



An Exploration of Educational Psychologists' Views of Their Role and Job Satisfaction

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Summary

Part one of the information below focuses on the literature relating the topic exploring educational psychologists' (EPs) views of their role and current job satisfaction. The literature explores why the topic is relevant to psychology, the educational psychology profession, and EPs themselves. Theories relating to role and job satisfaction are also explored and critiqued. The relevant research literature regarding the topic is then reviewed and related to the role of the EP. From the literature examined, five research questions are posed. This then leads on to part two – 'The empirical study'. This section explores how the research questions posed were investigated. For this, fourteen EPs engaged in semi-structured interviews about their job role and current job satisfaction. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, where eight main themes emerged; difficulty defining the EP role, varied role of the EP, negative aspects of the current EP role, positive aspects of the EP role, desired changes to the EP role, EPs' definition of job satisfaction, extrinsic factors to improve EP job satisfaction and intrinsic factors to improve EPs' job satisfaction. Each main theme had sub themes. This resulted in various implications and recommendations for the profession.

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DEdPsy

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Abbreviations

Association of Educational Psychologists	(AEP)
Causality orientations theory	(COT)
Cognitive evaluation theory	(CET)
Core Evaluation Theory	(CET)
Department for Education and Skills	(DfES)
Educational Psychologist	(EP)
Educational Psychology Service	(EPS)
Every Child Matters	(ECM)
Goal Contents Theory	(GCT)
Individual Development Plan	(IDP)
Principal Educational Psychologist	(PEP)
Office for National Statistics	(ONS)
Organismic Integration Theory	(OIT)
School Psychologist	(SP)
Self Determination Theory	(SDT)
Special Educational Needs Coordinator	(SENCo)
The Job Satisfaction Survey	(JSS)
The Job Descriptive Index	(JDI)
The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire	(MSQ)
Welsh Government	(WA)

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Part One: Literature Review

1. Introduction

1.1 Amplification of the title. Love (2009) noted that the role of educational psychologists (EPs) and the distinctive contribution, which they make, have received a considerable amount of attention within the literature. Research, such as that by Kelly and Gray (2000), suggests that there are conflicts between what schools are looking for and what EPs want to offer. Ashton and Rogers (2007) found similar results, which also suggested that EPs find it difficult to agree as a profession on what they should offer to schools. Research also suggests that the EP role has been found to overlap with other professional groups, e.g., teachers and psychiatrists, and these concerns and the ones above reflect a degree of continuing uncertainty about the long-term future of the profession (Farrell, 2009).

Moreover, possible anxieties within the profession may also be the result of the many changes that have been occurring recently in the role of the EP, and are likely to continue to do so in the near future. According to Corban (2011), such changes include the evolving role of the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) into the Children's Services (2004) within some Local Authorities (LAs) and the introduction of the UK coalition government (2010). Also, in the future there will be changes in the legislation relating to Special Educational Needs. These changes will be explained in more detail below. However, Corban (2011), also notes that EPs as a profession are currently re-evaluating their skills and relevance.

This uncertain time, and the uncertainties of the future, may have an impact on how EPs perceive their current role and job satisfaction. This research, therefore, aims to gain an understanding of how EPs perceive their job role and how this, as well as other factors, may

affect their job satisfaction. Literature relating job role and job satisfaction will be explored below and related to EPs.

1.2 Theoretical significance. According to Griffin (1990) “Theory is a tool of science, as it defines major orientation of a phenomena, such as job satisfaction” (p. 67). Thus, theories can be the scientific tools that can be used to explain the factors associated with job satisfaction. For the purpose of this research, motivation theories will be explored in depth, as the concept of motivation is often linked with job satisfaction and as theories of motivation have often formed the basis of models and measures of job satisfaction (Mullins, 1996). These theories will also incorporate the importance of job role. Each theory will be explored and critiqued.

As was explained briefly above, the EP profession has been experiencing difficulties. Theories of motivation may, therefore, be helpful in clarifying the needs, drives, and aspirations of EPs. Applying theories of motivation could also help to gain an insight into how EPs currently perceive their role and explore any changes that could be implemented to improve their role and job satisfaction.

1.3 Rationale of the topic. With regards to the rationale of the study, Collins et al. (2008) note that there is a link between employee and client satisfaction. As EPs play a fundamental role in the development of children and young people’s education, it is important to keep individuals in this profession motivated and feeling that their role is worthwhile. Also, job role is linked with wellbeing (Ford, 2001) as also is job satisfaction (Office for National Statistic; ONS, 2011). Therefore, it is important to explore these two concepts in relation to the EP profession, especially with the changes that have been occurring within the role recently.

1.4 Relevance to psychology. This study will have relevance to psychology, in that various psychological aspects and theories will be applied in order to explore the EP's current job role and job satisfaction. This may help to gain an understanding of the importance of the two concepts, with regard to an individual's wellbeing. In applying psychology, this might help other professionals and also EPSs to gain an understanding of how EPs currently perceive their job role and job satisfaction in the sample investigated. Possible strategies could be implemented to support the EP role and to maintain or improve their job satisfaction, if necessary.

1.5 Relevance to educational psychology and the educational psychology profession. The current research will help EPs gain an overall understanding of how they currently perceive their role and job satisfaction. At this point in time, this is particularly important, as the profession has been experiencing changes, which may have an impact on how EPs currently perceive their role and job satisfaction. As mentioned previously, job role and job satisfaction have an impact on individuals' wellbeing (Ford, 2001; ONS, 2011). Consequently, this research may help identify factors that affect EPs' perceptions of their job role and job satisfaction, which could in turn improve their wellbeing. Also, given that job satisfaction has been historically linked to performance and productivity variables (Iaffaldano & Muchinsky, 1985), EPs' job satisfaction may have a direct impact on the quality and quantity of the work that they produce and achieve. Also, Collins et al. (2008) noted that there is a link between employee and client satisfaction. This information may also help EPs to develop coping strategies, or even assist principal educational psychologists (PEPs) to support the EPs in their current role and help to increase their job satisfaction. By including theories and psychological knowledge, this may possibly help to reduce the role conflict and role ambiguity, which is produced by the current lack of role consensus within

the profession, as, discussed by Farrell (2009). It may also help gain both an understanding of EPs' possible dissatisfaction with their role and an insight into possible changes that could be implemented in order to improve this.

1.6 A description of the key sources used. The key sources used to identify relevant research papers were PsycINFO, Google Scholar, Scencedirect and ERIC. Journals considered include Educational & Child Psychology, Educational Psychology in Practice, The British Journal of Educational Psychology, Educational Psychology Review and the Journal of Occupational and Organisational Psychology.

1.7 Introduction of the research literature. The information below, will firstly explore the theory involved with this topic. Initially, theory relating to job role will be discussed and why this is related to the topic. Following on from this, different theories of motivation will be applied to explore what factors may affect EPs' current perceptions of their role and job satisfaction. These theories could help to identify what strategies need to be implemented to support EPs within their role and possibly what to do in order to increase their job satisfaction, if need be. Specific studies relating to EP job role and EP job satisfaction are also discussed below and critiqued.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction of the literature review. As will be discussed in more depth below, EPs have not always agreed with each other about what they want to offer to schools (Ashton & Rogers, 2007). This has caused anxieties within the profession and these anxieties may be exacerbated due to recent changes. This may affect how EPs currently perceive their role and this may in turn affect their job satisfaction. Other than the concept of role, factors that contribute to EPs' perceptions of their job satisfaction will also be reviewed.

Therefore, the areas to be discussed in this literature review will include exploring EPs' current job role and job satisfaction. Motivation theories will be explored in detail, as motivation is linked to job satisfaction (Mullins, 1996), and will be related to EPs' job role and job satisfaction. Theories such as those described below, in section 2.2 have previously been applied to studies investigating job satisfaction of EPs (Male and Jenson 1998; Corban, 2011) and also school psychologists (SPs) in America (Worrell, 2004). As well as this, the role of the EP will be discussed and the changes that have been and will be taking place within the profession will be reviewed in depth. Studies concerning the EP's role and job satisfaction will be explored and critiqued.

The areas, which will not be included in the research, are the demographic variables related to job satisfaction, such as age and gender. These variables have been shown to have an impact on EPs' job satisfaction, but will not be discussed in depth. It was considered that it was not necessary to explore these areas, as this research is an explorative study of EPs' perceptions of their role and job satisfaction. Also, different theories relating to motivation and job satisfaction will be acknowledged, but due to the word limit it would be difficult to cover all of the theories, so a range of the most predominant theories in the literature will be reviewed.

2.2 Theoretical literature. The theoretical literature below will briefly explore the importance of job role by exploring role theory. The literature will discuss how job role might have an effect on one's job satisfaction. However, the literature will mainly focus on the development of motivation theories and how these are related to job role and job satisfaction. When reviewing the theoretical literature relating to job satisfaction, there was a wide range of theory and in fact, there was a wealth of information concerning job satisfaction and motivational theories. As noted above, under the sub heading 'Theoretical

Significance’, the concept of motivation is often linked with job satisfaction (Mullins, 1996). These theories can help to gain an insight into how EPs can sustain their motivation within their role at this point in time, where there has been organisational change.

2.2.1 Social constructionism. Firstly, this research project is based upon a social constructionism framework (Burr, 1995). According to Robson (2011), “Social constructionism indicates a view that social properties are constructed through interactions between people, rather than having a separate existence” (p. 24). This approach emphasises the world of experience as it is lived and felt by people acting in social situations (Schwandt, 2007).

Social constructionism allows individuals to make sense of, and give meaning to, their world. Meyer, Moore & Viljoen (2003) state that individuals ideas and attitudes are informed by their interaction with the particular social and cultural context in which they exist. It is within this framework that the researcher sought to understand how EPs construct their realities, ideas, attitudes and responses, their job role and job satisfaction. Social constructionism involves taking a critical stance towards assumed knowledge and it assumes that knowledge is sustained by social processes. This means that individual’s common ways of understanding the world are constructed through interaction and social process (Robson, 2011).

2.2.2 Role. According to William and Alliger (1994) roles provide individuals with important psychological benefits such as status, ego gratification, and increased self-esteem. Ford (2001) emphasised the importance of ‘job role’ in an individual’s sense of wellbeing. He stated that work is generally perceived as being an essential part of human life, individual identity and self-worth. One theory which explores role, and how an individual's behavior is connected to his or her environment is role theory. Martin and Wilson (2005) stated that role

theory points to the “expansive and variegated body of analyses examining the linkages between the social organization, culture and performances that humans give while engaged in interaction” (p. 651). However, for the purpose of this research, one of the earlier contemporary conceptions of role theory will be explored, which explores role within the organisational setting. The reason as to why this area will be explored, is due to previous literature suggesting that EPs have been experiencing role conflict (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009) and anxieties (Farrell, 2009) within the profession.

Kahn, Wolf, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964) believed that the organization is conceptualised as a system of roles and dynamics, which explains how stress can result from conflicting or incompatible expectations (role conflict) and unclear or vague expectations (role ambiguity). Kahn et al. (1964) also believed that role dynamics include personality factors as motives and values for important determinants of role pressures. However, research in this area has not always supported this assumption (Keller, 1975).

Since role conflict and ambiguity pose problems of adjustment for the individual, Kahn et al. (1964) predicted and found lower levels of job satisfaction for those with high conflict and ambiguity. Role theory states that responsibilities of all employees and positions at work should be defined. Cuhadar (2008) also noted that clearly defined roles could strengthen an employees’ feelings concerning the efficiency of their abilities.

However, there are limitations of role theory, for instance, Connell (2005) stated that there is terminological and conceptual confusion with the concept of role. Also, whilst there has been widespread academic acceptance of the role conflict construct and the scales to measure it (Rizzo, House & Lirtzman, 1970), there is divergence on the factors that serve to mediate the concept. The literature in this area will be discussed in more detail in the section labelled, 3.1 Role.

2.2.3 Motivation. Firstly, it is important to note exactly why motivation is important in the workplace and to define what motivation is. According to Oudejans (2007), employee motivation is a crucial element in a successful organisation. Singh and Tiwari (2011) state that “motivation can also be conceived of as whatever it takes to encourage workers to perform, by fulfilling or appealing to their needs” (p. 31). However, according to Oudejans (2007) there is a problem with finding a suitable definition of motivation, as there are so many definitions available in the literature. Robbins (2003) defines motivation as the eagerness to do something, conditioned by this action’s capacity to satisfy some specific need for the individual. Also, Kinicki and Kreitner (2003) note that motivation is one of the psychological processes that cause the stimulation, direction, and determination of voluntary actions that are goal oriented.

In the literature there have predominantly been two classifications of motivational theories related to job satisfaction. These are: content theories and process theories. The content theories assume that all individuals possess the same set of needs and focus on identifying the needs, drives and incentives/goals and their prioritisation by the individual to get satisfaction (Luthans, 2005). Process theories stress the difference in people’s needs and focus on the cognitive processes that create these differences. While new models of motivation are emerging, there are also efforts to integrate the existing approaches (Newstrom, 2007). Some theorists also focus on the dispositional predictors, such as personality, whilst others focus on the environmental predictors. More recent theorists recognise the importance of both types of predictors. These will also be explored below.

2.3 Content Theories. Wehrich & Koontz (1999) state that Maslow’s hierarchy of needs (1943) is “the most widely mentioned theory of motivation and satisfaction” (p.468). This theory proposes that employees’ needs determine their level of job satisfaction.

However, this theory will not be explored in this research as it was felt that the theory has numerous criticisms. For instance, Gruneberg (1979) points out that, even though the theory is appealing, there is no empirical evidence for a hierarchy of needs. There is a problem in deciding when a level has actually been "satisfied" or not. Therefore, there are difficulties with establishing causality and operationalising the strength of a need in this theory.

2.3.1 Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation. Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation (1968) is based on a study of accountants and engineers. According to Herzberg, "motivation" factors, including achievement, responsibility and recognition, are the intrinsic nature of the job itself, are related to psychological growth and lead one to job satisfaction. He believed that "hygiene" factors, on the other hand, are associated with the context and extrinsic factors of the job. These include such things as pay, security, supervision and physical working conditions. When deficient, the hygiene factors lead to dissatisfaction; however, their presence cannot be a source of job satisfaction and motivation (Berry, 1998). Herzberg perceived motivational and hygiene factors to be separated into two dimensions affecting separate aspects of job satisfaction (Maher, 2002).

These personally rewarding intrinsic factors have demonstrated a significant impact on job satisfaction in many studies (Herzberg et al., 1957). Dodd-McCue and Wright (1996) found that job satisfaction is enhanced by the value placed on one's professional role and identification with that role, but is negatively affected by choosing the job because rewards are extrinsic (external to the work itself, such as fellow workers, salary, or promotion opportunities). However, although based on an empirical study, this theory ignores individual differences and assumes that all employees react in a similar manner to changes in motivators and hygiene factors, not taking into account differences between individuals (Maher, 2002).

2.4 Process Theories

2.4.1 Locke's range of affect theory. Locke's range of affect theory (1976) is one of the most influential theories of job satisfaction. Locke (1969) defined job satisfaction as "the pleasurable emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job as achieving or facilitating the achievement of one's job values" (p.316). He thought that satisfaction is more likely to result from the fulfilment of wants or desires than from the fulfilment of deprived needs. He believed that satisfaction is determined by a discrepancy between what one wants in a job and what one has in a job. Locke also pointed out that people use values to appraise their job, as they perceive it. The theory states that the degree in which the individual values a particular aspect of her/his work moderates how satisfied/dissatisfied s/he feels when her/his expectations are/are not met. Locke felt that the fulfilment of values leads to job satisfaction, provided that values are compatible with needs. Locke argued that a discrepancy between perceptions and expectations leads to uncertainty, which can be either satisfying or dissatisfying, depending on the event (Berry, 1998).

Again, as above, there are critiques of this theory also, for example, the definition of job satisfaction provided by Locke (1969) combines the discrepancy between perceptions and values with the emotional state. However, it could be argued that the emotional state is shaped by the discrepancy and should thus be viewed separately. As such, Locke's definition renders the relationship between discrepancies and satisfaction circular (Corban, 2011).

2.4.2 Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model. Hackman and Oldham (1975) suggested that jobs differ in the extent to which they involve five core dimensions: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and task feedback. According to the job characteristic model, job dimensions indirectly determine an employee's motivation, performance, withdrawal, and satisfaction because they affect three critical psychological states in employees: (1) experienced meaningfulness of work, (2) experienced responsibility

for work outcomes, and (3) knowledge of the results of work activities. Hackman and Oldham (1975) stated that the skill variety, task identity, and task significance affect an individual's perception of the job as meaningful. For autonomy, they believed that this affected an individual's responsibility and that that feedback affected knowledge of results. These critical psychological states are expected to predict a number of personal and work outcome measures, including work motivation, work performance, work satisfaction, absenteeism and turnover (Berry, 1998). Berry also stated that a person's need for personal growth moderates the relationship between these job characteristics and employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction.

There have been empirical tests of the model that have provided partial support for the main propositions (Kelly, 1992). However, these tests have also demonstrated that many of the relationships that exist between variables were excluded from the model (Maher, 2002). Also, researchers find it difficult to agree on the growth need strength of the model and how it affects behaviour (Tiegs, Tetrick & Fried, 1992).

2.5 Dispositional theory. This theory suggests that regardless of one's job, some people have innate dispositions to have certain tendencies toward a certain level of job satisfaction (Toshlika & Abhishek, 2011). For many years, research has taken place into the dispositional source of job satisfaction and this research has presented strong evidence that job satisfaction, to some degree, is based on disposition (Judge & Larsen, 2001). A significant model associated with this theory is the core self-evaluations model (Judge, Locke, and Durham, 1997).

This theory states that higher levels of self-esteem (the value one places on oneself) and general self-efficacy (the belief in one's own competence) lead to higher work satisfaction. Having an internal locus of control (believing one has control over one's own

life, as opposed to outside forces having control) leads to higher job satisfaction. Finally, lower levels of neuroticism (enduring tendency to experience negative emotional states) lead to higher job satisfaction. Judge argued that the four traits are interrelated as part of an individual's inner self-concept.

However, there has been difficulty with empirical validity with this model, as the four constituent traits display slightly differential relations with criterion variables (Corban, 2011). Although, studies have been able to demonstrate a strong correlation between core self-evaluations and reported levels of job satisfaction, the core self-evaluation tools have been extended to general health and well-being, social satisfaction and other areas. Therefore, it could be argued that such tools are not only a predictor of job satisfaction but measure something much more tangible.

2.6 Self determination theory (SDT). Deci & Ryan, (1985) produced self determination theory (SDT) which is similar to the previous theories mentioned above, in that it applies a concept of psychological needs and hypothesises that satisfaction of these needs will be associated with more effective performance and wellbeing. SDT has evolved over three decades using an empirical approach in which each proposition has received empirical confirmation before being incorporated into the theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

SDT encompasses views on individuals' well-being and behaviour within the general positive psychology movement (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The optimal conditions in which the individual's tendencies are produced are defined by the satisfaction of psychological needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy; in other words, the degree to which individuals experience a sense of ability, social connectedness and choice in settings that are important to them (Deci & Ryan, 2000). When these three needs are supported and satisfied within a social context, individuals experience more vitality, self-motivation and

well-being (Ryan, 2009). SDT argues that needs are innate, but can be developed in a social context. Some people will develop stronger needs than others, creating individual differences (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

SDT comprises of five mini theories. Firstly, the cognitive evaluation theory (CET) addresses the effects of social contexts on intrinsic motivation, or how factors such as rewards and interpersonal controls impact intrinsic motivation and interest. Another mini theory of SDT is organismic integration theory (OIT). This theory addresses the topic of extrinsic motivation, with their properties, determinants, and consequences. This theory acknowledges that the more internalised the extrinsic motivation, the more autonomous the person will be when enacting the behaviors (Ryan, 2009).

Another mini theory is causality orientations theory (COT). According to Ryan (2009), this describes individual differences in people's tendencies to orient toward environments and regulate behavior in different ways. COT describes and assesses three types of causality orientations: the autonomy orientation, in which persons act out of interest in and their valuation of what is occurring; the control orientation, in which the focus is on rewards, gains, and approval; and the impersonal or amotivated orientation, characterized by anxiety concerning competence. The fourth theory is basic psychological needs theory (BPNT). This elaborates the concept of evolved psychological needs and their relations to psychological health and well-being (Ryan, 2009). BPNT argues that psychological well-being and optimal functioning is predicated on autonomy, competence and relatedness.

The fifth mini-theory, goal contents theory (GCT), grows out of the distinctions between intrinsic and extrinsic goals and their impact on motivation and wellness. Extrinsic goals such as financial success, appearance, and popularity/fame have been specifically contrasted with intrinsic goals such as community, close relationships and personal growth,

with the former more likely to be associated with lower wellness and greater well-being (Gagne & Deci, 2005).

As of yet, no research has been conducted applying SDT to EPs' job satisfaction. Several studies have supported SDT as an approach to work motivation by confirming aspects of the theory within organisations. For example, studies have found that managers' autonomy support led to greater satisfaction of individuals' needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy, and, in turn, to more job satisfaction, higher performance evaluations, greater persistence, greater acceptance of organisational change and better psychological adjustment (Baard et al., 2004).

SDT is an empirical based theory and discusses the regulatory processes that underlie the direction of behaviour, which is a criticism of the humanistic theories. However, much of the support for SDT has come from laboratory experiments and field studies in domains other than work organisations. Possibly more studies need to be conducted, applying this theory to such areas as job satisfaction. However, according to Luthans (2005) "at present there is a lack of integration or synthesis of the various theories" (p. 240). While research highlights factors related to job satisfaction, a lack of a unifying theory and ongoing development of theory means that the literature currently appears to be fragmented. More recent theories are taking into account individual differences, such as SDT. However, more research needs to be conducted relating such theories to the EP's role and job satisfaction.

With regards to motivation and job satisfaction, it is also important to note that these theories use the terms interchangeably. According to Kinicki and Kreitner (2003), being motivated and being satisfied are two related, but different constructs. They believe job satisfaction is an affective or emotional response toward a variety of aspects of an employee's job. It is possible for employees to be satisfied, but not to be motivated at all. On

the other hand, an employee can be motivated to perform, but be totally dissatisfied with the current situation at a particular firm. However, research does suggest that motivation affects outcomes and this is clearly evidenced in the research, which is geared toward finding the role of motivation on the satisfaction level of a particular job. Therefore, there is a link between the two concepts, but researchers have trouble defining and clarifying this link.

3. The Research Literature

3.1 Role. The literature below will focus on research relating to work role and the role of the EP. According to Pareek (1993), role is a set of functions one performs in response to the expectations of the 'significant others' and one's own expectations from that position. As mentioned above in the section, Theoretical Literature, Ford (2001) emphasised the importance of 'job role' in an individual's sense of wellbeing, individual identity and self-worth. However, also briefly explained in the section above, were role theory and the concepts of role conflict and role ambiguity.

Kahn et al. (1964) explored organisational role in relation to role theory and stated that individuals experience role dynamics within the work environment. They found that experiencing role conflict or role ambiguity could lead to lower levels of job satisfaction. A scale to measure role conflict and role ambiguity was developed by Rizzo, House, and Lirtzman (1970), who also found that role conflict and ambiguity emerged as separate dimensions. Studies have been conducted which support Kahn et al.'s theory. For instance, Brown and Peterson (1993) found that role conflict and role ambiguity affect employee job satisfaction in a negative way. More recent research by Kemery (2006) used the concepts of role ambiguity and role conflict with pastors. The researcher found that clergy satisfaction was highest when role ambiguity was high and role conflict was low. Satisfaction was lowest when role ambiguity and role conflict were both high. However, Kemery believed that in

some situations, high role ambiguity could have a positive influence on job satisfaction.

Research has also suggested that role conflict, as well as role ambiguity, has been found to reduce self-efficacy (Jex and Gudanowski, 1992).

There has been limited research with EPs in this area. However, a study of SPs by Hughes (1979) reported a significant negative correlation between the discrepancy of real and ideal roles and respondents' job satisfaction. It was suggested that the inconsistency of real and ideal roles, or role conflict, diminishes job satisfaction. Furthermore, South (1990) found that when the roles of SPs are restricted, satisfaction level decreases. A lack of role diversity has also been shown to limit the effectiveness of services and increase the likelihood of burnout (Huberty and Huebner, 1988).

Freeman (1987) also found that EPs' stress appears to come from issues around autonomy and a mismatch of role definition. Her research stressed the importance of making effective use of a range of social support strategies, as a means of reducing stress and enhancing job satisfaction. However, the data relating to role conflict and role ambiguity in relation to EPs are dated. The profession has developed and changed since Freeman's study in 1987 and there have been legislative changes. Also, the majority of research has been with SPs working in other countries (e.g., Brown et al., 1998; Huebner and Mills, 1994) and for this reason, the findings cannot be generalised to EPs in the UK, due to different legislation and working systems. Therefore, it is felt that more research needs to be conducted in this area with EPs, especially after the recent changes that have been occurring within the profession, which will be explored below. Additionally, there are criticisms of role theory, noted above, in that the concept of role is rather vague (Connell, 2005). Also, the link between role ambiguity and job satisfaction has been found to be not necessarily a difficulty,

but rather the opposite (Kemery 2006). However, there is a need for more research to be conducted, to evidence this.

3.1.1 Role of the EP. The information below will focus on the recent research literature relating to the role of the EP. It is necessary to gain an understanding of the EP role, as there have been many changes within the profession and this may have an impact on how EPs perceive their role and job satisfaction. However, even though there are definitions of the EP role, e.g., Fallon, Woods, & Rooney (2010), there is a widely acknowledged ‘identity crisis’ taking place within the EP profession (Norwich, 2005; Gaskell & Leadbetter, 2009; Love, 2009). There has also been fundamental questioning of the EP role (Wood, 1998). Multi-agency pressure for role definition for EPs has been emphasised in many Government publications. For instance, in Wales, the Children and Young People: Rights to Action (2004) was produced and in England, the Every Child Matters agenda (ECMs) in 2003 (Department for Education and Skills; DfES, 2003). As joint working is becoming the norm, clarity about roles and responsibilities have become increasingly important (Corban, 2011).

Stobie (2002) states that EPs in the twenty-first century are still finding it difficult to describe their role and that the diversity in practice is increasing. According to Labram (1992), the movement in delivery systems from referral to time allocation has opened up a much wider spectrum of possible work, but a decrease in role clarity is a logical consequence of this role expansion. As shown above, research has shown that the role can tend to overlap with that of other professionals (Farrell, 2009). Also, Jimerson et al. (2006) noted that SPs believe that their role is often misunderstood, that employers make unreasonable demands on them, that parents and teachers can have unrealistic expectations as to what SPs can achieve

and that their contribution is not valued as highly as other professionals, for example psychiatrists and clinical psychologists.

As well as the above literature, there have been several reasons that have been put forward to explain why many EP practitioners appear to be experiencing something of an identity crisis (Norwich, 2005). As already noted, there have been changes within the EP profession. One change that has occurred has been the integration of the profession into the children's services within some LAs. The Children and Young People: Rights to Action (2004) and the ECM's agenda makes outcomes for children central to integrated children's services that form a team around the child and family in the context of community and school. The publications caused the restructuring of LA departments to combine education and social care as "integrated children's services". Although, not all EPSs have become integrated in the children services, in some cases where they have, this has resulted in some instances in shared accommodation and co-located teams. However, the implementation of changes across authorities has varied widely.

The integration into children's services has resulted in more multi-agency working. Research by Gaskell & Leadbetter (2009) suggests that multi-agency working enhances feelings of professional identity for EPs and makes them feel more engaged with the organisation. According to Topping et al. (2007), EPs are now in the position to be able to disseminate systemically gathered research across the children's services. It is believed that evidence-based practice enables EPs' confidence to increase, as well as their professional identity (Miller & Todd, 2002). However, research also demonstrates that, in some cases, professionals can find multi-agency working stressful (Bachmann, et al., 2009). Fears have been expressed that this type of working may lead to the blurring of professional boundaries and the erosion of professional identity (Moran, Jacobs, Bunn & Bifulco, 2007).

Due to the global economic crisis in 2008 and the introduction of the Coalition Government in the UK during May 2010, the reductions in public spending have led to massive cuts in local authority funding and changes to the nature of the delivery of public services. This has led to fewer staff being employed by local authorities, changes to the nature of “state schools”, so as to achieve a significant increase in the number of academies and free schools that would receive all their funding directly from the government, rather than spending decisions being made within local authority structures (Association of Educational Psychologists; AEP, 2011).

Between autumn 2010 and autumn 2011, it appears that approximately 200 substantive EP posts disappeared from local authorities (AEP, 2011), due to reductions in Children’s Services budgets. However, the effect on different EPSs has been very varied. According to the AEP, in some cases, EPSs are now fully traded, especially in England, where a small number of services have become part of “stand alone” organisations, now generating all their income via trading with “stakeholders”. According to Corban (2011) in his research, anxiety and frustrations appear to be related to a perceived increase in EPs having to generate income via traded service teams, which are potentially independent of the LAs. Also, due to the reductions in the Children’s Services, terms and conditions have been under threat; including, for example, access to car user allowances, payment of annual increments and annual leave entitlements (AEP, 2011).

In addition, LAs now distribute funding to schools in the form of an annual delegated budget and schools decide how to spend their budget. The School Funding (Wales) Regulations 2010 came into force in 2010 for the financial years 2011-12 onward. Also, another change, which might affect the EP profession in the future, will be the changes to children and young people’s statements, which will be replaced by the Individual

Development Plan (IDP). A consultation document from the Welsh Government (WA; 2012) proposes that this will replace the current statementing procedure.

As can be suggested from the literature above, it is evident that the EP profession has been experiencing organisational change. According to Corban (2011), although EPs are generally optimistic, the profession had been experiencing anxieties and uncertainties before the global economic crisis. Corban also notes that how people make sense of organisational change depends on how the change either enhances or diminishes their individual and organisational identity. As people engage in this sense-making process, it has been suggested that they interpret these changes through four aspects of trust: trust in organisation, trust in leadership, trust in process and trust in outcome (Sloyan, 2009).

The Health and Care Professions Council's (HCPC's; 2012) state standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists. The standards of proficiency are the threshold standards necessary for safe and effective practice. The HCPC outline various standards relating to areas of the EP profession. Such standards involve describing the expectations of a registrant, the skills required for the application of practice, formulation and delivery of plans and strategies for meeting health and social care needs, and knowledge, understanding and skills required to be an effective practitioner. As mentioned previously, the EP profession has been experiencing changes, and will continue to do so in the future, therefore, the HCPC standards might support EPs with guidance within the profession in the future.

Possibly, change models could be incorporated in supporting EPs in the organisational change process, for example the Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action (Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis & Carroll, 2003). This could be used in order to reduce stress for EPs and be used to collaboratively support one another. No prior studies

have been conducted using change models to support EPs with organisational change, but it is an area that could be considered.

3.2 Job satisfaction. This section will initially explore the literature relating to job satisfaction, including what job satisfaction entails and how it can be measured. Job satisfaction is one of the most popular and widely researched topics in the field of organisational psychology (Spector, 1997). Research has suggested that when employees are satisfied they tend to care more about the quality of their work, they are more committed to the organisation, they have higher retention rates and they are generally more productive (Bravendam Research Incorporated, 2002). According to the ONS (2011) people in the UK believe that their wellbeing should be measured in terms of health, friends, family and job satisfaction.

However, there has been difficulty defining and operationalising the construct of job satisfaction. The definition has evolved through the decades, but most versions share the belief that job satisfaction is a work-related positive affective reaction (Worrell, 2004). Many researchers claim that job satisfaction can be formally defined as “the degree to which individuals feel positively and/or negatively about their jobs” (Steyn & Van Wyk 1999, p. 37). However, the most-used research definition of job satisfaction is provided by Locke (1976), who defined it as “ a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (p. 1304). Mullins (2002) states that job satisfaction is an attitude and an internal state that can be associated with personal feelings of achievement, either quantitative or qualitative. It has been suggested that job satisfaction and dissatisfaction are variables on a pleasant-unpleasant continuum (Landy, 1989), which was noted in some of the theories above.

There have also been different ways of measuring job satisfaction. However, since there is no agreed definition and no widely accepted theory to explain it, there are inevitably different ways of measuring it (Wanous & Lawler, 1972). The most widely cited survey instruments found in the literature include; The Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS; Spector, 1985), The Job Descriptive Index (JDI; Smith, Kendall & Hulin, 1969) and The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ; Weiss, Dawis, England & Lofquist, 1967).

3.2.1 Determinants of job satisfaction. The literature in this section will explore factors that may affect an individual's job satisfaction and the previous literature relating to possible determinants of EP job satisfaction. There is limited research exploring EP job satisfaction. Most of the research that has been conducted has taken place in America. A review of the literature suggests that there are numerous variables that have been investigated in their relationship to job satisfaction. These variables include demographic data (e.g., age, gender, and race), intrinsic features of the job (e.g., recognition, advancement and responsibility), and extrinsic variables (e.g., salary, supervision and working conditions).

As noted above, in the section Theory and Research Literature, 'job role' has been shown to have an impact on the level of job satisfaction, especially with regards to role conflict and role ambiguity (Kahn et al., 1964). Therefore, the literature below will discuss other factors associated with job satisfaction and relate them to the EP profession. The demographic variables involved with job satisfaction will not be discussed in detail, as this is an explorative study. Results in this area are both contradictory and dated. For example, with regards to age, Anderson, Hohenshil, & Brown (1984) suggest that a positive relationship between age and job satisfaction exists, perhaps because SPs learn to modify their job or their needs as they gain experience and grow older. However, other studies such as Brown et al. (1998) and Levinson et al. (1988) found no significant relationship. With

regards to gender, there again seems to be conflicting results, with some research showing no link (Anderson, Hohenshil, & Brown, 1984) and others suggesting that female school psychologists were more likely to be satisfied with their jobs (Brown et al., 1998).

3.2.2 Joining the profession. Firstly, it is important to briefly discuss why EPs in general join the profession, as the research suggests there is a discrepancy between what aspiring EPs thought the role would entail and what they actually engage in once qualified. For example, Burden (1996) states that if one asked EPs, especially trainee EPs, why they wanted to be EPs, they would probably reply ‘to help children’. However, once they join the profession soon after completing the training course, they face obstacles that they never anticipated would have existed to such a degree, for example, countless meetings, administrative work, statutory assessments, which can interfere with their intentions of applying psychology in educational settings in order to help children. This often results in feelings of frustration, and eventually helplessness, after several years of such frustration (Leadbetter, 2000).

Huebner and Mills (1994) suggested that many new practitioners enter the profession of educational psychology with the intention of immediately exercising their new skills to the fullest extent possible. However, they realise that caseloads and responsibilities can tax both their time and their ability to cope with the demands of the job. Ford (2002) investigated the area of job satisfaction and attrition among school psychologists and found that there were misconceptions about job expectations that can lead to role confusion and job dissatisfaction for new school psychologists.

3.2.3 Salary. The relationship between pay and job satisfaction seems to be dynamic in the field of school psychology, and the existing literature is inconsistent. Initially, satisfaction levels were thought to be positively correlated with pay (South, 1990). However,

other studies have found no relationship between salary and job satisfaction (Brown et. al., 1998). It must be emphasised that these results are from studies in America, where some SPs are placed on teacher pay scales and others are on administrative salary schedules. More recently, Corban (2011) found that EPs were quite satisfied with the salary in the UK in LAs in England.

3.2.4 Support and relationships. As was emphasised in some theories, relationships and support are important contributors to job satisfaction. With regards to social support in the work place, Levine (1994) states that this is necessary to enhance performance. According to Brough & Pears (n.d). workplace social support focuses on collaborative problem solving and sharing information, reappraising situations and obtaining advice from a variety of personnel, such as colleagues, supervisors and managers. Research suggests that supporting employees both at work and home enhances the subjective well being of individual employees (Van Steenbergen & Ellemers, 2009).

Supervisor social support has been identified as alleviating the negative consequences of occupational stress across a variety of job contexts (Brough & Pears, n.d.). SPs with inadequate supervision have been found to experience lower levels of job satisfaction (Anderson, Hohenshil, & Brown, 1984). According to Nolan (1999) supervision can play a major role within an EPS in terms of supporting, developing and managing the EPs within it. Research has previously highlighted the importance of supervision as a means by which EPs gain validation and recognition of the work they have undertaken (Leadbetter, 2000). Stratford (1994) states that competency based supervision for EPs should enhance quality by ensuring clarity of role expectations, provide good quality feedback and support continuing professional development.

With regards to relationships with clients, Ashton and Rogers (2007) found that this was an aspect that EPs identified to be distinctive about their role and an aspect that they considered important within their role. Also Corban (2011), in his research, noted that many EPs reported that using psychological skills such as rapport building, empathic listening and paraphrasing to help form the relationships was as rewarding as the relationship itself.

3.2.5 *Autonomy*. According to Stewart (2000) helping to make workers feel independent had large positive effects on both performance and satisfaction outcomes. When employees feel their work is meaningful and that they are responsible for their outcomes, this increases their job satisfaction (Thomas & Tymon, 1995). However, autonomy is a factor linked to job satisfaction that is potentially significant for EPs. The problems most professional EPs face in their work are multifaceted, complex and not clearly defined (Webster & Bond, 2002), thereby requiring a degree of autonomy for the practitioner. However, it has been suggested that increasing accountability within the profession has led to a reduction in practitioners' autonomy (Webster & Hoyle, 2000).

Corban (2011) in his research, found that autonomy included determining the type of work EPs specialised in and the opportunity to exercise creative freedom. However, he found that whilst findings demonstrated a strong link between autonomy and job satisfaction, a significant number of participants felt that EP autonomy was being eroded and these concerns seemed to centre on perceived threats to autonomy for the profession as a whole. Participants attributed the threat to a perceived inability of the profession to successfully articulate EPs' full range of skills. However, it was also felt that a recent change of government and subsequent cuts to LA budgets left the EP profession vulnerable in many ways, including threats to professional autonomy. However, most EPs thought this was a central aspect of the job.

3.2.6 Recognition. Another factor that has shown to be associated with job satisfaction, and was emphasised in the theories above, is recognition. Treating a worker as an individual and recognising and praising effort results in happier and more valuable employees (Shepard, 1937). Recognition for one's work or approbation is also important for EPs (Nolan, 1999). Corban (2011) found that most EPs expressed frustration that others often did not appear to recognise the contribution that EPs could or do make.

3.2.7 Feedback. Feedback is defined as information that conveys an evaluation about the quality of an employee's performance (London & Smither 2002). Hackman & Oldham (1976) stated that providing feedback to employees is believed to be essential for maintaining and increasing employee motivation and satisfaction. As employees adapt to a constantly changing work environment, feedback becomes an increasingly salient means of guiding, motivating, and reinforcing effective behaviours, while reducing detrimental behaviours (Whitaker & McKinney, n.d.). However, Corban (2011) found that EPs in his study did not require positive feedback from others for their own self worth or to feel valued.

3.2.8 Stress. Job stress is something that also may affect job satisfaction. Job stress is any characteristic of the workplace that causes threat to the individual (Larson, 2004). Job stress occurs when the individual does not have the skills and abilities to perform the job effectively, when s/he lacks in training or is not provided with necessary resources to perform her/his job, or when he is confronted with conflicting job demands (Jamal, 1990). As noted above, Freeman (1987) investigated EPs' stress and found that this appears to come from issues around autonomy and a mismatch of role definition. Heavy caseloads have been linked to lower job satisfaction, more role conflict, more stress and higher rates of burnout (Anderson, Hohenshil, & Brown, 1984).

3.2.9 Work conditions. *Eurofound* (2011) refers to working conditions as the working environment and aspects of an employee's terms and conditions of employment. This covers such matters as the organisation of work and work activities; training, skills and employability; health, safety and well being; and working time and work-life balance. Robbins (2001) advocates that working conditions will influence job satisfaction, as employees are concerned with a comfortable physical work environment. There is a lack of research with regards to working conditions and EP job satisfaction, but Worrell, Skaggs and Brown (2006) noted that it was a factor and that, in America, SPs' job satisfaction with working conditions was improving. However, this may not be the case with EPs in the UK today, due to the recent changes.

3.2.10 Personality. Characteristics relating to different personality types between SPs is an area of research gaining more attention. Dixon (2001) reported using the Million Index of Personality Styles (MIPS) in a more recent study of personality characteristics and job satisfaction among SPs. Dixon reported that his sample group was comprised of sixteen students in a school psychology-training program. However, he found that there was sample bias, so additional studies using inventories, such as the MIPS are warranted. More recently, according to Heller et al. (2009) work personality is a better predictor of job satisfaction than both global personality and home personality. However, it is felt that more research needs to be conducted in this area.

As can be suggested from the literature above, the EP role is continuously evolving and changing. Even though this is the case, there has been little research exploring EPs' views of this, or what changes could be implemented to support EPs. This is also the case with EPs' job satisfaction. However, as noted in the literature above, there is no agreed definition of job satisfaction, which consequently makes this subject difficult to research, and

makes the validity and reliability of measurements of job satisfaction questionable. Also, the majority of research has been conducted in America and the disadvantages of this will be explained in more detail below. More up to date research needs to incorporate personality differences and individual differences.

4. Key Research Studies Relating to the Research Questions

4.1 Studies relating to the role of the EP. The literature below will review the key research studies relating to the research questions for the current study. Firstly, looking at the EP role, Ashton and Rogers (2007) explored what is valuable and unique about the EP. For this research, they identified aspects of the EP role that were considered valuable by SENCOs and by EPs themselves. For this, they used open questions, which were designed for the SENCO questionnaire and adapted for the EP questionnaire. The research highlighted that, while there is some agreement between SENCOs and EPs about the role, there is still a gap between the perceptions of the two groups. The key differences between the groups appear to be in the perceptions of the EPs' general approach to their work. Most of the SENCOs valued the "traditional" EP role of individual assessment, which may lead to statutory assessment and giving their expert advice to staff. The EPs in the study stated that the aspects of their role that they thought were most valuable to schools were: (1) the relationship that they shared with the school, (2) the different perspectives they brought to understanding different problems and (3) the fact that they included the views of the pupils. Therefore, there was a discrepancy between the two groups' views. As well as this, Ashton and Rogers (2007) reported that EPs also found it difficult to agree themselves on what they should be offering to schools, which suggests possible role conflict.

However, although this research captures a picture of EPs' perceptions of their role, the research used open questions, only viewing three questions. The study was also on a very

small scale, with only eight EPs interviewed, suggesting that the results cannot be generalised to other EPSs. Also, only SENCOs from mainstream primary schools were involved in the study, again suggesting that the results cannot be generalised to other sectors. Therefore, the data are difficult to generalise. More research needs to be conducted relating to the EP perceptions of their own role.

4.2 Studies surrounding the EP role and job satisfaction. The research literature surrounding EPs' job role has also been explored in studies surrounding EPs' job satisfaction. Research surrounding this area has mainly been conducted in America, with SPs. For instance Worrell, Skaggs and Brown (2006) examined the changes over the past 22 years of SPs' job satisfaction. Surveys were sent to 500 randomly selected members of the National Association of School Psychologists, and the results were compared to previous national surveys, conducted in 1992 and 1982. Results suggested that job satisfaction has slightly increased over the previous 22 years for SPs, and they continue to be most satisfied with the social service, independence and values aspects of their jobs. They are also very satisfied with their co-workers and job activities. Satisfaction with job security, compensation and working conditions improved the most over the 20-year time span. Opportunities for advancement and school system policies and practices remain sources of job dissatisfaction.

However, it should be acknowledged that the context is different in the US to the UK, as there are, for example, an increasing number of SPs employed full-time in a single school. It would also be difficult to make a direct comparison with UK EPs who are usually part of a LA, rather than being directly employed by schools, although due to the current changes, this may not be the case in the near future. Some studies also suggest that job satisfaction may be positively related to state school psychology organisation memberships. In the UK, professional membership is not organised on a regional basis as it is in most of the US. UK-

based EPs are often members of the Association of Educational Psychologists, which acts as a professional body and trade union for the profession (Corban, 2011). Also, most of the job satisfaction research has been limited to quantitative data based upon the pre-defined US standardised MSQ (Worrell et al., 2006).

As noted above, most of the job satisfaction research has been conducted in America. However, a national survey conducted in the UK by Male and Jensen (1998) investigated the career continuation plans, and factors that may be associated with them, with main grade and senior EPs, across seven services. Altogether, there were sixty-one (56% response) participants. Using mainly Likert-type scales, the questionnaire asked participants to rate their attitudes to a variety of factors associated with job satisfaction. The results indicated that the respondents are generally satisfied with their work, have positive attitudes towards the profession and perceive high levels of support from colleagues and other professionals. The researchers found that working conditions contributed to levels of satisfaction, and in this case the participants were pleased. The EPs in the study also reported high levels of satisfaction with role clarity and, whilst a minority mentioned concerns regarding role ambiguity in their qualitative responses, overall, EPs felt that the Code of Practice had done much to lessen role problems. Autonomy was also found to be related to feelings of job satisfaction and was consistent with their view of their PEPs as being supportive line managers.

However, dissatisfaction was expressed with workload and time constraints. In addition, a significant proportion of respondents reported finding the job stressful. Overall, of particular significance in this study, there appeared to be the beneficial effects of collegial and line manager support and the apparent role clarity provided by such initiatives as the Code of Practice. Whilst almost all of the respondents considered the pace of change in

recent years to have been too fast, just under two-thirds of them considered that the nature of it had been generally good. However, this study is quite dated and some of the findings do not reflect more recent data.

A more recent study by Corban (2011) suggests many factors that may be associated with job satisfaction. This study elicited EPs' views of factors that influence approbation, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction when working within this context. Twenty-seven main grade and senior EPs working in the North West of England participated in a combination of focus groups and individual semi-structured interviews. Five themes of approbation, autonomy, job satisfaction, job dissatisfaction and multi-agency working were identified as relevant to the study. However, this research suggested that, at present in England, EPs' level of dissatisfaction was linked to the re-organisation of LAs which was unforeseen, and this caused anxiety. Results suggested that there were a number of factors associated with approbation, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, which have been noted above. EPs in the study did feel that they were unrecognised to an extent in their profession and that they enjoyed the autonomy of their role, although they thought this was diminishing. However, this research used focus groups and then used semi-structured interviews to collect information, therefore, it is possible to suggest that the focus groups resulted in predetermined questions for the interviews. Also, the researcher was in the profession himself when completing this research and, therefore, this raises the question of subjective positioning.

5. How the Literature Review Leads to the Proposed Study

The literature above, relating to the role of the EP, suggests that, the profession is experiencing anxieties and changes. Statements such as 'identity crisis' (Norwich, 2005) and 'role conflict' (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009) suggest that the profession has been experiencing

difficulties and uncertainties. There have been various studies questioning the distinctiveness of the EP role (Farrell et al., 2006; Ashton & Rogers, 2007), which have suggested that the role can tend to overlap with that of other professionals and that EPs are in controversy themselves about what they should offer to schools. As well as this creating anxiety within the profession, there have also been recent changes, which have affected the EP profession in Wales. These changes include, for instance, the integration of the EPSs in the Children's Services and the budget cuts that have taken place due to the introduction of the coalition government.

As noted above in the section 3.1.1 detailing the role of the EP, the HCPC (2012) stated standards of proficiency for practitioner psychologists. The standards emphasise the importance of EPs being able to support the learning of others in the application of psychological skills, knowledge, practices and procedures. As well as this, EPs are required to understand the structures and systems of a wide range of settings in which education and care are delivered for children and adolescents. Due to the changes that have occurred and will be occurring within the EP profession in the future, the standards are important in order to support EPs within their profession and maintain their confidence within the role.

Therefore, with this information, it was felt that investigating EPs' perceptions of their role would be a useful and important area to explore. Also, since job role relates to job satisfaction (Cuhadar, 2008), it was felt that this area would also be beneficial to explore. Job satisfaction is also relevant at this point in time, for the reasons explored above. The literature relating to the EP job satisfaction is very limited and the majority of research in this area has been conducted mainly in America, with SPs. One recent study was conducted in England by Corban (2011) but no research has been conducted in Welsh LAs. Job role and

job satisfaction both affect individuals' wellbeing (Ford, 2001; ONS, 2011) and are, therefore, important factors to investigate.

5.1 Relevant and specific research questions. After reviewing the information, the main research question formulated was, how do EPs perceive their job role and job satisfaction. In order to answer this overarching question, five sub questions are posed:

How do EPs define the role of the EP?

How do EPs perceive their role?

What would EPs like to engage with more within their role?

How do EPs define job satisfaction within their role?

How do EPs think their job satisfaction could be improved?

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Part Two: Empirical Study

Abstract

Literature relating to the role of the educational psychologist (EP) suggests that the profession has been experiencing role conflict in recent years (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). The profession has also been experiencing changes, which have resulted in redundancies and budget cuts within Local Authorities (Association of Educational Psychologists; AEP, 2011). The aim of the current study is to explore EPs' current perceptions of their job role and job satisfaction. Research has shown the importance of job role for an individual's wellbeing (Ford, 2001) and how job role can have an impact on one's job satisfaction (Cuhadar, 2008). Research has also shown that employee job satisfaction is linked to client job satisfaction (Collins et al., 2008). Consequently, since EPs work with vulnerable individuals, it is important to maintain and increase EPs' job satisfaction. Fourteen EPs from 6 Welsh LAs were asked semi-structured, open-ended questions about their current job role and job satisfaction. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, and eight main themes emerged; difficulty defining the EP role, varied role of the EP, negative aspects of the EP role, positive aspects of the EP role, desired changes to the EP the role, EPs' definition of job satisfaction, extrinsic factors to improve EP job satisfaction and intrinsic factors to improve EP job satisfaction. Each main theme had sub themes. This resulted in various implications and recommendations for the profession.

1. Literature Review

As will be suggested from the literature reviewed below, the educational psychology profession has been experiencing anxieties and uncertainties within the role in recent years. Results from such studies have suggested that the role can tend to overlap with those of other professionals (Kelly and Gray, 2000) and that educational psychologists (EPs) find it difficult to agree on what they should offer to schools (Ashton & Rogers, 2007). This has resulted in anxieties within the role, with researchers suggesting that there is an 'identity crisis' taking place within the profession (Norwich, 2005). Moreover, the recent changes within the profession, which will be discussed in more detail below, have also caused uncertainties (Corban, 2011). The aim of the current study will be to explore EPs' perceptions of their job role and job satisfaction.

1.1 Relevance and rationale of the study. The EP profession is experiencing changes and the distinctiveness of the role is being questioned, hence investigating EPs' perceptions of their role and job satisfaction is an important area to explore. According to Collins et al. (2008) there is a link between employee satisfaction and client satisfaction and, since EPs play a fundamental role in the development of children and young people's education, it is important to maintain or increase EPs' job satisfaction. In view of the changes that have recently been occurring within the profession, the concept of job role and job satisfaction will be beneficial to explore.

1.2 Theoretical significance. Firstly, role theory will be discussed in relation to job role and secondly, theories of motivation will be discussed, as the concept of motivation is often linked with job satisfaction (Mullins, 1996). These theories will be explored to review EPs' current perceptions of their role and job satisfaction. The theories can help to gain an

insight into how EPs can sustain their motivation within their role, where there has been organisational change.

1.2.1 Social constructionism. This research is based upon a social constructionism framework (Burr, 1995). A social constructionist approach believes that individuals' ideas and attitudes are informed by their interaction with the particular social and cultural context in which they exist (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2003).

1.2.2 Role. One of the earlier contemporary conceptions of role theory was devised by Kahn, Wolf, Quinn, Snoek, and Rosenthal (1964). They focused on role dynamics within the organisational setting. Kahn et al. believed that the organisation is conceptualised as a system of roles and dynamics, which explains how stress can result from conflicting or incompatible expectations (role conflict) and unclear or vague expectations (role ambiguity). Kahn et al. (1964) also believed that role dynamics also includes personality factors as motives and values as important determinants of role pressures, a view which has not always been supported (e.g., Keller, 1975).

Kahn et al. (1964) predicted and found lower levels of job satisfaction for those with high conflict and ambiguity. However, there are limitations of role theory due to it being weakened by terminological and conceptual confusion (Connell, 2005)

1.2.3 Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation. According to Herzberg's two-factor theory of motivation (1968), motivation factors, including achievement and recognition, and the intrinsic nature of the job itself, are related to psychological growth and lead one to job satisfaction. Hygiene factors, on the other hand, are associated with the context of the job and the extrinsic factors of the job. These include such things as pay, security, supervision, and physical working conditions. When deficient, the hygiene factors lead to dissatisfaction; however, their presence cannot be a source of job satisfaction and

motivation (Berry, 1998). Although based on empirical study, the theory ignores individual differences and assumes that all employees react in a similar way (Maher, 2002).

1.2.4 Locke's affect theory. Locke's (1976) affect theory states that how much an individual values a particular aspect of work moderates how satisfied/dissatisfied s/he feels when expectations are/are not met. Locke thought that satisfaction is more likely to result from the fulfilment of wants or desires than from the fulfilment of deprived needs. According to Corban (2011), Locke's theory renders the relationship between discrepancies and satisfaction circular, whereas possibly they should be viewed separately.

1.2.5 Hackman and Oldham's job characteristics model. Hackman and Oldham (1975) formed a theory called the job characteristic model. Hackman and Oldham stated that the skill variety, task identity, and task significance affect an individual's perception of the job as meaningful. For autonomy, they believed that this affected an individual's responsibility and that that feedback affected knowledge of results. These critical psychological states are expected to predict a number of personal and work outcome measures, including work motivation, work performance, work satisfaction, absenteeism and turnover (Berry, 1998). However, empirical studies have demonstrated that many of the relationships that exist between variables, some have been excluded from the model (Maher, 2002).

1.2.6 Dispositional theory. This theory suggests that people have innate dispositions that cause them to have tendencies toward a certain level of satisfaction, regardless of one's job (Toshalka & Abhishek, 2011). The core self-evaluations model (Judge, Locke, and Durham, 1997) states that higher levels of self-esteem and general self-efficacy lead to higher work satisfaction. Also, Judge states that having an internal locus of control (believing that one has control over one's own life, as opposed to outside forces having control) leads to

higher job satisfaction. Finally, lower levels of neuroticism (enduring tendency to experience negative emotional states) lead to higher job satisfaction. However, there has been difficulty with empirical validity with this model, as the four constituent traits display slightly differential relations with criterion variables and the core self-evaluation tools are not simply predictors of job satisfaction but measure something much more tangible (Corban, 2011).

1.2.7 Self-determination theory (SDT). This is an empirically based theory of human motivation, development and wellness (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which states that the degree to which basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are either supported or thwarted affects both the type and strength of motivation. However, Luthans (2005) notes “at present there is a lack of integration or synthesis of the various theories” (p. 240).

1.3 Relevant Research Literature

1.3.1 EP role. Burden (1996) states that, if one asked EPs, especially trainee EPs, why they wanted to be EPs, they would probably reply ‘to help children’. The research presently suggests that there are anxieties within the profession. According to Labram (1992), the changes in delivery systems has opened up a much wider spectrum of possible work, but this role expansion inevitably leads to a decrease in role clarity. Also, Boyle and Lauchlan (2009) state that the EP role is vulnerable to ‘role conflict’. This has been an issue for EPs previously; e.g., Freeman (1987) suggested that EPs’ stress appears to come from issues around autonomy and a mismatch of role definition. However, there is a lack of recent research investigating the effects of possible role conflict or role ambiguity within the EP profession and the majority of the studies have been conducted in America, which makes it difficult to generalise to EPs in the UK.

The anxiety within the profession may be even more pronounced recently, in view of the many changes that have taken place within the profession. The publication of the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters (ECM)* in 2003 (Department for Education and Skills; DfES, 2003) in England and the *Children and Young People: Rights to Action* (2004) in Wales, marked a significant shift in thinking about the organisation of children services (Corban, 2011). According to Corban, due to this, EPs now engage in more multi-agency working and the majority of Educational Psychology Services (EPSs) are becoming integrated into the children services.

Another major change within the profession has been the introduction of the UK coalition government in May 2010. Many EPs have been made redundant as a result of budget cuts and there has been a reduction in allowances (Association of Educational Psychologists; AEP, 2011). Some EP services are now traded services, where a small number of services have become part of “stand alone” organisations, and now generate all their income by trading with “stakeholders”. Research concerning organisational change suggests that people interpret changes through four aspects of trust: trust in organisation, trust in leadership, trust in process and trust in outcome (Sloyan, 2009). Also, it is envisaged in the future, that in Wales changes to children and young people’s statements, will be replaced by an Individual Development Plan (IDP), and may have an impact on the profession (Welsh Government; WA, 2012).

1.3.2 Job satisfaction. Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as “a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences” (p. 1304). Although theories of job satisfaction have been extensively studied, researchers are yet to agree on a definition of job satisfaction, which also makes measuring the concept problematic.

According to Worrell (2004), there are a number of different determinants of job satisfaction, including demographic data (e.g., age, gender, and race), intrinsic features of the job (e.g., recognition, advancement and responsibility) and extrinsic variables (e.g., salary, supervision and working conditions). How these factors relate to the EP profession will be discussed in the section below.

1.4 Research studies. Ashton and Rogers (2007) explored what is valuable and unique about the role of the EP to Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) and EPs. The EPs believed that the relationship they shared with the school, the different perspectives they brought to problems and the fact they included the views of pupils, were an important aspect of their role. According to Ashton and Rogers, identifying the unique contribution of EPs to schools is still unclear and EPs are unable to agree on what services they believe they should be offering to schools. However, this was a small-scale research study, in which only eight EPs participated, and teachers were from the primary mainstream sector.

Research relating to the EP job role has also been incorporated into studies involving job satisfaction. The majority of the research surrounding EP job satisfaction has been conducted in America with School Psychologists (SPs). Such studies have suggested that SPs' job satisfaction has been increasing over the past twenty years (Worrell et al., 2006). Results from the majority of studies concerning job satisfaction suggest that SPs and EPs are experiencing stress. Heavy caseloads have been linked to lower job satisfaction, more role conflict and increased stress (Anderson et al., 1984). However, these results should be considered with caution when relating this to EPs in the UK, as the studies are based on the pre-defined US standardised questionnaires and as there is usually one SP per school, so the system is very different.

Male and Jenson (1998) investigated EP job satisfaction and found that respondents were generally satisfied with their work, and happy with the amount of secretarial support, role clarity, autonomy and support from colleagues. However, participants noted particular dissatisfaction with workload and time constraints. A recent study by Corban (2011) investigated EPs' views of factors that influence job approbation, job satisfaction and dissatisfaction in England. He found that the re-organisation of Local Authorities (LAs) created anxiety for EPs and his findings are likely to remain relevant and worthy of further consideration. However, Male and Jenson's (1998) study is now dated and Corban (2011) notes that there were overlaps with his themes during analysis and that he was within the profession whilst undertaking this research.

1.5 Research questions.

How do EPs define the role of the EP?

How do EPs perceive their role?

What would EPs like to engage with more within their role?

How do EPs define job satisfaction within their role?

How can the job satisfaction of EPs be improved?

2. Method

2.1 Epistemology and Research Paradigm

The philosophical position that the researcher takes for this study is a postmodernist approach, suggesting that reality is a constructed account. Ontology as a branch of philosophy is the science of what is, of the kinds and structures of objects, properties, events, processes and relations in every area of reality (Smith, 2003). It also concerns the nature of reality and the tension between subjectivity versus objectivity. The current study suggests that reality is meaningful, and is socially constructed by the individuals who participate in it

(Willis, 2007). The researcher is drawn to the social constructionism epistemology (Burr, 1995). The research below tries to understand EPs' views at a particular and specific point in time. According to Robson (2011), this approach is very open in the sense that it does not proscribe or prescribe any specific or particular way of engaging in research. Therefore, the positions mentioned above allow the researcher to explore the reality people experience.

As this research involves an explorative study, it was thought that a qualitative design would be most appropriate to collect and analyse the data. According to Sidani and Sechrest (1996), qualitative data allow for flexibility in design, and a *deep* understanding of the participants' perceptions. However, it is also important to note that with qualitative data, issues of subjectivity may arise.

2.2 Sample/Cases

Through the process of opportunity sampling, six LAs in South Wales were involved in the study. From each LA the researcher interviewed two main grade EPs who have been in the profession for at least three years. Hence, this research did not include newly qualified EPs (NQEPs) as participants, but identified EPs who had been in the profession long enough to give detailed responses. It was felt that EPs who have been in the profession longer would be able to provide information regarding how the EP role has possibly changed over the years and their job satisfaction.

Thus, a total of fourteen EPs participated in the main research, including two EPs who were interviewed for a pilot study.

Some of the EPs had previously experienced decreases in their allowances, such as mobile phones being withdrawn and/or car allowances being reduced. A number of the EPs have experienced redundancies, and in one authority the PEP was made redundant.

Altogether, 4 males and 10 females were interviewed. There was no specification regarding age range, gender or ethnicity, and all of the EPs recruited worked under the LA.

Participants were recruited by a letter (Appendix A) and information sheet (Appendix B) that were sent to the principal educational psychologist (PEP) of each service, asking if they wished their services to take part in the study. The researcher contacted the individual PEPs a week after they had received the information. If the PEP wished his/her service to take part in the study, he/she provided the names of the EPs who had volunteered to take part in the study. The researcher then contacted the EPs to arrange convenient interview dates.

2.3 Procedure

After ethical approval was granted from the School of Psychology Ethics Committee at Cardiff University, a pilot study was completed, involving two main grade EPs from different authorities. As noted above in the section sample/cases, the PEPs of six local authorities were contacted by opportunity sampling. Information packs were sent out and the researcher contacted the PEP a week later.

If the PEPs had given permission for the interviews to take place, they informed the researcher of the EPs interested and the details for the researcher to contact them to arrange a date and time for the interviews. Two EPs from each service were asked to be involved in the study. If more than two EPs wished to participate in the study, two were to be selected randomly. The researcher arranged interview dates with all the EPs who had volunteered to participate in the study. Interviews were held on a one-to-one basis in the EPs in which the EPs worked. The data were analysed using thematic analysis, which is explained in the results section. To ensure reliability of the results, transcripts were blindly coded for inter-rater reliability. For this, colleagues of the researcher read through transcripts identifying sub themes and themes, in which the researcher compared their themes to. Data collection

commenced in May 2012 and was completed in July 2012 (See Appendix C for a description of the study procedure).

2.4 Measuring Instruments

To explore the key research questions, participants were interviewed through semi-structured interviews. This enabled the researcher to gain in-depth data of EPs' perceptions of their role and job satisfaction. The semi-structured interviews contained eleven questions and took approximately forty-five minutes to complete. The interview was constructed by reviewing previous research regarding information on EP job role (Ashton & Rogers, 2007; Kahn et al., 1964) and job satisfaction (Male & Jenson, 1998; Worrell et al., 2006). The theories mentioned in the literature review were also incorporated in designing the questions; for example, Herzberg two-factor theory (1968), as well as previous measurements of job satisfaction, e.g., The Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ; Weiss, Dawis, England & Lofquist, 1967). Face validity was measured using the pilot study questions. However, the overall reliability of the interviews was difficult to measure as the questions were newly constructed.

Each interview was audio recorded and the data was transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. For this, the researcher followed the procedure described by Braun and Clarke (2006). This initially involved the researcher familiarising themselves with the data and noting down initial ideas. The next stage of the process was the initial coding, in which the researcher identified interesting features across the transcripts, collating data relevant to each code. After the initial codes had been generated, they were collated into potential themes. The themes generated were then reviewed and checked in relation to the coded data and the entire data set. During this part of the data analysis, thematic networks were produced (See Appendix K). The next stage of the process included ongoing analysis to refine the specifics

of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

As noted above, to ensure reliability of the results, transcripts will be blindly coded for inter-rater reliability.

2.5 Pilot Study

Initially, a pilot study (Appendix D) was undertaken, to make it possible to assess the general design of the interview schedule, prior to investigating time in the final study (Appendix E). This allowed for any adjustments that needed to be made. The pilot study was also used to ensure that the questions used and the instructions given were clear. Some questions were altered after the pilot study.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

All participants were asked to provide written consent (Appendix F). Participants were given the right to withdraw from the study and/or to withdraw their data without giving reasons. All of the data from the participants were collected and stored confidentially and were anonymised a week after data collection, ready for transcription. The raw data will be retained for up to a year confidentially and will then be destroyed. The anonymised data may be retained indefinitely. All participants were given a debriefing form (Appendix G) at the end of each interview. This outlined the purpose of the study and the ways in which the study could assist EPs.

3. Results

3.1 Description of results

The interviews were transcribed (see Appendix L) and analysed one by one by applying thematic analysis. This involved developing associations, looking at the language and developing issues throughout the text. The next part of the analysis involved identifying

themes throughout the transcripts (see Appendix H). The themes and sub themes are presented in the tables below for each research question (see Tables 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 in this section). An example of how a transcript was coded is displayed in Appendix I. Appendix J displays Table 6, showing the occurrence of the main themes and sub themes in each transcript. Thematic networks were also produced for each research question in order to support the researcher in developing themes (see Appendix K).

3.2 Research Question One

Table 1

Main themes and Sub Themes of Research Question One

Key Research Questions	Main Themes	Subordinate Themes
How do EPs define the role of the EP?	Difficulty defining the EP role Varied role of the EP	Number of aspects within the role Individual work Systemic work Statutory Work Using psychology Consultation Multiagency work

Table 1 above, shows that there were two main themes produced for the first research question. Of the participants interviewed, six responses generated the theme ‘difficulty defining the EP role’. One of the most apparent reasons for this was due to there being so many different aspects within the role. One participant stated *“I’m laughing because actually that’s something I think most of us struggle with”* (EP5). Although this seemed to make the role of the EP difficult to define, it was not perceived as being a negative part of the role, as will be displayed in a research question displayed later. The second main theme produced was ‘varied role of the EP’. Participants described a number of different aspects, which

define their work, demonstrating the range and breath of work currently being undertaken by the EPs who participated in the study.

3.3 Research Question Two

Table 2

Main themes and Sub Themes of Research Question Two

Key Research Questions	Main Themes	Subordinate Themes
How do EPs perceive their role?	Negative perceptions of the EP role	Frustration Role conflict Stress
	Positive perceptions of the EP role	Perception of the EP role Feeling unrecognised Change within the role Rewarding Variety Learning and challenging Relationships Autonomy

When completing the thematic network for this (see Appendix J, figure 2) the researcher concluded that there are currently both negative and positive perceptions of the role of the EP. Eleven participants noted that they were experiencing some sort of ‘frustration’ within their role for a number of reasons, such as management and bureaucracy. Another sub theme noted by participants (n = 7) was the issue of not receiving sufficient ‘recognition’ of their qualifications in their role as EPs. Participants stated that they wanted to feel more recognised as a profession, especially since their training was intensive and as they have a range of skills to offer that are not utilised. Five of the participants also stated that they were completing work that they felt was not a part of the EP role, illustrating the sub theme of ‘role conflict’. One participant stated, “...unrealistic expectations of you...Being asked to make

decisions that you think well, you know, this isn't my role. I think that there is a conflict of role..." (EP2).

The majority of the participants stated that, in some cases, their clients and other professionals did not understand their role. For example, some noted that EPs had been "*pigeon-holed into SEN*" and seen as "*gatekeepers*". One participant stated "*...there is a lack of understanding in society about what the role is...*" (EP12). Another sub theme that was emphasised by the majority of participants was 'Stress'. Quotes such as "*fire-fighting*" and "*unmanageable workload*" repeatedly appear in the transcripts. Stress was also related to 'change within the role'. Thirteen out of the fourteen participants stated that the role had changed in a negative way, in relation to, for example, more paperwork, more pressures and more uncertainty about the future role of EPs.

With regards to the participants' positive perceptions of the EP role, there was a range of different answers. The majority of the participants (n= 10) stated that the EP role enabled them to support people and see progress, which they found rewarding. One participant stated "*The stuff that keeps you in the job is making the difference or moving a child on, helping everybody to support a family or a child to move things on a little bit*" (EP2). Another sub theme for positive perceptions of the EP role was that the profession involves continuous learning and the opportunity to encounter new challenges (n = 9), which tend to make the role both unpredictable and stimulating. Another sub theme produced was 'relationships'. Eleven of the fourteen participants noted that relationships with staff and colleagues were positive factors within their role. They felt that these were important 'tools to facilitate change'.

3.4 Research Question Three

Table 3

Main themes and Sub Themes of Research Question Three

Key Research Questions	Main Themes	Subordinate Themes
What would EPs like to engage with more within role?	Desired changes to the EP the role.	Action research In-depth work Systemic work Peer supervision/ support

As can be suggested from the table above, participants felt that a number of factors could improve the EP role. Seven of the fourteen participants commented that they had been trained in research skills during their training, but that these skills were not being utilised. The majority of participants stated that they felt they would like to complete more in-depth work and apply psychology, as they felt that this aspect was ‘becoming lost’. Also, seven participants stated that they felt they would like to engage in more systemic work. One participant stated, *“I’d like to be able to do more of the bigger systems change, because I think it would change things for the children quicker and better”* (EP5). It was felt that engaging in more systemic work would enable the EP role to be more effective.

3.5 Research Question Four

Table 4

Main themes and Sub Themes of Research Question Four

Key Research Questions	Main Themes	Subordinate Themes
How do EPs define job satisfaction within their role?	EPs’ definition of job satisfaction within their role	Work/life balance Enjoyment of the role Making a difference

Table 4 above, suggests that the majority of participants stated that they felt that job satisfaction involves a good work/life balance (n = 11). However, some participants felt that they were not achieving this. For instance, one EP stated *“At the moment I think because work dominates my home life as well, you just resent it a little bit”* (EP5.) Some participants commented that it was the enjoyment of the role and the ability to make a difference in supporting people that helped them to achieve job satisfaction.

3.6 Research Question Five

Table 5

Main themes and Sub Themes of Research Question Five

Key Research Questions	Main Themes	Subordinate Themes
How can EP’s job satisfaction be improved?	Intrinsic factors to improve EP job satisfaction	Recognition
	Extrinsic factors to improve EP job satisfaction	Professional Development Working conditions Peer Supervision/support More Time Research Salary Consistency within authorities and between authorities Systemic Work

Table 5 suggests that there were many ways in which participants felt that their job satisfaction could be improved. As well as more recognition within the role, participants stated that they would like to receive more training and opportunities for continuing profession development (CPD). A number of participants also noted that supervision was an important factor in order to increase their job satisfaction, but felt it was not considered important by management and that it was, therefore, not structured or factored into the role.

Six participants noted that ‘salary’ was also a factor affecting their job satisfaction.

One EP reported that *“The teaching profession, umm, gets pay rises, so the difference*

between teachers and EPs is becoming quite marked” (EP3). Some participants also emphasised the importance of good working conditions, such as IT facilities and petrol allowances, which they noted was more of an issue, due to the changes that have been occurring within the profession. Another sub theme was ‘consistency. One participant stated “An EP can be very insular and not talk to their colleagues, and the EPS is definitely very insular and they don't even talk to other EPS's. So, you know, much more conferences, discussion forums and networking” (EP5).

3.7 Results Summary

The results collected suggest that the participants perceive their role as enjoyable and feel that they make a difference in supporting individuals, families and schools. However, the results also suggest that, the majority of the participants felt they were not engaging in the work that they had anticipated and been trained to do, which sometimes resulted in role conflict. Stress was also an aspect that EPs were currently finding difficult, especially concerning workload. With regards to the present changes, the majority of the participants stated that they felt quite negative about the changes.

With regards to improving job satisfaction, the main themes were intrinsic factors, such as professional development and recognition of their role and extrinsic factors, including sub themes such as salary, support, and working conditions. These findings will be explored in more depth below.

4. Discussion

The literature below will explore some of the main themes and sub themes that emerged from the transcripts. For all the themes produced see Appendix I.

4.1 Key research findings.

Two main themes emerged for the first research question, ‘how do EPs define the EP role?’ One main theme was ‘difficulty defining the EP role’. A number of participants stated that this was mainly due to the different aspects of the EP role. This has been recognised in previous literature; for instance, Labram (1992) stated that EPs now have a much wider spectrum of possible work, but this has resulted in a decrease in role clarity. However, as has been suggested in the results section, the variation of the role was also seen as a positive aspect for participants, as many stated that they liked the variety within their role. Another theme was the ‘varied role of the EP’. This produced six sub themes, such as systemic work and applying psychology, for example. This emphasises the wide range of work that EPs engage with.

Two themes emerged for the second research question ‘how do EPs perceive their role?’ The two themes produced were the ‘negative perceptions of the EP role’ and ‘positive perceptions of the EP role’. For the former, six sub themes were produced. One of the sub themes was ‘feeling unrecognised’. This relates to Herzberg’s two-factor theory (1968), which states that the intrinsic factors of the job, such as recognition, are important within a role and can lead to an increase in job satisfaction. This was also a factor noted in the SDT and related to wellbeing. By applying Kahn et al.’s (1964) definitions of role conflict, some EPs noted that they felt that role conflict was an issue. As noted previously, role conflict can have a negative impact on one’s job satisfaction (Khan et al. 1964).

Stress was also a common theme throughout the transcript and this was mainly due to workload. Previous research with EPs suggests that heavy caseloads are linked to lower job satisfaction, increased role conflict and more stress (Anderson et al., 1984). Perception of the role was also a negative aspect, as participants felt their role was often misunderstood, which links in with previous studies (e.g., Ashton & Rogers, 2007). Change was also another sub

theme. According to Sloyan (2009) people interpret changes through four aspects of trust: trust in organisation, trust in leadership, trust in process and trust in outcome. This therefore, suggests that it is important for EPs to have good management to support them through changes and that they need to feel confident in the changes occurring. For the latter main theme, five sub themes emerged. Two of the sub themes that emerged were that the EP role gave participants 'autonomy' and that they found the role 'challenging'. According to Hackman and Oldham's (1975) job characteristic model, autonomy and skill variety can lead to positive psychological states, which can increase an individual's job satisfaction.

One main theme was produced for the third research question 'what would EPs like to engage with more within role?' The main theme was 'desired changes to the EP role'. Four sub themes also emerged. One of the sub themes was 'action research'. It is argued that evidence-based practice enables EPs to derive a greater sense of confidence and professional identity (Miller & Todd, 2002). Therefore, engaging in research may increase EPs' self-efficacy within the role. Another important factor that EPs noted was peer supervision/support. This supports previous research by Male and Jenson (1998) and theories, such as SDT, which emphasise that this support is important for job satisfaction. Participants felt that engaging in peer supervision and supervision with a mentor helped them to feel supported within their role and helped to increase their confidence.

One main theme emerged for the research question 'how do EPs define job satisfaction within their role?' The main theme produced was 'EPs' definition of job satisfaction'. Two of the sub themes produced were 'enjoyment of the role' and 'making a difference'. This supported previous literature, where Burden (1996) found that EPs joined the profession because they wanted to help children. However, the majority of EPs noted that the workload was 'unmanageable', which was impacting on their job satisfaction. Personality

was a factor that was noted in some transcripts as a determinant of job satisfaction, but it was not a prominent theme in the transcripts. This would support Judge's (1998) core self-evaluations model, which stated that personality could have an impact on job satisfaction.

Two main themes emerged for the final research question 'how can the job satisfaction of EPs be improved? These were 'intrinsic factors to improve EP job satisfaction' and 'extrinsic factors to improve EP job satisfaction'. For the intrinsic factors, sub themes such as 'recognition' and 'professional development' emerged. Herzberg's two-factor theory (1968) notes intrinsic factors are important for job satisfaction. Many of the EPs noted that they would like to enhance their CPD and engage in more training, in order to develop their skills. With regards to the second main theme, seven sub themes emerged. With the sub themes salary and working conditions, Herzberg's two-factor theory (1968) states that these factors can lead to lower levels of job satisfaction. Some participants noted that working conditions were becoming difficult due to the current organisational changes within the profession.

Studies have been conducted with other professions of a similar nature. For instance, a study conducted by Hannigan, Edwards and Burnard (2004) investigated factors that contribute to stress, burnout and job satisfaction for clinical psychologists in the UK. Reported sources of stress for clinical psychologists included client characteristics, excessive workloads, professional self-doubt and poor management. Coping strategies included talking with colleagues, and other "active" approaches to personal stress management. Up to 40% of UK clinical psychologists participating in studies were found to be experiencing "caseness" levels of distress. In this case, the conclusion was that mental health work is stress-provoking. These findings link in with the recent results from the current study. For instance, numerous EPs stated that their job satisfaction was affected by caseload and that this issue

caused stress. EPs in this study similarly noted that for support they felt that peer supervision was helpful. Self-doubt was an issue for clinical psychologists, whereas, this did not seem a factor in the current study. However, with the changes occurring in the future, it may become an issue. The results from such studies might suggest that more emotional support is required in roles, which concern wellbeing and mental health.

4.2 Study Strengths

As stated previously, the literature relating to the role of the EP suggests that the profession has been experiencing changes, which have caused anxieties and uncertainties. There have been no recent data investigating EPs' perceptions of their job role and very limited data surrounding their job satisfaction in the UK. Due to the recent changes within the profession, this research identifies areas of difficulty for EPs and areas in which they may need support within their roles. This research also listens to the voice of EPs during a time of organisational change.

4.3 Study Limitations

It could have been beneficial to ask participants to produce accounts of their experiences through alternative methods, for example, using diaries. Another method of data collection, which could have been considered, is focus groups. This may have helped the researcher formulate their questions more succinctly. However, conversely speaking in a group situation, may have caused some participants anxiety. Also, it may have been problematic for all of the participants to have gathered at the same time.

It is important not to generalise the findings to all EPs or all EPSs. The data from this study were collected from 6 EPSs in Wales, and, therefore, it is difficult to generalise the findings. Also, these interviews were conducted nearer to the end of the school term, when EPs were going into schools less and had the opportunity to complete more work of a more

administrative nature. With regards to the qualitative data, the researcher formulated themes, which possibly questions the result of the researchers positioning.

4.4 Future research

Following on from this study, gathering data using quantitative methods could be of use to the EP profession. It would also be interesting to ask trainee EPs how they are feeling about entering the profession, now that changes within the profession have occurred. Also, due to the changes within the profession, it would be interesting to investigate if there is a difference of how EPs perceive their role and job satisfaction in traded and non traded services.

4.5 Conclusion

These data suggested that EPs enjoy working with children and making a difference and that this aspect makes their job worthwhile. However, the majority of EPs in the study currently felt unrecognised and over worked. In some cases, some participants felt that role conflict was an issue for them. In previous studies, EPs felt that they had good role clarity, which increased their job satisfaction (Worrell et al., 2006; Male & Jenson, 1998), but this study suggests that this is changing for the EPs who participated. Possible strategies which could be implemented to support EPs in this area could involve distributing information about the their role to EPs' clients and professional colleagues and EPs making their work more explicit, so others understand their role.

With regards to the sub theme 'change within the role', possible change models could be implemented to support EPs; for instance, the Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action (COMOIRA; Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis & Carroll, 2003) could be used to support the process of change and the factors that are causing concern. A number of EPs

mentioned this model as a good strategy for problem solving and managing change.

Possibly models such as these could be used in peer supervision and supervisor supervision.

All EPs noted different ways in which their job satisfaction could increase. One sub theme noted was professional development. This suggests that EPs could benefit from more peer supervision, training, CPD activities and appraisal sessions from line managers. As this is a time of significant change for the EP profession, EPs' perceptions of their role and job satisfaction should be monitored on a regular basis. Possibly, with this information, a tool could be developed to assess EPs' perceptions of the above, in this way making a measurement tool unique to the EP profession.

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6. Appendices

Appendix A

Letter to the principal educational psychologist (PEP)



Address

Date

Dear Principal Educational Psychologist

I am a postgraduate student in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University, studying for a Doctorate in Educational Psychology. As part of my degree I am conducting research exploring educational psychologists' (EPs') views of their role as an EP and their job satisfaction. This information will be important, especially in today's current situation, with the changes happening within the EP profession. Hopefully, the data will be useful to EPs and EPSs in supporting EPs in their role. They may also help support trainee EPs prepare for their role as an EP in the future.

The title of my project is: An exploration of educational psychologists' views of their role and job satisfaction.

Please find enclosed an information sheet describing the details of the study and the semi-structured interview questions that will be asked to the participants.

If you agree for your service to take part in the study, I will require two main grade EPs who have been practising EPs for three years or more, to be interviewed separately using semi-structured interviews. These interviews will take place between April and August 2012. EPs who want to participate, will be selected from five services. Interview times will be arranged

to suit the participants. The semi-structured interviews will contain eleven questions and the interview will last approximately forty-five minutes.

All the data from the participants will be collected and stored confidentially and will then be anonymised a week after data collection, ready for transcription. The raw data will be retained for up to a year confidentially and will then be destroyed. The anonymised data may be retained indefinitely.

I will contact you in due course to see if you are interested in being involved with this study.

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

Regards,

Katie Jayne Willdridge

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Appendix B
Information sheet

Information Sheet

Title: An exploration of educational psychologists' views of their role and job satisfaction.

My name is Katie Willdridge. I am a trainee educational psychologist at Cardiff University. As part of my degree, I am conducting research exploring educational psychologists' (EPs') views of their role and job satisfaction. This information will be important, especially in today's current situation, with regards to changes happening within the EP profession. Hopefully, the data will be useful to EPs and EPSs in supporting EPs in their role. They may also help trainee EPs in preparing them for the EP role in the future.

Altogether, five Local Authorities (LAs) have been selected. From each LA two main grade EPs, who have been in the profession for three years and over, will be selected using those EPs who would like to participate in the study. The semi-structured interviews and the questionnaire will take approximately forty-five minutes to complete.

All the data from the participants will be collected and stored confidentially and will then be anonymised a week after data collection, ready for transcription. The raw data will be retained for up to a year confidentially and will then be destroyed. The anonymised data may be retained indefinitely.

The participants will be free to withdraw from the study at any time up to the point of transcription. All participants will receive debriefing forms at the end of the interviews.

After interviews have been conducted and the data transcribed, a report will be written on the findings.

This study has been reviewed and approved by The School of Psychology Ethics Committee at Cardiff University. If you would like to raise any queries, or are unhappy with any aspect of the study, please contact Dr Simon Griffey on the address below.

I would greatly appreciate your participation in this project. If you are interested in taking part, you could email me at *Willdridgekj@cardiff.ac.uk* expressing your interest. I will also contact you shortly to establish your interest in the study and arrange interview times if you wish to take part.

Researcher

Katie Jayne Willdridge

Trainee Educational Psychologist

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Supervisor

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Dr Simon Griffey

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Appendix C
Timeline of the research

Date of procedure	Research
July-December 2011	Research of the literature
February 2012	Ethics Proposal accepted
March 2012	Letters to PEPs and Information sheet
March 2012-May 2012	Literature Review and pilot study completed
May- July 2012	Data collection
July- September 2012	Transcription of the data.
September 2012-January 2012	Write-up of literature review and journal article for the first draft.
March 2013-April 2013	Final thesis submission

Appendix D
Pilot study questions

1) How would you define the role of the EP?

Prompts: Role that helps children? Help individuals think systemically about difficulties?

2) What attracted you to the EP profession?

Prompts: Helping children? Money?

3) How do you view and feel about your role at present and why?

Prompts: Exciting? Happy? Stressed? Work is interesting/enjoyable? Caseload?

4) What would you say are the key aspects of your role as an EP?

Prompts: Working systemically? Consultation?

5) What do you believe to be the positive and negative aspects of your role as an EP?

Prompts: Helping others? Workload?

6) How do you believe others perceive your role as an EP?

Prompts: Gatekeeper? Advisory worker?

7) In an ideal world, what do you think the EP role should involve?

Prompts: More systemic work? More community work? More research work?

8) What do you consider job satisfaction to be?

Prompts: Salary? Autonomy? Role diversity?

9) What factors do you believe influence your job satisfaction?

Prompts: Salary? Autonomy? Role diversity? Good support?

10) How do you feel you are supported in your job?

Prompts: By other EPs? The team?

11) What factors do you feel should be changed or improved, in order to increase your own personal level of job satisfaction as an EP?

Prompts: Less case load? Work more systemically?

Appendix E
Final interview schedule

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

Prompt: What do you believe the job role of an EP to be? (Working with children and young people, working systemically).

Probe: Anything else you would say that defines your role? Could you expand on this further? Do you feel this matches what you do in your present role?

2) What attracted you to the EP profession?

Prompt: Why did you originally join the EP profession? (To help children, money, status).

Probe: Do you believe this is why you are still in the profession? Has what attracted you into the profession changed at all? Why do you think it has changed? How does this make you feel?

3) What would you say are the key aspects of your role as an EP at present?

Prompts: What is your normal day like as an EP? (Consultation work, individual work, policy work).

Probe: Could you expand on this? Why do you think these are the key aspects of your role at present?

4) How do you feel about your role at present?

Prompts: How do you feel about the duties of your role at present? (Happy, satisfied, frustrated, disappointed).

Probe: What are the reasons as to why you feel this way?

5) What do you believe to be the positive and negative aspects of your role as an EP?

Prompts: What are the positive aspects of your role? Are there any negative aspects of your role? (Helping others, workload).

Probe: Can you expand on this further? How do the positive and negative aspects of your role make you feel?

6) How do you believe others perceive your role as an EP?

Prompts: How do others (other professionals) view your role as an EP? (Gate keeper, advisory worker).

Probe: How does this make you feel? Why do you think they view your role like this?

7) In an ideal world, what do you think the EP role should involve?

Prompts: What would be the perfect EP role? (More systemic work, more community work, more research work).

Probe: How would this make you feel? Why do you think this does not happen?

8) What do you consider job satisfaction to be?

Prompts: What do you believe are the aspects that make a person happy in their job? (Salary, challenges, enjoyable work, effective work).

Probe: Can you expand on some of the points that you mentioned? Anything else you would consider job satisfaction to be?

9) What factors do you believe influence your job satisfaction in your role as an EP?

Prompts: What makes you happy in your job? What makes you unhappy in your job? (Salary, challenges, enjoyable work, effective work).

Probe: Can you expand on some of the points further? Why do you think these factors influence your job satisfaction?

10) What ways are you supported in your job?

Prompts: How are you supported in your role as an EP? (Family, the EPS team).

Probe: Anything else that you can think of which supports you in your role?

Do you find this is very helpful with the role that you have?

11) What factors do you feel should be changed or improved, in order to increase your own personal level of job satisfaction as an EP?

Prompts: Any aspects of the job that could be changed that would make you feel happier? (Less demands, more support).

Probe: How would this make you feel?

Any other comments you would like to make?

Appendix F
Participant consent form

School of Psychology, Cardiff University
Consent Form- Educational Psychologists

Title - An exploration of educational psychologists' views of their role and job satisfaction.

I understand that my participation in this project will involve being asked questions about my views of my role as an Educational Psychologist (EP) and about my job satisfaction.

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 up to the point that the data are anonymised.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time and discuss my concerns with Katie Willdridge, the trainee educational psychologist.

I understand that the information provided by me will be held confidentially, such that only the researcher (Katie Willdridge) can trace this information back to me individually. I understand that my data will be collected and stored confidentially and will then be anonymised for transcription. After this point no-one will be able to trace my information back to me. The information I will provide will be anonymised a week after data collection, ready for transcription. The raw data will be retained for up to a year confidentially and will then be destroyed. The anonymised data may be retained indefinitely.

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

I, _____ (NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Katie Willdridge, School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Jean Parry.

Signed:

Date:

Researcher

Katie Jayne Willdridge

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Appendix G
Debriefing from

Title of Study: An exploration of educational psychologists' views of their role and job satisfaction.

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this study. The aim of this study is to explore EPs' perceptions of their role and job satisfaction as an EP.

This information will be interesting, especially in today's current situation with the changes happening within the EP profession. Hopefully, the data will be useful to EPs and EPSs in supporting EPs in their role. They may also help trainee EPs in preparing for the EP role in the future.

All the data from the participants will be collected and stored confidentially and will then be anonymised a week after data collection, ready for transcription. The raw data will be retained for up to a year confidentially and will then be destroyed. The anonymised data may be retained indefinitely.

If you have any further questions about the research, please contact the researcher at:

WilldridgeKJ@cardiff.ac.uk.

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Trainee Educational Psychologist Katie Willdridge	Professional Tutor Jean Parry
School of Psychology	School of Psychology
Cardiff University	Cardiff University
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Name of Researcher	Name of supervisor
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Appendix H

Thematic analysis procedure

The researcher used techniques by Braun and Clarke's (2006) and Robson (2011) to support them in applying thematic analysis in interpreting the data.

Step 1: The first part involved the researcher familiarising themselves with the data. This was achieved by the transcribing each interview, as well as re-reading the transcripts numerous of times identifying initial themes.

Step 2: For the second part of the analysis, the researcher coded the data in a systemic fashion, collecting the data that was relevant to each code.

Step 3: This step involved collating the codes into potential themes and organising them into main and sub themes. The themes were checked on relation to extracts that were coded.

Step 4: During this stage the researcher developed 'thematic networks'. This helped the researcher to seek an understanding of patterns and relationships in the data. Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

Step 5: The researcher interpreted the data and related this to the theory and research discussed in the literature review.