



***“The stories we tell of other people are always going to somehow be influenced by our own story.” - exploring Educational Psychologists’ constructions of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice.***

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## Summary

This thesis consists of three sections.

*Part 1:* This section provides a summary of the tertiary and grey literature focusing on the concept of *pupil voice*. It also outlines the legislative, theoretical, and historical context within which this concept will be considered and discuss the benefits and barriers of pupil voice drawn from the wider literature. The second section of this literature review will comprise of a semi-systematic narrative review of primary literature to answer the question, 'What does existing literature tell us about the role of pupil voice and how it is currently understood within an educational context? And how does it relate to Educational Psychologists' practice?'

*Part 2:* This section consists of the empirical paper outlining the practical research process that was undertaken as part of this thesis and a discussion of key findings and implications from research. A summary of existing literature is presented which illustrates the importance of attending to constructions of pupil voice and how these constructions might influence practice. This research engaged with 4 focus groups of professionals working in Educational Psychology services across England to create space to reflect on conceptualisations of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in practice. A critical thematic analysis was conducted to identify themes whilst also attending to issues of power and discourse within the data collected. Findings are presented in the results section followed by a discussion linking findings to psychological theory and existing literature. Implications from the research, limitations and recommendations for future research are also presented.

*Part 3:* This section consists of a critical account of the research process with a focus on key reflections and decision points. Firstly, the researcher reflects on the process of designing the research with attention to the decisions that were made at each point. Following this some of the key challenges that were experienced throughout the research process and how they were, or could be, addressed in future are discussed. Additionally, the researcher reflects upon the potential contributions to knowledge that this research adds to at the individual, practitioner, and system level. Lastly, it includes a reflection on the researcher's own development as a researcher engaging in this process with consideration to how it will inform practice post-qualification.

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## **Abbreviations**

ALNET	Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal
BPS	British Psychological Society
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CTA	Critical Thematic Analysis
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EHC	Education and Health Care (plan)
EP	Educational Psychologist/s
HCPC	Health and Care Profession's Council
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education
PATH	Planning Alternative Tomorrow's with Hope
PCP	Personal Construct Psychology
PRISMA	Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses model
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
UK	United Kingdom
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child





## Part 1: Literature Review

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### 1.0 Introduction

*‘Only by hearing their stories can we empathise with others, give them a voice, give them hope that someone else cares.’ (Morris, 2019, p.419).*

This statement illustrates the important possibilities of voice in action. It also highlights the necessity of voice being heard and empathised with by someone else for it to lead to meaningful change. In relation to this statement, this thesis aims to explore the underlying themes that this statement enshrines by focusing on the concept of pupil voice and its application to practice. A review of extant literature illustrates a general lack of consensus around what the term *pupil voice* means in practice (Fielding, 2007). Rolls and Hargreaves (2022) point out that differing conceptualisations of pupil voice significantly increases the risk of professionals engaging in tokenistic practice. Thus, illustrating the importance of an agreed upon definition to affect lasting and meaningful change.

For the purpose of this paper, Sewell’s (2022) definition of ‘pupil voice’ will be drawn upon to provide a frame of reference.

*Table 1: Definition of Pupil Voice*

<p><i>‘When used in an educational context, voice primarily encompasses an individual’s, or group of individuals’ unique views, opinions, and perspectives. It is understood to be rooted within their own frames of reference, developed through personal experience. It is also equally resultant of the wider cultures and cultural norms the protagonist[s] may act within. Voice can be expressed via many different mediums and means. A person does not have to rely on language alone to have a voice and be able to express it. The job of an educator is to find ways to adapt to everyone and their circumstances so that their opinions and perspectives are given due weight and value.’</i></p>
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(Sewell, 2022, p.4)

This definition was considered appropriate as it specifically relates to core principles and standards of practice within the Educational Psychology [EP] profession. For example, pupil voice is referred to, both explicitly and implicitly, as a core element of practice within guiding legislation, policy and professional standards of practice for educator's, including EPs, at a regional, national and international level (The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal [ALNET] Act [Wales] 2018; the British Psychological Society, 2017; the British Psychological Society, 2021; the Children and Families Act [England and Wales] 2014; the Health and Care Professions Council, 2023; United Nations, 1989; Welsh Government, 2016).

Various authors have drawn attention to some of the potential challenges related to gaining pupil voice in education namely the challenge of overcoming tokenistic pitfalls whereby pupil voice is gathered and does not actually lead to real, meaningful change (Fielding, 2001; Lundy, 2007; Smillie & Newton, 2020). Other authors have speculated the possible reasons why professionals may face these challenges in practice with pupil voice (Bland & Atweh, 2007; Boswell et al., 2021a; 2021b; Hartas, 2011; Shriberg et al., 2017). One example is provided by Sewell (2022) who considers that incongruencies between organisational and practitioner espoused values (*values held*) and enacted values (*values in action*) can lead to tokenistic practice. Therefore, research highlights the importance of considering the perceived *meaning* (Rolls & Hargreaves, 2022), *value* and *purpose* (Sewell, 2022) of pupil voice and how these constructions influence pupil voice leading to meaningful change.

Existing research indicates that various constructions of pupil voice are currently held within the education workforce. For example, voice can take on many meanings including 'ownership and advocacy' (Taines, 2013), 'equality' (Bahou, 2012; Sellman, 2009; Shriberg et al., 2017), 'an information source' (Kolne & Midthassel, 2022; Smillie & Newton, 2020), and a 'vehicle for social justice' (Fiske, 1999; Storz, 2008). Voice can also take on different forms for example 'behaviour as voice' (Hartas, 2011; Sellman, 2009) and 'visual voice' (Zilli et al., 2020).

It is also clear that the value that pupil voice is given is dependent on adults' beliefs and values (Fiske, 1999; Giraldo-Garcia et al., 2021; Sellman, 2009; Taines, 2013; Zilli et al., 2020). Many reasons are cited for preventing the enactment of espoused values pertaining to pupil voice that are discussed in other sections of this review (Bland & Atweh, 2007; Boswell et al., 2021a; 2021b; Hartas, 2011; Shriberg et al., 2017). However, when these barriers are overcome, research demonstrates that

pupil voice can lead to meaningful change at the individual, organisation, and systemic level (Allen, 2014; Bahou, 2012; Bland & Atweh, 2007; Fiske, 1999).

In order to ensure that pupil voice efforts continue to result in meaningful change, Gregory (2019) proposes a need for education professionals at all levels to engage in discourse about how *pupil voice* is conceptualised and understood. This is particularly relevant to Educational Psychologists' practice as they work at multiple levels to engage with, and promote, pupil voice (Greig et al., 2014). Additionally, they possess considerable knowledge of psychological theories that pertain to the act of gathering and advancing pupil voice in an educational context (Harding & Atkinson, 2009; Howells, 2021; Kirwan, 2018; Riddell et al., 2019; Smillie & Newton, 2020). Therefore, it is not unreasonable to suggest that constructions of *pupil voice (meaning)*, the beliefs that guide practice (*values*) and how these translate into the facilitation of meaningful change (*purpose*) require further exploration and understanding. This thesis proposes to create space for Educational Psychologists to reflect on these aspects of pupil voice and consider how they are then applied to practice.

Part one of this thesis will provide a summary of the tertiary and grey literature focusing on the concept of *pupil voice*. It will also outline the legislative, theoretical, and historical context within which this concept will be considered and discuss the benefits and barriers of voice drawn from the wider literature. The second section of this literature review will comprise of a semi-systematic narrative review (Snyder, 2019) of primary literature to answer the question, 'What does existing literature tell us about the role of pupil voice and how it is currently understood within an educational context? And how does it relate to Educational Psychologists' practice?'

## **2.0 A general overview: setting the scene.**

### **2.1 *The historical and socio-cultural context for pupil voice***

To understand current constructions of pupil voice it is imperative to explore the historical context of childhood and voice. The rationale for doing so draws on Burr's (2015) introduction to the theoretical lens of Social Constructionism whereby the author alludes to the historic and cultural factors that influence how a person views and experiences the world around them. These factors form a person's frame of reference from which they understand and interact with others. This perspective encourages a focus on the historical and cultural trajectory of pupil voice to help us develop an understanding of what we mean by the term in the current day.

Burr (2015) specifically notes that constructions of 'childhood' have changed throughout the last century. For example, psychological theories of development (e.g., Piaget, 1964; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994; Vygotsky, 1978) have influenced the way in which adults view children, shifting from a view of them as small adults and passive vessels to be filled with knowledge towards seeing them as autonomous and active social actors with human rights and control over their own lives (Mayes et al., 2019). These historical shifts are pertinent to current understandings of what it means to be a child or young person and consequently the way in which their voice is sought and valued.

Cultural and societal factors also provide a basis from which pupil voice can be considered. Billington (2006) alludes to the conceptualisation of 'childhood' as a distinct category of 'being' in the early nineteenth century when children's right to an education came into effect and how this led to a socio-cultural shift in which children and young people were understood to exist in ever-expanding contexts outside of the family home. As such, children and young people were no longer solely interacting with their families, they were now interacting with their peers, the school system, and the State itself. Nevertheless, children's right to an education did not automatically equate to a right to voice and value was placed on children being 'seen and not heard' (Billington, 2006). As our understanding of 'childhood' has continued to progress towards a more humanistic perspective, which considers childhood to involve the development of the whole child into an autonomous, critical thinker, so too has our acknowledgement and acceptance of pupil voice as holding meaning and value (Aung, 2020; Maslow, 1943; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994).

## **2.2 The legislative and political context for pupil voice**

This next section will now consider some of the relevant legislation and policies pertaining to pupil voice in the United Kingdom [U.K.]. In 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC] introduced the concept of children 'having voice' and their involvement in decision-making processes relating to matters affecting them as a basic human right afforded to all children and young people (United Nations, 1989). This notion was similarly ratified by the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities [CRPD] (United Nations, 2006). This right has subsequently been incorporated into various U.K legislation, thereby giving it a statutory basis, since its ratification in 1989 (For example, the Special Needs and Disability Act, 2001; the Education Act, 2002; the Children and Families Act, 2014; the Special Educational Needs and Disability [SEND] Code of Practice, 2015 and the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal [ALNET Wales] Act, 2018).

Despite the continued emphasis on pupil voice within political movements, the way in which this is then translated into practice can vary as there is no clear guidance provided within the legislation as to the process of realising children's right to voice (Lewis, 2004; Lundy, 2007; Morgan, 2011). Nevertheless, some attempts have previously been made to incorporate *pupil voice* into education policies and frameworks. For example, children and young people are 'at the heart' of the Every Child Matters agenda for teaching and learning developed by the U.K Government (Department for Education and Skills [DfES], 2004) and it is also reflected in the Office for Standards in Education's [Ofsted] inspection framework which specifically looks at school's efforts to promote pupil voice and participation (Hartas, 2011). However, it is worth noting that aside from the Welsh Government's more recent implementation of the ALNET Act 2018, the English legislation that makes reference to pupil voice and participation was first introduced over a decade ago (e.g., the Special Needs and Disability Act, 2001; the Education Act, 2002; the Children and Families Act, 2014; the Special Educational Needs and Disability [SEND] Code of Practice, 2015). Therefore, it is not unreasonable to suggest that an updated focus on how policy translates to practice would be beneficial.

According to the UNCRC's rights-based approach to pupil voice, the Convention encourages adults to give meaning and value to the views of children and young people in order to gain an understanding of their world and their lived experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). However, there are several potential challenges to the enactment of right to voice in practice that warrant attention. For example, legislative guidance makes reference to issues of age, maturity and capacity to understand

information in order for children to be able to realise their right to voice. This adds a degree of subjectivity and complexity to the issue of pupil voice. For example, Spyrou (2019) highlights how professionals' judgements of a child's competency when deciding whether to consult with them could result in only the voices of more mature, capable, and able individuals being heard. Another complexity that potentially interferes with the promotion of pupil voice is the idea that children and young people should both be empowered to make decisions about their lives and equally safeguarded from harm (Lee, 2005). It can feel incongruent to try to attempt both things at the same time. As a result, the level of independence and weight given to pupil voice can be subjective and dependent on all of these situational factors.

In relation to this, Nieuwenhuys (2008) offers a critical reflection on the universality of children's rights from the different positions of abstract universalism and cultural relativism. These positions are useful to consider overarching legislative frameworks through a critical lens that takes into account the socio-cultural context of which pupil voice is understood and enacted. Abstract universalism holds the view that children's rights should be applied universally to protect children from harm. Conversely, cultural relativism considers it impossible to apply a universal set of children's rights as they need to be understood in the context of specific cultures (Nieuwenhuys, 2008). From this viewpoint, the United Conventions on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC] (United Nations, 1989), and the right to pupil voice, can be considered to reflect a 'Eurocentric colonial bias' in favour of Western constructions of childhood (Nieuwenhuys, 2008, para. 4). An alternative perspective of childhood is illustrated by Hastings and colleagues (2019) who draw upon research conducted in Eastern countries that positions children and young people as one part of a collective unit within society whereby individual self-expression is discouraged. These differing perspectives illustrate how constructions of childhood, competency and maturity are steeped in cultural and historical contexts (Davidge, 2016). It is, therefore, important for practitioners working with children and young people to reflect on their own constructions of childhood and the value placed upon pupil voice in practice, within communities, and in our wider society.

In order to critically study the application of *pupil voice* in practice it is imperative that educators reflect on the aforementioned relevant historical, cultural and political factors that influence different constructions of pupil voice. It is important to engage in such an activity as a person's beliefs and values may be implicitly influenced by whether or not the society they belong to values the voices

of children and young people, and at what point it enables these voices to hold power and influence over their own lives. This is particularly salient for Educational Psychologists as Burr (2015) notes these factors are central to the frames of reference from which individuals attribute meaning and interact with the world around them.

### **2.3 The current national context**

For the purpose of this thesis, the focus will be on Educational Psychology practice in England and Wales. The reason for this is that in the last ten years, education reforms in both England and Wales have seen a bigger emphasis being placed upon the role of education professionals, including Educational Psychologists, in promoting and gathering pupil voice to inform decision-making processes (e.g., The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal [Wales] Act 2018 and the Special Education Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice [England] (Department for Education & Department of Health and Social Care, 2015).

The differences between the legislative frameworks relating to pupil voice across England and Wales bear mentioning here. The ALNET [Wales] Act 2018 sets pupil participation out as a statutory responsibility which is central to the principles of the ALN reform. Conversely, the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2014) makes broad reference to pupil participation in decisions regarding their support, care, and educational provision but it does not place a statutory duty on professionals to consult with pupils (Zilli et al., 2020). Therefore, the risk of such variation across the British regions is professional confusion and uncertainty around the meaning of pupil voice, the value to be given to it in practice and the purpose it has (Boswell et al., 2021a; Gregory, 2019). This is particularly pertinent to EPs as they play a pivotal role in the ALN and SEN assessment process (Mitchell & Ellis, 2020; Riddell et al., 2019).

Although the lawful basis for pupil participation varies across the United Kingdom, it is clear that current legislation does place pupil voice and participation at the centre of decision-making processes relating to the needs of the child and how these needs are subsequently addressed within education (White & Rae, 2016). Despite this, research conducted by Riddell and colleagues (2019) found a disconnect between policy rhetoric and application to everyday practice. Their findings highlighting a need for future research to consider possible reasons for such a disconnect.

As Educational Psychologists' play a key role in the assessment of need and advice relating to appropriate provision for children and young people, they too have a duty to consult with them about such matters (Mitchell & Ellis, 2020; Riddell et al., 2019). This is also embedded in standards for professional practice. For example, according to the Health and Care Profession Council's [HCPC] Standards of Proficiency (2023) and the British Psychological Society's Code of Ethics (2021), Educational Psychologists are expected to respect the views, wishes, and feelings of those they work with. Therefore, it is important to seek the views of practitioners working within Educational Psychology services to explore their experiences of enacting legislative duties relating to pupil voice.

#### **2.4 Definitions of pupil voice**

Thus far, this literature review has considered the broader socio-cultural, political, and historical factors that underpin current understandings of pupil voice. At the microsystemic level, practitioners draw on empirical research and theory to inform 'evidence-based practice' (The Health and Care Professions Council, 2023). As such, it is important to explore what the broader literature currently tells us about how pupil voice is defined and theorised. The next few sections of this literature review will discuss various definitions of pupil voice within existing literature followed by a description of the relevant psychological theories and models that have been developed to support an understanding of pupil voice in practice.

Cook-Sather (2006) conceptualises *pupil voice* as a broad term that describes different ways to redefine the role of children and young people within education as having agency over decisions affecting them. Sewell's (2022) definition of *pupil voice* cited at the beginning of this literature review reflects the uniqueness and cultural subjectivity of voice as well as drawing attention to the different modalities of voice. This is also emphasised in very early work by Giroux (1988) who claimed that pupil voice can also be a mechanism for pupils' own understanding of their individual identities relating to class, culture, religion, and gender. In this sense, voice does not simply offer others an insight into that person's lived experiences, it is also a way for individuals to make sense of their own lives.

Other authors attend to the different modalities of voice with MacLure (2009) highlighting the necessity of paying as much attention to 'silence' as to 'voice' as its own form of self-expression that can be listened to, interpreted, and acted upon. Billington (2006) similarly proposes that educators



also listen to the stories that young people tell through their behaviour, actions, and responses. This illustrates the multiple meanings that a seemingly straightforward term such as *pupil voice* can have in practice thus emphasising the importance of reflecting on, what do we mean by this term? And what is its purpose in practice?

It is also worth noting that much of the literature that attempts to define pupil voice is produced by adults (Elwick et al., 2014). Therefore, it is also important to hold in mind that often professionals are acting from an 'adults' frame of reference and may wish to gather ideas from children and young people about what pupil voice means to them.

Nevertheless, due to the recent reforms in legislation, pupil voice and participation has now become a core part of practice within education settings (Boswell et al., 2021a). This involves education professionals taking efforts to find out what matters to a child or young person and tailoring support to meet the young person's own needs and wishes. It is 'doing with' rather than 'doing to'. Hobbs and colleagues (2000) have identified Educational Psychologists' as having a key role to play in performing duties relating to gathering and promoting young people's views with their knowledge and application of psychological theories including Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1970) and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Some of the theoretical underpinnings cited in the literature will be further explored in the following sections of this literature review.

## ***2.5 Theories underpinning pupil voice***

According to Fiske (1999) there was a notable increase in education research centred on pupil voice in the late 1990s that drew upon a social constructivist lens that viewed children and young people as 'autonomous social actors' with control over their own lives (Vygotsky, 1978). More recent research (Harding & Atkinson, 2009; Hobbs et al., 2000; Woods & Farrell, 2006) indicates that when engaging in pupil voice work, practitioners utilise principles from Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1970) and Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012) to inform practice. Furthermore, Neel and Lassetter's (2019) affordance-management theory provides a basis for understanding factors that might enable or hinder pupil voice from being 'heard' in school contexts.

Personal Construct Psychology [PCP] (Kelly, 1970) considers individuals to hold unique models of the world based on their own experiences and how they have come to make sense of the world around them. This theory posits that each person holds distinct binary 'constructs' (e.g.,

emerging vs. contrast poles) relating to their experiences that together make up their model of the world. Therefore, if we are to understand the lived experiences of children and young people and find out what matters to them it is crucial that we first understand the way in which they make sense of situations and identify the constructions they hold to do this (Sewell, 2020). In her research, Sewell's (2020) use of a method for eliciting pupil voice underpinned by PCP allowed for a rich, in-depth understanding of children and young people's worlds thereby increasing the validity of the pupil voice that was gathered.

Self Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2012) defines the concept of self-determination as having agency over one's own life and being able to make decisions without influence from external factors or people, and links this to a positive impact on a person's motivation (Shogren & Turnbull, 2006). Researchers such as Makin & Whitehead (2004) and Vallotton (2011) argue that adults can promote self-determination in children and young people by actively listening and responding to their views and wishes. Freire (2010) operationalises the promotion of self-determination through pupil voice as having the potential to challenge oppressive systems and promote social justice for children and young people who are often silenced and marginalised. In this way, pupil voice can be considered to drive an emancipatory process for young people within the education system. Freire (2010) also points out that in order for children and young people to benefit from pupil voice initiatives certain conditions are necessary. For example, participation opportunities must be authentic, democratic, and acted upon.

Considering Freire's (2010) conditions for pupil voice, Neel and Lassetter's (2019) affordance-management theory suggests there may be instances where children and young people's voices are not listened to or acted upon. Research indicates that particular groups who are often stigmatized within society, including children and young people, can experience prejudice in several ways including being overlooked and treated with indifference. This type of prejudice towards marginalized groups is known as *interpersonal invisibility*. Neel and Lassetter (2019) describe how *interpersonal invisibility* can occur based on a person's (e.g., an adult's) perception of whether another person (e.g., a child or young person) will support or impede them in achieving their goals. A person's perception can be influenced by judgements about the 'value' the other person has within a particular social context (e.g., a school setting). For example, a child or young person's voice may be overlooked by an adult in a position of power based on stereotypical 'value-based' judgements of capacity and age,

but also based on whether the child or young person's views align with the perceived 'goals' of the adult (i.e., raising educational outcomes, meeting educational standards and targets). This theory suggests that in order for children and young people to become 'visible' and have their voices heard the development of a common, shared goal may be the best approach to achieve this. One way this could be achieved is by raising awareness of the potential benefits of pupil voice that align with adult-perceived goals, such as raising educational attainment and outcomes.

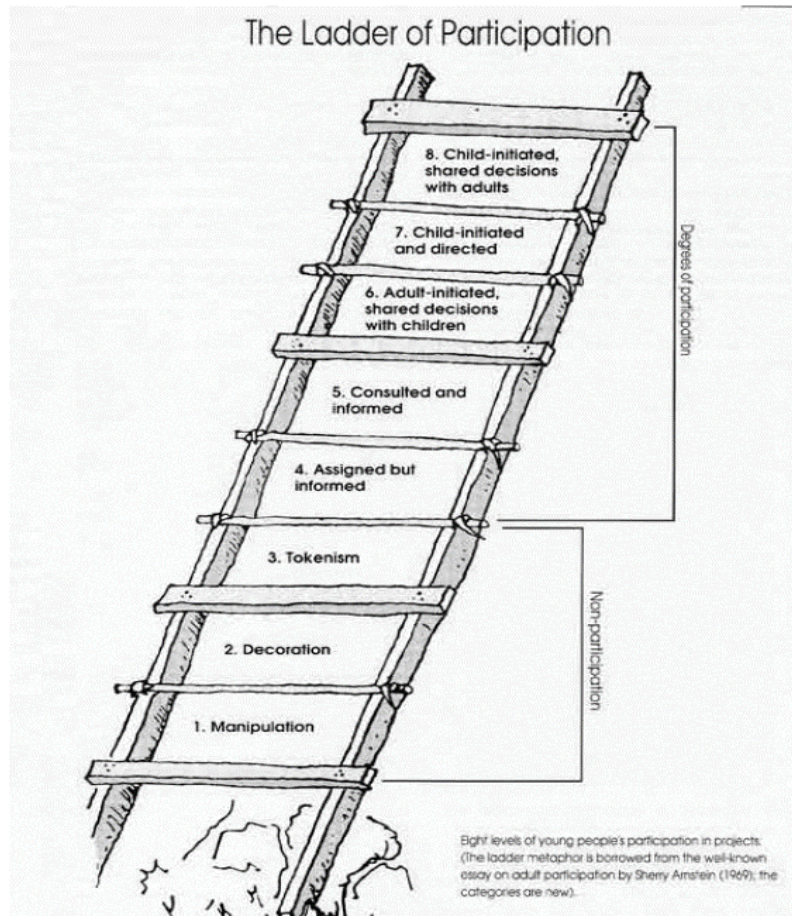
Additionally, Freire (2010) also argued that in order for self-determination to be realised individuals needed to engage in a process called '*praxis*' which is the act of reflection leading to embedded practice. Therefore, according to Freire's (2010) philosophy, not only is pupil voice in and of itself a transformational process, it is also crucial for practitioners, including Educational Psychologists, to engage in a process of critical reflection of their own practice in order to transform their values into reality. By drawing upon supervision, reflection and reflexive practice, practitioners can begin to consider ways they can bridge the gap between their espoused and enacted values in relation to pupil voice in practice (Boswell et al., 2021a; Sewell, 2022).

## ***2.6 Models underpinning pupil voice and participation.***

Drawing from the aforementioned psychological theories, several models of participation have been developed to reflect best practice when gathering pupil voice and involving children and young people in decision-making processes. There are three specific models frequently cited in the literature which are relevant to Educational Psychology practice; Hart's (1992) ladder of participation, Lundy's (2007) rights-based model of participation, and Boswell and colleagues (2021b) principles of co-production.

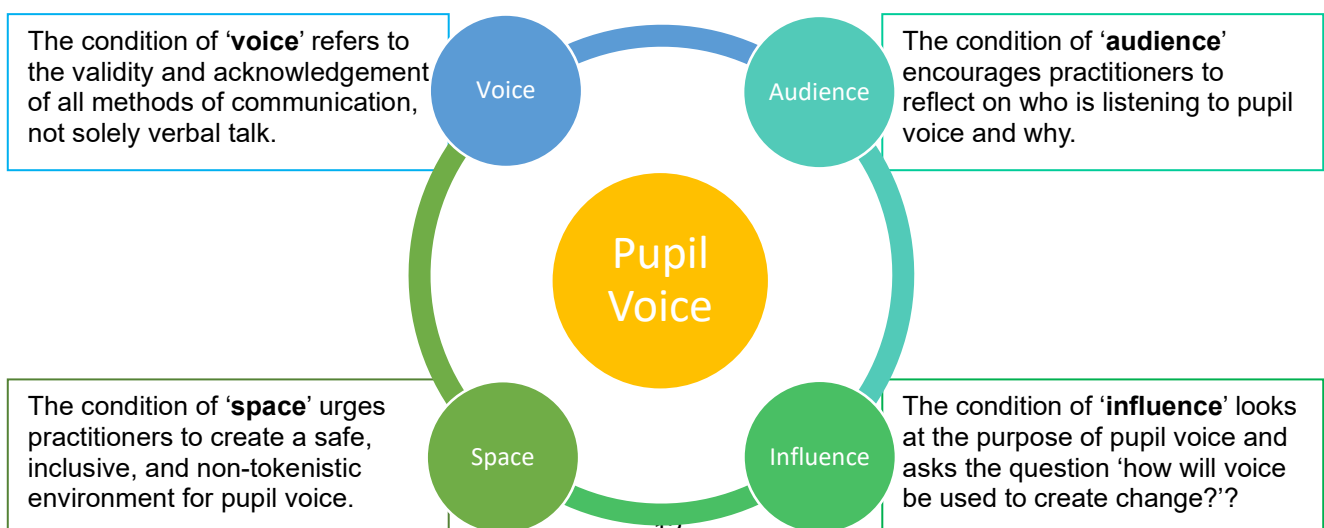
Hart's (1992) ladder of participation (*see Figure 1*) was one of the earliest frameworks for understanding the different approaches to pupil participation that can be applied to the education system. Hart's (1992) ladder illustrates the difference between tokenistic and emancipatory methods of participation which is when teachers and young people share equal involvement in decision-making processes that are initiated by the young people.

Figure 1: Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation



Other researchers such as Todd (2007) have critiqued traditional models for adopting a 'hierarchical' perspective of participation which can often be unhelpful and discouraging for practitioners seeking to implement participatory approaches into their practice. To combat this, Lundy (2007) created a 'rights-based model of participation' (see Figure 2) which describes the ideal conditions for pupil voice to be realised.

Figure 2: Lundy's (2007) rights-based model of participation



Lundy's (2007) model builds upon Hart's (1992) ladder of participation by encouraging practitioners to undertake critical reflection about what pupil voice is, how it can be authentically gathered, and the purpose of voice in action to ensure that practice is not at risk of being 'tokenistic'. According to Hart's (1992) ladder, the optimal form of participation is for children and young people to lead on decision-making processes alongside adults, resulting in co-produced change. However, in their research Boswell and colleagues (2021b) found that participants were often unclear about what 'co-production' really is. Therefore, the researchers developed guiding principles for co-production (see *Figure 3*) to encourage practitioners to engage in reflexive practice when working to promote pupil voice and participation.

Figure 3: Boswell et al's (2021b) principles of co-production



(Boswell et al., 2021b)

The principles of co-production (Boswell et al., 2021b) provide an extension of Hart (1992) and Lundy's (2007) models in that practitioners are encouraged to reflect more broadly on how pupil voice is promoted and engaged with at a wider, systemic level. This model is specifically helpful for Educational Psychologists as they are able to apply psychological theory and knowledge at the systemic level to facilitate change (Welsh Government, 2016). One of the common features present across all models discussed here is that practitioners are encouraged to take an active role in reflecting on their own practice when engaging with pupil voice. Additionally, across the different models' practitioners are urged to think about what pupil voice really means and what purpose it serves in practice. This author considers that an additional reflective point around values and what drives practice also warrants attention as research points out that this can also increase the risk of engaging in tokenistic practice (Sewell, 2022).

Thus far, this literature review has situated pupil voice in the context of historical, cultural, and theoretical factors that underpin our current understanding of voice in practice. It has also made links to the relevance that pupil voice has to the practice of Educational Psychologists'. From this overview, it is apparent that there is a lot more to unpick when considering the term *pupil voice* and much of the guiding literature encourages practitioners to engage in reflective and reflexive practice to consider the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice. The second section of this literature review will carry out a focused review of literature looking at what is currently known about the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice and how the concept of voice is applied to Educational Psychologist practice. However, before undertaking this more focused task, it is the authors' intention to ground much of what has already been discussed about pupil voice by attending to the question, 'Why does pupil voice warrant attention? And what does the literature tell us about the potential challenges of enacting pupil voice?'.

### **3.0 Why should we listen? What prevents us from being able to listen?**

This review has so far set out currently held understandings of pupil voice and the various theoretical models (Boswell et al., 2021b; Hart, 1992; Lundy, 2007) that support the implementation of voice in practice. However, Rudduck (2006) cautions against focusing on 'how' to implement pupil voice into practice without critically evaluating the advantages and challenges of this type of work. Therefore, this section will attempt to summarise what literature currently tells us about the benefits and potential barriers related to pupil voice in educational settings.

#### **3.1 Benefits of pupil voice**

*'Where children are able to talk openly about the processes of change that affect their lives, they are more likely to develop coping strategies themselves. This has been seen as a major contributor to resilience in childhood'* (Dowling & Barnes, 2020, p.67). This quote from Dowling and Barnes (2020) is illustrative of the transformative value that pupil voice can have for children and young people when they are given the space to share their stories and develop their own solutions. This is also echoed by the World Health Organization (1986) who consider pupil participation to be pivotal in the improvement of children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

Numerous studies have discussed the various benefits that pupil voice can have for children and young people, including positive effects on their educational outcomes (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004), their personal development (Kirby & Bryson, 2002) and at the wider societal level (van der Veen, 2001). For example, at the individual child level, pupil voice efforts have been shown to increase feelings of belonging, engagement, competence, and agency (Giraldo-Garcia & Galletta, 2015; Mitra, 2004; Ozer et al., 2013; Voight, 2015; Zeldin et al., 2018). It has also been shown to positively impact teacher-pupil relationships as well as the wider school culture (Giraldo-Garcia & Galletta, 2015; Voight, 2015).

The research cited above provides an encouraging rationale for the promotion of pupil voice in practice. Research over the last two decades has demonstrated that many positive effects can be brought about by the pursuit and enactment of pupil voice in schools. The value of pupil voice in education is further emphasised by Levin (2000). He contends that all school improvement issues should draw upon pupil voice as it is the children and young people who have the most influence on education outcomes and they are the key stakeholders within the education system.



Conversely, Davidge (2016) provides an alternative viewpoint in that she cautions those who view the benefits of pupil voice as being related to attainment and citizenship development. She argues that the true benefit of pupil voice should be recognised as being improved equity and wellbeing in the pursuit of social justice. This perspective encourages practitioners to consider the far-reaching systemic implications that pupil voice can have for not only children and young people, but also the society they are a part of. As such, the benefits of pupil voice are demonstrable and wide-reaching within the literature. However, further reflection on the purpose of pupil voice and who it ultimately serves is required; is the purpose of pupil voice for the pupils themselves or for the education system they are a part of? This is something that this thesis hopes to explore further.

The following section will now consider what the literature tells us about the possible challenges that educators' currently experience when attempting to gather and enact pupil voice in practice.

### **3.2 Barriers to pupil voice**

In a review of general literature relating to pupil voice, three factors are repeatedly discussed as presenting a challenge to the promotion and enactment of 'pupil voice'. These factors relate to issues of power (Bennett, 2017; Billington, 2006; Cook-Sather, 2006; Freire, 2010; Taines, 2013), the risk of tokenism (Bahou, 2012; Bloom et al., 2020; Davidge, 2016; Dickins, 2011, McLeod, 2007; Noble, 2003; Rudduck & Fielding, 2006), and issues of professional uncertainty (Bloom et al., 2020; Boswell et al., 2021a; 2021b; Davidge, 2016; Lundy, 2007).

**3.2.1 Issues of Power.** The education system by nature of design is hierarchical and positions adults as holding 'power' at the top of the organisational structure with children and young people occupying a less influential role within the system (Taines, 2013). Taines (2013) argues that in order for pupil voice to hold value and weight within school systems it is necessary to reframe ideas about 'power' and who holds it. This can be achieved by moving away from traditional hierarchical decision processes towards a more relational and collaborative approach that is open to listening to the voices of children, young people, and adults as equal partners (Freire, 2010). This sentiment is echoed by Cook-Sather (2006) who suggests that in order for pupil voice to hold power within schools, a cultural shift towards an ethos that accepts, acknowledges and empowers pupil voice is required.

Despite an increase in calls to include children and young people in decision-making processes, existing power differentials can remain for many reasons. For example, if adults choose not to consult with young people based on assumptions relating to age, competency or understanding then this can uphold hierarchical power dynamics and limit the influence of pupil voice in important decisions (Bennett, 2017; Smith, 2007). Furthermore, existing attitudes and beliefs about pupil voice, limited resources and reduced capacity of teaching staff can all create barriers to the reframing of existing power differentials within schools (Ballard et al., 2016; Ozer et al., 2010; Zeldin et al., 2008).

Research has also illuminated the fact that giving children and young people power over decisions within the school system can sometimes result in feelings of unease and discomfort for adults (Lewis & Burman, 2008; MacBeath, 2006). The barriers discussed here reflect some of the key reasons why there may be some resistance towards pupil voice initiatives based on issues of power. In relation to EP practice, these issues relate directly to ethical principles of respect and ensuring that the contribution of children and young people within education is considered equally valuable and worthwhile as that of adults within the system (The British Psychological Society, 2021). It will be necessary for practitioners to consider these issues with compassion and take steps towards reaching a shared understanding of the benefits of pupil voice and shared decision-making to address some of these challenges.

**3.2.2 Risk of Tokenism.** Although much of recent legislation and policy emphasises the right to pupil voice, research indicates that in practice, many children and young people are not being consulted with. Where children and young people are consulted with, they often report feeling that the process has been 'tokenistic' rather than genuine (Bloom et al., 2020; Dickins, 2011; McLeod, 2007; Noble, 2003). This is reiterated by Kilkelly and colleagues (2004) whose research found that children and young people are increasingly consulted with however their voices rarely lead to meaningful change. A particular strength of this research study was that it drew on rich qualitative data gathered from over 1000 participants including adults working with children and young people across a range of sectors as well as children and young people themselves. Conversely, it is important to highlight that this research was conducted in a Northern Irish context whereby at the time there was no legislative duty to consider the views of children and young people with SEN in decision-making processes. Therefore, it is unsurprising that findings indicate a lack of meaningful change from gathering pupil

voice. Other researchers also highlight that pupil voice initiatives can be deemed tokenistic if they only ever seek the views of children and young people who have the confidence and language ability to give their views without support or reasonable adjustments (Rudduck & Fielding, 2006).

Rudduck and Flutter (2000) question the motivation for gathering pupil voice and whether it is driven by a self-serving 'standards-obsessed' system or by a view to genuinely empower young people by giving them autonomy over decisions that affect them. Furthermore, Davidge (2016) draws attention to the vast implementation of pupil voice initiatives across the U.K and how this may have diluted the original purpose of pupil voice. Instead of a process for creating radical and meaningful change, Davidge (2016) argues that it has become a process for illustrating educational standards (Bragg 2007). This illustrates how the true meaning of pupil voice as a vehicle for empowerment, self-efficacy, and democratic education, can get lost depending on the values that drive the implementation of pupil voice processes.

This argument put forward by Davidge (2016) highlights the criticality of practitioners reflecting on their values, and the value of pupil voice, when engaging with pupil voice work as this is what guides our actions. Gopinath and colleagues (2018) draw a distinction between 'espoused values' and 'enacted values' in their work. They define espoused values as the values that are considered important to an organisation or individual's practice whereas enacted values are the values that are actually put into action. Sometimes limiting factors, such as those touched on by Davidge (2016), can mean that our enacted values do not always marry with our espoused values. Thus, it is important to consider how as Educational Psychologists we can overcome some of the barriers discussed and transform our enacted values into action.

**3.2.3 Issues of Professional Uncertainty.** Lundy (2007) highlights that one of the main barriers to implementation of pupil voice in practice is professional uncertainty about children's rights and the right to voice. Therefore, an increased understanding and awareness of children's rights within education is a valid area for professional development. This is especially important when traditional models of power exist whereby adults are responsible for making decisions that impact children and young people (e.g., safeguarding responsibilities and capacity judgements) (Bloom et al., 2020).

In addition, Boswell and colleagues (2021b) point out that in their research many practitioners described uncertainty about what best practice looks like when attempting to promote pupil voice and participation in schools. Alongside this uncertainty, many practitioners report discomfort about the 'unpredictability' associated with shared decision-making processes (Beattie, 2012). This experience of discomfort may be as a result of misconceptions held about what pupil voice is. For example, Flutter (2007) describes how some professionals may consider an increase in the influence of pupil voice as undermining the role and authority of adults within the school system. As a result, professionals may revert to traditional top-down, tokenistic approaches that help them to mitigate the uncomfortable feelings of uncertainty that come with the promotion of children's right to voice.

### ***3.3 The relevance to Educational Psychologists***

It is clear from the literature that there are several benefits and challenges of gathering and enacting pupil voice in education that will be pertinent to education professionals seeking to implement this work into their practice. This next section will focus on the Educational Psychology profession specifically and consider the relevance of pupil voice to this particular field.

As Educational Psychologists' often work with key systems that interact with children and young people on a daily basis, they play a key role in raising an awareness and understanding of the rights of children and young people, particularly their right to pupil voice. Educational Psychologists can provide reflective space for practitioners to consider the role of pupil voice within the education system as a first step towards overcoming some of the barriers discussed above (Boswell et al., 2021b). Furthermore, Davidge's (2016) extensive account of her critical ethnographic research where she deconstructs the meaning and value of pupil voice in co-operative schools highlights the necessity of reflecting on these constructs in relation to pupil voice. By doing so, Davidge (2016) encourages readers to challenge the 'day-to-day' practices that we engage in that may disempower and marginalize pupils' voices in action. Although this particular author offers a rich, in-depth reflection on the meaning and value of voice in education, the focus is specifically on co-operative school models and the author also acknowledges that her account includes reflections from primary data gathered from participants as well as her own reflections which increases the risk of findings being influenced by researcher bias.

Nevertheless, the representative body for psychologists in the United Kingdom, the British Psychological Society [BPS] (2017) propose that inclusion for children and young people involves professionals working to tackle issues present in wider societal structures, such as exclusionary practices and power imbalances. Educational Psychologists are also expected to exemplify and facilitate inclusion in their own practice and within the systems which they work, including Local Authorities, school settings, and the wider community (BPS, 2017; HCPC, 2023). For example, one of the standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists is to '*recognise the impact of culture, equality, and diversity on practice and practise in a non-discriminatory and inclusive manner*' (HCPC, 2023, sop 5). Therefore, before EPs can provide a reflective space for others to consider their practice with pupil voice, it is considered good practice to first do this for themselves.

This next section will comprise of a semi-systematic literature review of existing research that considers the role (e.g., meaning, value, and purpose) of pupil voice in educational practice and the role that Educational Psychologists' may have in the promotion and enactment of pupil voice initiatives.

## **4.0 What does existing literature tell us about the meaning, purpose, and value of pupil voice in education settings? And what is the role of Educational Psychologists?**

### **4.1 Introduction**

A semi-systematic narrative review (Snyder, 2019) was conducted to answer the question, 'What is currently known about the role of pupil voice in education? And what is the role of Educational Psychologists in promoting pupil voice?'. This approach was chosen as extant literature indicates that pupil voice is a concept that has progressed over time. Therefore, the researcher was interested in exploring how pupil voice has been conceptualised in literature over time and how it has been linked to the Educational Psychology profession. This approach also aligned with the researchers' ontological and epistemological position of relativist social constructionism (*see Part 2 for further information*) which acknowledges that multiple realities exist and attends to historical, cultural, and social factors underpinning constructions of a particular topic (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

A semi-systematic approach was employed to ensure that the review process involved a transparent research strategy with a degree of rigour in line with Yardley's principles for ethical practice (2000). To reflect this transparency, the search strategy that was employed is illustrated by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses [PRISMA] (Page et al., 2021) model (*Appendix 1*). Following the semi-systematic narrative approach outlined by Siddaway and colleagues (2019), the researcher will present the findings from the review as a qualitative synthesis of key information pertaining to the research question being asked.

The semi-systematic search was conducted using databases relevant to the education and psychology fields including APA Psycinfo, EBSCO (including the British Education Index, ERIC, Child Development and Adolescent Studies) and Scopus. These databases were selected as they allowed the researcher to conduct a review of literature from across disciplines that work with children and young people, including education, psychology, and social care, all of which were deemed relevant to the field of Educational Psychology (Welsh Government, 2016). Searches were conducted between July 2023 and November 2023 (*see exemplar searches in Appendix 2*) and the following inclusion and exclusion criteria applied to results.

Table 2: Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria applied to semi-systematic review of literature

Inclusion	Exclusion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education where pupil voice is the primary focus.</li> <li>• Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice.</li> <li>• Has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice.</li> <li>• Conducted in or applied to education settings.</li> <li>• Full text is available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did not involve primary research.</li> <li>• Did not primarily focus on the role of pupil voice in education.</li> <li>• Did not include discussion of systemic implications.</li> <li>• Did not discuss implications for educational psychology practice.</li> <li>• Was not conducted or applied to education settings.</li> <li>• Full text unavailable.</li> </ul>

*\*Further information relating to the development of inclusion/exclusion criteria applied to this review can be found in Appendix 2*

A total of 17 articles were included in the full review. From the broader literature included in the narrative review, several key factors were identified as being relevant to pupil voice practice in education settings. Namely, the construction of pupil voice (meaning) (Boswell et al., 2021a), the values that drive practice as well as the value given to pupil voice (value) (Sewell, 2022), and the impact or influence that pupil voice has to result in meaningful change (purpose) (Davidge, 2016). Therefore, the researcher conducted a thematic analysis of article findings to develop a qualitative synthesis of what literature currently tells us about the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in education and how it relates to Educational Psychology practice. The researcher also drew on Yardley's (2000) research quality principles to guide critical reflection of the literature included in this review. An overview of the studies included in the full review as well as key points relating to Yardley's quality principles for each study can be found in *Appendix 3*.

## 4.2 Summary of literature

In line with the semi-systematic approach outlined by Siddaway et al. (2019) and Snider (2019), this literature review aimed to gain an understanding of the concept of *pupil voice* over time. Therefore, the search strategy did not include any publication date limits. The search terms 'pupil voice', 'learner voice' or 'student voice' were applied as the researcher felt that this term embodied Sewell's (2022, p.4) definition of pupil voice as encompassing '*an individual's, or group of individuals' unique views, opinions, and perspectives.*' As the researcher intended to focus on the role of pupil voice within the education context, the review included literature pertaining to education settings including 'schools' and 'colleges'. In summary,

- Literature included in the review consisted of primary research articles and theses / dissertations.

- Research articles involved a range of stakeholders within education including school leaders, teachers, and learners from primary, secondary, and post-16 education.
- Only 3 studies specifically looked at the role of Educational Psychologists in relation to pupil voice (Boswell et al., 2021a; Kolnes & Midthassel, 2022; Smillie & Newton, 2020)
- Research was conducted in or applied to education settings including secondary schools, primary schools and one specialist school (Zilli et al., 2020)
- Most studies drew on qualitative research methods and methodologies including questionnaires, individual interviews, focus groups, case studies and action research.
- The majority of studies utilised thematic analysis to interpret their data.
- Two of the studies were conducted in partnership with community organizations (Taines, 2013; Allen 2014)
- Only one study was conducted outside of a Western context in Lebanon (Bahou, 2012).

A summary of the critical appraisal the researcher engaged in to review the articles included can be viewed in *Appendix 3*. The following sections will consist of a qualitative synthesis of key themes within the literature relating to what is currently known about the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in education and how it links to Educational Psychology practice.

### **4.3 What does literature tell us about constructions of pupil voice in education?**

This section of the semi-systematic literature review will consider the ways in which pupil voice is constructed within existing literature to provide a general understanding of what is currently known about the *meaning* of pupil voice in practice currently. For example, in Taines (2013) study which focused on educators' views of student engagement in schools, teaching staff conceptualised pupil voice as being interconnected with issues of ownership, advocacy and belonging within the school. Other participants including youth workers and learners themselves highlighted how pupil voice is enmeshed with issues of power illustrating how pupil voice can be a form of 'activism' leading to power shifts and meaningful change within schools. It is worth noting that the participants in this research were recruited from a community project that focused on pupil participation in schools. Therefore, the constructions of pupil voice captured by this research may only represent the constructions, values, and beliefs of a specific group of individuals with an existing interest in pupil participation.



Nevertheless, in line with pupil voice as a vehicle for shifting power dynamics other researchers conceptualise pupil voice as meaning children and young people sharing space with teachers and adults as equal partners in decision-making processes (Bahou, 2012; Sellman, 2009; Shriberg et al., 2017). One way that researchers have demonstrated pupil voice as being equal to teacher voice is through the use of a 'students as researchers' (Bahou, 2012; Bland & Atweh, 2007) and participatory research approaches (Giraldo-Garcia et al., 2021; Shriberg et al., 2017). However, these methodologies require extensive investment, time and resources from the school and facilitating adults therefore the results from such approaches may not always be realised in different school contexts. Nevertheless, the use of such approaches consolidates the idea put forward by several researchers that pupil voice should be seen as an ongoing two-way process rather than a one-off event (Boswell et al., 2021a; Hall (2010; Kolnes & Midthassel, 2022; Riley & Docking, 2004).

Specifically, in relation to the role of Educational Psychologists', Kolne and Midthassel's (2022) and Smillie and Newton (2020) conceptualise pupil voice as a crucial resource for gaining an understanding of the school context and a child or young person's needs within that context. However, both studies took place in Western contexts (i.e., Norway and Wales), therefore reflect the role of EPs from a WEIRD (White, Educated, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic) perspective. As a result, it is unclear what the role of pupil voice might be within alternative non-Western contexts and how it might provide different opportunities for understanding the potential of pupil voice in relation to the role of the EP.

In addition, Allen's (2014) research with former school students labelled as 'at risk' constructed pupil voice as being a central vehicle for the development of young peoples' 'self-identity' in relation to the world around them. In this way, pupil voice can be transformational for children and young people helping them to construct ideas about who they are and what their position within the system might be. This research adopted a retrospective, narrative approach with former students to explore their experiences in education. Therefore, findings must be recognised as only reflecting the participants' own interpretations and memories of their experiences. Nonetheless, Bland and Atweh's (2007) research also highlights how pupil voice can be emancipatory for those young people who may be 'silenced' or 'disempowered' by traditional school systems. In this way, pupil voice can be conceptualised as a matter of 'social justice'. The idea of pupil voice linked to matters of social justice is further emphasised by Fiske (1999) and Storz (2008) who associate pupil voice with civil rights

issues relating to democratic citizenship, autonomy, and empowerment. It is important to highlight that these studies took place over a decade ago and although they offer a consistent argument for the emancipatory effects of pupil voice in education more up-to-date research on how pupil voice could be used to this affect in today's education system would be beneficial.

Additionally, Hartas (2011) and Sellman (2009) offer an alternate perspective on the meaning of pupil voice. Sellman (2009) allocates power to voice exhibited through challenging behaviour. Adding to this, Hartas (2011) questions whether disaffection in and of itself is a perfectly legitimate form of pupil voice. This notion encourages practitioners to reflect on other types of pupil voice outside of the traditionally accepted modes that currently exist. Although a pertinent finding, this viewpoint ignores the fact that pupil voice is often tied up in a formal education system that experiences other pressures relating to attendance and academic performance. Therefore, although voice in the form of disaffection may be valid, educators have other pressures to deal with before they can attune to the voice of the young person in such circumstances.

It is also important to note that much of the research focusing on pupil voice includes, and is often led by, adults. Therefore, constructions of the meaning of pupil voice are predominantly from an adult perspective or taken from a position of 'adultism' (Shriberg et al., 2017). Nevertheless, the studies cited in this section provide an initial understanding of the ways that pupil voice is currently conceptualised within existing literature. It is considered to be tied up with issues of power and equality (Bahou, 2012; Sellman, 2009; Shriberg et al., 2017; Taines, 2013) and can be a source of information for professionals (Kolne & Midthassel's, 2022; Smillie & Newton, 2020) and emancipation for children and young people (Bland & Atweh, 2007). Hartas (2011) and Sellman (2009) also encourage a reflection on the different modalities of 'legitimate' pupil voice which will be important to consider going forward. It is important to note that none of the studies included in this section focused explicitly on the meaning of the term *pupil voice*. Therefore, the constructions discussed here have been derived from the way in which researchers contextualised pupil voice in their studies. Yet again highlighting the need for a specific focus on how Educational Psychologists construct pupil voice in practice.

#### **4.4 What does literature tell us about the value of pupil voice and the values that drive pupil voice practice?**

Next, the researcher has analysed existing literature to gain an understanding of the value placed upon pupil voice in practice currently as well as information relating to the values that drive professional practice. Taines' (2013) research illustrated that educators value pupil voice, but only when it aligns with their own constructions of 'legitimate voice' and maintained existing processes and power dynamics. She also highlighted that despite a commitment to promoting pupil voice via traditional methods the adults still made decisions about which voices held the most value in decision-making processes. This is a clear demonstration of incongruency between espoused and enacted values within the education system (Sewell, 2022). It is important to note that Taine's (2013) conducted her research in one U.S school district using a selective sampling method therefore it would be unreasonable to assume these constructions are shared by other professionals that did not participate in the study or by educators in other educational contexts.

Nevertheless, the challenge of transferring values into practice is reiterated by Fiske (1999) in her account of delivering an intervention with a focus on pupil voice. Her description of the events that transpired reveal an incongruency between the practitioners' values and the enacted reality of working with children and young people. This raises an interesting question about the process that practitioners go through when attempting to enact their espoused values in a highly dynamic and organic system such as that of a school. For example, Fiske states, '*I couldn't listen, yet. The core of my cognitive energy was focused on establishing order, maintaining behavioural control.* (p.153)'.

Fiske (1999, p.211) goes on to say that pre-conditions for pupil voice include 'establishing order' and 'trust' however this idea could reinforce existing power dynamics of adults directing whose voice is listened to (i.e., the well behaved), when they are listened to (i.e., when they are 'controlled'), and how they are listened to (i.e., if they speak in ways deemed acceptable by adults). Although Fiske's (1999) research provides an in-depth perspective of attempts to translate espoused values into enacted practice, she also makes reference to children's language capacity and cognitive ability to explain findings which could be viewed as an outdated 'within-child' perspective of barriers to involvement (Bloom et al., 2020). Despite this, Sellman (2009) also illustrates the impact of child-adult power imbalances and found that often pupil voice initiatives perpetuate adult values by including

concepts such as agendas, taking the form of 'councils' and delegated roles (i.e., chair, secretary). As such, this illustrates a possibility for Educational Psychologists' working with school systems to consider alternative bottom-up approaches for gathering pupil voice, designed by and for children and young people in line with Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation.

A further illustration of adults deciding the value that pupil voice is given is provided in Giraldo-Garcia and colleagues' (2021) research into the implementation of Student Advisory Committees. Findings illustrated that where adults decided who could take part in these committees there was a marked selection bias in favour of well-behaved, high-achieving students with good communication skills. Thereby, limiting the voices of any other students failing to meet these pre-determined criteria, such as children presenting with social, emotional, and mental health needs and pupils with Additional Learning Needs (Bland & Atweh, 2007; Bloom et al., 2020). It is also of note that this study sought the voices of school leaders within the education system, but data is missing the voices of the pupils who are central to the successful implementation of pupil voice initiatives thus reinforcing the construction that adults voices hold more value than that of children and young people.

Conversely, examples of facilitative values held by adults working with pupil voice are provided by Zilli et al. (2020). They refer to positive relationships between adults and learners, a view of learners as 'human beings with their own ideas', care, compassion, and respect as key values helpful in the promotion and enactment of pupil voice. However, this research took place in one specialist school setting so findings can only be applied to that specific school. Yet other researchers within the literature have recognised the inherent value of pupil voice by conceptualising it as holding equal weight to the voices of adults within the school system (Bahou, 2012; McCarter & Woolner, 2011). Where research strove to illustrate this, findings often demonstrated a shift within the school culture and teacher mindset around pupil voice and the value it has. It also demonstrates a view that pupil voice can take many different forms (i.e. photo voice, observational data) that is given equal value to that of verbal voice (Zilli et al., 2020).

Research shows that even when attempts have been made to overcome dichotomous power dynamics, various barriers remain that negatively impact the attempt to give pupil voice equal weight to teachers' voices. Bland and Atweh (2007) identified educational expectations, legal issues, and ethical responsibilities as just a few of the barriers faced when attempting to empower pupil voice.

Reference to systemic barriers is also noted by several other researchers (Boswell et al., 2021a; Hartas, 2011; Shriberg, et al., 2017) who highlight that the systems that are encouraged to engage with children and young people are the very same systems that often marginalise and disempower them. Therefore, the values shared by adults and the wider system are of critical importance if pupil voice is going to be taken seriously and lead to meaningful, positive change.

Another key issue discussed in literature is the value given to different voices relating to factors including behaviour as communication, pupil age and different types of voice (i.e. photo-voice) (Hartas, 2011; Riley & Docking, 2004; Smillie & Newton, 2020; Zilli et al., 2020). In Riley and Docking's (2004) research exploring the experiences of 'disaffected' learners, pupils indicated that they experienced limited opportunities to express their voice as they moved up the education system. This is an interesting finding as 'competency' is often stated as an essential criterion for pupil participation in legislation and guidance (Spyrou, 2019). Additionally, staff participants acknowledged the importance of listening to pupil voice so why is this acknowledgment not being felt by the young people themselves? This was not explicitly explored by the researchers; however, a possible reason is offered by Taines (2013) who found that the value teachers placed on pupil voice differed based on perceptions of voice as 'threatening' or 'criticising'.

It is clear that current practice reflects a mixed opinion about the value of pupil voice in schools and only one study appears to explicitly reference the values that facilitate the enactment of pupil voice (Zilli et al., 2020). Therefore, this is an area that warrants further exploration.

#### ***4.5 What does literature tell us about the purpose of pupil voice?***

The focus of this next section will be on what is currently known about the *purpose* of pupil voice in practice and how, if at all, it can lead to meaningful change. At the individual level, Allen's (2014) research illustrates how pupil voice can support the development of children and young people's own self-identity. In her research, Allen (2014) sought to provide space for the voices of former students who were labelled as 'at risk' whilst in the education system. By providing this space, Allen (2014) also demonstrated the possibility of voice as being empowering and emancipatory for groups who may be marginalized by dominant social ideologies. It is worth considering however that the participants included in the study all had a prior connection to the researcher which could have influenced the data and consequently, the impact that voice had in this particular study. Nevertheless,

Bahou (2012) also recorded benefits of pupil voice at the individual level including positive effects on children and young people's confidence, academic skills, sense of agency and communication skills. Thus, illustrating the purpose of pupil voice in creating positive change for children and young people themselves.

In relation to pupil voice leading to school level change, Kolnes and Midthassel (2022) point out how Educational Psychologists' have a role in promoting pupil voice to facilitate change at systemic and ecological levels to support the needs of children and young people. Research conducted by Bland and Atweh (2007) highlighted how using a method such as 'students as researchers' has the potential to create authentic opportunities for pupil voice to be heard and acted upon to facilitate change at the school level (e.g., feeding into school policy) as well as at the individual child level (e.g., improved educational outcomes). Therefore, demonstrating the dual purpose that pupil voice can have. Despite illustrating the far-reaching potential for pupil voice, Bland and Atweh's (2007) research involved a collaborative project between students, teachers, and an external facilitator to demonstrate these effects which is not always feasible for other schools and settings. However, this does provide a possible approach for Educational Psychologists to adopt to support the facilitation of meaningful change from gathering pupil voice.

In addition, McCarter & Woolner's (2011) research illustrates how pupil voice when treated with respect can successfully lead to a shift in school culture, teacher mindsets and practice resulting in positive change in both teaching and learning experiences. A limitation of this study includes the researchers' proximity to the research as they worked within the school the study took place in which increases the risk of researcher bias influencing findings. Conversely, Storz (2008) illustrates that meaningful change resulting from pupil voice can be dependent on the way in which pupil voice is shared. For example, using creative ways to feedback pupil voice (e.g., creating a play, writing methods) can add weight to what is being said. However, the researcher does not consider the time commitments that might constrain such an activity taking place in a busy school system.

In contrast to McCarter and Woolner (2011), Giraldo-Garcia et al. (2021) found a mixed response from participating educators in their research in that some adults held supportive views of transforming pupil voice into action whereas others expressed uncertainty about how to do so. One example of school leaders transforming pupil voice into action is provided by Hall (2010) who

facilitated the transformation of pupil voice into an organisational action plan. Despite this application of pupil voice, the researcher did not comment on whether a review of this action plan was carried out to ensure that the plan was not at risk of being 'tokenistic'. Similarly, pupil participants in Hartas' (2011) research expressed feelings of powerlessness over pupil voice initiatives they were part of as they did not feel confident that their voice would lead to any meaningful change within the school system. It is important to note however that the participants in this study were all considered to be experiencing 'disaffection' from schooling therefore their views about pupil voice efforts may have been skewed by their prior experiences of the education system.

In line with the view of pupil voice as being tokenistic, Sellman (2009) puts forth an argument that pupil voice efforts directed by adults are a surreptitious way to reinforce adult-held values and goals. Taines' (2013) research with teaching staff resulted in a similar finding. Findings highlighted that participants in school leadership positions conceptualised pupil voice as being instrumental in the evaluation of day-to-day school policies and practice which in turn has the potential to positively influence school standards and outcomes. School leaders also perceived traditional pupil voice initiatives including school councils and forums to be a '*legitimate and acceptable*' form of student voice as these approaches can lead to greater respect for school values. These constructions inspire the question, who benefits from pupil voice and what is it really for?

If the purpose of pupil voice is to improve the standards and image of the school then does this risk detracting from the purpose of pupil voice as being a vehicle for agency, autonomy, and empowerment for the young people themselves (Fiske, 1999; Smillie & Newton, 2020)? These findings also reaffirm ideas about adult-led conditions for pupil voice as including models that are deemed 'acceptable'. This highlights a risk that pupil voice initiatives may be wholly designed and led by adults who make decisions about who to listen to, when to listen and how they listen at their own discretion. Therefore, it is crucial that professionals reflect on the intended purpose of pupil voice as existing models may result in the preservation of hierarchical, tokenistic power dynamics and risk 'silencing' those voices who may not necessarily 'fit' the mould of the 'acceptable and legitimate' constructions held by adults in charge. It is crucial to draw attention to the fact that most of the studies included in this review draw on responses from teaching staff and pupils, with only 3 articles explicitly focusing on Educational Psychologists (Boswell et al., 2021a; Kolnes & Midthassel, 2022; Smillie &

Newton, 2020). Therefore, more research needs to be conducted with other professionals, including EPs, who play an instrumental role in promoting pupil voice.

To summarise, Fiske (1999, p.245) claims that the main purpose of pupil voice should be for it to 'make a difference'. To do so, it will be necessary for adults to relinquish traditional roles of power and engage in reflection and reflexivity in order to further empower pupil voice within the education system.

#### ***4.6 What does literature tell us about the role of Educational Psychologists in relation to pupil voice?***

This focused review of existing literature has considered what is currently known about constructions of the *meaning, value, and purpose* of pupil voice. It will now turn to what literature tells us about pupil voice and its relevance to EP practice. In Smillie and Newton's (2020) research with Educational Psychologists in Wales, participants constructed pupil voice as a core part of ethical practice in line with overarching professional standards and legislative directorates indicating the central role that EPs have to play in the promotion of voice initiatives. This research also highlights the need for frequent reflection on practice to ensure that EPs continue to enshrine ethical and legislative principles and values in their work. A recommendation echoed by Boswell et al. (2021a).

In Allen's (2014) research, she highlights a need for reflective and reflexive practice in relation to creating equitable opportunities and conditions for pupil voice. A key recommendation includes professionals engaging in reflective processes to acknowledge and work through potential biases and assumptions about pupil voice. This is reiterated by other researchers including Fiske (1999) and Bahou (2012). This type of activity is well within the boundaries of the Educational Psychologist role (BPS, 2017; Welsh Government, 2016).

Additionally, Bahou (2012) recommends that in order for pupil voice to be fully realised within the school system two conditions are necessary; change at the organisational level to create opportunities for pupil voice and a shift at the teacher level to encourage them to step away from traditional norms and embrace pupil voice in different, empowering ways. As Educational Psychologists work at different levels to facilitate change, they would possess the knowledge and skill set to work with organisations and teaching staff to facilitate reflective discussions about different ways to implement authentic pupil voice initiatives. This is a proposal also illustrated by Hartas' (2011)



findings that recommend the facilitation of a culture of respect within school systems to ensure authentic pupil voice efforts are implemented and sustained.

In fact, Giraldo-Garcia et al. (2021) directly implicate Educational Psychologists in the facilitation of pupil voice initiatives quoting the U.S professional body, the National Association of School Psychologists (2010), who state that school psychologists have a role in *'promoting fairness and social justice in school policies and programs'* (Domain 8). A sentiment that is also echoed by the U.K regulatory body, the HCPC (2023, sop 5). Therefore, if pupil voice is to be conceptualised as a social justice issue, then Educational Psychologists' have a direct role in the empowerment of children and young people's voice within education. This is again highlighted by Kolnes and Midthassel (2022) who found that despite the challenges associated with pupil voice initiatives, Educational Psychologists' working in a Norwegian context saw the promotion of pupil voice as a fundamental part of their role and a crucial embodiment of children and young people's human and civil rights.

Therefore, research reaffirms the role of Educational Psychologists' in promoting pupil voice by attending to power dynamics within systems and seeking ways to address them (BPS, 2021). This is especially crucial in relation to pupil voice as the existing body of research highlights the impact that power differentials can have on the empowerment or disempowerment of children and young people within the education system (McCarter & Woolner, 2011).

#### **4.7 Current study**

In reviewing the literature currently available, pupil voice is constructed in many different ways by researchers, educators, and children and young people. There is a demonstrable paucity of research that explicitly explores the concept of pupil voice with the aim of unpicking the underlying principles that guide professionals' work with children and young people, namely the meaning, value, and purpose of 'voice' in education. This is surprising as research highlights the importance of educators engaging in critical reflection of their practice when engaging with pupil voice to ensure that efforts to promote voice are authentic and meaningful (Smillie & Newton, 2020; Storz, 2008).

In reviewing the articles included in this review the following limitations and strengths were considered to provide a rationale for the current study,

- Only 3 studies specifically looked at the role of Educational Psychologists in relation to pupil voice (Boswell et al., 2021a; Kolnes & Midthassel, 2022; Smillie & Newton, 2020)
- None of the studies specifically focused on the principles underpinning current conceptualisations of pupil voice in practice i.e., what it means, the values driving it, and its intended and actualised purpose, and the impact of these on practice.
- The majority of studies were conducted in concentrated areas e.g., a cluster of schools or within a particular district, rather than gathering an understanding of practice across broader geographical areas.
- Most of the studies utilised qualitative research methods (i.e., interviews, focus groups, questionnaires) to gather rich, in-depth data that can support reflective and reflexive practice (Allen, 2014).
- The majority of studies utilised thematic analysis to interpret their data which provides a flexible approach to analysing data relating to many different research questions and methodologies (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Considering these key themes from the existing literature, the researcher drew on Taines' (2013) argument that in order for pupils to have influence on decisions made within the school system, the structure of school systems requires reorganization and new thinking. The researcher considers that this argument lends itself to a rationale for an updated understanding of pupil voice in practice. Creating space to reflect upon currently held constructions of the meaning, purpose, and value of pupil voice with key members of the wider education system is a justifiable first step towards encouraging this new thinking about how pupils are positioned within the school structure. As Freire (2010, p.72) emphasises that '*knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world and with each other*'.

In line with this notion, research conducted by Boswell et al. (2021a) with EPs illustrated the positive impact that a reflective space focusing on the link between values and practice can have. A recommendation from Smillie and Newton (2020) proposes that more research needs to be conducted to explore how Educational Psychologists manage their own beliefs and values when engaging with pupil voice. This is particularly relevant as research highlights the pivotal role that EPs have in the promotion and enactment of pupil voice initiatives. Therefore, this current research aims to

create a reflective space for EPs to reflect on the meaning, value and purpose of pupil voice and how current conceptualisations of voice may influence their practice.

Therefore, the researcher will seek to explore the following: What ideas do professionals working in Educational Psychology Services in England and Wales have about the following,

- What does the term *pupil voice* mean in practice? (*meaning*)
- What value does *pupil voice* have in practice? (*value*)
- What is the perceived purpose of gathering *pupil voice*? (*purpose*)

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## **Part 2: Empirical Study**

*Word Count: 15,387 words*

## 1.0 Abstract

Existing literature illustrates the importance of attending to constructions of pupil voice and how these constructions might influence practice (Boswell et al., 2021; Smillie & Newton, 2020). A review of the literature indicates that few studies have been conducted that focus specifically on constructions of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice, and its relevance to Educational Psychology [EP] practice. Therefore, this research engaged with 4 focus groups of professionals working in Educational Psychology services across England to create space to reflect on conceptualisations of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in practice. A critical thematic analysis was conducted to identify themes whilst also attending to issues of power and discourse within the data collected. Findings illustrate the multi-faceted nature of pupil voice and encourage practitioners to engage in ongoing reflection on the core concepts of *meaning*, *value*, and *purpose* when engaging with pupil voice in practice. In doing so, practitioners are able to attend to the various facilitative and limiting factors that influence the empowerment or disempowerment of pupil voice in education.



## **2.0 Summary of the literature**

This section will provide a summary of the literature that has been reviewed by the researcher to develop an understanding of what is currently known about pupil voice and its relevance to Educational Psychology practice. Firstly, it will provide an initial account of the current legislative and societal context of pupil voice practice in the United Kingdom [U.K]. It will also discuss some of the findings that illustrate the various benefits and key challenges relating to the act of gathering and enacting pupil voice in practice. Lastly it will provide a summary of what existing research tells us about how the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice has been constructed thus far in the literature before introducing the rationale and proposal for this current piece of research.

Pupil voice is a concept that refers to the unique views and perspectives of individuals underpinned by their personal, historical, social, and cultural lived experiences (Sewell, 2022). The term encompasses 'voice' in its many different mediums including verbal, visual, physical, and behavioural methods of communication. The term *pupil voice* is increasingly referred to within guiding legislation, policy and professional standards of practice within an educational context at a regional, national, and international level (The Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal [ALNET] Act [Wales] 2018; the British Psychological Society, 2017; the British Psychological Society, 2021; the Children and Families Act [England and Wales] 2014; the Health and Care Professions Council, 2023; United Nations, 1989; Welsh Government, 2016). However, extensive research that utilised a mixed methods design with a range of professionals and pupils highlights the challenges involved in implementing the ethos of this guidance into practice (Riddell et al. 2019).

### **2.1 Pupil voice through a systems lens**

The practice of gaining pupil voice often occurs within the context of dynamic educational systems working alongside different key stakeholders including children, their parents and school staff (Welsh Government, 2016). As pupil voice encompasses personal, historical, social, and cultural factors it is important to consider how these factors influence constructions of childhood and what it means to be a child in today's society. This is important as Rolls and Hargreaves (2022) point out that the constructions we hold can directly influence our practice. Therefore, pupil voice can be best understood through a systems lens (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) to acknowledge the interactive and socially constructed nature of the concept. For example, societal shifts in the way we view children

has led to a movement away from children viewed as 'passive empty vessels' to 'autonomous active agents' with the right to have their voices heard and acted upon (Mayes et al., 2019).

## **2.2 Why is pupil voice important?**

Research has highlighted the numerous benefits of pupil voice on the individual child or young person and on the wider school system (Rudduck & Flutter, 2004; van der Venn, 2001). For example, it can promote the development of positive self-concepts, feelings of belonging, engagement and agency for children and young people (Giraldo-Garcia, 2015; Mitra, 2004; Ozer et al., 2013; Voight, 2015; Zeldin et al., 2018). Although most of the studies that illustrate positive outcomes at the individual level were conducted in Western contexts where the concept of increased pupil agency is framed more positively through a Westernised individualistic lens compared to cultures that adopt a collectivist philosophy where pupils' voices are valued as more of a collective unit (Hastings et al., 2019). Thereby illustrating the importance of attending to historical, cultural, and societal factors relating to the concept of pupil voice.

When considering outcomes at the broader systems level, Levin (2000) illustrated how pupil voice is central to the success of all school improvement efforts such as improving school standards and outcomes. Conversely, other researchers contend that the purpose of pupil voice should be to benefit the children and young people themselves, not the adults (Davidge, 2016). Other research sheds light on some of the difficulties faced by practitioners attempting to promote pupil voice in education. Taines (2013) illustrates how traditional hierarchical power structures can limit the extent that pupil voice is given weight in decision-making processes. However, it is worth noting that participants in this study were recruited from a community organisation where there was possibly more scope to move away from traditional power structures compared to school systems that are still under pressure from Governmental policy and academic performance measures (Kirwan, 2018).

Nevertheless, other research highlights how these traditional power differentials can be maintained by the constructions and beliefs held about pupil voice and childhood within the system (Ballard et al., 2016; Ozer et al, 2010; Zeldin et al., 2008). For example, researchers suggest that professional uncertainty about children's right to voice (Lundy, 2007) and best practice (Boswell et al., 2021) can be a barrier to the promotion of pupil voice in schools. An additional challenge cited in the literature is the risk of pupil voice being 'tokenistic' and not leading to any real, meaningful change for

children and young people (Bloom et al., 2020; Dickins, 2011; McLeod, 2007; Noble, 2003). As such, researchers urge professionals to reflect on constructions of meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in practice to ensure that it has impact and influence (Davidge, 2016; Gopinath et al., 2018).

### **2.3 The role of the EP**

As Educational Psychologists work directly with children, young people, their parents, and school staff they play a vital role in gathering and promoting pupil voice in matters relating to the educational needs of children and young people (Greig et al., 2014). Drawing from psychological theories (Deci & Ryan, 2012; Kelly, 1970) and frameworks for practice (Boswell et al., 2021; Hart, 1992; Lundy, 2007), Educational Psychologists can ensure that pupil voice efforts are evidence-based and rooted in best practice. They can also encourage others within the system to reflect on practice and support ways of promoting pupil voice at various levels (BPS, 2017).

Existing research into the role of Educational Psychologists' and pupil voice has mainly focused on the '*process*' of gathering pupil voice, including how they might record pupil voice (Harding & Atkinson, 2009), how they might engage children and young people in assessment and decision-making processes (Howells, 2021; Kirwan, 2018) and how they might then represent pupil views (Smillie & Newton, 2020). However, in line with Davidge (2016) and Gopinath et al's (2018) recommendation, practitioners would benefit from further reflection on their constructions of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice to mitigate the risk of engaging in tokenistic practices that can perpetuate disempowering power dynamics.

### **2.4 Constructions of meaning, value, and purpose within existing literature**

**2.4.1 Meaning of pupil voice:** Existing literature conceptualises pupil voice as taking many forms. For example, pupil voice can be viewed as a form of activism towards social justice encompassing issues of ownership, democracy, and empowerment (Fiske, 1999; Storz, 2008; Taines, 2013). It can also mean children and young people's voice holding equal weight to adults in decision-making processes (Bahou, 2012; Sellman, 2009; Shriberg et al., 2017). It is also cited as a resource for information pertaining to the child or young person's lived experience, needs, and sense-of-self (Allen, 2014; Kolne & Midthassel, 2022; Smillie & Newton, 2020). Furthermore, behaviour and 'silence' are also discussed as valid mechanisms for voice (Hartas, 2011; Sellman, 2009). It is important to note, however, that none of the studies cited here focused explicitly on the meaning of

the term *pupil voice*. Therefore, the constructions discussed here have been derived from the way in which researchers contextualised pupil voice in their studies. Yet again highlighting the need for a specific focus on how Educational Psychologists construct pupil voice in practice.

**2.4.2 Value of pupil voice:** Research indicates that educators value pupil voice but often the value assigned to it is based on adult constructions of what is deemed ‘appropriate’ and ‘legitimate’ (Giraldo-Garcia et al., 2021; Taines, 2013). This means that pupils who do not meet the adult-led criteria for having their voice heard are often marginalized and their voices ‘silenced’. Other researchers highlighted how practitioners can find it a challenge to transfer their core values relating to the importance of pupil voice into practice due to conflicting priorities within the school system which increases the risk of engaging in tokenistic practice (Fiske, 1999; Sewell, 2022). However, none of the studies specifically explored constructions of the *value* given to pupil voice in educational practice, nor the *values* that may drive practice. It is this author’s assertion that this would be a pertinent area of exploration based on Sewell’s (2022) claim that there is currently a disconnect between practitioner’s *espoused values* (values held) and *enacted values* (values in action).

**2.4.3 Purpose of pupil voice:** Within the existing literature, Allen (2014) discussed the purpose of pupil voice as instrumental in the development of a child or young person’s sense-of-sense and identity. At the individual level, research also linked the purpose of pupil voice to improving children and young people’s overall sense of wellbeing and engagement with learning (Bahou, 2012). On a wider systemic level, when pupil voice is acted upon it can lead to the co-production of school policy and positively impact the wider school culture and ethos (Bland & Atweh, 2007; Kolnes & Midthassel, 2022; McCarter & Woolner, 2011). Research has illustrated that it is important for professionals to be clear about the purpose of pupil voice and whether it is intended to benefit the child themselves or the school system as it can only be considered ‘authentic’ if the benefits are felt by the young people themselves (Hartas, 2011; Sellman, 2009). The studies included in Part 1 of this thesis suggest that pupil voice can have *purpose* at various levels and with varying degrees of impact. As such, it is not explicitly clear what the intended purpose of pupil voice practice is within the education system and how this interlinks with constructions of *meaning* and *value*. Therefore, this is another area that would benefit from further exploration.

## **2.5 Current study**

It is clear from a review of extant literature that pupil voice is currently constructed in many different ways by key stakeholders within the education system. There is also a demonstrable paucity of research that explicitly explores underlying principles that guide professional's work with children and young people, namely, the meaning, value, and purpose of 'voice' in education. Research illustrates the importance of reflective spaces to inform practice (Boswell et al., 2021) and recommends that future research explores how Educational Psychologists manage their own constructions about pupil voice in practice (Smillie & Newton, 2020).

Therefore, this current research aimed to create a reflective space for professionals working in Educational Psychology services in England and Wales to explore the following research questions.

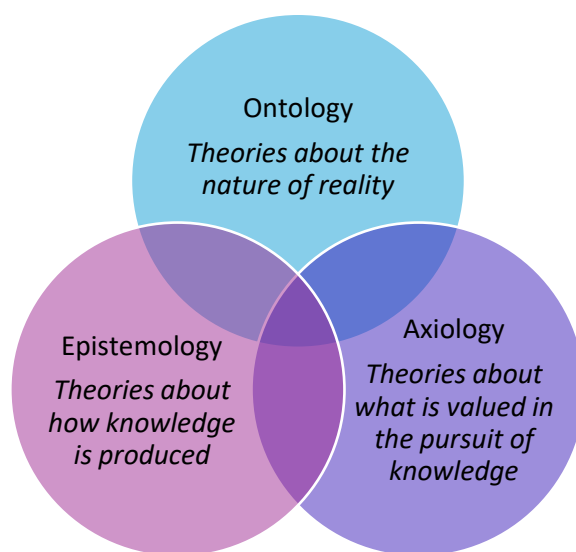
- What does the term *pupil voice* mean in practice? (*meaning*)
- What constructions of 'value/s' underpin pupil voice practice? (*value*)
- What is the perceived purpose of gathering *pupil voice*? (*purpose*)

### 3.0 Research methodology

This next section will outline the methodological decisions that were made by the researcher during the research process including matters relating to the ontological, epistemological and axiological positions taken, data collection and sampling methods that were chosen, and actions taken to mitigate possible ethical issues.

#### 3.1 Research paradigms

Figure 4: Research Paradigms (Biedenbach & Jacobsson, 2016; Braun & Clarke, 2013)



**3.1.1 Ontological position:** A relativist ontological position was used throughout this research project (Braun & Clarke, 2013). This position disputes the idea that an objective reality exists, instead positing that there are multiple realities experienced. The researcher felt that it was important to acknowledge the existence of multiple realities in discussions around 'pupil voice' as research tells us that perceptions, experiences, and beliefs may differ both at an individual level but also at an organisational / systemic level (Bragg, 2007; Hayhoe, 2007). The risk of adopting this stance is that it will not be possible to establish an agreed upon 'truth' relating to the practice of pupil voice as a relativist stance regards 'truth' as dependent on context (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Nevertheless, this research intended to inspire reflection rather than reach an 'objective reality' therefore a relativist position is deemed appropriate.

**3.1.2 Epistemological position:** This research utilised the epistemological position of Social Constructionism (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Social Constructionism focuses on how through

social interactions and processes individuals construct their own sense of 'reality' (Burr, 2015). Social Constructionism encourages researchers to question taken-for-granted knowledge and consider the social, cultural, and historical context within which knowledge has been constructed. This position was deemed relevant in this research as Komulainen (2007) points out that the concept of 'voice' is socially constructed and can differ depending on the context within which it is being discussed.

Within the social constructionist position, there are different perspectives that can be assumed. The first is a 'micro' perspective which focuses upon knowledge constructed through social discourse at an individual level, for example with a focus on an individuals' experiences. Alternatively, a 'macro' perspective considers knowledge constructed at a wider systemic level, taking into consideration constructs formed within and between overarching power structures such as leadership structures, local authorities, and national policy (Burr, 2015). A focus on shared discourse and power structures was viewed as appropriate in this research as these factors have been identified as influencing decisions in practice (MacConville, 2006; Taines, 2013). Therefore, to understand how ideas about pupil voice translate into practice an exploration of these structures was considered beneficial.

**3.1.3 Axiological position:** Axiology is the philosophy concerned with what is valued in the pursuit of knowledge (Biedenbach & Jacobsson, 2016). Biedenbach and Jacobsson (2016) discuss different value types and ways that researchers might value a subject. The axiological position that this researcher adopted with regards to this research was one of 'extrinsic value'. For an object or concept to possess 'extrinsic value' means that it serves a function that is deemed to be useful or worthwhile (Biedenbach & Jacobsson, 2016). From this perspective, the researcher considered that the construction of knowledge around pupil voice holds value as it serves a worthwhile function in influencing professional practice and facilitating meaningful change for children and young people. As such, the researcher deemed it important to reflect on constructions of 'value' throughout the research process and consider the socially constructed value that participants assign to pupil voice themselves. It is also worth highlighting here that the researcher's own constructions of the value of pupil voice were relevant throughout the research process as pupil voice is considered to be a core aspect of their own practice that aligns with the researcher's professional values. This is discussed in more detail in Part 3 of this thesis.

## 3.2 Data collection and sampling procedure

**3.2.1 Sampling procedure:** Literature supports the notion that Educational Psychologists play a vital role in the promotion and enactment of pupil voice work in practice (Donaldson, 2020; Eguara, 2018, Harding & Atkinson, 2009). This role is reiterated in overarching guidance published by professional and governmental bodies, including the British Psychological Society (2017; 2021), the Health and Care Professions Council (2023) as well as the British and devolved Welsh Government (Atfield et al., 2023; Welsh Government, 2016). As Educational Psychologists' typically work at the individual, organisational and systemic levels to support children and young people, they are well-positioned to engage with, and promote, pupil voice at these various levels and work towards facilitating meaningful change as a result.

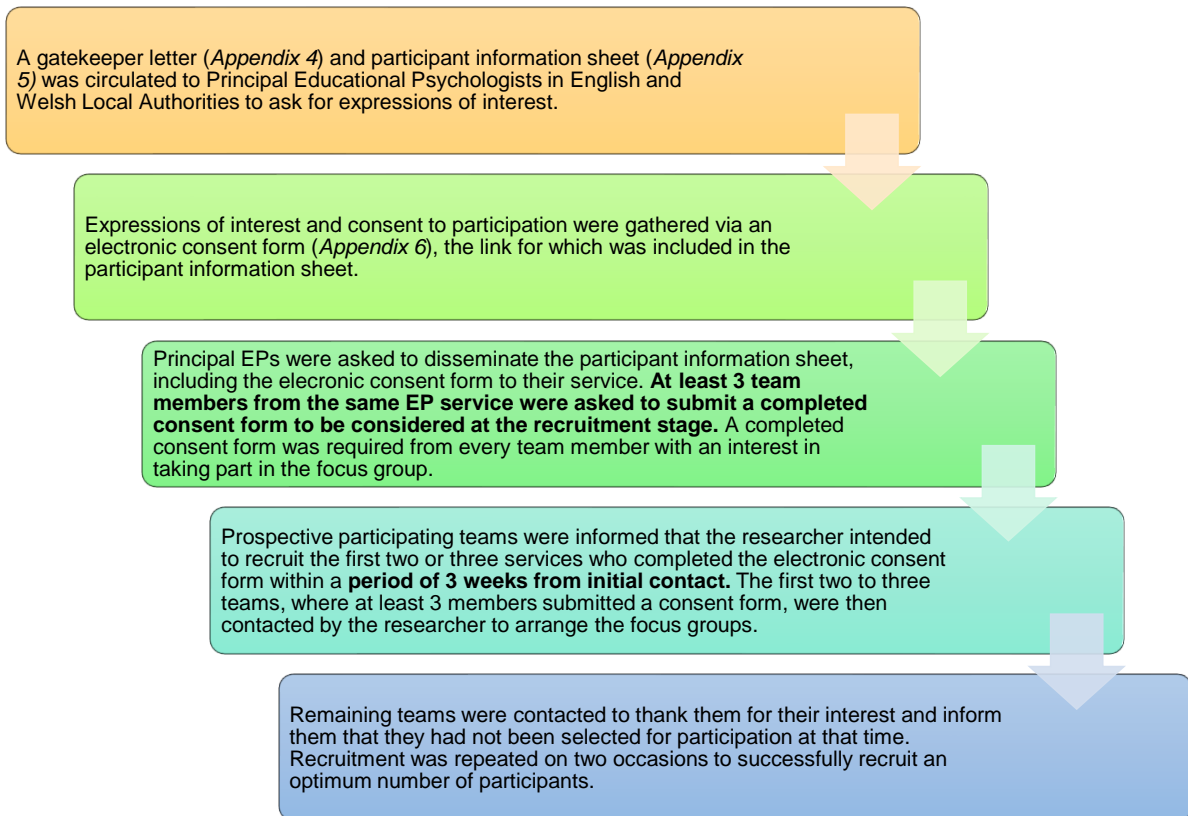
In reviewing the existing literature, there are a limited number of studies exploring the constructs and beliefs held by Educational Psychologists engaging in pupil voice work in their practice (Boswell et al., 2021; Smillie & Newton, 2020; Storz, 2008). As a result, the researcher adopted a purposive sampling approach (see Figure 5) to recruit professionals working within Educational Psychology services across England and Wales to create a reflective space to explore conceptualisations of pupil voice in practice. The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to recruitment,

Table 3: Recruitment Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria	Rationale
Participants must be employed by, or currently on placement (if in training) in, a Local Authority Educational Psychology service.	Participants not employed by, or on placement in, a Local Authority	To enable the researcher to engage in rich discussions with already familiar participants with established working relationships (Braun & Clarke, 2013)
Participants must have the term 'psychologist' in their working title.	Participants who work within the service but do not have the term psychologist in their working title.	This research is interested in gaining insights into the context of Educational Psychologist practice only.
Participants must be working in England and Wales.	Participants work in an area outside of England or Wales.	This research draws on legislation that includes reference to pupil voice applicable to England and Wales (The [ALNET] Act [Wales] 2018; the Children and Families Act [England and Wales] 2014.



Figure 5: Sampling Procedure



**3.2.2 Research methodology:** Following recommendations from Guest et al. (2017) and Braun and Clarke (2013), the researcher intended to conduct between two to three focus groups. However, due to significant interest in the second round of recruitment, the researcher consequently conducted four focus groups consisting of between three to six participants in each group (*see Table 4 for focus group compositions*). Although the invitation to participate was circulated to Educational Psychology services across both England and Wales, the researcher only received expressions of interest from services in England and as a result, all four focus groups were conducted with Educational Psychology services practicing in England.

The researcher recruited heterogeneous existing groups consisting of professionals working within the same Educational Psychology service, including practitioners at different stages of their career (i.e., Assistant, Trainee, Newly Qualified, Senior and Principal Educational Psychologists). The decision to recruit existing teams rather than attempt mixed membership focus groups was due to various methodological and ethical considerations that are further expanded upon in Part 3. The researcher considered it more practical to arrange focus groups with existing teams as this provided an opportunity to join pre-arranged team meetings or team days to carry out focus groups. It was also felt that by recruiting existing groups this could help to mitigate the risk of social desirability bias and encourage collaborative reflective discussions about pupil voice in practice (Barbour, 2018).

Table 4: Focus Group Compositions

Focus Group Number	Number and Role of Participants per Group
Focus Group 1	<b>3 participants:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Principal Educational Psychologist</li> <li>• 1 Educational Psychologist</li> <li>• 1 Senior Educational Psychologist</li> </ul>
Focus Group 2	<b>6 participants:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 Trainee Educational Psychologists</li> <li>• 2 Newly Qualified Educational Psychologists</li> <li>• 1 Senior Educational Psychologist</li> </ul>
Focus Group 3	<b>4 participants:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3 Assistant Educational Psychologists</li> <li>• 1 Senior Educational Psychologist</li> </ul>
Focus Group 4	<b>5 participants:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1 Trainee Educational Psychologist</li> <li>• 1 Newly Qualified Educational Psychologist</li> <li>• 2 Educational Psychologists</li> <li>• 1 Senior Educational Psychologist</li> </ul>

A focus group methodology was used to gather the voices of the professionals with a pivotal role in the promotion of pupil voice (Donaldson, 2020; Eguara, 2018, Harding & Atkinson, 2009). This researcher considered this to be an important task in the pursuit of enabling pupil voice as Bragg (2007) points out that we cannot discount professional voices in the process of empowering children and young people.

**3.2.2.1 Ethical and methodological considerations:** This researcher drew upon a focus group methodology in this research for ethical and methodological purposes. In Bragg's (2007) research which adopted a case study approach to explore perceptions of pupil voice initiatives with teachers, staff reported feeling as though their practice was being criticized. In light of this feedback, the researcher felt that focus groups would be an appropriate data collection method as this approach can help to mitigate the risk of participants experiencing feelings of criticism or pressure from the researcher (Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015). The researcher also considered the methodological benefits of focus groups in that they can encourage engaging discussions, reflections, and collaborative thinking (Barbour, 2018).

**3.2.2.2 Reflecting on research aims:** A focus group methodology also aligns with the research aims and paradigms as Braun and Clarke (2013) highlight how focus groups can shed light on the way a topic is made sense of and given meaning amongst a group of people. The risk of focusing on the group dynamics involved in the construction of knowledge about pupil voice is that individual narratives, which also warrant attention, can potentially be missed (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Smillie & Newton, 2020). Nevertheless, the purpose of this research was to attend to the 'macro' structures and shared narratives about pupil voice therefore individual constructions, although important, do not align with the aims and philosophies of this particular study.

It is also important to note that focus group methodology has other limitations such as the risk of discussions leading away from the topic of focus and the risk of participants 'conforming' to one type of 'dominant' discourse within the group (Braun & Clarke, 2013). However, as Educational Psychology services that participated in the research consisted of existing groups, the researcher considered the risk of social desirability bias and group think to be minimised and opportunities for critical thinking and reflection to be supported (Willig, 2013). The researcher also drew upon the focus group guide (*Appendix 7*) to keep discussions focused and relevant.

**3.2.2.3 Practical considerations:** The focus groups all took place in the participating Educational Psychology services' work bases which the researcher travelled to so that groups were conducted face-to-face. Although conducting the groups face-to-face required the researcher to dedicate a significant amount of time to planning, preparation, and travel the benefits of doing so were considered to outweigh the possible limitations. Conducting focus groups face-to-face helped the researcher to establish rapport with participants through 'pre-interview chit-chat', to respond to body language and to attend to power dynamics within the room (Braun & Clarke, 2013). All of which were helpful in enabling the researcher to explore participants' constructions of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice. The groups all lasted between 90-120 minutes long to allow for rich, in-depth discussions. The questions included in the focus group guide intended to incite reflection and were derived from relevant literature including Fielding's (2001) conditions for pupil voice framework, Driscoll's (2007) 'what' model of reflection, and Lundy's (2007) rights-based model of participation.

Data was captured via audio recording using a Dictaphone which was subsequently transcribed. The researcher had intended to capture participants' discussions and ideas through the

creation of a rich picture however without the presence of a co-facilitator it was a practical challenge to carry this out and moderate the discussions at the same time. Therefore, participants were encouraged to use post-it notes to record their thoughts in any way they wished and a rich 'word cloud' was developed for each research question (see Appendix 8). This was done for each focus group to support the facilitation of the focus group discussions by drawing it back to the research questions, to create a 'visual map' of the discussions that could be viewed by all participants and to be used as an aide-memoire to support subsequent data analysis (McNaught & Lam, 2010).

### 3.3 Ethical considerations

This research was granted ethical approval by Cardiff University School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee and the following ethical issues were considered with actions taken to mitigate any potential negative effects.

Table 5: Ethical Considerations drawn from Braun & Clarke (2013)

Ethical consideration	Action taken
Informed consent	All participants received a participant information sheet (Appendix 5) containing details about the research. This information sheet contained a link to an electronic consent form which participants were required to submit to express their interest and consent to participation. At the start of focus groups, the researcher checked that all participants present had read and understood the participant information sheet and had completed the online consent form (Appendix 6).
The right to withdraw from participation	Participants were informed of their right to withdraw which was iterated in all relevant research documentation (see Appendices). Participants had the right to withdraw from participation before, during and following the focus group by contacting the researcher. <b>During the focus group</b> participants were informed that they could leave the room at any time if they wished to. This did not occur other than during comfort breaks. If this had occurred, the researcher planned to pause the focus group and hold a private discussion with participants to check their wellbeing and safety. <b>Following the focus group</b> participants were informed of their right to request that any contributions they made during the focus group be withdrawn from the data set. During the focus group, participants were asked to identify themselves before they contributed to discussion to allow voice identification for the removal of their data. Participants were informed that they had two weeks between the focus group and transcription to withdraw from the research. After this time, data was anonymously transcribed, and the audio recording destroyed in line with Cardiff University's policy for data retention. No participants exercised their right to withdraw from this study.
Data Protection	Data was captured via audio recording using a Dictaphone and the creation of a 'word cloud' in the session. The audio recording was kept for a period of two weeks following the focus groups for transcription purposes after which time it was destroyed. All data

	<p>and research documentation has been kept in a secure location on the researcher's password protected, encrypted drive and will be safely stored for a period of 5 years in line with Cardiff University's policy for data retention.</p> <p>Participant names, emails, and the service that they work in was collected for the sole purpose of arranging focus groups. Once arranged, this data was securely destroyed.</p>
Anonymity	Once focus groups had taken place, audio recordings were transcribed and anonymised. Each participant has been allocated with a pseudonym. Any reference to participants in subsequent writings will be via pseudonym.
Confidentiality	Participants were reminded of their responsibility to maintain confidentiality both before and after the focus group. This means that any explicit details about what was discussed in the group, and by whom, must remain confidential. This was also set out in all research documentation. Participants were additionally made aware and consented to research findings being shared in the format of an empirical paper as part of a Doctoral course thesis.
Debriefing	All participants were provided with a debrief form (Appendix 9) following the focus group. This contained contact details in the instance that any participants wanted to contact the researcher, the research supervisor and Cardiff University's Ethics Committee.
Participant welfare	It was not anticipated that participants would be negatively affected by anything discussed as part of this research. However, Bragg (2007) found that when staff were asked to reflect on their practice, some members reported feeling as though their practice was being criticised. The researcher hoped that holding focus groups with an already established group helped to mitigate this effect. Additionally, it was emphasised to participants that the focus groups were intended to be a collaborative, reflective space without judgement or criticism. As part of the focus group guide (Appendix 7), a script was used to explain to participants the purpose of the group and establish ground rules including holding positive regard towards all contributions offered in the space.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

This research has utilised a two-stage critical thematic analysis [CTA] (Braun & Clarke, 2013) to analyse data gathered from focus groups. Thematic analysis is an approach that allows for researchers to identify themes and patterns of meaning in a dataset. From the epistemological position being taken, a critical thematic analysis enabled the researcher to identify concepts, assumptions and meaning relating to '*the key concepts, language, and interpretations* [of pupil voice]' (Eguara, 2018, p.7). In this approach, it was possible to analyse the discourse and language used in the data at both the micro (social interaction) and macro (systemic) levels (Burr, 2015; Lawless &

Chen, 2019). The researcher has attempted to do this by focusing on the relationships between 'discourse, social practices, power relations, and ideologies' (Lawless & Chen, 2019, p.92).

In order to attend to the socially constructed nature of 'pupil voice' within the focus groups, the researcher has focused on the shared language, narratives and interactions between focus group members (Burr, 2015). To reflect this, each theme is presented alongside extended extracts from the focus groups that illustrate the social processes involved in participants' constructions of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice. Quotes from the focus groups have also been used for some theme titles to ensure that the analysis reflects the participants' constructions in their own words rather than the researcher's interpretation of what was discussed. By adopting this analytical approach, the researcher endeavoured to shed light on how language can illuminate the constructions held within groups, how these might shed light on power structures and consequently influence practice (Lawless & Chen, 2019). As such, a critical position was considered necessary to understand the influence of systemic factors and power on the groups' conceptualisations of pupil voice.

The data was analysed using an inductive 'bottom-up' approach that sought to understand the constructions held within groups of Educational Psychology professionals relating to the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice, and how these constructions are reflected in practice (Terry, 2021; Willig, 2013). Table 6 depicts the two-stage critical thematic analysis [CTA] approach that was taken by the researcher. An illustration of the activity undertaken by the researcher during the coding and generation of themes stage can be found in Appendix 10.

*Table 6: Two-stage approach of Critical Thematic Analysis [CTA] (Lawless & Chen, 2019)*

<b>Stage of Analysis</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>Stage 1:</b> Open Coding	Transcripts are read and re-read with a focus on what has been discussed, guided by repetition, recurrence, and forcefulness (Owen, 1984) to identify patterns in discourse that appear important, relevant, and meaningful to participants, either individually or collectively.
<b>Stage 2:</b> Closed Coding	This stage links themes to larger societal, cultural, and historical structures. Specifically, it considers the ideologies, power structures, or hierarchies that are recurring, repeated, and forceful.

Throughout the analysis stage, the researcher considered key critical questions posed by Cannella and Lincoln (2015, p.259) to aid the construction of themes from data, including,

- *'How are particular groups represented in discourses, practices, and social systems?*
- *How do elite groups define values, constructs, and rhetoric in ways that maintain matrices of power?*
- *How are power relations constructed and managed through?'*

A critical approach to analysis was important to the researcher as the aim of this research was to understand how processes and ideologies that could reinforce power imbalances and hierarchical positions are socially constructed, and how they influence pupil voice in practice. In attending to these meta-ideologies, the researcher hoped to encourage reflection within the focus group and create space for social action. It is not the researchers' intention to highlight the individual positionalities of the research participants, rather than it is to highlight the wider societal, political, and cultural ideologies that underpin discourse and, ultimately, influence professional practice.



## 4.0 Results

A critical thematic analysis was conducted to answer the following questions;

- What does the term 'pupil voice' mean in Educational Psychology practice? (*meaning*)
- What constructions of 'value/s' underpin 'pupil voice' in Educational Psychology practice? (*value*)
- What is the perceived purpose of gathering 'pupil voice' in Educational Psychology practice?  
(*purpose*)

The core themes and related sub-themes are presented in the thematic map below (*Figure 6*). Each theme and their related sub-themes will subsequently be discussed with reference to extracts from the data set and the critical analytical process the researcher engaged in at the closed coding stage of analysis. Extracts from focus group transcripts will be embedded within the following sections using the key below and colour-coded quotes to illustrate different speakers and speech patterns. Each participant has been allocated a pseudonym to ensure anonymity (see *Table 8*).

*Table 7: Transcript Key*

Feature	Notation used.
Noises of agreement	[affirmative] to indicate where members of the group responded in agreement to something that was said with an affirmative noise rather than a word e.g., <i>mm</i> , <i>mhmm</i> .
Laughter	[laughter] to indicate a group member laughing.
Overlapping speech	[crossover] to indicate where more than one group member is talking, and speech cannot be accurately understood.
Inaudible speech	Where the researcher has had to make a best guess as to what has been said the word has been presented in square brackets e.g., [ ]  Where the researcher has been unable to make out a word this has been presented by the following expression [unintelligible]
Removed information	Where the researcher has removed a word or words from a quote this will be presented using ellipses e.g., ...

Table 8: Participant Pseudonyms

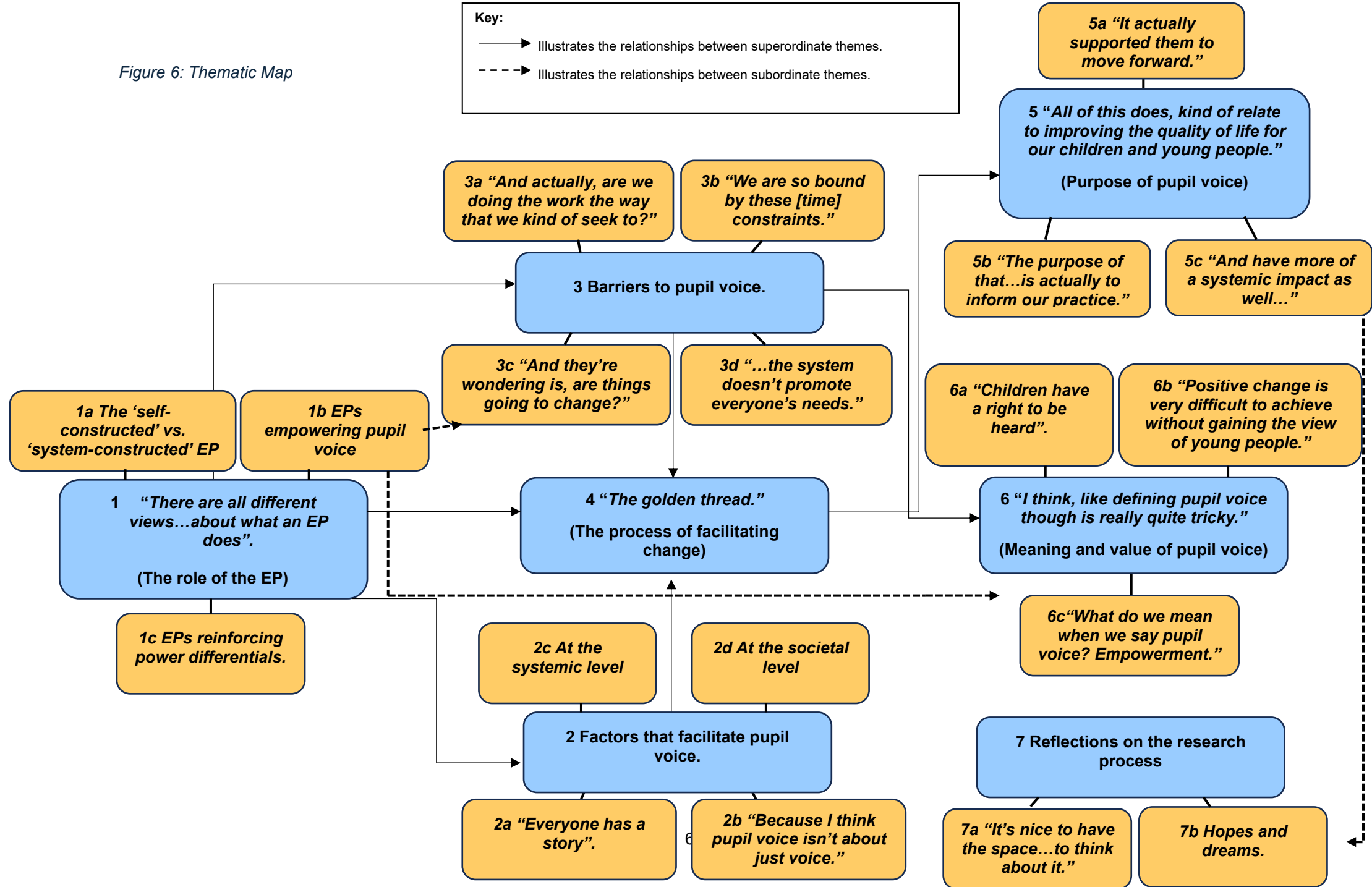
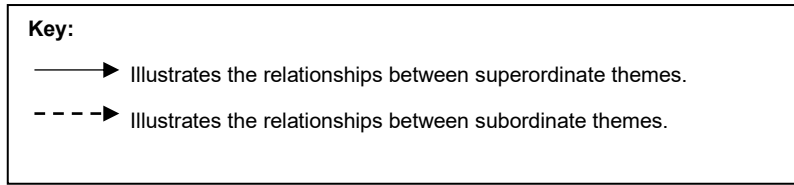
<b>Focus Group</b>	<b>Pseudonyms allocated to participants</b>
Focus Group 1	Sally Gillian Fran
Focus Group 2	Meredith Cristina Izzy Callie Arizona Maggie
Focus Group 3	Pam Angela Holly Jan
Focus Group 4	Belle Merida Aurora Ariel Tiana

#### **4.1 The thematic map**

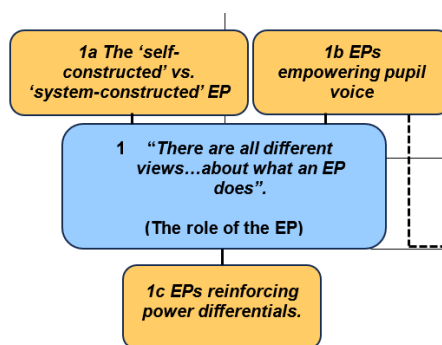
The thematic map was developed to visually present the various themes and subthemes derived from the data. Each superordinate theme has been allocated a number (1-7), and each subordinate theme allocated a letter (a-d), to indicate the order that themes have been presented and made sense of by the researcher in the subsequent sections.

The researcher starts by considering how participants constructed the role of Educational Psychologists and the ways in which EPs interact with pupil voice in their practice (*Theme 1*). Next, themes relating to how participants constructed the process of gathering pupil voice have been discussed. This includes the factors that facilitate pupil voice (*Theme 2*), the barriers to pupil voice (*Theme 3*), and the process of carrying the 'golden thread' of pupil voice through at each stage of involvement to facilitate meaningful change (*Theme 4*). Themes 5 and 6 specifically relate to participants' constructions of the *meaning, value, and purpose* of pupil voice. Finally, the researcher has included a theme relating to participants' reflections on the research process itself and their hopes and dreams for transforming their reflections into purposeful action (*Theme 7*).

Figure 6: Thematic Map



## 4.2 Theme 1: “There are all different views...about what an EP does.”



The first theme that will be focused on is the theme ‘*There are all different views...about what an EP does*’. This theme relates to the discussion that participants engaged in around the role of the Educational Psychologist in relation to pupil voice. This gives a starting point for contextualising how participants felt that pupil voice fits in with Educational Psychology practice before a more in-depth analysis of the constructions around meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice can be looked at.

Participants discussed the different ways that the Educational Psychologist [EP] role can be constructed within the systems they work in and how these constructions can either enable or hinder the process of gathering pupil voice as illustrated by the following quote,

Callie: *In my experience, I've had actually teachers saying they actively want an EP to come in, and almost sort of be an outside link that the child feels isn't part of the school, because maybe the relationship between the child and the school is broken down. And so actually, by being an external person you're suddenly you're outside the system almost. So you're sort of almost seen as safe.*

Meredith: *We try to educate. That is what we do because there's that, in that bigger context, people, there are all different views from other adults in the system about what an EP does. So it's really difficult to share what it is that we do and it can change in different situations as well...And our best hope is that within our explanation to those adults is that they can somehow convey what we want them to convey about us to the young people in the best way possible. But as Maggie said, there's such a power imbalance that you just actually don't really know what's being said...*

Izzy: *Yeah, I really see what you mean there with the kind of what-what sort of explanation the young person has had prior to you arriving about what an educational psychologist is, yeah, if any, and what they're there to do... And so yeah, I think that is a really big thing, isn't it, how we're introduced and how we kind of arrive in the school.*

*Extract from Focus Group 2*

These quotes illustrate the challenge of being able to neatly define the role of the Educational Psychologist as a result of the different ways it can be constructed by the system and the people working within it compared to how EPs themselves construct their role. The way in which the role of

the EP is constructed by others within the system and how this is then shared was identified by participants as being either a barrier or a facilitator of empowering and enacting pupil voice. The possibilities of the EP role was considered to be dependent on different factors including how the EP role was constructed or constrained within the 'system' (*sub-theme 1a: the 'self-constructed' vs. 'system-constructed' EP*), whether constructions enabled EPs to 'empower' pupil voice (*sub-theme 2: EPs empowering pupil voice*) and whether constructions required EPs to carry out duties that could conversely 'disempower' pupil voice (*sub-theme 3: EPs reinforcing power differentials*).

**1a The 'self-constructed' vs. 'system-constructed' EP**

**4.2.1 Theme 1, Sub-theme 1a: The 'self-constructed' vs. 'system-constructed' EP.**

Participants talked about the role of the Educational Psychologist as being 'meta' and external to the school system. Callie's quote from the previous section illustrates how the EP as an 'outsider' to the school system can facilitate the promotion of pupil voice as participants considered children and young people to construct them as being 'safe'. From a critical perspective, if EP's as 'outsiders' are perceived as 'safe', this might lead us to question what experiences or constructions pupils and participants have of being 'inside' the system and whether 'insiders' might not feel 'safe' enough to have their voices heard.

It was clear from discussions that pupil voice was something participants considered to be 'embedded' in their training and practice but not something that they had necessarily been explicit about either as illustrated below.

Researcher: *...And do the kind of people that you work with, you know, when, when you kind of go in and explain your role, and, you know, you would say that this is the purpose of gathering pupil voice, how easy is that to kind of, you know, get other people on board with or communicate that with parents and schools...?*

Sally: *Yeah, they, they, they often when we kind of explain how we're going to work this- I never really have any kind of pushback, but actually they often always ask 'so are you going to meet with the young person?'. Yeah, they're usually very keen for it. In my experience.*

Fran: *I'm not sure I've ever been explicit about why I work...but actually, maybe it's really important to be explicit about what it is we're trying to do.*

Sally: *No, no, I don't. I don't think I have either which is terrible.*

*Extract from Focus Group 1*

- Researcher: *...And I just wonder kind of how does it fit you-you know when you go into schools and you kind of say this is the purpose of gathering people voice, do schools kind of often take ownership of these things after-after your involvement do you find?...*
- ...  
Izzy: *I think schools want to outsource it like who was it who said about you know schools want you to come in and be the person who does it-... But actually, yeah, encouraging them and almost empowering them to feel that they can be the people who do it-...*
- ...  
Arizona: *Also another thing like from that is I guess even just being explicit about what you're doing ...actually explicitly having a conversation with the people around that young person of like this is what I did and why because sometimes like you can just forget that it's just something that you do..."*

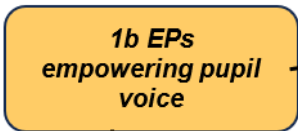
*Extract from Focus Group 2*

The risk of not being explicit about the EP role in relation to pupil voice is that the role of the EP, as well as the meaning and purpose of pupil voice, can end up being constructed *by the system* rather than by the individual practitioners. For example,

- Researcher: *...So just kind of thinking about the people that we might work with when we're gathering pupil voice...What do you, what kind of things do you say to other people to describe pupil voice?*
- ...  
Tiana: *It's such a good point. Because what, uh, you know, even, even before we kind of elicit pupil views and pupil voice, it's, the amount of times that you turn up and the young person doesn't know who you are, what an educational psychologist even is and does and why you're there...And us always being explicit about who we are, and giving them, giving a bit of ourselves so that they know they can then safely give it back.*

*Extract from Focus Group 4*

This theme illustrates how participants constructed *pupil voice* to be a natural, automatic part of their practice which can be facilitated by the fact that EPs are often viewed as 'outsiders' independent from the school system therefore creating a 'safe' space for pupils' voices to be heard. However, the automaticity of this aspect of EP practice could result in a lack of clarity which may then lead systems to construct the role of the EP and pupil voice themselves. EPs may then find themselves having to work within the role cast for them by the system.



**4.2.2 Theme 1, Sub-theme 1b: EPs empowering pupil voice.** Participants talked about the different ways that they constructed the role of the EP as empowering pupil voice. For example, they described EPs as being advocates for children and young people, as illustrated by Gillian.

Gillian: *So my name's Gillian, call me Gillian. And I've always had a real passion for children's views because when I was a child myself I didn't feel listened to so that's where this came from. So I'm always like, I really want to hear what children say and I really want to be their advocate and advocate for them.*

*Extract from Focus Group 1*

McDonnell et al. (1995) define advocacy as the act of 'speaking for, or on behalf of...another person'. A core aspect of advocacy is 'empowerment' and the aim of improving a person's quality of life through the act of empowering and amplifying their voice in matters that affect that individual (Wolfe et al., 1996). Participants described how EPs might be the only person who has 'listened' to what a child or young person has to say.

Aurora: *I think, literally one I was in yesterday and my reaction from that is, I need to get this young person's views.*

Merida: *Yes, I had one of those.*

Aurora: *And I think I came out of that going, no one's listening to them, we need to get their views. And some might, like you said, some you go to and you think, 'oh, this child is being listened to, they're telling me they're-they're listening', you can kind of tell, can't you?...and other times, I don't actually know, I may be that only person that comes and listens to that-that child, I need to meet them. So, it's yeah.*

*Extract from Focus Group 4*

Research indicates that simply 'listening' to what a child or young person has to say and treating their voice as valid and important can have an 'empowering' effect in and of itself (Makin & Whitehead, 2004; Vallotton, 2011). Additionally, participants constructed their role as that of an 'ally' for children and young people. Thereby, empowering 'pupil voice' by constructing children and young people to have equal value within a collaborative process involving the EP, the child, and the school.

Researcher: *So I don't know if you can all see, we've definitely got a few of the same, same words on there. So we've got...Being heard. Respect. Inclusive. Alliance. Culturally responsive. At the centre. Child at the heart of all we do. Autonomy. Value. Understanding. Choice. Engaged and Belonging... Any words that might surprise you that you didn't think of when you were thinking about it?*

Maggie: *I really liked the word Alliance. I thought what a lovely way to descri- like talk about pupil voice. It's kind of like I'm on your team, and we're working together. That was the impression I got from that.*

*Extract from Focus Group 2*

In a similar way, the role of the EP was seen to 'enable' other members of the system to hear and respond to pupil voice, as referenced in the extract below.



Aurora: *...but also, for them I think the empowerment comes in it being done. I think that, you know, because it's possibly more frustrating to have your voice heard. And then nothing changed...It's like a meeting, I think I was in recently, [unintelligible] the pupil had just started the school and in his plan, it said that he needed a one to one at all times...And the young person did not want a one to one...And so he kind of voiced that. And then the SENCo listened and said, 'Okay', and so we said, well, what can that look like then? How can that support look like? And we kind of talked through it with him...it was being acted upon. That was the powerful bit because he said that lots and lots of times before but no one had listened. Or listened and not done.*  
...

Belle: *But is there something about actually sometimes we are used then in that role to help enable that?... You know, they could have done all of that by themselves. But it kind of took you to come in, to just back it up and say, you just need to do it. Just listen to what he's said.*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 4*

Participants described how being a supportive '*critical friend*' to the system can enable key members to reflect on their practice and make changes to empower, and respond to, pupil voice. Participants also constructed the EP role as gently and supportively challenging systems about their assumptions of pupil voice to shift narratives and encourage the promotion of pupil voice within the system.

Sally: *...and if, if we can shift a narrative around a young person as well, that's so powerful because it's, you know, these young people's they have, you know, narratives kind of get around them and that can, that, those narratives are so powerful as to whether they are going to thrive, you know, whether they're given a support, whether they're understood, and I think that's why you know, their truth and advocating for them is so important to, to shift how other people see them so that they can understand them and support them.*

Researcher: *Yeah, no, I like that kind of like shifting the narrative. That's really nice...You know, how difficult or easy can it be to kind of shift that narrative I suppose?*

Sally: *Sometimes you do feel like, it's sometimes you know the narratives can be so negative, and I'm th-like how am I going to gently challenge it. You know, it requires courage, but that's our job.*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 1*

Participants described the EP role as 'empowering' pupil voice through a range of ways and working at various levels within the system. For example, empowering children and young people at the individual or group level by listening to their voices, treating their voices as valuable and advocating for them as their 'ally'. Another way that participants constructed the EP role as empowering pupil voice was at the systems level by gently challenging and supporting systems to be open to pupil voice, listen to what pupils have to say, and make changes in response. In this way, EPs can be thought of as vehicles for the promotion of social justice for children and young people by

challenging the oppressive systems that frequently 'silence' and 'marginalise' children and young people (Freire, 2010).

**1c EPs reinforcing power differentials.**

**4.2.3 Theme 1, Subtheme 1c: EPs reinforcing power differentials.** Participants alluded to how the empowerment of pupil voice by EPs can be constrained by the systems and processes that they have a duty to fulfil, including the duty to safeguard and protect children from harm. This is highlighted by the following extract,

- Sally: *I do think one of the challenges is when they've built that trust of you and you then, you know, share that information and then next time they might not want to share. You know, go or they just might not. That's, that sometimes I think, I think just-*
- ...  
Gillian: *It's a safeguarding concern. You've got to share it. Of course you're breaking their trust. Or they might think you're breaking their trust.*
- Sally: *Yeah, and then yeah, it's just that that part's hard because they built that trust with you and then they don't want to like tell you anything else...later.*

*Extract from Focus Group 1*

They also discussed the incongruencies between empowering and safeguarding children and young people at the same time.

- Researcher: *... Just wondering what kind of, are there any other reasons you think that other people might not necessarily want to share that power with young people?*
- ...  
Ariel: *It comes back to some of those stories that they hold, sorry Tiana, that maybe that's part of the reason that they, you know, they have a certain view, like you just said Merida, about well they're naughty. That's maybe their story they're, they hold of that young person. So then it affects then what they hold as being valuable, the knowledge that they have.*
- ...  
Belle: *I think it's also about the narrative we hold about children and childhood...So the shift in how we view children as a society has changed and more like protectionist knowing, like with the safeguarding stuff, it didn't used to be called that, it used to be called Child Protection, didn't it? So it's, you know, the language has shifted. And I think it's that, you know, we don't if we're protecting somebody or something, and that's our model of how children should be treated, then how can we also then empower them and sometimes people can't quite understand that through empowerment, you can then protect...*

*Extract from Focus Group 4*

A similar point is highlighted by Race & Frost (2022) who illustrate that children's voices are often 'lost' in bureaucratic, adult-led safeguarding processes which can result in children and young people feeling 'disempowered' and reinforces traditional, hierarchical positions of adults knowing what is best for the child. However, Belle suggests an important reframing to understand how through empowering pupil voice, adults can also protect at the same time. Additionally, participants discussed the position of 'power' that EPs hold within their role.

Gillian: *And I remember as a Trainee, I worked with a child who was, who had cystic fibrosis and he missed a lot of school and they kept him down a year and he was just becoming what we call now EBSA but in those, we're talking 20 years ago it wasn't called that, and they asked me to come in and see this young person who was in year six, and he told me all his friends had gone to secondary and they've kept him down and he doesn't want to go to school [because it was embarrassing] and there were so many things and it really resonates with me and I really stood up with him and for him and he got escalated straight back to secondary, to his year and since that moment as a Trainee, I thought yes, that is really where I'm at.*

Researcher: *Yeah, and that shows the power of pupil voice in practice, doesn't it?*

Gillian: *Yeah, and we're so, like, privileged to be in that position because we are powerful. Um, we can be very powerful for children. So yeah...*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 1*

Merdith: *We have, um, again... our questionnaires that go out to young people...I've not had one, any young person say I don't want that to go to anybody. But how, how free and open they feel about saying that might be another matter.*

Callie: *...*  
*There's also that challenge as well if a young person might say, you know, I want this or I need this to progress, and then you go away and you think actually on reflection, maybe that isn't the best for them, and maybe something else is better.*

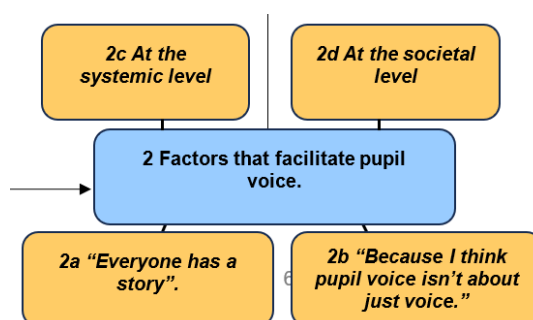
Izzy: *...*  
*Yeah and that's difficult isn't it? Because in a sense, because we're working, there is a sense that whilst we don't want to go in and position ourselves as experts it is kind of part of our job to be experts and to understand those systems and understand what the options and possibilities might be in a way that the child might not. And so yeah.*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 2*

Within a traditional hierarchical education system, EPs entering that system as professional adults bring with them an inherent position of power (Wicks, 2013). This position of power is reinforced by the way in which the EP role is constructed – in the way it is self-constructed or constructed-by-others. The way that EPs then apply this power to the promotion and enactment of pupil voice can have altering effects. It can be useful in promoting and empowering pupil voice by advocating for children and young people or conversely, it can have the opposite effect and reinforce

existing hierarchical power differentials resulting in pupils being placed in 'disempowered' positions within the system.

### 4.3 Theme 2: Factors that facilitate 'pupil voice'.



This theme attends to the factors that participants discussed as facilitating pupil voice in their practice. This theme enabled the researcher to contextualise 'pupil voice' in EP practice and consider factors that may underpin constructions of meaning, value, and purpose.



#### 4.3.1 Theme 2, Subtheme 2a: "Everyone has a story".

*(Participants engaged in reviewing the answers they had added to their 'So What' word cloud answering the question 'What values drive your practice with pupil voice?')*

Researcher: *No, that's really, I suppose that kind of talks to I suppose you know, we all will have a journey with pupil voice won't we? Which is individual to us, and which kind of encompasses sort of our beliefs and values around pupil voice as well...*

Gillian: *Yeah, so it's really, it's lovely being aware of your own, what you bring, whether it's triggering for you or where you do that work or whatever is interesting...*

Fran: *But I think there's a reason why EPs become EPs. [affirmative] I've not met an EP that doesn't have a story. Everyone has a story...*

*Extract from Focus Group 1*

Participants discussed how 'the stories we bring' can influence the way in which EPs work with pupil voice is carried out. They also described how 'pupil voice' is at the heart of EP practice illustrating how important and valuable it is to the participants involved in this research as highlighted by Gillian's quote below.

Gillian: *Yes, because, because when I said at the beginning when I was a child, I never felt listened to. So for me, it's like I want to make someone feel valued and heard and listened to and appreciated. Because what better thing can you give someone?...*

*Extract from Focus Group 1*

Participants also discussed some of the core values that drive their work. These values were gathered into word clouds for each focus group (*Appendix 8*) which were used to prompt reflection and discussion. A sample of the values that participants identified as underpinning their practice are presented in the quotes below.

Researcher: *Thank you. Thank you very much for that. (reading word cloud) Just...Child- centred. Children have a right to be heard. Curiosity. Understanding. For all children to be treated with the same respect as adults. How would you want to be treated? Acceptance. Children's views are important. Respect. Empowering. Always keeping the child at the centre of your work. Vulnerable pupils are often marginalised and pupil voice combats this. Positive change is very difficult to achieve without gaining the views of young people. Autonomy. Engagement. Motivation and Alliance again...*

*Extract from Focus Group 2*

Gillian: *I mean, I felt strongly, I put lots I felt strongly about up there but one that I felt really strongly was about 'equality'. Because I felt like if we don't get their voice, it's not equal, is it?*

Sally: *Yeah, agree.*

Gillian: *So it's the heart of what we do, it has to be*

*Extract from Focus Group 1*

It is clear from discussions that participants all shared similar values about pupil voice in their practice and considered it to be 'at the heart' of their role. Discussions also illuminated how constructions of the 'value' of pupil voice are underpinned by the personal stories, histories, and experiences that EPs bring with them into role. Other values that were discussed closely aligned with language used within national legislation (e.g., ALNET 2018) relating to pupil voice which considers it to be an issue of 'equality' and 'empowerment over decision-making'. Therefore, this finding suggests that when considering factors that facilitate pupil voice in practice it is important to consider the personal beliefs and values that individual EPs might hold as well as how these values relate to those enshrined within wider systemic policies and national legislation. By attending to the values that drive practice, it makes it possible to consider ways that EPs can bridge the gap (if one exists) between their espoused and enacted values relating to pupil voice (Boswell et al., 2021; Sewell, 2022).

2b "Because I think pupil voice isn't about just voice."

**4.3.2 Theme 2, Subtheme 2b: "Because I think pupil voice isn't about just voice."** This sub-theme refers to the discussions that participants engaged in relating to the factors that enable them to promote and empower pupil voice in their own individual practice. Participants discussed different practical factors within their work that facilitate the promotion of pupil voice. For example, thinking of creative ways to gather pupil voice (a list of the different approaches and methods discussed by participants can be found in *Appendix 11*).

Another example participants gave was how they create different opportunities for voice to be heard whether this be through direct work with the young person or working with those closest to the child or young person, acknowledging that voice can take on different mediums (i.e., behaviour, what is known about the young person), or by advocating for opportunities for pupil voice at a local authority or systems level.

Researcher: *Yeah. So it's a lot about kind of that giving them a sense of, not just a sense, giving them agency isn't it?...What kind of tools, approaches or things do you do to give them a sense of empowerment and agency?*

Belle: *I think sometimes it's like, other colleagues, I don't use them. But "I" statements, I think, can we bring the young person present even if they're not present? So I think it's almost like that, I mean I have had young people at like reviews and things and making sure that they're part of that.*

*Extract from Focus Group 4*

Pam: *There's drawings now in the pupil voice section on some of their Education and Healthcare Needs plans that have been issued and they're quite often drawings of the child that they've done of themselves and things like that. So I've not seen that before. That's fairly recently so-so that's-that's sounding like maybe you were saying about whether people are receiving those alternative ways of gathering pupil voice it, potentially yeah, I have-have seen drawings being used on formal documents. So that's a positive, isn't it?*

...

Angela: *Sorry. When we were doing the SEN support plans, I worked with reception children. They couldn't access the pupil voice parts. And we used to do it all visually. Very simple, you know, smiley face, sad face and all the pictures and they would simply sort them then we would just photograph it and it would go in like that rather than typed up as their pupil voice. I guess that's similar to what you were saying. It's finding those accessible ways and being willing to adapt to find those ways as well.*

*Extract from Focus Group 4*

Participants also talked about the need to be flexible and adaptable in their work with pupil voice to create authentic and accessible opportunities for all children and young people to be able to share their voice.

Belle: *I think it's about purpose actually, because again, part of this like strategic stuff is about 'oh, we need to get the views of young people'. Well for why? Talk to me about how come? You know, what-what are we asking of them? We're not going to be just setting up a forum for them just to sit there...*

Merida: *...  
I think as well, and it's a tricky one. But when, when young people just don't want to talk to you, that's sorts of pupil voice isn't it?*

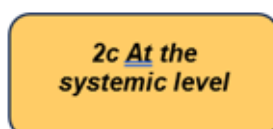
*Extract from Focus Group 4*

Researcher: *... So it's what other ways are there to gather pupil voice in other ways, and you've kind of mentioned some ways, you know, the cards, capturing videos, drawings, those kinds of things. Are there any of the other kind of ways that you would capture pupil voice for-for those particular young people?*

Pam: *I think with the very little ones, you would probably use more play based, as well. So I try and have a view from the adults about what they might like. So I'm thinking very little children, and maybe getting down with them and having a little play, offering them things that they are, told that they prefer and having a little interaction and writing that up in a way that shows respect and value for that as well.*

*Extract from Focus Group 3*

Overall, this sub-theme relates to the ways in which participants make adaptations to their own practice and constructions of pupil voice (meaning and value) to facilitate the promotion and empowerment of pupil voice.



**4.3.3 Theme 2, Subtheme 2c: At the systemic level.** Participants discussed the systemic factors that support the promotion and empowerment of pupil voice. For example, the interacting factors between children and young people, school systems and key stakeholders (i.e., child, parents, staff, the EP).

Researcher: *...What extent do you feel that pupil voice does lead to meaningful change when you have kind of gone and gathered it and presented it back to schools maybe, or presented it to parents, or even with the young people?...*

Maggie: *Like Meredith said it really depends on the individual and the school and where they are on that cycle of change as well that plays such a big, and the relationship that you already have between the EP and like the SENCo, for example, it's just dependent on so many factors.*



Arizona: *...It's just what's possible I guess within the capacity and limitations that you have but yeah, it really varies then because some children you'll feel like they've really been involved in the process more and you've got their views really strongly in their report and then other children it doesn't feel like that so much so it does really vary.*

Meredith: *I think it does matter how we communicate with schools you know taking any blame away, you know, having conversations where your highlighting what's worked can be helpful and yeah, so there's all sorts of ways that we can promote change, and yeah, I don't think the sledgehammer cracking nuts is the right approach that I would be comfortable with so if you are going to talking about 'can you please listen to the young person's voices?' it's about how you present that in a way that schools can feel open to, receptive.*

*Extract from Focus Group 2*

Participants described how supportive relationships with schools was a facilitative factor in enabling schools to empower pupil voice. This relates to the way in which the EP is sometimes constructed by schools as giving 'permission' for them to move away from traditional models of dichotomous power structures towards a more collaborative structure that gives equal value to pupil voice.

Merida: *"How many meetings do we go into and they say like 'but you're the expert'. And I'm like, I say I'm not, you're the expert on you."*

Researcher: *It's almost like, kind of them kind of needing the permission to-*

Belle: *It is*

Researcher: *To act and listen, isn't it?*

*Extract from Focus Group 4*

They also discussed how the system values, ethos and culture can be facilitative if positive constructions are held about the value of pupil voice.

Researcher: *"I'm just wondering whether you might be able to kind of provide a bit more, um, some examples of what factors might kind of make you feel like oh, yeah, this child, these people really, really know this child or young person and they're really representing their views, I was just wondering..."*

Aurora: *I think it's like that the empathy that they have, and the way they talk about the young people. And I think you know if I ever hear, oh they say that they're 'naughty', I don't really ever hear-hear that much anymore. But I think you can tell by the way they-they describe the young person and the way they focus on their behaviours or, you know, those kinds of things and whether I can see them taking their perspective in the meeting, in the consultation. So I think it's more about those the way they phrase things already in their mind, and-*

*Extract from Focus Group 4*

The systems' values regarding pupil voice can also enable more opportunities at the systems level for pupil voice to be heard outside of traditional forums and processes as exemplified by Holly,

Holly: *I think we, so as part of the inclusion strategy the piece of work that we did we went to, um, so over the summer, there's an organisation... it's a parent group. For parents of children with additional needs. And so this, in the summer they held like activities in the park for parents and their families... we did this survey with one of the children there and it was really, he had, you know, his, he was so insightful... and he wasn't in a setting at the time and his mum came over and said it was really nice that he was able to express this because he's not in a setting. So quite often, his voice isn't heard and he doesn't have kind of that, I suppose that teacher input to feed back to a higher level but it's really nice to get his, you know, to get his views on things...*

*Extract from Focus Group 3*

Researcher: *What-what about kind of in your in-individual casework when you're kind of working with schools and parents, and parents also just wondering, how that is valued?*

Holly: *In terms of the autism in schools work, you know, the staff that we've-we've had the kind of the initial discussions and they've, you know, these values are very similar, I think in their schools. I mean, that's also I think, why they want to be part of that really, you know, they're really invested, um.*

*Extract from Focus Group 3*

This reinforces the importance of there being a shared culture and mindset at the systemic level to promote and empower pupil voice. It also reflects how when working within a traditionally hierarchical structure, the shift towards a system that respects and values pupil voice can often be set in motion from the 'top-down'. This is reiterated by Osborne (2003, p.35) who insinuates that '*it is the headteacher who is usually best placed to initiate and support change*'. The view of shared discourse and understandings of pupil voice as a facilitative factor was recurrent throughout the focus groups.

Overall, facilitation, openness, positive relationships, and collaboration were all crucial factors in the promotion of pupil voice at the systems level. It was important that the system (either at the school or authority level) enshrined these values and were ready, willing and took active steps to listen authentically to the voices of children and young people.

**2d At the societal level**

**4.3.3 Theme 2, Subtheme 2d: At the societal level.** Participants discussed the wider societal factors that facilitate the empowerment of pupil voice. For example, reference was made to the societal constructions around pupil voice and childhood in the extract below,

Belle: *...So I think it's a wider kind of society thing about how we see children...But so yeah, so I think that's something about actually how we see children in our society as well. And that goes back to those grander narratives that possibly are held at a wider level. So I think, you know, there's lots of sort of shifts. That's possibly being changed with like climate change. And the young people's movement around that, that actually perhaps that might shift some of these big narratives, possibly? I don't know, I'm ever hopeful, but yeah.*

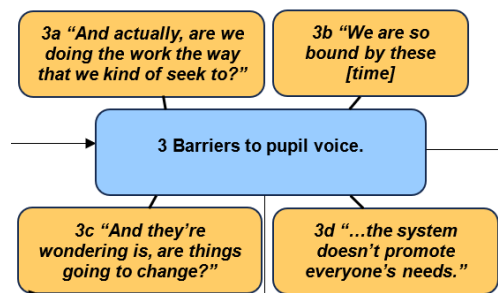
...

Merida *I think it's changing as well as, um, just think about I've been doing an essay recently on social skills interventions for autistic children and young people. And as the views like of society and the neurodiversity movement, as that has shifted views...*

*Extract from Focus Group 4*

Participants referenced the fact that societal factors and discourse can influence the way in which pupil voice is conceptualised and valued within society and can subsequently filter down into school systems.

#### 4.4 Theme 3: Barriers to 'pupil voice'



This theme encompasses factors that participants alluded to as 'barriers' to the promotion and empowerment of pupil voice in their practice. Similar to the facilitating factors, this theme enabled the researcher to explore the reciprocal relationship between these factors, participants' constructions of pupil voice and influence on practice.

3a "And actually, are we doing the work the way that we kind of seek to?"

**4.4.1 Theme 3, Subtheme 3a: "And actually, are we doing the work the way that we kind of seek to?"** Participants acknowledged that it is important to reflect on the 'stories we bring' as they form our frames of reference and the constructions that we hold. As such, they drive our practice, sometimes in facilitative ways but potentially sometimes in unhelpful or 'triggering' ways.

Gillian: *We should have a CPD session on that, on people's stories.*

Sally: *That's so true.*

Fran: *Because I don't know what, because we're telling stories of other people all the time. The stories we tell of other people are always going to somehow be influenced by our own story. So we sort of need to be aware of that, I think, especially also if we're telling young people's, you know, they can say something that could be very triggering, because we had a similar experience. You were also excluded or whatever.*

*Extract from Focus Group 1*

Therefore, highlighting the importance of practitioners working through any potential unconscious biases or assumptions that could interfere with their practice. In this way, practitioners can identify some of the potential barriers preventing them from transforming their espoused values into enacted values as illustrated by the following quote,

Researcher: *Thank you...(reading word cloud) Making sure that pupil voice feeds into that and then it informs the kind of targets and pathways and plans. And also the kind of evaluative,*

*more evaluative level so like evaluating kind of system level stuff like inclusion, accessibility, but also kind of our own practice. Coproduction. Making sure that children and young people feel valued and have their voices heard. And making sure that we're kind of, we are also kind of reflecting on our own values. And actually, are we doing the work the way that we kind of seek to?*

*Extract from Focus Group 3*

**3b "We are so bound by these [time]**

#### **4.4.2 Theme 3, Subtheme 3b: "We are so bound by these [time] constraints."**

Participants talked about some of the challenges they face when attempting to gather and promote pupil voice. For example, at the individual child level, they often find that their role as someone 'outside' of the system can be either a facilitating factor or a barrier. As illustrated by Merida,

Merida: *I think as well, and it's a tricky one. But when, when young people just don't want to talk to you, that's sorts of pupil voice isn't it?*

Belle: *It is*

Merida: *And say, you know, I met with a young person, and I said, 'I'd like to do this, is that okay?', he went, 'No', and I said, 'all right I'm back in next week, I'll come say hi, again, if you want to chat, then you can, but you don't have to'. And I went back the next week and he said 'I still don't want to talk to you' and I said 'Okay'. And that was that. But the school found that tricky. They were like but we need his views? And I said, 'Yes, you do'. But he's not gonna give them to me. He doesn't know me. I'm a stranger...*

*Extract from Focus Group 4*

Participants noted that the nature of the EP role tends to limit the time they can invest to develop a relationship with pupils,

Researcher: *They feel safe enough and kind of have that real rapport with you to kind of [crossover]*

Gillian: *Yeah, we also get the opposite of what, we also get the opposite where obviously, we're strangers and we're just, we're literally hit and run aren't we?... They don't know us.*

*Extract from Focus Group 1*

This can make it difficult to build up the trust and positive relationships that are necessary to gather authentic 'pupil voice'. This is particularly illustrated in the language used by EPs to describe the nature of their work as being like a '*hit and run*'. Other participants also discuss how this 'hit-and-

run' nature of their work can impact relationships with schools and, as such, outcomes from the work they engage in.

Maggie: *... I think that's what I found the most difficult because it has taken time for school staff, for example, to kind of move along that cycle...And I think that's really frustrating like we are so bound by these time constraints. And yeah, it's just really frustrating. But what can you do like yeah...*

Callie: *I was just thinking about actually my experience, limited experience, and you sort of, you know, where the schools at I think as a trainee, you have got that time to be able to go in and out of a school and just see where they're at in terms of that, that change cycle and being able to adapt, I suppose to that situation... but it is that you're able to go back and keep going back and building that relationship over time.*

Maggie: *And I'm thinking Meredith, when you were able to do non-statutory work and you had like relate-you could build relationships with the staff and SENCos over time, did you notice there was a difference in?*

Meredith: *Yeah, and I think part of it was because there was an alliance with the schools, and the schools felt supported...*

Cristina: *It's hard to be like the critical friend when you haven't built up the friend bit...*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 2*

These extracts highlight the potentially jarring effect that not having the time to develop relationships and then asking children and young people to give voice away to a 'stranger' might have on a young person. The language used by participants suggest that the act of 'giving voice away' could even be distressing for children and young people. They also illustrate how this might feel for schools and EPs when working together without first establishing a secure relationship that allows them to 'take risks' when working to promote and enact pupil voice.

Izzy: *And I think often for young people, especially in our [traded] model of, you know, only seeing them once that can be quite a big difficulty as well, can't it? You know, that it's sort of telling them all these things and then they have no idea whether any of them are going to be followed up or you know, and might be left with a sort of feeling that it wasn't a particularly useful experience for them, potentially. Or not being able to see the direct follow through from kind of what we did with them to what a, the difference that that made.*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 2*

Time constraints also meant that participants experienced uncertainty about whether pupil voice had been acted upon, or if it had been 'tokenistic'. In the discussion, Izzy linked this to certain models of service delivery that mean EPs can only see the child or young person once therefore EPs have limited opportunities to reflect or evaluate change as an outcome of pupil voice. This point links to pupil voice having purpose and being acted upon as a significant factor in the pursuit of meaningful

change. It is also illustrative of the how the wider legislative system does not place significant value on the often-lengthy process of gathering, promoting, and enacting pupil voice.

Participants also made reference to the boundaries of the EP role in that they are not always the ones to make decisions about what action comes out of pupil voice. This could be because of EPs position within the various systems they work with to influence change.

Researcher: *And how easy do you think it is, kind of at the moment, to use pupil voice to kind of lead to meaningful change in some of the, kind of maybe the kind of more strategic stuff or?*

Angela: *...  
It's whether that has, it's hard to know, isn't it? Will that have an impact long term? How? It-it's probably out of our hands that doesn't involve us.*

*Extract from Focus Group 3*

Researcher: *So a lot of kind of coproduction at the individual level, but also kind of further up as well...And kind of that people seem to share kind of similar beliefs around-around pupil voice actually leading to meaningful change. Is that something that you'd-you've come across?*

Pam: *And I'm not sure that the statutory process is, as a process itself, how much weight or capacity it has in its legalities to-to hear that and put actionable, um, weight behind it as well? Because I think as EPs we would always gather it and report it, but I'm never sure when that actually comes to making those final decisions, say on an education panel. Or in a tribunal hearing, um, how much weight I think is then placed on-on the child or young person's views? I couldn't answer it. I think it's a gap I have in my, my own mind, but I can't say that I've ever particularly been aware of it being a strong line that's-that's pulled through in those processes.*

*Extract from Focus Group 3*

Systemic constraints included lack of time, money, and limited resources both at the school and authority level. For example, participants talked about how it is not always practicable or possible for school systems to enact some of the points raised by children and young people due to limited capacity. Thus, raising questions of how to empower pupil voice within a system with finite resources?

Arizona: *...We've kind of got the space to focus on it, it's so ingrained in how we work that it is hard to not do it in a way that like you said, it's so much easier to overlook when you've got so many other things to be thinking about lessons like planning like pressures from above all those things, so...*

*Extract from Focus Group 2*

Similarly, participants discussed challenges relating to amplifying different voices and the resources required to make the process more equitable and accessible. For example, some participants referred to engaging with pupil voice in secondary and post-16 settings a lot more than

they did in primary settings. Participants considered whether this challenge was reflective of the value they placed on different voices. However, it could also relate to 'professional uncertainty' about how to engage with younger children and advocate for this to be a priority within the system (Bloom et al., 2020).

Researcher: *Um, and I'm just wondering kind of how, how would you say that these values guide the way that you work and the way that you practice with pupil voice?... Is it easy to kind of make sure that these are kind of all the way throughout the process of working with children and young people?*

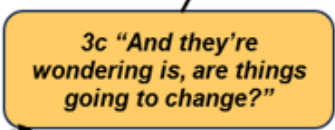
...  
Ariel: *I'd like to think so?*

...  
Belle: *I think I find it a lot easier with-with older pupils. That's why I do a lot more work there, I've got a view about how I work in primary school, actually, do I do the same? Or value it the same time? Possibly I don't.*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 4*

This links to ideas around adult-led decisions based on capacity and which voices are given more 'value' than others. As Taines (2013) pointed out this can maintain traditional power dynamics where adults choose who to listen to, how to listen to them and when to do so.

In summary, participants described how they face several practical barriers to the promotion and enactment of pupil voice. These barriers are related to time, space, capacity, service delivery models and resources. It also links with the EPs position within the wider system as to the amount of power they themselves have to uphold and empower pupil voice within processes at different levels. It is also important to reflect on how the way that EPs might interact with these barriers could reflect their implicit assumptions, beliefs, and constructions about pupil voice.



3c "And they're wondering is, are things going to change?"

#### **4.4.3 Theme 3, Subtheme 3c: "And they're wondering is, are things going to change?"**

One of the main barriers discussed by participants was pupil voice not being acted upon and children and young people not seeing the impact of their 'given voice'. Participants described how this increases the risk of 'tokenism' and shifts power back to the adults who decide whether or not to enact what pupils have said.

Izzy: *And I think often for young people, especially in our model of, you know, only seeing them once that can be quite a big difficulty as well, can't it? You know, that it's sort of telling them all these things and then they have no idea whether any of them are going to be followed up or you know, and might be left with a sort of feeling that it wasn't a*



*particularly useful experience for them, potentially. Or not being able to see the direct follow through from kind of what we did with them to what a, the difference that that made...*

...  
Maggie: *...And like you said, Izzy, you worry that you are opening a bit of a can of worms if you've gone and especially for a statutory piece of work, you've maybe met the child, once. You've talked about things that they might want to change about school, and you're leaving them with that, that's what I felt uncomfortable, I can deal with my own uncertainty. But my worry is I'm leaving the young person with more uncertainty about you know, they feel like they've been quite vulnerable and they've shared something with you and they're wondering, is, are things going to change? Are the things that I've shared with you actually going to happen?*

*Extract from Focus Group 2*

Belle: *I guess that point about the targets and things who they're for, I mean I often I find working with an older young person I'll say look this plan is actually for the adults to tell them what to do. So I reframe it...*

Aurora: *I think it is that dif-the difficulty of like, sort of them being in the meeting and being involved, having their voice heard, having it reflected, but also, for them I think the empowerment comes in it being done. I think that, you know, because it's possibly more frustrating to have your voice heard. And then nothing changed. It's sort of that agents of change thing, isn't it?*

*Extract from Focus Group 2*

Participants raise questions around whether the enactment of the right to pupil voice is authentic or if it is being applied through 'tokenistic processes'; that may ultimately disempower children and young people, such as completing a section on a form or gathering voice and not acting upon it. They also question whether it is the role of the EP to gently challenge the practice around gaining pupil voice in some of these processes so that it isn't overlooked or gathered as part of a 'tick-box' exercise as illustrated in the quote below,

Belle: *... You know, so, it's about being really purposeful as well and not, you know, I think it's easier in our day to day work. I think it gets harder when you're thinking about more broad topics really or, you know, how you make it as part of the system and that's where it becomes harder because then it can feel tokenistic and is it just a tickbox? So yeah, we've got school council. Okay, well who sits on the school council? The ones who can shout the loudest? Marvellous. [laughter] Or maybe not, maybe they've got a really good, like voting system. So you know, it's fine. But yeah, it's, I think it's for me, it's about purpose as well. So not just there for the sake of it, it's got to be and then acted upon, isn't it?*

*Extract from Focus Group 4*

Participants described how sometimes children and young people may be spoken for. This could be viewed as a perfectly valid mechanism for gathering pupil voice through the people that know them best. However, it could also be viewed as being disempowering by viewing pupil voice as

limited in some way thereby requiring the voice of another to speak for them. Participants also discussed how important it is to engage in reflection to check out underlying assumptions about pupil voice to take steps towards minimising the risk of engaging in tokenistic practice. In doing so, this demonstrates the importance of reflective practice and how the pupil's voice can be valued and empowered by EPs.

Arizona: *I think it's almost worse if you gather the views without actually listening to them because I'm just remembering from when I was like in school and from I remember that happening where the headteacher would, you know, would send a survey round and we'd all be like, 'No, we don't like this idea'. And she goes 'Well, we've gathered your views, but we're gonna do it anyway'. You know, and then you think well, why bother? I'd rather you didn't even ask so you've got to be careful, I guess about doing as a tick box because that could actually just be even more frustrating and, like, disempowering then if you hadn't even asked in the first place, so...*

*Extract from Focus Group 2*

Participants described how important it was for systems to overcome risks of engaging in 'tokenistic' pupil voice practice by ensuring that pupil voice initiatives have purpose. They also discussed how the risk of engaging in tokenistic practice can be perpetuated by different understandings of what pupil voice is. Participants reflected on how the role of the EP in such instances might to be to challenge or question the intention and purpose behind strategic pupil voice initiatives.

A yellow rounded rectangular box with a black border, containing the text: 3d "...the system doesn't promote everyone's needs."

#### **4.4.4 Theme 3, Subtheme 3d: "...the system doesn't promote everyone's needs."**

Participants spent some time reflecting on some of the systemic barriers that hinder the empowerment of pupil voice. For example, participants discussed how pupils can be 'disempowered' by processes where adults make decisions 'in the best interest of children and young people'. Specifically in relation to medical diagnoses and processes.

Belle: *...I know it's good practice with the sensory impairment teams who are pres-, they often, especially the hearing impaired team, they follow their children through from birth. So there is quite a lot of pupil voice work that's done that is then fed back and up to, and they see them on a much more regular basis...*

Merida: *I think that is an interesting one. This is, this is my niche. But I've been sort of reading about, obviously cochlear implants. Decisions are made before kids can decide that. So it's like, it's an invasive procedure. That's not like medically necessary. But you know, it's because it's because professionals say your child needs to hear so they*

*need a cochlear implant, and often pe-, not well, no often people get to adulthood, and they go, I didn't ask for that, I didn't want that.*

...  
Belle: *No. But it's about the wider systems, it's about the assumptions that are being made for those kind of treatments.*

Merida: *Well, it's similar with autism isn't it? You know, until quite recently, people didn't really ask and it's only like, you know, autistic adults sort of going, no one asks us these things, and us going right well we're going to tell you what you need. Yeah, we're going to teach you how to make eye contact.*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 4*

This raises questions around what value is given to pupil voice in circumstances where adults consider themselves to know 'what's best' for the child or young person as well as the constructions held about what change is needed to support their needs. In what way are children and young people given voice in these situations? And what purpose does it have if adults have the final say?

Other participants made reference to the way that systems can disempower or 'silence' the voices of some children and young people and how the role of the EP is to advocate and empower the voices of these young people.

Fran: *Um, I'm Fran, I'm a Senior Educational Psychologist...Um, for me, I became an EP to listen to people, um, because I think it's [pause] so important and children are at the centre of what we do so listening to children is, like, all the more important. Um, I think that listening isn't just about those that can speak. I think it's about those that don't have a voice either literally, or because the system has kind of quietened them, and I think that's our job, really, is to make their voice [flower?].*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 1*

Participants referred to traditional pupil voice initiatives and the way in which they are implemented within the system questioning whether they empower all children and young people equally, whether they lead to meaningful change or whether they are implemented as part of a 'tokenistic tick-box' exercise.

Belle: *... You know, so, it's about being really purposeful as well and not, you know, I think it's easier in our day to day work. I think it gets harder when you're thinking about more broad topics really or, you know, how you make it as part of the system and that's where it becomes harder because then it can feel tokenistic and is it just a tickbox? So yeah, we've got school council. Okay, well who sits on the school council? The ones who can shout the loudest? Marvellous. [laughter] Or maybe not, maybe they've got a really good, like voting system. So you know, it's fine. But yeah, it's, I think it's for me, it's about purpose as well. So not just there for the sake of it, it's got to be and then acted upon, isn't it?*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 4*

Participants made reference to the uncertainty they experienced around '*what extent was [pupil voice] even carried forward?*'. This illustrates how EPs position within the wider system and bureaucratic processes can mean that they might be restricted in their ability to promote and carry the 'golden thread' of pupil voice forward depending on where they are situated within the wider system structure. This is particularly so where EPs may feel like 'lone voices' amplifying pupil voice within the wider system.

Researcher: *So would you say, kind of, with some of these values are they things that are shared with other people that you work with?*

...

Aurora: *...But I was thinking about like, um, EBSA cases like emotionally based, um, school non-attendance, isn't it?...And I was thinking, okay, so a child is telling us they don't want to go to school, but then we're doing everything in our power to try and get them back in to the school. And I think well what, is that part of pupil voice? And that's the system and the society telling us that that child should be in school because it's a legal requirement...*

Tiana; *And the nature of our work sometimes...we're not involved in an ongoing way. ...When we've been involved, so the EP has been involved, we've got the voice but what's happened with that? And we don't, we're not then part of that ongoing journey. And what happens? So yeah, I wonder. I wonder what that means for us as a-as a profession, um?*

Belle: *It's like say...that question you asked about who else sort of subscribes to this? Actually, are we lone voices in this promoting this sometimes you know? I don't know.*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 4*

This reflects potential differences in the espoused values held within the system and the challenge of working with these different values. Again, highlighting the hierarchical structure that remains within many of the processes and systems around children and young people. Therefore, if EPs, with their position of power, do not even have the influence to carry 'pupil voice' forward then how can we expect children and young people to be empowered? Participants raised questions about the purpose of pupil voice policy and legislation and whether espoused values can be translated into enacted values in a system that may not actively listen or make it easy to facilitate meaningful change. This is particularly so when governmental directives explicitly go against what pupils are voicing. For example, this can be demonstrated by Aurora's comment about emotionally based school non-attendance above. The issues discussed by participants relate to the idea of systems that disempower pupil voice whether that be through bureaucratic processes, differing constructions and narratives held within the system, or contrasting values. The end result is that pupil voice can be consequently 'silenced' and 'overlooked'.

#### 4.5 Theme 4: “The golden thread”

**4 “The golden thread.”**  
**(The process of facilitating change)**

This theme relates to the way in which participants described the process of maintaining the ‘golden thread’ of pupil voice throughout their practice and the various factors that support or hinder their ability to do so, linking this with themes 2 and 3. From discussions, it was clear that participants took actions to empower voice through their approaches to gather it and share it in ways that would lead to meaningful change. Participants viewed this as an ongoing process that involved interactions with individual children and young people, school staff, and overarching systems and processes. Participants described the different methods and approaches they used to gather and feedback pupil voice listing a range of tools and techniques they use stemming from Personal Construct Psychology. A list of these tools and techniques can be viewed in *Appendix 11*.

Participants talked about the importance of a ‘golden thread’ when working to empower pupil voice. This ‘golden thread’ carries pupil voice through from the process of elicitation to enactment. Participants articulated that within the boundaries of their role they can take measures to ensure this ‘golden thread’ by transforming pupil voice into provision and actionable outcomes as illustrated by Fran.

Researcher: *And is there a kind of particular way that you would maybe do that in your practice to make sure that their voices are heard?*

...  
Fran: *I think certainly when I work directly with young people, I will then briefly feedback to the staff afterwards if I can...And then obviously, we write written reports...and for some people that might be the first time they're hearing some of it. I think like, for me, a gold standard, if I was working with a young person is that I would be trying to help them think of their own targets and their own next steps and helping them to recognise that so it's the empowerment actually comes through them, not necessarily what other people are going to be doing.*

...  
*I sometimes do my provision, just literally based on [crossover], yeah, because I get them to do a sorting activity on the strategies that help them and don't help them. [laughter] I copy that table as a reminder and write my provision based on what they say because I just think 'well, if that's what helps them then why would I be trying to as an adult think that I know more than the person'. [affirmative] So I think yeah, it's about really following that golden, like thread almost.*

*Extract from Focus Group 1*

Participants also spoke about the uncertainty around that 'golden thread' persisting upwards through to different processes and parts of the system that EPs may not necessarily have access to due to their position within that system. As a result, participants spoke about how keeping hold of the 'golden thread' of pupil voice can become more challenging when attempting to facilitate change at the systemic level.

Pam: *...I'm never sure when that actually comes to making those final decisions, say on an education panel. Or in a tribunal hearing, um, how much weight I think is then placed on-on the child or young person's views? I couldn't answer it. I think it's a gap I have in my, my own mind, but I can't say that I've ever particularly been aware of it being a strong line that's-that's pulled through in those processes.*

Researcher: *Yeah, so kind of further up, that kind of process, whether pupil voice maybe gets lost in a way?*

Pam: *I think so.*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 3*

Participants also described the importance of shared values, practice, and discourse between team members and services to enable 'the golden thread' of pupil voice to feed into the wider system and lead to change. Participants considered how the role of the EP could be to explore constructions of pupil voice with the systems they work with to facilitate the enactment of their espoused values.

Izzy: *You know, this tension that we've talked about between hearing the pupil voice and what pupils want from their schools...and the actually the systems aren't prepared or able to listen to that really, because everyone's so constrained, aren't they? And so, ...what are they really valuing and wanting and it does feel quite tokenistic. If they're not then prepared to kind of respect and make the accommodations needed to really take that pupil voice on board. So I suppose in a way that does sort of come down to values doesn't it? They don't have that core burning desire.*

Cristina: *I was thinking a bit similar, like, maybe they do, but because they have all these pressures and they're trying to meet the needs of lots of children and they don't have enough staff or whatever else that they then kind of lose sight of that child's voice...*  
...

Maggie: *Yeah, and I used to feel quite cross if, like for example, I went to an annual review as a Trainee EP and the SENCo was really trying to get the young person to fill in this template with different boxes on and he didn't want to and they said but you have to... And I remember feeling quite cross at the time...but then now I think now we need to be more curious and empathetic towards you know, other people in these systems because that SENCo might not have known other tools to-...because it is so embedded in our practice and in our training...I feel like we should be finding time to kind of support others to learn other ways and to kind of talk about those beliefs and values about pupil voice before making assumptions or you know, holding any uncomfortable or negative feelings towards the situation.*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 2*

Participants discussed the process of empowering pupil voice in their individual casework, statutory casework and at strategic levels. The main way that participants reported amplifying pupil voice was through their written reports.

Researcher: *And just kind of thinking about these values that you've written down here...how are these kinds of reflected in your practice? How do you kind of make sure that you're, you know, advocating and making sure that it's accessible?...*

...

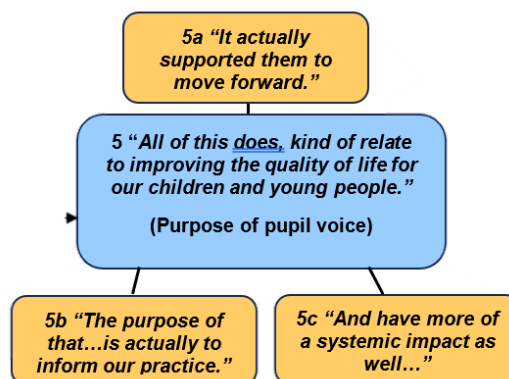
Pam: *I think that's a really important point because we, when we did our initial value-values work as a service around inclusion and the importance of coproduction and working alongside children and young people. We then changed our statutory advice templates to include, as Jan's described, a person-centred approach so using the PATH, planning alternative tomorrow's with hope, with the view that we wanted I suppose some of the, seeing some of the difficulties that I've described around pulling pupil voice through into some of those decision making and formal kind of forums. We wanted that weight to be there. So. So the PATH and the person-centred tools were intended, really to pull that golden thread through, not just from a box of pupil voice, but for it to be embedded throughout how we're talking about the child's needs, strengths, their hopes for the future. Those hopes for the future are then converted into targets. And those targets then marry to provision.*

Jan: *It's lovely, because when you read these reports, you can really get a feel for the child. Even without having met them or just reading through like, oh, you can really, yeah, get a sense of who they are because of those little bits like 'oh, they've got that as a dream' and that's really lovely, and so it puts them as, it makes them an individual, not just a number, another report, there's actually a little person behind that.*

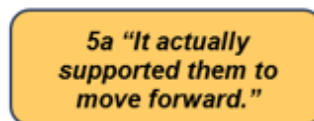
#### *Extract from Focus Group 3*

This discussion inspired reflection on the approaches and strategies that participants might take to uphold 'the golden thread' of pupil voice. The approach that participants described taking was to 'humanise' pupil voice throughout the often bureaucratic and disempowering processes that make up the education system, as evidenced by Jan's statement above (Bland & Atweh, 2007). It was clear in the language that participants used that pupil voice was a highly valued element of their practice which they upheld throughout their work from start to finish. The role of the EP in this instance was to amplify and empower pupil voice through different mediums and by utilising their knowledge of psychology at various levels to facilitate the transformation of espoused values into meaningful, positive change.

**4.6 Theme 5: “All of this does, kind of relate to improving the quality of life for our children and young people.””**



This theme alludes to the many ‘purposes’ that pupil voice can have in Educational Psychology practice, as constructed by the participants in this study. Relating to the previous theme of ‘the golden thread’, participants discussed the importance of pupil voice having a meaningful ‘purpose’.



**4.6.1 Theme 5, Subtheme 5a: “It actually supported them to move forward.”** Participants talked about the different ways that pupil voice can lead to meaningful change at different levels. At the individual child level, Pam (Focus Group 3) described how ‘pupil voice’ “*actually supported [the child or young person] to move forward*”. Similarly, participants described how at the individual child level, pupil voice can lead to the implementation of reasonable adjustments to support their educational needs.

Angela: *...I think that’s the other thing that can surprise people about children and young people is they don’t have wild expectations, like it’s quite reasonable, when you say to them ‘what do you want? What’s going to help?’, they do come up with things that are reasonable adjustments or things that they know are already available within their setting...*

Holly: *...And some of the responses from the young people across the [borough] like I was nearly in tears reading them because they were so lovely, like their knowledge on inclusion and what they think inclusion should look like, how things could be improved and they just offered some amazing suggestions. So kind of I think, you know, we spoke with like stakeholders spoke with SEN teams, with parents, out of all those people actually, like the pupil voice was the most powerful.*

*Extract from Focus Group 3*



A reasonable adjustment is underpinned by the Equality Act 2010 and requires that steps are taken to remove any disadvantage that a person with a disability or additional needs may be exposed to. The concept of reasonable adjustments also ensures equitable access to opportunities for all people regardless of their needs. This idea highlighted by Angela conceptualises pupil voice as encompassing issues of human rights (Lawson, 2008). Similarly, participants also described the benefits that pupil voice can result in including an improvement to the overall quality of life for children and young people by ensuring that their needs are met.

Researcher: *Yeah, (reading word cloud) reviewing, co-production. So using voice to create positive change. Reframing needs of children and young people. Giving them experience of being listened to and valued. Model for others value of pupil voice. Sharing people's views. Explaining what is behind a child's needs and views. Empowering people and share their views. Improving quality of life. Understanding. Empathy, and then for next steps, set goals with children and young people and what helps them get there. Pupil voice group within local authority. Use Mosaic approach. Check with schools if asked pupil views. Add to provision in reports. Challenge negative thoughts about the child. Sharing systems and Reviewing and Coproduction. There's some really lovely things on there, I love that. And I just, I think I kind of, I don't know whether kind of my thinking was that all of this kind of does. kind of relate to improving the quality of life for our children and young people.*

Gillian: *Yeah.*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 1*

Participants alluded to how pupil voice can be the factor that helps to 'punctuate' the system that might be in a state of homeostasis and lead to meaningful change (Dowling & Osborne, 2003). Other benefits mentioned included an increase in motivation, positive relationships and engagement that can result in a wider impact on the school system itself.

Researcher: *I'm just wondering how how we might as EPs kind of go in and show the value of pupil voice...Just wondering if anybody else has any examples of how they might show the value of pupil voice to people we work with?*

Meredith: *Well, yeah, well in this, if-if somebody is prepared to listen to the young pupil's voice and make a reasonable adjustment, and they experience increased motivation and engagement from that young person, or better 'behaviour', better attainment, then they learn that actually listening was a useful thing to do.*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 2*

This highlights the dual-purpose pupil voice can have for both pupils and school systems as discussed in the initial literature review (Bland & Atweh, 2007; McCartner & Woolner, 2011).

Participants described how the experience of positive benefits from pupil voice felt at the systems level can influence how receptive schools are towards pupil voice. This however suggests that pupil

voice is conditional and may only be accepted or listened to if it will benefit the school system in the long run. Therefore, this raises the question of who pupil voice benefits and what is its ultimate purpose?

**5b "The purpose of that...is actually to inform our practice."**

#### **4.6.2 Theme 5, Subtheme 5b: "The purpose of that...is actually to inform our practice."**

Participants also referred to the way in which pupil voice can lead to change at the practitioner level. For example, engaging in reflexive practice and making adjustments to the way in which they work based on feedback from children and young people. Participants described the different ways they enable pupil voice to be heard through informal verbal feedback or more formal processes such as feedback questionnaires.

Ariel: *Thinking about PATH, the one I did yesterday actually, gathering the young person's views afterwards about the process that didn't go so well for her and I said, well, I apologised and said, you know, maybe I chose the wrong approach...but I asked her what, what was good about it and what maybe she thought could have been a bit different. And actually, when she referred to it, she said no, I like the process, but I just felt that I've never heard any of these positive things before. And it's overwhelming doing it with everybody. And then I found out that they'd all been forced to come along...So I made an assumption that the school had kind of given them an opt in, which again, apologised for and said for the remaining ones that we do, obviously, now I can reflect on it. So I guess purpose in that moment was really helpful to get feedback to inform the next ones that I'm going to do, so I've got three more. Yeah, kind of like a little cycle like you [laughter].*

Aurora: *They get monotonous after a while [laughter]. But I do love a PATH, I do love a PATH.*

Ariel: *So, yeah, you've got to find those little moments that actually even though, yeah, gathering pupil voice just even informally can be really, really powerful.*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 4*

This also goes some way to balancing power differentials between professional adults and pupils by valuing and acting on what they said. Pupil voice also illuminated the various 'chinks' in the system that might disempower pupil voice e.g., the system dictating that voice **should** be heard, the power imbalances present during the process. By attending to these 'chinks', participants alluded to how they could adapt their practice to ensure that the process of gathering pupil voice is accessible and meaningful for children and young people going forward.

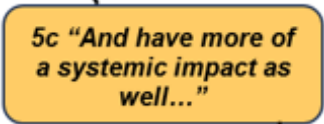
Participants expressed how pupil voice was crucial to inform the change that needs to occur in order to meet the young person's educational needs. The practitioner's role in this was to support and facilitate the enactment and co-production of pupil voice. They do this by upholding the 'golden thread' of pupil voice and bringing it through to action planning, co-constructing outcomes and placing value on what children and young people have to say, as illustrated by Gillian's response.

Researcher: *...How do we use pupil voice to make sure that justice is just-kind of found for these young people?*

Gillian: *I suppose a bit like I was saying before it's that making sure it's actioned, it's put into place, whether it's in your report, or we share it or empower them to share it. So it's not just yeah.*

*Extract from Focus Group 1*

Again, this attends to the traditional power imbalances that exist within the education system and places pupil voice as equally important and valuable as anyone else's voice within the process. Overall, participants expressed how they conceptualised their role as one of ensuring pupil voice is **actioned** to create meaningful change for children and young people. It was important that pupil voice had specific and clear purpose in their work so as not to be 'tokenistic'.



5c "And have more of a systemic impact as well..."

**4.6.3 Theme 5, Subtheme 5c: "And have more of a systemic impact as well..."** On a wider level, participants discussed the impact that pupil voice can have within the system. For example, they described how the amplification of pupil voice within education can help to shift power imbalances, lead to system-wide service developments, and provide children and young people with opportunities to participate in decision-making processes.

Aurora: *I've got a high school I worked with, who have been 5-6 years I've been with them now. And when I went in, it was very much they wanted me to go in and do a BAS, do a cognitive assessment then, in a little room, and then go and write it up. And I finally now got them and they're doing so they're doing PATHs for every annual review... they're doing all the year elevens we're doing a PATH, they're using it as an annual review update... But now I'm thinking okay, how can I empower the school now to run their own PATHs?*

Merida: *You've made a rod for your own back*

Aurora: *... But it is having a huge impact. And th-the sort of all of the annual reviews now, the EHCs will all be on, with PFA outcomes, they're all looking at they've got the young*

*person's voice in the outcomes. So I'm hoping that that then feeds into the EHC, they should do. So it is having an impact...*

*Extract from Focus Group 4*

Participants provided examples of work to empower school systems to incorporate pupil voice in processes such as the development of EHC plans. For example, Aurora talked about how they had supported a school to conduct a PATH for their pupils, referencing how this empowered school to hold pupil voice central to the process. Participants also discussed the role of EPs in facilitating change within the wider Local Authority system and the challenges involved in doing so.

*Meredith: Well one thing that I'll be taking away is to make a concerted effort to find out more about the local authority strategies, I'm going to find out where pupil voice is fitting in because it's an area I don't think I know about so I'll be interested finding that out.*

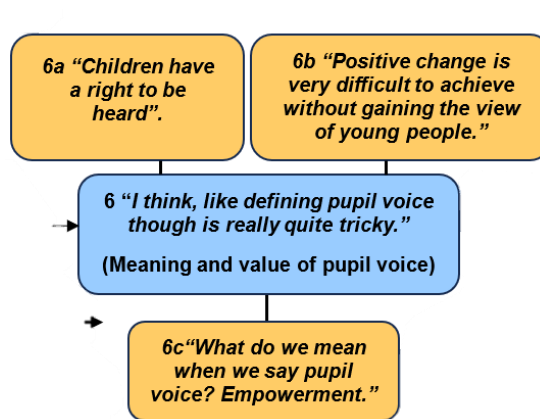
*Maggie: And also I do think that it's easy for us to say it's um, we can't do anything about it, you know, but I also think it's interesting to think about what the local authority strategies are, how far they are being more than tokenistic and then if there are any ways that we can try to affect change...because I do think that...we've got so much pressure and time constrained that we don't have enough time to think about those things but then I feel like with EPs we're always sitting around like saying 'this is wrong, this is wrong!' but then we don't really have the time and the space, in a way it's nice to have this space isn't it to think about it and really think about how important it is and how much it is part of our core values which then I think hopefully does inspire us to think about what we can do about that*

*Arizona: And have more of a systemic impact as well rather than we can do our best in our casework and the things we're doing day to day but actually if we spent a little bit more time doing that we could have a bigger impact overall.*

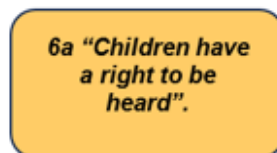
*Extract from Focus Group 2*

The purpose of pupil voice in this case is to facilitate changes within the wider system to amplify the voices of children and young people. This was cited by participants as a key part of their role that is not always possible due to other practical constraints such as time and capacity. Some other challenges were around the constructions and assumptions held within the system about what pupil voice is really for. Participants referenced this type of work as being central to their values and illustrated how transforming their espoused values into enacted values can be a challenge.

#### 4.7 Theme 6: **“I think, like defining pupil voice though is really quite tricky.”**



This theme attempts to draw together the core ideas discussed by participants pertaining to the meaning, purpose, and value of pupil voice in Educational Psychology practice, as well as the conditions needed to empower voice.



##### 4.7.1 Theme 6, Subtheme 6a: **“Children have a right to be heard.”** This subtheme

attempts to draw together participants’ constructions of the meaning of pupil voice. Participants talked about ‘pupil voice’ as being a basic human right. This was illustrated by the recurrence of the term ‘Human Right’ on focus group word clouds (Appendix 8) and emphasized by Belle in her quote below,

Researcher: *Um, and I'm just wondering kind of how, how would you say that these values guide the way that you work and the way that you practice with pupil voice?...*

...  
Belle: *It's just different, it-it just challenges something like, you know, if I'm saying well, actually, I believe that children have rights, they are humans, then perhaps I need to be a bit stronger in that and, you know, actually be promoting that more, you know...*

*Extract from Focus Group 4*

Underpinning this right to voice are a number of ‘conditions’ that participants alluded to as needing to be in place for pupil voice to be empowered and for their rights to be realised. For example, pupil voice needed to be respected, valued, and recognised as being unique to every individual child or young person.

Researcher: *(Reading word cloud) Valued. Authentic. Person centred. Unique. Accessible. Heard. Inclusion. Informative and Actioned...So just kind of thinking about some of those words. Are there any that really kind of stand out for you in terms of what pupil voice means to-to your own practice?*

Holly: *I think I think 'Actioned' because I think quite often, it's tokenistic it's 'Oh we've got pupil voice', but actually, how does that then feed into practice? How does that feed into like provision or changes to a service?*

...

Jan: *I would say sort of 'Valued'. I think for the young person to have people want to hear and want to listen to like 'what's your opinion on this, how do you feel about this?' It sort of builds their value like 'oh actually like I am important in this'. And I think in terms of if they get their voice heard for interventions or things put in place they are more willing to be like, 'oh, no, I will- I will-I want to get involved, because I've had my say in it'*

### *Extract from Focus Group 3*

Participants also discussed how every effort should be made to gather authentic voice and for this to be amplified using a 'golden thread' approach to ensure that pupil voice leads to meaningful and purposeful change. Overall, participants constructions were underpinned by issues of **equality, ethics, cultural responsivity, accessibility, and inclusion.**

Researcher: *So we've got...(reading word cloud) Being heard. Respect. Inclusive. Alliance. Culturally responsive. At the centre. Child at the heart of all we do. Autonomy. Value. Understanding. Choice. Engaged and Belonging. And so some really lovely words really kind of, words that you've already mentioned when we were going around kind of talking about pupil voice at the beginning. Um, are there any- is there any kind of one word that jumps out at you on- that's on there? Any words that might surprise you that you didn't think of when you were thinking about it?*

Maggie: *I really liked the word Alliance. I thought what a lovely way to descry- like talk about pupil voice. It's kind of like I'm on your team, and we're working together. That was the impression I got from that.*

Izzy: *Yeah, and it ties in with Respect, doesn't it? And kind of, you know, like, like you said at the start, you know, or in fact, lots of people kind of talked about trusting people to have their own solutions as well and to be able to kind of articulate what's happening in their experience.*

### *Extract from Focus Group 2*

These constructions are all enshrined by the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and frames pupil voice as a human right that can ultimately lead to positive change in the form of social justice. This aligns with more modern humanistic perspectives of 'childhood' that views children and young people as autonomous critical thinkers whose views hold meaning and value in society (Aung, 2020; Maslow, 1943; Rogers & Freiberg). The constructions discussed by participants

are also reminiscent of Fiske (1999) and Storz's (2008) ideas about pupil voice as a vehicle for democratic citizenship, autonomy, and empowerment.

**6b "Positive change is very difficult to achieve without gaining the view of young people."**

**4.7.2 Theme 6, Subtheme 6b: "Positive change is very difficult to achieve without gaining the view of young people."** Participants discussed the various possibilities of pupil voice in practice in leading to meaningful and impactful change which again illustrated the 'multi-faceted' nature of voice in action. They described how pupil voice can often reveal 'truth' and shed light on the lived experiences of children and young people who, when given the opportunity, can often think of their own solutions.

Callie: *Hi I'm Callie, and I'm the final trainee, here on placement. And I think I've done quite a bit of pupil voice over my career because I've been a teacher, deputy head so actually drawing the views of pupils about how school is and what we can do to improve it has been quite important in that respect. And then this last year...starting the training...it is actually really important to get the views of the child because often they can tell you what the problem is and give you solutions too, so I think it'll be really interesting to hear what the people say about pupil voice today.*

*Extract from Focus Group 2*

They also referenced how pupil voice can create change at multiple levels by helping to shift 'narratives'. Participants referred to a change in the narratives that pupils might hold about themselves or the narratives that others may hold of them.

Pam: *I think another hope and dream of mine is, I really do believe in the therapeutic aspect of it...So I met with a young person, gathered their views on things and we used some projective techniques, and it was amazing what he could tell me, and then I fed that back to the adults around him. And then we did some more kind of direct assessment work. And then I went back and I fed back, 'okay, I've spoken to the adults, I've told them what you said. This is what they said, they actually really like you and they think this and they think that' and I gave him the results of the assessment and, you know, much to his surprise, he was a very, you know, very able pupil. I don't think he'd ever held any positive views of himself as a learner in that way. So the way he then acted in school and the shift and the change in how he felt about himself, how he felt about his relationships with adults, how he felt about his approach to learning was so different.*

Researcher: *...Pupil voice as an intervention, isn't it?*

Pam: *Absolutely. Absolutely.*

*Extract from Focus Group 3*

Tiana: *I just thinking about, um, change sort of more, perhaps on a smaller scale, so more of an individual level. So using the sort of narrative tool that I did in my thesis, so I've not been able to kind of track it long term-long term, but I, all of them sort of fed back how much they enjoyed the process of being able to kind of make sense of their lives and their story, and become authors of that, and actually how empowered they felt going forward. And I do know that one of them, so mine was...people and going to university. And so I know that one, one of them has gone off to university, and but yeah, just the, I think, to get the feedback that they felt more empowered, and like they had more control than, you know, because obviously, that's-that's against the narrative of this cohort of young people don't go to university typically. So but actually, they-they felt empowered and able to change that and challenge that narrative a little bit. So I suppose on, you know, on a smaller scale level, I see it.*

Researcher: *Yeah. Yeah. That kind of power that pupil voice can have in kind of shifting those kind of internal narratives they might hold, yeah.*

Tiana: *Yeah.*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 4*

Another possibility of pupil voice is the potential to develop a shared understanding that holds the child or young person's views as equal to that of other key members of the system and co-producing actions for change. In discussion, participants also described how pupil voice can be multi-faceted and be used in different modalities to affect change. This is illustrated by Meredith in the following quote,

Researcher: *Like how do you kind of work with-with people, with the systems to kind of help them understand pupil voice and kind of what we mean by pupil voice?*

Meredith: *Yeah. Well, Arizona, your example was sort of an on the spot in the moment I'm kind of hoping that every conversation is an intervention -*

#### *Extract from Focus Group 2*

Some other examples of the possibilities of voice expressed by participants were that it can be used to form part of an assessment of a child or young person's needs, or as an intervention, or as a tool for quality assurance and reflection. Thereby, reflecting how participants viewed pupil voice as being a central mechanism in the process of facilitating meaningful change in various ways.



6c "What do we mean when we say pupil voice? Empowerment."

4.7.3 Theme 6, Subtheme 6c: "What do we mean when we say 'pupil voice'?"

**Empowerment.**" Participants discussed the meaning of pupil voice and what it can lead to in practice. They described pupil voice as being powerful and transformative for children and young people, practitioners, and systems. Participants also talked about how pupil voice can give children and young people agency and ownership over their own lives. For example, one participant wrote the following statement as a response to the question, 'What is the purpose of pupil voice?'

*"To empower young people to make changes for themselves."* (Focus Group 2 'Now What' Word Cloud)

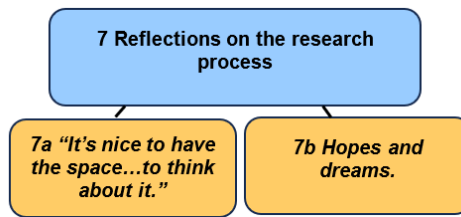
It was also constructed as giving hope to children and young people that they have control over what happens to them and that they can achieve their aspirations.

Researcher: *Thank you for that. (reading word cloud) So yeah, again, a lot of similar themes. So making sure their views are central to decisions. To inform provision. So they can achieve their aspirations. Make sure that needs are met. Model practice to other professionals. To inform support and outcomes. Advocacy and, Address power imbalances. Empowerment. Ownership. Um, to know. Investment. To understand. Change. Support measurable progress. Hopes for provision and outcomes. Developing skills for life. Equality and Inclusion. Informing decision making and service developments based on service users. Making sure they are agents of change. To make others listen and act so giving them permission. Enabling planning. Reflecting back to others. Challenging views. Assessment of skills. Awareness and Inform outcomes. So I think it's nice to see that it's kind of like that golden thread that it's coming, there's a good sense of you know, like they are going to go towards, it is towards something and it's going to be hopefully acted on.*

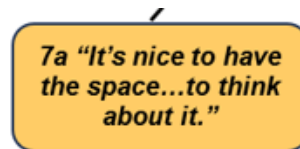
*Extract from Focus Group 4*

Ultimately, from the discussions held within these focus groups pupil voice can be constructed as encompassing a range of meanings that are tied up with the value that is given to it as well as its intended purpose. According to the participants in this study, pupil voice also encompasses concepts like **inclusion, agency, justice, and power**. It is underpinned by a basic human right and can lead to meaningful change at multiple levels. All of these concepts can be linked back to Fiske's (1999) original conceptualisation of pupil voice as social action and social justice.

#### 4.8 Theme 7: Reflections on the research process



This theme is included here as the researcher intended for the research process itself to have utility and benefit the participants in some way. Therefore, as part of the focus group discussion, participants were asked for their reflections on the research process and anything they might take with them into their own practice.



##### 4.8.1 Theme 7, Subtheme 7a: *"It's nice to have the space...to think about it."*

Participants fed back that they appreciated the space and time that was created to enable reflection on 'why I do what I do'. They also fed back that they found it meaningful and that it enabled them to consider the values that influence their work. It also supported teams to consider actions that they may wish to take into practice as illustrated in the excerpts below,

Izzy: *...In a way it's nice to have this space isn't it to think about it and really think about how important it is and how much it is part of our core values which then I think hopefully does inspire us to think about what we can do about that.*

*Extract from Focus Group 2*

Researcher: *Yeah, I'm glad I'm getting to do them in person as well because we do have the option to do it on Teams but I just think it's-*

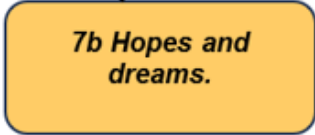
Gillian: *Mm you wanted to come out? That was very good of you because I think I would've done the lazy option.*

Fran: *I think it's really nice. Like the fact that I knew that you were willing to come made me really want to participate because it just made me feel like you're really valuing what you're doing. So like, it made me, like value it also, like, I feel like you'll get better engagement.*

Researcher: *Thank you, yeah. I'm really, I'm really glad that you know, it's working, it's been, it's been really good and I'm learning a lot from from you as well this morning. So thank you.*

*Extract from Focus Group 1*

On reflection and considering the feedback given by Fran, it would appear that conducting the focus groups in person helped to facilitate in-depth, meaningful and reflective discussion with teams of Educational Psychologists about the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in practice.



**7b Hopes and dreams.**

**4.8.2 Theme 7, Subtheme 7b: Hopes and dreams.** Participants were also asked what they hoped to take away from the research, any dreams they had about pupil voice in practice and any next steps they intended to take. Participants discussed making changes to the way in which they gather pupil voice in practice to ensure that the tools they use are more accessible so that every child has the opportunity to have their voice heard. They also spoke about the potential for gathering pupil voice to evaluate their own practice making sure that they continue to engage in reflective and reflexive practice as a response to pupil voice.

Pam: *... I'd like to ensure that I'm using tools that capture pupil voice for lots of different communication styles and preferences. And I think for us as a service when I sit with my senior hat on we want to use pupil voice as an evaluative measure. To show children and young people's experience of working with an educational psychologist. We'd like to evaluate that and see if we can use it as a tool to improve practice and things we do as well.*

*Extract from Focus Group 3*

Holly: *I think it's been a really nice reflection because I think as a team, we are constantly like, our service is developing. So it's really, it's been really good to reflect on actually how much pupil voice does underpin everything. And when we kind of, you know, looking at a new area, actually how can we bring pupil voice into that?...*

Researcher: *I know you've already kind of covered a little bit already. So is there anything that you'll kind of take away after today? You don't have to say anything.*

Jan: *I think just really like, I don't know, listening to all the things that we're doing and you know, it is so important to our team. And it's nice when you asked us to put like what our values are. It's nice that all of us seemed to put quite similar values which, yeah, was really nice.*

Angela: *Just finding more things for the toolkit. What else is there out there that could possibly add to our focus?*

*Extract from Focus Group 3*

Additionally, participants identified that they hope to continue holding the 'golden thread' of pupil voice through all their work at the individual, school, and strategic levels. Some examples of how

they hoped to do this were provided by participants, including exploring ways to share good practice with schools and other services and by remaining curious about how pupil voice is promoted within the wider local authority systems.

Researcher: *Um, just coming up to quarter to now, so I'll start closing it off, just kind of a last question really, is from the discussions we've had today, what, if anything, will you be taking away from our discussions?*

Meredith: *Well one thing that I'll be taking away is to make a concerted effort to find out more about the local authority strategies, I'm going to find out where pupil voice is fitting in because it's an area I don't think I know about so I'll be interested finding that out*

*Extract from Focus Group 2*

Tiana: *I think, sorry, a transition tool, I'm just thinking like before they go to secondary, wouldn't it be lovely if every year 6 had a, had a PATH. I think that would be really lovely.*

Aurora: *And then it could be carried on and reviewed at every annual review.*

Belle: *That could be the annual review paperwork.*

Aurora: *What an EHC should look like [laughter]*

*Extract from Focus Group 4*

Overall, responses from participants indicate that they appreciated the time and space to reflect on their beliefs, values, and how these then influence their practice. By doing so, the focus groups had the potential to create a 'consciousness-raising' effect (Braun & Clarke, 2013) that could result in some level of change within individuals, or the wider group. This can be seen by participants' identifying potential hopes, dreams, and actions to take forward into their practice.

## 5.0 Discussion

This thesis intended to create a reflective space to explore the following research questions,

- What does the term 'pupil voice' mean in Educational Psychology practice? (*meaning*)
- What constructions of 'value/s' underpin 'pupil voice' in Educational Psychology practice? (*value*)
- What is the perceived purpose of gathering 'pupil voice' in Educational Psychology practice? (*purpose*)

This section will draw upon the findings of this research to attempt to answer the three questions above. It will also consider the strengths, limitations, and implications from conducting this research as well as making some recommendations for future research and practice.

### 5.1 What does the term pupil voice mean in Educational Psychology practice?

#### (*meaning*)

Similarly to what existing literature tells us, participants in this research constructed *pupil voice* as holding many different meanings. The word cloud below has drawn upon the key words used by participants to construct the meaning of pupil voice that were considered to be '*recurrent, repeated, and forceful*' (Owen, 1984),

Figure 7: The meaning of pupil voice word cloud



As illustrated in other studies (Bahou, 2012; Fiske, 1999; Sellman, 2009; Shriberg et al., 2017; Storz, 2008; Taines, 2013), the participants in this research conceptualised pupil voice as encompassing issues of **equality, agency, and autonomy**. Pupil voice was constructed as a **human right** that every child and young person should have **access** to in order for them to experience **inclusion** and **meaningful change**. For this to happen, participants emphasised that pupil voice needs to be **heard** and **acted** upon. This conceptualisation is underpinned by **core values** and principles of **respect**.

Discussions within the focus groups illustrated that underlying participants' constructions of what pupil voice means in practice is the core concept of **'power'** as illustrated by the following extract from focus groups,

*"What do we mean when we say 'pupil voice'? Empowerment." (Gillian, Focus Group 1)*

Across focus groups, participants described pupil voice as relating to children and young people being 'empowered' to participate in matters affecting them and having autonomy over their own lives. Participants also discussed how they constructed the role of the EP as being instrumental in the 'empowerment' of pupil voice within the systems that they work with using a range of methods and approaches stemming from Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1970). Additionally, participants discussed how the role of EPs could also be constructed as empowering, or 'giving permission to', the systems they work with to 'listen and act' on pupil voice thereby illustrating the possibilities for EPs to work at various levels (Greig et al., 2014). Reference was also made to the structures and systems that may empower or disempower pupil voice. For example, participants referred to 'tokenistic' practices that could limit the impact of pupil voice rendering children and young people 'powerless' and perpetuating traditional hierarchical power differentials. Thereby, reinforcing notions put forward by Davidge (2016), Rudduck and Fielding (2006), and Taines (2013).

Overall, participants' conceptualisations of pupil voice in this research aligned with Fiske's (1999) construction of pupil voice as 'social justice' underpinned by issues of democratic citizenship, autonomy, and empowerment within the education system. As such, this raises questions about the concept of 'empowerment' and what it means to 'empower' another person?

Relating back to viewing pupil voice through a systemic Social Constructionist lens (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Burr, 2015), Kreisberg (1991) situates the concept of 'power' and 'empowerment' within a socio-cultural context. He highlights how in Western cultures, power is often constructed as '*power over*' which inherently undermines progress towards true democratic participation and autonomy if power structures act in a way that seeks '*domination and control*' over another. This is reiterated both within existing literature and this study's findings, where traditional hierarchical power structures are maintained within education by 'adult-led' decisions about what pupil voice should be, whose voices should be heard and how and when they are listened to (Bennett, 2017; Smith, 2007).

Kreisberg (1991) offers an alternative model of 'power' called '*power with*' that can help to shift system culture and processes towards one where power is shared and reciprocal. This is the model that Kreisberg (1991, p.11) suggests would lead to 'empowerment' which he defines as the '*ability to make a difference, to participate in decision-making, and to take action for change.*'. This aligns with the findings from this research which suggests that for pupil voice to be considered authentic, it needs to lead to meaningful change. However, current practices where 'powerful adults' are the vehicle for meaningful change to occur from pupil voice could go some way to reinforce traditional '*power over*' structures. If adults are the ones who listen and make decisions about what actions to take from pupil voice, can this be considered true 'empowerment' as this maintains the view of 'pupil voice' as conditional to the whims of the more powerful, autonomous adults? A notion that is reinforced by Hart's (1992) Ladder of Participation which contends that the highest form of 'pupil participation' is when children initiate their participation themselves and share decision-making power with adults as equal partners.

Participants also illustrated the constraints that Educational Psychologists' face in the promotion of pupil empowerment based on practical and systemic barriers. Discussions were helpful in highlighting the context of the EP role as working between Local Authority and school systems. Therefore, EPs are often positioned within these systems and this position can dictate the 'power' the EPs have themselves to facilitate change as illustrated by the following quote,

*"It-it's probably out of our hands that doesn't involve us". (Angela, Focus Group 3)*

Therefore, if the meaning given to pupil voice by participants is one of 'empowerment' then how can this be achieved within wider systems and structures that are in themselves hierarchical and where, potentially, EPs themselves may be 'disempowered' from upholding the 'golden thread' of pupil voice through to decision-making processes?

Ideas are put forward by participants who considered the role that EPs have in 'gently challenging' and being a 'critical friend' to systems where they can utilise their knowledge of psychology and best practice to inform, enable, and empower systems to reflect on their own beliefs, values, and actions with regards to pupil voice. Davidge (2016) agrees that this type of action could go some way towards creating social change and encouraging practice developments at the systemic level.

## **5.2 What constructions of 'value/s' underpin 'pupil voice' in Educational Psychology practice? (value)**

Existing research has highlighted that the value given to pupil voice in practice is often subjective and tied up with issues of power whereby adults decide whose voice is most 'valuable' in decision-making processes (Taines, 2013). Other research has illustrated how constructions of 'value' are underpinned by the beliefs and values held by an individual or system around pupil voice (Smillie & Newton, 2020; Zilli et al., 2020). The subsequent enactment and impact of pupil voice can thus be dependent on whether the values and beliefs held by the individual or system are 'facilitative' or 'limiting' (Bahou, 2012; McCarter & Woolner, 2011; Zilli et al., 2020). This notion was recurrent in this study's findings with participants describing the facilitative values that can support the empowerment of pupil voice in practice including compassion, respect, and kindness.

Research findings also illustrate that participants placed a high value on pupil voice in their practice considering it to be '*the heart of what we do*'. Despite this high value, participants echoed Fiske's (1999) and Bland and Atweh's (2007) challenges in attempting to transfer their espoused values into enacted values (Sewell, 2022). Participants discussed how this was due to various practical constraints and systemic barriers that are a common feature within organic systems such as schools and Local Authorities. They also described the importance of 'shared values' within systems



that enable pupil voice to be heard and acted upon as well as the uncertainty about whether EPs may be '*lone voices*' in the system with regards to the value they place upon pupil voice.

Findings indicate that participants recognised pupil voice as having 'intrinsic value' as well as 'extrinsic value' in that it was viewed as being tied up with the purpose that it ultimately had in facilitating meaningful change (Biedenbach & Jacobsson, 2016). This aligns with the axiological position that this research adopted that considered pupil voice to have 'extrinsic value' in that it serves a function or purpose but also recognises that pupil voice is considered to be important, in and of itself. Therefore, this suggests that before engaging in pupil voice, practitioners should be clear about the 'extrinsic value (function)' of pupil voice in context as well as their own values that might influence the work to be carried out. In doing so, practitioners can also attend to the wider system or societal value that is given to pupil voice and consider what actions may need to be taken to enable the 'empowerment' of children and young people, whether this be through *educating*, *challenging*, or helping to *shift narratives* (Arduin, 2015).

This is important as in focus group discussions participants referred to the individual narratives they held that informed their 'value' of pupil voice in practice in recognising that '*everyone has a story*' that they bring with them that influences their assumptions and beliefs about pupil voice. Participants also commented that the research process allowed them time and space to reflect on '*why we do what we do*'. Thereby, highlighting the importance of reflection to acknowledge the values, beliefs, and constructs that drive practice and illustrating the importance of research that focuses on these concepts (Smillie & Newton, 2020). Findings also emphasise the '*consciousness-raising*' effect that reflective group processes can have and the potential for continued professional development as a result (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

### ***5.3 What is the perceived purpose of gathering 'pupil voice' in Educational Psychology practice? (purpose)***

The findings of this research reflect ideas from existing literature that pupil voice can serve many purposes in practice across different levels ranging from the individual child or young person to the wider system (Allen, 2014; Bahou, 2012; Kolnes & Midthassel, 2022). Participants described the purpose of pupil voice as positively impacting the individual child or young person, influencing

professional practice, and creating change at a wider systemic level thereby illustrating the wide-reaching potential of pupil voice in practice.

Participants discussed the importance of upholding the 'golden thread' of pupil voice as well as the different approaches they take in practice to do this. This echoes findings from Storz's (2008) research which suggested that the way in which pupil voice is shared can be helpful in facilitating change and ensuring that pupil voice has a 'purpose'. Participants described the various tools and methods they might use to elicit pupil voice and how they then transform this into 'outcomes and recommendations for provision' in a written report or plan for the school or Local Authority system. Conversely, participants also voiced concern about the practical constraints at the practitioner, school, and Local Authority level which might limit the ability to transform voice into action, referring to the 'uncertainty' that this incites for children and practitioners in not knowing if voice will lead to change. This finding suggests that pupil voice can be conditional and depends on many contextual factors. It also raises the question of; if change isn't practically possible, does that mean that we should stop listening? Or should we be curiously engaging with systems who say change is not possible to find out why and overcome these barriers together with children and young people at the helm?

Nevertheless, the research findings highlight the importance of pupil voice having 'purpose' resulting in meaningful change that children and young people get to experience. Participants noted that 'empowerment' only occurs if children and young people are able to see that their voice has been heard and acted upon. Thus, highlighting that as professionals it is important to be clear about the intended purpose of pupil voice efforts and who they benefit. Research cautions professionals about the risk of engaging in pupil voice efforts if the intended purpose benefits the system or adults in a way that outweighs the benefits for the children and young people (Sellman, 2009). This is echoed by participants in this research who described the purpose of pupil voice as '*improving their quality of life*', reiterating Fiske's (1999) proposition that ultimately pupil voice should '*make a difference*'. The findings of this research indicate that to ensure pupil voice results in meaningful change requires considered reflection on the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in context. Findings from this study and existing literature suggest that this may require professionals to actively and compassionately challenge the systems of power that are currently in place that marginalise pupils'

voices and perpetuate traditional '*power over*' structures in education resulting in adult-led, tokenistic practices.

#### **5.4 What does *this mean for Educational Psychologists*'?**

Existing literature and professional guidance allude to Educational Psychologists' having a pivotal role in the promotion, elicitation, and empowerment of pupil voice in their work across different levels of the system around the child (Boswell et al., 2021; Greig et al., 2014; Smillie & Newton, 2020). It is clear from this research that EPs possess considerable knowledge, experience, and core values that facilitate the empowerment of pupil voice. It is also worth noting that EPs are in a unique position in being 'meta' to the systems that they encounter every day to promote pupil voice. As Osborne (2003) notes that EPs knowledge of the systems they work with as well as their 'independent' role enables them to consider ways of 'punctuating' systems in a way that serves to promote and empower pupil voice.

This is reflected in the research findings as participants allude to the creative ways that they work with school and Local Authority systems to 'empower' pupil voice whether that be by supporting individual children and young people or enabling systems to consider ways of enacting pupil voice through system processes and initiatives. Participants discussed doing this by illustrating the benefits of pupil voice, adopting a position of a 'critical friend' to gently challenge potentially disempowering practice, and sharing good practice across teams, services, and systems.

Within the reflective space created by the focus groups, participants were able to recognise the various factors that interfere with their work at the individual, systemic, and societal levels that increase the risk of perpetuating hierarchical power structures resulting in 'tokenistic' pupil voice practice. This was an important result in and of itself as the discussion brought into consciousness the different barriers that participants face in the pursuit of empowering pupil voice and as such, allowed them to share ideas, hopes, and dreams about the various ways that they could overcome these challenges. Thereby embodying Freire's (2010, p.72) proposition that,

*'Knowledge emerges only through invention, and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.'*

As such, EPs have a role in the empowerment of pupil voice and the way in which they take on this role depends on various contextual factors. This research illustrates the benefits of engaging in reflective processes to attend to key issues relating to pupil voice, including the way in which the meaning, value, and purpose of it is constructed and how this translates into practice. In doing so, professionals can become aware of potential barriers in their work and propose ideas for change.

Additionally, Educational Psychologists are expected to engage in reflective and reflexive practice as part of their professional development (HCPC, 2023). This can be achieved in a number of ways either through engaging in personal reflective practice, or through individual and peer supervision (BPS, 2017; HCPC, 2023; Welsh Government, 2016). Educational Psychologists are also able to offer supervisory support to other colleagues including teaching staff (Dunsmuir & Leadbetter, 2010). In this way, this research provides a useful framework for engaging in reflection around pupil voice in practice that can be utilised by EPs to encourage discourse and attention to the ways in which practice can be further developed to enhance and empower pupil voice within education. This research utilised Driscoll's (2007) reflective model to guide discussions which was found to be useful by both the researcher and participants.

Another key finding in this research was with regards to the conditions that participants constructed for the empowerment of pupil voice in practice which is an extension of the conditions conceptualised in Lundy's (2007) rights-based model of participation. The conditions constructed by participants in this study include,

- Pupil voice needs to be respected.
- Pupil voice needs to be meaningful, purposeful, and acted upon.
- Pupil voice needs to be valued.
- Pupil voice needs to be amplified.
- Pupil voice should be recognised as unique to each individual child and young person.
- Efforts should be made to gather authentic pupil voice in a way that works for the child or young person.
- Pupil voice efforts are underpinned by equality, ethics and inclusion and should be accessible and culturally responsive.
- It should be viewed as a basic human right, because it is (UNCRC, 1989)

These conditions form a useful tool for practitioners to reflect upon when engaging with pupil voice in practice and could be used as a 'benchmark' for practice to ensure that pupil voice is being engaged with authentically and with purpose. It is important to note, however, that it was not the aim of this research to identify a consensus with regards to the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice. Therefore, although these conditions illuminate some important factors to consider when engaging with pupil voice in practice, it would be beneficial for practitioners to engage in their own reflection and consider establishing their own conditions for pupil voice that are relevant to the specific context that they work within, either in their individual practice or as a team.

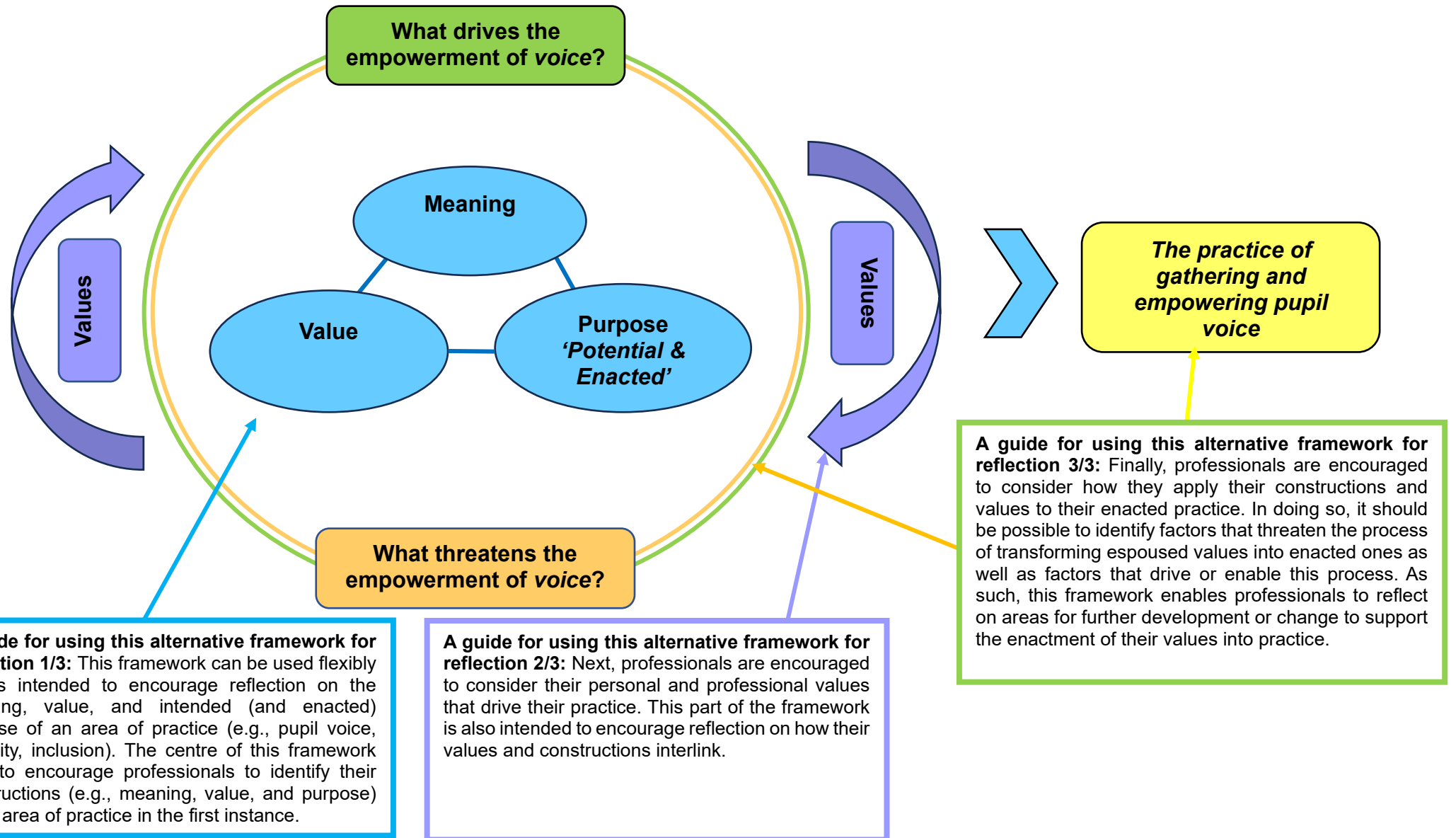
### ***5.5 Implications from research***

A key finding in this research was that issues of 'power' underpin pupil voice in practice. Participants attended to issues of power and how they interact with individual children and young people, practitioners themselves and the wider system. This was also evidenced in existing literature which suggests that for pupil voice to be empowered a cultural shift at the systems level is required (Cook-Sather, 2006). Literature points to the emphasis placed on pupil voice in guiding policy and legislation (Smillie & Newton, 2020; Zilli et al., 2020) and how this directs the actions of the Local Authority and school systems to promote pupil voice in matters effecting children and young people. However, research indicates a breakdown between policy and practice (Riddell et al., 2019) and professional uncertainty about how to implement pupil voice in practice effectively (Boswell et al., 2021).

Therefore, Educational Psychologists could have a role in supporting systems at a Local Authority, or even Local Government level, to reflect on the intended purpose of pupil voice in policy and how this could be translated into practice by drawing on principles from Implementation Science (Kelly, 2016) and participation frameworks (Boswell et al., 2021; Hart, 1992; Lundy, 2007) to explore ways of furthering the aim of pupil voice-as-empowerment within education. As research suggests changes occur from the top-down in traditionally hierarchical structures (Osborne, 2003), it may be worthwhile for key stakeholders at the Governmental and Local Authority levels to also engage in reflective processes with regards to the constructions held about pupil voice. This would go some way to identifying any incongruencies between the espoused values held at the very top levels of the system and the enacted values that are being put into place in day-to-day practice. By shedding light on these incongruencies, ideas for meaningful change can be envisioned and put into action.

To facilitate reflection in this study, the researcher drew upon Driscoll's (2007) 'So What' reflective model (see *focus group guide in Appendix 7*) to explore participants' constructions of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice and how this translates to practice. Similar use of this model could be used in future research and in practice to explore sensitive issues and specific areas of practice. Alternatively, the researcher has utilised findings from this research to develop an alternative framework (*Figure 8*) that encourages reflection at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels with the aim of bringing into consciousness the links between constructions and application to practice. It is hoped that by offering this alternative framework for reflection that this can encourage EPs and other professionals to engage in continuous reflection and reflexivity. This has the potential to illuminate areas for development to transform espoused values into enacted ones therefore leading to meaningful change (Sewell, 2022). Again, this framework could be used to support continued professional development across several areas of practice, including but not limited to children and young people's right to voice (United Nations, 1989).

Figure 8: An alternative framework for reflection



## **5.6 Limitations and future research**

This research was intended to explore the constructions of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in practice with professionals working in Educational Psychology services across England and Wales. Despite recruitment emails being circulated to all EP services in both England and Wales, the sample included 4 focus groups of participants working in English services. Therefore, it is important to note that the legislative framework and consequently statutory duties pertaining to pupil voice differ across England and Wales. In England, there is no statutory duty to involve pupils in decision-making processes although it is encouraged. In Wales, pupil participation is noted as a core principle of the ALNET (Wales) Act 2018. As a result, this research can only shed light on the practice of Educational Psychologists in an English context and the researcher acknowledges that practice may differ significantly across the different British nations. It would be beneficial therefore for a similar study to be conducted with EPs practising in Wales to explore the way in which the pupil participation element of the ALNET Act is being implemented into practice.

Despite taking actions to mitigate the risks of groupthink and social desirability bias by recruiting existing groups (Braun & Clarke, 2013), the researcher acknowledges that these interacting factors can still remain particularly within groups where power differentials exist. Therefore, the researcher acknowledges that due to the inclusion of professionals at different points of their career, this could have led to the presence of power imbalances within the focus group which could have in turn influenced the discussions that were had.

The researcher has also engaged in reflective processes during the undertaking of this research which are expanded upon in the reflective account in Part 3 of this thesis. However, it is worth noting that, in line with the findings of this research, the values, constructions and beliefs of the researcher are acknowledged as important factors that will have undoubtedly influenced this study despite best attempts to mitigate these through access to supervision and use of a reflective log. As participants note, '*everyone has a story*' and it is important to be aware of the stories we carry through to our work. Pupil voice is an element of practice that the researcher holds a particular interest in, and this was potentially shared by participants who voluntarily participated in this research. Therefore, this could have resulted in an increased risk of social desirability bias within the focus groups which is important to be aware of.



Another limitation is that this research focused on Educational Psychologists' voices in isolation rather than engaging with stakeholders from the wider system and pupils themselves. This is a limitation as a wider sample that included other stakeholders, including pupils, parents, and teachers, could have been helpful in co-constructing a shared understanding of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice. EPs do not work in isolation, and in line with the Social Constructionist perspective that this research takes, engaging with other members of the system including the child themselves would have allowed for a more in-depth, ecological understanding of various constructions of pupil voice held within the system. A recommendation for future research therefore is to explore constructions of pupil voice held within different parts of the system including parents, teaching staff and pupils so that a shared, co-constructed understanding of pupil voice can be conceptualised.

Nevertheless, a particular strength of this research was that the researcher aimed for the research process itself to have utility for the participants which aligned with Braun and Clarke's (2013) notion that focus groups can have a '*consciousness-raising*' effect that can result in some level of change within the individual, or the wider group. Although participants fed back that they had found the research process useful and meaningful, it is unknown whether the discussions had any lasting impact on participants' practice. Therefore, future research that utilises an action research methodology that will enable researchers to explore and review the impact of reflective processes on practice would also be beneficial.

## 6.0 Summary and Conclusion

This research has illustrated the benefits of engaging in reflective discussions to bring into consciousness ways that espoused values can be successfully transferred into practice. Gathering EP perspectives on the constructions of pupil voice in practice has enabled the researcher to develop a richer understanding of how pupil voice is understood within the profession and how it is then embedded into practice. It is clear from discussions with participants that pupil voice is a core element of EP practice in line with professional standards of practice (HCPC, 2023) and statutory / non-statutory responsibilities (ALNET 2018; The Children & Families Act, 2014; The SEND Code of Practice, 2015). EPs in this research provided a range of examples of how they uphold the 'golden thread' of pupil voice in their practice at individual, organisation, and strategic levels.

Use of a reflective model (Driscoll, 2007) supported this research to gain insight into the various constructions held by participants in this particular study. For example, we know that participants constructed pupil voice as being a multi-faceted concept that is embedded in issues of power, justice, and equality. Research findings also illustrate some of the complex contextual and systemic factors that can either facilitate or hinder the process of embedding espoused values relating to pupil voice into practice. For example, a key factor that was discussed by participants referred to the position of EPs within the system and how they can act as an advocate for pupil voice as they interact with various systems around the child including schools and Local Authorities.

Findings also indicate that participants considered pupil voice to hold intrinsic and extrinsic value leading to benefits for individuals, schools, and wider societal structures. It was particularly emphasised by participants that pupil voice should have a purpose and lead to meaningful change that is felt at the individual level of the children and young people they work with. Discussions also highlighted how participants personal and shared values can drive their practice and therefore it is important to spend time acknowledging how *'the stories we tell of other people are always going to be influenced by our own story'* (Fran, Focus Group 1). This can be achieved through ongoing reflection, using a model or framework such as the one developed by the researcher (*Figure 8*), with a focus on our own beliefs, values, constructions and how these might influence our enacted practice.

In summary, this thesis presents a detailed exploration of constructions about the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in Educational Psychology practice in the context of four Educational Psychology services across England. The core concept at the heart of this thesis is the concept of power and how it relates to the constructs practitioners hold with regards to pupil voice. It is clear from discussion that 'power' permeates the ideas that we hold about the world in context as well as the ideas the world holds about us as individuals or groups of people. Participants allude to issues of power throughout the discussion about pupil voice and this is echoed in core literature that has informed this research. Power can position people in roles of liberation or oppression (Freire, 2010). As such, it is the role of the powerful 'other' to recognise their position within the system and consider how their actions might perpetuate limiting power structures or challenge them in pursuit of a more democratic structure that places active citizenship, autonomy, and equality at its heart. In this way, reflective processes can be considered a first step on the journey towards a more democratic education system as Billington (2006) points out that knowledge and power are intricately linked and form the basis of emancipatory practice.

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### **Part 3: Reflective Account**

*Word Count: 6098 words*

## 1.0 Overview

Part three of this thesis will comprise of a critical account of the research process with a focus on key reflections and decision points. Firstly, I will discuss the process of designing the research with attention to the decisions that were made at each point. Following this I will consider some of the key challenges that were experienced throughout and how they were, or could be, addressed.

Additionally, I will reflect on the potential contributions to knowledge that this research adds to at the individual, practitioner, and system level. To conclude, I will reflect on my own development as a researcher engaging in this research process with consideration to how it will inform my practice post-qualification.

## 2.0 Idea formation

*'How does one pick a thesis topic?'*

This was the question at the forefront of my thoughts throughout the first half of my second year on the Doctorate course. It was a question that was discussed frequently in supervision with my research supervisor as well as with my peers. The initial task of choosing a thesis topic felt overwhelming and I reflected on my desire for a clear process for coming up with an idea. This then led me to wonder about the discomfort I felt and the reasons for this discomfort. I did not enjoy the feeling of having an endless number of opportunities and the freedom to choose one topic as it felt like a momentous decision to make. To help me to make sense of my reaction to this decision point, I drew upon Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress and coping theory. This theory suggests that the more value that is placed upon a decision the more susceptible a person becomes to appraisals of threat associated with that decision. They link individual reactions to these 'stressful' decisions with the constructs that individuals' hold about their control and influence over the outcome of the decision being made.

This led me to reflect upon the weight that the thesis element of this Doctoral course has and the constructed importance that it holds in the attainment of a doctoral qualification, and successfully passing the course. I also noted the strategies that I employed to 'cope' with this important task, which aligned with Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) 'problem-focused' strategies. I drew upon the expertise and experience of my supervisors (*Appendix 12*) and peers to exert some control over this decision-making process and established a 'roadmap' to guide my decision-making process (*Figure 9*).

Figure 9: The Research Formulation 'Roadmap'



Consequently, I started to wonder about how children and young people might feel when we create opportunities for them to have agency over decisions in their lives. I reflected upon the day-to-day decisions that we often make that usually have a finite number of options to choose from (e.g., picking something for tea, choosing which route to walk home, or choosing your options for GCSE and A-Levels). There is typically some sort of boundary framing our decisions that can make it easier to choose just one option. However, when we are presented with boundless opportunities and open questions such as 'What do you want to focus your thesis on?', or even bigger questions like, 'What would help you in school?' or 'What hopes do you have for your future?' finding an answer to this type of question could feel incredibly daunting and even stressful. This reflection in and of itself led me to consider the concept of pupil voice and what it actually means to promote, empower, and enact pupil voice in practice (see *Research Diary Extract 1*)

*Concept of AGENCY?*  
 As an advocate for children & young people having agency, this process has made me reflect on what the experience of agency could be like for some CYP. If as an adult making a decision about research that doesn't really affect my life in any deep way find it stressful then I wonder what it is like for CYP who are given agency to make

Research Diary Extract 1

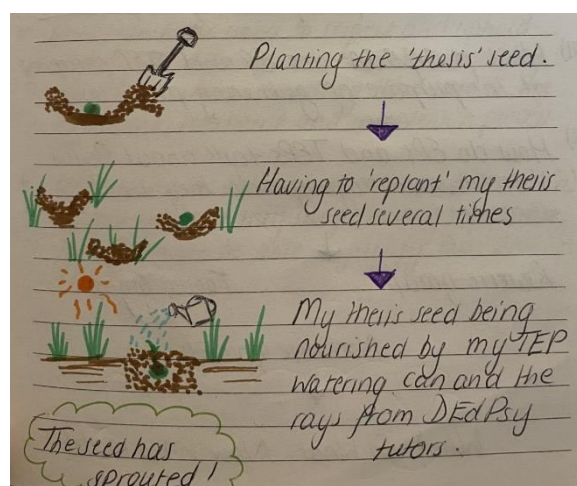




## 2.1 Planting the 'Thesis Seed'

I drew upon the metaphor of 'planting a seed' to illustrate the process of developing my thesis topic. This metaphor demonstrates how my final research question was developed through exploration of the broader literature, discussions in supervision, and personal reflection until I was able to find 'fertile ground' for my thesis to 'take root'.

### Research Diary Extract 2



In reading around the general topic of pupil voice, literature highlighted the importance of attending to the way in which this concept has been constructed and how these constructions influence practice (Fielding, 2007; Manwaring, 2022; Rolls & Hargreaves, 2022). Manwaring's (2022) study also introduced me to various theoretical frameworks (e.g., Hart's (1992) ladder of participation) and historical perspectives that led me to consider the potentially socially constructed nature of pupil voice. Similarly, other authors attended to the beliefs, assumptions and values that underpin pupil voice practice in education contexts and how these influence the way in which pupil voice is then enacted (Fricker, 2007; Gregory, 2019; Sewell, 2022). Various researchers have implicated potentially biased assumptions and unclear constructions of pupil voice as leading to a breakdown in the application of pupil voice policy in practice (Lundy, 2007; Rolls & Hargreaves, 2022; Sewell, 2016). This led me to consider the purpose of pupil voice which authors such as Flynn et al. (2012) suggest is the enactment of real, transformative change.

Relating this to what I had read so far caused me to wonder about the link between constructions of 'voice', the beliefs held by those engaging with 'voice', and the intended function of listening to 'voice'. By scoping the existing literature, this allowed me to develop a basis for my thesis which aimed to reflect on constructions (*the meaning*) of pupil voice, the beliefs held about pupil voice (*values*), and what happens to pupil voice in practice to facilitate meaningful change (*the purpose*).

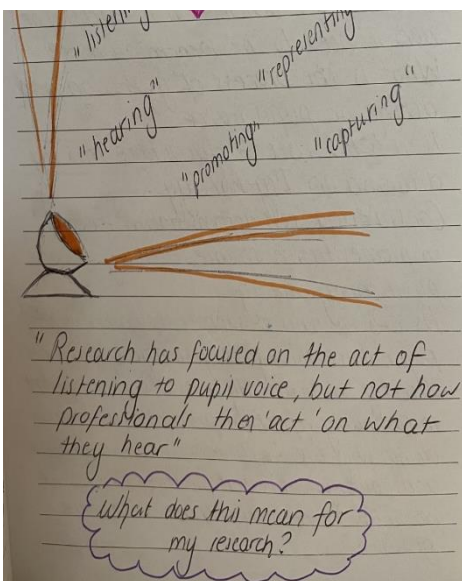
## 2.3 Whose voices?

When considering whose voices I wanted to capture in my research, I reflected on the relevance of 'pupil voice' to various stakeholders within an educational context. I also considered my

own experiences of gathering pupil voice in my practice as an Assistant and Trainee Educational Psychologist. This led me to wonder about how Educational Psychologists [EPs] are implicated in the act of gathering and enacting pupil voice. Working within a Welsh context, I was able to reflect on how the recent introduction of the Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal [ALNET] Act (Wales) 2018 implicates Educational Psychologists as upholding the principles of 'a rights-based approach' in their work with children and young people considered to have ALN. This principle relates to Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child [UNCRC] (United Nations, 1989) which states that "[any] child who is capable of forming his or her own views [has] the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child..." (p.5.). As such, I specifically focused on what existing literature tells us about the role of Educational Psychologists in upholding this right to voice.

I was able to find a number of studies that focused specifically on pupil voice in

### Research Diary Extract 3



Educational Psychology practice (Greig et al., 2014; Harding & Atkinson, 2009; Howells, 2021; Kirwan, 2018; Riddell et al., 2019; Smillie & Newton, 2020). These studies highlighted the pivotal role that Educational Psychologists have in enabling and empowering pupil voice. However, much of the existing research focused on the process of gathering and reporting pupil voice, rather than focusing on how constructions of meaning, value, and purpose might influence practice. Therefore, this provided a plausible avenue for my thesis to focus on. As such, I aimed to engage with professionals working in Educational Psychology services across the United Kingdom to explore their constructions of the meaning, value, and purpose of

pupil voice in their practice.

I also considered the voices that would be 'missing' from my research who had an equal investment in pupil voice in practice. Namely, pupils themselves and the school staff who engage with pupil voice every day. I considered the phrase '*no decision about me, without me*' that derives from a Department of Health (2012, p.1) initiative to involve patients in decision-making processes. I noted the discomfort that I felt placing professional adults at the centre of my research with a focus on conceptualising 'pupil voice' without having first asked learners themselves what they felt pupil voice should be defined as. In a semi-systematic review of literature which focused on the role of pupil voice

in Educational Psychologist practice, only one study looked at the way in which learners themselves constructed the process of having their voice heard (Boswell et al., 2021). As this is the case, future research would benefit from asking learners about their own constructions of 'pupil voice'.

Similarly, I reflected upon the role of teaching staff who are continuously interacting with pupil voice every day. I felt that an understanding of their constructions of pupil voice would be equally beneficial. Despite their voices not being featured in my own research, a number of studies have already gone some way towards engaging with school staff to explore their understanding and implementation of pupil voice practices (Giraldo-Garcia et al., 2021; Taines, 2013; Whitty & Wisby, 2007; Zilli et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, I chose to focus solely on constructions held within the Educational Psychology workforce as they often work at multiple levels (individual, organisation, and strategic) to facilitate change which places EPs in a unique role to uphold children's right to voice in a variety of ways (Welsh Government, 2016). These reflections also illustrate the dynamic and interactional nature of the educational context within which pupil voice is situated which led me to consider the different ontological and epistemological paradigms that might be adopted within this study.

## **2.2 How do we know what we know?**

From the existing literature, I had developed a sense of the historical and cultural facets underpinning the concept of pupil voice and the way that it has come to be understood today (Burr, 2015; Mayes et al., 2019; Nieuwenhuys, 2008). Research also illustrates the variation in the constructs and interpretations of pupil voice held within public discourse (Eguara, 2019). Therefore, I felt it important to adopt an ontological position that enabled me to acknowledge the existence of multiple realities experienced by participants and did not aim to seek out a 'truth' about what pupil is. I felt that this position also allowed me to reflect upon potential biases and assumptions about pupil voice and move away from the acceptance of any one view as being 'right' or 'true'.

This was especially important as Nieuwenhuys' (2008) encourages professionals to attend to the colonial, Westernised ideals interlaced with concepts of 'children's rights' and how adopting a lens of 'cultural relativism' helps us to situate constructions of 'childhood' within the specific cultural context that is being considered. This stance encourages practitioners to reflect on the 'universality' of constructions of childhood and children's rights. It urges them to pay attention to how these concepts

are understood in cultures that exist outside of the Western colonial bias within which the UNCRC (1989) was established.

Nieuwenhuys' (2008) paper encouraged me to reflect on my own biases, positions, and assumptions that I could potentially be bringing to the research process. I considered how in the Welsh context, the socio-cultural position is that all children and young people have the right to have their voice heard and taken seriously and the reference to this right in current legislation (ALNET 2018) indicates this position to be a 'universal truth'. This position was something that aligned with my own personal values and that was reflected in my practice by ensuring that I uphold pupil voice in each piece of work that I do. However, based on Nieuwenhuys' (2008) assertions, I recognised the inherent colonial bias that this position enshrines and wanted to be open to potentially divergent constructions of pupil voice within my research. A sentiment that is echoed by Eguara (2019) who recommended that attention be paid to the variation in 'key concepts, language, and interpretations [of pupil voice]' (p.7). By attending to the different constructions and discourses participants use to make sense of 'pupil voice', this would allow me to explore the micro (individual) and macro (systemic) structures that underpin professionals' understanding of pupil voice and its application to practice.

Therefore, to be able to attend to the historical and socio-cultural factors that influence constructions of pupil voice and attend to the divergent narratives that might exist in relation to this concept I felt that a relativist, social constructionist position would best align with these aims.

### ***2.3 Designing the Research (the conditions for growth)***

Following a process of examining the literature and engaging in supervision, I had a basis for my research. The next step in the process was to consider my research design. Existing literature highlighted a paucity of research explicitly exploring the underlying principles that guide practitioners' work with pupil voice. Boswell et al's (2021) research with Educational Psychologists illustrated the importance of reflective spaces to inform practice. Similarly, Smillie and Newton (2020) suggest that Educational Psychologists would benefit from engaging in reflection in relation to the beliefs and constructions they hold about pupil voice. As such, this research aimed to create a reflective space for professionals working in Educational Psychology services across England and Wales to explore constructions of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in practice.

As my aim was to create a space for reflection, I sought more information from the literature about the particular contexts that allow for 'reflection' to take place to guide my research design. Initially, I drew upon the work of Bartle (2021) on 'reverie groups' which led me to consider the benefits of facilitating reflection within a group structure. I found myself drawn to the idea of groups as a space for learning and the idea that groups can lead to 'exploration, discovery, and transformation' (Bartle, 2021, p.132). This appealed to me as I was grappling with the utility of my research and considering ways to make the process purposeful for both participants and the researcher. The idea of my research involving some form of 'group' process also aligned with my epistemological position of Social Constructionism that would enable me to attend to the social interactions and discourses that underly constructions of pupil voice (Burr, 2015).

As a result, I opted to utilise a focus group methodology within my research to explore constructions of 'pupil voice' with heterogenous groups consisting of staff working in Educational Psychology services across England and Wales. Table 9 provides details of the methodological, practical, and ethical factors that I considered when engaging with this particular decision point,

*Table 9: Factors considered when choosing a focus group methodology*

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Risks</b>	<b>Actions to be taken</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups allow for rich in-depth discussions between participants.</li> <li>• Focus groups can help to mitigate the risk of participants being influenced by feelings of criticism or pressure from the researcher.</li> <li>• Focus groups can encourage engaging discussions, reflections, and collaborative thinking.</li> <li>• Focus groups can enable the researcher to attend to social structures and shared discourse within the group.</li> <li>• Focus groups can help to create a naturalistic space for reflection.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus groups can be logistically challenging.</li> <li>• Power imbalances can influence discussions within the group.</li> <li>• It can be a challenge to keep focus group discussions focused on the research topic.</li> <li>• Participants could 'conform' to dominant discussions within the group.</li> <li>• The right to withdraw can be a challenge to implement in focus groups.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I recruited heterogenous groups consisting of psychologists (including Assistants, Trainees, and Qualified team members) within existing Educational Psychology teams to enable groups to be easily arranged during existing time slots for team meetings / team days.</li> <li>• I attempted to mitigate the risk of power imbalances influencing discussions by outlining the reflective, non-judgmental purpose of the focus groups.</li> <li>• I attempted to mitigate the risk of discussions becoming unfocused by utilising a focus group guide to provide a framework for discussion.</li> <li>• To reduce the risk of 'conformity' within groups, I adopted a curious position as facilitator and encouraged reflections that differed from dominant views held within the groups. I also felt that recruiting already established groups with existing</li> </ul>

		<p>relationships helped to minimise the risk of social desirability bias.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants were informed that they could leave the group at any time. They were also asked to say their name before contributing to discussions to allow the researcher to identify individual data from transcripts so that participants could withdraw from the research up to two weeks after the group took place.</li> </ul>
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(Barbour, 2007; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2015; Willig, 2013).

After careful consideration of the benefits and risks, I decided that a focus group methodology was most appropriate and aligned with the research paradigms. Since conducting the research, I have further reflected on the utility of my research and the concept of 'reflection'. I set out to explore constructions of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice within the Educational Psychology workforce, therefore I felt it only right to reflect on the meaning, value, and purpose of my own research. Drawing on Van Beveren et al's (2018) research, I considered the different purposes of reflection and how it can facilitate change at the individual, interpersonal, and systemic levels. For example, Brookfield (2009) notes how reflection can shed light on implicit 'power dynamics' and 'hegemonic assumptions' that can be subsequently challenged. Building on this, Mezirow (1998) considers how engaging in reflection can challenge one's own beliefs and values resulting in a transformational process for the individual or group.

In line with the Social Constructionist position, I felt that the research design served purpose as within the reflective discussions attention could be paid to how knowledge about pupil voice has been constructed by the power structures and systems that we, as professionals, act within as well as the beliefs and values held at both the personal and shared levels. In this way, I felt that the groups had utility and the potential to influence practice. Nevertheless, this is purely an assertion at this point and subsequent research that adopts an action research approach would allow researchers to actually measure the transformational impact of such reflective spaces.

A key reflection point that I held in mind throughout the process of designing this research was consideration of the nature of the Educational Psychologist role in navigating issues of power and various interacting systems (Welsh Government, 2016). I also considered what research tells us about the impact of 'power differentials' in the application of 'pupil voice' initiatives (Ballard et al.,

2016; Taines, 2013). As such, when it came to choosing a data analysis method, I considered approaches that would enable me to pay attention to the interactive factors of language, power, and socio-cultural practices.

As research highlights that the concept of pupil voice is context-dependent and varied (Cook-Sather, 2006; Eguara, 2019), I did not intend to establish a consensus on what pupil voice is, rather it was my intention to identify themes pertaining to the way in which pupil voice is constructed within and across focus groups. As I was looking at the 'constructions' that people hold, I did consider drawing on a thematic discourse analysis to interpret the language used by participants to construct pupil voice. However, I felt that a critical thematic analysis would allow me to focus on broader factors that underpin constructions of knowledge, including issues of power and beliefs rather than purely focusing on semantics (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As such, I decided upon a critical thematic analysis to develop themes relating to participants' constructions of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice whilst attending to the wider systemic factors underpinning these constructions.

### **3.0 The Research Process (nourishing the 'thesis' plant)**

After formulating the basis for my thesis and receiving ethical approval for my proposal from the Cardiff School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee, I was ready to embark on the journey of conducting my research. This process was not without its fair share of 'bad weather' i.e., challenges to overcome, and I will spend some time in this section reflecting on these challenges.

#### **3.1 Literature Review**

Initially as I set out to conduct a review of the literature to gain an understanding of what research already tells us about pupil voice and Educational Psychology practice, I found myself holding the question, '*what is a literature review?*'. Therefore, part of my research process involved a detailed exploration of the different types of literature review and the benefits / risks of conducting each type. Drawing on papers by Baumeister and Leary (1997), Siddaway et al. (2019) and Snyder (2019), I considered that I would not be focusing on the replicability or empirical significance of evidence in relation to pupil voice. Rather I was interested in gaining an understanding of overarching themes evident within the literature which meant that a semi-systematic narrative review was deemed appropriate.

The first hurdle I came upon when setting out to gather my literature was attempting to focus the scope of my literature search to allow for a feasible and manageable review. When using search terms relating to 'pupil voice' in 'education', my searches (see *Table 10*) resulted in a great number of articles which indicated the broad nature of the topic at hand.

*Table 10: Initial search results*

Database	Search String	Results	Date:
Ovid	(TITLE) "pupil voice" OR "student voice" OR "learner voice" AND (ALL) "education" OR "school" OR "college"	155	8.8.23
British Education Index	TITLE) "pupil voice" OR "student voice" OR "learner voice" AND (ALL) "education" OR "school" OR "college"	168	8.8.23
ERIC	TITLE) "pupil voice" OR "student voice" OR "learner voice" AND (ALL) "education" OR "school" OR "college"	380	8.8.23
Scopus	(TITLE ( "pupil voice" OR "student voice" OR "learner voice" ) ) AND ( ALL ( "education" OR "school" OR "college" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "PSYC" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "ARTS" ) OR LIMIT-TO ( SUBJAREA , "SOCI" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( LANGUAGE , "English" ) ) AND ( LIMIT-TO ( OA , "all" ) )	215	8.8.23

With further reflection and supervision, I decide to refine my literature review question to the field of Educational Psychology as this was the particular area that I was interested in with my research. Once I had my results, the next stage was to establish my inclusion and exclusion criteria (see *Table 11*) for literature to be included in the final review.



Table 11: Literature Review Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion	Rationale
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education where pupil voice is the primary focus.</li> <li>• Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice.</li> <li>• Has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice.</li> <li>• Conducted in or applied to education settings.</li> <li>• Full text is available.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did not involve primary research.</li> <li>• Did not primarily focus on the role of pupil voice in education.</li> <li>• Did not include discussion of systemic implications.</li> <li>• Did not discuss implications for educational psychology practice.</li> <li>• Was not conducted or applied to education settings.</li> <li>• Full text unavailable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I hoped to gain insight into first-hand accounts of research with a focus on 'pupil voice'.</li> <li>• It was important that research focused on the role of pupil voice in education as I was interested in the application of pupil voice and to understand how it had been constructed in practice.</li> <li>• I wanted to attend to the wider implications for pupil voice at the systems level to explore the potential for change that the application of pupil voice can have as suggested by Bland and Atweh (2007) and Kolnes and Midthassel (2022).</li> <li>• My research focus was on Educational Psychologists practice due to the pivotal role they have in upholding children's right to voice (Smillie &amp; Newton, 2020).</li> <li>• This research intended to focus on the application of pupil voice in education settings as this is where a majority of EP work takes place (Welsh Government, 2016).</li> </ul>

Once I had overcome the initial challenge of making sense of different approaches to conducting a literature review, I felt that the process of synthesising existing knowledge became a lot clearer. This was a particular area of development for me as a researcher due to the scale and scope of the topic I had decided to explore. Although the task felt overwhelming at times, I again drew upon Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) problem coping strategies to provide a safe structure and framework for this element of the research process which enabled me to work through the challenges I experienced. Upon reflection, if I were to conduct this review again, I would attempt to refine my literature review question even more which would have enabled me to conduct a more rigorous and specific review (Efron & Ravid, 2019).

### **3.2 Recruitment**

Another challenge that I experienced throughout the research process was during the recruitment stage. I had set out to recruit at least 3 focus groups consisting of between 3-8 members of staff from the same Educational Psychology service in each group. I aimed to recruit groups from across England and Wales as I was interested to explore whether pupil voice practice was similar or different between national contexts and modes of service delivery. I felt that this was particularly important as in Wales the ALNET (Wales) Act 2018 sets pupil participation out as a statutory responsibility in the Code of Practice (Welsh Government, 2021). Whereas in England the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) does not place the same statutory requirements on professionals to engage in pupil voice practice despite referring to it in more general terms. Therefore, I was keen to hear from practitioners what their lived experience was of enacting these different legislative frameworks and whether they make a difference to the way in which pupil voice is constructed and enacted in practice.

A gatekeeper letter and research information sheet were sent to Principal Educational Psychologists across England and Wales, however I only received expressions of interest from services practising in England. Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) stress and coping theory suggests that it is possible that the weight of pupil voice holding a statutory element may have primed potential participants in Wales to view my research through a lens of 'perceived threat'. It is important to acknowledge this as although I had attempted to emphasise the reflective nature of my research, the value placed on pupil voice could have resulted in increased susceptibility to appraisals of the research activity as threatening, or criticising (Bragg, 2007). Additionally, participating members of staff referenced various practical barriers to their work including lack of time, resources, and capacity. It is possible that the services practising in Wales, who are currently engaged in a process of transformation to the new ALN Code as well as the new curriculum, may not have had the capacity to engage in the research at this time. I felt it crucial to acknowledge and remain sensitive to the context of which the research was intended to take place to make sense of the challenges I experienced (Yardley, 2000).

It is important to note that these are my own reflections about possible reasons for the voices that are 'missing' from my research. A recommendation for future research would be to consider

engaging with Educational Psychology services in Wales to explore their experiences of implementing the principle of pupil voice into practice in a way that may be more practical and provides some level of anonymity which could create a safer, less 'threatening' space for reflection.

### **3.3 Facilitating the Focus Groups**

In total, I conducted four focus groups with 4 different Educational Psychology services ranging from 3 to 6 participants. I had intended to conduct 3 focus groups in total in line with Guest et al. (2017) and Braun & Clarke's (2013) recommendations. However, due to difficulties gaining consent from at least 3 team members before being able to arrange the focus groups and due to significant interest from EPs wishing to participate it was felt that conducting four focus groups would be beneficial. This allowed for the researcher to gather rich data from across four different EP services and ensured that at least 3 groups could be conducted if any of the groups could not go ahead. Initially, I had proposed to record data from focus groups via audio recordings, anonymised notes, and a rich picture (Booton, 2018). However, I soon learnt that adopting the role of group facilitator and 'graphic designer' at the same time was a difficult task as in the first focus group I found that facilitating discussion and actively listening to participants took up most of my time and therefore was not able to co-create a rich picture. Participants were given the option to draw their ideas and thoughts out themselves however all participants opted to use written language to convey their ideas. This led me to consider the importance of direct instruction when attempting to use a creative or innovative method in research as well as the potential discomfort that participants may experience when asked to draw as a form of self-expression (Booton, 2018). If I were to conduct this research again, the process would benefit from use of a co-facilitator to support the moderation of focus groups and the creation of a rich picture as well as an explicit task for participants to draw their ideas and thoughts about pupil voice.

Another key reflection from facilitating the focus groups was with regards to navigating power differentials within the group and between myself and group members. Braun and Clarke (2013) state that it is a key skill to be attuned to the power dynamics within focus groups and to notice the impact of power on the discussion, the participants and the moderators themselves. In reflecting on the presence of power within my focus groups, I have considered the impact of recruiting whole teams rather than using a mixed-members approach. As I recruited any member of staff working within a Local Authority Educational Psychology service, this meant that groups consisted of staff at varying

points of their careers including Assistants, Trainees, Newly Qualified, Senior, and Principal Educational Psychologists. As such, this meant that as facilitator it was necessary for me to remain open to how these existing power dynamics entered and impacted the reflective space that I attempted to create. This was especially pertinent as it was likely that some members of staff would be discussing elements of their practice with their supervisors / managers present. Therefore, although recruiting existing groups can in some cases mitigate the risk of members experiencing feelings of judgement and social desirability bias (Barbour, 2018), this risk can never fully be overcome when existing groups consist of pre-established hierarchical management structures. For example, as a Trainee EP, I was conscious of my own position within the focus groups and how it felt to ask questions to staff who I considered to be in a more senior and experienced position than myself. Nevertheless, I considered that the use of a reflective model to guide discussions (Driscoll, 2007) and emphasis of the reflective nature of the research meant that I was able to minimize the impact of power differentials to some degree.

Prior to conducting focus groups, I referred to Stewart and Shamdasani's (2014) principles of a good moderator to help me to prepare for taking on the role. One of the principles that I found myself reflecting on throughout the process was the principle of '*admitting own biases*'. As already mentioned in previous sections, I wanted to remain open to divergent views about pupil voice and the value of it in practice however I did also acknowledge that it is a crucial part of my own practice and one that I place a high value on. As much as I tried to remain an 'observer' in the focus group discussions, I did find myself occasionally being drawn into some of the discussion points that aligned with my own constructions, beliefs, and values.

Therefore, it felt important to acknowledge and recognise the possible influence of these moments in the research process. As Stewart and Shamdasani (2014, p.87) point out '*complete objectivity is impossible*' and therefore as a researcher I will undoubtedly bring my own 'history' into the research process as much as the participants will. As such, the position of Social Constructionism allowed me to attend to the way in which these wider factors have the potential to influence our constructions of knowledge and aligned with the relativist stance that there are multiple versions of what 'pupil voice' might mean in practice. From this perspective, I have acknowledged that my role as researcher was to explore constructions of pupil voice with these specific participants, at this specific

time and in this specific context without an attempt to generalise any findings. Therefore, other alternative constructions of meaning, value, and purpose must exist and warrant further exploration.

#### **4.0 Contribution to Knowledge (The Thesis Bloom)**

Literature suggests that despite a significant shift in the way that society views 'pupil voice' as holding weight and value in decision-making processes that it does not often lead to real, meaningful change (Bloom et al., 2020; Dickins, 2011; McLeod, 2007; Noble, 2003). Some researchers suggest that this kind of tokenistic practice can occur when practitioners hold constructions that serve to perpetuate hierarchical power differentials that may minimise the impact of pupil voice. As such, authors such as Davidge (2016) and Smillie and Newton (2020) recommend that practitioners should dedicate time to engage in reflective and reflexive practice with a focus on their constructions and beliefs about pupil voice. This research attempted to create an opportunity for this type of exercise to occur in a structured and exploratory way.

Not only did findings illustrate the multiple meanings that pupil voice can hold both within and across different Educational Psychology services, but they also brought to light the importance of reflecting on issues of power when engaging with children and young people in a traditionally hierarchical power structure.

#### **4.1 For Children and Young People**

My research findings illustrate the importance of reflection in the process of recognising one's own biases and assumptions that may show up in practice with pupil voice. By attending to wider issues that impact our work, reflection can act as a tool for both professional development as well as social action (Freire, 2010). By creating the space to reflect on how pupil voice can be empowered or disempowered by both personal and systemic factors, practitioners can start to consider ways to deconstruct some of the barriers that they identify as getting in the way of pupil voice leading to real, meaningful change (Bloom et al., 2020; Dickins, 2011; McLeod, 2007; Noble, 2003). As previously stated, this research did not intend to provide solutions as that would suggest there to be a common reality that needs addressing, rather this research hopes to inspire careful, reflective thought that can lead to reflexive, social action. This research draws on examples provided by participants where they engaged in practice that aims to deconstruct and rebuild power structures in a way that upholds and empowers pupil voice thereby leading to meaningful change for individual children and young people.

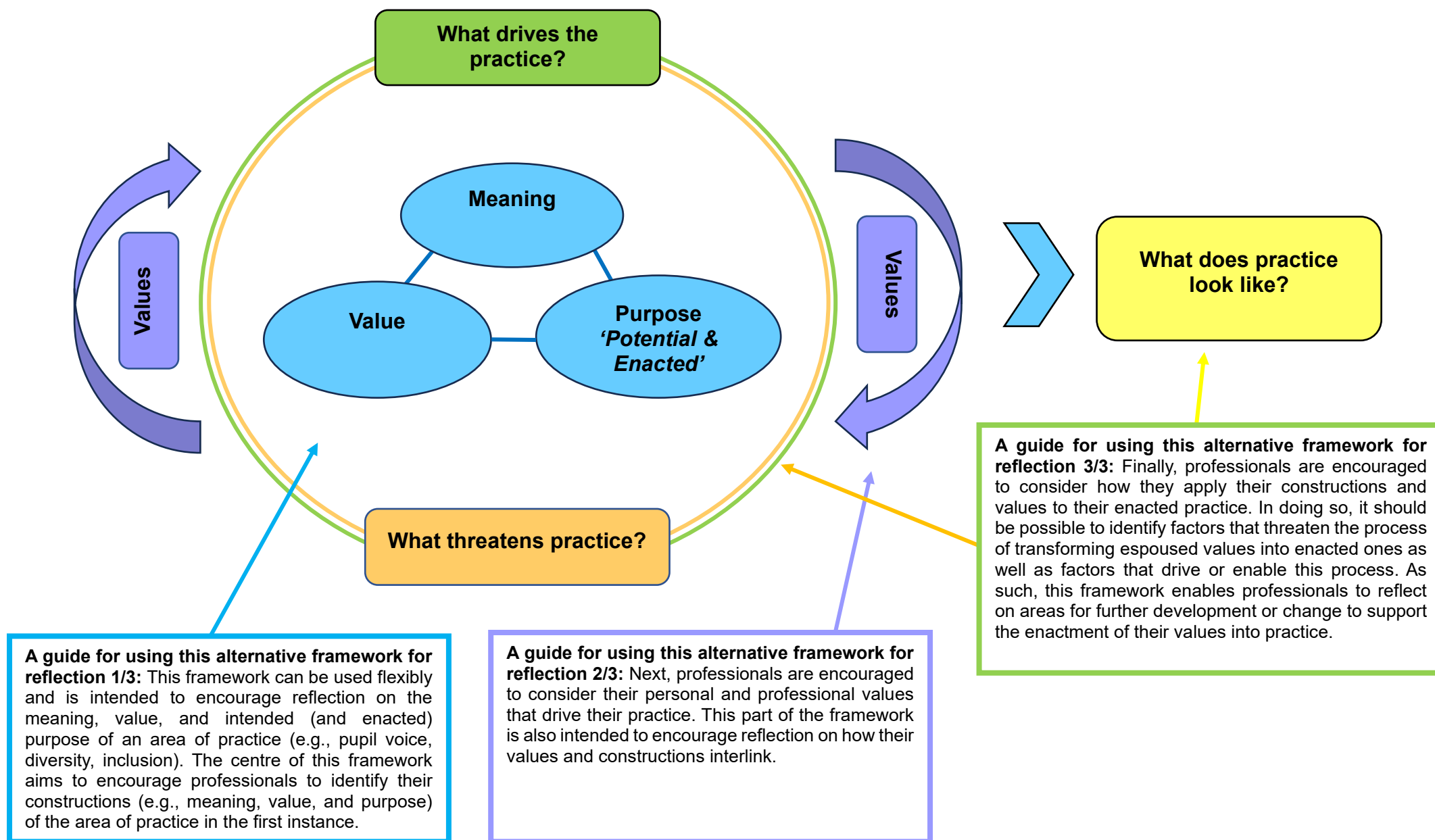
It is hoped that the findings of this study will resonate with other practitioners and professionals working closely with children and young people and encourage them to consider ways they might do the same in their own practice.

#### **4.2 For Educational Psychologists**

This research suggests that issues of power are present at multiple levels within the systems that EPs work within and how the role of the EP can be at risk of being influenced by the constructions held within the system, as well as their own personal constructions. Thus, further emphasising the importance of unpicking some of the beliefs, assumptions, and values that underpin practice (Smillie & Newton, 2020). Educational Psychologists also possess the knowledge and skill set to support others to engage in a similar level of reflection which may be an action that practitioners take forward into their practice (Davidge, 2016). Participants in this research indicated that they appreciated the opportunity to engage in a reflective space that provided an opportunity to engage in personal and group reflections. The process of engaging in reflective discussions was interesting to observe as a researcher and was illustrative of the 'consciousness-raising' potential that reflective group processes can have (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

In practice, this research provides a general framework (*see Figure 10*) to guide reflective group discussions that are relevant to practice. In this case, the focus was on pupil voice in practice, however the framework could be applied to different areas of practice that may require focus and further reflection.

Figure 10: Framework for Reflection

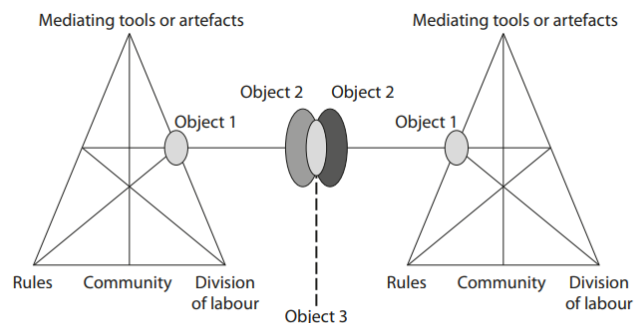


Although many reflection models already exist, such as Driscoll's (2007) 'So What' model which was specifically drawn upon to guide focus group discussions, this research provides professionals with an alternative framework that encourages reflection at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels with the aim of bringing into consciousness the links between constructions and application to practice. It is hoped that by engaging in this process that reflection can become a central part of the change process and illuminate areas for development to transform espoused values into enacted ones (Sewell, 2022).

### 4.3 For Systems

The reflective framework that has been proposed at the individual practitioner level can also be utilised within and across different systems also. In fact, it could be useful to draw comparisons between the different underlying constructions held about an area of practice which could then be further explored in a similar way that Engelstrom's (1999) third generation system activity model (see *Figure 11*) helps to develop an understanding of interconnected activity across different systems such as school staff, leadership teams and Local Authorities.

*Figure 11: Engelstrom's (1999) third-generation system activity model*



*Figure 13.3: Third-generation Activity Theory model (Engestrom 1999c, p.4)*

Within this research, participants illustrated how they viewed the role of the EP at the systems level to involve gently challenging and exploring potentially 'disempowering' narratives and constructions held within the system. The reflective framework illustrated above could be one possible way of engaging with systems in a non-judgemental, exploratory way with the aim of enabling systems to themselves identify where incongruencies between policy and practice exist and begin to consider ways to address the disconnect.



#### **4.4 For participants**

Following the focus groups, participants were told that once research findings were written up and formally approved for circulation that a summary report could be made available to them. I also suggested that I would be happy to feedback results in any way that would be beneficial to the EP teams, for example in the form of a presentation, so that my research could continue to have utility for the participants. If possible, I would very much like to follow up with each of the focus groups to feedback findings and gather their thoughts and ideas about them. I would also like to find out whether any participants had made any changes to practice or acted on any of their 'next steps' as discussed in focus groups to explore how that has gone for them. I feel that these actions encapsulate the intended aim of my research enabling continuous professional development for both myself and my participants.

#### **4.5 For me ('the researcher')**

Throughout this research process, I have felt myself grow and develop as a researcher from the inception of my thesis all the way through to the completion of my written parts 1, 2 and 3. I hope to continue developing throughout my career and will be drawing upon the knowledge, experience, and skills that I have gained throughout this process to do so. I have grappled with the idea of research having impact, mainly drawing upon literature about pupil voice being 'tokenistic', and wanting the research process in and of itself to be meaningful for all those involved. As previously discussed, it will be impossible to say with certainty whether participants did take what was discussed into their practice without a follow-up, but I was encouraged by the positive feedback that I received from them about how the research had inspired sparks of some ideas for action.

As for my own practice, this process has illustrated to me the criticality of remaining an 'active participant' in continuous learning and reflection in my career. Something that is also reflected in professional standards and principles (BPS 2021; HCPC 2023). Nonetheless, what has become evident to me throughout my reading and discussions is how without space to reflect and focus on what drives us introspectively it can be difficult to recognise where practice may have become 'stuck' or 'confined' to a particular frame of reference. It is easy enough to say the words 'recognise your own biases and assumptions' but without the mechanisms and permission to do so, it can be an uncomfortable and confusing process to engage in on your own. As Mortari (2015) states, '*to become*

*mindful on one's own practice gives value to any kind of inquiry*'. Therefore, in order to empower the voices of others, we must first be mindful of where our own voice comes from and how it can be a tool for empowerment or disempowerment.

This is something I will continue to reflect on throughout my career as although this has been my process of becoming a researcher, I feel that this work has also been a key part of my journey towards constructing my professional, and personal, identity. As part of this process, I have engaged in reflection on my own values, beliefs and privileges and have started to consider how I can continue to 'landscape', 'nourish' and 'grow' my garden (i.e., my professional toolkit) in a way that benefits and empowers all those I work with.

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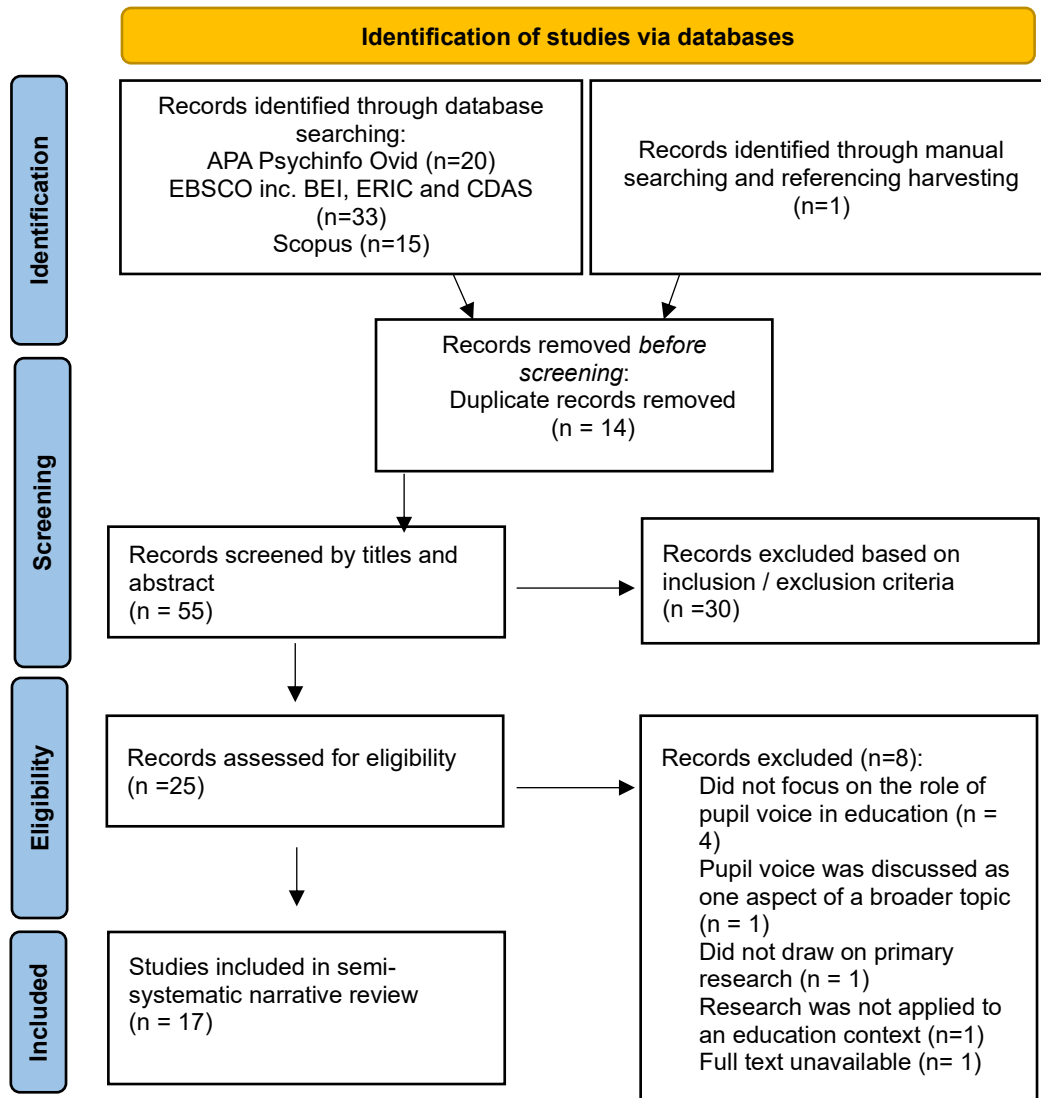


## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses

#### [PRISMA] model (Page et al., 2021)

Figure 12: PRISMA model for semi-systematic literature review



## Appendix 2 – Search Strategy for Literature Review

The literature review consists of a general narrative review (sections 1.0-3.2.3) of existing literature that broadly introduces the historical, cultural and political context of pupil voice and a second semi-systematic narrative review (section 4.0) that attends to a specific question relating to the role of pupil voice in education and the link to Educational Psychology practice. The literature in the general narrative review consists of literature derived from the researcher’s wider reading on the broader topic including relevant journal articles and grey literature garnered through a snowballing method.

The semi-systematic narrative review consists of articles gathered through a semi-systematic search strategy using the following search strings on key databases.

Figure 13: Example search conducted on APA PsychInfo on 31st July 2023

The screenshot shows the Ovid search interface. At the top, there are navigation links: My Account, Ask a Cardiff University Librarian, Support & Training, Help, Feedback, and Log Off. Below this is a blue navigation bar with 'Search' selected and other options like Journals, Books, Multimedia, My Workspace, VisualDx, EBP Tools, and What's New. The main content area shows 'Search History (1)' with a 'View Saved' link and a plus icon. Below this is a table with the following data:

#	Searches	Results	Type	Actions	Annotations
1	"pupil voice".m_titl.	14	Advanced	Display Results More	

Below the table are buttons for 'Save', 'Remove', and 'Combine with: AND OR'. At the bottom, there are links for 'Save All', 'Edit', 'Create RSS', 'Create Auto-Alert', 'View Saved', and a 'Share Search History' button.

Figure 14: Example search string conducted on APA PsychInfo on 8th August 2023

The screenshot shows the Ovid search interface. At the top, there are navigation links: My Account, Ask a Cardiff University Librarian, Support & Training, Help, Feedback, and Log Off. Below this is a blue navigation bar with 'Search' selected and other options like Journals, Books, Multimedia, My Workspace, VisualDx, EBP Tools, and What's New. The main content area shows 'Search History (3)' with a 'View Saved' link and a plus icon. Below this is a table with the following data:

#	Searches	Results	Type	Actions	Annotations
1	("pupil voice" or "student voice" or "learner voice").m_titl.	177	Advanced	Display Results More	
2	("education" or "school" or "college").mp. [mp=title, abstract, heading word, table of contents, key concepts, original title, tests & measures, mesh word]	1088014	Advanced	Display Results More	
3	1 and 2	162	Advanced	Display Results More	

Below the table are buttons for 'Save', 'Remove', and 'Combine with: AND OR'. At the bottom, there are links for 'Save All', 'Edit', 'Create RSS', 'Create Auto-Alert', 'View Saved', and a 'Share Search History' button.

Figure 15: Example search string conducted on APA PsychInfo on 13th November 2023

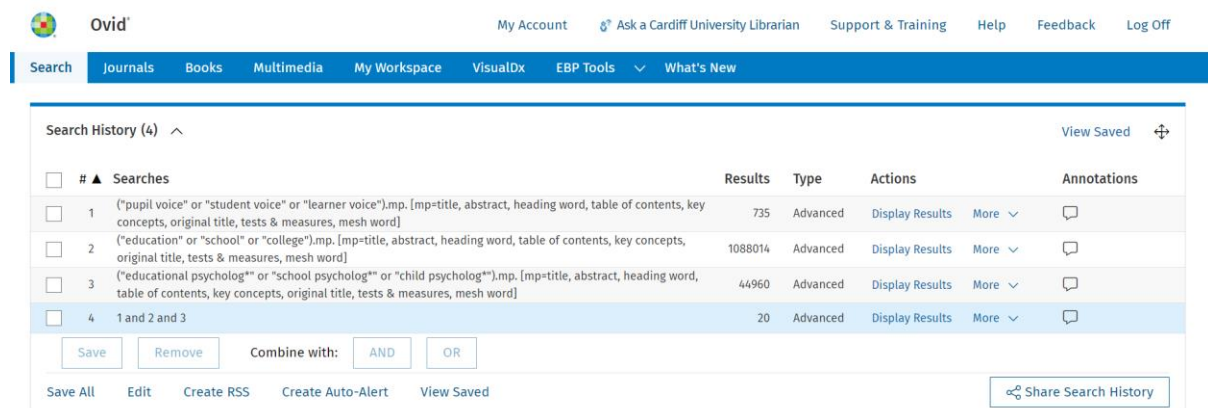


Table 12: The search strategy for the semi-systematic search (section 4.0 of the literature review)

Database	Search String	Results	Date:
APA PsychInfo Ovid	(ALL) "pupil voice" OR "student voice" OR "learner voice" AND (ALL) "education" OR "school" OR "college" AND (ALL) "educational psycholog*" OR "school psycholog*" OR "child psycholog*"	20	13.11.23
EBSCO (British Education Index, ERIC, Child Development & Adolescent Studies,)	(ALL) "pupil voice" OR "student voice" OR "learner voice" AND (ALL) "education" OR "school" OR "college" AND (ALL) "educational psychology*" OR "school psychology*" OR "child psychology*"	33	13.11.23
Scopus	( TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "pupil voice" OR "student voice" OR "learner voice" ) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ( education OR school OR college ) AND TITLE-ABS-KEY ( "educational psycholog*" OR "school psycholog*" OR "child psycholog*" ) )	15	13.11.23
<b>TOTAL:</b>	68		
<b>Duplicates removed</b>	14		
<b>TOTAL:</b>	54		

The researcher drew upon the process of establishing inclusion and exclusion criteria as recommended by Snyder et al. (2019) as well as drawing upon the expertise of Cardiff University's Subject Librarian for support and advice. The steps that the researcher took were as follows.

Step 1: The researcher conducted searches of key terms on core literature databases.

Step 2: A selection of journal articles were sampled to derive the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Step 3: The researcher conducted a pilot screening of articles to test the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

*Subsequent steps are detailed above in Appendix 1 Figure 12 PRISMA Model*

The various decision points and rationale for the development of the inclusion and exclusion criteria are detailed below.

*Table 13: Decision points and rationale for inclusion and exclusion criteria*

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Decision point / rationale</b>
<p><i>Inclusion:</i> Primary research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education where pupil voice is the primary focus.</p> <p><i>Exclusion:</i> Did not involve primary research with a focus on the role of pupil voice in education.</p>	<p>In an initial review of literature, the researcher identified that many articles referencing pupil voice focused on utilising pupil voice as a method for exploring different topics (e.g., a particular school subject, views on school, specific interventions). However, within these articles there was little specific reference to the meaning, value, or purpose of pupil voice itself. Therefore, it was felt that in order to answer the focused literature review question it was important that articles primarily focused on the concept of pupil voice in education as this is the context that the researcher intends to focus on as being relevant to EP practice.</p>
<p><i>Inclusion:</i> Includes discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice.</p> <p><i>Exclusion:</i> Did not include discussion of systemic implications.</p>	<p>The researcher was interested in exploring the purpose of pupil voice as leading to meaningful change at all levels e.g., individual, organisation, and systemic (Sewell, 2022). Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to exclude articles that did not discuss wider implications of pupil voice within the school system.</p>
<p><i>Inclusion:</i> Has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice.</p> <p><i>Exclusion:</i> Did not discuss implications for educational psychology practice.</p>	<p>The researcher has illustrated the relevance of focusing on pupil voice in relation to EP practice in Part 1 of this literature review. As such, it was deemed important that articles included in the semi-systematic review referred to implications for EP practice either directly (specifically mentioned EPs) or indirectly (deemed relevant to core elements of EP practice as referenced by Welsh Government, 2016).</p>
<p><i>Inclusion:</i> Conducted in or applied to education settings.</p> <p><i>Exclusion:</i> Was not conducted in or applied to education settings.</p>	<p>Although EPs can work outside of education settings (i.e. in the community, in family contexts), it was felt that this review should focus explicitly on research conducted or applied to education settings. This was considered</p>

	appropriate as this is the context that legislation, such as ALNET 2018 and SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2014), is applied to.
<i>Inclusion:</i> Full text is available <i>Exclusion:</i> Full text is unavailable	The researcher used all resources available to access articles including requesting them from Cardiff University's Library Service. If articles were still unavailable after attempts were made to retrieve a copy, articles were excluded on these grounds.

Other considerations at this stage included the addition of criteria based on year of publication, geographical location, or language. However, in line with the Social Constructionist position that the researcher adopted it was felt that a review of articles across time periods, geographical locations, and languages (if translations were available) would be beneficial to understand the historical, cultural, and social factors underpinning constructions of pupil voice. Therefore, the final inclusion and exclusion criteria utilised by the researcher to derive articles to be included in the semi-systematic narrative review can be viewed in *Table 14* below. An overview of the articles included and excluded from the final review can be viewed in *Appendix 3*.

*Table 14: Inclusion and exclusion criteria utilised by the researcher*

Inclusion criteria				
Primary research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education where pupil voice is the primary focus.	Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice.	Has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice.	Conducted in or applied to education settings.	Full text is available.
Exclusion criteria				
Did not involve primary research.	Did not primarily focus on the role of pupil voice in education.	Did not include discussion of systemic implications.	Did not discuss implications for educational psychology practice.	Was not conducted or applied to education settings.
Full text unavailable.				

### Appendix 3 – Overview of Studies included in Semi-Systematic Narrative Review

This table includes all studies that met the inclusion criteria and were included in the full semi-systematic literature review followed by the studies that were excluded from the review as a result of failing to meet the necessary inclusion criteria.

Table 15: Overview of studies included in semi-systematic narrative review

Name of paper	Inclusion / exclusion criteria	Research question – aim of research	Participants and recruitment	Methods/ontology and epistemology	Findings	Strengths and critiques of research (Yardley, 2000)
<b>RECORDS THAT MET THE INCLUSION CRITERIA AND WERE INCLUDED IN THE FULL REVIEW</b>						
Taines, C. (2013) Educators and youth activists: A negotiation over enhancing students' role in school life. <i>Journal of Educational Change</i> , 15(2), pp.153-178 <a href="https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/s10833-013-9220-y.pdf">s10833-013-9220-y.pdf (cardiff.ac.uk)</a>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings ✓</p> <p>Full text available ✓</p>	<p><i>Aim:</i> To analyse educators' conceptions about the proper exercise of student voice within schools and how these coincide with activists' tactics for school reform.</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> To identify strategies that will gain students entry into school policy deliberations.</p> <p><i>Research questions:</i> What are teachers' and principals' views of student engagement in school decision making? What forms of enhanced student participation will educators accept?</p>	<p>School principals, teachers, community organizers, and students who all took part in a community-based program that encouraged young people to organise and transform their schools.</p> <p>3 urban high schools.</p>	<p>Qualitative case study</p> <p>Interview methodology</p> <p>Thematic analysis</p>	<p><i>Meaning:</i> Two conceptualisations of 'student voice' – student involvement where student voice is heard alongside parents and teachers and youth activism which involves learners driving change from outside the school system. The second construction stems from a belief that school systems are socially unequal, and change occurs through political force.</p> <p>Teaching staff constructions: 'Pupil voice' enabled pupils to have ownership over their school and learning. In this way, it can increase pupil belonging. Teachers believe that youth activism allows pupils to advocate for educational change.</p> <p>Youth activism workers constructions: Pupil voice as having an 'organising perspective' that 'actually builds power within the school system for students to organize change from the inside'.</p> <p>Pupil constructions: Power dynamics to overcome in order to have their voices heard. For example, 'They're in power so they're intimidating'.</p>	<p>Selective sampling method.</p> <p>Included names of participants (not clear if pseudonyms) – lack of anonymity?</p> <p>If school systems are only willing to listen to the voices they want to hear, can this really be classed as 'authentic pupil voice'?</p> <p>This research focused on the 'what' of pupil voice according to different key stakeholders. It did not look at what was underlying these beliefs or what this meant for the stakeholders in terms of practice.</p>

				<p><i>Value</i> Principals did support the expansion of student voice in school life despite voicing concerns about youth activism not aligning with school policies and procedures. However, they expressed preference for traditional modes of student participation (i.e. to hear what they want to hear).</p> <p>Teaching staff valued pupil participation in youth activism as it created a sense of leadership and establishes different spaces for student voice in education.</p> <p>Teaching staff expressed worries that pupil voice as youth activism could become adversarial leading to disruptions in school order and destabilized relations with educators.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> School leaders perceive 'legitimate and acceptable student voice' to consist of school sponsored processes such as student councils and committees whereby pupils considered 'high-achievers' take up positions to discuss day-to-day school matters. School leaders also expressed wariness about youth activism. <b>This begs the question as to what school leadership consider to be the 'purpose' of pupil voice.</b></p> <p>Evaluating and modifying school policy and that it increases school attachment leading to greater respect for school goals and objectives.</p> <p>A tool for 'getting students to care' about school.</p> <p>A useful tool for quality assurance and feedback of teaching practices.</p> <p>Pupil voice as influencing school orderliness</p> <p>Youth activism workers saw the staffs' favour for current models of pupil voice as indicating a 'resistance to change'.</p>	<p>The research provided a 'snapshot' insight into different stakeholders' perspectives within one school district. Therefore the findings may be limited in their applicability to other school contexts. However, key findings relating to power dynamics and the differing conceptualisations of pupil voice at various layers of a school system provide for some useful reflections.</p> <p>Based in the U.S - WEIRD</p>
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					<p><b>Therefore, who is benefitting from pupil voice?</b></p> <p>Teachers backed a model of youth activism in which students both expressed their educational needs AND honoured the school's goals and priorities. Some teaching staff supported the current models of pupil voice that were in place however others voiced their disfavour for them. Possible reasons given for these differing opinions included teaching staff feeling threatened or criticized. An example of the kind of language used included 'You're not grown. Stay in the kids' place'. Teachers suggested that pupils should be more tactful if they want to be listened to. – <b>is this a good enough reason for pupils' voices to be silenced? Disempowering?</b></p> <p>Youth activism workers saw pupil voice as instrumental in delivering real and institutional change.</p> <p>Students conceptualised pupil voice as being important for ensuring school quality and improving relationships with staff. They also saw it as improving pupils' engagement in all of school life.</p> <p><i>Implications</i> A vision and strategy of relational power may restore trust and expand the space available for student engagement. This shift would involve a relational mindset adopted by staff that endorses independence, partnership, compromise, autonomy, and mutual agreement.</p> <p><i>Rationale</i> Research illuminates potentially conflicting visions of the place and power of students to shape their schools.</p> <p><i>Reflection</i></p>	
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					How do conceptualisations of pupil voice impact the perceived safety of school systems (school leaders, pupils)?	
Allen, K. C. (2014). <i>Breaking the 'at risk' code: deconstructing the myth and the label</i> (Doctoral dissertation, Loyola Marymount University). ProQuest. <a href="#">Breaking the "At Risk" Code: Deconstructing the Myth and the Label - ProQuest</a>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice ✓</p> <p>Has indirect implications for EPs – to support staff to consider ways of moving towards a more humanizing and democratic pedagogy. ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings ✓</p> <p>Full text available ✓</p>	<p><i>Aim:</i> To centralise student voices by gathering narrative accounts from former students of U.S high schools.</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> To understand how students labelled 'at risk' interpret and make sense of their educational experiences.</p> <p><i>Research question:</i> How do former students identify and understand the conditions that labelled them 'at risk'?</p>	<p>6 former students labelled as 'at risk' based on definitions within the literature.</p> <p>All over 18 years old.</p> <p>Recruited through relationships with existing organizations.</p>	<p>Critical pedagogy</p> <p>A qualitative and investigative methodology using unstructured interviews in line with a critical narrative inquiry method.</p> <p>Re-occurring individual interviews and a focus group with selected participants.</p>	<p>Identified 5 themes from young people's narratives.</p> <p><i>Meaning</i> Pupil voice can be viewed as a political act towards social change as defined by Freire (2010). Through engaging in dialogue within the educational context, students can engage in a transformative process that helps them to understand their place in the world and reconceptualise educational spaces as a result.</p> <p><i>Value</i> The value that pupil voice holds is constructed at both an individual and systemic level. At the individual level, it is viewed as being central to the understanding of one's own history and lived experience. At the systemic level, it can be conceptualised as leading to a genuinely democratic society where individuals can see that their voices do in fact matter.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> Pupil voice can be seen as transformative and supporting the process of understanding one's identity. The minimizing of voice therefore can be seen as a way of oppressing individuals and reinforcing dominant ideologies. To inform policies and educational programmes (a person-first approach).</p> <p><i>Implications:</i> Recommendations include educators learning how and when to create conditions for pupil voice, emancipatory practices and develop critical consciousness. One way in which the author suggests that they do this is by recognizing their own biases. Could EPs have a role by creating reflective spaces for staff to consider the role of student voices in the school system?</p>	<p>Not all participants had the opportunity to engage in a focus group.</p> <p>Sampling method was not random.</p> <p>All participants had a first or second degree connection to the researcher</p> <p>Researcher engaged in reflection and reflexivity as part of the research process, acknowledging the impact that they may have had on the research itself.</p> <p>Based in the U.S – WEIRD</p> <p>Data collection caused emotional responses in participants (ethics)</p> <p>Did not look at the constructions held about meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice.</p> <p>The value of pupil voice is constructed through the 'outcome' that it can produce</p>

						rather than a reflection on the inherent value of pupil voice.
<p>Bahou, L.(2012). Cultivating student agency and teachers as learners in one Lebanese school. <i>Educational Action Research</i>, 20(2), pp.233-250.</p> <p><a href="http://cardiff.ac.uk">Cultivating student agency and teachers as learners in one Lebanese school (cardiff.ac.uk)</a></p>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings ✓</p> <p>Full text available ✓</p>	<p><i>Aims:</i> To explore a 'student as researchers' intervention in one Lebanese school, and how this method served as an instrument for activating student voice for agency.</p> <p><i>Research questions:</i> What key processes enable an intervention such as SAR to improve the learning and relationships of students and teachers within one school?</p>	<p>School director as collaborator</p> <p>Teachers</p> <p>Whole class (13 participants) of Grade 7/8 students aged 12-14.</p>	<p>Applied 3 phases of 'students as researchers' within 3 cycles of action research.</p>	<p><i>Meaning</i> Student voice was conceptualised as underpinning the 'students as researchers' intervention. It is also conceptualised as being encompassed by overarching terms like 'student agency' and 'participation'. The development of a shared space whereby teachers and students could come together to share ideas and voices.</p> <p><i>Value</i> All members of the school system were shared stakeholders with equal positions held within the system. In this way, the value of pupil voice was given equal weight to teacher voice. The research method also inspired a 'cultural shift' among teachers within the school, which required them to listen and reflect on pupil voices. SAR student presentations were a powerful strategy for making themselves heard. Other teachers question 'to what extent teachers should listen to students'.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> SAR as an intervention in this study enabled students to express their agency by conducting school-based research on matters that were important to them. It also enabled them to develop their confidence, academic skills, and communication skills, foster new understandings, altered perceptions, and shifting roles resulting in a shift in school culture.</p> <p><i>Implications:</i> The researcher suggests two important conditions for enabling student agency; supporting schools' organisational structure to embrace student agency and supporting teachers to cross the boundaries of traditional norms. Both implications could be supported by Educational Psychologists.</p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>	<p>Lebanese (Asian) context - cross-cultural</p> <p>Considers context – experience teaching in a 'traditional educational structure and culture'.</p> <p>Researcher strove to gain an understanding of the research context and became immersed in the system – risk?</p> <p>The co-researcher at the school level was a former colleague of the researcher but this was not considered although the researcher's relationship with participants was acknowledged.</p> <p>The researcher suggests future work needs to be done to explore adults' assumptions regarding pupil voice in order to support meaningful engagement with participatory approaches.</p>

					The researcher suggests that adults who are in a position of power need to question their own assumptions, motivations, and readiness to work with young people in order for student voice work to become meaningful.	No definitive conceptualisation of what pupil voice is.  Only briefly discussed the values shared by staff about pupil voice.
Bland D., & Atweh, B. (2007). Students as researchers: engaging students' voices in PAR. <i>Educational Action Research</i> , 15(3), pp.337-349	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education. ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus. ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice. ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice. ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings. ✓</p> <p>Full text available. ✓</p>	<p><i>Aims:</i> Identifying features from SAR project that promote student voice on educational issues. Also, outcomes for schools engaging with student voices and potential barriers to positive collaboration.</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> Reflective account of a students as researchers project which focused on engaging the voices of marginalised secondary school students.</p>	Initiated by an Australian university.	Utilised participatory action research.	<p><i>Meaning</i> Pupil voice is central to the 'students as researchers' project. The researchers argue that the practice of students as researchers offers one way of creating opportunities for engagement, so that students whose voices may have been silenced or devalued within traditional schooling systems can be heard.</p> <p>Pupil voice in this instance goes beyond consultation and representing their voices in research. It is conceptualised as student involvement that results in knowledge production and co-constructing solutions (Smyth &amp; Hattam, 2001). PAR is grounded in social justice matters which is what makes this conceptualisation of pupil voice different to pure consultative approaches.</p> <p><i>Value:</i> Schools may need to change the ways in which they listen to students, including respecting the realities of the roles young people play in the broader community, and the role they can play in relation to their own educational opportunities (Rudduck &amp; Flutter, 2004).</p> <p>Even when attempting to give students voices equal value in initiatives like SAR, various systemic factors can create challenges including educational expectations as well as legal and ethical constraints.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> Often pupil voice is confined to school management matters rather than wider systemic issues at a whole school level. Emphasis on voice</p>	<p>Such a project featuring collaborators (staff, pupil and external facilitator) can be time-consuming and require a lot of resources.</p> <p>Did not focus on people's constructions of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice.</p> <p>No reflections on the researcher's role in the project.</p> <p>No information about sample size.</p>

					<p>being partnered with vision. 'Voices need to be not only heard, but also engaged, reconciled, and argued with' (Hargreaves, 1994, p.251).</p> <p>SAR projects offer a model to scaffold student voice and illustrates how listening to and respecting voices of marginalised students can affect school change at the same time as empowering the participants towards improved educational outcomes.</p> <p><i>Implications</i>          Researchers posit that SAR initiatives can act as a link between the theory of pupil voice and actually facilitating meaningful change (Fielding, 2001).</p>	
<p>Fiske, P. M. (1999). <i>Teaching and learning stances that aid the emergence of voice in severely emotionally / behaviourally disordered elementary school-aged children</i> (Doctoral dissertation, The University of Georgia). ProQuest.</p>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education. ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus. ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice. ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice. ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or</p>	<p><i>Purpose:</i> To explore ways of encouraging pupil voice with children and young people described as having SEBD needs and to consider their response to an intervention put in place by a school psychologist.</p> <p><i>Research question:</i> What teaching and learning stances aid the emergence of voice in children diagnosed with a severe emotional and behavioural disability?</p>	6 students	<p>Qualitative case study using students as co-researchers.</p> <p>Pupils participated in an intervention with a focus of increasing prosocial behaviour – <b>ethics?</b></p> <p>Mixed methods – observations, field notes, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, video recordings, co-researcher written surveys and school records.</p>	<p><i>Meaning</i>          Pupil voice as a condition of empowerment whereby pupils are given space to hold power over decisions relating to their lives. It is grounded in social justice and civil rights issues relating to democratic participation, citizenship, and empowerment.</p> <p>Identified the following elements of pedagogical practice for pupil voice to be developed; adults should engage in reflection to review their practice, adults need to listen to children and young people, opportunities for children to construct their own knowledge should be available, and adults need to ensure that all voices are empowered including those from diverse and multi-cultural backgrounds.</p> <p><i>Value</i>          Traditional approaches to learning may stifle pupils' voices. Research has shown that pupils are effective in their critique of education reform initiatives. Teachers who empower pupil voice are described as creating opportunities to share power with students in the classroom and school environment.</p>	<p>U.S context</p> <p>Took place nearly two decades ago – outdated?</p> <p>Some deficit language used to describe children and young people.</p> <p>The researcher describes their own beliefs and philosophical viewpoint.</p> <p>The research took place in a setting that the researcher was employed at during their studentship – what impact may this have had?</p>

	<p>applied to education settings. ✓</p> <p>Full text available. ✓</p>			<p>Constant comparative analysis.</p>	<p>Description of the events that transpired reveal an incongruency between the practitioners' values and initial ideas about their practice and the enacted reality of working with children and young people. The researcher states 'I couldn't listen, yet. The core of my cognitive energy was focused on establishing order, maintaining behavioural control.' – <b>link to rationale.</b></p> <p>The researcher argues that 'establishing order and trust' are preconditions to the emergence of pupil voice – but what does this mean in terms of power dynamics? Does this mean that pupil voice can only be heard when on our own terms?</p> <p>Highlighted the importance of using reflective tools such as SOCIAAAL GRRACESSS to engage in reflexive practice to ensure that pupils from diverse backgrounds voices are amplified and empowered.</p> <p>The pupils were more free in their expressions of pupil voice when power dynamics were intentionally shifted towards them. Pupil voice can be engaged in systems that tap into underlying principles and shared values of democratic education and social constructivism.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> Implementation of student ideas creates conditions for further emphasis on pupil voice and empowerment.</p> <p>For pupil voice to make a difference.</p> <p>Adapting practice based on pupil voice / inform practice and engage in reflexivity as a response to pupil voice.</p>	<p>Teaching staff nominated a group of students to recruit from – potential bias?</p> <p>Inclusion criteria for participation included having an adequate ability to express themselves – what about those who don't?</p> <p>Researcher engaged in reflexive and reflective practice throughout.</p> <p>The researcher posed the idea that pupils' cognitive abilities limited the amount of involvement they had in this research. This is a very limiting and within child view of pupil voice. How does this align with current constructions of pupil voice / competency / capacity?</p> <p>Case study – findings limited to just this one cohort of children.</p>
<p>Giraldo-Garcia, R. J., Voight, A., &amp; O'Malley, M. (2021). Mandatory</p>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of</p>	<p><i>Aims / purpose:</i> Explores how urban high schools</p>	<p>Purposive sampling of 22 district high school</p>	<p>Using an implementation science framework</p>	<p><i>Meaning:</i> Student voice initiatives are a heterogenous array of programs and practices that incorporate an</p>	<p>Western (U.S based).</p>

<p>voice: implementation of a district-led student-voice program in urban high schools. <i>Psychology in the Schools</i>, 58 (1), pp.51-68.</p>	<p>pupil voice (0-25) in education. ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus. ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice. ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice. ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings. ✓</p> <p>Full text available. ✓</p>	<p>implement a district-initiated student-voice program (Student Advisory Committees).</p> <p><i>Research question:</i> How do urban high schools implement a district-initiated student-voice mandate?</p> <p>What contextual factors help to explain variance in implementation?</p>	<p>principals / counsellors.</p>	<p>to analyse interview data from principals and advisors in 22 urban high schools.</p> <p>Iterative, top-down thematic analysis.</p> <p>Case study design.</p>	<p>active student role in the identification of needs in their schools, decisions and improvement strategies and priorities, and decisions about strategy implementation and evaluation. 'Authenticity of voice' is a measure of whether and to what degree students are allowed to express themselves and whether their ideas are acted upon. Zeldin et al. (2018) argue that when students are truly allowed to exercise voice, the school becomes a place of empowerment and engagement.</p> <p><i>Value:</i> Literature indicates that adults needs to buy into principles of student-voice programs in order for them to be successfully implemented. There was a marked selection bias, however, in favor of high-achieving students with positive behavioural records – <b>whose voices are being valued?</b> Another principal explained their selection criteria, which included their estimation of the students' ability to communicate their opinions and any relevant information to the school community in addition to their good academic standing.</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> Critical to the successful implementation of student voice programmes is the sense of ownership, vision, and purpose amongst adults and students (Mitra, 2007; Zeldin et al., 2008). Some participating schools were more supportive of the purposes and expected benefits of the SACs while others were generally unsure of how to transform the principles and processes of student-voice into quality practice (Zeldin et al., 2008).</p> <p><i>Implications / Rationale:</i> School psychologists are well-positioned to support all phases of student voice initiatives. The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP, 2010) indicates that school psychologists should have a prominent role in 'promoting fairness and social justice in school policies and</p>	<p>It is interesting that in the U.S, pupil voice seems to have been commercially / industrially constructed into a packaged programme that can be implemented in schools rather than something that is constructed by the individuals within the school system.</p> <p>Inter-coder reliability and member checking was employed by researchers.</p> <p>Researchers paid attention to the context of the research i.e., student voice mandates, socio-political context of the sample population.</p> <p>The researcher attended to their own impact on the research process and discussed ways they mitigated this impact.</p> <p>Researcher did not discuss their own philosophical paradigm from which they were conducting this research.</p>
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					programs'. School psychologists' training makes them suitable for roles as coordinator/facilitator of student voice strategies, helping to ensure that implementation carefully adheres to the philosophical principles of youth voice.	No deeper exploration of what we mean by 'pupil voice' and how this may influence implementation of student voice initiatives.	
Hall, S. (2010). Supporting mental health and wellbeing at a whole-school level: listening to and acting upon children's views. <i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i> , 15(4), pp.323-339.	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education. ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus. ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice. ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice. ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings. ✓</p> <p>Full text available. ✓</p>	<p><i>Purpose:</i> This project was conducted as a response to a primary school identifying a need to listen to and act upon children's views in relation to social and emotional aspects of learning.</p> <p><i>Aim:</i> To explore the social and emotional experiences of children within one primary school.</p> <p><i>Research question:</i> Is the Ten Element Map a useful framework to structure focus groups to elicit children's views about organisational influences on their mental health and wellbeing?</p> <p>Can information gathered from such focus groups be used to develop an action plan for change at the organisational level?</p>	18 children from Reception year to Year 6 participated in 4 focus groups.	<p>School staff selected a sample of pupils to participate – potential bias?</p>	<p>Semi-structured focus group methodology.</p> <p>Exploratory, single school case study.</p> <p>Thematic analysis.</p>	<p><i>Meaning</i> Pupil voice efforts need to be constructed as a process rather than a one-off event.</p> <p><i>Value</i> The research process itself demonstrated how pupils' voices can be valued as being important. Researchers reflected on the skills demonstrated by participating children and discussed how previous research by MacDonald (2006) proposes that these skills derive from an environment that values an individual's worth. This was also considered in the wider context of the school who had a specific interest in effectively listening to and acting upon the voice of the child. This indicates the value that the researchers and school system place on pupil voice.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> Pupil views were used to inform an organisational action plan for the school. Opportunities for pupil voice implemented via the SEAL programme supported pupils to develop key social and emotional skills.</p> <p><i>Implications:</i> In recent years, EPs have moved away from a deficit model towards a more collaborative, solution-focused way of working that aligns with the meaningful inclusion of children and young people's views to overcome inequalities in an empowering, collaborative, and participatory manner (Jane-Llopis et al., 2007). Todd (2007) reflects that 'one option for organisations is to go into partnership with another agency where there</p>	<p>School staff selected a representative sample of pupils – how can we be sure that this was truly representative and unbiased?</p> <p>Children's views were used to co-construct an organisational action plan indicating the practical utility of the research.</p> <p>The researchers gained pupil consent to participate however they did not discuss the possible impact of power differentials and how this may have influenced the research process.</p>

		Can this process promote pupil participation?			is experience in consulting with children'. EPs are well placed to be involved in aspects of pupil participation and consultation. They are also well placed to ensure that children's views are taken seriously by promoting them with school staff.	
Hartas, D. (2011). Young people's participation: is disaffection another way of having a voice?. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 27(2), pp. 103-115.	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education. ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus. ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice. ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice. ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings. ✓</p> <p>Full text available. ✓</p>	<p><i>Purpose:</i> Young people, described by teachers as being disaffected, were encouraged to become involved in a public forum to discuss issues regarding participation, learning, and training at their school as well as their future aspirations.</p> <p><i>Aim:</i> To offer young disaffected pupils a social space to express their views about matters that affect their life at school.</p>	<p>Conducted in partnership with a college in the U.K. which has developed a public forum to gather views from pupils aged 13-15 years old.</p> <p>Staff described pupils who accessed the forum as being disaffected due to a lack of engagement with school affairs.</p> <p>In collaboration with 3 college staff, using purposive sampling, 18 young people were recruited to participate.</p>	<p>3 focus groups each with 6 participants and one to one interviews.</p> <p>Case study approach.</p> <p>Thematic analysis</p>	<p><i>Meaning</i> Pupils voiced that pupil participation should involve sustained informal ways of being able to express their views in a way that will be genuinely listened to. Staff described how pupil voice processes often consist of academically able pupils who have the confidence and ability to participate in 'formal systems of participation'.</p> <p>The school had various processes and systems in place to gather pupil voice including a student council, student voice groups, student governors, a student panel, and a student bulletin.</p> <p>Offers an alternate perspective on the meaning of pupil voice in his research exploring disaffected pupils' experiences of pupil participation. He questions whether disaffection in and of itself is a perfectly legitimate form of pupil voice. He also challenges the position that pupil participation is inherently good.</p> <p><i>Value</i> Staff expressed concerns that traditional processes of gathering pupil voice often favour those more academically able children and young people. This begs the question – whose voice is most valued in the education system?</p> <p>Pupils expressed that the opportunities for pupil voice were limited and that even when opportunities were there they did not feel genuinely listened to and that the process felt 'tokenistic'.</p> <p>The researcher also points out that systemic factors can impact the process of gathering pupil voice and constructions held about it. For example,</p>	<p>Pupils were provided with an opportunity to conceptualise what pupil voice means to them and what it should look like in practice - useful</p> <p>Research was conducted in partnership with a college who had already developed a pupil voice forum. What might the impact be of collaborating with a system already interested in and placing value on pupil voice?</p> <p>Pupils were described as being 'disaffected' by staff and researchers aimed to consider pupil participation through this lens. Pupils expressed dissatisfaction at this criterion being used to identify participants.</p> <p>Reported recruitment criteria appears to be subjective and based on individual staff</p>



				<p>the systems implemented to engage with children and young people are often the same ones that marginalise them.</p> <p>Pupils viewed a lack of respect from staff as being a significant barrier to participation efforts. They viewed academically able pupils as being the most valued group within school systems.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> Participants expressed scepticism about the pupil voice forum and the purpose that it served. Pupil expressed feelings of powerlessness and lack of confidence that their views would lead to any change within the school system.</p> <p>Participants' key concerns were that their views were attended to and responded to in an authentic way that acknowledges pupils needs before it responds to the organisation's needs.</p> <p>Participants considered the curriculum to be widely irrelevant to their interests and future goals and discussed how the purpose of schooling is underpinned by adult-endorsed ideologies about what children and young people need to be successful (e.g., good grades and qualifications).</p> <p>Participants voiced that current forms of participation are tokenistic and do not provide a truly safe space for their voices to be listened to. Therefore, the meaning and purpose if these processes were different from those 'envisaged by the architects of inclusionary policies' (Fergusson, 2004, p.292).</p> <p><i>Implications</i> 'Systemic constraints have the potential to divert thinking from treating young people as citizens with a right to education and training, to attributing disaffection as an internal failure rather than a response to policy failure whereby participation, teaching, and learning are construed as means to</p>	<p>members' beliefs about pupils – ethics?</p> <p>Not much detail about the researcher's role in the research process and the analytic process that was undertaken to establish themes.</p>
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					an end.' EPs may have an important role to play in facilitating conversations with students and staff and encouraging the development of a two-way culture of respect and agreed upon channels for genuine participation. Highlights the importance of bridging conceptualisations of pupil voice by all those who have a vested interest (both pupils and staff) – future research?	
Kolnes, J., & Midthassel, U. V. (2022). Capturing students' needs through collaboration – exploring challenges experienced by Norwegian educational-psychological advisers. <i>European Journal of Special Needs Education</i> , 37(3), pp. 386-400.	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education. ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus. ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice. ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice. ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings. ✓</p> <p>Full text available. ✓</p>	<p><i>Purpose:</i> To explore EPS advisers' experiences of challenges in collaborating with key stakeholders including students, parents, teachers and principals.</p> <p><i>Research question:</i> What challenges do EPS advisers experience when collaborating with key stakeholders to identify students' needs?</p>	8 interviews with EPS advisers.	<p>Exploratory</p> <p>Semi-structured qualitative interviews.</p> <p>Theory-driven thematic analysis.</p> <p>Constructionist paradigm.</p>	<p>Researchers identified capturing pupil voice as a key challenge to collaboration efforts.</p> <p><i>Meaning</i> EPS advisers constructed pupil voice as involving students in various meetings and assessment-based conversations. Literature suggests that pupil voice is an important resource for gaining knowledge about the school environment and the pupils' needs in order to enable a more systemic and ecological approach to facilitating change for schools, parents and pupils.</p> <p><i>Value</i> Some EPS advisers constructed gathering pupil voice as time consuming whereas others described it as 'motivating, rewarding and meaningful'. Demonstrating the mixed ideas of how valuable the exercise of gathering pupil voice is to EPS advisers. EPS advisers commented on how sometimes the student perspective may appear threatening to teaching staff and if the student perspective could lead to a difficult climate, advisers sometimes would not report it.</p> <p><i>Challenges</i> It is difficult for EPS to navigate the differing constructions of the EP role (e.g., investigating SEN vs. systemic approaches). Advisers in this study found it a challenge to bridge these two constructions as they can contradict one another. This can result in professional uncertainty about which approach to take to fulfil their role. By not drawing on pupil voice, EPS advisers run the risk of violating pupils' rights to a voice.</p>	<p>Small sample size</p> <p>Conducted in Norway.</p> <p>Limited sample just with EPS advisers and not the key stakeholders that they collaborate with.</p> <p>The researcher had experience with the EPS role and acknowledges that this may have impacted the research process due to their prior knowledge of the role.</p> <p>Does not reflect on EPS advisers' constructions of participation however does look at participation more broadly as including staff, parents and pupils.</p>

					<p><i>Purpose</i> EPS advisers have constructed their role as supporting schools and pupils in a more collaborative, systemic way compared with school staff constructing their role as being that of a 'gatekeeper' that does not necessarily align with the inclusion movement.</p>	
<p>McCarter, S., &amp; Woolner, P. (2011). How listening to student voice can enable teachers to reflect on and adjust their use of physical space. <i>Educational &amp; Child Psychology</i>, 28(1), pp. 20-32.</p>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education. ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus. ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice. ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice. ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings. ✓</p> <p>Full text available. ✓</p>	<p><i>Aims / Purpose:</i> Focused on the use of carpet time in an English primary school by asking both children and adults for their ideas about carpet-based teaching and learning.</p> <p>This research is embedded in an interest in pupil empowerment and pupil voice.</p>	<p>1 small, rural primary school that included 119 pupils grouped into 5 classes from Reception to Year 6.</p>	<p>Mixed methods using activity theory, semi-structured interviews, focus groups and questionnaires for triangulation purposes.</p> <p>Questionnaire was pupil-generated by members of the school council.</p> <p>Social Constructionist paradigm.</p> <p>Also drew on verbal and visual data in the form of drawings and photographs.</p> <p>Thematic analysis.</p>	<p><i>Meaning</i> The researcher argues that the physical school environment can impact pupils' feelings of worth, sense of belonging, feelings of ownership and of being able to make a positive contribution, all linked to the 5 outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda (DfES, 2004). This indicates that pupil voice needs to be considered in a wider systemic context and that practitioners need to look beyond the child and microsystemic levels to consider the factors that either hinder or facilitate pupil voice.</p> <p><i>Value</i> In classrooms where pupils reported a more positive experience, the pupils and teacher had developed a partnership based on co-operation and organisation which is argued by Galton et al (1999) to be fundamental to the success of classroom interactions. This research shows how listening to pupil's voices about the school environment and their experiences can illuminate incongruencies between what teachers think benefits pupils and what pupils actually find helpful. It also highlights the benefit of consulting with pupils to inform practice.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> By listening to pupil voice, the researcher was able to gain an understanding of their learning experiences. Children described how their experience in the classroom was typically adult-controlled and that they preferred opportunities to experience autonomy in their learning.</p>	<p>Whose voices were prominent? How were members of the school council selected? Was this representative of the school community?</p> <p>Interviews with teachers took place sporadically during the school day – how valid can data be when captured in this way? Was it confidential? Why were they not given a set date and time to enable them to prepare / have space to think about their answers?</p> <p>How was data analysis influenced by the researcher analysing whilst data was still being collected?</p> <p>Limited sample (one primary school).</p> <p>The researcher did not reflect on her role</p>

					<p>The feedback from pupils drew teachers' attention to the wider issues of the classroom environment. As a result, teachers were able to consider what pupils' had to say and adjust their practice in response to their views. Demonstrates how a process of shared understanding can support a shift in school culture, mindsets and practice and result in positive change in teaching and learning.</p> <p><i>Implications</i> According to Activity Theory (Engestrom, 1987), when common practices are questioned and the status quo challenged, change occurs. One role of an EP is to be 'an agent of change'; challenging the status quo will invite discussion about changing practice or at least add to the understanding of that practice.</p> <p>Another central EP role is to discover and advocate the pupils' views and perspectives (Farrell et al., 2006) so that their views inform decision making.</p> <p>This study also highlights the importance of structured efforts to gather pupil voice as many teachers were unaware of pupils' negative experiences working on the carpet as a result of possible pupil compliance. This is indicative of the inherent power dynamics within the school. As such, adults must seek ways to overcome these power imbalances to enable pupils' voices to be heard authentically.</p>	in the research process.
Riley, K., & Docking, J. (2004). Voices of disaffected pupils: implications for policy and practice. <i>British Journal of Educational Studies</i> , 52(2), pp. 166-179.	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education. ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus. ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of</p>	<p><i>Aims / Purpose:</i> Two studies that examined pupil disengagement.</p> <p>Both studies drew upon pupil voice to explore the school experiences of pupils labelled as 'disaffected' along</p>	<p>1<sup>st</sup> study – based in one county of England recruited 45 pupils.</p> <p>2<sup>nd</sup> study – 18 primary schools and 13 secondary schools including</p>	<p>Drew upon visual data and drawings in pupil panels.</p> <p>Questionnaire.</p>	<p><i>Meaning</i> Pupil voice is defined as establishing an effective dialogue between staff and students about how to achieve mutual respect.</p> <p>If students are to become radical agents of change, then staff must be willing to ensure that conditions are met to bring about dialogic democracy (Fielding, 2001).</p>	<p>This research was published 10 years ago – why are we still asking the same questions? What is prohibiting practice from moving forwards? Systemic implications?</p>

	<p>systemic implications from gathering pupil voice. ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice. ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings. ✓</p> <p>Full text available. ✓</p>	with their teachers and parents.	<p>3291 pupils and 361 staff.</p> <p>Gathered data from pupils, teaching staff and parents.</p>		<p>All voices need to be heard, not just those of the more able and articulate but also those who have learning difficulties and lack social confidence (Rudduck et al., 1996).</p> <p><i>Value</i> Pupil voice gathered in this study indicated that as pupils progressed through secondary school they experienced limited opportunities to express their point of view. This is an interesting finding as 'competency' is often stated as an essential criterion for pupil participation in legislation and guidance. Staff in the questionnaires also acknowledged the importance of pupils' opinions being listened to. – <b>so why aren't they?</b></p> <p><i>Purpose</i> Insight from pupils can help us to understand how they experience school and what motivates / demotivates them to engage in learning. This information can help staff to consider their own role as teachers and consider alternative, innovative approaches to teaching that is based on mutual respect and engages pupils as active learners, rather than passive vessels to be filled with knowledge. <b>Link to psych theory?</b></p>	<p>Questionnaires used a 4-5 point scale to gather pupil views on aspects of school life. A true understanding of experiences may be limited by this restricted measurement.</p> <p>Large sample size. 1<sup>st</sup> study was a pilot and second study expanded on their initial findings.</p> <p>A different methodology such as interviews and focus groups could have been helpful to explore some of the findings in a bit more depth.</p> <p>The researcher has not reflected on their philosophical paradigm or their own involvement in the research process.</p> <p>There is limited discussion of the impact of power dynamics.</p>
Sellman, E. (2009). Lessons learned: student voice at a school for pupils experiencing social, emotional, and behavioural	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education. ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus. ✓</p>	<i>Purpose:</i> To implement a student research group with pupils experiencing SEBD to evaluate the school's behaviour policy.	<p>The researcher was not involved in the recruitment stage.</p> <p>The student research group</p>	<p>7 group meetings took place facilitated by the researcher.</p> <p>Grounded theory approach</p>	<p><i>Challenges</i> The researcher argues that processes via which pupils are meaningfully involved in decision-making processes are not well understood in mainstream schools or specialist provisions. Davies (2005) highlights that there have been numerous studies about pupil voice in mainstream</p>	<p>U.K based.</p> <p>The school were selected to be a case study for research funded by the University of</p>

<p>difficulties. <i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i>, 14(1), pp. 33-48.</p>	<p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice. ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice. ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings. ✓</p> <p>Full text available. ✓</p>	<p><i>Aims:</i> To investigate the processes involved in student voice projects at provisions for children with special needs.</p>	<p>comprised of 6 volunteer pupils aged between 13-16.</p>	<p>Participants engaged with analysis and themes were derived from data.</p>	<p>settings, but few carried out for students with special educational needs, particularly SEBD. – <b>implication for EPs.</b></p> <p>The author argues that true democratic pupil participation is much rarer than pupil consultation efforts due to different reasons. For example, the type of pupil voice is often dictated by adults and teaching staff who may hold constructions of children being 'objects of education'. As a result, pupil voice initiatives often focus on trivial issues and feel tokenistic in nature. Another reason for the difference in pupil voice implementation may be due to teaching staff underestimating the complexity of the cultural shift required to create a truly democratic school system.</p> <p>In order for all pupils' voices to be heard requires a shift from viewing children as the objects of education to partners in the process (Christensen &amp; James, 2008).</p> <p><i>Meaning</i> The researcher distinguishes between the different types of pupil voice processes. The first being pupils given opportunities to be heard and the second being pupils being involved in truly democratic schools.</p> <p>The researcher argues that when student voice projects are planned in schools they often reproduce models from the adult world (e.g., councils, forums) and use linguistic devices with similar origins (e.g., agendas, minutes).</p> <p><i>Value</i> The researcher highlights the value of gaining pupil voice in this research by highlighting the stark differences in the views of pupils compared with the views of teaching staff. In this study, the views of pupils allowed a much deeper insight to their experiences of the schools' behaviour policy than</p>	<p>Nottingham – what are the implications of this financial backing?</p> <p>The focus of the research on evaluating the schools' behaviour policy was directed by the headteacher.</p> <p>As the researcher was not involved in the recruitment stage, it is possible that the sample of participants recruited may not be representative of the school population.</p> <p>The researcher acknowledges the possible limitations of a self-selecting sample.</p> <p>What control did pupils have over the research process? Some control over setting agenda and questions for meetings. Consider the impact of power dynamics from an adult facilitator on the process.</p> <p>The researcher discussed their prior experience and how this may have</p>
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				<p>the adults' views which focused on minor points such as grammatical errors.</p> <p>The researcher highlights that there was initial resistance from teaching staff about the pupil voice project taking place. Teachers voiced concerns about the time students would spend outside of the classroom and how long the project would take. This indicates that teachers may not have positively valued the nature of this project and did not see it as being part of the pupils' education as a whole.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> The researcher argues that adult initiated pupil voice initiatives are far from empowering pupils. He views them as a 'surreptitious means of inserting adult middle-class values and preferred means of communication into provision catering for high numbers of disaffected students in the name of pupil empowerment.'</p> <p>Due consideration needs to be given to how information from pupil voice activities is shared and acted upon. For example, the research group wrote a report for staff and the school voiced their intention to listen and respond to any points raised. However, this now resides in the power of the adults who are directly challenged by the content of the report. What impact can this have on authentic pupil voice leading to meaningful change?</p> <p>Mitra (2008) argues that pupil voice projects need to be realistically framed and planned so that they have a genuine opportunity to have an impact. However, Alderson (2008) found that this is often neglected from planning resulting in outcomes that are difficult to implement or the prospect of seriously harming morale.</p>	<p>impacted the research process.</p> <p>Small sample representative of only one seventh of the pupils in the school.</p> <p>The researcher details how the participants were involved in the data analysis process however did not provide details on how the themes were conceptualised between the researcher and the participants.</p> <p>This research contributes some pertinent points towards an understanding of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in practice however does not directly focus on these aspects.</p>
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					The researcher gives credit to teaching staff for their willingness to listen to pupils and for their commitment to act upon the research findings.	
Shriberg, D., Brooks, K., Jenkins, K., Immen, J., Sutter, C., & Cronin, K. (2017). Using student voice to respond to middle school bullying: a student leadership approach. <i>School Psychology Forum: Research in Practice</i> , 11(1), pp. 20-33.	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings ✓</p> <p>Full text available ✓</p>	<p><i>Purpose:</i> To describe a novel student leadership group for 7<sup>th</sup> graders in which the primary task was the creation of bullying prevention ideas for their school.</p> <p><i>Aims:</i> to give students a stronger platform to influence their school's antibullying procedures.</p>	Conducted in one middle school.  10 students (5 girls and 5 boys).	<p>Student leadership group and post-group student interviews.</p> <p>Participatory Action Research was the organizing theoretical framework.</p> <p>Research was conducted over a ten-week period consisting of a 10 session student leadership group.</p> <p>Thematic analysis.</p>	<p><i>Challenges</i> A potential barrier to pupil participation efforts is the concept of 'adulthood'. When systems act from a position of 'adulthood' this can often result in children and young people having restricted access to participating in decision-making processes (Dejong &amp; Love, 2014, p.536).</p> <p>As a result of teachers adopting a position of 'adulthood', many efforts to implement pupil participation result in pupils not having the opportunity to actualize their ideas. In order for this to happen, schools will need to implement a system that ensures that pupil voice is given adequate power to make a meaningful impact (MacNeil, 2006).</p> <p>Many of the factors hindering the continuance of the project were systemic including a school restructure and staffing issues. This indicates how important it is to consider wider contextual factors that may hinder pupil voice efforts in a highly organic environment such as that of a school. The researcher also considers wider school priorities as having an influence on the implementation of pupil voice initiatives. Therefore, the values held within the wider system are of significant import when considering how well pupil voice may be received, acted upon and sustained.</p> <p><i>Meaning</i> In this study, pupil voice is considered within the wider scope of 'youth leadership'. Young people held the view that leadership involves creating change, collective action, modelling, mentoring and a strong character. In other research it was found that when pupils were given opportunities to lead and influence school decisions this resulted in increased feelings of agency, belonging, and</p>	<p>U.S based.</p> <p>Participants of the leadership group were nominated by teaching staff. Criteria for recruitment was subjective – <b>whose voices are valued? May have led to a biased sample.</b></p> <p>Post-group interviews were very short – what quality of information can be gathered on the effectiveness of the leadership group in 5-8 minutes?</p> <p>Researchers applied inter-rater reliability to establish reliability and consistency during data analysis.</p> <p>It would have been useful to hear how teachers found this process?</p> <p>Small sample size and unique school context in a state of change. Illustrates the organic nature of school systems but must also be considered as limited in terms of</p>



					<p>competence. Pupils emphasised how important it is for teaching staff to just listen to what children and young people have to say.</p> <p><i>Value</i> In this research, the authors draw on Participatory Action Research as a means of tapping into pupil voice and authentic engagement. PAR encourages research to be conducted in collaboration with people rather than being done to them. The philosophy behind this approach is that research will produce a commitment to culturally relevant and effective change that will be sustained after the research process (Song et al., 2014).</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> Pupils recognised that for pupil voice to have an influence mutual respect and communication between pupils and teachers needed to be established. By creating a space for shared power between teachers and students, this study was able to demonstrate how promoting pupil empowerment and leadership via pupil voice efforts can support the promotion of a healthier, safer learning environment for all. The pupils in this study all reported positive effects from taking part in the leadership group. They all reflected on how they enjoyed taking part and indicated that they felt empowered by the process, particularly in being able to discuss their ideas with teaching staff.</p>	<p>applicability to other contexts.</p> <p>Did not consider the meaning, value and purpose of pupil voice.</p>
<p>Smillie, I., &amp; Newton, M. (2020). Educational psychologists' practice: obtaining and representing young people's views. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i>, 36(3), pp. 328-344.</p>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from</p>	<p><i>Purpose:</i> Collecting information regarding EPs practice in obtaining and representing CYP's views.</p> <p><i>Aims:</i> To explore EP practice in relation to obtaining CYP's views and to explore the espoused theories</p>	<p>16 Principal EPs consented to their EPS' being involved in this research.</p> <p>73 questionnaires completed by LA Educational Psychologists in Wales.</p>	<p>Mixed methods approach – questionnaire and individual semi-structured interviews with a pilot process.</p> <p>Thematic analysis.</p>	<p><i>Value</i> EPs viewed pupil voice work as ethical and respectful practice in line with overarching guiding standards and policies. They also constructed pupil voice as enabling EPs to work in a holistic way. EPs also drew upon the legislative directorate to engage in pupil-centred practice and how this is now an integral part of the EP role in terms of the ALNET (Wales) Act.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i></p>	<p>Welsh context.</p> <p>Explored the process of gathering pupil voice but did not explore constructions of meaning and value linked to practice.</p> <p>Researchers acknowledged that due to the nature of</p>

	<p>gathering pupil voice ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings ✓</p> <p>Full text available ✓</p>	<p>that may inform this practice.</p> <p><i>Research questions:</i> How are CYP's views being recorded and represented by EPs in their reports?</p> <p>What underlying theories do EPs use when obtaining CYP's views?</p> <p>What are the challenges and benefits for EPs when representing CYP's views in their reports?</p>	<p>8 interviews conducted.</p>	<p>Presented both quantitative and qualitative findings.</p>	<p>Sometimes due to the nature of involvement or the number of professionals already involved with the child, the child or young person may feel that EPs are just one more professional coming in to carry out a 'tick-box' exercise and therefore may feel that the process is not meaningful and does not serve a purpose.</p> <p>EPs viewed pupil voice as being empowering for children and young people. They also viewed themselves as being advocates for the child or young person. Pupil voice as being beneficial to understand the lived experiences of children and young people and to inform interventions and strategies. Observed more successful outcomes when children and young people were given the opportunity to have their voices heard.</p> <p><i>Challenges</i> Some researchers have described gathering pupil voice as a complex process (Warshak, 2004) citing difficulties accurately interpreting children's views and having to assess children and young people's capacity and competency to engage in pupil voice processes. Other challenges include gathering pupil voice from those with complex or speech, language and communication needs and navigating the power dynamics between adults and pupils in a way that ensures authentic pupil voice can be ascertained.</p> <p>EPs discussed numerous challenges involved in gaining pupil voice: communicating views accurately and sensitively, eliciting an honest account of their views, limited communication as limiting expressed views and using a range of strategies to engage pupil voice.</p> <p><i>Implications for EPs</i> Ingram (2013) argues that EPs are well placed to gather and communicate pupil voice. Norwich and colleagues (2006) also recommend that EPs are well-positioned to evaluate participation methods</p>	<p>recruitment participating EPs may already hold particular beliefs about pupil voice compared to those who did not participate in the research. The research also took place during a period of political reform in Wales where pupil centred practice was integral to policy therefore this may have influenced participants' responses.</p> <p>The researchers did not reflect on their own roles within the research process and how this may have influenced the research.</p> <p>The researchers also did not reflect on their own practice and whether this insight may have influenced interpretation of the data collected.</p> <p>More details could have been provided to demonstrate how themes were derived.</p>
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					to inform practice. This recommendation highlights the importance of taking a step back and reflecting on what ideas EPs hold about pupil voice in order to develop a shared understanding about what pupil voice means in practice.  <i>Rationale</i> Researchers recommend future research to explore how EPs manage their own beliefs and values when engaging with pupil voice – <b>rationale.</b>	
Storz, M. (2008). Educational inequity from the perspectives of those who live it: urban middle school students' perspectives on the quality of their education. <i>Urban Review</i> , 40(3), pp. 247-267.	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings ✓</p> <p>Full text available ✓</p>	<p><i>Purpose / Aims:</i> To highlight young people's perspectives on the quality of their education.</p> <p><i>Research questions:</i> How do urban middle school students define a quality education, and from their perspective, are they receiving one?</p> <p>What are the types of teachers and pedagogical practices that both enhance and hinder their success in school?</p> <p>Are urban middle school students aware of educational inequality in their schools, and if so, how do they conceptualize educational inequality?</p>	<p>Over 250 young adolescents.</p> <p>4 urban middle schools.</p> <p>Participants were randomly selected to participate in focus groups.</p>	<p>Focus group Interviews.</p> <p>Phenomenological approach.</p> <p>Thematic analysis.</p>	<p><i>Meaning</i> Researchers conceptualize pupil voice as central to pedagogical practice. They view their work in this research as making sure that pupil voice is truly heard and not merely spoken.</p> <p>Pupil voice can illuminate existing and entrenched social and political inequities that are reflective of societal inequalities. Thus, pupil voice can be conceptualised as being part of a social justice movement. Pupil voice as critical to reform efforts.</p> <p>Inquiry groups and narrative writing methods can create space for authentic dialogue about lived experiences (Jones &amp; Yonezawa, 2002). Pupil voice as a source of information.</p> <p>Creative demonstrations of pupil voice include creating a play from pupil views (Bates et al., 2001). Class meetings and advisory programs are also cited as vehicles for pupil voice. In all these instances, the critical component is that pupil voice is shared in a way that facilitates change and has impact – <b>is this the missing link in EP practice?</b></p> <p><i>Value</i> Pupil voice can often highlight the on the ground experiences of children and young people and how their experiences relate to the wider social, cultural, and political contexts that schools exist within. Researchers consider that pupil voice, and consequently their lived experiences, should feature a more prominent place in education</p>	<p>Why is it necessary for an outsider to come into a system and amplify students' voices? What skills are required? What confidence levels are required? What differentiates the role of researchers / EPs to school staff that makes one group better positioned to conduct such work?</p> <p>U.S. context</p> <p>Researchers considered their role in facilitating focus groups and the impact that their personal characteristics may have on the interactive process of conducting a focus group with children from diverse backgrounds.</p> <p>How might it feel for students to be asked for honest feedback</p>

					<p>practice and literature. This research highlights how listening to pupil voice can uncover knowledge and understanding that is surprising and unknown to adults. Pupil voice can enable students, and as a result others, to question social norms, problematize the status quo and develop skills to become agents of change.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> Pupil voice in this research is used to inform educators about how students understand inequity. Researchers argue that pupil voice needs to be heard and considered directly in the process of school transformation.</p> <p>If pupil voice is to serve a purpose in pursuing social justice, O'Loughlin (1995) argues that 'critical teaching [should] create a climate that is safe enough for the expression of students' voices and experiences, but that is sufficiently politically conscious and critical to allow for the examination of these experiences within larger frameworks.'</p> <p>Authentic listening of pupil voice can provide new insights leading to new perspectives through which educators can reflect on the education being provided to children and young people.</p> <p><i>Implications</i> Researchers argue for opportunities for education professionals to critically reflect on practice.</p>	<p>about teachers and their practices?</p> <p>Issue of conformity in focus group settings – how might this have impacted the data collected?</p> <p>Unclear whether the researcher has anonymised participants by providing them with pseudonyms?</p> <p>Little is known about the researcher and how the research was proposed.</p> <p>Little is known about the lens that the researchers adopted in the design and completion of the research.</p> <p>Whose voices are missing? Educators.</p>
<p>Zilli, C., Parsons, S., &amp; Kovshoff, H. (2020). Keys to engagement: A case study exploring the participation of autistic pupils in educational decision-making at school. <i>British Journal of Educational Psychology</i>, 90(3), pp. 770-789.</p>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from</p>	<p><i>Aims:</i> To provide a detailed exploratory analysis of practices that enable autistic pupils to participate in educational decision-making, and to generate new knowledge about pupil participation in a school context.</p>	<p>4 pupils with autism spectrum diagnoses.</p> <p>11 staff members from a specialist, independent school.</p> <p>School was identified based on an existing</p>	<p>The research uses the Framework for Participation (Black-Hawkins, 2010) to guide analysis.</p> <p>Case study.</p> <p>Observational data and photo-voice</p>	<p><i>Meaning</i> Current policy encourages pupils with SEND to be involved in decision-making processes relating to their educational needs, support, and provision. However, current legislation does not direct schools to consult with pupils about other educational matters that might be important to them.</p> <p>Researchers found that there is limited evidence about whether and how autistic pupils in particular are involved in day-to-day decisions in schools.</p>	<p>The research aimed to focus on the experiences of autistic pupils therefore findings are limited to this specific cohort of learners.</p> <p>U.K. context.</p> <p>The participating school was identified</p>

	<p>gathering pupil voice ✓</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings ✓</p> <p>Full text available ✓</p>	<p><i>Research questions:</i> What school practices enable autistic pupils to participate in decision-making about their school experiences?</p> <p>How are the views of autistic pupils used to inform decisions about their school experiences?</p> <p>When do autistic pupils feel their voices have been heard?</p>	<p>relationship with the University of Southampton.</p> <p>Pupils were recruited through SLT via opportunity sampling.</p> <p>Staff recruited through snowball sampling.</p>	<p>was used to collect data from pupils.</p> <p>Semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff.</p>	<p>Framed in a participatory framework and described as going beyond access and a movement towards collaboration and having a voice that is impactful and facilitates change.</p> <p>Different constructions include photo-voice, pupil-led decisions, student council, freedom to make choices, reading between the lines / Attending to behaviour, responding to pupil voice in context, earning about the pupil as a 'person' rather than a 'subject' and responding to their interests.</p> <p>Pupils framed 'being listened to' as including the following; sorting out issues, listening when pupils are struggling, receiving 100% of the adults' attention, giving advice and being a friend. Illustrates the importance of positive relationships to facilitate pupil voice.</p> <p>Pupils indicated that they felt listened to by members of staff in senior management positions. One of the reasons for this posited by researchers is the status that these staff held in the school and how this meant that they could ACT on what pupils were saying. Link to purpose.</p> <p><i>Value</i> Responding to pupil voice to set an example and illustrate that their voices are being listened to has had a positive impact on engagement. Pupil voice initiatives need to be prioritized by staff (an investment) e.g., '[the school council] makes you feel important and you get your ideas listened to'.</p> <p>Caring – it was important to staff that pupils understand that teachers actually cared about them. Pupils felt listened to by staff across the school. This may have provided a relational context that facilitated the views of pupils to be heard, valued and acted upon.</p>	<p>by the University. Participants may have been influenced by a desire to maintain a positive existing relationship.</p> <p>Sampling methods – whose voices might have been missing? The pupils not readily accessible to staff? Staff who may not have had existing relationships within the school? Staff at the periphery of the school system?</p> <p>All participants could communicate verbally – what about pupils who may not have had these speech and language skills?</p> <p>The researcher did not reflect on their role in the process or consider how they may have influenced the research process.</p> <p>The case study approach means that the findings are restricted to this particular school and cohort of pupils.</p> <p>The researcher does not provide details</p>
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					<p>The leadership ethos of the school has been identified as one of the vital characteristics of inclusive schools that respect and value pupil views and the current study confirms this (Ainscow &amp; Sandill, 2010).</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> There is little detailed, contextualized knowledge based on the perspectives of those who participate and what happens as a result of their participation.</p> <p><i>Challenges</i> Findings suggest that some pupils may find decision-making processes overwhelming and worrisome. Researchers recommend that practitioners should be mindful of the impact of decision-making processes on young people and provide information, support, and guidance to support pupils' engagement.</p> <p>The aim of asking pupils their views about their education may not be straightforward to implement in practice. Findings suggest that adults should not assume that children and young people have the information and skills they need to make decisions.</p> <p><i>Facilitating factors</i> A flexible curriculum and system that creates opportunities for pupils to make decisions.</p>	<p>about their research paradigm.</p> <p>The researcher has inadvertently provided implicit findings about the value and purpose that pupil voice has in education. However, this is not a specific focus of this study.</p>
<p>Boswell, N., Douglas-Osborn, E., Halkyard, T., &amp; Woods, K. (2021). Listening to children and young people: an Educational Psychology Service co-production journey. <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i>, 37(4), pp. 396-412.</p>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education ✓</p> <p>Pupil voice is the primary focus ✓</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice ✓</p>	<p><i>Aims:</i> To explore understanding and knowledge around engaging with children and young people about how services can be co-produced within education.</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> Presents what children and young people think is important when working with</p>	<p>9 EPs.</p> <p>25 children and young people from various existing groups / forums.</p>	<p>Action research.</p> <p>Critical realist paradigm.</p> <p>Focus groups / drawing and mapping activities / interviews.</p> <p>Content analysis.</p>	<p><i>The role of the EP</i> Research has shown that EPs do gather and represent pupil voice in their practice (Harding &amp; Atkinson, 2009; Smillie &amp; Newton, 2020)/ However, it also suggests that EPs can frequently fall into the practice of doing 'to' children rather than working 'with' them (Harding &amp; Atkinson, 2009). Tisdall (2017) argues that some of the methods used in EP practice may merely gather information from children and young people rather than engage them in meaningful dialogue.</p> <p><i>Rationale</i></p>	<p>The research was commissioned by an EPS with a keen interest in participation to support and evaluate a co-production project within an EPS – risk of conflicting interests?</p> <p>The EPS had been dissolved and was in the process of</p>

	<p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice ✓</p> <p>Research is conducted in or applied to education settings ✓</p> <p>Full text available ✓</p>	<p>educational psychologists as they work towards co-constructing an educational psychology service.</p> <p><i>Research questions:</i> How do CYP wish to participate and share their ideas about their EPS?</p> <p>What do children and young people see as important when working with an EP?</p> <p>What do EPs see as the facilitators and barriers to working with the ideas of CYP with SEND?</p> <p>What is the impact for CYP and professionals in co-constructing an EPS?</p>			<p>Practice is frequently defined by the actions of adults rather than CYP identifying their own concerns and solutions (Tisdall, 2017). As this is the case, it is imperative for adults who do consult with children and young people to reflect on their practice and consider the underlying assumptions, beliefs and positions that they hold about pupil participation and pupil voice as this will guide their practice. This paper highlights a need for change and hopes to facilitate others to reflect on their practice either at an individual or service level about how they engage with CYP.</p> <p><i>Challenges</i> Co-production is a journey with the following barriers; getting other professionals to see the value in listening to CYP views, obtaining representative CYP views and creating something sustainable.</p> <p><i>Meaning</i> Children and young people argued that they should be actively involved in co-constructing goals and actions for pupils. EPs recognised pupil voice 'as co-production' as being a process rather than a one-off event.</p> <p><i>Value</i> The research provided evidence around the power of listening to CYP. Participants identified possible organisational or cultural barriers to the activity of co-producing an EPS. A significant factor that was raised included the 'buy-in' from leadership and management. Management being present signalled to EPs that co-production was an important priority.</p> <p>EPs explained that through consultation approaches they help to influence other agencies to 'see the value in [children's ideas]'. Both CYP and EPs reported a positive impact of co-constructing an EPS, with CYP feeling valued as their ideas were put into practice – link to purpose.</p>	<p>rebuilding itself – thus a heavy reliance on the success of the project?</p> <p>Did not include criteria that participants had met with an EP – how might this have impacted the data?</p> <p>Incentives were provided to participants – social desirability bias?</p> <p>The researcher does not reflect on their own perspective, motivation, or interests and how they relate to the research.</p>
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					<p>EPs commented that the process allowed them to reflect on their values and practice – link to rationale.</p> <p>For co-production to be successful, practitioners need to be motivated and see value in this way of working with CYP. Developing a co-production culture has been identified as being key to implementing this type of practice and needs to be evident at all levels of an organisation.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> EPs also discussed the challenges in being able to implement CYP's ideas if working within a more systemic service delivery rather than carrying out individual casework.</p> <p>Children and young people commented on how they see EPs as being 'one of the only professionals who if they say they are going to do it they do it'. Highlighting the importance of pupil voice leading to action for the development of positive relationships and trust.</p>	
<b>RECORDS THAT DID NOT MEET THE INCLUSION CRITERIA AND WERE EXCLUDED FROM THE FULL REVIEW</b>						
<p>Beattie, H. (2012). Amplifying student voice: The missing link in school transformation. <i>Management in Education</i>, 26(3), 158-160.</p> <p><b>Did not focus on the role of pupil voice in education</b></p>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education. ✖</p>	<p>This article is a reflective account of how schools in one state of the U.S are amplifying pupil voice through implementation of a programme called 'Youth and Adults Transforming Schools Together'</p>	<p>12 schools are part of the initiative.</p>	<p>Utilises an action research model whereby students and teachers conduct quantitative research about the quality of the educational experience.</p>	<p><i>Meaning</i> Student-teacher partnership</p> <p><i>Value</i> Pupil voice is key in changing fundamental norms, values, and practices.</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> To support student agency and promote engagement in learning.</p> <p><i>Implications</i> Can be a complex process. Quality training and ongoing support is essential – can be provided by Educational Psychologists. Such initiatives must be spearheaded by school leaders.</p>	<p>The author is the creator and director of the programme being reflected upon in this article – bias?</p> <p>The author is a school psychologist – highlighting the relevancy of this kind of work to the profession.</p>



<p>Cefai, C. &amp; Pizzuto, S. A. (2017). Listening to the voices of young children in a nurture class, <i>Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties</i>, 22(3), pp. 248-260.</p> <p><b>Did not focus on the role of pupil voice in education</b></p>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education. *</p> <p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice. *</p>	<p>Young children were given the opportunity to discuss and express their feelings and thoughts of what it means for them to be a pupil in a Nurture class in primary school.</p>	<p>Participating school was chosen based on accessibility and convenience.</p> <p>2 early years nurture groups consisting of 18 pupils aged between 4-7 years old.</p>	<p>Semi-structured group interviews, collaborative mapping and poster design.</p> <p>Used a child-friendly, child-driven, emancipatory research tool to empower pupil voice in research.</p> <p>Case study of one nurture class in one primary school.</p> <p>Thematic analysis - essentialist (reporting the experiences and meanings of the participants) and inductive (bottom-up) approach was used.</p>	<p>No information provided relating to the literature review research question – nothing on meaning, value and purpose of pupil voice.</p>	<p>Research based in Malta.</p> <p>Participating school was chosen based on accessibility and convenience.</p> <p>The methods used to collect data were chosen and imposed by adults. Would data have been different had the children and young people decided on the method by which to illustrate their views?</p> <p>If using an essentialist paradigm, why did researchers use an outside researcher to verify themes instead of consulting with the participants themselves?</p> <p>Research did not consider the meaning, purpose, and value of pupil voice.</p>
<p>Davidge, G. (2017). <i>Rethinking education through critical psychology: cooperative schools, social justice, and voice</i> (1<sup>st</sup> ed.). Routledge.</p>	<p>Included in general literature review as the book focuses on the role of voice as just one aspect of their research as part of a wider consideration of co-operative schooling.</p>					

<p><b>Pupil voice was not the primary focus.</b></p>						
<p>Estrapala, S. &amp; Grieshaber, J. (2023). Putting the “self” in self-regulation: strategies for incorporating student voice in self-regulation interventions for internalizing behaviours. <i>Teaching Exceptional Children</i>, 55(3), pp. 158-166.</p> <p><b>Did not include primary research.</b></p>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education. ✖</p>	<p>A featured article providing strategies for educators looking at how to involve pupils in planning interventions.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p><i>Meaning:</i> That students are involved in decision-making. Providing pupils with autonomy rather than being adult-led. Adults act as facilitators or partners.</p> <p><i>Value:</i> Considered pupil voice to have a direct influence over self-determination leading to improved long-term outcomes. As such, although there is no explicit discussion of the value of pupil voice, it is clear from this link that authors consider pupil voice to hold high value in relation to pupils’ life outcomes.</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> So that children and young people can develop their self-determination, which will ultimately lead to improved outcomes for children and young people.</p> <p><i>Reflection:</i> Who is the author gathering pupil voice for? What purpose does pupil voice have in this authors scenario? “To help the student be more socially, academically and emotionally successful in school” – who wants this to happen? The child, the adult, or the system?</p>	<p>Does not provide any references to back up their strategies.</p> <p>Strategies put a lot of onus on the pupil to change rather than the adults / environment</p> <p>Did not focus on the meaning, purpose, and value of pupil voice.</p>
<p>Furlong, M. J., Gilman, R. &amp; Huebner, E. S. (Eds.) (2014). <i>Handbook of positive psychology in schools</i> (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Routledge.</p> <p><b>Full text unavailable</b></p>	<p>Full text unavailable.</p>					
<p>Howitt, S. M., &amp; Wilson, A. N. (2015). Developing, expressing and</p>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education. ✖</p>	<p><i>Purpose:</i> Researchers developed a science course to enable staff</p>	<p>The course has been taught for 3 years with 30-45</p>	<p>Written submissions, reflections and</p>	<p>Not relevant to my research q.</p>	<p>Not relevant.</p>

<p>contesting opinions of science: encouraging the student voice. <i>Higher Education Research &amp; Development</i>, 34(3), pp. 541-553.</p> <p><b>Did not focus on the role of pupil voice in education</b></p>	<p>Research has direct or indirect implications for educational psychology practice. ✖</p>	<p>and students to compare and contrast different perspectives and experiences of what science is and how it is practised.</p> <p><i>Aims:</i> To examine the effectiveness of this approach in developing students' views of science and scientists.</p> <p><i>Research questions:</i> How do students' distal understanding of the nature and practice of science develop and change?</p> <p>Does the intrinsically student-centred approach help students to recognise the ways in which their own thinking has changed?</p>	<p>students each year.</p>	<p>course evaluations were collected.</p> <p>A qualitative analysis using a grounded theory approach to identify emergent themes.</p>		
<p>Hunt-Anderson, I., &amp; Shannon-Baker, P. (2023). "I CAN'T SAY IT!" Doodling to emancipate adolescents' voices in a transformative mixed methods study of covert bullying in Jamaican high schools. <i>Methods in Psychology</i>, 8, Article 100114.</p>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education. ✖</p> <p>Includes some discussion of systemic implications from gathering pupil voice. ✖</p>	<p><i>Aims:</i> To explore covert bullying among high school students in Jamaica.</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> To showcase doodling as an emergent tool in mixed methods research.</p>	<p>Participants represented a diverse group with different socio-economic backgrounds and ethnicities within Jamaica.</p> <p>27 participants were identified through convenience sampling.</p>	<p>Exploratory sequential mixed methods study.</p> <p>Transformative-emancipatory paradigm alongside a symbolic interactionism framework.</p> <p>Doodles were used to collect sensitive information during</p>	<p><i>Meaning</i> Researchers demonstrated how students' doodles expanded findings and provided an emancipatory space for students' voices.</p> <p>Doodling can help participants 'escape the linearity of the spoken or written word' (Orte &amp; Bautista, 2017). Doodling is also believed to be helpful in exploring the subconscious and psychological phenomena.</p> <p><i>Value</i> Pupil voice as 'doodles' in this study enabled researchers to triangulate and expand their findings thereby adding more depth to the data.</p>	<p>Conducted in a Caribbean context.</p> <p>The researcher has documented a personal interest in the issue being studied – <b>potential researcher bias?</b></p>

<p><b>Did not focus on the role of pupil voice in education.</b></p>				<p>individual and focus group interviews.</p> <p>Thematic analysis.</p>	<p>Doodling has been used to help participants access, communicate, and document phenomena not easily put into words.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> Pupil voice, in the form of doodles in this instance, supported the establishment of an emancipatory space for young people. Doodling in this study provided a private space for student participants to share their internal thoughts, reactions, and experiences related to covert bullying.</p> <p>Doodling helped participants to reach clarity around their inner thoughts and experiences that they had had with bullying in school. This demonstrates how pupil voice in different formats can also act as a therapeutic intervention.</p> <p>Researchers found that using doodling in research can lead to transformative-emancipatory possibilities and provide a space for marginalised students to share their voice, enact their agency, and address social justice issues.</p>	
<p>Talapatra, D., Snider, L. A., McCreddie, K., &amp; Cullen, E. (2023). Elevating disabled voices: decentering power in school psychology scholarship. <i>School Psychology International</i>.</p> <p><b>Research was not applied to an education context</b></p>	<p>Research with a focus on the role of pupil voice (0-25) in education. ✖</p> <p>Research is conducted or applied to education settings. ✖</p>	<p><i>Aims:</i> To offer insight into research that is conducted with disabled individuals rather than research carried out for them.</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p><i>Meaning</i> Emancipatory inquiry allows the voices of students with intellectual disabilities to be centred whilst also promoting social justice.</p> <p><i>Purpose</i> Emancipatory inquiry aligns with the paradigm of DisCrit which helps to hold up the voices of marginalized populations and recognize that many of the gains for disabled populations have largely occurred because of the benefits they afford white, able-bodied, middle-class citizens.</p> <p><i>Critique</i> Brandon and Towe (1989) state that 'participation has replaced 'community' as the [new] term to [embellish] descriptions of...services. The professional journals run endless articles about involving consumers in services in management, planning and running of projects. But does the</p>	<p>The researchers reengage in reflexive and reflective practice by considering their own positionality and assumptions that they bring with them as researchers.</p>

					<p>participation movement really amount to anything – or is it simply a new paternalism?’</p> <p><i>Implications</i>          Researchers offer a different framework that seeks to empower the subjects of research inquiry by producing knowledge that directly benefits them. This framework is coined Emancipatory Inquiry.</p>	
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## **Appendix 4 - Gatekeeper letter**

### Recruitment Letter to Local Authority Educational Psychology Service

Dear Principal Educational Psychologist,

I am a current Year 3 Trainee Educational Psychologist from Cardiff University. As partial fulfilment of my course requirements, I am required to carry out research to form my thesis. I am looking to explore constructions of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in practice with Educational Psychology teams across England and Wales.

The aim of this research is to create a reflective space for professionals working in Educational Psychology Services across England and Wales to conceptualise what we mean by 'pupil voice' and to consider the impact that this work might have in practice. As Educational Psychologists' play a key role in the promotion of pupil voice, it is felt that through reflection and discussion, professionals will be able to consider ways to further develop pupil voice in practice whilst also supporting other services and teams that they work with to do the same.

I am writing to you to enquire whether you would grant permission for this research to be undertaken with your Educational Psychology team.

Participation will involve between 3-8 team members taking part in a focus group that will last for between 90 – 120 minutes to allow for in-depth reflections and discussion. Participants must be; employed, or currently on placement, in a Local Authority Educational Psychology service in England or Wales and have the term 'psychologist' in their working title.

Consent must be received from **at least 3 members** of your team to be considered for this research, and all members who wish to take part must provide their consent via completion of the attached electronic consent form.

Ethical approval has been granted by Cardiff University School of Psychology Ethics Committee and I will be closely supervised throughout this process by Dr Victoria Bui, who is a professional tutor on the Cardiff Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme. Her contact details can be found below.

If you would be willing for the research to be undertaken, please could you forward the attached information sheet, which contains a link to an electronic consent form, to your Educational Psychology team. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly to ask any questions or request further information. This offer is open to any members of your team, as well.

Many thanks for your consideration of this project. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact myself or my research supervisor.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Corrin Westwood  
Trainee Educational Psychologist  
Cardiff University

If you have any queries regarding the study, you can contact the researcher, research supervisor and/or School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (details below) at any time during working hours.

Corrin Westwood  
Trainee Educational Psychologist  
School of Psychology  
Cardiff University  
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Park Place  
Cardiff  
CF10 3EU

Dr Victoria Bui  
Research Supervisor  
School of Psychology  
Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
Cardiff  
CF10 3EU

[WestwoodCB2@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:WestwoodCB2@cardiff.ac.uk)

[biuv1@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:biuv1@cardiff.ac.uk)

**Any complaints may be made to:**

Secretary of the Ethics Committee  
School of Psychology  
Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
Cardiff  
310 3AT  
Tel: 029 2087 0707  
Email: [psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk)

## Appendix 5 – Participant Information Sheet

### Participant Information Sheet

#### Study title: Creating space to conceptualise ‘Pupil Voice’

You are being invited to take part in this research study. To help you decide if you would like to take part or not, it is important to understand why the research is being done and what will happen before, during and after the research. If you are happy to take part, you will be asked to tell us this before taking part in a focus group. If there is anything you would like to know more about before you take part, you can ask us questions by emailing the researcher at [WestwoodCB2@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:WestwoodCB2@cardiff.ac.uk)

**Who is carrying out this study?** My name is Corrin Westwood and I am carrying out this research study as part of my Doctoral qualification in Educational Psychology at Cardiff University. I am being supervised by Dr Victoria Biu, Professional Tutor for the Doctorate in Educational Psychology at Cardiff University.

**What is the research about?** The aim of this research is to create a reflective space for professionals working in Educational Psychology Services across England and Wales to conceptualise the meaning, value and purpose of ‘pupil voice’ in practice. A lot of research has been done into how professionals might gather pupil voice, however this research intends to take a step back and encourage reflection to fully conceptualise what we mean by ‘pupil voice’. Educational Psychologists’ play a key role in the promotion of pupil voice, it is felt that through reflection and discussion, professionals will be able to consider ways to further develop pupil voice in practice whilst also supporting other services and teams that they work with to do the same.

Please consider taking part if you meet the following criteria;

- You are currently employed by, or currently on placement (if in training) in, a Local Authority Educational Psychology service in England or Wales
- You have the term ‘psychologist’ in your working title
- You have experience gaining the views of children and young people

The researcher will be unable to accept any expressions of interest from staff who

- Are employed by Educational Psychology services on a casual or locum basis
- Work within the service but do not have the term ‘psychologist’ in your working title
- Do not have experience gaining the views of children and young people.

Consent must be received from **at least 3 members** of your team to be considered for this research, and all members who wish to take part must provide their consent via completion of the embedded electronic consent form below. The researcher intends to conduct between 2-3 focus groups with different EP services across England and Wales. Therefore, the first 2-3 services where at least 3 team members provide consent in the course of **3 weeks** from the date of this email will be contacted for participation. You will be notified by the researcher whether or not you have been selected in 3 weeks’ time.

**What will happen to me if I take part?** If you choose to take part in the study, you will be invited to arrange an in-person focus group during a time that will be convenient for participants i.e., a team meeting or team day. You will be asked a series of questions to prompt discussion about perceived meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in practice. The purpose of this research is to explore current conceptualisations and discourse about pupil voice. The focus group is intended to last between 90-120 minutes long. The discussion will be audio recorded using Dictaphone, as well as the creation of ‘rich’ pictures to capture key elements of the discussion. The researcher will be present to facilitate the group and will also take anonymised notes for the purpose of capturing any salient points for the analysis stage. The researcher does not intend to collect any personal or sensitive information during this research. After the focus group, the discussion will be typed up into an academic empirical research paper and a summary poster / presentation will be made available for the Local Authority. Your name and any other identifying information will be removed, and the audio recording will be deleted after answers have been typed up (up to two weeks after the focus groups).



**Are there any risks involved?** There are no risks involved, the questions should not be upsetting. However, if you feel upset or uncomfortable at any point you can leave the focus group at any time. You have the right to withdraw your participation at any time prior to, during the focus group and up to two weeks after the date of the focus group. You may leave at any time during the focus group. You can request that your answers be removed from research up to two weeks after the date of the focus group by contacting the researcher ([WestwoodCB2@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:WestwoodCB2@cardiff.ac.uk)), after this point data will have been anonymised and written up.

**What data will be collected?** The data will be made up of the group discussion prompted by focus group questions and prompts. Audio recording and written transcription will be collected during the focus group. The researcher will then type up what was said during the focus group and remove all identifying information. The consent form will ask for personal details for the purpose of participant identification and focus group arrangements. Once participants have been identified and focus groups arranged, this information will be securely destroyed.

**How will my information be kept safe?** Data will only be viewed by the researcher on a password protected computer and the recordings will be deleted after they have been typed up. All data will be anonymised with no personal information included to ensure all information remains confidential.

**Will anyone else know I have taken part in the research?** All the information we collect about you during the research will be kept strictly anonymous. The recordings will be uploaded to the password protected computer immediately after the focus group has finished then deleted after being typed up.

**Do I have to take part?** No, you do not have to take part if you do not want to. If you decide you do want to take part, the researcher has asked for you to complete an electronic consent form to show that you agree to take part and return this within 3 weeks of being notified about this research project. The researcher will also check that you still want to take part at the beginning of the focus group, which will be recorded. If you decide you no longer want your answers to be included in the research, you are able to request this by contacting the researcher ([WestwoodCB2@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:WestwoodCB2@cardiff.ac.uk)) up to two weeks following the date of the focus group. After this point, data will have been anonymised and written up.

**What happens if I change my mind?** You can change your mind and withdraw without giving any reason without your participant rights being affected. You can withdraw from participation any time prior to, during the focus group, and up to two weeks following the focus group.

**What will happen to the results of the research?** Research findings made available in any reports or publications will not include information that can directly identify you. The results will be written up as part of an empirical research paper to be submitted as part of Cardiff University's Doctorate of Educational Psychology course. A summary of research will be shared with the Local Authority who have expressed interest in research findings however this will not contain any information that could lead to you being identified.

**Who has reviewed this research project?** This research project has been reviewed and approved by the School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (SREC), Cardiff University.

**What happens if there is a problem?** If you are worried about any part of the study, you can speak to the researcher at any time. If you are still unhappy or have a complaint about any aspect of the study, please contact the Secretary of the School Research Ethics Committee as an independent body from the research term. You can also contact the researcher or the research supervisor at [BiuV1@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:BiuV1@cardiff.ac.uk).

**Where can I get more information?** If you have any enquiries for more information or questions regarding the study, you can contact the researcher, research supervisor and/or School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (details below) at any time during working hours.

Corrin Westwood  
Trainee Educational Psychologist  
School of Psychology  
Cardiff University

Dr Victoria Biu  
Research Supervisor  
School of Psychology  
Cardiff University

Tower Building  
Park Place  
Cardiff  
CF10 3EU  
[WestwoodCB2@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:WestwoodCB2@cardiff.ac.uk)

Tower Building  
Park Place  
Cardiff  
CF10 3EU  
[biuv1@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:biuv1@cardiff.ac.uk)

**Any complaints may be made to:**

Secretary of the Ethics Committee  
School of Psychology  
Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
Cardiff  
310 3AT  
Tel: 029 2087 0707  
Email: [psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk)

**What do I do if I want to take part in this research?** If you have read and understood the information in this sheet and would like to express your interest and consent to taking part please follow this link [https://qfreeaccountssjc1.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/previewId/80e72b76-45ea-473e-b9c0-7fde96a6f04c/SV\\_dbWYpDDPZyptK9E?Q\\_CHL=preview&Q\\_SurveyVersionID=current](https://qfreeaccountssjc1.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/previewId/80e72b76-45ea-473e-b9c0-7fde96a6f04c/SV_dbWYpDDPZyptK9E?Q_CHL=preview&Q_SurveyVersionID=current) or by scanning the QR code below to complete the **online consent form**. This will only be open for **3 weeks** once you have received this information sheet and participants will be selected based on when they submit the form.



**QR Code to Online  
Consent Form**

**Data Protection Privacy Notice** The information found at <https://www.cardiff.ac.uk/public-information/policies-and-procedures/data-protection/research-participants-data-protection-notice> should be read alongside this information sheet. This web page will give further information about how the University deals with the personal information of individuals who take part in university-led research projects.

Thank you for taking the time to read the information sheet and considering taking part.

## Appendix 6 – Participant Online Consent Form

[https://qfreeaccountssjc1.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/previewId/80e72b76-45ea-473e-b9c0-7fde96a6f04c/SV\\_dbWYpDDPZyptK9E?Q\\_CHL=preview&Q\\_SurveyVersionID=current](https://qfreeaccountssjc1.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/preview/previewId/80e72b76-45ea-473e-b9c0-7fde96a6f04c/SV_dbWYpDDPZyptK9E?Q_CHL=preview&Q_SurveyVersionID=current)



Please read the participant information sheet before completing this form.

School of Psychology, Cardiff University

Study title: Creating space to conceptualise 'Pupil Voice'

Consent Form – Confidential Data

I understand that my participation in this project will involve taking part in a focus group to discuss the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in practice.

I understand that the researcher intends to conduct between 2-3 focus groups with different EP services across England and Wales.

I understand that at least 3 team members from the same service must consent to participation for my team to be considered in this research and that I may or may not be selected to participate in this research based on the information contained in the participant



information sheet.

The focus group will require approximately 90-120 minutes of my time.

Questions and prompts will endeavour to explore what conceptualisations are currently held about the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in practice.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without detriment.

I also understand that I can withdraw from the research at any time up to, during the focus group, and up to two weeks after the focus group by contacting the researcher.

I understand that data will be gathered through audio recording via Dictaphone, the creation of a 'rich picture' and anonymised researcher notes. This is so that data can be transcribed and analysed.

I understand I will be asked to identify myself during the focus group so that if I request for



my data to be withdrawn from research, the researcher will be able to identify my answers and remove them. I can request that my data be withdrawn from the research up to two weeks after the focus group after which time data will have been anonymised and transcribed. After this time, the audio recording will be securely destroyed.

I understand that the audio recording will be stored securely in a password protected file on the researchers' password protected drive that only they have access to and will be securely destroyed two weeks after the focus group at which time my answers will have been written up and anonymised.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time.

I am free to withdraw or discuss any concerns with the researcher, Corrin Westwood, or the research supervisor, Dr Victoria Biu.

I understand that the personal data will be processed in accordance with GDPR regulations (see privacy statement below).

I understand that at the end of the study I will be provided with additional information and feedback about the purpose of the study.

I understand that by completing and submitting this form, I am expressing my interest in participating in this research.

I understand that by completing and submitting this form, I am giving my consent to being contacted by the researcher to arrange my participation in a focus group (if I am selected).

If you have any queries regarding the study, you can contact the researcher, research supervisor and/or School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (details below) at any time during working hours.

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Any complaints may be made to:  
Secretary of the Ethics Committee  
School of Psychology

Cardiff University  
Tower Building  
Park Place  
Cardiff  
310 3AT  
Tel: 029 2087 0360 / Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Privacy Notice: The information provided will be held in compliance with GDPR regulations. Cardiff University is the data controller and James Merrifield is the data protection officer (inforequest@cardiff.ac.uk). The lawful basis for processing this information is public interest. This information is being collected by Corrin Westwood. The information on the consent form will be held securely and separately from the research information. Only the researcher will have access to this form, and it will be destroyed after 5 years. The research information you provide will be used for the purposes of research only and will be stored securely. Only Corrin Westwood will have access to this information. After two weeks, the data will be anonymised (any identifying elements removed) and this anonymous information may be kept indefinitely or published.

Restart Survey

Place Bookmark

Tools

Share Preview

By providing your full name, email address and the name of the EP team / service you currently work in, you are confirming that you have read and understood the information relating to this research project and would like to give your consent to participating in this research and agree to the researcher contacting you with further information about participation.

Full name:

Email address:

Educational Psychology Team / Service:

Restart Survey

Place Bookmark

Tools

Share Preview

Email address:

Educational Psychology Team / Service:

Date:



## Appendix 7 – Focus Group Guide

### Pre-Focus Group script

*Hello and welcome to the focus group. Thank you for coming today. I just want to spend a couple of minutes to go over the purpose of this focus group, provide you with an opportunity to ask any questions and to remind you of your right to withdraw from this research.*

*The purpose of this focus group is to explore current conceptualisations of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in practice. I will ask you a series of questions to encourage discussion about pupil voice and this discussion is intended to encourage collaborative thinking and reflection. I would like to remind the group that anything discussed is to be kept confidential within this group and should be received with positive regard and without judgement. You do not have to answer a question if you do not wish to, and you are able to leave this group at any time by leaving the room. You do not need to request to leave. This meeting will be recorded for transcription purposes, and you can ask for anything you say to be removed from the data up to two weeks after today. After this time, all data will be anonymised.*

*To ensure that your answers can be removed if you wish to withdraw from this research after today, I kindly ask that you say your name before contributing. This will make it easier to identify your data to remove it. Your names will not be used in the write up of this research. Once answers have been written up, you will be provided with a unique pseudonym so that no one can identify you.*

*Before we begin, I am just going to ask for your verbal consent to continue with taking part in this focus group, please indicate your consent by replying with your name and ‘I consent’. If you no longer wish to take part, you are able to leave the meeting.*

*Do you have any questions about the study or what is going to happen?*

*Are you still happy to take part in this research and talk to me today?*

### Questions / prompts

Derived from Fielding’s (2001) conditions for pupil voice framework, Driscoll’s (2007) ‘What’ model of reflection, Lundy’s (2007) rights-based model of participation.

<b>Q1) The ‘What’ - What does the term ‘pupil voice’ mean to you?</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How does your organisation define ‘pupil voice’?</li><li>• How does the service’s definition align with your view of ‘pupil voice’?</li><li>• What does the term ‘pupil voice’ encompass?</li><li>• What do you say to parents / other professionals when talking about ‘pupil voice’?</li><li>•</li></ul>	<p><b>Prompts:</b> Can you tell me more about Xx? Can you provide some (anonymous) examples? You mentioned Xx, can you expand on that? What is the importance of Xx to you?</p>

<b>Q2) The 'So What' - What are your beliefs and values in relation to pupil voice?</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What value does 'pupil voice' bring to your practice? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What factors influence the perceived value of pupil voice for you?</li> <li>• What beliefs do you currently hold about pupil voice?</li> <li>• What attitudes and dispositions do you draw on to make the voice of the young person a meaningful reality? (Fielding, 2001)</li> <li>• Tell me about your current organisational culture and how it could develop to enable pupil voice to thrive further? (Fielding, 2001)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p><b>Prompts:</b>  Can you tell me more about Xx?  What does Xx look like in practice?  Is there a situation that helps to expand this further?  What are some (anonymous) examples of this in practice?  Do you have any other ideas about Xx?</p>
<b>Q3) The 'Now What' - What is the purpose of gathering pupil voice as an Educational Psychologist?</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What do you do with the knowledge gained from pupil views? How are pupil views used? How do you use pupil views in your practice? (Lundy, 2007)</li> <li>• In your experience, to what extent do pupil views' lead to meaningful change? (Lundy, 2007)</li> <li>• From what we have discussed so far, what are the implications for your practice? (Fielding, 2001)</li> <li>• What can be done to raise awareness of the importance of gaining pupil voice with the systems that we work with in order to further promote and empower pupil voice in practice?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Prompts:</b>  Can you tell me more about Xx?  What impact has this had in your work?  What does this mean for you going forward?  What other ideas do you have about Xx?</p>



## Appendix 8 – Focus Group Word Clouds

Figure 16: Word clouds from Focus Group 1

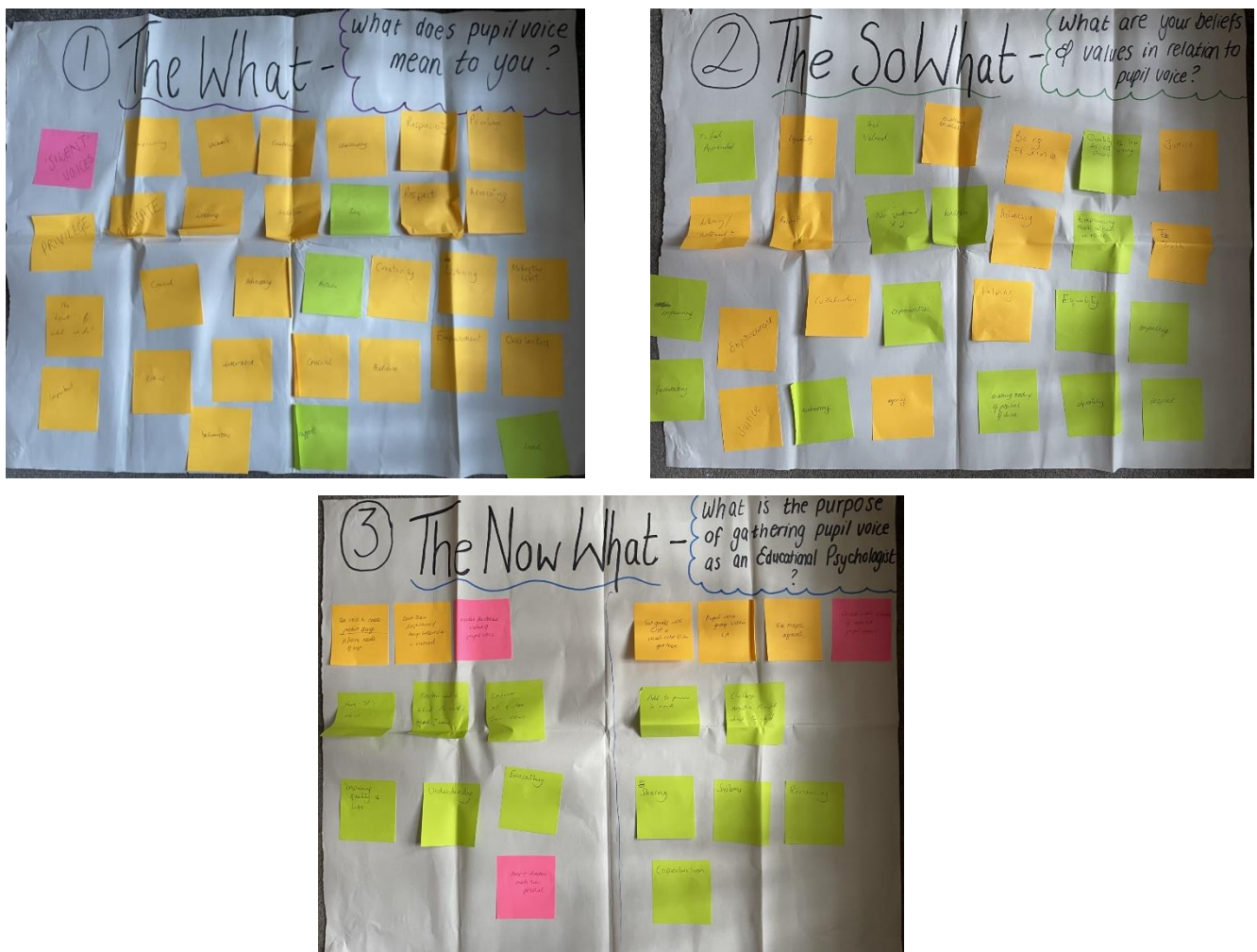


Table 16: Content of word clouds from Focus Group 1

1 The What		2 The So What		3 The Now What	
Empowering	Inclusion	To feel	Agency	Use voice to create positive change	
Valuable	Enabling	appreciated	Co-production	Reframe needs of CYP	
Listening	Challenging	Listening /	Kindness	Give them experience of being listened to and valued	
Crucial	Time	Listened to	Non-	Model for others value of pupil voice	
Important	Action	Empowering	judgement	Share YP views	
Ethics	Crucial	Facilitatory	Feel valued	Explain what is behind the child's needs and views	
Behaviour	Rapport	Justice	Enabling	Empower YP and share their views	
Underrated	Audience	Equality	choices	Improving quality of life	
Overlooked	Respect	Respect	Being of	Understanding & empathy	
Advocating	Lundy	Collaboration	service	Helping children reach their potential	
Creativity	Making the	Autonomy	Quality of life	Sharing with systems	
Responsibility	effort	Helping	Advocacy	Reviewing & co-production	
Privilege	The 'heart' of	Enabling	Empowering	Challenge negative thoughts about the child	
	what we do	reaching of	those without	Add to provision in reports	
		potential of	a voice	Set goals with CYP and what will help them get there	
		child	Empathy	Pupil voice group within LA	
			Truth	Use Mosaic approach	
				Check with schools if asked pupil views	



Figure 17: Word clouds from Focus Group 2

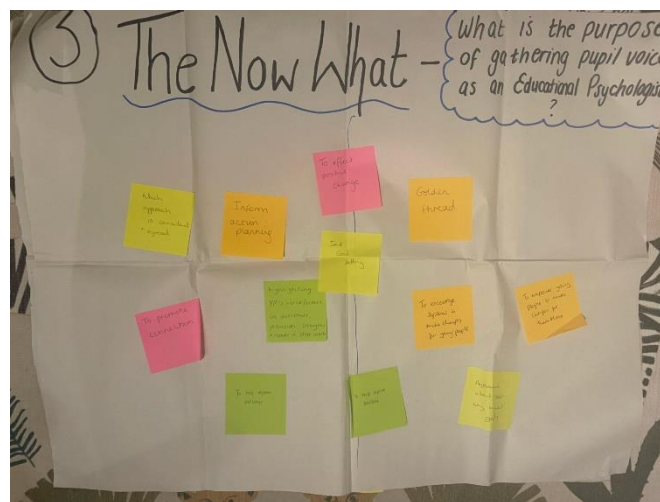
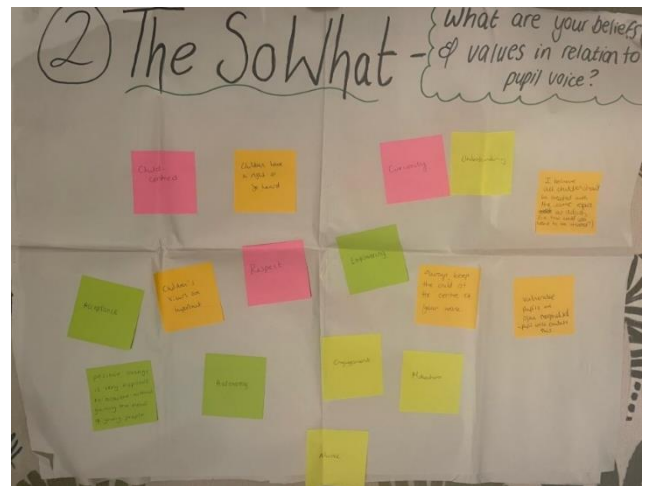
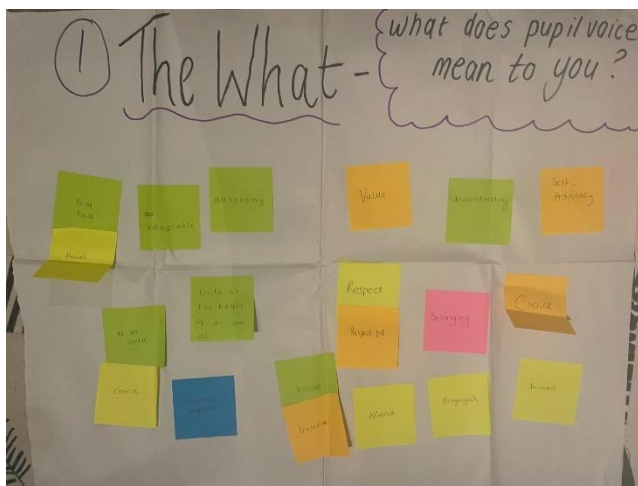


Table 17: Content of word clouds from Focus Group 2

1 The What		2 The So What		3 The Now What
Heard	Autonomy	Child-centred	Respect	Which approach is considered and agreed To promote connection Inform action planning To effect positive change Joint goal setting Highlighting YP's voice/views in outcomes, provision, strengths & needs in statutory work To help inform outcomes Golden thread To help inform provision To encourage systems & make changes for YP To empower young people to make changes for themselves Agreement about best way to meet goals
Adaptable	Child at the heart of all we do	Children have a right to be heard	Alliance	
At the centre	do	Acceptance	Motivation	
Culturally responsive	Inclusive	Children's views are important	Engagement	
Alliance	Respect	Positive change is difficult without pupil views	Empowering	
Value	Understanding	Vulnerable pupils are often marginalised	At the centre of our work	
Belonging	Engaged		Curiosity	
Self-advocacy	Choice		Understanding	
	Involved		All children should be treated with the same respect as adults	

Figure 18: Word clouds from Focus Group 3

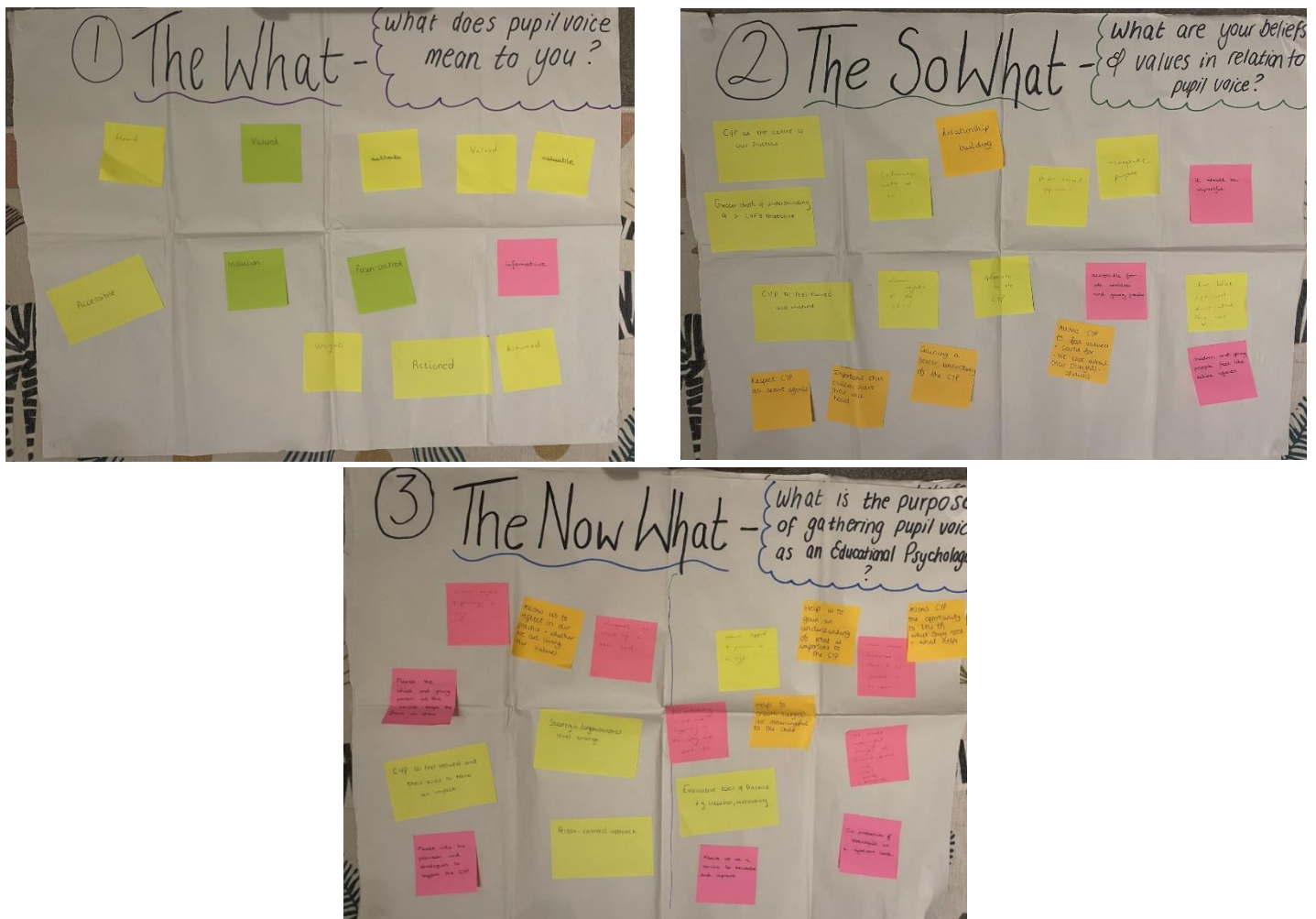


Table 18: Content of word clouds from Focus Group 3

1 The What	2 The So What	3 The Now What
<p>Heard Valued Accessible Inclusion Informative Actioned</p>	<p>Authentic Person-centred Unique</p> <p>CYP at the centre of our practice Greater depth of understanding of YP's perspective CYP feel valued and involved Respect CYP as active agents Important that they have their voice heard Collaborative with not to Human rights of the child Relationship building Advocate for CYP Person-centred Therapeutic Accessible for all CYP Allows CYP to feel valued and cared for It should be impactful Firm belief CYP know what they need CYP feel like active agents</p>	<p>Inform targets and pathways for CYP Allows us to reflect on our practice and whether we are living our values Places the CYP at the centre and keeps the focus on them CYP to feel valued and their voice to have an impact Therapeutic – to allow CYP to feel heard Strategic / organisation level change Person-centred approach Feeds into the provision and strategies Inform support and provision for CYP Helps us to gain an understanding of what's important to CYP Helps us to ensure targets are meaningful to the child Accountability – are we supporting in the way we seek to Evaluative tool of practice e.g. inclusion, accessibility Allows us as a service to evaluate and improve Allows CYP the opportunity to tell EPs what they need and what helps Inform service development and changes EP practice Meaningful changes at different levels Co-production of strategies at a systems level</p>

Figure 19: Word clouds from Focus Group 4

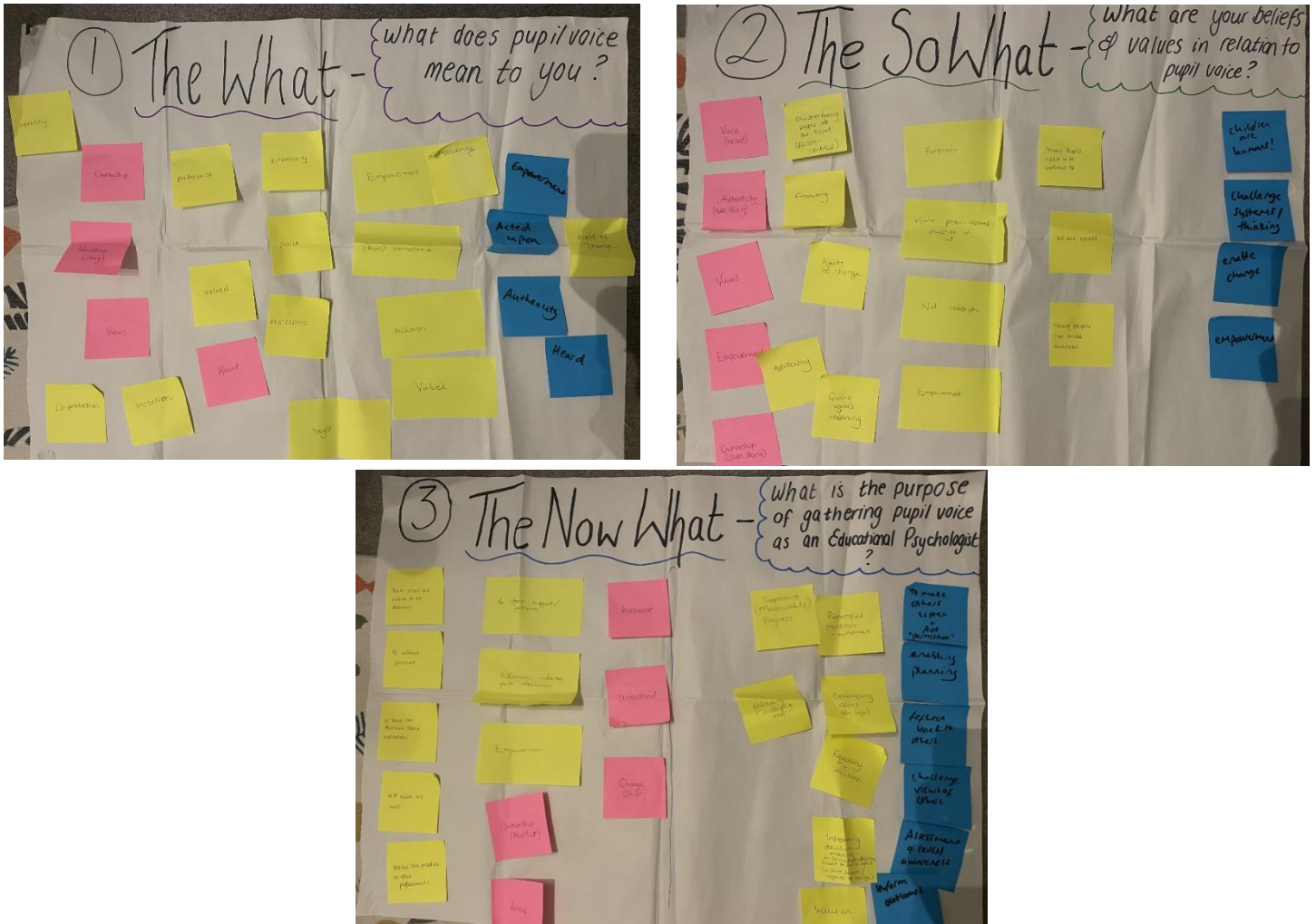


Table 19: Content of word clouds from Focus Group 4

1 The What		2 The So What		3 The Now What	
Equality	Empowerment	Voice is heard	Agents of change	Their views are central to all decisions	Change (shift)
Ownership	Ownership	Authenticity	Advocating	To inform provision	Support measurable progress
Narrative	Insight	Valued	Ownership	So they can achieve their aspirations	Purposeful
Views	Acted upon	At the heart	Giving value and meaning	YP needs are met	Developing skills for life
Preference	Authenticity	Person-centred	Purposeful	Model the practice to other professionals	Reframing and challenging views
Valued	Agent of change	Empowering	YP need to be listened to	To know	Equality & inclusion
Heard	Inclusion	Not tokenistic	Children are humans!	Ownership (author)	Informing decision-making and service developments based on service users
Autonomy	Co-production	We are equal	Enable change	Empowerment	Assessment of skills
Choice		YP can make decisions		Advocacy to address power imbalances	Reflect back to others
Expression		Challenge systems / thinking		To inform support and outcomes	Enable planning
				Investment	To make others listen and act 'permission'
				Understand	

## **Appendix 9 – Participant Debrief Form**

**Study title: Creating space to conceptualise ‘Pupil Voice’**

### **Debriefing Statement**

Thank you for taking part in this research.

The aim of this study was to explore current conceptualisations of the meaning, value, and purpose of pupil voice in Educational Psychology practice.

Your views will help inform and influence Educational Psychology practice, provide an opportunity for sharing good practice, and raise considerations for future progress.

If you have any further questions about the research, please contact the researchers directly at [westwoodCB2@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:westwoodCB2@cardiff.ac.uk) or the supervisor [Biuv1@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:Biuv1@cardiff.ac.uk)

Thank you for your participation in this research.

If you have any queries regarding the study, you can contact the researcher, research supervisor and/or School of Psychology Research Ethics Committee (details below) at any time during working hours.

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#### **Any complaints may be made to:**

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Email: [psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto: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](mailto: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 10 – Example of activities undertaken at coding / generation of themes

### stage

#### Stage 1 – Open coding

During this stage, the researcher read and re-read transcripts highlighting any language, narratives, and discourse that was recurrent, repeated, or forceful (Owen, 1984).

#### Example of highlighted extracts from Focus Group 1 transcript

Sally¶	Yeah. <u>So</u> what my practice is with pupil voice?¶
Researcher¶	And just introduce yourself and how you'd like me to refer to you <u>today</u> ¶
Sally¶	Ok, my name's Sally. I'm an Educational Psychologist working in [location removed]. and my practice of <u>Pupil voice is definitely like a core part of my practice. Um, um, whenever I, you know, kind of, must assess or trying to understand the needs of a young person meeting the young person and getting their voice from their perspective is so powerful</u> and often, um, when I'm, <u>wh</u> when we're kind of, when I'm speaking to parents or teachers about a young person and trying to understand what's happening for them and what their needs are <u>just speaking to the young person when they're able to speak, when they're able to give their view or even you know, even in any way possible just kind of can unlock and help understand, like, what exactly is going on for them. Um, and often answer so many of the questions, um, and yeah, just provides kind of key information to be able to, to advocate for them. And I think over the years I've just learned so many different ways of being able to gain their views,</u> which I don't know if you want me to speak about now, but maybe we can speak about that <u>later</u> ¶
Researcher¶	Yeah¶
Sally¶	But yeah, <u>just so powerful and so key to like, my work</u> ¶

#### Example of highlighted extracts from Focus Group 3 transcript

Jan¶	I-I think m-m, but that's it, <u>when we get those pupil voices back then, you know, they, they, you know, come back and say 'well, no, don't feel really particular heard to' then obviously we will need to think well, what what do we need to do? What can we change about our service? So</u> I think that will bring challenges with it.¶
Researcher¶	And how easy do you think it is, kind of at the moment, to use pupil voice to kind of lead to meaningful change in some of <u>the</u> , kind of maybe the kind of more strategic stuff or?¶
Jan¶	I guess, on the <u>strate</u> strateg, blurgh, strategic level thinking about the inclusion project that we worked on, which I think is, it is it to create a whole new inclusion strategy? And the fact that pupils are having their, you know, having an input on that and it was very, it was <u>really interesting seeing the different responses because we did get pupil voice, parents voice, stakeholders.</u> Um, so it will be interesting to see how the inclusion strategy ends up looking. You know, I think from us because we've looked at all the <u>data</u> we'll be able to pull out like, ah, that bit links to what the children and young people said. Um, which will be really, <u>really nice</u> to see at that level.¶
Angela¶	It's whether that has, <u>it's hard to know, isn't it? Will that have an impact long term?</u> How? <u>It it's probably out of our hands that doesn't involve us.</u> ¶
Researcher¶	Yes.¶
Angela¶	<u>Will that make a difference in three years time?</u> It's hard to measure or hard to know. I guess we, you know, we'd have to come back, you'd have to come back to it and <u>try to measure some sort of change.</u> But yeah, it's hard.¶

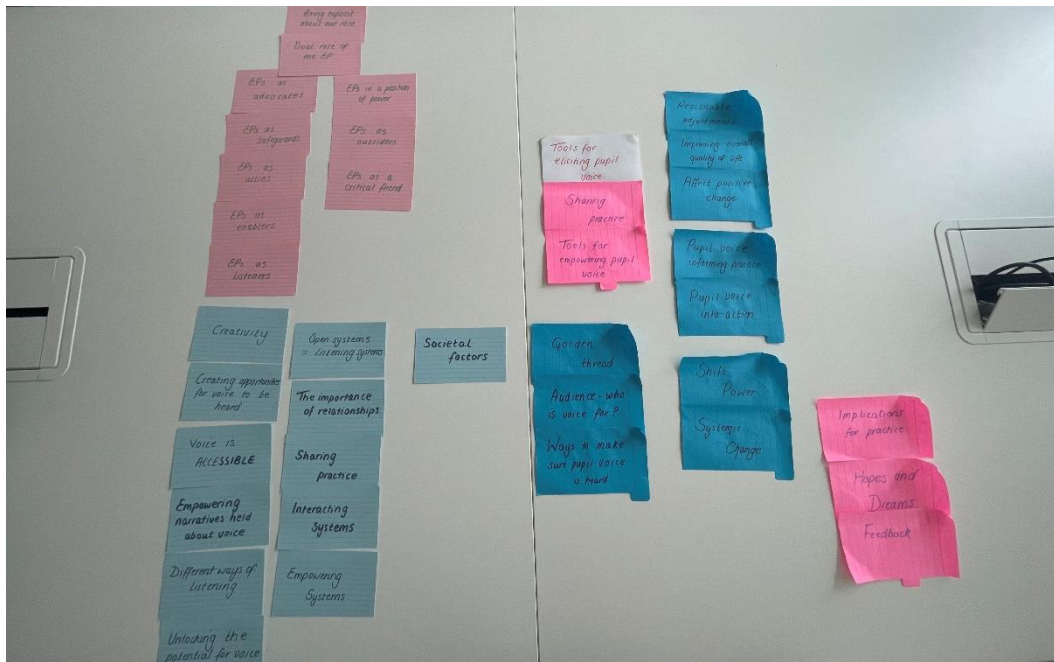
Example of code generation

<p>protect, but so I think it's a wider kind of societal thing about how we see children...And that goes back to those grander narratives that possibly are held at a wider level.</p>	<p>Empowering systems / Societal factors</p>
<p>just reminding myself, actually, you always need that toolkit of visual bits, or different ways of communicating or, you know, yeah, you can do a lot of stuff through observation, can't you?</p>	<p>Different ways of listening</p>
<p>And just trying to describe what, I think we talked about it before, about, it'll inform what's happening in school and what the adults are going to be doing. Or it's going to be written into a document that's for this. And again, depending on, you know, their understanding, talking about where it's gonna go, are they okay with me to share kind of verbatim quotes and things? Or do they just want me to summarise? And just sort of checking it back out with them really.</p>	<p>Creating opportunities for voice to be heard</p>
<p>And making sure that we're kind of, we are also kind of reflecting on our own values. And actually, are we doing the work the way that we kind of seek to?</p>	<p>Espoused vs enacted values</p>
<p>And it's nice when you asked us to put like what our values are. It's nice that all of us seemed to put quite similar values which, yeah, was really nice</p>	<p>Shared values</p>
<p>I'm very like, into pupil voice and making sure that they're at the heart of making decisions.</p>	<p>At the heart' of practice</p>
<p>write my provision based on what they say because I just think 'well, if that's what helps them then why would I be trying to as an adult think that I know more than the person'. [affirmative] So I think yeah, it's about really following that golden, like thread almost.</p>	<p>Pupil voice into action / 'Golden thread'</p>
<p>when they've actually told you, you know, three key things then yeah, those, you know, should be in the provision.</p> <p>How do we use pupil voice to make sure that justice is just-kind of found for these young people?</p> <p>...</p> <p>I suppose a bit like I was saying before it's that making sure it's actioned, it's put into place, whether it's in your report, or we share it or empower them to share it.</p>	<p>Pupil voice into action / 'Golden thread'</p> <p>Pupil voice into action</p>

## Stage 2 – Closed coding

At this stage, the researcher linked codes to the ideologies, power structures, or hierarchies that are recurring, repeated, and forceful within the dataset.

### Example of theme generation



Example of theme generation

Facilitating factors - The role of the EP - opportunities	Risk factors - The role of the EP - threats	Facilitating factors - practitioner level	Facilitating factors - systemic level	Facilitating factors - wider chronosystem?	The process of voice leading to change - what?	The process of voice leading to change - how?	Change - pupil level	Change - practitioner	Change - systemic	Implications from the research
Being explicit about our roles		Creativity	Open systems = listening systems	Societal factors	Tools for eliciting pupil voice	Golden thread	Reasonable adjustments	Pupil voice informing practice	Shift power	Feedback - the research process
Dual role of the EP		Creating opportunities for voice to be heard	<b>The importance of relationships</b>	°	Tools for empowering pupil voice	Audience - who is voice for?	Improving overall quality of life	Pupil voice into action	Systemic changes	Hopes and dreams - individual practitioners
Eps as advocates	Eps in a position of power	Voice is accessible	Sharing practice	°	Sharing practice	Ways to make sure pupil voice is heard	Affect positive change	°	°	Implications for practice - wider level changes
Eps as safeguards	Eps as outsiders	<b>Empowering narratives held about voice</b>	Interacting / collaborating systems	°	°	°	°	°	°	°
Eps as allies	<b>Eps as a critical friend</b>	Different ways of listening	Empowering systems	°	°	°	°	°	°	°
Eps as enablers	°	Unlocking the potential for	<b>Empowering narratives</b>	°	°	°	°	°	°	°



**Appendix 11 – A list of approaches and methods used by participants to gather pupil voice**

*Table 20: Tools and approaches used by EPs to gather pupil voice*

<b>Tools and approaches used by EPs to gather pupil voice</b>
Risk and resilience cards
The little box of Big questions
3 wishes tool
Planning Alternative Tomorrow's with Hope [PATH]
Solution Circles
LEGO classroom
3 Houses tool
Principles from Personal Construct Psychology
"I" statements
Having a picture of the child or young person in the meeting if they're not present
Circle of Adults
True and Not True About Me card sort
Ideal School

## Appendix 12 – Supervision Form

### Research Supervision Form – SSRP and Thesis Proposals

(One form must be completed for each meeting, telephone conversation and/or email dialogue - for meetings/conversations, the form must be submitted to your supervisor for countersigning)

(Please use this framework in conjunction with COMOIRA where change issues arise)

Date of Supervision	Supervisor	Trainee(s)
12.9.22	Dr. Victoria Biu	Corrin Bryony Treleaven Westwood

Record of Supervision	
<p>Discussed initial thoughts and feelings about research – tensions around balancing what is practical and manageable with interesting and purposeful research – <b>reflect, reframe, and reconstruct</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussed possible areas of interest for thesis: focus on pupil voice and EBSA</li> <li>• Possible questions: how do we use pupil voice? How do other services use and appreciate pupil voice? Do pupils at risk of EBSA feel like their voices are being heard? How have LAs utilised pupil voice in the development of an EBSA pathway?</li> <li>• Actions needed – read literature and identify a gap, draw up a rationale for research</li> </ul>	

Trainee's signature: C. WESTWOOD	Date: 20.9.22
Supervisor's signature: V. BIU	Date: 16/10/22