Educational Psychologist and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator Constructions of Effective Collaborative Working:

An Exploratory Study

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Acknowledgements

Abstract

The current educational and legislative reforms in the United Kingdom have placed effective multi-agency collaboration at the forefront of the professional agenda e.g., the Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) in England; and the draft Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code of Practice in Wales (Welsh Government, 2015; 2017).

Central to this process is a shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each multi-agency professional. A wealth of research has illustrated incongruities in the perceptions of the role and practice of educational psychologists (EP) between EPs themselves and school professionals e.g. teachers (Kelly & Gray, 2000; Farrell, Jimerson, Kalambouka & Benoit, 2005). Fewer papers have explored barriers and/or facilitators to effective collaboration between the two professional groups (Davies, Howes, & Farrell, 2008). Fewer papers still have focused on comparing Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators' (SENCo) and EPs' perceptions of the role in particular (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). As SENCos are important link colleagues for EPs, responsible for co-ordinating support for children and young people with additional learning needs in their educational setting, a clear understanding of the EP role is integral to effective collaborative working.

The current study aims: first, to compare and contrast EP and SENCo perceptions of the effectiveness of roles and/or functions of the EP; and second, to explore perceived facilitators and barriers to effective collaborative working between the two professional groups. A mixed-methods approach was used to collect data using questionnaires and focus groups. Forty-two EPs and seventy-two SENCos returned questionnaires representing data from a variety of geographical locations across Wales. Seven EPs and eleven SENCos took part in four focus groups in both rural and urban regions of Wales. Seven superordinate themes were identified including: (1) Interpersonal Relationships; (2) Understanding of Roles; (3) Value of EP involvement; (4) Clarity of the EP role; (5) The School System; and (6) The Wider Context. The final theme (7) Dream and Design includes EP and SENCo suggestions for future practice. These are discussed in relation to perceived facilitators and barriers and key areas of difference and/or similarity between responses. Implications of the present study for the role of EPs are discussed, together with the future directions for research.

Summary

This thesis is split into three parts: a literature review, an empirical research study and a critical appraisal. Part A, the literature review, provides a detailed overview of the role of the educational psychologist (EP) in the United Kingdom. Attention is drawn to the key challenges EPs have faced working within an ever-changing professional context since the role was established in the early nineteen-hundreds. The review begins with the historical context of the role and considers in turn external and internal change drivers that have influenced the direction of the profession. The impact these changes may have had on school professionals' expectations of the EP role are considered. Research demonstrates that school professionals and EPs hold different views of what they consider to be the most important and valuable roles and/or functions of the EP. Existing research suggests that school professionals perceive direct work with pupils (e.g. therapeutic or assessment work) to be the most valuable use of EP time (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). EPs, on the other hand, report more indirective methods of working as more valuable (e.g., working consultatively with schools/families, delivering training) (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010). The research studies presented are critiqued and research questions are proposed for the current study.

Part B is an account of the empirical study, which aimed to evaluate SENCo and EP perceptions of effective EP practice and explore SENCo and EP perceived facilitators and barriers to collaborative working. Participants completed a questionnaire and were invited to return for a follow-up focus group. Perceptions of the effectiveness of EP practice were statistically analysed to compare mean results across the two groups. Facilitators and barriers to effective working, and key differences and similarities between EPs' and SENCos' perceptions were identified using thematic analysis. The results are presented and implications for future practice are discussed.

Part C, the critical appraisal, is presented in two sections. The first section comprises a critical account of the researcher, providing a reflective account of each stage of the research process, from the inception of the research to data analysis. The second section consists of an exploration of the contribution to knowledge, including key findings, future directions for research and the wider implications of the research for professional practice.

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Abbreviations

ALN = Additional Learning Needs

ALNCo = Additional Learning Needs Co-ordinator

BPS = British Psychological Society

CoP = Code of Practice

CYP = Children and Young People

DfE = Department for Education

DfES = Department for Education and Skills

EP = Educational Psychologist

EPS = Educational Psychology Service

LA = Local Authority

LEA = Local Education Authority

PEP = Principal Educational Psychologist

SEN = Special Educational Needs

SENCo = Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

SSI = Semi-Structured Interview

WAG = Welsh Assembly Government

WG = Welsh Government

Educational Psychologist and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator Constructions of Effective Collaborative Working:

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Part A: Literature Review

1. Introduction

The current political climate of educational reform and the revised Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice in England (DfE, 2014) has placed specific emphasis on increased cohesion between multi-agency professional groups (Farrell, Jimerson, Kalambouka & Benoit, 2005; Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010; Buck, 2015). In preparation for legislative reform in Wales, the Welsh Government (WG) also released an Additional Learning Needs Educational Tribunal (ALNET) Bill in 2016. This outlined that a more contemporary method of multi-agency co-ordination was required to provide optimal support for children and young people (CYP) with additional learning needs (ALN). Central to this change is the ability of professionals across different agencies to engage in effective collaborative working.

An important aspect of the role of the educational psychologist (EP) is to work collaboratively with a myriad of professionals from other agencies including (but not limited to): school professionals e.g., special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCos), head teachers, class teachers; social and health care professionals e.g., medical practitioners, professionals from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), and social workers; and stakeholders e.g., families and CYP. It is expected that each individual, including EPs themselves, will hold his/her own constructions of the EP role, and that his/her own understanding of effective practice will vary based on personal agendas or expectations (Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis & Carroll, 2005; Burr, 2015). Constructions of the role will also impact on EP practice, and in turn, further influence professional and stakeholder expectations and understandings of the role of the EP (Love, 2009). Therefore, in light of current educational reform in England and Wales, it is vital to explore perceptions of the EP role itself and what is considered effective working by professionals in different agencies to ensure cohesion, particularly those perceptions held by school professionals with whom EPs work closely. For the

purposes of the current study, the term 'effective' will be defined as useful for EP and service-user, to inform effective intervention and in turn facilitate positive change for CYP in educational settings (Wicks, 2013).

Much research has been devoted to investigating EP and school professional perceptions of the EP role in both UK-based and multi-national contexts (e.g., Ahtola & Kiiski-Maki, 2014; Farrell et al., 2005; Bell & McKenzie, 2013). However, few studies have discussed facilitators and/or barriers to effective working between EP and school professionals (Davies, Howes & Farrell, 2008; Atkinson, Squires, Bragg, Muscutt, & Wasilewski, 2014). Far fewer studies have specifically compared the views of EP and special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCos; e.g. Ashton & Roberts, 2006). This is of specific significance because EP and SENCo effective collaborative working is central to ensuring best outcomes for CYP, as referenced in the legislative changes in England and Wales (e.g., WG, 2017). These call for a professional relationship based on co-operation, delegation and working towards shared goals.

1.1. Significance of Study for Practice

EPs spend approximately half (48%) of their working time in schools (with the majority of this time spent in mainstream primary schools; Kelly & Gray, 2000). As a profession, EPs are well placed to support schools provide appropriate support for pupils with additional learning needs (Kelly & Gray, 2000). In 2015, there were 105,000 reported learners with SEN/ALN in Wales, 12,530 of whom had a statement of SEN (Welsh Government, 2015). There is a legal requirement for each school to have a designated additional learning needs co-ordinator (Wales) responsible for coordinating the provision of support for pupils with ALN in their setting. As such, SENCos are one of the main professional groups with whom EPs work and may be participating at each stage of EP involvement, from requesting EP input, collaborative working through

Consultation, and supporting staff with the implementation of appropriate intervention (Cole, 2005; Kelly & Gray, 2000). It is apparent that SENCos and EPs require realistic and shared expectations of EP input to enable effective EP involvement (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Farrell et al., 2005; Wagner, 2000).

The introduction of the Additional Learning Needs Education Tribunal (ALNET) Bill (WG, 2016) has created changes to practice and legislation for professionals working with learners with ALN in Wales. A core element of this change will be a revision of the role of SENCo to 'additional learning needs co-ordinator' (ALNCo[1]). This will further emphasise the importance of the role (WG, 2016). The draft Code of Practice (WG, 2015; 2017) also states that the ALNCo will act as the key point of contact with local authority inclusion and support services, including educational psychology services (EPSs).

The outlined legislative changes in place support the view that collaborative working between EPs and SENCos is paramount, suggesting a need for a unified vision of effective practice and mutual understanding of roles (Farrell, 2009). Without this, effective EP involvement could be challenging and could lead to decreased satisfaction with EP service delivery from schools and a decrease in commissioned EP services which could have a negative impact on outcomes for schools (Farrell et al., 2005) and the longevity of the EP role (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). This is particularly relevant in the current context of traded services whereby EP services are purchased by schools. There is now the potential for school professionals to select a provider for services, and in doing so they will have a clear expectation of what they want delivered and implemented. Moreover, the purchaser may require further clarity regarding what services EPs can deliver (MacKay, 2002), and effective involvement may be hindered if

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[1] The Bill replaces the terms 'special educational needs' (SEN) and 'learning difficulties and/or disabilities' (LDD) with the new term Additional Learning Needs (ALN).

there are unrealistic expectations of the service being commissioned. Therefore, as a profession, EPs need to work collaboratively with those who commission their service to ensure shared expectations of EP involvement.

Existing research suggests a disparity between school staff expectations of EP input and the reality of EP service delivery, both in the United Kingdom (e.g., Farrell et al., 2005; Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Atkinson, Regan, & Williams, 2006) and in multi-national contexts (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014; Bell & McKenzie, 2013; Wang, Ni & Ding, 2015). The existing literature suggests that discordant views of EP practice between EPs and school professionals could be a result of a variety of external and internal change drivers influencing and guiding the development of the profession (Stobie, 2002; Farrell, 2009). However, there is a comparative scarcity of literature exploring SENCo perspectives on effective EP practice in England and Wales, and to the researcher's knowledge, there are no published studies based in Wales exploring these perspectives. This is a crucial distinction given different models of service delivery and different legislation in the Welsh context (Smith, 2012; WG, 2015).

1.2. Overview of the Literature Review

Throughout the literature review, theoretical and empirical research exploring perceptions of the role of the EP will be presented and critically discussed with a focus on the changes occurring within the EP role in England and Wales. The review will be structured into three sections.

Whilst focusing on the external drivers for change, the first section will locate the development of the EP role (and the profession as a whole) within its historical context, including the implementation and impact of socio-political and legislative change. The second section will review internal drivers which have impacted upon the EP role including: a perceived within-profession "identity crisis" (Love, 2009, p 3);

inconsistency in practice models and theoretical perspectives; and school professional constructions of the EP role. The review of the emerging role, including changes to legislation, was limited to England and Wales to allow deeper exploration of the development of the EP profession within the context in which the current study is set. While this study focussed only on exploring the socio-political development of the role in England and Wales, it is important to note other issues beyond the confines of one national setting (Maliphant, 1997). Therefore, recent international research (published within the last 5 years) was included to assist in contextualising current issues regarding school professionals' understanding of the role of the school psychologist/EP more widely. Within other national contexts, the role of the EP would be equivalent to a 'school psychologist'; it is understood that these roles are broadly similar to the EP role in England and Wales (Farrell et al., 2005).

The third section will provide a review of literature exploring school professionals' perceptions of the role of the EP. Particular emphasis is given to studies focusing on SENCo perceptions of the EP role, however, given the comparative lack of literature in this area, the search was widened to include teaching staff and senior management perceptions of EPs. This included research in a variety of educational provisions including primary, secondary, specialist, early years and post-16 settings. A lack of studies conducted within post-16 settings could be a consequence of the relatively recent increase in age range from 19 to 25 of CYP with which an EP may work, covered by the recent SEN legislation implemented in England (DfE, 2014) and ALN reform soon to be implemented in Wales (WG, 2015).

Finally, research exploring SENCos and EPs perceptions of the EP role will be reviewed, and the context for the current research focus described. Given the limited scale of the current research, it was felt that exploring the views of other professionals outside schools, or stakeholders such as parents or CYP, would not be feasible within

6

the current review. The review will conclude by defining the research questions for the current study.

1.3. Search Terms and Sources

The electronic search engines PsychInfo, British Education Index, Applied Social Science and Index Abstracts and Google Scholar were used to conduct a review of the literature. Search terms were divided into four areas relating to (1) the developing role/profession of the EP / educational psychology (2) the role of SENCos/ALNCos in England and Wales (3) perceptions of the EP role; and (4) collaborative working. Use of the database Google Scholar allowed a comprehensive search to be conducted through of the adoption of a variety of phrases and utilisation of cited sources. A comprehensive list of search terms used during the literature review is presented in table 1. Articles, books and relevant papers were sourced during June 2016 – January 2017.

Table 1: Search Terms and Results Generated

Category of interest	Search term(s) used	Number of results generated	Example articles selected from search
The developing role of the educational psychologist	'The role of the educational psychologist'	53 800	O'Hagan & Swanson (1983) Burnham (2013) Ashton & Roberts (2006)
	"The role of the educational psychologist"	254	Love (2009)
	School professionals + "educational psychologists"	15 100	Sheridan & Gutkin (2000) Farrell et al (2006)
Special Educational	"Special educational needs coordinator" role	1390	Cole (2005)
	"Additional learning needs co-ordinator" role	14	Welsh Government

Needs co-ordinators			documentation (2015; 2017)
	School professional perceptions of + educational psychologist/y	3335	Gilman & Gabriel (2004) Farrell et al (2005)
Perceptions of the EP role	'Educational Psychologists role' + Joined up/collaborative working	629	Ashton & Roberts (2006) Fallon, Woods & Rooney (2010)
	"teachers and educational psychologists" + collaboration	702	Davies, Howes and Howes, (2008)
Collaborative working	Collaboration + "school professionals" + "educational psychologists"	7186	Guva & Hylander (2012)
	"Multi-agency working" + "educational psychologists"	603	Farrell, Woods, Lewis and Rooney (2006)

The range of references included in the literature review were reduced through initial examination of the abstract for particular relevance to the EP role in England and Wales, and included both theoretical texts exploring the development of the EP role and empirical studies exploring perceptions of school professionals of the EP role. Studies were excluded if they focused on the EP role in a particular area e.g. supporting school professionals to work with pupils with autism spectrum condition. This ensured that the review retained a general overview of school professional and EP perceptions of EP involvement within schools.

A vast number of studies were completed in the UK and in America, therefore only studies published within the period 1970 – 2017 were included. If a relevant article was identified with an older publication date (e.g. O'Hagan & Swanson, 1983), the 'cited by' function was used which allowed the exploration of more recently published articles which may have made reference to the identified relevant article. Key dated references were included within the review to gain an historical overview of the context in addition to more recent research to ensure relevance to the current context.

Studies conducted within international settings were included if they had specific relevance to school professional perceptions or expectations of the involvement of school psychologists. Articles focusing solely on an international setting (e.g. Bell & McKenzie, 2013) were selected and perused in further depth if published within the last 5 years to allow exploration and comparison of perceptions of the EP role within other international contexts.

1.4. Inclusion / Exclusion Criteria

Throughout the searching process relevant literature was filtered by using the following inclusion criteria.

- Published in the English language

- Published within the period 1970-2017

- Relevant to the developing role of EPs in England and Wales, including EP perceptions of their own changing role

- Research exploring school professionals' perceptions of working with EPs, or of the EP profession

- Research based in primary, secondary, specialist, early years or post-16 setting and

- Recent research (within the last 5 years) conducted in multi-national contexts.

Conversely, studies were not included if they met the following exclusion criteria

- Published in a language other than English

- Published outside of the period 1970-2017

- Included other stakeholder perceptions of the EP role (e.g., other multi-agency professionals, CYP, families) and

- Theoretical literature relevant to the developing role of school psychologists in other multi-national contexts.

1.5. Definitions and Terminology

1.5.1. Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator

Although the term 'additional learning needs' is becoming increasingly used in place of 'special educational needs' in Wales, at the time of writing, the term ALNCo is not consistently used across all educational settings in Wales (WG, 2016). As the most commonly used term within the research literature, the professional title 'SENCo' will be used throughout this literature review and the subsequent research study to retain consistency.

1.5.2. Individual and Systemic Working

Developed by Mackay in 1989, and incorporated into official documentation, Munro (2002) outlined five core functions of the role of the EP including: consultation, assessment, intervention, training and research. These are expected to be conducted at three levels: individual, organisation and local authority level (Munro, Scottish Executive, 2002). Although developed in Scotland, the items are considered appropriate to describe the role across England and Wales (Munro, 2002).

For the purposes of the current literature review, the terms 'individual-based approaches' and 'individual assessment' are interchangeable and refer to any work conducted by an EP on an individual level rather than at an organisation or local authority level, e.g., consultation regarding, or direct work with, a pupil (Woods & Farrell, 2006; Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009).

The 'systemic' aspect of the EP role has been defined by Norwich (2005) as the influencing of organisational structures e.g., through research or policy development, staff training and development, and the management and support of learning or behaviour issues at a wider level. For the current review, this term will refer to any work conducted by an EP at a school or organisational level which may create positive change for a group of individuals or for the school as a whole.

2. The Changing Role of the Educational Psychologist: External Drivers

The EP profession has experienced significant change over the last century since its inception in the early nineteen-hundreds (Farrell, 2010). The role of the EP has been a subject of ongoing discussion within the literature described as "perhaps the most enduring debate within educational psychology" (MacKay, 1997, p. 165), With recurring themes in the literature of "reconstruction, reformulation and refocusing" (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010, p. 2), it is suggested that there may be a lack of confidence within the profession regarding the distinct contribution and directions of the profession (Love, 2009). Social, political and legislative change can create a challenging environment for any profession seeking to maintain its identity and this may be especially relevant for EPs due to the complex and changing context in which they work (Cameron, 2006). The role of the EP continues to be debated and reformed in England and Wales (Buck, 2015; Children and Families Act, (H.M.Gov., 2014); SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2014); draft ALN Code of Practice (WG, 2017).

2.1. The Historic Context

In order to understand the current context for EPs, it is important to first consider the historical context that informed the past development of the profession. The Education Act in 1870 implemented legal schooling for all children in the UK and thus a need was identified to support all CYP to achieve optimal educational outcomes (Education Act, 1870). Specifically, psychometric testing was considered necessary to inform placement of CYP within appropriate educational provisions (Boyle, 2014; Farrell, 2009; Arnold & Hardy, 2013). In 1913, Cyril Burt was appointed as the first EP working in London; through his use of psychometric testing, research, and the provision of psychological advice, Burt contributed to guiding educational policy across the capital (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; Lindsay & Miller, 1991). As more EPs were appointed, they were

placed within child guidance clinics and initially worked under the supervision of psychiatrists. This model of working embedded the concept of EPs as assessors, as this fitted within the context of psychiatry as a profession (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010). It has been since argued that this historical context had a profound impact on the subsequent direction(s) of the profession (Farrell, 2009).

2.2. Approaches to Practice

2.2.1. Systemic Approaches

In the late 1970s, individual and assessment-based approaches became increasingly criticised within the theoretical literature for overlooking relevant information about the systems around the child and obscuring the influence or contribution of individuals within the home or school environments (Gillham, 1978). As part of the 'reconstructing' movement, Gillham (1978) pioneered the view that new methods of practice had to be adopted to meet adequately the new complexities that EPs encountered; this was considered to be a significant text which is argued to have influenced future directions of the field of educational psychology (Farrell, 2010). It was argued that continued use of a 'within-child' or 'deficit' model i.e. a model with a focus on individual assessment or therapeutic work (Buck, 2015) gave "insufficient attention to external environmental influences" (Maliphant, 1997 p. 105). This was suggested to possibly result in poor progression in empowering educational establishments to become more inclusive (Farrell et al., 2009). During this era, EPs were encouraged to work more systemically in the pursuit of change within the systems and establishments in which they worked and reduce their clinical role (Norwich, 2005). This occurred in line with the development of General Systems Theory in many scientific spheres, which may explain the drive for this approach (Bertalanffy & Sutherland, 1974). It has since been argued that a shift towards systemic approaches was a cause for concern and could have had a negative impact on the future of the

profession. Stanley (2010) argued that, by embarking on a theoretical shift from an individual assessment-based approach to a more systemic focus, EPs have "challenged their own existence" (p. 82) by curtailing their key roles of assessing children for appropriate educational placements and working in a more collaborative systemic way to empower school staff.

Despite attempts to work more systemically with schools, financial and time restraints on resources can mean that systemic working has not always been a priority for schools (Greig, 2007). Historically, school professionals have held the view that EPs should not have a role in systemic school improvement work such as policy formulation or evaluation of teaching methods (O'Hagan & Swanson, 1983). However, these findings might be outdated and a new perspective may be found if this study was repeated in the contemporary context. More recently, Ashton and Roberts (2006) found that only 2 of 58 SENCos expressed an interest in EPs engaging in increased systemic working which could suggest a continuation of the historic view that EPs should not work systemically, held by school professionals (O'Hagan and Swanson, 1989). Furthermore, MacKay (2002) wrote that the "traditional role of individual assessment and counselling" (p. 250) were most highly valued by schools, suggesting that they might advocate for continued individual level involvement. At the time, this assertion indicated that EPs may be met with resistance within their own profession to retain their traditional roles and external resistance from adjacent professions when attempting to expand the parameters of their role (Bell & McKenzie, 2013). The EP profession placed significant pressure on itself to engage in more systemic and preventative work, described by Leadbetter (2000) as "project work – good, casework – bad" (p. 458). It is suggested that SENCos may also have a sense of anxiety about allocating EP time to systemic issues, perceiving them to be less of a priority than individual based casework (Cole,

2005).

2.2.2. Individual-level Approaches

Despite a shift in theoretical approaches towards a more systemic method of working within the EP profession, over the last 30 years individual approaches have remained a central aspect of the EP role (Farrell, 2010; Rees, Farrell & Rees, 2003). Valued by both EPs and school professionals, researchers argue that individual level work is essential in the identification of a pupil's needs and in implementing effective interventions, with the potential to evolve and inform change at a school or local authority level (e.g. MacKay and Boyle, 1997; 2007). However, Norwich (2005) warned that the more frequently a child-focused perspective is adopted, the less EPs can effectively intervene in wider systemic factors impacting on the school as a whole. There has been much debate about the term 'individual assessment' and the various forms this may take within EP practice, for example, psychometric assessment, formative assessment, or iterative testing (Woods & Farrell, 2006).

In a study involving 142 EPs, Woods and Farrell (2006) found that many EPs perceived value in working with individuals, with results from their study indicating that 'individual interview with the child' was deemed most commonly used by 97% of EPs, and rated as most useful by 63% of the same sample. Considering psychometric testing in particular, the authors found that 40-46% of participants reported 'commonly using' psychometric testing in their practice, however, this item was rated as 'most useful' by only 6-13% of the same sample (Woods & Farrell, 2006). This supports the assertion that there is a persistence of individual based working, although this response could reflect an experience of cognitive dissonance for EPs given discord between their perceptions of most commonly used, and most useful, approaches (Festinger, 1962).

14

However, this study focussed only on assessment measures and therefore did not include more systemic methods of working. It would be informative to explore how EPs would rate individualised ways of working when also asked to rate systemic approaches.

Farrell (2009) suggested that the frequency with which EPs carry out certain methods of working may be indicative of responses to expectations of service users, rather than resulting from their own views. This may be a consequence of EPs moving towards more service delivery-focussed models of practice and therefore more focus being placed on 'customer' expectations. Alternatively, this could reflect the professional pressures EPs may experience from organisational expectations (e.g., local strategies and school professionals). Local authority administration staff have been shown to hold the view that EPs carry out such assessments as a fundamental aspect of their role, a finding which also suggests a top-down basis for this narrative about the EP profession (Gilman & Gabriel, 2004). Topping and Lauchlan (2013) argue that LA strategies and/or approaches may dictate certain requirements such as assessment data. Systemic or local factors such as these could perpetuate expectations of the EP as 'assessor' that the profession itself may be attempting to move away from, and further create disconnect between EP approaches and SENCo expectations. This may be a cyclical process contributing towards a continued understanding that individual assessment remains a central element of EP work and could be an element of the perceived identity crisis within the profession (Love, 2009). This, in turn, could influence service delivery to schools, which has implications for both service quality and service-user satisfaction (Woods & Farrell, 2006). The research suggests there remains a current dilemma for EPs regarding the benefits of individual and systemic working (Pellegrino, 2009). In a context where EPs were otherwise being encouraged to work more systemically, the introduction of a statutory role (taking place at an individual-assessment level) may

have generated a sense of internal conflict and uncertainty surrounding the identity, professional values and the direction of the profession (Buck, 2015; Leadbetter, 2000).

2.3. A Statutory Role

The release of the Summerfield Report in 1968 and the Warnock Report in 1978 laid the foundations for the introduction of Statements of SEN in England and Wales. The Warnock Report gave rise to the Education Act (1981) which introduced the legal duty of identification and assessment of pupils who may require additional resources from LAs to have their special educational needs met. Within legislation that followed, a legal duty was highlighted for EPs to be involved in making distinct psychological contributions to support CYP with SEN and ensure a person-centred focus (Arnold & Hardy, 2013). This input remains central to the EP role in the present day, having been recently included in the Children and Families Act 2014 and argued to be a local authority's (LA) main motive for employing EPs, thereby increasing longevity and security for the profession (Buck, 2015).

Described as "perhaps the single greatest disaster for educational psychology services" (Faupel & Norgate, 1993 p. 52), it was warned that EPs would be viewed as 'gatekeepers' to additional resources if they contributed towards statutory assessments. Warnock herself reflected that the emphasis had shifted away from identifying and supporting individuals' needs and instead had become focused on resource allocation (Warnock & Norwich, 2010; Shaw, 2008). Atkinson, Regan and Williams (2006) suggested that EPs should continue to develop new ways of working that shift the focus of the role from statutory work to systemic work, to continue to promote the range of skills on offer as a profession. This is particularly noteworthy in light of the increasing emergence of commissioned services across England and Wales (Lee & Woods, 2017).

2.4. Multi-Agency Working

Over the past 20 years, legislative change and Government directives have also introduced increased multi-agency working for EPs forming part of an integrated Children's Service in England (Every Child Matters 2003; Children and Families Act 2014) and Wales (Children and Young People: Rights to Action 2003)). These changes emerged as a result of criticism that the systems responsible for organising support for families and children with SEN were poorly co-ordinated (Maddern, 2012). It was deemed essential for multi-agency professionals to work together more cohesively and share a common understanding of best outcomes, and with this, develop clarity regarding roles and responsibilities (Arnold & Hardy, 2013). It was a widely held view that more effective joined-up services would mean better services for families and CYP, acknowledging the interrelatedness of family needs across multiple fields such as education, health and social care (Hutchings & Williams, 2014). Multi-agency working ensures that all work carried out by particular professionals complements the work conducted by other professionals, in both depth and detail (Fox, 2015). An increase in multi-agency working may have contributed to a decrease in understanding of the EP role, not only for stakeholders but for EPs themselves (MacKay, 2007; Farrell, et al., 2006).

Large scale governmental reviews have highlighted a lack of certainty about the EP role from school professionals. Specifically, school professionals reported that the nature of support service available and how these agencies worked in collaboration were areas of uncertainty (Kelly & Grey, 2000). It may therefore be challenging for stakeholders to understand the unique yet complementary roles of professionals in multi-agency teams. A lack of clarification of the EP role is noted by the release of a document in Wales co-written by the WG and the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) in 2016. Designed to assist in informing parents/carers and professionals about the role of EPs

and their distinctive contribution, the identified need for this document suggests a current lack of clarity regarding the role of the EP within Wales.

The coming together of different professional 'knowledges' and ways of working could have contributed to a sense of insecurity for EPs regarding their distinctive contribution (Love, 2009; Guvå & Hylander, 2012). For example, Stanley (2010) suggests that the introduction of the educational advisory teacher role has led to expectations from service users that an aspect of the EP role will include the recommendation of practical strategies to support children and young people with special educational needs. If this is not delivered, this could be a cause for concern and reduce stakeholder satisfaction with the EP role, particularly within a traded context where commissioners are purchasing EP service involvement and could be deterred if they feel their expectations of the service are not met (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010; Ashton & Roberts, 2006). Miller (2008, cited in Law, 2008) felt that EPs may not communicate their roles effectively to multi-agency professionals until they have clarity about the role themselves (Cameron, 2006).

Farrell et al. (2006) reported that some EPs in smaller Welsh local authorities worked more effectively with multi-agency professionals due to having established rapport with them. However, others indicated that the smaller sizes of the local authorities stifled changes, new initiatives and continued professional development opportunities. Gaskell and Leadbetter (2009) interviewed ten senior EPs across six English LAs who reported that multi-agency working was a positive experience in reaffirming their positions, roles and contributions within a multi-agency team. The authors speculated whether an increase in multi-agency working in recent years helped define the parameters of each professional role. Alternatively, this outcome could be a result of senior EPs holding more years of experience of working alongside professionals from other agencies and having increased confidence in their personal roles and responsibilities. Perhaps it

would be helpful for this study to be replicated with trainee or newly qualified EPs to explore perceptions of working within multi-agency teams from EPs at different stages of their professional journey.

2.5. Current Context

The current educational reforms have been described as the biggest changes experienced in a generation (Maddern, 2012). Legislative changes regarding SEN do not occur frequently and the last major change occurred in the 1980s with the introduction of a statutory role in relation to the formal assessment of SEN through the process of development a Statement. Therefore, it could be interpreted that the present political context continues to be one of great change in both England and Wales which will influence the direction of the EP profession for the foreseeable future. This highlights the current need to explore the views of EPs and SENCos regarding facilitators and barriers to working effectively and ensure this information is utilised to inform future practice.

2.5.1. English Context

In England, the reforms including the new SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) were approved in 2014 and were predicted to effect more change than had occurred in the last 30 years (Tutt & Williams, 2015). This Code of Practice advocates an increase in integrated working between education, health and social care service professionals. Statements of SEN were replaced by Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs), designed to create a cohesive and multi-agency support plan, putting the CYP and family at the centre of the process. The age range for EP involvement also increased from 0-19 to 0-25. Fox (2015) suggests that the introduction of EHCPs was a positive change due to its promotion of multi-agency working. It could be argued that a recent increase in multi-agency working within the statutory context has assisted with effective

collaboration and improved understanding of roles between professional groups, as suggested by the findings of Gaskell and Leadbetter (2000).

2.5.2. Welsh Context

In the Welsh context, similar changes are emerging. The proposed changes include the introduction of a single legal framework re: ALN from age 0-25 and the replacement of Statements of SEN with Individual Development Plans (IDP), ensuring that families and CYP remain central to the process of developing appropriate support. The key aspects of the legislative changes include a commitment to increased multi-agency working and the involvement of young people more explicitly in the process. This suggests a need for further cohesion between multi-agency professionals in Wales. Furthermore, the importance of raising awareness of the EP role has been highlighted by the provision of governmental guidance on the roles and functions of EPs in Wales (WG, 2016). This could suggest that the WG recognise that a deeper understanding of the EP role is required. This lack of clarity may be a factor impairing effective collaborative working.

2.5.3. Traded Services

The emergence of traded services, where EPSs offer schools an opportunity to purchase EP time, has been reported to have greatly influenced the nature of the EP role. Lee and Woods (2017) explored perceptions of trading across two local authorities in North-West England by EPs and commissioners. They report that successful trading has seen the commissioning of more creative and innovative ways of working for EPs by schools. The authors found that, within a traded model, commissioners held a better understanding of the costs of the EP, and with it an increased appreciation of the value and distinctiveness of the EP's contribution. Although this study only involved two local authorities in one geographical area which may not be representative of trading/funding implications country-wide, it is indicative that EPs can be

commissioned to engage in more creative methods of working reliant on good marketing of the broad range of skills and services available for purchase. Naturally, this requires EPs to work in strong collaborative partnerships with those who purchase the service to understand what commissioners want and expect and to ensure this is delivered.

2.6. External Drivers: Summary

The literature suggests that a large number of legislative, social and political changes have influenced the direction of the development of the EP profession and how EPs are viewed by stakeholders and those professionals who work closely alongside them. The EP profession has been influenced by a number of external drivers for change including: a historic individual assessment focus, an aspiration to work systemically to broaden the role; a blurring of professional boundaries; pressures to preserve an assessment focus while also delivering new services, changes to legislation and to service delivery (i.e., a progression towards commissioned services). These factors may have influenced the role in different ways, contributing towards a lack of certainty of the role amongst both EPs themselves and their school colleagues (Woods, 2012).

3. The Changing Role of the Educational Psychologist: Internal Drivers

Internal drivers for change have existed in parallel to the external drivers of change due to within-profession reflection and subsequent modifications to executive frameworks and practice models (Wagner, 2000; Norwich, 2000; Buck, 2015; Farrell, 2010).

Ashton and Roberts (2006) suggest factors that may have contributed to difficulty in defining the EP role, including: a lack of clarity in defining who the client is; inconsistency within the profession in relation to practice (Ashton & Roberts, 2006), uncertainty about the unique contribution of the EP within a multi-agency context; and

'conflict' about what educational psychology services offer and what schools professionals, or other stakeholders, may expect. However, the authors outline that their research derived from discussions between newly qualified EPs, whose experiences may differ greatly from those experiences of more experienced EPs. It is also noteworthy that less research has been published on the role of the EP in the UK within the last 5 years, which may be an indication that EPs are more certain within their roles and professional identities (WG, 2016; SEND Code of Practice; DfE, 2014). Boyle and MacKay (2007) argued that the change process within a profession is inevitably slow and requires frequent review to ensure positive change is taking place and continuity established.

3.1. Defining the Role

Defining the client is a responsibility outlined in the most recent Code of Conduct and Ethics for Psychological Practitioners (BPS, 2009). Put broadly, the 'client' for the EP may include the CYP, families, school professionals, and in some cases, the local authority. The expectations of EP service delivery from these stakeholders can add further complication to defining the role due to difficulties in identifying to whom the EP is an advocate for (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). Each individual/group may present a conflicting demand that the EP is expected to manage (MacKay, 2002; Kelly & Gray, 2000). Furthermore, EPs themselves will hold their own view of what EP service delivery should look like. Norwich (2000) identified a separation between applied and academic educational psychologies and argued that the EP's adoption of a humanist approach, rather than a scientific one, may have resulted in diminished confidence in professional identify for some practitioners.

As a result of difficulty defining the client and the role, Love (2009) speculated whether the EP profession had experienced an "identity crisis" (p. 3) caused by a lack of

confidence in both their unique contribution and the direction of the profession. This has been echoed in literature produced by EPs themselves (e.g., Buck, 2015; Stobie, 2002; Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010; Tarrant & Cook, 2008; Evans, Grahamslaw, Henson & Price, 2012) and for those working closely with the profession (e.g. Farrell et al., 2005; Woods, 2012; and Akinson, Regan & Williams, 2006). It has been speculated that this was caused by external drivers with the profession attempting to redefine their role from an individual-based role to a more systemic role, contrary to the expectations of those around them (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010). Boyle and Lauchlan (2009) argued that in 2009, the profession had not yet recovered and that these insecurities continue to permeate throughout EP services.

Conversely, recent research indicates that EPs report improved professional effectiveness as a consequence of traded services allowing the profession to expand beyond previous parameters and negotiate the offer of services within a traded context (Lee & Woods, 2017). This may be indicative that traded models are supporting the clarification of the parameters of the EP role for schools and EPs. However, although the introduction of traded services appears to have had a positive effect, the authors specify that their study may be limited by searching for the positive outcomes and may therefore have overlooked any negative outcomes of the introduction of traded services. An example of which might be that the reliance on schools to commission local authority rather than private EP services could lead to further dependence on a service dictated by customer expectations (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). This highlights a further need for clarity of EP services purchased when considering that more of the profession may move towards a traded model of service.

3.2. Within-profession Diversity

3.2.1. Methods of Service Delivery

There are reported discrepancies in perceptions of optimum methods of service delivery throughout the EP profession. As outlined above, some EPs argue that there is significant psychological worth and benefit to be found in individual casework (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; Leadbetter, 2000; Atkinson et al, 2014). Others may place more value on focusing on systemic or preventative work (Topping & Laughlan, 2013; Jimerson, Oakland & Farrell, 2006). Burnham (2013) argued that a consensus on the optimum role and working practice of EPs remains elusive, since there is such a sheer diversity of accepted practice models and theoretical stances. It could be argued that uniformity of accepted practice models in EP practice is necessary to avoid differing expectations of the role from professionals working alongside the profession.

Although diversity of working approaches may not itself be an issue, professional inconsistency in relation to practice (Ashton & Roberts, 2006) between EPs may have a detrimental impact on those who require adequate understanding of the EP roles and functions. Clarification of school professional expectations of the role is impossible if there is a lack of agreement about the role within the profession itself (Farrell et al, 2005). Researchers have suggested that teachers still have a limited understanding of the broad roles and functions of the EP (Gilman & Medway, 2007). Even though a diverse toolkit is required within the EP role, it could be argued that significant inconsistency within the profession in relation to practice may lead to confusion when school professionals work with multiple EPs and the diversity of working methods is amplified.

However, with external legislative change creating modifications to the way EPs practise, such as changes to Codes of Practice in England and Wales and the introduction of traded service models, it appears more important than ever to ensure a

firm understanding and definition of the role both for EPs themselves and colleagues of an EP. Therefore, self-reflection is vital to ensuring professional identity and consistent service delivery both within and between EPSs (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010). The research literature emphasises a need for EPs to have clearer guidance on their role before they can be assured of their unique contributions to schools.

Within the field of clinical psychology, the British Psychological Society (BPS) released a document which provides a detailed account of the principles and processes for formulation within the profession (BPS, 2011). BPS guidance for the EP profession, in addition to the document published by the WG (2016b), would be beneficial to provide clearer guidance for school colleagues but also for other colleagues in education, health and social care who may require further clarity on the EP role, and for EPs themselves.

3.2.2. Frameworks for Practice

Divergent views remain within the profession itself regarding professional duties, role responsibilities and appropriate activities. Internal reflection within the EP profession caused a shift from working at an individual level to a wider systemic level, in response to the external drivers of change. Given this, frameworks for practice have changed over time, which may reflect the development of the role (Wicks, 2013). Examples of commonly used frameworks include the Constructionist Model of Informed Reasoned Action (COMOIRA; Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008), the Monsen et al. Problem-Solving Model (Monsen & Fredrickson, 2008) and the Woolfson et al. Integrated Framework (Woolfson, 2008).

COMOIRA is a flexible framework underpinned by four core elements: social constructionism, systemic thinking, enabling dialogue and informed and reasoned

action. Utilising an executive framework for practice such as COMOIRA can be effective in managing complex work at different levels, which could enable practitioners to work creatively with a variety of situational factors within an individual or systemic context. However, given that there is such variation between executive frameworks, this suggests potential difficulty for the EP role in terms of developing an agreed view of practice, as each practitioner may practise in a different way. The variety of frameworks available may make comprehension of the role more challenging for school professionals as they themselves take differing views on the EP role and current inconsistency in working approaches between individuals (Wicks, 2013).

3.3. Expectations of School Professionals: A Collaborative Approach

EPs work primarily with school professionals, such as SENCos and class teachers, to create positive change for CYP and inform effective intervention (Farrell et al., 2005). Gillham states: "…by the very nature of their trade, educational psychologists can only really be effective through other people" (1978 p. 15.). Adults actively control the environment around a child and are thus in an optimal position to create consistent change in that environment. Researchers have argued that expectations of school professionals are the most influential factor affecting an EP's work (Guvå & Hylander, 2012). Multiple studies have highlighted the need for school staff and EPs to have a clear approach to collaborative working to ensure the best outcomes for CYP (Farrell et al 2005; Beaver 2011). Farrell et al. (2005) argued that teaching staff and EPs must have aligned expectations of EP involvement in order to ensure that the EP work is valued. Farrell et al. argue that if their work is not valued, and as a result, EP involvement is not sought in the future, then "services to children and families will be impoverished as a result" (p. 15).

Although MacKay (2002) argued that EPs should not respond to the expectations of those around them but rather create their own expectations, Fox (2015) argues that the role of any profession is construed from perceptions of colleagues, service users and those within the profession alike. It is therefore essential that school professionals have a mutual and aligned understanding of the roles and functions of an EP and value the work that they do, deeming EP input to be both effective and worthwhile (Gilman & Medway, 2007; Atkinson, Regan & Williams, 2006). Farrell (2010) suggest a shortage of EPs leading to an inability to respond quickly to request for involvement and a fear of losing their distinctive role, could lead EPs to continue to respond as the customer expects. Rothì, Leavey and Best (2008) highlighted a need within the literature to discover how school professionals envisage 'good' working relationships with multi-agency professionals. Research into these areas should aid in the bridging of service boundaries and promote more collaborative working in future (Wagner, 1995). This could be an example of circular causality whereby EPs attempt to fulfil school professional expectations of the role, which influences their expectations of the EP role further, and could ultimately lead to little change within the profession.

Research has shown that individuals are less likely to implement change if they do not have a sense of ownership and collaboration throughout the process (Blase, Van Dyke, Fixsen, & Bailey, 2012). In a sample of 1533 teachers and special education teachers, Gilman and Medway (2007) found that teachers felt they were not active collaborative partners, with participants reporting that they only sometimes utilise the strategies developed in consultation, suggesting a perception of a partial involvement in the collaborative process. Gilman and Medway (2007) theorised that this perspective may negatively influence school professional perceptions of school psychologists. The development of the Consultation Model (Wagner, 2000) as a practice model has

supported the process of shifting towards more collaborative working through joint problem solving approaches (Cording, 2011).

3.5. Internal Drivers: Summary

The literature suggests that the prevalence of speculation and self-reflection as a profession has sparked change for the EP. The questions posed by this literature regarding the nature of the client and the nature of the EP role itself are frequently framed in terms of how a lack of definite guidelines impact upon the expectations of school professionals about EP working. Again, a further need is emphasised for EPs to receive clearer guidance on their role in order to guide effectively the expectations of those with whom they work closely, e.g. guidelines provided by a professional body, and perhaps consistent use of one executive framework by all EPs.

The different perspectives portrayed within the theoretical literature are authored by practising EPs and may be a testament to the internal conflict with the role. However, throughout the literature, a select few researchers were active commentators within the field and provided a representation of the voice of the entire EP profession. Caution must be applied to avoid over-generalisation and assume that these issues exist for the entire profession.

4. Constructions of Educational Psychology practice

A wealth of research has illustrated discrepancies in expectations, and perceived effectiveness, of the broad roles and functions of the EP between school professionals and EPs themselves (Gilman & Medway, 2007; Kelly & Gray, 2000). Trends within the research indicate that school professionals value the more 'traditional' EP roles of the EP (e.g., direct work with pupils; MacKay & Boyle, 1994; MacKay, 2007). Research has also shown that systemic working approaches were preferred by EPs, as suggested within existing studies (O'Hagan & Swanson, 1983; Norwich, 2005). It is perceived that

disparities between EP and school staff expectations is an international phenomenon, with replicated findings observed in America (Farrell et al., 2010; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004), Australia (Bell & McKenzie, 2013), across a variety of countries in Europe (Ahtola & Kiiski-Maki, 2014; Farrell *et al.,* 2005), and in China (Wang, Ni & Ding, 2016).

4.1. Teaching Staff

Research has suggested that school professionals and EPs have expectations that EPs will engage in direct work with pupils and focus on assessment work (Kelly & Gray, 2000; Farrell et al., 2005). Atkinson, Regan and Williams (2006) presented a case study of three Year 5 class teachers, who reported addressing problems, assessment and work with parents as central roles of the EP. The authors suggest that these teachers had a lack of awareness of the broader range of services the EP could offer the wider school. Furthermore, Kelly and Gray (2000) also reported that from a sample of 500 school professionals did not consistently perceive there to be an EP role in systemic working based in school improvement. EP involvement in wider-school issues could be considered a form of unnecessary duplication from school professional perspectives (O'Hagan & Swanson, 1983).

Similar outcomes have also been noted in multi-national studies. Ahtola and Kiiski-Mäki (2014) conducted a study in Finland exploring how school professionals, including teachers and head teachers, construed what they needed from the EP service. It was found that consultation was deemed important by teachers but not as important as direct therapeutic approaches with the pupils, with systemic work viewed as the least valued approach. Again, schools reported that they would prefer EPs to undertake further individual therapeutic work with pupils and take on a more 'expert' role than EPs were willing to do (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014).

Despite this disparity in expectations, other research has indicated that teachers and EPs

show overall similarities regarding their aspirations for EP involvement. In development of the Consultation Model, Wagner (1995) asked for the views of school professionals and EPs on what could be improved regarding EP involvement. Both professional groups reported hopes for the EP to deliver a broader range of services and work with staff more preventatively. As far back as 1970, similar results were found by Hibbert (1971), and more recently by Farrell et al. (2010) in a study across the UK and North America. In both studies, teachers reported that they valued the services of the EP but held concerns about the amount of time that the psychologist spent on psychometric testing and requested further preventive and consultative collaborative work (Anthony, 1999). These findings contradict the notion that teachers value the 'traditional' roles of the EP, as previously suggested (McKay, 2002). The replication of similar findings in 1971 and in 2010 could suggests consistency over time towards a preference for further preventative rather than reactive working.

It could be the case that teachers' perceptions of the EP role are skewed by the perception of EP time spent on certain activities. For example, there is evidence to suggest that teachers have different perceptions of the frequency with which EPs carry out certain tasks. Farrell et al., (2006) found that school professionals reported that EPs conducted assessment with individual children termly (37%) or rarely (48%), compared with EP responses claiming they conducted assessment monthly (13%), or weekly (81%), suggesting disparity between views. It may be that teachers have differing constructions of what 'assessment' may encompass (Stringer, Powell & Burton., 2006). It is also possible that the researchers did not ask an EP/teacher sample who work directly with each other, therefore creating a misrepresentation in the portrayal of outcomes.

4.2. Senior Management Staff

It could be that certain expectations arise from senior management within a school. MacKay and Boyle (1994 2007) wished to explore whether head teachers' perceptions of the EP role were changing alongside the changes occurring within the EP profession. The authors completed a two-part study in which they asked mainstream primary and secondary head teachers about their perceptions of the roles and/or functions of the EP. In part one (1994), the three services delivered by the EP deemed most effective by a sample of 117 head teachers included individual assessment (61%), advising teachers(19%), and working with the individual pupils (25%), suggesting greater perceived value of direct and advisory work. In part 2 (2007), involving 112 primary and 24 secondary head teachers, the three highest rated activities were individual assessment, working with parents and pupil support. The findings indicate that overall, head teachers appeared to value more direct EP roles and/or functions; this could be indicative of a reluctance to change methods of working that have previously been considered effective.

Research suggests that head teachers are more inclined towards conducting research projects e.g. small scale projects to allow further exploration of school based areas of interest (MacKay, 2007). Anderman (2011) argues that research is essential for evidence-based practice and a significant challenge for EPs is ensuring that research truly impacts upon and influences policy and practice. One way to approach this could be to build research partnerships within schools to build school staff understanding of the importance of research (Anderman, 2011). Working closely with head teachers, such as attending planning meetings, could bring opportunities for EPs to engage in more systemic-level work such as research projects.

Given that head teachers may not have day-to-day contact with the EP, their views on the most effective methods of facilitating change may not be in line with views of other school professionals, or indeed, the EPs themselves. It is possible that head teachers are not as informed of the work conducted by the EP as SENCos are and therefore are unaware of the broader options for EP service delivery. However, SENCos' views may be affected by those in managerial positions, therefore, it is vital that EPs strive to work with a broad range of staff within any given school. .

4.3. Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators

Despite the breadth of research devoted to exploring school staff perceptions of EPs, there has been a comparative dearth of research exploring SENCo perceptions. The SENCo role is a UK-based role in place since 1994 (Cole, 2005). The SENCo has responsibility for the day to day implementation of legislation supporting CYP in England and Wales. Despite close working with EPs, there is research evidence to suggest incongruities in SENCos' perceptions of most effective EP practice which may be impeding effective partnerships between them, which in turn impacts on their working relationship.

A guiding study for the current research was conducted by Ashton and Roberts (2006). The study is one of only a few portraying a direct comparison between SENCo and EP views of the EP role. Nine EPs and 58 SENCos in England were asked what they felt was most valuable and unique about the role of the EP. EPs reported: good relationships with schools, changing perspectives of staff, collating views of the pupil, individual assessment and intervention. EPs also stated a preference to work a whole-school level offering a wider range of services; the authors note that the EPs' views "reflected the consultative, interactionist, systemic perspective" (Ashton & Roberts, 2006, p 118). In contrast, SENCos valued the more 'traditional' role of EPs (i.e. assessment, report

writing and the provision of strategies). These findings highlight a recent divide in perceptions of individual-level and systemic work between EPs and SENCos. Buck (2015) noted a possible explanation for this divide: school professionals may resist moving towards a systemic or 'context dependent' viewpoint to avoiding shifting a wider level of responsibility onto the school. An unpublished doctoral thesis by Smith (2012) focusing on outcomes in one local authority in Wales found that EPs perceived their roles as more systemic or facilitative, whereas SENCos again tended to value the more 'traditional' EP role e.g., individual assessment, suggesting the same situation in Wales as in England. A continuation of discord in perceptions of most valuable practice could be a threat to effective and cohesive working.

Ashton and Roberts (2006) reported that four of the 58 SENCos expressed interest in systemic working but felt they could not prioritise this method of working due to external pressures. Davies, Howes and Farrell (2008) suggest that this is a result of a systemic pressure on schools. It could be that SENCos remain assessment-focused as a result of necessity, to ensure each child receives resources and funding that they are entitled to, both for the young person's best outcomes and for the school as a whole (Cole, 2005; Topping & Lauchlan, 2013). It could be the case that SENCos and EPs aspire to the same outcomes and have a shared vision of effective EP practice, but contextual factors at a local authority or national level may present a barrier to a shared view and SENCos reported preference for assessment work may be a result of system requirements (Magi & Kikas, 2009).

In Finland, Ahtola and Kisski-Maki (2014) found that special education teachers rated all functions of the EP as less highly than mainstream teachers. The authors argue this outcome was reflective of a more realistic attitude towards the psychologist from the perspective of special education teachers, due to their experience of working closely with the psychologist and an increased understanding that an issue cannot be fixed by a

specific approach. This outcome may reflect a culture specific understanding of inclusion and SEN which may not be directly transferable the UK due to differences within educational systems. Furthermore, the special education teachers in Finland may not directly equate to the SENCos in the UK, which suggests lack of generalisability of the study to the Welsh context.

5. Summary

A review of the literature posits that the EP profession experiences external and internal change drivers that influence EP practice, and in turn, their working partnerships with school-based colleagues (Gersch, 2009). Overall, it appeared that the main wish of educational professionals was that the EP was more readily available (Ahtola & Kiiski-Maki, 2014; Anthony, 1999)). Generally, consultation is deemed important by teachers but not as important as therapeutic approaches with the pupils and families, either individually or in groups (Cording, 2011).

In terms of individual level working, the review indicated that there are currently widespread expectations that an EP will work directly with pupils within a therapeutic role, possibly due to a lack of understanding of the distinct role of the EP as unique from professionals working in a service such as CAMHS. Socio-political or cultural factors could have impacted upon these outcomes. For example, school psychologists in other countries may assume more of an active therapeutic role than EPs typically do in the UK (Farrell, et al., 2005).

Input from EPs in the form of psychometric assessments appear to be valued by school professionals (Ashton & Roberts, 2006) but there is little evidence to suggest that schools professionals wish for EPs to engage in more assessment work (Farrell, et al., 2005). The requests for assessment from schools could be a result system requirements, as is demonstrated by the legislation focusing on the provision of statements of SEN

(Topping & Lauchlan, 2013). It could also be argued that, within a system where SEN is still 'diagnostic', numerical data is seen as more valuable and deemed more 'empirical' than qualitative data.

The research, however, does imply that school professionals would be open to EPs working in more systemic ways, but not at the cost of traditional approaches (Farrell, et al., 2005) SENCos may also feel unable prioritise systemic working above individual casework or therapeutic approaches due to contextual limitations (Cole, 2005; Davies, Howes & Farrell, 2008). Alternatively, this outcome may be a result of teachers being unaware of the broad range of services an EP can offer (Atkinson, Regan & Williams, 2006) or derived from a sense that the EP should not be involved in school improvement work (O'Hagan & Swanson, 1983).

Overall, the research indicates instances of aligned working, and instances of hopes for a more unified view of EP practice. However, a divergence in expectations of the EP role is also evident from a range of studies conducted in a variety of contexts (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Atkinson, Regan & Williams, 2006; Bell & McKenzie, 2013; Boyle, 2014). This lack of clarity could be a result of a poorly defined role within a context in which the service user dictates services provided. Consequently, the outcomes remain inconclusive, suggesting a need for further exploration. In light of the new educational reforms in England and Wales, it is argued that this is an optimal time to explore the issues highlighted in more depth.

6. Study Rationale

The literature review indicates a prevalence of differing views of the EP role within the research between school professionals and EPs. The importance of clarity and 'joined-up' working between schools and EPs is emphasised and needs to be reviewed regularly

(Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). The role of the EP continues to be debated and developed in England and Wales (Buck, 2015; ALN Code of Practice, WG, 2016; SEND Code of Practice, 2014). With proposed changes to the role of the ALNCO outlined within the new ALN Code of Practice in Wales, it is essential to explore perceptions of this role and facilitators and barriers to effective collaboration between EPs and SENCos in this context.

A broad overview of the views of SENCos and EPS across Wales is essential considering the imminent implementation of the Code of Practice (WG, 2017). The information obtained from this research will add to the existing literature, with an intention of developing a more unified vision of EP involvement in schools.

6.1. Research Aims

The current research study aims to do the following. Firstly, gain further understanding of perceptions of EPs and SENCos working in Wales and explore any current key differences and/or similarities in these perceptions of effective EP practice (Burnham, 2013; Buck 2015). Secondly, to explore EP and SENCo perceptions of effective collaboration and to highlight key areas of similarity and difference in these perceptions. It is hoped the outcomes of the current research will assist in informing improvements to collaboration between the EP and the SENCo in practice, in light of recent legislative change.

6.2. Research Questions and Hypotheses

The current study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the key differences and/or similarities between EP and SENCo constructions of 'effective' EP practice (i.e. facilitating positive change within a school for a child or young person)? Based on the above literature, this study aims to test the following hypotheses (at an alpha level of < .05.)

- Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant difference in SENCo and EP perceptions of effective EP service delivery.

- Hypothesis 2: The SENCo sample will report items relating to individual-level working as more effective than the EP sample will.

- Hypothesis 3: The EP sample will report items relating to systemic-level working as more effective than the SENCo sample will.

2. What do EPs and SENCos construe as facilitators and/or barriers to effective collaborative working?

3. What are the key differences/similarities in perceptions of facilitators and barriers to effective collaborative working between EPs and SENCos?

4. What do EPs and SENCos suggest could be implemented in future to increase effective collaboration?

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Educational Psychologist and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator Constructions of Effective Collaborative Working:

An Exploratory Study

Part B: Empirical Study

Abstract

The professional identity of educational psychologists (EPs) and the development of the profession have been recurring themes within recent theoretical and empirical literature (Love, 2009). A sense of uncertainty about the role has been argued to exist for both EPs themselves and for those working closely with EPs e.g., school professionals (Woods, 2012). An expansive literature illustrates discrepancies in expectations of the roles and functions of the EP between EPs and school professionals (e.g., Ashton & Roberts, 2006). The current study aimed to review EPs' and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators' (SENCo) constructions of effective EP practice and constructions of facilitators and barriers to effective collaborative working.

A mixed methods design involved collection of qualitative and quantitative analysis via questionnaires and focus groups. Data analysis revealed considerable agreement between the professionals involved with a few areas of discrepancy. Seven superordinate themes emerged from the qualitative analysis including: (1) Interpersonal Relationships; (2) Understanding of Roles; (3) Value of EP involvement; (4) Clarity of the EP role; (5) the School System; (6) the Wider Context; and (7) Dream and Design. Key similarities and differences between responses are presented and the implications of these outcomes in relation to the role of the EP are discussed.

1. Introduction

1.1. The Role of the Educational Psychologist

Defining the role of the educational psychologist (EP) is considered a contentious subject within the theoretical literature (Fallon, Woods and Rooney, 2010; Buck, 2015). In 2009, Love described the EP profession as experiencing an "identity crisis" (p. 3). Within England and Wales, a series of external and internal changes since the emergence of the profession are argued to have contributed to a lack of clarity regarding the role for both EPs themselves and for those who work closely with them (Woods, 2012; Ashton & Roberts, 2006). Existing research has shown discrepancies in perceptions of EP service delivery between a variety of school professionals and EPs within a variety of mainstream education settings in both UK-based and multi-national studies (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014; Farrell, Jimerson, Kalambouka, & Benoit, 2005; Gilman & Gabriel, 2004; Ashton & Roberts, 2006).

External change drivers such as the historical development of the role as 'assessor' (Farrell, 2010) and the introduction of a statutory role which focused on individual level working (Education Act, 1981) may have shaped external expectations of EPs (Faupel & Norgate, 1993). An increase in multi-agency working may also have created a lack of clarity about the role in terms of the EP's unique contribution (Hutchings & Williams, 2014). The EP role has experienced on-going reform in England with the implementation of a new Code of Practice (SEND Code of Practice, DfE, 2014) and the introduction of traded services (Lee & Woods, 2017). Further change is imminent in Wales with the introduction of the draft Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code of Practice (Welsh Government, 2017).

Internal drivers for change may also have sparked a lack of certainty about the role within the profession, such as speculation regarding difficulty defining the client and therefore difficulty defining the exact role of the EP (MacKay, 2002). Other

contributing factors may be: debate surrounding the EPs' unique contribution (e.g., Ashton & Roberts, 2006); the sheer diversity of practice models within the profession (Burnham, 2013; Wicks, 2013); a lack of communication regarding the role with other professionals (Law, 2008); and finally, an incongruity between school expectations and the reality of EP service (Farrell et al., 2005; Wagner, 2000). Therefore a current need is highlighted to address the lack of clarity regarding the role of the EP amongst school professionals (Ashton & Roberts, 2006).

1.2. The Importance of Collaborative Working

Perceptions and expectations of school professionals are arguably the most influential factor in determining an EP's work, therefore, there is a clear need to ensure that school staff have a shared understanding of the EP role (Farrell et al., 2005). However, it has been argued that teachers have a limited understanding of the broad roles and functions of the EP (Gilman & Medway, 2007; Atkinson, Squires, Bragg, Muscutt, & Wasilewski, 2014). Farrell et al., (2005) suggest that mutual understanding of the roles of EPs and school professionals has a major impact on the success of a EPs work. Therefore, integral to this process is the need for a unified view of EP involvement and collaborative working between school professionals and EPs (Rothì, Leavey & Best, 2008). A lack of an agreed understanding of the EP role could also lead to schools requesting less EP involvement either for school wide issues or for individual pupil involvement, which could leave both schools and EP services at a disadvantage (Farrell et al., 2005).

1.3. School Professionals' Constructions of the EP role

Legally, every school must have a designated special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCos) who has responsibility for the special educational needs of children and young people in their setting. A key aspect of the role includes working closely with EPs and other support services, as enshrined in the draft Code of Practice (WG, 2016). Studies from 2000 and 2005 have shown that EPs spend 48% of their working time in schools, with SENCos co-ordinating these visits and working more closely with the EP than any other school staff member (Kelly & Gray, 2000; Cole, 2005). There is a scarcity of literature that explores SENCo perceptions of effective practice and how EPs and SENCos feel they could work more effectively together in future, with only one UK-based published study in this area.

Ashton and Roberts (2006) carried out a study involving eight EPs and 22 SENCos and explored what they found most valuable about EP involvement. The authors report that SENCos valued the more 'traditional' role of EPs, defined as "advice giving and individual assessment." (Ashton and Roberts, 2006; p. 188). In contrast, EPs preferred to work preventatively and systemically, offering a wider range of services to schools, including indirect work and consultation. The results also revealed that EPs viewed their consultative and systemic approaches to working as a part of the unique contribution of the EP. SENCos, on the other hand, did not perceive these functions as a key aspect of the EP role. A more recent unpublished doctoral thesis study involving 26 SENCos and 14 EPs completed in 2012 also revealed similar outcomes within one local authority in Wales (Smith, 2012). Internationally, researchers note that there seems to be widespread discordance between EP and school professional views of the EP role which may be impacting the overall development of the role and the use of services (Bell & McKenzie, 2013). In Finland, Ahtola and Kiiski-Mäki (2014) found that school professionals would prefer EPs to undertake further individual therapeutic work with

pupils, provide more strategic approaches and take on a more expert role than school psychologists felt was appropriate (Ahtola & Kiiski-Mäki, 2014)

1.4. The Current Study

The current research aims to explore whether there remains a discordant view of the EP role between EPs and SENCos in Wales. In the light of recent changes, it is timely to explore how SENCos and EPs currently view their working partnership and to explore facilitators of and/or barriers to more effective collaboration. These findings will add to the existing literature, providing relevant updated information to inform future practice as to how EPs and SENCos work most effectively in collaboration.

1.5. Research Questions and Hypotheses

The current study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the key differences and/or similarities between EP and SENCo constructions of 'effective' EP practice (i.e. facilitating positive change within a school for a child or young person)? Based on the above literature, this study aims to test the following hypotheses (at an alpha level of < .05.)

   - Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant difference in SENCo and EP perceptions of effective EP service delivery.

   - Hypothesis 2: The SENCo sample will report items relating to individual-level working as more effective than the EP sample will.

   - Hypothesis 3: The EP sample will report items relating to systemic-level working as more effective than the SENCo sample will.

2. What do EPs and SENCos construe as facilitators and/or barriers to effective collaborative working?

3. What are the key differences/similarities in perceptions of facilitators and barriers to effective collaborative working between EPs and SENCos?

4. What do EPs and SENCos suggest could be implemented in future to increase

   effective collaboration?

2. Methodology

2.1. Epistemology, Ontology and Design

The current study adopted a critical realist ontological stance. This paradigm is one which allowed the researcher to present one interpretation of 'reality' whilst acknowledging the existence of multiple interpretations (Bergin, Wells & Owen, 2008; Clegg, 2005). Observable patterns occurring within the data can allow the researcher to draw tentative conclusions about the exact realities of the world while retaining critical awareness of the subject matter (Cruikshanks, 2004). This paradigm also recognises the fragility of knowledge, given the multitude of influences and contradictions that may exist in the real world (Lund, 2005).

Critical realism advocates the use of multiple measures of assessment, therefore a mixed-methods design was utilised. This design produces complementary data allowing the researcher to interpret the data with both numerical precision and qualitative narrative. This provided a depth of comprehension that might have been overlooked had only a single method of data collection been adopted (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Mixed-methods can be particularly beneficial in increasing the likelihood of generalisability when informing theory and practice. Therefore questionnaires and focus groups were selected as appropriate tools to answer the research questions (Cresswell & Plano-Clark, 2007).

The questionnaires, distributed in May 2016, aimed to provide an overview of the current context by assessing participant perceptions of the effectiveness of EP practice. The focus groups, held in June and July 2016, were an integral aspect of the research process in relation to answering the presented research questions and contributing to the field. Triangulation and interaction of the qualitative and quantitative data occurred at the interpretation stage of the research process.

2.2. Participants

Only participants working in Wales were sought, to ensure a focus on perceptions of collaborative working within the Welsh context. Thus this study may inform future EP practice in light of the current legislative change (WG, 2017). The inclusion criteria required that all participants had experience of working with at least one EP or SENCo and were willing to contribute to the research.

2.2.1. Educational Psychologists

Twenty Principal EPs (PEPs) working in twenty-two educational psychology services (EPSs) across Wales were contacted (at the time of data collection). Fourteen PEPs responded to initial contact and gave consent to distribute the questionnaires to their colleagues; forty-two questionnaires were returned from a range of geographical locations. Seven EPs agreed to participate in one of two focus groups (FGs), in both rural and urban locations in Wales. The sample pool of EPs working in Wales was 228 (HCPC, personal contact, September 2016) which provides an estimate of an 18.4% response rate for the questionnaires.

2.2.2. Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators

Only mainstream Local Authority (LA) maintained primary sector schools were included. EPs spend the majority of their time working within mainstream primary schools therefore primary SENCos are clearly vital colleagues of EPs (Kelly & Gray, 2000). It could be argued that primary schools in England and Wales have more consistent staffing structures than other educational settings e.g. secondary schools. Therefore it could be that SENCos are more likely to have more direct experience of working with an EP (Kelly & Gray, 2000). As such, primary SENCos may be more familiar with the roles and activities an EP may engage in than SENCos working within larger secondary schools. Furthermore, the inclusion of SENCos working within

specialist or secondary settings might have introduced extraneous variables which may not be applicable across all settings.

A full list of mainstream Local Education Authority (LA) maintained primary schools in Wales was obtained from a Welsh Government (WG) primary school database. Every 10th school was contacted to ensure random and representative sampling of SENCos[2] across Wales. Seventy-two questionnaires were returned; eleven SENCos participated in one of three FGs, equating to approximately 6.8% of the sample pool[3] (53.7% of those contacted).

2.3. Methods

2.3.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaires were designed for the purposes of the current study (Appendices H and I). Completed on a voluntary basis, they were designed to be short and accessible to ensure a good return rate (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011). The questionnaires included questions regarding relevant demographic data, such as length of experience within roles. Nine items were carefully considered in relation to the research aims (Gillham, 2007). Diversity in question type was included to retain participant interest (Bryman, 2016). The list of core roles and/or functions of the EP (presented in questions 5a and 5b, appendices H and I) were collated through a thorough literature search exploring roles and functions of the EP (e.g. Woods & Farrell, 2006; Ahtola and Kiiski-Maki, 2014). These were reviewed against an evaluative list of roles and/or functions

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[2] In Wales SENCos may also be referred to as Additional Learning Need Co-ordinators (ALNCos) in line with the recent legislative changes to the education system in Wales (WG, 2015). Participants with either the SENCo or ALNCo title were invited to participate.

[3] Only primary schools described as 'infants, primary and juniors' in the WG primary school database were included to ensure consistency in type of school contacted, making a total sample pool of 1054 schools.

sent annually to schools from the largest EPS in Wales. This was to ensure that the content was appropriate and accessible to both participant samples.

Participants were given an option to provide their contact details on the questionnaires to indicate whether they would be interested in taking part in the focus group. The responses from the questionnaires informed the focus groups regarding who may take part in a focus group. However, it was not a requirement for participants to have completed a questionnaire in order to attend the focus group.

2.3.2. Pilot Study

An early version of the questionnaire was piloted with three EPs and three SENCos. Participants were asked to give responses and feedback on their experience completing the questionnaire (Matthews & Ross, 2010). Questions 5a and 5b were initially designed to include a ranking rather than scaling measure (Appendices H and I). Pilot participants were hesitant to rank such items due to the subjective and circumstantial nature of such work, therefore a scaling system was adopted instead which allowed a more flexible perception to be recorded (Bryman, 2016). Pilot responses were not included within the final count. This process increased the face validity and reliability of the questionnaire.

2.3.3. Focus Group

Participants were invited to take part in a focus groups (FGs) if they had indicated interest following questionnaire completion. FGs were selected as a method that would produce authentic data with increased ecological validity, providing an opportunity for participants to contribute and share information (Kitzinger, 2005; Morgan, 1997; Krueger & Casey, 2015). FGs also provide a group perspective which can be tentatively used as a representation of the views of a professional group (Guvå & Hylander, 2012).

Here, an Appreciative Inquiry[4] (AI) approach was adopted within the groups (Passmore & Hain, 2005; Appendix J). This ensured the discussions were constructive and solution-oriented. Participants were prompted to:

- share positive collaborative experiences of, and perceived facilitators and barriers to, effective collaborative working (*'discover'*);
- explore how collaboration could be developed or improved in future (*'dream'*); and
- explore how this could be implemented in practice (*'design'*).

The prompts were open-ended to enable the participants to talk freely and enable clarification through questioning and discussions between participants (Bryman, 2016). The researcher followed the same prompts for both FG discussions to ensure consistency between groups.

2.4. Procedure

Gatekeeper letters were sent to 20 PEPs (Appendix A) and 134 head teachers (HTs) (Appendix B) via email to introduce the research and invite individuals to participate in the study. This was accompanied by information sheets (Appendices C & D) and consent forms (Appendices E & F) for the appropriate participant sample. PEPs and HTs were asked to return the consent forms to the researcher and distribute the information letter and questionnaires to their colleagues. Fourteen PEPs and 5 HTs responded and gave consent for EPs/SENCos to take part in the research project. The questionnaires were available as paper copies or through Survey Monkey, an online survey host (Nulty, 2008). 14 EPs and 51 SENCos completed and returned paper questionnaires, while 28 EPs and 21 SENCos completed an online version.

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[4] AI is a change management approach based in positive psychology and incorporates four stages of discussion: 'Discover', 'Dream', 'Design', and 'Delivery' (sometimes referred to as 'Destiny') (Passmore & Hain, 2005). The 'Delivery' stage often involves participants developing agreed actions, which was not felt to be appropriate within the scope of the current study given its intention to be exploratory.

Participants indicated interest in FG attendance following questionnaire completion by providing their contact details on a detachable sheet of paper. After two months, 4 FGs were held: three homogenous groups (7 SENCos; 2 SENCos; 3 EPs) and one heterogeneous group (2 SENCos, 4 EPs). The groups lasted between 50-70 minutes, and were recorded using a secure audio device. The recordings were then transcribed by the researcher and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006; Appendix L). A debrief form was made available to participants, PEPs and HTs following data collection (Appendix K).

2.5. Ethical Considerations

The ethical concerns posed by the study and a summary of how these issues were addressed are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Overview of Ethical Issues and Researcher Actions

Ethical Issue	Researcher Actions
Informed Consent	• Participants were provided with information sheets (appendices C and D) and consent forms (Appendices E and F) prior to participation. • Prior to attending any FGs, participants were provided with the FG prompts. Participants were given a second consent form at the start of the FGs (Appendix G). • Participants indicated that they understood the outcomes of this research project would be used to inform a doctorate level thesis project and the anonymised raw data would be kept indefinitely. • Participants were informed at all stages that the outcomes of this research would not necessarily influence future practice.
Confidentiality and Anonymity	• Participants were made aware that the information obtained would only be used for the specified purposes and that no individual participant, EPS or location would be identifiable within any written report. • Participants were asked to provide their contact details on a detachable sheet kept separately from the questionnaire, or to contact the researcher directly to indicate interest in attending a FG. • All transcripts from the FGs were anonymised within one month. Participants were informed that within the mixed transcript that SENCos would be identifiable as 'S' and

	psychologists as 'P'. Any names or locations mentioned were anonymised. • Prior to starting the FG, the limits of confidentiality were clearly communicated to participants. They were informed that any personal information released was inevitably shared with the other participants as well as the researcher (Morgan, 1997). Participants were asked to make a verbal agreement to protect the confidentiality of any information disclosed during the FG. However, they were advised that confidentiality and anonymity could not be guaranteed.
Participant Discomfort	• To avoid participant discomfort during the FGs, a solution-focused AI approach was adopted to inform the discussion (Nestor & Schutt, 2014; Passmore & Hain, 2005). This was considered particularly important within the heterogeneous FGs where EP and SENCo colleagues had worked together previously.
The right to withdraw	• Participants were informed that they could withdraw their participation at any point up until the raw data was transcribed, at which point individual data would no longer be identifiable.
Debrief	• Head teachers and PEPs were provided with a debrief form (Appendix K) for their information and to distribute to their colleagues following questionnaire completion. • Participants were debriefed following the FGs and opportunities for questions were available at this point. • Participants had the researcher's contact details should they have any questions or concerns.

2.6. Data Analysis

2.6.1. Statistical Analysis

The numerical data available from the questionnaire was analysed using descriptive

statistics to establish the most commonly used methods of practice, and the perceived

most and least effective methods of practice for both sample groups (Field, 2009). This

data was put into SPSS (the Statistical Package for Social Scientists) and the

assumptions for normality explored. A Kolmogorov-Smirnov[5] (KS) test was carried out on all variables to test whether the data was normally distributed (Appendix M).

2.6.1. Thematic Analysis

The qualitative data was then analysed using the six steps of thematic analysis devised by Braun and Clark (2006). This included the data from the FG transcripts and the data from the open-ended questions in the questionnaire. Thematic analysis is a method of qualitative analysis which is appropriate for use with six or more participants to identify 'patterns' or 'themes' occurring within the data (Braun & Clark, 2006). Two research colleagues independently coded the transcriptions for comparison, with the aim of reducing researcher bias in the codes and themes selected (Gilham, 2007). Following this stage, the final themes produced were reviewed and approved by a representative participant from each of the focus groups held.

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[5] A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was selected because it is appropriate for use with large data sets (N > 50 samples) (Field, 2009).

3. Results and Analysis

3.1. Participant Information

Questionnaires from forty-two EPs and seventy-two SENCos were returned and analysed. The largest subsection of EPs who responded with demographic information were main grade EPs working within Local Authority funded services. 65% of SENCo participants had worked with 0-3 EPs throughout their role, 29% had worked with 4-6 EPs, and 6% had worked with 7-9 EPs. Years of participant experience in their current roles was also explored demonstrating a range of experience for each group (Figure 1).

EP responses   **SENCo responses**
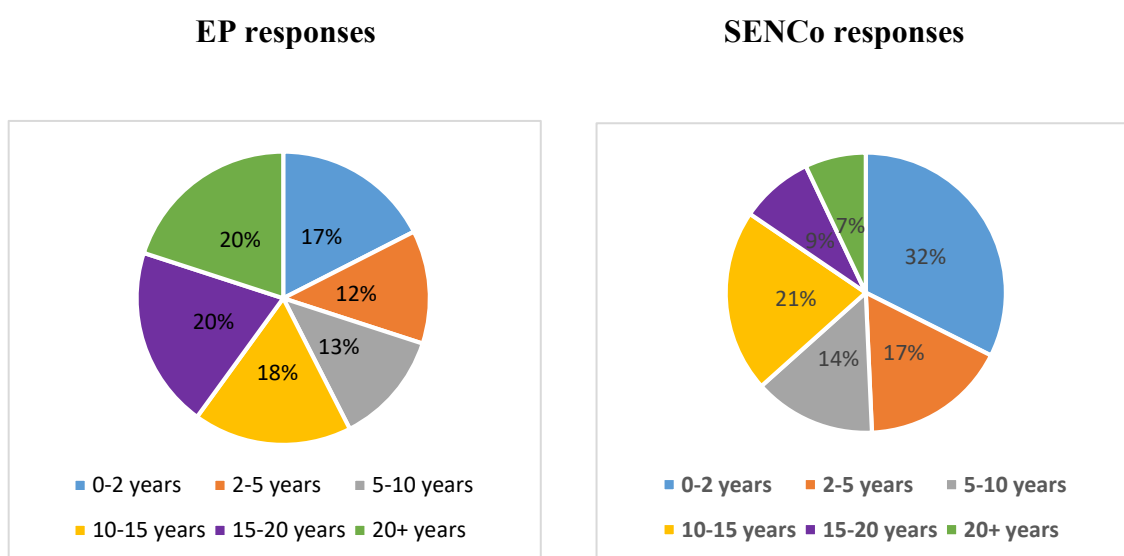
Figure 1: Pie charts to show years of experience in role for EPs and SENCos

3.2. Questionnaire Results

The data is presented in a descriptive manner in line with each question included in the questionnaire. The responses for open-ended questions numbered 3, 9 and 10 are included within the thematic analysis in section 3.3.

Q1: How would you describe the role of the EP?

Participant responses to the above question were collated and presented within a word cloud[6] where the largest words presented indicate the most frequently used words selected to describe the EP role by each professional group (Figure 2).
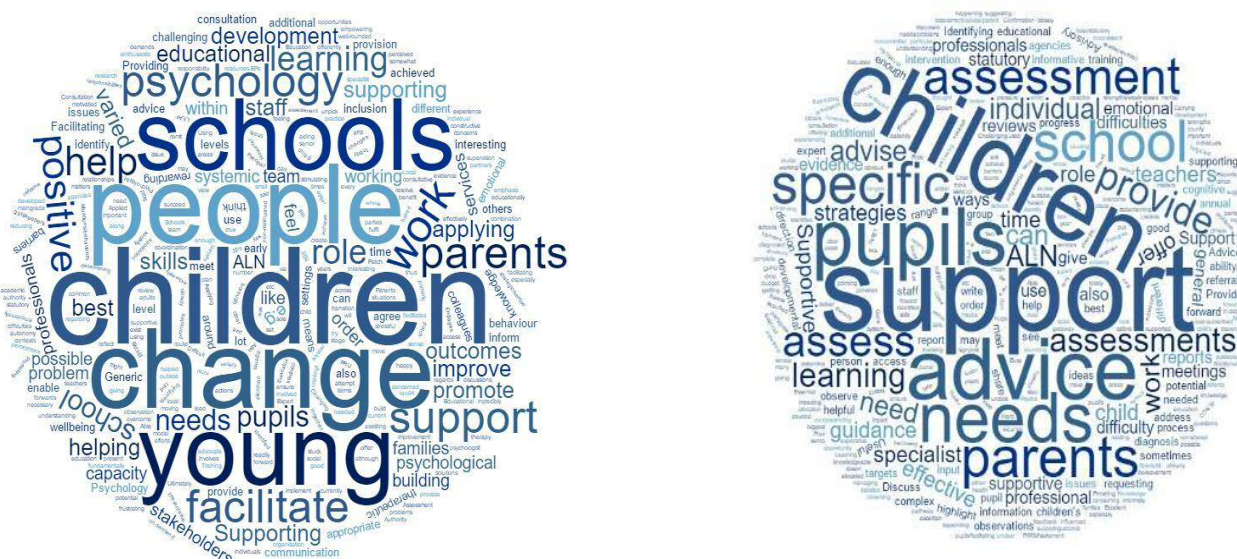
Figure 2: Word clouds to illustrate EP (left) and SENCo (right) perceptions of the EP role

Table 3: Table to Show Frequency of Words Chosen to Describe the EP Role

EP	Word	Frequency	SENCo	Word	Frequency
	children	23		support	28
	school	23		children	20
	change	21		assess	18
	people	19		pupil	17
	young	17		advice	17
	support	16		provide	13
	role	15		need	13
	help	12		school	12
	work	11		parent	10
	facilitate	11		specific	10

Q2: How effective at facilitating change is the service that you / your EP provide(s) to your school overall?

Participants reported their perceptions of the effectiveness EP involvement overall on a

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[6] The word clouds were created using an online resource '*wordle*' (www.wordle.net). The raw data was inputted into this resource which generated a word cloud based on the frequencies of words used within the same participant sample; the words used most frequently are presented as largest. Commonly used words e.g. 'the' were not included.

Likert scale of 1-5 (1 = very ineffective and 5 = very effective). A Mann-Whitney U test[7] revealed an insignificant difference between EP (Mean = 3.40; Standard Deviation = .70) and SENCo (Mean =3.18; Standard Deviation = 1.02) perceptions of the effectiveness of the EP (U = 1189.5, Z = -1.309, p = .190). Therefore, hypothesis 1 (there will be a significant difference in SENCo and EP perceptions of effective EP service delivery) can be rejected.

Q4: Please rank the following items in order of effectiveness.

EPs and SENCos were asked to rank their perceptions of a series of items in order of overall *effectiveness* (1 = most effective and 7 = least effective). The mode, or most commonly rated, responses for each item are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Ranked Modal Responses or Items

Item	EP Ranked Mode s	Item	SENCo Ranked Modes
Whole School work	1	Individual work with Pupils	1
Individual work with Staff	1	Individual work with Staff	2
Group work with Staff	2	Group work with Staff	2
Group work with Pupils	4	Individual work with Parents	3
Individual work with Parents	5	Group work with Pupils	5
Individual work with Pupils	6	Whole School work	6
Statutory work	7	Statutory work	7

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[7] The KS test of normality revealed that the data did not satisfy the assumption of normality (Appendix M), therefore Mann-Whitney U tests were selected as the most appropriate non-parametric equivalent to an independent t-test (Cribbie, Fiksenbaum, Keselman, & Wilcox, 2012).
P < .05 was set at the significance level for accepting research hypotheses (Field, 2009).

Q5a/b: When working within a typical mainstream primary school, please scale each item below based how effective you perceive each item in facilitating change, on an individual/whole-school level.

EPs and SENCos reported their perceptions of the effectiveness of different types of EP involvement on a Likert scale of 1-5 (where 1 = very ineffective and 5 = very effective), the first section focused on scaling the effectiveness of 'individual' items (Q5a; Figure 3). The second section focused on 'whole-school' or systemic items (Q5b, Figure 4).

	Consultation (teacher)	Observation (in class)	Consultation (SENCo)	Therapeutic work with pupil	Consultation parents)	Standardised attainment test	Dynamic assessment	Standardised cognitive assessment	Facilitating a multi-disciplinary meeting	Facilitating multi-disciplinary meeting (with pupil)
EP	4.07	3.20	3.90	3.47	3.93	2.64	3.05	2.90	3.79	3.83
SENCo	3.67	3.86	4.08	3.79	3.76	3.56	3.52	3.84	3.69	3.53

'Individual' level approaches

Effectiveness (where 0 = not effective at all and 5 = very effective)

Figure 3: Bar Chart to Show SENCo and EP Mean Responses re: Effectiveness of 'Individual' Level Approaches

	Group work with pupils	Planning Meetings	Staff training and development	Multi-disciplinary team meetings	School based research projects
EP	3.08	3.50	3.81	3.76	3.47
SENCo	3.17	3.20	3.66	3.63	2.70

Systemic level approaches
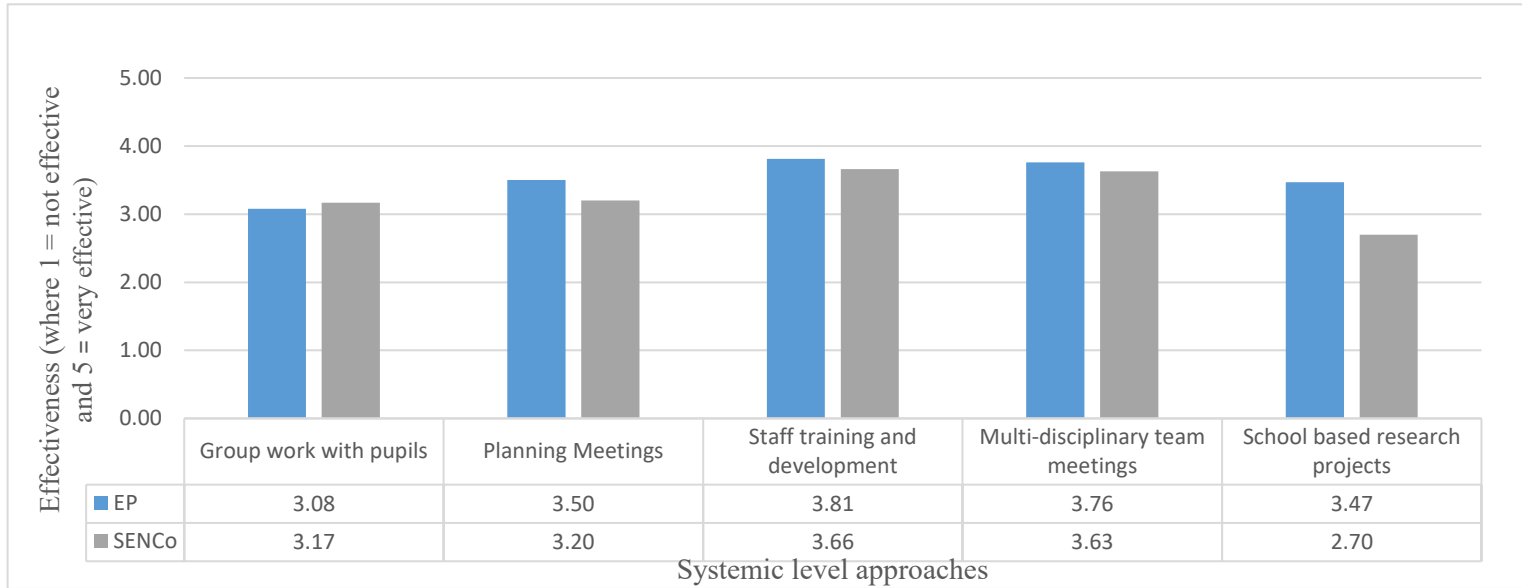
Figure 4: Bar Chart to Show SENCo and EP Mean Responses re: Effectiveness of 'Systemic' Level Approaches

Table 5: Table to Show Mean and Mode of Individual/Systemic Items (EP sample)

	EP responses	Mean	Mode
1	Consultation with class teacher	4.07	4
2	Consultation with parent(s)	3.93	4
3	Consultation with SENCo	3.90	4
4	Multi-disciplinary meeting: CYP present	3.83	4
5	Staff training and Development	3.81	4
6	Multi-disciplinary meeting: whole school	3.81	4
7	Multi-disciplinary meeting regarding one pupil	3.79	4
8	Planning Meetings	3.50	3
9	School based research projects	3.47	4
10	Therapeutic work with CYP	3.47	4
11	Observation of CYP	3.20	3
12	Group work/Intervention	3.08	3
13	Dynamic Assessment	3.05	3
14	Cognitive Assessment	2.90	3
15	Attainment Testing	2.64	3

Table 6: Table to show mean and mode of individual/systemic items (SENCo sample)

	SENCo responses	Mean	Mode
1	Consultation with SENCo	4.04	5
2	Observation of CYP	3.86	4
3	Cognitive Assessment	3.84	4
4	Therapeutic work with CYP	3.79	4
5	Consultation with parent(s)	3.76	4
6	Multi-disciplinary meeting regarding one pupil	3.69	4
7	Consultation with class teacher	3.67	4
8	Staff Training and Development	3.64	4
9	Multi-disciplinary meeting: whole school	3.63	4
10	Attainment Testing	3.56	3
11	Multi-disciplinary meeting: CYP present	3.53	4
12	Dynamic Assessment	3.52	4
13	Planning Meetings	3.22	3
14	Group work/Intervention	3.21	3
15	School based research projects	2.80	3

Following a pairwise deletion to remove missing data, a post-hoc Bonferroni correction

was applied which offered a more conservative alpha[8] to avoid inflating the Type I error

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[8] A Bonferroni correction involves dividing the *p* level (*p* = .05) by number of statistical tests conducted at any one time (in this case, 16). Therefore, the alpha used was p = .003.

rate[9] (Field, 2009). Statistical analysis revealed that the SENCo sample reported three

items as significantly more effective than the EP sample: 'observation' (U = 892.00, z =

-3.500, p = .000); 'attainment testing' (U = 62.00, z = -4.202, p = .000); and, 'cognitive

assessment' (U = 661.00, z = -4.504, p = .000). The data revealed a significant

difference between three items suggesting that SENCos reported individual-level

measures to be more effective, in partial support of Hypothesis 2 (the SENCo sample

will report items relating to individual-level working as more effective than the EP

sample will). No items were statistically significant in the 'systemic' data set, therefore

Hypothesis 3 (the EP sample will report items relating to systemic-level working as

more effective than the SENCo sample will) can be rejected.

An opportunity was provided for participants to suggest additional technique or

strategies that they felt were effective in facilitating change that were not included in the

questionnaire; these are shown in Table 8.

Table 7: Type and Frequency of Responses in the 'Other' Category

Other Responses	Individual or whole-school level	Rating	Number of times offered
Consultation meeting with parents and staff in school	Individual	5/5 (EP) 5/5 (EP)	2
Training for school staff	Individual	3/5 (EP) 4/5 (SENCo)	2
Target Monitoring and Evaluation forms	Individual	4/5 (EP)	1
Input around Inspection	Whole-school	4/5 (EP)	1
Group consultation with ALNCos from different schools	Whole-school	4/5 (EP)	1
Work with Senior Management Teams	Whole-school	5/5 (EP)	1
Helping schools to identify gaps in support network	Whole-school	4/5 (EP)	1
Modelling group intervention	Whole-school	No rating given	1

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[9] A Type I error refers to a false positive effect identified within the dataset which occurs based on statistical chance rather than a true effect (Field, 2009).

Q6/7. In four average working weeks:

- *How much individual to systemic working do you/does your EP conduct?*

- *How much individual to systemic working would you / would you like your EP to conduct, ideally?*

Participants were also asked to identify on a scale of 1-10 the ratio of individual to systemic they conduct or receive (where '1' indicated all 'individual' level work conducted, and '10' indicated all 'systemic' level work). This was compared with their perceptions of ideal service provision; the outcomes are presented in Figure 6. Although only 3/4 of the data sets met the assumptions of normality, a mixed ANOVA was used as it is robust in circumstances where assumptions are violated (Field, 2009).
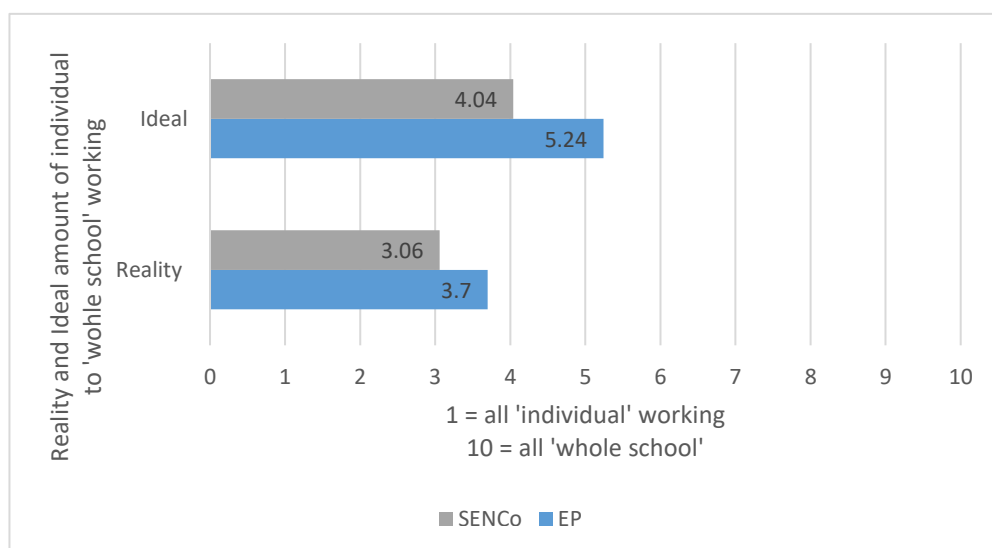
Figure 5: Bar Chart to Show Mean EP and SENCo Responses of Perceptions of Individual to Whole-School Working Completed by the EP in a 'Reality' and 'Ideal' Scenario

A two-way mixed ANOVA[10] was conducted with Scenario (ideal vs. reality) as a within-participants variable and Group (SENCo vs. EP) as a between-participants variable. No significant effect of the interaction of Group x Scenario was found ($F_{(1, 87)} = 1.655$, $p = .202$, $\eta p^2 = .019$) which indicates the gap between the 'reality' and

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[10] A two-way mixed analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was selected as ANOVAs are robust to violations of assumptions of normality (Field, 2009). A Kruskall Wallis, a non-parametric equivalent statistical test, was also completed and revealed the same outcomes of effects between and within groups. However, the ANOVA was selected to allow the exploration of the presence of an interaction between the participant groups and was therefore deemed the most appropriate method of analysis.

'ideal' occurred for both groups. However, there were main effects of Scenario (F (40, 53) = 20.468, p = .000. ηp^2 = .190) and Groups (F= 5.207 (1, 87), p = .025, ηp^2 = .056). This indicated that there was a significant difference between 'ideal' and 'reality' for both groups and between EP and SENCo responses as overall: EPs reported significantly higher outcomes (towards systemic working) than SENCos.

3.3. Qualitative Analysis

The data was thematically analysed following guidelines presented by Braun and Clark (2006) to ensure that the analysis was theoretically and methodically sound (Appendix L). 129 codes were condensed into seven overarching themes and 28 subthemes, presented below.

3.3.1. Interpersonal Factors

The first superordinate theme (Table 8) highlighted the importance of the interpersonal relationship between EP and SENCo. Key subthemes identified within this theme included: an established relationship over time and building a sense of trust; collaboration including delegation and negotiation about e.g., how to best use EP time; accessibility, including ease of working with the other, and finally, opportunities for regular contact and communication.

Table 8: Theme 1. Interpersonal Factors

Sub-theme	Evidence	
Established Relationship	EP: *"Once you know someone, you've worked with them for some time, they know your approach, how you approach issues"* **[FG3, 108-109]**	SENCo: *"Your EP probably knows your school inside out, trusts that you will make a referral when it's necessary…you're in that fortunate position with the relationship"* **[FG1, 519-521]**
Collaboration	EP: *"Between ourselves we seem to manage to erm, help each other decide, well 'you can do that aspect, I'll do that aspect'"*. **[FG4, 32-33]**	SENCo: *"We're better than the sum of the parts, aren't we, when we come together…We're all wanting the best for the child."* **[FG4, 580-585]**

Accessibility of key individuals	**EP:** *"Being able to work with the person, you know, who's got the most concerns is helpful"* **[FG3, 245]**	**SENCo**: *"Being able to contact your EP, I think, is key. ...Knowing that they are the other end of an email if needs be."* **[FG2, 53-56]**
Regular Contact	**EP:** *"I think a helpful thing as well… as much as you can is to do a summary at the end of a visit."* **[FG3, 661-662]**	**SENCo:** *"I think what works as well is a discussion between the Ed Psych and the SENCo first because we know the parents, we know the pupils"* **[FG4, 75-77]**

3.3.2. Understanding of Roles

The second theme captured the importance participants attributed to understanding the roles and responsibilities and pressures, upon their colleagues. Within this theme, SENCos acknowledged a need for further awareness of the EP role and an appreciation that EPs hold an in-depth understanding of the SENCo, and other staff members' roles. EPs identified a need to further enhance the profile of their role within the wider school.

Table 9: Theme 2: Understanding of roles

Sub-theme	Evidence	
EP of SENCo / staff	**EP:** *"I think we've got a very good understanding of the schools... the educational psychology service are very aware of the pressures on schools"* **[FG4, 575-577]**	**SENCo:** *"I think an EP having an awareness of what the SENCos role is, or what the class teachers' role is because they're getting a kind of, snapshot"* **[FG1, 508-509]**
Staff of EP	**EP:** *"I think there are a lot of misconceptions about the role of the EP, not necessarily with SENCos, because they've got more experience of working with us, but maybe teachers"* **[FG3, 356-358]**	**SENCo:** *"Perhaps they have unrealistic expectations. Some teachers do – they think the EP is going to come in and solve it, erm, you know. And they're disappointed that that isn't the case."***[FG1, 417-420]**
Enhancing profile of the EP role	**EP:** *"It opens up that conversation…you're not just constantly looking at special needs and individuals, you're talking about, kind of, groups of children, wellbeing, you're looking at expanding your role really."* **[FG3, 478-481]**	**SENCo:** *"Because it does actually say on the top [referral form] doesn't it - 'individual child, group' but then how do people actually refer a group?"***[FG1, 539-530]**

3.3.3. The Value of EP involvement

The third theme, *The Value of EP involvement,* identified key areas of EP involvement

that were recognised as highly valued by schools.

Table 10: Theme 3 Value of EP involvement

Sub-theme	Evidence	
Reports, advice and recommenda tions	EP: *"...schools just flick to the end of [the report] and there's a list of strategies that they can take to the teachers"* **[FG3, 344-347]**	SENCo: *"You have to have recommendations so you can follow them, and you're not going to digress. Without them, you are going to digress because so many things are thrown at us"* **[FG4, 61-62]**
Supporting Data	EP: *"If we do do a little bit of assessment, it's much more targeted and not generalised, it's much more for a purpose"* **[FG3; 33-35]**	SENCo: *"Obviously the main reason for having that EP visit in is so that you've got that supported data...if you want to put in a statutory assessment request"* **[FG1, 43-44]**
Clarification of a young person's needs	EP: *"The school sees the holistic...* *"It's not just the behaviour"* or *spelling or something. So you look at it globally as well, that really helps"* **[FG3, 512-514]**	SENCo: *"And information that [EPs] provide is a nudge, if you like, to our mind-set... So we get an insight into the child."* **[FG4, 131-133]**
Consultation	**Mixed Group:** EP*: "Sometimes people can get stuck can't they? We do. And certainly in schools, as you say, which are "go, go go" when you don't have the luxury sometimes just to sit back."* **[FG4, 103-106]** SENCo: *"And reflect, yeah. We don't. It's really difficult to, and that's the valuable part of it, if we can sit back and stand away."* **[FG4, 107-108]**	
Support	SENCo: *"[the EP] actually was brilliant because she was so calm and level and explaining [the child's needs] to the parent that it was hugely supportive to me professionally...a great asset to have."* **[FG1 167-168]**	
Neutral input	EP: *"It really helps that we're someone from the outside who comes in because, professionally...you can see things more clearly and you can compare between schools"* **[FG3, 547-550]**	SENCo: *"[The EP] hasn't got a vested interest in what she's saying, she's completely neutral".* **[FG2, 75-76]**

3.3.4. Clarity of the EP role

Clarity of the EP role encompassed three subthemes which were identified as areas for

development as they showed key areas of contradiction between EP and SENCo views.

Table 11: Theme 4: Clarity of the EP role

Sub-theme	Evidence	
Expectations of Effective Change	**EP:** *"So I think how you manage expectations at the start of the consultation then is really important because it changes the outcome, or at least how that outcome is viewed."* **[FG3; 457-459]** **Mixed group:** **SENCo:** *"No success. No success, and I know the problem now is in the next school and he's in the… he's in the secondary and the problems are there."* **[FG4 353-354]** **EP:** *"…But the way I would want you to see it as a professional person is that actually, that was a success for you as a school."* **[FG4, 384-385]**	
New and Different information	**EP:** *"It's not like this is revelatory information, you've discussed all that…So actually when you sent your information in, it's nothing new for them"* **[FG3; 251-255].**	**SENCo**: *"If it's a report that is just repeating what you've already said and perhaps you've put that in the referral and you've… for want of a better word, wasted an hour talking to the EP telling them what you've put in the referral and then it appears in the report"* **[FG1, 51-54]**
EP as Expert	**EP:** *"You're not being the expert coming in and telling them what to do, you're just there to investigate, and you're just there to find things out a bit more."* **[FG3, 631-632]**	**SENCo**: *"we just need someone, a professional to tell us exactly "actually this child is duh, duh, duh" you know? "And needs this…that information is totally precious."* **[FG4, 45-48]**

3.3.5. The School Context

Identified barriers to effective working including a variety of systemic factors from within the school system; this included expectations from teachers, senior management teams and parents and the pressures on the SENCo and school to meet certain requirements and demands.

Table 12: Theme 5: The School Context

Sub-theme	Evidence	
Data pressures on schools	EP: *"As EPs, obviously we have to be mindful of the data but actually that's certainly not my priority"* **[FG4, 512-513]**	SENCo: *"In an ideal world, data wouldn't be so important."* **[FG2, 372-373]**
School ethos of inclusion	EP: *"SEN is something that is seen as something that happens outside of the classroom…than something that affects the whole school"* **[FG3, 235-237]**	SENCo: *"People in the school need to be on the same page as well, there needs to be that ethos of transparency"* **[FG2, 52-53]**
Responsibility of staff	EP: *"It works when the school following a consultation, takes ownership of any agreements really and starts the intervention"* **[FG4, 53-54]**	SENCo: *"It's overwhelming rather than empowering, because now you think "we're responsible for this child's motor co-ordination, speech development, mental health, and in the middle of it we've got to teach them to read and write and count somewhere along the line."* **[FG2, 272-274]**
Staff wellbeing	EP: *"You can't ask somebody, who's already had it up to here and is overwhelmed with stress, to take on new interventions."* **[FG3, 528-534]**	SENCo: *"Teachers … SENCos, head teachers, will never have a work/life balance if you're going to have everything correct"* **[FG4, 557-558]**
Parents / families	EP: *"You understand, or they understand, they understand what your approach is but they say "but this is what the parents want"* **[FG3, 31-32]**	SENCo: *"We had one go from us as well, and you feel you've given that child so much, and you know that child is improving but sometimes the parents don't want them to improve"* **[FG4, 396-397]**

3.3.6. The Wider System

Wider systemic factors beyond the confines of the school system were also identified as potential barriers to effective working including the Subthemes 'Multi-agency professionals' and 'The local authority'. The time allocation process was a recurring theme identified as a barrier, due its lack of flexibility in managing the real world situations; a need was identified to access more or less time on an ad-hoc basis.

Table 13: Theme 6: The Wider Context

Sub-themes	Evidence	
Multi-agency professionals	**EP:** *"I think there are obviously other people in other teams who assume that we will provide 'certain pieces of information' [laughs] and that can become frustrating for us then because work is prescribed…"* **[FG3, 126-130]**	**SENCo:** *"Well my hand was being forced in a conference to make a referral that I didn't deem to be needed."* **[FG1, 366-367]**
Local strategy / approaches	**EP:** *"Letting go of those ideas of assessment and the more traditional ways of looking at it is reinforced by the system"* **[FG3, 115-126]** **EP:** *"Until they have experience of seeing other ways of working, it's really hard for them to see any value in putting very limited resources into something new."* **[FG 3, 176-177]**	**SENCo:** *"You don't go for a Statement lightly, that's what they don't seem to understand it's almost met like you can just pop back in a couple of months. It's a couple of months of the same stress"* **[FG2, 512-513]** **SENCo:** *"More flexible time. I think it's more the flexibility, and not being penalised if you don't use it."* **[FG1, 435-436]**

3.3.7. Dream and Design

The final theme was made up of areas identified as areas for future development to improve the collaborative working partnership between EPs and SENCos.

Table 14: Theme 7: Dream and Design

Sub-themes	Evidence	
SENCo on SMT	**EP:** *"But when they are part of the senior management I think that helps to facilitate things even more because they've got more of a confidence about making decisions and asking people for help or telling teachers that they need to be there for consultation."* **[FG3, 308-309]**	
Increased EP accessibility	**SENCo:** *"Like a surgery drop-in. You might not need to make the referral but to put your mind at rest that there isn't anything that could be done."* **[FG1, 242-243]**	
Earlier Intervention	**SENCo:** *"In an ideal world, [group work] would be amazing because they're the ones where you're not even thinking about statutory, you know? There the ones that could actually make a difference because actually we could veer them off so might not even have to go down that route"* **[FG1, 550-553]**	
Further clarity on EP role	**EP:** *"I guess it's about raising the profile isn't it? Meeting more people, and so not overly relying on the SENCo."* **[FG 3, 299-300]**	**SENCo:** *"We don't seem to have a clear guidance, do us, on what we're entitled to and how it works."* **[FG1, 203-204]**
More consistent communication	**EP:** *"Yeah, keeping that conversation going. Clear communication at all stages, clarify"* **[FG4, 434]**	**SENCo:** *"it might be good if there was some meeting between SENCos and EPs, not in a confrontational or judgemental way".* **[FG1, 503-505]**
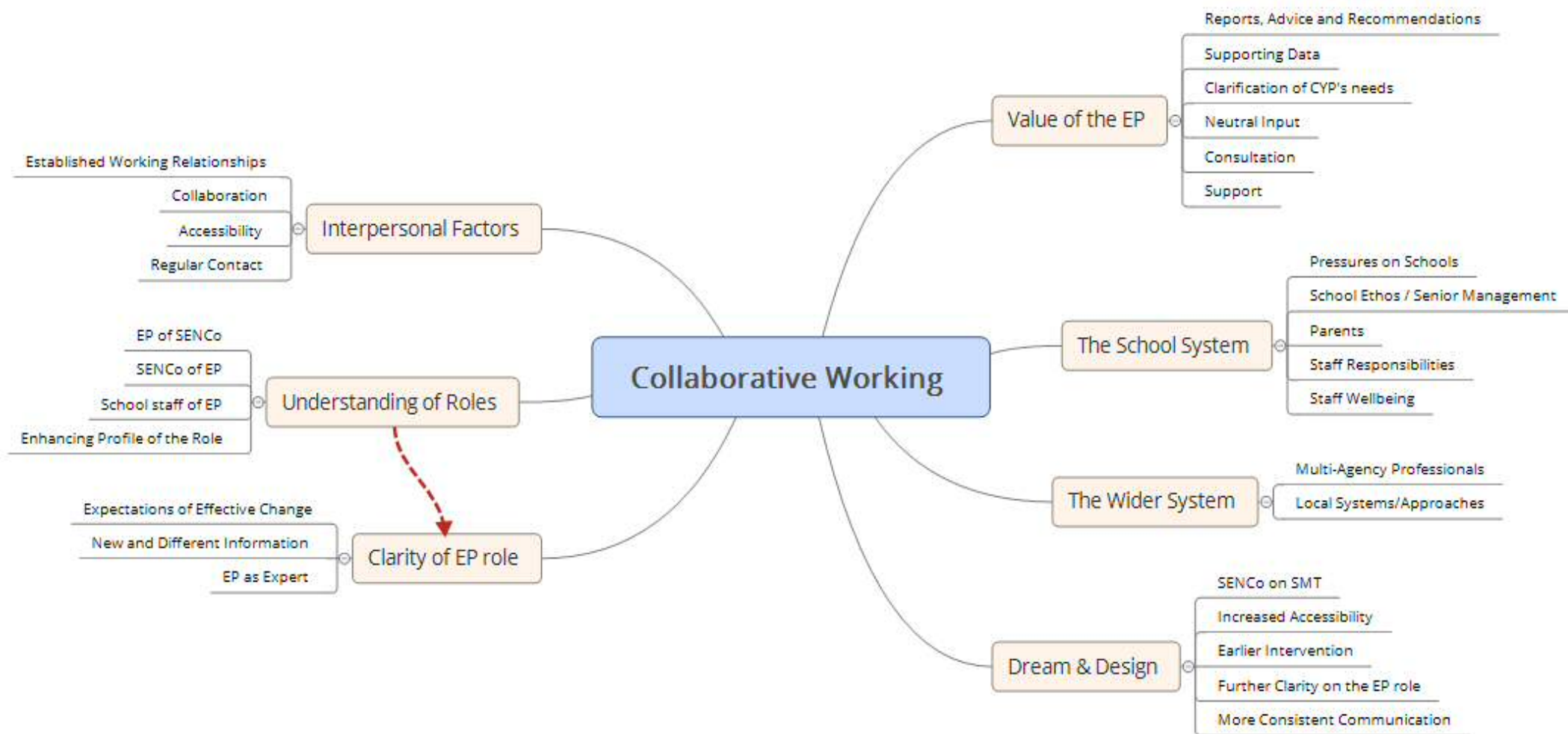
Figure 6: Final Thematic Map[11]

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[11] Red dotted line on Final Thematic Map refers to connection between themes re: understanding of roles and areas for further clarity of the EP role are linked.

4. Discussion

4.1. Overview

The aim of the current study was to investigate EP and SENCo constructions of collaborative working. The patterns in the data will be explored in relation to each research question.

4.2. Research Question 1

What are the key differences and/or similarities between EP and SENCo constructions of 'effective' EP practice?

Data analysis revealed concordance between EP and SENCo views of the effectiveness of a series of roles and functions of the EP, with only 3 of 15 items statistically different between groups. These items were all methods of direct work with pupils including two forms of assessment (Figure 4) and were rated higher by the SENCo sample. SENCos viewed assessment as the primary purpose for EP involvement in the qualitative data (subtheme: 'Supporting data'). However, it was specified that this was related to receiving additional resources to support pupils. This suggests a continuation of the view that EPs are viewed as 'gatekeepers' to resources (Faupel & Norgate, 1993). In contrast, the current study indicated that EPs considered assessment-based items and statutory work as least effective and reported consultative approaches to be most effective (Tables 4 and 5). This is also supported by the outcomes of the word clouds (Figure 1). SENCos rated three systemic items as least effective (Figure 5) suggesting similarity with previous studies (O'Hagan & Swanson, 1983).

These findings appear concordant with previous literature suggesting that SENCos value a more 'traditional' view of the EP role (e.g., Ashton & Roberts, 2006). However, a lack of statistical significance across all items leaves the hypotheses (section 1.5.) unsupported; these findings may be indicative of increased concordance between EP and SENCo perceptions of the role than presented in existing literature.

SENCos may consider certain approaches as effective for specific purposes related to their job roles and responsibilities (Cole, 2005). This may not be symptomatic of personal perspectives but of necessity (Topping & Lauchlan, 2013). In support of this, statistical analysis revealed a significant gap between perceptions of 'reality' and 'ideal' for both groups, suggesting a unified aspiration for the EP to engage in more preventative and systemic work in an 'ideal' world. This could reflect that the majority of SENCo participants (32%) were within their first or second year working in the role and might have been less influenced by the notion of a 'traditional' approach.

4.3. Research Questions 2 and 3

What do EPs and SENCos construe as facilitators and/or barriers to effective collaborative working? What are the key differences/similarities in these perceptions?

4.3.1. Facilitators

The results indicate that both groups valued of the collaborative working partnership. 'Consultation with SENCo' was within the top three most effective methods of working for both groups (Tables 5 and 6) suggesting a mutual value placed on the collaborative relationship between the two professions. *Interpersonal factors* (Theme 1) were considered a key facilitator to effective working. Another salient theme was the need for an established working relationship between EP and SENCo over time. Research suggests that initiating change from within a system can be challenging (Hayes, 2014), therefore it could be argued that EPs may not facilitate effective change if they remain within one school for an extended period of time. However, this must be balanced with the need for established relationships to facilitate effective working. SENCos identified that regular contact and opportunities for planning, prioritising and reviewing work were important facilitators. Participants identified a

need for mutual understanding of roles (Theme 2), as a key facilitator. A need to enhance the profile of the EP role within the wider school context was identified in terms of the EP understanding the pressures and responsibilities of school professionals.

4.3.2. Barriers

The data revealed both interpersonal and systemic barriers to effective working. *Clarity of the EP role* (Theme 4) incorporated three areas for development; including discrepancies regarding expectations of effective change: EPs valued small changes whereas SENCos hoped for complete resolution. SENCos reported expecting the EP to provide new and different information whereas EPs felt their role was to gather information rather than provide it, SENCos also hoped their EP would dispense expertise, whereas EPs work with SENCos to be more collaborative. This finding is accordant with previous research describing SENCos valuing the expert role (e.g., Farrell, et al., 2006; Ashton & Roberts, 2009; Ahtola & Kiiski-Maki, 2014). An understanding of the nature of EP involvement is fundamental to ensure collaborative working and a lack of understanding of what can be expected from the EP service could lead to a sense of dissatisfaction from schools.

The wider school system (Theme 5) was also identified as a potential barrier. SENCos reported that they experienced some difficulty with the social pressures of school systems. Even with a comprehensive, unified view of the EP role, there may be social pressures and time restraints influencing the process that may be challenging to avoid (Gillham, 1978). The input of senior management is also integral in creating lasting systemic change, therefore a unified whole-school ethos regarding inclusion would lead to better outcomes for CYP as suggested by Boyle and MacKay (2007). EPs also reported that effective collaboration is more attainable when the SENCo is part of the school senior management team enabling ease of strategy implementation; a modification which has been proposed in the new ALN Bill in Wales (WG, 2016).

The role of the EP in supporting schools is paramount, as Gonzalez, Nelson, Gutkin and Shwery (2004) suggest that school staff are becoming increasingly responsible for the emotional, social and mental wellbeing of CYP as the education system is a main point of call for CYP with mental health difficulties. SENCos, however, reported feeling overwhelmed by the pressures on schools in the current political climate.

Participants also reported a sense of pressure from professionals from other agencies (e.g., social workers) and questioned those professionals' understanding of the EP role. SENCos felt a lack of understanding of the EP role from other health and social care professionals impacted effective working by other professionals' demands dictating the nature of EP work. Both the SENCo and EP participants recognised demands of professionals from other agencies as a barrier to effective working as they described feeling a lack of professional autonomy for the purpose or direction of EP involvement

Secondly, SENCos often felt that there were multiple obstacles to accessing support, described as a process of "jumping through hoops" (FG2, 306) in keeping with previous research (Rothì, Leavey & Best, 2008). This finding is indicative of a need for systemic change to enable easier navigation for schools to access the support systems available.

4.4. Research Question 4

What do EPs and SENCos perceive could be implemented in future to increase effective collaboration?

Finally, as a consequence of the AI approach used, a series of future directions were indicated by EPs and SENCos regarding their best hopes for moving forward. In addition to increased time, funding and resources, 'ideal' responses included:

- an increase in the provision of training/information for SENCos in terms of navigating the system and receiving further support at a local authority level;

- an increase of influence of the SENCo within the school system e.g. being part of the Senior Management Team (as proposed in the ALN reform, 2016);

- access to further information about the scope of the EP role specifically for schools, including closer working with a variety of school professionals such as senior management teams;

- increased accessibility of the EP and the provision of informal support on an ad-hoc basis e.g., via a drop-in service. In line with this, SENCos requested a faster response to school requests for EP involvement;

- more consistent and regular communication, as highlighted above, in the hope that earlier intervention could increase levels of preventative rather than reactive work; and

- a flexible time allocation system that allows schools to use time as-and-when required and to ensure limited time is used in optimal ways.

SENCos hoped that their EP involvement would not be limited by time restraints; EPs felt that having additional time to spend in their schools would enable them to engage in more creative working and would also ensure earlier intervention in supporting CYP. This outcome is indicative that SENCos wish to receive more systemic working from the EP but do not feel they can prioritise systemic working over individual assessment due to limited time available. This might be addressed via the introduction of traded services in Wales where time could be purchased in a more flexible manner (Lee & Woods, 2017).

4.5. Summary

Overall, the results indicate similarities of views between the two professional groups, with an increased emphasis on the systemic pressures impacting upon EP/SENCo collaboration. Ongoing work is required to address any areas of opacity for SENCos regarding the EP role;

however, both participant samples acknowledged this as an area for development. Other factors such as the school structure and local systemic processes were identified as external pressures and potential barriers for effective collaboration. Implications for EP practice and wider implications are discussed below.

4.6. Strengths of the Current Study

The current study provides further insight into the facilitators and barriers that may be impacting on the EP/SENCo working partnership; the current study provided opportunities for EPs and SENCos to discuss these factors in a proactive way. AI assisted in providing a positive focus and encouraging practical suggestions for change; the current study produced information that has potential for EP services to use to develop and improve their relationships with SENCos at this important time of change in Wales (WG, 2017).). The current study also aimed to explore perceptions across Wales, and achieved responses from EPs (approximately 18.4%) and SENCos (approximately 6.8%), providing an acceptable account of the current context.

4.7. Limitations of the Current Study

Some of the focus groups were inadequately subscribed which may therefore limit generalisation but could nonetheless provide some good indicative data. FGs were largely conducted in one local authority in South Wales and findings could be unique to this LA. Furthermore, the questionnaires were created for the purpose of the investigation and there appeared to be some issues with the instrument (e.g. higher percentages of missing data than expected) which could be indicative of its low validity and reliability as a research tool (Cresswell, 2014). Future research should consider use of a pre-existing questionnaire.

4.8. Future Directions

Further research should include increasing the scale and scope of the study to gather data across the UK in both primary and secondary contexts; this could be followed by a similar but adapted study for Early Years and Post-16 work. Exploring the collaborative relationship within a variety of contexts may elucidate new barriers and facilitators to effective working which could inform future practice across a wide range of contexts.

In addition, future research could explore SENCo and EP perceptions of practice solely within a traded context.[12] This would provide an essential overview of the facilitators and barriers that may exist within a traded context. This may provide invaluable information and assist in informing future directions for practice in Wales, if Welsh EPSs move in this direction.

4.9. Implications for Educational Psychology Practice

The findings indicate that interpersonal factors and mutual understanding are key facilitators to effective working. Therefore, EPs could assist in opening further communication channels with SENCos (via email, phone, incidental discussion) to discuss their theoretical and practical approaches and increase transparency regarding the role. This could be supported by circulating documentation to enhance the profile of their role (e.g., via brochures, leaflets, and websites). Shadowing opportunities EPs may also assist the SENCo to develop further understanding of the role. Furthermore, regular opportunities for discussion between EPs and SENCos may also be beneficial. This could include termly drop-in 'surgeries' e.g. half hour-long appointments in one school to ensure all teachers have an opportunity to acquire greater awareness of the range of EP skills available (Anthony, 1999). Regular SENCo cluster

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[12] Educational Psychology Services which participated in the current study were local authority funded at the time of data collection.

meetings with EPs and access to an official online forum within local authorities may also provide opportunities for SENCos to seek support or advice from colleagues.

SENCos appeared to feel unable to prioritise systemic working above individual casework or therapeutic approaches due to contextual demands and pressures. This suggests that it is perceived as the least valued aspect of the EP role and may be indicative that SENCos view this aspect of the role as an optional addition rather than an aspect of preventative work. Systemic and preventative working may be an issue which would be beneficial to include in both SENCo and teacher training courses. The absence of such training at present may lead to a discordance of professional theoretical perspectives (Bell & McKenzie, 2013). Discussion about systemic work could be encouraged from the offset using service-level formats for planning meetings that prompt discussion regarding policies/support structures, rather than retaining a focus on individual casework. Within services, use of consistent approaches and executive frameworks could support these processes outlined with the core features of COMOIRA including enabling dialogue and systemic thinking (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008).

On a wider level, crucially, the distribution of firm, clear guidance specified by the BPS and/or Association for Educational Psychologists (AEP) would support in reducing internal variation and possibly conflicting ideas that may be obscuring the clarity of role for professionals in other agencies.

4.10. Conclusion

The current research shows that SENCos and EPs may hold more aligned views of effective methods of working than previous research has suggested and that SENCos value EP involvement highly (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). The data revealed consistency between EP

and SENCo views on value of the interpersonal relationship between the professions; the importance of understanding roles; and, the value of EP involvement for the school.

The research cast light on some key differences between SENCo and EP views and expectations regarding the role. These included: differing expectations of effective change, an expectation for the EP to provide new and different information and an expectation of an EP to act within an 'expert' role. However, SENCos themselves specified a need for further understanding of the EP role suggesting an openness to closer, or different, working.

The importance of EPs working more widely with those engaged in systemic around the school was also emphasised. In accordance with previous research, the data indicated that SENCos are not opposed to systemic work but instead feel they cannot prioritise systemic work within the current systems of working; this finding may suggest that opportunities to commission work within a traded context may be more suitable to encouraging systemic working

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Educational Psychologist and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator Constructions of Effective Collaborative Working:

An Exploratory Study

Part C: Critical Appraisal

1. Introduction

This critical appraisal is comprised of two sections. The first section includes a critical account of the research process from inception to completion including the origins of the researcher's interest in the subject, the epistemological stance, ethical issues and the rationale behind the methodology and data analyses. The second section includes a critical account of the contribution made by this research to the role of the educational psychologist (EP) in practice, including the identification of a gap in the literature, the rationale for the research questions, the key findings of the study, and implications for EPs and for the wider context of education.

2. Critical Account of the Research Practitioner

2.1. Inception of the Research Topic

The origin of the research arose from personal and professional discussions with school professionals such as special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCos) and teaching staff regarding their perceptions of working closely with EPs. The researcher was initially struck by a sense of dissatisfaction from school professionals regarding EP involvement. As a trainee EP entering the profession, the researcher felt a strong need to understand how SENCos view the EP role in more depth, including any issues that may arise in the working relationship and the perceptions of causes for these; and most importantly, to explore how both professional groups envisage respectful, collaborative partnerships in future practice.

2.3. Research Paradigm

Barker, Pistrang and Elliot (2003) note the importance of researchers acknowledging the philosophical context in which their data is obtained, both their philosophy of reality (ontology) and beliefs and assumptions about the world, including how this reality is known

(epistemology) (Fleetwood, 2005). These assumptions guide both methodological design and the possible conclusions drawn from the results of the research (Mertens, 2015).

The ontological position adopted for the current study is the critical realist position, which can be conceptualised as falling midway along a continuum of ontological positions with constructivism at one end and positivism at the other. A constructivist position suggests that knowledge is subjective, dependent on the interaction between researcher and participant (Crotty, 1998) and no regularities or patterns exist in the 'real' world (Moore, 2005). In contrast, positivism suggests that scientific research should be reduced to directly observable facts, and that science is objective and value-free (Crotty, 1998). The critical realist position posits that there is a 'real' world which exists and is therefore open to scientific study, and researchers can form tentative understandings about the reality of the world, whilst remaining critical of the researcher's ability to know reality with any certainty due to the fallibility, errors and biases of the scientist (Lund, 2005).

Whilst acknowledging that the posed research questions could lend themselves towards a constructivist paradigm, the chosen stance was informed by the researcher's desire to remain critical of the socially constructed nature of the concepts discussed namely, constructions of 'effective' EP practice. Critical realism advocates the use of multiple measures of assessment in order to learn as much about reality as possible; therefore, questionnaires and FGs were used to obtain data with multiple methods of data analysis employed (statistical and thematic analysis). The current research aimed to identify experiences of everyday practice of EPs and SENCos and draw tentative conclusions, in order to understand the 'reality' of the working partnership, and EP and SENCo interpretations of this reality (Bergin, Wells & Owen, 2008).

2.1. Research Design

Having identified that a critical realist perspective was the most appropriate to the research aims, the decision was made to adopt a mixed-methods design (Punch, 2015). This research design was deemed the best for the exploratory aims of the study to observe the differences and similarities between EP and SENCo perceptions of 'effective' EP practice, and perceptions of facilitators and/or barriers to an effective collaborative partnership. By using questionnaires to collect a larger sample of quantitative data it was hoped that general patterns within the dataset could be identified. The qualitative narrative provided by the FG data facilitated the expansion of these patterns by adding depth and narrative (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Understandings of the EP role will continue to evolve and change alongside legislative and socio-political change, and, a limited yet meaningful attempt was made to understand the immediate context better.

The researcher had personal aims regarding the outcomes of the current study such as gaining clarity regarding the role from the perspectives of both EPs and from school based colleagues. It was deemed particularly important for the researcher to have a positive understanding of moving forward with SENCos, as an integral colleague, in order to build future positive partnerships in practice.

The research aims consisted of exploring any areas of similarity or difference between EP and SENCo perceptions of a series of activities or roles an EP might complete within their professional role. The current study also aimed to explore and understanding EP and SENCo views of effective collaboration and significant facilitators and barriers to building effective working partnerships.

2.2. Methods

2.2.1. Designing the Questionnaires

The questionnaire was developed to explore participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of individual/systemic approaches to EP practice. This was in keeping with the exploratory rationale of the study and allowed an opportunity for the participants to begin reflecting on their experiences of working closely with SENCos/EPs prior to FG attendance (Punch, 2005). Care was taken and guidance sought in the process of designing robust questionnaires for the current study (Gillham, 2008). Authors advise the use of open-ended questions to avoid the experimenter placing limitations on participant responses, thereby seeking a broader range of responses than the researcher could propose through multiple choice questions (Creswell 2014). However, excessive use of open-ended questions can reduce response rates (Bryman, 2016). Therefore, the current questionnaire included a diverse selection of questions (4 open, 4 scaling, 1 closed and 1 ranked) to gain a range of information while retaining participant interest.

Items for questions 5a and 5b (Appendices H and I) were divided into activities of an individual or systemic nature, guided by existing literature (e.g., Norwich, 2000; Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009) were assembled from pre-existing questionnaires (e.g. Woods & Farrell, 2006). The developed list was cross-referenced against items included in an evaluation form sent annually to SENCos from the largest EPS in Wales. This was to ensure accessibility of terminology for both participant samples to allow direct comparison of outcomes. A comprehensive range of activities an EP may undertake could not be included, therefore the list was kept to a total of 15 items, aiming to provide a broad overview of perceptions of the EP role.

On reflection, the selected items may reflect the constructs of the EP role from the perspective of the researcher (or of those researchers' whose work that informed the current

study). It is acknowledged that the items selected could present a reductionist representation of the range of roles and/or functions of an EP; this could also have been result of comparative inexperience and naivety on the part of the researcher at the time of questionnaire design. If this study were to be repeated in future, the researcher would instead make use of a pre-existing instrument such as The School Psychology Perceptions Survey (SPPS) to ensure reliability and validity of outcomes (Gilman & Medway, 2004). The SPPS is a comprehensive questionnaire designed to assess perceptions of a number of areas in relation to the practice of school psychology with established reliability and validity. However, this is an American tool and might not have reflected the EP roles and/or functions in the context of the UK adequately.

2.2.2. Pilot Study

In an early stage of questionnaire development, items 5a and 5b were presented within a 'ranked' format informed by Woods & Farrell (2006). However, following piloting, it was deemed inappropriate to rank items which could be differentially effective under variable circumstances. These were changed to become scaled measures which allowed participants' true constructions of effectiveness to be presented rather than skewed by limited choice (Bryman, 2016). However, one 'ranked' question (Q4; Appendices H and I) remained which was designed to explore a broad overview of participant's perceptions of individual or group working with key stakeholders (e.g., school staff, pupils, parents).The pilot study also demonstrated a need to modify wording on the questionnaire e.g., changing 'systemic working' to 'whole-school working' for clarity. This process ensured the questions were accessible for both audiences (Matthews & Ross, 2010).

Despite efforts to increase validity, there remained some issues with the instrument. First, there remained instances where participants were unaware of the meaning of certain items (e.g. one SENCo reported unfamiliarity with the term 'dynamic assessment'). In addition, Q4

96

revealed higher proportions of unanswered questions (14-30% for EPs and 32-51% for SENCos) suggesting non-random patterns of missing data. This appeared to be a consequence of misunderstanding or lack of question clarity. Furthermore, three participants responded that a series of items were 'ineffective' because their EP did not have time to carry these out directly (e.g., group work). These responses seem to suggest a different issue but still illustrated the impact of systemic factors that may affect perceptions of the EP.

Although a pilot study was conducted, it appeared that the limited scope of the trial failed to pick up some of the issues that the larger dataset showed. In future, the researcher would allow sufficient time to run a more thorough pilot study to test for validity and reliability of the instrument, which was not possible due to the time restrictions of the current study. Despite the instruments' limitations, the data did not satisfy the assumptions of normality, which indicates that all participants allocated a significant amount of importance to each question asked; this reinforces the overall relevance and validity of the items selected (i.e., participants mostly weighted all items towards 'effective')which has positive implications for the perceptions of the EP profession.

2.2.3. Focus groups

Focus groups (FGs) were considered the most appropriate qualitative data collection technique. The researcher strived to explore issues from the participant perspective, therefore unstructured and non-directive questioning techniques were adopted (Appendix J; Krueger & Casey, 2014). FGs are more likely to result in authentic data free from experimenter bias and increased ecological validity when conducted with familiar individuals (Kitzinger, 2005; 1995). FGs also allow a larger number of views to be collated at once, which enables increased representation of the views of a professional group (Guvå & Hylander, 2012). Strategies were adopted by the researcher to engage in appropriate mediation as advised by the literature including summarising, acknowledging points raised and allowing sufficient

time for participants to think and speak (Wilkinson, 1999; Kandola, 2012). The researcher remained firmly within the role of 'researcher' to avoid the risk of diversion into a more consultative discussion as could be associated within the researchers' co-existing role of 'trainee EP' (Wagner, 2000). The researcher reflected whether this 'trainee EP' role would impact upon how participants presented their views. Participants were encouraged to be as authentic as possible to provide rich information for the purposes of the present research, but also as a learning experience for the researcher.

Some challenges emerged during the process of carrying out FGs, the first being ensuring participant attendance. Despite regular contact with participants who consented to take part in a FG through both verbal and written means, each group had several non-attenders; this is recognised as a common problem with FGs (Krueger & Casey, 2015). It was not always possible for the other attendees to reschedule due to the busy academic period in which data collection took place. For two of the four FGs, only 2 and 3 participants attended respectively and the researcher had concerns that this could compromise the quality of the data obtained (Morgan, 1997, states that the optimum number of participants to attend a FG is 6-10). However, research suggests that smaller FGs are recommended when participants have much to contribute, if topics may be controversial, or when discussing personal experiences; all of which were relevant for the current study (Bryman, 2016). Furthermore, Peek & Fothergill (2009) confirm that in many contexts smaller groups, of between 3-5 individuals, "run more smoothly than larger groups" (p. 37). With more participants, it can be harder to entice members to contribute, whereas smaller groups provide an opportunity for disagreement and there is less of a risk of one individual dominating the group (Krueger & Casey, 2015). This resonated with the researcher's experience and it was felt that equally rich data was obtained from the smaller groups. Nevertheless, for the following groups, participant mobile telephone numbers were recorded and participants contacted the day before the FG resulting in healthier

group sizes of 6 and 7. A lesson learned from this experience would be to over-subscribe

FGs in future (Krueger & Casey, 2015). The data from the four FGs were combined during

analysis to increase the validity of emergent themes, equating to 11 SENCos and 7 EPs in

total which are adequate numbers for thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, 2006). The

qualitative questionnaire data from items 8 and 9 were also included within this analysis.

The second challenge related to the location of participants. A number of responses indicated

that participants across Wales would be willing to participate, yet FGs were only feasible if

sufficient responses were acquired within close proximity. The researcher had to rely on

personal contacts to increase numbers sufficiently within one location. For this reason, three

of the four FGs took place in the same local authority. On reflection it was beneficial to

include homogenous groups within the same local authority to compare responses within the

same context. The addition of the fourth group in a second location allowed a broader

overview and increased the reliability of the data collected.

2.2.4. Alternative Methodologies

Robson (2002) notes that, within FGs, the views of quieter participants might be under-

represented, despite smaller FGs and questionnaires attempting to readdress this balance. FGs

naturally lend themselves towards more extroverted individuals (Morgan, 1997) so it might

have been beneficial to include semi-structured interviews (SSIs) as an additional method of

data collection to obtain a wider range of perspectives (King and Horrocks, 2010). FGs are also

particularly vulnerable to social desirability biases (Bryman, 2016). With SSIs, participants

may have become more self-reflective if they had not been asked to present their most positive

experiences, and perhaps participants would have shown increased honesty regarding their

personal viewpoints and experiences (Alshenqueeti, 2014). Experimenter bias may be inflated

in SSIs e.g., SENCos may have modified their responses knowing the researcher was also a

trainee EP, given the subject matter (Mertens, 2015). It was perceived that FGs would reduce

this bias. Lastly, SSIs have been frequently used in previous studies, therefore it was felt a more innovative approach was required to identify key areas of development (Ashton & Roberts, 2006).

2.3. Ethical Issues

The current study acquired ethical approval from Cardiff University's School of Psychology Ethics Committee and ethical issues that could occur were considered and accounted for prior to commencement of the study. The researcher also noted that discomfort could occur amongst EP and SENCo colleagues who have previously worked together, when discussing their positive and/or negative experiences of co-working. For example, one local authority was initially reluctant for members of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) to be part of the investigation. The researcher emphasised at all points that the purpose of this research was to be constructive with an aim to understand EP and SENCo perceptions of collaborative working and suggest strategies for future change and development. As such, an appreciative inquiry (AI) approach was adopted founded in positive psychology to ensure a solution-focused, beneficial discussion (Passmore & Hain, 2005). It is generally recommended that the researcher should guide the discussion as appropriate, but ultimately allow participants to formulate their own views (Kruger & Casey, 2015). At times, it became challenging to ensure that the focus remained positive throughout the discussion; on reflection, retaining a forced focus on positive experiences may limit the participants' inclination to share experiences and could lead to an inaccurate depiction of the current context, therefore participants were offered opportunity and freedom to discuss both facilitators and barriers to effective working. Moreover, Bushe and Kassam (2005) argue that the emphasis of AI should be on the generation of ideas, rather than simply recalling positive experiences. In hindsight, it would have been beneficial to pilot the FG prompts to predict the direction of discussion beforehand, but given limited time and response rates from participants, this was not possible within the scope of the current research.

2.4. Data Analysis

2.4.1. Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was selected to analyse the qualitative data because it allowed the reduction of a large data set into a rich and manageable set of themes while retaining its complexities. The criticisms of TA often relate to its subjective nature, which runs the risk of potential bias towards, or a failure to acknowledge, certain themes. However, as the generated themes were reviewed by an external researcher and the participants themselves, this implies a robustness of themes collated (Bryman, 2016).

The TA process incorporated semantic analysis to outline stated key facilitators and barriers to effective working, and latent level analysis when exploring areas of similarity and difference between perceptions and possible causes for these (Braun & Clark, 2013). However, it was acknowledged that some themes might have arisen from the pre-existing knowledge of the EP/SENCo relationship from the researchers' first-hand experience, rather than from the data itself. Therefore, care was taken to ensure themes initially collated were based in semantic rather than latent analysis, to reduce the likelihood of biased outcomes.

To ensure quality of the analysis, an independent researcher also coded the raw focus group transcriptions. These were compared with the researchers' original codes, showing consistency between interpretations with only slight adjustments to wording made. This was also reviewed by a second independent coder at a later point to check for clarity and precision of theme presentation. Finally, one participant from each focus group (2 SENCos and 2 EPs) reviewed the final themes and confirmed their agreement with them prior to the themes being finalised and written within the report (Bryman, 2016). The questionnaire responses also supported the existing themes and the themes appeared to reach saturation, where no new initial themes were introduced (Krueger & Casey, 2015).

101

In hindsight, Discourse Analysis (DA), a focus on linguistic semiotic factors, might have added further depth to the analysis whereby language used in the data can inform further interpretation beyond what is articulated in it (Bryman, 2016). However, Discourse Analysis has increased susceptibility to researcher bias and interpretation and is more in line with a constructivist than critical realist ontology (Fleetwood, 2005).

2.4.2. Quantitative Analysis

Previous literature suggests that a missing rate of 15-20% of data is common in educational and psychological studies (Enders, 2003). The current study showed 2-10% missing data for the EP sample and 2-30% for the SENCo sample. With the exception of responses received for Q4, the missing data appeared to be randomly distributed. It was considered that the missing values could be replaced with means for any subject, prior to statistical testing (Field, 2009). However, this method has disadvantages in terms of presenting perfectly 'average' data and therefore decreasing data reliability. This approach is also more suitable with smaller percentages of missing data (e.g., under 10%; Dong & Peng, 2013). Pairwise deletion is a common approach to managing missing data in educational or psychological research. Although this approach can reduce sample sizes and statistical power, it attempts to minimise losses that would occur with list wise deletion of data. On reflection, removal of incomplete questionnaires and allowing sufficient time to collect more questionnaire responses would have resolved this issue.

2.5. Contribution to the Professional Development of the Researcher

Overall, it was felt that the roles of researcher and trainee EP co-existed with ease, due to a familiarity with ethical procedures, plus experience of working closely with schools and of facilitating large meetings as part of the role. Through completing the current thesis, the research process encouraged a great deal of professional reflection; the information obtained

from the current research will undoubtedly inform the researcher's role as an EP. The researcher experienced an increase of confidence in building relationships with schools and managing extraneous systemic variables that impact upon the EP and SENCo interaction. The outcomes of the research have also highlighted the importance of transparency, clear communication and collaboration.

3. Contribution to Knowledge

3.1. Summary of Gaps in the Literature

The literature review began with an attempt to confirm the researcher's personal view that EPs and SENCos held discordant views of effective EP involvement and explored causes for this. The role of the EP is one which has been discussed and reflected on within the existing theoretical literature, with a particular focus on EP professional identity and the direction of the profession (Love, 2009; Farrell, 2009; Boyle & MacKay, 2007; Buck, 2015). The current governmental stance in the UK advocates collaborative working between schools and other agencies, for example, the education reforms in England (DfES, 2014) and Wales (Welsh Government, 2015) highlight the importance of multi-agency working between schools and multi-agency professionals for the best outcomes for children and young people (CYP; Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2000). The existing literature has shown discordant expectations of EP involvement between EPs themselves and school professionals. This has been replicated in both in the United Kingdom (UK; e.g., Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Farrell et al., 2005) and across multi-national contexts in Europe and Australia (e.g. Bell & McKenzie, 2013; Ahtola & Kiiski-Maki, 2014). The researcher was pleased to find that a wealth of research had been conducted in this area.

The current research was informed by a UK-based paper by Ashton & Roberts (2006) which explored SENCo and EP views of what is considered valuable and unique about the EP role.

The findings indicated that EPs valued systemic methods of EP practice e.g. training, policy development, and organisational change. SENCos, however, appeared to value more individual methods of working (or 'traditional' methods; McKay, 2002) e.g. direct work with a CYP and psychometric assessment. The researcher felt these findings shed light on the presence of discordant views between EPs and SENCos, but provided limited information about reasons underlying this phenomenon.

To the researcher's knowledge, there are only very few studies pertaining to the topic of how EPs and SENCos experience working collaboratively (e.g., Rothì, Leavey & Best, 2008). Furthermore, no previous studies had explored perceptions of collaborative working between SENCos and EPs or investigated facilitators and barriers to this process. The researcher felt this was particularly integral in practice, given that EPs frequently work collaboratively with SENCos. It could be argued that the empirical and theoretical studies within the existing literature focused more on highlighting discrepancies between constructions of the EP role, and perhaps the reasoning for the documented discrepancies had been overlooked. Through the current study, the researched hoped to explore EP and SENCo views of the role of the EP and views of their collaborative working partnership specifically. It seemed imperative to explore how this working relationship could be made most effective, in light of current legislative change in Wales.

3.2. Contribution to Knowledge

The current investigation comprised of two main objectives. The first was to gain an understanding of the current context in Wales i.e., whether EPs and SENCos were in agreement regarding their perceptions of effective EP practice. The second was to explore what SENCos and EPs viewed as facilitators and barriers to effective collaborative working. As such, the research questions reflected these two elements.

The study adds both breadth and depth to the existing literature by exploring views gathered from EPSs and schools across Wales using a questionnaire completed by 72 SENCos and 42 EPs. Four focus groups (FGs) involving 11 SENCos and seven EPs were held across two local education authorities in Wales. The methodology also appears to offer two unique contributions to existing research in this area: firstly, the use of mixed professional FGs, and secondly, the, use of AI methods to enable positive FG discussion (Passmore & Hain, 2005). The present study therefore records a broader picture of EP practice regarding working closely with SENCos, particularly when compared to previous studies which were undertaken within one local authority, or utilised only SSIs. This study also provides an updated insight into the Welsh context prior to the introduction of the new Code of Practice (Welsh Government, 2015; Smith, 2012).

3.2.1. Research Question 1

Research question 1 aimed to explore SENCo and EP Perceptions of 'effective' EP Practice. Initially, the researcher hoped to explore perceptions of why a unified view of the EP role was not observable in practice based on knowledge obtained from existing literature and the researchers' previous experiences. However, the avoidance of assumptions or generalisation based on one's personal experiences was paramount. The researcher also reflected that participants might not be aware of discord between the professionals' views, as this would also be based on individual experiences. From a critical realist standpoint, it would not be appropriate to explore why there was not agreement over the 'correct' interpretation of the role of EP (Crotty, 1998). Instead, it was felt more appropriate to develop an explorative study of SENCos' and EPs' current views on a series of roles and functions of the EP and explore similarities and differences within these views.

Statistical analysis revealed that only three out of 15 items showed significant differences between participant groups, suggesting a more aligned view of the EP contribution than

105

literature has suggested in previous years (e.g., Ashton & Roberts, 2006). Analysis also revealed that both professional groups aspired for EPs to engage in more systemic-level working in an 'ideal' scenario. Overall, this outcome suggests that school professionals may deem systemic work as effective as EPs do, as previously found in existing literature (Farrell et al., 2005; Ashton & Roberts, 2006).

The rationale behind asking participants about their views of effective working was, firstly to see if any different perspectives would be identified between the EP and SENCo participant samples, based on the previous reviewed research on perceptions of the EP (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Smith, 2012; Farrell, et al., 2005.) The researcher hypothesised that EPs and SENCos would hold significantly different constructions of effective EP practice. The data revealed that this was not consistently the case and as such the null hypotheses were accepted.

3.2.2. Research Question 2 and 3

Research questions 2 and 3 aimed to explore, and compare, SENCo and EP perceptions of facilitators and/or barriers to effective collaborative working. It was important to gain and an understanding of facilitators and barriers to working jointly between SENCos and EPs. Research questions 2 and 3 were challenging to develop, in terms of conceptualising how they aligned with research question 1 which was specifically about EP practice, rather than the collaborative relationship. These questions allowed exploration on a topic of significance (the collaborative working partnership between EPs and SENCos) while also allowing a multi-faceted view of the larger picture encompassing the perspectives of both professional groups (Agee, 2009).

The key similarities in responses between both groups displayed an acknowledgement that collaborative working was facilitated greatly by interpersonal relationships, recognising the

value of EP involvement and developing an understanding of roles. Similar responses from both groups also acknowledged that factors in wider systems around the EP and SENCo may cause difficulty in creating effective outcomes i.e. within-school pressures and wider-level pressures.

The key differences in responses were identified in the following areas: expectations of effective change, the EP as an expert and an expectation for the EP to provide new and different information. These suggest a discrepancy between EP and SENCo expectations which could lead to a diminished common understanding of the role. It was considered that the research might highlight particular areas for development in Wales, for example, a need for more communication to elaborate on the purposes of some methods of practice or a need to note issues at a systemic level that should be addressed before SENCos and EPs can develop a shared vision of the EP role. Both professional groups separately highlighted a need for further clarity of the EP role in schools, suggesting that the EP role remains uncertain to both professional groups, as outlined within the existing literature (e.g.., Ahtola & Kiiski-Maki, 2014; Farrell, et al., 2005; Bell & McKenzie, 2013).

3.2.3. Research Question 4

Research question 4 aimed to explore EP and SENCo constructions of how effective collaborative working could be improved in future. The final theme entitled 'Dream and design', derived from the process of AI, (Passmore & Hain, 2005), assimilates participant suggestions about factors which could be implemented in future to improve the collaborative relationship. The first suggestion was to increase confidence for SENCos when working with parents and multi-agency professionals; this was supported by EPs suggesting that the proposed legislative change towards SENCos working on SMTs would be beneficial in terms of increasing the SENCo influence throughout the school and working towards a more inclusive ethos (WG, 2016). Secondly, SENCos suggested a need for further access to their

EP; suggestions included providing 'drop-in' sessions as an open forum for SENCos to ask questions and seek support from EPs. Both groups also noted more consistent communication as an area they would hope to improve in future. It was also noted by SENCos that they would prefer to receive earlier preventative work from their EPs, such as group work, yet they felt this was not possible due to time restrictions. This could be indicative of the expectation that SENCos prefer the EP to engage in individual methods ways of working, as outlined in the existing literature (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). However, it could also be interpreted as SENCos ideally wanting more systemic work and earlier intervention, but simply feel this is not possible within the current models and systems (Topping & Lauchlan, 2013).

3.3. Limitations and Future Directions

The outcomes of this research are not widely applicable given the limited sample size, which could be addressed by conducting a broader study of EPs across the UK in a variety of educational settings. Although questionnaires were distributed to schools and EPSs across Wales, geographical locations remained unnamed, therefore it is unknown whether a representative sample was obtained. On reflection, a confidential record of geographical location of each participant would have been beneficial in exploring regional representativeness of the data.

An initial bias that may have occurred is that only SENCos and EPs most interested in discussing their role may have volunteered to take part; this may include participants who are particularly interested in the topic, or individuals who were familiar with the researcher in a professional capacity. Furthermore, both aspects of the study included self-report measures, which do not necessarily provide a reliable measure of reality (Alshenqeeti, 2014). In line with a critical realist ontology, the researcher can acknowledge multiple interpretations of the

world but utilise the prevalence of patterns within the data to indicate a critical overview of the 'reality' of the explored context (Cruikshanks, 2004).

Despite every effort to maximise participant responses (e.g. sending reminders), the response rate was relatively low, particularly for FGs. The heavy demands already experienced by both SENCos and EPs and the timing of the data collection process at the end of the school year could have contributed to this (Rothì, Leavey & Best, 2008). Therefore, collecting data at a quieter time of year might increase response rates in future studies. Numbers for FG attendance were particularly limited based on the need for respondents to be based within the same geographical location.

3.4. Implications for EP Practice

The current findings shed light on the SENCo experience of working alongside EPs and highlight many valuable aspects of EP involvement, and some barriers which may prevent effective working. The data indicated that s further support for SENCos e.g. SENCo teams, should be widely and immediately accessible within both the school and wider setting should any issues arise. EPs could work to build informal relationships where questions and discussion are encouraged.

Furthermore, EPs and SENCo building mutual understandings of their respective roles and sharing experiences are vital parts of rapport building leading to effective collaboration. For example, the Lamb inquiry (2009) highlighted that parents find it challenging to understand the complex SEN systems in place, but it is important to note that this may also be challenging for school professionals. This could indicate a need for more thorough SENCo training procedures in Wales; EPs could also incorporate a time slot within planning meetings to develop a collaborative discussion on how they could best work together. This could also

imply a need for further co-operation between SENCo training and EP training; such as sessions delivered by a member of the corresponding profession.

On a school level, working with a broader range of staff, e.g. teaching assistants, to develop intervention, class teacher training and/or systemic work with senior management can bring broader awareness of the EP role to the forefront. Anderman (2011) argues that research is essential for evidence-based practice and a significant challenge for EPs is ensuring that research truly impacts upon and influences policy and practice. It is suggested that research partnerships should be built within schools to build school staff understanding of the importance of research. Therefore, working closely with senior management, e.g., by attending planning meetings, could bring opportunities for EPs to engage in more systemic-level work such as research projects.

Additionally, each school could be allocated or purchase termly multi-agency professional meetings where cases could be brought to a team of professionals and a problem solving activity could be carried out in this way. This would have the added benefit of increasing regular contact and cohesion in working with other agencies.

3.5. Wider Implications

It is also vital that the profile of the EP role is raised not only within the school context, but also within the wider community e.g., with parents and multi-agency professionals, and within the wider context, so that the value of EP involvement is eventually recognised at local authority and governmental levels. Presenting information regarding the role in mainstream media e.g., through television, would assist in the understanding of the role for families, pupils and staff who may not have previously worked with an EP.

It is also important for EPs to develop good working relationships with education administration teams and policy makers at a local authority and governmental level (Farrell,

2009); this is important in light of the outcomes of the current study. Influencing policy could assist in the implementation of ideas for development, particularly regarding the complex systems and interactions that have been perceived as barriers to collaborative working. Previous research suggests that EPs could publish in a wider variety of journals to ensure multi-agency professionals become more familiar with the role of the EP (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). There is also arguably a need for further guidance from professional bodies such as the British Psychological Society to portray the role of the EP accurately and consistency at all levels for all service users.

3.6. Contribution to the Professional Development of the Researcher

The critical review aimed to provide an outline of the rationale for the current study and insight into the research process, including key decisions which were made and their effect upon the outcomes of the study. Key issues regarding both the account of the research practitioner and the contribution to knowledge have been described.

As a trainee EP, this area of research was particularly relevant to explore and aided the researcher's professional development, and understanding of important areas to remain mindful of when working with SENCos and school professionals in general. The researcher held an expectation that the barriers and facilitators would be on an individual-level (e.g., personality traits, methods of communication or specific interaction). The outcomes of the current study enabled the researcher to think more systemically when considering working partnerships. The findings also provided a more in-depth overview of the challenges faced within school and local authority contexts from the SENCo perspective. The most valuable aspect of the research was identifying the importance of clarifying roles to new school professionals and understanding what factors SENCos perceive to positively influence effective collaborative partnerships. It also appeared vital for EPs to invest time to explain

their theoretical approaches to, and systems behind, EP practice when working with new colleagues, (school-based or otherwise). A great deal was learned throughout the development of this research project, and the results will stay with the researcher in future practice.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Gatekeeper Letter – Principal Educational Psychologists

<div align="right">

School of Psychology
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff University
CF10 3AT

DATE

</div>

Dear [Principal Educational Psychologist],

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) programme at the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of my degree I am carrying out a research project on perceptions of the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP). I am writing to enquire whether you would be interested in your service taking part in this project. The project is entitled:

Educational Psychologist and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator Constructions of Effective Collaborative Working: An Exploratory Study

The research aims to compare and contrast EP and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) perceptions of EP practice and EP and SENCo views on collaborative working. The information obtained from this research will add to the existing literature surrounding constructions of the EP role.

Please see the attached information sheet for further information. This project is being supervised by Andrea Higgins, research supervisor, School of Psychology, Cardiff University.

Once ethical approval is given by Cardiff University's Ethics Committee, and should you grant permission for myself to contact EPs working within your service, EPs will be contacted directly with consent forms and information sheets. Should they choose to take part, participation would involve completing a confidential questionnaire on perceptions of the role of the EP and of working alongside SENCos (available online or on paper, taking approximately 15 minutes).

Participants will also be given an opportunity to state whether or not they would be interested in taking part in a follow up focus group on the same topic by providing their contact details. This will be followed up in 4-6 weeks' time. Neither the service nor any individuals involved will be identifiable in the final report.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any further information.

Warm wishes,

Susannah Young (trainee educational psychologist)   *Youngsl2@cardiff.ac.uk*

Supervisor: Andrea Higgins (research supervisor)   *Higginsa2@cardiff.ac.uk*

Cardiff University Ethics Committee   *psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk*

Appendix B: Gatekeeper Letter – Head Teachers (of primary schools in Wales)

<div align="right">
School of Psychology
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff University
CF10 3AT
DATE
</div>

Dear [head teacher],

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) programme at the School of Psychology, Cardiff University. As part of my degree I am carrying out a research project on perceptions of the role of the Educational Psychologist (EP). I am writing to enquire whether you would be interested in your service taking part in this project. The project is entitled:

Educational Psychologist and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator Constructions of Effective Collaborative Working: An Exploratory Study

The research aims to compare and contrast educational psychologists' (EP) and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators' (SENCo) perceptions of the most effective methods of EP working/involvement. The information obtained from this research will add to the existing literature surrounding constructions of the EP role.

Please see the attached information sheet for further information. This project is being supervised by Andrea Higgins, research supervisor, School of Psychology, Cardiff University.

I am writing to enquire whether you would be willing to allow me permission to contact the SENCo working in your school and ask if he/she would be willing to participate in this research project. Collecting data for this research would involve obtaining EP and SENCo perceptions of the EP role and of working collaboratively together, using questionnaires and focus groups.

If you grant permission, and once ethical approval is given by Cardiff University's Ethics Committee, the intention would be to contact the SENCo directly to provide a consent forms and information sheet to provide further information on the study. Should he/she choose to take part, participation would involve completing a confidential questionnaire on perceptions of the role of the EP and of working alongside SENCos (available online or on paper, taking approximately 15 minutes).

Participants will also be given an opportunity to state whether or not they would be interested in taking part in a follow up focus group on the same topic by providing their contact details. This will be followed up in 4-6 weeks' time. Neither the service nor any individuals involved will be identifiable in the final report.

Many thanks in advance for your consideration of this project. Please let me know if you require any further information.

Warm wishes,

Susannah Young (trainee educational psychologist) *Youngsl2@cardiff.ac.uk*

Supervisor: Andrea Higgins (research supervisor) *Higginsa2@cardiff.ac.uk*

Cardiff University Ethics Committee *psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk*

Appendix C: Information Sheet – Educational Psychologists

School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Cardiff

CF10 3AT

E-mail: psychenquiries@cardiff.ac.uk

Invitation to participate in a research study
You are being invited to participate in a research study, but before you decide whether or not you consent to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like further information.

The researcher:
My name is Susannah Young and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at Cardiff University, working under the supervision of Andrea Higgins, Researcher Supervisor.

What is the purpose of the study?
The current research aims to compare and contrast educational psychologists' (EP) and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators' (SENCo) perceptions of the most effective methods of EP working/involvement. The information obtained from this research will add to the existing literature surrounding constructions of the EP role.

Who we are looking for?
We are hoping to involve EPs from both traded and non-traded services and SENCos from mainstream Primary Schools across Wales.

What the research involves?
This research involves participants completing a questionnaire about your experiences of being an educational psychologist. This includes: exploring your perceptions of most effective methods of EP involvement within a mainstream primary school and providing your views of how SENCos and EPs could reach a more shared understanding of the EP role. This questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes. If you are willing, you may also be invited to return for a follow-up focus group discussion on the same topic at a later date with other EPs or with a mixed group of EPs and SENCos. You will be given an opportunity to state your group preference, if any. The focus groups are estimated to take place in June/July 2016.

What are the risks and benefits?
We do not think that participation will involve any disadvantages or risks to you. The findings of this research study will provide an insight into how SENCos and how EPs perceive the EP role, and will add to the literature on the most effective methods of EP working and how EPs and SENCos can best work together. No individual, school or educational psychology service (EPS) will be made identifiable at any point. You may refuse to answer any questions at any point and/or withdraw from the study at any point without giving a reason.

What will happen to my information?
All data collected by the researcher (questionnaires and audio recordings) will be held completely confidentially. Your data will not be identifiable in any written report that arises from this research. However, the university will hold anonymous data indefinitely. The questionnaires collected will be

stored in a locked storage unit, and recordings from the focus groups will be stored on a locked device for up to one month. After this, the raw data will be destroyed. Once the data is analysed and anonymised, it will be impossible to trace any information back to you individually which means your data cannot be withdrawn from the study after this point. However, up until this point, you can withdraw your participation at any time. Any personal information shared within the focus groups will be he held confidential by verbal agreement by the other participants. However, it is important to note that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed within this context.

Please feel free to contact me, my supervisor or the Ethics Committee at Cardiff University for further information.

**Susannah Young (trainee educational psychologist)**	*Youngsl2@cardiff.ac.uk*

Andrea Higgins (research supervisor)	*Higginsa2@cardiff.ac.uk*

Ethics Committee	*psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk*

Thank you for reading.

Appendix D: Information Sheet – Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators

School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Cardiff

CF10 3AT

Invitation to participate in a research study

You are being invited to participate in a research study, but before you decide whether or not you consent to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like further information.

The researcher:

My name is Susannah Young and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at Cardiff University, working under the supervision of Andrea Higgins.

What is the purpose of the study?

The current research aims to compare and contrast educational psychologists' (EP) and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators' (SENCo) perceptions of the most effective methods of EP working/involvement. The information obtained from this research will add to the existing literature surrounding constructions of the EP role.

Who we are looking for?

We are hoping to involve SENCos from mainstream Primary Schools and EPs from both traded and non-traded services across Wales.

What the research involves?

This research involves participants completing a questionnaire about your experiences of working closely with an educational psychologist. This includes: exploring your perceptions of most effective methods of EP involvement within a mainstream primary school and providing your views of how SENCos and EPs could reach a more shared understanding of the EP role. This questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes. If you are willing, you may also be invited to return for a follow-up focus group discussion on the same topic at a later date with other SENCos or with a mixed group of EPs and SENCos. You will be given an opportunity to state your group preference, if any. The focus groups are estimated to take place in June/July 2016.

What are the risks and benefits?

We do not think that participation will involve any disadvantages or risks to you. The findings of this research study will provide an insight into how SENCos and how EPs perceive the EP role, and will add to the literature on the most effective methods of EP working and how EPs and SENCos can best work together. No individual, school or educational psychology service (EPS) will be made identifiable at any point. You may refuse to answer any questions at any point and/or withdraw from the study at any point without giving a reason.

What will happen to my information?

All data collected by the researcher (questionnaires and audio recordings) will be held completely confidentially. Your data will not be identifiable in any written report that arises from this research.

However the university will keep anonymous data indefinitely. The questionnaires collected will be stored in a locked drawer, and recordings from the focus groups will be stored on a locked device for 1 month. After this, the raw data will be destroyed. Once the data is analysed and anonymised, it will be impossible to trace any information back to you individually which means your data cannot be withdrawn from the study after this point. However, up until this point, you can withdraw your participation at any time. Any personal information shared within the focus groups will be he held confidential by verbal agreement by the other participants. However, it is important to note that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed within this context.

Please feel free to contact me, my supervisor or the Ethics Committee at Cardiff University for further information.

Susannah Young (trainee educational psychologist)   *Youngsl2@cardiff.ac.uk*

Andrea Higgins (research supervisor)   *Higginsa2@cardiff.ac.uk*

Ethics Committee   *psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk*

Thank you for reading.

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form (Educational Psychologists)

This research is being conducted by Susannah Young, a trainee educational psychologist as part of a Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) degree.

Participation in this research will involve completing a questionnaire about my experiences of working closely with an educational psychologist (EP). Completing this questionnaire will involve reporting your perceptions of the most effective working methods carried out as an EP; this will take approximately 15 minutes.

Questionnaire data will be anonymous and as such it will be impossible to trace this information back to any individual. The anonymous data will be used to provide a report for Cardiff University as part of part of a doctoral qualification and this will be held indefinitely by the university. The outcomes of this research project will result in a written report but the outcomes may not necessarily affect or influence future EP practice.

Following completion of the questionnaire, you will be able to indicate whether or not you would be interested in taking part in a small focus group (45-60 minutes) with other EPs or with both EPs and Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinators (SENCos) in your local area.

You will be given an opportunity to express your preference for focus group participation, if any (i.e. with just EP/SENCos or a mixed group). The focus groups are expected to take place in June/July 2016. The purpose of the focus groups will be to explore ways of enabling SENCos and EPs to work towards a shared understanding of the EP role in future.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that you can refuse to answer questions or withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

You are free to ask any questions, withdraw your participation or discuss your concerns with Susannah Young, trainee educational psychologist, and Andrea Higgins, Research Supervisor, at any time.

Susannah Young, Trainee educational psychologist: *Youngsl2@cardiff.ac.uk*

Andrea Higgins, Research Supervisor: *Higginsa2@cardiff.ac.uk*

I, _____ (NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Susannah Young, School of Psychology, Cardiff University under the supervision of Andrea Higgins.

Signed:
Date:

Appendix F: Informed Consent Form (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators)

This research is being conducted by Susannah Young, a trainee educational psychologist as part of a Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) degree.

Participation in this research will involve completing a questionnaire about your experiences of working closely with an educational psychologist (EP). Completing this questionnaire will involve reporting your perceptions of the most effective working methods carried out by the EP; this will require approximately 15 minutes.

Questionnaire data will be anonymous and as such it will be impossible to trace this information back to any individual. The anonymous data will be used to provide a report for Cardiff University as part of part of a doctoral qualification and this will be held indefinitely by the university. The outcomes of this research project will result in a written report but the outcomes may not necessarily affect or influence future EP practice.

Following completion of the questionnaire, you will be able to indicate whether or not you would be interested in taking part in a small focus group (30-45 mins) with other EPs or with both EPs and Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinators (SENCos). You will be given an opportunity to express your preference for focus group participation, if any (i.e. with just EP/SENCos or a mixed group). The focus groups are expected to take place in June/July 2016. The purpose of the focus groups will be to explore ways of enabling SENCos and EPs to work towards a shared understanding of the EP role in future.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that you can refuse to answer questions or withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

You are free to ask any questions, withdraw your participation or discuss my concerns with Susannah Young, trainee educational psychologist, and Andrea Higgins, Research Supervisor, at any time.

Susannah Young, Trainee educational psychologist: *Youngsl2@cardiff.ac.uk*

Andrea Higgins, Research Supervisor: *Higginsa2@cardiff.ac.uk*

I, _____ (NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Susannah Young, School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Andrea Higgins.

Signed:

Date:

Appendix G: Informed Consent form – Focus Groups (Educational Psychologists and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators)

School of Psychology, Cardiff University: Informed Consent (Part 2 of 2)

This research is being conducted by Susannah Young, a trainee educational psychologist as part of a Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) degree.

Participation in this aspect of the research will involve taking part in a focus group involving EPs, SENCos or a mixed group. The purpose of the focus groups is to explore ways of enabling SENCos and EPs to work towards a shared understanding of the EP role in future.

Any personal information discussed within a focus group will be shared with other participants as well as the researcher. All participants will be asked to make a verbal agreement to protect the confidentiality of any information disclosed. However, participants must be aware that confidentiality cannot be guaranteed within a focus group.

The discussion will be audio recorded on a password encrypted device (that only the researcher has access to) for up to 1 month. After which point, the recording will be transcribed and anonymous; the original recording will be deleted. No service, school or area will be identifiable within the written report. All data held will be anonymous and it will be impossible to trace this information back to any individual. Participants will only be identifiable by a 'code' representing job title e.g. EPs will be referred to as 'P' and SENCos will be referred to as 'S' within the transcripts.

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and that you can refuse to answer questions or withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason.

You are free to ask any questions or discuss your concerns with Susannah Young, trainee educational psychologist, and Andrea Higgins, Research Supervisor, at any point in the process.

Susannah Young, Trainee educational psychologist: *Youngsl2@cardiff.ac.uk*

Andrea Higgins, Research Supervisor: *Higginsa2@cardiff.ac.uk*

I, _____ (NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Susannah Young, School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Andrea Higgins.

Signed:

Date:

Thank you very much.

Appendix H: Questionnaire for Educational Psychologists

The following questionnaire aims to give you the opportunity to express your thoughts and feelings about the role and work of the educational psychologist (EP). The questionnaire is completely confidential so you can say exactly what you think. Please feel free to omit questions if you do not wish to answer.

How long have you been working as an Educational Psychologist? Please tick:

☐ 0-2 years   ☐ 2-4 years   ☐ 4-5 years   ☐ 5-10 years

☐ 10-15 years ☐ 15-20 years ☐ 20-25 years ☐ 25+ years

Please state your role as EP:

☐ Main grade   ☐ Senior   ☐ Principal

Are your services: ☐   Local Authority funded
                      ☐   Partially Local Authority funded
                      ☐   Non-local Authority funded

Please try to give an **<u>overall</u>** response to the questions below.

----

1) How would you describe the role of the EP at present?

2) In your opinion, how effective in facilitating change is the service that you provide to schools?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Ineffective		Quite Effective		Very Effective

3) Please outline any factors that could be changed to improve your rating:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) When working within a typical mainstream primary school, please rank each item below based the **effectiveness** of each method of working in facilitating change:

___ Individual work with pupils
___ Individual work with staff
___ Individual work with parents
___ Group work with pupils
___ Group work with staff
___ Whole school work with staff
___ Statutory Tasks

5a) When working within a typical mainstream primary school, please scale each item below based how **effective** you perceive each item in facilitating change, on an **individual level**:

1= Very Ineffective, 2 = Effective, 3 = Somewhat Effective, 4 = Effective, 5 = Very Effective.

Consultation with the class teacher:
     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Observation of pupil in class
     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Consultation with SENCo or other key person

     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Individual therapeutic work/intervention with the pupil

     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Consultation with parents

     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Standardized attainment test

     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Dynamic assessment

     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Full or partial standardized cognitive assessment (e.g. WISC IV/BAS3)

     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Facilitating a multi-disciplinary meeting featuring other professionals

     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Facilitating multi-disciplinary meeting featuring other professionals AND the pupil

     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**
Other…………………………………………...
     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

5b) When working within a typical mainstream primary school, please scale each item below based how **effective** you perceive each item in facilitating change, on a **group/whole-school level**:

Group work with pupils:

     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Planning Meetings:

     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Staff training and development:

     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Multi-disciplinary team meetings:

     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

School based research projects:

     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Other………………………………………:

     1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

6) In the last 4 working weeks, approximately what percentage of individual to group/whole-school work have you conducted?

100% Individual   50%   100% Whole-school/ Group

     1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

7) In 4 average working weeks, approximately what percentage of individual to group/whole-school work would you like to conduct, ideally?

100% Individual   50%   100% Whole-school/ Group

     1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

8) Please outline three main facilitators to you and your school SENCos having a shared understanding of your role as an EP?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

9) Please outline three main barriers to you and your school SENCos having a shared understanding of your role as an EP?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

_____

Follow up

1) Would you interested in taking part in a follow-up focus group **involving other EPs** (estimated to be taking place in June/July 2016)? Please circle:

Yes   No

2) Would you interested in taking part in a small focus group **involving other EPs and SENCos** (estimated to be taking place in June/July 2016)? Please circle:

Yes   No

Please Note: You will only be asked to take part in one of the above focus groups.

If you consent to either option, please provide your contact details:

Name:

Email:

Contact number:

Thank you very much for your time.

Appendix I: Questionnaire for Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinators

The following questionnaire aims to give you the opportunity to express your thoughts and feelings about the role and work of the educational psychologist (EP). The questionnaire is completely confidential so you can say exactly what you think. Please feel free to omit questions if you do not wish to answer.

How long have you been working as a Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo)? Please circle:

☐ 0-2 years ☐ 2-4 years ☐ 4-5 years ☐ 5-10 years

☐ 10-15 years ☐ 15-20 years ☐ 20-25 years ☐ 25+ years

Approximately how many educational psychologists have you worked with in your role or previous roles?

☐ 0-3 ☐ 4-6 ☐ 7-9 ☐ 10+

Please try to give an **<u>overall</u>** response to the questions below.

----

1) How would you describe the role of the educational psychologist (EP) at present?

2) In your opinion, how effective at facilitating change is the service that your EP provides to your school, overall?

1	2	3	4	5
Very Ineffective		Quite Effective		Very Effective

3) Please outline three factors that could be changed to improve your rating:

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) Please rank each item below based the **effectiveness** of each method that an EP might use when working in your school e.g. 1 = Most effective, 2 = Second most effective, etc.

___ Individual work with pupils
___ Individual work with staff
___ Individual work with parents
___ Group work with pupils
___ Group work with staff
___ Whole school work with staff
___ Statutory Tasks

5a) Please rate how **effective** you find each of the following activities that your EP may carry out in your school on an **individual** level:

1= Very Ineffective, 2 = Effective, 3 = Somewhat Effective, 4 = Effective, 5 = Very Effective.

Consultation with the class teacher:
  1   2   3   4   5

Observation of pupil in class
  1   2   3   4   5

Consultation with SENCo or other key person

  1   2   3   4   5

Individual therapeutic work/intervention with the pupil

  1   2   3   4   5

Consultation with parents

  1   2   3   4   5

Standardized attainment test

  1   2   3   4   5

Dynamic assessment

  1   2   3   4   5

Full or partial standardized cognitive assessment (e.g. WISC IV/BAS3)

  1   2   3   4   5

Facilitating a multi-disciplinary meeting featuring other professionals

  1   2   3   4   5

Facilitating multi-disciplinary meeting featuring other professionals AND the pupil

  1   2   3   4   5
Other……………………………………………...
  1   2   3   4   5

5b) Please rate how **effective** you find each of the following activities that your EP may carry out in your school on a **group/whole-school** level:

Group work with pupils:

1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Planning Meetings:

1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Staff training and development:

1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Multi-disciplinary team meetings:

1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

School based research projects:

1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

Other……………………………………:

1   **2**   **3**   **4**   **5**

6) In the last 4 working weeks, approximately what percentage of individual to group/whole-school work have you conducted?

100% Individual   50%   100% Whole-school/
Group

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

7) In 4 average working weeks, approximately what percentage of individual to group/whole-school work would you like to conduct, ideally?

100% Individual   50%   100% Whole-school/
Group

1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10

8) Please outline three main facilitators to help you and your EP having a shared understanding of the EP role?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

9) Please outline three main barriers that prevent you and your EP having a shared understanding of the EP role?

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

_____

Follow up

1) Would you interested in taking part in a follow-up focus group **involving other SENCos** (estimated to be taking place in June/July 2016)? Please circle:

Yes   No

2) Would you interested in taking part in a small focus group **involving other SENCos and EPs** (estimated to be taking place in June/July 2016)? Please circle:

Yes   No

Please Note: You will only be asked to take part in one of the above focus groups.

If you consent to either option, please provide your contact details:

Name:

Email:

Contact number:

Thank you very much for your time!

Appendix J: Focus Group Prompts

The following focus group prompts were created to guide discussion within the focus group based on responses and themes that emerged from previous research exploring perceptions of the EP role (Willdridge, 2013; Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Smith, 2012). Appreciative inquiry (AI) is a group problem solving 4-stage approach based on positive psychology (Passmore & Hain, 2005). The four stages include: discover, dream, design and delivery. Research has shown that AI creates a solution-focused and constructive atmosphere, and builds trust, understanding and communication between individuals involved (Passmore & Hain, 2005). The first two stages of AI will be implemented during this focus group to provide a positive structure for discussion.

Participants will be reminded that any personal information released will be inherently shared with the other participants as well as the researcher (Morgan, 1997). Participants will be asked not to give any names or make references to specific individuals. Prior to starting the focus group, all participants will be asked to make a verbal agreement to protect the confidentiality of any information disclosed during the focus group. Participants will be advised that although confidentiality of the recorded data can be assured by the researcher, confidentiality of information shared by other participants cannot be guaranteed. Participants will be reminded that they are free to withdraw their participation at any point before or during the focus group.

Stage	Question prompts
1. Initial Discussion	*How would you define the role of the EP at present, from the SENCo/EP perspective?* *Do you feel that SENCos/EPs have a clear understanding of each other's roles?* *What is it like for you to work closely with EPs/SENCos overall?* *Mixed: Generally, in your experiences what is it like for you to work together as SENCos and EPs?*
2: 'Discover' Stage In the 'discover' stage, the researcher will encourage a discussion about the valuable and positive aspects of collaborative working between EPs and schools. The researcher will ask participants to think of a time in the past when EPs and SENCos have felt they had a shared understanding of the EP role.	*What do you think has helped EPs and SENCos to have a shared understanding of the EP role in the past?* *What do you feel are the facilitators to a shared understanding of the EP role?* *Conversely, what do you consider to be the barriers to a shared understanding?* *What and who else do you need to experience this collaborative working/understanding of the EP role?*

	(Situation context; supports, understanding etc.) • *What do you feel works well when you work with your EP/SENCos?* • *Thinking of a time where your work has gone particularly well when working with a SENCo or EP, what's really helped to make that an effective piece of work?*
3: 'Dream' Stage In the 'dream' stage the researcher will encourage discussion and exploration regarding any long-term dreams and aspirations for reaching a shared understanding of the EP role between EPs and SENCos. This vision can be memorable, compelling and ambitious.	• *In your role, how would you most like to be supported by EPs/SENCos?* • *In your opinion, how could EPs and SENCos work best together?* • *From a school perspective, how could your EP help you to better understand the roles and functions of the EP?* • *From a school perspective, how could you more effectively communicate with your EP?* • *From an EP perspective, how could you help your SENCo to better understand what might be effective?* • *In an ideal world, how could EPs/SENCos best work with you in schools? What would this look like?*
4. 'Design' Stage In the 'design' stage, the researcher will encourage participants to discuss how the discussed aspirations could be implemented.	• *How would you go about implementing/creating the situations and support that you have envisaged for the future?* • *What would be needed to be put in place before this change could be implemented?* • *So in terms of moving forward then, what would be your ideals of what we could do to work together and have a more shared view?*

Appendix K: Debrief Form

Educational Psychologist and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator Constructions of Effective Collaborative Working: An Exploratory Study

Thank you very much for taking part in this study. The research aimed to explore Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators' (SENCos) and educational psychologists' (EPs) understanding of the EP role.

EPs and SENCos were asked to complete a questionnaire regarding their perceptions of the EP role focusing on perceptions of most effective methods of EP practice, based on their experiences.

Participants were also given an opportunity to return for a follow-up focus group involving groups of SENCos or EPs, or a mixed group, to explore the same topic in further depth. Using an appreciative inquiry (AI; Passmore & Hain, 2005) method, participants were asked to discuss experiences of successful instances of collaborative working between EPs and SENCos and were asked to discuss potential facilitators and barriers to effective collaboration. Finally, participants were asked to discuss how this working partnership could be improved in future practice.

All questionnaire data will be held by the researcher in a safe storage unit until the data is analysed (1 month), at which point the questionnaires will be destroyed. The audio recordings of the focus groups will be held confidentiality by the researcher and locked in a safe storage unit on a locked device for one month. Once the data is analysed, it will be entirely anonymous and it will not be traceable back to any individual. Although confidentiality of the recorded data can be assured by the researcher, confidentiality of information held by other participants in the focus group setting cannot be guaranteed.

Participants are reminded that they are free to withdraw their participation at any point; however, as the questionnaire data is anonymous and cannot be traced back to any individual, participants cannot withdraw their information after submitting the questionnaire.

The results of this research project will not necessarily influence future EP practice but the written report produced will contribute to the field of literature exploring the best ways of ensuring clear communication links, expectations and understanding between EPs and schools. If you would like further information on this research project or are interested in the outcomes of this project, please feel free to contact me directly. For any other concerns please contact Andrea Higgins, research supervisor, or the Ethics Committee, at the School of Psychology, Cardiff University.

Thank you very much for your time.

Susannah Young (trainee educational psychologist) *Youngsl2@cardiff.ac.uk*

Andrea Higgins (research supervisor) *Higginsa2@cardiff.ac.uk*

Ethics Committee *psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk*

Appendix L: Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data.

The first phase included reading and re-reading of the data to increase familiarity of the content and the transcription of the raw data, paying specific attention to patterns that occur. These aspect included: reading and re-reading while transcribing raw data, and identifying initial codes on the transcriptions.
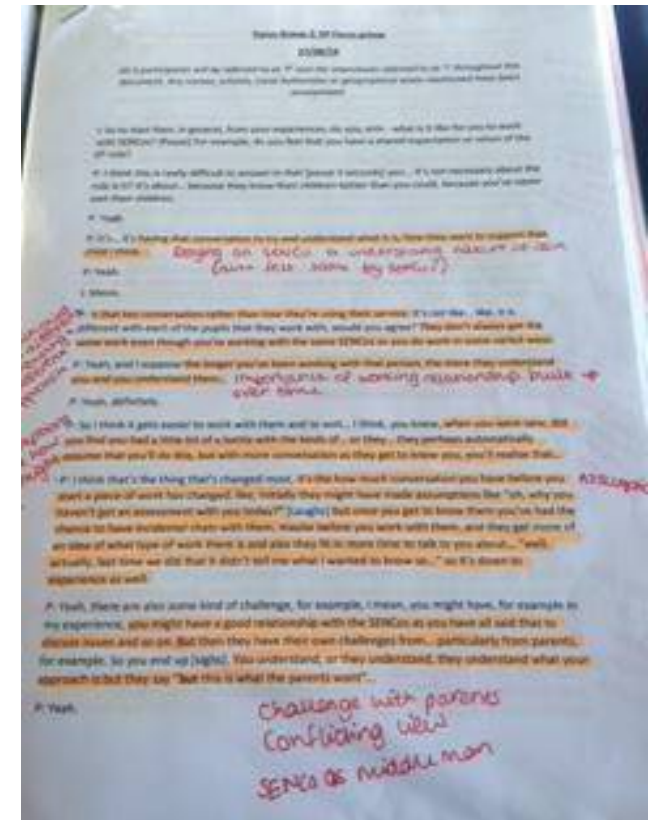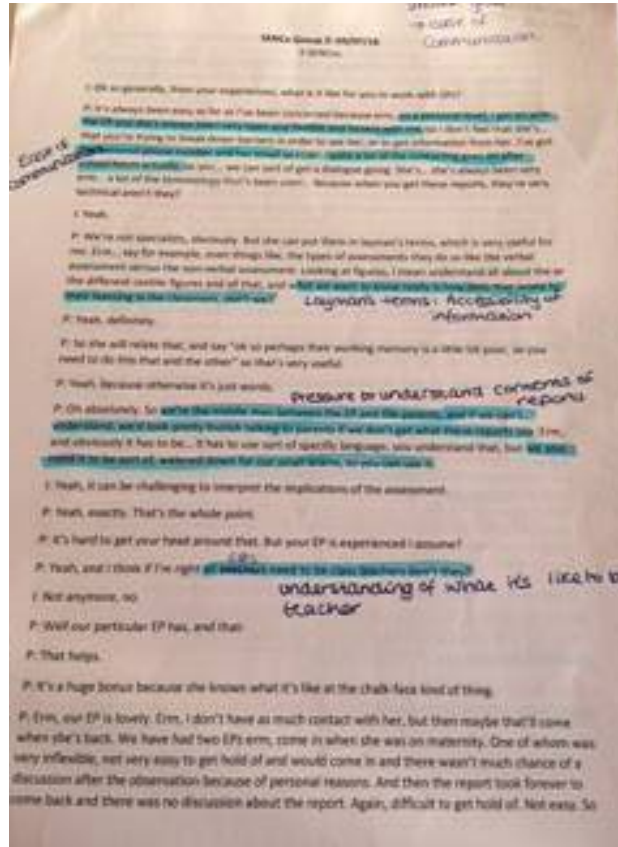
Phase 2: Generating initial codes.

An initial codes list was generated upon a second read through of the completed transcripts and open-ended questionnaire responses (see picture right). This occurred through data reduction where the researcher collapses data into particular labels to create categories for more efficient analysis (appendix 7). This includes developing lists in line with the research questions, beginning to identify common themes.

- Developing lists of codes as in line with research questions.

- Providing detailed info as to how and why codes were combined, what questions the researcher is asking of the data and how the codes are related:

- Noting interesting aspects of the transcript.
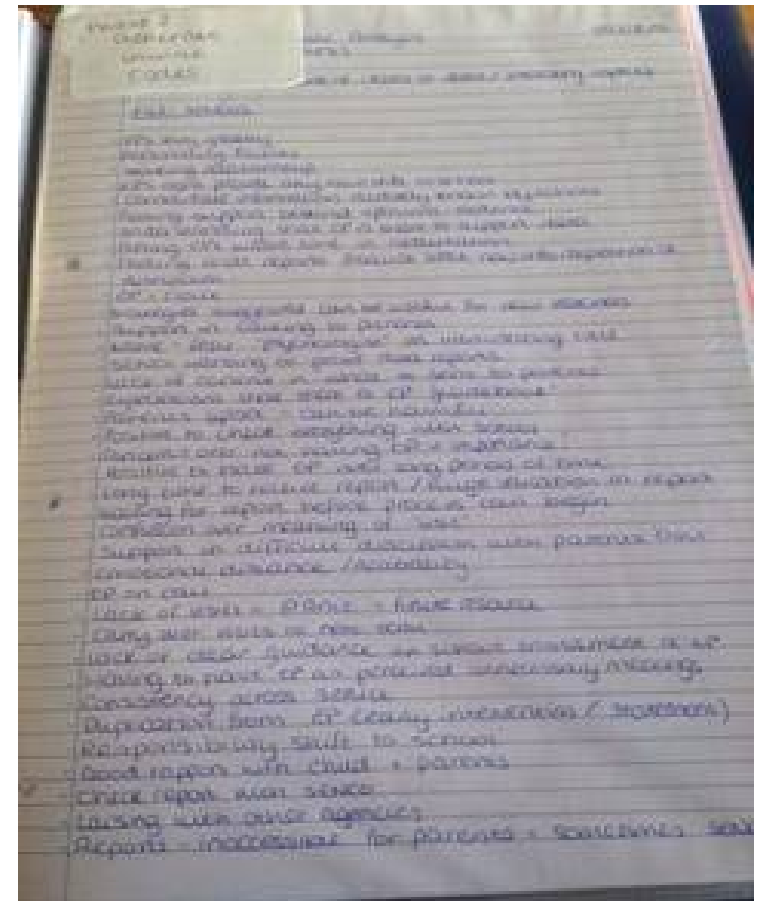
Phase 2: A coded data extract from Focus Group 1 (SENCos)

P: I think it's valuable, personally, just for the next step of where you need to go next. Not… Well, to be honest, I find that a lot of the EP reports are basically consolidating what you already know anyway.

P: Yeah, confirming it.

P: A rubber stamp. There's very little actually… it sounds awful but they don't tell us anything new. Because obviously, we're all educationalists, we're all experienced and it is more of a rubber stamp rather than anything new. And I completely agree with… the one we've got at the moment is amazing. I didn't have one for a year. But the one we have now is amazing. Others have been very variable in the past.

P: And like you say, I think putting figures, assessments behind what you know anyway, about the children, as [X] said, it is just getting some assessments done, some formal assessments that back up what you already know for the next step.

I: Ok. So a form of proof or confirmation?

P: Yeah. Yeah. Occasionally it does throw up something you weren't quite expecting, there may be a small element of it. But you're looking at so many different component parts, that very often… yes it is reinforcing what you already thought it might be, if it's working memory, it says it and you've got a figure against it that you can use.

Suzy Young
Supporting data/confirmation of SENCo perceptions

Suzy Young
Lack of new and different information – is there a need for new information to feel EP involvement is worthwhile?

Suzy Young
Evidence through assessment

Suzy Young
Planning for next stage – EP involvement informs SENCos how to move forward

Suzy Young
New and different information?

Suzy Young
Proof of what SENCos views were already

Suzy Young
Focus on assessment aspect of EP involvement

Phase 3: Searching for themes.

In this phase, codes were combined into overarching themes that accurately depict the data. These contributed to the process of developing overarching and subordinate themes (see Appendix 8).Throughout this phase, both semantic (facilitators and barriers) and latent themes emerged (key similarities/differences between views and causes for this) were identified.

Phase 4: Reviewing the themes.

An independent coder created codes and themes and these were compared with the researcher's original themes. The themes were then modified appropriately. This stage also involved the reviewing of initial codes to ensure the analysis seemed complete. Exploring how the themes support the data and the overarching theoretical perspective.

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Each theme was defined to describe the aspect of data that is being captured. Participant representatives from each FG were asked to review the themes to ensure the robustness of the emergent themes and avoid experimenter bias (Bryman, 2016). Appropriate modifications were made. The themes which received more weighting overall were included.

Theme	Description
Interpersonal relationship	All facilitators associated with building rapport, developing relationships with schools and enabling the process of collaboration.
Value of EP involvement	Aspects identified from participants outlining facilitators to effective working i.e. what the EP brings to the school personally and professionally.
Understanding of roles	An overview of each professional group has an understanding of the other e.g. EP → SENCo / EP → class teacher / class teacher →EP/ / SENCo → EP. In addition, how the SENCo/staff members view the EP as separate to other agencies.
Managing expectations/Clarifying EP service	Practical aspects of EP service delivery that were identified as areas that required further clarification of EP role e.g. time allocation processes, the purpose/content of reports/records of involvement, statutory processes.
The school system	Factors within the school system that can act as barriers or facilitators to the process of collaboration. This included soft systems within the organisation e.g. parent expectations, expectations of school staff, and a supportive/unsupportive head teacher. This also included emotion related items such as staff wellbeing and a sense of being overwhelmed/unable to take on further work.
The Wider context	This theme incorporated factors that influence on the SENCo/EP relationship from further afield e.g. governmental pressures setting data targets for schools, multi-agency professionals who may require further clarification of the EP role, and finally, the local approaches or strategies which require certain ways of working.

Phase 6: Writing the report

Upon writing the report, 129 codes were identified within the transcripts which were then organised into 6 overarching themes and 33 subordinate themes at a semantic level. Facilitators and barriers to effective working were identified with use of semantic analysis; however, when the researcher began exploring similarities and differences in responses, and possible causes for these, latent themes began to evolve at a later stage of the analysis process (These were presented in Tables 8-13 to show areas of consistency and difference in EP and SENCo response to make meaningful contributions of the data set. This was then refined into a final theme map (see Figure 6) to provide an overview of the data. The implications of each theme identified are discussed.

Appendix M: Quantitative Analysis

1. Descriptive statistics: EPs

Descriptive Statistics[a]

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experience	40	1	6	3.70	1.772
Effective	42	1	5	3.29	.918
Rank_Individual_Child	31	1	7	4.03	1.888
Rank_Individual_Staff	32	1	7	2.25	1.503
Rank_Individual_Parents	29	1	7	3.97	1.614
Rank_Group_Pupils	31	2	7	4.77	1.477
Rank_Group_Staff	32	1	6	2.94	1.523
Rank_Whole_School	36	1	6	3.25	1.746
Rank_Statutory	39	1	7	5.23	1.993
Consultation_Teacher	41	1	5	4.07	.877
Consultation_SENCo	42	1	5	3.90	.878
Observation	41	1	5	3.20	.901
Consultation_parents	41	2	5	3.93	.755
Therapeutic_Child	40	1	5	3.47	.905
Attainment_Test	42	1	4	2.64	.821
Dynamic_Assesssment	39	1	5	3.05	.916
Cognitive_assessment	42	1	4	2.90	.906
MA_Meeting	42	1	5	3.79	.898
MA_Meeting_Child	40	1	5	3.83	.931
Group_Work_Pupils	38	2	5	3.08	.882
Planning_Meeting	42	2	5	3.50	.834
Training	42	1	5	3.81	.833
TAS	42	1	5	3.81	.833
Research	38	1	5	3.47	1.133
Four_Weeks_Reality	40	1	9	3.70	2.210
Four_Weeks_Ideal	41	1	9	5.24	2.142
Valid N (listwise)	18				

a. EP_or_SENCo = EP

Case Processing Summary[a]

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Effective	42	100.0%	0	0.0%	42	100.0%
Rank_Individual_Child	31	73.8%	11	26.2%	42	100.0%
Rank_Individual_Staff	32	76.2%	10	23.8%	42	100.0%
Rank_Individual_Parents	29	69.0%	13	31.0%	42	100.0%
Rank_Group_Pupils	31	73.8%	11	26.2%	42	100.0%
Rank_Group_Staff	32	76.2%	10	23.8%	42	100.0%
Rank_Whole_School	36	85.7%	6	14.3%	42	100.0%
Rank_Statutory	39	92.9%	3	7.1%	42	100.0%
Consultation_Teacher	41	97.6%	1	2.4%	42	100.0%
Consultation_SENCo	42	100.0%	0	0.0%	42	100.0%
Observation	41	97.6%	1	2.4%	42	100.0%
Consultation_parents	41	97.6%	1	2.4%	42	100.0%
Therapeutic_Child	40	95.2%	2	4.8%	42	100.0%
Attainment_Test	42	100.0%	0	0.0%	42	100.0%
Dynamic_Assesssment	39	92.9%	3	7.1%	42	100.0%
Cognitive_assessment	42	100.0%	0	0.0%	42	100.0%
MA_Meeting	42	100.0%	0	0.0%	42	100.0%
MA_Meeting_Child	40	95.2%	2	4.8%	42	100.0%
Group_Work_Pupils	38	90.5%	4	9.5%	42	100.0%
Planning_Meeting	42	100.0%	0	0.0%	42	100.0%
Training	42	100.0%	0	0.0%	42	100.0%
TAS	42	100.0%	0	0.0%	42	100.0%
Research	38	90.5%	4	9.5%	42	100.0%
Four_Weeks_Reality	40	95.2%	2	4.8%	42	100.0%
Four_Weeks_Ideal	41	97.6%	1	2.4%	42	100.0%

a. EP_or_SENCo = EP

Descriptive Statistics – SENCos

Descriptive Statistics[a]

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Experience	72	1	6	2.72	1.603
Effective	66	1	5	2.86	1.357
Rank_Individual_Child	40	1	7	2.25	1.750
Rank_Individual_Staff	37	1	6	3.32	1.510
Rank_Individual_Parents	34	1	7	3.62	1.518
Rank_Group_Pupils	34	1	7	4.21	1.684
Rank_Group_Staff	35	1	7	4.03	1.823
Rank_Whole_School	42	1	7	4.50	1.966
Rank_Statutory	46	1	7	4.09	2.298
Consultation_Teacher	70	1	5	3.67	1.032
Consultation_SENCo	72	1	5	4.04	1.093
Observation	70	1	5	3.86	.937
Consultation_parents	70	1	5	3.76	1.197
Therapeutic_Child	52	1	5	3.79	1.194
Attainment_Test	62	1	5	3.56	1.111
Dynamic_Assesssment	52	1	5	3.52	1.093
Cognitive_assessment	63	1	5	3.84	1.003
MA_Meeting	58	1	5	3.69	1.231
MA_Meeting_Child	53	1	5	3.53	1.137
Group_Work_Pupils	42	1	5	3.21	1.260
Planning_Meeting	54	1	5	3.22	1.144
Training	56	1	5	3.64	1.069
TAS	51	1	5	3.63	1.148
Research	41	1	5	2.80	1.077
Four_Weeks_Reality	53	1	10	3.06	2.545
Four_Weeks_Ideal	53	1	10	4.04	2.184
Valid N (listwise)	10				

a. EP_or_SENCo = SENCo

Case Processing Summary[a]

	Cases					
	Valid		Missing		Total	
	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Effective	66	91.7%	6	8.3%	72	100.0%
Rank_Individual_Child	40	55.6%	32	44.4%	72	100.0%
Rank_Individual_Staff	37	51.4%	35	48.6%	72	100.0%
Rank_Individual_Parents	34	47.2%	38	52.8%	72	100.0%
Rank_Group_Pupils	34	47.2%	38	52.8%	72	100.0%
Rank_Group_Staff	35	48.6%	37	51.4%	72	100.0%
Rank_Whole_School	42	58.3%	30	41.7%	72	100.0%
Rank_Statutory	46	63.9%	26	36.1%	72	100.0%
Consultation_Teacher	70	97.2%	2	2.8%	72	100.0%
Consultation_SENCo	72	100.0%	0	0.0%	72	100.0%
Observation	70	97.2%	2	2.8%	72	100.0%
Consultation_parents	70	97.2%	2	2.8%	72	100.0%
Therapeutic_Child	52	72.2%	20	27.8%	72	100.0%
Attainment_Test	62	86.1%	10	13.9%	72	100.0%
Dynamic_Assesssment	52	72.2%	20	27.8%	72	100.0%
Cognitive_assessment	63	87.5%	9	12.5%	72	100.0%
MA_Meeting	58	80.6%	14	19.4%	72	100.0%
MA_Meeting_Child	53	73.6%	19	26.4%	72	100.0%
Group_Work_Pupils	42	58.3%	30	41.7%	72	100.0%
Planning_Meeting	54	75.0%	18	25.0%	72	100.0%
Training	56	77.8%	16	22.2%	72	100.0%
TAS	51	70.8%	21	29.2%	72	100.0%
Research	41	56.9%	31	43.1%	72	100.0%
Four_Weeks_Reality	53	73.6%	19	26.4%	72	100.0%
Four_Weeks_Ideal	53	73.6%	19	26.4%	72	100.0%

a. EP_or_SENCo = SENCo

(2) Tests of Normality

Tests of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
Effective	.295	28	.000	.739	28	.000
Rank_Individual_Child	.175	28	.028	.879	28	.004
Rank_Individual_Staff	.184	28	.016	.879	28	.004
Rank_Individual_Parents	.179	28	.022	.921	28	.036
Rank_Group_Pupils	.139	28	.178	.933	28	.075
Rank_Group_Staff	.176	28	.026	.896	28	.009
Rank_Whole_School	.158	28	.072	.916	28	.028
Rank_Statutory	.349	28	.000	.704	28	.000
Consultation_Teacher	.303	28	.000	.747	28	.000
Consultation_SENCo	.301	28	.000	.813	28	.000
Observation	.237	28	.000	.868	28	.002
Consultation_parents	.290	28	.000	.798	28	.000
Therapeutic_Child	.194	28	.008	.891	28	.007
Attainment_Test	.231	28	.001	.903	28	.013
Dynamic_Assesssment	.254	28	.000	.876	28	.003
Cognitive_assessment	.197	28	.007	.905	28	.015
MA_Meeting	.295	28	.000	.830	28	.000
MA_Meeting_Child	.299	28	.000	.807	28	.000
Group_Work_Pupils	.183	28	.017	.911	28	.020
Planning_Meeting	.267	28	.000	.868	28	.002
Training	.339	28	.000	.812	28	.000
TAS	.229	28	.001	.862	28	.002
Research	.180	28	.021	.912	28	.022
Four_Weeks_Reality	.213	28	.002	.899	28	.011
Four_Weeks_Ideal	.150	28	.110	.957	28	.292

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

According to the KS test, all data sets not satisfy the assumption of normality both before and after missing data corrections were applied. Therefore, a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was used to compare mean outcomes between groups. A post-hoc Bonferroni correction was applied to avoid the presence of a Type I error (where statistical significance occurs by chance and the risk of accepting a false positive is identified).

(3) Mann Whitney U Tests

a

	Effective	Consultation_ Teacher	Consultation_ SENCo	Observation	Consultation_ parents	Therapeutic_ Child	Attainment_T est	Dynamic_Ass esssment	Cognitive_as sessment	MA_Meeting	MA_Meeting_ Child	Group_Work_ Pupils	Planning_Me eting	Training	TAS	Research
Mann-Whitney U	1189.500	1104.000	1302.000	892.000	1421.000	808.000	692.000	734.000	661.000	1204.500	916.500	715.000	1008.000	1116.500	1006.000	514.000
Wilcoxon W	3400.500	3589.000	2205.000	1753.000	3906.000	1628.000	1595.000	1514.000	1564.000	2107.500	2347.500	1456.000	2493.000	2712.500	2332.000	1375.000
Z	-1.309	-2.137	-1.317	-3.500	-.091	-1.910	-4.202	-2.354	-4.504	-.101	-1.207	-.831	-.979	-.464	-.534	-2.702
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.190	.033	.188	.000	.928	.056	.000	.019	.000	.919	.228	.406	.328	.642	.594	.007

Grouping Variable: EP_or_SENCo

Table to show outcomes of Mann Whitney U tests between EP and SENCo responses

EP Role and/or function: individual	EP Mean (SD)	SENCo Mean (SD)	Degrees of Freedom	Values	Significant
Consultation with class teacher	4.07 (.877)	3.67 (1.032)	41, 70	U = 1104.00, z = -2.137, p =.033	N
Consultation with SENCo	3.90 (.878)	4.04 (1.093)	42, 72	U = 1302.00, z = -1.317, p = .188	N
Observation of pupil	3.20 (.901)	3.86 (9.37)	41, 70	U = 892.00, z = -3.500, p = .000	**Y***
Consultation with parents	3.93 (.755)	3.76 (1.197)	41,70	U = 1421.00, z = -0.91, p = .928	N
Therapeutic work with child	3.48 (.905)	3.79 (1.194)	40, 52	U = 808.00, z = -1.910, , p = .056	N
Attainment test	2.64 (.821)	3.56 (1.111)	42, 62	U = 692.00, z = -4.202, p = .000	**Y***
Dynamic assessment	3.05 (.916)	3.52 (1.093)	39. 52	U = 734.00, z = 1514, p = .019	N
Full or partial cognitive assessment	2.90 (.906)	3.84 (1.003)	52, 63	U = 661.00, z = -4.504, p = 0.00	**Y***
Multi-agency team meeting (concerning a pupil)	3.79 (.898)	3.69 (1.231)	42, 58	U = 1204.50, z = -.101, p = .919	N
Multi-agency team meeting (with pupil present)	3.83 (.931)	3.53 (1.137)	40, 53	U = 916.50, z = -1.207, p = .228	N

EP Role and/or function: individual	EP Mean (SD)	SENCo Mean (SD)	Degrees of Freedom	Values	Significant
Group work with pupils	3.08 (.882)	3.21 (1.260)	38, 42	U = 715.00, z = -.831, p = .406	N
Planning Meetings	3.50 (.834)	3.22 (1.144)	42, 54	U = 1008.00, z = -.979, p = .328	N
Staff training and development	3.81 (.833)	3.64 (1.069)	42, 56	U = 1116.50, z = -.464, p = .642	N
Multi-agency Team meetings (concerning the school)	3.81 (.833)	3.63 (1.148)	42, 51	U = 1006.00, z = -.534, p = .594	N
School based research projects	3.47 (1.133)	2.80 (1.077)	38, 41	U = 514.00, z = -2.702,, p = .007	N

*Items are significant with a post-hoc Bonferroni correction (alpha level = .003).

(4) Two Way Mixed Methods ANOVA

a

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[c]
scenarop	Pillai's Trace	.190	b	1.000	87.000	.000	.190	20.468	.994
	Wilks' Lambda	.810	b	1.000	87.000	.000	.190	20.468	.994
	Hotelling's Trace	.235	b	1.000	87.000	.000	.190	20.468	.994
	Roy's Largest Root	.235	b	1.000	87.000	.000	.190	20.468	.994
scenarop * EP_or_SENCo	Pillai's Trace	.019	b	1.000	87.000	.202	.019	1.655	.246
	Wilks' Lambda	.981	b	1.000	87.000	.202	.019	1.655	.246
	Hotelling's Trace	.019	b	1.000	87.000	.202	.019	1.655	.246
	Roy's Largest Root	.019	b	1.000	87.000	.202	.019	1.655	.246

Design: Intercept + EP_or_SENCo
Within Subjects Design: scenarop

Exact statistic

Computed using alpha = .05

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1
Transformed Variable: Average

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[a]
Intercept	2867.806	1	2867.806	413.191	.000	.826	413.191	1.000
EP_or_SENCo	36.143	1	36.143	5.207	.025	.056	5.207	.617
Error	603.834	87	6.941					

Computed using alpha = .05

152

Tests of Within-Subjects Effects

Measure: MEASURE_1

Source		Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[a]
scenarop	Sphericity Assumed	66.233	1	66.233	20.468	.000	.190	20.468	.994
	Greenhouse-Geisser	66.233	1.000	66.233	20.468	.000	.190	20.468	.994
	Huynh-Feldt	66.233	1.000	66.233	20.468	.000	.190	20.468	.994
	Lower-bound	66.233	1.000	66.233	20.468	.000	.190	20.468	.994
scenarop * EP_or_SENCo	Sphericity Assumed	5.356	1	5.356	1.655	.202	.019	1.655	.246
	Greenhouse-Geisser	5.356	1.000	5.356	1.655	.202	.019	1.655	.246
	Huynh-Feldt	5.356	1.000	5.356	1.655	.202	.019	1.655	.246
	Lower-bound	5.356	1.000	5.356	1.655	.202	.019	1.655	.246
Error(scenarop)	Sphericity Assumed	281.520	87	3.236					
	Greenhouse-Geisser	281.520	87.000	3.236					
	Huynh-Feldt	281.520	87.000	3.236					
	Lower-bound	281.520	87.000	3.236					

Computed using alpha = .05

Tests of Within-Subjects Contrasts

Measure: MEASURE_1

Source	scenarop	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power[a]
scenarop	Linear	66.233	1	66.233	20.468	.000	.190	20.468	.994
scenarop * EP_or_SENCo	Linear	5.356	1	5.356	1.655	.202	.019	1.655	.246
Error(scenarop)	Linear	281.520	87	3.236					

Computed using alpha = .05

153