

**THE INTERPRETATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EDUCATION
POLICY OF ENGLAND IN GIFTED AND TALENTED EDUCATION BY PRIMARY
SCHOOL TEACHERS¹**

KUBRA KIRCA DEMIRBAGA

DURHAM UNIVERSITY

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1. Introduction

In the last century, much research regarding the origin of giftedness, the difference between giftedness and talent, types of intelligence, and general educational needs of gifted and talented children have been conducted (Galton 1869; Terman 1905; Renzulli 1978; Sternberg 1980; Gardner 1983, 1999; Gagne 1985, 2004). However, little research has concentrated on teachers' views about the interpretation and implementation of education policies in gifted and talented education (Koshy et al. 2010, 2012; Berman et al. 2012). In response to this need in the gifted and talented literature, the research study presented in this report investigated the interpretation and implementation of the education policy of England in gifted and talented education by primary school teachers.

The report consists of three main sections. The first section gives a general description of the research study. It explains what it is and what it tries to do. The second section evaluates

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the research study in terms of how it achieves its purpose and for whom might it be beneficial. The last section explains the shortcomings of the research study.

2. A general description of the research study - What is the study? What does it try to do?

This study focuses on how primary school teachers interpret and implement the education policy of England in gifted and talented education. Therefore, the study specifically addresses the following research questions:

1. How do teachers identify gifted and talented students?
2. How do teachers evaluate their sufficiency in identifying gifted and talented students?
3. How do teachers evaluate their sufficiency in meeting the needs of gifted and talented students?

A qualitative approach based on semi-structured interview method was used in order to allow discussion on questions, topics, and issues that were relevant to the research (Hennink, 2007; Parr, 2013). It was aimed to obtain information about the participants' opinions, experiences, and attitudes related to the subject through this method (Barrington 2014; Hennink, 2007). In this context, a totally of 12 interview questions that address the research questions were prepared.

The primary school teachers who are currently working in the local area were determined as the most appropriate group for this study because they are active employees in the interpretation and implementation of the current education policy of England in the education of gifted and talented children. The participants of the study consisted of two primary school teachers as one female and one male. Both teachers are working in Sheffield that a city in the north of England.

The qualitative data gained from the individual interviews were analysed via thematic analysis as manually. It was aimed to describe and understand “how participants feel, think, and behave within a particular context relative to a specific research question” (Guest et. al. 2012, p.13) with this analysis technique. The thematic analysis of the data was done in three stages: coding, categorising and building themes (Braun and Clarke 2006). Firstly the empirical data was coded by describing all the details in the data set and produced an initial list of ideas about what is in the data. In other words, the data was organized into meaningful groups (Tuckett 2005). Then, relevant codes were combined. While combining the initial codes, the categories were developed and the codes were divided according to these categories. After coding and categorizing the data, major ideas were revealed as themes. In this context, two major themes were consisted: (1) perceptions of the teachers towards giftedness and talent (2) the sufficiency of teacher training in identifying gifted and talented children and meeting the needs of them.

3. An evaluation of the research study - How well does it achieve its purpose and/or for whom might the study be beneficial?

This study presents that the perceptions of primary school teachers towards giftedness and talent are different. One of the teachers used the concepts of giftedness and talent interchangeably and defined them as an inherent cognitive ability. The other one handled these concepts as separately, defined giftedness as an untrained and spontaneous inherent ability and talent as an ability acquired through labour and struggle. Although the educational backgrounds of the teachers are different, both think that their training was inadequate in the identification of gifted and talented children. Both the teachers highlighted expanding the opportunities to meet the needs of these children. However, they did not indicate how much they are adequate in meeting the needs of them and improving gifted and talented children’s abilities. Therefore, the final research question has not been fully answered.

The English education system presents an inclusive and holistic approach for gifted and talented children, it seeks excellence for all (Lowe 2003). When we look at the strategic practices in gifted and talented education, we encounter an education system that has focused on “what learners have in common”, particularly from the 1960s (Dyson 2001, p.26). This study tried to find out, in such a system, which criteria are based by the primary school teachers in identifying gifted and talented children, if there are differences in terms of the identification criteria between the teachers, what these differences are, how well the teachers feel themselves at the point of identifying gifted and talented children and meeting their needs. Therefore, this study may be useful as preliminary information for researchers who will study gifted and talented education and teacher training in gifted and talented education in England in the next.

4. Main shortcomings of the research study

The scope of this study is limited in terms of the number of participants, only two primary school teachers could be interviewed. Therefore, this research does not intend to generalize the result of the analysis. Another limitation is that there is not enough response from the participants to answer the last research question.

5. Conclusion

This report has examined the aim of the research study, the method used, the participants, how it was analysed, its results, benefits, and shortcomings. In brief, this study has shown that there is no consensus on the descriptions of concepts of giftedness and talent between the primary school teachers. The diversity in the perceptions of the teachers towards giftedness and talent influences the identification process and criteria of gifted and talented children. Secondly, both think that their training was inadequate in the identification process of gifted and talented children. However, there has not enough response on how the teachers evaluate themselves in meeting the needs of gifted and talented children. Although the study is

limited in terms of the number of participants, it gives an idea of how the education policy of England is interpreted and implemented by primary school teachers in the education of gifted and talented students.

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About the author:

Kubra Kirca Demirbaga graduated from the branch of Psychological Counselling and Guidance, Istanbul University, for her bachelor's degree. She worked for three years as a psychological counsellor in Turkey and get the IQ tests education such as WISC-R, KBIT-2, and WNV. She completed her master's degree in Psychology and Education at the University of Sheffield, and then the Research Training and Researcher Development Programme at Newcastle University. Now, she is a Ph.D. student at Durham University. Her research area is about character education of gifted and talented children.

E-mail: kubra.kirca-demirbaga@durham.ac.uk