Abstract

Many studies have focused on the importance of the participation of young people in their education (e.g. Todd, 2012), although fewer papers discuss the practical aspects of seeking their views and fewer again on representing them. The current educational reforms including the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice in England (DfE, 2014a) and the draft, indicative Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code in Wales (Welsh Government, 2015) have highlighted the importance of seeking young people's views. The benefits of gathering and communicating young people's views are well documented (e.g. Mannion, 2007), although the challenges are complex (Ingram, 2013). It is argued that EPs are well placed to gather young people's views and that the methods that they use affect the information gathered (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). A mixed method approach was used to collect information regarding educational psychologists' (EPs') practice in obtaining and representing young people's views. A questionnaire was used to gather data from local authority Educational Psychology Services across Wales and the results were analysed using descriptive statistics. Eight participants who completed the questionnaire took part in an interview to explore their views in more depth. These interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The major themes constructed included 'accessing a true representation of young people's views', 'gaining young people's views empowers them' and 'child-centred practice'. The implications of the present study for the role of educational psychologists are discussed, together with future directions for research and the limitations of the present study.

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Educational Psychologists' Practice: Obtaining and Representing Young People's Views

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Summary

This thesis is constructed from three parts: a literature review, an empirical research study and a critical review. Part A, the literature review, describes the historical and political context for gathering and communicating young people's views and current practice utilised by educational psychologists (EPs) to do so. Gathering pupil views is described as problematic (Ingram, 2013); therefore the challenges and benefits of eliciting and communicating young people's views are outlined. The range of tools and strategies which have been developed to seek young people's views are also discussed.

Part B, the empirical research study, seeks to explore current practice amongst local authority EPs working across Wales. This information was gathered using a questionnaire, completed by 73 fully qualified EPs from sixteen different local authorities. Eight of the seventy three participants were interviewed to explore their views and practice in more depth. The transcriptions were analysed using thematic analysis and independently coded by another researcher; the results are then discussed. The relevance of the findings to educational psychology practice, implications for future practice and limitations of the study are outlined.

Part C, the critical review, consists of two separate sections: the first is a discussion of the study's contribution to knowledge which includes the rationale for the research questions and the relevance of the research findings to educational psychology practice. The second section is a critical reflection on the development of the research practitioner, which includes information about the researcher's epistemological position, methodological decisions and data analysis.

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List of Abbreviations

EP	Educational Psychologist
SEN(D)	Special Educational Needs (and Disabilities)
ALN	Additional Learning Needs
SFBT	Solution-Focused Brief Therapy

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PART A: Literature Review

1 Introduction

Much research has been devoted to investigating the participation of children and young people in their education (e.g. May, 2005; Clark, 2010; Todd, 2012) although far fewer papers have been written on the topic of seeking and representing children's views (Harding & Atkinson, 2009; Ingram, 2013). Given the current political climate of educational reform and the revised Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice in England (Department for Education, DfE, 2014a), more attention than ever before is being given to the active role of the child in their education and in decision making which affects them.

Educational Psychologists' (EPs) practice in seeking and representing the voice of young people can be evidenced in formal records (e.g., reports that EPs complete for statutory assessment purposes) and informal records (e.g., consultation records). It is argued that the reports that EPs write reflect their position with regard to child-centred practice (adopting a perspective that focuses on a child or young person's needs, interests and wellbeing) and the EP day-to-day role and therefore the topic is highly relevant to EPs. Fox (2015) argues that the language within EPs' reports can affect perceptions of the EP role,

> … the discourse about EPs gives meaning to who we are, not only in our own view but in the views of others… that language is seen in the consultations we undertake, the reports we write and the articles that get published about the profession (Fox, 2015, p. 383).

The research aims to investigate EPs' practice in relation to seeking and representing the views of young people. The study seeks to explore how the participants record and represent young people's views in their reports and the underlying psychology and frameworks they use to support this practice. The study also asks the participants about the challenges and benefits of representing young people's views in their reports and whether they use specific approaches to help them to capture the views of young people with communication difficulties.

The terms 'children' and 'young people' are used interchangeably in this study, although the participants are asked specifically about their practice with regards to secondary school pupils. The terms 'views' or 'voice of the child' or 'children's voices' are used to describe a wide range of opinions, thoughts, feelings or wishes that a child might express about his or her life. Therefore, terms such as 'views', 'voice of the child,' and 'child's voice' will be used interchangeably. Many topics might be included in the children's views, examples of which might include: educational attainment; wellbeing; family; friends; school staff; systemic issues; their hopes for the future and their feelings about their progress or school.

Through the literature review research and theories regarding children and young people's participation and the voice of the child will be discussed. It will be structured into eight parts.

Firstly the historical context for the 'voice of the child' will be provided, followed by research relating to the participation of young people and young people's perspectives. Next, the EP's role in seeking and communicating young people's views is outlined, followed by the challenges and benefits of seeking

and communicating young people's views. The use of psychology and frameworks in obtaining and representing young people's views are then discussed, along with research on strategies used to gather and communicate young people's views by EPs and previous research.

The literature review concludes with comments on the relevance to the EP profession and the aims of the current study.

1.1 Key Sources

Aspects of the topic which are thought to affect young people in mainstream secondary schools are included. Information focused on pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties or specific communication difficulties are excluded. The topic of interpretation is very briefly outlined.

The electronic search engines PsychInfo, Science Direct and Google Scholar were used to conduct a review of the literature. The keywords used were 'voice of the child/young person', 'child's/young person's view', 'child's/young person's perspective', 'children's/young people's involvement', 'educational psychologist', 'educational psychology', 'educational psychology report', 'educational psychologist interpretation' and 'frameworks'.

The search was completed in December 2015.

2. The historical and political context for the 'voice of the child'

Young people's participation in their education was legally supported in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1989) which acknowledged that children's views should be considered in processes which affect them. The Children Act (H M Government, 1989) also emphasised children's rights to a voice regarding matters that concern them.

May (2004) argued that the SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 1994) highlighted the importance of pupil participation in a broader and more vital context by raising awareness of children's rights. As early as 2001, the SEN Code of Practice in England offered a full chapter on the importance of giving children a voice (Department of Education & Skills, DfES, 2001).

Documents and initiatives which followed (Every Child Matters, DfES, 2003) and the Green Paper 'Care Matters' (DfES, 2006) stipulated the importance of the participation of children in the development of children's services. These guidelines were included in the Children's Plan (Department for Children, Schools and Families, DCSF, 2007).

It could be argued that the creation of governmental roles, such as the Children's Commissioner, demonstrate the value that society places on the voice of the child. The Children's Commissioner fulfils a statutory role to ensure that children's voices are promoted in decision-making which affects them; a role which was developed following the Children Act (H M Government, 1989).

Processes by which children's views are gathered can be evidenced in current educational policy and practice. Students are interviewed by staff from the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) in England and by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ESTYN) in Wales as part of their inspection visits to schools. OFSTED and ESTYN also provide students with feedback from the visits. School based developments which promote the participation of young people include school councils. School councils involve a group of elected students who are encouraged to represent the views of all pupils. Activities within the council may include student forums and youth parliaments or smaller subcommittees designed to focus on specific events.

Although many policy developments which promote the inclusion of the voice of the child can be evidenced, Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE, 2013) raises concerns regarding how much practice is genuinely aligned with seeking children's views or whether policies are followed in a tokenistic manner. Previously, authors (e.g., Mannion, 2007) have stressed the need to consider alternative perspectives when listening and consulting with children regarding decision making processes. For example, considering the relationships between children and adults and the effect those relationships have on children's participation.

Norwich et al. (2006) commented that issues remain surrounding the limits to gathering children's views and taking them into account. The SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) also suggested that children should participate in all decision-making processes; although the document emphasised that a child's age, maturity and capability should be taken into account when considering his or her views. It is possible that contextual considerations and differences in

professionals' views about the degree to which children's views should be sought and considered, have created a diverse and subjective range of practice.

McKay (2014) commented that there is much variation in practice within schools and local authorities with regards to the active participation of children. He describes two studies, both of which highlight challenges to the genuine participation of children. Firstly, Soar et al. (2005) suggested that variations in practice with regards to active participation in SEN disagreement resolution were found both within and between local authorities. Lewis et al. (2007) found that the degree to which pupils were able to express themselves was a revelation to schools. They linked this to findings which suggest that despite being asked to share them, pupils' views are often passed over or undermined.

McKay (2014) suggested that "the apparent variations in participatory activity suggested by these examples infer a more subtle effect of the participation policy regime, where active engagement with services is contingent upon assumptions about degrees of capability or deservability" (p. 5). It could be argued that differences in the practice of participation are inevitable where individual decisions have to be made regarding capacity, capability and maturity. However, this needs to be considered in the light of the desire of political and governmental bodies for the adoption of a consistent approach to the participation of children. The government's desire for consistency in the approach to children's participation is demonstrated by the active reform in the area of SEN/ALN.

2.1 Additional learning needs and special educational needs reform

The current political context is one of great change, which has been widely reported in the media. The Times Educational Supplement described the

current SEN(D) reforms in England as the biggest in a generation (Maddern, 2012). The reforms in England are suggested to be a response to criticism that systems which organise support for families and children with SEN(D) were poorly coordinated (Maddern, 2012). Sarah Teather, Minister for Child and Families at the time, said of the reforms "too many parents have faced bureaucratic barriers… and we will empower parents and young people, giving them greater control over the services they receive…" (DfE, 2012, para. 5).

The Welsh Government suggested that reform to the SEN framework was needed as it was outdated, being over thirty years old. In 2007, the Welsh Assembly suggested "there was a consensus that the existing system was too bureaucratic and not sufficiently child-centred or user-friendly" (Welsh Government, 2012, para. 2). The Welsh Government arranged consultation events to discuss the proposals to reform the legislative framework for SEN and additional events had to be arranged, demonstrating the interest in the reforms.

The SEN(D) reform has proceeded earlier in England and only draft legislation for the Additional Learning Needs (ALN) reform exists in Wales. There are likely to be some differences in the legislation and each will be discussed in turn, first England and then Wales.

The SEN(D) Code of Practice for England (DfE, 2014a) was approved by the House of Lords in July 2014 and the reforms were expected to effect more change than had occurred in the last 30 years (Barry, 2014). The changes were initially described in the Children and Families Act (H M Government, 2014). The new Code of Practice sees the joining up of education, health and social care services to provide a holistic approach to service delivery. Statutory assessment of SEN and Learning Disability Assessments are being replaced by

Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans. The EHC Plans are designed to provide a cohesive support plan for children and aim to place the young person at the centre of the process of assessment and planning regarding their SEN. For the first time in the history of the legislation relating to SEN, the age range of the service user will span from nought to twenty-five years of age. Other changes include the commitment to publish a 'local offer' of support which outlines the local services available to children and their families. The 'local offer' allows parents and families to express a preference to attend a mainstream, special school, academy, free school or further education college. Also, a mediation process has been developed for families who are unhappy with the support they have received and this includes an opportunity for children to make an appeal against the provision specified in the EHC Plan.

When discussing the principles of the SEN(D) code of practice (DfE, 2014a), Fox (2015) argues that they can be supported by the moral values which reinforce the work of health and care professionals: autonomy, beneficence, non-maleficence and social justice. Fox (2015) suggests that the Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans could be conceptualised as 'doing good' or beneficence due to including SMART (specific, measureable, achievable, realistic, time bound) targets and should be supported by a clear evidence base with details of how to achieve the outcomes on the EHC plan.

In Wales, the draft Additional Learning Needs and Educational Tribunal Bill was published in July 2015 and the draft indicative ALN Code was published in September 2015 (Welsh Government, 2015a). The proposed changes include the following: replacing the terms 'special educational needs' with 'additional learning needs,' a single legal framework from age 0 – 25 (including the requirement for local authorities to secure provision for post-16 learners where

necessary) and replacing Statements of SEN and learning difficulty assessments with an Individual Development Plan (IDP).

The draft code suggests that statutory duty for preparing an IDP rests with local authorities and it is likely that a new ALN Code of Practice will require services to work together collaboratively and flexibly. Therefore, local authorities may have to process information pertaining to advocacy and support for children (including the right of appeal to the ALN tribunal against a variety of issues, which includes the right of children to appeal).

One of the key aspects of the legislative changes is the commitment to involve young people more explicitly and this is often described as a person-centred approach.

2.2 Person-centred planning

Both Wales and England show an intention to make the ALN/SEN system more child-centred. This can be illustrated in the commitment to person-centred reviews, allowing children the right of appeal to the tribunal (in England) and the Individual Development Plan (in Wales) which uses a person-centred planning approach to help children to contribute and be central to the process. Huw Lewis, Minister for Education and Skills, suggested that the person-centred ethos is central to the principles of the legislative change in Wales and also emphasised the need for professionals working in schools and colleges to embrace the ethos and children's needs in a "meaningful and holistic way" (Welsh Government, 2015b, p. 2). The aim of the person-centred approach is further described by the minister as a method to ensure that learners' voices are not only listened to, but also acted upon.

Person-centred planning has been adopted as a recognised approach in England (Department of Health, 2001) and in Wales (Welsh Government, 2015b). In England, the white paper 'Valuing People' (Department of Health, 2001) outlined Government plans for person-centred planning-led strategies which were implemented by local councils and agencies for adults with learning disabilities. Person-centred reviews are replacing previous formats of annual reviews (the review of a Statement of SEN) in Wales. A person-centred approach is defined by Sanderson (2000) as "a process of continual listening, and learning; focussed on what is important to someone now, and for the future; and acting upon this in alliance with their family and friends" (p. 2). Attendance at annual reviews is part of the role of an EP (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010) and therefore, EPs are likely to have experienced person-centred planning in reviews or are likely to experience it in the future. The transition to person-centred reviews raises the possibility that EPs will receive or will have already received training in person-centred approaches.

Despite the clear commitment to child-centred work demonstrated by the adoption of person-centred approaches, it is important to acknowledge the criticism levelled at previous practice regarding children's participation.

3. Young people's participation

May (2005) noted that political documents make little or no mention of learners actively participating on their own behalf, arguing that the political stance seems to encourage professionals to facilitate this participation. Links could be made between professionals facilitating children's participation and the traditional notion of professionals 'doing to' young people. 'Doing to' may suggest formal assessment or specifically asking young people for their views on adult-driven agendas. Contrasts can be drawn between this adult-led practice and child-led practice, where children are able to facilitate their own participation.

May (2005) states that using professionals as gatekeepers to ascertain pupils' views determines three outcomes: the nature of topics discussed, how often children are consulted and the interpretation of the responses. May (2005) suggested that this results in empowering professionals to actively encourage children's participation although crucially, it fails to empower the children themselves.

In a study by Lundy (2007) on Article 12 of the UNCRC she states that there is an acknowledged disparity between the commitments made by the UNCRC (United Nations, 1989) and current practice regarding children's participation. She further comments that "in practice, children's enjoyment of Article 12 is dependent on the cooperation of adults, who may not be committed to it or who may have a vested interest in not complying with it" (p. 929). Lundy (2007) suggests that some adults are concerned that placing additional control in the hands of children will undermine adult power and threaten the stability of the education system.

Despite concerns regarding the practice of young people's participation, authors have continued to assert the importance of considering practice and the body of research in relation to young people's perspectives.

4. Young people's perspectives

In an editorial in the issue 'Gaining young people's perspective' Gray (2004) suggests that the journal "seeks to move beyond tokenism, to consider what needs to happen to ensure that the voices of young people are routinely heard" (p. 1). Gray suggests that action taken to provide opportunities for young people to share their views is especially important for young people with communication difficulties, whether due to their age or the nature of their ALN.

Warshak (2004) supports the idea that "hearing a child's voice" (p. 382) is a complex notion. He notes the difference between children contributing to a decision and empowering children to make decisions themselves. Skivenes and Strandbu (2006) concur that the concept of a child perspective is vague and that in practice, variations with regards to young people's participation produce a range of outcomes (e.g. deciding whether to inform a young person about a decision and that decision's possible consequences).

Some authors (Aston & Lambert, 2010) highlight the small scale of the research related to gathering young people's views and communicating them to others in the context of the increased focus on child-centred practice and the benefits associated with this work.

Todd (2012) argues that research into the process of gaining young people's views has lacked a critical discourse. She suggests that evaluations of the research tend to focus on young people's views and often do not include any critique of the research itself.

These criticisms all indicate a need to critically examine the process of collecting young people's views and this could be argued to be something than an EP is in a position to effect.

5. The educational psychologist's role in seeking and communicating young people's views

It could be argued that one of the rationales for exploring EPs' work in gaining and representing young people's views is that EPs work in a unique position as a local authority employee who has many service users (Hobbs, Todd & Taylor, 2000). The authors suggest that EPs' identities are further complicated by the wide variety of psychology used to guide their work, which creates varied practice. Hobbs et al. (2000) argue that the location of EPs in SEN services means that their role is to respond to a need, which is a "problematic lens through which to understand the relationship between children and schools" (p. 109).

Hobbs et al. (2000) illustrate the imbalance in power between learners and professionals and that opportunities must be developed for learners to give their views. However, the authors warn that "educational psychologists cannot just ask the child for their (sic) view of their situation, and expect them (sic) to tell us" (p. 100). The child may be reticent in offering honest feedback to an EP, who represents someone in a position of power and inhabits a possibly unfamiliar role.

Some literature (Lewis et al., 2006) asserts that there can be an aspect of tokenism in relation to gathering children's views, in that they are heard, although not necessarily listened to. These authors (Lewis et al., 2006) argue that tokenism is more likely to occur if the child has a disability.

Todd (2012) discusses the evidence that children may have a limited understanding of what the outcomes may be of working with a professional, such as an EP, or a limited awareness of the role of such a professional. Todd

(2012) suggests that the practice of EPs, such as assessment procedures and report-writing, are not necessarily in-line with the aim of partnership with young people.

Ingram (2013) suggests that it is the practice of EPs seeking children's views, analysing them and not then reporting them which creates significant challenges. "Approaches which involve a partnership with the child in exploring or testing their views (for example, cognitive-behavioural) are perhaps the most empowering because children retain more control over how their views are analysed" (Ingram, 2013, p. 5). Ingram (2013) suggests an EP's decision to choose one approach over another is often not transparent and this may limit the extent to which their practice can be challenged.

However, Maxwell (2006) comments that the Framework for Assessment (Department of Health, 2000) suggests that EPs have "made significant contributions to listening to children and accessing their views" (p. 21).

Previously, authors have commented on EPs' innovative practice in gaining children's views and evaluating their participation (Norwich et al., 2006). Although research (Aston & Lambert, 2010) has also asserted that EPs must think in broader terms than supporting schools in gathering children's views and holding 'person-centred' reviews. Aston and Lambert (2010) claim that EPs are "arguably very well placed to assist local authorities to develop supportive 'cultures', 'attitudes', 'environments' and 'systems" (p. 50).

Ingram (2013) suggests that EPs have a vital role in gathering and communicating children's views. Various researchers (Billington, 2006; Hobbs et al., 2000; Todd, 2000) propose that, for students, the act of participating in

consultation, assessment or an intervention with an EP can be a valuable strategy. In addition, listening to children may be central to helping EPs to identify useful interventions to promote change. EPs could be said to be carrying out a valuable role in gathering the voice of the child (Ingram, 2013).

Fox (2015) identifies a role for EPs in relation to SEN, which is related to the voice of the child. Fox (2015) suggests that "supporting forums and meetings where children with SENs are empowered and given a voice may be ultimately more powerful than an EP becoming involved in policy and organisational change projects" (p. 394).

There are both benefits and challenges associated with the EPs work of gathering and communicating young people's views which will now be discussed.

6. Challenges and benefits of seeking and communicating young people's views

6.1 Benefits

Messiou (2002) suggests that a central aspect of the process of inclusion is gathering and considering young people's views. Warshak (2004) suggests that the two main benefits of listening to young people are enlightenment (for the adult as a result of understanding the young person's perspective) and empowerment, the rationale that young people will benefit from being involved in decision making which affects them. Although there is legislation and research that emphasises the importance of involving young people in decision-making, some evidence notes that they are frequently denied a voice in such decision-making processes (Rose & Shevlin, 2005; Percy-Smith, 2007).

One of the outcomes that Mannion (2007) lists was originally highlighted by Steele (2005) who suggests that there are also benefits for adults when children are involved as active participants, and that relationships between adults and children can be enhanced following children's active participation. Mannion (2007) suggests that the benefits for adults are sometimes omitted in the literature on listening to children and he notes that to omit the role of adults in the research may result in an incomplete account of the topic. The outcome of improved relationships between adults and children may be particularly pertinent to the work of EPs.

Sharp (2014) suggests that children who perceive themselves as powerful in relation to change issues may be more resilient and adaptable to difficulties in their later life. The DfES has already acknowledged in 2001 that "children and young people with special educational needs have a unique knowledge of their

own needs and circumstances and their own views about what sort of help they would like to help them make the most of their education" (DfES, 2001, p. 27).

McKay (2014) suggested that children wish to be active participants and have their voices heard. "Identifying a persistent failure to listen to young people's voice occurs within a regime of truth about participation that suggests young people would want to be heard" (McKay, 2014, p. 6).

Additionally, Sharp (2014) suggests that if the child or young person feels like he or she have been listened to and that this has an impact on their life, that this could have a positive effect on their psychological health.

Sharp's study (2014) aimed to consider what enabled young people to perceive themselves as active agents in their lives. He utilised grounded theory to analyse discussion of three focus groups containing eleven young people aged thirteen to seventeen from one county in the UK. The author reported that the study's findings suggested that the following supporting constructs support young people's sense of being an agent: culture and context (e.g., community ethos), positive relationships, individual perceptions and thoughts and agentic feelings. Sharp suggests that "having an impact on the world and experiencing control over outcomes may be crucial for psychological well-being" (Sharp, 2014, p. 357). Limitations of the study include the small sample size which limits the generalisability of the study and the possible group effects of the focus group methodology, for example, individuals dominating within the groups.

6.2 Challenges

The authors Rose & Shevlin (2005) argue that the shift from policy to practice requires significant strength to be applied in multiple areas to seek and consider children's views in a genuine participatory manner. Rose and Shevlin suggest that marginalized groups, including those with SEN(D) "…have remained on the periphery of decision-making processes in education though it is quite likely that the outcomes of these discussions will have a profound impact on their current and future lives" (para. 1). Perhaps part of the dilemma in the transformation of policy into practice is how best to seek children's views in a meaningful manner. Todd (2012) suggests that there have been challenges in translating published guidance into practice

There are many challenges associated with seeking and taking account of children's viewpoints. The following examples will now be outlined: capacity and competency; interpretation; learners with communication difficulties with complex needs; one-off visits from unfamiliar EPs; advocacy; power and disaffected pupils.

6.2.1 Capacity and competency

Skivenes and Strandbu (2006) suggest

> children's capacities to make decisions are not fully developed, and they are consequently dependent on their guardians and the state. Nonetheless, we argue for a position where children can be considered in the present as human beings - rather than only in a future perspective as a human becoming (p. 13).

Fox (2015) suggests that it is helpful to consider Article 12 of the UNCRC (United Nations, 1989) when considering the capacity children have in relation to a particular decision or the autonomy that they should be given to help to make that decision. Fox suggests that EPs can help children to develop their autonomy and their own unique voices, ready for such scenarios; however, he also reminds us that parental views are predominant in the legal context. Fox states that the competence of a child varies with different tasks, rather than an overarching ability or quality.

6.2.2 Interpretation

It is acknowledged that the topic of interpretation is complex and therefore will be outlined briefly, in relation to EPs' practice in gathering and communicating young people's views.

Skivenes and Strandbu (2006) highlight the problematic nature of interpretation, which "implies putting meaning into social phenomena and processes, and there is always a danger that these interpretations are wrong" (p. 15). The authors emphasise the increased likelihood of errors in adult interpretation of children's views, due to a variance in their language skills and social and cognitive development.

Todd (2012) also suggests that it is challenging for EPs to interpret children's views and he gave an example of children reporting on their activities at break and lunch times. Todd (2012) wondered whether the meaning given to the children's views should be reported exactly as it was spoken by the pupils, or whether social and structural theories should be used to contextualise their comments.

Ingram (2013) discusses the complex nature of interpreting children's views and the difficulty in ensuring they have been correctly understood by the EP.

> Arguably, any EP's interpretation of a child's view which assumes the child is (sic) not able to access their (sic) own view is potentially the most disempowering, because the child is not afforded a position from which to dispute the interpretation. Furthermore any protest they (sic) make can be interpreted as evidence of a further misperception of their (sic) own beliefs (Ingram, 2013, p. 5).

Ingram (2013) highlights the value of 'checking back' with the child or young person to check that the EP has been correct in his or her understanding of the child's view and to avoid the danger of interpreting the child or young person's view independently and, therefore, incorrectly.

6.2.3 Learners with communication difficulties or complex needs

Perhaps one of the most pertinent challenges in gathering children's views is when those individuals have complex or profound needs which limit their communication and therefore their ability to indicate their preferences independently, or at all. Hayes (2004) suggest that meetings can be most difficult for learners with moderate to severe learning difficulties as it can be challenging for them to communicate their views or for them to understand the purpose of the meeting.

6.2.4 One off visits from unfamiliar educational psychologists

One off meetings and assessments were identified as problematic in recording the voice of the child by Harding and Atkinson (2009). To help children to communicate their views with confidence and to be sure that information regarding what will happen to their views is pitched at the right level, advocates can be utilised to support them.

6.2.5 Advocacy

Fielding (2004) discusses the notion of speaking 'for' someone, which is arguably practised by teachers, parents, family and friends when gathering children's views if they have difficulty expressing themselves. It could be posited that, at times, the EP also serves as an advocate to speak for a child or young person to others, at individual or systems levels (e.g., to a teacher or another service).

Norwich et al. (2006) highlighted the information (SEN Regional Partnership, 2004) which sets apart direct advocacy (where a child or young person was involved in the process, able to express his or her views and have an understanding of advocacy) and indirect advocacy (where it had to be assumed that a judgement was being made from the child or young person's perspective, from information obtained from observations and from discussion with key people in his or her life).

The reliance of some children with ALN on the advocacy of others is highlighted by McKay (2014). The issue of advocacy is particularly pertinent where children have speech, language or communication needs which may affect their ability to communicate with others. McKay suggests that, in such a scenario, the families become "an instrument of government" (p. 5) as the

advocates for the child or young person must be involved in the discourse of participation.

Fox (2015) suggests that, historically, one of the key questions for EPs was who their client was. Fox clarifies that the new SEN Code of Practice (DfE, 2014a) states clearly that the child is the customer and he comments that the new guidelines will make the position of advocate easier for the EP to adopt. Fox (2015) asserts that EPs can begin (or continue, for some) the advocate role in a number of ways. Firstly, working at an individual level with the child to empower him, largely through the delivery of information either about his needs or the support for which he may be eligible. Secondly, EPs can advocate for the child where they may or not be present, such as in meetings, panels and tribunals. Thirdly, Fox suggests that EPs can be advocates on organisational or systemic levels such as in training others about advocacy.

6.2.6 Power

Fielding (2004) describes multiple challenges to gathering and communicating young people's views, including the differences in power between groups of people. Fielding also highlights the difficulty in speaking for a group of people (e.g., pupils with dyslexia, children who are looked after) due to the complex identities within groups and the changing nature of group identity over time. Fielding recognises the danger of not speaking for marginalised or otherwise un-heard groups and the responsibility of professionals to challenge the oppression experienced by those groups.

Rose and Shevlin (2005) suggest that imbalanced power relationships within the educational context continue to be largely unquestioned and unscrutinised due to their invisible and hidden nature. Rose and Shevlin suggest that "young

people from marginalized groups and their families often lack the resources to effectively challenge decisions that exclude their legitimate concerns in pursuit of greater efficiency or the allocation of scarce resources" (para. 6).

Using student voice as an action to redress the power balance between children and adults is a concept highlighted by Cook-Sather (2006), who suggests that any roles taken on by learners which were previously held by adults, such as a position contributing to reforms, may "effect a cultural shift in educational research and reform" (p. 366). The author notes that, although the term 'student voice' is positive, as it suggests presence, involvement and commitment, more crucial is the signifier that the cultural shift will change the imbalance in power between adults and children. The opportunity for children to speak about their views gives them a chance to take on active roles rather than maintain passive identities and leads to learners feeling respected and engaged and that in turn it promotes communication and relationships with teaching staff.

One of the problems that professionals may experience when gathering young people's views is that the process may highlight challenges that professionals do not wish to confront, particularly when faced with information that they do not want to hear (Cook-Sather, 2006).

Bragg (2007) notes that educators have historically made the argument that it is important to increase student voice. However, recent changes in legislation which have framed the student to fit within government and management objectives have caused unease. Bragg suggested that the unease is a result of the possible 'manipulative' reasons for seeking young people's views to use as a tool for control.

Whitty and Wisby (2007) suggest that it can appear that children are being heard when in fact their voice is being used in the service of an adult agenda, which might be political. "Here, young people are effectively being used as a source of information, consulted for the purposes of quality control and even to build greater compliance and control amongst them" (Whitty & Wisby, 2007, p. 306).

Aston and Lambert (2010) report that children who took part in a study regarding their views about their involvement in decision making asserted that "society does not want young people to have a voice" (p. 50). When asked for possible ways to challenge that viewpoint, the participants could not think of any ways to improve the situation. EP participants involved in the same study also claimed that they felt that they were not only being asked to advocate for children but also to guide their views (Aston & Lambert, 2010).

Todd (2012) notes that children expressed their concerns about how the researcher felt about what they said, when being asked about their views being sought. For example, some children suggested that giving their views was more difficult if they knew the person and they worried that giving negative comments about staff might offend individuals or get them into trouble.

6.2.7 Disaffected pupils

Hartas (2011) discusses the issue of participation and he suggests that the concepts of involvement and participation may be unrealistic for some learners, who in turn may be viewed in a negative way it they feel they cannot, or choose not to, participate. The children in Hartas' study questioned their school's participation practices which could be seen in the form of systems such as school councils, which they felt advantaged groups of pupils who were already

thriving in their education. In addition, the pupils expressed a wish to be involved in non-hierarchic structures and to be non-participatory if they wished. Hartas asserts that EPs have a role in the discussions between school staff and pupils and must take into account young people's self-identified needs when planning and implementing strategies.

Following the examination of some of the benefits and challenges involved in obtaining and communicating young people's views, the underlying psychology used by EPs in this practice will now be discussed.

7. Use of psychology in seeking and communicating children's views

7.1 Reports

Buck (2015) stated that the move from within-child, individual work to a systemic way of working with schools has not been largely reflected in the reports that EPs complete for statutory assessment purposes. Buck claims that psychological reports which provide advice for the local authority should include psychological theory. It could be suggested that if more psychological theory was included in EP reports, it would be simpler to explain the use of psychology to obtain children's views.

7.2 Seeking and communicating children's views

Cameron and Monsen (2005) argue that the role of an EP is broader than simply eliciting children's views so that they can become active participants. They suggest that gathering children's views can assist EPs in hypothesising about difficulties the young person may be having. Cameron and Monsen assert that 'views' should be interpreted as not only what the child tells the EP, but also what the EP can deduce or extrapolate from drawings and more informal measures.

Kelly (2006) voices concerns regarding the use of un-expressed psychology which may raise questions for EPs regarding how they communicate their use of psychology to others.

Ingram (2013) reports that the different approaches used to elicit children's views are problematic. The underlying psychology that EPs use when obtaining a young person's views also affects the EP's interpretation of these views, and what is communicated to others (Ingram, 2013). Ingram highlights the variance

between the approaches to children's views that different psychological theories employ and emphasises that the child's views become both explicit and implicit due to the interpretations made by the EP. Examples of psychological theories used to interpret the views of children include psychodynamic, behaviourist and neuropsychological and Ingram (2013) highlights the varying techniques used to obtain views, depending on the theoretical approach taken.

Wicks (2013) asserts that making a service user aware of the psychological theories which underpin input from an EP will increase the intervention's efficacy and that revealing the psychological approaches is an example of a joint working methodology. Wicks also warns that by an EP not communicating psychological approaches to a services user "there is the possibility that he or she is disempowering that service-user by assuming the 'expert' role" (p. 157).

Ingram (2013) also asserts that using robust frameworks may help to combat criticism that EPs' interpretations of children's views can be disempowering to them.

7.3 Frameworks

Frameworks could be described as practice frameworks, which describe the use of a particular area of psychology, such as consultation (Wagner, 2000) or executive frameworks, which do not specify a psychological approach. Wicks (2013) describes executive frameworks as "those that can be applied to any area of educational psychology practice and at any level (individual, system or organisational)" (p. 153). Examples of executive frameworks include the Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action (COMOIRA) (Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis & Carroll, 2003), the Problem-analysis Framework

(Monsen, Graham, Frederickson & Cameron, 1998) and the Interactive Factors Framework (IFF) (Frederickson & Cline, 2009).

Given that practitioners' use of psychology is diverse, Wicks (2013) suggests that this could have implications for best practice and consistency within and between educational psychology services. Wicks asserts that frameworks could be used to illustrate and explain theory and may serve as a supportive practice.

Wicks (2013) also suggests that there is a lack of research into EPs' use of frameworks in their practice. Wicks comments "from an ethical perspective it is important for EPs to be explicit about the psychological knowledge and theory they apply, in order to be transparent with service-users so that they are aware and consenting to the psychology being used" (p. 157). Wicks also asserts that frameworks help EPs to communicate processes of psychology and intervention to customers of change.

Hobbs et al. (2000) discuss two frameworks used to gather children's views: solution-focused approaches and personal construct psychology.

7.3.1 Solution-focused approaches

Roller (1998) extols the benefits of using solution-focused approaches (de Shazer, 1985) to support work which targets the participation and views of children. Solution-focused approaches can be constructed as a goal-directed approach that is usually collaborative and focuses on the present and the future (de Shazer, 1985). Solution-focused psychology recognises that the learner has the tools and abilities to help himself and that they may require support to define the change issues or ways to move forward. Roller (1998) suggests that

two benefits of using solution-focused approaches include a positive approach and freedom to reframe the change issues.

Hobbs et al. (2000) argue that solution-focused approaches are inherently biased towards reflecting power back to the young person so he or she can consider their own perspective and suggest ways forward.

7.3.2 Personal Construct Psychology

Roller (1998) suggests that the principle of listening to children is reflected in personal construct theory (Kelly, 1955) as the theory emphasises the value of understanding how individuals view themselves and their individual understanding of the world around them.

Maxwell (2006) contends that personal construct psychology is a helpful framework through which to access young people's views. Maxwell suggests that the principles of exploring others' attitudes and perspectives are unprejudiced and cause the practitioner to be receptive to varying potential perspectives.

Given that psychological approaches are utilised by EPs to underpin their work in gathering and communicating young people's views, it seems pertinent to outline examples of specific tools and strategies which facilitate this.

8. Strategies used to gather and communicate young people's views by educational psychologists

Techniques and strategies which seek young people's views can also be evidenced in use by local authority educational psychology services, such as Making Action Plans (MAPS) (Forest, Pearpoint & O'Brien, 1996) and Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) (Kusche & Greenberg, 1994). PATH, for example, is currently being used in educational psychology services in both England and Wales (J. Hammond, personal communication, February 18, 2015; J. Swire, personal communication, February 18, 2015).

To improve the processes through which they gather children's views, EPs have created techniques and strategies to include children as active participants. As early as 1993, Waltham Forest EPS ran a Pupil Involvement project to develop new techniques to gather children's views (Gersch, Holgate & Sigston, 1993). These included the Child's Report (Gersch & Cutting, 1985) that was used with children in care. The Pupil Report was then created regarding children in school and the most recent version is named the Student Report which was developed in response to findings from evaluations of previous documents. The Student Report is outlined briefly below, as an early example of tools which help to facilitate obtaining pupil views.

The Student Report seeks children's views on the following topics: school; special needs; friends; life out of school; feelings; the future; and 'anything else'. Examples of approaches given in the paper (Gersch et al., 1993) include sentence completion tasks; short questions and questions with pre-determined yes/no answers. Fourteen EPs who were involved in the pilot of the Student Report agreed that the report was useful when gathering the view of pupils. Limitations of the report were also reported by the EPs such as the length of the

report, which they believed would necessitate more than one session with the pupil and that some pupils might feel that the report was long and therefore would be less motivated to complete it. The small scale of the pilot is another limitation of the research. The Student Report also could cause the young person to require the support of a scribe if he or she lacks confidence or is unable to record his or her views independently.

Hobbs et al. (2000) put together a list of approaches to explore the views of the child, developed by the Educational Psychology Course team and Educational Psychologists in Training (EPiTs) at Newcastle University. They included interview approaches, letters to children, therapeutic letters and videos of children's views about school.

The strategies outlined have been utilised in a number of studies, some examples are discussed below.

9. Research on educational psychologists gathering and communicating young people's views

Whilst research is available on the participation of children in decision making (e.g. Aston & Lambert, 2010; Hartas and Lindsay, 2011; McKay, 2014; Sharp 2014) and others have written about listening to children (Mannion, 2007; Todd 2012); articles written about the difficulties in recording and reporting children's views are much more limited (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). There is also a limited amount of research regarding the decision-making processes that EPs face when interpreting children's views (Ingram, 2013).

Previous research (Ingram, 2013; Harding & Atkinson, 2009) has highlighted some of the challenges in EPs' work regarding reporting children's views. Examples include issues arising from reporting provocative information (such as children's views which are disparaging of teachers) or EPs choosing to guide children's views (Aston & Lambert, 2010). Ingram's (2013) view supports Aston and Lambert (2010) and suggests that future work must focus on the practice that can support EPs when they interpret children's views.

Clark and Moss (2001) aimed to inform the planning and development of early years provision through seeking children's views and experiences. The 'mosaic approach' (Clark & Moss, 2001) combines different sources of information, for example children's interviews, photographs, observations and parents' views. Clark and Moss (2001) place emphasis on constructing knowledge (where children and adults are asked to discuss and reflect upon the approach together) to aid reflection, review and interpretation. One strength of the mosaic approach is that it can be used with young children with limited speech and with other children who do not communicate primarily using speech. However, it could also be argued that the approach is time-consuming,

particularly aspects of the data collation, which could affect its usefulness within settings with time constraints.

A study by Woods and Farrell (2006) asked about theoretical approaches or frameworks related to assessment practice. Forty percent of the one hundred and forty two EPs who took part in the study did not reply to the question regarding theoretical approaches to psychological assessment, twenty two percent selected solution-focused brief therapy/cognitive behavioural therapy and fourteen percent selected personal construct psychology. Behaviourism was also offered as a framework (two percent), as was attachment theory (one percent). The authors suggest that the high non-response rate may suggest that there is a "paucity of coherent practitioner theory about psychological assessment, which has implications for perceptions of consistency, and possibly satisfaction, by clients and stakeholder" (p. 398).

Woods and Farrell (2006) found that participants responded with a range of assessment methods, which the researchers suggested was in line with EP training programmes in the UK who report a variety of practice between and also within educational psychology services.

Norwich et al.'s study (2006) sought to answer research questions regarding eliciting the views of pupils with SEN and supporting their participation in SEN procedures. The study (Norwich et al., 2006) collated this information from the perspectives of pupils, head teachers, local authority officers, special educational needs co-ordinators (SENCos), teachers and teaching assistants (TAs). A range of different methodologies was utilised in the study, these comprised a questionnaire regarding seeking the views of young people with SEN responded to by local authorities, local authority officer interviews

regarding eliciting pupils' views and a questionnaire regarding participation practice responded to by SENCos.

Due to the wide range of data gathered using the multiple methodologies, the authors (Norwich et al., 2006) summarised aspects of the results. These included school level factors reported as supporting participation practices and different types of practice within pupil participation. The school level factors which promoted participation practices included; respect for children and their individual needs, listening and then acting on pupils' views, creating a caring and comfortable school experience, fostering good relationships between staff and pupils, aiming to involve pupils in their learning and aiming for an open door policy. Various supportive practices of children's participation were described, including formal and informal participation and staff facilitating children's participation (particularly identified key TAs). Different methods of eliciting children's views identified by respondents included drawing pictures, doing activities (e.g., art) whilst talking, using the computer, using picture cards and questionnaires.

Norwich et al. (2006) noted that one of the most consistent findings regarding children's participation across three local authorities was the perspectives of SENCos and LA officers and of adults in schools in relation to the challenge of eliciting the views of young children and children with severe communication and learning difficulties. This finding was evident in both the surveys and the interviews.

Norwich et al.'s (2006) findings also suggested that participants identified the following barriers to child participation: limitations to child and adult skills and

competencies, lack of opportunities and resources and inappropriate methods of eliciting views.

The scope of Norwich et al.'s (2006) study was very broad. For example, the SENCo questionnaire was sent to 1,600 mainstream schools across seven local authorities. However, the SENCo questionnaires had a small response rate (27%) which limits the generalisability of the findings to other local authorities and schools. The schools utilised for the school visits and interviews by the researchers were selected by identifying schools with "potentially promising practices" from the SENCo questionnaire (Norwich et al., 2006, p. 258). It is possible that the results would be different if the schools were chosen using different criteria or randomly selected.

The most recent study relating directly to EPs and the voice of the child found when carrying out a literature search is Harding and Atkinson's (2009) study on how EPs record the voice of the child, in which the researchers expressed surprise at the lack of research and literature relating to the topic. The study used content analysis to determine the themes in thirty year nine (age 13/14) transition reports written by EPs within one local authority. The authors (Harding & Atkinson, 2009) then utilised a focus group to explore techniques and strategies used by EPs to gather the young person's voice and to determine how information was reported. The educational psychology service taking part in the study had chosen to promote work which aimed to gain and represent children's views.

Harding and Atkinson's (2009) research questions focused on the key themes in the child's view section of a report; whether there was evidence that the EP recorded the child's view regarding decisions and arrangements; what

techniques and strategies the EPs use to gain the child's views and how EPs selected and represented the child's views.

Harding and Atkinson (2009) suggest that "the language an EP chooses when reporting the voice of the child needs to be carefully considered so that the content represents the child's own voice" (p. 127). Harding and Atkinson (2009) also reported on findings from a report from the National Children's Bureau (Danso et al., 2003, in Harding & Atkinson, 2009) which suggested that reports should include more of children's actual words rather than paraphrasing on their behalf.

Harding and Atkinson (2009) reported that the most commonly selected method for gathering pupil views was direct questioning (e.g., discussion). Participants also mentioned task related procedures (e.g., sentence completion tasks and questionnaires), therapeutic based approaches (e.g., personal construct psychology tasks and solution-focused methods), indirect methods (asking parents or familiar adults about a child) and measures specific to children in special schools (e.g., All About Me profile, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, 2008). When participants in the focus group were asked about how they represented the child's views in their written reports, EPs highlighted their advocacy role in writing the report. Participants also expressed a desire to present a balanced view of the child's strengths and needs and to provide information which would promote positive changes for the child.

Harding and Atkinson (2009) suggested that the EPs demonstrated a range of practice in sharing how the child's views were ascertained, with only some sharing their methods with others. Similarly, EPs reported a range of practice

regarding the use of the child's actual words and reported that they quote, interpret, paraphrase and summarise children's views.

The small sample size used in the study (Harding & Atkinson, 2009) and the specific promotion of work targeting gathering and representing children's views limits the generalisability of the findings to other EPs and educational psychology services. The transition reports were randomly selected, however they included reports regarding pupils attending both mainstream and special schools. It could be argued that the broad scope of considering specialist and mainstream settings could have obscured important points, such as themes which were relevant to one setting and not the other.

10. Summary

10.1 Conclusions of the literature review leading to the present study

EPs work with a variety of pupils and gather their views as part of their role. EPs may represent young people's views in written documents and also verbally, to others. Education is increasingly child-centred in its processes and young people are becoming more involved in decision-making processes (Hartas & Lindsay, 2011). This is reflected in current proposed ALN reforms in Wales (Welsh Government, 2014) and SEN(D) legislation changes in England (Department for Education (DfE), 2014a). There is also a growing research body regarding children and young people's participation in their education (Hartas & Lindsay, 2011; Todd, 2000; Messiou, 2002).

There is scant recent research into the topic of gathering and reporting children's views. Harding and Atkinson (2009) analysed sections of EP reports relating to young people's views within a single local authority regarding pupils in year 9 (age 13/14). The current study will widen the previous age range by asking EPs about secondary school age pupils.

The current proposed reforms to systems relating to ALN, which include the proposed changes from Statements of SEN to Individual Development Plans in Wales, could be argued to signal a need for research. England has already made changes to its procedures regarding SEN/ALN which includes the move from statements of SEN to Education, Health and Care (EHC) plans (DfE, 2014b).

Harding and Atkinson (2009) suggested that exploring EPs' strategies to gather young people's views across a wider range of authorities would be beneficial. The current study aims to extend previous research by recruiting EP

participants across Wales. The focus on Wales is due to the proposed ALN legislation not having been put into force, whereas similar reforms have already taken place in England which may have led to changes in practice already.

This study will aim to add to the research concerning EP practice, pupil centred work and representing young people's views. This may contribute to the knowledge base in this area, ultimately producing possible benefits for young people, EPs and other professionals who are interested in gaining and representing young people's views.

10.2 Relevance to the educational psychology profession

The relevance to the educational psychology profession could be argued to be inherent in the topic as it involves everyday practice. It is likely that for most, if not all EPs, meeting with children, seeking their views and reporting them verbally or in written documents (e.g., psychological advice written as part of the statutory assessment process for special educational needs or records of consultation) is a part of their core, regular duties. The research questions involve the exploration of psychological theories and frameworks which underpin EP practice. The tools and strategies EPs use to elicit young people's views are also gathered. The study could be argued to be a timely review of practice, given the current SEN and ALN reforms.

11. The current study

11.1 Research questions

1 How are pupils' views (within mainstream secondary schools) being recorded and represented by EPs in their reports?

2 What underlying theories (if any) do EPs use (explicitly or implicitly) when obtaining pupils' views?

3 What are the challenges and benefits for EPs when representing pupils' views in their reports?

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Educational Psychologists' Practice: Obtaining and Representing Young People's Views

PART B: Empirical Research Study

1. Abstract

Many studies have focused on the importance of the participation of young people in their education (e.g. Todd, 2012), although fewer papers discuss the practical aspects of seeking their views and fewer again on representing them. The current educational reforms including the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice in England (DfE, 2014a) and the draft, indicative Additional Learning Needs (ALN) Code in Wales (Welsh Government, 2015) have highlighted the importance of seeking young people's views. The benefits of gathering and communicating young people's views are well documented (e.g. Mannion, 2007), although the challenges are complex (Ingram, 2013). It is argued that EPs are well placed to gather young people's views and that the methods that they use affect the information gathered (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). A mixed method approach was used to collect information regarding educational psychologists' (EPs') practice in obtaining and representing young people's views. A questionnaire was used to gather data from local authority Educational Psychology Services across Wales and the results were analysed using descriptive statistics. Eight participants who completed the questionnaire took part in an interview to explore their views in more depth. These interviews were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. The major themes constructed included 'accessing a true representation of young people's views', 'gaining young people's views empowers them' and 'child-centred practice'. The implications of the present study for the role of educational psychologists are discussed, together with future directions for research and the limitations of the present study.

2. Introduction

2.1 Young people's views should be sought and considered

There is a clear rationale for seeking young people's views which was legally laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). The Children Act (H M Government, 1989) also provided a legal basis for young people's rights to a voice. The topic is also evident in educational policy (SEN(D) Code of Practice, DfE, 2015). Research (Messiou, 2002) suggests that the process of gathering young people's views is vital to an inclusive education system; however there is evidence (Lewis, Parson & Robertson, 2006) to suggest that there is frequently an element of tokenism when gathering pupil views. Some sources (e.g., Lundy, 2007) suggest that adults minimise the value of gathering young people's views and that gathering young people's views can be used by adults to increase their own control (Whitty & Wisby, 2007).

The current political context of the proposed ALN reforms in Wales (Welsh Government, 2015) and the current SEN(D) reforms in England (DfE, 2014b) have both highlighted the importance of considering children's views and adopting a more child-centred system. In Wales, this has included the use of person-centred planning approaches in annual reviews of the statement of ALN.

There are multiple benefits associated with gathering pupil views, including having a positive impact on their psychological health (Sharp, 2014) and empowering children (Warshak, 2004).

Gathering and communicating the views of children has been described as a complex process (Warshak, 2004) with many acknowledged challenges, such as correctly interpreting of children's views and making judgements about children's capacity and competency to contribute to decision-making processes. Difficulties also include supporting learners with communication difficulties or complex needs to communicate their views, the power imbalance between children and adults and encouraging disaffected pupils to give their views.

2.2 Educational psychologists are well placed to represent young people's views

Authors (e.g., Ingram, 2013) suggest that EPs are well placed to gather and communicate pupil views and research (Norwich et al., 2006) has suggested that EPs' practice in gathering pupils' views is innovative. The development of vehicles to collect children's views can be evidenced in the literature review (Student Report, Gersch, Holgate & Sigston, 1993; the 'mosaic approach', Clark & Moss, 2001; MAPS, Forest, Pearpoint & O'Brien, 1996). Previous research (Norwich et al., 2006) found that one of the most significant challenges when eliciting pupil views was the absence of suitable tools for doing so.

Authors (Aston & Lambert, 2010) suggest that EPs must think more dynamically about children's participation and that merely contemplating person-centred reviews and children's preferences is not sufficient. Fox (2015) comments that the language in reports, which gives meaning to EPs' identity, will give rise to the discourse regarding EPs. He argues that this can be evidenced from the language used in EP reports.

2.3 Previous research on educational psychologists gathering young people's views

The small scale of the research on this topic has been highlighted by authors (Aston & Lambert, 2010). Previous research suggests that EPs use a range of techniques and approaches to seek young people's views (Wicks, 2013; Harding & Atkinson, 2009) and that the use of discussion methods is common (Harding & Atkinson, 2009).However, there is criticism that EPs may distort young people's views through incorrect interpretation (Billington, 2006).

Previous research (Hobbs, Todd & Taylor, 2000; Roller, 1998) has suggested that personal construct theory and solution-focused techniques in particular are useful frameworks for EPs when seeking pupil views. However, authors (e.g., Wicks, 2013) have emphasised the problematic nature of EPs' practice in failing to acknowledge their use of psychology to others and how this could lead to an expert role which is disempowering for young people.

2.4 The Current Study

The current study uses a Welsh sample, as the proposed reforms have not yet taken place in Wales, since reforms that may place greater emphasis on child-centred practice are not yet in place in Wales as they are in England.

The current study focuses on EPs' practice with pupils of secondary school age, as research (Sharp, 2014) has found that gathering the views of secondary school aged pupils had a positive effect on decision-making processes.

2.5 Research questions

1. How are pupils' views (within mainstream secondary schools) being recorded and represented by EPs in their reports?

2. What underlying theories (if any) do EPs use (explicitly or implicitly) when obtaining pupils' views?
3. What are the challenges and benefits for EPs when representing pupils' views in their reports?

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

There were twenty educational psychology services in Wales at the time of the distribution of the questionnaires and sixteen Principals EPs returned consent forms to agree to take part in the study. Eight participants from different educational psychology services across Wales were interviewed. No more than one EP was recruited from each educational psychology service, in order to interview EPs from a range of geographical locations. Of the interview participants, six were female and two were male.

3.1.1 Inclusion criteria

The inclusion criterion was that all EPs who answered the questionnaire must have been fully qualified EPs with the same criterion applied to the interview participants.

3.2 Materials

A mixed methods approach of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews was chosen to provide depth and breadth of the topic. The pilot process increased the face validity of both measures, although any comment on the reliability and validity is limited as the questionnaire and interview schedule were developed for the current study.

3.2.1 Questionnaire

The various techniques (Appendix 4) listed in the questionnaire are taken from a literature review of the research into gathering young people's views. Some questions asked respondents to select from different answers (multiple choice) and other questions were open ended. One question used a frequency scale.

3.2.2 Interview

The interview questions (Appendix 6) provide an in-depth view of the subject area and ask questions regarding whether EPs actively seek ways to include young people's views in written documents, the benefits and challenges of gaining young people's views and the benefits and challenges of communicating young people's views in reports. The interview was designed to be semi-structured and included open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were utilised to enable the participants to talk freely and explain themselves fully.

3.3 Pilot

Both the questionnaire (Appendix 4) and the interview questions (Appendix 6) were piloted with the educational psychology service where the researcher was on placement. The questionnaire was piloted with five EPs and the interview was held with one EP. Reflecting on the piloting process and comments that were made led to a question regarding young people with communication difficulties being added to the interview schedule. The questionnaire was changed from a multiple choice format to mix of multiple choice and open questions format and for that reason the responses in the pilot were not used in the final analysis.

3.4 Procedure

Gatekeeper letters (Appendix 1) were sent to Principal EPs in Wales. Copies of the information letter and questionnaires for all EPs in the service were included. Principal EPs were asked to return the consent letters to the researcher to take part in the study and then distribute the information letter and questionnaires to all of the fully qualified EPs in the service. The

questionnaire was also available online through Survey Monkey, an online survey host.

Sixteen Principle Educational Psychologists returned the consent form to agree to take part in the study. Sixty two EPs completed and returned paper questionnaires to the researcher. Eleven EPs completed the questionnaire online via Survey Monkey. The total of seventy-three respondents represents 43.5% of EPs in Wales.

Following a two month period to allow the return of questionnaires, eight participants were then interviewed. The participants had opted in by contacting the researcher, following the completion of the questionnaire. The interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes. The interviews were recorded using two audio devices (simultaneously) and then transcribed by the researcher and analysed using the qualitative analysis software, NVIVO.

The data collected from the semi-structured interviews were analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A research colleague independently coded the transcriptions to ensure critical thinking about the structure and the coding decisions (King & Horrocks, 2010).

3.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical approval was given by the School of Psychology Ethics Committee at Cardiff University. Principal EPs were provided with a gatekeeper letter (Appendix 1) and were asked to give consent for EPs to take part (Appendix 2). Similarly, the EPs were provided with information about the study's aims in an invitation letter to take part in the research and to give anonymous passive consent by completing the questionnaire (Appendix 3). The invitation letter and

the research measures were provided in a blank envelope to maintain anonymity when returning the forms. Participants choosing not to take part were asked to place the blank questionnaires back into the envelope. It was not possible to tell who had, and had not, complete the questionnaire. The invitation letter (Appendix 3) also served to debrief and, as such, told participants that the data would be stored by Cardiff University indefinitely.

The participants were recorded in the interview and were provided with information about confidentiality, anonymity, data storage and the right to withdraw at any stage, up to the point at which the recording was transcribed (Appendix 5). The invitation letter also informed participants that the researcher would write a thesis based on the research findings for submission to the University and that no individual participant would be identifiable in the Thesis. All transcripts from the interviews were anonymised within two weeks of the interview being held.

The educational psychology services are not identifiable in the thesis or summary report and no individual participant has been made identifiable. A summary debriefing report regarding the research findings will be made available to the principal EP at each educational psychology service after completion of the thesis, which will provide feedback to the participants.

3.6 Ontology and epistemology

The epistemological position or paradigm which guided this study was constructivism, which suggests that knowledge is constructed by humans proactively and that truths are laden with value and meaning. Constructivism also suggests that language reflects reality and is affected by social factors. The ontological approach of the researcher was relativist, the participants

responded to the questionnaires with their constructions of the topic in relation to their social and political reality.

The questionnaires and interviews provide the participants with an opportunity to share their social constructions of their practice and views regarding gathering and representing children's views.

4. Analysis and results

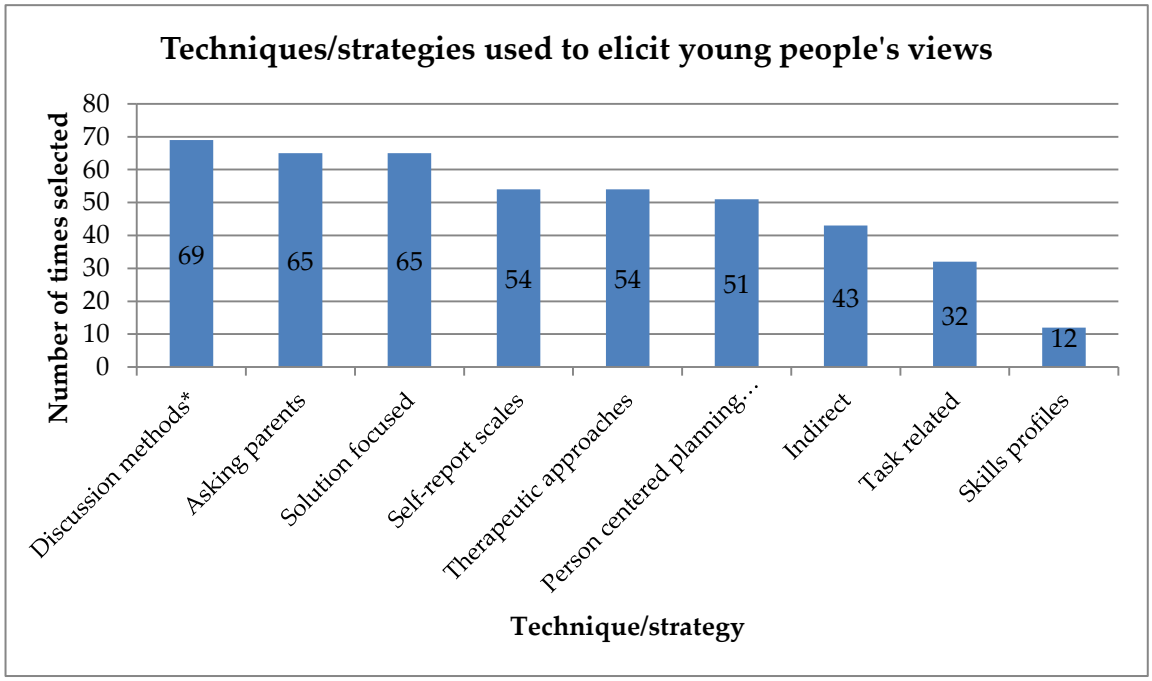
4.1 Quantitative analysis

Questionnaires from seventy-three participants were received and analysed. The data is presented in a descriptive manner below.

4.2 Quantitative results

Question one: Which approaches do you use to gather young people's views in mainstream secondary schools? Figure one illustrates that the most popular technique or strategy was discussion methods, as 93% of participants suggested that they use them to gather young people's views.

Figure 1: Bar graph showing frequency of responses according to type of technique or strategy



*Discussion methods were originally selected 68 times by participants; the category is revised above to reflect one response under 'other' that was classified as a discussion method.

Question one also allowed participants to select an 'other response' and specify another technique or strategy. The responses were categorised into the following groups: fits into category already provided; resource (specific) and suitable 'other' technique/strategy. Table one lists the 'other' responses given. Full details of the 'other' responses and the data manipulation can be found in Appendix 10.

Table 1: Type and frequency of responses given in the 'other' category

Other responses	Number of times offered
Genograms	2
Observations	2
Picture based approaches	2
Role play	1
Group work	1
Sociograms	1
Focus group	1
Games	1
Discussion methods	1

Question two: Please name any specific resources you use to gather young people's views in mainstream secondary schools. Responses can be seen in Table two below and show a wide range of resources being utilised, the most frequently reported include the Ideal Self (Moran, 2001), Scaling (Solution-focused approach) and the Beck Youth Inventory (Beck, Beck & Jolly, 2005). An additional thirteen comments were offered but were not included as they did not refer to specific resources. Please see Appendix 10 for the responses.

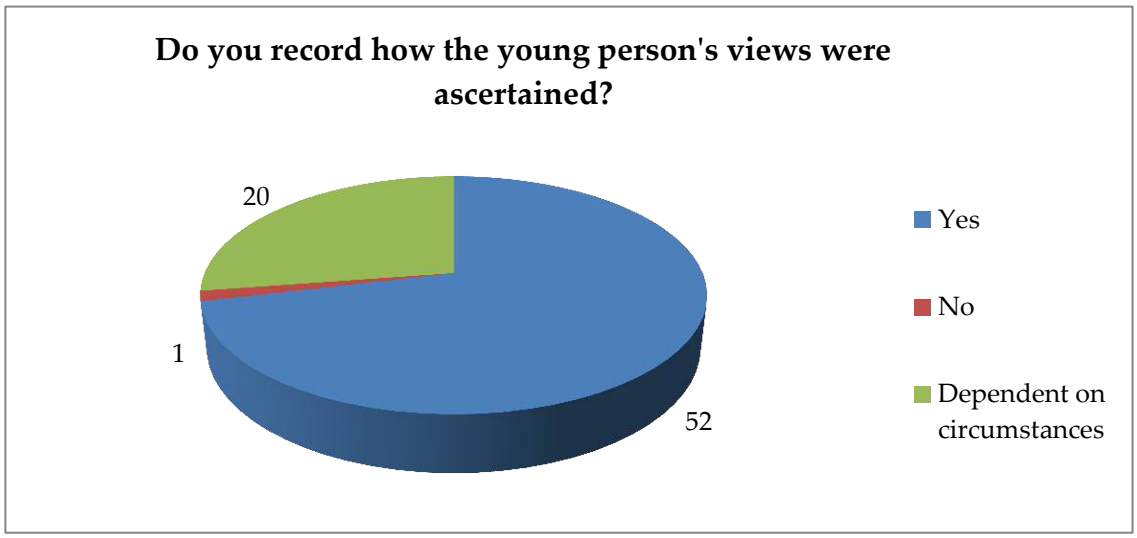
Table 2: Frequency of responses according to type of resource

Resource	N	Resource	N
Ideal Self	15	Locus of Control Scale	2
Scaling	14	Strength Cards	2
Beck Youth Inventory	13	Kinetic Family Drawing	2
Self-Image Profile	11	'Salmon Lines'	2
Person-Centred Planning/Thinking Resources	9	Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH)	2
Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)	9	Attitude to School Questionnaire	2
B/G Steem	7	Psychological Profile	2
Blob Tree/Behaviour Blobs/Blob Cards	7	Normed Assessment (British Ability Scales/Wechsler Individual Achievement Test)	2
Resiliency Scales	6		
'Myself-As-Learner' Scale	5	Mind Mapping	1
Spence Children's Anxiety Scale	4	'In my shoes' Transition Interview	1
SF questioning/SF consultation meetings/SF interviewing	4	Pupils Attitudes to Self and School (PASS)	1
'Let's Talk'	4	School Refuser Questionnaire	1
Laddering	3	Emotional Literacy Checklist	1
Connors Self-Report Assessment	3	Motivational Interviewing	1
'Good Day/Bad Day' Tool	3	Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) Resources	1
EP Portfolio	3		
'Talk about' Resources	3	Triadic Elicitation	1
EPS Developed Questionnaire	3	Self-Report Questionnaires	1
One-page Profile	2	Puppets	1
Achenbach Youth Report	2	Stages of Change Model	1

*Round robins involve staff being asked for their views regarding

Question three: Do you record how the young person's views were ascertained? Figure two below illustrates that just one of the seventy three respondents suggested that he or she does not record how the young person's views were ascertained, whilst fifty one respondents indicated that they do record the methods used to gather young people's views.

Figure 2: Pie chart showing frequency of responses in recording how the young person's views were ascertained



N = 73

Table three shows the frequency of responses offered regarding how the young people's views were recorded by participants.

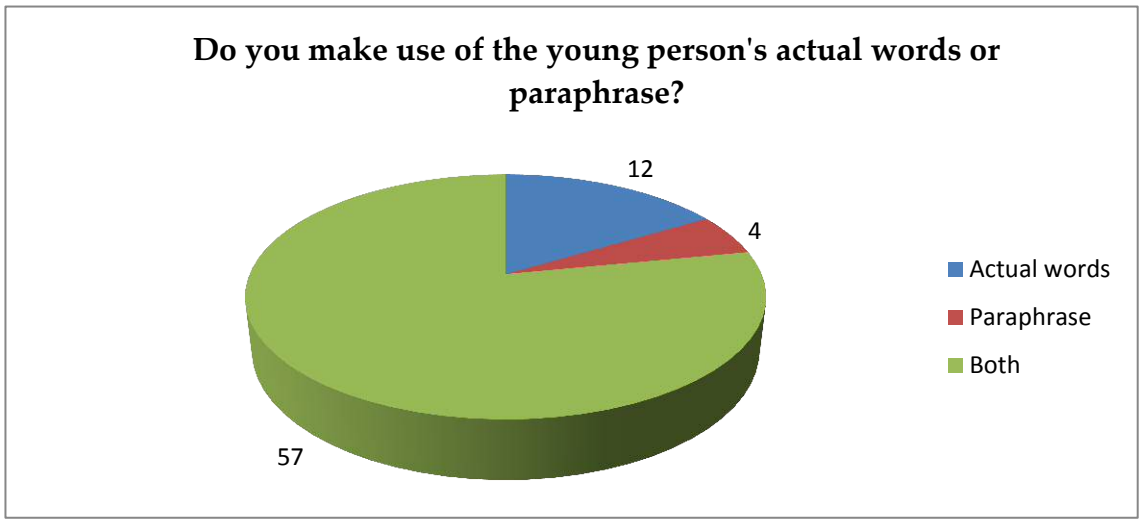
Table 3: Frequency of specified methods of recording how the young person's views were ascertained - categorised by response

Specify	Number of times selected
Verbally	2
In written form	14
In formal circumstances	1

A further fourteen responses were offered which did not specify practice regarding recording young people's views. Those responses are included in Appendix 10.

Question four: Do you make use of the young person's actual words or paraphrase? Figure three reflects that the majority (57) of respondents use a mixture of both the pupils' actual words and paraphrasing. A small minority of the respondents (4) suggested that they only paraphrase pupils' views and do not report their actual words.

Figure 3: Pie chart showing frequency of responses regarding using the young person's actual words or paraphrasing



N = 73

Table four shows the frequency of responses to question five: Which frameworks and underlying psychology do you make use of when gathering young people's views? Participants could choose to offer more than one framework or psychological theory. Table four illustrates the most frequently mentioned psychological theory to be personal construct psychology (48 times) and solution-focused thinking (46 times). The majority of the frameworks and psychological theories listed in Table four have been mentioned by just one participant in the study.

Question five: Which frameworks and underlying psychology do you make use of when ga

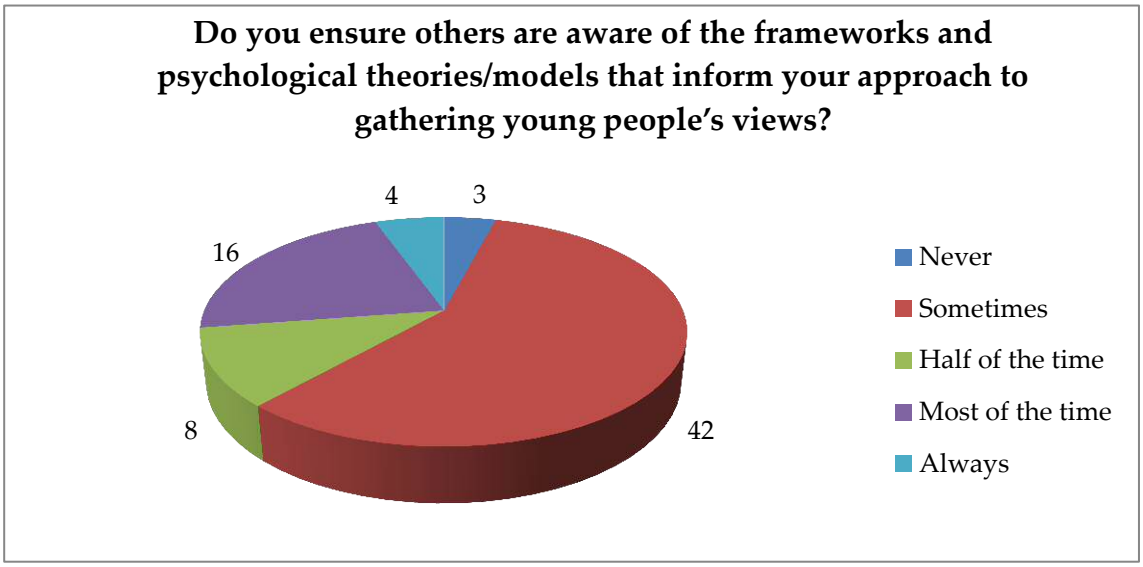
Table 4: Frequency of frameworks and underlying psychology participants suggest they use to gather young people's

Framework/underlying psychology	N	Framework/underlying psychology	N	Fran
Personal construct psychology	48	Problem solving framework	2	Resi
Solution-focused	46	Behaviour	2	Rog
Person-centred planning	14	Self-theories	2	Inte
Social constructionism	11	Child-centred	1	Mas
Positive psychology	10	Identity theories	1	The
Cognitive behavioural therapy	7	Task of adolescence	1	The
Constructionist Model of Informed Reasoned Action (COMOIRA)	6	Social constructivism	1	Inte fram
Developmental psychology	4	Child development	1	Cho
Humanistic	4	Narrative therapy	1	Cog
Attribution theory	4	Reflective	1	Syst
Motivational interviewing	4	Restorative approaches	1	App
Attachment	3	Individual Development Plans (IPDs)	1	Con
Social interactionist	3	Theories of self esteem	1	Intri
Social learning theory	2	Eco systems	1	Stre
Psychodynamic approaches	2	Emotional development	1	Posi
Self-efficacy	2	Self determination	1	URF
Systemic practice	2	Cognitive psychology	1	Emp
Narrative approaches	2	Phenomenological psychology	1	

Unclassifiable responses were removed; please see Appendix 10

Question six: Do you ensure others are aware of the frameworks and psychological theories/ models that inform your approach to gathering young people's views? Respondents could select from the following options: never; sometimes; half of the time; most of the time; or always. Figure four below shows that the majority of participants (42) selected 'sometimes' whilst just 3 participants selected the response 'never.' Question six showed a variation in the practice of EPs when communicating the use of frameworks to others.

Figure 4: Pie chart showing how frequently participants ensure others are aware of the frameworks that inform their approaches to gathering young people's views

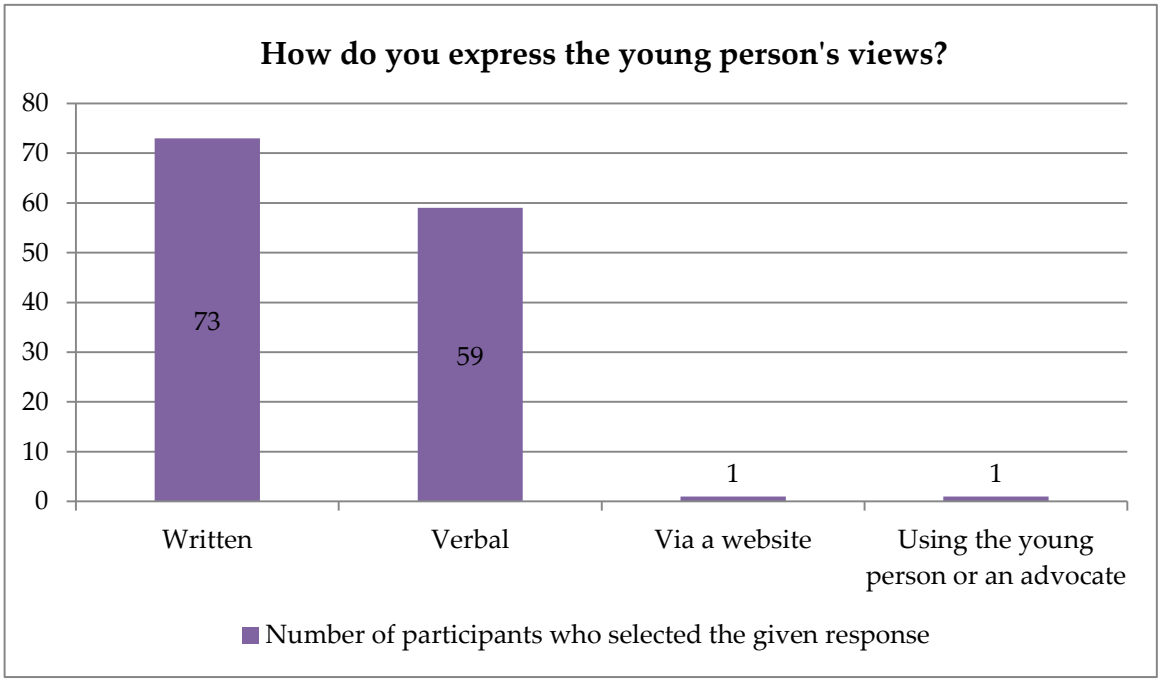


N = 73

Question seven: How do you express the young person's views? As illustrated in Figure five below, all of the participants indicated that they use written methods to express young people's views. A majority of participants (80%) also reported that they use verbal methods to communicate young people's views. Most 'other' responses were able to be categorised as either a written or verbal response. Two separate categories were created to classify the 'other' responses: 'via a website' and 'using the young person or an advocate'. One offered

response was unclassifiable and was removed; please see Appendix 10 for the full responses.

Figure 5: Frequency of methods that participants use to express young people's views



4.3 Qualitative analysis

Thematic analysis was carried out using the phases described by Braun and Clarke (2006).

- Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data

Phase one included the transcription of the verbal data which necessitated repeated reading and ensuring accuracy within the transcriptions.

- Phase 2: Generating initial codes

The initial codes were recorded and anything interesting or of interest about patterns within the data set were also identified. The codes at this stage were broad and there were many different codes generated across small sections of data.

- Phase 3: Searching for themes

The themes are formed by sorting the codes into different groups. This process developed the main themes and sub themes. Phase three was a dynamic process and codes were moved around to consider how the different themes could be developed.

- Phase 4: Reviewing themes

This stage involved collapsing the themes into one another and sorting them into subgroups associated with three main themes and other sub themes. Firstly, the themes were considered in relation to the extracts or quotes used to highlight the themes. Secondly, the themes were related to the whole of the data set. Then a thematic map was created, illustrating the relationship between the themes.

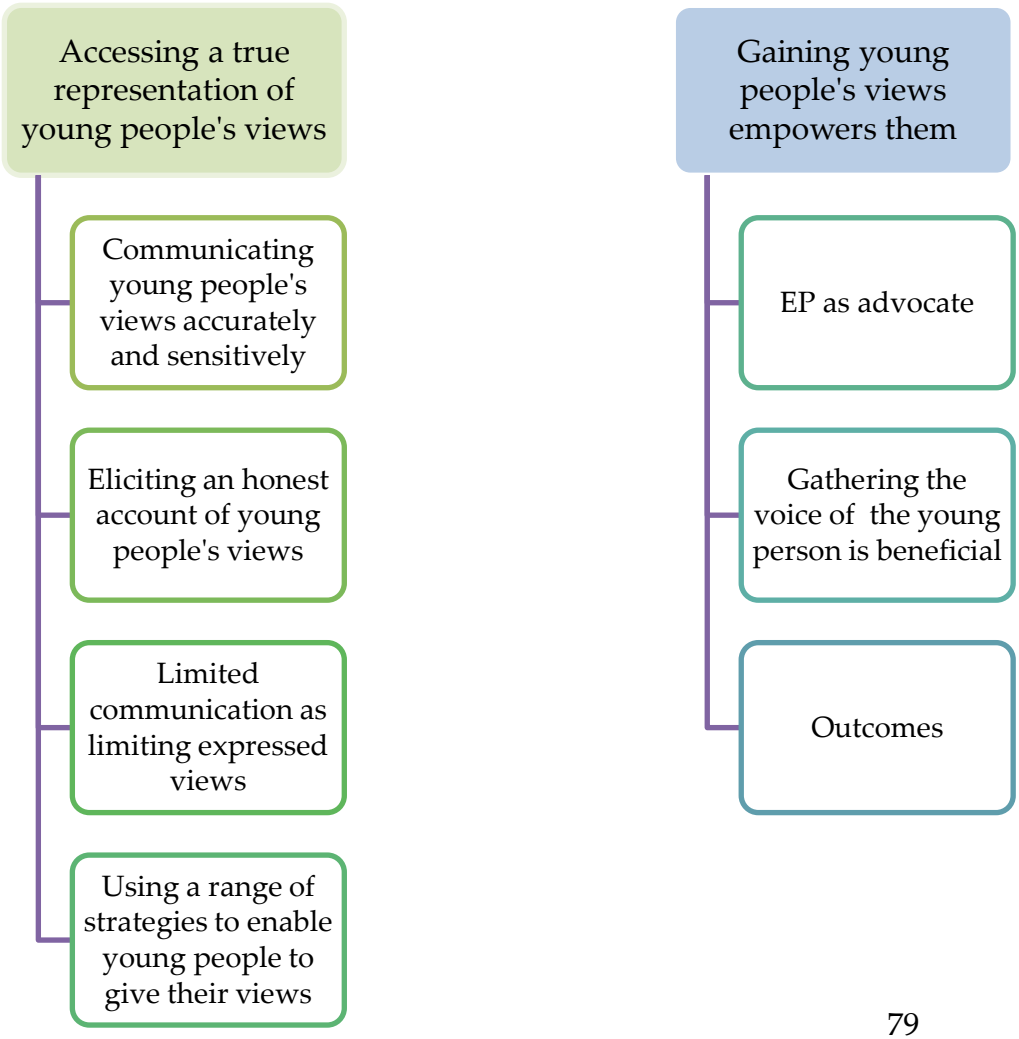
- Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

Each theme and sub theme was defined and refined until each one was usefully described. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest trying to name the "essence" of each theme and what it encapsulates (p. 22).

Three themes and eleven subthemes were constructed (see Figure six: final thematic map). The themes relate to both the research questions and to a patterned response from the data set. Mostly, themes were found to be prevalent across the data set, although themes that were not necessarily prevalent in the data set but captured something important in relation to a research question were considered as themes. The type of analysis used was inductive, as the analysis was not driven by the researcher's theoretical understanding or a pre-existing coding structure but was based on the data itself.

4.4 Outcomes of qualitative analysis

Figure 6: Final thematic map



4.4.1 Theme 1: Accessing a true representation of young people's views

All data sets included views regarding the importance of accessing a true representation of the young people's views, both in eliciting their views and in communicating them to others. There was significance attributed to actively listening to young people's views, as they were actually presented, as opposed to how one might expect them to be presented.

"But there's the danger of not listening, not because you're not interested but just that you've actually missed what is important, it might have been said in passing, not at the point at which you were expecting it to be said" (P4).

Subtheme 1.1: Communicating young people's views accurately and sensitively

Participants spoke about the challenge in communicating young people's views accurately, without interpreting them or changing the wording and simultaneously changing the meaning.

"I think that maybe it can be challenging at times to differentiate between what they actually said and the interpretation that you've maybe put on there without actually thinking" (P5).

A challenge which participants described was the problematic role of communicating young people's views accurately and sensitively, particularly if the young person's views had the capacity to offend or upset others. Others might include teaching staff, non-teaching staff, parents and family, as suggested by participants.

"Another challenge is again writing things that you know the child has said that may actually be offensive or damaging to the parents, so you have to be - you have to be wise to that" (P8).

Subtheme 1.2: Eliciting an honest account of young people's views

Participants spoke about both their practice and specific groups of young people in relation to eliciting an honest account of the young people's views. Participants mentioned some of the 'one-off' meetings with young people which are expected to result in those young people sharing sensitive and personal information with the EP.

"From the point of view of an Ed Psych going into school, there is that whole issue about are we expecting a lot of a child to sit in a room with a stranger and to open up and to trust enough, so I think that's always a challenge" (P3).

Participants also mentioned groups of young people who have experienced a great deal of involvement from services or professionals previously and might be described as "disengaged" (P3) or "disillusioned" (P5).

"… some of the young people that we come across who've had maybe lots of professional involvement become…disillusioned maybe by the processes of feeling that sometimes it's done, you know, it's done to tick a box, you know that no one really cares about their views… so I think it can be difficult to gain their trust that it's a meaningful process and that there's a purpose to engaging" (P5).

Subtheme 1.3: Limited communication as limiting expressed views

Participants discussed pupils with limited communication and suggested that as a result, this often limits the expression of those young people's views. Participants listed a range of communication needs, such as young children with reduced or not fully developed language, young people who were not articulate for a number of reasons (e.g. selective mutism), children with speech and language difficulties, with English as an additional language, with social communication difficulties or who are expressing limited views as they do not know/trust/ wish to engage with the EP.

"…it really does limit what you can gain from the child when there are those sorts of communication barriers" (P1).

"I guess very often a big challenge is that when I as an EP meet a child for the first time, I am a stranger to that person why on earth should they want to talk to me about things that are emotionally charged for them, why would I ever expect that they'd want to" (P6).

Subtheme 1.4: Using a range of strategies to enable young people to give their views

Participants listed a range of strategies which they use to gather young people's views. When considering the needs of children with communication difficulties, responses included the use of computer based programs, the 'mosaic approach', art based strategies, personal construct tools (e.g. Ideal Self, Moran, 2001), the use of play, observational and various visual tools.

"We have as a service talked about eliciting views in other ways, so getting peers in and involving other children… we have done some sessions as a service on using art to elicit ideas and thoughts and feelings" (P3).

Participants discussed the need for creative strategies when working with young children, young people with English as an additional language and disillusioned or 'hard to reach' learners. Advocates seeking the views of young people was also a pattern throughout the data set; these advocates included parents, familiar adults such as teaching assistants and teachers and other children, including siblings and friends.

4.4.2 Theme 2: Gaining young people's views empowers them

Participants commented regarding the possible benefits for young people when they have an opportunity to give their views. This related to gathering the young person's voice as being beneficial and affecting outcomes.

"I think it's important to the child as well, you know, that they will feel that they're being taken seriously" (P3).

Subtheme 2.1: EP as advocate

The role of the EP serving as an advocate on behalf of the child was a pattern in the findings. EP's reflected on their role to advocate on decision making, for example on decision-making panels within their local authorities. Participants also discussed their role to promote and communicate children's views.

"… I think it's quite easier to become sucked into working for the authority and thinking about placement and that side of things whereas actually we're

supposed to be independent practitioners who are well equipped I think, to advocate for young people…" (P5).

Subtheme 2.2: Gathering young people's views is beneficial

EPs listed a range of benefits that are created through gathering children's views, these including gaining the child's perspective on their world, their wellbeing and whether they feel safe or happy and using their views to inform interventions and strategies.

"And in practical terms it means we can get it right for children in education and it can be something quite simple… so often we can get it wrong if we don't understand how the child is seeing the world" (P3).

Subtheme 2.3: Outcomes

Participants described a relationship between improved outcomes and gathering and sharing the views of young people,

"We have more successful outcomes if we involve children and young people in saying, you know, what's important to them and how they feel and what they want to happen" (P3).

4.4.3 Theme 3: Child-centred practice

Throughout the data a pattern of reference to the use of child-centred practice was evident. This included views about the importance of young people's views as being ethical practice and following local authority policies. Participants also expressed they felt they needed young people's views to consider their work with that young person was 'complete,' holistic or well-rounded. Participants also discussed the notion that the psychology which

underlies EPs' practice supports the gathering and communicating of young people's views.

Subtheme 3.1: As a matter of ethics and respect

Participants frequently mentioned the need to respect young people and to apply ethics within the EP role; the respondents felt that this was linked to listening to the views of young people.

"Also it's about empowering young people to feel part of the process and not feel that something is being done to them, you know that's outside of their control, it's about giving them the opportunity to be part of the process if they wish to be" (P5).

Subtheme 3.2: As supported by proformas and policies

Participants spoke about the 'automatic' procedure of seeking a young person's view when working with them, both in the sense that there is an in-built section in the statutory assessment proforma for reporting their views and that it was a routine part of their practice.

"I don't think it's ever a choice as to whether you do or don't" (P4).

Participants also referred to the reforms and new policies in Wales which specify the importance of placing the young person at the centre of the ALN processes and including them in decision making processes.

"In terms of the future, in Wales, this is now going to be an integral part anyway of our additional needs system. So it's not going to be something which is optional…" (P3).

Subtheme 3.3: Needing children's views for complete work

Participants highlighted the importance of needing the young person's view for a complete piece of work,

"It's about them isn't it? So in a way it's - there's no disadvantage, you know, it should be integral to the process" (P4).

Subtheme 3.4: Psychology supports a child-centred approach

Participants also suggested that the psychology which underpins their professional practice as EPs also supports a child-centred approach where children's views are highly valued. Participants frequently mentioned the use of person-centred planning, personal construct theory and solution-focused approaches.

"…I think a person-centred approach is inevitably going to ensure that children and young people's views are fully part of the process and I think there's a way to go with a number of approaches we use" (P4).

5. Discussion

5.1 Overview

This study aimed to explore EPs' practice in obtaining and representing young people's views. Patterns of findings from both the questionnaire and the interviews will be discussed in relation to the research questions below, including references in relation to previous research and existing literature regarding the topic.

5.2 Research question 1

How are pupils' views (within mainstream secondary schools) being recorded and represented by EPs in their reports?

Results from the questionnaire suggest that a variety of techniques and strategies is being used to elicit the views of children. The most commonly described methods include discussion methods; this finding is supported by the interviews as all participants mentioned the use of discussion methods, which is consistent with previous research (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). The majority of participants also suggested that they use a selection of the following techniques: asking parents, solution-focused approaches, self-report scales, therapeutic approaches, person-centred planning approaches and indirect methods. This finding highlights the multiplicity of different methods EPs to gather young people's views; this is consistent with previous findings which suggest that EP practice is varied (Wicks, 2013).

Participants named a broad range of resources used to gather young people's views, some of the most frequently mentioned resources have their theoretical base in personal construct psychology (Ideal Self, Self-Image profile) and solution-focused techniques (scaling). This is in line with previous research that

suggests that personal construct theory and solution-focused techniques are useful tools for EPs when gathering pupil views (Hobbs et al., 2000).

The range of mentioned resources is wide and clearly demonstrates the variety in EPs' practice. There are a number of self-created materials e.g., questionnaires. It could be that this demonstrates that EPs are not satisfied with the existing tools available. Norwich et al. (2006) found that one of the biggest barriers to eliciting pupil views was a lack of appropriate tools.

All participants suggested that they express young people's views in written form, which is consistent with research which describes EPs' central roles as writing reports and other documents (Farrell et al., 2006).

When describing their approaches to reporting young people's views, most participants suggested that they both paraphrase pupil views and use their actual words. A minority of respondents (twelve) suggested that they just use the child's actual words. Research suggests that using actual words is important. Skivenes and Strandbu (2006) note that making errors when interpreting views is more likely when working with young people. Billington (2006) comments that criticism of EPs suggests that they distort and misconstrue pupil views.

A theme of the interview data was the EP serving as an advocate, both in written reports and also on panels and in meetings. Advocacy has been highlighted as an important part of practice for EPs (Fox, 2015) due to the associated benefits of empowering young people through providing information about their needs and advocating on the behalf of young people when they are not present.

5.3 Research question 2

What underlying theories (if any) do EPs use (explicitly or implicitly) when obtaining pupils' views?

Research (Kelly, 2006) regarding transparency in EPs' work suggests that the use of un-expressed psychology in EP practice is problematic, whilst Wicks (2013) argued that EPs may adopt a disempowering, "expert" role if they do not communicate their use of psychology (p. 157). The questionnaire responses demonstrated that although the majority (seventy-one percent) of the participants recorded how they gather children's views, fifty-seven percent only sometimes communicated the use of frameworks and psychology which underpinned their practice to others.

Research (Hobbs et al., 2000; Woods & Farrell, 2006; Harding & Atkinson, 2009) on psychological theories of use to EPs when gathering pupil views suggests that personal construct psychology and solution-focused are widely used, which is consistent with the findings in the present study. The most frequently mentioned psychological theories which support EPs' practice gathering children's views included personal construct psychology (forty-two responses) and solution-focused approaches (forty-six responses). These theories were also most frequently discussed in the interviews, as well as personal construct theory.

5.4 Research question 3

What are the challenges and benefits for EPs when representing pupils' views in their reports?

The interview data highlighted challenges for EPs when gaining and representing pupil views and such challenges included communicating children's views accurately and sensitively. Participants' expressed the

challenge of interpreting children's views accurately. Previous research has described interpretation of children's views as complex and highlighted the ongoing issues regarding whether pupil views should be reported as spoken by children or whether EPs should interpret them in the light of social and structural theories available to them (Todd, 2012; Ingram, 2013). Another challenge participants identified was communicating pupils' views sensitively, including views that adults may not wish to hear. This has been highlighted in previous research as a challenge associated with seeking children's views (Cook-Sather, 2006).

Hartas (2011) found that some 'hard to reach' children did not want to participate in school matters and participants in the present study reflected on challenges in ensuring effective communication from such pupils.

Participants also mentioned a range of benefits linked with gathering and communicating the views of children. These included empowering the child, which is a strong theme in the literature (Sharp, 2014; Warshak, 2004). Another benefit established in the literature review and mentioned by the participants in the present study is the positive ethical and moral context created by gathering and seeking young people's views (Messiou, 2002).

Theme 3.3: Needing young people's views for complete work was contextualised by the participants as the young people's views being vital to their work. Although many studies have described gathering children's views as important (e.g., Harding & Atkinson, 2009), the participants' suggestion that the inclusion of students' views was needed to complete a piece of work, appears to be a new finding.

5.5 Strengths and limitations

5.5.1 Strengths

Strengths of the current study include the researcher's limited involvement with the participants who completed the questionnaires, making the responses less likely to be influenced by the researcher (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). The study also contributes unique findings as it contains a larger sample than previous studies on the topic (Harding & Atkinson, 2009) and the questionnaire gathered views from EPs from multiple educational psychology services across Wales. The study also updates older findings (Harding & Atkinson, 2009) and contributes findings on the use of frameworks and psychological approaches to support EPs' practice in gathering young people's views.

5.5.2 Limitations

One of the major limitations of the study was that participants were asked about their practice regarding secondary school-age pupils, therefore the findings cannot be used to describe practice regarding pupils of different ages or pupils in special schools or units.

EPs who volunteered to take part in the interviews may have differed in their perspective and practice towards seeking and representing young people's views, in comparison to those who did not take part. Choosing to participate in the research may reflect their enthusiasm or passion for child-centred practice or for promoting children's rights.

The demand characteristics of reporting a child-led picture to a trainee or to someone writing about EP practice, wanting to be seen to be an effective role-model could have affected responses. The use of self-report measures could also have increased social desirability bias (Berger, 2010). Given the current political

reforms, participants may have wanted to communicate inclusive and positive practice with regards to seeking and representing children's views.

5.6 Future directions

Future studies could replicate the methodology with an English sample, to explore whether the findings would differ in the light of recent reforms. Also the study could be replicated in relation to different ages of pupils, with different SEN, such as pupils in special schools or young people with an Autistic Spectrum Condition. Replicating the study with reference to special schools might serve to increase the amount of data with regards to strategies useful for students with communication difficulties or complex needs.

The study included a very limited amount of data on EPs' practice of interpreting pupils' views, this area is described as an area of limited research (Skivenes & Strandbu, 2006). Todd (2012) suggested that interpreting children's views is challenging for EPs. Future studies could focus on EPs' practice of reporting pupil views with respect to EPs' choice of wording, whether they consult with pupils regarding paraphrasing and using their own words and the challenges and ways forward regarding interpreting children's views.

Another area of interest would be the topic of communicating the use of psychology to others. This appears to be an area of importance when considering confusion revealed by research around the EP role and EPs' unique contribution (Cameron, 2006). Buck (2015) suggests that EPs communicating the use of psychology to others, particularly the use of methods outside the familiar context of traditional, positivist methods, is problematic and that strategies and guidance are needed.

5.7 Relevance to the practice of the educational psychologist

Given the wide range of pupils that EPs work with, it is important to have a range of tools which will support the practice of gathering young people's views. The research could also help to widen the range of material that EPs might use. Interview participants suggested that eliciting young people's views is a key part of their work. Considering ways of overcoming the challenges of gathering young people's views is also vital when the interpretation of their views to inform decision making is necessary. Writing reports which communicate pupil views is a central aspect of the EP role (Farrell et al., 2006). EPs' use of psychology could support their practice in this area, as highlighted by participants in this study.

5.8 Conclusions

This study adds to the body of research available regarding EPs' practice seeking and representing the views of young people, which is suggested to be a key aspect of the EP role (Farrell et al. 2006). This study has sought to extend previous studies by increasing the number of EP respondents and exploring in-depth views by utilising interview methods. A varied range of tools and psychological theories and frameworks were identified by participants, with personal-construct psychology and solution-focused psychology emerging as the most common responses. Interview participants suggested that communicating young people's views sensitively and accurately was a significant challenge to their work. Participants also argued that outcomes of gathering and communicating pupils' views include empowering young people and improving outcomes in pupils' lives. The study contributes a finding regarding the participants' views that consulting with a young person is a vital aspect of their practice. As EPs work frequently with young people to gather

and communicate their views, they are well placed to ensure the benefits are actualised.

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Educational Psychologists' Practice: Obtaining and Representing Young People's Views

PART C: The Critical Review

1. Introduction

The critical review is presented in two distinct sections. The first section is an analysis of the process which contributed to the body of knowledge on obtaining and representing young people's views within EP practice. The section is comprised of a summary of the gaps identified within the literature review, the rationale for the research questions, contribution of the findings to EP knowledge, relevance to EP practice, contribution to the knowledge of the research practitioner and dissemination of knowledge.

The second section is a critical account of the development of the research practitioner which includes the inception of the research topic, ethical issues, the researcher's epistemological position, supervision, methodological decisions and data analysis.

The two sections outlined above conclude with a summary.

The critical review aims to reflect the researcher's journey through the thesis, reflecting two roles; both as a researcher and an applied psychologist.

2. Contribution to knowledge

2.1 Summary of the gaps identified within the major literature review

2.1.1 Young people's participation

There is a wealth of research available on the topic of young people's participation which is historically reflected in a variety of national and international legislation requiring participant involvement. This legislation is described as early as 1989 in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) and in the Children Act (H M Government, 1989). The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) also sought to support the facilitation of participation of the individual and their right to express their wishes with regard to their education. Hartas and Lindsay (2011) suggest that there is also development of participatory methods that include young people in developing countries. The current governmental stance in the UK also advocates the practice of seeking children's views and involving them in policy-making and decision-making. The current reforms in England (DfE, 2014) and Wales (Welsh Government, 2014a) highlight the importance of child-centred processes.

Sharp (2014) suggests that there are benefits in seeking the views of children and young people, such as a sense of empowerment of the young people and the notion that they wish to be active participants (McKay, 2014). Criticism is aimed at guidance documents, which authors (Todd, 2012) suggest are challenging to translate into practice and also that the topic as a whole has lacked a critical discourse. This may highlight the benefit of the present study which asks educational psychologists about their practice and also highlights the challenges, as well as the benefits, of gathering and representing pupil views. Although studies provide an account of children's participation in SEN

procedures (Norwich et al., 2006) and the involvement of pupils with learning difficulties as decision-makers (Rose, 1999), the topic of EPs practice regarding young people's participation is far less thoroughly documented.

There are tensions described between young people's capacity in decision making and the legislation which favours co-construction (e.g., DfE, 2014). Warshak (2004) suggests that there are challenges for professionals in making accurate judgements regarding young people's capacity and competency. Skivenes and Strandbu (2006) remark upon the position of expecting young people to be able to make decisions, despite their developing capacity as they mature. Fox (2015) suggests that it is important to recognise that children's competence varies across different tasks.

2.1.2 Methods used to seek young people's views

There is limited research into methods of how professionals, particularly EPs, seek the views of children and young people. This is an interesting gap in the major literature, given that authors (e.g., Ingram, 2013) suggest EPs are ideally placed to be doing this work. This view is emphasised when practice concerns gathering the views of disabled children, who researchers (Lewis, Parson & Robertson, 2006) suggest are more likely to be subject to tokenism than non-disabled children. Given the importance that is placed on the report writing of EPs (e.g. in their advice in the Statutory Assessment process for young people with ALN) it could be argued that the use of effective vehicles to seek learners' views, which are part of the reports, is of considerable importance.

2.1.3 How to represent young people's views

There are very few studies available on how young people's views might be represented by EPs. There are also few studies pertaining to the topic of

interpretation of young people's views. There is only sufficient scope in the thesis to cover interpretation briefly, although it would be an interesting area of development in further research. Skivenes and Strandbu (2006) highlight the possibility of errors of interpretation when working with children, due to their varied language skills and development. Previous research (Danso et al., 2003 in Harding & Atkinson, 2009) highlighted the importance of using young people's actual words as opposed to paraphrasing, which may increase the likelihood of changing the meaning of their views. Previous studies (Harding & Atkinson, 2009) found a variance in the practice of EPs, possibly due to the focus group methodology. This study sought to gain a clearer understanding of EPs' practice.

2.2 The rationale for the research questions

2.2.1 Research question one

How are pupils' views (within mainstream secondary schools) being recorded and represented by EPs in their reports?

This research question provides further data on methods to gather young people's views. Previous research includes Harding and Atkinson's (2009) study which included a focus group of six EPs in a single local authority. This study is based on a larger sample size, of both EPs and educational psychology services. This increases the possibility of generalising from the questionnaire results.

Given the variety of tools which have been created to seek young people's views (e.g. MAPS (Forest, Pearpoint & O'Brien, 1996), PATH (Kusche & Greenberg, 1994) and the Student Report (Gersch, Holgate & Sigston, 1993), it

would be of interest to see which, if any, were identified as being used in practice by the participants.

2.2.2 Research question two

What underlying theories (if any) do EPs use (explicitly or implicitly) when obtaining pupils' views?

Ingram (2013) highlighted the importance of the underlying psychology that EPs use when obtaining the views of young people. She suggested that the variance in theories influenced the differences in interpretation from EP to EP and was problematic. In response to such criticism, Ingram (2013) also states that the use of frameworks could enable greater consistency. The questionnaire asks respondents about their practice regarding underlying psychology and frameworks and also about their practice regarding communicating the use of those theories and frameworks to others. Kelly (2006) asserts that the use of un-expressed psychology is problematic and suggests that EPs must consider how they communicate their use of psychology. Wicks (2013) also suggests that there is a lack of research into EPs' use of frameworks in their practice, which highlights the need for further research. The rationale for research question two, therefore, is to gather information regarding which theories and frameworks EPs utilise and then, how frequently their use is communicated to others.

2.2.3 Research question three

What are the challenges and benefits for EPs when representing pupils' views in their reports?

Many challenges and benefits have been listed in the previous research. Challenges include:

- the general lack of published practical guidance (Todd, 2012).
- children's capacities to make decisions (Mannion, 2007).
- seeking views from learners with communication difficulties or complex needs (Norwich et al., 2006).
- the differential power struggle associated with the advocacy process on behalf of some learners (McKay, 2014).
- the differential power struggle between professionals/adults and children and young people (Cook-Sather, 2006).
- the implications of the issue of representing the views of disaffected learners who may choose not to participate or be involved with professionals (Hartas, 2011).

Benefits include:

- young people may perceive themselves as more powerful if asked for their views and are therefore more powerful in relation to change issues, more resilient and adaptable to difficulties in later life (Sharp, 2014).
- children wish to be active participants (McKay, 2014).
- asking children and young people for their views is inclusive practice (Messiou, 2002).
- relationships between adults and children may be enhanced when learners are constructed as active participants (Steele, 2005).
- adults are enlightened by understanding the young person's perspective (Warshak, 2004).
- young people have a unique understanding of their own needs and what support they wish to receive (DfES, 2001).

The rationale in asking participants about the benefits and challenges was firstly to see if any different perspectives would be identified by practitioners from previous research on EPs report writing (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). It

also builds on previous research (Ingram, 2013) which did not discuss the positive and negative aspects of seeking children and young people's views.

Secondly, it was considered that it might highlight an area of development, for example a need for more effective methods of seeking views or representing them.

2.3 Contribution of findings

The study adds both breadth and depth by exploring views across educational psychology services utilising a questionnaire completed by seventy-three EPs in sixteen different educational psychology services and then carrying out interviews with eight EPs from different educational psychology services across Wales. The methodology also appears to offer a unique contribution in that it utilises interview methods to explore in-depth views and approaches of EPs' practice in relation to gathering and representing children and young people's views. The present study records a broader picture of EP practice in the topic of gathering and communicating young people's views, particularly when compared to previous studies which were undertaken within one educational psychology service (Harding & Atkinson, 2009).

Participants illustrated the use of a large number of different resources used to gather young people's views including self-created tools such as questionnaires. Tools with a theoretical basis in personal-construct psychology and solution-focused psychology were some of the responses most commonly identified. The findings supported previous studies which suggested that participants most frequently express young people's views in written form (Farrell et al., 2006). Discussion methods were most popular with participants as a way to elicit the

views of young people and this is in-line with Harding and Atkinson's findings (2009).

2.3.1 Contribution to knowledge

The study has extended previous studies on EPs' practice in the following areas:

- EPs' use of specific tools and strategies to elicit the views of young people, including those with communication difficulties.
- EPs' use of psychological theories and frameworks to support the gathering of young people's views.
- EPs' views on the challenges and benefits of eliciting and representing children's views.

Distinctive contributions made by the current study include the collation of participants' use of frameworks and psychological theories to support eliciting and recording young people's views. Personal-construct psychology and solution-focused psychology were most frequently mentioned, although a wide range of theories and frameworks were referenced which reflects diverse practice.

Another distinctive contribution made by the study could be argued to be the participants' suggestion that young people's views are vital to EPs' work. Previously, young people's views have been described as important (Harding & Atkinson, 2009). Another finding which supported previous research included the challenge of communicating pupils' views sensitively (Ingram, 2013).

2.3.2 Relevance to educational psychologists' practice

The relevance to EP practice is embedded throughout the topic and can be evidenced throughout the literature review, in the rationale for the research questions and in the article itself. The study concerns everyday professional practice for EPs in that it involves gathering and representing the views of young people.

The exploration of EPs' communication of psychological theories and frameworks to others is suggested to be an important consideration by some authors (e.g., Kelly 2006). Kelly suggested that EPs would benefit from an increased level of transparency in their work. The current study reflects a range of practice, with the majority of participants 'sometimes' communicating their use of frameworks and theories to others and three participants expressing that they never communicate those aspects of their practice to others.

Farrell et al. (2006) suggested that communicating pupil views in EP reports is a key feature of EP practice, therefore it could be argued that there is a strong rationale to describe practice in this area, including the tools that EPs use to elicit views.

There is a wealth of training happening across the country, particularly concerning person-centred planning within Wales (Welsh Government, 2015b). Within local authorities there is a general drive towards stakeholder involvement, which can be referenced in national policy (e.g., DfE, 2014). This could be argued to serve as a rationale for this study and future research in this area.

2.4 Contribution to the development of the research practitioner

2.4.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis fits can be described as the act of building themes from the data in which the researcher is an active participant. Therefore, the researcher can be described as sculpting the data into a particular shape, as a sculptor would mould clay. This way of describing thematic analysis supports the epistemological and ontological position of humans constructing meaning, rather than being passive in the production of knowledge. The researcher suggests that the notion of themes emerging from the data set is a term misused in thematic analysis research. Describing the emergence of themes would fail to acknowledge the researcher's active role in constructing them. The researcher also recognises that the thematic analysis completed may not be the only possible way of interpreting the relevance of the data.

2.4.2 Use of NVivo

The computer software 'NVivo' was used to carry out thematic analysis, as opposed to using a paper-based system. The strengths and limitations of NVivo are outlined below.

Strengths

One advantage of using the software is the themes can be listed together in a new screen and tracked back to their data source (interview participant) instantly. Codes can be applied using key words or phrases which is referred to as automatic coding. This can be helpful or examining the use of key words or terms. The retrieval of codes is simple and quotes can be displayed on one screen organised under each code. The software also produces models and diagrams of the analysis.

Limitations

Codes within the data set need to be carefully labelled so that multiple codes with similar names are not produced which, can make the data set more difficult to manage. Currently, NVivo does not have a feature to print the sources (interview transcripts) with the themes displayed on the same print out.

2.4.3 Coding partner

Due to the personal nature of the construction within the data set, it was helpful to discuss the themes arising with others in a critical and explanatory manner. This helps give a greater confidence in the interpretation of the data and affects the confidence within which generalisations can be made.

2.5 Dissemination of knowledge

When asking principal educational psychologists to act as gatekeepers and allow for their educational psychology service to take part in the study, they were advised that they would receive feedback from the study. A summary debriefing report regarding the research findings will be made available to the PEP at each educational psychology service following completion of the thesis.

3. Critical Account of the Research Practitioner

3.1 Inception of the research topic

The researcher became interested in the variation between EPs' practice during the process of applying for the Doctorate in Educational Psychology. The researcher visited multiple educational psychology services within London to expand her knowledge of the role in the hope that this would strengthen her application. One of the aspects of EP practice discussed regularly throughout the interview process and whilst training has been how different the role can be, depending the educational psychology service and the individual EP.

Particular frameworks appear to shape practice further, for example adoption of the consultation framework might mean that the EP chooses to meet with a teacher rather than meet with an individual pupil. Despite acknowledging the effect that frameworks might have, there seem to be multiple variables which affect the way an EP chooses to practice. The researcher was interested in whether some of the variability in practice is related to which training course the EP attended. This idea was discounted as the researcher made a preference for exploring an aspect of day-to-day practice if possible.

The researcher was motivated to examine the use of tools to support gathering young people's views (e.g., Ideal-Self, Moran, 2001). These tools were explored initially on the training course and then further in practice during the placements. The researcher was struck by how different the type of views gathering were depending on which tools were used and hypothesised that the use of underlying psychology would also affect the views gathered.

By undertaking different placements in different parts of Wales, the researcher was able to read and reflect on a number of different report writing styles and the other methods of recording young people's views (e.g., consultation records). Therefore, consistency of practice was another aspect of interest and this has also been reflected in various literature (e.g., Fox 2015). The researcher feels that inconsistency in EP practice is a particular uncomfortable learning aspect of the EP training. The ability to make individual decisions that can be explained using informed reasoning and supported by psychology could be argued to be a difficult learning process. The researcher feels that another layer of complexity is when two EPs would possibly make two very different decisions when faced with the same evidence and that both would be defendable. It could be argued that a more uniformed and consistent approach to practice would provide a more comfortable learning for a trainee, although it is also acknowledged that the prescribed level of consistency would not necessarily result in dynamic practice.

Additional aspects of the research, such as the challenge of interpretation and EPs use of frameworks and were developed through the process of the literature review.

3.1.1 Carrying out the research

There were similarities between the researcher and applied psychologist roles regarding the organisational aspects in speaking to principal EPs and more generally, utilising effective communication to recruit participants for the study. There was a need for positive relationships in order to complete the research.

An additional challenge was carrying out the questionnaire elements whilst working as a trainee EP in an educational psychology service which was involved in the study. Various EPs asked for details and further clarification on the questionnaires and wanted to speak about the design and methodological aspects of the study. Various colleagues also wished to discuss techniques for gathering young people's views. Whilst these challenges were relatively straightforward to overcome (making notes of requests and fulfilling them once the data collection phase was completed), the responses to the challenges had to be thought through carefully to make sure that the researcher was not contaminating the study.

It is possible that contamination affecting participants' comments in interview occurred, through discussion with other EPs following completion of the questionnaire. This is more likely to be the case as there was a significant period (approximately 2 to 8 weeks) between the participants' completion of the questionnaire and the interviews taking place. It may have helped to limit the possible contamination by asking participants to fill out the questionnaire directly before the interview. However, this would have made distributing the questionnaires before the interviews took place problematic. Participants would have needed to express their interest in taking part in the interview and then the researcher could have held the interviews prior to distributing the questionnaires to all educational psychology services.

3.1.2 The impact of the research upon the researcher's practice

The researcher has become aware of a greater variety of methods to gain children and young people's views, including innovative techniques such as visual annual reviews developed by Hayes (2004). Developed to support young people with limited communication or significant learning difficulties, visual

annual reviews are suggested to be child-centred and accessible. Hayes (2004) suggests that they were developed to meet challenges for schools to support young people with communication or learning needs to give their views.

In addition, the process of writing the thesis has increased the researcher's awareness of the ethical aspects of gathering and communicating pupils' views. Interviewing the participants also highlighted the need to be sensitive in reporting young people's views and the researcher has discussed these aspects within professional supervision. The researcher has become motivated to discuss techniques and approaches more frequently with colleagues to share practice and problem solve challenges related to seeking or communicating young people's views. The researcher would also be interested in carrying out further research on the topic in the future.

3.2 Ethical issues

The ethical issues in the study involved gathering informed consent from participants and ensuring anonymity of participants. Ethical issues in practice were related to the researcher's familiarity with some participants in the study. To aim to lessen the difficulties created by maintaining the role of trainee EP and the researcher within an educational psychology service, participants were deterred from discussing the research or their responses with me on the basis that it might have contaminated the results. However, occasionally participants still provided names and extra details on their responses which identified them. These identifying features were all removed, so that anonymity was ensured.

There was also the ethical issue of what participants might and might not have shared on the questionnaires knowing that there is a relationship with the researcher which is on-going in some cases. This could also be argued to be the case with some of the interview participants.

With hindsight, it could be suggested that it was inappropriate to carry out the research in the placement authority. However, this would have affected the sample size significantly, as the authority was one of the larger educational psychology teams in Wales. As the questionnaires were anonymous, the researcher is unable to comment on whether there is any difference in quality or content.

3.3 Epistemological position as a research practitioner

The chosen epistemological position of the researcher was constructivism. Bryman (2012) defines constructivism as "an ontological position that asserts the social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors" (p. 33). Constructivism proposes that knowledge is socially constructed and that there is no one objective truth, rather that there are multiple versions of social reality. It could be argued that the constructivist framework, which emphasises the meaning of social relationships, is ideally placed to explore topics regarding the discourse and interaction between EPs and children.

The ontological approach of the researcher was relativist. This position emphasises the relative, subjective value of the data, rather than an absolute truth or validity. Relativism suggests that truth is related to an individual's social, cultural and moral context and his or her previous experiences.

3.3.1 Social constructionist research

Social constructionist research is constructed by Robson (2011) as a mainstream qualitative approach. The researcher was guided by the framework COMOIRA (The Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action) (Gameson, Rhydderch, Ellis & Carroll, 2003) throughout the thesis, in terms of supervision,

reviewing the work, constructing research questions, timescales and planning, carrying out the research and writing the thesis.

"Social constructionism indicates a view that social properties are constructed through interactions between people, rather than having a separate existence" (Robson, 2011, p. 24). Researchers who take an epistemological stance based on social constructionism emphasise that there is not a single reality. Therefore, it is the task of the researcher to understand participants' constructions of events and knowledge and construct a reality together with the participant through the research (Robson, 2011). A popular method for researchers to use is interviews, to allow the researcher to seek and understand multiple constructions.

3.3.2 The Constructionist Model of Informed and Reasoned Action

In the researcher's practice COMOIRA is frequently utilised as a guiding framework, for example whilst completing casework and during supervision. COMOIRA also was pertinent to the process of writing the thesis. Social constructionism underpins the researcher's understanding of the role of the EP as investigating and understanding other people's constructions and co-constructing understanding with the key service users. The researcher felt that social constructionism would be an important aspect of the research with EPs.

Informed reasoned action was particularly pertinent when considering the design of the questionnaire and the interview questions. Crucially, the questions should only ask the EPs about topics which were already established in the literature review.

3.4 Methodological decisions

3.4.1 Alternative methodologies

One approach considered at length was focus groups, which were previously utilised in the research regarding EPs' practice around the pupil voice (Harding & Atkinson, 2009).

The strengths of focus groups include the following:

- they can provide a broader range of information than individual interviews.
- they can provide a group perspective, rather than individual accounts.
- focus groups can provide a shared understanding of a topic.
- the interaction with a focus group can enable clearer understanding through the questioning and discussions between participants.

The limitations of focus groups include:

- the possibility that some members of the group will dominate the discussion.
- the possibility that some members of the group will feel hesitant to disagree with the dominant view of the group.
- participants may feel pressurised to give describe best practice (rather than everyday practice) in front of colleagues.

3.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a preferable methodology to focus groups for the following reasons.

- The research sought to gather both a broad and an in-depth perspective of the topic, which the researcher felt would be best achieved using a questionnaire and then semi-structured interviews.

- One of the limitations of focus groups is the possibility of group effects, which can create a degree of social bias, causing the participants to give a socially desirable response and to agree with the other participants.
- Individual interviews appeared to be more consistent with the researcher's constructionist epistemological position. "Different practitioners and service users are likely to construct their own 'convincing' and 'powerful' versions of events, which they might consider to be more accurate and more appropriate than those of other people" (Gameson & Rhydderch, 2008, p. 101). It was hoped that the use of interviews would allow the participants to share their individual constructions.

3.5 Questionnaire

The researcher wanted to explore practice across a large area with the intention of including many different educational psychology services and EPs and a questionnaire was ideal for these purposes. The questionnaire could be provided online and via post and it was hoped that the aspect of anonymity would allow respondents to feel comfortable sharing their practice. In addition it was hoped that the questionnaire would be straightforward and take a short amount of time to complete. It was hoped that the various positive aspects of using a questionnaire would increase the sample size. There were two main challenges associated with the design of the questionnaire and analysis of the questionnaire data which are outlined below.

3.5.1 Designing a reliable and valid measure

Designing a reliable and valid measure was the most challenging part of the research process due to the difficulty of designing a questionnaire. Gillham (2000) agrees that the construction of a questionnaire that will produce useful

data is difficult. To overcome the difficulties, the following strategies were used:

- the previous literature surrounding the topic was used in the phrasing of the questions.
- a pilot study collected feedback on the questionnaire and the results were analysed to give an example of the data that would be produced.
- a range of closed and more open questions were used, including occasions where participants were able to suggest their own 'other' responses. This was partly to acknowledge the questionnaire limitations in not being able to provide all possible responses that participants might want to give and also to acknowledge the participants' own constructions of the subject matter.

3.5.2 Questionnaire data analysis

The data analysis for the questionnaires was problematic, due to the responses given by the participants. At times, it appeared that the participants had not read the questions fully. Some participants offered responses which did not relate to the question asked or related to the question asked but did not provide an answer. As a result, the data manipulation was complex. A full account of the data had to be provided, yet the data had to be organised to read in a straightforward manner. The results section required careful organisation due to the complex nature of the responses. The questionnaire was subjected to a pilot process which did not reveal any concerns regarding the wording or ambiguity of the questions asked.

Many of the items within the questionnaire allowed participants to add to their answer, including some open questions. However it is possible that the participants wished to discuss their practice regarding gathering and

representing pupils' views more widely. This was supported by the more in-depth interviews which were carried out and it is possible that many of the points made by the respondents of the questionnaire were restated and participants were able to discuss the topic in much more detail.

3.5.3 Providing an online and postal questionnaire

At a time when electronic processes are frequently replacing paper based tasks, the researcher posited that giving the options of both postal and online questionnaires would increase the return-rate with the expectation that the electronic version would be preferred by some EPs. Additionally it was thought that the electronic version might look more attractive and might be quicker to complete. However, only eleven responses were received online, whereas sixty-two responses were received by post. In a comparison of online and on-paper survey response-rate data, Nulty (2008) suggests that online surveys frequently have a lower response rate than paper questionnaires. Nulty compared eight studies and found that the response rate online was thirty-three percent compared with fifty-six percent online. Nulty (2008) suggests that the most popular way to improve the return-rate is to send follow up emails, although simultaneously he suggests that this may irritate participants.

4. Summary

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

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6. Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1: Gatekeeper letter to the Principal Educational Psychologist

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

Dear Principal Educational Psychologist

I am a trainee educational psychologist in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University and I am in the second year of my Doctorate in Educational Psychology. As part of the programme I am required to carry out a research project for a Thesis and I am interested in exploring the methods that EPs use to obtain and represent children and young people's views. I am writing to enquire whether you would be willing for me to distribute a copy of the questionnaire and covering letter to all members of the service. If they wish, there will be an opportunity to take part in an interview at a later date. All EP services within Wales are being invited to take part in this research.

The project is supervised by Gillian Rhydderch, Academic Director of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme, and the proposed project has ethical approval from the School of Psychology Ethics Committee, Cardiff University.

The questionnaire should take no more than 10 minutes to complete and it is anonymous. Copies of the questionnaires are included with this letter but are also available to be filled in online and information about this is included on the

invitation letter. The data will be obtained and analysed and the analysis will be presented in a Thesis. No individual will be able to be identified in the Thesis. The data will be retained by Cardiff University indefinitely.
A confidential report summarising the findings of the research will be provided to the EP services that participate in the study, upon completion of the project.

Given the current reforms in education concerning person-centred planning, it is increasingly important for young people's views to be sought and communicated effectively.

Some authors (Aston, 2010) highlight the small scale of the research regarding gathering young people's views and communicating them to others, when considering the move towards child centred practice. At the time of writing, this study is unique in that is exploring EPs' practice regarding young people's views across multiple local authority EPSs.

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

Regards,

Meryl Newton

Researcher

Meryl Newton
Trainee Educational Psychologist
c/o Clair Southard
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
Park Place

Gillian Rhydderch
Academic Director (DEdPsy)

School of Psychology
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CF10 3AT

Email: daviesmj7@cardiff.ac.uk

Cardiff
CF10 3AT
Telephone number: +44(0)29 2087 5493
Email: RhydderchGA@cardiff.ac.uk

In case of complaints, please contact the Ethics committee:

Secretary of the Ethics Committee
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT
Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 0360
Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

6.2 Appendix 2: Consent form for the Principal Educational Psychologist

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

Educational Psychologists' methods of obtaining and recording the 'voice of the child': In mainstream secondary schools in Wales

I understand that participation in this project will involve EPs in this service answering a questionnaire about methods of obtaining and recording children and young people's views and that participants will also be invited to take part in a semi-structured interview on the same topic.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that EPs can choose not to fill in the questionnaire, or to leave out questions they do not wish to respond to.

I understand that EPs are free to ask the researcher any questions via email before they take part in this study.

I understand that the data gathered in the study will be analysed and presented in a Thesis prepared as part of the researcher's Doctorate in Educational Psychology. It will not be possible to identify any individual's data in the Thesis.

I understand that the information provided will be held anonymously, so that it is impossible to trace this information back to any participants individually. All data will be held securely in a locked cabinet in the researcher's EP office.

I understand that, in accordance with the Data Protection Act, this information may be retained indefinitely.

I, _____ (NAME) consent for the EP service to participate in the study conducted by Meryl Newton, School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Gillian Rhydderch.

Signed (PEP/ gatekeeper): Date:

Signed (researcher): Date:

6.3 Appendix 3: Invitation letter to the educational psychologists

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

Dear Educational Psychologist

I am a trainee educational psychologist in the School of Psychology, Cardiff University and I am in the second year of my Doctorate in Educational Psychology. As part of the programme I am required to carry out a research project for a Thesis and I am interested in exploring the methods that EPs use to obtain and represent children and young people's views. I am writing to ask you to complete a questionnaire as part of this research, and furthermore, whether you would like to take part in an interview to explore these issues in more depth. All of the EP services within Wales are being invited to take part in this research.

The project is supervised by Gillian Rhydderch, Academic Director of the Doctorate in Educational Psychology programme, and the proposed project has ethical approval from the School of Psychology Ethics Committee, Cardiff University.

The questionnaire should take no more than 10 minutes to complete and it is anonymous. The data will obtained will be analysed and the analysis will be presented in a Thesis. No individual will be able to be identified in the Thesis. The data will be retained by Cardiff University indefinitely.

A confidential report summarising the findings of the research will be provided to the EP services that participate in the study, upon completion of the project. Given the current reforms in education concerning person-centred planning, it is increasingly important for young people's views to be sought and communicated effectively.

Some authors (Aston, 2010) highlight the small scale of the research regarding gathering young people's views and communicating them to others, when considering the gravitation towards child centred practice. At the time of writing, this study is unique in that is exploring EPs practice regarding young people's views across multiple authorities.

- This questionnaire is optional. If you do not wish to complete it please leave it blank and place it into the addressed envelope provided. It will be impossible to tell who has, and who has not, completed the questionnaire and you do not need to give a reason for deciding not to fill in the questionnaire.
- The questionnaire is anonymous and no individual EPs can be identified once the questionnaires are submitted. The questionnaire should not take more than 5 to 10 minutes to complete.
- If there is a question that you do not wish to answer, please miss it out. The data collected, and the outcomes of the research, are not in any way linked to appraisal or other performance monitoring of staff.

- There will be no adverse consequences of not participating. The EP service will not be identifiable in the report and no participant will be able to be identified from the Thesis or summary report.
- If you decide to complete the paper questionnaire, please place the completed questionnaire in the addressed envelope provided and post it back to the researcher.

The paper questionnaire is available via the PEP and the online version can be found at the following link: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/B9VLCDP. If you are completing the online questionnaire, please be advised that the IP addresses of the computers used are not being recorded and that it will not be possible to identify the computer used.

If you are willing to be interviewed as part of this project, please contact the researcher either by email or, alternatively, please post the reply slip (enclosed) to the researcher. Please be aware that the interviews analysed using thematic analysis, the themes will be the researcher's own constructions and only short, anonymous quotes will be used to illuminate the themes.

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

Regards,

Meryl Newton

Researcher

Meryl Newton
Trainee Educational Psychologist
c/o Clair Southard
School of Psychology

Gillian Rhydderch
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Email: RhydderchGA@cardiff.ac.uk

In case of complaints, please contact the Ethics committee:

Secretary of the Ethics Committee
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT
Tel: +44 (0)29 2087 0360
Email: psychethics@cardiff.ac.uk

Name:

EPS:

Email:

I would like to take part in an interview at a later date

Preferred location:

☐ Cardiff University

☐ Local authority location (please specify:

_____)

Please specify any dates that would be **convenient** for interview: (from late June - August)

1.

2.

3.

Please return to:

Meryl Newton
Trainee Educational Psychologist
c/o Clair Southard
School of Psychology
Cardiff University
Tower Building
Park Place
Cardiff
CF10 3AT

Email: daviesmj7@cardiff.ac.uk

6.4 Appendix 4: Questionnaire for participants

Educational Psychologists' Practice: Gathering and Representing Young People's Views

Please answer the questions in relation to your work with pupils in **mainstream secondary schools**

Q1: Which approaches do you use to gather young people's views in mainstream secondary schools?					
Discussion based methods (including direct questioning)	☐	Self-report scales	☐	Indirect methods – using past reports to track a young person's journey through education	☐
Task related procedures (sentence completion tasks, questionnaires, reading motivation inventories)	☐	Therapeutic based approaches (e.g. personal construct psychology tasks)	☐	Asking parents or familiar adults about a young person's preferences and dislikes	☐
Skills profiles	☐	Solution focused methods	☐	Person centred planning approaches	☐
Other: (please specify)					
Q2: Please name any specific resources you use to gather young people's views in mainstream secondary schools.					
Q3: Do you record how the young person's views were ascertained?					
Yes	☐	No	☐	Dependent on circumstances	☐
Please specify:					
----PLEASE TURN OVER----					

Q4: Do you make use of the young person's actual words or paraphrase? (please base this on the majority of your practice)					
Actual words	☐	Paraphrase	☐	Both	☐

Q5: Which frameworks and/or underlying psychology do you make use of when gathering young people's views?

Q6: Do you ensure others are aware of the frameworks and psychological theories/models that inform your approach to gathering young people's views? (please circle)				
Never	Sometimes	Half of the time	Most of the time	Always

Q7: How do you express the young person's views?			
As part of a written document (report, advice, consultation documents etc)	☐	Verbally, to the school, parents/ guardians and other systems?	☐
Other:(please specify)			

--- END OF QUESTIONNAIRE ---

Thank you **very** much for your time

6.5 Appendix 5: Consent form for the interview participants

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

Educational Psychologists' methods of obtaining and recording the 'voice of the child': In mainstream secondary schools in Wales

I understand that participation in this interview will involve answering questions about obtaining and representing children and young people's views.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can refuse to answer any question, or withdraw from the study at any time, without giving a reason.

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

I understand that the data gathered in the study will be analysed and presented in a Thesis prepared as part of the researcher's Doctorate in Educational Psychology. It will not be possible to identify any individual's data in the Thesis.

I understand that the information provided will be held totally anonymously, so that it is impossible to trace this information back to any participants individually.

I understand that, in accordance with the Data Protection Act, this information may be retained indefinitely by Cardiff University.

I agree to be recorded by tape to enable transcription of the interview. I understand that this information will be anonymised when it is transcribed two weeks after the interview, but I can ask for my data to be removed, without giving a reason, up until the data is anonymised.

I, _____ (NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Meryl Newton, School of Psychology, Cardiff University with the supervision of Gillian Rhydderch.

Signed (participant): Date:

EPS:

Signed (researcher): Date:

6.6 Appendix 6: Semi-structured interview schedule

Semi-structured interview schedule

Preamble: Hello, my name is _____, thank you for attending this interview. The purpose of the interview is to explore in more detail, some aspects relating to gathering and communicating pupils' views in mainstream secondary schools. The interview is expected to last roughly 20 - 30 minutes. Do you have a specific end time that I need to bear in mind? As you know, the interview is being recorded for the purpose of transcription. The interview will be transcribed and anonymised within a fortnight. Prior to the interview being anonymised, you are free to request that your interview data is withdrawn from the study. You can also choose not to answer any individual questions during the interview. Do you have any questions before we begin? … Are you happy to continue?…Thank you.

1. How do you actively seek to include young people's views in written reports?

Prompt: Can you tell me a bit more about that?

2. What are the benefits of gaining young people's views?

Prompt: Is there anything else that you would like to add?

3. What are the challenges of gaining young people's views?

Prompt: Could you explain that aspect further?

4. What are the benefits of communicating young people's views in your reports?

Prompt: Could you describe that in more detail?

5. What are the challenges of communicating young people's views in your reports?

Prompt: Could you say more about that aspect?

6. Do you use any specific tools to elicit the views of young people with communication difficulties?

Prompt: Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Finishing prompt: Is there anything that I have left out that you think is important?

6.7 Appendix 7: Debrief to participants

Educational Psychologists' practice: Obtaining and representing the 'Voice of the Young Person.'

Thank you for completing the questionnaire and/or interview relating to the study. The study aims to gather Educational Psychologists' (EP) methods of obtaining and recording children's views. EPs working within local authorities in Wales will also be asked about their use of psychology and frameworks to gather children's views with regards to students in key stages 4 and 5. The interview questions aimed to gather information about EPs' views on the advantages and challenges of gathering and communicating young people's views.

The research questions include the following:

a. How are pupils' views (within mainstream secondary schools) being recorded and represented by EPs in their reports?
b. What underlying theories (if any) do EPs use (explicitly or implicitly) when obtaining pupils' views?
c. What are the challenges and benefits for EPs when representing pupils' views in their reports?

The study aims to add to the research regarding young people's views. The study extends previous research (Harding & Atkinson, 2009) by gathering data across multiple local authority services. The researcher considers that the current climate of change regarding pupil centred approaches, could mean that young people's views are an important research area.

Data will be held anonymously and only short, anonymous quotes from the interviews will be used to illuminate the themes identified as a result of thematic analysis. The data gathered in the study will be analysed and presented in a Thesis prepared as part of the researcher's Doctorate in Educational Psychology. It will not be possible to identify any individual's data in the Thesis.

Thank you again for participating in the study, please let me know if you require further information.

Regards,

Meryl Newton

Researcher

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References

Harding, E., & Atkinson, C. (2009). How EPs record the voice of the child. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, *25*(2), 125-137.

6.8 Appendix 8: Raw data (from the questionnaire responses)

P's	Q1: Which techniques and strategies do you use to gather young people's views?										Q2: Please name any specific resources you use to gather young people's views in mainstream secondary schools	Q3: Do you record how the young person's views were ascertained?				Q4: Do you make use of the young person's actual words or paraphrase?			Q5: Which frameworks and underlying psychology do you make use of when gathering young people's views?	Q6: Do you inform others of the frameworks etc that inform your approach to gathering yp's views?					Q7: How do you express the yp's views?		
	DM	SR	I	TR	TA	AP	SP	SF	PCP	Other:		Yes	No	Cir	Specify:	Act	Para	Both		Nev	Some	Half	Most	Always	Written	Verbal	Other:
P1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		BG steem, student report, self image questionnaire			1	Depending on circumstances, they are sometimes discussed with parents but no written in report, following obtaining consent from the young person.			1	CBT, Solution-focused				1		1	1	
P2	1	1	1		1	1		1	1		SQD's, Happiness scales, the 'blob' tree, school refuser questionnaire	1						1	Personal construct psychology				1		1	1	
P3	1	1			1	1		1			Self image profile, scaling (SFBT)	1						1	Personal Construct Psych, Humanistic,		1				1	1	

																		COMOIRA								
P4	1	1	1		1	1		1			No response given	1			Reference is made within the report in order to clarify source (direct always preferred method)	1			Basic principles of solution-focused, CBT and Personal Construct Psych approaches where pupil feels that he/she can share their views in a non-judgemental environment. By gaining the pupils perspective, thoughts/ideas future work can be discussed and planned in collaboration.					1	1	1	
P5	1	1		1		1		1	1		Attitude to school questionnaire, psychological sense of school/family membership, SDQ	1						1	Solution focused	1					1	1	
P6	1		1	1	1	1		1			Motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioural therapy and think good feel good. Stages of change model (Prochaska).	1			Views are written down by the EP unless the young person has been asked to complete a task related procedure. If this happens, they are invited to write down their views or whether they wish to			1	COMOIRA - active listening. Positive psychology. Humanistic psychology. Consultation approach. Solution focused therapy. Personal construct theory.		1				1	1	

														discuss verbally.				Intrinsic/extrinsic motivation. Elements of the person centred approach.											
P 7	1	1	1		1	1		1		Lots of PCP, ideal person, SIP, scaling, blobs etc	Discussion with staff and parents (pupils often will tell them things they might not tell me)	1			Sometimes I scan a drawing onto a report. I often say which psychological approach I have used e.g. PCP/SFBT etc.			1	COMOIRA. Attribution theory etc esp Dweck and self theories. Rogers, URP, empathic listening etc. Personal Construct Psych. Identity - theories around positive Erickson etc. Development of identity/task of adolescence.			1			1	1	
P 8	1	1	1	1		1		1			Self esteem inventories, my own adapted pupil questionnaire	1			There is a section in my reports - pupils views and under this heading I always record how the young person provided the information.			1	Sometimes solution focused. Very occasionally personal construct psychology techniques.				1		1	1	
P 9	1	1	1	1	1	1		1			To ensure that my assessment is robust and that their voice is heard - a matter of ethics.			1	If it's formal, I will detail the tools I used.			1	SFBT Personal construct psych		1				1	1	
P 10	1	1		1	1	1		1	1	Role play, group work/	Talkabout books, ELSA resources,	1			yes, in the report/pupil letter.			1	COMOIRA, Solution focused,			1			1	1	often both,

									activities to generate constructions on specific issues e.g. activities from 'talkabout'	resiliency scales, SDQ.							scaling, person centred planning, personal construct.								sometimes one of the two - get consent from the child first.
P 11	1		1		1	1		1	1		SF questioning, ideal self	1			Write them down but always check with the young person if they are happy for me to share their views with others and that they are happy for me to record them.			1	Personal Construct Psych, SF, social constructivism, child development		1				1	1	
P 12	1	1			1			1			Scaling, ideal self PCP, strengths and difficulties questionnaires, CBT	1			just within body of report, also keeping original notes, scales etc.			1	Solution focused approaches, Personal Construct Psych through ideal self, CBT		1				1	1	
P 13	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1		Psychological profile, as recommended by BPS, our own EPS sheets for specific areas: ASD, DCD	1			staff member, to myself, to parents, via another peer/peer close to pupil - always checked out with pupil in sensitive manner.			1	Brief therapy, narrative therapy, reflective, personal construct psychology, personal centred planning.				1		1	1	
P 14	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1		In my shoes' transition interview, person centred resources from Helen	1				1			My main concern is to ensure that I have rapport with the child or young person.		1				1		Therapeutic letter checking back with the child

										Sanderson associates, resiliency scale - Prince, EP portfolio (GL assessment) - various checklists.							Usually the starting point in a process guided by solution focused thinking and motivational interviewing. Ideally I want to understand what sense of meaning the child has made of their experiences so far; what is important to them and for them ie person centred planning.									or young person.
P 15	1	1	1			1				Emotional literacy checklist, Faupel.			1				1	Solution focused sometimes, cognitive psychology		1				1	1	
P 16	1	1			1	1				Genograms, sociograms.	No response given			1		1			Systemic practice (tracking family patterns)		1				1	1	
P 17	1	1				1		1	1		No response given			1				1	Personal construct theory, social constructionism, solution focused techniques		1				1	1	
P 18	1	1	1		1	1		1			No response given	1						1	social constructionism, personal construct theory, solution focused methods.		1				1	1	

P 19	1		1	1	1	1			1		One page profiles, drawing the ideal self (PCP)	1			This is usually included in a written report after the visit. If there is a one page profile I will request a copy for the pupils' EPS file.			1	I trained at the Tavi so my frameworks/underlying psychology will stem from systemic family therapy and psychodynamic approaches. I also try to incorporate BSFT where possible.		1				1	1	In a letter to the pupil after the session.
P 20	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1		B/G steem, resources in psychology portfolio, Helen sanderson resources for person centred, scaling, miracle question, beck youth inventory, resiliency scales, BAS, WIAT	1						1	Personal construct psychology, self-efficacy, social constructionism, maslows hierarchy of needs, theory of planned behaviour, theory of reasoned action, choice theory.				1		1	1	
P 21	1	1	1			1	1	1			Strengths and difficulties questionnaire	1						1	Development psychology and actual young person's behaviour		1				1		
P 22	1	1		1	1	1		1	1		SF consultation meetings, myself as a learner, personal construct psychology - lets	1						1	SF approaches, positive psychology, Personal Construct Psych				1		1	1	

										talk.																
P 23					1			1	1		Solution focused interviewing, PCP - laddering, triadic elicitation, myself as a learner, all about me questions, BECKS	1			on report it will be stated how views are ascertained	1			solution focused, positive psychology		1				1	1	
P 24	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1		Achenback youth report, conners self-report, becks youth inventory, self-image scales	1			name resource and how and where it was completed			1	social constructionism, solution focused / scaling				1		1	1	
P 25	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	psychometric tests to clarify cognitive abilities, observations	Helen Sanderson PCP resources	1			I always write in my report how I gathered info from the young person			1	Person centred planning		1				1		
P 26	1	1	1			1		1	1		No response given			1	If it's for a stat assessment then defo do, in normal consultation reports it depends how much time I've got to write up report.	1			Interactive frameworks, motivational psychology/interviewing styles		1				1	1	
P 27	1				1	1		1	1		No response given	1						1	Person centred planning		1				1		
P 28	1	1	1	1		1		1	1		Ackenback youth self-report form, social skills checklists (talkabout, sue spencer etc) BG steem checklist,	1						1	no response		1				1		

										spence anxiety scale, self-image profile (SIP-C & SIP-A), Connors-3 self report form, beck scale.														
P 29	1		1		1	1		1	1		Self report questionnaires - strength and difficulties questionnaire, scaling	1			When I write a consultation report I ensure that the young person's views are recorded in the body of the report and how they were ascertained e.g personal construct methods.			1	Solution-focused approaches - this approach is the one most generally used in our service. We use scaling questions (e.g. on a scale of 0 -10, how are things in school at the moment?), Personal construct psychology - use of pyramiding and laddering.				1		1		
P 30	1	1	1		1	1		1	1		Beck youth inventories, B/S steem, locus of control scale, SDQ.	1						1	Personal construct, solution focused, social constructionism		1				1	1	
P 31				1		1	1		1	Personal interviews	No response given	1			psychologists report			1	No response					1	1		

P 32	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	sometimes picture based approaches (eg with pupils who have limited language) - presenting choices. Also, getting pupils to draw. I have done a focus group in the past to gather views on an intervention (R time).	Ideal self, self-image profile, spence anxiety scale, MALS, 'I can do it' questionnaire, becks inventory, strengths and difficulties, various questions from educational psychology portfolio (e.g school and school work inventory)	1						1	Person centred planning, personal construct psychology, social constructionism, narrative approaches, SFBT, positive psychology		1				1	1	On occasions, I would write a therapeutic letter to the pupil as a record of the work we completed, and the views they expressed.
P 33						1			1		No response given			1			1		Solution focused		1				1	1	
P 34	1	1			1			1			No response given	1			I would record if personal construct psychology, or rating scale.		1		personal construct psychology, solution focused		1				1	1	
P 35	1	1		1	1	1		1	1		Usually use of direct questioning, often involving scaling but within the COMOIRA model.			1				1	Use of COMOIRA, use of personal construct psychology, use of solution focused based methods, more recently IDPs			1			1		
P 36	1	1	1	1	1	1		1			rating scales, drawing the ideal	1						1	solution focused approaches,		1				1	1	

										self							personal construct psychology									
P 37	1	1			1	1			1		Ideal self, lets talk software by Simon Burnham	1			As part of the written report I would reference the approach/resource.			1	Personal construct psychology - Kelly - 'If you want to know what someone thinks, ask them'						1	1	1	
P 38	1		1		1	1		1	1	Observation	No response given			1				1	Personal construct psychology	1					1	1	
P 39	1	1		1	1	1		1	1		MALS, BG steem, becks inventory			1	Yes interview or using a specific tool with detail this			1	Problem solving framework, person centred, personal construct psychology, solution focused		1				1	1	
P 40	1					1		1	1		No response given			1	I would always do this unless the pupil disagreed			1	Solution focused methods	1					1	1	
P 41	1	1		1	1	1		1	1		Various from the psychological toolkit, Connors self report			1	Sometimes reflecting on how info was gathered is valuable to the process. I usually feedback via a therapeutic letter which has info about our dialogue. The method is not always explicitly fed back to the school/parent. Confidentiality sometimes impacts			1	Person Centred Planning, attachment theory, social construction/Personal construct psychology		1				1	1	Dependent on purpose and agreement with individual regarding confidentiality.

														on what and how info is shared.														
P 42	1	1			1			1	1		BG steem which gives an indication of self esteem and locus of control	1				1			personal construct psychology, social interactionist theories		1				1	1	
P 43		1			1	1		1			questionnaires, scales	1			Any work we undertake is recorded in consultation minutes.			1	solution focused approach				1		1		
P 44	1	1		1	1	1		1			Lets talk (simon burnham 2008) MALS, self image profile for adolescents (SIP-A)	1		1	Not if it's direct questioning			1	Personal construct psychology		1				1	1	
P 45	1	1	1	1	1	1		1			Resiliency scales, beck youth inventory, 5 can make me lose control	1				1			Personal construct psych, positive psych, attachment theory, development psych, solution focused approaches, monsen et al framework			1			1	1	
P 46	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	through the stat process - perhaps using drawings to elicit views, games and puppets and	Strengths and difficulties questionnaire, talkabout resources, socialise, BG steem, beck youth inventory,	1						1	Person centred planning, attribution theory, attachment theory, resiliency theories, social constructionism, theories of self				1		1	1	via a website (ICT)

									buttons.	puppets							esteem, personal construct psychology, eco systems, social learning theory									
P 47	1	1	1		1	1		1	1	Often own resources aimed at helping YP to be comfortable answering Qs and eliciting their true thoughts/feelings			1	In more formal circumstances eg stat assessment I would state how their views were ascertained.			1	Principles from PCC approach, motivational interviewing, restorative approaches if appropriate		1				1	1	both of the above also when appropriate: written piece from YP, advocate eg TA.
P 48	1		1			1		1	1	PCP resources. Round robins from staff.			1				1	Emotional developmental levels with regard to trauma/experiences, solution focused, social learning theory.			1			1	1	
P 49	1	1			1			1	1	Good day/bad day tool, working/not working, ideal self, strengths and aspirations tool, PATH			1		1			personal construct, humanistic psychology, self determination, positive psychology, person centred thinking		1				1	1	in one page profiles
P 50		1			1	1		1	1	Butler self rating scale, person centred planning tools.	1						1	positive psychology, person centred thinking, self determination				1		1	1	

																	theory, humanistic psychology													
P 51	1					1		1	1		No response given			1	If important for the purpose of the report			1	Person centred, solution focused, personal construct		1					1	1			
P 52	1		1			1		1	1		No response given	1			I specify this in any written record I provide			1	Solution focused thinking, positive psychology						1	1	1	person centred approaches are also vitally important although I feel the essence of such approaches can be found in positive psychology, I have found prof. Tom Billington's work really insightful. See, for example, Working with Children, Assessment,

																												representation and intervention
P 53	1		1		1	1	1	1	1		No response given	1			in the subsequent report schools use a pro forma to record pupils views as part of the statement review process		1		Solution focused practice		1				1		
P 54	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			No response given	1						1	behaviour and cognitive psychology			1			1	1	
P 55	1	1	1			1	1	1	1		nothing in particular	1			via consultation process			1	social interactionist, developmental, solution focused approaches, Personal construct psychology				1		1	1	
P 56	1	1			1	1	1	1	1		No response given	1						1	PCP - both kinds! SFBT, narrative interventions, systems - family and school, social interactionist		1				1	1	sometimes in a record or letter, or contract for young person to have - to

																											capture their views for their own benefits
P 57	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1		PCP, laddering, ideal self	1			through direct conversations and key adults - views and their conversations and observations			1	personal construct psychology, solution focused questioning, motivational interviewing		1				1	1	
P 58	1				1	1		1	1		Lets talk (simon burnham 2008) Drawing ideal self	1			I reference the resource used and in the instance of personal construct tasks and scaling I describe the approach.			1	personal construct psychology solution focused approaches positive psychology		1				1		
P 59	1	1	1		1	1		1	1		Strength cards, resilience scales, beck youth inventory, personal construct psychology eg kinetic family drawing, ideal self, spence anxiety scale			1	Where it is relevant or helps the readers understanding I do record my methodology. In formal reports such as appendix Ds I sometimes include a summary of the scale or method used in the appendices.			1	Personal construct psychology - how the young person sees the world from their point of view		1				1		
P 60	1	1	1	1	1	1		1		Picture prompts - enabling young people to select picture	Blob people, self image profile, multi element map	1			I will say which resources have been used and reference it. Sometimes I will comment on their presentation during			1	Personal construct psychology, solution focused work, social constructionism		1				1	1	

									that most represents feelings etc. PC presentation - e.g. Simon Burnham					1 to 1 work.														
P 61	1			1	1			1			Drawing the ideal self, draw and talk, blob people, behaviour blobs, likert scales	1			Written accounts of responses, therapeutic letters			1	Personal construct psychology, psychodynamic methods			1			1	1	Therapeutic letter
P 62	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	PASS survey	Ideal self, kinetic family drawing, blob tree, salmon lines	1			Will refer to method in my report			1	Personal construct psychology		1				1		
P 63	1	1			1			1			self image profile, BECKS, resiliency scales, attitude to school questionnaire	1				1			positive psychology, solution focused approaches, personal construct psychology		1				1	1	I sometimes write therapeutic letters to pupils where it is appropriate
P 64	1	1		1	1	1		1	1		All about me - service developed questionnaire, the self image profile for children (SIP-C) drawing the ideal self (heather moran) practical ideas for emotional			1				1	solution focused, Personal construct psychology, the integrated framework for EP practice, CBT		1				1	1	

										intelligence, one page profiles																	
P 65	1	1				1		1	1		person centred thinking tools, good day/bad day, routines, relationship circles. Solution focused rating scales, self-perception questionnaires	1				1			No response				1		1	1	
P 66	1	1	1		1	1		1	1		my life in school checklists	1						1	social constructionism, personal constructs			1			1	1	
P 67	1	1	1		1	1		1	1		ideal self, PCP resources, good day/bad day, laddering, self image profile, solution focused scaling, strength cards, blob cards, animal cards, would you rather cards, games (e.g. ungame)	1					1		personal construct psychology, strength based approaches, social constructionism, COMOIRA		1				1	1	
P 68	1		1		1	1		1			questionnaires/proformas designed by Eps in a previous LA I worked in		1					1	Personal construct psychology, phenomenological psychology,				1		1	1	

																		humanistic approaches, CBT, solution focused approaches								
P 69	1	1		1					1		self image profile	1				1			attribution theory, person centred approaches, developmental psychology, self efficacy, positive regard/building rapport, SfBT/AI		1				1		I am careful what I report to ensure I do not compromise the YP's position to expose them to negative feedback
P 70	1	1	1		1	1		1	1		Beck youth inventory, person centred planning approaches, personal construct psychology resources			1	where appropriate			1	solution focused approaches, person centred planning, personal construct psychology		1				1	1	
P 71	1		1			1					PASS	1				1			CBT framework		1				1	1	
P 72	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	Salmon lines/rating scales - visual approaches. Mind mapping school and	blob people/salmon lines/rating scales, PCP questions, CBT and emotional health measures (BYI; mood and	1						1	Personal construct psychology, SFBT, CBT, child centred practice				1		1	1	other - pupil friendly letters where possible (for CBT)

									home. Friendship maps/Genograms. CBT approaches during assessment stage.	feelings, spence anxiety), mind mapping, solution focused therapy questions/self and ideal self															
P 73	1	1	1	1	1	1		1	1		Personal construct cards, PATH analysis - Pearpoint et al, Items to elicit constructions - buttons, toy animals, collection of assorted unrelated items, scaling - relevant to age and stage, solution focused - various.	1						1	Construct theory, positive psychology, solution focused approaches				1		1	1	Visual record

6.9 Appendix 9: Interview transcript 1

Participant 1 Transcription

Date: 16th June 2015.

Time: 3:00 pm.

Location: Local Authority Educational Psychology Service.

R: Researcher

1: Participant 1

R: Hello, thank you for attending this interview. The purpose of the interview is to explore in more detail, some aspects relating to gathering and communicating pupils' views in mainstream secondary schools. The interview is expected to last roughly 1 hour. Do you have a specific end time that I need to bear in mind?

1: Yes, I need to be gone by 3:45.

R: As you know, the interview is being recorded for the purpose of transcription. The interview will be transcribed and anonymised within a fortnight. Prior to the interview being anonymised, you are free to request that your interview data is withdrawn from the study. You can also choose not to answer any individual questions during the interview. Do you have any questions before we begin?

1: No.

R: Are you happy to continue?

1: Yeah.

R: So, question number 1: how you actively seek to include young people's views in written reports?

1: Okay, So, in my work I'll always obviously speak with the young people to find out about their thoughts and feelings, and then in all my reports I have a section entitled "pupil views" and within that I

Methods/ Discussion Dedicated section

include information that they've shared and I try to use the pupil's words where appropriate, erm if I am working with a child who is non-verbal or a child who um doesn't elicit - doesn't share any sorts of views, um I try to do pictures with them sometimes, um, and try to describe that. Erm, or I'll just write - I'll still include pupil views but I will write pupils views were unable to elicit due to whatever factor that might be.

Using pupil's words

Methods/ drawing

Limited communication as limiting pupil views

R: Okay. And what are the benefits, do you think, of gaining young people's views?

Child centred

1: Well I think the request for involvement is about a young person, a child or a young person, so therefore we need to seek their views in what they deem to be the change issue because the parents or carers and the school may have a very different view point on the situation and what they want to see change and the child may see things from a very different point of view and unless we hear and take on board their views then we can't make changes that they see to be appropriate. Erm, with younger children or children perhaps with learning needs to a greater extent, sometimes the discussion is just generally about them. What they like, what they find easy in school, what they find difficult in school, erm I'll try to ask them why they think I might be involved but with some children, they just think you're there to help them so it's difficult to find out what the change issue is but nonetheless its helpful to find out what their strengths are, what they - how they see their strengths and what they think they could do to improve, so I don't think you can get a full assessment of a child's needs without having the child's views incorporated into it.

Change issues

Gaining perspective of child

Methods/ discussion

Difficult to find out change issue

Need YP view for complete work

R: What are the challenges of gaining young people's views?

1: Erm, I think the challenges can be sometimes when schools make a request, as I say, they see things from their point of view and sometimes it can d - it can be challenging for others in school to understand the child's views in that they see if from a different point of view. Particularly when they don't like their school or they don't like particular members of staff - that can be a challenge trying to convey the pupil's voice. With children I always ask them if they want to be included in the parent meeting, particularly for older ones, so that they can contribute their views during the meeting and they don't think that adults are talking about them behind their backs. So that can be a challenge when there may be views that the school don't want to hear, or that parents don't want to hear, but nonetheless I think we need to put them forward if the child or young person is happy about that and consents for that. Other challenges, if a child is non-verbal or very young and they're not fully understanding our role or why we're involved, that can be a challenge and if their parent or the staff haven't told us they're gonna see us erm or why they're gonna see us, I find this with EOTAS pupils so education other than at school, that they are reticent to share their views because they haven't been kind of briefed as to why we're coming in, who we are and what sort of information is gonna be gathered. And I find that those children who have been excluded from school so to speak, are quite reticent to share views, unless I've kind of got that relationships with them by going in and out of the provisions and clearly stating why I'm involved or why the school or EOTAS have asked me to be involved. So that can be a challenge when there isn't relationships and I find that particularly in that setting because with limited

Pupil view as challenging to others

YP included in meetings

Pupil view as challenging to others

EP as advocate

Difficult to find out change issue-young

Disengaged/ distrusting YP

Need relationship with YP

Capacity Disengaged/ distrusting YP

number of visits, you can't build the relationships up that you need with these young people in order for them to honestly and be willing to share their views and I think if I was able to visit those provisions more often, they'd see me more often and be more willing to open up so I find that to be a challenge. Erm, and sometimes if it's an initial consultation and it's just trying to gain staffs views initially, sometimes they'll think that their views are more important, or that parents views are more important and they kind of dismiss the fact that I would like to speak to their child and use their time in that way, that's a challenge I suppose initially. But I think that with relationships in schools, and the way you generally work and set your stall out as to how you're gonna work that overcomes that challenge.

Staff/ parents thinking their views more important

R: Okay, thank you.

1: okay.

R: What are the benefits of communicating young people's views in your reports?

1: I think the benefits are that you are valuing that pupils voice, by not only sharing it within a consultation meeting, either they do it themselves or you do it on their behalf but also you are equally valuing so you're valuing what the parents have said, schools and the pupil equally by having sections for each. And with some of my pupils where it's appropriate I'll also write them a letter individually, so that I will kind of reflect on what they've said, thank them for giving them their time to sit with me and discuss and I will sometimes bullet point the key things they've mentioned or the ideas that they've come up with through that discussion about ways of helping themselves and if they're interested in doctor

Sharing pupil voice

Valuing all change customers equally

Pupil letters

who or whatever they're interested in, try to put pictures in to try to personalise it for them. I'd be interested in finding out what a pupil's perception is themselves of actually receiving a letter which has been pitched for them and how they interpret that really, because I suppose you make an assumption that they'd like it but they may not necessary like it or how I've done it and so maybe that's something I'd like to gain some feedback from.

Pupil letters

R: Have you had feedback before?

1: Erm, all I've have is erm when I've seen a child again and I've said "oh did you receive the letter?" and they've just had a little discussion around it but I've not done any kind of formal, how the parents viewed it or how the school perceived it and how the child viewed but that would be interesting to find out and maybe get some ideas about what children would like in these sorts of letters which represent their views.

YP view as distressing/ sensitive

Sharing pupil voice

R: Okay. What do you think the challenges are of communicating young children's views in your reports?

1: In my reports. If a child has disclosed information about their mental health [coughs] sorry, perhaps that they have been self-harming or that they've had thoughts of killing themselves, or have thought about that in the past. I think that is a challenge about how you report it, but over time I've questioned whether to include it because I don't want them to be upset by that but I think that if you've got their consent about how you're gonna use their views and it's about what they've said and how they think and feel, then it shouldn't be about upsetting parents for example, that's not the intention. It's about to get their views across, so that could be a potential challenge and I have thought about it a lot and discussed

Communicating view sensitively

with people how they do it but I still think that it should be reported. Erm, if a pupil has disclosed information which is potential a safeguarding issue about something that's happened to them, then I am quite careful I suppose how that's included, so it may not be the words that have been used but I've put in brackets after their view, a child protection referral was made as a consequence of - so if anyone reading that can contact me and find out why cos I don't think that's fair if they've disclosed that sort of information, so that can be a challenge. And again a challenge linked to the note before was that if the child or young person doesn't like their teacher, doesn't like the school or something, again, it could be perceived as a challenge but ultimately that's their view and I've never - I have wrote that into things in the past, I've never had anybody come back and say, take this part out, so hopefully they respect the pupil views as well.

YP view as challenging

Giving YP courtesy and respect

R: do you use any specific tools to elicit the views of young people with communication difficulties?

Different methods of gathering views/ games

1: I've tried - I had a girl who was selective elective mute and I've tried a few different ways. I tried games to try and just build a relationship with her initially when there wasn't views, I've used her writing down answers to my questions, I've used the iPad to type answers and that did work to some extent but because there was literacy needs as well that was laborious and probably quite frustrating for the child concerned and it really does limit what you can gain from the child when there are those sorts of communication barriers because if you do provide a question and maybe you were to give pictures or something then point to the picture, maybe - you can do it with emotions perhaps on what you

Limited communication as limited pupil views

like doing, you can provide a selection of pictures but if the picture isn't there that they like doing then you're forcing a response so I've tried to do it that way. Do we mean social communication as well? Yeah?

R: Mmm hmm.

1: So with social communication needs as well where they've been reluctant to talk or get involved with me in any type of way, again I've tried to do where I've just done little visits. I'm thinking of EOTAS pupils again where I've just kind of shown my face, shown an interest in what they're doing and their work, before trying to engage in discussion really so they feel more trust. Erm, and tried to play games rather than going straight into - I suppose the purpose of why I'm there to get their needs or to assess in some kind of capacity. Erm, sometimes when children are lacking in confidence I've had their LSA or whoever knows them best come into the room and perhaps they've answered through their LSA so that they just feel more comfortable and confident. I've never had a scenario where a parent has had to be present but if that was the case where they didn't have a relationship with an LSA or someone in school then I'd probably invite the parent in to see if that would help facilitate their communication as well. I've - for children with EAL, I don't know whether if this is - comes under this, I've had translators in, so that's been arranged where I've kind of communicated through the translator and now I've started recently covering a hearing impaired class so I would envisage for some children where they use sign, that the LSA would be present who does the sign within class for that. Erm, so they're the ways that I

Need relationship with YP

Building rapport with YP

3rd party/LSA helping facilitate

3rd party/parent helping facilitate

3rd party /translator helping facilitate

would go about ways trying to get views, with people that they trust or building a relationship. Does that answer that question?

R: It does yeah absolutely, I think that there's an interesting aspect there of a third party whether it be an LSA or translator or someone else there who's helping you to gain their views.

1: Yeah.

R: How do you feel about that third party being involved? Do you feel that it represents their views sufficiently?

1: I think it is, perhaps the best situation in not the best situation if you know what I mean.

R: Mmm hmmm.

1: with the translator I found it really difficult, because, I didn't know, so it was English to Latvian, obviously I didn't have an idea if what my questions were being represented accurately because there's the vocabulary difference, language difference and also whether they were being reflected back because I think in some scenarios perhaps, if a child wants to er, share views about their wellbeing, things that aren't going so difficult, a third party who isn't a psychologist may try and buffer some questions and you wouldn't get a fair reflection and that would be an issue. If the parents are there I'd be worried that they wouldn't share their views accurately or be worried about upsetting their parents in some way but I think that would be good just for an initial relationship. Because if they are safe and comfortable with their parent being with me they may then next time be - and I do home visits as well which I didn't mention, so sometimes if a child isn't opening up whether that be social communication or speech and language, whatever the area of difficulty is in school I go to home

Limited communication as limited pupil views

3rd party

Accurately eliciting y.p view

Different methods of gathering views / home visits

which is particularly the case with anxious non-attenders, our EOTAS pupils where truanting is or non-attendance is an issue, that is just easier when they're comfortable in their own home space to talk to them there. Erm, if it was the LSA present or the school based ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant) if they were involved, I think I would need to know the relationship and it would be the person that they talk to most often involved rather than the teacher. So I don't think it's ideal but I think if they're having real difficulty I think it's one way of getting in at some level.

3rd party

R: Okay.

EP as advocate

1: Yeah.

R: thank you. That's the end of my questions, I wonder if there's anything that you think I've left out about obtaining and representing young people's views that's important?

Sharing pupil voice

Gathering YP voice is beneficial

1: I think I, I think I've mentioned them but I think that it's important that children or young people are asked if they want to be part of any meeting that's going on about them because - so that they do feel empowered and think they should give consent for information that is shared and that you should be, give that kind of information from the beginning of your discussion so the usual kind of safeguarding information you give and just say that I'm gonna try and get your views so that I can put it forward to others are you happy about that? Just so they understand and if they don't wanna be involved I think you are the advocate on behalf of the child, that's the reason why you're there so you have to put forward the views, even if it's not always gonna be liked. Again reporting in written documents as well should always be pupil's views and they should be reported higher than anybody else's views really. I think

Pupil letters

Dedicated section for YP views

Need YP view for complete work

that pupil letters are good and I think that perhaps I should do it more often as another way of acknowledging and erm, I think dependent on different people's format of reports maybe because there's not a consistency here for report, maybe if there was, pupils views would have to be there but I think in most people's reports whether they write it in a kind of formal or consultation bullet point I'd say that most people do put the pupil view in. I think you're asked all of the questions.

Dedicated section for YP views

R: Thank you very much.

1: Okay.

6.10 Appendix 10: Questionnaire data manipulation

Question One: Which approaches do you use to gather young people's views in mainstream secondary schools?

'Other' responses to question one were grouped using a key described below in Table five.

Table 5: Key used to categorise the 'other' responses to question one

Explanation	Key
Fits into category already provided	F
Resource (specific)	R
Suitable 'other' technique/strategy	S

Table six shows the allocation of the categories to the responses provided by participants.

Table 6: 'Other' responses to question one, listed by category

Technique/strategy	Number of times selected	Key	
Genograms	2	A	
Observations	2	A	
Role play	1	A	
Group work	1	A	
Sociograms	1	A	
Picture based approaches	2	A	
Focus group	1	A	
Games	1	A	
Drawing	2	F	Task related
Psychometric tests	1	F	Task related
Mind mapping	1	F	Task related
PC presentation	1	F	Task related
Scaling	1	F	Solution focused
Personal interviews	1	F	Discussion based*
Activities to generate discussion on specific subjects	1	F	Discussion based*
Puppets	1	F	Discussion based*
Buttons	1	F	Discussion based*
CBT	1	F	Therapeutic approaches
Ideal person	1	S	
Self-image profile	1	S	
Blobs	1	S	
Salmon line/rating scales	1	S	
Friendship maps	1	S	
Pass survey	1	S	

* Where the technique/strategy had been categorised as discussion based, 3 of the 4 participants had already selected the category 'discussion based', therefore only 1 was added to the total number so that it was a correct reflection of the responses.

Where participants responses were categorised as task related, solution-focused or therapeutic approaches, those participants had already selected the relevant

category, therefore the total numbers for those categories remain unchanged in Figure 1 of the results section.

Question Two: Please name any specific resources you use to gather young people's views in mainstream secondary schools.

Table seven shows the full responses of participants which were not classifiable as specific resources.

Table 7: Responses to question two which were not classifiable as specific resources

Resource given by participant	Number of times response was given
Cognitive Behavioural Therapy	3
Personal Construct Psychology	2
Psychological sense of school/family membership	1
To ensure that my assessment is robust and that their voice is heard – a matter of ethics	1
Various checklists	1
Discussion with staff and parents	1
EPS sheets	1
Own resources/checklists	1
Solution Focused	1
Questionnaires	1

Question Three: Do you record how the young person's views were ascertained?

Table eight shows the key which was used to categorise the responses which participants gave under 'dependent on circumstances.'

Table 8: Key used to categorise the 'dependent on circumstances' responses to question three

Explanation	Key
In written form	W
Verbally	V
In formal circumstances	F
Answer elaborates on the importance of consent	C
Response does not specify how views were ascertained	D
Response not able to be categorised	C

Table 9: 'Dependent on circumstances' responses to question three, listed by category

	Key	V	W	F	C	D
Reference is made within the report in order to clarify source (direct always preferred method)	W		1			
Just within body of report, also keeping original notes, scales etc.	W		1			
Yes, in the report/pupil letter.	W		1			
There is a section in my reports – pupils' views and under this heading I always record how the young person provided the information.	W		1			
This is usually included in a written report after the visit. If there is a one page profile I will request a copy for the pupils' EPS file.	W		1			
On report it will be stated how views are ascertained	W		1			
I always write in my report how I gathered info from the young person	W		1			
When I write a consultation report I ensure that the young person's views are recorded in the body of the report and how they were ascertained e.g., personal construct methods.	W		1			
As part of the written report I would reference the approach/resource.	W		1			
Psychologists report	W		1			
Any work we undertake is recorded in consultation minutes.	W		1			
I specify this in any written record I provide	W		1			
Written accounts of responses, therapeutic letters	W		1			
Will refer to method in my report	W		1			
If important for the purpose of the report	D					1
In the subsequent report schools use a pro forma to record pupils views as part of the statement review process	D					1
Via consultation process	D					1
I reference the resource used and in the instance of personal construct tasks and scaling I describe the approach.	D					1
Where it is relevant or helps the readers understanding I do record my methodology. In formal reports such as appendix Ds I sometimes include a summary of the scale or method used in the appendices.	D					1
I will say which resources have been used and reference it. Sometimes I will comment on their presentation during 1 to 1 work.	D					1
Where appropriate	D					1
Sometimes reflecting on how info was gathered is valuable to the process. I usually feedback via a therapeutic	D					1

letter which has info about our dialogue. The method is not always explicitly fed back to the school/parent. Confidentiality sometimes impacts on what and how info is shared.						
Not if it's direct questioning	D					1
Name resource and how and where it was completed	D					1
If it's for a stat assessment then defo do, in normal consultation reports it depends how much time I've got to write up report.	D					1
I would record if personal construct psychology, or rating scale.	D					1
Sometimes I scan a drawing onto a report. I often say which psychological approach I have used e.g. PCP/SFBT etc.	D					1
Yes interview or using a specific tool with detail this	D					1
Views are written down by the EP unless the young person has been asked to complete a task related procedure. If this happens, they are invited to write down their views or whether they wish to discuss verbally.	D					1
Staff member, to myself, to parents, via another peer/peer close to pupil - always checked out with pupil in sensitive manner.	D					1
In more formal circumstances e.g. stat assessment I would state how their views were ascertained.	F			1		
If it's formal, I will detail the tools I used.	F			1		
Depending on circumstances, they are sometimes discussed with parents but not written in report, following obtaining consent from the young person.	V	1				
Through direct conversations and key adults - views and their conversations and observations	V	1				
I would always do this unless the pupil disagreed	C				1	
Write them down but always check with the young person if they are happy for me to share their views with others and that they are happy for me to record them.	C				1	
		2	14	2	2	16

Table nine (above) shows the full responses given, which have been classified according to Table eight.

Question Seven: How do you express the young person's views?

Table ten below shows the full responses participants gave for the 'other' category of question seven. Four responses were not able to be classified, eight were classified as a written response and one was classified as both a written and verbal response. Two new categories were developed from the remaining 'other' responses.

Table 10: 'Other' responses to question seven, listed by category.

'Other' responses	Classification
Via a website (ICT)	via a website (ICT)
Both of the above, also when appropriate: written piece from YP, advocate e.g. TA.	Via the young person or an advocate
Often both, sometimes one of the two - get consent from the child first.	Written and verbal
Therapeutic letter checking back with the child or young person.	Written
In a letter to the pupil after the session.	Written
On occasions, I would write a therapeutic letter to the pupil as a record of the work we completed, and the views they expressed.	Written
in one page profiles	Written
sometimes in a record or letter, or contract for young person to have - to capture their views for their own benefits	Written
Therapeutic letter	Written
I sometimes write therapeutic letters to pupils where it is appropriate	Written
other - pupil friendly letters where possible (for CBT)	Written
Dependent on purpose and agreement with individual regarding confidentiality.	Unclassifiable
Person centred approaches are also vitally important although I feel the essence of such approaches can be found in positive psychology.	Unclassifiable
I am careful what I report to ensure I do not compromise the YP's position to expose them to negative feedback	Unclassifiable
Visual record	Unclassifiable