

## Chapter 53

# The English Model of Gifted Education

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**Abstract** This chapter focuses on the English Model of gifted education conceptualised by the author. The English Model is a relatively new model for educating the gifted that builds on traditional models of gifted education to create a new paradigm. The English Model has been in use in England for 10 years and now forms the basis of the comprehensive national programme offered to pupils of all ages and in all government-funded schools in England. This chapter considers the case for the English Model, describes its educational characteristics and discusses the various elements of the model. A key strength of the English Model is that it uses elements from existing models of gifted education to create an approach that positions gifted education deeply within overall education policy and within wider social policy objectives. This gives not only the benefit of better educational provision for individual gifted children but also better sustainability for this field of work within education policy.

**Keywords** Public policy · Education policy · Social justice · The English Model · Classroom provision · Out-of-hours · Identification

### Introduction

The English Model (Fig. 53.1) is an entirely new approach to gifted and talented education which seeks to tackle the traditional problems associated with gifted and talented education, particularly sustainability and acceptability. At the same time it reflects changes in

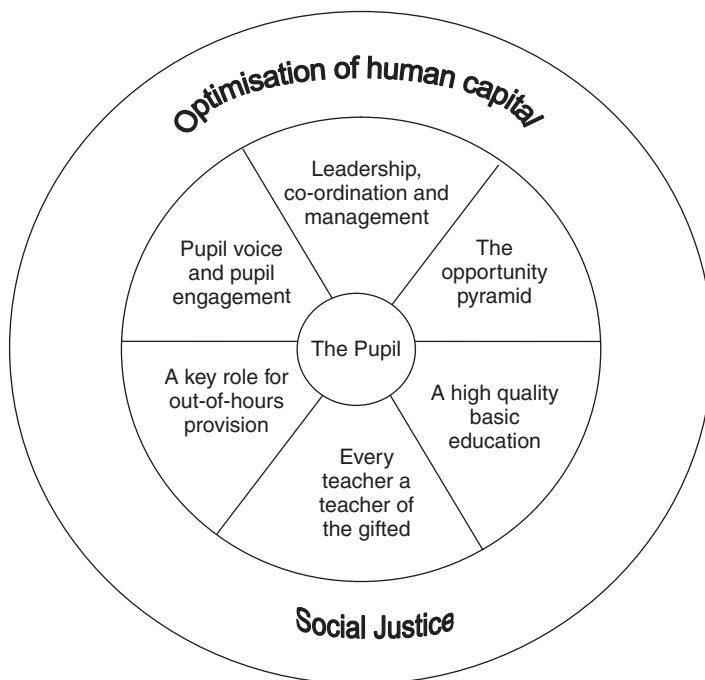
wider education and social policy which themselves make traditional models less attractive. It seeks to build upon effective experiences to date and apply them in a new and more integrated model. In essence the English Model is one which sees the approach to gifted and talented as a part of an overall, mainstream offer which includes both in-school and out-of-school provision. It is a system-wide endeavour that judges its success by the impact on the performance of individuals rather than measuring the availability of activities. The model is multi-faceted with concerns around such issues as equality and social justice and the economic imperative to optimise human capital as well as the traditional areas of pupil self-image, school curriculum and the professional development of teachers.

Education is changing. The purposes of education, the possibilities created by education and the demands upon education are quite different in the first decade of the 21st century than 50 or even 20 years ago. Many diverse factors have contributed to this need for change, from the development of IT to the need for economic competitiveness. However, it is obvious that if education changes then this must impact on gifted education, if the field of gifted education is to be a vibrant and successful aspect of education.

Education in developed countries is no longer confined to the traditional territory of ensuring that every child gains enough education to equip him/her for some kind of effective adult life. The aspirations for education are now far greater. Every family now expects that their child should be given the bespoke opportunities that will enable them to achieve at the highest levels. They will accept nothing less. Governments, meanwhile, look to use education as a mechanism for ensuring that their country develops the kinds of intellectual capital that will enable it to compete in a new,

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**Fig. 53.1** The English Model

more global, world. Employability has become a key outcome for most education systems.

Individual pupils themselves recognise the role of education in delivering wealth and happiness in adult life. Education matters, as Alison Woolf (2002) so eloquently puts it, and it matters more than it has ever done. Indeed, she suggests that 'The lesson of the last century must be that, for individuals, it matters more than ever before in history. And not just any education: the right qualifications, in the right subjects, from the right institutions, is of ever-growing importance.'

In this climate of educational change two factors emerge as being of significance for those interested in gifted education. First, it is important to recognise that education has ceased to be an isolated discipline. It has become an aspect of the wider 'public policy' agenda in which the needs of society are addressed through the provision of public services that drive forward economic and cultural growth. The educational well-being of the child is no longer seen as separated from their physical well-being or their cultural well-being. This is in recognition of the overwhelming evidence that links educational opportunity, housing and health and sees them as being intertwined in determining a child's development. In England the statistics show that the gap in educational performance between children from rich and poor backgrounds starts to be evidenced very

early and continues to grow (Schwartz, 2004). Hence it is no longer possible in education to separate ideas around the nature of giftedness from the conditions which allow it to flourish. Crudely stated, education is not a meritocracy. Gifted children from poor backgrounds who succeed are likely to be the exception rather than the rule unless the overall approach to education changes. New changes may have the potential to alter this dynamic and ensure that far more gifted and talented pupils from poor backgrounds achieve highly.

Second, in this newly emerging view of education the needs of the individual are more strongly foregrounded. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Ruano-Borbalan, 2006) describes public services generally as becoming more customised and more responsive to individual choice. In just the same way as we expect to choose between different types of goods and services in order to obtain an optimal fit between our needs and the product, the same applies in education. In most countries the range of possibilities is being expanded so as to enable a better response to the learning needs of individuals. In this climate the debate is less about a single approach for specific cohorts of pupils such as the gifted and more about individuals. This is not to deny the generic needs of the cohort but rather also to recognise the diversity of needs within it. Gifted pupils are no more

a homogeneous group than are those with learning difficulties or those from specific ethnic backgrounds. Set within this wider interest in customisation in education the possibilities in respect of the education of gifted and talented pupils become potentially more imaginative and more comprehensive.

So education is a political matter and gifted education is a subset of overall education policy.

New Labour is committed to meritocracy. We believe that people should be able to rise by their talents, not by their birth or advantages of privilege. We understand that people are not all born into equal circumstances, so one role of state education is to open up opportunities for all, regardless of their background. This means we need to provide high standards of basics for all, but also recognise the different abilities of different children, and tailor education to meet their needs and develop their potential. (Blair, 1996)

In education policy where the emphasis is on pupils all achieving in accordance with their intellectual merit the agenda for gifted education becomes focused on how best to create the structures that allow giftedness and talent to emerge and on how best to nurture that outstanding ability or talent once it has emerged.

## Gifted Education and the Mainstream Education System

The field of study around the education of gifted and talented pupils originally emerged largely in response to poor provision in general education systems. As far back as 1932 a leading English educational writer, Susan Isaacs, described the challenge in relation to gifted and talented education thus: ‘There is a steady drag back on the brighter children towards the level of the mediocre.’

Whilst terminology may have changed in the 21st century the spirit of the problem remains the same. How to challenge the most able learners. This problem was cited as a rationale in the earliest gifted education programmes (Tempest, 1974) and remains a key rationale in even the most modern ones (O’Reilly, 2006).

Ruano-Borbalan (2006) describes western education systems generally as being characterised by the four ‘ones,’ one teacher, one class, one lesson and one subject. Within this overall model possibilities for meeting the needs of particular cohorts are limited. Traditionally, policy makers have used crude

responses, usually, either roughly sub-dividing pupils according to their abilities and then adopting the same ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach but for this narrower, streamed, ability band or alternatively adjusting classroom teaching approaches to give greater flexibility within individual lessons – differentiation. Neither approach has proved to be effective in meeting the diverse needs of gifted and talented pupils.

In England education structures have changed many times during the 20th century but lack of challenge for the gifted and talented in ordinary schools has remained a common theme. Indeed in 1999 an enquiry into the education of highly able children (House of Commons) judged provision to be unsatisfactory in the majority of schools.

In analysing the reason for this on-going situation one possible conclusion that could be drawn might be that mainstream education has given inadequate consideration to the education of the gifted and talented. If this were to be addressed then these problems would disappear. An alternative conclusion might be that the mainstream system cannot provide for the gifted and talented and so separate schools or separate programmes should be created.

The House of Commons Report itself however suggests a third reason, not located in the nature of the provision itself, but rather in public and professional opinions. It sets the problem in the wider public arena and sees *attitude* rather than *emphasis* as being the chief barrier to success. It found that under-achievement of gifted and talented pupils was perceived by both education professionals and general public alike as being of low significance. It was seen as unimportant. In this climate gifted education is unlikely to ever move beyond being an enthusiast’s agenda:

The development that would make the most difference to the education of the highly able is a change in attitude among teachers and LEAs (Local Education Authorities), but perhaps most importantly among the public and society at large.

Tackling this perception could therefore be said to be a pre-condition to achieving effective provision. It must be tackled before any model can be properly implemented. The English Model recognises that for gifted education to be a sustainable part of overall education policy then both society and the education profession must first recognise the importance of this agenda and the consequences of inaction. Under-achievement among gifted and talented pupils must

come to be seen as unacceptable for the child, for the family, for the school and most importantly for society. Politically it must be recognised that a 21st century country cannot afford to let talent go to waste. It must systematically nurture outstanding ability within all its young people in order to remain successful in a world where intellectual capital is a highly valued commodity. Forces outside of education such as business and commerce can be some of the most vociferous advocates for this agenda and can play a key role in ensuring its continued priority in the education policy arena.

Once this recognition is secured then gifted and talented education moves from being peripheral to being a key tenet of overall education policy and the emphasis can shift from securing commitment to designing and implementing the model.

## The English Model: Rationale and Values

Traditionally gifted education has been seen as divorced from the general education system, yet if a country's education system seeks to provide appropriate education for all its children, then the education of the most able (gifted) should be seen as just one part of a larger whole. This in itself should provide a compelling case for a nationally coherent and integrated approach to the education of the gifted.

However there are reasons that transcend education policy that suggest that a country would be well-advised to give gifted education a more central location. Today's gifted pupils are tomorrow's social intellectual economic and cultural leaders and their development cannot be left to chance. Where it is left to chance, evidence indicates that educational progress is not so much a question of intellectual merit but rather a question of affluence, with the most affluent receiving the best education and therefore achieving most highly. (Eyre, 2004)

Deconstructed, this statement resolves itself into a three-part rationale: an *educational* policy about the mainstream system catering for the needs of all pupils; an *economic* argument about realising potential to drive up performance in the knowledge economy; and a commitment to *equity*, with an ambition to counter those social and economic factors shown to have had a restrictive influence on educational achievement. It challenges the idea that giftedness is unequally distributed among social groupings, stressing the need to identify giftedness in hitherto unrepresented groups. However, the challenge implicit in this agenda is substantial since the social bias in high educational achieve-

ment reflects a particularly longstanding English disease, as large-scale longitudinal studies in England have demonstrated (Douglas, 1964; Halsey, Heath & Ridge, 1980).

The rationale for the English Model is deliberately designed to appeal to a political audience as well as an educational one. At a policy level gifted education has something of a chequered history. In some countries the concept does not exist at all. In others gifted and talented programmes are established and then disappear through lack of funding or through reprioritisation within the education system. The English Model seeks to avoid such turbulence by embedding gifted education within not only education policy but also wider public policy and economic policy. The main benefit here is that this approach creates advocates for gifted education in the business and cultural worlds. These advocates can often be more influential in the allocation of overall resource than educationalists. This raises the status of gifted education and helps to secure it. Of course, gifted education is about nurturing talent for the future and therefore it is right and proper that non-educationalists have a keen interest in such an endeavour.

## Reflections on Existing Approaches to Gifted and Talented Education

In securing the design of the English Model consideration was given to both exploiting the overall general education context and the traditional methodologies for securing effective provision for the gifted and talented. The model sought to locate gifted and talented education deeply within general education whilst at the same time ensuring that, what might be described as, the gifted and talented element of education policy was optimally designed.

The classic dichotomy in meeting the needs of the gifted and talented is between identification and provision. Whether to identify a cohort and then provide for them or whether to provide general education in school which itself meets the needs of the gifted and talented. At the extremes those favouring 'provision' would advocate differentiation within a mixed ability classroom and nothing more; those advocating 'identification' would select the brightest and educate them separately.

The conceptual leap behind the English Model was to recognise that the optimum approach combines elements of both so that identification and provision complement each other. The key question is not whether to identify and then provide or alternatively to focus on provision in the hope that those with significant abilities will emerge. Instead it is to focus on where along the identification/provision continuum to draw the 'policy line.' In short to develop a third tradition that builds on the strengths of the first two and seeks to mitigate the known limitations of each. This we have called the English Model.

The most traditional approach to gifted and talented education is to select those deemed to be within the cohort and provide for them additional educational opportunities outside and separate from mainstream schooling. Through this identification-led approach, gifted programmes are created and provide a qualitatively different experience from general education. The learning benefits of this approach relate to the advantages of having a largely homogeneous intellectual cohort. It is possible to set a swift pace of learning within the programme, to tackle complex and advanced learning and to create a style of working that would be impossible within the normal school classroom. Personal and social advantages also accrue for pupils in this environment in that it enables them to perform highly without risk of ridicule from peers. This effect is particularly important in cultures where it is not generally considered 'cool to be bright.'

This 'gifted programmes' tradition has provided excellent opportunities for many, many gifted students over an extended period of time and in many countries. There is surprisingly little firm research evidence regarding the long-term impact on individuals (Freeman, 1998), but the evaluation of individual programmes would suggest at least a short-term impact. Long running schemes like those at the Centre for Talented Youth, Johns' Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA, also have anecdotal evidence from significant numbers of students suggesting perceived long-term impact.

There are two major limitations to the 'gifted programmes' approach. The first is that it sits outside of mainstream schooling and frequently has little connection to it. In exceptional circumstances, for example, where a student gains formal credit through a 'gifted programme' they may then be exempted from studying that particular course in normal school. But

in the majority of programmes gains from the 'gifted programme' are not traditionally factored into more general schooling. Gifted programmes rely on motivating the student so that they are more 'switched on to learning'; teaching more advanced knowledge and skills; and empowering students to make best use of their newly acquired skills when they return to school. Gifted programmes are an adjunct to mainstream schooling rather than a part of it. Indeed schools have sometimes indicated that participation in gifted programmes has led pupils to become dissatisfied with regular school provision and de-motivated in school.

The second limitation relates to the burden placed on identification. Gifted programmes were originally located in a psycho-medical paradigm in which some people were considered to possess higher innate intelligence than others and it was assumed that this intelligence could be accurately tested to create a robust cohort. More modern conceptions of giftedness stress its complexity with the influence of environmental and personality factors alongside any inherited predispositions (Gardner, 1999; Sternberg, 1986). This makes identification by a single test difficult and unreliable.

This lack of reliability is most sharply evidenced in the socio-economic make-up of gifted programmes. Research into the composition of 'gifted programmes' shows a persistent skew in selection towards wealthy, first language students at the expense of their less affluent peers.<sup>1</sup> In the absence of compelling data to suggest that giftedness is *not* found in poor families then we must assume that selection processes are biased against them. It is for this reason that some have criticised the whole concept of 'gifted programmes' describing it as giving further advantage to the already advantaged.

By contrast the 'provision'-focused approach is a relatively more recent one with its antecedence in the second half of the 20th century. The Plowden report (1967) contains the earliest suggestion by the UK Government that the needs of gifted and talented pupils should be met in the ordinary or regular classroom:

<sup>1</sup> NAGTY data December 2006 show

Urban prosperity	8.3%
Comfortably off	28.2%
Moderate means	9.0%
Hard pressed	7.5%

using 2004 'a classification of residential neighbourhoods' (ACORN) postcode classifications.



‘...the majority of us believe that the English system of primary education at its best is better adapted than any other we have seen to provide for the needs of the gifted individual, without segregating him’ (p. 307, para 868).

In this tradition the focus is on the ordinary classroom in any school with challenge provided through differentiated classroom provision. It attributes a greater role to the ordinary classroom teacher and is located firmly within the general school system. This approach has an obvious appeal to educators since it stresses professional skill. At the heart of this approach is the design of the curriculum offer which enables students to experience high levels of challenge within the context of the normal school curriculum. This can be through particular curricular approaches such as problem solving (see Wallace and Maker, this volume) or through structural approaches such as curriculum compacting (e.g. Renzulli, 1983). In this model where the focus is on the opportunities on offer, identification is less prominent since it is assumed that through the provision of suitable opportunities giftedness will be revealed. This approach chimes more readily with multi-faceted views on giftedness and with a desire to develop the talents of many rather than addressing the needs of the few. Advocates for this approach see it as more inclusive and equitable since access to high-level learning opportunities is not contingent on being selected into the cohort. This type of provision is also seen as providing a response to traditional problems related to social isolation.

The conferences of the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children (WCGTC) show an increasing interest in the ‘provision’ approach in all its forms. An analysis of programmes shows that in 1995, 38% of sessions were ‘provision’ orientated. At the 2005 conference this had increased to 55% of sessions with a ‘provision’ focus.

Critics of the ‘provision’ approach see it as Utopian. They describe it as reliant on a level of teacher skill not evidenced in the teaching profession in most countries – an enthusiast’s agenda for educationalists. They describe the inequality created by biased selection of individuals in the ‘gifted programme’ approach as being replaced under the ‘provision’ model by inequality created by discrepancies between good and bad provision in different schools. They point to the artificial learning ‘ceilings’ created when teachers lack professional confidence and competence and say that without ‘gifted programmes’ students in these classrooms will

be permanently disadvantaged. They challenge the equity advantage claims by pointing to the overwhelming statistical evidence suggesting that ‘bad’ schools are more frequently to be found in areas of social deprivation, suggesting that pupils in schools in poorer areas will not receive that optimal provision advocated in this model because even base level education is not properly secured. Hence it too mitigates against gifted children from poorer families.

The UK Government’s Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) reported that in the 44 most deprived local authority districts in England, secondary schools were more than five times as likely to fail their Ofsted (school quality) inspection (SEU, 1998).

So in both models wealthy students are more likely to gain benefits from ‘gifted education’ than their poorer colleagues. This has serious consequences for not only the pupils themselves but also for the whole field of gifted education. The result of this bias has been that the whole concept of gifted education meets strong ideological opposition from some quarters and in many countries has failed to gain a serious foothold.

A second key plank of the English Model is therefore to seek to foreground the ‘social justice agenda’ to highlight ways in which a sharp focus on gifted and talented education might provide a mechanism for ensuring that the brightest pupils from poorer backgrounds are given the opportunity to succeed. Gifted and talented initiatives then become a part of wider social policy contributing to wider social policy objectives.

## The English Model: A New Paradigm

In policy terms the ‘gifted programmes approach’ might be said to be focused primarily on the *individual* in that it recognises the need for supplementary opportunities to assist the individual. The ‘provision’ approach, by contrast, is focused primarily on the *school*. It sees the school as the provider of education for all including the gifted and talented and sees this provision as being part of its wider set of responsibilities. It does not formally recognise the role of out-of-hours, non-school programmes. The English Model makes the education *system* the main focus of attention establishing a structure of both in-school and

out-of-hours provision that grows with the child and allows for maximum flexibility and range. It focuses on an entitlement model in which all pupils are *entitled* to access to relevant opportunities provided by the system within and beyond the school. As part of this system-wide approach provision is also subject to standard system accountability measures, so ensuring quality as well as quantity of provision.

The benefits of focusing on a system-wide approach could be summarised thus:

- It ensures that gifted and talented education is nested within wider education policy making it higher profile and less vulnerable to cutbacks.
- It ensures that gifted children have access to a continuous diet of higher quality learning opportunities with appropriate learning progression throughout their schooling.
- It enables a fusion between the traditional 'gifted programmes' approach and the 'classroom provision' approach drawing on the strengths of both.
- It can combine in-school with out-of-school programmes so enhancing rather than compensating for in-school provision.
- It can address the 'social justice' agenda making provision more equitable.
- It can accommodate both those with general all-round ability and those with specific strengths.
- It allows children to be aware that they are gifted yet at the same time feel accepted within their school.
- It can create a national community of like-minded gifted pupils.

The English Model then seeks to create a comprehensive system-wide approach to the education of the gifted which transcends many of the traditional tensions within the field of gifted education such as those outlined by Yun Dai (see Yun Dai, this volume), namely potential versus achievement, domain specific versus domain general and addressing the needs of the few versus the developing talents for all.

## The English Model Summary

*Potential + Opportunities and Support + Motivation*  
= *High Achievement*

## Beliefs Underpinning the Model

- Giftedness and talent are terms used to describe children or adults who have the capacity to achieve high levels of expertise or performance. Giftedness and talent in childhood could be described as *expertise in its development phase*.
- The education of gifted and talented should therefore focus on the development of expertise within specific domains.
- Giftedness is a dynamic interaction between potential, opportunities/support and personal motivation. That interaction begins at the moment of birth.
- Giftedness is developmental and is developed through individuals gaining access to appropriate opportunities and support. Performance levels are directly affected by availability of appropriate opportunities and support.
- Direct intervention with individuals can reduce and sometimes reverse the effect of socio-economic disadvantage or other lack of support.

## Provision

- Provision for gifted and talented children and young people should focus primarily on provision made in ordinary schools, in ordinary lessons, as part of the day-to-day educational offer.
- Core school-based provision should be supplemented by access to enhanced, bespoke opportunities offered both within and beyond the school.
- Enhanced opportunities should seek to develop expertise and should become increasingly sophisticated with age.
- Schools should themselves be diverse and distinctive in nature and so offer specific opportunities to develop certain aptitudes.
- Parents should be seen as co-educators with a key role in supporting learning.
- Pupils should see themselves as active participants in the learning process, co-constructing their personal educational journey.
- The learning progress and needs of individuals should be carefully tracked so that appropriate personalised pathways can be created.

## The English Model: Key Elements

### *The Opportunity Pyramid*

In the English Model the core of gifted and talented education is intended to be delivered through day-to-day classroom provision (Fig. 53.2). Gifted children and students should spend most of their time with the regular school group, especially in the 5–11 years age range. This means all *teachers* are routinely required to plan to meet the needs of both their most able as well as their least able through a differentiated classroom approach.

All *schools* offer a range of supplementary opportunities aimed at creating a rich curriculum offer. Schools identify those with the potential to be considered as gifted and talented and offer flexibilities to accommodate the needs of that cohort. These should include the ability to progress more rapidly than others in the peer group, including taking external examinations early. Within the school it is expected that pupils will be placed in ability groups for some aspects of their work. The extent of pupil grouping arrangements are not defined within the English Model but rather left to the school to determine as part of their overall policy.

As the child becomes older, and more advanced, then the mix between normal class, cross-school and out-of-school provision will change. By 14–19 years, the emphasis on personal pathways to meet personal needs is intended to pervade the whole education sys-

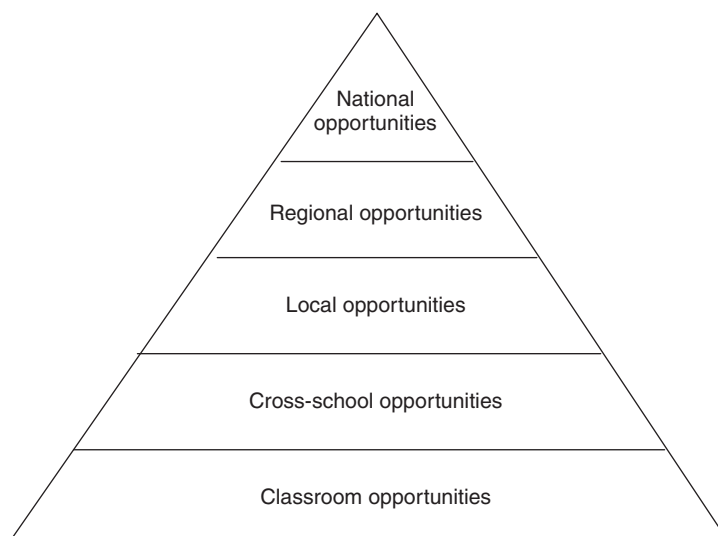
tem. The school is the core provider but is envisaged as working in conjunction with a range of other providers to ensure optimum match between needs and opportunities.

In this model the main task of school-based activity is to secure relevant knowledge, skills and concepts whilst at the same time inducting the pupil into the ways of thinking, learning and behaviours valued within particular subject domains. This approach brings pupils into contact with various forms of ‘higher order’ thinking on a regular basis. The out-of-school opportunities, by contrast, focus more strongly on this second element – development of expertise – with pupil groups being apprenticed to experts and experiencing advanced learning not for assessment or of the school curriculum but for the sheer joy of participation. Out-of-hours opportunities are therefore characterised by the use of experts as teachers and access to sophisticated ideas and techniques.

A major benefit claimed for this approach is its potential for raising systemic performance. By focusing sharply on nurturing strengths as well as mitigating weaknesses, the achievements of all children may be raised, not just those identified as being in the cohort.

### *The High-Quality Basic Education System*

Key to the English Model is a basic school offer. The entire school system must be aiming for excellence



**Fig. 53.2** The opportunity pyramid



for all. In the climate of more personalised public services the pursuit of excellence is a standard agenda in many countries. All families are looking to ensure that their child attains as highly as possible so they are well placed to secure places at college or university and eventually have the qualifications to secure a good job. The standard agenda has moved away from making firm judgements about who has the capability to do well and towards a focus on everyone striving to achieve (everyone may have the potential to be a winner). In this climate demanding learning opportunities are offered widely and pupils invited to strive to conquer them. Rewards are given for 'trying' and for taking intellectual risks as well as for getting the right answer. Small failures are an expected aspect of learning in this high-challenge model and pupils come to see them as a part of the overall learning process rather than a disaster.

For this element of the English Model to be effective for the gifted and talented cohort the basic curriculum must be specifically designed to anticipate excellence. Rather than the school or class-teacher offering a core curriculum aimed at the middle ability point and then extending it for those pupils who exceed the base requirements, this model requires the school/teacher to design in *expectation* that some pupils will achieve the more demanding requirements without knowing precisely who will achieve them. The task for the teacher is to create the scaffolds that allow as many pupils as possible to achieve the high-challenge target.

At the school management level this involves ensuring that higher level and higher tier opportunities are always on offer and that the numbers of pupils accessing them year on year increases. At the qualifications level it involves ensuring that qualifications are appropriately demanding and also intellectually interesting so as to motivate pupils to strive to achieve. This includes both academic and vocational qualifications.

In this approach gifted and talented pupils begin to identify themselves through their response to the high-challenge curriculum. By demonstrating their capacity to achieve the high-challenge targets on a regular basis, either generally or in specific domains, they begin to define themselves as gifted or talented. It is a natural development of self-identity with individual pupils becoming aware of their areas of strength and weakness and their preferred styles of learning as well as their overall ability. This approach to identification through

'doing' is similar in nature to the way we traditionally assess sporting prowess or musical ability. This approach need not replace traditional tests of ability but it is certainly a useful second strand to it.

### ***Every Teacher a Teacher of the Gifted***

The English Model places the teacher at the heart of the curriculum delivery model in a similar way to that which is traditional in the 'classroom provision' approach to gifted education. In the 'classroom provision' tradition the focus is on the ordinary classroom in any school with the teacher creating challenge through a differentiated approach to classroom provision. It attributes a significant role to the ordinary classroom teacher and stresses professional skill.

The benefits of this kind of approach are twofold. The first relates to the teacher. The 'classroom provision' approach builds on existing teacher skills and locates the teaching of gifted and talented pupils as being a part of the overall teaching lexicon rather than a separate and 'mysterious' activity. Teachers are encouraged to see gifted and talented pupils as their most effective learners rather than a specific, clearly defined, subset of the population with learning needs so unique that they cannot be accommodated through normal, recognised teaching approaches. The latter might be described as the 'exotic child' syndrome. The 'classroom provision' approach challenges teachers to push forward the boundaries of their professional skills to accommodate the needs of the gifted and talented. This is an exciting prospect for teachers and ultimately a rewarding one. It foregrounds professional experimentation and innovation and given the responsive nature of the cohort any appropriate teacher action is likely to be rewarded by high-quality outcomes from the pupils. Teachers actively working to improve their classroom provision for gifted and talented pupils is a virtuous circle of increased professional satisfaction and increased pupil satisfaction. Practitioner research activity such as structured tinkering (Eyre, 2006) demonstrates this approach in its most sophisticated form and affirms its virtues.

Teachers also find the 'classroom approach' appealing because it chimes with their own experience of children and their learning needs. Most 'classroom provision' approaches recognise that

- Gifted pupils are a diverse and disparate group and therefore optimum provision will vary from child to child.
- The best provision for gifted pupils is made by extending that which is available to all children rather than providing a completely different curriculum for gifted pupils.
- Schools and teachers vary in their capacity to deal effectively with gifted pupils.

This practical approach empowers teachers to become better teachers of the gifted.

The ‘classroom provision’ approach also has considerable merit in policy terms. It is a high-coverage, low-cost approach which makes good use of existing resources. It offers the prospect of national coverage in every school and available to every pupil and overcomes some of the traditional problems associated with gifted programmes such as sustainability. In addition it negates the need to create a system that rejects large numbers of pupils in order to create a small cohort – the winners and losers approach – and may itself contribute to increasing capacity and professional skill in the teaching profession.

The criticisms levelled at this approach relate to the capability of teachers to play this central role and whether it is unrealistic for policy makers to expect it of them. If teachers are expected to play this role and then fail to do so the consequences for the gifted and talented are considerable. It will be falsely assumed that opportunities for gifted and talented are being made available whilst in reality they are not. The English Model recognised this potential flaw and counters it by an increased emphasis on professional development and by limiting the demand on teachers. The English Model recognises that in order for the classroom aspect of provision to be successful teachers need the knowledge, skills and confidence to play this role. There is a clear professional development requirement for this policy to be effective. Both pre-service and serving teachers need access to the training and guidance required to make this a reality. All teachers need a basic understanding of the issues surrounding the creation of effective provision and some teachers need advanced skills to lead work on this agenda in their schools.

The English Model also differs from the traditional ‘classroom provision’ model in that it does not place *all* the responsibility on the teacher. This policy recognises that whilst teachers may be central there is a limit to

what might reasonably be seen as the teacher’s responsibility. This model therefore makes classroom provision the *core* provision but not the *only* provision. It is expected that pupils will also access cross-school opportunities and most crucially out-of-school opportunities and programmes. This serves to reduce the burden on classroom teachers and open up access to the type of high-quality, targeted provision that has characterised the ‘gifted programmes’ approach to gifted education. As a child becomes older the balance of provision changes in recognition of the need for increasingly advanced learning opportunities.

### ***A Key Role for Out-of-Hours Programmes***

Traditional gifted programmes have offered some of the most imaginative and demanding opportunities for gifted and talented pupils. They have the advantage of being free of the traditional school constraints such as timetables, examination curriculum and formal assessment processes. They offer an optimal environment for certain forms of learning. They are also expensive to offer and usually offered on a piecemeal, ad hoc basis. Therefore, their advantages need to be maximised and their use needs to be judicious.

Hickey (1988) found that internationally educators of G&T pupils converged in having three main goals for gifted programmes:

1. To provide a learning environment that will permit and encourage the capable student to develop his/her individual potential whilst interacting with intellectual peers
2. To establish a climate that values and enhances intellectual ability, talent, creativity and decision making
3. To encourage the development of and provide opportunities for the use of higher levels of thinking (analysis, synthesis and evaluation)

These conditions can most easily be met within the context of out-of-school or cross-school programmes rather than through general classroom provision.

The English Model factors out-of-school and cross-school ‘gifted programmes’ as being a recognised part of the overall offer. It gives these programmes legitimacy within the pyramid of opportunities and seeks to mobilise a market of out-of-hours providers who can

offer high-quality opportunities that meet the required design requirements. The English Model requires that out-of-hours learning serves to enhance rather than replace school-based learning. Therefore, it must conform to key principles. This enables the out-of-hours providers to operate with maximum flexibility whilst ensuring that school providers have a sense of the type of learning that their pupils will have experienced through out-of-hours provision and are therefore able to build on it. Pupils themselves are then able to view in-school and out-of-school learning as being two aspects of their learning rather than totally different activities.

In England advice to out-of-hours learning providers stresses the following:

- (A) *Gifted and talented pupils display most of the personality characteristics typical of children or young people of their age.* Some may have high levels of concentration whilst others lose interest quickly. Some will be confident in their abilities and keen to put forward their opinions. Others will be shy, unsure and in need of encouragement and re-enforcement. Some will be good team players, sensitive to the needs of the group. Others may be arrogant and dismissive of the contributions of others. Some will like to work independently, others will not.
- (B) *Gifted and talented pupils are embryonic experts.* One purpose of courses is to induct pupils into the ways of thinking and the valued behaviours of individual subject domains. They do not need to be encouraged to engage with learning or entertained, although, as with all of us, they appreciate elements of fun. They particularly like working with experts and particularly dislike being patronised.
- (C) *Course content should make best use of the teacher's interests and expertise.* Almost any content area is relevant provided the engagement is set at an appropriate level. Passion and enthusiasm for a subject is a great motivator and working on something the teacher finds fascinating will automatically convey that to others.
- (D) *Choose a style that suits the subject.* Aim for a collegiate style with students encouraged to participate, to put forward their own opinions without fear of ridicule, to respect the views of others and to challenge the tutor's views if they wish.
- (E) *Make use of peer teaching.* One of the key benefits of out-of-hours provision is that pupils have the opportunity to work with others of like ability. Some pupils do not have this opportunity regularly at school.
- (F) *Consider a final product or presentation.* The end of course product is rewarding for pupils and is also useful in helping students to record their out-of-hours learning back in school.

A measure of the success of out-of-hours provision in the English Model is its ability to empower the learner. Gifted programmes should help the pupil to become a more confident and sophisticated learner. The success of gifted programmes in the English Model is judged by their ability to increase aspiration, motivation, self-esteem and attainment.

Out-of-hours gifted programmes have considerable merit from the policy makers' perspective. They provide the very highest levels of challenge so ensuring that individuals are not held back by school expectations. They can raise aspirations as pupils can come to see themselves as part of two different educational communities – their school and this other group of peers with shared characteristics, aspirations and interests. This is often the first place where gifted pupils are able to feel at ease with their ability and confident to achieve at the highest levels. Gifted programmes are key to improving the educational performance of some individuals. It can empower individual learners so that they are better able to exploit their normal schooling regardless of its overall quality. It is therefore a particularly significant strand for pupils with low aspirations in low-achieving schools.

### ***Pupil Voice and Pupil Engagement***

The English Model places pupils at the centre of the learning process. It seeks to create a raft of suitable learning opportunities both within and beyond the school and to make them available to pupils in such a way as to personalise learning for the individual. This is a radical departure from models where the gifted and talented community are seen as being a homogeneous group with common needs and common issues. In the English Model every gifted and talented pupil is seen as an individual with individual learning needs.

The overall requirements for the cohort which underpin the personalised approach are seen as follows:

- Formal recognition for the cohort
- Planned learning opportunities offering high levels of challenge on a daily basis
- Progress in learning in a way that reflects the stage of learning rather than the age of the pupil
- Access to enhanced learning opportunities offered outside of normal classroom provision
- To be seen as a child with social and emotional as well as intellectual needs

Overlaying these general cohort needs are the needs of the individual. For the English Model to operate optimally pupils must come to know themselves and their strengths and weaknesses and, eventually, be able to determine their learning needs.

Policy in this respect must recognise that such an approach is counter cultural to most schools and so systematic processes must be put in place if this outcome is to be achieved. This process must be a planned and managed one which starts in a limited form from the earliest schooling and involves both the pupil and their parents. In judging the success of provision for gifted and talented the English Model focuses primarily not only on the availability of suitable opportunities but on their impact on the performance of the individual.

### ***Leadership, Coordination and Management***

A system-based approach such as the English Model is dependent upon effective use of key policy and decision makers, who can themselves utilise the levers at their disposal to embed the model. In the education system there are two key agents, namely national/regional policy makers and school head teachers (principals).

For the English Model to operate effectively the needs of gifted and talented pupils must be factored into all aspects of education policy making. In a centralised education system such as the English education system this requires the gifted and talented cohort to be a recognised cohort within the system. Their needs are then considered by the policy makers responsible for curriculum, school resourcing, school quality, teacher training, etc. At a national level, policy makers will, from time to time, be held accountable for the effec-

tiveness of their policy in relation to the gifted and talented cohort. In a more localised or regional model this recognition for the cohort would need to be secured in a similar way.

At school level the key agent is the school leadership team comprising head teacher (principal) and other senior colleagues. They must recognise the importance of the agenda and implement the various structural aspects that will provide the scaffold for success. These include identification processes, school-wide coordination of provision, professional development for teachers, systems for classroom planning and delivery, assessment of pupils, pupil grouping arrangements and arrangements to accommodate individual needs. Most crucially at the school level there is a need for accountability structures that monitor the impact of provision on the cohort generally and on individuals within it.

### **The Role of Identification Within the English Model**

Within the English Model identification of the cohort sits at a central point. Unlike the 'gifted programmes' approach in which access to opportunities is contingent on identification, the English Model makes some opportunities available through general school provision. However, unlike the 'classroom provision' approach, the English Model also makes some opportunities contingent on identification. In this mixed economy the process of identification is both formal and informal. An initial cohort will be created by a school but it will be continually reviewed and expanded as giftedness or talent emerges through access to high levels of challenge in the classroom and through performance on standardised school and public tests. The numbers of pupils identified at the end of elementary school will be greater than at the start and similarly at high school.

The English Model contends that identification of the cohort should be an on-going process throughout the period of formal schooling and should be a system issue rather than a school or individual issue. The English Model recognises that we cannot get identification right if we do not get provision right first. We will create a skewed cohort with over-dominance of some socio-economic and ethnic groups. Responding to challenging work in the classroom is frequently the

only way in which gifts and talents come to the surface. We know that a gifted child who happens to be middle class, native language speaking, with early exposure to literature and complex vocabulary can be easily recognised. But we also know that a child from an educationally disadvantaged background is likely to require personal support and intellectual challenge *before* they start to show their true potential. If we do not emphasise the importance of provision in identification we can expect to see a cohort that is skewed.

- Richer children will be over-represented.
- Poorer children will be under-represented.
- Children with highly educated parents will be over-represented.
- Children from single-parent families will be under-represented.
- Chinese, Indian and middle-class white pupils will be over-represented (in England).
- Black, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and working-class white pupils will be under-represented (in England).
- Traveller pupils and pupils with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities will be very under-represented (in England).
- Looked-after children (those in children's homes and orphanages) will hardly be represented at all.

It is also important that teachers are trained to understand the nature of giftedness; otherwise, they will make conventional mistakes in their part of the identification process. All teachers must be aware that giftedness is a dynamic interaction between potential, opportunities/support and personal motivation and that this interaction begins at the moment of birth. Evidence suggests that unless this knowledge is secured then teachers identify 'school smart' children rather than gifted and talented ones. Therefore, amongst the 'tools' made available to schools must be a clear framework and guidance on identification.

## Developing Good Citizens

Gifted and talented education policy is not just about enabling the individual to have a satisfying educational experience, it is also about ensuring that those within the cohort develop into well-rounded responsible individuals. From time to time, gifted education models have focused heavily on the development of the intel-

lect at the expense of a focus on the social and emotional needs of children and young people.

The English Model begins from a wider social policy concern in which the nation is looking to find talent and nurture it for the common good. In this climate the thrust must therefore be on creating not only intellectual capital but also social and emotional capital. Those with outstanding abilities and talents must also be equipped with the emotional skills that will enable them to play a leadership role in their chosen field. In England gifted and talented education has traditionally recognised the need to align the complementary concerns of intellectual development and social and emotional development. In some other countries (e.g. Brazil) identification brings with it formal responsibilities in respect of citizenship. This kind of approach has real merit in that it both builds the necessary leadership skills and also helps gifted and talented individuals to behave unselfishly.

## Exemplars of the English Model in Practice

Abid is 8 years old and already achieving highly. He attends his local primary (elementary) school where he encounters a stimulating and challenging curriculum offer. In some of his lessons he is encouraged to make choices and to recognise the significance of the choices he makes. Whether to do this task or that. Whether this task is easier or harder and why. This reflective behaviour is encouraged by appropriate teacher questioning and task design. Lessons are tailored to his needs. On a regular basis he has a discussion with his teacher about his progress and he and his teacher/s are well aware of his strengths and weaknesses. He knows that he will have the opportunities that will enable him to achieve well but that he must make the effort. His parents are a part of this discussion and they are given information and practical strategies to help support his learning. Outside of normal class Abid has access to additional, more bespoke, learning opportunities through extended day provision, online provision and a rich array of out-of-school enrichment opportunities. All of Abid's learning achievements, whether occurring in the core offer or beyond it, are tracked through an e-portfolio to which Abid and his parents can also contribute. This portfolio helps everyone in-



volved in Abid's education to unlock his needs and secure appropriate opportunities.

Hannah is 14. She attends her local school. She is already a confident learner and has a monthly academic discussion with her form tutor regarding her progress and learning needs. Hannah already knows that she is a strong academic achiever and is in the top set for most of her lessons. The curriculum offered by her school in KS3 (11–14 years) was demanding and swiftly paced. She is already studying the GCSE (public exam) course in some subjects a year ahead of her peers. The school has a particular focus on engineering which has given her an interest in practical problem solving although on balance she thinks at the moment that she is likely to apply this in more traditional subjects as she develops. Hannah is studying Chinese in another local school in non-core time and attends a maths class at her local university. She is also accessing a range of online and face-to-face non-assessed learning opportunities in school, in local schools, regionally, nationally and internationally. Hannah plays in a local rock band with friends. Hannah's learning is tracked through her e-portfolio and she takes control of this in conjunction with her form tutor. Hannah is a confident learner and well able to describe her strengths, lament over her weaknesses and describe her learning needs. At the moment she and her form tutor think that Hannah's education should involve a strategy that enables her to experience a wide range of opportunities and keep her options open. They and Hannah's parents agree that Hannah is capable of going to university. However, she is capable of moving forward in a variety of directions and is unsure about future university or career destinations. Hannah is becoming increasingly familiar with the options available to her post 16 years at her school, other local schools and colleges.

## Conclusions

At its heart the English Model seeks to locate gifted and talented education within the new educational agenda of more customised education. Through that channel gifted and talented education has the best chance of long-term sustainability. It will cease to be a project and become a permanent feature of the educational landscape. Individual gifted and talented pupils also have the greatest chance of success in

this model because it is infinitely flexible and able to respond to their individual needs. This new model utilises both in-school and out-of-school learning reflecting the world in which we now all live. In the 21st century learning, like other commodities, is available on demand and pupils, their families and their teachers are free to make use of a truly extensive range of online and face-to-face learning opportunities – choosing those they want and need. This methodology mobilises the whole national community, not just those traditionally engaged in school education, in support of this agenda. Most importantly this model is one where *all* gifted and talented pupils have a real chance of converting their potential into high performance regardless of background or ethnicity. It is only when this is secured that gifted and talented education can be said to be fair and equitable.

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