Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy)

An exploratory study of teachers' and Educational Psychologists'
perspectives of inclusive education in Wales

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Summary

This thesis is divided into three sections: a major literature review; an empirical research paper; and a critical appraisal.

Part One - A Major Literature Review

Part one presents a narrative review of the literature. It commences by exploring the global impetus for Inclusive Education (IE), before focusing on how this drive sits within the context of key international and national developments. This is followed by consideration of the political landscape within the United Kingdom (UK) in terms of the devolution of education policy and the varying responses to IE across the UK's four constituent nations. This provides contextualisation for the subsequent critique and analysis of IE in relation to the Welsh education context. Definitions of IE are explored, along with the implications of IE for the roles of teachers and Educational Psychologists (EPs). Finally, it concludes by outlining the rationale and research questions for the empirical research paper presented in part two.

Part Two - An Empirical Research Paper

Part two is the empirical research paper. It begins with a brief overview of the relevant literature and outlines the research rationale and questions. This is followed by the choice of methodology and research design utilised, with twelve semi-structured interviews undertaken with teachers and EPs regarding their perspectives of IE in Wales. Next, the method of data analysis is detailed, with the themes and corresponding sub-themes presented and discussed in relation to the research. Finally, implications for practice, limitations and potential directions for future research are explored.

Part Three - A Critical Appraisal

Part three offers a critical appraisal wherein a reflective and reflexive account of the major literature review and empirical research paper is presented. Consideration is given to the development of the research and research practitioner, along with a discussion about the decisions taken throughout the research journey. Finally, the research's contribution to knowledge and practice is discussed, and possible future research and dissemination of the research are outlined.

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List of Abbreviations

AEP – Association of Educational Psychologists

ALN – Additional Learning Needs

ALP – Additional Learning Provision

ALNET – Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal

AP – Alternative Provision

BPS – British Psychological Society

CfW – Curriculum for Wales

CRPD - Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

DECP - Division of Educational and Child Psychology

DES - Department for Education Science

DfE – Department for Education

EP - Educational Psychologist

FP – Foundation Phase

GCSE – General Certificate in Secondary Education

GEM – Global Education Monitoring

HCPC – Health and Care Professions Council

IDP – Individual Development Plan

IE – Inclusive Education

LA – Local Authority

NI – Northern Ireland

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development

PCP – Person-Centred Practice

PISA - Programme for International Student Assessment

SDG – Sustainable Development Goals

SEND – Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

SEN – Special Educational Needs

SG – Scottish Government

TEP - Trainee Educational Psychologist

UDL – Universal Design for Learning

UK – United Kingdom

UN – United Nations

UNCRC – United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNCRPD – United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

UNESCO - United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation,

WAG - Welsh Assembly Government

WG – Welsh Government

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Part One: Major Literature Review

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1. Introduction

1.1 Overview of the Literature Review and Search Strategy

The purpose of this literature review is to explore, synthesise and critique the research in Inclusive Education (IE) to build an "overall impression" of IE and to attempt to make sense of what the existing literature has yielded (Siddaway et al., 2019, p. 749). A narrative review is utilised, with this approach enabling the gathering and synthesising of a rich volume of literature in the field (Cronin et al., 2008). The decision to use a narrative review also reflected the recognition that IE is deeply intertwined within the grey literature of government policies and declarations by supranational organisations that are often absent from the white literature of scholarly journals and commercial publications (Lawrence et al., 2014). Furthermore, narrative reviews are deemed beneficial in offering historical accounts of how a phenomenon has evolved and developed over time, which is arguably pertinent to the field of IE (Siddaway et al., 2019). For transparency, this literature review thus commences by offering a detailed explanation of the search strategy utilised when undertaking the narrative review.

1.2 Search Strategy

To gain an understanding of the historical and contextual factors surrounding IE developments, a scoping exercise of the Welsh Government (WG) and other United Kingdom (UK) government websites was undertaken, along with an examination of a range of grey literature published by international non-profit organisations (e.g., UNICEF). This scoping exercise enabled a broad and narrative frame of reference for understanding key IE developments in the international and national policy agenda and research literature. It also provided the researcher with insight into the range and extent of research available on the topic (Booth et al., 2016). A systematic literature review was then undertaken between August and October 2023 to determine more precisely, the extent of IE literature available concerning the Welsh education context. Specifically, this systematic search sought to gain a clearer understanding of how IE is defined within the research, as well as to identify key themes around IE and the roles of teachers and Educational Psychologists (EPs).

A Boolean search of three prominent education and psychology databases was utilised for the systematic literature review, which included the: Education Resource Information Centre (ERIC), American Psychological Association (APA) PsycInfo and Scopus. Articles were subsequently screened according to their titles and abstracts using a combination of search terms depicted in Table 1 below. These search terms were developed through an iterative process of the researcher becoming familiar with the research base and through a scoping search of the titles, abstracts and index terms utilised within retrieved articles.

Table 1: Mapping and Search Terms

Subject mapping terms	Key word search terms	Rationale
'inclusive education' AND	OR 'educational inclusion' OR 'inclusi*'	This systematic literature review intended to find research pertaining to IE. A variety of similar terms were found for IE in the scoping exercise.
'Educational Psychologist*' AND / OR 'Teacher*'	OR 'Educational Psycholog*' OR 'Teach*'	The scoping exercise highlighted that 'EP' may refer to service-based practices as well as the role of EPs. It was also deemed necessary to broaden the search term of 'teacher' to include consideration for references to the practice of teaching.
'Wales' AND	OR 'Welsh'	The Welsh education context is the primary focus of this research study.
'education reform*'	OR 'curriculum*' OR 'Additional Learning Need*' OR 'ALN'	Given the education reform context in Wales, key search terms associated with the reforms were included.

Due to a paucity of research examining IE within the Welsh education context (see Appendix 1), the decision was made to expand the search terms to encompass research relating to the wider UK context. Additional search terms thus included: 'UK', 'United Kingdom', 'Scotland', 'Scot*', 'England', 'Engl*', 'Northern Ireland', and 'Northern Ir*'. Whilst it was recognised that political variations across the UK may necessitate key differences in the framing of IE and its implications for teachers and EPs, it was also acknowledged that

commonalities do exist. For example, all EPs across the UK are regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) and share standards of professional practice (HCPC, 2023). Further, as a United Nations (UN) member state, all four nations will hold a level of alignment with the UK's overarching IE developments and commitments.

1.3 Transparency and Reporting

The systematic search of the literature conducted for this review was guided by the questions 'How is IE being defined within the UK literature?' and 'What does the IE literature tell us about the role of teachers and EPs in the UK?' The findings from this search resulted in 1,047 papers (ERIC), 727 papers (Scopus) and 455 papers (APA Scopus) which were exported to EndNote to manage citations and to support the removal of duplicate articles. The abstracts and titles of articles were then screened using inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 2).

Table 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Rationale
1. **Study Design** Studies were included if they had a qualitative focus in their design. Studies that offered an analysis of IE policy were included if they used qualitative methodological approaches.	Studies were excluded if they were based purely on positivist, experimental study designs and sought to offer a quantifiable measure of IE.	The systematic search sought to align with the qualitative ontological and epistemological theoretical paradigm underpinning this research study. Please see the methodology section within Part Two for further information.
2. **Location** Studies were included if they were written in English and described IE within the context of the UK.	Studies were excluded if they were not written in English and described IE outside of the UK context.	Research was primarily sought that directly related to the focus of this study, the Welsh education context. However, the location was expanded to include research related to the wider UK context for the purpose of a more comprehensive and contemporary review.

3. Sample Focus	Studies were excluded if they focused on other specific groups (e.g., speech and language therapists) or related to non-compulsory (e.g., further/higher) education.	The author is interested in what the IE research says in relation to teachers and EPs, as well as what it says about compulsory education given that this is the age range for whom the new curriculum and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system applies.
Studies were accepted if their focus was on EPs and/or teachers. Studies also had to relate to compulsory education (primary/secondary education).		
4. Publication Date	Studies were excluded if they did not appear in a peer-reviewed journal after 2010.	The Equality Act was published in 2010, which is a key document underpinning the education reforms underway in Wales.
Studies were included if published in a peer-reviewed journal after 2010.		

Hand searches of the Educational Psychology in Practice journal, unpublished theses, Google Scholar, the Wales Journal of Education, and the Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP) were also conducted. Further, bibliography searches and snowballing techniques were applied to identify additional references (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Of the literature generated, 28 studies were subjected to a full article screen and met the inclusion criteria for study design, location, sample focus and publication date. The Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP, 2018) Qualitative Checklist further supported the appraisal of these studies. A flow chart outlining the database search and literature selection process is available in Appendix 1. An overview of the literature generated from the systematic search is provided in Appendix 2, with the included literature presented thematically within sections five and six of this review.

1.4 Narrative Review Structure

In light of the literature gathered, this narrative review commences by seeking to explore the global impetus for IE, with consideration given to how this drive sits within the context of key international and national developments. Given the political landscape of the UK in terms of the devolution of education policy, attention then turns to exploring the various responses to IE across the UK's four constituent nations. This provides contextualisation for the subsequent analysis and critique of the WG's aspirations for a "fully IE system", which is the primary focus of this research (WG, 2021, p. 38). Through exploration of Wales's dual

reforms of a new curriculum and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system, consideration then turns to the ambiguities surrounding definitions of IE in Welsh policy and the implications this raises for practitioners. This is subsequently followed by consideration of the key themes surrounding definitions of IE within the national research literature, as well as an exploration of IE concerning the roles of teachers and EPs. Finally, the rationale and research questions for the empirical study presented in part two of this thesis are provided.

2. The Global Impetus for IE

Major momentum has been observed in education systems across the world seeking to make progress towards IE developments (Ainscow, 2020). Demarcated as a global agenda, both developing and developed nations have identified IE as a hallmark of their education policies and deemed it pivotal to the realisation of inclusive societies (Global Education Monitoring Report, GEM, 2020). Central to the aspiration of IE is the view that education offers the potential for an inclusive system that is fundamental to the broader attainment of a "just, equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world" (UN, 2015, p. 4). IE is, therefore, identified as holding an intrinsically ethical appeal and is regarded as being a deeply moral issue for societal consideration (Pirrie & Head, 2007; Gibbs, 2018). Further, the impetus for IE has been catalysed by growing awareness of several recent global developments, including demographic shifts, poverty, refugee crises, and greater awareness of the increasing diversification of schools (Organisation for Economic Development, OECD, 2021, 2023). Consequently, the drive for IE has been argued to be the recognition of the need for education systems to keep abreast and responsive to the dynamism and complex nature of today's modern and diverse societies (Malet, 2023). It has also been deemed unsurprising given that societal and educational exclusion remains "ubiquitous, reaching back in time and across nation-states" (Slee & Tait, 2022, p. 2). Indeed, educational exclusion persists as a pressing global concern with an estimated one in five children currently being entirely excluded from education due to factors such as disability, ethnicity, gender, displacement and language (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, UNESCO, 2023).

IE has thus become an increasingly major focal point within a wealth of education policy and research across the globe over the past three decades (Ainscow, 2020). A movement which is notably synonymous with the growing advocacy for a human rights-based paradigm in driving forward positive societal change (Patel, 2018). Indeed, the aspiration for IE has been

deemed concurrent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), wherein Article 28 stipulates the right of all children to education (UNICEF, 1989). Yet notably, simply advocating for the imperativeness of IE and education as a right, risks overlooking the complexity that this process entails (Norwich, 2014). Indeed, a convoluted array of factors, such as political agendas, pedagogical approaches and a particular set of values existing within a society towards education and inclusion all serve to make the task of understanding IE a challenging endeavour (Hernández-Torrano, et al., 2020). A view which is ratified by the plethora of debates surrounding the strikingly challenging question of how to define IE and the varying trajectories being observed both internationally and nationally in terms of the developments towards implementing IE systems (Kershner, 2016).

3. International and National Developments in IE

3.1 International Developments

3.1.1 Key International Developments in IE

From an international perspective, substantive efforts have been made to encourage IE practices within schools (Ainscow, 2020). This drive has been steered by a plethora of legislative advances and declarations, first expressed in the 1948 UN Declaration of Human Rights and more directly within the Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO, 1960). Yet notably, it was the UN World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990) that brought for the first time, international awareness of the need for countries to ensure that basic quality education was obtainable for all learners (UNESCO, 1990). Within this declaration, emphasis was placed on increasing the participation and success of all learners, with a particular need to target certain obstacles in the form of extreme poverty, racism, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, conflict, traveller children across Europe and those living in remote regions (UNESCO, 1990). Four years later, the Statement and Framework for Action of the 1994 World Conference on Special Needs Education sought to advance the ambitions of IE further (UNESCO, 1994). Widely referred to as the Salamanca Statement, 92 member countries and 25 international organisations signed their acknowledgement of a need for a shift in educational policy that more effectively promoted IE and mitigated barriers to achieving it (UNESCO, 1994). Within this statement, countries were urged to "adopt as a matter of law or policy, inclusive education" (UNESCO,

1994, p. ix). Reference was also made to the need for schools to "include everybody, celebrate differences, support learning, and respond to individual needs" (UNESCO, 1994, p. iii). This statement was profound as it marked a critical shift within the field of education in its acknowledgement of the positionality of schools as fundamental to the facilitation of IE (Ainscow, 2020). In doing so, it called for an international response towards the reform of education systems to meet the challenge (Ainscow, 2020). Yet paradoxically, despite the global advances in IE that the Salamanca Statement sought to facilitate, it was criticised as falling short given its primary focus was on learners identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN; Ainscow, 2020). Indeed, by taking this stance the Salamanca Statement offered a narrower conceptualisation of IE than had first been proposed in the Education for All declaration (UNESCO, 1990).

The association of IE as being heavily intertwined with the needs of learners identified as having SEN, as well as those with disabilities, has been common within the international policy agenda and influential in shaping global perspectives of IE (Antoninis et al., 2020). A lens fuelled by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities wherein the need for nations to ensure the inclusion of learners with disabilities is stipulated (UNCRPD, 2006). Ratified by 186 states and the European Union, Article 24 of the Convention specifies the need for state parties to ensure an "IE system at all levels" (UNDESA, 2019, p. 1c). With this being deemed necessary for the realisation of full human potential and to enable persons with a disability "to participate effectively in a free society" (UNDESA, 2019, p. 1c). Yet notably, whilst this statement acknowledges the criticality of IE to individuals and wider society, it has been criticised as being vague and the transference of the UNCRPD into practice has been shrouded with contention (Kanter, 2019). Indeed, disparities have emerged between nations as to what IE constitutes and disagreements have arisen around the matter of educational placements (Kanter, 2019). In acknowledgement of these ambiguities, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities sought to formulate General Comment No. 4 in a bid to define IE in greater depth, as well as to provide implementation guidelines and critical policy considerations (UN, 2016). Within General Comment No. 4, greater emphasis was placed on IE as a fundamental human right that requires a "transformation in culture, policy and practice" in education to accommodate the "differing requirements and identities of individual students" (UN, 2016, p. 3). This statement thus highlighted the need for nations to combat inequalities in the participation, accessibility and educational opportunities of all learners (UN, 2016). This broadening conceptualisation of IE was also

timely given its alignment to Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) of the Education 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda wherein the need for nations to confront exclusion and marginalisation in all its forms was emphasised (UNESCO, 2015). Yet despite the surfeit of international developments in IE and the reviving of IE as part of the Education for All movement, achieving consensus around a shared understanding of IE across nations has remained deeply problematic (Antoninis et al., 2020).

3.1.2 The Challenges of International Comparatives in IE

The dedication of the GEM Reports in 2019 and 2020 to the theme of inclusion and SDG4 is perhaps indicative of the ongoing disparities, challenges and debates in international developments in IE (Antoninis et al., 2020). As is the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD, 2023) recent publication, Equity and Inclusion in Education: Finding Strength through Diversity, wherein the need for greater global awareness of the challenges surrounding IE was raised. Indeed, the pace of progress in international IE developments has been deemed frustratingly slow, with contextual, cultural and local factors cited as fundamental explanations for the varying directions, definitions and pace of IE being observed amongst nations (GEM Report, 2020). Thus, whilst positive steps have been observed in the dedication of international declarations and statements towards achieving IE, systemic disparities between nations have raised concerns about a lack of international unanimity in their implementation (GEM Report, 2020). A plethora of dynamics have been implicated in this, including factors such as conflict, displacement and unremitting poverty (GEM Report, 2020). For example, in economically poorer nations, the focus and definitions of IE have been heavily tied to mitigating the barriers that prevent learners from attending and accessing education (UNESCO, 2015). This is evident in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is identified as battling some of the greatest obstacles to IE given the extreme challenges facing its schools in meeting basic provisions, with only half having access to drinking water, electricity, computers and the internet (UNESCO, 2023). In contrast, in economically wealthier nations, such as the UK, Australia and the United States of America (USA), the focus for IE developments has instead been heavily aimed at addressing inequalities in the number of learners leaving education without meaningful qualifications and issues surrounding the educational segregation of some learners (OECD, 2012; Ainscow, 2020).

Tensions have also permeated between nations in terms of their varying responses to the content of General Comment No. 4 (UN, 2016). In particular, the highly debated topic of segregation in education has raised ambiguity in its interpretation between nations focused on inclusion in learning and those focused on educational placements (GEM Report, 2020). For example, countries such as Australia and Germany have historically argued that segregation by educational setting is not necessarily exclusionary but could support inclusion in learning when considered with respect to parental choice (GEM Report, 2020). Whilst Spain has historically proposed that to attain full inclusion, it may at times be necessary to utilise segregation by educational setting as a precursor for integration (OHCHR, 2016). Such as when determining how best to support learner needs when later integrated into class with their peers (OHCHR, 2016). More recently, segregated education in all its forms has been criticised by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which stated that all learners have the "right to access inclusive learning opportunities in the mainstream education system" (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2019, p. 10). Yet this attempt to resolve the debate has created further tensions, given that it utilises the term *mainstreaming* to signify *inclusivity* when it has been argued that they reflect incompatible constructs (Graham, 2019). Indeed, attention has been drawn to the absence of inclusivity that mainstreaming risks given that it reflects an education system developed to meet the needs of *most* as opposed to *all*, given its reliance on a parallel SEN system (Graham, 2019). Thus, what these varying international debates serve to highlight is that IE reflects a multifaceted, transient and highly complex concept (Florian, 2014). Indeed, the rhetoric surrounding definitions of IE and its developments have varied historically due to their contingency upon the unique context in which IE is being construed and sought (Slee & Tait, 2022). An observation that thus necessitates a more focused exploration of the historical and current developments in IE here within the UK.

3.2 National Developments

3.2.1 Historical Milestones

From a national perspective, very little development was made in IE within the UK until the publications of the Warnock Report in 1978 (Department for Education Science, DES, 1978) and the subsequent Education Act in 1981 (HM Government, 1981). Prior to these publications, the historical patterns of education made available to learners across the UK had

been dominated by the traditional medical model of viewing learners' needs as a within-person deficit (Lindsay et al., 2020). Indeed, from the late 1800s onwards, learners had been categorised within the education system as being either "handicapped" or "non-handicapped", with those learners with the most complex needs being labelled "ineducable" (Lindsay et al., 2020, p. 2). Within this lens, learners with a disability were perceived as having an impairment of the mind and body and emphasis was placed on the need for cures or rehabilitation (Frederickson & Cline, 2015). In contrast, the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) sought to change the rhetoric surrounding the educational needs of learners, stating that learners experiencing difficulties with accessing education should not be categorised by their impairments but instead supported and statemented according to their SEN. The replacement of the term handicapped to SEN thus marked a critical shift within the UK's IE developments as it sought to acknowledge a more interactionist view of learners' educational needs as being a complex interplay of individual and environmental factors (Lindsay et al., 2020). Indeed, the term SEN was defined as encapsulating "all the factors" which interact to "have a bearing" on a learner's educational progress (DES, 1978, p. 37). Furthermore, the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) sought to endorse educational integration as conducive to inclusive practice, with schools being urged to meet the needs of learners with SEN in mainstream settings. Consequently, many specialist units and classes were added to schools in the years following the report's publication (Daniel et al., 2019).

Yet in 2005, Baroness Warnock herself criticised the Warnock Report, stating that the ambiguous concept of inclusion it advocated was its "most disastrous legacy" (Warnock, 2005, p. 11). She also acknowledged regret that the report's use of integration to denote inclusion had resulted in the closures of some specialist schools and learners being placed into mainstream settings when it was causing them distress or not within their best interests (Warnock, 2005). Consequently, the Warnock Report's (1978) stance of integration as signifying inclusion had raised criticisms that the concept of IE being advocated was ambiguous and impeding progress in inclusive practices (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2006). Concerns were also raised about the often, interchangeable use of SEN as being synonymous with disability, as well as the prevalent assumption that SEN reflected a single category of need (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2006). A view identified as failing to recognise the vast continuum of needs being observed within schools that could not be neatly conceptualised under the umbrella term of SEN (House of Commons Education and Skills Committee, 2006). Yet perhaps the greatest

criticism of the Warnock Report was that it had failed in its aim to extricate the medical model (Norwich, 2019). Indeed, the report was blamed for inadvertently creating a new language for adversely labelling learners as SEN in an education system wherein the categorisation became, paradoxically, requisite to the protection of provision and support (Norwich, 2019). A development which Slee (2018, p. 44) has fervently criticised, stating that the synonymous use of SEN as "part of the lexicon" of IE has led to it becoming an "object of and vehicle for profound reductionism."

3.2.2 The UK's Response to International Developments

In more recent years, the UK has sought to align its IE policy development with the wider international developments in IE being made by supranational organisations such as UNICEF and UNESCO (Knight et al., 2022). As a UN member state, the UK ratified the UNCRC (1989) in 1991 and endorsed the Salamanca Statement in 1994. Then in 2006, the UK government ratified the UNCRPD (2006), thus acknowledging its commitment to protecting and promoting the rights of persons with a disability by ensuring an IE system. More recently, in 2015 the UK supported the formulation and adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and subsequently published a voluntary national review detailing the efforts being made towards achieving IE as part of SDG4 (HM Government, 2019). Within this review, the UK sought to highlight its commitment to IE by ensuring that inclusivity is a central focus of its education policy (HM Government, 2019: 62). Emphasis was placed on the UK's pledge to the SDGs central promise to "Leave No One Behind" and its determination to ensure that all learners reach their full potential in education (HM Government, 2019, p. 5). Yet critically, cogitation should be given to the view that the simple act of providing ratification and signature for international declarations and agreements in IE does not necessitate that a more IE system is being attained or progressed towards (Amor et al., 2019). A consideration that is highly pertinent given the politically devolved landscape of the UK and the varying responses to international IE developments being observed and prioritised by each of the UK's four constituent nations: England, Northern Ireland (NI), Scotland and Wales (HM Government, 2019).

3.2.3 Devolved Responses to International Agendas

An area where divergence between the UK nations in their response to international agendas relevant to IE is evident is in their varying responses towards the UNCRC (1989). Until recently, Wales was the only UK nation that had incorporated the UNCRC (1989) into its domestic law via The Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011 (WG, 2011). This measure stipulates a legal obligation for WG ministers to have due regard to the UNCRC when exercising their functions (WG, 2011). In contrast, despite calls to incorporate the UNCRC (1989) into law in NI, the government has so far resisted, with Brexit and the suspension of the government between 2017 and 2020 being deemed implicated (McMurray, 2021). Whilst other means for addressing children's rights are evident in NI, such as the Children's Services Co-operation Act (NI) 2015 and the Children and Young People's Strategy 2020-2030, concerns have been raised that substantial inequalities exist within NI's education system that are creating barriers to learners "fully realising their right to an effective education" (McMurray, 2021, p. 3). With regards to England, the former Children's Commissioner has highlighted the urgent need for the full incorporation of the UNCRC into England's domestic law, stating that it is fundamentally requisite to ensuring the protection and advancement of children's rights in political decision-making (Longfield, 2019). Whilst in Scotland, steps have been underway to incorporate the UNCRC into domestic law, however, the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill 2021 was challenged by the UK Government, with this resulting in a substantial delay to its incorporation (Scottish Government, SG hereafter, 2021). This was due to the Supreme Court ruling that certain parts of the Bill fell outwith the legislative competency of the Scottish Parliament (Supreme Court, 2021). Consequently, the SG sought to make amendments to the Bill for it to be passed into law and on the 26th of January 2024 royal assent was finally granted with the Bill now becoming an Act, with most of its provisions due to come into force by July 2024 (SG, 2024). A development regarded as demarcating a significant milestone in the protection of children's right to an education in Scotland (Somerville, 2023).

Divergences between the UK nations also exist in their responses to the UNCRPD (2006) which whilst ratified, is not yet legally binding within the UK (Abreu, 2022). Whilst all four nations have taken steps to incorporate the Convention's principles into their domestic laws and policies, they have done so in varying ways. In England, Wales and Scotland, the steps taken relate to the establishment of the Equality Act (2010) which seeks to advance equality

and protect all individuals from discrimination. The Equality Act (2010) also includes a definition of disability based on the UNCRPD (2006), with disability being defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a long-term and substantial negative effect on a person's ability to undertake normal daily activities. In contrast, there is no overarching equality legislation within NI that fully encompasses the promotion of equality of opportunity and protection of individuals against discrimination (Equality Commission for NI, 2022). Instead, stand-alone legislature, codes and documentation exist, such as the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), Disability Discrimination Code of Practice for Schools (NI Assembly, 2006) and Disability Action Plan 2022-25 (NI Assembly, 2022). Whilst these documents include a commitment to ensuring that learners with a disability have equal opportunities and access to education, calls have been raised for a single equality legislation to "strengthen equality rights and protections" in NI (Equality Commission for NI, 2022, p. 5). This is due to concerns surrounding gaps between equality law in NI and the Equality Act (2010) embedded across the other UK nations, with this identified as resulting in individuals in NI having less protection against harassment and discrimination than other parts of the UK (Equality Commission for NI, 2022). A concern further convoluted by the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities which raised concerns about the "uneven implementation" of the UNCRPD across the UK and identified the need for the UK to develop a "comprehensive legislative and policy framework for IE" (UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2017, p. 2). This was due to the Committee identifying a perturbing lack of "real inclusion" for learners with disabilities in schools across the UK and the need for greater unanimity amongst educational professionals in their understanding of inclusion (UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2017, p. 10).

3.2.4 Education Policy as a Devolved Matter

Deviations between the four UK nations have also been highlighted in terms of the structure, purpose and delivery of their education systems (Knight et al., 2023). These variations have been identified as reflecting the policy motivations of each nation and education being a politically devolved matter (Sibieta & Jerrim, 2021). From a broad perspective, all four nations have taken steps towards a more IE stance in their educational policies in recent years, with England, Wales and NI acknowledging the importance of IE and Scotland advocating for the removal of barriers to inclusion (Knight et al., 2023). Yet fundamental differences exist between the nations in terms of their curriculums and mechanisms for

supporting the needs of learners identified as having Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) or additional needs (Knight et al, 2023). For example, the curriculum in England emphasises the importance of equality as a hallmark for IE, with teachers expected to set high expectations for every learner, with the added acknowledgement that a minority of learners will require access to "specialist equipment and different approaches" (Department for Education, DfE hereafter, 2014, p. 9). The English curriculum is also framed within the context of the Children and Families Act (2014) which sets out a presumption of mainstream education for learners with SEND. However, the English curriculum is notably prescriptive compared to the other UK nations, given that it specifies guidelines for what learners should be taught in the curriculum and the expected levels to be attained at each stage within the education system (DfE, 2014). For example, assessment checks for each key stage are demarcated, such as the phonic screening check for learners at ages five to six and the multiplication table checks at ages eight to nine (DfE, 2014). Consequently, concerns have been raised that the English curriculum offers little flexibility regarding how these prescribed attainment and normed expectations are fully inclusive and responsive to the diverse educational needs of all learners (Knight et al, 2023). A concern that is arguably justified given the recent SEND and Alternative Provision (AP) Green Paper Review calling for a more IE system in England (DfE, 2023). This is due to the striking inequalities being observed amongst learners with SEND or in an AP who have been found to experience persistently worse educational outcomes than their peers (DfE, 2023).

In NI, the rhetoric of having high expectations for all learners is also acknowledged, however a more person-centred approach towards designing a curriculum that moves away from a one-size-fits-all stance is advocated (Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment, 2019). NI also outlines a commitment to IE in relation to supporting learners identified as having additional needs, stating that the Department of Education and the Education Training Inspectorate are dedicated to promoting inclusive practices within schools (NI Department of Education, 2005). Wales has taken a similar stance, stating its ambitions for a person-centred and fully IE system wherein the "majority" of learners with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) are supported to "participate fully in mainstream education" (WG, 2021a, p. 39). Yet notably, both NI and Wales create challenges for IE in their references to instances whereby their curriculums and best practice guidelines can be modified or disapplied for learners with additional needs (WG, 2020; Council for the Curriculum Examinations and Assessment, 2019). In contrast, the IE rhetoric in Scotland is focused on

providing a curriculum responsive to the diverse needs of all learners through its emphasis on the removal of environmental barriers that might restrict learners from accessing the curriculum (Education Scotland, 2016). Scotland also utilises the term Additional Support Needs (ASN) to describe learners who would be unable to benefit from education without additional support (SG, 2017). Arguably, this definition of ASN could be deemed more inclusive than ALN, SEN or SEND, given its emphasis on the need for an adaption to the learning environment rather than individual learner (Knight et al., 2023). Yet despite the potentially more inclusive connotations of ASN, the SG has been criticised for providing case study examples within their Additional Support for Learning (ASL) Code of Practice (SG, 2017) that contradict the term (Knight et al., 2023). Indeed, many of the examples detailed encourage practitioners to target support for the individual learner to change, rather than focusing on changing the environment (Knight et al., 2023).

Thus, what these devolved education developments serve to highlight, is that varying agendas and tensions for IE exist between and across all four of the UK's constituent nations (Knight et al., 2023). In particular, the repeated alignment of mainstreaming to references of inclusion, as well as the language used to describe learners requiring additional support, all warrant further scrutiny. As does the use of competing medical and social theoretical models of educational needs, given the references to inclusive discourses and juxtaposing instances of curriculums becoming disapplied or modified (Hardy & Woodcock, 2023). Yet, it is unfortunately beyond the scope of this current study to provide the explanatory depth to such an appraisal. Instead, a more thorough exploration and critique of IE developments within the Welsh education context will now ensue given its focus for this research.

4.   IE and the Welsh Education Context

To better comprehend the WG's aspirations for an IE system, it is imperative to first understand the key historical developments in Wales's education system that have occurred post-devolution and given rise to the current educational reform context. Particularly given that the fractured responses to education across the UK nations have led to successive Welsh education ministers espousing that there exists a uniquely "Welsh way" to its education policy and implementation (Evans, 2022, p. 372).

4.1 Post-Devolution Education in Wales

Wales is a relatively small nation with education being compulsory from the age of five to 16 (Education Act, 1996) According to the most recent data, there are six nursery schools, 1,223 primary schools, 27 middle schools, 178 secondary schools and 39 special schools (StatsWales, 2023). Following the political devolution of powers in 1999 from the UK Parliament to the National Assembly for Wales (now Senedd Cymru), the Welsh Assembly Government (now WG) gained responsibility for the delivery and oversight of education across all stages. A process which enabled Wales to carve its own pathway in terms of its strategic decision-making in education policy and thus IE developments (Evans, 2021). Hitherto political devolution, education in Wales had been closely aligned with the education system of England, with the Education Reform Act (1988) having led to the implementation of a statutory national curriculum and corresponding assessment arrangements (HM Stationary Office, 1989). Flexing its post-devolution autonomy, Wales sought to move away from its parallelism with England, with the publication of The Learning Country and Curriculum Cymreig commencing a vision for an education system that solely met the needs of the Welsh nation (Welsh Assembly Government, WAG, 2001; ACCAC, 2003). Indeed, a prevailing ambition of Wales's post-devolution education journey has resided in the quest to establish an education system that reflects the unique socioeconomic, cultural, linguistic, environmental and historical landscape of Wales (WG, 2013a). An aspiration highly evident in Wales's establishment of a play-based and developmentally focused Foundation Phase (FP) curriculum for early years children (WAG, 2010). Described as a deliberate attempt at progressivism over its neighbouring nation's more traditionalist attainment-focused curriculum, the FP replaced key stage one (Power, 2016). Schools in Wales subsequently became structured around the statutory FP (ages 3-7), key stage two (ages 7-11), key stage three (ages 11-14) and key stage four (ages 14-16).

A major impetus for the FP stemmed from concerns about the persistent underachievement of learners in Wales, particularly in terms of literacy, numeracy and the wide-reaching challenges of poverty disadvantaging many Welsh communities (Dauncey, 2013). Whilst poverty reflects a notably complex and nuanced issue, Wales has persisted in having the highest levels of poverty and child poverty amongst all four UK nations (Senedd Cymru, 2023a). Debates have consequently surmounted about the quality and inclusivity of the Welsh education system in counteracting such inequalities (Taylor et al., 2016). In particular,

it was felt that the formal teaching approaches typified by the former key stage one curriculum were at odds with the developmental needs of Wales's youngest learners (Taylor et al., 2016). A core feature of the FP thus became its emphasis on the importance of teacher observations and the need to target learning more holistically and inclusively according to individual learners' stage of development rather than chronological age (WG, 2015). Yet paradoxically, the subsequent establishment of a Literacy Numeracy Framework (LNF) and annual literacy and numeracy assessments for all 5-14-year-olds, saw learners categorised according to "appropriate expectations at each age and key stage" (WG, 2013b, p. 7). Within these assessments, learners receive age-adjusted scores comparing their achievement against the "average child" in Wales of the same age (WG, 2013b, p. 7). A process accused of contradicting the core ethos of the FP and fuelling a narrative counterintuitive to IE given its portrayal of expected norms and levels of ability based on chronological age (Taylor et al., 2016).

4.2 An Accountable Education System

The changing trajectory in Wales's policy agenda towards more standardised assessments for learners in 2013 was a direct response to Wales's poor performance in the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessments (PISA, OECD, 2014). Consequently, alarms were once again raised about the quality of education in Wales and the establishment of an Improving Schools Plan soon followed that focused on the need for greater accountability in driving up educational standards (Andrews, 2011; WG, 2012). This resulted in a plethora of initiatives being devised that focused on assessment and accountability measures, such as a greater focus on performance management, the establishment of regional consortia tasked with school improvement and the banding of schools according to their support needs (Donaldson, 2020). Changes were also made to the national curriculum to include a greater focus on learners acquiring transferrable skills for life (WAG, 2008a). Furthermore, a non-statutory Skills Framework for three to 19-year-olds focused on key skills in numeracy, thinking, communication, Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) was also established in a bid to "address concerns about skills' shortages" amongst employers (WAG, 2008b, p. 4).

Yet, this "ratcheting up of various forms of accountability" occurred in a context deemed imbalanced by its lack of offer of support mechanisms for school practitioners (Egan, 2016, p. 30). Consequently, concerns were raised that the Welsh education system was being

dominated by top-down, politically motivated and neoliberal agendas seeking to demonstrate progress through a narrow lens of education focused on short-term gains in pupil assessment data (Donaldson, 2015). An issue exasperated by the rapid pace of change in Wales's education system and the paucity of follow-up evaluations of education policy, with only one in ten policies being reviewed for their effectiveness following implementation (OECD, 2014, 2017). There was thus a pervading sense that the education profession had become exhausted by rapidly changing policy agendas and teachers demoralised by an absence of autonomy given the entrenched curriculum they were being tasked to deliver (Grigg, 2016). Furthermore, concerns were raised that these attempts to reduce educational inequalities were failing, given that the connection between poverty and low educational outcomes remained stubbornly high (Egan, 2017). Whilst caution about assuming causality is needed, these tensions within Wales's education system raised fundamental implications for IE. Indeed, if IE is regarded as a vehicle for counteracting inequality and harnessing cohesion within a society, then the pervading challenges of poverty in Wales are poignant (Graham et al., 2020). As is the problem of neoliberal agendas to IE, given their emphasis on competitive individualism and the steering of schools towards a depiction of education narrowly focused on high academic attainment that inevitably risks the exclusion of some learners (Mac, 2021).

4.3 Education Reform and Wales's Aspirations for IE

The prevailing tensions within Wales's post-devolution education system thus proved instrumental in raising alarms that there existed much ambiguity surrounding the longer-term vision of education in Wales (OECD, 2014). An observation that proved pivotal in propelling the whole-system education reforms currently underway in Wales, wherein a key aim resides in the need to create a fully IE system (Donaldson, 2015; WG, 2021a, 2021b). Indeed, Wales is halfway through the implementation of a major programme of education reforms, described in a speech by its former education minister as the "biggest set of education reforms anywhere in the UK for over half a century" (Williams, 2019). Whilst bold, this claim is arguably justified given the extent of reforms underway in Wales (Knight & Crick, 2021). These include the introduction of a new curriculum and assessment arrangements (Donaldson, 2015; WG, 2021b), changes to initial teacher education (Furlong, 2015), an overhaul of professional standards for school practitioners (WG, 2017a) and changes to the school inspection framework (Estyn, 2023a). Furthermore, a statutory ALN system is

currently being embedded, with this system serving to replace the SEN system that has operated in Wales for over thirty years (WG, 2018, 2021a).

Given the perceived historical shortfalls of the Welsh education system, a fundamental aspiration of Wales's education reforms lies in the need to create a high-quality, IE system "appropriate to every learner in every classroom" (WG, 2017b: 17). In particular, the dual development of a new curriculum and ALN system are deemed pivotal to realising Wales's ambitions for IE (Conn & Hutt, 2020). This is due to these reforms specifying the need to balance equitable access to a curriculum for all, with the provision of an ALN system that meets the diverse needs of individuals (WG, 2018, 2021a). Indeed, as the ALN system is targeted at learners with ALN, it becomes necessary to look to the curriculum to understand how the IE of all learners is being sought (Conn & Hutt, 2020). Yet notably, criticisms have been raised about the ambiguities and inconsistencies that have been found to exist between these education reform policies regarding the messages of IE being advocated (Knight & Crick, 2021). To attain a clearer understanding of these concerns, critical appraisal of the purpose and structures underpinning the new curriculum and ALN policies is thus requisite.

4.4 Curriculum for Wales (CfW)

4.4.1 An Overview of CfW

In 2014, the WG tasked Professor Graham Donaldson (a leading education consultant) to conduct a comprehensive examination of the Welsh education system and assessment arrangements. The resulting outcome was the publication of Successful Futures wherein a radical reform of Wales's curriculum structure and purpose for three to 16-year-olds was proposed (Donaldson, 2015). Within Successful Futures, 68 recommendations for a clearer vision of education in Wales were identified, along with a strategic roadmap for their implementation (Donaldson, 2015). Following a period of consultation, the WG accepted the recommendations in full, thus paving the way for the curriculum and assessment reforms now underway and due to be fully embedded by 2026 (WG, 2023b). A key principle of the curriculum design was identified as the need for inclusivity, with this being framed within a rights-based paradigm (UNCRC, 1989) and defined as a curriculum easily understood by all wherein every learner is entitled to a high-quality education (Donaldson, 2015). Based on this

and other guiding principles (see Donaldson, 2015: 14), the new CfW identifies four overarching purposes (Figure 1) for the education of every learner in Wales:

Figure 1: The Four Curriculum Purposes
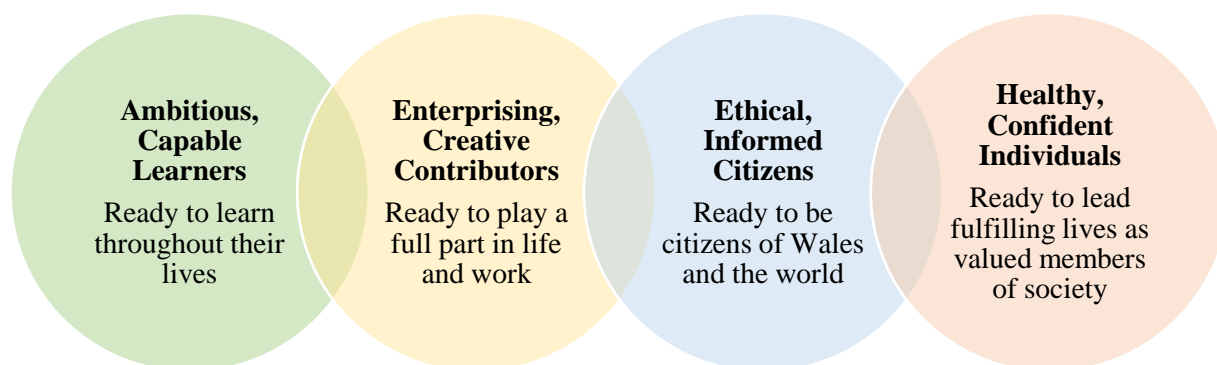
To achieve these four purposes, learning is structured around six Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE) that provide a broad framework for curriculum delivery (Donaldson, 2015). These include expressive arts; health and well-being; humanities; languages, literacy and communication; mathematics and numeracy; science and technology (Donaldson, 2015). Mandatory cross-curricular skills are also identified which include literacy, numeracy and digital competency, with these skills deemed vital to realising the four purposes and preparing learners to thrive in a precipitously advancing and technologically rich future world (WG, 2022). Furthermore, building upon the perceived strengths of the FP, the CfW removes the discrete key stages of the old curriculum and replaces them with a continuous model of learning (Donaldson, 2015). Assessment of learning is instead focused on "what matters" statements within the AoLE and broad progression steps at ages five, eight, 11, 14 and 16 (Donaldson, 2015: 75).

This shift towards a single continuum of learning and progression was felt to be more inclusive, given that it allows all learners, including those with ALN, more equitable opportunities to make progress along the same continuum (Donaldson, 2015). Learning in CfW is thus viewed through a more fluid lens with acceptance given that learners will move between progression steps at varying speeds (Donaldson, 2015). The rationale for the removal of traditional subject areas also reflected the view that a more interconnected, flexible and holistic vision of learning was required wherein subject knowledge serves but

does not define the curriculum (Donaldson, 2015). A view that supports the CfW's aims of removing detailed content specificity in favour of schools developing a person-centred curriculum bespoke to the needs of their learners (Donaldson, 2020). Indeed, a hallmark of CfW resides in its underpinning principle of subsidiarity and its aspiration for the curriculum to be built "from the classroom out" (Donaldson, 2020, p. 24). A Pioneer Schools Network supported this ambition and the WG has remained steadfast in its commitment to tasking schools with taking a co-constructive approach to curriculum design (Donaldson, 2020). Furthermore, learners themselves are viewed as agentic in the curriculum design and are encouraged to partake in planning, reviewing and reflecting on their learning experiences (Donaldson, 2020). A movement that is notably synonymous with Article 12 of the UNCRC (1989) which stipulates the imperativeness of ensuring the active participation of learners in matters that concern them.

4.4.2 CfW and the Aspirations for IE

The new CfW thus seeks to be unapologetically progressive and affords practitioners a high degree of agency in realising its ambitions (Furlong et al., 2021). A decision viewed as offering the potential for schools to utilise inclusive teaching practices, given the flexibility that the curriculum affords practitioners in being able to adapt their approach towards curriculum content and pedagogy (Knight & Crick, 2021). Yet, concerns about the implementation of CfW have been highlighted that create fundamental implications for IE. Indeed, in a report by the OECD (2020), alarms were raised about a deep lack of coherence amongst education practitioners in terms of what the successful realisation of CfW will look like in practice. A claim based on over six years of policy analysis, visits, interviews and workshops with schools, advisory groups and wider members of the education community across Wales (OECD, 2020). Further, whilst a strength of the CfW was acknowledged as its affordance of schools designing a curriculum according to their local need, concerns were raised about the potential educational inequalities it risks (OECD, 2020). In particular, the OECD highlighted the educational disadvantage that learners could face given that variations between schools in their availability of resources and professional capacity could limit the curriculums being offered to some learners (OECD, 2020). Notably, caution is needed when considering these claims, given that there is a lack of rigorous detail and transparency regarding how the telephone meetings and interviews utilised in the OECD's (2020) study were analysed. Nevertheless, the potential risk of educational inequality and its "fellow

traveller exclusion" within the new CfW warrants critical implications for Wales's aspirations for IE (Slee, 2018, p. 12). Indeed, it highlights consideration for matters relating to intersectionality and the potential influences that serve to reinforce privilege or exacerbate disadvantage and exclusion within education (Slee, 2018).

A further implication for Wales's ambitions of creating an IE system resides in the observation that whilst the CfW espouses to be inclusive for all, reference is made to instances where it can be disapplied or modified for learners with ALN (WG, 2021a). Indeed, whilst the CfW Guidance (WG, 2020) advocates an inclusive stance via the need for a curriculum that recognises and celebrates diversity, the subsequent Curriculum and Assessment (Wales) Act 2021 provides legislative powers for maintained schools and nurseries to disapply sections 27, 28, 29 and 30 of the Act for some learners (WG, 2021b). These sections relate to the duty of schools to ensure the implementation of the adopted curriculum (section 27), general implementation requirements (section 28) and further implementation requirements for pupils of school age (sections 29 and 30). Given such exemptions, concerns have thus surmounted that these legislative powers "risk the potential to become exclusionary" and contradict the attainment of a fully IE system in Wales (Knight & Crick, 2021, p. 14).

4.5 The ALN Transformation Agenda

4.5.1 An Overview of the ALN System

Of further pertinence to Wales's aspirations for IE, are the changes being made to the system for learners identified as requiring additional support for their learning (Conn, 2023). Following the introduction of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act (ALNET, 2018), a unified approach for identifying and supporting learners with ALN has been enforced across the broader age range of zero to 25 years (WG, 2018, 2020). Due to be fully implemented by August 2025, the ALN system supersedes the SEN system for three to 16-year-olds, with the term ALN serving to replace the terms SEN and learning difficulties and/or disabilities (WG, 2018). Statements of SEN are also being replaced with Individual Development Plans (IDP) for all learners who meet the criteria for ALN (WG, 2018). This is defined within the ALN Code for Wales 2021 as per Figure 2:

Figure 2: Definition of ALN

Additional Learning Needs

(1) A person has additional learning needs if he or she has a learning difficulty or disability (whether the learning difficulty or disability arises from a medical condition or otherwise) which calls for Additional Learning Provision (ALP).

(2) A child of compulsory school age or person over that age has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she—

(a) has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or

(b) has a disability for the purposes of the Equality Act 2010 which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities for education or training of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in mainstream maintained schools or mainstream institutions in the further education sector.

(c) A child under compulsory school age has a learning difficulty or disability if he or she is, or would be if no ALP were made, likely to be within subsection (2) when of compulsory school age.

(d) A person does not have a learning difficulty or disability solely because the language (or form of language) in which he or she is or will be taught is different from a language (or form of language) which is or has been used at home.

(WG, 2021a: 28)

A key rationale for the ALN reform was the WG's recognition of the need to address historical systemic inequalities, with criticisms raised that the SEN system was archaic and failing to provide a unified approach for assessing, planning and monitoring provision for all learners (National Assembly for Wales, 2015). Criticisms had also surmounted that the SEN system was failing to capitalise on the early identification of learners' needs and thus opportunities for timely, mitigative interventions were being lost (National Assembly for Wales, 2015). Consequently, a key aim of the ALN system resides in its ambitions of offering

a person-centred, fairer, more integrated and inclusive system for assessing, identifying and supporting learning needs under the single umbrella term of ALN (WG, 2018).

4.5.2 The ALN System and IE Considerations

A key principle underpinning the ALN reform resides in its aim of supporting an IE system (WG, 2021a). This is defined within the ALN Code as providing learners with "common opportunities" relevant to their learning needs, as well as ensuring that they "fully belong to the school community" (WG, 2021, p. 40). It also states that the attainment of IE relies "on the knowledge and experience of teaching staff" to provide "appropriate access" to the curriculum (WG, 2021a, p. 40). Yet notably, this definition is vague, with criticisms raised about the lack of tangible guidance for how it translates into inclusive practices within schools (Conn & Hutt, 2020).

Whilst the ALN Code (WG, 2021a) does seek to signpost practitioners to its Inclusion and Pupil Support guidance (WG, 2016), this documentation makes several outdated statements about how to support inclusion. For example, when citing the need for practitioners to undertake training to support their inclusive practices, the WG (2016) guidance refers newly qualified teachers to the Master's in Educational Practice (MEP) programme. Yet the MEP has since been overhauled and replaced in recent years. Also concerning is the observation that this guidance states that the National Literacy and Numeracy Framework (NLNF) offers schools a "statutory" and "inclusive framework" for practice (WG, 2016: 17). Yet, this framework is now non-statutory and deemed subordinate to the cross-curricula skills within the new CfW (Donaldson, 2015). Further alarming is the fact that this guidance provides no references to either the new CfW or ALN reforms which have been deemed as prerequisite to the attainment of an IE system in Wales (WG, 2016).

An additional implication for IE resides in the observation that a determiner of ALN is a learner experiencing a learning difficulty or disability that calls for the learner to receive Additional Learning Provision (ALP: Figure 3):

Figure 3: Definition of ALP

Additional Learning Provision

(1) "Additional learning provision" for a person aged three or over means educational or training provision that is additional to, or different from, that made generally for others of the same age in—

(a) mainstream maintained schools in Wales,

(b) mainstream institutions in the further education sector in Wales, or

(c) places in Wales at which nursery education is provided.

(WG, 2021a: 29)

Whilst the demarcation of ALP is deemed critical for supporting learners' ALNs, it inherently raises fundamental implications for IE. Indeed, distinguishing educational provision that is *additional to* and *different from* that which is generally available, risks the potential othering of learners with ALN (Knight & Crick, 2021). This is because it suggests that these learners have fallen short in their abilities to effectively exercise use of the normative provision of their school (Florian, 2019). A concern further convoluted by the risk of iniquity and ableism that may arise given the within-person, deficit language being used to define learners with ALN as having a significantly greater difficulty in learning (Knight & Crick, 2021). Furthermore, alarms have recently been raised by Estyn (2023b) who conducted a thematic report exploring the progress of schools and local authorities in supporting pupils with ALN. Within this report, concerns were highlighted that schools lacked an understanding of the legal definition of ALP, as well as the finding that a broad range of terms (e.g., universal, specialist) are being used by schools to categorise provision that is not ALP. This is despite a lack of consensus as to what these non-ALP provisions constitute (Estyn, 2023b). Concerns further exasperated by the observation that there was found to exist a lack of "joined up thinking at either policy or practice level" to highlight the connections between CfW and the ALN reform agenda (Estyn, 2023b, p. 48). Yet, perhaps more positively for Wales's IE developments was the finding that school practitioners noted enthusiasm towards the person-centred principle underpinning the ALN reform, with this being deemed as aligning with the inclusive aspirations of CfW (Estyn, 2023b).

5. The Ambiguity of IE Definitions

The aforementioned tensions and ambiguity surrounding the alignment of policy developments and practices that seek to address the WG's aims for IE are thus concerning and compounded by the paucity of an agreed definition of IE across the reform policies (Knight & Crick, 2021; Knight et al., 2023). This ambiguity is not, however, limited to Wales, but reflects the wider UK research literature wherein varying definitions of IE have been posited (please see Appendix 2). Understanding these varying conceptualisations is critical given that any attempts to obtain an IE system will be contingent upon being able to first define what it is that is being striven towards (Krischler et al., 2019). A discussion of how IE has been commonly defined within the UK research literature will thus ensue.

5.1. Narrow Versus Broad Definitions of IE

Definitions of IE have predominantly faced tensions between those who narrowly regard IE as related to ensuring the inclusion of specific groups of learners (e.g., those with SEN, ALN or disability) and those who argue for IE from a broader, rights-based perspective of being about educational inclusion for all (Norwich, 2014). There have also been instances within the literature whereby IE has been used interchangeably to denote special education, such as that by Ware (2014) when seeking to understand the effects of changing policy and legislation on IE developments in Wales. Indeed, Florian (2019) has argued that the synonymous use of the terms *special* and *inclusive* education is commonplace within the literature and has resulted in much confusion about the distinction between the terms. Lauchlan and Greig (2015) also acknowledge the convoluted nature of IE definitions but go on to state that it is a term generally taken to mean that learners are educationally and socially included in an environment where they feel welcomed and able to thrive. This focus on the environment is insightful to their framing of IE, with Lauchlan and Greig (2015) advocating that the matter of educational placement is a significant aspect of IE. Thus, by conceptualising IE in this light, the researchers reinforce historic debates about whether IE can only be achieved via the placement of learners with additional needs or disability in mainstream settings, or whether specialist placements can be successfully inclusive (Lauchlan and Greig, 2015). Yet, it has been argued that this narrower framing of IE risks fuelling a narrative of difference whereby learners with additional needs or disability are seen as sitting on the periphery of the normative, mainstream centre of education (Florian, 2019).

This is due to the suggestion that their minority differences in learning necessitate that they are unable to access provision that is normally available to the majority needs of their mainstream peers (Florian, 2019).

Contrastingly, broader conceptualisations of IE advocate for a diversity lens, whereby all learners are viewed as unique and construed notions of normative bell-curve distributions of educational ability are suspended (Florian, 2019). To better understand these competing definitions and debates, Knight and Crick (2021) identified two continuums (Figure 4) based on practice and values to distinguish how IE can be defined and understood:

Figure 4: Practice and Values Continuum
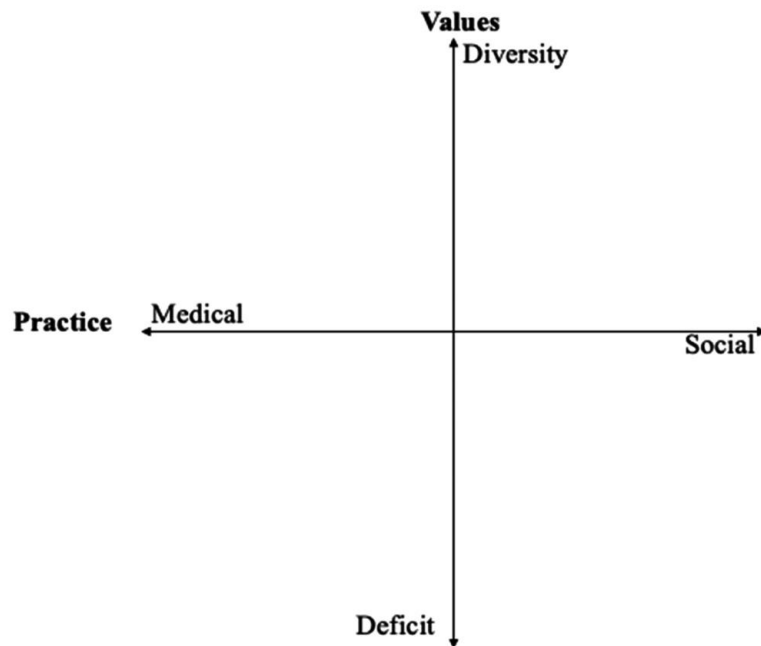
Taking the practice continuum (medical–social), Knight and Crick (2021) acknowledge the historical reliance within IE rhetoric towards a medical model of disability in the depiction of within-learner deficits that necessitate labels and intervention for inclusion to occur (e.g., SEN, ALN, disability). In contrast, they state that the move towards a social model of disability in recent years has highlighted that learners can be disabled by society and face obstacles to IE as a result of barriers within their environment, rather than because of impairments or differences (Knight & Crick, 2021). For the values continuum (diversity-deficit), they highlight the problematic nature of attempts to define IE through a narrow focus

on the educational placement and integration of pupils with ALN or disability in the mainstream setting (Knight & Crick, 2021). They argue that this lens risks sitting on the deficit end of the values continuum, and state that a diversity perspective is requisite to moving away from notions of difference and towards a broader, more inclusive acknowledgement of the diverse needs of all learners as something to be celebrated rather than targeted or secerned (Knight & Crick, 2021).

5.2 A Nuanced Definition of IE

Contrastingly, Norwich (2014) has contested the logic of definitions of IE as being a dichotomy between one narrow perspective over a broader perspective (i.e., from a medical to social model of disability, or from SEN / ALN to IE). Indeed, he warns it maintains a view of IE that is too simplistic and frames debates as sitting on competing polarities of positive and negative. Instead, Norwich (2014) defines IE as reflecting a nuanced continuum of difference that combines plural values that are sometimes incompatible. He draws upon Berlin's (1990, p.13) notion of ideological purity and impurity parallels to highlight this point and states that choices in IE will inevitably entail some "irreparable loss" from one position to the other. This framing of ideological purity and impurity is likened by Norwich (2014) to Berlin's (1978) distinction between the hedgehog and fox perspectives. Based on the Greek poet Archilochus's statement that the fox knows many things while the hedgehog knows one big thing, the hedgehog's vision of IE is that it can be understood through a single, universal organising principle as "one big value and idea that provides security and purpose" (Norwich, 2014, p. 500). Contrasting this monist stance is the fox perspective of IE, which is one of diffusion and pluralism. The fox perspective thus seeks to move beyond purist notions of a coherent position of IE to one of nuance and multiple values that are sometimes conflicting and present both dilemmas and hard choices.

Norwich (2014) thus aligns with the fox perspective and calls for a conceptualisation of IE that is not about the hedgehog perspective of *either/or* but is rather *both/and*. To demonstrate this point, Norwich (2014) highlights the assumption of opposition between segregation and integration debates surrounding educational placement. From the one position, IE necessitates a transformation of school systems to be more accommodating to learners' needs as opposed to specialist education provisions deemed additional to the normative centre of education. On this assumption, if generally provided teaching includes what a learner requires, then no

distinguishing of individual differences is necessitated. From this stance, the more inclusive provision available within a school, the less additionality required. However, Norwich (2014) explains that inclusivity from a diversity perspective would yield a contradictory response to individuality given that awareness of the need to extend or adapt provision to accommodate the needs of the individual would also be requisite. Norwich (2014) thus argues that the maintenance of hedgehog IE perspectives that reject their supposed opposites are at risk of overlooking the connections that exist between them. He extends this point to the critiques of the language of SEN and disability, stating that the view that these terms are always stigmatising, risks ignoring the potential interests and views of those they represent "when seen from their own perspective" (Norwich, 2014, p. 501). Thus, by highlighting the connections between these principles, Norwich (2014, p. 501) argues that the fox perspective of IE questions the simplicity and ideological purity-maintaining stance of the hedgehog perspective. Indeed, Norwich contends that the hedgehog way of thinking risks IE being a mere ethical provocation and self-insulating concept that protects itself "through rejection of its supposed opposite". Instead, Norwich (2014) calls for a fox style of thinking about IE, arguing that it enables the ability to move beyond mere critiques and assumptions of oppositional viewpoints, to one of seeking tangible resolutions to tensions that may not be in the form of a coherent position.

5.3 IE as a Process

Definitions of IE have also been framed around systems theory and the question of what systemic changes are needed to ensure greater equity and inclusion of learners in education (Robinson-Plant, 2020). This definition is rooted in a social model of disability that seeks to avoid within-learner deficits of difference by highlighting the interactions within a learner's systems that support or hinder their experiences of IE (Robinson-Plant, 2020). Within this systemic lens, IE is viewed as an evolving and organic process as opposed to a clearly conceptualised and pre-determined endpoint (Robinson-Plant, 2020). The underpinning theoretical framework for this definition can be understood by drawing upon Urie Bronfenbrenner's (1994) bioecological model which highlights the dynamic and multiplicity of influences between a learner and their microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and chronosystems (Figure 5)

Figure 5: Bronfenbrenner's (1994) Bioecological Systems Theory
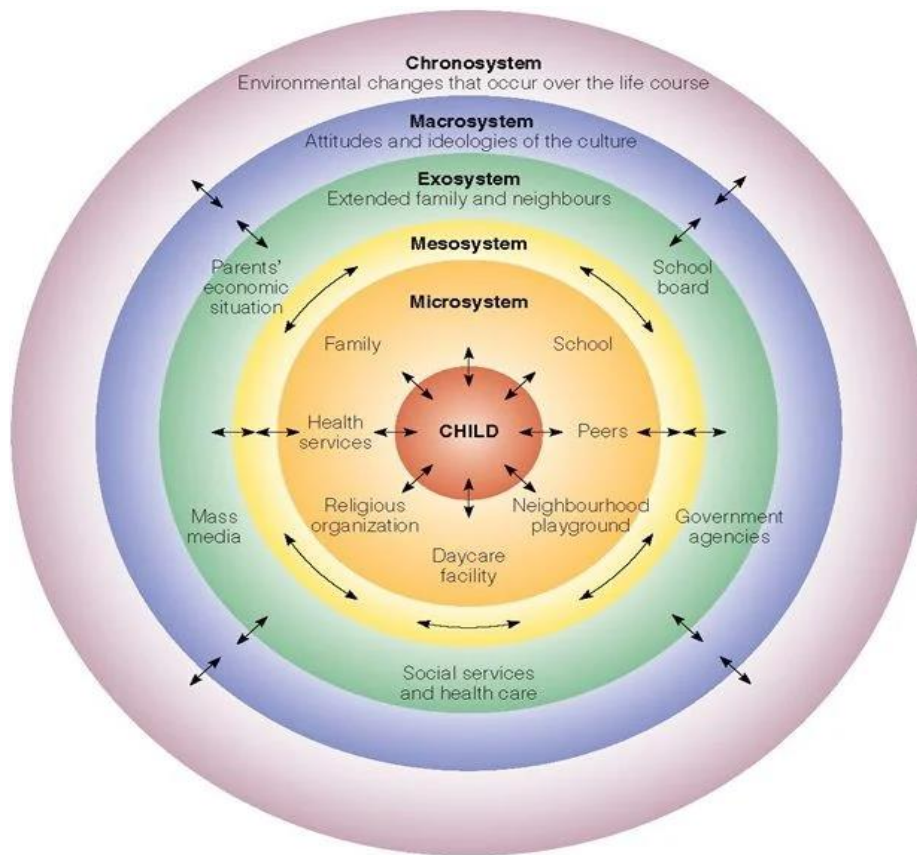
Knight et al (2023) argue that IE reflects not only a complex mesosystemic interplay between educational policy within the exosystem and school practices within the microsystem, but also the broader macrosystemic context in which ideologies of IE are being developed and progressed toward. Focusing on the exosystem, Knight et al (2023) conducted a critical policy analysis of national legislation, policy documents and associated resources across the UK to gain insight into how IE is being articulated and portrayed. Whilst recognising the bi-directional nature between policy and practice as highly complex and shaped by intended and unintended consequences, they rationalised that government policies provide important insight into ideological framings and motivations for IE (Knight et al., 2023). Their analysis revealed that while consensus for the importance of IE exists across UK policies, it is highly symbolic and lacking in tangible guidance for what IE looks like in practice at the microsystemic level (Knight et al., 2023). They also identified inconsistencies in the definitions of IE within and between the policies of each UK nation (Knight et al., 2023). Considering these findings, Knight et al (2023) concluded that policymakers and educational

stakeholders need to reflect more systemically and transparently on the conceptualisation of IE being advocated.

Yet notably, this research was heavily focused on exosystemic influences and risks passivity in its portrayal of IE as a process *done to* learners. Indeed, Robinson-Plant (2020) raise concern that certain systems and thus voices are all too often privileged in efforts to define IE and determine its progress within a society. To explain this point, Robinson-Plant (2020) draws upon Von Bertalanffy's (1972) general systems theory to highlight consideration for the prevalence of open and closed systems in IE whereby a closed system resists change and, unlike an open system, is unamenable to engaging in exchanges with external environments. Taking this lens, Robinson-Plant (2020, p. 6) queried whether there has been an underlying appeal in governments seeking to define IE exclusively within the education system as a "potentially closed system with simpler solutions." In contrast, Robinson-Plant (2020) argue for the importance of defining IE through a broader systemic lens that goes beyond the traditional systemic framings of schools, formal education and policy developments, and moves towards an understanding of the wider social and cultural attitudes in IE, particularly amongst learners themselves.

6. IE and its Implications for Practitioners

In addition to the implications raised by the debates surrounding IE definitions, it is imperative to consider what the WG's aspirations for an IE system necessitate for the practitioners tasked with its implementation (Knight & Crick, 2021). In particular, teachers have been identified as critical to the WG's obtainment of an IE system given their positioning as fundamental delivers of CfW and ALN policy (WG, 2020, 2021a). Yet notably, teachers are not isolated practitioners and the WG's ambitions for IE raise implications for other professionals. Indeed, in a joint publication by the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) and WG, EPs were also recognised as holding a pivotal role in promoting inclusive approaches through their practice (AEP & WG, 2016: 2). There is also an ethical rationale for EPs' seeking an IE system, given their guiding ethical principle towards promoting and protecting the interests and inclusion of those they serve (HCPC, 2016; British Psychological Society, BPS, 2017). To better understand the implications of IE for teachers and EPs in Wales, a discussion of the key research literature themes applicable to each of these professions will thus follow.

6.1 IE and the Role of Teachers

6.1.1 Inclusive Pedagogies

An area where teachers have been framed as critical change agents in supporting IE resides in their positioning in being able to implement inclusive pedagogies that mitigate barriers to education (Pantić, 2015). Florian and Spratt (2013) define inclusive pedagogies as the ability of teachers to view human diversity as a strength and inclusion as a dynamic process that moves beyond the categorisation of some learners and towards teachers taking responsibility for all learners. They thus refute the idea that IE is concerned with whole-class teaching focused on equality of opportunity, delivered via identical experiences for all (Florian & Spratt, 2013). Instead, they argue that inclusive pedagogies require teachers to provide a multiplicity of opportunities so that all learners can be included (Florian & Spratt, 2013). Yet, this inclusive pedagogical stance has not been without its contentions, with pervading debates emerging amongst teachers who report feeling that they lack the necessary skills to teach learners identified as having SEN or ALN (Black-Hawkins & Florian, 2012). Addressing these concerns, Black-Hawkins and Florian (2012, p. 568) argue that gaining insight into the "craft knowledge`' of teachers who demonstrate inclusive pedagogies in their practice offers valuable insight into how the teaching profession can support IE. Through their longitudinal studies, Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) summarise that this craft knowledge requires a fundamental shift in teachers' mindsets, whereby they cease focusing on distinguishing learners with additional needs and instead concern themselves with the learning needs of all learners as members of a classroom community. Further, they state that inclusive pedagogies necessitate that teachers reject deterministic beliefs about learners' abilities and instead, embrace difficulties in learning as a challenge for their teaching practices rather than within-learner deficit (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). A stance supported by Efthymiou and Kington (2017) who conducted a multimodal study and found that the greatest influence on the IE experiences of learners with SEND was the behaviours and practices of the classroom teacher. An observation deemed as necessitating careful consideration of the interplay between teachers' pedagogical practices, classroom interpersonal relationships and teachers' awareness of individual learner differences (Efthymiou & Kington, 2017).

For teachers in Wales, Conn and Davis (2023) highlight the potential opportunities for inclusive pedagogies within the new CfW, given the autonomy and flexibility it affords

teachers in designing a curriculum to meet the diverse needs of their learners. Yet, Power et al (2020) highlight concerns raised by teachers about the greater investment in resources (e.g., time, professional development) and tailored enrichment activities that such a person-centred, inclusive pedagogical approach necessitates. They also state that whilst teachers identify the flexibility of CfW as a positive for their professional agency, it could risk variations in how the curriculum is implemented and thus lead to inequalities that hinder IE (Power et al., 2020). Further, Power et al (2019) highlight that the person-centred roots of inclusive pedagogical practices require teachers to cede a degree of control to be directed by a child's learning journey as opposed to a standardised, teacher-centric approach. Whilst Power et al (2019) argue that this approach offers many positives for inclusion, they raise concerns about the high level of resourcing and teacher capacity it necessitates, which without, could risk disadvantaging some learners and impede their experiences of IE.

6.1.2. Beliefs and Attitudes Matter

Teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards inclusion have also been highlighted as critical to the realisation of an IE system (Glazzard, 2011; Brady et al., 2020; Conn & Hutt, 2020; Knight et al., 2022). In a systematic review exploring practitioners' perspectives of supporting inclusion in primary schools, attitudes towards inclusion were identified as a critical factor for IE given the influence of these attitudes on practitioners' behaviours and actions towards implementing inclusive practices within the classroom (Brady et al., 2020). Whilst this systematic review was limited in scope (ten studies examined), Knight et al (2022) also argued for the criticality of teachers' attitudes towards inclusion, stating that Wales's aspiration for IE risks being compromised without a positive shift in attitudes. A claim based on a survey of 253 teachers wherein findings highlighted that whilst teachers framed inclusion positively as celebrating diversity amongst learners, they implicitly othered learners with ALN by noting the caveats to their full inclusion (Knight et al, 2022). An observation which mirrored earlier research by Conn and Hutt (2020) exploring ALN in the context of CfW, wherein they found that the core beliefs of teachers and policy leads towards inclusion were subordinate and subsumed by what they viewed as being in the best interests of learners with ALN. Similarly, Glazzard (2011, p. 58) explored the perspectives of teachers and teaching assistants towards inclusion and concluded that teachers' attitudes pose a significant challenge to IE if they "fail to embrace their responsibilities for the education of all children."

Of further pertinence to the criticality of teachers' beliefs is the matter of self-efficacy which has also been identified as having implications for IE practices (Pantić, 2015; Brady et al., 2020). Self-efficacy refers to a person's belief in their ability to execute control over their motivations, behaviours and environment to attain a certain behaviour or performance outcome (Bandura, 1977, 1988, 1997). It is thus regarded as a central mechanism for determining motivation in terms of how much effort a person will exert in an endeavour and for how long when encountering obstacles. In the context of IE, it has been argued that greater self-efficacy among teachers is likely to positively influence their IE practices (Brady et al., 2020). A claim based on findings highlighting that practitioners with higher self-efficacy were more likely to view learners' difficulties in learning as extrinsic and mitigable by effective teaching practices (Woolfson & Brady, 2009). As well as findings highlighting that greater self-efficacy predicted feelings of competence regarding behaviour control that positively influenced the likelihood of teachers being more inclusive in the classroom (Gregor & Campbell, 2001; MacFarlane & Woolfson, 2013). Whilst caution about making linear assumptions of causality between teachers' self-efficacy, attitudes and inclusive practices is undoubtedly needed, the potential implications for IE are poignant and raise important considerations given the paucity of research examining teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards IE in the Welsh education context.

6.1.3 Navigating Pragmatics

A further implication for the role of teachers in IE is identified as the challenges they face in navigating the competing social justice and neoliberal agendas that populate educational discourses and policies (Done & Andrews, 2020; Williams-Brown & Hodkinson, 2021). Indeed, it has been argued that neoliberal agendas are prevalent in educational systems seeking IE and have resulted in teachers experiencing intense scrutiny and pressures that contradict IE and exasperate the exclusion of some learners (Done & Andrews, 2020). This is due to the risks to IE that can derive from an assessment-driven curriculum that can leave teachers feeling powerless in practising according to the needs of all learners and in a manner counterintuitive to their professional judgement (Titley et al., 2020). A concern compounded by the observation that teachers are being unfairly positioned as the key facilitators of, or barriers to, IE with the issues of neoliberal and competing social justice agendas being grossly overlooked (Done & Andrews, 2020). Indeed, Williams-Brown and Hodkinson (2021) highlight the challenges that teachers face in realising IE in their practice given the

juxtaposing messages of IE being advocated within the education system in which they are expected to operate and make sense.

Notably, a defining feature of the CfW resides in its aspirations to move away from its historic emphasis on neoliberal agendas and accountability regimes (Donaldson, 2015). Nevertheless, given the continuing focus on measures such as PISA (see Senedd Cymru, 2023b) as a mechanism for benchmarking the deemed success of Wales's education system, the potential implications of accountability regimes remain an important consideration for teachers' IE practices. Yet, Alkan and Priestley (2019) also raise the point that whilst previous research has criticised the neglect of wider (e.g., structural, cultural) considerations in its over-emphasis on teachers achieving policy agendas, teachers do remain critical in realising educational priorities within their practice. A matter which they argue necessitates consideration for reflexivity and the critical role it plays in mediating the complex processes that exist between teachers' decision-making and their enactment of those decisions in practice (Alkan & Priestley, 2019). A stance that could arguably, be enhanced by providing teachers with non-judgemental, collaborative opportunities to acknowledge the prevalent tensions between IE theories and practice, in a bid to help reframe perspectives from one of problems to that of opportunities (Florian, 2012).

6.2 IE and the Role of the EP

6.2.1 Promoting Belonging and Participation

Analogous to teachers, EPs have been identified as fundamental to the realisation of an IE system, with a DECP positioning paper highlighting the criticality of EPs in utilising research to "support the development of educationalists as reflective practitioners" that promote the "belonging and full participation" of learners (BPS, 2022, p. 3). A stance ratified by research exploring the views of 12 EPs about IE, wherein key values of the profession were identified as promoting the listening of learners and supporting their belonging in education (Zaniolo, 2021). Whilst Zaniolo's (2021) findings warrant caution, given that they reflect a small sample size focused on IE regarding SEND, the role of EPs in promoting belonging and participation reflects a common theme within the IE literature (Powell, 2021; BPS, 2022). Yet notably, belonging and participation reflect complex and nuanced concepts that encapsulate often overlapping and competing theoretical positions (Pardede et al., 2021;

Olsen, 2023). For example, Maslow (1943) viewed belonging as a basic motivation and the psychological need for humans to experience interpersonal connection and acceptance in their lives. More recently, belonging has been argued to reflect far more than a human motivation and has been deemed a basic human right critical to attaining inclusive societies (Samuel, 2022). A position which reflects the growing emphasis on a rights-based paradigm within the IE field, as perhaps evident in the DECP position paper's reference to EPs supporting the full participation of learners (BPS, 2022).

Yet despite the theoretical complexity surrounding the concepts of belonging and participation, a paucity of debate or explanation for how EPs are construing these terms for the purposes of IE was tangible within the literature examined (Powell, 2021; Zaniolo, 2021; BPS, 2022). A possible explanation for this absence is perhaps evident in the DECP position paper's (BPS, 2022) reference to EPs' role in utilising research to inform their practice. It suggests that a unique element of EPs' roles in supporting IE is deemed as residing in their ability to draw upon psychological theories to inform debates, developments and practice-based decisions that support belonging, participation and thus, greater inclusivity in education. Indeed, Kershner (2016) states that the field of IE has much to gain from the insight that psychological research offers. Further, Kershner (2016) argues that EPs are critical to the robust dissemination of this psychological research and warns against the risks to IE that can arise when snippets of theories are applied and populated in IE discourses by non-psychologists. From this stance, the role of EPs in IE is regarded as intertwined with their unique research skills and ability to critically engage in discussions regarding how psychological theory can be effectively disseminated into tangible practices to support IE developments.

6.2.2 Mitigating Deficit Perspectives and Promoting Diversity

A further area where EPs are regarded as having much to offer IE developments resides in the professions' advocation for systems theory (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1994: Figure 4) as a means for promoting a more holistic and meta-perspective of education (Powell, 2021; Zaniolo, 2021; Sewell et al., 2022). Indeed, EPs have been deemed as ideally positioned to promote a diversity lens through their systemic practices, given their ability to steer focus away from individually orientated approaches that risk the maintenance of deficit, medical models of education (BPS, 2022). In particular, a pivotal mechanism for mitigating such individualised

approaches has been identified as EPs' use of consultation, which has been deemed as affording the profession opportunities to facilitate wider systemic changes in IE (Sewell et al., 2022). Notably, consultation reflects a highly complex term, however, it can be broadly understood as being underpinned by systemic, interactionist and constructionist psychological theories (Wagner, 2017). Indeed, key principles of consultation reside in the emphasis it places on EPs working collaboratively with others to facilitate positive and systemic change processes in a manner which seeks to avoid power imbalances and supports the skills development of others (Wagner, 2017).

Yet despite EPs' skills in consultation being highlighted as a unique strength of the profession in enabling the support and challenge of inclusive practices within schools, the absence of research examining the effectiveness of EPs' consultation models for supporting IE is strikingly limited (Zaniolo, 2021). Indeed, in the process of systematically searching the research literature, only two studies were found within the UK context since 2010 that had sought to offer specific insight into the matter (Powell, 2021; Sewell et al., 2022). Further, these two studies had focused on very specific and differing approaches to consultation (Capabilities Approach, Universal Design for Learning). Yet despite these limitations, these studies unanimously concluded that consultation offers EPs important opportunities to facilitate IE practices on a systemic level (Powell, 2021; Sewell et al., 2022). Indeed, they highlighted the potential of consultation in enabling EPs to work with schools to ensure that educational environments are inclusive for all learners (Sewell et al., 2022). They also identified that EPs' use of consultation offers a critical space for discussions in education that go beyond sweeping declarations for values of inclusion, to deeper considerations of what needs to be equalised and the tangible opportunities for learners to thrive (Powell, 2021).

7. The Rationale for the Current Study and Research Questions

In light of the aforementioned literature, this narrative review has raised fundamental considerations for the WG's aspirations for a fully IE system and its potential implications for the practitioners tasked with its implementation. In particular, the tensions and uncertainty surrounding what constitutes IE in Wales and how it translates into practice are highly concerning (Knight & Crick, 2021). It creates a risk that contradictory interpretations and practices will be applied by practitioners, thereby fueling inequality in the experiences of IE experienced by learners (Kershner, 2016). There is thus a clear rationale for research seeking

an understanding of how teachers and EPs at the forefront of implementing Wales's education reforms, are perceiving and making sense of IE in their practice. Especially given the sheer paucity of research exploring IE in relation to the role of teachers in Wales, and to the best of the researcher's knowledge, absence of any research pertaining to the role of EPs. Furthermore, given that Wales's education reforms are currently part-way through implementation, there is also a rationale for research that seeks to explore what teachers and EPs perceive their role to be in promoting IE in the future. This exploratory study thus aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' and EPs' perspectives of the Welsh education reforms in relation to the aim of developing a fully IE system?
2. What does IE look like in practice for teachers and EPs?
3. What are teachers' and EPs' perspectives of their roles in promoting IE in their future practice?

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An exploratory Study of teachers' and Educational Psychologists' perspectives of inclusive education in Wales

Part Two: Major Empirical Study

Word Count: 13,020

1. Abstract

Aim(s): *Wales is in the process of embedding a major programme of education reforms, including the introduction of a new Curriculum for Wales (CfW) and Additional Learning Needs (ALN) system (Donaldson, 2015; Welsh Government, WG, 2021a). A fundamental feature of these reforms resides in the WG's aspirations for a fully Inclusive Education (IE) system (WG, 2021a). This research sought to explore teachers' and Educational Psychologists' (EPs) perspectives of the Welsh education reforms' aim of developing an IE system, as well as what they view IE to look like in practice. Given that the reforms are part-way through being implemented, this research also sought to explore teachers' and EPs' perspectives of their roles in promoting IE in their future practice.*

Method: *Six teachers and six EPs from five local authorities across South and Mid-Wales were recruited for this research. Open-ended semi-structured interviews were conducted virtually with the participants and explored inductively using reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).*

Analysis: *Three overarching themes and corresponding sub-themes were found and discussed within the data analysis for teachers and EPs respectively. Further, two overarching themes and related sub-themes were also presented for the participants collectively ('mind how we step' and 'finding tribes'). These themes reflect the deep sense of commitment reported by the participants towards the WG education reforms' aims of IE, with this being framed as an ethically imperative endeavour. Further, they capture the underlying sense of ambiguity and tension surrounding the perceived implementation of the education reforms into tangible inclusive practices for learners.*

Limitations: *This research is limited by its small-scale nature and narrow lens in focusing solely on the perspectives of teachers and EPs at this mid-point within the implementation of the reforms. The absence of learners' and their families' voices regarding their perspectives of IE is thus a missed opportunity. Further, it is accepted that the analysis reported for this research tells only one amongst multiple that could have been told about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013).*

Conclusions: *This research provides insight into teachers' and EPs' perspectives of IE in light of the education reforms in Wales. Whilst the IE aspirations of Wales's education reforms were overwhelmingly welcomed, greater clarity and discussion regarding the enactment of inclusive practices in schools is warranted. This will be critical to preventing educational inequalities and to ensuring that the journey towards an IE system in Wales remains viable. Implications for practice are discussed and recommendations for future research are proposed.*

2. Introduction

Wales is part-way through the implementation of a major programme of education reforms (Williams, 2019). These reforms include the introduction of a new CfW, as well as a statutory ALN system for learners who have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for Additional Learning Provision (ALP hereafter; Donaldson, 2015; WG, 2021a). The catalyst for these reforms reflects a complex array of historical, political, social and economic drivers (Knight & Crick, 2021). Yet of pertinence was the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2009 which brought to the forefront of public and political attention the observation that Wales was failing to provide a high-quality IE system (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, 2014). Indeed, Wales was found to have disproportionately high levels of poverty and academic underachievement, with disparity emerging regarding how best to meet the needs of individual learners (OECD, 2014, 2017). Notably, it could be considered that caution may be needed when viewing PISA as a reflection of an education system, given its reliance on a narrow lens of education deemed measurable through academic testing (Hopfenbeck, 2018). Nevertheless, PISA was a major impetus in driving forward Wales's current education reforms, wherein a pervasive ambition resides in the WG's aim of achieving a "fully IE system" (WG, 2021a, p. 38).

Wales's aspiration for an IE system is not however unique and sits within a broader international context, wherein substantive efforts have been made to encourage IE developments (Ainscow, 2020). Indeed, IE has become a focal point within a wealth of educational policy, research and practices across the globe (Ainscow, 2020). A movement which is synonymous with the increasing emphasis on a rights-based paradigm in driving forward positive societal change (UNICEF, 1989; Patel, 2018). Yet, a myriad of interconnected factors, such as political agendas, pedagogical approaches and a particular set of values existing within a society, all serve to combine to shape the IE being construed and sought for learners (Ainscow, 2020). Within the Welsh education context, the WG's aspirations for IE thus necessitates consideration of the new CfW that is designed to be inclusive for all learners and the ALN system intended to meet the needs of individuals (Conn & Hutt, 2020). Yet, whilst inclusion is frequently cited within these dual reforms, little guidance is provided to practitioners in terms of how their IE aspirations translate into tangible practices in schools (Conn & Hutt, 2020). An issue compounded by the lack of

clarity and inconsistencies that exist between the various reform policies in terms of the messages and definitions of IE being advocated (Knight & Crick, 2021). Indeed, whilst the CfW espouses being inclusive for all, reference is made to instances wherein it can be disapplied or modified for learners with ALN (WG, 2021b). Furthermore, the definition of ALN is itself questionable for inclusivity, given that the notion of a significant difficulty in learning risks holding a deficit lens whereby learners are deemed as failing to achieve expected norms (Knight & Crick, 2021).

The semantics of IE is thus complex and demands consideration of matters of social and political zeitgeist (Slee & Tait, 2022). Indeed, a major challenge of IE is that it represents a multifaceted concept that is notoriously difficult to define (Conn & Hutt, 2020). A systematic search of the UK literature supported this view, with competing definitions of IE highlighted. These included polarised broad and narrow conceptualisations of IE, as well as more nuanced and systemically rooted positions. Through a narrow lens, IE has been focused on how to ensure the inclusion of specific groups of learners (e.g., those with a disability or SEN) and is often tied to discourses concerning educational placement (Ware, 2014; Lauchlan & Grieg, 2015). In contrast, broader depictions of IE are concerned with celebrating diversity and the question of how to ensure the inclusion of all learners (Florian, 2019; Knight & Crick, 2021). Yet notably, these polarising narrow and broad definitions of IE have been criticised as failing to acknowledge the connections that often exist between the aspirations of both (Norwich, 2014). For example, whilst the narrower definition of IE arguably risks portraying a within-learner deficit by highlighting the differences of some learners, the broader definition may require an understanding of individual differences to ensure that the diversity of learners' needs can be met. From this stance, a more nuanced conceptualisation of IE that is less *either/or* but *both/and* may be called for to better support the potential for positive developments to be made within the field (Norwich, 2014). Connecting to this messier definition is the framing of IE within a systemic lens as being an evolving process rather than a fixed endpoint (Robinson-Plant, 2020). Within this stance, IE requires consideration for the complex interactions between systems in and beyond the education system itself (Robinson-Plant, 2020; Knight et al., 2023).

The lack of clarity and inconsistencies surrounding IE definitions within the WG's education reform policies and the wider UK research literature thus raises implications for the practitioners tasked with supporting progress in IE. In particular, teachers and EPs have been

identified as critical to supporting the obtainment of a fully IE system (Pantić, 2015; BPS, 2022). For teachers, implications have been related to their abilities to adapt their practice to utilise inclusive pedagogies that recognise the diverse needs of learners and overcome potential obstacles to their learning (Florian & Spratt, 2013). Yet, a multiplicity of factors has been found to impact teachers' preparedness and abilities to implement IE, such as the availability of adequate resources, time and training, as well as their underlying beliefs and attitudes towards IE (Pantić, 2015; Power et al, 2019; Brady et al., 2020). Further, concerns have been raised about the potential challenges facing teachers in supporting IE when operating in educational contexts tarnished with neoliberal discourses and political agendas at odds with IE (Done & Andrews, 2020; Titley et al., 2020; Williams-Brown & Hodkinson, 2021). Whilst for EPs, implications for their practice in IE are identified as their unique skills in being able to utilise psychological research and consultation to promote systemic considerations and mitigate deficit perspectives of learners (Powell, 2021; Zaniolo, 2021; BPS, 2022; Sewell et al., 2022). Indeed, EPs are viewed as well-placed to promote the importance of diversity, belonging and participation within their practice (Powell, 2021; Zaniolo, 2021; BPS, 2022). Yet critically, whilst EPs are recognised as having a key role in supporting the attainment of an IE system, the ability to fully understand the implications for their practice is marred by the dearth of research that has explored the field. Indeed, in the process of reviewing the literature, only two studies were found that had sought to elicit the views of EPs about their practice in relation to IE in England (Powell, 2021; Zaniolo, 2021). An issue exasperated by the broader lack of research available that pertains to IE in the Welsh education context (please see Appendix 2).

Given the ambiguities surrounding definitions of IE and its implications for the practice of teachers and EPs, as well as the limited research concerning IE in Wales, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are teachers' and EPs' perspectives of the Welsh education reforms in relation to the aim of developing a fully IE system?
2. What does IE look like in practice for teachers and EPs?
3. What are teachers' and EPs' perspectives of their roles in promoting IE in their future practice?

3. Methodology

3.1 Theoretical Paradigm

Research paradigms refer to the world view of how research phenomenon is being perceived and understood (Cohen et al., 2018). Providing clarity around the paradigm underpinning this research is vital given the significance of paradigms for the "epistemological basis of social science and its consequences for educational research" (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 10). This current research is thus rooted in a postmodernist position that stipulates that positivist claims of objectivity fail to reflect the complexities of social interaction and human experience (Moore, 2005). Specifically, this research takes a relativist ontological and social constructionist epistemological stance. Social constructionism asserts that knowledge derives its value "only from the socially constructed contexts" within which it is being observed and understood (Weinberg, 2015, p. 17). This position thus contests axiomatic views of knowledge as absolute truth and instead upholds a nuanced lens that recognises the sociohistorical, cultural and social interactional processes in which knowledge is being produced (Burr, 2015; Weinberg, 2015). Moreover, social constructionism asserts that language is pivotal in shaping peoples' co-constructions of the world and therefore holds a performative role in facilitating social change (Burr, 2015). Within this epistemic position, subjectivity is not problematic, but is regarded as central to the research process and strengthened by the active reflexivity of the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

The rationale for utilising this theoretical paradigm reflects the interest of this research as residing in understanding the "perspectival subjectivity" and contextualised experiences of the teachers and EP participants (Kvale, 1996, p. 212). Indeed, this relativist research does not aspire to positivist ambitions of replication or generalisability, but rather, it values the rich descriptions and meaning making of the participants themselves. It was therefore felt that this theoretical paradigm best reflected the anti-essentialist values of this research, and it enabled the researcher the ability to actively consider their positionality with the process. This approach also felt ethically appropriate given the researcher's positioning as a former primary school teacher and current Trainee EP (TEP) operating in Wales. For a more detailed critique of the theoretical paradigm utilised for this research and the reflexive processes of the researcher, please see Part Three of this research.

3.2 Participants and Recruitment

A purposive sampling technique was employed for this research, with this technique based on the assumption that specific participants are required as they are most ideally situated to provide rich, in-depth responses about the research foci being explored (Kelly, 2010). Given the specific interest of this research residing in the perspectives of teachers and EPs in the Welsh education context, this approach was deemed most appropriate. Participants were therefore included in this research if they were employed as teachers (primary/secondary phase) or EPs (HCPC registered) and were currently operating within Wales. However, participants were excluded from this research if they were teachers in higher or further education. The rationale for this was due to the recognition that teachers within these fields do not deliver the CfW which was of pertinence to this research.

Due to the small-scale nature of this study, this research was undertaken with Local Authorities (LAs) in Mid and South Wales. Initially, the recruitment of participants was focused on one LA in South Wales and then rolled out to further adjacent LAs until adequate participant numbers were recruited to ensure rich "information power" in the data collated (Malterud et al., 2016, p. 13). In total, twelve participants were recruited for this research, with these participants being evenly distributed in numbers between teachers (n=6) and EPs (n=6). All teachers recruited for this research worked in schools from within one LA, whilst the six EP participants were recruited from a total of five LAs (see Table 3).

Table 3: Participant Characteristics

Participants	Role	Additional Characteristics
1 - 6	Teachers	Three participants were primary school teachers from two different primary schools. The other three participants were secondary school teachers from three different schools with one of them teaching in a specialist provision secondary school.

7 - 12	EPs	Two of the EPs worked in the same LA, whilst the other four were from different LAs across Mid and South Wales.

Before recruiting participants, gatekeeper consent was first sought from the local authorities Principal Educational Psychologists (PEPs) and school Head Teachers. A gatekeeper letter (Appendix 3) was emailed along with a copy of the participant information sheet (Appendix 4) and recruitment poster (Appendix 5). The gatekeeper letters contained a link to the gatekeeper consent forms on Microsoft Forms (Appendix 6). A courtesy letter and copy of the recruitment poster were also emailed to the Director of Education of the local authority (from which the teachers were recruited) to inform them about this research (Appendix 5 and 7). Once gatekeeper consent was obtained, a participant recruitment letter (Appendix 8) was then emailed to the gatekeepers to forward by email to their respective staff. Attached to this email were the participant information sheet, recruitment poster and link to the relevant participant consent form on Microsoft Forms (Appendix 4, 5 and 9).

3.3 Approach to Data Generation

Individual semi-structured interviews were undertaken for the data generation via Microsoft Teams at a time convenient for the participants. In terms of the decision to use interviews, this was due to the qualitative, theoretical paradigm underpinning this research and the fundamental importance of language that this position advocates (Burr, 2015). Indeed, interviews enable an interchange between people that upholds the centrality of social interaction in knowledge production (Kvale, 1996). Thus, alternative positivist approaches, such as scaled questionnaires or descriptive data surveys would have been juxtaposed with the relativist position of this research. It is however important to acknowledge that a focus group design could have been utilised for the data collection method, given the potential of synergy and interchange between participants that this method can also afford (Namey et al., 2016). However, the researcher was conscious of Smithson's (2000) point that focus groups can give rise to group dynamics and dominance by individual participants which could have risked the voices of other participants being lost or lacking in depth.

During the interviews, participants were asked a schedule of open-ended questions informed by the overarching research questions (Appendix 10). The rationale for using open-ended questions related to the inductive stance of this research and the desire to enable the participants to respond freely and without the constraints of closed questions. Further, open-ended questions have been deemed beneficial in building rapport between the interviewer and respondent, as well as enabling the interviewer to be more flexible, less mechanistic and able to make use of probing to gain more depth and clarity (Cohen et al., 2018). Indeed, the semi-structured, open-ended interview has been argued to be more likely to yield a conversational interaction whereby there is an "absence of superficiality; there is flow" between the interviewer and respondent (Hermanowicz, 2002, p. 482).

3.4 Approach to Data Analysis

This research is rooted in a Big Q approach, whereby qualitative research is being undertaken within a qualitative paradigm (Kidder & Fine, 1987). Acknowledging this Big Q stance is vital given that qualitative approaches are not homogeneous but reflect different and sometimes overlapping theoretical interests (Smith, 2015). Thus, reflexive Thematic Analysis (reflexive TA) was utilised for the data analysis, with the six-phased approach of Braun and Clarke (2022) being conducted inductively (Figure 6) in a highly recursive and flexible manner. Notably, consideration was given to other approaches of data analysis (Appendix 11), however, it was felt that reflexive TA best reflected the Big Q fully qualitative stance of this research. This analytical congruence was deemed as residing in what Braun and Clarke (2022, p. 7) define as "qualitative sensibility", whereby reflexive TA was sought for its alignment with the fully qualitative lens of this current research and its aim of gaining an understanding of the nuance of participants' perspectives of IE. Indeed, reflexive TA accepts that data analysis cannot be objective, but it can offer the opportunity to gain insight and a rich understanding of the research topic (Braun & Clarke, 2021). A further advantage of reflexive TA related to its emphasis on the researcher being an active and "analytic resource" within the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2020, p. 3). This reflexivity was deemed pertinent and ethically requisite for this research, given the positionality of the researcher as a former primary school teacher and current TEP.

Figure 6: Braun & Clarke's (2022) Six Recursive Phases of Reflexive TA
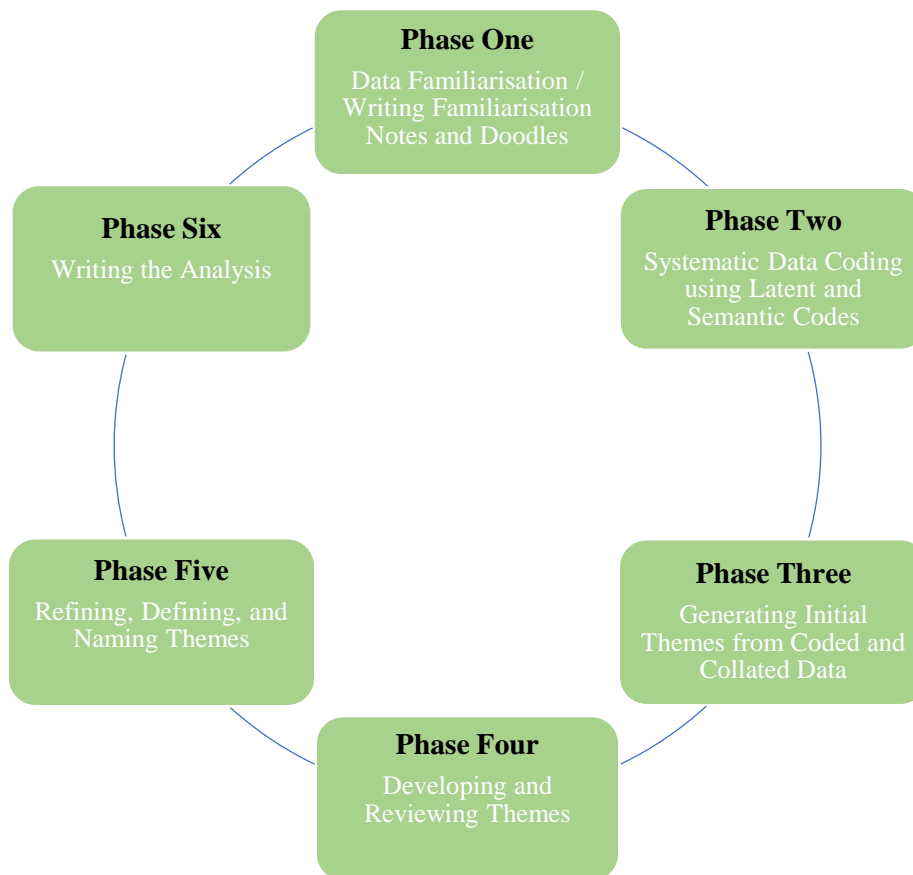
3.5 Ethical Considerations

Prior to conducting this research, ethical approval was first sought and obtained from Cardiff University's Research Ethics Committee (EC.22.06.14.6580A). At every point within the research, the utmost importance was given to ensuring that it was undertaken in accordance with the BPS's (2021a) four ethical principles of respect, competence, responsibility and integrity. Moreover, this research was conducted in line with the moral principles outlined within the Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2021b) which stipulates the need for psychologists to conduct research that upholds the broader values of the profession itself. These include the need to ensure scientific integrity, social responsibility, maximisation of benefits, minimisation of harm, and respect for the autonomy, privacy and dignity of individuals, groups and communities (BPS, 2021b).

The researcher adhered to the principle of respect for the privacy, dignity and self-determination of the participants by avoiding deception and ensuring that informed consent formed the basis for all data collection. Participants were required to provide consent electronically once they confirmed they had read and agreed to the information detailed in the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 4). Within this document, the aims of the research, approach to data analysis and ethical considerations were outlined. Further, the participants were made aware of their right to withdraw from the research at any point without fear of penalty or need for explanation. However, it was explained that they would be unable to withdraw from the research once the interviews had been transcribed and anonymised. In terms of the principle of competency and responsibility, every effort was made to ensure that the research was conducted responsibly. Issues of confidentiality and data protection were addressed, and participants were afforded opportunities to raise concerns and ask questions about the research. The participants were also provided with a debrief sheet via email following the interview (Appendix 12).

The research data and personal data collected were held separately and securely on the researcher's secure Cardiff University online Intranet portal, in line with Cardiff University's Research Record Retention Schedules. Further, all data collected for this research was processed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations (2016) and Data Protection Act (2018). Finally, the principle of integrity was achieved through the researcher's commitment to honesty, openness and candour. The researcher strove to conduct the research in a non-maleficence manner and remained reflective about their responsibilities in collating and disseminating the research data. Indeed, active consideration was given to the "representational ethics" of the analysis undertaken for this research in terms of its potential implications for participants (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 214). To support this process, the researcher kept a research journal to ensure that they remained critically reflective and reflexive throughout the research process (Appendix 13).

3.6 Trustworthiness

In addition to these ethical protocols, iterative consideration was given to the quality and rigour of the research using Yardley's (2015) framework for trustworthiness in qualitative research:

Figure 7: Yardley's (2015) Framework for Trustworthiness

- The narrative review conducted for the literature review sought to offer clarity about the context of IE to formulate informed research questions that were sensitive to the paucity of literature relating to the perspectives of teachers and EPs in Wales.

- The questions used within the interviews with participants were deliberately open-ended to encourage the participants to respond freely and to discuss what they felt was important to them, rather than being directed by the preoccupations of the researcher (Wilkinson et al., 2004).

Sensitivity to Context

Commitment and Rigour

- Throughout the research process, the researcher remained steadfast in their commitment to actively engaging in in-depth and rigorous immersion with the research literature on IE. Please see Part One.

- Twelve participants were purposively recruited to include an evenly distributed number of EPs and teachers. This was deemed as providing an opportunity for a broad and balanced insight into the perspectives of IE by each profession.

- Throughout the research process, the researcher engaged in regular research supervision.

Coherence and Transparency

Impact and Importance

- All decisions regarding the approach to data collection and data analysis are provided by the researcher in this methodology section, as well as more critically in part three of this thesis.

- The researcher maintained a research journal to ensure that they remained reflexive (see Appendix 13).

- To further ensure transparency about the data analysis processes undertaken, detailed text excerpts were provided within the analysis for the reader to be able to see what the analytical interpretations were based upon. Furthermore, examples of coded data and theme development processes are provided in Appendix 14.

- The recognised impact and importance of this research relates to the absence of any research (to the best of the researcher's knowledge) having being conducted in the Welsh education context that has explored the perspectives of EPs towards IE. As well as a paucity of research relating to the perspectives of teachers in recent decades.

- The practical implications of this research for EPs and teachers practice are discussed, along with suggestions for future research. Please see Part Three.

4. Analysis

4.1 Overview of the Analysis Process

Reflexive TA (Braun & Clarke, 2022) for the teacher and EP interviews was undertaken separately to identify themes within the data that represented each profession. Following this, the teacher and EP interviews were analysed collectively as an entire dataset to determine overarching themes for all participants as practitioners operating within the Welsh education context. Braun and Clarke's (2022) six phases of reflexive TA were followed for all data analysis, with this process commencing with the transcription of the interviews wherein the decision was made to include verbal utterances so that the data remained accurate to how it was expressed (Poland, 2002). A period of immersion and critical engagement followed with the datasets read repeatedly and the interview video recordings watched repeatedly to gain greater familiarity with the data and to reflect on the questions being evoked at this initial stage of analysis. This process was supported by the act of creating "familiarisation doodles" (Figure 8) for each data item as this felt helpful to the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p. 47):

Figure 8: Familiarisation Doodles Examples
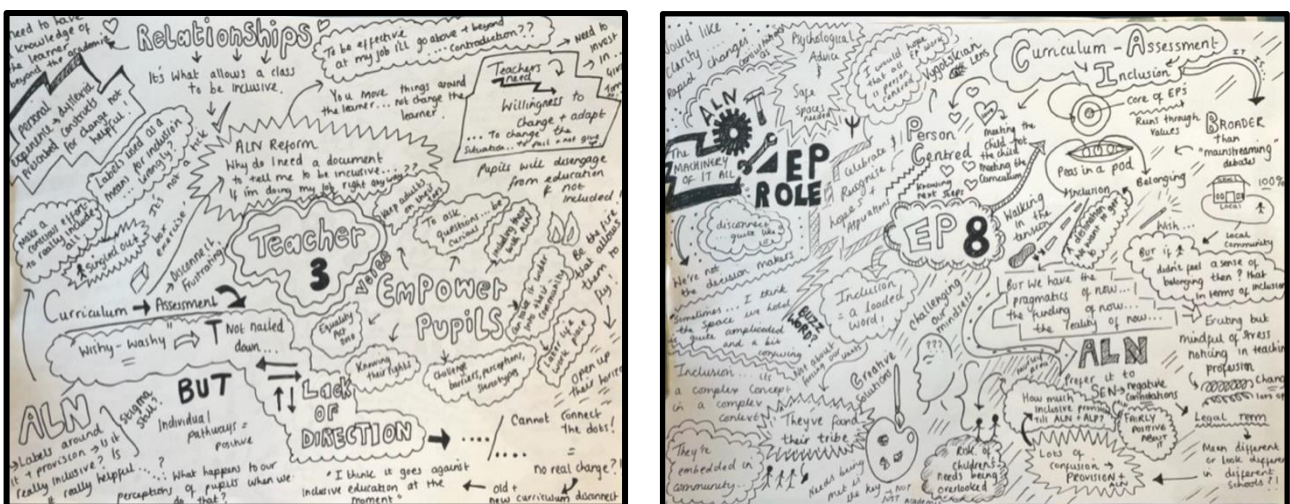
For the second phase of analysis, the interview transcripts were explored more systematically to identify initial code labels for each dataset. Both semantic and latent codes were identified that presented as interesting and relevant to the research questions. Semantic codes were

identified through consideration of the explicit meanings of the data, whilst latent codes were determined through the researcher identifying and interpreting underlying information in the data (Byrne, 2021). For phase three of the analysis, initial themes were generated, then developed and repeatedly reviewed in phase four. Finally, in phase five, themes were refined, defined and named. Yet, it is critical to note that the analysis was not conducted linearly but involved highly recursive processes of moving between all analysis phases (see Appendix 14).

4.2 Overarching Themes and Sub-Themes for Teachers

In this section, the thematic map will be presented, followed by an overview of the overarching themes and corresponding subthemes for the teachers.

Figure 9: Thematic Map for Teachers
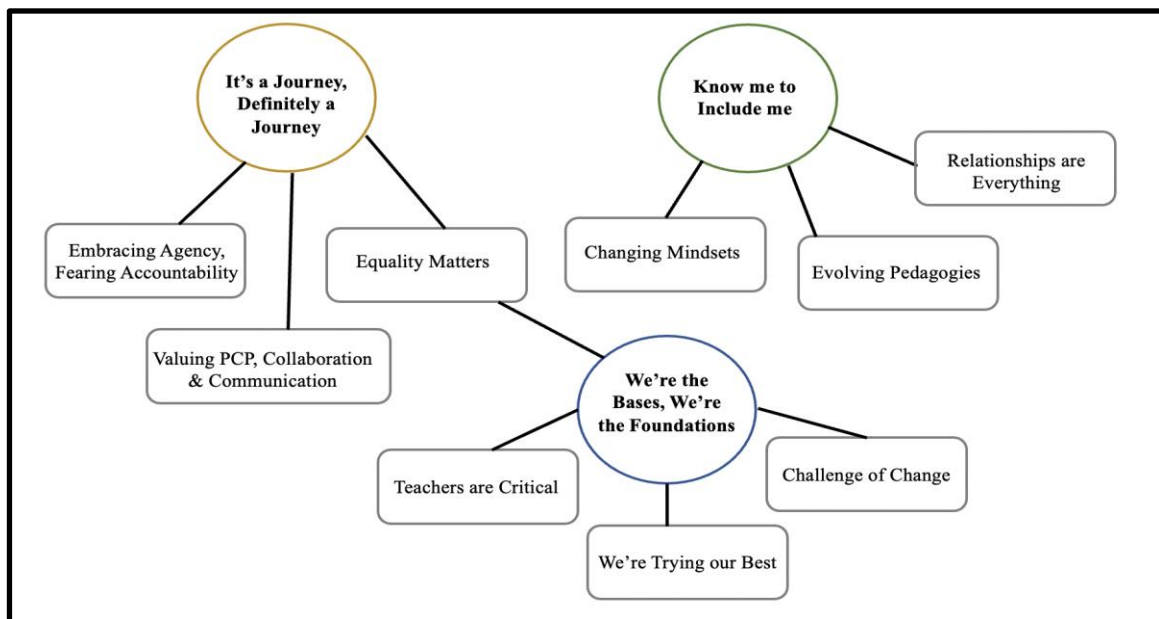
4.2.1 Theme: It's a Journey, Definitely a Journey

"It's a journey, definitely a journey" was a statement expressed by a teacher (Participant, P hereafter, 6) that encapsulates the overarching sense amongst the participants, that the WG's education reforms and aspirations for IE, have rendered them travellers tasked with circumnavigating the welcomed but unchartered journey of change they now find themselves

upon. A journey deeply embraced by all the participants in terms of the opportunities that the changes are deemed as affording IE for learners and teachers' practice. Indeed, many of the participants noted a liberating sense of empowerment and increased agency in their practice as a result of the flexibility that the new CfW enables. This sense of gained freedom was heavily contrasted to the former curriculum, which the participants perceived as rigid and dictatorial in its directing of pedagogical practice towards prescriptive "do this, write it down, do this, write it down" (P1) approaches. Indeed, many of the participants noted a lack of balance within the former curriculum and depicted it as narrowly focused on academic attainment. Consequently, it was felt that the former curriculum fundamentally lacked inclusivity given its failure to recognise the diverse interests and needs of learners who "aren't maybe academic, you know, ones, when they leave school, are focused on other things…maybe an artist, maybe a dancer" (P5). There was thus a pervading sense that the increased flexibility and sense of professional agency deriving from CfW offers more opportunities for the inclusion of all learners:

> *"We've developed our whole curriculum around what works really well, and it allows us to be really flexible and do things which we wouldn't have been able to do before. So as far as inclusion is concerned, it means that our pupils have more access to things, and we can justify why we do it." (P2)*

Yet what is striking about this statement is the reference made to "wouldn't have been able to do before" and feeling able to "justify" practice. Indeed, it is somewhat oxymoronic given its competing sense of increased professional freedom on the one hand and yet, feelings of preparedness to defend practice on the other. This underlying sense of battle was particularly prevalent among the secondary school teachers, who noted the challenges they face in their journey to realise an IE system when operating in contexts shrouded by accountability measures. Indeed, there was a tangible sense of insecurity surrounding teaching and assessment practice for key stage four learners given that General Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations currently remain in situ. Whilst the participants acknowledged that the WG has provided progression steps for the assessment of the six curriculum Areas of Learning and Experience (AoLE), it was felt that these were disconnected from the expectations of GCSEs, with one participant describing them as "wishy-washy" (P3). This sense of vagueness was shared by another secondary school teacher who also highlighted concern for the implications of assessment for learners beyond

school, "we're still not exactly sure how it's gonna look necessarily, with looking at GCSEs and then how that relates to A Level" (P4). In turn, uncertainty surrounding assessment and progression within CfW was deemed as detrimental to IE and contradicting the potential it holds for the equality of opportunities for all learners:

> *"There's still this disconnect of not knowing and yeah, there's been huge concern in the school, and we've had a, a curriculum meeting on it last week and there's not one department in the school at the moment that is aware of what the GCSE criteria will be and we're just in that fear that we're gonna have some pupils who are not gonna be accessing as much as they could."* (P3)

Yet notably, the tensions between the assessment of learners and the WG's aspirations for IE were not, however, isolated to secondary school teachers, with some primary school teachers also arguing that the IE ethos of the CfW and ALN reform risks being hampered by the conflicting expectations being relayed between policy and assessment practices:

> *"It's mixed messages for us. And I guess there's a place for it because I know they want to get standards up, but it's contradicting when it's all teacher observation, be creative – meet your pupils' needs and then at the end of the year, kids are being put in front of laptops and being told that they have to do these national computerised assessments and they get compared to all the other kids."* (P5)

The reference to learners being "compared" is poignant and suggestive of the view that normative, bell-curve distributions of learning ability remain heavily propagated in the education system in terms of how learners are construed, and teachers evaluated. The statement "I know they want to get standards up" is also telling and indicative that the participant potentially perceives the WG through a detached, *them and us* lens, whereby WG education agendas are being funnelled down to teachers in a top-down manner. However, despite these concerns, the ALN reform's emphasis on communication, collaboration and Person-Centred Practice (PCP) were deemed as making a positive difference to IE practice. Indeed, many of the participants viewed the ALN reform as demarcating a critical step change in raising awareness of the need for all key persons around learners to come together to ensure a shared understanding of needs and how to effectively meet them. Further, whilst

the participants acknowledged that the ALN reform is purely intended to meet learners with ALNs, it was felt by many that the PCP approaches it advocates hold wider benefits for the inclusion of all.

4.2.2 Theme: Know me to Include me

'Know me to include me' captures the consensus amongst the participants that central to the attainment of an IE system, is the requirement for teachers to utilise pedagogical practices that are highly tailored to the needs and interests of individual learners. Indeed, multiple references were made to the importance of authenticity in knowing learners beyond an assessment or curriculum "tick boxing exercise" (P5). With value given to the diversity of learners via statements such as "not everybody fits the same peg" (P1) and IE requires more than a "one-size-fits-all" (P4) approach:

> *"So, I think it's about, with the new curriculum, it's about personalising learning far more, not just kind of using a textbook and one-size-fits-all approach. I think giving schools the ability to work out a curriculum for their learners is what inclusion is to me."* (P4)

This notion of "personalising" learning reflected the sense amongst the participants that the new CfW was enabling them the ability to move away from the "content" (P2) of the former curriculum and to focus instead on the experiences and skills that learners need. A move deemed as demarcating a "big change" (P2) in the mindsets of teachers: "It's changing how we think and it's changing our thoughts around who needs more support in our school" (P1). Indeed, many participants drew attention to the wider implications of inclusion that the education reforms were highlighting for their practice, in terms of the need to make reasonable adjustments and adapt classroom environments so that they are "accessible to all" (P3). There was thus a sense amongst the participants for the wider needs of learners that permeate beyond the traditional boundaries of learning, with some emphasising the need for teachers to support learners' physical and emotional needs, such as by providing opportunities for "movement breaks" (P5) and engaging learners in conversation to ascertain "what works best for them" (P3). Some participants also connected this pedagogical shift in mindsets and practice as reflecting an evolution from the ethos of the "more hands-on" (P1) and "creative" (P5) Foundation Phase (FP) curriculum. Indeed, there was a view held by

some participants that teachers who have taught in the FP will be better equipped to provide highly personalised learning experiences and will find it an easier adjustment than teachers in key stage two and secondary education. A view perhaps ratified by a secondary school teacher from a specialist provision school who reported feeling "fortunate" (P2) in being able to offer bespoke teaching and learning experiences given the small ratio of pupils to staff within their school. Yet interestingly, these perspectives were rebutted by the mainstream secondary school teachers who acknowledged that whilst they spent less time with learners than primary school teachers, they felt deeply committed to meeting learners' personalised needs:

> *"If it means that I've gotta explain something 423 times ...then it's 423 times and 423 different ways each time. So, it's having that one-to-one relationship with pupils that allows a classroom to be inclusive rather than, you know 'I've ticked this box, I've ticked that box'. It is all about the individual and knowledge of the individual learner and then making sure you've moved things around to fit them."* (P3)

The notion of moving "things around to fit them" suggests a strong rejection of a medicalised lens of seeing learners' needs as a within-person issue to be rectified. Instead, this statement captures the broader sense amongst the participants that the "onus" (P1) is on teachers to be prepared and able to adapt their practice and the school environment to ensure the inclusion of their learners. Deemed prerequisite to achieving this were relationships, with participants unanimous in citing the criticality of positive relationships with learners and their families to the attainment of inclusion:

> *"It's about putting relationships first, about that priority being part of that learning structure and I think, I think it's far more rewarding being in an inclusive learning system rather than kind of this dictatorship way you have to, you know, it's my rules and we're doing this."* (P4)

4.2.3 Theme: We're the Bases, We're the Foundations

"We're the bases, we're the foundations" (P3) was a statement made by a participant that captures the overarching sense of awareness amongst the participants for the fundamental

positioning of teachers in achieving Wales's aspirations for IE. Indeed, there was a permeating acknowledgement of the responsibility facing the teaching profession in supporting progress towards more inclusive practices and contexts for learners. A stance that was rationalised in terms of the frequency of direct interaction that exists between teachers and learners:

> *"I think ultimately it is the teaching staff, we spend the majority of time with these pupils, particularly in primary school. And you know, and I think teachers need to really recognise how important their role is. I think sometimes maybe teachers who have been teaching for a very long time might have lost sight of the impact they can have on their class. I think, I think teachers have…well, are the most hands-on if that makes sense."* (P5)

The notion of teachers being "the most hands-on" denotes a sense of the profession having a tangible and somewhat more authentic stake in realising IE, given their influence on learners' curricula and educational experiences compared to those more removed from the daily operations of schools. The reference to some teachers having "lost sight" of their role in IE is also profound and hints at a view of there being a detrimental risk of fatigue that can arise within the profession over time. Indeed, the sub-theme of 'teachers are critical' captures the sense amongst the participants that teachers' attitudes and motivation towards achieving inclusion have major implications for learners, which without "the system falls apart" and "doesn't become inclusive" (P3). Yet notably, whilst the participants embraced and accepted their position in progressing developments towards IE, frustrations and tensions surrounding the challenges of change were highlighted:

> *"...the responsibilities on teachers have become so much bigger over the years and because of these reforms… I think staff, staff should feedback to WG for them to understand it's not as simple as just putting the reform in people's hands and saying off you go with it, oh and if it doesn't work again maybe in 10-15 years, we'll change it again. I think it's really important that WG listen to schools throughout these reforms."* (P6)

The notion of the WG placing the reforms and aspirations for IE in the "hands" of teachers is thought-provoking in its undertones of perceived abandonment. A stance further compounded

by the potential lack of trust in WG captured by the reference to maybe "we'll change it again" and the rallying call for teachers to be heard by WG. Indeed, it creates a perception of the participant wanting a deeper, more lasting change that requires collaborative and more equitable processes of sense-making between teachers and WG. A view shared by many participants who drew attention to the increased pressures in workloads they face in their efforts to implement the reforms and the challenges of ensuring equality given the lack of money, time and training for inclusive practices within their schools. A concern that was encapsulated in the sub-theme 'we're trying our best' wherein the dilemma between the participants' commitment to seeking an IE system for their learners, was jarred by their conflicting sense of uncertainty and confidence to fully do so. An observation captured in the notable lack of conviction amongst the participants via their seeking of external confirmation for their practice:

> *"...from the inspection report that we've had, there's no monitoring, they're not coming back. So hopefully we're doing something right, isn't it?"* (P1)

> *"...quite sort of difficult to get everybody's head around, right? Am I doing this, am I doing it right? Is this what they mean on all of that?"* (P2)

> *"I'm constantly asking myself is this the idea sort of thing for what the curriculum is wanting us to do? Am I going down the wrong route here?"* (P6)

4.3 Overarching Themes and Sub-Themes for EPs

Within this section, the thematic map will be presented, followed by an overview of the overarching themes and related subthemes for the EPs.

Figure 10: Thematic Map for EPs
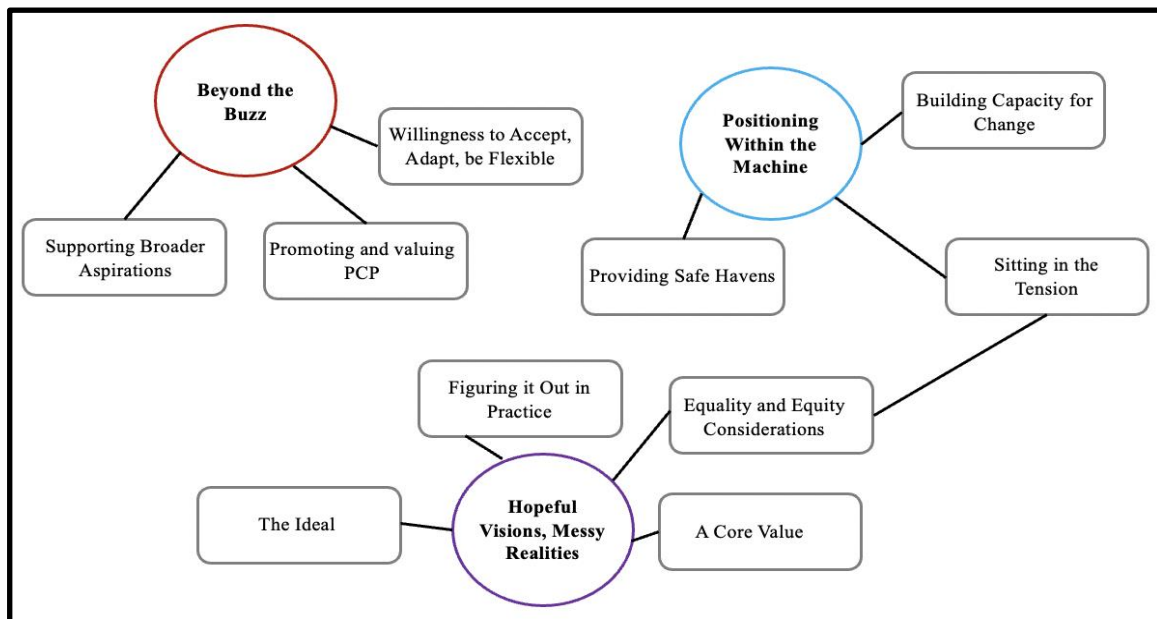
4.3.1 Theme: Beyond the Buzz

'Beyond the buzz' alludes to the sense amongst the EP participants of needing to look beyond the buzzword of inclusion to engage in the more valued process of unravelling what it implies and necessitates for learners. Yet the complexity of this endeavour was noted, with participants referencing a deep-rooted awareness that IE reflects a "loaded word" (P8) that can "open a can of worms" (P7) and create challenges for understanding; "Where do you stop and where do you start?" (P7). Digging beyond this admission and seeking to "pack out what inclusion means" (P8), there was an underlying sense amongst participants that the WG's drive for IE is heavily connected to the task of seeking broader aspirations for learners that grow beyond the boundaries of more traditionalist academic walls:

> *"I think that it's really positive because obviously, you know all children have got their own skills, their own strengths, their own talents. And I think that that's more inclusive than just sort of pushing those attainment levels and academic achievement. You know, I think that, yeah, it thinks of a child in more holistic...in a more holistic way rather than just going after that one traditional sort of attainments type of focus."* (P9)

The notion of the educational reforms as thinking of learners in "a more holistic" manner was a prevalent and deeply valued construct shared by the participants, with inclusion being framed as encompassing the whole child, as opposed to addressing areas of disconnected learning needs. The phrase "going after that one traditional sort of attainment type" is also striking and depicts a sense of moving away from an education system narrowly focused on learners being able to perform on tests. Indeed, many of the participants welcomed the CfW's move "away from a heavy focus on data" (P10) and discretely delivered curricula subjects of "we're doing maths, doing English, we're doing history" (P7). There was thus an underlying sense that conceptualisations of learning have historically been too weighted in their regard for traditional academic subjects delivered in militaristic fashions. A lens contested by many participants as failing to see the wider "facets of learning" (P9) that include a multiplicity of factors, such as a regard for the talents and interests of learners, as well as their social and emotional skills. The new CfW and ALN reform was thus deemed as offering a critical opportunity for change, with one participant noting their "sense of excitement" for the reforms and referencing the "really person-centred" stance and incorporation of "Vygotskian principles" (P8) as fundamental to this. A view shared by many participants who highlighted the value and need to actively promote the PCP principles underpinning the reforms. Indeed, PCP approaches were hailed by many as a prerequisite to supporting IE given the "rich picture of learners" (P12) they can yield and the opportunities for collaboration they afford. Yet notably, the participants also acknowledged the view that attaining this more wholesome IE reality for learners necessitates a teaching workforce able to demonstrate an undeterred willingness to accept the need to adapt and be flexible in their practice:

> "It's about all children, you know, being included in the everyday practices of the classroom. So, you know, that willingness and determination to ensure that any child has access…that kind of equitable access to the curriculum, to extracurricular activities, to staff time and input. So, you know, that's it at its simplest level, but then you know what I'd also hope to see is that any adjustments that need to be made are being made…whether that's kind of physical access to buildings, to activities, or extracurricular activities." (P12)

4.3.2 Theme: Positioning Within the Machine

'Positioning within the machine' encapsulates the mechanistic depiction of the education system portrayed by the participants, whereby the WG was deemed as akin to holding the role of chief engineer and EPs tasked with determining whether they operate as cogs in the machine or interjecting technicians. Indeed, there was a pervading sense amongst the participants of trying to clarify the boundaries of their practice regarding the CfW and ALN reform agenda, with the rapid pace of change deemed as convoluting matters:

> *"...it's been shifting so much, and things have been changing so frequently that you know, we're not totally...on the edges of the ALN machinery, the ALN works, but I think that we don't always know what's going on at the centre and if things have changed. It's not always easy to predict what will happen next um... I guess in some ways I can feel a bit disconnected from the machinery of it, and I guess in some ways I like that as it's not the most exciting part of our role (laughs) but at the same time, I guess more clarity would be helpful."* (P8)

This notion of disconnect is striking and was reiterated by another participant (P11) who raised concerns about the lack of statutory duty specified within the ALN reform regarding EP practice. Whilst the participant reported feeling pleased about this "because I don't think any of us want to be gatekeepers", they illuminated the risks it holds given that EPs may not necessarily be "ingrained" or "embedded" in the discussions and processes of change (P11). Notably, this view was not shared by all participants, with some reporting feeling "entrenched" and critical cogs in the dissemination of the reforms, particularly in terms of the ALN policy and supporting schools with having a "robust understanding" of its aims (P9). Indeed, attention was drawn to the imperativeness of "psychologists shaping those conversations" (P12) and their "strategic role" (P10) at a systems level within the implementation of the reforms. Yet despite these variances, the participants were united in their observations of finding themselves sitting in the discomfort of tension when working with schools to hold both the "value aim of inclusivity" and the "pragmatics of now" (P8). Indeed, there was a pervading sense of tension reported by the participants whereby they highlighted the delicate endeavour they face when trying to navigate schools toward more IE practice whilst simultaneously remaining sensitive to the challenging contexts in which schools currently operate. A challenge deemed as raising implications for IE given the risk of

inequality and inequity that can arise when schools raise concerns about poor budgets and staffing issues that risk compromising their perceived abilities to be fully inclusive in meeting the diverse needs of all learners. Yet despite these tensions, recognition was given to the uniqueness of EPs in being able to provide safe havens to schools via the offering of collaborative, reflective and supportive spaces:

> *"...just having those conversations, if there are doubts or possible concerns that practice may not be considered inclusive and sort of...well, we always sort of use the term critical friend, but just having those conversations with staff and maybe if there are concerns, sort of maybe supporting them to reflect on their practice in other ways that could be more inclusive."* (P7)

The reference to "just having those conversations" is poignant and suggests the view that the dialogue EPs facilitate is in and of itself, a critically important tool in steering movements towards more IE developments. A view reiterated by another participant who felt that "even those psychological skills of sitting and listening to the frustration, the overwhelm that teachers are feeling right now in Wales is important" (P8). There was thus an unwavering sense of commitment amongst the participants towards their role in building capacity for change in their schools, with repeated references made to the role of EPs in facilitating training to schools on the diverse range of learning needs. Further, consultation approaches were identified by many participants as a critical mechanism for supporting EPs' IE practice. Indeed, one participant highlighted the powerful potential of consultation to enable schools to have a "fresh pair of eyes on the situation" that might lead to "tiny little kind of adjustments", that "make a huge difference to children's lived experiences" (P12).

4.3.3 Theme: Hopeful Visions, Messy Realities

There was a pervading sense amongst the participants that they find themselves standing in the messy reality of real-world practice whilst gripping on tightly to a hopeful vision of IE. Indeed, IE was demarcated as a core value of the participants, that they felt "runs through" (P8) and "permeates through everything" (P9) the profession seeks to do. Reflecting on this hopeful vision, many of the participants referenced "the ideal" of what they would expect to see in schools if IE was being realised, with these including schools "where individual differences and diversity is celebrated" (P7) and where all learners can access the curriculum

alongside their peers whilst being "fully embedded" in their local community (P8). Reference was also raised to an IE system being one where inclusion:

> *"...is the baseline rather than you know, what we're aiming for over time. It would be nice to think that you know all, all schools are functioning at a certain level that you think is, just is inclusion rather than something that we've moved to...that it's become the usual thing."* (P9)

Yet notably, contrasting this vision of IE as the "usual thing" finally reached rather than always striven towards, was the messy reality whereby the participants acknowledged the ambiguities resulting from the education reforms. A reality that had rendered them attempting to figure out in practice what it all means. In particular, concerns were raised amongst participants about the processes for identifying and supporting learners with ALNs:

> *"...it's the two tests and how you decide if someone's got ALN and there's a lot of complexity around that isn't there, you know there's complexity around how that looks, it tends to look slightly differently in each local authority, I think. To some extent, perhaps it looks different in each school I think because one of the two test is obviously about whether it calls for additional learning provision that is over and above what other children can access and that looks slightly different in each school and each community."* (P8)

What is strikingly troublesome about this statement is the shrilling alarms it rings in terms of matters of equality and equity given the perception of variations between "each school" and "each community" which create implications for learners. A concern which permeated throughout the views of participants and explained their subsequent calls for clarity regarding the implementation of the ALN policy. Notably, this issue of ambiguity was not confined to the ALN reform, with many of the participants also acknowledging the uncertainties they hold in terms of CfW and what it means for teaching and learning in relation to assessment: "I don't know much about the assessment arrangements, I'm afraid" (P12). Yet, counteracting this sense of uncertainty was the strength felt amongst the participants in terms of their knowledge and application of psychological theory to navigate the change processes. Indeed, the participants hailed the EP professions' contribution as residing in the psychologically informed lens that they can bring to aid the understanding and implementation of IE

practices. With one of the participants stating that EPs' advocation for a psychologically informed lens was finally being "heard" beyond the profession, given the emphasis on theory within the CfW; "all of the things that research has been telling us for years – well it feels like it's getting listened to" (P8).

4.4 Collective Overarching Themes and Sub-Themes for Teachers and EPs

This section will present the thematic map for both the teachers and EPs, followed by an overview of the overarching themes and related subthemes.

Figure 11: Thematic Map for Teachers and EPs
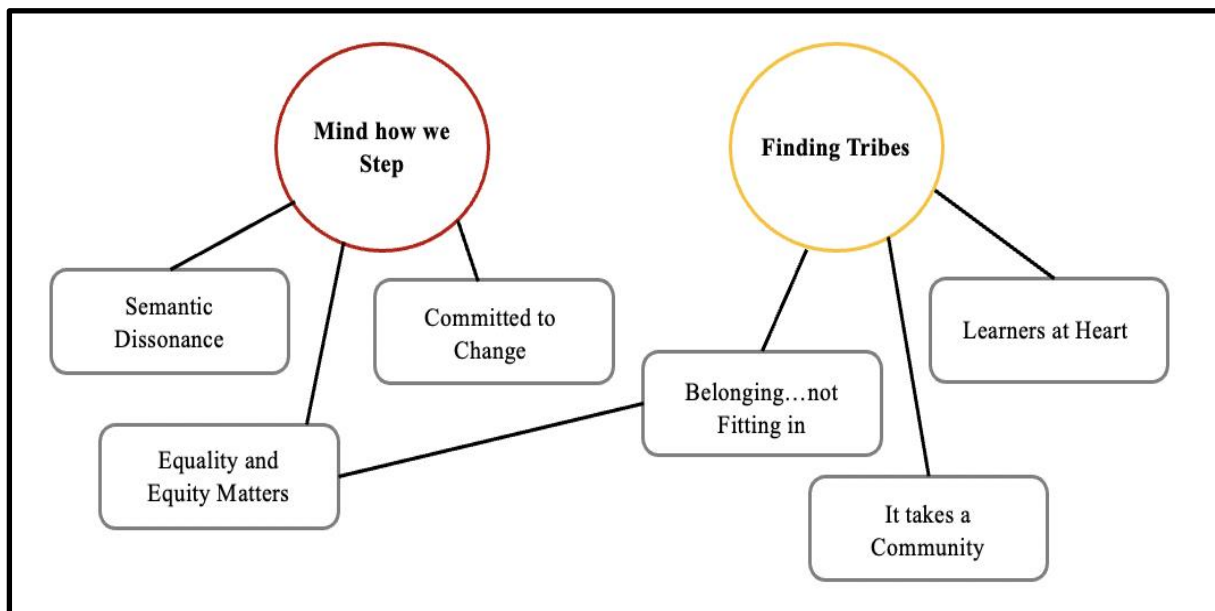
4.4.1 Theme: Mind How We Step

'Mind how we step' captures the overwhelming sense of unanimity between teachers and EPs in their determination to support developments towards the attainment of an IE system in Wales. Indeed, there was a pervading sense amongst all participants of being committed to change and seeking to take steps forward in their practice to do so. Yet underscoring this commitment was the acknowledgement that these steps forward need to be taken tentatively and in a manner that is mindful of the potential implications for learners and their families. A view repeatedly highlighted in the semantic dissonance reported by participants in terms of

the connotations that the language of Special Education Needs (SEN) and ALN can evoke. Indeed, whilst all participants reported the belief that the term ALN is "broader" (P1), "preferable" (P8) and "more inclusive" (P11) than SEN, many raised concerns that it remained problematic for inclusion:

> *"I don't like the labelling of pupils. I've gotta be honest…Um, yes, we need to be able to identify the pupils that do have learning needs. But I think putting a label on that pupil is stigmatising them, whether it's conscious or unconscious, you would…you're constantly thinking that, oh they might not be able to achieve this, whereas the attitude needs to be how can I get them to achieve this?"* (P3)

> *"I think it's a complicated thing because I think again, it depends on how you look at it, it is inclusive, but equally, it's still labelling or naming a category of pupils and is that in and of itself not inclusive? I don't know. I don't think there's a straightforward answer really."* (P7)

These statements encapsulate the deep sense of conflict among the participants towards the terminology being utilised within the ALN reform, with one participant capturing this discomfort in their statement; "we've got a real responsibility for the language that we use" (P12). Indeed, the notion of the term ALN as risking the conscious or unconscious construing of learners as "oh they might not be able to achieve this" (P3) is profound and depicts a view of ALN as creating glass ceilings for learners that hinders their opportunities to flourish and experience IE. Yet, participants also highlighted uncertainty about how to overcome this semantic conundrum, given their perceived need to know which learners require more support, but in a manner that did not *other* them. Indeed, some participants felt a sense of there being no term that could offer "a happy medium for everyone" (P11), while others called for the removal of labels altogether; "they need to be individual learners with an individual learning pathway, rather than an ALN with that stigma that comes with it" (P3). A further permeating concern highlighted by all participants related to the distinguishing of provision within schools. Indeed, there was a deep sense of confusion as to how provision was being demarcated as Additional Learning Provision (ALP) requisite to the needs of learners with ALN:

"...what is provided is bespoke to each school, and my concern would be if you know a child came from the school down the road for example, and they've got an IDP there, whereas that pupil comes here and what was ALP in their previous school isn't ALP here and so we start thinking about taking that IDP away." (P5)

"...it's a bit of a tricky one really, because I think across schools, they're all so different. I think perhaps the idea that local authority maybe want is that it's going to be the same across schools. So, the universal provision is the same across every school, whereas what we're actually tending to find is the universal provision really differs. So, in some schools, children will be classed as having ALN, whereas in other schools they wouldn't be." (P10)

The depiction of learners being identified as having ALN being inextricably linked to the provision offer of their school is utterly poignant and suggestive of a somewhat ALN postcode lottery. A view that connected to the overwhelming sense of concern noted by the participants to matters of equality and equity within the ALN reform. Indeed, participants highlighted the absence of "fairness" (P6) this variation risks and highlighted the critical need for greater consistency across Wales concerning the "equity of provision" (P11) available to all learners.

4.4.2 Theme: Finding Tribes

"They have found their tribe" (P8) was a statement made by a participant that reflects the overarching perspective amongst participants that IE is synonymous with feelings of belonging, community and a steadfast commitment towards keeping learners at the heart of matters. Yet, whilst the imperativeness of learners feeling a sense of belonging in the attainment of IE was noted, a distinction was made between true belonging and expecting learners to fit into the school system:

"I think belonging...I think belonging goes alongside inclusion - it's got to be part of it. And so, I think that if...for me, if a child stays in their mainstream school and receives their education there but does not in any way experience a sense of belonging there, well I would question whether that is really inclusion." (P8)

"...pupils being part of things, having that sense of owning their school and wanting to be there and feeling like, uh, like they are important to it." (P6)

"That they are going to be accepted and supported. The confidence to, to achieve whatever they, they want to achieve." (P4)

These statements epitomise the perspectives held by participants that for IE to be realised, it is fundamentally a prerequisite that learners feel an authentic sense of security and safety in being accepted for who they are and where they are in their learning journey. The reference to "mainstream school" (P8) is also telling and was a point raised by several participants in terms of the perceived helpfulness of debates surrounding segregated education to IE developments. Indeed, participants drew attention back to the need to keep learners' needs at the heart of discussions and decisions. They also highlighted the absence of belonging and risks of inequity and inequality that could arise if inclusion is construed as necessitating "all learners to be in the same place and to all be doing the same thing" (P10). Further, the notion of learners "owning their school" (P6) is poignant and illustrative of the value participants placed in their view of learners as active players in IE, rather than passive members of the system. This view expanded to the acknowledgement that it takes a community to support progress towards IE, with the critical importance of collaboration between learners, schools, families and wider professionals highlighted. Indeed, there was a sense of schools being far more than buildings for the mere transmission of learning experiences:

"...because you know, your school is more than just a place to learn...school is part of people...family life and more." (P1)

5. Discussion

This research sought to explore teachers' and EPs' perspectives of IE in the Welsh education context. Specifically, with respect to the following research questions:

1. What are teachers' and EPs' perspectives of the Welsh education reforms in relation to the aim of developing a fully IE system?
2. What does IE look like in practice for teachers and EPs?
3. What are teachers' and EPs' perspectives of their roles in promoting IE in their future practice?

Eight overarching themes and corresponding sub-themes were identified within the data analysis, which will now be discussed in relation to these questions.

5.1 Navigating an Education System Beyond Tradition

This research found that the teachers and EPs were unanimous in viewing the Welsh education reforms' aspirations for IE as demarcating an ethical and highly valued endeavour. A perspective synonymous with the positioning of IE as being an inherently moral issue concerned with ensuring the betterment of education received by learners (Pirrie & Head, 2007; Gibbs, 2018). Indeed, there was a pervading sense amongst the participants that Wales's aspiration for IE marks a critical step-change in its education policy, with this being identified as rooted in the need to ensure greater equality and equity in the educational experiences of all learners. A lens which mirrors the rights-based paradigm underpinning the education reforms (Donaldson, 2015; WG, 2021a) and wider research literature wherein IE has been posited as concurrent with matters of human rights (Slee, 2018; Ainscow, 2020).

In addition to the perceived ethical impetus of IE, the participants portrayed the view that the shortcomings of Wales's former education system had rendered the current reforms vital. Indeed, there was a sense that IE had historically been lacking in the Welsh education system, with the former national curriculum blamed for propelling a narrow lens of education focused on traditional academia and competitive individualism. A critique which aligns with Donaldson (2015) who stated that the catalyst for CfW stemmed from concerns surrounding the neoliberal agendas that had dominated the Welsh education system and left it barren in

scope. In contrast, the participants perceived the CfW and ALN reforms as offering the potential for a richer, more holistic and person-centred education system. This was captured within the theme 'beyond the buzz', wherein the EPs hailed the potential of CfW as residing in its focus on broader aspirations for learners that go beyond traditional ideologies of learning. Whilst for teachers, the theme 'it's a journey, definitely a journey' captured their sense of being afforded opportunities to shake away the shackles of the former curriculum in favour of embracing more agentic practices bespoke to their learners. These perspectives are thus congruent with the rhetoric running through the reform policies in terms of their aspirations for a more flexible, interconnected and IE system that stems "from the classroom out" (Donaldson, 2020, p. 24; WG, 2021a, 2021b).

Yet, whilst the participants supported the espoused aspirations of the reforms for IE, they noted several ambiguities surrounding their implementation into practice which raised fundamental implications. This sense of uncertainty was prevalent in the perspectives of teachers who noted ambiguity surrounding assessment measures and disparity given that GCSEs currently remain in situ. A concern further exasperated by the observation that despite the more inclusive emphasis on individualised progression within CfW, the WG persists in utilising annual assessments to benchmark learners against their peers. Indeed, many teachers viewed these as mixed messages fundamentally at odds with IE and disconnected from the reforms' ethos towards person-centred and holistic practices. A concern ratified by Florian (2019) who argued that the obtainment of an IE system requires that performative bell-curve distributions of educational ability be discarded, given that they fail to reflect or value the diversity of learners. Yet notably, these concerns were not limited to the teachers, with many EPs also acknowledging uncertainty about the CfW in terms of what it constitutes for the assessment of learners.

The aforementioned concerns are thus poignant and perhaps telling of the lingering presence of accountability regimes in the Welsh education system (Egan, 2016). An observation which aligns with the finding that a major challenge for IE resides in the conflicting social justice and neoliberal agendas that educational practitioners are often tasked with circumnavigating (Done & Andrews, 2020; Williams-Brown & Hodkinson, 2021). Indeed, when faced with such contradiction, it could be postulated that educational practitioners may seek to minimise the feelings of discomfort and uncertainty that these messages evoke by practising in a manner counterintuitive to their beliefs and in a way that hinders positive change in IE

(Mercieca, 2009). A risk which has roots in Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance wherein it is asserted that people have a strong motivational drive to overcome and find solutions to contradictions in behaviours, beliefs and attitudes. Thus, in the context of IE developments in Wales, it could be considered that whilst such contradictory messages and uncertainty regarding the reform policies remain, there could be a reluctance amongst practitioners to fully enact the reform aspirations into practice. A risk identified as a form of "closed economy" whereby sameness in practice is perpetuated given the "curiously self-reinforcing, self-perpetuating" sense of security that this affords practitioners when operating in uncertain contexts (Standish, 2005, p. 57).

5.2 Ethical and Semantic Tensions

This pervading sense of cognitive dissonance was further evident in the theme 'mind how we step', wherein participants noted tensions about the language of the ALN reform. Whilst the participants regarded the term 'ALN' as necessary (to be able to identify learners who require additional support/provision) and preferable to SEN, they also shared a conflicting view that it still serves to negatively label learners. An issue supported by Knight and Crick (2021) who argued that the term ALN risks being discriminatory due to its conceptualisation of learners as experiencing a significantly greater difficulty in learning. It is also worryingly familiar, given that the historical introduction of the term SEN was itself, once blamed for creating a language for adversely labelling learners (Norwich, 2019). Indeed, it has been argued that exclusion in education is all too often disguised in the language of inclusion, when in fact, such language is laden with deficit perspectives (Slee, 2018). The participants' sense of tension about the potentially harmful semantics of the term ALN is thus poignant for IE developments in Wales, particularly when considered through a social constructionist lens. This is due to this theoretical positioning asserting that language permeates beyond mere description and holds a performative role through being "intimately bound" with social practices that have real-world consequences (Burr, 2015, p. 55). It could thus be argued that the term ALN is deemed at risk of fuelling practice concurrent with a within-learner deficit view of learners that hinders the obtainment of inclusion for those it seeks to serve.

Further concerning, was the ethical tension surrounding ALP reported by the participants. In addition to being an overarching concern within the theme 'mind how we step', EPs highlighted the 'messy realities' they face in trying to navigate the ALN policy regarding

educational provision in schools. This was captured in the perspective that the identification of learners with ALNs appears to be dependent on the varying inclusive provisions and ALP available in a school. A view which raises consideration for matters of educational equality and equity, particularly given that participants alluded to the complex contexts in which they operate, with increased workloads, lack of funding, and a paucity of time or training to understand reform policies also highlighted. Concerns which mirror the wider budgetary challenges facing many schools in Wales and the recent Estyn report identifying ambiguity amongst practitioners in their understanding of educational provisions within the ALN reform (Sibieta, 2020; Estyn, 2023b). This finding thus provides critical consideration for the OECD (2020) report highlighting that the inequalities between schools (in terms of their resources and professional capacity), risk overshadowing the progress of the WG reforms and could impact the educational experiences of some learners.

5.3 IE in Practice

The theme 'know me to include me' captured teachers' views that the implementation of IE requires the utilisation of highly tailored pedagogical approaches that meet the diverse and personalised needs of learners. A task deemed as necessitating a pedagogical shift in the mindsets of teachers away from prescriptive, one-size-fits-all approaches. This stance was also encapsulated in the theme 'beyond the buzz' wherein EPs viewed IE as necessitating teachers to be flexible in their practice and willing to adapt the school environment to accommodate the needs of learners. These perspectives are thus consistent with the view that the implementation of IE requires teachers to utilise inclusive pedagogies and craft knowledge focused on viewing learner diversity as a strength. A lens wherein difficulties in learning are deemed as a challenge for teaching practices rather than within-learner deficits (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011; Florian & Spratt, 2013). Interestingly, the participants did not perceive there to be a competing pluralist tension or "irreparable loss" in their advocation for IE practices concerned with both the maintenance of a diversity lens and a simultaneous focus on individual learning differences (Berlin, 1990, p. 13). A view that aligns with a more nuanced conceptualisation of IE wherein *either/or* approaches are rejected in favour of tolerance for a *both/and* stance (Norwich, 2014). Instead, the participants construed individual learning differences as being more positively intertwined with *knowing* learners and placing them at the centre of educational decision-making. Central to achieving this in

practice, was the value placed by the participants on developing collaborative relationships with learners and their families, with PCP approaches deemed as supporting these processes.

The teachers and EPs were also unwavering in their perspective that IE is synonymous with practices focused on promoting belonging and community, as evident in the theme 'finding tribes'. A view which echoes the ALN Code's conceptualisation of IE as being the need to ensure that learners "fully belong to the school community" (WG, 2021a, p. 40). For the participants, this sense of belonging and community was connected to the need to ensure that learners feel safe, secure and accepted for where they are in their learning. They also challenged the notion that these aims should necessitate that learners attend their local mainstream school if they fail to obtain a sense of belonging there. Yet, what is perhaps challenging about this perspective of IE is the tolerance it affords to the view that obtaining belonging requires finding the right school for a learner. Indeed, it could be argued that his stance is somewhat counterintuitive to the notion of schools as inclusive communities. This is due to it providing a caveat to the perhaps more idealistic aspiration of IE wherein belonging is deemed concerned with embracing all learners into their local school community as simply being "part of the pack" rather than having to *find their tribe* (Slee, 2018, p. 29).

5.4 Conceptualising Roles in Promoting IE

The theme 'mind how we step' encapsulated the perspective that participants felt committed to promoting IE in their current and future practices. For teachers, they regarded their role as critical to realising Wales's aspirations for IE given their frequent contact with learners and abilities to implement inclusive pedagogies. The teachers also hailed the importance of having inclusive attitudes and being motivated towards promoting inclusion through their practice, which without, IE was deemed unobtainable. A view which supports the finding that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion can serve as critical barriers or facilitators to the realisation of an IE system (Glazzard, 2011; Brady et al., 2020; Conn & Hutt, 2020; Knight et al., 2022). Yet, whilst the teachers positioned themselves as central to IE, the cognitive dissonance and concerns about accountability they reported regarding the assessment of CfW should not be overlooked. Indeed, it raises consideration for the implications that this may have on their sense of self-efficacy and ability to fully exert control over their use of IE practices (Brady et al., 2020). A concern that was perhaps evident in the teachers' lack of conviction surrounding their implementation of the reforms thus far and their seeking of

external confirmation from other professionals. Furthermore, the *them and us* lens held by some teachers towards WG, as well as the reported lack of trust in WG to follow through with the reform policies over time, could risk hindering the sense of ongoing commitment and enthusiasm of teachers towards realising the reforms. A risk potentially captured in the participants' reports of fatigue that they felt often shadowed their profession over time. Given the historical rapid pace of change in Welsh education policy and the lack of monitoring of the effectiveness of these policies, such concerns might appear germane (OECD, 2014, 2017).

With regards to EPs, IE was perceived as a core value running through the veins of the profession that permeates everything they seek to do in their practice. A view that was highly evident in the themes 'positioning within the machine' and 'hopeful visions, messy realities.' Yet whilst the EPs were unanimous in their commitment to progressing IE developments, they held varying perspectives regarding their roles within the implementation of the ALN reform, with some feeling that they had a strategic role to play, whilst others felt somewhat removed. The resulting call for clarity regarding the positioning of EPs within the ALN reform is perhaps however, unsurprising given the ambiguous framing of the profession within the ALN Code itself (WG, 2021a). Indeed, whilst EPs are frequently alluded to within the ALN Code, the requirement for local authorities to involve them in decision-making processes is diluted to considerations of "whether to seek" their advice (WG, 2021a, p. 89).

Yet, an area where EPs were united in their perspectives of their role in promoting IE was evident in their abilities to provide safe havens to support schools in their IE developments. Indeed, the EPs regarded their ability to offer reflective and supportive spaces for school staff as a unique contribution of their role, with the dialogue produced within these spaces deemed critical for steering progress towards more IE practices. A view ratified by Kershner (2016) who stated that inclusion necessitates practice rooted in effective communication and dialogue between all involved, given the differing perspectives and sharing of tensions it can afford. This aligns with the EPs' views, who identified their use of consultation as affording opportunities for fresh perspectives that can yield positive ripple effects for the IE experiences of learners. A stance which aligns with the limited research highlighting the potential of consultation to support inclusive practices (Powell, 2021; Zaniolo, 2021; Sewell et al., 2022). Furthermore, the EPs identified a critical role for themselves in being able to build capacity for inclusive practices within schools via the offer of psychologically informed

training on the diverse needs of learners. This is consonant with the DECP (2022) position paper wherein EPs are identified as having a unique role in utilising psychological research to promote progress in IE.

5.5 Implications for Practice

This research found that participants viewed IE as necessitating both the maintenance of a diversity lens and a simultaneous focus on individual learning differences. This distinction was evident within the emphasis placed on the need to balance equality of opportunity for all learners in accessing the curriculum, whilst simultaneously ensuring equitable educational experiences that meet the diverse needs of individuals. However, the participants perceived a dichotomy concerning the ALN reform via the need to identify differences to ensure additionality (resources/support) is provided, whilst noting dissonance about the distinguishing of these differences in terms of their potential consequences for learners (being labelled with ALN). These findings reflect the wider debates in IE concerned with the tension of "difference as enabling versus stigmatising" (Norwich, 2014, p. 502). Whilst profound and ethically thought-provoking, it is imperative to consider the implications of these findings for practice if tangible ways forward are to be formulated. One means that this could be striven towards could be to reframe the splitting of these concerns as a dichotomy between good versus bad positions in IE, towards one of openness wherein practitioners are afforded opportunities to reflect on these tensions and the connections between them. Indeed, Norwich (2014) argues that this *both/and* stance is more conducive to supporting coherence and resolution in IE developments than are fixed viewpoints that risk the maintenance of IE as a self-insulating concept. EPs are ideally placed to support this endeavour, given their advocation for promoting a meta-perspective and their ability to draw upon social constructionism to illuminate the power of language to shape identities and practices (Burr, 2015). By utilising their unique skills in consultation, EPs could thus seek to work with teachers and wider members of the education community to explore constructs, enable dialogue, and promote the reframing of polarised viewpoints to help promote greater progress in inclusive practices (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2017; Wagner, 2017;).

A further implication for practice relates to the principle of subsidiarity underpinning CfW and the ambiguity noted by teachers regarding assessment. Given the potential cognitive dissonance that such uncertainty can render, there is a risk that IE developments will be

hindered by the ghost of neoliberal regimes. This could leave teachers feeling disempowered and result in them putting aside more inclusive pedagogies to teach according to traditional, uniform assessments instead. An observation which urgently calls for meaningful discussion and collaboration amongst teachers and the WG to occur so that such voices and concerns are not overlooked. Moreover, it would be beneficial for these discussions to be broadened to include the views of learners, families and EPs so that they can become more equal in the design and implementation of IE policies in Wales. Indeed, an IE system must be underpinned by the premise that everybody's views count (Antoninis et al., 2020). Further, by EPs engaging in discussions with WG about IE policy, they would be able to more strongly advocate the skills of their profession in being able to apply psychological theory with others to help identify, assess, and resolve issues that impede change processes (BPS, 2022). A skillset which would appear highly requisite given the tensions raised by the participants in terms of the ambiguities surrounding the implementation of the reforms into practice and the variations in ALP being observed between schools that risk inequality and inequity.

The EPs within this research identified that they hold a role in being able to support IE developments by building the capacity of school practitioners via the delivery of psychologically informed training pertinent to the education reforms. This training could be focused on developing a greater theoretical understanding of factors such as belonging and community which were identified by the participants as pivotal to the attainment of an IE system. Indeed, EPs are well placed to be able to utilise training to promote greater understanding and support for systemic ideas in IE that mitigate against simplistic, divisive and linear explanations (Embeita, 2019). Given that the teachers themselves raised concerns about increased workloads and a lack of training or adequate time to explore the education reform policies, such training may be highly welcomed. Further, EPs could consider offering supervision to teachers focused on IE practices, as a means for providing a 'safe haven' in which teachers could explore any feelings of uncertainty or tension they may be experiencing. Indeed, by offering supervision, EPs could help support a climate of practice wherein cognitive dissonance and "learning to tolerate not knowing, generates the professional who is in a constant process of becoming" (Mercieca, 2009, p. 170). Yet, it should not be overlooked that EPs may also have much to learn from teachers and are likely to benefit from the opportunities that supervision can afford their IE practices. A more bi-directional view of learning and reflection between the teaching and EP professions is thus

recommended, particularly given teachers' abilities to offer rich insight into what works and is practically achievable in IE practices within the messy real-world contexts of their classrooms.

5.6 Limitations and Future Research

Whilst every effort was made to conduct this research assiduously, it is imperative to acknowledge its limitations. This includes its narrowness in focusing solely on the perspectives of teachers and EPs at this mid-point within the implementation of the reforms. The absence of learners' and their families' perspectives of IE within this research is thus tangible and a missed opportunity. Particularly given that the participants themselves highlighted the view that it takes a community to make progress towards an IE system. Future research exploring IE from the perspectives of learners, families and wider members of the educational community is thus recommended, particularly given the absence of their voice from the literature within both the Welsh and wider UK context. Progressing this further, developing collaborative research projects between teachers and EPs focused on IE in terms of its conceptualisations and practices could offer an important avenue for future exploration. Such interprofessional collaboration could support the enabling of opportunities to move beyond traditional ways of thinking and offer a creative space in which new ways of working can be determined to enhance learners' experiences of inclusion (Green & Johnson, 2015). An approach which could be readily expanded to include wider members of the education system, including learners, families and other educational stakeholders. Indeed, Wegerif (2007, p. 28) posited that individuals and societies can attain greater capacity for positive change and innovative thinking when they demonstrate an "openness to the other."

A further limitation of this research resides in its small-scale nature, which stemmed from the time scales imposed upon its conduction and dissemination. Whilst this research did not aspire to positivist aims of data saturation, it is possible that the recruitment of twelve participants lacked the richness that could have been yielded had more been recruited. The "information power" for this research is, therefore, potentially limited and lacking in explanatory depth (Malterud et al., 2016, p. 13). Whilst every effort was made to conduct the data analysis robustly, it is also acknowledged that the analysis presented told only one narrative amongst multiple that could have been told about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Further, conducting this research at this stage within the implementation of Wales's

education reforms warrants caution and acknowledgement should be given to the potential limitations of the data generated given that the reforms are not yet fully embedded into practice. It would thus be helpful to conduct future research exploring developments in IE in Wales once the reforms have been fully implemented.

5.7 Conclusion

This research sought to offer unique insight into teachers' and EPs' perspectives of IE in light of the education reforms currently underway in Wales. The findings suggest that the participants unanimously welcomed the WG's aspirations for a fully IE system. They also reported feeling deeply committed to supporting progress through their practice for the betterment of education received by all learners. With this being framed as ethically imperative and rooted in values of equality, diversity, equity, and person-centred education. The findings also suggest that IE was viewed as necessitating highly tailored pedagogical approaches and relational practices, wherein knowing learners and promoting their belonging as members of the school community is pivotal. In terms of participants' roles in promoting IE, the teachers identified themselves as the foundations for the realisation of an IE system. They highlighted the criticality of teachers' attitudes and motivations towards implementing inclusive practices, with matters of cognitive dissonance also raised as a potential implication that risks impeding IE developments if overlooked. For EPs, IE was portrayed as a core value of their profession that necessitates their skills in providing safe, reflective and psychologically informed spaces to help navigate messy real-world school contexts. Yet, whilst the espoused aims of Wales's education reforms for IE were welcomed, there existed uncertainty surrounding their implementation into tangible practices. This was particularly evident concerning the assessment of learners within the CfW and the language of the ALN reform in terms of its potential consequences for learners. These combined with concerns about the risks of inequality and inequity stemming from variability in ALP between schools thus raise critical considerations and implications for practice if Wales's journey towards an IE system is to remain viable.

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An exploratory Study of teachers' and Educational Psychologists'

perspectives of inclusive education in Wales

Part Three: Critical Appraisal

Word Count: 6,494

1. Introduction

A fundamental foundation of qualitative research resides in the active engagement of reflexivity on behalf of the researcher (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). It is a process rooted in subjectivity and reliant on the researcher remaining committed to considering how they make and disseminate real-world data that reflects the messiness of social phenomenon (Finlay, 2002). Importantly, reflexivity is not an endpoint or tick-box exercise. Rather it is an evolving process of active reflection and transparency about the research journey (Braun & Clarke, 2022). It requires the researcher to be brave and to acknowledge their own held assumptions, as well as to be willing to recognise the difficulties or tensions experienced in conducting the research (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). Further, it is a challenging and delicate endeavour that requires a fine balance between the researcher acknowledging the self without engaging in narcissistic indulgence that risks the loss of the participants' voices in favour of their own (Nadin & Cassell, 2006). The purpose of this critical appraisal is therefore an attempt to offer the reader a reflexive, balanced and honest account of the research process (Brocki & Wearden, 2006). It will be written in the first person in acknowledgement of my positionality within the research process and in recognition of how the decisions I took led to what I hope is an interesting contribution to knowledge. Further, this critical appraisal will be subdivided into two sections. 'Part A' offers a critical account of the development of the research and research practitioner, whilst 'Part B' provides an overview of the research concerning its contribution to knowledge.

2. Part A: Development of the Research and Research Practitioner

2.1 Research Origins

The roots of this research stemmed from an amalgamation of my professional experiences as a primary school teacher and reflections as a TEP. Having taught in Wales for many years, I have been privileged to have worked with many learners who never failed to inspire me every time I entered the classroom. I had also observed the complexities of their development, with each learner I met having presented with their unique strengths, needs, experiences and wider systemic factors that needed to be understood and nurtured. Yet interpreting and meeting these needs, whilst navigating an education system that to me, had often felt uniform in its structure, delivery and measures of assessment, was by no means an easy task. An ethical and

moral challenge, I felt made more complex by the impacts of austerity measures and wider social challenges facing many local authorities and communities in Wales. Simultaneous to these experiences, I had also observed multiple political agendas and policy shifts within the education system that, at times, I had found myself scrabbling to keep up with and fully comprehend. What I had desperately wanted was space and time to be able to reflect, discuss and process the information being given to schools so that I could better serve the learners within my classroom. Yet in my experience, space and time for such cogitation were rarely synonymous with the busy, day-to-day, hustle and bustle of school life. Then in 2015, I became aware of the work of Professor Graham Donaldson and his publication of Successful Futures (2015) which catalysed the movement towards a major reform of the Welsh education system. Reading this publication, I felt inspired by the references made to an education system that was to be *done with* rather than *done to* learners and practitioners. I felt a welcomed sense of there being a voice and agency given to those the education system serves and is implemented by. In turn, this sparked a sense of curiosity within me as to how these processes of change would be perceived, made sense of and ultimately, implemented into tangible *realities* for learners.

It was this curiosity that during my Master of Arts in Childhood Studies at Swansea University, drove me to conduct research exploring school leaders' perspectives of Welsh education reform (Roberts & King, 2020). Providing a platform for these perspectives to be heard was a privilege and felt important, particularly given the paucity of research being published about practitioners' views within the Welsh education context. Yet notably, this research also highlighted uncertainties amongst the school leaders towards the reform processes which left me reflecting further on the implementation of policies into practice. As I progressed in my current venture as a TEP my interest in the ambitions of Wales's education reforms was further fuelled by the developments being made in the ALN transformation agenda and its aim of achieving a fully IE system for learners (WG, 2021). This notion of seeking IE struck a chord with me in terms of the value of inclusion that I identified myself as holding. Yet reflecting on this sense of value for inclusion, I also found myself questioning 'What exactly am I thinking of when I think about IE?' It was a question I found myself grappling to answer and I soon found myself wandering down the rabbit hole of the IE literature. In doing so, I realised the utter complexity and ambiguity within the field and wondered why there was a lack of research relating to EP practice. The further I delved into the research, the more I realised the ambitious but, in my view, critically important task

the WG had set for their education workforce. A task that I was determined to better understand and bring light to through this exploratory research, particularly in terms of the role of EPs given the lack of IE literature relating to the profession.

2.2 Review of the Literature and Research Questions

2.2.1 Exploring the Literature and Determining the Research Questions

When commencing this research and determining the research questions, a tremendous amount of time was spent immersing myself in the IE literature to develop familiarity with the field. Both in terms of the current context as well as historically to understand how developments have unfolded in recent decades. Through doing so, I became alert to the criticality of international declarations and conventions made by supranational organisations and other global bodies in shaping developments in IE (e.g., UN, 2016, 2017; UNICEF, 1989; UNCRPD, 2006; UNESCO, 1990; UNESCO, 1994; UNESCO, 2015). From further examining the research literature, it also became apparent that IE is a highly contested concept that has evolved historically and has been shaped by the multiplicity of perspectives and agendas pertinent to the unique contexts in which it is being sought (Slee & Tait, 2022). Mindful of this, I pursued to explore IE more specifically in terms of its developments within the Welsh and wider UK context. In doing so, I was struck by the sheer paucity of research available, particularly in terms of the Welsh education context in recent decades. Indeed, whilst I was able to find a wealth of papers exploring international developments in IE (e.g., Ainscow, 2020; Amor et al., 2019; Hernández-Torrano et al., 2022), I was able to find few studies related to the UK, with only six papers being specific to Wales and primarily focused on IE since 2010 (Conn & Davis, 2023; Conn & Hutt, 2020; Knight & Crick, 2021; Knight et al., 2022; Knight et al., 2023; Ware, 2014).

Despite the sparsity of research available on IE in Wales, the six papers retrieved were highly thought-provoking and highlighted the criticality of understanding the interconnections and inconsistencies between Wales's education reform policies in terms of their implications for IE (Conn & Davis, 2023; Conn & Hutt, 2020; Knight & Crick, 2021; Knight et al., 2022; Knight et al., 2023; Ware, 2014). Yet notably, none of the papers had provided consideration of the role of EPs, perhaps because the backgrounds of the researchers were all related to educational academia and not EP practice. I also noted that these papers were heavily focused

on offering critical policy analyses and researcher positions on IE, as opposed to seeking the perspectives of practitioners at the forefront of implementing the reforms into practice. Indeed, only two out of the six papers had sought to elicit the views of teachers about the education reforms (Conn & Hutt, 2020; Knight et al., 2022). Mindful of these limitations, I determined that my research would be focused on eliciting the perspectives of both teachers and EPs as key practitioners within the implementation of Wales's education reforms (WG, 2020, 2021; AEP & WG, 2016). Yet looking beyond their perspectives of the reforms for IE, I was also keen to gain insight into what they thought IE looked like in practice, as well as what they thought their roles might be in promoting IE in the future. This interest stemmed from my eagerness to explore perspectives of the tangible actions that could be taken to positively influence learners' experiences of IE going forward. Indeed, I was acutely mindful of the transfer problem that can arise whereby attitudes and conceptual knowledge of a phenomenon do not necessarily result in actual practices (Chidley & Stringer, 2020).

A further important decision I took when determining the overarching research questions was to avoid focusing specifically on learners with ALN. This was contrary to much of the literature I had read within the field, with many studies being focused on IE with regard to specific groups of learners, particularly those with SEN, ALN and/or disability (Antoninis et al., 2020). With this trend also being the case for one of the two doctoral theses I had found concerning IE and the role of EPs (Zaniolo, 2021). In contrast, I recognised that I was keen to avoid framing my literature review and research questions in this manner. This was due to my concern that it would contradict the exploratory nature of my research and would cast the assumption that IE is heavily intertwined with matters relating specifically to the inclusion of learners with ALN in Wales. Indeed, I was mindful of the point raised by Messiou (2017) who argued that research in IE that puts divisions amongst learners in its focus on specific groups is unlikely to facilitate progress or align with the core ethos of inclusion itself.

2.2.2 Reflections on the Process of Reviewing the Literature

Engaging in the process of conducting the literature review was by far the most arduous aspect I encountered when undertaking this research. I felt an enormous sense of pressure to 'get to grips' with the different mechanisms available for doing literature reviews and related to Kamler and Thomson (2008, p. 508) who noted "the difficulty of writing as an authority when one does not feel authoritative." I had also construed the belief that a systematic review

of the literature was a prerequisite for a doctoral thesis and hailed amongst researchers as the gold standard approach to take. Such a construction is perhaps unsurprising given that narrative reviews of the literature have been maligned by many researchers as non-systematic and subordinate to systematic reviews (Mulrow et al., 1997; Greenhalgh, 2014). Yet in honesty, there was something very conflicting about the idea of undertaking a systematic review for my research that I struggled to shake off. This feeling was particularly prevalent when I read positivist comments about systematic reviews of the literature being concerned with searching for the whole truth on a research focus (Mulrow et al., 1997). Indeed, it felt fundamentally at odds with the Big Q, fully qualitative and social constructionism paradigm underpinning my research, given its rebuttal of absolute truths (Burr, 2015). I was also aware that IE developments are heavily connected to the grey literature of government policies and supranational agreements which are often absent from the white literature of academic journals and commercial publications (Lawrence et al., 2014). Thus, in a bid to offer a more theoretically aligned and comprehensive overview of the literature, I determined that a narrative review best reflected the needs of my research. Further, I was aware that narrative reviews have been posited as beneficial in offering historical accounts of how a phenomenon has evolved and developed over time, which seemed highly pertinent to the field of IE (Siddaway et al., 2019).

Whilst I felt settled on my decision to undertake a narrative review of the literature, I was also alert to the importance of qualitative research needing to maintain a transparent, critical, robust and evaluative approach towards the literature generated (Carroll & Booth, 2015). I thus decided to systematically search the IE literature in relation to how it has been defined within the UK context, as well as to how it has been related to the roles of teachers and EPs. This process was supported through the use of inclusion and exclusion criteria that were devised according to the design, context, sample focus and publication date pertinent to my research. Given the paucity of research available on IE within the context of Wales and the wider UK, the search terms used were also kept deliberately broad in an effort to capture as much research as possible. In reflection, I have wondered whether more specific search terms such as 'role*' or 'practice*' may have been beneficial. However, I do feel that the broad terms used enabled a wide range of publications to be searched. Further, given the narrative review strategy acknowledged within my research, the purpose of the systematic search was never to claim that all research available in the field was necessarily synthesised (Siddaway et al., 2019).

A further reflection I have regarding the process of reviewing the literature was the sense of concern I felt when I realised that there was very limited recent research available on IE in Wales or the wider UK context since 2010, particularly in terms of the role of EPs. Whilst I felt that this might be perceived as a strength of my research in terms of the unique insight it could offer, it also felt problematic given that I was tasked with piecing together a coherent literature review with limited studies to do so. The irony of this dilemma left me actively reflecting on the traditional aspirations of research being concerned with finding gaps in the literature to fill (Robinson et al., 2011). Indeed, I found myself questioning where this logic stemmed from, and the implications it creates for researchers when faced with the task of trying to write robust claims when standing on unknown terrain. I was however comforted by Braun et al (2019) who discussed the tensions for qualitative researchers when being pressured to present something unique and different. They highlighted the positivist thinking that this encapsulates and its limitations in overlooking the potential of research to be accumulative and part of the "bigger broader story" of the phenomenon being explored (Braun et al., 2019, p. 12).

2.3 Theoretical Paradigms

When devising my research much deliberation was given to the theoretical paradigm underpinning its structure and focus. Through examining the literature on IE, I was conscious of the complex debates surrounding its varying definitions and interpretations. With these being deemed influenced by the dynamic, sociocultural, historical and political contexts in which IE is being sought and construed (Slee & Tait, 2022). Consequently, I reflected on how IE was consonant with a theoretical positioning that regarded language as a critical pillar in terms of how humans make sense of their social world and express that meaning-making to themselves and others (Burr, 2015). I thus felt that a positivist theoretical paradigm rooted in a value for quantitative data would be fundamentally at odds with my research aims, given that it would posit the view that IE reflects a unitary and measurable phenomenon in an unequivocally concrete world. Further, I was aware that a hallmark of a positivist paradigm resides in its aspiration for the researcher to operate dualistically and objectively (Park et al., 2020). Recognising my positionality within the research in terms of both insider and outsider perspectives (please see point 2.4), I acknowledged that this requirement would have raised fundamental ethical dilemmas and challenges for my research. With regards to a critical

paradigm, whilst I recognised the potential value of this approach to my research in terms of its focus on power imbalances, social change and inequality, I was also mindful that it holds a normative lens focused on an assumptive view of how things *ought* to be (Crotty, 1998). Further, I felt that the heavy focus in a critical paradigm on power imbalances could have risked the potential conceptualisation of participants as "blindly doing the bidding of powerful regimes" (implementing policy reforms) and thus "further enslaving themselves" in processes that impede positive societal change (Scotland, 2012, p. 14). Consequently, I concluded that a relativist ontological position and social constructionist epistemological stance were the theoretical partnership that best reflected my research aims. This congruence was deemed as residing in this theoretical paradigm's regard for the "perspectival subjectivity" and contextualised experiences of the participants with regard to IE (Kvale, 1996, p. 212). Indeed, it places value on the rich and thick descriptive accounts of the participants who are regarded within this paradigm as being active in formulating their *reality* (Smith, 2015).

2.4 Researcher Positionality

Acknowledging the positionality of the researcher in terms of the potential insider and outsider perspectives that they may hold is critical to the ethical transparency and integrity of research (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015). An insider researcher is broadly defined as belonging to a group of participants within a study through shared characteristics, whilst an outsider researcher is not viewed as a member of that group (Gair, 2012). Epistemologically, I recognised that this distinction was a vital consideration for my research, given the role of the researcher in qualitative-centric research as being active within the description and presentation of participants' perspectives (Hayfield & Huxley, 2015). Indeed, I was aware that insider researchers may benefit from the commonalities they share with participants in terms of greater awareness of their contexts that could yield richer data collection (Gair, 2012). I was also aware that the insider researcher may hinder data analysis by making erroneous assumptions of understanding that overlook critical aspects of the data (Perry et al., 2004). Furthermore, I had read literature wherein the notion of a researcher as being either an insider or outsider was refuted as too simplistic and at risk of overlooking the potential that they may be both (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Indeed, Hayley and Huxley (2015) raised the point that given the complexities of human relationships and the intersections of identity that can exist for an individual, a more nuanced lens of positionality may be necessary.

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In the process of undertaking this research, I have found myself wading through this more nuanced sense of positionality given my current role as neither a practising teacher nor a qualified EP. Whilst I recognised that I hold insider perspectives given my professional background as a teacher and current role as a TEP, I also found myself feeling like an outsider looking in from the periphery at times. In reflection of this experience, I believe that this sense of outsider positionality stemmed from the emerging identity that I feel I am gaining as an educational researcher. Indeed, I have found that the process of undertaking this research has felt like an important step in and of itself for my professional development as a member of the educational research community. A process, which I feel has been greatly enriched by keeping a research journal (Appendix 13) and engaging in regular research supervision sessions wherein I have been encouraged to critically reflect on the conflicting sense of positionality and development I have experienced throughout this process.

2.5 Methodological Considerations

2.5.1 Data Generation Considerations and Reflections

It is perhaps helpful to first explain the reasoning for why I decided to use *data generation* in place of the more traditional term *data collection* within the description of my methodology. It was a decision that derived from a webinar I watched wherein Braun and Clarke (2023a) raised the fascinating point that the term *collection* carries positivist undertones that imply the researcher is going out and gathering something that already exists. In contrast, the term *generation* gives acknowledgement to the active role of the researcher in generating the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2023a). I thus used the term data generation to ensure that the use of language throughout my research was carefully considered and consistent with the theoretical paradigm I advocated using. This seeking of theoretical alignment was also implicated in my rationale for using virtual, semi-structured interviews for the data generation. A decision which stemmed from my awareness of the sense-making that occurs verbally amongst people and my eagerness to ensure that my data generation approach aligned with the linguistic "symbolic system within which that sense-making occurs" (Smith, 2015, p. 2). I was also aware that the Covid-19 pandemic had resulted in virtual interviewing gaining prominence in qualitative studies and understood the advantages to my research and the participants it afforded in terms of time, convenience and cost (Keen et al., 2022).

Once I had determined to utilise interviews over other approaches such as focus groups (which I felt risked group dynamics necessitating another researcher to support) my attention turned to the task of constructing the interview schedule (Smithson, 2000). In doing so, I recognised quite quickly that I would be seeking to use open-ended questions within the interviews. This was due to open-ended questions being identified as enabling participants a helpful frame of reference to answer questions but without the imposition of restraints in terms of how they do so (Kerlinger, 1970). I also sought to formulate the interview schedule in a manner that adequately reflected my research objective and what I was seeking to find out (Cohen et al., 2018). Consequently, the interview schedule was structured around the three overarching research questions for my thesis (please see Appendix 10). I also decided to limit the number of questions I asked to eight as I was keen to ensure that there was adequate time and flexibility to follow the lead of the participants in the interviews. To further support this process, I sought to use a series of anticipated prompts and probes within the interview schedule, as I understood that these can help seek clarification and further information (Cohen et al., 2018). Indeed, I was aware that the use of probes within semi-structured interviews can be particularly valuable in supporting the attainment of greater depth and richness of responses from participants (Patton, 1980).

In terms of the recruitment of participants, I recall the sense of uncertainty and worry that came with the ebb and flow surrounding the timescales for when the participants were recruited for my research. Whilst I was able to recruit the six teacher participants quite quickly, I experienced more difficulty recruiting the EPs. I have found myself questioning why the recruitment of EPs to my research took longer than anticipated and wondered if my recruitment email and participant information sheet were overly wordy, uninviting and inaccessible for busy professionals. Indeed, it is possible that in seeking to recruit participants via a somewhat lengthy email, I had compromised the ability to communicate the research in an enthusiastic and inviting way (Archibald & Munce, 2015). I also wondered whether EP services were being inundated with requests for participants, given that many TEPs across the UK would have been seeking participants around the same timeframes as myself.

In reflection of the experience of conducting the interviews, whilst I thoroughly enjoyed undertaking the interviews, it would be disingenuous to suggest that I found the task easy. Indeed, I have gained a much deeper appreciation for the skills that interviews necessitate of

the researcher to be able to discern pertinent points being offered by the interviewee and to ask unanticipated questions in response (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I often reflected on the competing demands I found myself balancing during the interview processes, such as trying to build rapport, listen tentatively to participants' perspectives, and hold in mind probing questions. All whilst, finding myself simultaneously checking that I had not forgotten to record the interview or wandered completely away from the interview schedule! Nevertheless, I am incredibly grateful for the experience and concur that whilst interviewing is a "deceptively difficult" skill, it is an invaluable mechanism for moving the researcher more "deeply and substantively into the lives and social worlds of people" (Hermanowicz, 2002, p. 498).

2.5.2 Data Analysis Considerations and Reflections

Concerning my choice of data analysis, considerable time was spent trying to determine what the 'best approach' to take would be (see Appendix 11). Indeed, I felt an overwhelming sense of concern that I would make mistakes in my choice of data analysis and compromise the integrity of my research. Yet, I was reassured by a point raised by Patton (2002) who, whilst acknowledging the complexity of qualitative analysis, stated that there exists no single or correct means by which to analyse, present and interpret data. Indeed, Cohen et al (2018) argue that rather than viewing qualitative data analysis through a lens of stringent rules and closed boundaries, focus instead should be given to fitness for purpose. Acknowledging this and recognising that I was seeking to undertake Big Q fully qualitative research, I felt that reflexive TA offered a good fit for my data analysis. This congruence was deemed as residing in its unapologetic acceptance that whilst analysis cannot be accurate, it can be rich and insightful (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Braun & Clarke, 2022). The core emphasis on reflexivity within reflexive TA also felt ethically imperative and elevated its sense of relevance to my research over other forms of TA I was aware of (e.g., codebook TA; King, 2012). Indeed, I was keen to be transparent about the entwinement that existed between the participants, myself as the researcher and the methodological approaches that I had decided to use. I also embraced the opportunity advocated in reflexive TA to be a passionate storyteller of the data analysis rather than a dispassionate scientist as this felt more creative and exciting to me (Braun & Clarke, 2023a).

In reflection of conducting the data analysis, it was undoubtedly the most rewarding and enjoyable task that I undertook for my research. I cannot overstate the sense of privilege that I felt to be able to read the participants' perspectives and analyse the data for patterns of shared meaning. Yet admittedly, it was also an extremely challenging, complex, highly recursive and time-consuming process. Indeed, whilst I have used reflexive TA for previous research studies, I had honestly underestimated how challenging the analysis was going to be with a larger sample of participants. Whilst twelve participants may not seem like a large sample, I found it tremendously difficult to get a deeper, latent sense of what each participant was saying while simultaneously thinking of the themes running across the data for both professions separately and collectively. However, I did find the process somewhat eased by the act of creating familiarisation doodles for each data item and found this creative means of initially exploring the data extremely helpful. Further, I also concluded that I needed to give myself the space and time required to be able to do the analysis well. I thus put aside the pressures I had placed upon myself to meet strict deadlines for when I expected to complete the data analysis and instead sought to embrace the 'slow wheel of interpretation' that reflexive TA inevitably necessitates (Braun & Clarke, 2021a).

2.5.3 Reflections on Using a Big Q Approach

My utilisation of a Big Q approach marked a critical decision point within the methodological design of this research and reflected the underlying qualitative research values and aims being held. Indeed, it was rooted in the non-positivist paradigmatic foundations underpinning this research and was critical in shaping my decision to focus solely on qualitative studies for the literature review, as well as my choice of data generation and analysis techniques. This was due to my awareness of the methodological incoherence that can arise in qualitative research whereby researchers "mash together" conceptually incoherent concepts and procedures, for example, utilising both positivist/small q and non-positivist/Big Q approaches (Braun & Clarke, 2023b, p. 2). Reflecting on this decision, I recognise that more moderate approaches could have been adopted whereby acknowledgement could have been given to such instances of conceptual incoherence. Yet, I resonated with Braun and Clarke (2023b) who encourage researchers to own their perspective and to be "thoughtful and deliberate" in their practice (Braun & Clarke, 2021b, p. 44). To avoid a "conceptually messy mash-up" I thus fully embraced a Big Q stance for this research and actively sought alignment with the values, assumptions and orientations of this approach for all my decision-making processes

(Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.228). Furthermore, given my paradigmatic stance (please see point 2.3) and positionality (please see point 2.4), I recognised the criticality of reflexivity in my research and that I could not have coherently or ethically claimed to have operated within both a "scientifically descriptive" (positivist/small q) and "artfully interpretive" (non-positivist/Big Q) framework (Finlay, 2021, p. 105).

3. Part B: Contribution to Knowledge

3.1 Contribution of Research to Existing Knowledge

Whilst mindful of the limitations of this research, it has highlighted several important considerations for IE in an area acutely sparse in its research literature bases, both within the Welsh and wider national context. It is also, to the best of my knowledge, the first exploratory study that has sought to examine the perspectives of EPs in relation to the WG's aspirations for a fully IE system. This research is therefore unique in its focus on EPs in the Welsh education context, and it seeks to build upon the limited research that has explored the perspectives of teachers (Conn & Hutt, 2020; Knight et al., 2022).

Given the absence of research exploring IE with regard to EPs in general, this research also offers a helpful platform for further discussions within the field. It also calls for the profession to engage in further research to help mitigate the perspective that EPs have historically been too focused on the advocation for inclusivity at the expense of questioning how it translates into tangible practices (Burden, 2017). This research therefore aspires to be part of the "ongoing conversation" (Braun et al., 2019, p. 12) of IE. Indeed, if this research has encouraged the EP reader to reflect more deeply on the complexity of IE in terms of its definitions and tangible implications for learners and their professional practice, then I feel it will have achieved its purpose in contributing to knowledge.

Further, I would argue that a strength of this research resides in its use of interviews to capture the perspectives of teachers and EPs tasked with implementing Wales's education reforms into practice. Indeed, this methodological approach provided the opportunity to gain valuable and rich insight into the sense-making of these practitioners within the dynamic and complex contexts in which they operate (Knott et al., 2022). Insight, which arguably, would have been lost had more positivist, quantifiable measures been utilised instead.

3.2 Contribution to Future Research

As identified within the conclusion of this research's empirical study, several areas for future research are identified. In particular, future research that seeks to obtain the perspectives of learners, families and wider members of the educational community towards IE and its implications for practice is warranted given the paucity of research found within the systematic literature search. This requirement for research exploring the views of learners is particularly poignant and a regrettably missed opportunity of this current research. Indeed, it is recognised that it is learners who ultimately have the most at stake when it comes to the realisation of educational reforms into practice (Fullan & Edwards, 2022). By future research seeking to acknowledge this stance, a more empowering lens of learners as critical change makers within the education system can thus be advocated (Fullan & Edwards, 2022).

Another area for future research could be for EPs and teachers to undertake collaborative action research that utilises a cycle of enquiry to systematically explore the implementation of inclusive practices. This would support the obtainment of iterated feedback on the effectiveness of such practices on learners' experiences of inclusion. Such interprofessional collaboration through research could also enable important opportunities to go beyond traditional ways of thinking and offer a creative space in which new ways of working together can be determined (Green & Johnson, 2015). In particular, such collaborative research could seek to explore the concerns raised within this research around inclusive and additional learning provisions within schools, as well as the potential implications of the language of ALN.

3.3 Dissemination of Research

Whilst it is recognised that the findings of this research reflect a reality of IE in Wales, as perceived by the participants at a specific moment in time, it is also acknowledged that the dissemination of such research can have critical implications for real-world practices and processes of change (Gergen & Gergen, 2008). I thus feel a strong sense of duty to ensure that every effort is made to disseminate this research further. To achieve this, priority will be given first and foremost to providing the participants with a copy of this thesis, out of courtesy and appreciation for the time they so graciously afforded me in partaking in the interviews. By providing the thesis in its entirety, it is also hoped that this will enable the

participants the opportunity to consider more holistically the research findings in relation to the wider literature, as well as to support reflection on any possible implications for their practice.

Beyond the dissemination of this research to the participants, I am also keen to share my research within the local authority where I will be commencing employment in September 2024. It is my aspiration that this will enable me the ability to raise discussions about IE at a local authority level with regard to Welsh educational policy and its implications for teachers' and EPs' practices. I would also be keen to work collaboratively with schools through consultation and if possible, joint research projects focused on exploring the application of inclusive practices as identified within the implications for practice section (please see point 5.4). Furthermore, I am eager to explore whether this research could be disseminated more widely to the EP and education community. Both in terms of the Welsh education context, as well as more broadly with regards to the EP profession. The rationale for this relates to my hopes of enabling my research to be disseminated to a wider audience so that further consideration and reflection of IE and its implications for practice can be encouraged. To attain this aim, I intend to explore a range of peer-reviewed journals in an effort to submit my research for publication.

3.4 Contribution to EP Practice

In addition to the implications for practice discussed within the conclusion of the empirical paper presented in part two, this research aspires to contribute to EPs' professional practice in several ways. In particular, the literature review highlighted that a major challenge of IE and its developments resides in the competing and convoluted debates surrounding its precise definition (Kershner, 2016; Aasen et al., 2014; Hernández-Torrano, et al., 2020). It is thus hoped that this research may encourage EPs to consider the conceptualisation of IE they hold in terms of how it shapes their practice and relates to the psychological research literature. This may also help to support EPs with their ethical decision-making and the recognised need for the profession to be able to identify the characteristics and barriers to inclusion for those they serve (HCPC, 2023). Indeed, by engaging in deeper reflection and reflexivity of IE, EPs would be afforded the ability to recognise the potential implications of their values and beliefs on learners' experiences of inclusion (HCPC, 2023). A process that could be readily extended to encompass EP Services (EPS), so that active consideration and discussion can be

given to the collective understanding and messages of IE being relayed to schools, both at a local authority and wider systemic level.

A further area where this research seeks to contribute to EPs' practice resides in its advocation for a more bi-directional view of learning and reflection between the teaching and EP professions in their progress towards IE developments. This was due to the observation that whilst the EPs identified their role in IE as offering 'safe havens' to school staff for reflection, as well as the building of capacity in schools via the delivery of psychologically informed training on inclusive practices, none of the teachers spoke about how they might support EPs (or other professionals) with regards to their IE developments. An observation convoluted by the lack of conviction noted by the teachers about their implementation of the education reforms into practice and their seeking external confirmation from other professionals that they are doing the *right thing*. Whilst caution is needed given that these observations solely reflect the teachers within this research, they are nevertheless thought-provoking. Particularly given the principle of subsidiarity underpinning Wales's education reforms and the recognition that a critical driver for change stemmed from criticisms that the former education system was inhibiting teachers' sense of professionalism (Donaldson, 2015). This research thus hopes to encourage the EP reader to consider how they might work with teachers in a truly bi-directional and collaborative manner to make progress in IE developments and mitigate the historical trend of teachers being *done to* rather than *done with*. One way this might be achieved is through EPs offering supervision to teachers on IE wherein the idea of a learning community is embraced, and active consideration is given to how power imbalances can be counteracted (e.g., through explicitly sharing supervision models/frameworks for practice). By taking this stance, the powerful potential of supervision for mutuality of influence and learning would be acknowledged and valued. Indeed, both EPs and teachers would be afforded opportunities to understand that whilst their respective roles in the education system are different, they nevertheless each have something to learn and contribute to the other in their support of progress in IE developments. Indeed, as Shohet and Shohet (2020, p. 33) highlight, supervision inherently takes place in a relationship that necessitates both parties to be inquisitive, trusting and open to sharing "their vulnerabilities together" (Shohet & Shohet, 2020, p. 33).

4. Concluding Reflections on the Research Journey

Conducting this research has been an incredibly rewarding experience that has taught me so much about myself, both professionally and personally. It has made me reflect more consciously on the language that I use in my interactions with others and the need to always remain open and curious within my professional practice. It has also taught me the criticality of remaining mindful of the potential discrepancies that can arise between the rhetoric espoused within educational policies and their transference into tangible practices for learners. Further, it has reminded me of the need to be patient and accepting of the unexpected turns and messiness that inevitably come with conducting qualitative research of this nature.

From a personal perspective, balancing the demands of the doctorate whilst writing a thesis and more importantly, being an incredibly proud mum to three amazing little boys, has admittedly, not been without its challenges. Yet, it is a journey that I am extremely grateful to have been on and feel that it has given me a tremendous sense of resilience that will serve me well as I venture into my future practice as an EP. It has also made me realise how passionate I am about undertaking research and has concreted within me a sense of determination to continue to be part of the educational research community going forward.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Details of the Systematic Literature Review

Following an initial scoping exercise, the search terms depicted in Table 4 were used for the initial systematic literature review. The inclusion criteria for this initial search specified that the research had to be related to IE within the Welsh education context, with research also sought that involved IE focused on the practice of teachers and EPs in Wales.

Table 4: Initial Mapping and Search Terms

Search Terms			
'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' OR 'inclus*'	'Educational Psychologist*' OR 'Educational Psycholog*' AND / OR 'Teacher*' OR 'Teach*'	'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	'education reform*' OR 'curriculum*' OR 'Additional Learning Need*' OR 'ALN

Note: The asterisk (*) serves as a truncation used to search for alternative letters at the end of words. For example, the use of inclusi* would enable searches for 'inclusion' and 'inclusive'.

A combination of these search terms was entered into the ERIC, APA PsycInfo and Scopus databases and retrieved articles were further screened to check that they met the inclusion criteria of being written in English, peer-reviewed and published after 2010. The findings from this initial search identified that no research articles had examined IE in relation to the role of EPs within the Welsh education context (see Table 5). Further, limited studies examined IE specifically in terms of teachers or IE within the Welsh education context more broadly (Table 5). The decision was therefore taken to expand the search terms to include a wider focus on the UK context more broadly, with these search terms visible in Table ?? below:

Table 5: Final Mapping and Search Terms

Subject mapping terms	Key word search terms	Rationale
'inclusive education' AND	OR 'educational inclusion' OR 'inclusi*'	This systematic literature review intended to find research pertaining to IE. A variety of similar terms were found for inclusive education in the scoping exercise.

'Educational Psychologist*' AND / OR 'Teacher*'	OR 'Educational Psycholog*' OR 'Teach*'	The scoping exercise highlighted that EP may refer to service-based practices as well as EPs. It was also deemed necessary to broaden the search term of 'teacher' to include consideration for references to the practice of teaching.
'Wales' AND	OR 'Welsh' OR 'UK' OR 'United Kingdom' OR 'Scotland' OR 'Scot*' 'England' OR 'Engl*' OR 'Northern Ireland' OR 'Northern Ir*'	The Welsh education context is the primary focus of this research study. However, given the limited research examining IE in the Welsh education context, search terms were widened to include the whole of the UK.
'education reform*' AND	OR 'curriculum*' OR 'Additional Learning Need*' OR 'ALN'	Given the education reform context in Wales, key search terms associated with the reform were included to determine if there was any further research relevant to the aspirations for IE.

These search terms were entered into the ERIC, APA PsycInfo and Scopus databases using a combination of search terms. The focus of these searches was to identify within IE research literature relating to Wales and the wider UK context, as well as in terms of the implications of IE for the role of teachers and EPs. The results of these searches, conducted between August to October 2023 are evident in Table 6 below:

Table 6: Systematic Search Results

Database	Search String	Number of 'Hits' After Filtering (Peer-reviewed, English, specific to compulsory education, published from 2010 onwards)	Articles Removed due to Exclusion Criteria 1. Study design 2. Location 3. Sample Focus 4. Publication Date	Number of Articles Identified for Further Screening
ERIC	'educational psychologist*' OR 'Educational Psycholog*' AND 'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	0	N/A	0

(Search Within Article title and Abstract)	'teacher*' OR 'teach*' AND 'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	18	Criteria 1 = 0 Criteria 2 =10 Criteria 3= 6 Criteria 4 = 0	2
	'educational psychologist*' OR 'Educational Psycholog*' AND 'inclusive education' OR title 'Educational Inclusion' OR 'inclusi*' AND 'UK' OR 'United Kingdom' OR 'Scotland' OR 'Scot*' OR 'England' OR 'Engl*' OR 'Northern Ireland' OR ab 'Northern Ir*'	149	Criteria 1 = 1 Criteria 2 = 63 Criteria 3 = 82 Criteria 4 = 0	3
	'teacher*' OR 'teach*' AND 'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion'AND 'UK' OR 'United Kingdom' OR 'Scotland' OR 'Scot*' 'England' OR 'Engl*' OR 'Northern Ireland' OR 'Northern Ir*'	162	Criteria 1 = 2 Criteria 2 =95 Criteria 3=61 Criteria 4 = 0	6
	'educational psychologist*' OR 'Educational Psycholog*' AND 'education reform' OR 'curriculum*' OR 'Additional Learning Need*' OR 'ALN' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	2	Criteria 1 = 0 Criteria 2 = 0 Criteria 3= 2 Criteria 4 = 0	0
	'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' AND 'teacher*' OR 'teach*' AND 'education reform' OR 'curriculum*' OR 'Additional Learning Need*' OR 'ALN' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	279	Criteria 1 =0 Criteria 2 = 248 Criteria 3= 29 Criteria 4 =0	2
	'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	34	Criteria 1 =0 Criteria 2 = 21 Criteria 3=7 Criteria 4 = 0	6
	'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' AND 'UK' OR 'United Kingdom' OR 'Scotland' OR 'Scot*' 'England' OR 'Engl*' OR 'Northern Ireland' OR 'Northern Ir*'	403	Criteria 1 = 12 Criteria 2 = 247 Criteria 3= 127 Criteria 4 = 0	17
Scopus (Search Within Article title, Abstract, Keywords)	'educational psychologist*' OR 'Educational Psycholog*' AND 'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	0	N/A	0
	'teacher*' OR 'teach*' AND 'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	14	Criteria 1 = 0 Criteria 2 = 6 Criteria 3= 6 Criteria 4 =0	2
	'educational psychologist*' OR 'Educational Psycholog*' AND 'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' OR 'inclusi*'AND 'UK' OR 'United Kingdom' OR 'Scotland' OR 'Scot*' 'England' OR 'Engl*' OR 'Northern Ireland' OR 'Northern Ir*'	3	Criteria 1 = 0 Criteria 2 = 1 Criteria 3= 1 Criteria 4 =0	1
	'teacher*' OR 'teach*' AND 'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' OR	192	Criteria 1 = 14 Criteria 2 = 10	9

	Search Terms	Count	Criteria	Final
	'inclusi*'AND 'UK' OR 'United Kingdom' OR 'Scotland' OR 'Scot*' 'England' OR 'Engl*' OR 'Northern Ireland' OR 'Northern Ir*'		Criteria 3= 159 Criteria 4 =0	
	'educational psychologist*' OR 'Educational Psycholog*' AND 'education reform' OR 'curriculum*' OR 'Additional Learning Need*' OR 'ALN' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	1	Criteria 1 = 0 Criteria 2 = 0 Criteria 3= 1 Criteria 4 = 0	0
	'teacher*' OR 'teach*' AND 'education reform' OR 'curriculum*' OR 'Additional Learning Need*' OR 'ALN' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	136	Criteria 1 = 12 Criteria 2 = 27 Criteria 3= 94 Criteria 4 = 0	3
	'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	22	Criteria 1 = 0 Criteria 2 = 15 Criteria 3= 5 Criteria 4 = 0	2
	'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' AND 'UK' OR 'United Kingdom' OR 'Scotland' OR 'Scot*' 'England' OR 'Engl*' OR 'Northern Ireland' OR 'Northern Ir*'	460	Criteria 1 = 54 Criteria 2 = 278 Criteria 3=119 Criteria 4 =0	9
APA PsycInfo (Search Within Article title and Abstract)	'educational psychologist*' OR 'Educational Psycholog*' AND 'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	0	N/A	0
	'teacher*' OR 'teach*' AND 'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	3	Criteria 1 = 0 Criteria 2 = 2 Criteria 3= 0 Criteria 4 = 0	1
	'educational psychologist*' OR 'Educational Psycholog*' AND 'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' OR 'inclusi*' AND 'UK' OR 'United Kingdom' OR 'Scotland' OR 'Scot*' 'England' OR 'Engl*' OR 'Northern Ireland' OR 'Northern Ir*'	1	Criteria 1 = 0 Criteria 2 = 0 Criteria 3= 0 Criteria 4 = 0	1
	teacher*' OR 'teach*' AND 'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' OR 'inclusi*'AND 'UK' OR 'United Kingdom' OR 'Scotland' OR 'Scot*' 'England' OR 'Engl*' OR 'Northern Ireland' OR 'Northern Ir*'	85	Criteria 1 = 1 Criteria 2 = 2 Criteria 3=78 Criteria 4 = 0	4
	'educational psychologist*' OR 'Educational Psycholog*' AND 'education reform' OR 'curriculum*' OR 'Additional Learning Need*' OR 'ALN' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	1	Criteria 1 = 0 Criteria 2 = 0 Criteria 3= 0 Criteria 4 = 0	1
	'teacher*' OR 'teach*' AND 'education reform' OR 'curriculum*' OR 'Additional Learning Need*' OR 'ALN' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	80	Criteria 1 = 0 Criteria 2 =18 Criteria 3=59 Criteria 4 = 0	3

'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' AND 'Wales' OR 'Welsh'	9	Criteria 1 = 0 Criteria 2 =5 Criteria 3= 2 Criteria 4 = 0	2
'inclusive education' OR 'Educational Inclusion' AND 'UK' OR 'United Kingdom' OR 'Scotland' OR 'Scot*' 'England' OR 'Engl*' OR 'Northern Ireland' OR 'Northern Ir*'	276	Criteria 1 = 3 Criteria 2 = 42 Criteria 3= 223 Criteria 4 = 0	8

The abstracts and titles of retrieved studies were then examined and verified in relation to the following inclusion and exclusion criteria (Table 7 below).

Table 7: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Rationale
1. Study Design Studies were included if they had a qualitative focus in their design. Studies that offered an analysis of IE policy were included if they used qualitative methodological approaches.	Studies were excluded if they were based purely on positivist, experimental study designs and sought to offer a quantifiable measure of IE.	The review sought to align with the qualitative ontological and epistemological theoretical paradigm underpinning this research study.
2. Location Studies were included if they were written in English and described IE within the context of the UK.	Studies were excluded if they were not written in English and described IE outside of the UK context.	Research was primarily sought that directly related to the focus of this study being the Welsh education context. However, the location was expanded to include research related to the wider UK educational context for the purpose of a more comprehensive and contemporary review.
3. Sample Focus Studies were accepted if their focus was on EPs or teachers. Studies also had to	Studies were excluded if they focused on other focus groups (e.g., speech and language therapists, EAL teachers) or	The author is interested in what the research says in relation to the specific roles of teachers and EPs, as well as what the IE research says about

relate to compulsory education (primary/secondary education).	related to higher / further education.	compulsory education given that this is the age range for whom the new curriculum and ALN system applies.
4. Publication Date Studies were included if published in a peer-reviewed journal after 2010.	Studies were excluded if they did not appear in a peer-reviewed journal after 2010.	The Equality Act was published in 2010, which is a key document underpinning the education reforms underway in Wales.

A detailed flow chart outlining the full database search and study selection procedure undertaken for this research is presented in Figure 12 below.

Figure 12: Database Search and Study Selection Process
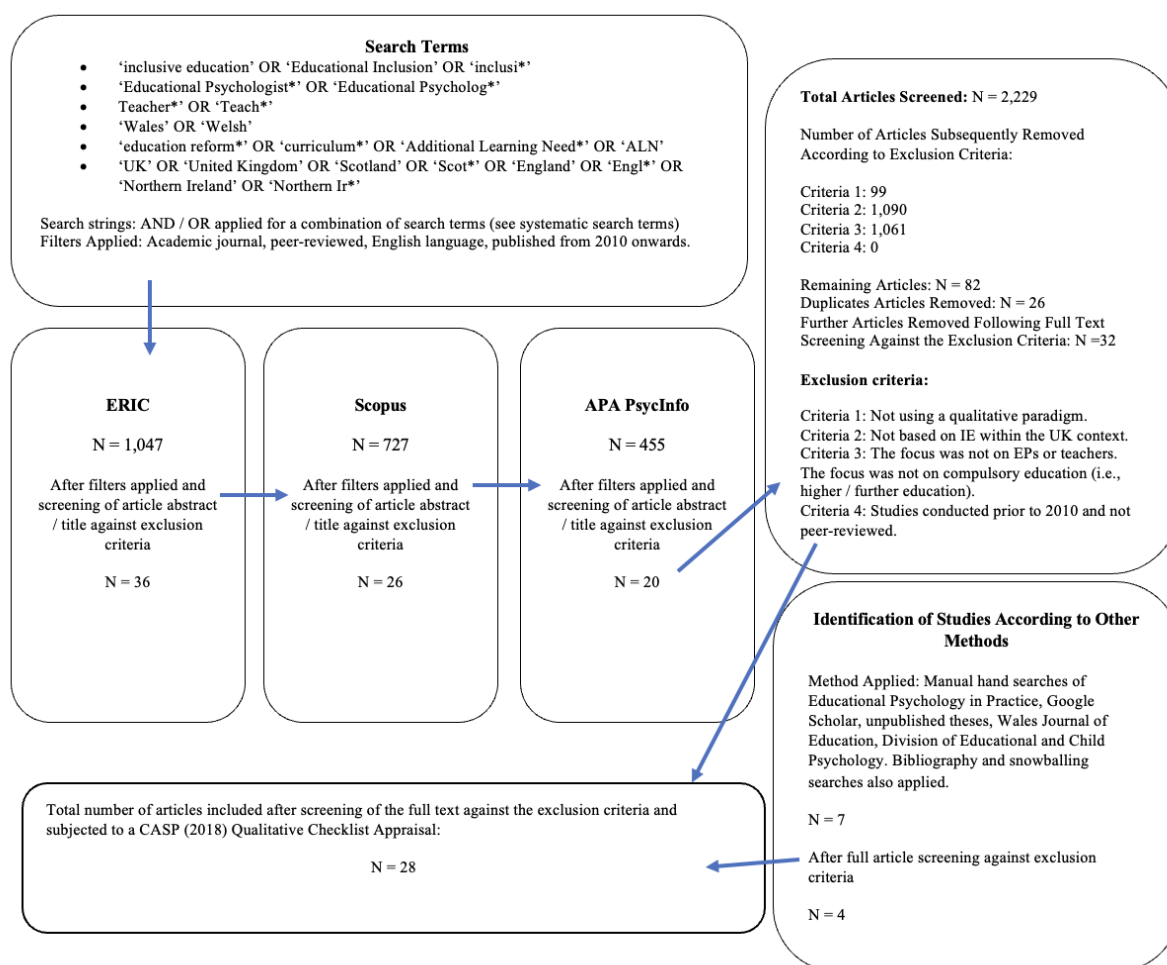
Appendix 2: Research Generated from the Systematic Literature Search

Table 8: Systematic Literature Search Findings

Systematic Search Question Foci	Title	Author(s)	Year	Focus Country	Publication Type	Sample Focus	Data Collection	Data Analysis	Author(s) Conclusions and Key Themes	Conclusion and Critique (Guided by the CASP 2018 Qualitative checklist)
	Inclusive Education in Wales: Interpreting Discourses of Values and Practice Using Critical Policy Analysis.	Knight, C., & Crick, T.	2021	Wales	Qualitative Research	Paper focused upon key WG policies. Findings were related to educational practitioners in Wales.	Critical policy analysis.	Critical policy analysis using two continuums of practice (medical- social model) and values (diversity-deficit).	Relatively little consistency is evident in terms of how inclusion is understood and communicated in key WG education reform policies and guidance documents. This creates challenges for stakeholders and practitioners tasked with their enactment. The authors raise concerns for the inequalities that these inconsistencies risk and the challenges of moving from policy to practice in IE in Wales.	Key WG education policies in relation to IE were included in the critical policy analysis, but the list of publications examined was not exhaustive. The aims of the research, approach to analysis and key findings were clearly defined and described.
Definitions of Inclusive Education	*Divergences in the framing of inclusive education across the UK: a four nations critical policy analysis.*	Knight, C., Conn, C., Crick, T., & Brooks, S.	2023	Four Nations of the UK	Qualitative Research	Paper focused on recent key education policies and documents from across the UK to understand how IE is being constructed.	Critical policy analysis.	Critical policy sociology (Ozga, 2021).	Divergence exists in constructions of IE, not only between the UK nations, but also within each nation. This raises consideration for the implementation on IE from a practitioner perspective, particularly given the agency and autonomy afforded to practitioners in Wales's reforms. The authors call for each of the nations to better learn from each other's developments in IE and to collaborate for the purposes of supporting advances in IE. They also offer a practice and	The research questions, rationale, contradictions and findings were clearly defined by the authors. However, as the total number of policies analysed was only twenty for all UK nations, caution is warranted in terms of the depth of representation that the analysis and findings can be deemed as encapsulating.

	Title	Author	Year	Context	Type				Summary	Critique
									values continuum for understanding IE framings.	
	Educational inclusion in England: origins, perspectives and current directions.	Lauchlan, F., & Greig, S.	2015	England	Position Paper	N/A	N/A	N/A	The authors examine the inclusion debate in terms of the English context over the past 30 years. They raise consideration for whether a universalist view of inclusion wherein special schools are not offered, is feasible or desirable.	This paper offers an interesting analysis of debates surrounding inclusion policy developments and framings in England. However, its focus is notably limited given its emphasis on the matter of educational placement.
	Recognising value tensions that underlie problems in inclusive education.	Norwich, B.	2014	Situated in the UK but also references the international context.	Position Paper	N/A	N/A	N/A	Within this paper, the author examines IE in terms of its conceptualisations and the dilemmas of difference between enabling-stigmatising and participation-protection positions. The author questions whether these positions can be split and whether they are related principles that necessitate a rejection of inclusion as an ideological purity.	The author acknowledges a limitation of their argument relates to the limited word count that he had that meant that he was only able to touch upon some of the dilemmas of difference in conceptualisations of IE. Nevertheless, the paper offers a valuable contribution to understanding the complexity and nuance of definitions of IE.
	Inclusive Education: thinking beyond systems.	Robinson-Pant, A	2020	UK but captures wider considerations based on the BAISE Presidential Lecture 2019.	Position Paper	N/A	N/A	N/A	The author highlights the prevalence of systems-thinking in IE and argues that in its place, wider lenses, such as one of culture as performative rather than pre-given and acknowledgement for informal learning are needed. Further, the author states that IE requires mitigating closed systemic thinking in favour of acknowledging broader social and cultural attitudes – particularly those held by teachers, learners and the wider community.	This paper offers an interesting perspective towards how IE is conceptualised and is helpful in advancing arguments and debates in relation to the topic. Particularly given the paucity of research found in relation to the field. However, the author's argument for the closed systems of IE in relation to schools is perhaps imbalanced in its consideration of the community lens that schools may in fact be seeking in

										their efforts towards more inclusive practices.
	On the necessary co-existence of special and inclusive education.	Florian, L.	2019	Situated in the UK but also references the international context.	Position paper	N/A	N/A	N/A	The author examines how the terms 'special' and 'inclusive' continue to be forcefully debated in conceptualisations of IE. The author calls for bell-curve notions of learner ability to be dissolved and replaced by thinking about human diversity. They also highlight the importance of teachers' responses to mitigating against pedagogical approaches that highlight the differences of some learners by ensuring that what is generally available to some becomes available to all.	This paper offers a broad view of some of the challenges surrounding debates of IE but is limited in terms of its depth of specific contextualisation to the UK context.
	Changing policy, legislation and its effects on inclusive and special education: a perspective from Wales.	Ware, J.	2014	Wales	Position paper	Researcher comparison of key language policies for inclusivity	N/A	N/A	The author highlights inconsistencies in the WG policy initiatives and their developments that may result in unintended effects for inclusive and special education, particularly in terms of learners being educated through the medium of Welsh.	Whilst the author recognises the complexity of IE definitions, they narrowly frame it as synonymous with special education without explanation as to the basis for this.
	Including psychology in inclusive pedagogy: enriching the dialogue?	Kershner, R.	2016	UK	Qualitative Research	Teachers (n=8)	Within this paper the author explores dialogue through direct conversations with teachers and via virtual dialogue with published literature.	Conversational analysis using a psychological approach concerned with communicative relationship and thinking (e.g., collective reasoning).	The researcher draws upon dialogue with teachers and an examination of the research literature to highlight the interconnections between IE, dialogue and psychology, with a particular focus on inclusive classroom pedagogy. The author warns against the common application of snippets of psychological theories in education and calls for the	Caution is needed when considering this paper in terms of the potential assumption it risks in framing psychologists, or EPs more specifically, as reflecting a homogenous group with regards to the matter of IE. Notably, the author touches upon this matter, but it could be considered that their research would have been enhanced by engagement in

									important role of psychologists in adopting critical approaches towards psychological research in the field of IE.	dialogue with psychologists themselves.
Role of EPs	***Universal design for learning as a theory of inclusive practice for use by educational psychologists.***	Sewell, A., Kennett, K., & Pugh, V.	2022	UK	Position paper	N/A	N/A	N/A	The authors introduce Universal Design for Learning (UDL) as a framework for EPs' inclusive practice and highlight its potential for consultation and ensuring a systemic lens that mitigates deficit views of learners. The authors also highlight the role that EPs could have in supporting teachers to use the UDL framework and call for more research to be done in the area.	The authors themselves highlight the lack of real-world research exploring and critiquing UDL in supporting inclusive practice. This absence of research thus necessitates a degree of caution when considering the potential of UDL in relation to EPs practice in IE.
	The role of educational psychology in promoting inclusive education.	BPS	2022	UK	Position Paper	N/A	N/A	N/A	This DECP position paper offers guidance to EPs in terms of IE and how their good practice can support the inclusion of children and young people in the UK. Specific implications for the role of EPs relates to their ability to: highlight systemic approaches to mitigate deficit perspectives; apply psychological theory to yield positive, collaborative solutions; utilise research to support the development of educationalists as reflective practitioners who promote belonging and the full participation of learners; celebrate diversity; enhance the capacity of learning environments and work with others to ensure that attitudes	Given that this paper is a position paper, it provides a helpful framework of key considerations for EPs role in IE. However, it somewhat lacks depth in its offer of tangible explanations and examples for how the values of the profession may look in the daily practice of EPs across the UK.

	Title	Author	Year	Country	Research type	Participants	Data collection	Analysis	Findings	Critique
									and values expected of citizens in an inclusive society are developed by all members of the community.	
	Exploring the application of a 'Capabilities Approach' in educational psychology practice to promote inclusion in education.	Powell, R.	2021	UK	Qualitative Research (Doctoral Thesis)	Learners (n=14) Primary and secondary school Staff (n=11) EPs (n =4)	Case study approach and focus group with school staff and EPs. Participatory focus groups with primary and secondary school learners.	Thematic Analysis	The author argues that the Capabilities Approach can be utilised by EPs to promote IE, particularly in terms of EPs consultation practice. The author also highlighted the potential of this approach in supporting EPs to ensure the participation and voice of learners in order to ensure that their views are represented and considered.	Authors cited use of Braun & Clarke (2006, 2013) for TA, without acknowledging their more recent work and distinguished Reflexive TA approach (i.e., Braun & Clarke, 2020, 2022). Further, it should also be held in mind that the research is limited by the small sample of EPs who partook in the study.
	Educational Psychologists' views around the inclusion of children with Special Educational Needs and Disability – do Educational Psychologists have a role to play in working towards inclusive education?	Zaniolo, A.	2021	UK	Qualitative Research (Doctoral Thesis)	EPs (n=12)	Semi-structured interviews.	Thematic Analysis (TA) of with authors citing use of Braun & Clarke (2006, 2013) for this.	The author highlighted finding variabilities in the framing of inclusion by EPs but noted that the participants upheld strong values for inclusion rooted (e.g., belonging, participation) in social justice, diversity and children's rights. Implications for EPs' practice were highlighted in terms of the value of person-centred practices, consultation practice and the ability of EPs to promote systemic change in a manner that aligns with their values for inclusion.	As per the previous study, the authors for this paper also cited use of Braun & Clarke (2006, 2013) for TA, without acknowledging their more recent work and distinguished Reflexive TA approach (i.e., Braun & Clarke, 2020, 2022). Further this doctoral thesis is notably focused on a narrow lens of IE given its specific interest in relation to SEND. Nevertheless, it offers a robust, comprehensive and valuable analysis of debates in IE in terms of EPs, which is an area extremely limited in its availability of research.
	Aspiring to include versus implicit 'othering': teachers' perceptions of inclusive	Knight, C., Clegg, Z., Conn, C., Hutt, M., & Crick, T.	2022	Wales	Qualitative Research	Teachers across all ages and education settings. (n = 253)	Online survey via the use of open-ended questions.	Thematic Analysis (TA) of open-text responses. Authors cited use of Braun & Clarke (2006) for this.	Teachers showed understanding of IE in its ideal form (inclusion for all), but highlighted barriers to the practicalities of achieving it in terms of 'behavioural issues', 'training and preparedness', 'physical and	As per two previous studies, the authors for this paper also cited use of Braun & Clarke (2006) for TA, without acknowledging their more recent work and distinguished Reflexive TA approach (i.e., Braun &

Role of Teachers										
	education in Wales								financial constraints'. Beneath the ideal description of IE, teachers portrayed competing views that suggested the othering of learners with ALN. The authors concluded that teachers' attitudes towards inclusion were inconsistent and without a change in teachers' attitudes, efforts towards IE in Wales will be futile.	Clarke, 2020, 2022). Participants were asked three open-ended questions as part of the online survey. It is possible that this was too narrow to afford an in-depth and rich understanding of teachers' perceptions of IE. Whilst the authors highlighted a key finding as the participants' othering of learners with ALN, it should be considered that one of the survey questions asked, 'what are the difficulties of including children with ALN in the classroom?'. Notably, this question frames ALN negatively, given its focus on 'difficulties' and might have been implicated in the responses given. However, the statement of the aims of the research was clear and the use of a qualitative methodology was appropriate to the research questions. Contradictory observations were taken into account and the statement of findings was clearly detailed. Given the paucity of research in this area in Wales, this research marks an important contribution to the field.
	Policy implications of collective agency for inclusion: evidence from	Conn, C., & Davis, S.	2023	Wales	Qualitative Research	Paper focused upon key WG policies in terms of their implications for learners	Policy analysis	Authors cited drawing upon poststructuralism, affect theory and the concept of	The authors highlighted the challenges of WG policy in inclusion being enacted into practice and the need for collective agency. They highlighted an ecological	The authors provided a clear statement of the aims and methodological approach to the policy analysis. The approach utilised was appropriate to the research

	the Welsh context					with ALN and implications for teachers and other policy enactors within the Welsh education system.		policy windows (Kingdon, 1984) to apply a hybrid model of analysis to developments in the Welsh education system.	perspective of agency and drew attention to deep-rooted beliefs amongst practitioners towards learners. They also noted impact of structural issues within education systems and the affective production of teaching for inclusion. Further, the authors reference the significance of focusing events, with Covid-19 and anti-racism developments to frame considerations around IE in Wales.	aims and addressed the research issues. The statement of findings was clearly provided and offers an interesting contribution to the field. The use of critical policy analysis enabled the authors the ability to focus on the material consequences and intersections of policy (Lewis, 2000). This provided an interesting macrosystemic level analysis of WG education policy on inclusion in relation to practitioners at an exosystemic level.
	Successful futures for all? Additional learning needs in Wales in the light of curriculum reform.	Conn, C., & Hutt, M.	2020	Wales	Qualitative Research	Teachers and policy leads. (n= 8)	Interviews	Content analysis (Cohen et al., 2018) was used to identify analytical codes within the data and narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2016) supported the authors in identifying individual narratives.	Participants viewed the new CfW as broader, more focused on quality teaching and relevant to all learners. However, tensions were noted in the core belief systems of interviewees towards meeting the needs of learners with ALN. Whilst welcoming the curriculum reform, participants expressed differences about its principles and what it meant for learners with ALN, as well as the future of education in Wales. The authors highlighted the importance of teacher agency and understanding their core belief constructs around IE in order to support systemic change.	Consideration should be given to the sample utilised for the research. Out of the small sample, only four were teachers. The other participants were policy leads from the regional consortia, WG and interestingly higher education. This is interesting as higher education does not encompass a responsibility for the new CfW. This indicates that this / these participant(s) contributed from a possibly academic research or educational lecturing position, rather than having direct responsibilities for the implementation of the CfW and ALN reforms going forwards. With this also being the potential case for participant(s) from the WG.

		'What is considered good for everyone may not be good for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities': teacher's perspectives on inclusion in England.	Williams-Brown, Z., & Hodkinson, A.	2021	England	Mixed Methods Research	Primary school teachers (total n= 58 for the two studies)	Reflection on two studies conducted by the researchers in 2010 and 2019 wherein Q-methodology and post Q-sort semi-structured interviews were used.	Q-methodology, Q-sort and the PQ method for generating factors (Eden et al., 2005).	Comparing and contrasting the findings from the two studies, the authors noted that there remains much ambiguity amongst practitioners regarding how to define inclusion and how it relates to the standards agenda of education. They noted the pragmatic perspectives of teachers towards the inclusion of learners with SEND. They conclude that systemic change is needed to ensure the inclusion of all learners.	It is imperative to acknowledge the theoretical paradigm of this research is at odds with the fully qualitative stance of this current research. Further, its use of comparative approaches to explain findings and commonalities of two separate studies of different teachers' perspectives also warrants caution. However, a strength of the research is its clear articulation of research aims and its offer of insight into developments in IE over time within the context of SEND.
		'Successful futures' for all in Wales? The challenges of curriculum reform for addressing educational inequalities.	Power, S., Newton, N., & Taylor, C.	2020	Wales	Mixed Methods Research	Interviews: Pioneer Leads (n=10) and teachers (n=25) Primary and Secondary School teacher survey (n=634)	Semi-structured interviews and a subsequent survey which utilised both closed and open-ended questions.	Thematic content analysis and descriptive statistical analysis.	The authors highlighted consensus amongst participants that the CfW requires teachers to fundamentally change their teaching and mindsets due to its movement away from a teacher-centred to invisible pedagogical learner-centred curriculum. Implications for teacher capacity and resources were raised, along with the implications of increased professional flexibility for disadvantaged learners.	The use of descriptive statistics as a means of data analysis has roots in positivism, which warrants caution given the Big Q fully qualitative paradigm of the current research. However, the use of thematic content analysis provided interesting and rich insights into the research focus. Further the research findings were made explicitly clear and the important contribution of the research to the field clearly highlighted.
		A model for study of teacher agency for social justice.	Pantić, N.	2015	Scotland	Research based inputs and insights from practitioners were used to develop a model for the study of	Twelve participants were recruited to offer insight into the model., including teachers (n=2), teacher	The twelve participants formed an advisory committee that met four times a year to make adjustments	Critical Communicative Methodology was used to help previse and develop the model presented.	The author proposes that teachers are agents of change within the education system and draw upon the importance of teachers' sense of purpose, competence, autonomy and the wider school, political and socio-cultural contexts as important	The advisory committee group tasked with refining the model for the study of teacher agency and social justice is notably limited in its representation of the wider teaching profession.

				teacher agency for social justice.	educators including programme coordinators and researchers (n=6), local and national policy-makers (n=2) and (deputy) head teachers (n=2).	to the proposed model.		considerations for understanding teacher agency for matters pertaining to social justice including inclusion. Further, the author highlights the importance of understanding teacher reflexivity in terms of how their practices evolve and develop over time.	
Teacher mediation of curriculum making: the role of reflexivity.	Alkan, S. H., & Priestley, M.	2019	Scotland and Wales	Qualitative Research	Teachers from both primary and secondary schools (n=6 from Scotland and n=3 from Wales).	Case study approach of teachers in an online focus group.	Thematic analysis drawing upon Margaret Archer's (2003, 2007, 2012) theoretical constructs of reflexivity and internal conversation.	The authors discussed three factors that mediate teachers' curriculum making practices: individual, structural and cultural factors. They noted that these factors mediate curriculum practices but do not determine them as they are not embedded in reflexivity. The researchers argue that teachers' responses are mediated by the modes of reflexivity they exhibit.	A strength of the research resides in the authors acknowledgement of the interconnectivity between themselves, the participants and the methods they utilised. Ethical considerations were also highlighted, and findings clearly presented. Limitations of the research reside in the small sample of teachers recruited, particularly in terms of the Welsh education context.
Classroom teachers' craft knowledge of their inclusive practice.	Black-Hawkins, K., & Florian, L.	2012	Scotland	Qualitative Research	Practitioners from two primary schools.	Classroom observations and teacher interviews conducted over a six-month period.	Thematic analysis using deductive and inductive approaches.	The authors note that their research helps illustrate a distinction in approach between the additional needs approach to IE that can serve to reinforce differences, and an inclusive pedagogical approach that seeks to respond to differences in a manner that avoids this othering of learners. They argue the 'craft knowledge' of inclusive teachers can be used to support the inclusive pedagogical practices of others.	The research findings stemmed from data collated from two primary schools that the researchers had deemed as demonstrating strong articulation for inclusive policies and practices. However, little clarity was offered as to how this was determined, or to the exact number of participants included in the research. Yet an important contribution of the research lies within its aspirations of adding to the literature field that seeks to develop understanding of

									how to address the research-practice gap in IE.
Enacting inclusion: a framework for interrogating inclusive practice.	Florian, L., & Spratt, J.	2013	Scotland	Qualitative Research	Primary School teachers (n=4) Secondary School teachers (n=3)	Classroom observations followed-up by semi-structured interviews conducted three times with each participant over the course of a year.	Thematic Analysis using NVivo. A narrative case study approach was then undertaken for each of the participants.	Authors drew upon a framework for inclusive practice developed in the context of the Inclusive Practice Project (IPP) in Scotland. The key themes identified and used within this framework are social justice, understanding learning and becoming an active professional. The authors used the framework as a guide for the classroom observations and conducted a narrative case study of each teacher to highlight the complexity of underlying concepts that inform inclusive pedagogy.	The research offers a practical and interesting insight into how inclusive pedagogies can support teachers' IE practices. The research was enhanced by the authors transparency in explaining their evolving decision processes within the research design and data analysis process. An area of limitation, however, was the lack of specificity in relation to the authors choices around ethical issues. However, as the research was conducted in the context of the authors positions at universities, it is recognised that robust ethical committee requirements would need to have been met.
How inclusion became exclusion: policy, teachers and inclusive education.	Done, E. J., & Andrews, M. J.	2020	England	Position Paper.	N/A	N/A	N/A	The authors draw attention to the implications of IE agendas on teachers in terms their positioning within the discourse and their workloads. They highlight the challenges to teachers in terms of competing neoliberal cultures and IE discourses that convolute practice.	This paper provides a thorough consideration of IE developments from both an international and domestic context in terms of some of the implications it has for teachers. Whilst it has focused heavily on neoliberalism debates in its framing of IE challenges and opportunities, it offers a valuable contribution to aiding insight into the specific role of teachers.
Perceptions of the barriers to effective inclusion in one primary school: voices	Glazzard, J.	2011	England	Qualitative Research	Teachers and Teaching Assistants	Focus group.	Thematic analysis.	Key themes were identified as barriers to effective inclusion which included attitudinal barriers. The author also identified themes related to one-to-one support,	A criticism of the research relates to the lack of depth given in the description given by the author to the analysis used when presenting their findings thematically. That

								standard agendas, location, resources, parental resistance, resources and the training needs of teachers and teaching assistants. The author concludes that practitioners need to develop a shared understanding of what inclusive practice should like and raises concern for achievement driven educational agendas for IE practices.	said, the use of a qualitative methodology was appropriate in meeting the aims and purpose of the research. The findings, whilst notably limited, were also deemed relevant to further supporting understanding when considered in the wider context of UK IE research.
of teachers and teaching assistants.									
A systematic review of practitioners' perspectives of supporting inclusion in a UK mainstream primary context.	Brady, C., McLarty, A., & Rankin, R.	2020	UK	Literature Review.	Focus was on practitioners' perceptions of supporting inclusion in the mainstream primary school context.	Research synthesis.	Thematic synthesis was used to analyse the data (Harden, 2012).	Key themes identified by the authors related to practitioner factors (self-efficacy, practice, attitudes), resource factors (classroom resources, training and development resources), establishment factors (role of leadership, whole establishment approaches and type of provision) and factors external to establishment (family).	Whilst the authors sought to conduct the literature review systematically, they acknowledged that relevant literature may have been missed and that the research questions resulted in the generation of limited studies for the review.
Preparing Teachers to Work in Inclusive Classrooms: Key Lessons for the Professional Development of Teacher Educators from Scotland's Inclusive Practice Project.	Florian, L	2012	Scotland	Position Paper (drawing on research from Scotland's IPP).	N/A	N/A	N/A	The author highlights that IE has become increasingly emphasised as a process of increasing participation and decreasing exclusion. The author argues that this creates implications for teachers in terms of their pedagogical practices and abilities to ensure the education of all learners. Further the author highlights that providing non-judgemental collaborative opportunities for teachers to acknowledge the tensions between IE theories and practice could help shift	This position paper offers interesting discussion and consideration for the complexities of IE. Whilst caution surrounding position papers is undoubtedly needed, this research offers a unique and helpful debate around how the gap between theoretical positions and actual classroom practices might be bridged.

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	Title	Author	Year	Country	Methodology	Participants	Data Collection	Analysis	Findings	Evaluation
									focus from problems to opportunities.	
	'[It] isn't designed to be assessed how we assess': rethinking assessment for qualification in the context of the implementation of the Curriculum for Wales.	Titley, E., Davies, A. J., & Atherton, S.	2020	Wales	Qualitative Research	Secondary school teachers and learners.	Focus groups with learners (n=33) and semi-structured interviews with secondary school teachers (n=15).	Thematic analysis with Braun and Clarke (2006) and Saldaña (2009) referenced as a mechanism by the authors for the building of theory and drawing of inferences.	The authors identified themes pertaining to the inhabiting of an assessment-driven system, experiences of reform, perceived challenges of CfW and matters pertaining to assessment, performativity and preparation. They concluded that clarification is needed and highlighted tensions raised by teachers towards an education system wherein assessment measures drive pedagogical decisions.	The data was analysed thematically in a collective way, with no distinction made between the potential variations in themes that may have existed between the learner and teacher participants. Whilst the authors did not acknowledge Braun and Clarke's (2022 etc), more recent work, their use of qualitative methodological approaches and data analysis was appropriate for the research aims and offered interesting insight into Welsh educational developments.
	How child-centred education favours some learners more than others.	Power, S., Rhys, M., Taylor, C., & Waldron, S.	2019	Wales	Mixed Methods	Policy-makers, teachers, principals, teachers, parents, pupils.	Interviews with policy-makers, teachers, surveys with principals, teachers, parents, systematic observations and existing administrative data.	Descriptive statistics and exploration of common themes in the qualitative elements.	Drawing upon a wide plethora of qualitative and quantitative data collected over time (see also Power et al., 2015) with regard to the FP, key themes highlighted were the risks of uneven implementations that child-centred pedagogic approaches risk. Resourcing and the experience of teachers to facilitate a more demanding child-centred curriculum were highlighted as critical considerations within this.	This research is focused on the FP curriculum; however, it remains pertinent to the aspirations of CfW and the emphasis on person centred practice with Wales's educational reforms. A notable caution for the research however is the author's heavy use of descriptive statistics in the presentation of their research findings.
	The development of inclusive learning relationships in mainstream settings: A	Efthymiou, E., & Kington, A.	2017	England	Qualitative Research	Primary school teachers (n=2), teaching assistants (n=1) and	Classroom observations, interviews, focus groups and analyses of classroom organisation	Thematic Analysis using NVivo.	The authors found that the greatest influence on IE for learners with SEND is the behaviour and practice of the classroom teacher. They concluded that this finding reflected consideration of	The aims of the research were clearly explained at the outset, as well as the theoretical framework underpinning it in terms of multimodal theory and linguistic ethnography.

multimodal perspective.					primary school pupils (n=35).	and decoration.		interpersonal classroom relationships, social pedagogic practices and teacher awareness of their learners' individual differences.	Limitations of the research relate to the small number of teachers recruited, as well as lack of consideration for the dynamics between the researchers and participants given the choice of methods used. Yet the findings were clearly stated and the choice of methodology appropriate given the unique focus of the research.

Appendix 3: Gatekeeper Letter for Principal Educational Psychologists

Dear XXXX,

My name is Francesca Roberts, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme at Cardiff University. I am writing to you to inform you about my thesis research which is titled:

'An exploratory study of teachers' and Educational Psychologists' perspectives of inclusive education in Wales'

This research seeks to explore teachers' and Educational Psychologists' perspectives of the Welsh Government's aspirations for a fully inclusive education system. Interest for this research resides in exploring what teachers and Educational Psychologists perceive inclusive education to look like in practice, as well as what they view their role to be in promoting inclusive education in the future. The research is being supervised by a tutor on the doctoral training programme, Dr Gemma Ellis.

I hope to gain the perspectives of teachers and Educational Psychologists via one-to-one, semi-structured interviews on Microsoft Teams, which will take no longer than 60 minutes. Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and participants will be required to provide informed consent prior to participation.

I am writing to you as gatekeeper of your Educational Psychologist Service/school (deleted as appropriate) to request your permission for the Educational Psychologists/teachers (deleted as appropriate) within your service/school (deleted as appropriate) to be invited to partake within this research.

If you are willing for this, can you please read the participant information sheet attached and provide gatekeeper consent via Microsoft Forms using the following link:

https://forms.office.com/e/C2mS559krz

Please note that if you do provide gatekeeper consent, then you will be emailed a participant recruitment letter to forward (via email) to the relevant staff within your Educational Psychologist Service / school (deleted as appropriate).

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

Kind regards,

Francesca

Researcher:	**Research Supervisors:**
Francesca Roberts	Dr Gemma Ellis
Trainee Educational Psychologist,	Research Supervisor,
School of Psychology,	School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,	Cardiff University,
robertsfj@cardiff.ac.uk	Ellisg6@cardiff.ac.uk
63 Park Place,	63 Park Place,
School of Psychology,	School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,	Cardiff University,
Cardiff,	Cardiff,
CF10 3AS	CF10 3AS

Appendix 4: Participant Information Sheet

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

'An exploratory study of teachers' and Educational Psychologists' perspectives of inclusive education in Wales'

You are being invited to take part in some research. Before you decide whether to participate (participation is entirely voluntary), it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully.

What is the purpose of the research?

Wales is undergoing a major reform of its education system, described by its former education minister 'as the biggest set of education reforms anywhere in the UK for over half a century' (Williams, 2019). A fundamental aim of these reforms resides in the Welsh Government's ambition of achieving a 'fully inclusive education system' (WG, 2021a: 38).

Given the pivotal positioning of teachers and Educational Psychologists within the education system, this research seeks to explore how teachers and Educational Psychologists at the forefront of implementing Wales' education system, perceive and make sense of inclusive education in their practice. Further, given that the education reforms are currently being embedded, this research also aims to explore what teachers and EPs perceive their role to be in promoting inclusive education within the future.

The key research questions are as follows:

a) What are teachers' and Educational Psychologists' perspectives of the Welsh Government's aim of developing a fully inclusive education system?
b) What does inclusive education look like in practice to teachers and Educational Psychologists?
c) What are teachers' and Educational Psychologists' perspectives of their roles in promoting inclusive education in their future practice?

Who is carrying out the research?

The research is being conducted by Francesca Roberts who is a trainee on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme at Cardiff University.

The research is being supervised by Dr Gemma Ellis who is a tutor on this programme. This research has been approved by Cardiff University's School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee.

What happens if I agree to take part?

If you provide informed consent to participate in this research, then you will be asked to attend a virtual one-to-one semi-structured interview. This will be conducted online using your professional Microsoft Teams account. The interview will take approximately 60

minutes to complete and will be conducted at a time that is suitable for you. During the interview, you will be asked a series of questions relating to the research questions, as detailed above. Your personal details (name, email address and workplace) will remain private, with your anonymity ensured throughout the publication of this research.

To ensure a safe context for the virtual one-to-one interviews, participants will be required to consent and adhere to the following terms:

- For confidentiality purposes, please do not disclose identifiable information about your colleagues, service users or learners.
- To ensure privacy, please ensure that you are in a quiet space when undertaking the interview.   You must not undertake the interview in a space where non-participants are present.

Please note that the sample size for this research is limited to a maximum of twelve participants, with an even number of teachers and Educational Psychologists sought. This is due to the small-scale nature of this research and the limitations imposed by the specified timeframes for dissemination. You will be notified and thanked for your interest in this research should recruitment cease after you provide informed consent to participate.

Are there any risks associated with taking part?

The research has been approved by Cardiff University's School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee. There are no significant risks associated with participation. The potential benefits of participating in this research are the opportunity for participants to share their perspectives of inclusive education and to be part of research seeking to aid understanding at this time of significant education reform in Wales.

Data Protection and Confidentiality

Your data will be processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018); the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR) and Cardiff University's Data Protection Policy (2018). All information collected about you will be kept confidential and will not be shared unless there is reason for concern. For example, for reasons of safeguarding, requirements of the law, and public protection.

Your personal data will only be viewed by the researcher and their supervisor. Where necessary, your personal data may also be made available to auditors, as detailed within Cardiff University's 'Research Participants Data Protection Notice':

[Research participants data protection notice - Public information - Cardiff University](#)

Both personal and research data will be stored on a password encrypted computer file via the researcher's secure Cardiff University online, Intranet portal. Your consent information will be kept separately from your responses (research data) to minimise risk in the event of a data breach. Research data will be anonymised as quickly as possible after data collection so that you cannot be identified, and your privacy is protected. You will not be able to withdraw your data after this point of anonymisation. Therefore, if at the end of the interview you

decide to have your data withdrawn, please let the researcher know as soon as possible (within the two weeks following the interview).

The researcher takes full responsibility for destroying all collected research data and personal data in line with Cardiff University's 'Records Management Policy' (2020). The video recording of the virtual individual interview will be destroyed immediately following the transcription of the data. The transcript data will be held electronically and destroyed on March 31st, 2029, which is in line with Cardiff University's 'Research Record Retention Schedules'.

What will happen to the information I provide?

Reflexive Thematic Analysis of the research data will form part of the research report (*please see Braun & Clarke, 2022).* Upon completion of the research, the report may be presented to interested parties and published in scientific journals and related media. Please note that all information presented in any reports or publications will be anonymous and unidentifiable.

Is participation voluntary and what if I wish to later withdraw?

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you do not have to participate if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, but then wish to withdraw from the study, then you are free to withdraw at any time up until the point of data anonymisation (two weeks following the interview). You can withdraw up until this point without giving a reason and without penalty.

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The data controller for this project will be Cardiff University. The University Data Protection Officer provides oversight of university activities involving the processing of personal data and can be contacted via the University Secretary's Office (see below). Your personal data will be processed for the purposes outlined in this information sheet. Standard ethical procedures will involve you providing your consent to participate in this study by completing the consent form that has been provided to you.

The legal basis for collecting your personal data is based on informed consent and in line with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 (GDPR) principles. The purpose for obtaining your personal data is because you meet the participant inclusion criteria:

A – You are a trained teacher or Educational Psychologist
B – You are currently operating as a teacher or Educational Psychologist in Wales

How long will your information be held?

Your personal data and the research data will be held until March 31st, 2029, which is in line with Cardiff University's 'Research Record Retention Schedules'. The video recording of the virtual one-to-one interview will be destroyed immediately following its transcription.

What are your rights?

You have a right to access your personal information, to object to the processing of your personal information, to rectify, to erase, to restrict and to port your personal information. Please visit Cardiff University's Data Protection web pages for further information in relation to your rights.

Any requests or objections should be made in writing to the University Data Protection Officer:

Data Protection Officer,
Compliance and Risk, University Secretary's Office.
Cardiff University,
Friary House,
Greyfriars Road,
Cardiff,
CF10 3AE
Email: inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk

How to make a complaint?

If you are unhappy with the way in which your personal data has been processed, you may in the first instance contact the University Data Protection Officer using the contact details above.

You can also contact the secretary of the Ethics Committee within the school of Psychology via the details below: -

Secretary of the Ethics Committee
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT
Tel: 029 2087 0360
Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

If you remain dissatisfied, then you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: -

Information Commissioner's Office – Wales,
2nd Floor, Churchill House,
Churchill Way,
Cardiff,
CF10 2HH
Email: wales@ico.org.uk

What if I have other questions?

If you have further questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher:

Researcher:	**Research Supervisors:**
Francesca Roberts	Dr Gemma Ellis
Trainee Educational Psychologist,	Research Supervisor,
School of Psychology,	School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,	Cardiff University,
robertsfj@cardiff.ac.uk	Ellisg6@cardiff.ac.uk
63 Park Place,	63 Park Place,
School of Psychology,	School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,	Cardiff University,
Cardiff,	Cardiff,
CF10 3AS	CF10 3AS

School of Psychology

Teachers and Educational Psychologists Needed for Psychology Research

The research is interested in exploring teachers' and Educational

Psychologists' perspectives of inclusive education in Wales

You will be asked to attend a virtual interview with the researcher via Microsoft Teams.

Time required: Approximately 60 minutes
Place: Virtual interview via Microsoft Teams

If you would like further information, please contact:
Francesca Roberts (Researcher) - robertsfj@cardiff.ac.uk

Appendix 6: Gatekeeper Consent Forms

Gatekeeper Consent Form

Microsoft Forms Link: https://forms.office.com/e/C2mS559krz

Gatekeeper Consent – Inclusive Education in Wales Research

Your informed consent needs to be obtained before the researcher can seek to recruit your staff to this research. Please read the participant information sheet which has been sent to you before answering the statements below.

1. What is your name?

   Enter your answer

2. Name of your organisation.

   Enter your answer

3. What is your role in the organisation?

   Enter your answer

4. I have read and understood the terms of the participant information sheet.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

5. I understand that I can contact the researcher at any time via the details provided in the participant information sheet with any questions that I may have.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

6. I understand and consent to Francesca Roberts, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, supervised by Dr Gemma Ellis, to seek to recruit (with their informed consent) the relevant staff in my service and to contact them via their professional email accounts for the research.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

Appendix 7: **Courtesy Letter to the Director of Education**

Dear xxxx,

My name is Francesca Roberts, and I am a trainee educational psychologist on the Doctorate in Educational Psychology course at Cardiff University.

I am writing to make you aware of a thesis research project that I am undertaking within your local authority. The title for my research is as follows:

'An exploratory study of teachers' and Educational Psychologists' perspectives of inclusive education in Wales'

As part of my research, teachers and Educational Psychologists within your local authority will be sent an email inviting them to partake in this research. I have attached a participant information sheet, which provides more detailed information about the rationale and aims of the research project.

If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me via email (robertsfj@cardiff.ac.uk). I will be happy to tell you more about the project and answer any questions that you may have.

Kind regards,

Francesca Roberts

Appendix 8: Participant Recruitment Letter

Hello,

I am writing to inform you about a research project being undertaken by Francesca Roberts, who is a Trainee Educational Psychologist from Cardiff University. The research title is as follows:

'An exploratory study of teachers' and Educational Psychologists' perspectives of inclusive education in Wales'

Please find attached a participant information sheet and recruitment poster, which provide more detailed information about the rationale and aims of the research. If you are interested in participating in this research and have read the 'Participant Information Sheet' then please complete the consent form* using the following link:

Teacher Participant Consent Form Link:

https://forms.office.com/e/4i9HVzuimh

EP Participant Consent Form Link:

https://forms.office.com/e/Bd0CQc4x4H

Please note that participation in this research is completely voluntary.

If you would like any further information, please do not hesitate to contact Francesca Roberts via email (robertsfj@cardiff.ac.uk). She will be happy to tell you more about the research and answer any questions that you may have.

Kind regards,

XXXX

Please note that only the relevant link for the participant's professional role was included in the letter

Appendix 9: Participant Consent Forms

Teacher Consent Form

Microsoft Forms Link: https://forms.office.com/e/4i9HVzuimh

Participant (Teacher) Consent – Inclusive Education in Wales Research

Informed consent needs to be obtained for your participation in the research. Please read the participant information sheet which has been sent to you, before carefully answering the questions below.

1. Name.

Enter your answer

2. Name of your organisation.

Enter your answer

3. I confirm that I am a qualified teacher (EWC registered) currently working in Wales.

○ Yes

○ No

4. I have read and understood the terms of the participant information sheet.

○ Yes

○ No

5. I understand that my participation in this research will involve a virtual one-to-one interview (max. 60 minutes) on Microsoft Teams.

○ Yes

○ No

6. I understand that I need to attend the interview on my own and be in a quiet space, free from distraction.

○ Yes

○ No

7. I understand that I must not disclose identifiable information about colleagues or service users.

○ Yes

○ No

8. I understand that my participation in the research is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the research up until the point when the data has been transcribed (2 weeks after the interview) and anonymised.

○ Yes

○ No

9. I understand that my personal data will not be included in the transcription of the data to protect my anonymity and privacy.

○ Yes

○ No

10. I understand and consent for the data to be held in line with data protection procedures held by Cardiff University, as outlined in the participant information sheet.

○ Yes

○ No

11. I understand that what is said in the interview is confidential and will not be shared unless there is a reason for concern. For example, reasons of safeguarding, requirement of the law, and public protection.

○ Yes

○ No

12. I understand that I can contact the researcher at any time via the details provided in the participant information sheet with any questions I may have.

○ Yes

○ No

13. I understand and consent to my participation in the research being conducted by Francesca Roberts, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, supervised by Dr Gemma Ellis.

○ Yes

○ No

14. If consenting to partake in this research, please provide a professional email address in the space below. The researcher will then contact you via this email address in order to arrange the interview on Microsoft Teams.

Enter your answer

EP Consent Form

Microsoft Forms Link: https://forms.office.com/e/Bd0CQc4x4H

Participant (Educational Psychologist) Consent – Inclusive Education in Wales Research

Informed consent needs to be obtained for your participation in the research. Please read the participant information sheet which has been sent to you, before carefully answering the questions below.

1. Name.

   [Enter your answer]

2. Name of your organisation.

   [Enter your answer]

3. I confirm that I am a qualified Educational Psychologist (HCPC registered) currently working in Wales.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

4. I have read and understood the terms of the participant information sheet.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

5. I understand that my participation in this research will involve a virtual one-to-one interview (max. 60 minutes) via Microsoft Teams.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

6. I understand that I need to attend the interview on my own and be in a quiet space, free from distraction.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

7. I understand that I must not disclose identifiable information about colleagues or service users.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

8. I understand that my participation in the research is entirely voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from the research up until the point when the data has been transcribed (2 weeks after the interview) and anonymised.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

9. I understand that my personal data will not be included in the transcription of the data to protect my anonymity and privacy.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

10. I understand and consent for the data to be held in line with data protection procedures held by Cardiff University, as outlined in the participant information sheet.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

11. I understand that what is said in the interview is confidential and will not be shared unless there is a reason for concern. For example, reasons of safeguarding, requirement of the law, and public protection.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

12. I understand that I can contact the researcher at any time via the details provided in the participant information sheet with any questions I may have.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

13. I understand and consent to my participation in the research being conducted by Francesca Roberts, School of Psychology, Cardiff University, supervised by Dr Gemma Ellis.

   ○ Yes

   ○ No

14. If consenting to partake in this research, please provide a professional email address in the space below. The researcher will then contact you via this email address in order to arrange the interview on Microsoft Teams at a time and date convenient for yourself.

   Enter your answer

Appendix 10: Interview Schedule

Opening

Participants will be thanked for participating in the research and will be asked if they have fully understood the research aims and questions, as detailed within the 'Participant Information Sheet' (appendix 3).

They will be reminded of their right to withdraw (without reason or penalty) from the research at any point within the virtual semi-structured, one-to-one interview by simply ending the Microsoft Teams meeting via their account options.

Participants will also be reminded that they are to conduct the interviews in a quiet space where other people are not present. Furthermore, participants will be reminded that they are not to disclose identifiable information about colleagues or service users.

Discussion Points

Overarching research question - What are teachers' and Educational Psychologists' (Eps) perspectives of the Welsh Government's aim of developing a fully inclusive education system?

- Before we go into more depth and focus on your perspectives, I would first like to learn more about your role.
- What are your perspectives on the new curriculum and assessment arrangements in relation to supporting educational inclusion?
- The Welsh Government has stated that the term ALN is intended to be more inclusive, what are your thoughts on this?
- Within the ALN Code, distinction is made in terms of universally available provision and Additional Learning Provision. How helpful do you perceive this distinction to be in relation to inclusive education?

Overarching research question - What does inclusive education look like in practice to teachers and EPs?

- What do you think inclusive education looks like in terms of everyday practice in schools and classrooms?

- How might an inclusive education be experienced by learners, their families and staff?

Overarching research question - What are teachers' and EPs' perspectives of their roles in promoting inclusive education in their future practice?

- Looking forwards to the full implementation of the education reforms, what role do you perceive teachers / EPs (as appropriate to participant's role) as having in supporting an inclusive education system?
- What if anything, do you feel might influence or support your practice around inclusive education in the future?

Prompts / Probes

- Follow up probes - Why? / How?
- Expansive probes - Can you give me an example of this please?
- Expansive probes - Can you tell me more about...please?
- Confirmatory probes - Can I just check that I have understood correctly...?
- Deliberate use of pausing for the respondent to say more.
- Further unanticipated prompts / probes if required.

Closing Statement:

Participants will be thanked for their participation in the research and will be given the opportunity to ask any questions that they might have.

Participants will then be provided with a copy of the debrief sheet to read. This will be emailed to participants immediately after the interview ends.

Appendix 11: Consideration of Approaches to Data Analysis

Table 9: Data Analysis Decisions

	Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA)	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)	Grounded Theory (GT)	Pattern-based Discourse Analysis (DA)	Discursive Psychology (DP)	Conversation Analysis (CA)	Narrative Analysis (NA)
	More Common Approaches - Suitable for less experienced qualitative researchers				More advanced qualitative analysis approaches		
What is it?	A method for identifying themes and patterns across a dataset in relation to a research question. Identified as a specific method by Braun and Clarke (2022)	Developed by Smith et al (2009) and focuses on how people make sense of their lived experience. Can be used to analyse individual cases or to generate themes across a small group of participants.	Originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Focuses on building theory from data and focuses on social processes. Analysis is organised around key categories.	Analysis is concerned with patterns in language use connected to the social production of reality, and with understanding how accounts of objects / events are constructed in particular ways.	Concerned with how people do things when they talk or write. Discourse is in itself where psychology happens.	Based in ethnomethodological traditions where focus is on talk-in-interaction.	Involves making sese of 'storied' data. Views people as storytelling creatures (Macintyre, 1984). It focuses on an individual or small group of participants.
Varieties?	**Inductive TA** – Analysis is not shaped by existing theory but there is acceptance that the analysis will always be shaped by the researcher to some extent. **Theoretical or deductive (TA)** – Analysis is guided by existing theory and researcher's standpoint to some extent. **Experiential TA** – Focuses on the participants standpoint and how they make sense of the world. **Constructionist TA** – Focuses on how topics are constructed and also how accounts construct the world.	Not applicable. IPA is focused on how people make sense of their lived experiences (phenomenology is focused on how people perceive and talk about objects /events); it is interpretative because understanding how people make sense of experience is achieved through interpretive activity on the part of the researcher.	**GT-lite** - looks at relationships between concepts and the relative importance of concepts to the research question. **Full GT** – builds a theory from the data. Uses saturation. **Positivist GT**- Aims to represent reality. **Contextualist GT** – Acknowledges the role of the researcher in shaping analysis. Meaning is contextual rather than 'true'. **Radical Constructionist GT** – Focuses more on language use. Acknowledges ambiguity and inconsistency.	**Thematic-discourse analysis (DA-lite)** – identifies discursive themes and patterns in data and explores how themes construct reality in certain ways. **Post-Structuralist DA –** Influence by Foucault. Concerned with the ways in which discourses constitute objects and make available particular subject positions. Links to power concerns. **Interpretative Repertoires** – Looks at the patterned resources that participants use in their talk about an object and the functions of use. **Critical Discursive Psychology** – A synthetic approach that cuts across	Not applicable. DP allows the researcher to focus on the 'how of social practices: how are social actions carried out? What are the social and interactional implications of different ways of talking / writing?	Not applicable. In CA, context is only considered relevant if it is displayed as relevant by participants.	Not applicable. The difference between NA and IPA is that NA focuses on experiences as constituted – not reflected – through the narratives culture supplies.

				traditions and retains interest in both patterned socially available linguistic resources and language practices.			
Reasons For	Flexible in terms of its application to theoretical paradigms. Accessible to new researchers with little qualitative experience. Can be easily translated and understood by participants and the wider community.	Can be used to analyse an individual participant's data. It allows a focus on individual experience and the detail of individual experience. Accessible to new researchers with little qualitative experience.	Accessible to new researchers with little qualitative experience. The different approaches to GT lend themselves to different theoretical and epistemological frameworks.	Allows the researcher to give credence to the 'intuitive' aspects of analysis. Rather than being bound by rules and process. The different approaches lend themselves to different theoretical frameworks.	It focuses on recording and capturing authentic conversations.	It can identify minute details that can be overlooked in other qualitative approaches.	Can be used to analyse an individual participant's data.
Reasons Against	It cannot provide a full sense of the continuity and contradictions within individual accounts as it is looking at shared codes and themes. The 'voice' of the individual can get lost. Does not make claims about the effects of language use (unlike DA, DP, CA).	Has been accused of being an approach that lacks sophistication and substance (Parker, 2005). Clear and precise guidance may be viewed as a restrictive recipe that must be followed. Lacks the flexibility of reflexive TA in that sense. Analysis is often limited to simply describing participants' concerns.	More of an approach for researchers in social and social psychological processes – rather than individual experience. Can be more interested in sociological processes rather than psychological ones.	Requires a constructionist (or critical realist) view of language and social life. This approach lacks concrete guidance on how to do it – a 'craft skill' that includes following 'hunches' (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Can be too complex for a small-scaled project. Does not produce analysis that can be easily translated for 'giving back' to participants.	It solely focuses on language and therefore rarely tells the whole story about a dataset.	It is only suitable to analysis of naturally occurring / spontaneous talk (e.g., telephone conversations).	This approach is identified as a 'craft skill' developed and achieved through lots of experience of reading examples of NA.

Appendix 12: **Participant Debrief Sheet**

'An exploratory study of teachers' and Educational Psychologists'
perspectives of inclusive education in Wales'

Thank you for participating in this research, I appreciate the time that you have given.

The present study was conducted to gain an understanding of your perspectives on inclusive education within the Welsh education context. I was specifically interested in your perspectives on the Welsh Government's aspirations for a fully inclusive education system. I was also keen to explore what you perceive inclusive education to look like in practice, as well as what you view your role to be in promoting inclusive education in the future.

Whilst there is some research centred on inclusive education in Wales, it is extremely limited, with few studies having sought to gain the perspectives of practitioners at the forefront of implementing Wales's education system into practice. Further, no research has yet explored the perspectives of Educational Psychologists within this remit. It is thus hoped that this research will act as a first step and provide a foundation for future research, either at Local Authority levels or more widely.

The data was collected via a virtual semi-structured interview and will be transcribed and analysed by myself as the researcher to help identify any themes. This will be conducted using reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Please note that you have the right to withdraw your information from the research without explanation, up until the point of data transcription (two weeks after the interview). At this

point, all data will be anonymised. Data will be kept in accordance with Data Protection Procedures held by Cardiff University.

I would like to thank you once again for your participation. If you have any questions or further comments regarding this research, please do not hesitate to get in contact via the details below:

Researcher:	**Research Supervisor:**
Francesca Roberts	Dr Gemma Ellis
Trainee Educational Psychologist,	Research Supervisor,
School of Psychology,	School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,	Cardiff University,
robertsfj@cardiff.ac.uk	Ellisg6@cardiff.ac.uk
63 Park Place,	63 Park Place,
School of Psychology,	School of Psychology,
Cardiff University,	Cardiff University,
Cardiff,	Cardiff,
CF10 3AS	CF10 3AS

Should you wish to make a complaint about the research, this can be done via the information below:
Secretary of the Ethics Committee
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT
Tel: 029 2087 0360
Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Cardiff University is the Data Controller and is committed to respecting and protecting your personal data in accordance with your expectations and Data Protection legislation. The University has a Data Protection Officer who can be contacted at inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk. Further information about Data Protection, including your rights and details about how to contact the Information Commissioner's Office should you wish to complain, can be found at the following:
https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/staff/supporting-your-work/manage-use-and-protect-data/data-protection

Appendix 13: Research Journal Extracts

Date: July 2023

This week I have begun to think about how I will undertake the literature review for my thesis. It feels like quite a daunting task and having read a wealth of literature on the process, I still feel confused (if not more confused) by it all! I recognise that I am keen to ensure that I complete the literature review to a high standard and ensure transparency in my approach. However, recognising the steps needed for this remains clouded to me at this time.

With this in mind, I have decided to allow myself further time to read more information about how to conduct literature reviews. This feels somewhat nerve-wracking as I feel a sense of urgency, and a need to just get on with it. Yet, on the flip side, I also know that I need to get a sense of what it is that I am aiming to achieve and the processes for getting there. Without this space and time for understanding, I would ultimately be rushing a process counterproductive to supporting my development as a researcher.

Date: September 2023

There seems to have been a number of confusions amongst the gatekeepers in terms of their understanding of what I was saying and asking in my consent seeking emails. It has made me question whether I was not being clear in my communication or whether it is that the emails aren't being read fully. This has raised ethical implications for me that I had to then readdress with the gatekeepers. I was acutely mindful of the busy contexts in which they operate in and did not want to create a fuss that put them off partaking in my research. However, I knew that it was imperative that I remained focused on ensuring that their consent was fully informed.

Date: December 2023

I've been reflecting on the process of transcribing and analysing the interviews. It has been a labour of love, and I've felt that typing up the transcripts is such an enjoyable and critical part of the experience. It gave me a better feel and sense of what was being said and how IE was being understood by the participants. However, it has also left me feeling annoyed with myself at times. It made me realise that there were lots of things that I had not picked up on! So many points that the participants raised that I wished I'd paused to ask more about. I've also been reflecting on the analysis and the process of having to 'let go' of points raised by participants. There is a part of me that wants to tell every aspect of every point shared by the participants out of appreciation and regard for their views. Yet, I also recognise that reflexive TA is about patterns of shared meaning making and that this approach will offer a more holistic and clear understanding of the research questions. Rather than snippets of disconnected but interesting points.

Appendix 14: An Overview of the Data Analysis Process

Example of Phase One: Familiarisation Process

For the initial stage of the analysis, familiarisation doodles were created for each interview transcript. This enabled the researcher the ability to fully immerse themselves in the data and it encouraged repeated reading of the interviews to gain a sense of what messages and ideas were being evoked at this stage.

Figure 13: Familiarisation Doodle Process
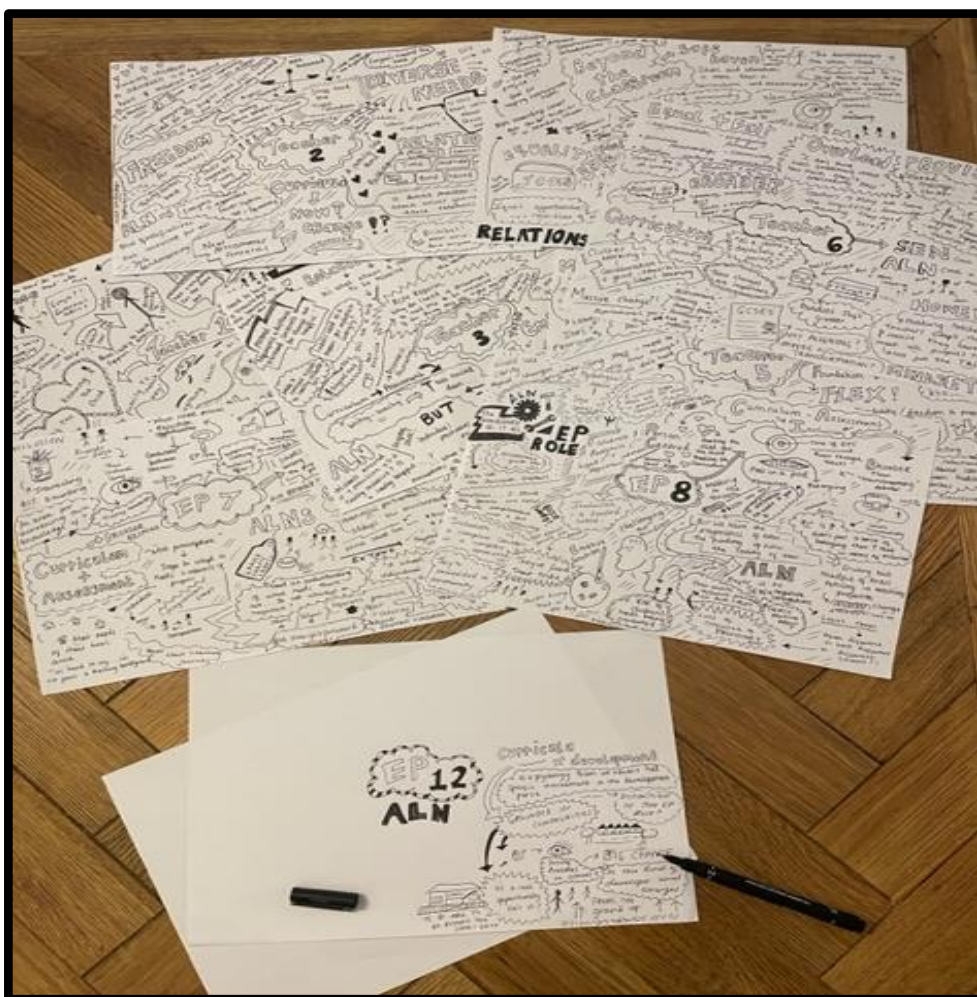
Example of Phase Two: Coding

The interview transcripts were explored more systematically to identify segments of the data that presented as interesting and relevant to the overarching research questions. This was a highly recursive and time-consuming process, whereby code labels were first assigned to all

segments of data and then repeatedly refined until more fully formed and encompassing codes were determined. Initially, there were 39 code labels assigned to the EP interviews, which were repeatedly refined and coded until 27 codes were identified. For teachers, there were initially 36 code labels assigned, then refined to 28 codes.

Table 10: Examples of Data Coded Extracts (EPs)

Code	Data Extracts
The changes are a positive development	*'...I think what's possibly helpful about the new curriculum is, from my understanding of it anyway, is that it's not especially prescriptive, there's sort of scope for schools to create their own curriculum, sort of in line with those four purposes. So, they have sort of some ownership over the content and how they deliver that and what topics they make cover and what activities might look like. So I guess there's...thinking about inclusion that's positive.' (P7)* *'... it's positive, it's more inclusive and I think it does move again, people towards thinking more inclusively. So, I think that it is you know good in that way.' (P8)* *'I think that it', it's good at including other children because I think it, it uh, provides teachers with that flexibility to be more inclusive than maybe they could before.' (P9)* *'...I'm glad that both the ALN bill and new curriculum are kind of coming in...around the, the right time because I think in theory...and like I said, it's...on face value they both seem really good. (P11)* *'I think it's got really exciting possibilities because you know it's about schools understanding their communities and, you know, being able to reach out to their communities and the people within their communities.' (P12)*
PCP approaches are an important	*'...the person-centred practice and the person-centred reviews and the IDP meetings and things like that and, and working with schools and families to identify the needs of the pupils. But then thinking together about what that would look like in terms of how we support those needs based on what the school is able to offer and, and where they aren't able to offer it, what can other services offer.' (P7)*

development for IE	'...I hold a sense of excitement about the curriculum and the way that the ALN reform is working alongside that. You know, it's really person-centred and it's trying to – that Vygotskian principle is there, so yeah.' (P8)
	'...we do a lot of work here around person centred approaches and person-centred reviews, but also feeding into that process so our work – well, I would hope that all EP work is person centred focused – what are the hopes and aspirations of this child? And working around that in our advice that we seek to support the school to achieve.' (P8)
	'I suppose there's mechanisms in place, like meetings and all those sorts of, you know, person, centre reviews and all of those things in place. Hopefully that will facilitate parents to feel like they are part of an inclusive system.' (P9)
	'...I think the conversations that we can have with parents then are perhaps more positive because it's really person-centred and we're really focusing on moving their children along rather than comparing them to other children.' (P10)
	'... I think if we always use that as our starting point, there's real, you know, person-centred practice and principles. I think that's often our best starting point. You know what's important to you from a school day and really kind of getting that rich picture that rich information, rich information, you know, using our PCP tools that we do.' (P12)

Table 11: Examples of Data Coded Extracts (Teachers)

Code	Data Extracts
Supporting opportunities to collaborate for the best interests of learners	'...with the ALN reform, it just means everybody's coming together, especially with PCR meetings.' (P1)
	'...some teachers do a one-page profile for everybody in their class. So, at the start of the year, we ask families things about the children via social media…Seesaw…in our

|	
	class. And then we can add that to it, and we can share it with staff. So, I think yeah that's good...' (P1) '...it is much better, and it means everybody's got a plan and everybody's working to their plan rather than 'so I got a statement, so I get this'. Yeah. It just makes it more of a level playing field for our pupils...' (P2) ...with the new ALN reform that, I understand that you know, it's about having shared documentation as well and you know, working close...more closely with healthcare and other professionals. And I think communication is vital. I think it's really important and I think that that vision of having everything kind of joined up...'. (P4) '...I think for the parents it will be having opportunities to meet the teacher, who can then inform them about where their child is in their learning and the things that their child is being supported with or challenged.' (P6)
The reforms are leading to changes surrounding practice	'Yeah, I think it is gonna make a big difference, to be honest with you, because I think it's not...so I don't know how other schools are doing it, but our school had relied heavily on books, books, books, evidencing learning in books...' (P1) '...And I'm just trying some new things out really and just always changing things for the better...' (P1) '...we've already transformed our curriculum into six areas of learning and matched the qualifications to it, and we sort of from that point of view, we're ready to go.' (P2) 'Um, well at the moment we sort of looking at... sort of moving away from content in the curriculum which is a big change. I'm changing our learning intentions so that they're all specific to skills and so looking at analysis, looking, evaluating and putting those sorts of skills in that.' (P2) '...sometimes we get into traps where we stuck in, well this has worked in the past, this is going to work for this pupil. Not necessarily...' (P3)

| | *'...thinking about the layout of classrooms and thinking can the children move around, because we don't want them sat in traditional rows staring at the teacher and not able to move, we know that needs to change.' (P5)*

'...teachers, maybe in the past have said, they've got special needs, they go and work with a group outside the classroom and have felt like it's not their responsibility. Whereas I think teachers now have to become much more inclusive because of the reform and have to think, we get him or her better now, and I think people are taking more responsibility for meeting their pupils needs.' (P6) |

Example of Phase Three: Generating Initial Themes

During this phase, the coded data was clustered together in tables, which subsequently resulted in the codes being further analysed and reduced. This was due to overlaps becoming visible between codes, with a broader code consequently being used to better encapsulate the points being made and to ensure clearer distinctions between each code. These codes reflected a combination of both semantic and latent codes. These codes were then used as 'building blocks' for sorting codes into topic areas or 'clusters of meaning' (Braun et al., 2019: 855). Initial themes were then explored with the following thematic map illustrating an example of the later stage within this process:

Figure 14: Initial Thematic Map Example
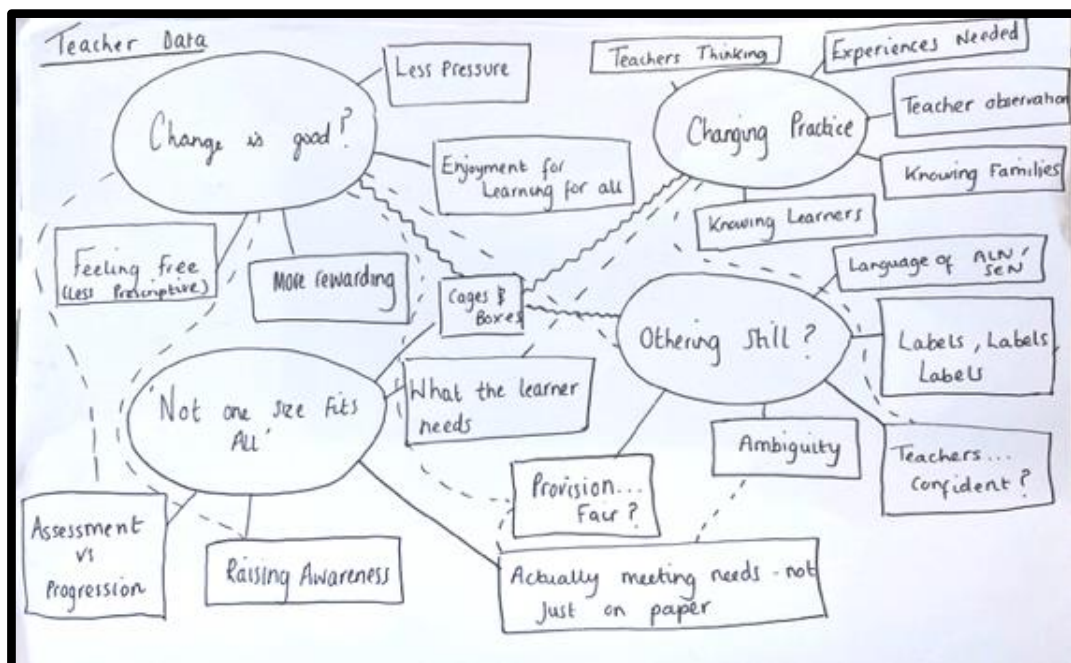
Example of Phase Four: Developing and Reviewing Themes

Within phase four of the analysis, a great deal of reflection was given to considering the initial themes in terms of their central organising concepts and relevance to the research questions. This process involved the researcher accepting that certain elements of the data needed to be 'let go of' for the purpose of this research. This was due to the limitations imposed upon the research in terms of the word count, as well as through a recognition that not all themes fully reflected the underpinning aims of the research itself. The thematic map below illustrates an example of how the themes from the previously presented thematic map were reviewed and developed:

Figure 15: Developed and Reviewed Thematic Map Example
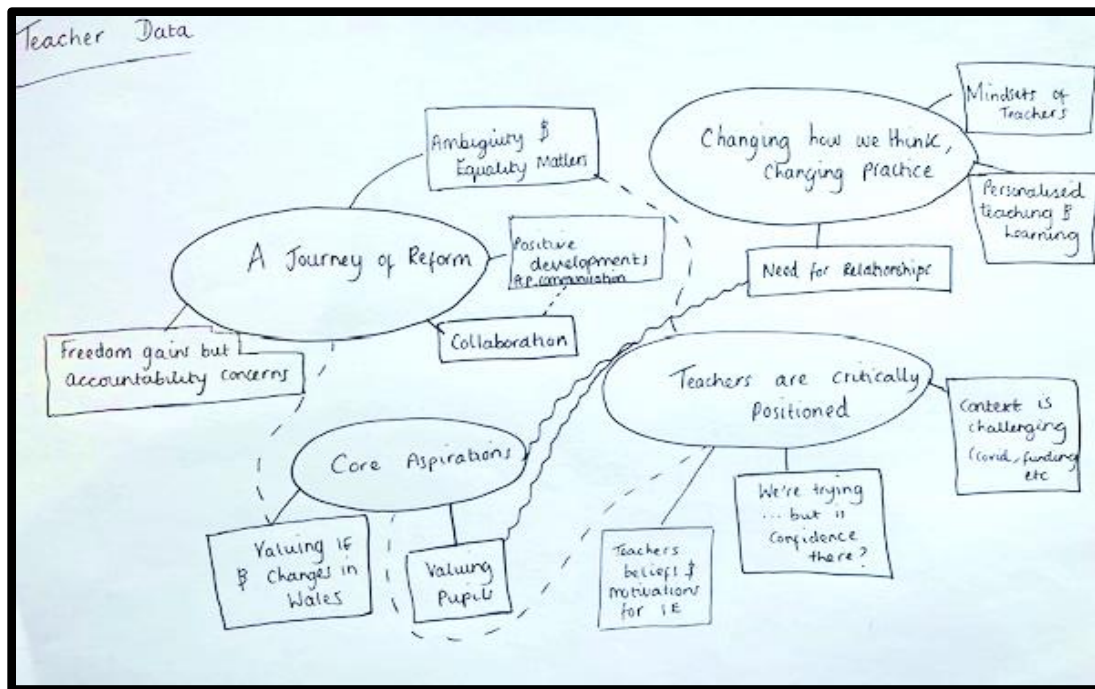
Example of Phase Five: Refining, Defining and Naming Themes

In this phase of analysis, every effort was given to ensuring that the themes were clearly defined and captured the essence of the data, with the final thematic maps visible below:

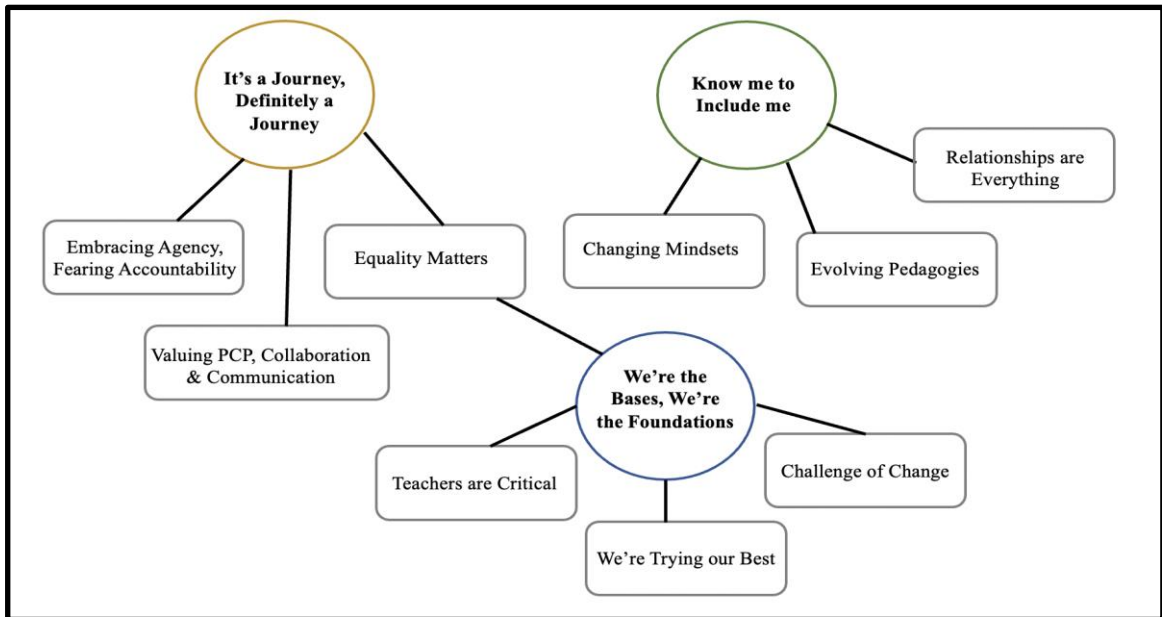**Figure 16:** Final Thematic Map for Teachers

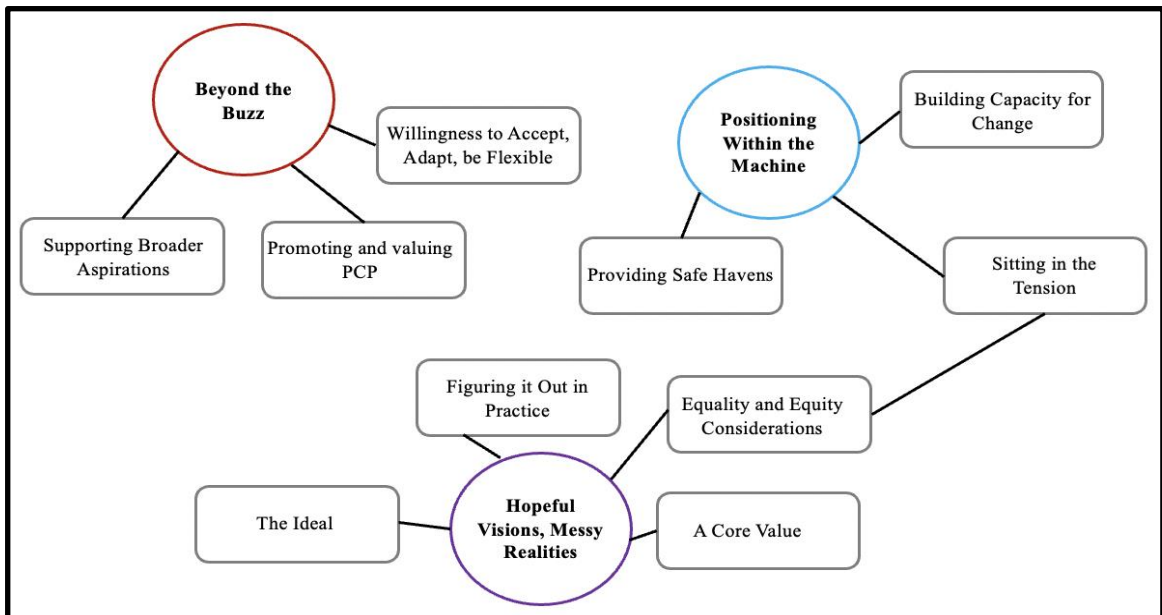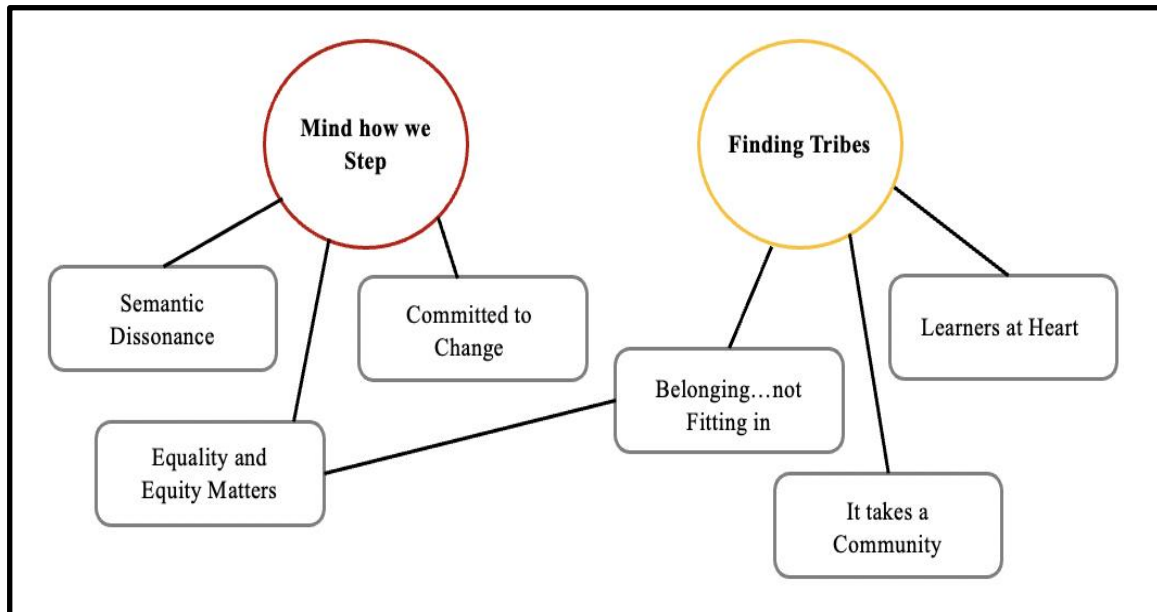**Figure 17:** Final Thematic Map for EPs

Figure 18: Final Thematic Map for Teachers and EPs

Phase Six: Write Up

In phase six, the writing of the analysis was conducted. This was a challenging element of the data analysis as it required the ability to tell a coherent story about the data that effectively captured the perspectives of the participants. Following on from this phase, for the discussion section, the analysis was then connected to the research literature presented in part one of this thesis. This was no easy feat given the sheer volume of information captured within both the analysis and literature review. Indeed, it required a tremendous amount of careful, recursive and critical consideration about how the analysis connected to previous research within the field, as well as the new insights it afforded.