapter and complement the two previous chapters. Together, they comprise the overall findings from my inquiry.

Teachers sharing their stories

In a similar vein to the students interviewed for my inquiry, educators were given the opportunity to share their stories during the interviews. Owing to the formality of the interview situation and the types of questions used I made it clear during the initial rapport-building phase that I was inquiring into their professional lives and inviting stories to emerge from their experiences in this role. On a number of occasions I garnered a palpable sense of developing collegiality when I interposed to seek clarification or further information on a topic that appeared to be of great importance to the interviewee. This validation often allowed for the emergence of deep and rich data as conversations were extended and multiple dimensions of a story explored. Overall, the willingness of staff to share their knowledge about, expertise in, and engagement with gifted ELLs ensured that the data collected were first-hand and authentic.

Professional stories. Educators who participated in this interview came from a broad range of backgrounds and teaching/administrative experience. From a principal with a background lecturing in an MBA program, to an ESL teacher with 30 years' experience working with ELLs, through to a mature-aged beginning teacher in his first year in the profession, each brought different dimensions and qualities to the conversation. Their varying contributions not only added depth but also breadth to the whole inquiry:

> As I said, I'm Principal, and in terms of professional experience I've taught in a wide variety of schools. This is my ninth. I've taught in the country, I've taught in a single-sex girls' school, specialist school, a technology high school; I was at a school which has a 30 to 70 ratio of girls to boys and a very high multicultural population. The reason that I came to Dickens was that I really like working with boys…I think it's a privilege to work with them. They're going through such an interesting and dynamic time of their lives and to be a part of that is a privilege and I really enjoy it (Margaret, Principal, DBHS).

> I've been here for 30 years this month. I first came here as the Learning Support Teacher that was then called Remedial Reading Teacher or something like that. And probably about 15 years ago I became the ESL Teacher (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).

> This is my sixth high school. I'm a brand new principal here. I've been here for a year and a little bit more, and I came from probably the best comprehensive public boys' school, up the road here where I was for three years. Before that I was at another boys' high school. And before that at a boys' high school in the Eastern Suburbs, which is getting close to being what you would now call a residual school in the public system. Thirty-eight percent public attendance in the Eastern Suburbs now. Before that a couple of other high schools on the harbour, as well as working with a lot of Aboriginal students as well, and inner-city types (Caroline, Principal, RSC).

I've actually just completed my Master of Teaching last year. This is actually my first year into teaching, and my current placement is actually a temporary position for the year. In terms of the classes that I actually teach, at the moment I only teach Years 7 to 10 in Geography and Commerce. In terms of the gifted and talented kids I teach a Year 7 class in Geography… In Year 7 I teach four classes. There's a selective class and there's also a class of lower ability kids (Sanjeev, Teacher, MHS).

Many educators have had a variety of experience within and beyond the classroom and into the broader education sector that has informed and shaped their current thinking about gifted ELLs. The administrators I interviewed were knowledgeable people with a depth of experience with students from both gifted as well as ELL backgrounds, and were able to contextualise how they were working to meet the needs of these students whilst aiming for a balance with the competing priorities they faced in their current role. Many were able to articulate coherently what had drawn them to the profession in the first place and indeed had found this calling validated again and again in their experiences with students, parents, teachers, and the wider community.

The teachers I interviewed for my inquiry fell into two distinct groups; they were either teachers working with gifted students, including those who were ELLs, or teachers working with ELLs, including those who were gifted. Whilst this distinction might initially simply appear to be a case of semantic interpretation, probing into their understanding of the population being researched indicated some bias towards one attribute over the other. Sanjeev, a teacher working with both selective and non-selective classes at McMahon High School, articulated his understanding thus:

Sanjeev (Teacher, MHS): When you talk about gifted and talented, are you talking about… because for me, my English language learners, they sort of sit differently to my gifted and talented learners.

Interviewer: Well, let's refocus this. This school has a selective class, and in that class there are some students who are still English language learners, they are still on that learning journey…

Sanjeev: Yeah, um, I don't think there is, I mean I don't see there being much differentiation; they tend to be grouped pretty much as a whole, so the fact there is still English-language learners… I haven't seen it being catered for. So the focus tends to be more on, you know, the fact they're selective students, that they're gifted and talented, as opposed to that they're English-language learners.

Sanjeev acknowledged that about 27 or 28 of his students from a selective class of 30 were from non-English speaking backgrounds. This teacher prioritisation of one attribute over another therefore has implications for not only the application of policies but also for teaching and learning practices and outcomes for students who are both gifted and ELLs.

Jill, with over 30 years' experience teaching in the capacity of ESL teacher in comprehensive schools and IECs and now at Riverview Secondary College, clearly saw her responsibility as teaching all ELLs including those who displayed attributes of gifted learners:

> *I sort of, I don't feel really comfortable with saying, "All right, you're in this box as an English-language learner and you're not." I think that all of the opportunities that we give the ESL students are for everybody, and so it's really hard to say, "These are just for the gifted ones." (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).*

This dualism of gifted students from an ELL background and ELLs with gifted attributes as understood by some educators interviewed for my inquiry appeared to be grounded in factors arising from educators' own understandings about their professional role and job description. Indeed, fundamental to an understanding of gifted students and their needs is the amount of teacher training with regards to gifted education that the individual has received. Schools such as McMahon High School and Riverview Secondary College had invested heavily in teacher development through subsidising for all their staff members the COGE (Certificate of Gifted Education) provided through GERRIC. Administrators in these schools showed a particular knowledge of the issues faced by gifted ELLs and were able to articulate these across all topics discussed in our interviews. Staff at comprehensive schools with a high population of ELLs spoke about English-language support as their baseline, whilst those from selective high schools all began from the premise that their students presented with high academic ability.

Teachers who had experience working in selective high schools or who were currently teaching in a selective school shared stories of teaching ELLs in this unique context. Issues discussed included broadening opportunities for student learning, acting as facilitators, assisting in forging links with the broader community to enhance student opportunities for learning, and barriers to success. One such barrier that was deemed crucial was that of funding and its relationship to student potential. Marcus (Deputy Principal, MGHS) noted that the gifted ELLs attending his selective school no longer attracted ESL funding from the NSW State Government as a result of their having exceeded a maximum benchmark standard for the allocation of funding. He pondered the question of what the true potential of his students might be were their funding (and thereby English-language support) continued. Funding and support for students were key issues that will be discussed further in this chapter.

Teachers who had experience teaching ELLs shared their stories and their understanding of how these students learn. The richest and most comprehensive definition of gifted ELLs came from Jill. Though lengthy, it merits being presented in its entirety:

They are independent learners and I think that's number one. They're the sort of kids who will read the ads on the side of the bus in English to support themselves. They're the kids who know about the news; they can tell you what happened because they watch the news. They're the students who will have a book in English that they are reading; not one that they are forced to read but one that they choose to read. They are also the kinds of learners who share with other students, you know, it's a team effort; they are cooperative in sharing their knowledge. They're the sort of students who will immerse themselves in the culture of the school, and if anyone is asked to volunteer for anything, they will do so, be it collecting for the Red Cross Appeal, or debating or just helping in some way with something. They are the kids who will try English out on anyone who cares to listen and they will, to a degree, divorce themselves from the students from their own background, because this gives them an opportunity to do what they came here to do, and to do what their parents want them to do. And we have had some very successful students in the past, and I have actually discussed with other staff members, you know, "Why did that boy get 99.6 when he only came here from another language background in Year 10?" And all of those things were pertinent to him, and he made that decision, and all the decisions that he's made have contributed to him becoming, in a very short time, bilingual (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).

An overwhelming number of educators described their role as that of a facilitator, using a selection of phrases to communicate their thoughts and ideas on the matter. From considering teachers and schools as "vehicles" (Caroline, Principal, RSC) to describing how they adjusted curriculum offerings to engage their students, countless examples were provided that demonstrated how educators were prepared to meet the needs of their students. The two examples below are from Sanjeev, a teacher in his first year of teaching, and Mariella, an ESL teacher with over 22 years' experience teaching ELLs in comprehensive schools and IECs:

With the selective kids I see myself as more of a facilitator of their learning. So when I structure their lessons it's, unlike other Year 7 classes where I more direct their learning, I create a framework around which I try and sort of teach them to direct their own learning (Sanjeev, Teacher, MHS).

If, for example, my role as an ESL teacher is to make sure that students' vocabulary grows and develops, and so they're working towards expressing themselves in a more sophisticated way. So my role is to insist upon them growing and developing; not accepting that if I give them a model, a scaffold of a piece of writing, they don't just copy that. That they look at it, they gain the understanding of what's expected, but then they produce something that is better, greater, and so on (Mariella, ESL Teacher, CGHS).

Educators were all of one mind when considering the purpose behind their role in meeting the needs of gifted ELLs. Simply put, they described themselves as being in the business of creating opportunities for learning. Examples of this abounded in all the schools participating in my inquiry, and ranged from curriculum modifications to community outreach and extending learning opportunities beyond the classroom. Some schools were also dealing with overcoming

the impact of low socio-economic disadvantage, as well as factors beyond the general bounds of education such as assistance in providing housing, meeting the needs of former boy soldiers, and keeping students out of the juvenile justice system. Margaret, Principal at Dickens Boys High School reflected on the breadth of the challenges she had to deal with (Frame 6.1).

Frame 6.1

Margaret's reflections (Principal, DBHS)

> **"But it's so nice to ring the schools and get people that know the students and know what they're capable of."**
>
> Margaret is Principal of Dickens Boys High School, a school with over 45 different cultural groups, with many students coming from low socio-economic backgrounds. There is also an increasing number of refugees from Africa, including Sierra Leone, Sudan, and Ghana. She comments:
>
> *I think some people out there in the real world would be blown away by some of the things we have to do for our students, some of the stories we know about them.*
>
> She discusses the current state of affairs with regards to a student who was removed from his situation because it was abusive:
>
> *I feel like I'm his mum, dad, guardian, all rolled into one at the moment. And we managed to get him a housing scholarship, so that will get him through Year 11 and 12. At the moment he's a little bit off the rails, but I'm trying to give him enough space and rope so that he'll only go so far that he'll come back on track in his own time…. He's moved quite a way away and it's taking him two hours to get to school at the moment, so that's very very hard.*
>
> Another student had got into some trouble:
>
> *I had a phone call from Juvenile Justice yesterday about another student, and they're not allowed to tell me what he did, and I said, "Oh, no. He's not in trouble, is he? What's he done? He's such a gorgeous student." And she said, "Oh, I'm pleased to hear that you know him so well" and she said, "Look, he actually said to us that he moved schools in Year 9 because he was really naughty and in a lot of trouble in the school that he was in, but since he's come to your school he's felt valued, he's felt part of the community, he's very fond of it."*
>
> *And then she said, "Yeah, look, you're speaking so positively for him, and we can see that this is a one-off, and this student is really going to learn from his mistakes. But it's so nice to ring schools and get people who know that the students, know the students and know what they're capable of."*

Throughout my interviews with educators I was often placed in the privileged position of being the gatherer of these professional stories, to hear time and again how, despite being hampered by the constraints of public funding and budgeting, they were developing strategies to meet the needs of gifted ELLs. The depth of the responses from the participants was a testament to the time, effort, energy, and professionalism invested over their careers into improving the educational needs of gifted ELLs.

What teachers are doing to meet the needs of gifted ELLs

Whilst it is understood that the education of each student is a multi-faceted endeavour where the responsibility lies with all stakeholders including the students themselves, it is important to note how powerful the teacher–student relationship is with regard to student development. Students and educators who participated in my inquiry made many references to the quality of the relationships they had developed with each other and in particular to how teachers were using these relationships to meet gifted ELLs' needs. This support impacted not only on the academic development of each student but also on their personal and social development as well as their self-esteem. Cultural considerations were also recognised as being of high importance by all parties. Over and above these aspects, however, was the acknowledgement of the significance of the range of teaching strategies and approaches used by teachers to not only assist gifted ELLs in their development of English but also to facilitate their becoming independent and self-directed learners.

In the same way that students sometimes identified their needs indirectly by identifying impediments to their learning, teachers too were able to comment on students' needs in this manner. As these impediments are also equally significant it was important to consider them in their own light and they are therefore discussed in more detail in the following sections. Together these overall findings are summarised in Table 6.1.

The complex role of the teacher. It is within the school context that teachers exercise their expertise in identifying students' needs, make adjustments to the curriculum to meet those needs, differentiate lessons and other learning experiences, apply assessment practices that are used to inform teaching, and evaluate student work carefully and sensitively for constructive feedback. Teachers also interact with students within the broader context of the school environment where they perform a wide variety of roles other than simply instructing students.

Many of these facets have been commented upon by teachers, students, and administrators. Jill from Riverview Secondary College, for example, described some of the complexities of her role:

> *I'm doing the ESL job which involves welcoming new students to the school, liaising with the IECs in the area, interviewing new students, checking on their work… The time I have to see them for sessions is limited, and there are a lot of them, upwards of 80 students who I consider need some kind of support. Probably 40 of those need a high level of support (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).*

From a different viewpoint, Vanessa from Dickens Boys High School spoke about her time as a Visual Arts Teacher and how she worked with gifted ELLs who were interested in expressing themselves artistically:

> *And we used to, you know, ask students, as well: "Would you be interested? We're running a workshop today. We're going to look at doing a project in a little bit more depth, you know." We had decided to do a Spring theme, we got all these flowers and we just asked the boys to come in and explore drawing them, photographing them, painting them, investigating artists. So they just spent a day, which in the limits of a classroom is not possible. And then they had another day and they created an artwork and then we sent it off to a… I think we entered them in a competition, so giving them that chance. And I find that they really respond to that, and then you can see that reflected back in the classroom because they can see the potential, that they just don't have to sit and do that little bit of exercise. They might say, "Oh, can I do this?" or "Can I do that?" You know, pushing them, and allowing them to. And Art has that ability. The syllabus is very open, it allows you to let the students expand, and you can keep feeding, facilitating that little bit: "Well, have you thought of looking at it this way, or this way?" And then they can just go on their way (Vanessa, Deputy Principal, DBHS).*

Overall there was a broad acknowledgement from teachers that they viewed their role as more complex than simply assuming responsibility for educational instruction. This recognition reflected teachers' understandings that the needs of gifted ELLs persisted beyond the traditional domains of schooling, and that they could be active contributors in assisting to meet these needs.

Pastoral support. The role of the teacher not only lies within the academic domain but is by its very nature interpersonal, therefore involving multiple aspects of the management and support of students. With regards to gifted ELLs it is often an ESL teacher who develops the closest relationship with the student, particularly in the high school setting where multiple teachers interact with students for different subject areas. In my inquiry students overwhelmingly praised their ESL teachers not only for the academic support they received but also for providing them with a personal supportive structure within the confines of the school. Responses about the supportive nature of teachers' work often extended to all the teachers that students interacted with.

Student responses varied from conversations about assistance with schoolwork to help in making career choices, or how to fill out application forms. Jill from Riverview Secondary College elaborated on this supportive role:

> *They are invited, right from the time that they come here, to come and see me if there is anything. Now sometimes they come because they have to fill in a form about their Austudy, or to get their licence. There's nobody at home to help them with things like that, so that's sort of a practical way that I can help. But I pride myself in the fact that I never turn them away. If I'm busy that day, I will make a time within the next two days that they can come. Or, they can leave the piece of work with me and I'll look at it, and they can come back at recess or lunchtime if I don't have a lesson time to give them. So they're never turned away and they know that, and I think that is what has made this process so popular, because they can leave it with me in the morning, pick it up at lunchtime, and it's got comments on it and things that, you know, that I've just been able to do, mixed in with everything else (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).*

Pastoral care is considered the business of every teacher, and is evident in both a one-to-one relationship as well as through whole-school provisions. At Dickens Boys High School, Margaret discussed how the school was working to address Benjamin's needs, attempting to support him well beyond the expected sphere of influence of the school and noting frustrations with regards to institutional limitations:

> *Some of these students, they've got such incredibly sad situations. I've got one boy, absolutely gorgeous. He lives with his uncle and he gets Youth Allowance, but his uncle insists… his uncle works, but his uncle insists he pay 50% of the rent. Now, and actually I actually asked the youth worker, "You know, can I actually get this uncle in and say to him, 'This is hardly fair. You're on, you're in the construction industry. You're taking home at least eight hundred bucks a week… yet he's getting, say one hundred and eighty a fortnight. You're expecting him to pay 50% of the rent? When he does that, that leaves him thirty dollars, or something. It's hardly fair.'" But she said, "Well it's none of your business, really. You can't." And I think that is so unfair. So we make sure that all these students, if, who, like that boy, he has food, he has breakfast and lunch here, provided by the canteen. We've got a list that the canteen has and they know they're on the list and it's not embarrassing. They just go down and their lunch is prepared for them. Everyone else thinks they've put in an early order, you know. And by giving them uniforms and enabling them to attend all the excursions they're entitled to without expecting them to pay… (Margaret, Principal, DBHS).*

At McMahon High School Doreen spoke about how the Head of Physical Education had concerned himself with the health of the whole child and had made arrangements to support staff, gifted students, and their parents:

> *And our PE fellow was going to, has arranged to have a psychiatrist come out to the school at the start of the term to not only talk to the kids and the staff but to talk to the parents of these kids about how not to break them. How to take care of their*

mental health. Yes, so as a staff we've gone beyond just starting to have GAT kids. But now we're developing programs to help them in what I think are deeper ways. We're becoming more and more aware of it (Doreen, Deputy Principal, MHS).

When discussing the educational needs of gifted ELLs, all groups of participants reflected on the teacher's role as going beyond that of providing academic support and into the area of pastoral care. Students and teachers cited numerous examples and administrators spoke positively about how this support was being implemented across the whole school.

Assistance with learning English. As well as acknowledging the interpersonal nature of the teacher–student relationship, ESL teachers spoke about the core elements of their practice in terms of assisting their students to develop proficiency in both spoken and written English and in its application in the general classroom. They discussed strategies and approaches:

They come to me whenever they need some support; if they need proof-reading done on anything, anything explained…. And you know, particularly English of course, because a lot of the subjects that they choose are their own language which I can't help them with; the bulk of them do three- or four-unit Maths which is once again out of my area. I can obviously help them with the English of Maths; and the Science classes, some of the Physics and Chemistry are beyond me, but once again I can support them in their written work and their acquisition of the relevant vocabulary (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).

Part of my time is also spent on supporting those students in the key learning areas. So I go to the classes when they have Geography or when they have Science or when they have History, and the idea is that I see what's happening in the classroom and I provide additional resources for the students to enable them to gain their understanding of the background of the subject that they're dealing with at the time (Mariella, ESL Teacher, CGHS).

The initiative that we started last year was changed at the end of the year and the ESL teacher would go in and work with those kids. And we got terrific feedback from especially the Science teachers because she would go around, she would help these kids to, just with their expression; she could pick up where they could be improved (Doreen, Deputy Head, MHS).

A general willingness to extend support beyond traditional role description boundaries was noted by both teachers and students as a hallmark of a good ESL teacher. Jill from Riverview Secondary College, for example, was not only available to help students during set lessons and for particular courses, but she also arranged her timetable so that she was available during students' study periods for individual or small group sessions. She also noted assisting students with the pronunciation of English, despite some initial concerns:

*I listen to them read, pronunciation is a big part of confidence, and particularly
with those students whose languages don't contain sounds that we have in English;
we make a point of mentioning those. I think, initially when I took on this job I was
a little fearful of correcting them because I felt that they might be insulted. But with
experience I've got to know that if you don't correct them then they will never
improve, and it's… you really only need to mention those things a few times and
they do become part of the way that they speak English, so that is really important
(Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).*

Teachers who worked with gifted ELLs gave priority to assisting students to develop
proficiency with the English language. Teachers were generous with their time and committed to
ensuring best outcomes for students, not only in English but across all learning areas.

Student ownership of learning. Teachers offered opinions regarding how to best support
gifted ELLs in terms of setting and meeting personal learning challenges and goals. Jill from
Riverview Secondary College acknowledged the need to facilitate the process of students' taking
personal responsibility for becoming independent learners:

*I find that a big part of this is trying to encourage the students to be independent
learners and therefore extending their vocabulary and writing skills in their own
time… You really need to look at the kids and see what their needs are and
structure the program around that (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).*

In order to become independent learners teachers described giving gifted ELLs the
opportunity to develop, use, and explore higher-order thinking skills, as recommended for gifted
students in numerous educational models. These teachers saw the purposefulness of incorporating
these skills in the classroom:

*I wanted them to learn the content but at the same time as learning the content, that
they develop the skills of questioning, investigating, analysing, so, those important
skills that, you know, they're going to need when they move into Year 11 and 12
and further into life, whether that's at university or in work. But just that, the idea,
and I've spoken to them about this is just not accepting that the teacher's always
right. Always questioning (Sanjeev, Teacher, MHS).*

Jill from Riverview Secondary College expressed much frustration with students who
displayed the potential but lacked the motivation to excel and progress in English much faster
than they were doing simply because they were not taking advantage of all the opportunities
offered to them:

*They have a school diary which has a group of words in it for each week, and with
my Year 11 and 12 classes… they are only interested in their subject vocabulary
rather than life vocabulary. So every time I see them we have a vocab test on the
words that have been in the diary for that fortnight, and you'd be surprised at the
number of students who are phase one and two who haven't availed themselves of*

that opportunity. Some of them are really progressing. They're not only progressing at the vocab but in their ability to write a coherent sentence, but unfortunately it hasn't sunk in with some of them (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).

Sanjeev from McMahon High School noted that giving students some choice with their learning needed to be managed and developed:

No matter what type of activity I give them where possible I try to give them as much choice as possible, because I think especially with the selective class that I've got, that's the ones, you know, one of those skills they have to work on is have, is being in a position where they actually have to choose. Because they're just so used to "This is what I want" and they'll go away and do exactly that. But I think that skill, they've mastered it. Whereas there's other Year 7 students where that's the skill they have to work on, be able to follow a teacher's instruction and hand in work in the way that the teacher expects it to be handed in. Whereas with the selective kids it's the other way (Sanjeev, Teacher, MHS).

Teachers who worked with gifted ELLs acknowledged the individual strengths and challenges of each student, and strove to foster within each personal responsibility and independence with regards to their own learning. Interwoven with a genuine desire to offer support and assistance across a variety of language learning needs, these two facets of a teacher's role formed the foundation of their efforts in meeting the needs of gifted ELLs.

Validation of culture. As noted, any encounter between teacher and student is principally relational and in order to achieve and sustain these relationships teachers need an understanding of the cultural differences between their students and themselves. Students who participated in my inquiry spoke in praise of their teachers, describing what this understanding looked like from their point of view:

Teachers, teachers here are really nice, so… yeah, they understand how some people's not as good in English, and yeah, they like how, we can, we're like all different race and they don't, they're not racist, yeah (Hattie, Year 9, selective class, MGHS).

It was not only in the understanding of cultural differences that teachers were endeavouring to meet the needs of their gifted ELLs. Teachers also actively assisted students to develop their identity through their culture, by utilising opportunities to explore different cultural facets. Vanessa from Dickens Boys High School reflected:

I try to sometimes always link with their culture too, because it's very important that, you know, our boys are able to reflect their culture and say, "Well, there's two arms to your culture. There's your culture traditionally from the homeland, and then there's a culture in Australia." There's always an active art movement,

and this is what they're pursuing, the issues and the concepts (Vanessa, Deputy Principal, DBHS).

For teachers working in schools with high numbers of students from non-English speaking backgrounds, a rich understanding of the cultural diversity of their students is an asset. This understanding has been recognised by both students and teachers in my inquiry, and evidenced in annual school reports.

Teaching and learning strategies and approaches. Teachers and administrators participated in conversations throughout the interviews that described a variety of strategies and approaches that they used when working with gifted ELLs. These reflected in many instances the recommended teaching practices in NSW DET policy guidelines for both gifted students and ELLs.

Teachers spoke about the importance of taking their time to get to know their students' strengths and weaknesses and to create opportunities for learning both within the classroom and beyond. Often the learning opportunities came from people acting in the capacity of mentor or role model. At Dickens Boys High School, Vanessa described numerous approaches for connecting gifted students with their artistic passions, and of helping others to channel their ideas by forging connections with outside agencies where the mentoring process could be developed. Thus opportunities for learning were opened up for students in both their areas of giftedness and in their English-learning journey:

> *And [I] also look out in to the community. If I know someone in the community working in that field I might take them there or link them up with that person and say, "Well, you know, would you like to go and spend a day and just work with them?" (Vanessa, Deputy Principal, DBHS).*

Caroline shared her understanding of how important the celebration of teachers as mentors was at Riverview Secondary College:

> *But when [students] see teachers with passion they gravitate, they enjoy, and it's amazing how many students have a habit of going off to work in an area where they've had a passionate teacher. So it's about allowing teachers to follow their passions and to connect with the community or other resources, and again, gifted and talented students follow (Caroline, Principal, RSC).*

As well as promoting mentoring as a strategy to support gifted ELLs, several teachers were able to acknowledge success through their role as facilitator when working with their students. Those who described teachers this way used terms such as *influencers* to account for their role in their students' lives. Others described specific ways of teaching that evidenced this:

I try to structure my lessons with them in that way, for them to direct that learning and if they feel that I don't say something or if they don't agree with me, that they question me… and I found that now, getting into halfway in the year, they're starting to come out of their shell. And they are openly starting to question, so it's a good thing (Sanjeev, Teacher, MHS).

I encourage them to read because I think that is the very best way of extending their English vocabulary, sentence structure, and just the whole gamut of English skills by reading. We do a lot of vocab work because they feel comfortable knowing more words. But the problem with, you know, the jury's out a little bit with the vocab thing; if you give them a sheet of a hundred words then how many of them will they remember? But I do believe that looking up the dictionary and finding out the English definition of words – by all means they can put the translation in their own language – but the English definition is also very much required in those exercises. And their reading and listening will very much support the language that they have picked up in those sessions (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).

Just as a facilitator. Just to give them, open them up and say something that they mightn't be aware of. Say, "Well, you know, you could go along, as I said before, this line, you might think there's a…, these artists." … They can create amazing artworks. You just have to open their minds to that and let the students explore (Vanessa, Deputy Principal, DBHS).

From these conversations emerged multiple examples of teachers acting as facilitators to further develop student-directed learning. This trait, often identified with gifted students, was acknowledged to be a high priority amongst teachers. Mariella from Colonial Girls High School reflected on the nature of student-directed learning when describing a group of gifted ELLs who were working with a teacher on a project with the use of podcasts:

And so they would work on a project of some kind and she would try to make sure that they, you know, it was lateral thinking, that it wasn't just simply a rote thing, that they were given the opportunity to develop their creativity and also to express themselves in ways that they wouldn't necessarily be able to in the classroom (Mariella, ESL Teacher, CGHS).

Mariella from Colonial Girls High School found that gifted ELLs were good role models for their peers, highlighting methods of engaging them to facilitate learning for others:

You need to be able to recognise that they [gifted girls] are going to contribute more in their discussions in the classroom. That they may, that they're going to write more fluently, possibly, or use better vocabulary. The way I try to enable them to try and grow and develop is to call on them to lead discussion groups in the classroom, because they often catch on more quickly; then it's a good way for them to express their ideas and therefore gain confidence from that. But also, too, to be able to hone those skills so that the other members of the class can learn from them (Mariella, ESL Teacher, CGHS).

Vanessa from Dickens Boys High School summarised what all the educators interviewed unanimously believed was the key strategy or approach to supporting gifted ELLs:

> *The staff… the teachers are committed to extending the students and educating them in well-rounded education, not just content-driven. It's a whole lot of factors and it's probably really hard to put your finger on it, but it does work well (Vanessa, Deputy Principal, DBHS).*

Students voiced predominantly positive opinions about how teachers were assisting them with learning English, giving them support beyond the academic sphere, and honouring their culture. Teachers saw these elements as their core teaching business of working in multicultural schools and were aware that they could engage their students as gifted learners by creating opportunities and facilitating self-directed learning in and through the school environment and beyond into the broader world. Taken together, these findings facilitate a greater understanding of the value of both the professional and the interpersonal relationships between the teacher and the student in how teachers are striving to meet the needs of gifted ELLs.

Impediments to learning: the teachers' perspective

Teachers also had an opportunity to discuss and reflect on what they believed were the most significant challenges impacting on student learning. Conversations revealed issues that were prevalent across all education sectors and seen in all global settings, issues that included student underachievement, resistance to acculturation, socio-economic disadvantage, and funding and resourcing issues. Whilst these concerns impact on all students, educators presented descriptions of how these concerns impeded the learning of gifted ELLs in their own educational settings.

Underachievement. Educators gave a detailed analysis of where they clearly saw that gifted ELLs were underachieving, either due to limitations in English impacting on written communication skills or because of internal motivational factors. Marcus described specific traits centred on traditional weaknesses such as the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary:

> *We find that while a few of our students in Year 7 will still have the fairly common issues in terms of subject–verb agreement, use of tenses, occasionally use of prepositions, by the times you're moving up into Years 9, 10, 11 you're looking at students who are attempting to possibly over-nominalise in their essays as they are attempting to meet a perceived standard and they're going for a certain formality which is not comfortable for them, and therefore they are having difficulties with this. Or again because of limitations in their vocabulary at an academic level,*

limitations which would not have functioned if English were their native language, then they simply don't have the skills of that stage of development to write at the level we are challenging them to write at (Marcus, Deputy Principal, MGHS).

Teachers, too, noted that the limitations in gifted ELLs' English also had a negative impact on their full participation in school life. When discussing involvement in extra-curricular activities, one teacher noted that not all ELLs accessed these options:

They are encouraged to do so, but not always willing, because, until they get into the comfort zone of being an English speaker, they shun some of those things in preference to hanging around with students from their own culture (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).

The underachievement of gifted ELLs appeared to frustrate many educators as demonstrated by the vigour with which it was discussed and the regret that was evidenced when describing possibilities:

The school has had a lot of success, I think, with students of high ability. I would like us to be able to reach those students with high ability who are not achieving. And to do that I think we really need to look at different teaching styles. The students in our school that do well are the students who are eager to learn, who work very hard, and so on. Sometimes you get the gifted student who is bored and maybe doesn't like that teaching style of, you know, teacher talk, teacher homework, and who needs some sort of a different method. I think they're the ones that we need to be able to reach (Mariella, ESL Teacher, CGHS).

It is important to acknowledge the difference between the underachievement of gifted ELLs due to insufficient English skills and underachievement due to personal and motivational factors. Both of these challenges have been identified in this inquiry as well as covered in the literature as separate topics; however little research exists in the Australian context.

Resistance to acculturation. Teachers identified some broader impediments to learning, which they considered as key factors in slowing student progress. Of these, resistance to acculturation was noted as being significant, often demonstrated in pathways and choices made by students as a response to dealing with their new situations. This resistance was recognised as having a flow-on effect that impacted on their learning. ESL teachers reflected on the matter:

Although many of those [students] were born here, a big percentage of those actually do still speak their first language at home, which obviously limits their ability to immerse themselves in English. Some of them speak absolutely no English outside of the school, and even so, in the school, every lunchtime and recess they would be with the friends of their own language (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).

A student can be gifted but not necessarily progress quickly, I've discovered. Sometimes those who are very intelligent, when they arrive in the country feel

thwarted. Their learning styles have changed, or need to change, and so they're faced with the difficulty of suddenly having to present their ideas in a language that they're not comfortable with and so some of them stop talking. Some of them play up. It causes all sorts of different reactions. Some of them just grab the ball and run with it because this is their new life and so on. So the fact that they're really intelligent doesn't mean that they're all going to learn their new language and learn in their new language at the same pace (Mariella, ESL Teacher, CGHS).

Part of the acculturation problem appeared to rest with the schools themselves. Jill from Riverview Secondary College noted:

The gifted ones.... I think we could possibly do a little better culturally for the newly arrived gifted students. There is so much that they don't know about this place and about what is required, and I think textbook stuff explains history, and that sort of thing; but the actual reasons, and why we do things, and what we actually do is a little bit lacking. I think there is no more time to do more; possibly a different focus. I don't know, some of them immerse themselves in such a way that they get that anyway; you know, they've been to the zoo, they've been on the harbour, they've climbed the [Sydney Harbour] Bridge. Obviously unlimited funds, that would be a wonderful thing to be able to do on some kind of excursion, but the way the curriculum is for the senior students who come here and stay in homestay or, you know, with people that are not really their family, it's really difficult. There's financial constraints. And I would like to see them know who Banjo Paterson is, know who Kylie Minogue is, and actors, and musicians… Because they won't be truly successful as people if they can't have a conversation with someone about popular culture. And I feel I should be able to do a lot better at that, but with time and money being issues, I don't know (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).

Acculturation has become a topic of much debate in recent years in an increasingly globalised world, impacting not only on the learning journey of gifted ELLs but also on understandings of their place in the world. It also forms part of the development of their interstitial identity, a significant concept impacting on gifted ELLs reported in the previous chapter.

Socio-economic disadvantage. Individual and family circumstances that impact negatively on a student's learning and future potential have also been considered as impediments to learning. In some situations adverse circumstances that have arisen have been a direct result of socio-economic disadvantage. Refugee students, whilst not the main focus of my inquiry, are particularly susceptible to the ravages of socio-economic disadvantage. Jill from Riverview Secondary College gave her impression of one student (not available to participate in my inquiry):

We've got to understand where these kids come from. We have a student here, a refugee. He's a delightful young man, but he brings with him all these things that have happened to him, all the things he's seen and all the things that've been done

to him. And he came here on a boat by himself. None of his family. He's staying
with some people in the local area and that's why he comes to us, but how he can
actually focus on learning in our environment when all of these things have
happened to him is just a miracle (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).

At Dickens Boys High School teachers were constantly dealing with the impact of socio-economic disadvantage. With an ICSEA of 972 where the mean is 1000, Dickens Boys High School's index was the second-lowest of the participating schools. Teachers at Dickens considered some of the barriers to learning faced by their students, including socio-economic constraints:

I think that the students who do come to this school, from all different backgrounds,
want to learn. Sometimes there are barriers in their way. Very very rarely they're
just naughty students, there are socio-economic barriers. And if we can help them
and they do see that and they appreciate it (Vanessa, Deputy Principal, DBHS).

At Dickens Boys High School students faced a multitude of challenges arising from disadvantage that went beyond those traditionally falling within the sphere of influence of the school. The case of Benjamin illustrated this (Frame 6.2).

Frame 6.2

Benjamin's story (Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS)

"So I guess when you come to school and you, they didn't see the smile in your eyes, you have
something, yeah."

Benjamin is currently enrolled at Dickens Boys High School. His unique story highlighted the diversity among gifted ELLs as well as presenting as a story of determination and success through support and assistance. Benjamin faces significant personal and economic disadvantage in his current situation.

When Benjamin arrived in Australia from Kenya in 2010 he was an unaccompanied minor, perhaps 15 years old, his age unknown. He first went to live with his uncle before moving in with his natural father who had come previously to Australia. His father enrolled him in school where he began to learn English. He was then forced to go and live with his uncle again, but until his uncle was ready to move into new housing, he was placed with his uncle's friend, who sent him to TAFE. He reflects:

This guy is like he doesn't have much education, so I went to TAFE, and then there I just went TAFE. I
don't know I was doing there. So I went there and I was kinda confused but I meet up with this lady.
She asked me, "Are you looking for someone?" I said, "I am looking for advisor, any kind of
advisor." They took me to this person and then you was very friendly, so I talk to him. I said, "I want

to go back to school." And then he gave me address of a Boys School. So then I went straight to a Boys' [School] and then I talk to the teachers and see if they can let me in. And then yes, they did.

Benjamin then moved in with his uncle, who had asked him to pay half the bond money and half the rent, though the uncle was employed and Benjamin was at school. Benjamin took himself to the nearest high school to enrol, but as he was out of area he was redirected to Dickens Boys High School where he was accepted. At Dickens, Benjamin is assisted with textbooks, uniforms, stationery, transport costs, breakfast and lunch expenses, and extra-curricular activities are also funded by the school.

Benjamin is grateful that the school offers him the opportunity to participate regardless of his personal or financial circumstances. He thinks Dickens Boys High School is a good school:

Because the teachers understand you, and every… yeah, they understand when you are in a good mood and when you are in a bad mood. So I guess when you come to school and you, they didn't see the smile in your eyes, you have something, yeah.

School resources and funding. Educators were outspoken when discussing issues such as school funding, resources, and support, especially in describing how continuation of funding might assist students to further develop their potential. Their major concern was that the limited funding only allows students to reach a functional stage of English language development, and is often discontinued at this point without regard to a student's potential. Marcus from Minerva Girls High School described in great detail the dilemma faced by his school with regards to accessing ESL funding for gifted ELLs (Frame 6.3), whilst Jill from Riverview Secondary College acknowledged the shortcomings of limited government funding:

> *I feel that funding is an issue. I feel that the federal government whom, I believe, is responsible for making money available for us to help the newly arrived students, particularly of course the talented ones whom you can go so far with, you can really get a long way with those kids and they can make such a commitment to our society with all that they've got to offer and their potential. But I feel that if the Commonwealth Government isn't going to keep up with the numbers of these students that we have in our schools and fund appropriately then we're letting them down but we're also letting ourselves down (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).*

In addition to financial support, time is also a resource that teachers would like to have more of in order to fully support gifted ELLs:

> *So I think time is still a factor that really sort of prevents real sort of teaching quality, and you know, like challenging them in the way that I'd probably like to be*

*able to. So, you know, that's probably one thing that I'd like to be able to do is just
have more time (Sanjeev, Teacher, MHS).*

Frame 6.3

Marcus's dilemma (Deputy Principal, MGHS)

***"We're predominantly dealing with students who are … still underperforming in terms of their
cognitive functioning in relationship to their performance in non-language-based subjects."***

For students from Minerva Girls High School, being in a selective high school is not always an
advantage in terms of receiving additional support. Due to the restructuring of funding formulas for
financial support for ELLs the school lost its ESL-assigned teacher at the end of 2010 and now
employs a part-time literacy-based teacher using funding made available through the generosity of the
school's Parents and Citizens Association. Marcus, the Deputy Principal, explains the situation:

*Now obviously, because our students are gifted and talented because they have passed the gifted and
talented entry requirements to get into this school, their functioning levels of oracy in English and
also their functioning levels of writing are quite high. Where we find that we have a particular issue is
that we might have a student who cognitively, in non-language-based areas, is quite competently
scoring in band 6 for example, but they may in fact be scoring high band 4 or band 5 in humanities-
based subjects where they are expected to write at length because they simply lack some of those
subtle nuances of the language and so are not able to communicate as effectively their high-level
perceptions, and so yes they are performing still well above state average, and that's why certainly the
Department of Education and Communities removed ultimately the support we had.*

Marcus believes that inadequate comparisons are being made:

*Because when you compare us across the state, my students are more competent than many native
speakers. But if you're looking at that student achieving her personal best then there are certainly
cases which are clearly identified where they are underachieving because of certain limitations in
their language functioning.*

The school is striving to support students who it sees are being impeded in their learning because of
language concerns:

*At that particular level it's quite challenging and demanding because we're not looking at quite basic
functioning as you would for example if you were trying to move someone from a first-phase learner
to a second-phase learner, or even second phase to third phase, but we're predominantly dealing with
students who are either quite late third-phase learners or in fact even slightly beyond that but still
underperforming in terms of their cognitive functioning in relationship to their performance in non-
language-based subjects.*

Marcus would like to see assistance aimed not just at students reaching a satisfactory level of
functioning but one where they are fully functioning and are fully able to exploit their potential as
gifted and talented students.

Table 6.1

Educational Needs of Gifted ELLs: Teacher Perspectives

	Educational Needs of Gifted ELLs: Teacher Perspectives	
The teacher's role	• Quality teaching and learning • Mentor and role model • More financial support and extra time	
Pastoral support	• Assistance with broader life skills • Counselling and personal support • Dealing with socio-economic disadvantage: individual and family circumstances	
Learning through English and about English	• Academic support with learning English, particularly grammar and vocabulary • Support beyond a functional stage of English language development • Academic support across all learning areas	
Self-management and support	• Assisting students to set and meet personal learning challenges and goals • Higher-order thinking skills as a framework for students becoming independent learners • Management and support of learning choices • Avoiding underachievement due to insufficient English skills and/or personal and motivational factors	
Cultural understandings	• Understanding of cultural differences between students and teachers • Assistance with the development of their own cultural identities • Development of interstitial identity	
Teaching and learning strategies and approaches	• Teacher familiarisation with students' strengths and challenges • Creation of opportunities for learning within and beyond the classroom • Teachers as facilitators and influencers • Development of students as good role models for peers	

The impediments to learning discussed by educators highlighted concerns that have been also identified in the general literature with regards to both ELL and gifted populations of students. Issues such as underachievement due to lack of English proficiency or motivational factors, difficulties encountered during the acculturation process, including resistance, general challenges brought about by socio-economic disadvantage, and insufficient funding and time allocations to support gifted ELLs were discussed. Educators were aware that these challenges impeded the development of the full potential of gifted ELLs, and reflected on the possible impact of missed opportunities for their students' capacity to learn as well as their futures.

The role of the school

The key stakeholder with a legislated responsibility to meet the needs of all its students is the individual school where each student is enrolled. As noted in the first chapter it is understood that the balance of power with regards to meeting students' educational needs lies with the educational institution, with students having only a minor say. With this responsibility firmly laid at the doorstep of the school it was important in my inquiry to examine at some length what that entailed.

The major findings with regards to the school's role in meeting the needs of its gifted ELLs emerged from the perceptions and understandings of key educational stakeholders as well as from the schools' annual reports and education department policy guidelines. Some research-based provisions that had been put into place in schools were identified, and it was acknowledged that a variety of alternatives had been explored by schools in their endeavours to accommodate not only gifted ELLs but all students with their diverse needs. Schools were validated in terms of their corporate knowledge and how it informed decisions made for and on behalf of gifted ELLs, based on the identification of where the most essential support was needed and how funding could best be distributed. Schools had in place programs and practices arising from policy documents for both gifted students and ELLs, and on the whole had periodically examined and revised their school policies in terms of gifted education and how these related to the specific needs of gifted ELLs, particularly in those schools with high ELL numbers. Schools had also investigated some research-based gifted education models, streamlined identification processes, and facilitated grouping arrangements for their students. Selective high schools had explored the purposes and benefits of operating under their specific model, whilst comprehensive schools had discussed differentiation and how it functioned, particularly when making adjustments to the curriculum for

their gifted ELLs' needs, including their English abilities and requirements. A full summary of these findings can be found at the end of the section in Table 6.2.

Corporate action and knowledge. Students, teachers, and administrators spoke at length and with great pride of the efforts and strategies that had been put into place by schools as institutions to meet the educational needs of gifted ELLs. They also acknowledged who the drivers of these strategies were and how that knowledge was created, shared, and used to the benefit of gifted ELLs. Teachers firmly acknowledged that the school had an obligation to meet the needs of all its students, including those who were gifted and ELLs, and that they themselves were an organic part of the institution whose responsibility it was to facilitate the meeting of these needs.

Vanessa gave an example of an experience that Dickens Boys High School had been able to facilitate for one of her gifted ELLs. With links made to create mentoring opportunities outside the traditional school boundaries, over time some unintended consequences arose:

> *I had one student one year, he was creating a model… He was in Year 12… he wanted to be an architect and he was creating this work and it was quite ordered and structured, but there was no creativity in it. And his technique of model-making was – he wanted to make a model – and I said, "Why don't you go… I've got this friend who is a model-maker. Go and spend a day and at least you can have a look at the technique." And he came back with, "Look, I can… this is… you can do… and you can use this… and you can do this… and you can do that…" And from then, he just created this amazing cityscape which was like a relief painting and he framed it in a gold frame and then he had this sculpture growing out of it. It was just amazing. So if he hadn't had that opportunity, he probably wouldn't have gone down that road, you know; he stepped out of the school into the real world and then used that learning and brought it back into the school. And he went on to do some amazing things. And in fact he gave back to the school because I asked him years later to come back and do a workshop with some of the students on the techniques he'd learnt (Vanessa, Deputy Principal, DBHS).*

Educators spoke not only about the corporate action, but also about the corporate knowledge that was created, accessed, and shared in order to inform better teaching and learning and for the creation of further opportunities for gifted ELLs. Concerns were raised that support drivers such as staff members who were passionate about gifted education were only as effective as their continued commitment to a school or project, and that there was a very real possibility of the knowledge being diminished:

That's sort of what I've been working with others to come up with programs and things like that and different policies… I suppose with my background, with my qualifications, I've sort of been doing a lot of the driving as far as that's concerned. We've got other staff here who do have experience with gifted and talented too, and so they have input into what happens…but I can see that certainly, I think gifted and talented is one of those areas where you need someone, an individual to drive it, otherwise it can go by the wayside. And I think, part of my role is to make sure that, if I end up leaving the school, or if others end up leaving the school that do have the corporate knowledge as far as both gifted and talented are concerned, that we have procedures and policies in place that someone else can pick up those roles (Robert, Head Teacher, CGHS).

Both corporate action and corporate knowledge were evidenced time and again in conversations with educators. Numerous endeavours and offerings were noted across schools, not limited to but including efforts to showcase students who excelled in the academic, cultural, and sporting areas. Annual school reports also celebrated the significant achievements of their gifted students in these various domains. Indeed, it has been noted how each school's report is used as a typical way of honouring and acknowledging student success in any given school year for the appreciation of the wider school community and the validation of the school's programs.

Policies and models. Policy development and educational models for gifted and talented ELLs had been considered to varying degrees across the participant schools. At the time of interview the participant schools operated under the direction of the NSW DEC which used the NSW DET, Curriculum K–12 Directorate's *Policy and Implementation Strategies for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students* (2004a) for gifted students, including ELLs, and the NSW DET, Multicultural Programs Unit's *English as a Second Language: Guidelines for Schools* (2004) for EAL/D students, including gifted students.

The 2004 policy document for gifted education arose as a response to the findings from the 2001 Senate inquiry into the education of gifted and talented students in Australian schools and replaced the Department's 1991 Policy for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students (New South Wales Department of School Education (NSW DoSE, 1991). This 16-page document contains nine pages of policy and its reference page cites the 2003 version of Gagné's DMGT, the Board of Studies' guidelines for acceleration from 2000, a Department paper into quality teaching in NSW public schools, and the 1991 policy and its implementation strategies paper.

The abstract of this document names the identification of gifted and talented students and the maximisation of their learning outcomes as its main aim (p. 5). The definition in the abstract of the terms *giftedness* and *talent* echoes Gagné's DMGT 2.0. It lays the responsibility for

identification procedures and developmentally appropriate programs with school communities, whilst apportioning the responsibility for professional learning to state and regional levels in addition to school communities. The Director-General is nominated as having the final responsibility for monitoring, evaluating, and reporting on outcomes and policy implementation.

The context section commences with a global statement about the responsibility of all NSW government schools to educate all students to their full potential regardless of cultural or socio-economic backgrounds (p. 5). It also references students who are underachieving or have disabilities, and cautions against cultural bias in identification processes. It lists as its main aim to provide developmentally appropriate programs. These all-inclusive statements, whilst only making a degree of reference to students from non-English speaking backgrounds, can be interpreted as encompassing this population of students.

The definitions section gives a brief overview of Gagné's DMGT and promotes the need for gifted and talented students to receive "appropriate opportunity, stimulation and experiences to develop their potential" (p. 6). Language proficiency is listed as an intrapersonal factor that can serve as either a catalyst or impediment that can "help or hinder the recognition of giftedness and the development of talent" (p. 6). Other environmental factors are also listed. Cultural identity is mentioned independently as affecting the recognition of gifts and the development of particular talents. Consideration of "perspectives that reflect the values and beliefs of different cultures" (p. 6) is suggested. This recognition of student diversity that encompasses aspects that are relevant and particular to gifted ELLs suggests that some consideration of the needs of this group has been taken into account when formulating definitions. Underachievement is also described here and is linked back to intrapersonal and environmental factors.

The policy statement itself is more complex, listing the distribution of responsibility for factors such as identification, provision of opportunities, monitoring and evaluation of programs, implementation of teaching strategies, coordination of school provisions, opportunities for staff development, and accountability. Responsibility is allocated to school communities, teachers, regions, and schools, and ultimately the Director-General (p. 7). The procedures and standards section addresses each of these points individually. The remaining sections of the document address regional and school responsibilities for gifted and talented students and cover the areas of provisions, organisational structures, and lines of responsibility (p. 12), as well as outlining processes and procedures for staff development opportunities (p. 13). The document concludes with overarching responsibilities in terms of accountability, monitoring, and oversight of the policy (p. 13). These statements are kept broad and make no comment about diverse populations.

The focus of this document is on appropriate identification methods as well as the modification of teaching strategies to meet the needs of identified gifted students, and it indicates clearly the allocation of lines of responsibility to different stakeholders.

The NSW DET, Multicultural Programs Unit offered in 2004 the document *English as a second language: Guidelines for schools,* a 22-page resource outlining procedures for the operation and management of ESL programs in NSW public schools including IECs and the Intensive English High School. It is associated with the *Multicultural Education Policy* (NSW DET, Multicultural Programs Unit, 2005) which in its turn was a much needed revision of the 1983 *Multicultural Education Policy Statement* (NSW Department of Education, 1983). The current guidelines highlight the learning of English as being "an essential requirement for success both at school and for further education, training and employment for students who speak a language other than English as their first language" (p. 1). The document notes that ESL programs are delivered in schools "in a variety of ways to meet the different needs of ESL students at different stages of learning English" (p. 1). Support is delivered through two linked specific-purpose programs: the ESL Targeted Support Program, and the ESL New Arrivals Program, the latter also providing support "for newly arrived students of high school age through the secondary Intensive English Program in IECs and the IEHS" (p. 1). With this broad introduction it is possible to assume that this support includes meeting the needs of gifted ELLs.

In section two the document outlines the specific roles and responsibilities of the stakeholders involved in the education of ELLs, with a determined focus on the English language and literacy learning of the students in order to achieve the outcomes of the key learning areas (p. 3). No distinction is made as to differentiated needs of gifted ELLs, despite extensive descriptors regarding students' diverse range of backgrounds and English-learning needs.

In section three the document categorises students into three broad phases of English language learning — first, second, and third phase — in order to establish a baseline for funding, support, and priorities within schools. The phase descriptors include rich detail with regards to communicative competency (see Table 4.4) and are broadly based on Cummins' (1979) distinctions between social and academic language acquisition in second-language learners. Known as BICS (basic interpersonal communication skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency) (Cummins, 2008), they give temporal indicators of when students are expected to move beyond each phase, listing these as "a general guide" (p. 6). The time taken for movement between the phases is described as being influenced by factors that include previous educational experiences, first-language literacy skills, and previous learning of English (p. 5). No

mention is made of individual ability or potential to move more quickly through the phases if the student is gifted in this area. Furthermore, any reference made to faster progression through the phases is solely attributed to uninterrupted learning prior to coming to Australia versus disrupted prior schooling (p. 5). Again no consideration of a student's potential for accelerated acquisition of English is noted and this lack of depth as evidenced in this section keeps the subject mute.

The guidelines that follow advocate for the learning of English to occur in context and across the curriculum through integration into the different subject areas (p. 7). Special mention is made of the need for students to gain an understanding of and develop competency in the use of the grammatical structures and features of English as well as an understanding of the social conventions and cultural contexts of the school and the wider community. Scaffolded support and appropriate modelling in context are the recommended strategies for teachers to implement with a view to the development of the independent use of language through supported practice. Prior language and cultural learning are to be recognised by teachers as valuable resources for the transfer of knowledge and skills into the English context (p. 7) but the document is silent on how this transfer might occur.

Curriculum frameworks and ESL-referenced syllabus documents are noted as being available to primary and high schools to help ESL teachers integrate teaching and learning (p. 9). These include references to the *English K-6 Syllabus* and *ESL Steps: ESL Curriculum Framework K-6* in the primary years, and the *English 7-10 Syllabus* in the high school years. A HSC English (ESL) course is also available for students who have been studying in English for five or fewer years, whist those with more than five years of instruction can enrol in the English (Standard) or English (Advanced) courses (p. 9). No mention is made of the opportunity for students with a period of fewer than five years to undertake the Standard or Advanced courses (though teachers in my inquiry mentioned that some students did take English Advanced).

Section four of the guidelines covers the different delivery modes of ESL programs in schools based around varying student needs and appropriate organisational arrangements (p. 10). A group of tables is provided with examples of models, with specific and practical examples listed (p. 11). This section concludes with factors that need to be considered by schools when determining the appropriate modes of ESL program delivery (p. 12). Mention is made of the students' educational background and literacy skills in their first language or English, as well as references to mostly administrative procedures focused on numbers of students from different categories (no previous experience of English, anticipated IEC transfers, and new arrivals). No

reference is made in terms of student potential; indeed, the entire section appears to centre on deficit levels of English as well as numbers of students for economically rationalist purposes.

Section five describes the bureaucratic processes and procedures for the allocation and prioritisation of funding and staffing for ESL teachers (p. 13), including access to Commonwealth Government funding for the ESL New Arrivals Program. The greatest weighting is given to first-phase ESL learners, and again, the baseline referent to determine allocation of funding is the length of time students have studied in an Australian school, not their individual levels of proficiency or individual learning needs.

Section six outlines the on-arrival short-term ESL teacher support available for newly arrived students, with an outline of the provisions of the IECs and the IEHS in section seven. Support is determined at a mere three hours per week of intensive ESL instruction for each eligible student, generally for two terms but which can be extended for up to three terms (p. 15) whilst the IECs and the IEHS have other arrangements. Multicultural/ESL consultants and the Multicultural Programs Unit are available to give professional advice.

The final section of this document details the professional support that is available for schools, including a range of professional learning programs (none noted as being specifically for gifted ELLs) as well as the multicultural and ESL support personnel who can be accessed at regional level, though regions no longer exist in the present time. These include Multicultural/ESL consultants, Community Information Officers, the Multicultural Programs Unit, as well as interpreting and translating services (pp. 20–21). It concludes with the training and qualifications that are expected for ESL teachers and notes flexible approaches to how these qualifications can be gained. The document concludes with a variety of references to other NSW Department of Education documents as well as contact details for relevant bodies mentioned in the document.

This comprehensive document posits a framework around which school personnel can make decisions to meet the immediate language needs of ESL students as well as providing other immediate orientation and settlement support. The development of a phase model allows for an expected English-language-learning trajectory for ELLs to be qualified in order for funding and staffing arrangements to be quantified. It takes into account the diversity of the learner insofar as a consideration of first-language background, and accounts for a small range of limiting factors and impairments as impinging upon learning. This deficit view of the ELLs' needs, however, allows little scope to account for provisions for gifted ELLs.

With these gifted and talented and ESL policies in place since 2004, educators from participating schools shared more current responses to school needs, as evidenced through interviews and annual school reports. Riverview Secondary College had recently focused on exploring changes to school policies of benefit to all its students, whilst Dickens Boys High School took into account on a daily basis the socio-economic challenges and cultural barriers faced by its students. Selective schools such as Minerva Girls High School operated under the restrictions of reduced funding for ESL students, however, had been able to fund support through other means. Colonial Girls High School had dedicated extensive time and personnel to re-working its position on the education of its gifted and talented students. From exploring identification practices for Year 7 students to offering professional learning on differentiation, Colonial Girls High School at the time of interview was deep in the process of engaging in transformation with regards to gifted and talented education:

> *I think at this stage, because we're probably in a fairly early stage of implementing our gifted and talented policies, it has been that sort of staggered approach as far as, you know, implementing things gradually, step by step, I suppose. Certainly want to make sure that our 8s to 10s are catered for but I think hopefully with the way that we've had a very fairly structured professional learning and cultural approach to the school in a sense that we initially looked at knowing each student, so knowing what the background of each student as far as their academic ability and their learning background. Now we're in the process of differentiating to those different levels. So that the sort of direction from here is that differentiation, and I suppose, you know, you can't differentiate unless you've identified those you want to differentiate to (Robert, Head Teacher, CGHS).*

Several schools made reference to the implementation and exploration of different gifted education models, however, only one staff member alluded to any particular model by its name. Whilst educational authorities in NSW have made reference through policy to practical arrangements for the support of gifted students, there is limited endorsement of any one model or program to be implemented in schools and classrooms other than Gagné's DMGT 2.0 that serves more of an overarching purpose. Some specific models are discussed in the NSW DET, Curriculum K–12 Directorate's *Policy and implementation strategies for the education of gifted and talented students: Curriculum differentiation* (2004d), however, their implementation is not mandated and is expected to occur at each school's discretion. Schools, therefore, have been placed in the position of exploring, developing, trialling, and implementing for themselves various formats and models.

Regardless of models being implemented, feedback regarding the participation of ELLs in school-developed gifted and talented programs was nevertheless positive:

I had three students at that time from my Year 9 ESL class who joined the [gifted and talented] program. And it was wonderful. They really had the opportunity to soar, if you like, and they were not disadvantaged by the fact that they were in an ESL class and they had less English than the other students. And I think that it was a really good thing that they were recognised as being, you know, gifted and talented, even though English was not their first language. We have a stigma which I find almost impossible to eradicate that if you can't speak English then you're dumb (Mariella, ESL Teacher, CGHS).

The relationship between policy documents over a decade old and current arrangements in schools highlights the evolution of practices over time and justifies the diverse approaches currently being taken to meet the needs of gifted ELLs. Schools demonstrated dynamic and individual responses to current needs, navigating with limited funding and resources the increasing demands of a more diverse corps of students, with the hopes of making a significant contribution to the lives of their students.

Identification. With reference to the identification of gifted students, particular note is made in NSW DET, Curriculum K–12 Directorate's (2004a) gifted and talented policy of the diversity of learners and the requirement for specialised approaches to this process (p. 8) for students from non-English speaking and culturally diverse backgrounds. In this policy, teachers are allocated direct responsibility for the identification of a student's giftedness, but are to be supported in the process by other members of the gifted and talented committee and the gifted and talented coordinator. Whilst listing a range of identification methods, including the consideration of culturally appropriate measures of ability, it notes the importance of not overlooking students from minority populations (p. 11). Colonial Girls High School, with approximately 89% of its students coming from a language background other than English (the highest percentage of the participating schools) followed policy directives and used findings from current research when developing its approach to the identification of its students into Year 7 (its intake year) and diversified its processes to encompass networking with its feeder primary schools (Frame 6.4).

Not all gifted ELLs, however, are identified, despite policy directives and the processes put in place. In some cases being unidentified was a personal or parental choice and undertaken with prejudice. At Riverview Secondary College, for example, despite having two selective classes and a gifted and talented class in each year level, some gifted ELLs completed their schooling in a mainstream class:

Frame 6.4

Robert's plans (Head Teacher, CGHS)

"And basically from that we, from matrices tests and the tests that we do on-line at the school and the NAPLAN results we form a preliminary list of who we think might be…"

Robert shared the background to the decision to explore alternative identification procedures:

Previously what had happened with the formation of Year 7 classes is that they were purely based on a comprehensive approach where there was mixed ability across all classes and I put to the executive last year that I didn't necessarily think that our gifted students were being met as far as their needs in class, because staff awareness in terms of differentiation weren't as good as what they could be…

It was decided to explore the identification of gifted students before they entered the school:

What happens is that the students who are looking at enrolling in the school, we have days that they come in for orientation. So we've got our traditional orientation day where they meet, greet, etc, but we also have an informal testing, trying to get to know them a little bit more effectively. So we do learning-style quizzes, we do some similar sort of NAPLAN quizzes as well. And also we do the Raven's Matrices, Progressive Matrices test because that's obviously not language intensive and it means that, you know, if a student hasn't got a fantastic grasp of the English language we can still, to some extent, recognise what their cognitive ability is based on that test. So obviously we don't use that entirely but it helps us to form judgment on where they might be. We also have access to their NAPLAN data from Year 5 so we use those performance scores as well. And basically from that we, from matrices tests and the tests that we do on-line at the school and the NAPLAN results we form a preliminary list of who we think might be, might be able to put them into that class.

Plans are being considered for more extensive data collection on students:

We probably didn't do it that well this year but what we certainly are looking at it for Year 7 next year is talking with primary school teachers more effectively. And I suppose what makes it hard for us is that we have more than 40 feeder schools and so there's a lot of different teachers to get in contact in that regard. So yeah, we need to put a process around doing that. But we also want to look at reports and grades and things like that, but at the same time recognise that gifted and talented students might not necessarily.., or gifted students might not necessarily produce excellent performance, for instance.

Once identified, further plans can be decided upon:

Basically once we've got that information we'll, the gifted and talented team looks at the overall picture of the different tests and things like that and then we try and do some sort of classification. And the idea is that we will also, based on this classification, we will interview the students we think could be in the class and then we use all that information to form a judgment on how many students we think are eligible to be in the class.

We have had great results from mainstream students, so there are clearly some parents whose students probably could qualify for gifted and talented who choose not to, and some of those parents are very much aware of the demotivating effects of being labelled G and T. And then once you're with a whole lot of other GAT students sometimes the motivation is diminished for various reasons: anxiety, competition, a whole host of reasons. So sometimes our top students have been in the mainstream classes… (Caroline, Principal, RSC).

Schools that participated in this inquiry used a variety of practices, from selective school entrance tests to other normed tests, as well as student product, professional observations, and staff nominations, among others. Non-selective schools in particular acknowledged these identification measures were an on-going concern that needed refining and improving upon, an endeavour a number of schools were undertaking.

Accommodations. Educators went to some lengths to describe the types of accommodations their schools had considered for their gifted students including streaming, acceleration, ability grouping, selective-school entry, and curriculum alternatives. These types of accommodations are consistent with the literature and reflect the recommendations of the NSW DEC's policies (NSW DET, Curriculum K–12 Directorate, 2004b; 2004d). A section of the NSW DET's (2004) gifted and talented policy highlights practices regarding curriculum differentiation, acceleration, and grouping strategies for gifted students (p. 10). It makes reference to a Board of Studies document revised in 2000 regarding guidelines for accelerated progression. A 2004 support package on acceleration devised by the NSW DET also exists (NSW DET, Curriculum K–12 Directorate, 2004b) but this is a broad document and makes no comment about diverse groups of gifted learners.

Robert reflected on some of the acceleration practices at Colonial Girls High School that he felt required further investigation:

Acceleration is also something which we would probably need to wrap up a process around a little bit more effectively, so we acknowledge that, you know, those that are moderately or exceptionally gifted should be maybe accelerated a whole grade. And also provisions for students that might need to, say for instance, take on a Year 11 subject when they're in Year 9 for instance, so they can be accelerated if they've got the ability there. That's a process that we need to put in place more effectively at the moment. At this stage it's been fairly, I wouldn't say an ad hoc approach but… It's where the student comes to one of the senior executives and says "I'd like to skip up a level" rather than a process that is put in place by which we identify students that might be able to do that. And I think the other thing as well, and I suppose it comes back to professional learning as well, is

making sure that the program is, you know, the learning programs are being compacted for the gifted and talented students (Robert, Head Teacher, CGHS).

Both comprehensive and partially selective schools described some of the streaming arrangements that they had implemented that were of benefit to gifted ELLs. Colonial Girls High School had recently ventured into this area (Frame 6.5).

Frame 6.5

Robert's venture (Head Teacher, CGHS)

"It's sort of a phase-in approach that we're looking at."

At Colonial Girls High School the streaming of the Year 7 classes has been a recent venture at the school. Robert describes the setting:

Up until midway through last year we didn't… there wasn't a lot of formal structure around arrangements for gifted and talented students, and I suppose I'll preface this by saying because we have 87% language background other than English most of our gifted and talented students are from a non-English speaking background. And so any processes that we do put in place obviously have that in mind.

He explains the processes:

What arrangements exist are as of half-way through last year. We decided that our Year 7, one of our Year 7 classes would be streamed, and that was not based on a set number. So we didn't say, "Okay, we want 25, the 25 best to be in the class." We used a process by which we identified those which we believed to be gifted and talented, and then however many numbers we came up with the class was formed based on that number. So we've got one class in Year 7 where they are in one class all the time so they have the same students in English, Maths, across the spectrum.

Robert plans for these streaming arrangements to continue:

We rationalised it by saying that we should begin with our Year 7s so that we've got a process by which they're coming into the school and they're being identified early. And I suppose the idea was that we would try to get across to the 8s through 12s later on this year; so get the process right for Year 7 and then move over to, into the other students. We're probably not quite at that point yet so I guess it's sort of a phase-in approach that we're looking at.

The opportunity for entry into a selective high school via specific and rigorous criteria was discussed by some participants as an appropriate accommodation for gifted learners. At Minerva Girls High School, for example, two students who gained a place via the selective high school's entrance examinations saw this as a major achievement. Arriving in Australia with very little English, committing to learning English and then sitting the examinations with no concessions for their ELL status appeared to be a feat in itself for Hattie and Anna. Gaining entry

into the school based on the outcomes of those exam results was a testament to the girls' efforts, abilities, and commitments, as well as the support and contributions of their families and tutors.

Offerings for gifted students also included curriculum alternatives, such as those being offered at Colonial Girls High School (Frame 6.6). This type of accommodation presented students with the opportunity to utilise higher-order thinking skills and make cross-curricular connections.

Frame 6.6

Robert's course (Head Teacher, CGHS)

"The skills which we've set up around the course are very much your higher-order things…"

At Colonial Girls High School a new Board-endorsed course is being written for gifted and talented students in Years 9 and 10 that will be available as an option. Structured as a 200-hour program, the course will run over two years and is based around different ways of thinking. Robert explains:

It's called "Revolution of Thought" and it's looking at throughout history at different eras in which there's different ways of thinking, and the way that the students can then make connections with those different ways of thinking. So, for instance, one of the periods we're looking at is something like the Renaissance and the different ways of thinking that have resulted from the Renaissance and how students might gain a better understanding about their metacognition and the way that they think.

The course is multidisciplinary and includes a novel study as well:

Also, we're looking at a text called "Sophie's World" which is about being a gifted student… It's under the umbrella of HSIE [Human Society and Its Environment] and English so it's a more humanities-based approach rather than Mathematics, but in saying that, part of the course will look at the way in which people have viewed Mathematics differently and the fact that different parts throughout the world look at Maths in different ways, etc., so getting across other faculties too.

It focuses on higher-order thinking skills and makes connections with different educational models:

The skills which we've set up around the course are very much your higher-order things, so your evaluation, synthesis, analysis-type skills. As far as Blooms is concerned very very little in the way of the bottom levels. And the course is also structured around, you know, models such as Kaplan as well, so you know…

The design of the course also includes variations to traditional assessment modes:

[Students] have to produce a major work and that's a personal project. So they get to choose anything they want and there's a criteria by which obviously they've got to fulfil; and they actually present that work to a real audience. So we actually aim to get a real audience in, as in experts in their field to mark them and assess them.

Differentiation. Educators who participated in my inquiry gave account of some of the differentiation practices operating within their schools. At McMahon High School, Sanjeev had the opportunity to develop differentiation strategies for all his Year 7 classes (Frame 6.7), whilst Caroline presented Riverview Secondary College's vision of how a better understanding of differentiation for gifted students translated into benefits for all students:

> *And certainly, differentiation is part of that overall plan and we constantly focus on differentiation and strategies to ensure that every child's needs are met. Now that includes GAT. I have found from my own personal experience, though, that once you do that training it actually informs the lesson, or the planning of the lesson that you deliver to everyone. I don't see a need to restrict it to GAT at all. It's about differentiating every lesson as much as possible (Caroline, Principal, RSC).*

Vanessa described what differentiation looked like at Dickens Boys High School:

> *What is always encouraged is that we give students rich tasks. So that any task we give them in the classroom there's always that ability to expand. So if a student has got a higher ability they can do a bit more work; actually not more work, but can get into a deeper understanding of the topic. And I think that's really important because I've done a lot of work with the gifted and talented, and kids would say, "Oh, I've been withdrawn to do extra work" and they don't see that as doing anything more than just the same as what they're doing. So it has to be something they can take a hold of and work with. So we do that, and a lot of tasks have choice, so it's across all the subjects (Vanessa, Deputy Principal, DBHS).*

NSW DET gifted and talented policy (2004a) places the responsibility for differentiation with teachers who are tasked with selecting and implementing teaching strategies in order to differentiate the curriculum for gifted students (pp. 11–12). Whilst the range of strategies endorsed addresses enrichment and other additive measures, no mention is made of specific learning needs potentially faced by diverse groups of gifted students such as twice-exceptional students, Indigenous students, and those from non-English speaking backgrounds. The best explanation is a broad statement noting that teachers will "provide challenges and learning options appropriate for their development" (p. 11), which is somewhat limiting and requires elaboration.

Participants in my inquiry described what they felt the role of the school was when striving to meet the needs of their gifted ELLs. They considered what shared knowledge was held amongst the staff and students, and sought a breadth of opportunities to enhance teaching and learning for gifted ELLs. They based themselves on NSW DET/DEC policies and models of practice, and modified these to suit their specific populations. Of the schools that participated in my inquiry the most in-depth conversations about what schools did occurred with those schools that were partially selective, because these schools constantly had to reflect on what identification and differentiation practices looked like across all their class groupings and arrangements.

Frame 6.7

Sanjeev's practices (Teacher, MHS)

> **"You are very much required to vary the way you are teaching because they just, their levels of understanding, it does vary greatly."**
>
> At McMahon High School, Sanjeev teaches Geography in Year 7 to four different class groupings: a selective class, two mainstream classes and a class of lower-ability students. He describes his rationale for differentiating for gifted students:
>
> *Especially with Year 7 teaching essentially four classes of students that have very different abilities, you're teaching the same thing four different ways. It's not one of those things where you can prepare the same lesson and teach it four different ways. You are very much required to vary the way you are teaching because they just, their levels of understanding, it does vary greatly.*
>
> With regard to his Year 7 selective class Sanjeev discusses adjustments he makes:
>
> *I design activities to try and get them out in front of the class and talk, and be able to express their opinion, and to be able to accept that there doesn't always need to be a sort of tight framework around which I've got to work. And you know, I give them activities where it's very open. The instructions are, there's minimal instruction in terms of what they're asked to do, because a lot of it, I want them to fill it in themselves.... so they're challenging themselves in two ways, where it's about creating a piece of work with minimal instructions being provided... and about just trying to get them out of their shell in that way.*
>
> Cahn, one of his selective students, responds positively to these accommodations:
>
> *Ah, the work is, isn't too easy, and it's different from the mainstream people. It's not, yeah, it's a little harder. And they challenge you a lot. Brings you to learn, like lot of excursions that helps you, and it's all fun also, yeah.*

Priorities

Alongside the specific role of the school as an educational institution there were certain priorities identified by educators with regards to meeting the educational needs of gifted ELLs. These priorities included but were not limited to conversations regarding student voice, the acquisition and development of English, and creating further opportunities for students not only with regards to their learning but also allowing them to develop leadership roles. Schools that participated in my inquiry also reflected on the role their teachers played in supporting gifted ELLs and how they, in turn, could best support their teachers in fulfilling their important role. In particular, administrators acknowledged the professionalism and expertise of their teachers working at the forefront of meeting the needs of gifted ELLs. In order to ensure continuity and

Table 6.2

Meeting the Educational Needs of Gifted ELLs: School Perspectives

Meeting the Educational Needs of Gifted ELLs: School Perspectives	
Corporate action and knowledge	• A variety of research-based strategies and approaches to teaching and learning • Teachers as drivers of the creation, sharing, and use of corporate knowledge • Efforts to showcase and celebrate achievements of students who excel in the academic, cultural, and sporting areas
Policies	• 2004 *Policy and Implementation Strategies for the Education of Gifted and Talented Students:* Gagné's DMGT • Focus on identification methods, modification of teaching strategies, and lines of responsibility • Little reference to gifted ELLs • 2004 *English as a second language: Guidelines for schools:* focus on the operation and management of ESL programs • three broad phases of English language learning in order to establish a baseline for funding, support, and priorities within schools • No distinction is made as to differentiated needs of gifted ELLs or potential for accelerated acquisition of English
Current programs and practices	• Individual approaches to meet each school's circumstances and needs, including policy reviews, seeking additional funding, re-imagining identification practices, exploring various gifted education models • School-developed gifted and talented programs: focus on curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular
Identification	• Policy-based; supporting a range of identification practices: holistic approach • Selective schools entrance tests
Accommodations	• Streaming, acceleration, ability grouping, selective-school entry, and curriculum alternatives
Differentiation	• Range of strategies addressing enrichment and other additive measures
Student voice	• Used and encouraged, but still underutilised • On-going partnerships with outside agencies to facilitate student voice
Development of English	• Acquisition of English a priority: strategies and approaches to support further development
Creating further opportunities for learning	• Breadth of extra-curricular activities and mentoring opportunities • Participation in industry-focused learning in authentic settings • Involving the primary community and tapping into students' personal interests • Leadership opportunities for students • Unleashing/unlocking student potential
Teachers	• Teachers as facilitators • Initial and on-going training in gifted education recommended at undergraduate and post-graduate levels • Professional learning opportunities in EAL/D
Other considerations	• On-going advocacy for increases in resources and funding • On-going collaboration between parents and schools • Development of broader skills: to nurture and grow "wonderful citizens"

growth, reference was made to teacher education programs for undergraduates and the necessity of specific and continuing training in the area of gifted education and EAL/D education.

Student voice. All educators were posed a question with regards to how the voices of students were present or absent when determining the needs of gifted ELLs at their school. Responses indicated that student voice was present and encouraged to varying degrees; however, it appeared that student voice was still an underutilised asset. Marcus described how student voice for gifted ELLs at Minerva Girls High School was perceived:

> *Obviously we do encourage students to speak about things and I think within classrooms, too, our students, even from an ESL background as the vast majority are, are sufficiently articulate to identify in many cases their own areas of broad need. They may not always be able to precisely identify what it is that is preventing them from obtaining the outcomes that they're looking for but students certainly are encouraged and do tend to speak to classroom teachers or to [the ESL specialist] or the year advisors about particular issues (Marcus, Deputy Principal, MGHS).*

Mariella spoke of how she encouraged student voice at Colonial Girls High School:

> *Yeah, that's a really important question. And that's something that I do struggle with, because you have the things that you have to do. But I think that for the student to have ownership of what they're learning they have to provide some input.... I've had girls in the past who've joined the Fundamentals class doing ESL who've scored 97 out of 100 for their ATAR score, you know, and went on to do whatever at university that they wanted. I asked them, even though we had set units we had to study, I was able to give them one unit that they chose. And I've said, "We've studied the required amount. What is it that you need to learn?" And so, based on that I designed the unit around what they felt they needed to do. And I always found that was probably the best unit in the year because it was something that was significant to them (Mariella, ESL Teacher, CGHS).*

Vanessa, more specifically, explained how student voice was used for subject selection in Year 11 at Dickens Boys High School:

> *We always try to adjust the curriculum to the students. As I run the Year 10 into 11 curriculum I do a pool of the students: "What would you like to run in Year 11?" We don't give them the subjects and then they have to pick. So some subjects don't run because there's no interest. And then they… from what they select we create the gridline to create the subjects… Sometimes I feel that we have not extended some students as much as we could, so we brought in the programs this way and the boys have been self-selecting… and it's been really effective… In English some gifted students elected to be in an extension English class where they were doing project-based learning (Vanessa, Deputy Principal, DBHS).*

On a broader note, at Dickens Boys High School ongoing partnerships had been forged with outside specialists to consider students' needs and to give them a voice in their learning:

We've introduced a teams-based middle schools approach in Years 7 and 8 which means that teams of teachers work together to discuss the learning needs of their particular groups of students. And to keep us accountable in that we use an academic from a local university as our academic partner. And she's retired from uni now but she's still working with us and every year she's conducted focus groups with our students a couple of times a year and she then feeds back to the staff what the students are saying. And then we get the staff to reflect on their practice and listen to what the students are saying and to make some changes to improve the student learning outcomes. So we've been doing that for four years now. And it's really important that student voice is heard… (Margaret, Principal, DBHS).

Despite giving students a voice in their education it was acknowledged that schools needed to operate within the constraints of the education system which included certain practices and provisions. The taught curriculum, for example, can only be flexible to a degree, and in the senior years is governed by requirements for the awarding of the HSC and an ATAR. The absence of student voice and the vacuum created by its silence was palpable at McMahon High School (Frame 6.8), whilst Jill from Riverview Secondary College reflected on the constraints faced at her school in the senior years of schooling:

Well, they do have a certain amount of say. I will help them with things that are totally outside the curriculum if they need it, but obviously, especially in Years 11 and 12 the curriculum seems to be the king, and one can't get away from that (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).

Administrators felt that schools should not miss the opportunity of listening to the voices of its gifted students, including ELLs, something which Caroline chose to prioritise at Riverview Secondary College:

I want you to know that I view that as an absolute priority and it's written in our strategic plan. I think again, people looking at me with alarm bells, "What's she going to do here?" but they've accepted it. At the end of this year I'm bringing XX, who I think has just about finished her PhD in student voice and engagement; and she has toured the world as I said, looking at how student voice is embodied in schools in the UK in particular and in America. So she's booked in to seduce my staff into believing at the end of the year that this is something worth doing. But we've started with little steps here (Caroline, Principal, RSC).

Frame 6.8

Doreen's concerns (Deputy Principal, MHS)

"The workload that these kids place themselves under, by the parents and the tutors, tutoring schools, you don't talk up, you don't speak up."

Doreen shared her thoughts when asked about student voice with regards to gifted ELLs:

Now as for the kids being heard, they're quiet. They have a silent…, they comply, as you said. They're beautiful kids. Even if it's a boring lesson they'll make sure that they appear to do it diligently, assiduously and all that sort of stuff. We, as we get more experienced with these kids we're having greater insight, ergo what I said about getting the psychiatrist out [to speak to parents]. It's by accidental conversations and the realisations of teachers that something else is wrong. But we're starting to do these things.

Insights gained from speaking to colleagues were very revealing:

What I did pick up when I was talking to all those teachers in Year 7, as well as Year 8 now and in Year 9, the workload that these kids place themselves under, by the parents and the tutors, tutoring schools, you don't talk up, you don't speak up. You just have to do it. You have to be so loyally compliant with them, you don't… In fact, you go through a nervous breakdown. It's expected of you rather than say something.

Some successes were had after different strategies had been explored. After describing how the school helped connect a particular student to author David Farland's "The Daily Kick" to assist him to develop his writing, she reflects:

So he's one serious kid, and he's the one we all love, you know. And we feel his pain because he's more articulate. The really silent ones, they will give you the answer they think you want.

Doreen acknowledges more needs to be done to encourage students to speak up about their needs and concerns.

Ultimately, student voice was not reported as being overtly utilised across many of the schools. At Colonial Girls High School Robert reflected on his perceptions of what student voice looked like for Year 7 students in their classroom setting, determining it to be an area meriting more attention:

> *As far as in within individual lessons are concerned, within individual classes are concerned, I guess that is somewhat dependent on the teacher. I would hope that there would be some sort of flexibility in terms of what the students would be able to learn based on what they tell the teacher. I guess again that's something we could probably work on making sure that does happen. But yeah, at this stage that's something we can certainly look at (Robert, Head Teacher, CGHS).*

Creating opportunities for student voices to be heard and to make a significant contribution that will influence their own education outcomes appears to be an evolving concern. Challenges identified included not only institutional barriers but also cultural and linguistic constraints as noted by all types of participants in my inquiry.

Acquisition and development of English. Schools acknowledged that the acquisition of English was a priority for gifted ELLs and they had implemented a range of strategies and approaches to support the further development of their English across the four macro skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. At both Colonial Girls High School and Minerva Girls High School, for example, intensive pull-out sessions were arranged for students to assist them extend their English skills:

> *What we also do as well with our gifted and talented is in order to make sure they're catered for in literacy skills we also take our Year 9s out of class once a term or so, generally around term 1 and term 2, to help them, you know, to extend them with their writing and their reading skills… and the way that's sort of structured is not so much going through a lesson per se but providing very explicit feedback for gifted and talented, in their writing particularly (Robert, Head Teacher, CGHS).*

> *We then work in, at this stage, predominantly in 2012, brief intense withdrawal sessions. Normally these are only half-period at maximum. As with many situations, our girls are very very focused, are very keen on learning. They do not want to miss class time and so they are quite happy with the context whereby they get an intense period, perhaps half an hour, 35 minutes, then they return to class, where they are also able to work on the content of that particular lesson (Marcus, Deputy Principal, MGHS).*

At Riverview Secondary College, outside support was accessed to assist gifted ELLs with writing, particularly in the absence of extended opportunities (Frame 6.9).

Educators confirmed that the capacity for gifted ELLs to demonstrate their potential through the modes required by educational institutions was compromised to some degree by their developing English skills and socio-cultural backgrounds. Schools were working to address this problem through various alternatives and options.

Frame 6.9

Caroline's approach (Principal, RSC)

"Now that I've got her working with them the girls are feeling like they can start taking risks with their writing and amazing things are happening there"

Caroline explains how the English needs of a group of female gifted ELLs are being addressed at

Riverview Secondary College:

Every time I enrol a new student they tend to be non-English speaking background, and often they're very bright, and we know from our data analysis that the girls in particular, they're okay at reading but they're not as good at writing, and particularly extended writing. Again, it's almost as if they're fearful of it, and we have… I've managed to convince the P&C to put some money into funding a teacher… she's a primary teacher but she's an e-writer. So she uses Twitter and blogging and teaches students how to write extended writing pieces. I've got her working with gifted and talented non-English speaking background girls.

Despite gifted students being considered capable, socio-cultural barriers were identified and

adjustments needed to be made to programs:

Here's an interesting anecdote: [the teacher] asked [the students] the other day to write an extended story about their holidays. And she said of all of the tasks she's given them that was the one they struggled with. They couldn't write. And when she asked them why, it's because they didn't have holidays, they were expected to stay home and study. There was no creativity coming out of an extended experience anywhere as many other families get. Some of them almost cried because they really didn't have a story to tell, and that's really worth following up. So now that I've got her working with them the girls are feeling like they can start taking risks with their writing and amazing things are happening there.

Creating opportunities for students. Educators in many schools noted that creating further opportunities for their gifted ELLs in terms of extending their learning often came in two related forms. First, opportunities to participate in a wide array of extra-curricular activities were provided by all schools as reflected not only in their annual school reports but also through teacher and student feedback. Second, these opportunities were extended when students could explore beyond the confines of the school and participate in industry-focused learning in authentic settings. Both types of activities were highly regarded by students and teachers alike.

When reporting extra-curricular activities available to gifted ELLs at their schools, Jill from Riverview Secondary College and Robert from Colonial Girls High School reflected:

There are so many opportunities: music is something that a lot of the English-language learners gravitate towards. That's an opportunity too. They can take it, they can leave it. The same with things like debating. We have, some of the students

who've been here for a longer time, who are actually putting their hands up for that opportunity. We have a lot of extra-curricular activities. We have High Resolves, which is a program for leadership. We have the Duke of Ed scheme; a lot of the English language learners become involved with that, and of course the successful ones will choose that, partly because it gives them an opportunity to immerse themselves. So yes, there are lots of things that the English language learners can put their hands up for (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).

They have, for instance, gifted and talented days for Mathematics where we go off to universities, etc., to, you know, participate in programs which they've done (Robert, Head Teacher, CGHS).

At Riverview Secondary College, Caroline considered the wide array of extra-curricular activities on offer as being "another form of differentiation, but also involving your primary community" (Frame 6.10), whilst at McMahon High School success was experienced by exploring ways to best tap in to students' needs based on their personal interests (Frame 6.11).

Frame 6.10

Caroline's resourcefulness (Principal, RSC)

"*I think there's so many talents we can't measure.*"

Caroline, Principal at Riverview Secondary College, believes that extra-curricular activities act as vehicles that provide opportunities for gifted students, and her school offers over 90 activities. The school is able to offer this significant amount of activities by drawing on local community resources.
And I harness them, we harness them for a range of partners for a whole lot of activities.

She describes how an event such as Environment Day, held recently at the school, embodies her beliefs about differentiation and the benefits to students:

We encouraged every student, this took six months, to create products and to sell them in teams. They developed collaborative learning strategies, they had to write a marketing plan, so there are your literacy and numeracy skills. They had to get up on stage and do a dramatic presentation, substantive communication. There was an outdoor challenge for those who are talented in that way. There was an indoor quiz, very tough environmental quiz. And then in the afternoon all of our community partners, the fire brigade, an architect, the State Emergency Service, wildlife rescue, all these community partners we'd engaged came in and showed how their work is related to the environment in one way or another. Students moved around. We had a radio station there. So that's a model of an authentic task, if you like, that engages all students, and I think there's so many talents we can't measure.

Frame 6.11

Doreen's resourcefulness (Deputy Principal, MHS)

"Over the course of the years with the kids that come, she's taken them to being published in some way."

Doreen takes the approach of meeting the needs of gifted ELLs at McMahon High School based on

their interests. She speaks about how the needs of keen writers are being met:

We found that a lot of kids in the English class had already started to write. And there was one boy who had four books already started. And he's a passionate writer, this kid. So I said, "Well come on. How about we get an author out?" And they love Science Fantasy. So I did this little survey where they had to write down what their favourite books were. They had to have five: books, authors, that sort of thing. And I created an anthology of those writers, not of the books but of the writers, because I went on… I did a Google search one Sunday, you know, I don't know, I just did it. And I found a place that had radio interviews of all these people. And they said, "How did you get started? What were your ideas?" So I got all of that and I made a book of it.

She found others who would carry the momentum forward in terms of student support:

We had a first-year-out guy who was an ex-student here who also said, "Oh, oh, can I have one of them?" And we've had him for the last couple of years. He started a Science Fantasy Book Club. And there's this group of kids who, they still do now, they're in Year 9, and they're up with writing Science Fantasy. And that year we authorised, I got through the Library, to get a writer to come out. And she spoke to them all, and he's continued on with that extension.

Assisting gifted ELLs to become better writers has been a part of the school culture for number of

years now:

We also up in English have, there's another teacher, again, gifted and talented lady, she's published in different ways. She wanted to get a writer's group going that was different and that was before the Science Fantasy thing which is more of an interest thing. So as a Quality Teaching program we started the Writers' Guild. And over the course of the years with the kids that come, she's taken them to being published in some way. So she's found different avenues outside the school whereby they can write for something, again that purpose.

As well as extra-curricular activities on offer at the school sites, the creation of links with

industry and people outside the school domain was a strategy that schools actively pursued in

order to assist their students to connect to the wider world:

> *I had an opportunity with an outside agency who approached me about spending days in corporations and working with them, mainly in the Creative Arts field. So I approached the boys doing the PBLs [Project Based Learning] and I said, "Would anybody like to go and spend the day with X, the big advertising agency?" And you know, a few of the boys said yes, they'd love to go. So I organised it and they went for the day. And what they did for the day is they were actually working with the advertising people on a project, so they were embedded. They didn't go in and were lectured to, or "this is what we do" and there was a tour. They actually sat*

down… so it was a real extension for them. And at the end of the day they had to do their own little presentation back to the corporation, and that was such a success that the people that organised it actually said that they thought the boys were so engaged that we've done quite a few now (Vanessa, Deputy Principal, DBHS).

Margaret explained how at Dickens Boys High School they made the most of every opportunity to tap into programs provided from outside the school:

For instance, at the moment we have a group of students who have been successful in being selected into a writers' and playwrighters' program. And we're really excited about that. And three boys – I think you're actually speaking to some of them today – who've been selected for this particular workshop. There's also a program that a local university runs called "Mosaic" which encourages students to write stories from their own background. They can be poems or short stories or photographs or whatever, and they publish a book each year. So that's another program students can tap into (Margaret, Principal, DBHS).

Margaret credited the success of these types of programs to the resourcefulness of her colleagues:

We have a Learning Support team and students are referred to them for a whole range of things, from learning difficulties right through to gifted and talented, and they're really good at connecting those students and their families into services beyond school or at school. We have an absolutely fantastic Careers Advisor and now that we've got the Youth Outreach Worker… they're really good at finding organisations and activities and opportunities that they can link students into (Margaret, Principal, DBHS).

Dickens Boys High School was a veritable example of how this type of mentoring could be done creatively on limited resources and for students experiencing disadvantage. Teachers described this mentoring as a much more valid way of meeting their students' needs than they could offer within the confines of the classroom, and which aligned with their personal beliefs about the education of gifted students:

And so they've sort of been extension work, taking them out into the community again. We've just sent a group of boys to X Studios and they did a film and editing day on a set, so that's been really good. Things like that are invaluable, because I think sometimes that in the classroom you can only give them so much but if you link to the outside world, it's proven data. And even in our quality teaching it's shown that that then gives them that goal and they can see why they're doing things too, it justifies some of that learning too, and gives them aspirations to maybe go on into that field (Vanessa, Deputy Principal, DBHS).

Doreen from McMahon High School also reflected on the importance of this approach:

When I went to that GAT [training] the one thing I came away with was you have to create opportunities for gifted and talented kids to realise or to demonstrate… to realise themselves and to demonstrate to others that they have these gifts. Because if we don't create the vehicles, if we don't also train them to realise that potential… because they don't have, they don't understand the process themselves innately. We

have to create scaffolds. We have to create opportunities for them to demonstrate these scaffolds. We have to have plans that just won't be realised in one-off things. The kids have to work towards something. They have to build. They have to really not know the answer before they start. They need something that they need to usually work in teams with, so that they experience the full outcome… so the journey of all that, I realise for these kids, is probably the more enjoyable part (Doreen, Deputy Principal, MHS).

Caroline, from the perspective of her work at Riverview Secondary College, summarised:

It's about also providing opportunities not only within the classroom but outside the classroom for students to fly. I call them "vehicles". We provide the vehicle, we provide the tools and the facilitation, you fly (Caroline, Principal, RSC).

Leadership opportunities were also an important aspect of what schools did to support gifted ELLs, as noted by Caroline from Riverview Secondary College:

Yesterday we had an open night and I like those to be interactive. So we got some of our students to come along. I said, "Design the evening for us." I want to give them authentic tasks to do that are leadership development, that again require teamwork, self-management, self-direction. And they came back at very short notice with a few ideas. We implemented that and we did our tour and it became totally interactive. I asked them questions, they spoke about things. The parents asked them questions… And really, they were 50% of the tour. And so we are trying to grow student input in that way, and I call that student voice, which of course is big time in the UK already, but we want to do it in an authentic way (Caroline, Principal, RSC).

Administrators from different schools discussed a wide range of beliefs about how to unlock the potential of gifted ELLs and gave numerous examples of how they were working to accomplish this goal in their schools. Margaret from Dickens Boys High School spoke about her vision for education:

But I think probably what I'm most passionate about is making sure that we unleash the potential that is within every student and that we recognise that all students have the right to succeed and can succeed if they're nurtured and encouraged and we have the high expectations that they can (Margaret, Principal, DBHS).

Teachers, too, gave specific examples of how they operated to facilitate the unlocking of student potential. Vanessa from Dickens Boys High School reflected on her time as Art Teacher and noted how she repeatedly reached beyond the walls of the school in order to facilitate the creative development of students. By sourcing and providing such opportunities as students working with mentors in the field of advertising or exploring other ways of three-dimensional design through one-on-one work with an artist she was able to demonstrate the school's perseverance in working against the negative impacts of low socio-economic situational and environmental factors.

On the whole, extra-curricular activities and mentoring opportunities were described as hallmarks in terms of offerings for all gifted students, including ELLs. These activities created multiple opportunities for gifted ELLs to demonstrate not only excellence in a chosen field but also their leadership skills, regardless of their level of English proficiency. Schools that recognised the positive influence on student outcomes arising from participation in extra-curricular activities as well as interactions with mentors in the professional world explored and created pathways for students to access these, and found the results very encouraging for continued student success.

Teachers of gifted ELLs. Teachers are at the forefront of all interactions with students, including gifted ELLs. As part of those interactions, students who participated in my inquiry recognised their teachers as being key facilitators in helping to meet their individual needs. They identified a number of traits they valued in their teachers, including a willingness to help, to clarify material, to give productive feedback, and to assist with the acquisition and development of English, among others.

In order for teachers to become competent teachers of gifted students, initial and on-going training has been advocated. The value of including gifted education units in undergraduate teacher programs, for example, cannot be underestimated and has been endorsed by Marcus from Minerva Girls High School:

> *I think we need to train classroom teachers, first and foremost, and that could be something that could be occurring going back to undergraduate degrees. I think too, schools should be able to access further professional learning provided by the Department of Education and Communities. Ongoing and regular support; possibly again, consultancy, particularly perhaps more specialised in some of these areas (Marcus, Deputy Principal, MGHS).*

Part of Robert's brief at Colonial Girls High School has been to explore professional learning needs and opportunities for the staff. He was encouraged by the interest teachers had shown in developing their professional skills with regards to differentiation practices:

> *Generally what I've found in my role is that there has been some professional learning for the teachers as far as gifted and talented and then ESL is concerned. However in our recent professional learning evaluation we found that a lot of, all teachers want to work on differentiation. And so I suppose in terms of the background of the staff with the school, you know, needing more assistance in differentiation. So yeah, that's pretty much where the school's at, at this point (Robert, Head Teacher, CGHS).*

At Dickens Boys High School, with its high proportion of ELLs, much of the focus on professional learning has been on ESL programs and initiatives:

> *We've also put our hands up for a number of different projects that are run by region regarding ESL and pedagogy and sent teachers off to train for that. And a couple of years ago we had two teachers whose work was so highly valued they got to tour the state. They did presentations at regional and state level. And we've got more teachers coming on board now and taking that learning further (Margaret, Principal, DBHS).*

It was to their own benefit that several schools had availed themselves of the professional learning in-services and short courses offered by GERRIC to individuals and schools. Caroline reflected on Riverview Secondary College's journey:

> *I guess you could say our teacher professional learning program is a core element of this school… We have a large team of people involved, and we have a plan which is aligned with our strategic plan and our management plan… Being partially selective, this school, in 2002, when it was re-badged and started taking selective students, trained every teacher in the GERRIC program, which is, it segues into a Certificate and a Master's degree in Gifted and Talented Education. We'd love to spend the money to get everyone the Master's but it's just not affordable for a public school. This is the best we can do. And we have just re-trained everyone again in that respect (Caroline, Principal, RSC).*

At McMahon High School, which is partially selective, investment in teacher training through GERRIC had also been significant:

> *Our school, anyone that's been here for the past three to four years has had a chance to be trained and get their GERRIC certification. So most of our people are now trained in understanding all that… And they're very clever, they're very dedicated, and for as much as the resources that we have I think they're doing a brilliant job, given how young we are in doing it (Doreen, Deputy Principal, MHS).*

Schools had evidently considered their priorities when making long-term decisions regarding the professional learning of their teachers, particularly with regards to meeting the needs of gifted students. At schools such as Minerva Girls High School, however, the focus for staff professional learning was centred less on the needs of gifted students and more on the needs of their students as ELLs:

> *We've certainly engaged in professional learning activities of staff and in 2012 for example a half day was spent at a school development day simply working with various activities, looking at ESL-based strategies that could function in mainstream classrooms. And that workshop took place, and since then there've been periodic meetings between, for example, [the ESL specialist] and some faculties in which she has spoken to them about how they might better meet the needs of students who are coming from a non-English-speaking background (Marcus, Deputy Principal, MGHS).*

As Minerva Girls High School is a selective high school, teachers searched for professional learning opportunities that could bring together best practice for ELLs from gifted backgrounds (Frame 6.12). Marcus identified a specific need for further professional learning for teachers of gifted ELLs.

Frame 6.12

Marcus's recommendations (Deputy Principal, MGHS)

"I do see the needs of selective high schools, gifted and talented schools, as being different to those of comprehensive high schools…"

Further professional learning to assist students with the development of their literacy skills has been recommended, particularly for selective schools with their gifted and talented population of ELLs. Marcus reflects:

I think too, more opportunity for professional learning in this particular area. Again, there's not a great deal available through the Department of Education and Communities that I'm aware of that targets this notion of ESL students in mainstream classrooms, particularly in terms of gifted and talented. There are certainly professional learning activities available for students who are obviously first-, second-phase learners, or have significant ESL issues, but those students are not necessarily from a gifted and talented background, and the focus on that is not necessarily from the gifted and talented point of view; it is purely from the language point of view and it is purely aimed at reaching a satisfactory level of functioning as opposed to reaching that level where they are fully functioning and they are fully able to exploit their potential as gifted and talented students.

Arguing on behalf of selective schools:

I appreciate that in comprehensive high schools we have ESL support there, but I do see the needs of selective high schools, gifted and talented schools, as being different to those of comprehensive high schools, and possibly a more formal support there from the Department in terms of professional learning opportunities or consultancy there.

Educators spoke often about their priorities and about what they considered to be important in what they did to meet the educational needs of gifted ELLs. They acknowledged that giving a voice to the students was a more equitable practice, and discussed ways in which this was being done and could also be improved upon. They also spoke about the different methods they explored with individual students to assist them to gain a better understanding of the English language, with a strong focus on student-directed learning. They also reported options for developing gifted ELLs' potential through extra-curricular activities and mentoring opportunities with the intent of counteracting disadvantage as well as value-adding to the educational

opportunities being offered at school. A priority, too, was the on-going professional learning of teachers in both gifted education and EAL/D fields, beginning at the undergraduate level and continuing throughout a teacher's career. Meeting the needs of gifted ELLs through various practices has been a key priority for schools.

Other considerations. In concluding this chapter it was appropriate to discuss other considerations that arose owing to their relevance for the current and future success of schools in being able to meet the needs of gifted ELLs. In particular, a lack of resources in both the material and fiscal sense created deep-seated implications for disadvantaged schools, whilst funding needs and concerns about the uncertainty of the continuation of support were communicated by educators from all socio-economic school groups. Educators also shared professional advice and suggestions they gave to parents, and they articulated their hopes and expectations for their gifted ELLs.

Resources and funding needs. Teachers and administrators who participated in my inquiry indicated that in order for new programs for gifted ELLs to be put in place in schools and existing programs to continue and all be staffed appropriately, funding needed to be increased in order to meet the demand.

At the time of interview for my inquiry schools such as Riverview Secondary College, with 67% of its population of 970 students identifying as being from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE), attracted a teacher allocation for these students of 1.4 (one full-time staff member and one part-time staff member employed for 2 days a week); not all the LBOTE students were ELLs in need of support, yet the needs ranged across all year levels. As Jill noted:

> *We have an allocation this year of 1.4, so another staff member has two days. That staff member deals with the Year 7 and 8 students mainly, some Year 9s, and I do the 10, 11 and 12s and some of the 9s…But with our drop in allocation from 1.6 last year to 1.4 this year, and an even greater need having 24 new students who've come in who are phases 1 or 2 and who really need a huge amount of support, it's very difficult to plug every hole (Jill, ESL Teacher, RSC).*

At Minerva Girls High School the concerns also extended to being able to support all students who needed assistance:

> *Even when I was funded by the Department of Education and Training, as it was in those days, then from my point of view it was still not as complete as I might have wished for. I could always have additional students who I thought would have*

benefitted from that small group or one-on-one situation; alternatively, support in a regular classroom as they were dealing with some of the more demanding language concepts (Marcus, Deputy Principal, MGHS).

In low ICSEA schools the key concerns were for additional support for students from low socio-economic backgrounds or those from disadvantaged situations, particularly refugee students, to meet the variety and complexity of needs with which they presented:

Sydney Region identified this school as having quite a high refugee population so they gave us one day a week, so 40 days, which means we can employ a person one day a week to help support the needs of these students. That person is employed to replace [an ESL teacher] who then works with one-on-one with… And she's the one who looks for opportunities, sends the students off in these directions with these opportunities… So she's the one who actually works with them to make these fabulous opportunities happen, and it would be great if we actually had more of that. Because there's never enough (Margaret, Principal, DBHS).

Suggestions for parents. Parents' best intentions in supporting and assisting their children were acknowledged and welcomed by participating schools. In my inquiry, providing tutoring in English outside of school hours and attending parent–teacher interviews despite difficulties with their own English were two types of events where parental participation was applauded by educators. However, with most parents having high expectations of their children, educators had some further suggestions where parents of gifted ELLs could be of assistance:

Now when parents come in with students [who are gifted ELLs] I have my own message for them, and the parents agree with me. We've perceived, as we have in other schools, that there is a problem I call "Chinglish". They learn out of books, they study hard, but of course they have no contextual English. And so they get 85 and 86 but they don't get those band 6s and so when I explain to those parents when they come in… "Let me give you my recipe" and they listen. And my recipe, which I found successful and they don't argue with, is that it's really important that their children watch the ABC or SBS news at night. They see visuals, they see more sophisticated language. That they watch Q&A [current affairs television program], some debates on TV, actually that they participate in debating at school. That there be a dictionary in the car and the students test the parents on words every day, a couple of words. That there be a newspaper in the house and that when the cooking is going on the child takes the newspaper and reads a few paragraphs from articles that are interesting and the parents ask a challenging question… And when I go through these strategies with the parents I explain to them that that'll help them with their own English as well, and they agree. And they actually, no-one ever argues with me. It makes sense. And I tell them if they've got that paper and news they're learning Geography, History, Maths, Science, as well as English and the family is helping that child improve their performance at the same time (Caroline, Principal, RSC).

Parents continue to be the best advocates for their children's education. Further collaboration between parents and the school has been encouraged, particularly for those families facing cultural and linguistic challenges.

Visions for the future. The educators who participated in my inquiry were eloquent in revealing their beliefs about gifted ELLs, going so far as to articulate their vision for the future for these students:

> *I love things that I feel are taking these kids outside the humdrum. I love stuff that will challenge them and they won't feel like it's work. Because most of the kids that you would've interviewed today have to go home to these rigid routines. I don't know if it's like this but I feel that it's loveless, and it's just "get out there and get that mark." You know? And I think that's why the kids here love the programs, because we love them. Oh, how could you not? And that makes me hopeful for them (Doreen, Deputy Principal, MHS).*

> *My main focus in this school has always been about building a really powerful professional learning community. I believe it takes a village to raise a child, but I want that village to be BIG. I want it to have tentacles in every direction. And I believe that through exercising opportunities in that professional learning network we grow, we provide vehicles for every child, but also specifically GAT students to fly. I'm about providing a vehicle for any child to fly, because we are constantly surprised by what children will do if we let them (Caroline, Principal, RSC).*

Of salience, too, and heard clearly from all the educators who participated in my inquiry, was the hope for the future that had been invested in these students. Caroline from Riverview Secondary College reflected on the future (Frame 6.13). To echo her words, the intent is to nurture and grow "wonderful citizens", beyond academic success, tertiary entrance rankings, and university courses through the development of broader skills:

> *I would love a much more holistic evaluation of students. I bet our students probably provide much better customer service when they are working in business in the long run; they can handle anyone. They can handle people with disability, they can handle lower socio-economic status people who come from public housing estates. They know about all the issues that these families suffer. They've also mixed with highly intelligent, highly capable and creative students, students from different cultural backgrounds… What wonderful citizens we are producing! Where's the value of that? (Caroline, Principal, RSC).*

Frame 6.13

Caroline's reflections (Principal, RSC)

"We need to consider a new set of criteria for success."

Caroline reflects on the impact that decisions made at federal and state levels of government will have on her staff and students at Riverview Secondary College:

So I am going to preside over the rationalist era where we've got to, you know, be lean and mean for a while, until we learn that we don't actually improve outcomes for students that way. I actually think that what we have going now is a really good model. And in fact, models of success we need to look at. There's always room to improve literacy, I can't argue with that, but I do believe that half of the learning in our school comes from these 90 extra-curricular activities.

She gives credit also to the influential factors outside the school:

And let's not forget in this whole discussion the importance of family. They are 50% of the story. Teachers might be 30% but what about that 50% at home? So community partnerships, community engagement, from the minute a parent walks in my front door, that's what I'm about.

Whilst academic results might be important, Caroline looks to acknowledge the broader results of students' education at Riverview Secondary College:

And I'll have a good cohort some years, and a bad cohort, in terms of the HSC results, but in terms of people… We are churning great people out of this school. And of course we don't measure the great people, we don't measure their entrepreneurial skills, whether it's for profit or not. We don't measure what kind of citizens they're going to be, whether they are passionate people who will do good things for society.

I mean I had a boy that I interviewed here the other day who said, "I want to go out and do something wonderful for the community; that's what I've learnt from my education here at this school." We need to consider a new set of criteria for success.

Some final thoughts from teachers:

> *One of the things that has always been close to my heart is the number of students that we get who may not be achieving in Year 7 but do in Year 12, and I think, you know, that growth rate is really significant. So you know, we're doing something right as a school (Mariella, ESL Teacher, CGHS).*

> *It has its challenges, but I am enjoying it. So it's always, you know, with any teacher it's always nice when you teach something and you can see the kids actually "get it." So that's always a nice moment (Sanjeev, Teacher, MHS).*

In this final section, school personnel spoke about other concerns that had implications for gifted ELLs. School funding in general and its continuance for different groups of students in uncertain economic and political times as well as funding of ESL programs was a matter of concern to educators. Parental participation was also discussed as having an impact and educators shared their views on the matter. Finally, successes and visions for the future were articulated by a number of educators.

Reflection

It has been noted that Australia is the only OECD country where first- and second-generation refugee and migrant children score above the average on international PISA Reading test scores (NSW ESL and Refugee Education Working Party, 2012). These positive results have been explained not only by the socio-economic status of Australian immigrants but also can "be largely attributed to the 'coherent infrastructure' of ESL teaching support that has been provided in Australian education systems over the last few decades" (Cummins, Mirza, & Stille, 2012, cited in NSW ESL and Refugee Education Working Party, 2012, p. 11). Combined with a variety of arrangements and models for supporting gifted students in schools including those where the percentages of ELLs are increasing, student outcomes have been promising to date. The mid- to long-term success of programs, however, is heavily compromised by decisions being made at state, national, and global levels where competing agendas between economic and political forces offer no guarantee of stability and continuity for such programs. Add to this the changing personal and contextual variables affecting each student, as well as the situational and environmental factors that impact upon each individual's circumstances, and it becomes necessary for each school to be constantly changing and evolving in order to identify and address the needs of not only its gifted ELLs but all of its students.

CHAPTER VII: DISCUSSION

The purpose of my inquiry was to identify the experiences and educational needs of gifted ELLs and how these needs were being met by exploring the current educational landscape in secondary schools in Australia, specifically in the state of New South Wales. The data collected from specific sources, both oral and written, were analysed in their storied form in order to create narrative portraits rich in detail that aimed at giving voice to key stakeholders. Habermas's theory of communicative action was used within a critical framework to arrive at determining stakeholders' beliefs based on the analysis of these data.

As noted in earlier chapters, the purpose of communicative action is to achieve emancipation through a process of mutual understandings or consensus (Welch, 1999). In order to achieve consensus the understanding of other people's points of view is necessary to bring about change (Risse, 2004). In educational contexts there is an understanding that agreements need to be established between stakeholders as to teaching and learning, and these agreements can be scrutinised according to the validity claims of the stakeholders in terms of mutual comprehension, shared knowledge, reciprocal trust, and accord with one another (Han, 2002). In order for the conditions of legitimacy to be present all voices must be included regardless of the status of each of the parties, and all external constraints, imbalances, and issues of domination and coercion need to be declared. Challenges to validity claims need to be justified and defended and a consensus where the better argument prevails must be reached (Head, 2008).

One key purpose of this inquiry was to provide voice opportunities for all stakeholders regarding the identification of the educational experiences and needs of gifted ELLs and to tap into their problem-solving capacity (Risse, 2004), "in order to find common ground and to establish a consensus with others over contested meanings" (Jones, Bradbury, & Le Boutillier, 2011, p. 198). With this in mind, this chapter sets out to discuss the findings from the data collected in order to improve the experiences of gifted ELLs.

Students

The findings from my inquiry from the student perspective related as much to exploring the experiences of the gifted ELLs and identifying what they perceived to be their own educational needs as to challenging general beliefs about such needs. Hallmarks of gifted ELLs emerged from the findings, which were grouped under the banners of motivational, relational, and

academic aspects. *Motivational* aspects included acknowledging student commitment to learning and how it generates a positive self-image, examining ways students challenge themselves, as well as dealing with underachievement. *Relational* aspects considered parental hopes, aspirations, and criticisms, the role and purpose of friendship groups and like-minded peers, reflection upon the development of their interstitial identity, their relationships with their teachers, and overall perceptions of their schools. Learning English, exploring opportunities to extend their gifts and talents, and sharing their hopes for their futures all featured as *academic* aspects. Finally, reflections on key turning points in their lives brought all these factors together, as students reflected on what was important to them as individuals. What my inquiry ultimately revealed about students was that there is as much need to pay attention to the individual stories as there is to make general assumptions about students' needs. A focus on student diversity is therefore necessary before making generalisations about the broader group.

Student diversity. Elfers and Stritikus (2014) described how a significant body of research has detailed the diversity of ELLs in the context of the United States, with students coming to school "with a wide range of native language and English language literacy habits and skills, uneven content-area backgrounds, and vastly different family and schooling experiences" (p. 310). In the Australian context, the diverse group of students who participated in my inquiry reflected similar characteristics. Students used linguistic, geographical, and cultural or ethnic information as markers of their individual identity, a practice common to the adolescent and crucial to the self-concept and psychological functioning of group members (Phinney, 1990). The 21 students identified as belonging to 14 different language groups and some identified with more than one language, further evidence for the need to acknowledge that English is an additional language that the student acquires rather than merely a second one. They were also identified by their teachers and themselves as displaying gifted attributes in multiple areas, specifically in Mathematics (20%) and in broader academic areas (17%).

Even in this sized sample what was interesting to note was that students easily separated into three distinct categories based on the timing of their acquisition of English, a key marker when identifying their educational needs. The first category comprised students who were either born in Australia or arrived as young children before the age of six, and included students such as Cahn (Year 7, selective class, MHS), Qiao (Year 7, selective class, MHS), and Ferista (Year 7, extension class, CGHS). As these students were exposed to English from an early age this group has more potential for developing early bilinguality and native-like proficiency in English than

any other group (Hamers & Blanc, 2000), even if their exposure to English only begins when they start school around age 5. Research has also indicated that being bilingual from an early age enhances the development of social cognition skills, executive functioning, and metalinguistic awareness due to the experience of manipulating and processing more than one linguistic system (Kalashnikova & Mattock, 2014).

The second group comprised students who were born overseas and arrived in Australia between approximately six and 12 years of age, generally considered to be the primary school years, and included students such as Anna (Year 9, selective class, MGHS) and Hattie (Year 9, selective class, MGHS). These students are described as consecutive bilinguals in the literature, and it is acknowledged that the better established their first language (L_1) skills, the greater their potential for success in acquiring competency in second (L_2) and additional languages (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). Engagement in a schooling system in another country including the development of literacy skills in another language has also been acknowledged by ACARA as advantageous when acquiring English (ACARA, 2011).

The third group included students who had recently arrived in Australia (within one to two years) and were generally in their adolescence. This group consisted of students such as Benjamin (Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS), Nina (Year 10, extension class, RSC), and Nattapong (Year 10, comprehensive class, DBHS), and they were more likely to have studied in an IEC previous to entering mainstream schooling. These last two groups have been acknowledged as having the potential to become near-native speakers but differences have been found in accent (Coppieters, 1987), grammar (Birdsong, 1992), and language processing, including phonological processing (Rubin & Turner, 1989), morphological awareness (Ramirez, Chen, Geva, & Luo, 2011), syntactic processing (Ben-Zeev, 1977), and lexical processing (Diaz, 1985). These three separate groupings of students were defined and formed based on the sample of students interviewed for my inquiry; they are indicative only and groupings may splinter further in consideration of a broader population.

The significant defining factor in determining the grouping of students was the commencement age for the acquisition of English, which is further impacted by the speed of acquisition. A review of the literature on age acquisition of an additional language concluded that "both the rate of acquisition and the ultimate level of attainment in L_2 depends on the age that learning started in different linguistic domains" (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). This is a key consideration when examining the needs of gifted ELLs, as it not only implies that students commencing English at different times of their learning journey have different needs, but also that

programs must be tailored to meet those needs in different ways. What also should be taken into account is that gifted ELLs may acquire English at an even faster rate than non-gifted peers; however, evidence is only anecdotal (Matthews & Shaunessy, 2008).

Despite the limited sample size of students in my inquiry (*n*=21), diversity played a significant role in determining how to meet students' needs by highlighting any one-dimensional approach as being insufficient for the task. ACARA's (2011) EAL/D resource acknowledges this diversity and recommends diagnostic assessment as a crucial starting point for the effective teaching of EAL/D students. Ongoing formative and summative assessments should also be recommended to determine the rate of student progress in the acquisition of English as well as consideration for the gifts and talents of gifted ELLs.

Hallmarks of gifted ELLs: Motivational aspects. Among the motivational aspects identified in my inquiry, a commitment to learning was a key attribute of gifted ELLs. This finding was supported in the main by teachers from both the pilot study and the main inquiry, with few reservations surfacing. Students were able to describe both short-term and long-term consequences they might expect from high levels of task commitment and motivation for learning, acknowledging and valuing personal effort as the prime driver. For students, short-term focus often centred on completing the year with good academic results, whilst long-term goals included gaining a place in a high-demand university course leading to a career considered prestigious by their community. These students also acknowledged the importance in their lives of being self-directed and self-motivated in order to achieve these goals.

Self-directed learning models have been advocated for gifted students for over 30 years (e.g., Betts & Neihart, 1986) in acknowledgment of their abilities and strengths for independently engaging in learning and sustaining task focus. In the Australian context, research on student-directed learning and gifted students is beginning to appear, and has demonstrated that gifted students have an explicit awareness of their knowledge of self-directed learning, which is linked to positive attitudes and motivation for further learning (Van Deur, 2004). It is recommended, therefore, that schools continue to provide gifted ELLs with opportunities to direct their own learning through appropriate curriculum reflective of students' cultural and linguistic diversity as well as through pedagogical approaches such as Project Based Learning (PBL), and to support them to reach their full academic potential, as encouraged by Smutny (2012).

Recognition by teachers and schools of gifted ELLs' commitment to learning was highly prized by students, who looked forward to meeting their goals of academic success and achievement by capitalising on their strengths and being supported with their challenges. Schools were meeting these needs through efforts that included the provision of selective and extension classes, special programs, and extra-curricular activities, services listed as protective factors in Chapter II (Table 2.3). All schools acknowledged student success through awards and special recognition in various public ways, as well as through the publication of significant curricular and co-curricular achievements in each school's annual school report.

This commitment to learning contributed to the generation of a positive self-image in many gifted ELLs. Students from both selective and non-selective schools and classes described a positive belief in their own abilities and future potential. They acknowledged their ease of learning and celebrated their commitment to their studies. This finding sits in marked contrast to the "big fish little pond effect" (BFLPE) identified in Australian schools by Seaton, Marsh, Yeung, and Craven (2011). Their study examined the relationship between academic self-concept and attendance at high-ability schools by reviewing three PISA databases with data from large representative samples of 15-year-olds from each Australian state, and established that academic self-concept was negatively affected by attending high-ability schools (Seaton et al., 2011). These findings echo the results of a similar study by the same authors in 2010 on U.S. data that demonstrated the BFLPE to be very robust (Seaton, Marsh, & Craven, 2010). Scholars well-known in the field of gifted education (e.g., Neihart, 2007) have been critical of such studies, however, and some have noted methodological concerns (Dai, 2004). This conflict demonstrates that the issue is much more complex than can be discussed in my inquiry and that the data should be examined along with other measures of academic success of gifted students in high-ability schools such as ATARs by school type and the socio-economic profile of the school, as has been suggested by Harvey (2012).

A personal commitment to learning was further evidenced when students discussed ways they challenged themselves, most notably in their drive to acquire English. This need was seen as a positive challenge by most students, who also acknowledged the advantage their English-speaking peers had over them in this area. Similarly, students demonstrated their resourcefulness when looking for ways of improving both their acquisition of English and their general academic performance by accessing staff, school resources, and technology. Schools assisted by providing ESL services within limited budgets as well as through the provision of resources to support student development. ESL teachers were known and respected by students for going out of their

way to offer further assistance, whether in the form of extra time, further assistance with schoolwork, or assisting with life skills traditionally outside the responsibility of the school.

Commitment to overcoming learning obstacles through personal effort was discussed by some of the older students and cited as a strength by teachers. Both groups acknowledged that these obstacles were directly linked to the acquisition and mastery of English, but they also noted parental expectations, cultural considerations, and friendship issues as impinging on their progress. Other factors such as teachers' attitudes, beliefs, and practices further facilitated or hindered an ELL's potential for academic success and access to resources, particularly with regards to student placement in mainstream classes, teachers' expectations of ELLs, and classroom interactions (Sharkey & Layzer, 2000). Individual learner characteristics such as age, gender, aptitude, motivation, self-esteem, learning strategies, extroversion or introversion, risk-taking, intelligence, tolerance of ambiguity, cooperation, competition, independence, and anxiety (Kang, 2006; Oxford, 1992) have also had implications for how a student performs in the acquisition of English.

By contrast, a concern with student underachievement was also noted, particularly by teachers of gifted ELLs. Whether due to the barriers posed by limited English or through poor or lax personal attitudes and other maladaptive strategies, underachievement was acknowledged as contributing to unfulfilled potential in gifted ELLs' academic performance. Influencers on underachievement such as a student's personality, peer influences, family, school, and community environments have also been found to contribute to underachievement and outcomes differ across cultures (Reis & McCoach, 2000). There is less evidence of the impact of underachievement on the social-emotional well-being of gifted students (Blaas, 2013), however, with a recent study of 1206 urban gifted and non-gifted Hispanic students suggesting that less than 1% of its whole sample was identified as demonstrating emotional and behavioural difficulties (Eklund, Tanner, Stoll, & Anway, 2014). Student engagement, a strong belief in self, and resilience to overcome negative experiences have been described as key characteristics for overcoming underachievement in gifted ELLs (Landis & Reschly, 2013). Students made reference to engagement, self-belief, and resilience as protective factors as well as to a number of the risk factors identified by Reis, Colbert, and Hébert (2004) and summarised in Table 2.4. These challenges are an ongoing concern for all school systems and not limited to gifted ELLs.

Stressors have been found to be particularly pronounced in cultures where competition both within the classroom and for the purpose of gaining entry into higher education institutions has rested on the demonstration of sustained high academic achievement. For example, research

into the vulnerability of gifted South Korean students to psychosocial stressors considered both personal and environmental characteristics and identified family processes, expectations, and parenting as key influential factors. Cho and Yoon (2005) noted that characteristics of the Confucian culture such as a high emphasis on education and achievement as well as conformity to the social value added further pressure. This vulnerability was evidenced in the commentary of students from South Korean backgrounds who participated in my inquiry, with a particular emphasis on high parental expectations. Worrell (2010) warned that psychosocial stressors were highly likely to have an impact on members of marginalised minority groups and individuals from low socio-economic backgrounds.

Ultimately, psychosocial stressors have an impact on the academic and achievement identities of all individuals, not only gifted ELLs. Worrell (2010) noted that these achievement identities "represent complex interactions of their personal identities (e.g., self-concept, motivation, self-efficacy, achievement orientation) and their collective identities or reference group orientations (e.g., socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity)" (p. 39). Students were aware of the various multifaceted demands on their lives, including expectations to conform and perform. This was most notably represented in Stella's story where she discussed her extended family's expectations of high ATARs for all their children.

In summary, these motivational aspects identified in my inquiry were a testament to gifted ELLs' commitment, drive, and determination to succeed in their academic endeavours. With a strong self-understanding of their own strengths and challenges, students focused on not only mastering the English language but also on continuing with their studies purposefully and with a goal clearly in mind. Despite this determination, gifted ELLs were still susceptible to numerous risk factors as identified in the literature (e.g., Martin, Burns, & Schonlau, 2010; Mueller, 2009; Peterson, Duncan, & Canady, 2009) that educators and schools must continue to be mindful of in order for these students to reach their full potential.

Hallmarks of gifted ELLs: Relational aspects. Gifted ELLs were acutely aware of the assistance they were receiving during their educational journey, underscoring the relational aspect of its provenance. They endeavoured to honour their parents' wishes for their continuing success at school despite high expectations, and praised significant adults such as their teachers who were supporting them during the course of their education. They also described the school as an affirmational place for learning. They were wary of peers who were not positive influencers,

regardless of cultural or language group commonalities, and reflected on their own cultural identity at a time when identity formation was crucial to their future well-being. These findings cast schools and their educators in a positive light for their role in striving to meet the needs of their gifted ELLs.

Parents of gifted students tended on the whole to have high expectations of their children as reported by both students and teachers. Research has found that parenting styles that are more likely to be authoritative (marked by high levels of warmth and demandingness) have a greater positive impact on the academic and social outcomes as well as future opportunities of gifted students; however this impact varies according to each family's cultural group and students' gender and age (Rudasill, Adelson, Callahan, Houlihan, & Keizer, 2013). Teachers and students confirmed that many parents came from backgrounds where education was highly valued and they felt that in some cases the pressure from the parents was too intense. This pressure can lead to students developing low tolerance thresholds, becoming more impatient and stressed (Frey, 1991). One school involved in this inquiry proposed to begin to address parental expectations by employing a consulting psychiatrist to speak to the parents on some of these matters. This type of support can begin to make a difference, as specific counselling for gifted students and their families has been recommended previously and consistently (Bireley & Genshaft, 1991a; Dai & Renzulli, 2000; Jackson, Moyle, & Piechowski, 2009).

Some of the gifted ELLs who participated in my inquiry also noted that their parents were critical of the Australian education system in terms of (lack of) demands made on the students, concerned that the volume of homework was perceived as being too low. Research has indicated that in general parents are satisfied with the type and amounts of homework given to gifted students and will supervise its implementation (Worrell, Gabelko, Roth, & Samuels, 1999). Studies focusing on different cultural groups' perceptions of homework and increased student achievement found "no consistent relationship between amount of time spent on homework and achievement within cultures, although the cultures in which more homework was done had higher achievement scores" (Worrell et al., 1999, p. 87). Schools continue to address the issues of student homework and expected hours of study.

Pianta and Allen (2008) noted that at the secondary school level "positive relationships with adults are perhaps the single most important ingredient promoting positive youth development" (p. 24) and these relationships extend outwards from the family circle and into the school environment. Overwhelmingly, students who participated in my inquiry spoke about these relationships and the strong, positive influence of their teachers in their role as educators and

mentors. Passionate teachers were likewise celebrated by administrators who cited their capacity to connect gifted students with the wider community and its varied resources to support the students' development and facilitate the unlocking of student potential. Pastoral support in particular was lauded, with examples such as assistance with extended living skills cited as a service teachers provided that went beyond expectations.

This central role that teachers play has been well covered in the literature, which has noted principally that the quality of teacher–student relationships, from as early as the entry year into school, is related to academic success (Hamre & Pianta, 2001) as well as to many important social and behavioural outcomes (Birch & Ladd, 1998; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Howes, Hamilton, & Matheson, 1994). These quality relationships have the effect of feeding back onto student academic success as evidenced through increased student engagement in classroom activities, which in turn has been thought to predict greater academic success (Hughes & Kwok, 2007). It was therefore important to note how many students responded positively about the quality of their relationships with their teachers, both subject and ESL, and how these relationships had assisted in their learning. Indeed, Jerome and Pianta (2008) referred to the findings of Harter (1996) who noted that middle school children who have better relationships with teachers tend to have higher self-esteem, greater interest in classroom goals, and greater pursuit of goals in school. Similarly, high school students have been identified as displaying lower levels of emotional distress, suicidal ideation and behaviour, violence, substance abuse, early sexual activity, and school suspension and expulsion when they have higher-quality relationships with teachers, relationships that have also been linked to greater academic achievement, especially among minority groups (Crosnoe, Johnson, & Elder, 2004).

In my inquiry both teachers and students made reference to mutual and respectful relationships. Research has indicated that secondary teachers tend to describe personal relationships with students more in terms of acknowledgement and respect (Hargreaves, 2000). In this inquiry students described these relationships through numerous instances where they felt valued by their teachers as measured by the type of assistance and support given. Teachers also assisted in setting personal challenges and goals as well as facilitating choice with student learning. They were noted for being available to give clarification and for their willingness to help, and their feedback was highly valued by the students. Mostly, students felt that on the whole their teachers were working to a high standard to meet their educational needs.

Gifted ELLs also identified their schools as being safe and supportive environments, staffed with adults committed to helping them to achieve. McEvoy and Welker (2000) identified

effective schools as being those that shared common characteristics including student perceptions of high expectations for achievement, students' sense of efficacy with respect to learning, and student perceptions of a safe environment in which to learn. In my inquiry, participants made mention of experiences and shared perceptions that acknowledged each of these three elements. First, findings included students discussing how they saw their schools and teachers supporting their academic achievement and accommodating their specific learning needs as well as being critical of those who weren't supportive, whilst some teachers and administrators were concerned about parental expectations they perceived to be unrealistic. Second, a commitment to learning and seeking new challenges has already been identified as an attribute of gifted learners, and some teachers who participated in my inquiry shared how they and their schools facilitated this commitment. Third, regardless of what type of class they participated in or the socio-economic status of their school, many students described their learning environment as a happy and safe place. Overall, students reported mostly positive experiences, whilst teachers and administrators were both positive and cautionary in their evaluation and outlook. These findings were similar to those reported in a recent Australian study on the perceptions of learning at a select-entry accelerated high school for high ability students (Kaman & Kronborg, 2012), whilst mixed findings have been reported across the international literature (e.g., Chae & Gentry (2011) found differences between Korean and U.S. gifted students' attitudes, and Mathews & Kitchen (2007) identified issues of social equity arising from a school-within-a-school approach).

Students who had the additional opportunity to be educated in an Intensive English Centre (IEC) uniformly described the experience as positive, and all participants who commented on the schooling model agreed on the effectiveness of the IEC in preparing ELLs to enter mainstream education settings. Teachers also indicated that more time in the IEC or similar levels of support in the mainstream school was needed. Whilst research on the effectiveness of the IECs in preparing EAL/D students for mainstream schools is scarce, it has been recognised that this model of education meets a need (Glew, 2001) that is not as accessible in a mainstream school. Continued access to IECs for longer periods of time before entering mainstream schools was recommended by teachers and students alike.

It is in the school setting that students participate with peers not only in educational activities but also in social and relational engagements. As friendship groups among adolescents tend to begin with perceived commonalities it was noteworthy that gifted ELLs shared a broad variety of experiences relating to friends from the same language or cultural groups at school, including both positive and negative experiences. These commonalities, however, were not

always sufficient for them to develop and sustain deeper friendships, as gifted students are more likely to have a preference for friendships with like-minded peers based on task-orientation and friendly competition, leading to greater friendship stability (Schapiro, Schneider, Shore, Margison, & Udvari, 2009). Friends might also be at a different stage of acculturation, adding further challenges to the relationship. On the whole, self-perceptions of interpersonal competence among academically gifted students have been found to be generally positive (Lee, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Thomson, 2012).

Being part of an adolescent peer group as a gifted ELL posed a challenge for some students in terms of acknowledging their giftedness, especially among peers from their own cultural or language groups. The attitude of gifted adolescents towards their own giftedness has been found to be generally positive in terms of their own personal growth and academics, however in peer relationships their perception of their giftedness has been reported as both a negative factor (Kerr, Colangelo, & Gaeth, 1988) and a positive one (Lee, Olszewski-Kubilius, & Turner, 2012). Gifted students are also not immune to the negative peer relations that can occur in the form of conflict between different cultural groups as well as with the dominant or majority group (Ford & Harris, 1999). Some schools noted in their annual school reports that hosting special events such as Harmony Day and multicultural fairs and festivals gives students opportunities to explore and enhance their intercultural understandings and celebrate diversity. Such events facilitated greater contact with peers from other cultural backgrounds and created opportunities to foster new friendships.

Cultural values and cultural identity were important parameters for gifted ELLs. Rance-Roney (2004) noted that as part of the development of their personal identity, gifted ELLs tended to engage in the formation of a new interstitial identity as the lifelong process of acculturation continued. The term *interstitial* is applied to the "changing historical, political, and geopolitical narratives" (Sheth, 2014, p. 76) experienced by individuals who engage in the acculturation process. As gifted ELLs deal with a multiplicity of identity facets not only with regards to their identity as gifted individuals but also to their cultural identity this process has a significant implication for these students.

Much of the current literature on migration and ethnic identity has paid particular attention to the process of acculturation, highlighting the central role of the migrant's maintenance or rejection of his or her ethnic culture in the acculturation strategy adopted after immigration (Nesdale, Rooney, & Smith, 1997). Research into bilingual students and cultural identity has supported the assertion that students on the whole experience positive experiences from being

born into and belonging to another culture (Fielding & Harbon, 2013). The causal impact of migrant ethnic identity on the acculturation process itself post immigration has received less attention; however, research in this area has indicated that being of migrant status per se is associated with greater psychological disturbance than if the individual had remained in his or her country of birth (Kuprinsky, 1984). It is not surprising, then, to hear gifted ELLs in their adolescent years speak about their psychological challenges in determining and developing their interstitial identity. For Harold in particular, not being able to identify as "fully Australian" nor "fully Chinese" left him emotionally vulnerable. Despite the establishment of a hybrid understanding of ethnicity (Lee, 1995) where this particular student has access to identification as Chinese-Australian, a greater challenge is countering the effects of feelings of isolation and lack of acceptance and their impact on self-esteem. On the whole, however, the self-esteem of ethnic adolescents has consistently been reported to be positively related to their ethnic identity (Phinney, 1992) and adds to their sense of agency, which is another reason why hearing the student voice is so relevant.

Teachers expressed their beliefs about acculturation and English-language learning that in the most part were consistent with policies from the NSW DET that focused on the acquisition of English for primarily functional purposes, but with ACARA (2011) noting the use of students' cultural understandings and the building of shared knowledge. Some teachers believed that deeper immersion into the Australian culture would facilitate the learning of English for gifted ELLs and therefore increase student participation in the curriculum. This attitude appears to be well intended; however, given the complexities involved in the development of interstitial identity, it warrants further evaluation as a pedagogical approach.

Several educators who participated in my inquiry shared deep insights into the cultural challenges faced by gifted ELLs. Research has indicated that teachers who are more critically informed about migration and acculturation can better provide for the enrichment of the language and literacy development of ELLs (Darvin & Norton, 2014). Indeed, by affirming that ELLs come with valuable transnational knowledge and skills "teachers can help migrant students claim more-powerful identities from which to navigate investments in the language practices of their new classrooms and communities" (Darvin & Norton, 2014, p. 116). Teacher education for greater understanding as well as the employment of teachers from non-English-speaking backgrounds have the potential to contribute positively to the development of a student's cultural identity.

The relational factors identified in my inquiry covered a significant amount of ground. They highlighted the interconnectedness of the human agents in a system, as well as the

dependency of the students on those agents (their parents, their teachers, the administrators, and the policy and curriculum designers) as well as themselves. The support that was in place for gifted ELLs was celebrated and many of the protective and risk factors identified by Reis, Colbert, and Hébert (2004) and discussed in Chapter II were also corroborated. Significantly, relationships were best acknowledged through the intentional support provided as part of a broader teaching and learning effort on behalf of schools and their personnel.

Hallmarks of gifted ELLs: Academic aspects. Overwhelmingly and understandably, learning English was described as the primary concern for gifted ELLs by all participants in this inquiry. This identification aligned with then-current NSW DET ESL policy that highlighted the learning of English as being "an essential requirement for success both at school and for further education, training and employment for students who speak a language other than English as their first language" (NSW DET, Multicultural Programs Unit, 2004, p. 1). With ACARA's (2011) updated EAL/D document the discussion has shifted somewhat and English is described as a vehicle through which learning is accessed and achievement demonstrated. There is less emphasis on the learning of English and more on learning being accessed through English as well as learning about English. Some educators acknowledged this updated perspective when considering the educational needs of gifted ELLs, suggesting that ESL support should be made available in classrooms in authentic learning situations rather than through withdrawal models. ESL teachers were more ambivalent about what was, in essence, their core business; however, were mostly supportive. From the students' perspective, many displayed an understanding that learning English was a practicality that formed part of their academic progression. Some could see themselves at a disadvantage by comparison with their native English-speaking peers in terms of academic performance, however, they were determined to overcome this difficulty with effort and persistence.

For gifted ELLs there were important implications regarding the acquisition of English that were not discussed in policy documents. Most significantly, it was acknowledged by all participants that student progress in the acquisition and flexibility of use of English is not only perceived as being accelerated in gifted ELLs, but is also crucial to their overall learning and progress at school. ACARA's (2011) EAL/D policy is better than earlier policy documents at acknowledging that both the rate and degree of success of second-language learning is affected by individual differences, and that factors described by Ellis (1985) such as age, aptitude, attitude, motivation, personality, cognitive style, and preferred learning strategies need to be considered.

The EAL/D policy, however, only describes "a progression of English language learning typical of students learning English as an additional language or dialect" (ACARA, 2011, p. 9). This description by omission allows for an understanding that there may be variations or an *atypical* progression. Though not explicitly expressed, this statement paves the way for recognition of a different progression rate for gifted ELLs, which would be of benefit when determining English-language learning pathways for these students.

Students who participated in my inquiry not only reported a strong desire to acquire English quickly and purposefully, but they also valued and acknowledged opportunities that existed or were created for them in order to extend their gifts and talents, regardless of their level of competency in English. While much of the literature has addressed interventions for primary-school-aged children (Sampson & Chason, 2008), and some aspects span the whole learning continuum through formal schooling and beyond (VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2008), it is thought that curriculum and services for gifted adolescents are under-researched (Hertberg-Davis & Callahan, 2008). My inquiry identified four key areas that participants considered relevant.

First, the opportunity for gifted students to develop, use, and explore higher-order thinking skills was acknowledged by teachers in both the pilot study and the main inquiry as being purposeful for the continued learning of gifted ELLs. Development of these skills has also been recommended for the general gifted student population in numerous educational models (e.g., VanTassel-Baska, 2008) and reflects good pedagogy for all students, not just the gifted. Second, the provision of a broad variety of extra-curricular activities that gave gifted ELLs the opportunity to demonstrate their gifts and talents regardless of language competency was celebrated by both students and educators and is noted by Smutny (2012) as an appropriate teaching strategy. Extended enrichment opportunities are considered a staple of some gifted education models (e.g., Renzulli & Reis, 2003). Third, community outreach was a hallmark of several schools, where students were connected to the real world beyond the classroom through the forging of links with different industries. These links allowed students not only to experience a real construct for their gifts and talents but are also considered a key aspect of the mentoring process, a strategy recommended for gifted students (Grassinger, Porath, & Ziegler, 2010). Fourth, gifted ELLs were given opportunities to demonstrate leadership skills amongst peer groups and across the school in their field of interest or expertise. In such an environment, interpersonal as well as intergroup mechanisms are more likely to become more completely actualised and individual personalities have the potential to emerge more fully (Chernyshev, 2013).

With support evident and varied and numerous opportunities provided, students who participated in my inquiry were on the whole hopeful for their futures. Many students spoke with both pride and certainty as they discussed both short- and long-term goals, mostly focused around reaping the benefits of academic success and hard work. For many of these students, achieving these goals meant gaining entry into university courses such as Medicine, Law, and other courses requiring high ATARs. Their aspirations are supported by ABS data that show that people who speak a language other than English at home achieve, on average, a level of higher educational attainment and enjoy greater participation in full-time study than people who were born in Australia and mainly speak English at home (ABS, 2009). However, the data also indicated that proficiency in English was a critical factor in determining educational outcomes, and that people who were proficient in English were twice as likely to have, or be studying towards, a university degree than people not proficient in English (ABS, 2009).

While showing that poor English skills have been identified as a specific obstacle for the full participation in society of people for whom English is not their first language (ABS, 2009), the same data revealed a different picture for 20- to 24-year-olds from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds (Figure 7.1). Coming from this background was positively associated with holding or studying towards a higher-education qualification such as a Bachelor degree. The pattern for 25- to 64-year-olds is similar (ABS, 2009).

The ABS data (Figure 7.2) further indicated that proficiency in spoken English was related to attainment and participation, with 20- to 24-year-olds with less English proficiency half as likely as those with greater proficiency to have completed or be studying towards a Bachelor degree or higher (30% compared with 58%). This difference was even more pronounced among 25- to 64-year-olds (16% compared with 43%) (ABS, 2009).

Ultimately, what is important to note is that the gifted ELLs were motivated and committed to learning English quickly, accurately, and efficiently as part of their journey towards ongoing academic success. Learning English was not perceived as an end, but rather as a means to an end. They understood not only its communicative function in terms of both self-expression and communication of acquired knowledge, but also its utility for the acquisition of new learning. Greater command of English would allow them to explore new possibilities in terms of extending their gifts and talents both within the school environment and beyond for future success, which was the overall goal of themselves, their parents, and their schools.

PEOPLE AGED 20-24 YEARS, LEVEL OF HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT/CURRENT STUDY BY CALD STATUS (a) - 2009

(a) "Born overseas" includes those for whom country of birth could not be determined.
(b) Includes "Certificate III/IV not further defined".

Source: ABS 2009 Survey of Education and Training
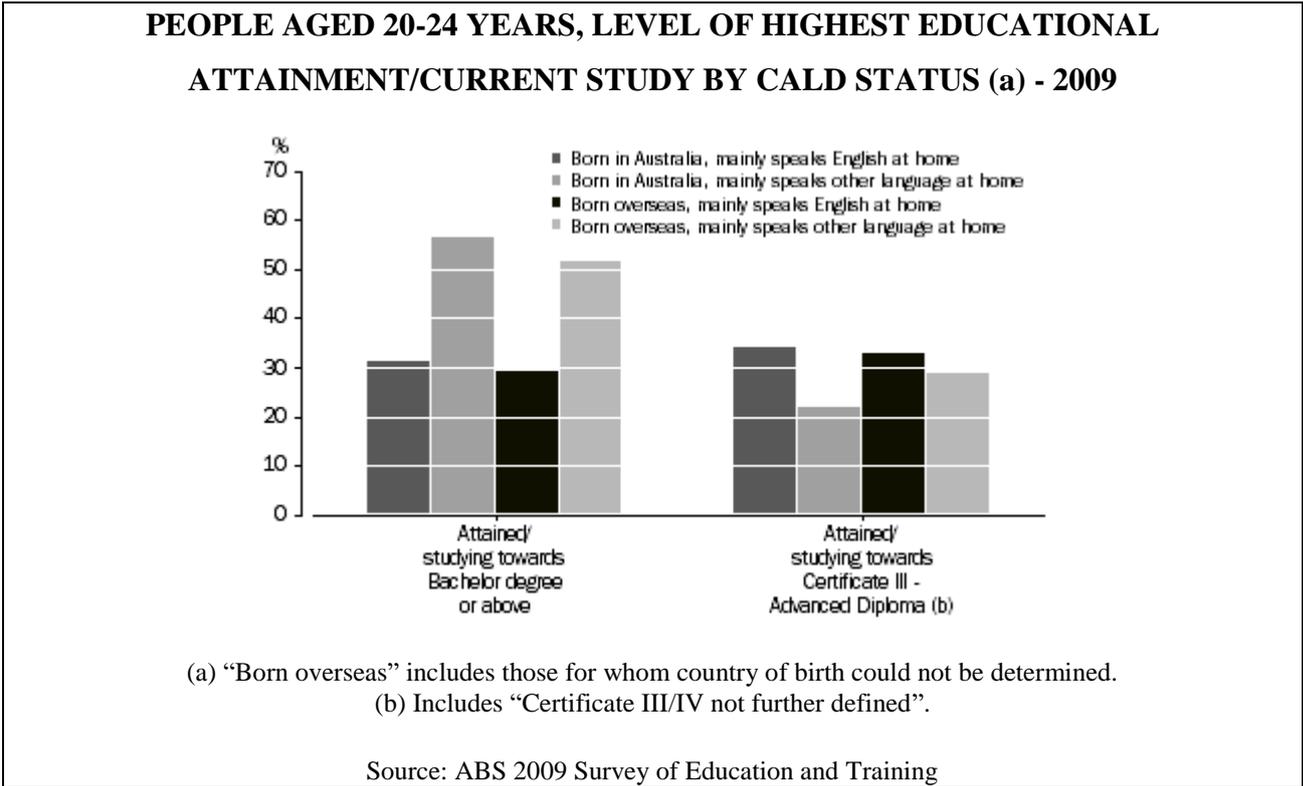
Figure 7.1. People aged 20–24 years, level of highest educational attainment/current study by CALD status, 2009.

PEOPLE AGED 20-64 YEARS, ATTAINMENT/STUDY TOWARDS A BACHELOR DEGREE OR HIGHER QUALIFICATION BY PROFICIENCY IN SPOKEN ENGLISH - 2009

Source: ABS 2009 Survey of Education and Training
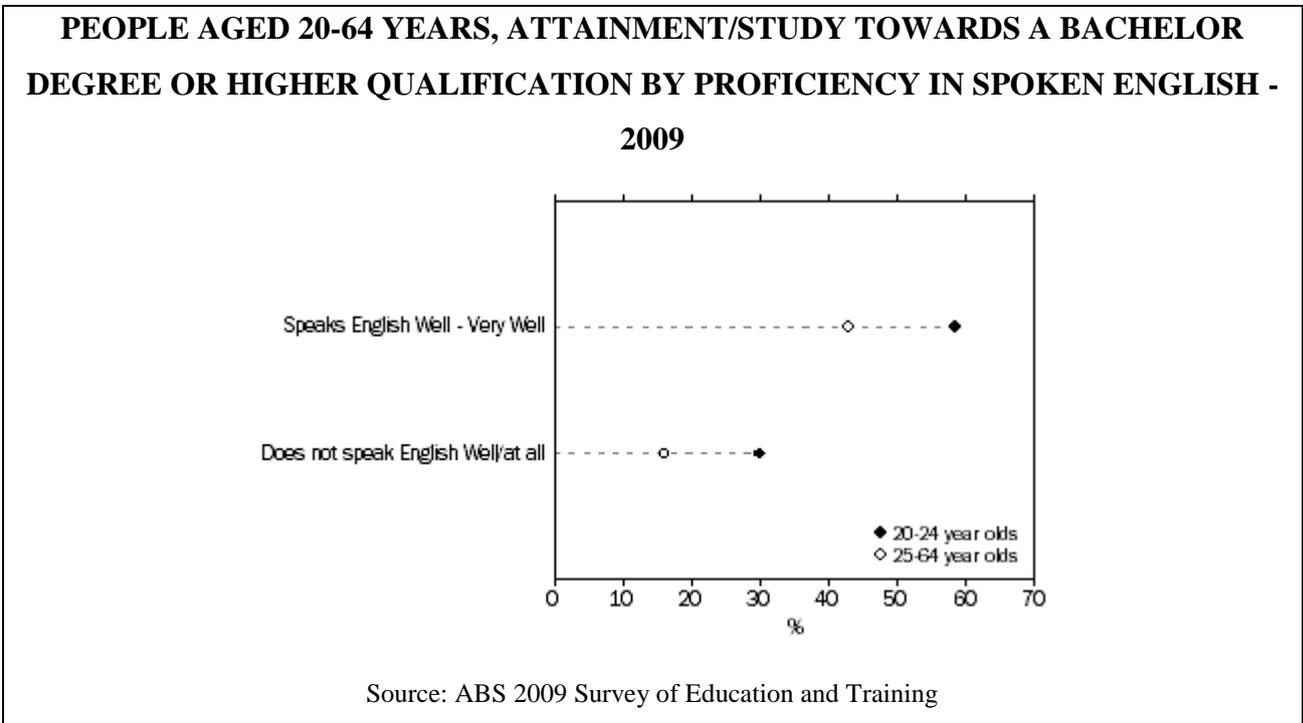
Figure 7.2. People aged 20–64 years, attainment/study towards a Bachelor degree or higher qualification by proficiency in spoken English, 2009.

Turning points. In making adjustments to schooling in Australia students identified significant turning points in their learning journey. They explained that not only were there linguistic and cultural challenges to overcome but also academic and parental expectations to fulfil. Some pertinent examples students shared included reflections on key moments in their lives when they decided to take advantage of support offered to them after initially rejecting these learning opportunities, whilst others noted their initial reticence in using spoken English in front of peers for fear of being ridiculed. These reflections from gifted ELLs indicate that they must find ways to overcome challenges arising not only from being gifted, but also from being English-language learners. Their self-identification of significant turning points in their learning journey highlighted not only that they have developed coping strategies for the challenges they face, but that like their experiences, these strategies are unique to the individual. Schools, therefore, need to continue to make support systems available for gifted ELLs, both in terms of their English-language learning needs and also their need to develop life-long problem-solving skills relative to the social domain.

Other students described the moment they broke away from peers of the same cultural group to find friendships among like-minded peers as being a pivotal point in their learning and social journey. The forced-choice dilemma that many gifted adolescents face, described in the literature as the choice between academic achievement or peer acceptance (Jung, McCormick, & Gross, 2012), was heightened in the experiences of some students, and pointed to difficulties encountered particularly in the social realm. Since many gifted adolescents perceive giftedness as a social handicap (Coleman & Cross, 2014), being linguistically different from the mainstream group provided an additional challenge. Coping strategies developed by gifted ELLs included exiting the culturally and linguistically similar group to forge new friendships with like-minded peers, regardless of the linguistic or cultural backgrounds of these peers.

For some students, realising the need for better time management skills was significant, and enacting changes to routines and lifestyle choices was a positive outcome. Unfortunately, this topic has had little coverage in the literature on gifted ELLs. As studies have reported that good time management can exert a positive influence on learning outcomes for all students (Claessens, Van Eerde, Rutte, & Roe, 2007) and plays a key role in academic achievement in the adolescent years (Liu, Rijmen, MacCann, & Roberts, 2009) this topic warrants further investigation for its impact on gifted ELLs. Links between time management and grades have suggested that students with poor time management are at risk of academic underachievement (Liu et al., 2009); there is thus potential for much harm if students are not supported to develop their skills.

As the focus of my inquiry was on the experiences and educational needs of gifted ELLs and how these needs were being met in Australian secondary schools with a consideration of student voice at the forefront, what was important to the students themselves needed to be honoured. As well as the motivational, relational, and academic aspects discussed above, the students themselves frequently stated how much they liked their school and how the school helped them to achieve. The socio-affective needs of gifted students have been well covered in the literature (e.g., Cross, 2004; Neihart, 1999) and their views on their schooling researched (e.g., Gallagher, Harradine, & Coleman, 1997; Kanevsky & Keighley, 2003). In my inquiry, school offerings, curriculum adjustments, support for English, and competent teachers were all found to have contributed to an overall sense of satisfaction with the schooling system for gifted ELLs.

Teachers

The findings from my inquiry that identified what teachers know about gifted ELLs and how to best meet their needs indicate that teachers have a solid knowledge of student characteristics as well as a strong commitment to see the students succeed, despite certain challenges. Indeed, the role of the teacher in supporting gifted ELLs was given prominence by all the teachers and administrators who participated in my inquiry, referring to these teachers variously as "facilitators", "influencers", and "vehicles". Teachers acknowledged these terms and described specific ways of teaching that demonstrated their understanding of these roles. Other main themes identified included teacher commitment to helping students learn English and through English, adapting and differentiating learning not only to meet their English-language needs but also in consideration of their needs as gifted students, and acting as facilitators for these processes. In addition, teachers outlined four significant areas where they felt more assistance was needed: funding, time, support, and resources. Each of these key findings is examined in turn.

The teacher's role. Overwhelmingly, the role of the teacher in education has undergone significant transformation due not only to changing pedagogies but also to the digitisation of the learning space. Considered a seismic shift by some standards, these changes mean that teachers are no longer content experts, but rather are constantly looking for new ways of encouraging students to cooperatively consider, analyse, and evaluate information, as well as develop higher-order thinking skills and engage in more reflective encounters with the mass of knowledge available. In Australia, teachers are required to demonstrate their proficiency against a set of

professional standards as determined by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). Of relevance to my inquiry, Standard 1.3 focuses on professional knowledge of students and how they learn, with a specific focus on students with diverse linguistic, cultural, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds, and Standard 1.5 commits teachers to differentiating teaching to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities. Standard 2 focuses on knowledge of content and pedagogy, whilst Standard 3 considers professional practice in terms of planning for and implementing effective teaching and learning (AITSL, 2014). None of these standards assigns specific attributes to the role of the teacher, but rather they provide descriptors for different phases of the teaching career, ranging from graduate, to proficient, to highly accomplished, then lead teacher.

The role of the teacher of the gifted has also been explored in the literature on gifted education. *Roeper Review* dedicated an entire issue in 2001, "designed to illuminate the specifics of what it means to be a gifted teacher" (Haensly, 2001, p. 189). Contributors noted a broad range of characteristics that echoed the terminology identified by participants in my inquiry, and Ford and Trotman's (2001) article addressed characteristics and competencies of teachers working with gifted students who were linguistically, culturally, and ethnically diverse, with a "focus specifically on multicultural knowledge, philosophies, and skills" (Ford & Trotman, 2001, p. 235). Specifically, characteristics of gifted multicultural education teachers as described by Ford and Trotman (2001) that aligned with those identified in my inquiry included: the ability to develop methods and materials for use with gifted ELLs; skills in addressing individual and cultural differences; skills in teaching higher-level thinking skills and questioning techniques using multicultural resources and materials; ability to recognise the strengths of gifted ELLs; and skills in creating an environment in which gifted ELLs feel challenged and safe to explore and express their uniqueness. Further recommendations by Ford and Trotman (2001) included advising schools to employ teachers from culturally diverse backgrounds. It was an oversight then, on my part, to not ask teachers and administrators to share their own cultural and linguistic backgrounds, which might have added more depth and support to the findings. At McMahon High School, however, the contact person did advise me that one teacher who participated in this research, Sanjeev, was from a language background other than English. Sanjeev's insights would therefore have the potential to make him an asset when considering the employment of teachers to work with gifted ELLs.

In my inquiry both administrators and teachers made reference to the role of the teacher as being a "facilitator" for learning for gifted ELLs. As well as having the potential to guide students

with their learning, teachers themselves have been known to act as positive influencers for gifted students in a broader way. In their capacity as mentors, teachers have been acknowledged as playing a major part in gifted adolescents' development and success. Indeed, Sampson and Chason (2008) noted Beck's (1989) assertions that career development of a student was one of the major areas affected by the mentoring relationship. Mentoring is also known to be especially advantageous for females (Maxwell, 2007).

Success and failure for gifted students hinge on many factors, including task persistence, academic performance, motivation, and interest, and teachers are involved in supporting the development of these attributes. In a recent qualitative study conducted with 28 university honours freshmen, focus group discussions revealed that students most often attributed their interest and motivation throughout high school to their interactions with their teachers (Siegle, Rubenstein, & Mitchell, 2014). Together with belief in their own self-efficacy and a positive valuation of the goal or task, a supportive environment in the form of personnel and resources has been found to contribute to sufficient self-regulation to reach task completion (McCoach & Siegle, 2003).

Due to shifting pedagogies and approaches to teaching and learning, teachers have adapted teaching methods and styles to fulfil added requirements, including meeting the needs of an increasingly diverse range of students. In my inquiry, gifted ELLs identified their teachers' strengths, which included not only support for language learning but also for the creation of opportunities within and beyond the classroom to allow them to explore their potential and express their creativity. Support from teachers to address life-skill deficits, including parents' lack of English skills and other disadvantages, was also welcomed.

Competing priorities for teachers of gifted ELLs. What came to light through listening to students' voices and to those most directly involved in their education was that the acquisition and development of English was of key importance to all stakeholders. Teachers shared that commitment and operated beyond the expectations of the NSW DET, Multicultural Programs Unit's (2004) ESL policy, with its focus on "the English language and literacy learning of their ESL students" (p. 3) and more in line with ACARA's (2011) vision of supporting students "to build the English language skills needed to access the general curriculum, in addition to learning area-specific language structures and vocabulary" (p. 2). In short, a transition from the learning of English to learning being accessed through English was acknowledged by educators.

Whilst teachers identified that a majority of their focus was on equipping students with English-language skills to function in school, continuing teacher support with all learning was also a key priority. Teachers were cognisant of their students' needs in terms of their gifts and talents, but expressed some urgency in having students acquire sufficient English to continue to make progress in areas of talent, potential, or achievement. Research undertaken by Hammond (2014) of teachers of at-risk EAL students acknowledged increased pressure when faced with trying to meet the needs of EAL students at different educational levels with diverse emotional needs, as well as getting through a crowded curriculum. These reflections are consistent with findings from other research (e.g., Miller & Windle, 2010). Further investigations into teachers' approaches to overcoming these challenges may provide greater insights for the benefit of gifted ELLs.

Despite a broader understanding of good teaching practice with regards to meeting the educational needs of ELLs being more evident in schools, teachers have been challenged by the increasing global trend of measurement and accountability in education. As a response to increased levels of international scrutiny concerning the quality of education relative to public expenditure, UNESCO addressed the matter by offering "a set of principles and strategies to be considered in the development and implementation of results-based accountability systems" (Anderson, 2005, p. 1). In Australia, these new accountabilities for teachers have become more manifest through recent major curriculum reforms as evidenced by the Australian Curriculum and NAPLAN. A specific literacy strand within the English curriculum, *literacy as a general capability*, and the standardised assessment of literacy skills alongside numeracy skills in the Years 3, 5, 7, and 9 NAPLAN tests (Freebody, Morgan, Comber, & Nixon, 2014), have required teachers to give further consideration to the language needs of their ELLs and expand their teaching repertoire to meet not only students' needs but also accountability requirements.

Regardless of the role of the teacher or the accountability-driven priority of the school, teachers spoke eloquently about differentiation practices that were being implemented in the various types of schools. Selective schools tended to focus more on differentiating to support English-language needs within a climate of excellence and achievement, whilst comprehensive schools sought community support to assist where disadvantage limited offerings for their students. Despite findings that state that little differentiation occurs for gifted students in mainstream classrooms, that differentiated practice suffers from varied interpretation, and that it is subject to irregular application (Adams & Pierce, 2009), in my inquiry administrators, teachers, and students recognised various elements of differentiation as being valuable and effective.

Exploration and implementation of differentiation strategies need to be continued in order to meet the needs of all students, including gifted ELLs.

      A call for increased inputs: funding, time, support, resources. Throughout my inquiry, teachers and administrators articulated specific concerns with regards to financial constraints and how these limiters impacted on the options that could be accessed to support the needs of gifted ELLs. They believed that greater resourcing could benefit gifted ELLs when used to provide more support from teachers and other personnel, with the allocation of extra time to more specifically address learning and other needs, and with enriched learning opportunities both within and beyond the school setting. Educators across all participating schools shared these same core beliefs, regardless of the degree of socio-economic advantage or disadvantage of their school population.

      Resource allocation has been a policy topic of high priority across ministries and departments of education worldwide for many years, and has become increasingly subjected to greater scrutiny. Anderson (2005) developed a pamphlet for UNESCO titled *Accountability in Education*, with a focus on forging links between accountability systems, values, goals, and aspirations of schooling, and the generation and appropriate use of high quality information about student achievement. She noted that teachers were generally held responsible for the education of all their students, regardless of the advantages or disadvantages students brought to school. Teachers also had little control over the resources available to them to achieve their goals yet were expected to assume responsibility for the learning of all students as well as provide for increased student success for all. Educators who participated in my inquiry agreed with these statements, and those from disadvantaged schools shared differing concerns from those from more advantaged schools with regards to best options for resource allocation, with the former focused on providing life opportunities and the latter on academic enhancement.

      In December 2011 the first comprehensive review of school funding in Australia since the 1970s was released, rejecting the existing socio-economic status (SES) funding index model which had been under criticism for its inequities from education and other peak bodies for well over a decade. Known colloquially as the *Gonski Review*, it recommended a two-tiered model termed the *schooling resource standard* which would include a per student base amount with extra loadings for disadvantage such as disability, low socio-economic background, school size, remoteness, number of Indigenous students, and lack of English proficiency (Gonski et al., 2011).

Continuing support for the Gonski reforms and full commitment to their implementation across all Australian states is uncertain due to the political tensions that exist in Australia at the current time.

In the Australian context the Australian Bureau of Statistics has defined socio-economic disadvantage in terms of "people's access to material and social resources as well as their ability to participate in society" (ABS, 2009). Whilst poverty has been posited as "the overarching variable that leads to underrepresentation in gifted programs, not race or ethnicity, nor gender" (VanTassel-Baska, 2010a, p. 1) it is important to note that only two of the five schools that participated in this sample had an Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage (ICSEA) of below 1000, considered to be the median for statistical purposes (ACARA, 2012). No data exist on the relationship between socio-economic disadvantage and the participation of gifted ELLs in education in Australia; however, in my inquiry there was a marked difference in priorities as listed by educators from different types of schools. In lower socio-economic schools teachers expressed a preference for resources to be used in terms of accessing not only basic living needs such as food and clothing for some of their most disadvantaged students, but also a broader life experience to develop their gifts and talents. In higher socio-economic schools further resources were not only sought but also provided to continue to refine the English-language needs of their students as well as opportunities to extend their gifts and talents. This marked difference aligns with many of the findings on the detrimental impact of poverty on the development of gifted students (e.g., VanTassel-Baska & Stambaugh, 2007), with calls for increased inputs by all educators who participated in my inquiry.

With the continuing climate of uncertainty with regards to general school funding across all Australian states and systems, in particular the historically poor support for gifted students and increasing numbers of ELLs entering Australian schools, it is difficult for schools to put in place any mid- to long-term provisions for their students. Compounded by the economic uncertainty since the 2008 global financial crisis there is a distinct lack of optimism that funding may be directed to where it is most needed (Hall, 2013), including for gifted ELLs.

Throughout this inquiry teachers were seen as the greatest advocates for gifted ELLs, championing their students' educational needs and constantly looking to maximise limited resources to assist their students to succeed, both with learning through English and in extending their gifts and talents. Watters (2010) has noted several studies that have reported the impact of teachers' classroom practices on students' goals (e.g. Ames, 1992; Turner et al., 2002), and has described in his own study certain positive characteristics of teachers as acknowledged by gifted students, including connecting pedagogical practices with students' interests, a passion for their

work, in-depth knowledge of subject matter, making learning relevant for the student, holding students to high expectations, the capacity to explain complex ideas, and good classroom management (Watters, 2010). Many of these characteristics were echoed by participants in my inquiry, paving the way for a greater understanding of how teachers are working to meet the needs of gifted ELLs.

Administrators

The role of the administrator in schools today has become increasingly more complex, and its importance is second only to the quality of a school's teachers in affecting student learning (Carpenter & Peak, 2013). Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010) proposed a new understanding of how leadership influences student learning by identifying four paths along which leadership influence flows. These paths are: the rational path (knowledge of the core purpose of schooling, including teaching and learning); the emotions path (the human resource frame in terms of teacher education and ongoing professional learning for teacher efficacy); the organisational path (structures, cultures, policies, and standard operating procedures of schools); and the family path (the external environment, SES backgrounds, and family educational culture). Contributions from administrators who participated in my inquiry were categorised along these four paths, each of which will be discussed in turn.

The rational path: The politicisation of the purpose of schooling. In order to reach an understanding about the school's role in meeting the educational needs of gifted ELLs it was important to examine the context of the school's overall purpose and what drives it to do what it does. Whilst the nature and purpose of schools and schooling have undergone much examination over the decades (e.g., Chitty, 2002; Gale & Densmore, 2000; OECD, 2006a), in recent times the conversation appears to have taken a decisive turn directed by the accountability requirements of the spending of significant amounts of public money (Anderson, 2005). In the current era the examination of the results of schooling for accountability purposes still dominates most policy-makers' conversations in preference to the exploration of the intrinsic relationship between learning and schooling and how it can be further enhanced in terms of student potentiality (Lesch, 2009). Mediated through the lens of high-stakes testing practices, in this context the role of the school in meeting the needs of its students is that of assisting all students to achieve at least a set of minimum competency standards in the areas that the dominant society values and entrusts the

school to promulgate. This expectation has significant implications for gifted ELLs, for whom a minimum standard benchmark is an almost irrelevant measure of individual student potential, and what the dominant society values may be in a state of contrast, fluctuation, or misalignment with student and family values.

There appeared to be a degree of dissonance between this rationalist interpretation of education and what the participating schools were doing to meet the educational needs of gifted ELLs. Educators tended to report more frequently on the types of programs and practices that had been implemented to create further opportunities for learning rather than results of standardised and other types of assessments. In contrast, policy-makers have tended to focus on the results of testing practices as evidenced in the mandated requirements of the publication of such data in annual school reports. Whilst these data serve a general accountability purpose, there is a concern that "a more careful examination of race, culture and socioeconomics as they pertain to the use of test scores" (Lesch, 2009, p. ix) is being neglected, leading to the further disenfranchisement of certain groups in society for whom standardised tests are arguably considered to be a form of institutional prejudice (Lesch, 2009; Smyth, 2012). The impact of high-stakes testing, in particular, has been noted to have led to a widening of the achievement gap between different minority groups; however, the data regarding any overall benefit to minority groups are unhelpfully contradictory (William, 2010).

In the participating schools administrators framed the management of their schools within this accountability-driven environment, responding to the competing demands from the positioning of State and Commonwealth Governments' responses to calls for educational reform at major levels of government. Reforms such as the *Local schools, local decisions* plan of the NSW Government (NSW DEC, 2014c), giving administrators more authority and freedom to make decisions about public education spending, and the *Gonski Review*, authorised by the Commonwealth Government that recommended a new resource-allocation model based on the individual needs of students and schools (Gonski et al., 2011), have had significant repercussions. While the focus on the purposes of schooling continues to be accountability-driven it sits in marked contrast to the 2008 *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians* (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), 2008), which served as the rationale for the Australian Curriculum, that not only allowed for the aspirational positioning of Australia and its education system for meeting the needs of twenty-first-century learners but also for the re-framing of future policy through a greater shift towards the centralisation of the student in its goal-shaping. This shift became evident with the

commencement of increased dialogue between the Australian states on matters of education and the subsequent push towards a national curriculum. The uncertainty of the continuation of these projects and reviews brought about by the divide between conservative and socialist governments in Australia with regards to educational priorities has created significant tensions across the education system. Ultimately, it is expected to be the students who will be most impacted by these changing decisions, particularly students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

The emotions path: Teacher education and ongoing professional learning. The role of the teacher has undergone a number of paradigm shifts over several centuries, and has for some time now been considered a professional rather than a technical occupation. Current understandings reflect not only the various historical perspectives, but also the importance of teaching, teachers, and teacher education in promoting education quality for increasingly diverse groups of learners (Sayed, Morris, & Rao, 2014), including gifted ELLs. As educators need also to respond to the shifting demands of globalisation and the digitisation of learning, it is important to meet the needs of teachers through adequate preparation and on-going support. Administrators in schools are responsible not only for the broader management of their workforce but also for ensuring their skill sets are capitalised on and opportunities for continuing improvement are provided. Indeed, capacity-building is considered as essential in driving the direction of pedagogical improvement (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001).

As well as responding to the demands of modernity, two key findings have emerged for professionals working with gifted ELLs in educational settings (Ford & Harris, 1999) that come under the jurisdiction of administrators. First, teacher preparation programs and professional learning for current teachers working with gifted ELLs need to ensure educators are adequately prepared for the challenges of students who are culturally and linguistically diverse and who also display characteristics and traits relating to giftedness. Second, teacher diversity in terms of cultural and linguistic background also needs to be advanced, particularly to support ELLs in gifted programs. Participants in my inquiry were able to speak to the first of these two concerns, and research in the field to the second.

Globally, teacher education programs have considered the needs of gifted students at a rate similar to the acceptance of giftedness in the broader educational community, with regions such as the Asia Pacific and the Middle East currently the most active (VanTassel-Baska, 2013). Similarly, consideration of language and culture in the classroom has recently undergone

significant revision (Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 2014). In Australia, the most common form of teacher education is through the gaining of a four-year Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood, Primary, or Secondary Education at a recognised university, or a Diploma or Master of Teaching following a Bachelor's degree in another discipline. Since 2008 the *Teach For Australia* program has also been in place to attract outstanding graduates in other areas to the field of teaching. After an initial six-week training course, program associates are placed in disadvantaged schools and undertake a further two years of study to be awarded a Master of Teaching (Teach For Australia, 2014). Despite the breadth of units of study available as part of initial teacher education, very few universities offer courses specific to gifted students nor are they compulsory; indeed these courses tend to be accessed at the postgraduate level (Plunkett & Kronborg, 2015). Likewise, courses regarding the education of ELLs often come under the banner of student diversity, and quality, length, and depth of programs differ considerably (Fraser-Seeto, 2013). Pre-service teachers themselves have expressed dissatisfaction with the level of exposure to gifted and talented education concepts in pre-service education courses (Harris & Hemmings, 2008).

Post registration, ongoing professional learning is a requirement for all teachers across Australia as per AITSL's (2012) *Charter for the Professional Learning of Teachers and School Leaders*. This Charter articulates the expectation that all teachers in Australian schools will actively engage in improving their professional knowledge, practice, and engagement through the development of professional learning communities within and across schools and systems (AITSL, 2012). Professional learning opportunities are broad and must be linked to one of the professional standards as determined by AITSL (2014). There are no data publicly available as evidence of the number of professional learning hours invested by teachers into improving their knowledge and understanding of gifted students, ELLs, or gifted ELLs. Nevertheless, schools that participated in my inquiry reported allocating a significant portion of resources to increasing teacher capacity for working with gifted ELLs by providing opportunities for on-going professional learning in these domains. Schools with selective offerings reported investing in teachers by subsidising training in the Certificate of Gifted Education (COGE) and mini-COGE as offered through GERRIC, UNSW. Little investment in up-skilling teachers of EAL/D students was reported.

The employment by schools of teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to support gifted ELLs has also been recommended (Ford & Harris, 1999). Ford (2010) questioned the efficacy of teachers in connecting linguistically and culturally with gifted ELLs while in the United States "the demographics of teachers remain primarily White,

accounting for some 85% of the teaching force" (p. 33). In Australia, the demographical data released by the ABS (2003) as well as other stakeholders in education such as the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) have only tended to report on the indigenous and non-indigenous backgrounds of teachers. In 2013, ACER conducted a *Staff in Australia's Schools* survey commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education that showed that while 23.2% of the estimated Australian population in 2011 reported speaking a language other than English at home, the teacher workforce had a lower proportion (8.9% in primary and 10.8% in secondary) (McKenzie, Weldon, Rowley, Murphy, & McMillan, 2014). In annual school reports NSW schools are still expected to report on the indigenous composition of their workforce according to the National Education Agreement. There are no such requirements to report on staff from non-English speaking backgrounds who would be considered as assets for meeting the needs of gifted ELLs (Castellano, 2002).

The organisational path: Provisions for gifted students, including ELLs. School administrators have as traditional responsibilities both the day-to-day and long-term management of schools. Part of their management role focuses on driving the policies and provisions to support the whole student body's broader educational needs, including those of gifted ELLs. Feedback received in my inquiry regarding the effectiveness of different provisions offered by schools for this population of students has suggested that whilst existing provisions are welcomed and appear to be meeting expectations to a degree, more could be done by schools. Conversations with administrators in my inquiry revealed both areas of success and challenge within schools with a distinct focus on the structures, arrangements, processes, and procedures in place for meeting the needs of gifted students, including ELLs. Depending on the type of the school, themes that arose included refining identification processes, exploring a variety of accommodations for gifted ELLs, and other special provisions that allowed students to extend their gifts and talents.

Attitudes from administrators regarding special provisions for gifted students appear on the whole to be positive. A recent doctoral thesis that investigated the attitudes and perceptions of U.S. high school principals towards gifted students and programs identified that more exposure to and knowledge of gifted education equated to more support for gifted students and gifted programs (Bryant, 2010). The same study revealed that 84% of participants believed that gifted education played a vital role in school-wide academic achievement "by increasing academic success, encouraging rigour and creativity in instruction and curriculum, improving school-wide test scores, by promoting the need and foundation for Advanced Placement (AP) and honors

classes, and by providing opportunities to students that otherwise would not be available" (Bryant, 2010, p. 157). There is no evidence available that reflects the Australian context on the topic with regards to administrators; however, a recent examination of educators' attitudes towards gifted students and their education in a regional Queensland school revealed generally ambivalent attitudes (Bartley, 2014).

The identification of gifted students of all ages and from all types of backgrounds is a topic that has attracted a vast deal of research over many decades, with several publications dedicating entire volumes to its exploration. A 2000 edition of *Roeper Review*, for example, published 12 articles in a single volume that considered the then current trends in gifted education in nine countries, with approaches to identification featuring heavily (Milgram, 2000). Recently, in a 2011 review of his 1978 article, Renzulli made a number of recommendations for the improvement of the identification of gifted students, including those from minority groups. These changes included prioritising the use of school-level norms over amalgamated national or state norms, and developing a weighting system to help achieve equity due to the disproportional emphasis on test scores compared to creativity or task commitment (Renzulli, 2011). In my inquiry some administrators focused on refining and improving identification processes for gifted ELLs in their schools, particularly in non-selective schools. For these schools this focus meant consolidating processes and procedures informed by current research and within the guidelines of departmental policies.

With regards to gifted ELLs, identification has been less researched and is more complex. There are findings that support alternative approaches (e.g., Kogan, 2001); however, their poor application continues to receive criticism (Esquierdo & Arreguín-Anderson, 2012). Identification of gifted ELLs has also been especially problematic due to reliance on functioning in the English language (Castellano, 2002). A number of factors that may inhibit the expression of giftedness are listed in the NSW DET, Curriculum K–12 Directorate's (2004) gifted and talented policy document but it is of note that language proficiency is not among them. This omission is a fundamental flaw in the policy, as it is mostly through the communicative modes of speaking and writing that students have the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities in general classroom practice. Students are identified on the basis of these modes of communication, and it is often through the receptive modes of listening and reading that they are expected to acquire new knowledge and follow instructions in a language that they are still acquiring. The exclusion of this element may point to either a lack of awareness or a lack of prioritisation on behalf of policy-makers and educators with regards to their interpretation of the expression of giftedness,

consequently perhaps contributing to the under-identification of gifted ELLs. The mention in the policy document of "intervention strategies to enable their giftedness to be identified" (NSW DET, Curriculum K-12 Directorate, 2004, p. 8), if applied to gifted ELLs, is indeed short-sighted, and would suggest that gifted students with limited English proficiency need to improve their language proficiency before identification can happen, something that is unnecessary and inequitable.

As contemporary trends show a shift away from the emphasis on categorical definitions of giftedness towards the adoption of a talent development perspective (Matthews, 2014; Pfeiffer, 2012), multiple identification strategies that are culturally appropriate using a variety of reliable instruments and measures are required (Erwin & Worrell, 2012). These strategies were among the proposals featured recently in a 2012 special edition of the *Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment*, that also showcased a number of new measures and tools for identification of giftedness such as the Distance from Privilege Measures (Kerr et al., 2012) and Aurora (Kornilov, Tan, Elliott, Sternberg, & Grigorenko, 2012). In Australia, schools and systems that use Gagné's DMGT 2.0 are better positioned for developing processes not only for the identification of gifts in students but also for making arrangements for talent development for all gifted students, including ELLs. By focusing on the developmental process within the model a greater range of abilities and talents can be identified and catered for.

Like the topic of identification, accommodations for gifted students, including ELLs, were topics that elicited varied responses from administrators dependent on type of school. Administrators from selective schools, for example, tended to comment more on differentiation for language-learning needs, whilst those from partially selective schools focused on streaming arrangements and differentiation strategies. Administrators from comprehensive schools also focused on differentiation; however in this inquiry they were also concerned with the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on school offerings.

Accommodations for student diversity, specifically for those with a disability, gifted and talented students, and EAL/D students have been discussed by ACARA (n.d.) in the Australian Curriculum and build upon existing practices in schools. Recommendations from ACARA with regards to curriculum adjustments have focused on drawing from learning area content at different levels, adjusting the learning focus by using general capabilities and/or cross-curriculum priorities, and developing individual learning goals (ACARA, n.d.). With regards to recent practices in Australian schools for gifted students, a sample of these practices was identified in a 2011 study (Gross et al., 2011). Data collected from educators through 211 self-administered

survey questionnaires indicated that the most implemented measure for gifted students as reported by 84.6% of respondents was "enrichment, extension of content in regular mixed ability classes" followed by "provision of beyond grade level curriculum in specific talent area" (68.6%) and "flexible performance grouping within the classroom for differentiated tasks" (66.7%) (p. 18). In this survey, placement in an Opportunity Class or Selective High School was reported by 19.0% of respondents.

Tomlinson (2004) and Winebrenner (1992) have published numerous works on differentiation in the general classroom for gifted and talented students, describing practical in-class and whole-school programs and strategies. Differentiation practices have also been endorsed by the NSW Department of Education (NSW DET, Curriculum K–12 Directorate, 2004c) and are evident in policy documents relating to the education of gifted and talented students (2004a). Despite its global acceptance as a key strategy for meeting the needs of all gifted students, differentiation as a well-practised type of accommodation is a topic that has caused some controversy. This dissonance is in the main part owing to its varied interpretation and irregular application to the field of gifted education (Adams & Pierce, 2009). Among other practices that have been advocated for meeting the needs of gifted learners, Neihart (2007) cited numerous investigations and reviews that explored the academic benefits of arrangements such as acceleration and ability grouping. She allowed that even with limited evidence she believed there were possibly benefits for minority students, including ELLs.

The effectiveness of various differentiation strategies and degree of satisfaction from gifted students and their parents have not been measured effectively in Australia, though in my inquiry students generally gave positive feedback when discussing differentiation practices. Findings from the United States have indicated that competing priorities, including meeting the agenda of high-stakes testing for accountability purposes, have placed pressure on teachers in terms of teaching practices. Furthermore, teacher resistance to differentiation, misunderstandings about its practice, unrealistic expectations about teacher education and capacity to differentiate well, and underlying beliefs prevalent in the school culture that gifted students will succeed regardless, have all contributed to the myth that the needs of gifted students are being appropriately met in mainstream classrooms (Hertberg-Davis, 2009). In my inquiry different populations of gifted and talented students were being acknowledged and catered for to some degree, despite Prior's (2011) reference to the assertions of Westberg and Daoust (2004) that alarmingly suggest that no meaningful differences are being made in curriculum for gifted students.

Other special provisions discussed in a positive light by all participants in my inquiry included curricular and extra-curricular experiences both within and beyond the school. Administrators who tapped into the capacity of their gifted students as self-directed learners and their teachers as facilitators, and created learning opportunities both within and beyond the school were celebratory of the new opportunities created and of student engagement. A recent exploration of the features of curriculum that may make it more or less engaging and motivating for gifted students highlights how a challenging and meaningful curriculum combined with a positive classroom experience "transforms it into something that represents a learning opportunity for the student and therefore something worth being motivated to pursue in the first place" (Little, 2012, p. 703). Many of the students who participated in my inquiry were indeed keenly exploring curricular and extra-curricular experiences to their own benefit. One participating school endorsed opportunities for gifted students to demonstrate leadership in particular capacities, which is also supported by the literature (Scribner, 2004).

Extended learning opportunities for gifted students can also include authentic work experiences, service learning, and early and continued career exploration that allow students to explore new interests in a richer and deeper way and expose them to mentors and role models (Rakow, 2011). Kanevsky (2011) compared preferred ways of learning of gifted and non-gifted students and found that gifted students preferred more complex content, pursuing their own interests, and determining the format of their product, all which can be developed through extended learning opportunities. The provisioning of curricular and extra-curricular activities for gifted adolescents has also been found not only to nurture creative potential but also to develop independent self-directed learning (Rakow, 2011). These types of provisions have a positive effect on student self-confidence, communication skills, and thinking skills (VanTassel-Baska et al., 2004) and school leaders have been instrumental in providing these opportunities for gifted students. These types of community resources have also been described as invaluable in the literature with regards to programs for the gifted (Davis & Rimm, 2004) and have been found to be of benefit to ELLs also, particularly when interacting with adult experts from a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Castellano, 2002a).

With greater acknowledgement of the diversity of learners in classrooms, schools have identified the need for accommodations and differentiation practices and educators have been charged with a response to their implementation. This demand has arisen from the concerns that exist that the needs of gifted students are not being met sufficiently in mainstream classrooms.

The lack of a challenging curriculum in mainstream schools has also made differentiation practices even more necessary for gifted students.

The family path: dealing with disadvantage and cultural issues. Some administrators who participated in my inquiry noted that for gifted ELLs, belonging to a linguistic or cultural family or group different from the mainstream presented challenges that were particularly evidenced in their educational journey. Administrators from lower socio-economic schools, in particular, discussed ways they dealt with the impact of family socio-economic disadvantage within their schools. All participating schools identified ways they managed the socio-cultural challenges of having large percentages of students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

Socio-economic disadvantage has been described as one of the most crippling contributors to underachievement in gifted students (VanTassel-Baska, 2010a). Gifted ELLs, in particular, are susceptible to the deficits arising not only from language barriers but also from socio-economic disadvantage, including limited access to learning materials, enriching experiences, and culturally and linguistically appropriate role models. VanTassel-Baska (2010b) determined that four types of resource capital were necessary for the servicing of gifted students from disadvantaged backgrounds, namely, fiscal support, educational opportunities, social networks, and career planning. In the United States, schools that have striven to overcome the deficits caused by socio-economic disadvantage have found that further investment through specialised programs and quality teaching has contributed to the improvement of student outcomes (Wallenstein, 2012).

In Australia a variety of programs and initiatives has been implemented to support students impacted by socio-economic disadvantage. From 2009 to 2013 the Commonwealth Government invested in the *National Partnerships for Low Socio-economic Status Schools, Literacy and Numeracy,* and *Improving Teacher Quality* programs (Australian Government, Department of Education and Training, 2015). In collaboration with the states and territories, projects such as the school performance improvement framework project, parental engagement in schooling in low SES, extended service school model project, and the national literacy and numeracy diagnostic tools project were undertaken. Whilst none of these projects was specific to gifted ELLs, their aim was to improve the access to quality education for all students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

These programs and initiatives were funded in addition to the public money which is directed towards education funding in Australia. Whilst the OECD reports that Australia's

investment in educational institutions is similar to the OECD average and allocates similar amounts of annual expenditure per student, funding for schools still lacks transparency and coherence (OECD, 2015). Additional public funding for gifted students is practically non-existent, and funding for ELLs, at least in NSW, has potentially been compromised by the *Local schools, local decisions* initiative of the DEC.

Participating schools with high percentages of students from non-English speaking backgrounds and from a variety of socio-cultural backgrounds reported particular challenges with regards to acculturation and issues arising from multiculturalism that had an impact on student learning. Administrators reported on numerous initiatives, programs, and celebrations in place with the purpose of continuing to build inter-cultural understandings and develop harmony between different cultural groups. Most significantly, administrators were concerned with the impact of socio-cultural issues on student learning, as students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have been found to face numerous challenges when entering the mainstream culture's education system. A recent analysis of the perceptions of learning among Australian university students from diverse cultural backgrounds found that the most significant challenges emerged in three areas: differences in approaches to learning, language and communication competence, and intercultural interactions (Ramburuth & Tani, 2009). Each of these areas was identified in my inquiry to be also relevant to the secondary school sector as an area that needed addressing by administrators, educators, and students alike.

The three areas of challenge for students from non-English speaking backgrounds identified by Ramburuth and Tani (2009) all impacted on a gifted ELL's optimum learning capacity. First, challenges posed by "non-critical approaches to learning observed in some Asian education systems, in contrast to the more reflective and analytical approaches to learning and teaching required in Australian or Western education systems" (Ramburuth & Tani, 2009, p. 184) were evident in some students and were found to have a significant impact on achievement and participation in particular subjects. This lack of preparedness has been shown to contribute to the cultural and learning disorientation faced by some students in the earlier part of their acculturation journey. Second, language and communication competence were also found to impact on the learning and confidence of gifted ELLs. Institutional support and skills-development initiatives to bridge the gaps have been strongly recommended. Last, intercultural interactions also provided challenges to students, hindered by cultural differences, lifestyle differences, negative stereotyping, and ethnocentrism. Effective acculturation programs and more inclusive approaches

to teaching and learning to accommodate student diversity have been suggested (Ramburuth & Tani, 2009).

These four paths of the flow of the influence of leadership have led to significant changes over time in the role of the school administrator, in response to the changing nature of students, families, and schooling. High expectations for the optimal achievement of all students, the development of relationships and collaborative endeavours with outside agencies, recognition of the accomplishments of both teachers and students, clear and concise communication with all stakeholders, knowledge of curriculum, and understanding of student diversity are considered some of the hallmarks of good administrators in today's educational climate. Administrators are expected to manage not only these aspects of their role but also respond to the demands from educational authorities, governments, and the general public, particularly in terms of good governance and accountability for the use of public funds, as well as to guarantee student well-being and educational outcomes.

With globalisation creating increasing mass migration as a strategy by countries to compete for the most talented, skilful, and resourceful individuals (Anderson, 2002), and as a response to and resistance against the integration of the world economy (Jordan & Düvell, 2003), administrators should expect that enrolments of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, including gifted ELLs, will continue, if not increase. Recent migration trends into Australia, for example, show a shift from people from European and English-speaking countries to those from Asian, Indian, African, and Middle Eastern countries (Freebody et al., 2014). An understanding by all staff and appropriate leadership by administrators in meeting the needs of all migrant students, including gifted ELLs, will become increasingly necessary.

Conclusion

The aim of my inquiry was to identify the experiences and educational needs of gifted ELLs and explore how these needs were being met in Australian secondary schools. My inquiry identified some specific needs of gifted ELLs, including motivational, relational, and academic aspects of their lives, which not only validated many of Rance-Roney's (2004) findings regarding the characteristics of gifted ELLs but also uncovered further attributes as noted in Table 5.1. Students added to the breadth of the findings by sharing stories of events that were significant turning points in their lives. Teachers discussed the multifaceted aspect of their role, and the competing priorities they had to negotiate in order to best support gifted ELLs. Their

recommendation for increased inputs, including funding, time, support, and resources, was validated by administrators, who not only had the responsibility of managing these resources equitably, but also faced increasing challenges in their roles.

The intended consequence of my inquiry was that it should provide sufficient evidence and guidance to expand the scope of autonomy for gifted ELLs and make recommendations based on the findings so that power and justice could be more equitably distributed. According to a Habermasian interpretation of education and schooling, Young (1989) noted that the power to guide change lies with the school and the system, and acknowledged the continued domination of a hierarchy of interests:

> In educational critique, we must begin with the context of pedagogical action and widen our scope to include the kind of structures that will enable critical pedagogy. The first such context is the learner's problem context. This context must have primacy for the reason that it is only when the learner's problems are not suppressed that we can find a reasonable guarantee against the interests of the teacher and the system overwhelming the interests of the child. (Young, 1989, p. 128)

Challenges faced by school administrators and systems included seeking best outcomes for all students in an increasingly politicised arena, managing staff and supporting on-going professional learning, ensuring provisions for all students, including gifted ELLs, and dealing with the consequences of socio-economic disadvantage and cultural differences. By listening to the voice of the student, as my inquiry has done, not only could participation of the student be enhanced in all of the above areas, but solutions could be reached that are more equitable and democratic. As Young has highlighted, "a hierarchy of interests is unavoidable… since hierarchies of sectional interest and bureaucratic power already exist, only developmental change can turn existing hierarchies of power into hierarchies of democratic co-ordination" (1989, p. 155).

The following and final chapter will report on the implications from the findings and will offer future recommendations for institutional improvement. It will also discuss certain limitations of the study, make reference to the unheard narratives of my inquiry, and offer recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER VIII: CONCLUSION

It has been my intention that this inquiry should serve to identify the experiences and educational needs of gifted ELLs and how these needs are being met in Australian secondary schools. Its broader purpose should then be to encourage discussion among students, educators, policy makers, and other stakeholders in order to determine how to better serve this population of students. The findings from this inquiry could then have the potential to contribute to the sparse national conversation with regards to gifted ELLs in Australia and begin in some way to address shortcomings by encouraging student self-advocacy, promoting enhanced teacher capacity, and driving institutional change. Consciousness-raising in support of emancipatory action for the benefit of the students, the education system, and society in general is a further aspiration.

The exact population of students this inquiry aims to serve is unknown and there does not appear to be any accountability-driven requirement for the collection of such data in Australia (ABS, 2014). It is also unknown what percentage of gifted ELLs goes unidentified and therefore insufficiently supported due to language and other barriers or inadequate identification procedures. Neither are there any longitudinal studies that examine the educational outcomes of gifted ELLs who are identified and supported, and what modes and types of support best align with students' needs. Curriculum and services for gifted students are under-researched, and no data exist linking socio-economic disadvantage to participation of gifted ELLs in Australian education systems. My inquiry, then, provides a basis for further investigations into these and other questions regarding gifted ELLs as well as bringing to the forefront the importance of meeting their specific needs.

In this concluding chapter the implications for stakeholders that have arisen from the findings and discussion of earlier chapters are presented. Recommendations for institutional improvement are also made on the basis of these findings. In terms of the research itself, reflections on the process are undertaken, some general limitations of the study are reviewed, and references to the unheard narratives of my inquiry are also made. This chapter concludes with recommendations for future research.

Implications for Stakeholders — Schools

The findings from my inquiry have indicated that participating schools were generally well aware of the potential of many of their gifted ELLs and were positioned to varying degrees to

improve processes and procedures for the identification of giftedness within their ELL populations, as well as being committed to meeting both their language-learning needs and to extending their gifts and talents through educational opportunities. Despite these positive and value-adding approaches and attitudes, there are competing power interests between educational authorities (e.g., ACARA, NSW DEC), schools (as noted in annual school reports and shared by administrators), teachers, and students that impact on the provision of support and further opportunities. As well, there are different understandings between stakeholders of the prioritisation of gifted ELLs' differing needs. Two significant and as yet unresolved areas for further discussion were identified: implications for policy, practice, and theory; and funding and accountability. A summary of all these findings can be found in Table 8.1.

Policy, practice, and theory. Across Australia, all education systems (including the participating schools) use Gagné's DMGT 2.0 (see Appendix A) as a basis for policy to inform the planning and provision for gifted and talented students. This model has direct relevance for secondary schools in its proposition "that maturation and systematic learning experiences convert abilities to more developed talents" (Moon & Dixon, 2006, p. 15). Further, the curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular activities offered in the participating schools provide catalysts for the development of abilities into talents for adolescents. By nominating giftedness as arising in the intellectual, creative, socio-affective, and sensorimotor domains the DMGT 2.0 also determines the scope by which programs and activities should be developed. The systematically developed skills described in the model, then, are core indicators of the modes in which talents can be manifested and must be capitalised on. Benefits for gifted ELLs include a broader categorisation of giftedness and talent that is language-free and culture-free; its broad and inclusive nature; and less reliance on IQ scores or tests often undertaken in a language that discriminates against ELLs.

An awareness of and sensitivity towards the individual journeys of gifted ELLs, taking into account multiple factors identified in my inquiry including variations in entry points into the Australian education system; first- and second-language use and proficiency; rate of acquisition of English; identification, development, and demonstrations of giftedness; and other factors also identified by ACARA (2011) in their EAL/D policy have significant implications for schools. A greater understanding of student diversity (including cultural and linguistic differences); a culturally rich, diverse, and inclusive curriculum; different approaches to teaching and learning including an emphasis on continuous assessment for learning; and modifications, adjustments, and accommodations tailored to the individual learner's needs are recommended. Furthermore,

superseded policy documents relevant to gifted ELLs such as NSW DET's (2004) *English as a Second Language* that have informed teaching and learning approaches until recently have been identified as suffering from a lack of understanding of these important factors and have had long-term consequences for this group of students and for teaching practices. The revisions of such policy documents have emerged from the 2008 *Melbourne Declaration* as complementary and contemporary understandings of the purpose of education and have subsequently been developed for the Australian Curriculum by ACARA. Their on-going implementation in Australian schools is much anticipated and welcomed by educational practitioners. On-going investigations into their efficacy and success are recommended.

Funding and equity. Since 1970 ESL funding in Australia for new arrivals has traditionally been the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government because of its long-standing responsibility in matters concerning immigration and migrant settlement (Brennan & Alcorso, 1986). After 2009, the ESL Program in NSW, in operation since 1969, assumed full and devolved responsibility for the English-language education of immigrant and refugee students under the *Local schools, local decisions* education reform (NSW ESL and Refugee Education Working Party, 2012). According to advocacy groups such as the NSW ESL and Refugee Education Working Party (2012), the Resource Allocation Model (RAM) (NSW DEC, n.d.-b) developed as part of the reform has already resulted in a loss of school support and professional learning, as well as the disappearance of specialist ESL positions. The Working Party has made several recommendations, including more consultation with key community interest groups in the development of allocation mechanisms for ESL within the RAM, as well as the continuation of existing ESL allocation and staffing arrangements until such consultation has taken place (NSW ESL and Refugee Education Working Party, 2012). The NSW DEC's *Equity Loading for English Language Proficiency RAM 2015* information sheet (NSW DEC, 2014a) has indicated that the new equity loading has been based on new methodology, including the use of ACARA's EAL/D learning progression instrument, to deliver resources to more than 145,000 students in 1,250 public schools, with the continuation of the current allocation of 896 FTE school-based ESL teacher positions.

Table 8.1

Key findings and implications: Schools

SCHOOLS		
KEY FINDING: Schools are aware of the potential of their gifted ELLs and are positioned to varying degrees to improve existing provisions.		
STRATEGIES/PROCESSES IN PLACE	**IMPROVEMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS**	**CHALLENGES/LIMITATIONS**
• Identification processes improving/being continuously refined • Commitments to meeting language needs and extending gifts and talents • Cohesive model in place (DMGT 2.0) across Australia • Curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular offerings seen as catalysts for the development of abilities into talents • Move away from NSW DET's ESL policy to ACARA's EAL/D policy	• Use the DMGT 2.0 to develop more consistent identification processes • Ensure broader categorisation of giftedness is developed that is language-free and culture-free, and more inclusive • Less reliance on IQ scores • Continued awareness of and sensitivity towards individual student learning and personal journeys • Consideration for a range of entry points to schooling in the English language • Consideration of L_1 and L_2 use and proficiency • Consideration of the rate of acquisition of English • Allow greater opportunities for the development and the demonstration of giftedness • Greater knowledge and understanding of student diversity • Explore different approaches to teaching and learning	• Competing power interests between educational authorities, schools, teachers, and students • Different prioritisation of students' needs by different groups • Transition period between NSW DET policy (ESL) and ACARA (EAL/D) • Implementation of ACARA EAL/D needs evaluation • Equity is an unresolved issue for Australian schools where funding is linked to meeting minimum benchmarks or standards, then discontinued • Disagreement between interest groups regarding the success or otherwise of state funding changes for EAL/D students • No special/additional funding for gifted students • Tensions between system autonomy, capacity, and accountability in the delivery of resources and support • Changing political landscape post GFC • Uncertainty of continuation of funding of existing programs and projects

Equity is still an unresolved issue for gifted ELLs in Australia in terms of resource allocation. For the OECD, "equity in education means that personal or social circumstances such as gender, ethnic origin or family background, are not obstacles to achieving educational potential (fairness) and that all individuals reach at least a basic minimum level of skills (inclusion)" (2012, p. 9). Despite the evolution and refinement of funding models and allocations, the rationale underpinning extra financial assistance in Australia and elsewhere is still often based on the expected outcome of meeting minimum benchmarks or standards and the discontinuing of support past this point. This approach does not necessarily align with the individual needs of complex groups of students such as gifted ELLs whose potential still may go unrealised after they have met minimum English-competency standards. The challenge is that gifted students who are developing English-language skills often become a low priority for schools and regions that are under pressure to ensure minimum competency for all. As has been suggested, "it is difficult to create a sense of urgency for the needs of gifted students because so many of them are already scoring well above average on standardised tests" (Clarenbach, 2007, p. 16).

Whilst the OECD (2012) has recommended administrative discretion and has supported formula funding, it has also acknowledged tensions between system autonomy, capacity, and accountability in the delivery of resources and support. Anderson (2005) has advised that those responsible for resource allocation need to specifically determine how their allocations promote or hinder achievement, as "concerns for equal access and treatment have been replaced with an emphasis on equal attainment" (Anderson, 2005, p. 4), which has been shown to disadvantage gifted students. These tensions also impact on the allocation of additional funding and support for gifted education to assist gifted students to reach their educational potential. The changing political landscape in Australia has created further tensions across all education sectors, and the uncertainty of the continuation of funding of existing projects and programs has significant implications for the implementation of new programs to support all students.

Implications for stakeholders —Teachers

Teachers have been identified as being significant influencers in the lives of their students, and for gifted ELLs the development of the teacher–student relationship is even more important to their long-term success. For this population of students, teachers have been described as not only performing in their role as educators, acting as *vehicles* and *influencers* as reported in this inquiry, but also of possessing flexibility to adapt and change their teaching to meet individual student

needs. Their helpfulness has been praised by students, and teachers themselves have described their commitment to extending their teaching skills in order to see their students succeed. Developing their students' competency in English is an urgent and significant endeavour, as this is seen as a necessary skill to enable gifted ELLs to fully access the curriculum to enable them to reach their full potential in the Australian education system. A summary of these findings can be found in Table 8.2.

Teacher–student relationship. Young (1989) examined the relationship between the teacher and the student in the context of his exploration of a critical theory of education based on Habermasian social philosophy. His understanding was that in the cooperative task of teaching and learning, the student's interests, which were more immediate and personally engaged, provided a better guarantee of a just and valid outcome than the teacher's. Therefore, he continued, the student's information about his or her learning needs must be more extensive than the teacher's, so the task of adequately meeting these needs is logically dependent on the sharing of complementary forms of information. Adorno, also a member of the Frankfurt School and a predecessor of Habermas (1971, cited in Young, 1989), suggested that educators "must aim at promoting in their students the mature capacity to speak up for themselves and not only have the capacity, but the courage to claim their political and epistemic autonomy" (p. 60).

The implications of this advice for teachers engaged in meeting the needs of gifted ELLs in contemporary classrooms is two-fold. First, teachers must acknowledge that the success of their role in the cooperative task of teaching and learning hinges on the development of quality interpersonal relationships with their students. By negotiating in many cases age, gender, cultural, linguistic, socio-economic, and other types of barriers, mutual trust relationships can be formed. Second, the purpose of that mutual trust is to develop and encourage student self-advocacy in terms of their learning needs and challenges so that teachers can, in their turn, modify and adjust strategies, methods, pace of delivery, and content to suit the learner's needs within the constraints of the existing curriculum. For gifted ELLs this accommodation is paramount, as their speed of learning, engagement with complexity, and accelerated development of English competency all contribute to their learning engagement. By utilising self-advocacy strategies within the context of a mutually respectful relationship, gifted ELLs can access better on-time delivery of educational services at the point of need.

Table 8.2

Key findings and implications: Teachers

TEACHERS		
KEY FINDING: Teachers are significant influencers in the lives of gifted ELLs, working to not only meet their English language needs but also to differentiate for their educational needs as gifted students, showing sensitivity to cultural perspectives, backgrounds, and learning styles.		
STRATEGIES/PROCESSES IN PLACE	**IMPROVEMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS**	**CHALLENGES/LIMITATIONS**
• The development of strong teacher-student relationships as acknowledged by all stakeholders • Acting as *vehicles* and *influencers* for enhanced student learning • Flexibility to adapt and change teaching to meet individual students' needs • Commitment to extending their own teaching skills • Developing student competency in English is seen as a significant endeavour • Awareness of the interstitial identity of ELLs and their interlingual positioning	• Teachers can form better mutual trust relationships with gifted ELLs through greater understanding of challenges posed by different socio-cultural barriers • Teachers should further encourage the development of student voice to inform more authentic teaching and learning • Employment of bilingual and multicultural staff to promote diversity in classrooms and to provide positive role models • Employment of culturally competent teachers to make learning meaningful and act as cross-cultural advocates • Employment of EAL/D teachers who have a first-hand understanding of the language learning needs of gifted ELLs • On-going professional learning for teachers with regards to gifted students and ELLs, including a focus on differentiation • Continue to build upon the students' home languages and to validate and accommodate language transition • Support the use of code-switching • Awareness of the linguistic capital (both in L_1 and L_2) that students bring to develop more refined English language programs	• No nation-wide collection of data on bilingual and multicultural teachers (both employed and seeking employment) • Inconsistent preparation given to pre-service teachers with regards to gifted education and students from diverse backgrounds • Little research exists on the effectiveness of different models for teacher development of competency in working with gifted students, including ELLs • Existing curriculum poses constraints for teachers

Effective teachers of gifted ELLs. Bernal (2002) recommended that for gifted ELLs the employment of bilingual and multicultural staff was important in order not only to promote diversity in classrooms but also to provide positive role models for students from non-English speaking backgrounds. Ford and Trotman (2001) specifically noted the value of employing culturally diverse as well as culturally competent teachers who had developed an understanding of the different worldviews of their students and who could make teaching and learning culturally meaningful and relevant for all students, as well as acting as cross-cultural advocates. Because teachers' beliefs form the basis of their attitudes and actions, the employment of teachers with these characteristics could have far-reaching repercussions. For Australian schools and regions with high levels of students from non-English-speaking backgrounds this information is particularly useful, and the nation-wide collection of data on bilingual and multicultural teachers is imperative.

The lack of identification of and reporting on the cultural and linguistic diversity of teachers in Australian schools as well as the inconsistent preparation given to pre-service teachers with regards to gifted education are significant failings on behalf of numerous stakeholders. Inadequate numbers of teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds limit student access to teachers who reflect their diversity; who serve as role models; who are sensitive to their cultural perspectives, backgrounds, and learning styles; and who are understanding of their language needs (Salend, Whittaker, Duhaney, & Smith, 2003). These deficits warrant further investigation and remedy.

There is an agreement that professional learning on understanding the needs of gifted students must occur initially at the pre-service stage and needs to continue in order to ensure that appropriate differentiation strategies are being implemented in schools (VanTassel-Baska, 2013). Similarly, pre-service teachers need greater preparation for understanding the diverse backgrounds of their students from non-English-speaking backgrounds. More research also needs to be conducted into the effectiveness of different models for teacher development of competency in working with gifted students, and particularly with gifted ELLs. Continued teacher education on differentiating to meet the needs of gifted students, including ELLs, is also required and should be prioritised by administrators.

Developing student competency in English. Teachers who participated in my inquiry acknowledged a sense of urgency in assisting gifted ELLs to develop their English competency for full participation in the Australian education system, and described teaching methods and approaches they used in their endeavours. Linguistic theory has suggested that the development of competency in an additional language begins with the student's first language, where reading and writing skills, strategies, rules, and attitudes in many cases have already been well-established (Harley, Cummins, Swain, & Allen, 1990), as has been the case for many of the gifted ELLs who participated in my inquiry. Validating a student's L_1 therefore is a considered approach that teachers need to undertake to assist in the development of proficiency in an additional language. Ford and Trotman (2001) noted that culturally responsive teachers had the skills to build upon the students' home languages and to validate and accommodate language transition. Teachers could also support the use of the important skill of code switching — the insertion of an utterance from one language into the sentence of another when a speaker may not have immediate or automatic access to the necessary vocabulary (Auer, 2002; Hamers & Blanc, 2000).

The interlingual positioning of many students also contributes to the formation and development of their interstitial identity and has implications for teaching. In acknowledging the skills these learners bring, as well as recognising them as "bi- or pluri-lingual learners who communicate *translingually* across the languages they use, and who have different literacy learning needs" (Freebody et al., 2014, p. 5), new teaching and learning alternatives can be explored. A continued awareness on the part of all educators, not only EAL/D teachers, of the linguistic capital students bring with them from the knowledge of their L_1 can assist teachers to develop more refined English-language programs that support students to achieve significant levels of English competency as a result of their learning journey.

Implications for stakeholders — Students

Gifted ELLs served as their own best advocates in this inquiry, sharing their backgrounds, interests, opinions, hopes, and expectations of schooling and beyond. Their narratives demonstrated that as a group they exhibit attributes that cross several broad categories and confirm their specific educational needs relevant to their characteristics, including their English-learning needs. Alongside this commonality, another equally important factor emerged that suggests reconsidering and repositioning the role of the students in their own learning journey. As noted in the introductory chapter, the objective of this inquiry has been to explore the

emancipatory interest with the purpose of expanding the scope of autonomy for gifted ELLs leading to the more equitable distribution of power and justice for this group. Arising from my inquiry, a call for the student voice to be better heard was noted, with the intent of empowerment for improved student outcomes. A summary of these findings can be found in Table 8.3.

Reframing the attributes of gifted ELLs. In this inquiry various attributes of gifted ELLs were identified that correlate with those noted by Rance-Roney (2004) as well as many acknowledged in the specific literature on gifted students, ELLs, and adolescents. Whilst these correlations add validity to this inquiry, they also highlight the breadth of student diversity within the broader category of gifted ELL. What is important to note is that each gifted ELL is a unique hybrid of particular attributes from diverse categories, and does not necessarily fit a singular profile. Specific variables such as amount or degree of acculturation, access to English in the home country, proficiency in L_1, as well as broader variables such as gender, age, and socio-economic status also impact on an individual's functioning and learning development. Recognition of both similarities and differences amongst gifted ELLs poses challenges for educators and school systems in terms of adapting teaching and learning strategies to meet student need with finite resources. Conversely, these similarities and differences have the potential to enhance both self and group understanding, and lead to greater self-awareness of learning needs.

Student voice. Of particular importance to stakeholders was the recognition of the need to give students a voice in decisions pertaining to their educational journey. Globally, organisations such as StudentVoice in the United Kingdom act as representative bodies for secondary school students by representing their views on schooling as well as collaborating with other international associations at events such as the Cambridge Student Voice Conference (Grillo, 2014). In Australia the concept of student voice has been discussed in school reform since the 1980s, with the Victorian Department of Education releasing a paper in 2007 titled *Student voice: A historical perspective and new directions,* providing a summary of local and international literature on the concept as well as exploring links between student voice and student learning and engagement (Manefield, Collins, Moore, Mahar, & Warne, 2007).

A recent search of a range of university databases limited to articles from peer-reviewed scholarly publications resulted in almost 100,000 entries on the topic of student voice. Whilst a thorough exploration of these results is beyond the scope of this inquiry, it is noteworthy that

Table 8.3

Key findings and implications: Students

STUDENTS

KEY FINDINGS: Gifted ELLs are a diverse group of learners with individual learning needs, exhibiting attributes that cross broad categories including age, gender, socio-economic status, language, and culture. Gifted ELLs need to be empowered to use their own voice in decision-making with regards to their own learning journey.

STRATEGIES/PROCESSES IN PLACE	IMPROVEMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS	CHALLENGES/LIMITATIONS
• Research that identifies attributes of gifted students, ELLs, and adolescents • Literature that explores the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students • Working to develop their English competency • Engaging in opportunities offered to extend their gifts and talents • Students consulted to some degree with regards to some learning choices • National and global organisations exist that act as representative bodies for secondary school students	• Acknowledgement of each student as a unique hybrid of particular attributes across categories • Consideration of degree of impact of variables such as degree of acculturation, access to English in home country, proficiency in L_1 • Further consideration of impact of student membership of gender, age, and socio-economic groups • Recognition of similarities and differences between and across different groups of gifted ELLs for enhanced self-understanding and greater self-awareness of learning needs • Student voice needs to be given opportunities to be heard, leading to empowerment and ultimately improved student outcomes • Deeper recognition of the connection between achievement, motivation, school engagement, and student voice is advised	• Student diversity/difference poses challenges for schools and educators in terms of adapting teaching and learning strategies with finite resources • Much of the focus in the literature on student voice appears to be on how the voice of the student is missing • A failure by schools to seek or embrace the opinions of young people about their own lives • Changes to the distribution of power challenge the status quo of the dominant group and is therefore often resisted • Literature on the gifted student's voice is minimal

amongst the articles most relevant to the topic of empowering students to speak about their needs and experiences during their schooling phase, much of the focus appeared to be on how the voice of the student was missing (e.g., McClenney & Waiwaiole, 2005). A deeper recognition of the connection between achievement, motivation, school engagement, and student voice was also advised. In fact, Toshalis and Nakkula (2012) noted that one of the most powerful tools a school can put into play is the empowerment of students to "express their opinions and influence their educational experiences so that they feel they have a stake in the outcomes" (pp. 29–30). There is evidently a call to address the "failure to seek or embrace any understandings from young people themselves as to the complexity of what is happening in their lives" (Smyth, 2012, p. 153). Notwithstanding ongoing initiatives, the literature on gifted students' voices in relation to their own learning is minimal (Knight & Becker, 2000) but emerging (Houghton, 2014).

Reflection

Hearing from students, teachers, and administrators about their perceptions of the supports that assist gifted ELLs in striving to reach their full potential as well as the challenges that impede them has been both an enlightening and a sobering endeavour. Supportive teachers, progressive administrators, accommodating schools, quality resources, student motivation and self-efficacy, and a collaborative effort to improve the educational outcomes of all students have all been recognised as hallmarks of success. The constraints identified, whether financial, temporal, or attitudinal, in most cases are correctable or at least meriting of closer attention and scrutiny. Unfortunately, competing priorities within school settings can often mean that certain groups of students or types of programs receive precedence over others in terms of resource allocation, and these funded programs often fall short of meeting gifted students' needs. Other priorities for gifted ELLs, too, such as the perceived priority given to the acquisition of English, have a further impact. Identification of individual challenges faced by gifted ELLs and both self-advocacy and advocacy for them are important matters for stakeholders.

Strengths and Limitations

My inquiry was based within the qualitative tradition of research and utilised narrative research methods, with specific strengths and certain limitations in the methodological approach used, the structure and organisation of the inquiry itself, and in the overall findings. Since these

strengths and limitations can have an impact on the research outcomes, addressing them was a necessary process.

In the first instance, my inquiry drew on the narratives elicited from interviews with only 30 individuals. It may be posited that a small number of participants in a qualitative inquiry may be considered to be a limitation (Travers, 2006); however, with regard to my inquiry its size was in fact one of its strengths. As a case study of a small group of students, teachers, and administrators, generalisability of the eventual findings was by its very definition limited in comparison to a large-scale study. However, the depth of treatment that can be engaged in with a smaller sample allowed for richer insights to emerge, particularly as each individual had the opportunity to have his or her voice heard more thoroughly. Unique characteristics can emerge that add further dimensions not originally expected and not necessarily obtainable through a larger study or via quantitative methods. By recruiting students from across 5 different schools the scope of the research was also broadened.

My inquiry deals with a small number of students, many who were in some sort of selective stream, in a limited number of government-run schools in only one Australian state, restricting transferability of findings to other states, and indeed other education systems (e.g., Catholic and Independent). There are implications, however, for a larger audience as the students are representative of a variety of cultural groups, including students from Burmese, Cantonese, Farsi, Gujarati, Indonesian, Khmer, Korean, Malayalam, Mandarin, Punjabi, Serbian, Swahili, Telugu, and Vietnamese speaking backgrounds. Also, it is unclear to what percentage of the general school population the results of this study might apply. While NSW schools mandatorily report on what percentage of their students are from non-English speaking backgrounds, the percentage of these students who are also gifted has not been accounted for. The full extent of generalisability cannot therefore be known at this point in time and indeed is not an issue in a qualitative study.

Conducting interviews to collect data for research also had particular challenges that could potentially be limitations of the research process. These included: the length of the process, when including transcription and data analysis processes; the complexity of skills and experience needed by the researcher to conduct sometimes lengthy interviews with ELLs to collect in-depth information; and the need to declare the position of the researcher during interviewing and data interpretation (Corbin & Morse, 2003). Other limitations included power differentials in the interview process, as well as cultural considerations in this particular inquiry. Both of these potential limitations have been addressed in previous sections.

In the second instance, a strength has been identified in the use of purposive sampling in order to include the types of participants who would provide appropriate and sufficient information for the requirements of my inquiry. Thus some participants were selectively included, and some deliberately excluded. Wiklund-Gustin (2010) has noted that as soon as participants are deliberately recruited on the basis of some set of unique characteristics or experiences, a particular framework has been set up. Therefore, much thought also went into the consideration of the types of participants who might be appropriate for this study and on the impact of purposive sampling on the overall findings.

One of the implications of purposive sampling was that despite the intent to give voice to gifted ELLs, it was the voice of an equally valuable stakeholder, the parents, that was deliberately excluded from this research. Practicalities such as additional costs of interpreters and translators, the logistical difficulties of holding further interviews with non-English-speaking people from different language and cultural backgrounds (and their interpreters), and a distrust by certain cultures of the western interpretation of power (Westoby, 2009) as well as the possibility of social trauma added a degree of complexity that would not have been foreseeably manageable in my inquiry.

The exclusion of the parent voice may be considered a restriction; however, it is important to note that the parent voice has not been wholly silent. In many instances the parent voice has been interpreted through the students' own voices in their narratives, such as when making reference to their parents' opinions and wishes, where some students were in agreement whilst others challenged their parents' ideas. Similarly, in some teachers' and administrators' narratives, comments were made relating to parental attitudes, and reflections on ways they could help parents become better informed with regards to their children's needs were also evident.

In the third instance, several strengths and weaknesses have been identified with regards to the thematic narrative data analysis method used overall in my inquiry. Sproule (2006) identified certain strengths including its inexpensiveness, its reliability on raw data that are relatively easy to obtain, its ability to provide valuable historical and cultural insights, and its usefulness in terms of being used to interpret the same texts for a variety of purposes. On the other hand, criticisms that have arisen have declared this method to be both too mechanistic and reductionist (Sproule, 2006). These criticisms have attested to its surfeit of subjectivity in coding, and conversely, have considered it as being too empirical. Another key criticism of this method of data analysis from Squire (2008) is the possibility of an over-interpretation of interview data by the researcher, particularly in the microcontexts of the inquiry. Attention to the wider cultural contexts of both

the narrator and the researcher (Phoenix, 2008) and the understanding and declaration of each person's positioning have assisted in minimising some of these criticisms. Overall, my inquiry has attempted to capitalise on the strengths of the data analysis method used whilst acknowledging the impact of the weaknesses when and where they have been able to be identified.

In the fourth instance, though generalisability may be considered limiting in terms of my inquiry, it is not necessarily non-existent. As the number of ELLs in secondary schools in Australia continues to grow, these findings could serve to inform both policy and practice and to assist schools with students from non-English-speaking backgrounds in their decision-making processes, going further and adding to the findings from studies such as the *Good Starts* research discussed earlier. Furthermore, as the education departments in a number of Australian states have established intensive English centres for similar populations with similar provisions in place, the findings may be of interest to them.

Several limitations exist in terms of the organisation of the inquiry itself. For example, the use of a single researcher may cause credibility issues that could have been overcome with the introduction of a second researcher or other checks. It is also conceded that by employing quantitative methods in the collection of data, a method that was not selected for my inquiry, other types of information may have been garnered. The use of a mixed-methods approach would in essence have provided strengths that could have offset the weaknesses of both quantitative and qualitative methods by providing more comprehensive evidence and making available a wider range of tools of data collection (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Other limitations include the reliance on other people in the handling of different aspects of my inquiry. This reliance ranged from the need for bilingual personnel to accurately translate interview protocols and the availability of translators for interviews, to the goodwill of school staff to commit time to act on my behalf within their school communities. I also had to rely on the goodwill and cooperation of students with varying degrees of English proficiency who might have recently suffered stress or trauma and who might be suspicious of external investigators. These and other logistical matters such as my relocating interstate for the duration of the interview period meant careful planning, preparation, and management were required.

Narrative research itself has been subjected to criticism that emphasises certain limitations that are of relevance to my inquiry. In particular, there is a concern with the assumed privilege of authorship by the researcher, as has been raised by Barone (2009). Essentially, while an inquiry like this has sought to give a voice to gifted ELLs, it has been suggested that it is the students

themselves who should have disclosed the "conditions of their subjugation" (Barone, 2009, p. 595) and taken responsibility for telling their own stories. This suggestion has glossed over the powerless feelings of outsiders in a dominant and different-language culture and ignored the fact that assistance provided by the privileged author might be not only welcome but enabling. Insofar as the term *privileged author* can apply to me in this inquiry, it was partly overcome by my own history of having been a gifted ELL, as the narrative has then become, in some part, my own story. However, this empathy has not been sufficient on its own as my current social status, cultural outlook, and personal history have been re-shaped over time. The absence of the refugee experience and a less traumatic and more distant migrant journey in its place have served to separate me further from being a more authentic representative voice for those gifted ELLs in today's generation. A way forward can be found by allowing the researcher to use his or her own personal or cultural background to support a version of the gifted ELLs' stories, as well as having the obligation, as Barone (2009) has stated, to "seek out, study carefully and vividly disclose the links between political forces and disenfranchised selves" (p. 595).

Interpretive authority in narrative research has been considered to be both a strength and a limitation. Centred on the aims and purpose of the inquiry the researcher can be seen to be in the role of collaborator, acting as a conduit, working as a co-producer with the participants (Bold, 2012; Josselson, 2007) in the construction of meaning. It is in the interpretive aspect of this construction of meaning and in the researcher's role of relating this meaning to a wider context that the breadth of interpretation and its subjectivity have received most criticism. Ultimately, it is in the honesty of the researcher's reflexivity, where the biases, aims, and positioning are disclosed, that the researcher can take full responsibility for the findings (Chase, 1996; Josselson, 2007; Wiklund-Gustin, 2010) so that these findings can be more clearly understood as being about the researcher's meaning-making of participants' stories.

Critics have also argued that narrative research may have a tendency to reify the interior "self" and question the authenticity of voice as "unalloyed subjective truth" (Riessman, 2005, p. 6). The danger then, lies in the over-personalisation of the personal narrative, particularly when it has been suggested that participants negotiate and perform a preferred self, selected from a range of individual persona each individual holds and crucial in the conception of identity (Riessman, 2001; Wiklund-Gustin, 2010). To counterbalance this possibility, Conle (2001) has argued that narrative, more than other types of communicative action, has highlighted the inner world of subjectivity and has given the researcher privileged access. Ultimately, these issues have all

contributed to the fluid and interpretive nature of narrative that continues to make it an attractive research method to those intending to undertake interpretations of others' lived experiences.

Implications for Future Research

My inquiry has allowed for insights into the lives of gifted ELLs to emerge, as seen not only through the eyes of educators but also through their own eyes. It has endeavoured to capture the essence of what a particular group of students with certain characteristics needs to support them as part of their educational journey, and how a number of schools strive to provide for these needs. Whilst this research has provided rich data that have been analysed and interpreted by me and presented in this thesis, there are still avenues unexplored that merit further investigation.

Several recommendations for future research have emerged from the findings in my inquiry. In the first instance, a follow-up inquiry that included parent voice would be welcome, as it would build upon the findings of this current inquiry and give it more depth. Second, evidence of the rate of acquisition of English by gifted students in comparison to mainstream students would further assist in forward planning for gifted ELLs. Third, as all students who had been initially supported in their learning journey by attending IECs expressed a wish for that support to have continued longer before entering mainstream schools, similar research could be conducted in those settings and the findings compared to those of my inquiry. Fourth, further investigations are needed into the efficacy of programs for gifted ELLs in Australian secondary schools from various education sectors and across different regions of the country. Finally, further inquiry into funding allocation models, equity issues, and student voice with regards to gifted ELLs would significantly enrich the conversation. Given the scarcity of research across the gifted education and multicultural education domains (Chamberlin, 2008), my inquiry has provided a strong starting point for the development of knowledge to inform theory in this given area.

Reflections on the process

Throughout my inquiry one of the most significant concerns I faced was defining my own role in the process and the part it may have played in influencing outcomes. One specific challenge was discussed earlier in the methodology chapter where I examined how the sharing of a brief summary of my own personal story as part of the rapport-building stage of interviewing might have determined a blue-print or scaffold from which students might construct their own stories. As I reflect upon the process I acknowledge that for a small number of students this

indeed was the case; however as their story is also my story it does not necessarily invalidate their responses. In fact, Hayden (2009) discussed the relationship between "a researching self and a researched other" (p. 85) and concluded that many tensions in research arise from creating contrasts between the self and the other, contrasts that are often treated as binaries, whereas a consideration of similarity and difference would yield better understandings. Keane (2003) also considered the contrasting epistemologies of intimacy and estrangement and how both were necessary in research. It would, therefore, have been unnecessary for me to separate myself completely from both the students and the teachers who participated in my inquiry, as much as it would have been to fully identify with both of these groups.

Notwithstanding, in my inquiry it has been important to acknowledge the researcher's context, including background factors such as class, race, gender, and voice. It has been argued by Fine (1994, as cited in Eder & Fingerson, 2001) that

> understanding these relations and placing the researcher in the data … will give us better data, help us to be more true to the data and the participants, and engage us in an intimacy with our research participants that will help us to be more honest in our analyses, interpretations, and data presentation. (p. 198)

It has in fact been in the data analysis and interpretation processes where the benefits of my personal characteristics and their concordance with two groups of participants (students and teachers) have been most useful. In interpreting and analysing students' responses, for example, I was able to draw upon personal knowledge and experience to determine intent and meaning when a student's vocabulary or grammar was not wholly clear or accurate. In a similar way, as a teacher myself I had greater insights into practices and programs described by educators that allowed for interpretive distinctions to be made when coding large narratives on these topics.

Ultimately, using a narrative approach was in equal parts rewarding and frustrating. The absence of any explicit definition of the term, and a lack of specific rules about suitable materials or modes of investigation (Riessman, 1993) meant that I had to develop my own guidelines within this approach. Whilst the procedures I developed for analysis and interpretation of oral stories appeared to provide rich data, this process was more challenging when applying the same methodology to written texts. The difficulty was partly due to the poor correlation between the fluid responses to semi-structured interview questions and the more rigid structure of the written documents. This problem was partly overcome by treating the documents as the voice of the

education system during the analysis process. Through this interpretive act of personification, the documents acquired a living status which made the relationship between the researcher and the researched more authentic, and allowed for more rewarding data to emerge.

Final thoughts

My inquiry journey proved to be significantly satisfying in terms of the outcomes. Originally intended as a catalyst for a group of students who had had little opportunity to voice their thoughts, opinions, hopes, dreams, and challenges as they progressed through the Australian education system, it revealed the existence of a strong network of support from committed professionals. These teachers and administrators communicated fiercely how they did not allow their gifted ELLs' lack of English competency to impede access to specific programs and extension activities, nor did they over-focus on the need for their students to acquire full competency in English before allowing their participation in such activities. Educators sought for continuous institutional improvement in the identification, support, evaluation, and outcomes for students, and acknowledged that student voice needed further attention and incorporation into decision-making processes for gifted ELLs. Ultimately, testimony from the students themselves acted as validation of these efforts and determined future directions. Educators, too, understood the on-going nature of the task at hand:

> *And still, like anything, it's a working machine and you have to work hard to keep it going. It's not going to happen, and once you get there, you're there. You have to keep extending, in-servicing staff, supporting staff, supporting the students, you know, reflecting, evaluating the students, asking the students what do they want? You know, you can't just go in and say, "This is what you want," you've got to know the world's changing. What are their needs? (Vanessa, Deputy Principal, DBHS).*

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Appendices

Appendix A: Gagné's (2012) Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent 2.0
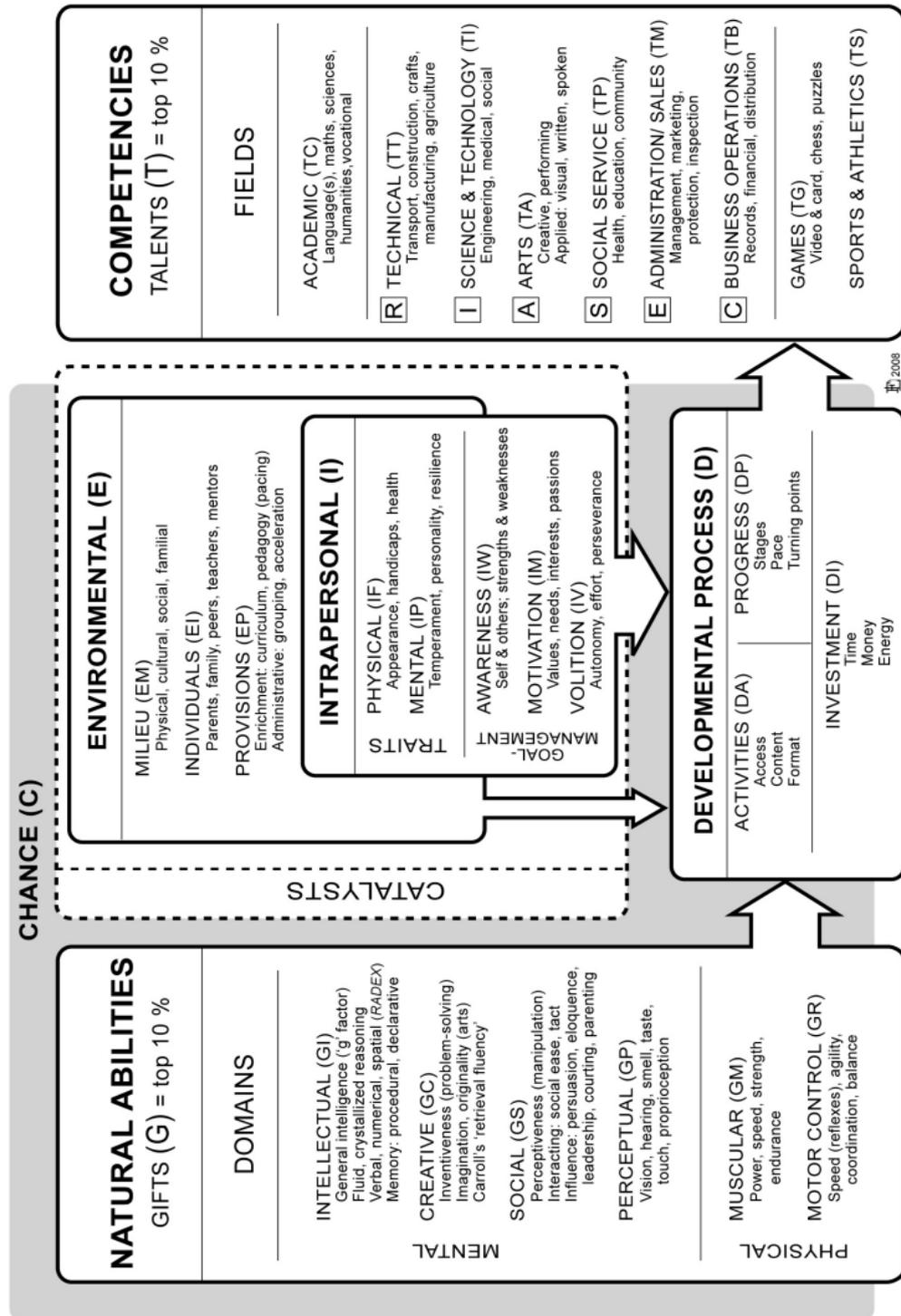
Differentiated model of giftedness and talent 2.0. Reprinted from "Building gifts into talents: Brief overview of the DMGT 2.0," by F. Gagné, 2012, p. 3. Retrieved from https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/17557857/Site%20Web/Site%20Web%20anglais/DMGT%202%2002%20EN%202012%20Overview.pdf. Copyright 2012 by François Gagné. Reprinted with permission.

Appendix B: Principals' information sheet and school consent form

_____

_____

Giving a voice to the voiceless: ascertaining the educational needs of gifted and talented English language learners in Australian secondary schools.

AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear _____

I am currently undertaking research towards a Master of Education with Honours degree in the field of Gifted and Talented. I would like to use your school as a case study, and to interview different people to gather information. I would like to invite your students and staff to participate in this study, for which I would be most grateful.

Research purpose:

I am a teacher with 18 years' experience of working in multi-age primary school classrooms, learning support and enrichment, teaching Spanish, and developing curriculum. I have an interest in high ability English language learners and in finding out what their educational needs are. Through this study I intend to explore this, and to find out the ways in which these needs are being met in this school community. By giving a voice to those directly involved in the education of the students, specifically teachers and school administrators, and most particularly to the students themselves, rich and detailed information can be gathered to add value to existing policies and their application, and can also lead to better informed teaching practices and school-based policy decisions. Most of the research in this field is based in the United States, and is generally concerned with issues of identification, underrepresentation, and educational provision with regards to high ability ELLs, who are predominantly from Latino backgrounds. Little research on the Australian context exists, generally receiving cursory attention in studies investigating socio-economic and racial disadvantage. The proposed research aims to bridge that gap by focusing exclusively on gifted English language learners in the Australian context.

Research process:

For your school community to participate in the project you will need to agree to grant me access to your school, staff and students at mutually convenient times, to be negotiated through a nominated member of staff. I would also need your school to be the point of contact for the distribution and collection of information sheets and consent forms as relevant to each participant. As my research is in 3 separate stages, I will detail the requirements of each:

Stage I: document reviews: for this stage I would need permission to reviews school policies and documents pertaining to gifted students, as well as English language learners. Any copies of documents made to be reviewed off-site or stored electronically on my computer will be returned, destroyed or deleted at the completion of the research.

Stage 2: interviews: for this stage, administrators, staff members and students will be required to participate in semi-structured interviews with me, which will be largely informal in nature. A framework of guiding questions will be forwarded to each participant well in advance of the interview, and they may decline to answer any questions they do not want to. The interviews will be conducted in a suitable location within the school during a mutually agreeable time. The interviews will last no more than 30-40 minutes and will be audio recorded. I will require to interview one member of the administration team, one member of staff who works directly with the gifted ELLs, and between 1 and 5 gifted ELLs (depending on who is available within your school community).

Stage 3: member checks: Once I have written up the observations taken during the visit I will meet again with participants under similar circumstances to review the data collected and to collect feedback on its accuracy. Any part of the transcript not wished to be used in research can be edited or deleted. This feedback will be used to ensure written observations are an authentic record of the interview.

All information gathered from the interviews will be coded to ensure that only the research team know your school's identity and that of the participants. After a period of five (5) years this data will be destroyed in keeping with the policies of the University. None of the participants are under any obligation to agree to participate in this project and can elect to withdraw from the process at any time. You may also withdraw your school's participation at any time. If, at any time throughout the research process participation is withdrawn, all information collected will be destroyed.

The information collected from the interview and from others involved in the study will be used to form the basis of my Master of Education with Honours (Gifted and Talented) thesis under the supervision of Dr Peter Merrotsy and Dr Susen Smith. On completion of the Master's thesis, articles will be written from the findings and it is intended that such papers will be published in appropriate journals and may be presented at both domestic and international conferences. A copy of the thesis will be held in the University of New England Dixson Library, and a summarised report made available to the school community.

You are encouraged to contact the research team at any time to discuss participation in the study, and to have questions answered.

Thank you for your interest in the project. If you wish for your school to participate in the project, you will need to complete the attached consent form. This will need to be returned to me as soon as possible.

 If you wish to ask questions regarding the project, please contact:

Dr Peter Merrotsy (Project Supervisor) on: 02 6773 3832

Dr Susen Smith (Project Co-Supervisor) on: 02 9385 1037

Mrs Aranza Blackburn (Student Researcher) on: 07 3806 4856 or 0427 521 114

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact Mrs Jo-Ann Sozou, Research Ethics Officer at the following address:

Research Services
University of New England
ARMIDALE NSW 2351
Telephone: 02 6773 3449
Email: ethics@une.edu.au

Yours sincerely

Mrs Aranza Blackburn
Student Researcher

School Participation Letter – Principals

Letter of Consent

Giving a voice to the voiceless: ascertaining the educational needs of gifted and talented English language learners in Australian secondary schools.

Please complete the form by filling in the details and circling **YES/NO**:

I, (name) _____ , (position) _____ of (school name) _____ have read the information contained in the School Principal Information Sheet attached, and have had any queries satisfactorily answered. **YES/NO**

I understand that by signing this participation letter I am agreeing to this school's participation in the nominated research project. **YES/NO**

I understand this will involve nominating a member of staff as a point of contact for the distribution and collection of information sheets and consent forms as relevant to each participant. **YES/NO**

I understand this will involve giving the researcher access to school documents pertaining to the student population under study, at my discretion. I understand the researcher will return, destroy or delete these documents at the completion of the research and as appropriate. **YES/NO**

I understand that I am giving the researcher access to the school to conduct semi-structured interviews with staff and students. I understand these interviews will be audio recorded, and the audio files will be kept securely at the University for a period of 5 years. **YES/NO**

I understand a second meeting will be held to review the data collected and participants may provide feedback on its accuracy. **YES/NO**

I understand that I may withdraw the school's participation at any time, and that should this be the case, all information collected will be destroyed and not used in any manner. **YES/NO**

I understand that all information collected will be coded so that the school and all the participants remain anonymous to all but the researchers. **YES/NO**

I understand that information gathered will be published appropriately. This will include the use of pseudonyms for people and place names and direct quotes. **YES/NO**

I understand that the information collected from the interview and from others involved in the study will be used to form the basis of the researcher's thesis, and that articles will be written from the findings with the intent of having such papers published in appropriate journals which may be presented at both domestic and international conferences. **YES/NO**

I understand that a copy of the thesis will be held in the University of New England Dixson Library, and a summarised report made available to the school community. YES/NO

_____   _____

Signature Principal   Date

_____   _____

Signature Researcher   Date

Appendix C: Ethical clearance UNE

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM TO: Dr P Merrotsy, Dr S Smith & Mrs A Blackburn

School of Education

This is to advise you that the Human Research Ethics Committee has approved the following:

PROJECT TITLE: Giving a voice to the voiceless: ascertaining the education needs of the gifted and talented English language learners in Australian secondary schools.

APPROVAL No.:   HE12-027

COMMENCEMENT DATE: 01/04/2012

APPROVAL VALID TO: 01/04/2013

COMMENTS: Nil. Conditions met in full.

The Human Research Ethics Committee may grant approval for up to a maximum of three years. For approval periods greater than 12 months, researchers are required to submit an application for renewal at each twelve-month period. All researchers are required to submit a Final Report at the completion of their project. The Progress/Final Report Form is available at the following web address: http://www.une.edu.au/research-services/researchdevelopmentintegrity/ethics/human-ethics/hrecforms.php

The *NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans* requires that researchers must report immediately to the Human Research Ethics Committee anything that might affect ethical acceptance of the protocol. This includes adverse reactions of participants, proposed changes in the protocol, and any other unforeseen events that might affect the continued ethical acceptability of the project.

In issuing this approval number, it is required that all data and consent forms are stored in a secure location for a minimum period of five years. These documents may be required for compliance audit processes during that time. If the location at which data and documentation are retained is changed within that five year period, the Research Ethics Officer should be advised of the new location.

Jo-Ann Sozou
Secretary/Research Ethics Officer

26/03/2012

A12/191

Appendix D: Ethical clearance SERAP

![NSW Government Education & Communities logo]

Mrs Aranzazu Blackburn   DOC 12/165066
17 LeGrange Ct
SHAILER PARK QLD 4128

Dear Mrs Blackburn   SERAP Number **2012064**

I refer to your application to conduct a research project in New South Wales government schools entitled *Giving a voice to the voiceless: ascertaining the educational needs of gifted and talented English language learners in Australian secondary schools.* I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved. You may now contact the Principals of the nominated schools to seek their participation. **You should include a copy of this letter with the documents you send to schools.**

This approval will remain valid until 01/04/2013.

The following researchers or research assistants have fulfilled the Working with Children screening requirements to interact with or observe children for the purposes of this research for the period indicated:

Name	Approval expires
Aranzazu Maria Blackburn	01/04/2013

I draw your attention to the following requirements for all researchers in New South Wales government schools:

- School Principals have the right to withdraw the school from the study at any time. The approval of the Principal for the specific method of gathering information for the school must also be sought.
- The privacy of the school and the students is to be protected.
- The participation of teachers and students must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience.
- Any proposal to publish the outcomes of the study should be discussed with the Research Approvals Officer before publication proceeds.

When your study is completed please forward your report marked to Manager, Schooling Research, Department of Education and Training, Locked Bag 53, Darlinghurst, NSW 2010.

You may also be asked to present on the findings of your research.

Yours sincerely

██████████████

Robert Stevens
R/Senior Manager, Schooling Research
Student Engagement and Program Evaluation
5 June 2012

Appendix E: Student selection criteria sheet

_____

School of Education
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Telephone: 61 2 6773 3835 / 6773 3716
Facsimile: 61 2 6773 2445 / 6773 5078
Email: education@une.edu.au
Web: www.une.edu.au/education

_____

Giving a voice to the voiceless: ascertaining the educational needs of gifted and talented English language learners in Australian secondary schools.

When selecting students for the project, please complete the following (1 table per student):

School name	
Type (comprehensive, partially selective, selective)	
Student name (pseudonym will be accorded)	
Age	
Current year level	
Language/s spoken at home	
Length of time in Australian schooling	
Proficiency in first language (please describe briefly)	
Student identified as gifted and/or talented according to selective high schools criteria[1]	Yes / No
Student identified as gifted and/or talented according to gifted and talented policy guidelines[2]	Yes / No
If NO to either question above, please indicate identification method/s and processes	
Area/s of giftedness and/or talent	
Student identified as ESL according to policy guidelines[3]	Yes / No
If NO to question above, please indicate identification method/s and processes	
ESL Learner phase (first, second or third) (refer p. 6 of policy document at note 2 below)	Written: Spoken:
NAPLAN Score/Band (if applicable)	Reading: Writing: Language conventions:

¹ New South Wales Department of Education and Communities: New South Wales Curriculum and Learning Innovation Centre. (2011). *Selective High Schools and Opportunity Classes.* Sydney, Australia: author. Retrieved from http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/gats/programs/organisation/provision.htm

² New South Wales Department of Education and Training. (2004b). *Policy and implementation Strategies for the education of gifted and talented students.* Sydney, Australia: author. Retrieved from http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/policies/gats/assets/pdf/polimp.pdf

³ New South Wales Department of Education and Training. (2004a). *English as a second language: Guidelines for schools.* Sydney, Australia: author. Retrieved from https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/policies/student_serv/equity/comm_rela/d04_23_ESL_Guidelines.pdf

Any additional comments:

_____   _____
(Signed: name and position)   (Date)

If you wish to ask questions regarding the project, please contact:

Dr Peter Merrotsy (Project Supervisor) on: 02 6773 3832
Dr Susen Smith (Project Co-Supervisor) on: 02 9385 1037
Mrs Aranza Blackburn (Student Researcher) on: 07 3806 4856 or 0427 521 114

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (approval no. HE12-027 Valid to 1 April 2013).

Yours sincerely

Mrs Aranza Blackburn
Student Researcher

Appendix F: Participants and parents of participants – information sheet and consent form

_____

School of Education
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Telephone: 61 2 6773 3835 / 6773 3716
Facsimile: 61 2 6773 2445 / 6773 5078
Email: education@une.edu.au
Web: www.une.edu.au/education
_____

Participants and Parents of Participants Information Sheet

Giving a voice to the voiceless: ascertaining the educational needs of gifted and talented English language learners in Australian secondary schools.

AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear _____

I am currently undertaking research towards a Master of Education with Honours degree in the field of Gifted and Talented. I intend to use your child's school as a case study, and to interview different people to gather information. I would like to invite your child to participate in this study, for which I would be most grateful.

Research purpose:

I am a teacher with 18 years' experience of working in multi-age primary school classrooms, learning support and enrichment, teaching Spanish, and developing curriculum. I have an interest in gifted and talented English language learners and in finding out what their educational needs are. Through this study I intend to find out what these students need in terms of their education and to explore the ways in which this is being met in this school community. Most of the research in this field is based in the United States and is focused on students mainly from Latino backgrounds. Little research on the Australian context exists. The proposed research aims to bridge that gap by focusing exclusively on gifted English language learners in the Australian context.

Research process:

For your child to participate in the project you will need to agree to them participating in a one-on-one interview with me, which will be largely informal. Some questions will be given to your child before the interview, and he/she may choose not to answer any questions they do not want to. We will meet at school and under supervision. You may also choose to be present during the interview; this is optional. This interview will last no more that 30 minutes and will be audio recorded. An interpreter can be made available by pre-arrangement for the meeting if you request it.

Once I have written up the observations taken during the visit your child will meet again with me later in the same place to review the information collected and talk about its accuracy. Any part of the transcript not wished to be used in research can be edited or deleted. This feedback will be used to ensure that what I have written is a true record of the interview.

You do not have to agree to your child participating in this project and can withdraw him/her from the process at any time. All information gathered from the interview will be coded to ensure that only the research team know your child's identity. After a period of five (5) years this data will be destroyed in keeping with the policies of the University. If, at any time throughout the research process you withdraw your child's participation, all information collected from him/her will be destroyed.

The information collected from the interview and from others involved in the study will be used to form the basis of my Master of Education with Honours (Gifted and Talented) thesis under the supervision of Dr Peter Merrotsy and Dr Susen Smith, which may also be used for journal articles and/or conference presentations. The results of this investigation will be reported in such as way that individual respondents and the school itself will not be able to be identified. A summarised report will be made available to the school community.

You are encouraged to contact the research team at any time to discuss any questions in relation to this study. Should you require the services of an interpreter for this, this can be arranged via the school.

Thank you for your interest in the project. If you wish your child to participate in the project, you will need to complete the attached consent forms. These will need to be returned to the school office no later than _____.

 If you wish to ask questions regarding the project, please contact:

Dr Peter Merrotsy (Project Supervisor) on: 02 6773 3832
Dr Susen Smith (Project Co-Supervisor) on: 02 9385 1037
Mrs Aranza Blackburn (Student Researcher) on: 07 3806 4856 or 0427 521 114

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (approval no. HE12-027   Valid to1 April 2013).

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact Mrs Jo-Ann Sozou, Research Ethics Officer at the following address:

Research Services
University of New England
ARMIDALE NSW 2351
Telephone: 02 6773 3449
Email: ethics@une.edu.au

Yours sincerely

Mrs Aranza Blackburn
Student Researcher

Permission to participate: Students under 18 years of age

Child's assent with parent/guardian consent

Young persons (16-17 years) consent

Giving a voice to the voiceless: ascertaining the educational needs of gifted and talented English language learners in Australian secondary schools.

Please complete the form by filling in the details and circling YES/NO:

We _____ and _____

have read the information contained in the Participant Information Sheet attached, and have had any queries satisfactorily answered.   **YES/NO**

We understand that by signing this consent form we are agreeing to our child _____

participating in a one-to-one interview with the researcher during school time and under school supervision.
YES/NO

We understand that this interview will be audio recorded, and the audio files will be kept securely at the University for a period of 5 years.   **YES/NO**

We understand that a second meeting will be held to review the data collected and our child may provide feedback on its accuracy.   **YES/NO**

We understand that any part of the transcript he/she does not wish to be used in research can be edited or deleted.
YES/NO

We understand that information gathered will be published appropriately. This will include the use of pseudonyms for people and place names and direct quotes.   **YES/NO**

We understand that all information collected will be coded so that our child remains anonymous to all but the researchers.   **YES/NO**

We understand that we may withdraw his/her participation at any time without providing a reason. If we choose to do this, we understand all information gathered about our child will be destroyed and not used in any manner.
YES/NO

_____   _____

Signature Parent 1   Date

_____   _____

Signature Researcher   Date

_____   _____

Signature Parent 2   Date

_____   _____

Signature Researcher   Date

_____   _____

Signature Young Person (if applicable)   Date

_____   _____

Signature Researcher   Date

Appendix G: Students – information sheet and assent form

Student Information Sheet

Giving a voice to the voiceless: ascertaining the educational needs of gifted and talented English language learners in Australian secondary schools.

AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear _____

I am currently undertaking research towards a Master of Education with Honours degree in the field of Gifted and Talented. I intend to use your school as a case study, and to interview different people to gather information. I would like to invite you to participate in this study, for which I would be most grateful.

Research purpose:
I am a teacher with 18 years' experience of working in multi-age primary school classrooms, learning support and enrichment, teaching Spanish, and developing curriculum. I have an interest in gifted and talented English language learners and in finding out what their educational needs are. Through this study I intend to find out what these students need in terms of their education and to explore the ways in which this is being met in this school community. Most of the research in this field is based in the United States and is focused on students mainly from Latino backgrounds. Little research on the Australian context exists. The proposed research aims to bridge that gap by focusing exclusively on gifted English language learners in the Australian context.

Research process:
For you to participate in the project you will need to have you and your parents agree to your participation in a one-on-one interview with me, which will be largely informal. Some questions will be given to you before the interview, and you may choose not to answer any questions you not want to. We will meet at school and under supervision. Your parents may also choose to be present during the interview; this is optional. This interview will last no more that 30 minutes and will be audio recorded. An interpreter can be made available by pre-arrangement for the meeting if you or your parents request it.

Once I have written up the observations taken during the visit we will meet again later in the same place to review the information collected and talk about its accuracy. Any part of the transcript you do not wish to be used in research can be edited or deleted. This feedback will be used to ensure that what I have written is a true record of the interview.

You or your parents do not have to agree to your participation in this project and you can be withdrawn from the process at any time. All information gathered from the interview will be coded to ensure that only the research team know your identity. After a period of five (5) years this data will be destroyed in keeping with the policies of the University. If, at any time throughout the research process you or your parents withdraw your participation, all information collected from you will be destroyed.

The information collected from the interview and from others involved in the study will be used to form the basis of my Master of Education with Honours (Gifted and Talented) thesis under the supervision of Dr Peter Merrotsy and Dr Susen Smith, which may also be used for journal articles and/or conference presentations. The results of this investigation will be reported in such as way that you and the school itself will not be able to be identified. A summarised report will be made available to the school community.

You and your parents are encouraged to contact the research team at any time to discuss any questions in relation to this study. Should you or they require the services of an interpreter for this, this can be arranged via the school.

Thank you for your interest in the project. If you wish to participate in the project, you will need to complete the attached assent form, and you and your parents will need to complete the consent forms. These will need to be returned to the school office no later than _____.

 If you wish to ask questions regarding the project, please contact:

Dr Peter Merrotsy (Project Supervisor) on: 02 6773 3832
Dr Susen Smith (Project Co-Supervisor) on: 02 9385 1037
Mrs Aranza Blackburn (Student Researcher) on: 07 3806 4856 or 0427 521 114

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (approval no. HE12-027   Valid to1 April 2013).

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact Mrs Jo-Ann Sozou, Research Ethics Officer at the following address:

Research Services
University of New England
ARMIDALE NSW 2351
Telephone: 02 6773 3449
Email: ethics@une.edu.au

Yours sincerely

Mrs Aranza Blackburn
Student Researcher

Permission to participate: Students under 18 years of age

Student's assent with parent/guardian consent

Giving a voice to the voiceless: ascertaining the educational needs of gifted and talented English language learners in Australian secondary schools.

Please complete the form by filling in the details and circling **YES/NO**:

I _____ have read the information contained in the Student Information Sheet attached, and have had any queries satisfactorily answered.   **YES/NO**

I understand that by signing this consent form I am agreeing to participate in a one-to-one interview with the researcher during school time and under school supervision.   **YES/NO**

I understand that this interview will be audio recorded, and the audio files will be kept securely at the University for a period of 5 years.   **YES/NO**

 I understand that a second meeting will be held to review the data collected and I may provide feedback on its accuracy.   **YES/NO**

I understand that any part of the transcript I do not wish to be used in research can be edited or deleted.   **YES/NO**

I understand that information gathered will be published appropriately. This will include the use of pseudonyms for people and place names and direct quotes.   **YES/NO**

I understand that all information collected will be coded so that I remain anonymous to all but the researchers. **YES/NO**

I understand that I or my parents may withdraw my participation at any time without providing a reason. If we choose to do this, we understand all information gathered about me will be destroyed and not used in any manner. **YES/NO**

_____   _____

Signature Young Person   Date

_____   _____

Signature Researcher   Date

Appendix H: Teachers and administrators – information sheet and consent form

Participants (Teachers and Administrators) Information Sheet

Giving a voice to the voiceless: ascertaining the educational needs of gifted and talented English language learners in Australian secondary schools.

AN INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear _____

I am currently undertaking research towards a Master of Education with Honours degree in the field of Gifted and Talented. I intend to use your school as a case study, and to interview different people to gather information. I would like to invite to participate in this study, for which I would be most grateful.

Research purpose:
I am a teacher with 18 years' experience of working in multi-age primary school classrooms, learning support and enrichment, teaching Spanish, and developing curriculum. I have an interest in gifted and talented English language learners and in finding out what their educational needs are. Through this study I intend to explore this, and to find out the ways in which these needs are being met in this school community. By giving a voice to those directly involved in the education of the students, specifically teachers and school administrators, and most particularly to the students themselves, rich and detailed information can be gathered to add value to existing policies and their application, and can also lead to better informed teaching practices and school-based policy decisions. Most of the research in this field is based in the United States, and is generally concerned with issues of identification, underrepresentation, and educational provision with regards to gifted ELLs, who are predominantly from Latino backgrounds. Little research on the Australian context exists, generally receiving cursory attention in studies investigating socio-economic and racial disadvantage. The proposed research aims to bridge that gap by focusing exclusively on gifted English language learners in the Australian context.

Research process:
For you to participate in the project you will need to agree to participate in a semi-structured interview with me, which will be largely informal in nature. A framework of guiding questions will be forwarded well in advance of the interview, and you may decline to answer any questions you do not want to. The interviews will be conducted in a suitable location within the school during a mutually agreeable time. The interviews will last no more than 30-40 minutes and will be audio recorded.

Once I have written up the observations taken during the visit we will meet again under similar circumstances to review the data collected and provide feedback on its accuracy. Any part of the transcript not wished to be used in research can be edited or deleted. This feedback will be used to ensure written observations are an authentic record of the interview.

You are under no obligation to agree to participate in this project and can elect to withdraw from the process at any time. All information gathered from the interview will be coded to ensure that only the research team know your identity. After a period of five (5) years this data will be destroyed in keeping with the policies of the University. If, at any time throughout the research process you withdraw your participation, all information collected from you will be destroyed.

The information collected from the interview and from others involved in the study will be used to form the basis of my Master of Education with Honours (Gifted and Talented) thesis under the supervision of Dr Peter Merrotsy and Dr Susen Smith. On completion of the Master's thesis, articles will be written from the findings and it is intended that such papers will be published in appropriate journals and may be presented at both domestic and international conferences. A copy of the thesis will be held in the University of New England Dixson Library, and a summarised report made available to the school community.

You are encouraged to contact the research team at any time to discuss participation in the study, and to have questions answered.

Thank you for your interest in the project. If you wish to participate in the project, you will need to complete the attached consent form. This will need to be returned to the school office no later than _____.

 If you wish to ask questions regarding the project, please contact:

Dr Peter Merrotsy (Project Supervisor) on: 02 6773 3832
Dr Susen Smith (Project Co-Supervisor) on: 02 9385 1037
Mrs Aranza Blackburn (Student Researcher) on: 07 3806 4856 or 0427 521 114

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (approval no. HE12-027   Valid to1 April 2013).

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Research Services
University of New England
ARMIDALE NSW 2351
Telephone: 02 6773 3449
Email: ethics@une.edu.au

Yours sincerely

Mrs Aranza Blackburn
Student Researcher

_____

School of Education
Armidale NSW 2351 Australia
Telephone: 61 2 6773 3835 / 6773 3716
Facsimile: 61 2 6773 2445 / 6773 5078
Email: education@une.edu.au
Web: www.une.edu.au/education

_____

Permission to participate: Teachers and Administrators - CONFIDENTIAL

Giving a voice to the voiceless: ascertaining the educational needs of gifted and talented English language learners in Australian secondary schools.

Please complete the form by filling in the details and circling YES/NO:

I, _____ have read the information contained in the Participant Information Sheet attached, and have had any queries satisfactorily answered.   **YES/NO**

I understand that by signing this consent form I am agreeing to participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher. I understand that this interview will be audio recorded, and the audio files will be kept securely at the University for a period of 5 years.   **YES/NO**

I understand a second meeting will be held to review the data collected and I may provide feedback on its accuracy. **YES/NO**

I understand that any part of the transcript I do not wish to be used in research can be edited or deleted. **YES/NO**

I understand that information gathered will be published appropriately. This will include the use of pseudonyms for people and place names and direct quotes.   **YES/NO**

I understand that all information collected will be coded so that I remain anonymous to all but the researchers. **YES/NO**

I understand that I may withdraw my participation at any time without providing a reason. If I choose to do this, I understand all information gathered about and from me will be destroyed and not used in any manner.

_____   _____

Signature Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature Researcher   Date

Appendix I: Pilot Study – Eagle Heights College

The pilot study for this inquiry was conducted in 2012 at Eagle Heights College, the pseudonym for a co-educational independent P–12 school in Brisbane, Queensland. Through interviews with two staff members, Max, the Gifted and Talented Coordinator, and James, an EAL Teacher, research questions were tested and initial data investigated. Its aim was ultimately to explore the feasibility of the research topic and methodology for a larger inquiry and to inform study design through the collection of data in an authentic setting.

Background

Eagle Heights College is a private, independent, ecumenical, co-educational day school that utilises the International Baccalaureate suite of programmes as its pedagogical framework across its P-12 setting. Eagle Heights College also offers a Child Care service as well as an International College. Flexible curriculum pathways to graduation exist (e.g., a choice of OP, selection rank, SAT, VET, Diploma, Horizons, or IB), with 60% of graduating students studying at university in 2012. The school is a vibrant and enthusiastic learning community built on mutual respect, traditional values, school pride, and strong direction. It also has a reputation for the quality of its technology programs and comprehensive co-curricular performing arts and sporting programs.

In 2012 the school ICSEA was 1123, placing it above the average in terms of socio-economic measures. Enrolments stood at 1856, with 147 teaching staff across the school. The student population included 1% indigenous students, and 14% of students were from a non-English-speaking background.

Method

A qualitative approach to research was selected for the pilot study and the main inquiry, and this has been discussed in Chapter III. My original intention was to use a grounded theory approach with the College as the case to be studied, however this method proved unsatisfactory very early in the planning stages. The need for purposive sampling and the emerging stories told by the participants created a better opportunity for the application of narrative methodology, and the approach was changed after consultation with supervisors.

Data were collected for the pilot study through interviews with two key stakeholders, Max, the College's Gifted and Talented Coordinator, who had been employed in the role for the past 18 months, and James, an EAL Teacher in the high school. Semi-structured open-ended questions were designed for each interview.

Focus of Gifted and Talented Coordinator's questions:

1. Professional experience
2. Professional role within this school
3. Arrangements to identify and support gifted ELLs
4. Who drives the agenda for gifted ELLs?
5. How is student voice heard?
6. How to better serve this population? Where are the gaps?
7. Does gender contribute?
8. Anything else that contributes to understanding the needs of gifted ELLs?
9. Resources to support learning needs

Focus of EAL Teacher's questions:

1. Professional experience
2. Professional role within this school
3. Arrangements to identify and support gifted ELLs
4. What is your role in contact situations?
5. Patterns in the learning needs of gifted ELLs
6. How is student voice heard?
7. What is their greatest need?
8. How can schools better serve the needs of gifted ELLs?

Interviews were conducted one-to-one in a quiet office and audio-recorded for transcription at a later date. It had been envisaged that at least one gifted ELL from the College would also participate; however there were difficulties in gaining consent. Students nominated for this inquiry were all attendees of the International College, and parental consent was not able to be gained during the planned period of interview. All other ethical considerations for the pilot study were the same as for the main inquiry.

The data collected from the two interviews were analysed according to similar processes used for the main inquiry, beginning with the transcription and the coding of the data. This process involved isolating and ordering relevant narratives within the transcripts into episodes or stories. These segments of stories were analysed for emerging themes, with the preservation of meaning paramount. Emerging from the two interviews and from this process are the main findings from this pilot study.

Results

Staff backgrounds. Both participants had post-graduate qualifications in either gifted education (Max) or EAL/D (James). Both had experience teaching diverse groups of students; Max had taught gifted students as a high school teacher, and James had taught in China. Max stated that gaining a better understanding of how to best serve the needs of gifted ELLs was a professional learning target for him.

School characteristics. Eagle Heights College is P–12 school with an International College as part of its global presence. This language school within the College serves the needs of ELLs who begin their education there to increase their English proficiency before merging into the mainstream school. The language school's biggest intake is in Year 11 annually, and students present with a broad range of abilities. There is a long history of ELLs within the College overall and long-term experienced staff members have been in place to support their learning needs. The College has a passion for all students to reach their potential, including gifted ELLs.

School organisation. The College uses as its pedagogical framework the suite of IB programs (Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme, and Diploma Programme). This differentiated classroom instruction model discourages ability grouping (streaming) in support of fluid cluster groupings for meeting the diverse needs of students.

Recently the support department at the College was re-badged as *Learning Enhancement* with the Gifted and Talented Coordinator as part of the team. The department operates under the leadership of the Directors of Teaching and Learning (Academics) and Heads of School (Pastoral and Management). The Gifted and Talented Coordinator described his role as breaking new ground in terms of P–12, involving a focus on both policy work and classroom presence, working with teachers and students to develop appropriately differentiated personalised curriculum. This was also a focus of professional learning.

School offerings. For gifted ELLs the College has a number of both general and specific programs in place. Generally, there are numerous co-curricular activities students can access, including a large and broad music program as well as various sporting academies. Many Korean students, for example, are attracted to the College due to the quality of its soccer academy.

Academically, whilst there are also numerous offerings for students, there is a desire to transfer the successes of co-curricular cultural and sporting offerings to the academic sphere. Some academic enhancements include an *English for ESL* course that is on offer in Year 11 for students for whom English is not their mother tongue. Further support is offered through the well-resourced Learning Enhancement department, where recognition of a student's additional language learning challenges is taken into account. Extra support such as lunch-time and afternoon tutorials is also well attended. Pastorally, arrangements are made for ELLs to meet and interact with support teachers, to combat the somewhat isolationist e-mail arrangements the College has in place due to enrolment sizes.

Challenges reported included some resistance from teachers in terms of changing practice. Other teachers perceived that only minimal support was being delivered in small amounts. Teachers would also like to see better communication with regards to identified gifted ELLs, as whilst most of those recently identified were high achievers and capable academically, there were some surprise nominations.

Identification. Aptitude testing occurs initially at the Year 8 entry point and in other senior school years where the Otis-Lennon School Ability Test (OLSAT 8) is used. Teachers use the split score (verbal and non-verbal) to allow for identification of ability in EAL/D students, as the non-verbal score is considered to be more accurate for this group of learners. Other identification measures were not discussed.

Gifted ELL attributes. Both participants listed a number of attributes they identified in their gifted ELLs, with a significant amount of correlation between their descriptions.

Situational. Most gifted ELLs at Eagle Heights College are not Australian residents but rather students of Asian background taking advantage of the offerings of the Australian education system through an IB model.

Cultural. The gifted ELLs at the College prefer to interact with others from their own language group. They show some reticence when dealing with authority and management, as this poses both cultural as well as linguistic challenges for them. Asking for assistance is also perceived as a cultural barrier, as their mindset is to do as the perceived figures in authority instruct.

Attitudinal. Some gifted ELLs are very motivated, very self-sufficient, and self-directed. They possess determination and drive to achieve academically and they communicate this to teachers. They work hard and are very disciplined and diligent, seeking constant feedback and input from their teachers. They self-advocate and know specifically what they need help with, particularly grammar issues. They put in a lot of time and effort to make sure they get the result they want and are not satisfied with lower than expected results. They can be disappointed when they reflect on the fact that had they been studying in their home country their grades might have been higher.

Academic. Many gifted ELLs challenge themselves academically and continuously question and probe. Their verbal communication outpaces the written; however their writing is generally of a high standard. Language-based subjects (e.g., English, History, and Geography) present more of a challenge than Maths and Science. Sometimes they are underestimated by their teachers in terms of their potential, as teachers sometimes misinterpret their struggles as lack of application, because these struggles are not so overt.

Gender. Gifted ELLs with the most dedicated focus towards academic achievement tend to be girls; however boys also make the effort as being academically successful is celebrated at this College. Most gifted ELLs in the sporting domain tend to be boys.

Student voice. Students are invited to contribute in class but are not often polled. Student voice of the gifted ELL is missing sometimes due to communication difficulties. A goal of the school is to develop and support their agency in order to assist them to communicate and self-advocate better.

G&T Coordinator's role. Max described his role as consisting of three key elements. First, in terms of policy, the attributes of mentoring, supporting, and resourcing were discussed. Second, advocacy for gifted students as well as driving the agenda in this field were noted. Third, supporting teachers in their classroom roles in terms of responding to the needs of students with choice and assistance was described. This assistance related not only to extending students in day-to-day teaching and learning encounters but also with assessment tasks.

Teacher's role. James described his role as that of supporting students to achieve academically. He acknowledged that his main core business was to work alongside students, mainly to clarify understanding compromised by language barriers, not academic or intelligence barriers. This often involved facilitating understanding of classroom activities and assessment items. More specifically, he described how he would often try to maintain the integrity of students' writing whilst assisting with grammar to make the ideas clearer. He acknowledged that gifted ELLs were often studying in a second or third language and needed both knowledge of the content and ability to communicate that articulately through English.

Pastorally, James acknowledged that part of his time was spent speaking with students on an individual basis to identify what their most pressing needs were. There was also an on-going need to provide support networks for students living away from their families and cultures. Ultimately, his hope was that schools were doing more than increasing students' knowledge and skill base, and he would like to see his students expand their view of the world.

James recommended that teachers and schools should keep providing opportunities and challenging tasks for gifted ELLs to engage them and push them. His fear was that they would stagnate without special provisions. The promotion of higher-order thinking skills, asking analytical questions, and encouraging students to push the boundaries were recommended.

Brief Conclusions

In this pilot study two educators contributed stories of their experiences, thoughts, and expertise with regards to working with gifted ELLs in a large P–12 school in Brisbane. From their interviews significant findings emerged that describe how one school is working to meet the needs of its gifted ELLs, findings that can also assist to inform the main inquiry.

First, when determining how to best meet the needs of gifted ELLs consideration of school context and offerings is necessary. This includes evaluating the role of multiple factors such as pedagogical

framework, school organisation and management structure, and distinctive offerings that characterise the school overall and that gifted ELLs have access to. At Eagle Heights College there was evidence of management working proactively with teachers and students to develop appropriately differentiated personalised curriculum as well as continuing with student support and staff professional learning.

Second, the specific role of classroom, subject, and support teachers in meeting the needs of gifted ELLs was discussed, and can be explored further, not only to determine best practice but also to identify professional learning opportunities for staff. Descriptors of current approaches such as working with gifted ELLs to clarify their understanding of academic tasks, coupled with the provision of pastoral and other support networks for students living away from their home and culture highlighted significant areas of work for teachers. Continuing to challenge students, regardless of language ability, was also a high priority.

Third, an emerging catalogue of the attributes of gifted ELLs as noted by the two participants described students who were motivated, self-sufficient, and self-directed. Whilst adhering to cultural constraints, they nevertheless self-advocated for assistance with their learning. Girls were reported as being more academically focused than boys, with Maths and Science subjects presenting less of a challenge overall than language-based subjects.

Finally, reference to student voice indicated a significant need to explore this concept further, as references to student voice were brief, noting mostly its absence.

Reflection

This pilot study presented a unique opportunity to explore aspects of my area of research in order to determine appropriate processes and procedures for the main inquiry. However incomplete this pilot study presents, particularly with the student voice missing, it has a number of redeeming factors that made it a valid starting point for my main inquiry. Rather than simply being a means to an end, the results from this pilot study not only offered some descriptors of the attributes of gifted ELLs but also described several approaches by teachers to supporting their learning needs. Ultimately, this pilot study has assisted me in refining the direction of my main inquiry and the processes to follow, as well as uncovering some initial results that feature prominently both here and in the main inquiry.

Appendix J: Interview questions

Administrators

Rapport Building:

- Tell me about your professional experience and your role in this school.
- Tell me about this school.

Semi-structured questions:

- Tell me about the arrangements that exist within the school that support gifted and talented ELLs.
- Who or what drives the agenda at this school with regards to the educational needs of gifted ELLs?
- How are students' voices heard in this process?
- How do you think this population of students can better be served?

Teachers

Rapport Building:

- Tell me about your professional experience and your role in this school.
- Tell me about this school.

Semi-structured questions:

- From your perspective, describe for me what structures and arrangements exist within the school that support gifted and talented ELLs.
- What do you see as your role when working with these students?
- What kind of a say do the students themselves have about their own learning?
- How do you think this population of students can better be served?

Students

Rapport Building:

- How long have you been at this school?
- Could you tell me where you came from and how you came to this school?

Semi-structured questions:

- Tell me how this school helps you to learn.
- Do you think teachers really understand what you want to learn? Why/why not?
- How do your parents want the school to help you?
- What is your hope for the future?

Appendix K: Sample coded transcript

TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW BETWEEN ARANZAZU BLACKBURN AND HUSSEIN (YR 11 STUDENT)
RIVERVIEW SECONDARY COLLEGE NSW
21 JUNE 2012

ABL	This is interview number 4 at Riverview Secondary College. My name is Aranza Blackburn and I'm the principal researcher.	
HUS	My name is Hussein and I'm a year 11 Riverview Secondary College student.	
ABL	Okay, so thanks, Hussein, for agreeing to do this interview and have this conversation with me. The whole purpose of the conversation is to find out what are the educational needs of students like yourself; that is, you have an English learning background, and that the school has deemed that you are highly able or gifted and talented in some area. So, if you could tell me a little bit first about your language background, your cultural background.	
HUS	Okay, my language background is Persian, or Farsi, because I'm Iranian. I came to Australia when I was in year 8-ish, end of year 8. Started school, started high school first term of year 9, end of first term, and been in Riverview Secondary ever since. So, um, it was a bit hard for me at the beginning, but since I had, I did study English when I was younger, in my country, so it wasn't a massive gap but I still had to work hard to, you know, catch up. And, yeah, no, I don't really have much problems with my English.	**Comment [U1]:** HLA: Home language **Comment [U2]:** HCO: Home country **Comment [U3]:** ARA: Arrival in Australia **Comment [U4]:** SJI: School journey IEC; SCO: School commencement
ABL	So what was learning English in Iran like? What did they teach you there?	**Comment [U5]:** SJO: Schooling journey in Australia
HUS	Ah, honestly, I can't remember much because I was really young, but the basic stuff I learnt was, like, really useful, like, you know, conversations, you know, the stuff you use in everyday conversations; that was really useful when I first came. So I didn't really struggle to do like, you know when you go, you want to go to office or like, do something, do some paperwork, I didn't really need someone to do it for me. I could do it myself because I had, like, knowledge of background in English.	**Comment [U6]:** SJO **Comment [U7]:** EEH: English experiences in home country **Comment [U8]:** CTS: Commitment to study
ABL	So you came straight into year 9?	**Comment [U9]:** EOL: Ease of learning
HUS	Oh, no, I didn't. I spent a term in IEC.	**Comment [U10]:** EEH
ABL	And what was that like?	**Comment [U11]:** SJI
HUS	Ah, that was actually really good because they give you the information you actually need before you start high school. That was really, I found that really useful because I had a really good teacher that really pushed me to limits. Like, because, the other class's teacher were like, it was just a normal teacher, like, they, they still did the work but their teacher didn't push them to their limits, but my teacher really pushed me that, that caused me, like, to learn a lot of English in like 3 months.	**Comment [U12]:** TSA: Teacher support (academically)
ABL	How did your teacher do that? What strategies did they use to push you?	**Comment [U13]:** SJI
HUS	A lot of tests, I guess. We had a spelling test every week, which was, which wasn't just spelling, it was the teacher explaining what a word means and you have to, like, analyse it and then find the word and write it down, which, which meant you have to, like, learn every meaning, every definition. And then, yeah, I guess that's about it, but then there was a lot of work to do in class as well, and the teacher really gives everyone to, like, you know, everyone was actually listening and working in class, yeah.	**Comment [U14]:** LEM: Learning English methods **Comment [U15]:** LEM
ABL	That's important to learn.	**Comment [U16]:** TSA; TWH: Teacher willingness to help
HUS	Yeah, I think so.	**Comment [U17]:** CTS
ABL	What about here at Riverview Secondary College? How have they helped you to learn here?	
HUS	First year, I guess, in year 9, there was help but I didn't really use the help. Like, Miss XXXX, I remember Miss XXXX coming up to me asking, "What, um," "Do you want to, like, come?" I was like, "Yeah, sure," but I didn't really go to Miss XXXX the first year. I don't know why. I was probably because I was just selfish, I thought I didn't need help. And then, in year 10, I realised that, "Oh, I actually need to get help." Well that's when I actually met…, I didn't meet Miss XXXX back in year 9 but I didn't really have much classes with her. So in year 10 I actually started having classes, like actual English classes with Miss XXXX, and that really boosted my English, 'til like, helped me a lot, 'til where I am now.	**Comment [U18]:** SJO
ABL	What kind of stuff did Mrs XXXX do with you that really stands out as having helped?	**Comment [U19]:** TSA

HUS	Miss XXXX really ask you, like, she could analyse and find out what you were not good at, and she would give you work about that area, because she's got a lot of experience as well. She's been like here for 30 years so she knows about ESL students don't really, don't really match up with English. Their languages have like massive difference with English, so like, I don't know. I remember year 9 we started doing prepositions, which is a gap between English and other languages, so, yeah. I remember that was really useful. But I can't remember anything specific, like, anything other than that.
ABL	That's okay. So, Mrs XXXX nominated you because she believes that you have an area of strength or excellence. What things are you good at, at school?
HUS	At school I'm... I love Science, I'm really good at Science, because it's my passion. Like, I, when I study, like when I study Math, I'm good at Math as well, but when I study Math I'm just like, "Oh, yeah, got to do it," you know, study Math. But when studying Science I actually enjoy studying Science. So I'm really good, at Science.
ABL	Any particular part of Science? Biology? All of it?
HUS	Oh, yeah. Biology and Chem-; ah, all of it, except Physics. I don't really like Physics. Um, and then, I guess, I'm sort of good at Math as well, because I study, sort of. And then, what else do I do?
ABL	How much study do you do?
HUS	Ah, not that much. I ... start of year 11 I was like, "Okay, I've got to get my act together, start studying like 2 hours a day." And then it was sort of going well 'til middle of year, um term 1. I was like, "Oh, God, I'm doing too much study," so I, like, turn it down to 1 hour. And then it got to the point where I was just doing the homework but now I'm just starting to study again, so... yeah.
ABL	Okay. And how did you go in your mid-year exams?
HUS	Ah, it was good. I got, I got a rank 5 for Math, rank 7 for Biology, Chemistry we didn't get a rank, English I became rank 1, and... yeah, that was about it, we didn't get that much ranks. So yeah, I did, I did pretty well in my first exam and my report was like the best report I've gotten, got mostly A's.
ABL	You think that report is an accurate reflection?
HUS	No, obviously not, but when you get an A, you think you are doing something right, for example I got a B for Biology when I got like 57 out of 60, but they only give like the top 5 people an A so you can't really say it's an accurate thing, because most of the time the teachers... because in year 9 I remember, like 1 subject, the... the comment of the teacher was the same for all of the students. Because some, some teachers like... some teachers sometimes you have a sub filling in for the actual teacher, even in the actual report, so they just like, they can't be bothered, they just put in the same thing for everyone, just change the name. Like give everyone a B. So yeah, that's... I know reports aren't accurate, but ranks sort of are accurate, it tells you where you are compared to other people, so, yeah.
ABL	Okay. So tell me some of the things this school does to help you to learn as a student here.
HUS	Um, well, apart from school you can just, there are so many resources on-line, you know, you tube... Like every topic I don't understand in Maths you just go on you tube, type in the topic and there's like thousands of videos coming up from different people. They're like a lot of resources: library, different textbooks, all that. The teachers, the school is just there to tell you the syllabus, it's I think, it's more up to you to actually learn it, because the teachers, like, 30 students or 25 students, you, the teacher can't really concentrate on every single student. Because the reason I think I accelerated in English was because in year 10 our English class was only, like, 9 people, and that's where Miss XXXX knew what was going on, and we were sort of the same level. Whereas our Engl-, my ESL class now is just like really... because the same students from year 10 are still in the class, so it's like a good 9 or 8 students in the room, and the rest, are like, they don't even care about their English studies, they're like slacking it and stuff. So that's, that, I guess... so the teacher's trying to concentrate and teach and when she sees that some people are like just not learning, she like steps back and tries to, like tries to teach everyone so everyone learns. That's the part when the good people don't really learn much. Yeah, that's the downside to year 11 I guess, for English.
ABL	Do you think you're highly motivated?

Comment [U20]: TAF: Teacher as facilitator

Comment [U21]: TEE: Teaching experience ESL

Comment [U22]: LEN: Learning English needs

Comment [U23]: AGA: Areas of giftedness / ability

Comment [U24]: AGA

Comment [U25]: CTS; TIM: Time management

Comment [U26]: ESW: Evaluation of student work

Comment [U27]: POS: Perceptions of the school

Comment [U28]: SOF: School offerings

Comment [U29]: CTS

Comment [U30]: SOF

Comment [U31]: TSA

Comment [U32]: ITL: Impediments to learning

Comment [U33]: TIR: Teacher improvements / recommendations

HUS	Um, I guess so, because HSC is your permission to go to university. If you go, if you have a good HSC that means you get a lot of choices, so that itself motivates me to study more and get a better mark.	**Comment [U34]:** CTS
ABL	And is that your plan, to go to university?	
HUS	Yeah, it is.	**Comment [U35]:** FDI: Future directions
ABL	Have you got an area where you're interested, or you're still thinking?	
HUS	Yeah, I want to study Medicine. Medicine's my first plan, that's if I get high 90s. If I get low 90s I'll probably do Genetic Engineering.	**Comment [U36]:** FDI
ABL	Sounds interesting. So have you already explored how to do that?	
HUS	Yeah. You have to do a UMAT test, you have to go through, like, a series of interviews, you have to get at least 95 for your ATAR, and yeah. But if you… There's a lot of ways of getting in Medicine, it just takes a while because it's a massive… it's one of the biggest subjects, because you can do Medical Science and then go into Medicine, but it just takes an extra year or so.	**Comment [U37]:** FDI
ABL	That's true. Great. Do you think the teachers really understand what you want to learn?	
HUS	The teachers definitely do understand what you want to learn as an individual, but what you really want to learn isn't important because you're in a class of 20 or 25 students or so, so what you, what you really want, the teacher does care, but he or she can't really operate it because there are more students in class and some might not be in the same level as you, so the teacher has to start with the basics and then start going with advanced sort of stuff, but yeah. And if students don't understand the advanced stuff she has to go back to basic, teach it again, then go back on.	**Comment [U38]:** ITL
ABL	And are there teachers who do that better than others? Without naming names, if there are, can you describe how they do that? That they meet everybody's needs, including yours.	
HUS	Um, yeah… That they… Well, I guess if a student, it's all to do with student really to, you know, step their game up to actually start learning stuff. I think the teachers who care about the environment of the class, like, who care about where everyone's listen, because if you listen, the stuff that they teach aren't really hard, so you can understand it. It's just you have to pay attention in class. The teachers who make students pay attention in class are, I think, more successful in general, whereas the teachers who don't care if people talk at the back, they don't get as much results because, like, they end up giving lectures like every week or so, to be like, "Oh, guys, you need to be quiet, HSC is important," and stuff like that, which wastes a lot of time.	**Comment [U39]:** CTS **Comment [U40]:** TIR
ABL	Especially if you've heard it before. What about your parents and your family? What do they want the school to do for you?	
HUS	Oh, my parents… Okay, I don't know if it's just my nationality or not, but my parents, as long as I get good results, they don't really mind what I'm learning. Like my mum helps me; my dad doesn't really care. Wait. My mum does help me a, in stuff that I need. She's like, they're like, "Oh, do you want a tutor? We can get you a tutor, or like textbook, or this and that," but they don't really pay attention to what I learn, like my mum… except Math, Math, because my mum's good at Math. But apart from that, they're just like, "Oh, yeah, as long as you're doing well, it's fine," and stuff like that. So they don't really get involved in my studies unless I get a really bad mark.	**Comment [U41]:** PEX: Parental expectations
ABL	So you could say that they trust that the school is doing the right thing? They don't sort of go out of their way to check, they use your marks as the checking?	
HUS	Yeah. That's right.	**Comment [U42]:** POS
ABL	So, is this a great school?	
HUS	Yeah, I guess so. It is a great school.	**Comment [U43]:** POS
ABL	Why?	
HUS	Because, um, first I came to this school, and I think I started hanging out with the people that were like the same as me, I found something common in. And then…	**Comment [U44]:** FLB: Friends from language background
ABL	And what was that, that you found?	
HUS	Ah, I guess the nationality or some things. Something like, something that didn't require any background. And then I realised, "Oh, they, they're not the people I want to hang out with," so then I changed that. And it's always good to, that you know that there are other people you can hang out	

	with and sit with at lunch and recess. I guess that's a good thing about our school, whereas I know some schools, they're like, they only one type of people, they all have the same lifestyle, stuff like that. I guess because there's a different... different range of people in our school, which makes it a better school. But, yeah.
ABL	So you get a choice?
HUS	Yeah, you get a choice of... what you can, you, what you, who you want to hang out with and who you want to sit with at lunch and recess. You get a choice of what you want to do, which is a good thing.
ABL	Excellent. Well, that's the end of my questions. Is there anything else you'd like to add to give more information about how this school is meeting your educational needs? Could it do anything better?
HUS	Ah, I guess the problem with ESL is that there aren't much people in ESL so the Board of Studies can't really focus and concentrate on ESL, rather than like doing English and Maths and stuff. And that causes... for example our year 11 ESL class, which I use it a lot, okay, um, we have good students and bad students and good students don't really get pushed to their limits, they don't learn much in the ESL class, because... the course is easy itself and the teacher can push you and you learn more, but then there are people who are like, really new, like came, came to Australia like a year ago or so, and, which I can understand their English isn't as well, so they, the teacher needs to wait for them and teaches, teach them basic stuff, which can slow down the whole class, and therefore the whole class doesn't learn as much as they would, you know.
ABL	That's just in that one ESL class?
HUS	Yeah.
ABL	But in other classes the teachers are happy to push you?
HUS	Yeah, in other class, yeah. More than the ESL. They having to push you more and more than the ESL class, because everyone is the same, in, at the same level, sort of thing.
ABL	So how can the ESL teacher do it better?
HUS	I guess, ah, it's a hard question but I guess, they... They're trying their best, it's just you can't do it better than that, there's not much improvement that can be done. Because, you know, you might be the best teacher but when the student's knowledge is really limited you can't really do anything with that. It's like knowing the technique but you don't have the right equipment to use it, so...
ABL	You're right. Well, thank you Hussein. I appreciate you taking the time to speak with me.
HUS	No worries.

Comment [U45]: POS; FLB

Comment [U46]: POS, FLB

Comment [U47]: ITL; DIF: Differentiation

Comment [U48]: TSA

Comment [U49]: ITL

Appendix L: Code book

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	**CODE BOOK (Alphabetical by code)**					
2		SCHOOL	ALL SCHOOLS			
3		CATEGORY	STUDENT	TEACHER	ADMIN	TOTAL
4		SUBJECT	ALL	ALL	ALL	
5	CODE	MEANING				
6	AGA	Areas of giftedness/ability	48			48
7	AIT	Assessment to inform teaching		1	2	3
8	ARA	Arrival in Australia	18			18
9	ATO	Adjustment to curriculum	6	1	5	12
10	BAL	Balance	3		2	5
11	CFO	Creating further opportunities			18	18
12	CHA	Challenge oneself	3	3	2	8
13	CKN	Corporate knowledge			4	4
14	COL	Creating opportunities for learning	5	2	14	21
15	COM	Competitiveness	5		1	6
16	COR	Community outreach			15	15
17	CRO	Current role		3	5	8
18	CST	Continuing support to teachers		1	17	18
19	CTS	Commitment to study	27	5	3	35
20	DIF	Differentiation	2	5	10	17
21	EEH	English experiences in home country	17			17
22	EHC	Education in home country	8			8
23	EOA	English on arrival	10			10
24	EOL	Ease of learning	23	8		31
25	ESW	Evaluation of student work	1	1	2	4
26	FDI	Future directions	53			53
27	FLB	Friends from language background	11	3		14
28	FNE	Funding needs		2	11	13
29	GCI	Great citizens			2	2
30	GEM	Gifted education models		1	4	5
31	GVS	Giving voice to the students	4	5	13	22
32	HCO	Home country	24		1	25
33	HLA	Home language	18	4	2	24
34	IPR	Identififcation processes			5	5
35	ISN	Identification of students' needs		1	7	8
36	ITL	Impediments to learning	29	8	1	38
37	LEM	Learning English methods	22	4	3	29
38	LEN	Learning English needs	17	6	3	26
39	LIK	Like the school	8		1	9
40	LOR	Lack of resources		1	5	6

COMBINED / DBHS / MGHS / CGHS / MHS / RSC / Student priority / T

Appendix M: Documentary analysis

Below is a sample of a page from the NSW DET, Multicultural Programs Unit (2004) *English as a Second Language* that was manually annotated in order to identify key themes. As discussed in Chapter III, I set about identifying threads (stories) of intention and meaning from the text. Once coded and scrutinised, the revealed data were attached to that garnered from interviews as well as reported in their own section in the Results chapters.

S E C T I O N 4   *pg 12*

ESL PROGRAM ORGANISATION

4.3 Organising ESL programs across the school

When determining the appropriate modes of ESL program delivery to be implemented in the school, the following factors need to be considered:

Why ?!? =$$$

- numbers of ESL students in each class or year and their levels of English language skills, including their educational background and their literacy skills in their first language or English   *more important! Allows room for Gifted ELLs.*
- ESL teacher allocation
- numbers of newly-arrived students with no previous experience of English (primary schools as well as high schools in non-metropolitan areas)
- numbers of ESL students choosing particular electives (high schools)
- numbers of students anticipated to transfer from IECs/IEHS (high schools)
- subject teaching expertise of ESL teachers (high schools)   *qualitative.*
- numbers of newly arrived students anticipated to enrol during the year.   *need to determine fluency & functioning*

how is this determined? (identification)

In most schools, the key to a successful ESL program lies in the careful placement of ESL students in appropriate classes. In general, it is preferable to place ESL students in classes with their age appropriate cohort even when students have little or no English language skills or prior schooling.   *no consideration of giftedness or acceleration in home country (x this happened to ME!) ⇩ future pathways?*

As the ESL teacher is a limited resource, and is usually not able to provide direct support to every ESL student, it is important that programs are planned and timetabled to enable the ESL teacher to provide effective instruction to as many students as possible, taking into account their relative need for support. Priority should be given to first phase learners, followed by second phase and then third phase. The ESL teacher should also be able to provide professional support to other teachers to assist them in meeting the needs of the ESL students in their classes.   *→ point-of-need support → GOOD!*

rationalistic = quantity over quality

ESL program organisation needs to be flexible to allow for changes that may need to be made to accommodate on-going enrolments of newly arrived ESL students throughout the year.   *what about accommodations for different rates of development/ability/needs ?*

Narrating a story from an economical rationalistic perspective with a focus still on a deficit model.

Numbers = $ with each student being 'equal' value?

Appendix N: Summary of student data

STUDENT DATA

SCHOOL		DBHS			MGHS				CGHS						MHS			RSC					TOTAL
NAME		Sopheak	Benjamin	Nattapong	Hattie	Anna	Amelia	Yujia	Ferista	Victoria	Chalnaa	Lily	Milinka	Lanika	Qiao	Cahn	Lucida	Harold	Hussein	Nina	Edgar	Stella	TOTAL
GENDER	Male	✓	✓	✓												✓		✓	✓		✓		7
	Female				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓	14
AGE	12								✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						7
	13									✓	✓												2
	14					✓	✓	✓															3
	15			✓	✓																		2
	16	✓																✓	✓	✓			4
	17		✓																			✓	2
	18+																				✓		1
YR LVL	7								✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						9
	8																						0
	9				✓	✓	✓	✓															4
	10		✓	✓														✓		✓			4
	11	✓																	✓				2
	12																				✓	✓	2
HOME LANG	Burmese			✓																			1
	Cantonese										✓												1
	Farsi								✓										✓				2
	Gujarati													✓									1
	Indonesian																			✓			1
	Khmer	✓															✓						2
	Korean				✓		✓																2
	Malayalam									✓													1
	Mandarin					✓		✓							✓			✓			✓		5
	Punjabi											✓											1
	Serbian												✓										1
	Swahili		✓																				1
	Telugu																					✓	1
	Vietnamese															✓							1

STUDENT DATA

SCHOOL		DBHS			MGHS				CGHS						MHS			RSC					TOTAL
NAME		Sopheak	Benjamin	Nattapong	Hattie	Anna	Amelia	Yujia	Ferista	Victoria	Chalnaa	Lily	Milinka	Lanika	Qiao	Cahn	Lucida	Harold	Hussein	Nina	Edgar	Stella	TOTAL
TIME IN AUST SCHOOLS	1 year			✓																✓			2
	2 years		✓																				1
	3 years																	✓	✓		✓		3
	4 years	✓																					1
	5+ years				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	14
PROF IN HOME LANGUAGE	Proficient						✓	✓															2
	Fluent	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	19
IDENTIFICATION VIA SELECTIVE CRITERIA	Yes				✓	✓	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓					✓	8
	No	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓		13
IDENTIFICATION VIA G/T POLICIES	Yes				N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A					N/A	6
	No	✓	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A							N/A	N/A	N/A	✓	✓	✓	✓	N/A	7
IF NO, THEN DESCRIBE		LST/ESL tchr			N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A							N/A	N/A	N/A				Yr 11 Dux	N/A	4
AREAS OF G/T	Mathematics				✓				✓		✓	✓		✓		✓		✓					7
	Geography									✓			✓		✓								3
	English									✓			✓	✓			✓					✓	5
	Visual Arts				✓	✓	✓																3
	Science				✓				✓		✓				✓								4
	Academic					✓	✓	✓											✓	✓	✓		6
	Musical					✓	✓	✓															3
	Sporting																	✓	✓				2
	Other	motivated, ambit., enjoys challenges	highly motivated, high ability levels	articulate, highly motivated																			3

STUDENT DATA

SCHOOL		DBHS			MGHS				CGHS						MHS			RSC					TOTAL
NAME		Sopheak	Benjamin	Nattapong	Hattie	Anna	Amelia	Yujia	Ferista	Victoria	Chalnaa	Lily	Milinka	Lanika	Qiao	Cahn	Lucida	Harold	Hussein	Nina	Edgar	Stella	
IDENTIFICATION VIA ESL POLICIES	Yes	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	21
	No																						0
ESL LEARNER PHASE (WRITTEN)	2nd	ESL 6	ESL 5	ESL 5																			3
	3rd				Late	Late	Late	Late	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	18
ESL LEARNER PHASE (SPOKEN)	2nd	ESL 6	ESL 6	ESL 5																			3
	3rd				Late	Late	Late	Late	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	18
NAPLAN READING	6												Yr 5										1
	7								Yr 5														1
	8									Yr 5	Yr 5												2
NAPLAN WRITING	6									Yr 5				Yr 5									2
	7								Yr 5				Yr 5										2
NAPLAN LANGUAGE	8								Yr 5	Yr 5	Yr 5		Yr 5	Yr 5									5
OTHER COMMENTS		father (doctor) in Aust on scholarship	disrupted schooling, refugee background						ident. via NAPLAN, Ravens, Interviews tchr / schl surveys	ident. via NAPLAN, Ravens, Interviews tchr / schl surveys	ident. via NAPLAN, Ravens, Interviews tchr / schl surveys	ident. via NAPLAN, Ravens, Interviews tchr / schl surveys	ident. via NAPLAN, Ravens, Interviews tchr / schl surveys	ident. via NAPLAN, Ravens, Interviews tchr / schl surveys									