VOLUME TWO

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE REPORTS

By

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Volume Two of a two-volume thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of APPLIED EDUCATIONAL AND CHILD PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORATE

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April 2023

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents

THE USE OF SECLUSION IN SCHOOLS: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW.

Abstract

Isolation is often used as part of school behaviour management systems, but there are questions regarding its efficacy as a behaviour deterrent and the potential long-term impact of isolation practices that resemble seclusion. The purpose of this paper is to review the evidence pertaining to the use of seclusion in schools, from the perspectives of key stakeholders. Herein, seclusion is defined as: *Removal of the student for a prolonged period, for disciplinary reasons relating to behaviour, to a separate, confined area where access to others is heavily restricted, and where attendance is non-voluntary - regardless of whether the student is physically prevented from leaving.*

A systematic search identified seven papers which were critically appraised for inclusion. Thematic synthesis identified key themes relating to punitive, academic and therapeutic aspects of seclusion practices. There was a lack of consensus as to the effectiveness of seclusion as a behavioural deterrent, or its impacts upon learning. Facilitators for the effective and ethical use of isolation were identified, including the need for systems to be proportionate, and incorporate academic and therapeutic strands. Implications for educational psychologists include a role in developing educational provisions and individualised behavioural management approaches that meet students' needs. Educational psychologists can also facilitate research examining the long-term effects of isolation and seclusion practices by supporting schools to implement monitoring and evaluation measures.

1. Introduction

All United Kingdom (UK) schools must have a clear behaviour policy, which may incorporate use of isolation as a disciplinary sanction (Department for Education (DfE), 2016). In September 2019 Ofsted implemented a revised education inspection framework with four new categories, including Behaviour and Attitudes, for which inspectors should:

> …*evaluat[e] the extent to which the provider has high expectations for learners' behaviour and conduct and applies these expectations consistently and fairly*. (Ofsted, 2019a, p.10).

Managing behaviour is important for sustaining positive learning environments. School policies often draw upon behaviourist principles invoking negative and positive reinforcement, and/or punishment. For example, zero-tolerance policies automatically apply predetermined consequences, such as isolation, for behavioural infractions (James and Freeze, 2006). Implementation of the Ofsted framework was preceded by public consultation wherein respondents raised concerns pertaining to internal exclusions and isolation booths, because 'these practices are able to operate outside the legal framework for exclusions but can have a significant impact on learners' (Ofsted, 2019b, p.145).

1.1. Exclusions and isolation

The legal framework governing exclusions, including the Education Act 2011 s51A, and The School Discipline (Pupil Exclusions and Reviews) (England) Regulations 2012, impose strict duties upon headteachers and governors to report student exclusions. Statutory guidance specifies that removing a student from school grounds is only justifiable for disciplinary reasons, must be formally recorded, and that '"informal" or "unofficial" exclusions, such as sending a pupil home 'to cool off' are unlawful…' (DfE, 2017, p.10).

National statistics monitoring exclusion rates consider only permanent and fixed term exclusions (FTEs). Lower exclusion rates are linked to increased use of alternative provision, particularly for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (Malcolm, 2018). Research indicates

over half of UK secondary schools use internal inclusion units as an alternative to exclusion (Mills and Thomson, 2018). Some emphasise supportive environments with tailored teaching and reflection; others prioritise sanctioning and isolation.

Since November 2019, schools are required to provide information about internal isolation (Ofsted, 2019c); however, guidance as to what it constitutes is not provided. There is no reference to internal exclusion (IE) or isolation within the legal guidelines pertaining to exclusions. Consequently, legal obligations imposed upon school stakeholders do not apply - a key factor underpinning concerns of Ofsted consultees.

Internal isolation is distinguishable from exclusion as students are permitted to remain on school grounds. The term isolation is often used alongside terms such as seclusion or time-out. Such interventions can be considered along a continuum of restrictiveness as proposed by Bon and Zirkel (2014):
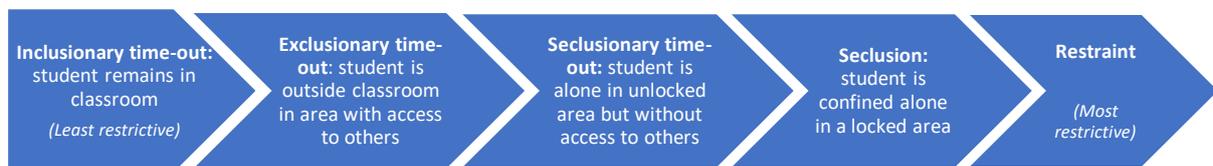
Figure 1: Continuum-based conceptual framework (Bon and Zirkel, 2014, p.509)

Time-out has roots in behavioural psychology. It involves removing positive reinforcement, or removal of the student from an environment that reinforces undesirable behaviour, in order to reduce undesirable behaviour. Ryan, Sanders, Katsiyannis and Yell (2007) provide a full account of types and applications of time-out. Research indicates it is an effective behaviour management strategy; however, some studies do not utilise sufficiently precise terms or distinguish time-out from seclusion (Bon and Zirkel, 2014).

Seclusion is defined as 'involuntary confinement of a student alone in a room or area from which the student is physically prevented from leaving' (Council for Children with Behavioural Disorders, 2009, p.1). That paper references school environments incorporating elements of seclusion, but where

students 'may not be alone (… or) not technically prevented from leaving' (ibid, p.2), noting such environments may nevertheless compromise students' rights, access to learning and peers, and carry a risk of 'significant psychological damage' (ibid, p.5).

In a school context, students are unlikely to be locked in or physically prevented from leaving areas, but attendance is often involuntary or obligatory. Forced isolation has been described as an unacceptable practice with grave implications for children's rights necessitating clear renouncement in national guidance (McCluskey, Riddell and Weedon, 2015). Consequently, use of isolation in schools requires further scrutiny.

1.2. History of isolation in schools

School use of isolation is not a new phenomenon. In 2005, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) endorsed IE 'where behaviour warrants removal from normal school activities but not from the school' (DES, 2005, p.125), claiming it addressed behaviour more effectively than FTEs. It referenced school 'withdrawal' rooms, but not their specific nature. In 2009, the now-archived 'Internal Exclusion Guidance' was published, defined therein as a school process where 'the objective is to remove the pupil from class, not from the school site, for disciplinary reasons' (Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), 2009, p.1).

This non-mandatory guidance stipulated that behavioural management systems may incorporate IE, where students are removed to an alternative teaching area, headteacher's office, or specifically designated room / building– described as 'remove rooms,' more commonly utilised in secondary schools (DCSF, 2009, p.1). It clearly differentiated IE and seclusion:

> *It is not advisable to use the term 'internal seclusion' as the word 'seclusion' legally means forcing a child to spend time alone against their will, whereas the aim of internal exclusion should be to provide appropriately supervised education not simply as a punishment but to secure improvements in the pupil's behaviour. It is also inappropriate to use the term 'inclusion room'.*

Internal exclusion and seclusion (DCSF, 2009 p.1).

Whilst clear justification for use of IE is omitted, the 2009 guidance states that it 'usually offers immediate, short-term provision in order that learning and teaching for the majority of pupils can continue uninterrupted' (DCSF, 2009 p.1). IE holds benefits over exclusion as students maintain routine school attendance, and exclusion performance indicators are unaffected (Munn, Cullen and Lloyd, 2000). No explicit reference to IE involving isolation is made, although it can be inferred isolation is not necessarily a core, nor desirable, aspect.

Interestingly, current national school guidance specifically refers to 'Seclusion / isolation rooms'– a conflation potentially shaped by changing terminology in school behaviour policies. It highlights a move in practice towards IE having isolation as a fundamental element. Schools are permitted to use 'seclusion or isolation rooms as a disciplinary penalty' where 'disruptive pupils [are] placed in an area away from other pupils for a limited period,' providing this is stated in behaviour policy (DfE 2016, p.12). No duration limit is suggested, although it should be for 'no longer than is necessary,' with time for toileting and eating (ibid). Schools must ensure they act reasonably and adhere to health and safety and safeguarding requirements. In 'exceptional circumstances' - left undefined - students may be restricted from voluntarily leaving the room.

This ambiguity has been described as 'dangerous' due to parallels between isolation and seclusion when students' free will to leave is restricted (Centre for the Advancement of Positive Behaviour Support, 2015). Unlike previous guidance (DSCF 2009), there is no recommendation that schools implement referral or monitoring procedures, consider staff skills and training, or that students be required to complete work-related or reflective tasks. Instead, schools must ensure isolation time is 'used as constructively as possible' with lead staff granted discretion over activities. This may have contributed to increasing reports of concerning school isolation practices.

An investigation conducted by Schools Week (an educational-focused digital newspaper) found two-thirds of academy trusts used isolation in some form, including time-out spaces and 'consequence booths' (Staufenberg, 2018), often within behaviour management approaches incorporating

sanctions for infractions such as forgetting equipment, incorrect uniform or disruptiveness. In a BBC news investigation, 5000 children with SEND reported attending isolation rooms, including '…partitioned desks in which children typically face the wall and work in silence' for up to 5 days (Titheradge, 2018). Reports describe isolation booths where students must not tap, chew, shout out or sigh (Perraudin, 2018), or students with SEND being wrongly kept in isolation contributing to delayed learning progress (Mills and Thomson 2018: 90). One student with autism isolated for over a month, eventually attempted to take her life inside an isolation booth (Busby, 2019).

1.3. Children's rights

The increasing prominence of isolation and seclusion practices is at odds with contemporary emphasis upon children's rights, and ethical, non-harmful and anti-oppressive practices. Potential negative effects have long been recognised in the mental health context:

> *Seclusion can be a traumatic experience for any individual but can have particularly adverse implications for the emotional development of a child or young person. (…) other strategies to de-escalate behaviours may be more appropriate …*

> *Department of Health, DoH, 2015, pp.26.57*

Consequently, the Mental Health Act Code of Practice (MHACoP, 2015) restricts seclusion to circumstances 'where it is of immediate necessity for the purpose of the containment of severe behavioural disturbance which is likely to cause harm to others' (ibid, pp.26.103), noting the negative interplay between seclusion, individual autonomy and deprivation of liberty safeguards. It imposes strict implementation and monitoring procedures, with a caveat that seclusion 'should not be used as a punishment or threat' (ibid, pp.26.107). Thus, disciplinary use within the educational context is questionable. Under the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:

- Every child has the right to an education, with discipline in schools that respects children's dignity and rights (Art 28)

- Children have the right not to undergo cruel or degrading punishment, with detainment as the last resort for the shortest time possible (Art 37).

The media reports above demonstrate how some isolation practices resembling seclusion may undermine these rights, potentially amounting to 'cruel or degrading punishment.' A recent government-commissioned exclusions review highlighted poorly implemented units with minimal supervision and unsuitable work (Graham et al, 2019), arguably undermining educational rights. Removal from class could result in lost opportunities for already vulnerable students and create resource demands upon schools (Power and Taylor, 2018). Exclusionary discipline contradicts inclusive education principles in sanctioning behaviour without considering individual development, rather than emphasising preventative measures, or teaching pro-social skills (James and Freeze, 2006).

This raises concerns regarding isolation of students who have SEND which affect their behaviour and / or reflective capacity. Persistent use could fall within the boundaries of 'cruel' treatment, undermine children's rights and necessitate reasonable adjustments to behaviour policies in line with disability discrimination laws (e.g. Equality Act 2010). The aim of this paper is to explore evidence relating to the use of seclusion in schools, as defined below.

Removal of the student for a prolonged period, for disciplinary reasons relating to behaviour, to a separate, confined area where access to others is heavily restricted, and where attendance is non-voluntary - regardless of whether the student is physically prevented from leaving.'

Operational definition of seclusion

1.4. Rationale and research questions

Despite limited school-based research, isolation rooms are commonly incorporated into whole-school behaviour approaches (Education Endowment Foundation, 2019). Educational guidance references isolation, with a shift in terminology towards 'seclusion' and broader usage. This is

incongruent with the cautious approach adopted in earlier educational guidance, and current best practice in medical contexts. Media reports have highlighted dubious practices, possibly impinging upon principles of inclusivity and the rights to education and fair treatment. The objective of this review to synthesise the literature relating to the use of seclusion in schools, to answer the following research questions:

- How do key stakeholders (including students and staff) experience seclusion when used in schools?

- What factors, if any, can facilitate the effective and ethical use of isolation practices in schools?

2. Method

Guidelines for systematic review detailed by Siddaway, Wood and Hedges (2019) were followed, shown in Figure 2.

2.1. Study characteristics

Overall, seven articles met the inclusion criteria. Four were peer-reviewed journal articles (Barker, 2010; Barker, 2019; Gilmore, 2012; Gilmore, 2013); three were unpublished theses examining American 'In-School Suspension'(ISS) programmes (Stiefer, 2003; Cole; 2006; Roach, 2012). The four articles used different datasets from two larger UK projects and involved a 'disciplinary inclusion room'(IR) (Gilmore, 2012; 2013) and 'seclusion unit' (Barker, 2010; 2019). All provision descriptions aligned with the definition of seclusion. There is a notable lack of recent research compared to media reports.

Participants included students and staff with experience of those provisions. Barker (2010; 2019) also sought parent views. Student participants were secondary age, equivalent to UK Years 7-13. School staff included teachers, administrators and senior leadership.
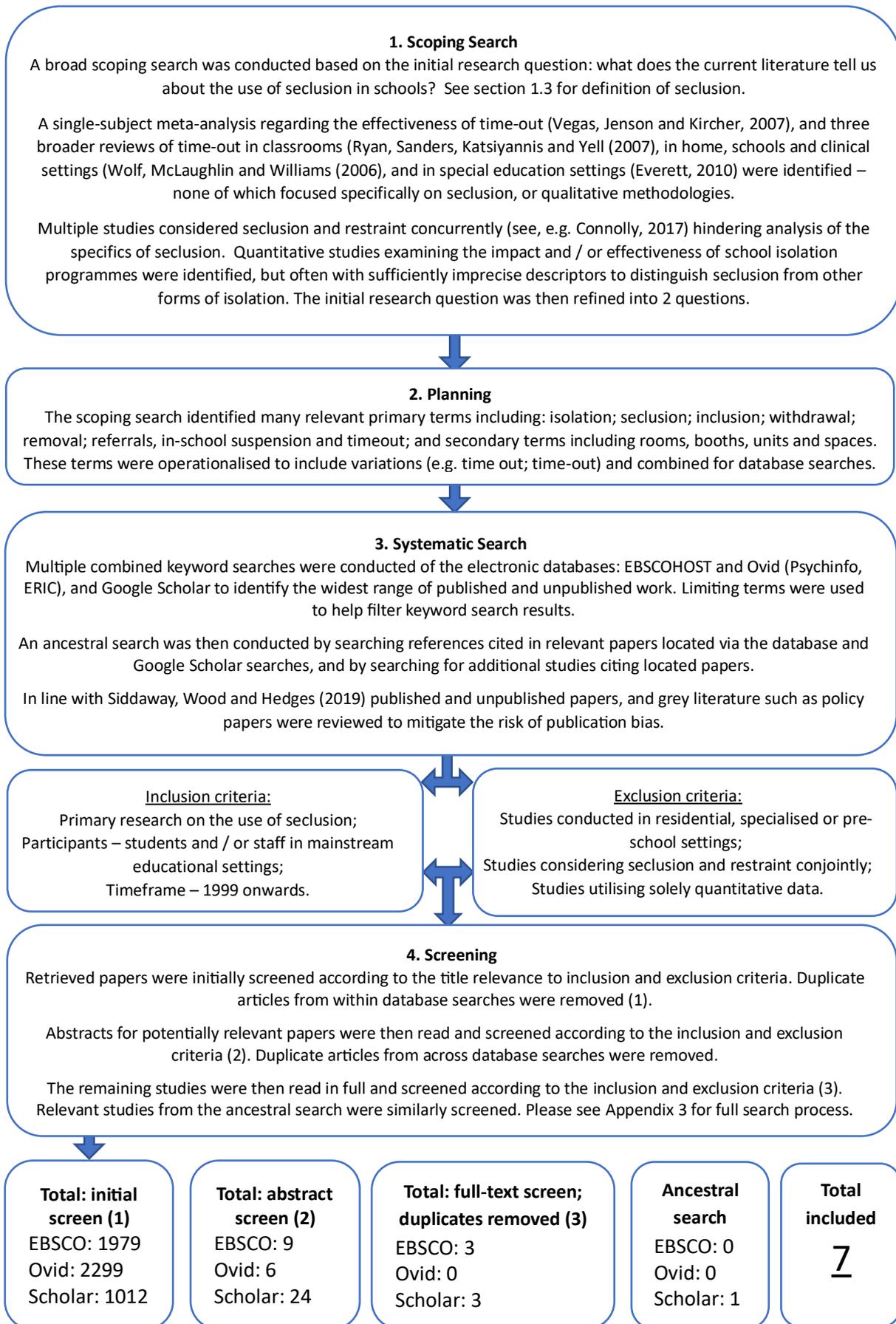
1. Scoping Search

A broad scoping search was conducted based on the initial research question: what does the current literature tell us about the use of seclusion in schools? See section 1.3 for definition of seclusion.

A single-subject meta-analysis regarding the effectiveness of time-out (Vegas, Jenson and Kircher, 2007), and three broader reviews of time-out in classrooms (Ryan, Sanders, Katsiyannis and Yell (2007), in home, schools and clinical settings (Wolf, McLaughlin and Williams (2006), and in special education settings (Everett, 2010) were identified – none of which focused specifically on seclusion, or qualitative methodologies.

Multiple studies considered seclusion and restraint concurrently (see, e.g. Connolly, 2017) hindering analysis of the specifics of seclusion. Quantitative studies examining the impact and / or effectiveness of school isolation programmes were identified, but often with sufficiently imprecise descriptors to distinguish seclusion from other forms of isolation. The initial research question was then refined into 2 questions.

2. Planning

The scoping search identified many relevant primary terms including: isolation; seclusion; inclusion; withdrawal; removal; referrals, in-school suspension and timeout; and secondary terms including rooms, booths, units and spaces. These terms were operationalised to include variations (e.g. time out; time-out) and combined for database searches.

3. Systematic Search

Multiple combined keyword searches were conducted of the electronic databases: EBSCOHOST and Ovid (Psychinfo, ERIC), and Google Scholar to identify the widest range of published and unpublished work. Limiting terms were used to help filter keyword search results.

An ancestral search was then conducted by searching references cited in relevant papers located via the database and Google Scholar searches, and by searching for additional studies citing located papers.

In line with Siddaway, Wood and Hedges (2019) published and unpublished papers, and grey literature such as policy papers were reviewed to mitigate the risk of publication bias.

Inclusion criteria:
Primary research on the use of seclusion;
Participants – students and / or staff in mainstream educational settings;
Timeframe – 1999 onwards.

Exclusion criteria:
Studies conducted in residential, specialised or pre-school settings;
Studies considering seclusion and restraint conjointly;
Studies utilising solely quantitative data.

4. Screening

Retrieved papers were initially screened according to the title relevance to inclusion and exclusion criteria. Duplicate articles from within database searches were removed (1).

Abstracts for potentially relevant papers were then read and screened according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria (2). Duplicate articles from across database searches were removed.

The remaining studies were then read in full and screened according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria (3). Relevant studies from the ancestral search were similarly screened. Please see Appendix 3 for full search process.

Total: initial screen (1)	**Total: abstract screen (2)**	**Total: full-text screen; duplicates removed (3)**	**Ancestral search**	**Total included**
EBSCO: 1979	EBSCO: 9	EBSCO: 3	EBSCO: 0	<u>7</u>
Ovid: 2299	Ovid: 6	Ovid: 0	Ovid: 0	
Scholar: 1012	Scholar: 24	Scholar: 3	Scholar: 1	

Figure 2: Search Process

Two studies aimed to explore students' perceptions (Stiefer, 2003; Gilmore, 2013) and one staff perceptions (Gilmore, 2012). Stiefer (2003) triangulated data from interviews, observations and documents using an interpretative interactionist framework. Both Gilmore studies were analysed within a Cultural Historical Activity Theory framework; one used staff questionnaires and interview data (Gilmore, 2012); the second triangulated data from student interviews and documents (Gilmore, 2013).

One study explored lived experiences of students, teachers and administrators, using interviews and focus groups within a critical case study design (Roach, 2012). Two studies were drawn from one larger seclusion unit evaluation (Barker, 2010; 2019). Interviews and focus groups with 39 participants were triangulated with observational and documentary data, analysed within a Foucauldian framework (Barker, 2010) or using Thematic Analysis (Barker, 2019). The remaining study involved an evaluative action research project incorporating student interviews and a staff survey (Cole, 2006). See Appendix 1 for full description of study characteristics.

2.2. Critical Appraisal

All studies used qualitative methods alongside appropriate research designs to achieve clearly stated research aims. The detail describing researcher and participant relationships was variable, with a lack of information in both Gilmore studies – however, this was discussed in the original thesis. All studies presented clear findings with valuable conclusions drawn in relation to practice implications or areas for further research (Appendix 2).

2.3. Thematic synthesis

This review aims to explore the use of seclusion in schools from the perspective of key stakeholders. Results indicated seclusion practices are used variably with differential stakeholder impact dependent on implementation. Thematic synthesis of selected papers highlighted the following key themes and subthemes (Figure 3).
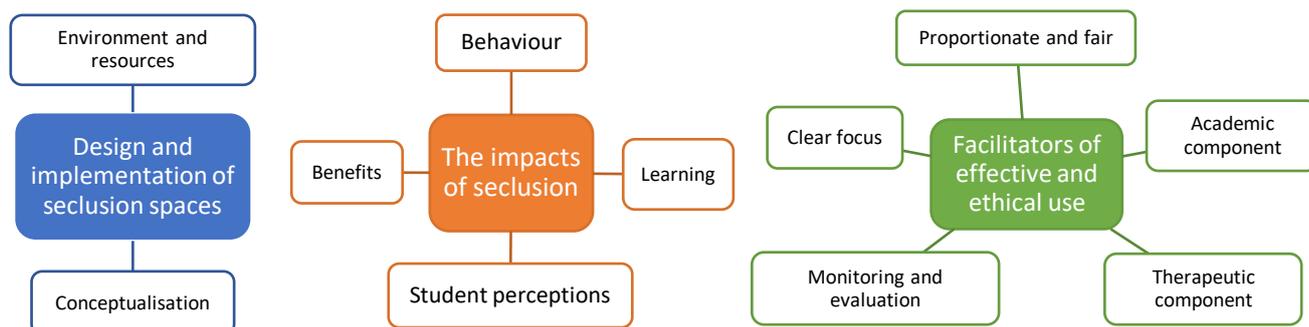
Figure 3: Thematic Maps

2.3.1. Design and implementation of seclusion spaces

i.   Environment and resources

Most spaces included individual cubicles or partitioned wall-facing desks in a dedicated, separate area. In all studies, students were expected to remain silent throughout the isolation duration, from half a day (Gilmore, 2012; 2013) to 10 days or more within formal ISS programmes (Stiefer, 2003; Cole, 2006). Four papers reported students remaining silent during all breaks (Stiefer, 2003; Cole, 2006; Barker, 2010; 2019); these studies – and Gilmore, (2012; 2013) - reported differentiated timetables designed to enforce student isolation (e.g., different school start and finish times), chosen by some as their least favourite aspect (Gilmore, 2013).

The extent of enforced peer separation within different contexts is concerning. Stiefer (2003) decried the sparse research regarding 'double isolation' of students from their school population and from peers within isolation spaces (p.147). Whilst removing students from a classroom and peers who provide reinforcement for misbehaviour is temporarily justifiable, long-term seclusion is dubious. The importance of interactions in learning is widely accepted. Seclusion – particularly programmes extending into breaktimes – drastically limits opportunities. Protected recreational time is embodied in employment legislation. Expecting adults to spend entire workdays in silence, with supervised (toilet) breaks, is unacceptable to many, yet equivalent statutory protection for students is absent.

Many studies reported deficient resources and facilities, e.g. 'old desks that are falling apart' (Stiefer, 2003, p.92), 'tattered and filthy blinds, and [bare] dingy, white walls [...] dated books' and 'scary' cubicles (Cole, 2006, p.12). Stiefer (2003) and Roach (2012) discussed 'uncomfortable' chairs, causing students physical pain (Stiefer, 2003). In Gilmore (2012) 'the physical space was uninviting and unattractive [...] with little stimulus other than the rules' (p.47). Staff in Barker (2019) described the room as 'spartan, on purpose' and 'not a pleasant place to be' (p.1285).

ii.   Conceptualisation of seclusion spaces

The phrase 'on purpose' from a senior manager, denotes intentionally sparse design. One might speculate that where provisions evolve out of necessity, resources are secondary to ensuring safe, supervised areas to place disruptive students. However, in many studies seclusion spaces were deliberately designed. Barker (2019) discusses how the space was conceived, perceived and lived in, from initial conceptualisation as a space of punishment into 'an unanticipated place of care' (p.1286) shaped by its users. In Gilmore (2012) the headteacher stipulated that the IR was disciplinary, not intended to be a 'nurturing environment' (p.44), but with implementation underpinned by values of inclusion and pastoral support.

Stiefer (2003) discusses initial conception of a rehabilitative space, contradicting the practical implementation of a strictly punitive space leading one student to comment: 'I think it's all a part of the plan to make you hate the place so much that you never want to go back' (p.108). Staff in Roach (2012) corroborated this: 'when ISS is a place that kids do not want to attend, it is a deterrent to... poor behaviour' (p.78). Thus, justification for minimal resources derives from the need for spaces to be sufficiently negatively reinforcing to deter further misbehaviour. Practical factors such as supervision additionally influence space organisation. Barker (2010) discusses how such spaces are configured to enable increased surveillance and, in many studies, room layouts were purposefully designed for ease of observation.

Whilst additional provision beyond the ordinary classroom might be debatable, spaces should have at least equivalent learning-based provision; study findings indicated this is often not the case. Notably, in Cole's (2006) action research study one initial action was environmental improvements, including additional resources and equipment. It is vital that balance is struck between spaces that provide sufficient disincentive for repeating undesirable behaviour, and disproportionate measures detrimental to student wellbeing and / or learning.

2.3.2.   Effects of seclusion

The review indicated limited quantitative research regarding seclusion's long-term effects. The few studies investigating this lacked sufficient detail of the nature of isolation (e.g. Cholewa et al, 2018). Generalisability is limited by small-scale studies and minimal statistical supporting data; however, some consistent themes emerged from participant accounts.

i.   *Impact upon behaviour*

The studies suggest seclusion has variable effectiveness as a behavioural deterrent. Students in Roach (2012) agreed 'the negative experience of ISS was enough to make them avoid going back' (p.77), helping to 'learn your lesson…think about what you are actually in ISS for and to know that you shouldn't do that again,' and preventing students doing 'more crazy stuff' (p.85). A teacher corroborated this: '[when students] know the consequences to a particular behaviour are ISS, it makes them pause because they do not like ISS' (p78).

Deterrent effects might be student dependent. Cognitive and reflective capacities are important in associating negative consequences with behaviour, in recalling this negative experience and consciously choosing behaviour to avoid further consequences. However, in Cole (2006), only 27% of students agreed they understood the consequences of their behaviour, and just 15% reported improved behaviour afterwards, suggesting seclusion alone does not invoke behavioural changes.

One teacher felt it had 'more lasting effect for students who don't really get into too much trouble' with only temporary impact upon the 'worst offenders' (Barker, 2010, p.383). Teachers in Roach (2012) echoed this, noting it affected 'good' students more than those who 'don't care about school' (p.78). Thus, underlying motivation for behaviour change may be different whereby 'good' students who prioritise academic achievement are less likely to return.

One student felt it '...helps you realise how much your behaviour is affecting your learning' (Gilmore, 2013, p.110). The author acknowledged that few students returned, but without providing specific data. However, alternative pastoral support systems that were implemented for students who had been assigned three times (Gilmore, 2012), likely reduced returning numbers. Roach (2012) referenced positive relationships as a factor reducing chances of returning. More detailed information would be helpful to determine specific effects of seclusion, compared to other factors upon behavioural change.

Roach's (2012) conclusion that desire to avoid the negative experience of seclusion was the greatest motivator for not repeating undesirable behaviour, contrasts with student accounts in Stiefer (2003) where none felt ISS alone was a deterrent: 'It ain't like I do things thinkin', "if I do this then they're gonna put me in in-house"' (p.91); 'they [think] that everything will get better [on its own]. They just think that if they punish us enough we'll act right.' (p.125). Only 27% of students in Cole (2006) reported not wanting to return, suggesting that seclusion had a low deterrent effect.

Avoidance of further sanctions might be an effective deterrent to further misbehaviour for some (Stiefer, 2003). Ongoing threat of external exclusion was theorised by Barker (2010) to be a factor, alongside seclusion, in inducing behavioural change. Many studies did not explore this, precluding conclusions as to whether cumulative punishment or threat of exclusion are greater motivators for behavioural changes than seclusion.

Limited evidence indicated seclusion may contribute to increased rule-breaking and that behavioural changes were not always positive (Stiefer, 2003). Students reported limiting interactions with peers and teachers to avoid further punishment: 'I haven't been in any trouble since, I guess I did learn to keep my mouth shut no matter if I think I'm right. Whatever the teacher says I just do it or take it...' (p.115-6). Whilst compliance is generally desirable, it is problematic where enforcement methods act to disempower students and discourage challenges to potentially unfair treatment. It is debatable whether desire to avoid a negative experience is equivalent to consciously choosing to meet behavioural expectations, and what learning is gained in the former condition. Observable behaviour changes within seclusion spaces may only indicate localised submission to strict rules and harsh circumstances. Students in Gilmore (2013) alluded to this: 'once you are out – you forget...' (p.111). Barker (2010) illuminated this further.

> *...students reverted to their usual behaviour and attitudes to learning once they returned to everyday classrooms (complete with peer pressure, noise, different teacher-student ratios and differing styles and modes of teaching). Therefore the transformative effects of Seclusion were often limited to the space of Seclusion - interventions were not sufficient to enable long term behavioural changes amongst many Secluded students, or to address or resolve the complex behavioural issues or specific learning needs many of them possessed.*

Author quote (Barker, 2010, p.383)

Reduced stimulation and minimal social demands may benefit students struggling to maintain expected classroom behaviour, and fewer distractions assist work completion (Roach, 2012). Without additional support however, whether students could independently develop coping or learning strategies or sustain behavioural improvements is questionable.

Students in Stiefer (2003) underscored the importance of addressing underlying needs, suggesting education should incorporate counselling support, teaching how 'to deal with the stuff that gets us in trouble...[not] just punishing us for messing up' (p.140). One described how the seclusion

environment led to suppressed feelings, which when released upon exiting, resulted in behavioural infractions and re-assignment to seclusion (p.136). This notion of emotional suppression correlates with Barker (2010) who associated 'extreme' changes in immediately observable behaviour with the direct effects of spatial configurations, producing 'mostly temporary and short-lived' behavioural changes (p.384).

Isolation should avoid positive reinforcement of undesirable behaviour, and also manage risks that behavioural changes are merely 'coping strategies to get through the day' (Barker, 2010, p.382); students need to be supported to make long-term, positive changes. For isolation to be an effective deterrent, regular classrooms must provide sufficient positive reinforcement (Ryan et al, 2007).

ii.   Impact on student perceptions

Students reported changed perceptions of school, themselves and how others viewed them. In Stiefer (2003) two-thirds commented that ISS changed their views about school or made them not want to attend due to feeling school had rejected them (p.127), they didn't belong (p.92) or 'wanna be someplace that don't want me' (p.93). For some, it was because they did not learn anything in ISS (p.114); others felt '…they didn't deserve to be in their school' (p.96). Although Gilmore (2013) concluded students were not alienated in school afterwards, supporting data was limited.

Feeling unwanted could contribute to students quitting school. Students in Roach (2012) felt ISS could increase this risk for vulnerable students by giving them no reason to attend (p.82). This corresponds with student perceptions in Stiefer (2003), that seclusion signalled the school had 'given up' (p.140), a 'cruel' punishment deliberately designed to make students quit so staff could 'get rid' of them (p.106). Another commented: 'It's like they don't care about me… when I need some help, like help with schoolwork … home and teachers' (p.126).

Barker (2010) concluded that students 'require substantive and ongoing support and intervention to help keep them in school' (p.384). In Roach (2012), administrators acknowledged 'at-risk' students

withdrawing rather than attending ISS, implying it could exacerbate existing difficulties: '…these students already have issues and now you put them in an ISS environment; that is asking for problems' (p.84).

In most studies mental health was not a significant theme, despite concerns about adverse mental health arising from isolation (DoH, 2015). Stiefer's (2003) findings indicate further research would be beneficial. Students reported signs of increased anxiety including disrupted sleep or reduced appetite (p.96). One commented that excitement about school was displaced by depression due to concerns about risks of ISS re-assignment, describing it as 'brutal…like you don't even exist' (p.126). Three described isolation severe enough to make someone 'crazy' (p.104; p.113; p.125); another recounted witnessing students 'crack' within an hour (p.101). The author concluded such conditions could constitute neglect with the potential to cause irreparable social and academic damage, a claim reinforced by restricted use of isolation in healthcare (MHACoP, 2015).

The prison-like nature of seclusion was highlighted, with students drawing comparisons in Barker (2010), Cole (2006) and Stiefer (2003), where three felt the enforced isolation was worse than jail due to not being able to see or speak to anyone. Barker (2019) raised the novel point that seclusion staff were also excluded from wider school participation.

One-third of students in Stiefer (2003) reported feeling like a 'criminal' (p.140), 'some enemy' (p.119) or 'outcasts' (p.114) in ISS. Internalisation of these labels or perceptions of being unwanted, could contribute to behavioural decline. Sustained exposure could cause or exacerbate mental health difficulties. Students' emotional needs may contribute to initial rule infractions, needs then exacerbated by the draconian nature of seclusion, resulting in a cycle of misbehaviour (Stiefer, 2003). Accordingly, ongoing monitoring of section use and outcomes, and to identify intervention opportunities is vital.

This cycle might be exacerbated by increased post-seclusion surveillance. Students alluded to perceived reputational damage following assignment, feeling more 'noticed' by teachers and thus at

greater chance of reassignment (Gilmore, 2013). Not only unsubstantiated by quantitative data, qualitative measures of possible influence upon others' perceptions were also absent. Comparably, in Stiefer (2003) one-third of students reported feeling increased surveillance, noting teachers would view them as a 'bad student or troublemaker' (p.110) and 'It's hard to learn…when you feel like you might get in trouble for every little thing' (p.122).

Heightened teacher awareness of previously sanctioned students is conceivable. Monitoring and follow-up procedures elucidated in Gilmore (2012) may have contributed to students' reported perceptions. Remaining studies did not discuss this in detail, so further exploration of students' perceptions – and others' perceptions of them – following seclusion would be helpful to clarify whether reputational damage occurs.

It is noteworthy that conditions in Stiefer (2003) were comparatively harsher – 'intimidating,' 'extreme' and akin to 'being under a military dictator' (p.101) - than other studies, potentially contributing to students' negative perceptions and reported impact upon their mental health. In comparison, emphasis on follow-up pastoral support in Gilmore (2012) could explain respondents' more positive views. Evidently, more research into long-term effects of seclusion is necessary.

iii.   *Impact on learning*

Seclusion restricts learning opportunities and could contribute to academic decline: a theme present in most studies. Students in Stiefer (2003) reported incorrect or no work provided, ISS teachers lacking subject-specific knowledge, and inadequate resources as contributors. Procedural factors restricting out-of-hours academic support limited students' capacity to catch up, with additional punishments for falling behind, creating a negative overall impact, eloquently summarised by one student:

> *'ISS is pretty malproductive. It's a waste of my time. It takes away my learning time and we don't get any work sent to us. So basically, we just sit and do nothing […] You never have the teachers in there that you need. So you fall behind academically. They don't have the time or resources to deal with every student in there. This is the most asinine thing I've ever heard of. I mean getting this for being tardy is ridiculous… Learning wise, you are limited because you don't get to ask questions that you would in regular class. It's ridiculous that I'm punished like this. Instead of improving, I get behind and I'm punished academically. There's no help or nothing. I think it's unethical to punish students academically. Don't take away my constitutional right to learn.'.*

Student quote (Stiefer, 2003, p.98)

Insufficient or inappropriate work was also discussed in Roach (2012). Staff noted not all work translated into the independent working context, particularly for academically 'poor' students (p.86), and that carefully selected work was necessary to prevent 'the student negatively associat[ing] that work with the negative situation of ISS' (p.86).

How far students used seclusion for independent learning varied, due partly to resource and teacher availability. For some, the quiet environment was advantageous. In Barker (2010) staff, parent and students referenced the ability to complete more work than in the classroom, one student attributing this to the behavioural controls and minimal distractions, improving concentration and rendering work 'the only thing to do' (p.383). This was corroborated by Cole (2006) wherein one-fifth of students found the quiet environment helpful, felt fewer distractions enabled greater work focus, and only 8% found missed instruction unhelpful. Students in Stiefer (2003), Roach (2012) and Gilmore (2013) felt it gave them time to catch up on classwork. In Gilmore (2012) one SENCO described the enforced silence as 'powerful,' enabling students to 'achieve a lot of work' and '[learn]' good behaviours about learning' (p.44). Assuming fewer positive peer role models within these contexts, it is unclear what 'good behaviours' students may learn, or whether they generalise to different contexts.

Although some students can learn independently, inadequate teacher assistance could challenge others. Students mentioned limited instructional input (Gilmore, 2013), noting how support requests

could entail additional punishment for breaking 'no talking' rules (Stiefer, 2003). Staff in Barker (2010) described students purposefully seated facing away from the teacher to reduce interactions. One student observed this paradox: 'I'm here to learn, not to be secluded. How you gonna learn unless somebody teaches you? In seclusion, how can you learn?' (Stiefer, 2003, p.133).

Staff noted the detrimental impact of insufficient academic assistance, one highlighting lost instructional time as the 'biggest disadvantage…[because] you cannot replicate what was done that day in class instructionally' (Roach, 2012, p.89). Teachers and administrators felt ISS was especially disadvantageous to 'at-risk' students who were often not 'academically minded' (p.84). Lost opportunities may contribute to school resource demands (Power and Taylor, 2018). Furthermore, if classroom misbehaviour is underpinned by academic frustration, sanctions involving restricted instructional input may be counterproductive.

Despite one IR manager describing her role as minimising educational disruptions from missed lessons (Gilmore, 2012, p.44), the author described 'a place where students were required to experience learning without teaching assistance' (Gilmore, 2013, p.111). The headteacher's view that IR's wider purpose was to 'focus on the learning needs of young people [and] removing barriers to learning' (p.44), likely influenced a reported 30% increase in A* to C grades following the IR's introduction. However, there is insufficient data to determine specific contributing factors. Frequent seclusion could constitute a barrier to learning. Learning benefits for those remaining in the classroom as reported by one-quarter of teachers in Cole (2006) are less apparent for removed students. The further behind academically, the more difficult mainstream reintegration, particularly if students internalise the view as reported by one: '…[the]more times they sent me…it made me feel like you just can't achieve anything…like they were telling me, 'You will never succeed' (Stiefer, 2003, p.134).

The educational emphasis within Gilmore (2012) – possibly driven by involvement in a local initiative - was less apparent in the American contexts of Stiefer (2003) and Roach (2012). In Cole's (2006)

action research, students' and teachers' views directed immediate changes to support learning, including effective instruction and better-quality work. Access to appropriate tasks and quality resources supports independent learning, but limited instructional and peer support restricts this. Further evidence is necessary to determine how far seclusion may compromise or enhance learning.

iv.   Benefits

The preceding sections suggest seclusion has limited deterrent effect, and may reduce learning and emotional wellbeing. Nevertheless, reported benefits for some students include improved academic attainment and behaviour change. In Cole (2006) 92% felt they benefited from attending ISS but reasons were not clearly explicated. Staff respondents were more likely to highlight broader benefits, the principal being continued attendance.

Barker (2010) notes increased seclusion use partly due to political pressure to reduce exclusion rates. In Gilmore (2012), one purpose of that provision was to reduce exclusions –FTEs subsequently reduced from 10% to less than 0.1%. Whilst students with SEND were eight times more likely to be excluded (DfEs 2009), they were no more likely to be assigned to IR. Most studies omitted quantitative measures, but it is likely students derive greater benefit from maintaining school routines compared to exclusion, often perceived as a 'day off' (Barker, 2019, p.1284). In Gilmore (2013), students agreed remaining in school was more useful than exclusion, whereas students in Stiefer (2003) generally found the provision unhelpful. In Roach (2012), staff reported students completing more work compared to when excluded. One student reasoned that exclusion was viewed as a 'vacation' whereas ISS 'gives the students a chance to still do their work…' (p.85).

Whether seclusion holds benefits over exclusion depends on its nature. Although students inarguably benefit from maintaining attendance and exclusion rates are unaffected (Munn, Cullen and Lloyd, 2000), it is vital students access equivalent quality education to peers, rather than simply being retained in school. While underscoring inclusion and participation values in Gilmore (2012), the IR

manager highlighted conflict between participation and exclusionary IR, permitting participation only in schoolwork and not wider school life. Staff felt exclusion resulted in students 'getting into more trouble' and students should remain in school 'for discipline purposes' (p.44). Additionally, Barker (2010) noted community benefits stemming from measures helping to remove the threat of ''undesirable' young people in public spaces during school hours' (p.379), resulting in some students' exclusion from both public and mainstream school spaces.

An associated benefit is the removal of disruptive students from lessons. One-fifth of staff in Cole (2006) felt this benefitted individual students through removal from a potentially frustrating environment; three-fifths felt it benefitted the teacher, giving them a break and allowing focus upon others. One-quarter felt it benefited students remaining in class. Staff alluded to benefits for others' learning through removal of disruptive students, and the individual benefits of timeout (Roach, 2012) and increased opportunities for disciplinary mediation (Gilmore, 2013). However, there is no evidence that longer timeout durations derive greater benefit than shorter periods (Sterling, Turner and Watson, 1999).

Two students in Stiefer (2003) stated ISS gave them thinking time; however most felt it was not useful, or was deliberately designed to induce students to leave, causing some to drop out - contradicting its intended purpose to reduce exclusions:

> *…principals can send kids they're tired of seeing…so they don't have to deal with them. It gets them out of their hair for a few days. Maybe they'll even quit school and then they get rid of them for longer'*
>
> Student quote (Stiefer, 2003, p.112)

For isolation to function as an effective alternative to exclusion, it needs to be sufficiently deterring but not contribute to negative outcomes overall. It fulfils the need for consequences within behavioural management systems, but it is imperative systems do not cause students harm or restrict educational rights.

2.3.3. Factors facilitating effective and ethical use

Many studies did not aim to evaluate efficacy so quantitative impact measures were omitted. Qualitative data suggests impact differs greatly dependent on contextual and individual factors, but there were common facilitating themes.

i. Clear focus and procedures

Internal exclusion systems may be punitive, academic, or therapeutic, but should ideally include all three strands under an individualised approach (Sheets, 1996; Morris and Howard, 2003; Stiefer, 2003; Roach, 2012). Educational spaces increasingly emphasise control, discipline and punishment (Barker, 2019). Academic and social learning functions are limited in particularly punitive contexts. It is vital that isolation spaces are suitably resourced and staffed to support student development. From the preceding analysis, Sheets' (1996) recommendations remain applicable (Table 1).

Table 1: Core components of effective systems

Foundational	Mission statement philosophically aligned with school values to ensure students are treated equitably; clear, concise and flexible policies; consistently enforced fair rules and procedures
Operational	Suitably skilled staff monitor with relevant experience of supporting needs; accurate records; adequate funding and resources including behaviour modification materials
Evaluation	Measuring behaviour change over time; seeking suggestions for improvement; regular evaluation committee.

Policies must be clearly communicated to assist understanding and consistency, and adaptable to individual and wider needs. Staff must be supported to maintain wider school links (Cole, 2006; Barker, 2019) and require training to implement, and maintain fidelity to, the least restrictive behavioural management strategies (Bon and Zirkel, 2014).

Barker (2010) referred to students' powerlessness to challenge punitive school systems, contrasting with Gilmore's (2012) findings that staff actively involved students in decision-making according to

inclusion and participation values. Michail (2011) argues that truly inclusive behaviour management systems that promote positive outcomes must incorporate multi-tiered approaches, collaborative working, and development of strong relationships (Michail, 2011).

All relevant stakeholders should be involved in designing systems (Roach, 2012), identifying their purpose and measures to evaluate desired and actual outcomes, and sharing this information. Including parents means broader needs can be considered and positive reinforcement for behavioural improvement provided (Hrabek and Settles, 2004). Systems should fulfil disciplinary, academic and therapeutic functions dependent on students' needs.

ii.   Proportionate and fair

Isolation can be a useful element of behavioural management policy depending on implementation. Positive perceptions tended to form where systems were viewed as fair, which varied across studies, sometimes linked to acknowledgement of the necessity for sanctions. Students and teachers agreed some form of punishment is necessary (Gilmore, 2012; 2013; Roach, 2012). Interestingly, teachers in Roach (2012) discussed punishing students for uncontrollable circumstances e.g. being dropped off late. It is unclear why isolation constitutes a suitable response. It should not be the first resort and emphasis should be on keeping students in class (Hrabek and Settles, 2004). One staff member questioned whether loss of teaching time for minor violations was equitable, listing this as their biggest frustration (p.90). Equitability concerns also arise for students with SEND, and whether punishing the expression of underlying needs is ever fair.

Challenges to the appropriateness of isolation for minor misbehaviour was a recurring theme. Barker (2010) highlights how adults 'legitimise the control and containment of children (…) in ways which would be unacceptable for many other[s]' contributing to perceptions of seclusion as 'fair, appropriate and "deserved"' (p.384). Perceptions of punishment as deserved varied; one student describing assignment for 'stupid' reasons:

> *The punishment should fit the act. I shouldn't be punished academically for something that was not academic behavior. I was a little late. So what? Doctors are late all the time.*

Students reported perceived injustice at having education restricted for unfair or trivial reasons, with undiscerning punishments and unsupported emotional needs contributing to overall negative views of ISS as unhelpful and lacking purpose.

In contrast, students in Gilmore (2013) felt the IR was proportionate, and reasons generally fair. The author attributed this to student-staff discussions held beforehand. Other factors could be a specific pastoral role implemented following earlier student feedback, and the importance the IR Manager attributed to ensuring students felt punishments were fair (Gilmore, 2012). Similar discussions were noticeably absent in Stiefer (2003):

> *If I was supposed to learn some kind of lesson…I can't think of what it is. It didn't serve no purpose. They should've had some kind of talk between me and the teacher'*

Many students recounted similar experiences, indicating that contextual explanations would have helped them '…understand the point of [isolation]' (p.96). The purpose of discipline must be clear. Sanctions must be equitable and proportionate, with consideration of contextual factors and underpinning causes. Isolation must be for 'no longer than necessary' (DfE, 2016, p.12) with breaks for interactions, toileting, eating / drinking and recreation permitted. Alternative responses may be more appropriate for minor rule infractions, with seclusion reserved for circumstances where behaviour is likely to cause harm to others (as advocated by MHACoP, 2015). Where there are underlying behavioural contributors, it is important suitably tailored support is offered rather than punitive responses that may not evoke desired behaviour changes.

As outlined in Section 2.3, multiple students in Stiefer (2003) raised concerns about falling behind. The need for academic support was highlighted by staff in Cole (2006), Roach (2012) and Gilmore (2012), the latter clearly emphasising attainment, with subsequently successful outcomes. Students must be assigned work relevant to their regular teaching and receive appropriate instructional input to mitigate potential negative effects.

Off-task or challenging behaviour may reflect learning frustration, so students must be supported to develop relevant skills and knowledge (Sheets, 1996). Table 2 outlines suggested actions.

Table 2: Suggested actions

Suggested actions	
Academic component	**Therapeutic component**
- Individualised literacy or numeracy interventions - Additional support to secure subject-specific foundational knowledge - Support to develop independent learning and self-assessment strategies - Tasks that provide students with opportunities for a sense of success - Create opportunities for positive feedback to reinforce desirable behaviours - Access to additional learning or catch-up support for missed content	- Tailored behaviour support or action plans - Functional behaviour analysis to explore communicative functions of behaviour - Additional support or interventions to help manage underlying emotional needs - Students should be supported to reflect upon behaviour and consequence, to assist understanding of consequences, accepting responsibility and making behavioural changes, using activities such as role plays, written tasks or worksheets. - Clear explanations regarding unacceptable behaviour and purpose of consequence - Support students to develop relevant skills e.g. conflict resolution, restitution, problem-solving - Access to bullying or social skills support to assist development of relationships that can act as a protective factor - Multi agency approach with close liaison and collaboration to support holistic understanding

There was consensus across studies regarding the necessity for a therapeutic element within disciplinary responses to unacceptable student behaviour. Negative student perceptions in Stiefer (2003) were associated with a narrowly construed punitive system not meeting broader needs. All students agreed there was an absence of counselling:

> *They don't care that I'm not getting any help. […] we shouldn't just get punished and that's it. You're done. I think we should've had some sort of conference or something. You know talk about things that were bothering me. We could've found some other solution….*

<div align="right">

Student quote (Stiefer, 2003, p.130)

</div>

The idea of an alternative solution was posited by staff in Roach (2012) who distinguished disruptive behaviour requiring classroom removal, from minor rule infractions. Aligning with staff proposals, the author concluded students must be supported to develop tailored action plans to prevent repeat behaviour. This supports Barker's (2010) conclusion that students need ongoing support and intervention to effect lasting behavioural changes.

In Cole (2006) the programme included counselling but only 12% of students reported receiving it. Staff in Roach (2012) felt a guidance component was particularly important for 'chronic' ISS returnees - echoed in Gilmore (2012) wherein staff felt they owed a 'duty of care' to frequent returnees, acknowledging that emotional support may need prioritising over academics. This was reflected in school policy whereby pastoral systems commenced following 3 IR assignments, possibly contributing to positive perceptions compared to other studies.

Strictly enforced consequences often fail to distinguish one-off from recurrent misbehaviour, and between deliberate behaviour compared to responses shaped by external factors. Consequently, such systems are likely to be perceived as unfair, particularly by the affected students. Seclusion does not consider underlying behavioural causes or communicative functions. In failing to teach desirable

behaviours and provide positive reinforcement, non-individualised responses contradict inclusive education principles (James and Freeze, 2006; Michail, 2011).

The SENDCoP (DfE and DoH, 2015) acknowledges that behaviour may be underpinned by emotional needs. Students must be supported to manage needs, rather than punished for consequential behaviours. Table 2 above suggests actions to address such needs.

v. Ongoing monitoring and evaluation

The final commonality for effective use was ongoing monitoring, evaluation and refinement. In Gilmore (2012) IR was 'not the end of the process' (p.46), with annual review processes involving staff and students implemented. Barker's papers (2010) evolved from an internal provision evaluation, and Roach (2012) concluded that ISS programs 'should constantly be evaluated and refined to fit [students'] needs…' (p.98).

Evaluation processes should involve all stakeholders and assess how far provisions achieve their stated objectives. If the objective is to reduce misbehaviour, frequency measures must be collated (Ryan et al, 2007). Regular review ensures that training, resource, or support needs can be swiftly identified. Statistical measures such as attainment, frequency of and reasons for attendance, or demographic patterns will be illuminated, facilitating development of effective learning and behaviour management policies. Effectiveness of academic and therapeutic interventions should be monitored to ensure efficient resource allocation. Finally, schools should regularly review processes to ensure adherence to health and safety and safeguarding requirements (DfE, 2016).

3. Implications for Educational Psychologists

The results indicate a dearth of research supporting the use of seclusion. EPs should support schools to develop structured monitoring and evaluation processes as part of school-wide behavioural management systems. This will contribute to research pertaining to the long-term impact of

repeated or extended isolation upon self-esteem, mental health, emotional wellbeing, relationships and academic progress, and identifying mitigating or protective factors.

Schools will likely continue to use some form of isolation within behaviour management policy, so EPs have a role in supporting schools to implement provisions incorporating differential reinforcement, academic and therapeutic strands to promote positive behavioural change and long-term outcomes in line with inclusion principles. This might include supporting schools to implement attachment-based practices or peer interventions to support positive relationships (Bombèr, 2007). EPs can also recommend suitable behavioural interventions and train staff in behavioural management approaches such as functional behavioural analysis (Sterling, Turner and Watson, 1999) to identify causes and communicative functions of behaviour ensuring tailored, yet consistent approaches that will help improve behaviour.

EPs can use consultation to collaboratively develop provision suited to schools' individual contexts. This should include strategies to obtain the child's voice, encouraging stakeholders to reflect on the purpose and appropriateness of isolation practices and supporting assessment of whether and / or how provisions achieve stated objectives. In addition, EPs can draw upon frameworks such as the eco-systemic model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to assist holistic understanding of individual needs so the most appropriate support can be provided.

4. Conclusions

The aim of isolation should be to secure behaviour improvements (DCSF, 2009) but this is hindered by excessively punitive systems and spaces, often amounting to seclusion. This review explored how key stakeholders experience seclusion in schools and indicated that numerous interlinking factors determine whether it effects behavioural change.

Effectiveness is dependent on adequate resources and facilities, clear and consistent policies, principles of inclusion and collaboration, and provision of academic and therapeutic support. Current guidance specifies that time in isolation is used as constructively as possible (DfE, 2016). This allows professional discretion over activities completed, meaning they can be tailored to meet students' academic, social and emotional or other identified needs. Previous guidance recommended that schools implement monitoring procedures and consider staff skills and training (DCSF, 2009). Although this is not a current requirement, the review has indicated that these actions are fundamental in facilitating the effective use of isolation.

Nevertheless, it would be beneficial for clearer, more directive government guidance to be issued to help mitigate against potential harms. In lieu of clear guidance, schools should ensure that use of isolation is underpinned by clear values of inclusion and measurable objectives, with emphasis upon individualised support and ongoing evaluation to bring about sustained behavioural changes.

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Appendix 1: Systematic Search Results

Author, Title and Type of study	Setting / Participants	Nature of isolation	Data collection and analysis	Key Findings / Recommendations
Gilmore, G. (2013) '"What's a Fixed-Term Exclusion, Miss?" Students' Perspectives on a Disciplinary Inclusion Room in England.' Peer reviewed journal article	Secondary school in high deprivation area in Southwest England. 5 year 8 / 9 students; 4 male, 1 female	Individualised booths in uninviting space with minimal stimuli aside from rules (no talking, drinking or eating) pre- and post-interviews with parents / governors, + pastoral follow-up. 12-5pm, 1 break when other students leaving school. Completing adapted curriculum work.	Mixed methods – school documents and student face to face interviews. Documentary Analysis, triangulation with interview data analysed using Cultural Historical Activity Theory framework.	Student views: all accepted need for disciplinary provision and felt reasons were generally fair (linked to interview prior to IR entry). IR served different purposes - reflection space, and deterrence. Many noted IR was a punishment, but 'forgot' and returned to normal after leaving. Agreement that remaining in school was better than exclusion. One raised issue of learning without the same level of teacher input as in classroom. Least popular aspect was late finish. Few students returned to IR [but this may have been linked to pastoral support offered afterwards]. Some students felt IR led to staff noticing them more in class, and increased likelihood of general discipline - not supported by the data. Conclusions: IR was proportionate and broadly educational form of discipline; it enabled student participation in school (although not with peers) and did not alienate students; it created opportunities for turnaround and mediation. IR illustrates how schools can use disciplinary provision within inclusion framework.
Gilmore, G. (2012) 'What's so inclusive about an inclusion room? Staff perspectives on student participation, diversity and equality in an English secondary school.' Peer reviewed journal article	Setting as in Gilmore 2013. Online questionnaire on general inclusion - 30 staff. Purposive sample of 9 interviewees including senior leadership, teachers and pastoral staff with influence over IR.	As above. Entry process similar to that for FTEs with parent / headteacher involvement and entry / exit forms.	Mixed methods - Quantitative online questionnaire, staff interviews, school IR data (kept as part of wider project). Descriptive analysis of questionnaires; interviews analysed using Cultural Historical Activity Theory framework.	43% to 73% A* - C attainment increase following introduction. SEND / FSM more likely to be excluded, but no more likely to enter IR. Staff held positive attitudes re inclusive practices, understood function of IR to keep student focus on work. H/T -IR intended to be disciplinary, not nurturing, wider purpose of enabling staff to focus on learning needs and remove barriers to learning. IR manager - educational role of IR, collecting work to ensure 'education is not disturbed.' Contradiction in values re participation, as students participating in work but not other school. Role in challenging fairness of IR placement. SENCO – IR enables remain in school, can achieve a lot of work in environment. Pastoral manager – ensuring issues are dealt with equally in student's view. Pastoral staff – need to balance educating individual and all students, respond to frequent IRs by recognising counselling or pastoral needs (entry 3+ times rare). Continuum of practice re educational and pastoral roles / responsibilities. Conclusions: Staff accepted disciplinary IR as necessary, proportionate and effective, benefit of keeping students in school and work focused. IR became part of school problem-solving, underpinned by values of participation, equality and diversity (even with differing staff motivations). IR shaped by staff and students to have more

				educational and inclusionary focus, rather than controlling discipline model. Disciplinary IR can complement educational focus.
Barker (2010) 'Pupils or prisoners? Institutional geographies and internal exclusion in UK secondary schools.' Peer reviewed journal article.	London Academy school in socially disadvantaged area with higher-than-average FSM and SEND. 29 individual and focus group interviews (39 respondents) with staff, parents and students.	Small room, heavy wooden doors with small glass panels, one small window – in contrast to bright spacious school environment. Students seated in cubicles facing wall, with supervisor (HLTA) sat behind. Rules - no talking, seated at all times including breaks. Later start and finish times, independent classwork. Assigned for one day or more.	Mixed methods – Unit data including demographics, reasons for and length of seclusion; focus group and interviews; observations over 6-month period. Statistical analysis of seclusion patterns; participant responses analysed within Foucauldian framework (mapping internal spaces).	Time and space designed to emphasise punishment via isolation and separation, high level of room surveillance comparable to prison. High regulation and control –students are not simply passive but resistant acts are often minor, and students lack power to challenge the process. Staff, students and parents did not raise concerns about prisonlike nature of space – seclusion is legitimised as fair, appropriate and deserved punishment. Physical space, surveillance and behaviour rules plus ongoing threat of exclusion can contribute to immediate changes in student presentation and compliance – both due to behaviour manipulation and as a coping mechanism. Staff and students agreed students complete more work (fewer distractions) and students express pride in this. However, effects were often temporary, students tended to revert to normal behaviour when returning to regular classroom. Conclusions: Seclusion intervention does not lead to long term behavioural change or consider behavioural and learning needs. More substantive and ongoing support is necessary for students at risk of exclusion.
Barker (2019) 'Who cares?' Gender, care and secondary schooling: 'Accidental findings' from a seclusion unit.' Peer reviewed journal article	As above (Barker, 2010)	As above with additional details: designed for up to 5 pupils; deliberately spartan with dividers painted black; 'do not speak' sign displayed.	Focus groups and interview; ethnographic observations. Thematic Analysis using Lefebvre's representations of space theory (how space is conceived, perceived and lived in).	SMT members: 'draconian,' focus on discipline, room designed to be unpleasant. Space is shaped by those within it, e.g. staff playing relaxing music and adopting nurturing rather than authoritative approach to understanding student needs and contextual factors – at odds with how space was conceived, but helped increase engagement. Staff recognised lack of support for Seclusion Unit members, who reported limited participation in main school. Parents / students reported experiencing seclusion as caring space. Conclusions: Seclusion became unanticipated place of care rather than discipline and punishment. Gendered expectations of caring role as maternal, occurring in peripheral school spaces with lower status support staff, care concerns often highlighted by females – in contrast to the male-led SMT school ethos which limited opportunities and spaces for caring to occur due to disciplinarian focus. This could contribute to seclusion being seen as a safe space – space was perceived and lived in differently from how it was conceived.

| Stiefer (2003) 'Voices unheard: An interpretive study of in-school suspension.'

Unpublished dissertation | American High School, typical demographics with slightly above average academic performance, 28% FSM.

9 students of which: 2 female, 7 male; 3 17-year-olds, 3 18-year-olds, 3 19-year-olds; 4 Caucasian, 4 BAME. | 5 'cheap' cubicles with 'decrepit' desk facing away from windows and TA. Rules; no talking, remain seated.
8 – 3.15 with lunch and 2 toilet breaks. Students escorted to toilet / lunchroom to eat alone in silence. Sporadic work, no academic assistance.

Students attend 3-15 days after parent-teacher conference and student-principal meeting to sign behavioural contract. No extra-curricular permitted. | Mixed methods - Student interviews; observations; documents

Descriptive realism of narrative accounts within broader interpretative interactionism framework. | Participant responses key points:
Reasons ISS given were perceived as stupid or minor, disproportionate, and unfair - linked to lack of explanation. ISS itself seen as a waste of time with behavioural changes linked to the threat of exclusion, rather than impact of ISS. Similarities to prison in terms of solitary confinement, lack of freedom and sense of being treated like a criminal or an enemy – emphasis on 'cruel' punishment through isolation from friends, imposed silence and physical pain from desks, rather than learning. Many students discussed the lack of academic support or work not provided plus impact of missing lessons so falling behind, results in further punishment; asking for help in room also results in further punishment. Most students reported sense of loneliness, isolation, feeling irritated, frustrated, depressed or worthless and not wanting to come to school. Many reported a sense of not belonging in school, feeling excluded, rejected, uncared for or unwanted. Perception of ISS as designed to get students 'out of the way.' Lasting impact – limiting future peer interactions; anxiety of being sent back; trouble sleeping; future drop-out; concerns re staff perceptions and reputational damage; changed view of school to more negative.
Some noted that ISS can provide time to think; however, there is a lack of counselling / pastoral support to prevent future ISS [cf design to make students not want to return]. No students reported that it was a deterrent.

Conclusions: Problematic event i.e. unacceptable behaviour leads to punishment event i.e. ISS which is designed to be a deterrent and provide time for reflection, leading to accommodation event i.e. student adapts behaviour as a result of punishment. More research is needed on effects of corrective isolation. Data showed high drop-out rates and impact on learning due to missed lessons and lack of support in ISS so does not support academic continuity.
Issue that nature of ISS could constitute maltreatment or neglect due to toileting restrictions, painful desks, surveillance not supervision, academic decline linked to missed work and lack of support, cycle of punishment linked to lack of emotional support, humiliation of students. |
| Roach (2012) – 'In-school suspension: An effective | Medium sized suburban high school with | Punitive In-School Suspension consisting of room | Student interviews; teacher focus group; administrators focus | Key points:
Student views: ISS is a boring and negative experience; work was not beneficial, and they do nothing. Some felt it was a good opportunity to catch up if focused |

deterrent of student misbehavior or just another form of discipline?' Unpublished dissertation	20+ year programme; high diversity and poverty. 3 11th grade students in ISS once: 1 male 2 female. 3 teachers with program knowledge: 1 male 2 female. (Pilot with 3 administrators & ISS director)	with uncomfortable chairs where students are not permitted to talk eat or drink. Work on different assignments throughout day. Have to walk in single file for breaks / lunch.	group; interview with ISS director. Theoretical framework including behaviourism and social exchange theory within critical case study research design	due to fewer distractions. Students did not discuss the guidance component. Acknowledged need for punishment but felt it could increase at-risk students' chance of dropping out due to missed schoolwork. Teacher views: ISS more effective for 'good' students, and a good place to send disruptive students but some concerns re SEND. Importance of fair punishment and finding more effective ways to manage behaviour. View that it hurts at-risk students due to irreplaceable missed instruction time and falling behind, and some students chose to withdraw rather than attend. Students complete more work than for OSS, but suitable work is often not sent, and students lack academic skills to catch up themselves. One teacher noted concerns about students forming negative association between ISS environment and work. ISS could be improved with a tutor / teacher, more instruction and reflection, and increased guidance and support for chronic returnees to prevent cycle. Administrators: ISS is better than being at home and reduces OSS numbers. Deterrent for academically minded students but a 'holding tank' for others. Should be somewhere that students do not want to go. Conclusions: importance of social aspect of school and students view that rights / freedoms were impacted; wanting to avoid the negative experience of ISS did act as a deterrent to return for some. Teachers concerns related to academic impact due to lost instructional time leading to falling behind. Teachers noted that students desire to do well academically was the main reason they do not return, and the negative experience of room. Teachers felt it was better than OSS but highlighted need for alternatives for minor behaviours and supportive behaviour plans to prevent negative cycle for at-risk students. Programmes should involve all stakeholders, regular evaluation and refinement, increased academic focus and guidance components to support behavioural changes.
Cole (2006). 'Effective or Not: As Study of An In-School Suspension Program at C. J. Middle School.'	Middle school in Georgia, average academically, 51% FSM 60 6th, 7th and 8th graders	Small dingy room with 8 cubicles and 12 old desks, old computer and no classroom supplies. Students referred to principal sent for 1-	In / formal discussions with teachers, counsellor, ISS director and teacher surveys; student exit interviews;	55 students out of 60 said yes when asked if they benefitted from programme, most due to quiet environment and work completed. Re discipline - 16 said they did not want to return, 16 said understood consequence, 9 said B improved, 8 reported sense of being in jail, 2 reported fair treatment. 10 said cubicles needed improvement, 13 said lack of socialisation, 14 said workload, 11 said nothing. 4 out of 23 teachers said structured environment was good for students, 8 said assistance, 6 said removal of disruptive students (14 identified as benefit for

| Unpublished dissertation | assigned to ISS

23 Teachers with experience of programme | 10 days. Must stay seated and silent unless permitted to move / speak.
2 toilet breaks and escorted to lunch, taken in silence. Sometimes required to complete tasks e.g. sweeping.

Students isolated while completing assignments; non-compliance = 3-day OSS. | Suspension Records [baseline]

Action research – qualitative/ quantitative evaluation' ethnography. Discourse / thematic analysis | teachers); students felt more socialisation necessary whereas 7 teachers said more limitations, 6 said stricter discipline; more communication

Action research – environmental changes and improved resources and equipment. Learning needs addressed through improved procedures to collect assigned work, more info on student learning needs / modifications, improved quality of ISS work, more learning materials, more instructional / peer support (tracking forms developed to support info sharing in all areas). Disciplinary plan developed – more discussion with students of rules and consequences, reflective essay, tracking form for further rule breaking AND rewards for good B in ISS; at least one group / 1:1 counselling session per ISS visit. |

Appendix 2: Critical Appraisal (CASP, 2013)

Study	Gilmore (2013)	Gilmore (2012)	Barker (2010)	Barker (2019)	Stiefer (2003)	Roach (2012)	Cole (2006)
Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	To clarify student perspectives on internal disciplinary approaches.	To analyse staff perceptions on disciplinary inclusion room (IR) intervention.	States it is not evaluation of efficacy but instead looking at how new punishment spaces have been created due to policy shift.	Original research commissioned by school to evaluate Seclusion Unit. Thematic analysis of original data highlighted 'accidental findings' relating to care.	To examine the perceptions and experience of students of punitive in-school suspension.	Yes – to understand the lived experiences of students, teacher and administrators with regards to ISS programme, and how they differed, strengths and weaknesses of ISS and perceptions of impact on students behaviour → what made them not want to return	Yes – to evaluate the effectiveness of ISS programme based on the perceptions of students and teachers with experience of11 ISS [as part of action research project to identify strengths and weakness and implement changes]
Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (part of information gathering stage for action research)
Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	Case study design using mixed methods.	Case study design using mixed methods.	Exploratory research using Foucauldian framework	Study reported incidental findings from original evaluation project, using Lefebvre framework.	Exploratory research using interpretive interactionism.	Yes – exploratory using critical case study, behaviourism and social exchange theory	Yes – action research with qualitative interviews conducted at initial stage; case study of single setting
Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	Participants were 6% sample of students who had attended IR during one term. Unclear how sample was selected. School	10% purposive sample of school staff who with influence over I, out of sample that had completed	Limited detail provided. Sample includes staff, parents and both non-secluded and secluded students.	Limited information provided as to how sample was obtained.	Limited information – appears to be purposive based on prior student / teacher relationship.	Yes – school specifically selected based on longevity of program and lack of evaluation; purposive sample and random	Yes – considered all relevant students and staff with experience of ISS in particular setting

	identified as part of larger project.	voluntary online questionnaire.				selection used for interviewees	
Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	Triangulation of data from school documents and F2F student interviews. Limited detail re interviews provided.	Online questionnaire, followed by staff interviews, document analysis of IR data.	Seclusion Unit data recorded by school, interviews and focus groups and observations. Limited details of interviews and focus groups.	39 in-depth interviews of head, SMT members, teachers, teacher-in-charge of Unit, parents and students who had / had not been in Seclusion; ethnographic observations.	9 taped student interviews, with one follow up as necessary, observations and document analysis.	Yes – interviews with students and ISS director, and focus groups with teachers and administrators	Yes – Observations, content analysis, historical records; discussions with ISS teacher, C/Ts, students, principal and counsellor
Has relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	No but was referred to in original dissertation. Member checking used to check and amend interpretations of student interviews.	No, but was referred to in original dissertation.	Partially, notes that evaluation by authors is funded by academy but limited further detail.	Limited detail provided.	All students had been taught science by researcher, who had also worked as hall monitor.	Yes – researcher was administrator and then was principal, member checking used to minimise effects	PE teacher and ISS programme teacher
Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	Not discussed in any depth (referenced in original dissertation).	Briefly referenced in relation to pseudonyms and use of supervision (more detail in original dissertation).	Not discussed in any depth.	Details provided in relation to university ethics approval, information sheets, consent and anonymity.	Consent sought from parents and students, anonymised reporting.	Yes, parental and student consent. Member checking and peer debriefing. Anonymity	Consent, anonymity, data storage considered.
Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	CHAT framework and triangulation, with illustrative quotes. Contradictions are examined. No consideration of the role of researcher.	CHAT framework and triangulation with illustrative quotes. Contradictions are examined. No consideration of role of researcher.	Triangulation of data with illustrative quotes. Not overly rigorous but in line with Foucauldian framework. Role of	Interviews transcribed and thematically analysed, with participant quotes provided. Role of researcher not considered.	6 phase methodological framework proposed by Denzin (1989) followed. Role of researcher extensively discussed.	Data recorded, transcribed and coded, with clear description of coding process. Clear statement of researcher's	Discourse analysis – data categorised according to physical environment, learning needs and disciplinary plans. Detailed description

			researcher not considered.			assumptions and subjectivity.	of thematic analysis process
Is there a clear statement of findings?	Explicit statement of findings, and in relation to CHAT framework. Limited consideration of credibility.	Clear statement of findings, discussed in relation to CHAT framework. Limited consideration of credibility	Yes, in relation to aims, but at times suggests generalisability without clear discussion of limitations given small size.	Yes, and there is discussion of small-scale limiting generalisability.	Yes – narrative account and themes, along with model of process	Yes – with thorough consideration of trustworthiness.	Yes – frequency count for categorised responses, and narrative account
How valuable is the research?	Implications discussed re how disciplinary provision can be developed within inclusion framework, drawing upon student perspectives. Area for future research not identified.	Implications discussed with proposed model for disciplinary inclusion. Consideration of how study may contribute. Areas for future research not identified.	Responds to call for research, highlights implications in relation to concepts of surveillance and power. Areas for further research and debate are identified.	Highlights importance of accidental findings in research, discusses implications of findings in relation to how spaces are shaped, and how caring spaces can be mapped within secondary schools. Areas for future research identified.	Identified areas for further ISS research especially relating to punitive ISS, and insights into 'unintended curricular outcomes.' Limitations and generalisability considered.	Implications and recommendations for practitioners, and future research areas highlighted. Limitations including lack of statistical data, limited sample discussed.	Areas for future research re teacher attitudes and learning environment. Implications identified. Limitations including single setting and subjectivity of data highlighted, and lack of data measuring actual student performance.

Search number and keywords	Database	Total Results	Additional limiters (must include term)	Results - since 1999	Excluded [Title, criteria or duplicate]	Excluded after abstract	Excluded after full text	Met all criteria
Appendix 3: Full systematic search process								
1	**Isolation + (room OR booth OR unit OR area OR space)**							
1a	EBSCO	518	School Children Student Behaviour	100	100	N/A	N/A	N/A
1b	Ovid	4576	School Children Student Behaviour	89	89	N/A	N/A	N/A
1c	Google Scholar (GS)	10000+	School School AND behaviour *NB GS following searches limited to specific phrases / title searches to limit high number of results)	1000+	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
2	**Inclusion + (room OR booth OR unit OR area OR space)**							
2a	EBSCO	50	N/A	N/A	48	0	0	2 (1; 2)
2b	Ovid	311 (inclusion + area = 178)	Filter keyword 'area' Inclusion + Area + (school OR behaviour)	133 1	127 1	3 N/A	1	2 (1; 2)
2c	GS	18	N/A	N/A	15	0	1	2 (1; 2)

Omitted after full text:

- Ross, R. (2012) 'Inclusion unit with a lot of bottle', *The Times Educational Supplement Scotland*, (2255: 24) [not primary research]

- Gilmore, G.J. (2010) Inclusion and Professionalism: Reducing fixed term exclusions in a Southwest Secondary School. A Cultural Historical Activity Theory study of a disciplinary Inclusion room [thesis; published studies included in review]]

Search number and keywords	Database	Total Results	Additional limiters (must include term)	Results - since 1999	Excluded [Title, criteria or duplicate]	Excluded after abstract	Excluded after full text	Met all criteria
3	**Seclusion + (room OR booth OR unit OR area OR space)**							
3a	EBSCO	65	N/A	N/A	64	0	0	1 (3)
3b	Ovid	397 (seclusion + room = 353)	Filter keyword 'room' (Seclusion + Room + school OR behaviour)	44 1	43 1	1	0	0
3c	GS	12	N/A	N/A	11	0	0	1 (4)

4	**Room + (consequence OR remov* OR withdraw*)**							
4a	EBSCO	8	N/A	N/A	8	N/A	N/A	N/A
4b	Ovid	526 (remov* + room = 492)	Filter keyword 'remov*' (Remov* + room + school OR behaviour	34 75	34 75	N/A	N/A	N/A
4c	GS	566	Full text search; School NOT jail	277	286	3	0	0
5	**Internal + (exclusion OR suspension)**							
5a	EBSCO	24	N/A	N/A	21	2	0	1 (3)
5b	Ovid	74	N/A	N/A	73	1	0	
5c	GS	34	N/A	N/A	33	0	0	1 (3)
6	**(Timeout OR time-out OR time out)**							
6a	EBSCO	67646	School	8478	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6b	Ovid	100000+	School	100000+	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
6c	GS	65	N/A	N/A	64	1	0	0
7	**(Timeout OR time-out OR time out)**							
7a	EBSCO	67646	School AND behaviour	761	N/A	N/A	N/A	
7b	Ovid	100000+	School AND behaviour Database limiters applied (Journals@Ovid; Psych Articles; PsychInfo; Social Policy and Practice)	511 39	N/A 31	N/A 6	N/A 2	N/A 0
7c	See 6c							

Omitted after full text:
- Erford, B. T. (1999) 'A Modified Time-Out Procedure for Children with Noncompliant or Defiant Behaviors', *Professional School Counseling*, 2(3), pp. 205-10 [involved use of TO by mothers]
- Turner, H.S. and Watson, T.S. (1999) 'Consultant's guide for the use of time-out in the preschool and elementary classroom', Psychology in the Schools, 36(2), pp. 135–148. [not primary research]

8	**(Timeout OR time-out OR time out) + (room OR booth OR unit OR area OR space)**							
8a	EBSCO	220	School	220	219	1	0	0
8b	Ovid	100000+	School School AND behaviour Database limiters applied (Journals@Ovid; Psych Articles; PsychInfo; Social Policy and Practice) Additional limiters [age 0-18; document type; type of research]	100000+ 100000+ 100000+ 10000+	N/A	N/A	N/A	(N/A)
8c	See 6c							
9	**(Timeout OR time-out OR time out) + (isolation OR inclusion OR seclusion OR discipline OR punishment)**							

9a	EBSCO	10,000+	School	478	465	9	4	0
9b	Ovid	10,000+	School	970	960	9	1	0
9c	GS	27	N/A	N/A	26	1	0	0

Omitted after full text:
- Erford [duplicate]; Turner and Watson [duplicate]
- Albrecht, S. F. (2008) 'Time Away: A Skill-Building Alternative to Discipline', Preventing School Failure, 53(1), pp. 49–55. [intervention with <10min in time away room]
- Mancini, J.A. (2017) 'Student Discipline Strategies: Practitioner Perspectives.' At https://nsuworks.nova.edu/fse_etd/128/ [general, no reference to isolation rooms]
- French, D.D. and Wojcicki, C.A. (2018) 'Restraint and seclusion: frequency, duration, and rate of injury for students with emotional and behavioral disorders', *School mental health*, 10(1), pp.35-47. [considers restraint and seclusion for EBD]

10	**Referral + (isolation OR inclusion OR seclusion OR discipline OR punishment)**							
10a	EBSCO	10,000+	School School AND behaviour	10,000+ 908	902	6	0	0
10b	Ovid	100000+	School AND behaviour Database limiters applied (Journals@Ovid; Psych Articles; PsychInfo; Social Policy and Practice) Additional limiters [age 0-18; document type; type of research] Limit category = school]	100000+ 10000+ 45	42	3	0	0
10c	GS	147	N/A	N/A	147	N/A	N/A	N/A
10	**Inschool OR in-school + (suspension)**							
11a	EBSCO	126	N/A	N/A	116	9	1	0
11b	Ovid	5	N/A	N/A	4	1	0	0
11c	GS	156	N/A	N/A	124	13	17	1 (5; 6)

Omitted after full text:
- Vanderslice, R., (1999) 'Developing Effective In-School-Suspension Programs' At [ERIC] https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED444257.pdf [discussion paper]
- Morris, R.C. and Howard, A.C., (2003) 'Designing an effective in-school suspension program.' *The Clearing House*, 76(3), pp.156-159 [not strict primary research]
- Cholewa, B., Hull, M.F., Babcock, C.R. and Smith, A.D., (2018) 'Predictors and academic outcomes associated with in-school suspension.' *School Psychology Quarterly*, 33(2), p.191. [no info re nature of ISS as large-scale survey]
- Boone, J.M., (2006) 'In-school suspension: A qualitative study of high school programs' [Thesis - none with isolation as core component]
- Evans, K.R., (2011) 'Suspended students' experiences with in-school suspension: A phenomenological investigation' [dissertation – looks at ISS which may or may not be exclusionary across 3 settings]
- Vaccar, J., 2010., (Teachers' Perceptions of the In-School Suspension Program at Centerville High School.' [dissertation - insufficient description of ISS]
- Welch, M.E., (2010) 'Differences in student misbehavior after completing in-school suspension between rural high school and suburban high school students.' [dissertation - ISS programmes included specific counselling / conflict resolution components]

- DiMino, M., (2013) 'Best Practices for Successful In School Suspension Programs.' [Dissertation - no reference to isolation / seclusion]
- Seckinger Jr, M.E., (2015) 'The relationship between in-school suspension and the academic achievement of middle school African American males' (Dissertation - insufficient description re nature of ISS]
- Williams, S., (2011) 'Effects of an in-school suspension program on student academic achievement, recidivism, and social literacy.' [Dissertation - not specifically about isolation / seclusion]
- Jackson, A.S., (2010) 'Administrators' and teachers' perceptions of in-school suspension.' [Dissertation - views w/o ISS description]
- Rahynes, L.M., (2015) 'Suspending in School Suspension?: Is ISS a Valid Means of Disciplinary Action to Reduce Negative Student Behaviors' [ERIC - no ISS descriptions]
- Whitfield, D., (2004) 'The influence of in-school-suspension programs on academic achievement.' [Thesis - quantitative survey-based study, omitted as reframed focus on qualitative studies exploring experience]
- Rimes, J.S., (2012) 'Teacher and administrator perceptions of in-school suspension programs on changing student behavior and academic success in schools.' [Thesis - insufficient description of ISS]
- Smith, M. and Gray, R., (2001) 'In-school Suspension: Is it Working?. [Thesis - not specifically about isolation / seclusion]
- Hickey, D.M., (2004) 'The benefits of an in-school suspension program.' [Thesis - concerned development of ISS, not existing]
- Agnew, S.D., (2004) 'A case study: the effectiveness of an in-school suspension program at Cherokee High School.' [Thesis - Insufficient description of ISS]
- Griffin-Gay, M., (2019) 'An Evaluation Of The In-School Suspension Program At One High School.' [Thesis - not specifically isolation / seclusion]

Additional phrase searches on Google Scholar							
12. School AND isolation	113	N/A		N/A	112	0	1	0

Omitted after full text:
- Frampton, R &Thomas K., (2011) 'The effectiveness of isolation timeouts for students with severe emotional disabilities attending therapeutic day school' [Dissertation – EBD focus]

| 13. School AND seclusion | 19 | N/A | | N/A | 17 | 1 | 1 | 0 |

Omitted after full text:
- Roberts Jr, C.A., (2018) 'Phenomenological Study of Students, Teachers, and Parents Affected by Restraint and/or Seclusion Use in Alternative School Setting' [Dissertation - insufficient description of ISS]

| 14. Isolation AND behaviour or discipline or punishment | 132 | N/A | | N/A | 132 | 0 | 2 | 0 |

Omitted after full text:
- Rubio, A., (2014) 'Student misconduct and isolation from the school environment: A study of student, teacher, and administrator perceptions of school discipline at an urban middle school.' [Dissertation - not specifically isolation / seclusion]
- Dunning-Lozano, J.L., (2015) 'Removal, isolation, and discipline in Texas schools: An ethnographic study of a 6th-12th grade disciplinary alternative education program [Dissertation - alternative provision rather than ISS]

APPLICATION OF THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN ORGANISATIONS MODEL TO A SMALL-SCALE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT INVOLVING A BEHAVIOURAL INCLUSION PROVISION IN A MAINSTREAM SECONDARY SCHOOL.

Abstract

This paper describes the use of the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) model as a framework for a small-scale research and development project involving a behavioural inclusion provision in a mainstream secondary school. It provides a reflective account of the conceptualisation and development of the project, preliminary findings and agreed next steps. It discusses the role of Educational Psychologists in conducting systems work within a consultation-based model of service delivery, and how the RADIO model can facilitate this.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background and context

This project was initiated in Summer 2020 between a mainstream secondary Academy school and me, in my capacity as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) undertaking a supervised professional practice placement at a Local Authority Educational Psychology Service (EPS).

The EPS operates a consultation-based model of traded service delivery. Consultation techniques encompass "…asking questions, listening, problem-solving, facilitating solutions, and giving advice" (Leadbetter, 2006, p.26). Alongside consultation, EPs typically engage in "…assessment, intervention, research and training, at organisational, group or individual level across educational, community and care settings, with a variety of role partners," (Fallon, Woods and Rooney, 2010, p.4).

The nature and scope of EP's activities within a traded model are subject to negotiation with commissioners and contingent upon multiple factors, such as individual casework and statutory assessment requirements, financial, resource and time limitations, and local or national educational and socioeconomic contexts.

Effective service delivery is underscored by opportunities for EPs and schools to share perspectives and engage in joint planning (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003, p.241). Use of consultation skills and approaches helps to accomplish this. For example, EPs may utilise principles of process consultation to empower consultees and collaboratively identify solutions to improve outcomes for individual children or groups (Leadbetter, 2006).

Joint negotiation of service delivery priorities and desired outcomes may necessitate activities designed to invoke organisational changes. EPs often engage in strategic and capacity building activities, such as the development, implementation and evaluation of policies or procedures to promote school improvement or pupil achievement (Farrell et al., 2006, p.48). Evaluation of school practices may entail formalised research at the school or community level, which EPs claim to be

well-placed to conduct due to their psychological skills and knowledge. EPs, in working with schools to raise standards and inclusion, arguably have a responsibility to conduct such research to help determine effective practices in educational settings (Timmins, Bham, McFadyen and Ward, 2006, p.305).

The EP's role within behavioural work may include consultation, therapeutic and systemic work with schools or Local Authorities (Law and Woods, 2019, p.112).

Systems level work in the educational context has been defined as:

> *"…that which goes beyond the individual child and aims to make changes at a 'higher' level of the system, for example whole school training or work with a group of children. Systemic working might focus at any level; its difference is an awareness of the relations within the system around the child and between the child and those systems"* (Young, Smillie and Hamilton, 2019, p.1067).

Systems work is associated with organisational change and school improvement (Fox, 2009 - please see for a comprehensive account of the history of systems work and systemic thinking within Educational Psychology). That author suggests that consultation is the point at which systems work and systemic thinking integrate.

This paper provides an example of systems work, involving a small-scale research and development project focused upon a school's current behavioural inclusion provision (BIP), highlighted during consultation-based planning meetings as a strand of the school's upcoming improvement priorities.

It describes how the Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) framework (Knight and Timmins, 1995; Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003) was used to guide the conceptualisation and implementation of the project, which aimed to identify areas of strength, propose and implement recommendations for improvement, and monitor outcomes. The report summarises preliminary outcomes, providing a critically reflective account of the process, and implications for EP practice.

1.2   The Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) model

The RADIO model was devised by Knight and Timmins (1995) to assist trainees undertaking professional EP training at the University of Birmingham. Figure 1 illustrates stages and activities within RADIO phases.

Fox (2009) describes RADIO as an example of an ecological way of working that "…incorporates both systemic work and systemic thinking" (ibid, p.255), drawing upon organisational development, school improvement and social constructionist perspectives.

Studies have demonstrated its practicality within action research, and in promoting collaborative working between EPs and other stakeholders. For example, it has been applied to research conducted within EPSs (e.g., Timmins et al., 2006; Law and Woods 2019), and between EPs and Early Years practitioners (e.g., Douglas-Osborn, 2017), and schools (e.g., Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly 2003; Ashton, 2009; Pearson and Howe, 2017).

RADIO phases	RADIO stages	Typical activities
Clarifying concerns	1. Awareness of need	School/EPS/LEA request or EPS suggestion
	2. Invitation to act	Contracting EP role in organisational development
	3. Clarifying organisational and cultural issues	Exploring opportunities and threats relating to initiative
	4. Identifying stakeholders	Agreeing processes for collaborating with stakeholders for feedback and discussion, e.g. coordinating group and initiative co-ordinator
Research methods mode	5. Agreeing the focus of concern	Identifying research aims and purposes.
	6. Negotiating the framework for data gathering	Issues and decisions regarding methodology, methods, resources and timescales
	7. Gathering information	Using agreed methods
Organisational change mode	8. Processing information with stakeholders	Sharing findings with stakeholders
	9. Agreeing areas for future action	Discussing findings in relation to organisation's needs and identifying areas action for
	10. Action planning	Stakeholder-led planning process
	11. Implementation /action	Stakeholders facilitating change within organisation
	12. Evaluating action	Stakeholders reviewing effectiveness of action and possibly requesting further EP involvement

Figure 1: Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) model (Timmins et al., 2006, p.307)

Reported benefits of using RADIO in research design include a clear framework for negotiating time-limited work incorporating various positivist and interpretive data collection methods (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003). It aims to help to structure the research process, whilst triangulating different sources of data can strengthen findings. The model encourages early reflection upon research processes and outcomes in order to meet organisational needs, with specific benefits for TEPs such as the development of key skills in a professional rather than training context (Timmins et al., 2006). This includes negotiation, consultancy, project and time management skills, alongside opportunities to work with various stakeholders to produce organisational change (ibid, p.316).

Successful change initiatives are bolstered by the inclusion of multiple stakeholder perspectives, whereby seeking contributions encourages ownership of change processes thus reducing the likelihood of negative reactions (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003). In stipulating the need to identify and collaborate with stakeholders, the RADIO model promotes greater engagement of those who will be affected by research and contingent developments, thus increasing the likelihood of success.

Although the stages are numerically ordered, the RADIO model is cyclical rather than linear (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003), with some overlap between phase stages. Consequently, stages can be revisited as more information arises, creating opportunities to discuss organisational or cultural issues that may impact on the research process and outcomes, and refine research aims, monitoring processes and desired outcomes.

The broad applicability and usefulness of the RADIO model underpinned its selection for this project. The following section describes application of the model to the research and development process, detailing activities, outcomes and agreed next steps at each stage.

2. Method

This section outlines the research inception and initial data collection, with reference to stages within RADIO Phases 1 and 2. An overview of all phases and associated activities is provided in Appendix 1.

2.1 Phase 1: Clarifying concerns

This phase is characterised by 'intense collaborative interaction' to elicit concerns, organisational needs and culture, and set the direction of future work (Timmins et al., 2006, p.307). Preliminary aspects of research including the area of interest and stakeholders are explored.

Awareness of need

EPs develop awareness of school needs, culture and organisational factors via visits and existing working relationships, enabling them to conduct participatory research into environmental interventions (Pearson and Howe, 2017, p.359).

A general planning meeting was attended by the Assistant Principal (AP), SENCO, the school's lead EP and me in June 2020, to agree 2020/2021 service delivery priorities. The school was part of an Academy Trust which had recently undertaken training relating to Attachment, as part of an Attachment-Aware schools project (see Box 1) following which the overarching priority was to embed Attachment principles throughout school policies and pedagogy, alongside supporting students' transition back to school after Covid-19 closures.

Under the behaviour policy, multiple students – some of whom had Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) - had been permanently excluded in preceding years. The policy employed cumulative sanctions consisting of warnings, then strikes (marks recorded in student planner) for poor behaviour. Upon reaching a threshold, or following specific behaviours such as fighting, students would be sanctioned with assignment to the behavioural inclusion provision (BIP), where

they work in silence and are not authorised to leave their seats or talk without permission.

Continued behavioural infractions could result in fixed-term, and eventually permanent, exclusion.

Box 1: Attachment Overview

Attachment has been defined as '…a relational process where whereby a strong affectional bond develops between one person and another' (Rose, Gilbert and Richards, 2016, p.57).

Attachment Theory developed out of the work of Bowlby (1969) and Ainsworth (1979) and suggests that child wellbeing and development is impacted by the nature and quality of the interactions between a child and their primary caregiver.

Caregivers who are responsive, sensitive and attuned to their child's needs support the development of secure attachments - linked to increased self-esteem, resilience, emotional regulation and learning progress – and positive Internal Working Models.

Insecure attachment patterns (i.e. Avoidant, Ambivalent and Disorganised) may result where a caregiver is inconsistent, insensitive or non-responsive, and can impact upon behaviour and learning (for more information on Attachment, development and learning, see Geddes, 2006; Bomber, 2007; Rose, Gilbert, Richards, 2016).

Attachment Aware schools (Parker, Rose and Gilbert, 2016)
This developing area of research proposes attachment-based, trauma-informed practice as an alternative approach to traditional behavioural management approaches utilising sanctions and rewards.

It emphasises a whole-school, child-centred approach to supporting social and emotional needs and behaviour, working at multiple levels within the school ecosystem and the wider community. It draws upon strategies and approaches such as:
- Emotion Coaching
- Key adults
- Secure base
- Nurture Groups
- Mindfulness

A recent study found that schools which adopted the Attachment-Aware Schools model reported significant improvements in student academic achievement, positive impact upon staff wellbeing, and a significant decrease in the number of exclusions and sanctions (Rose, McGuire-Snieckus, Gilbert, and McInnes, 2019).

School data showed students were most often assigned to BIP for accumulating strikes. National data indicated higher than average exclusion rates within the borough, and for the year 2019/20, the national average exclusion rate was 0.06, compared to a rate of 0.54 within the setting (School Census). The lead EP and I suggested reviewing school policy and data could inform action to help reduce the use of sanctions and consequently, exclusions. It was agreed that a less punitive policy would be congruent with Attachment-Aware principles derived from the Trust-wide training undertaken. For example, if a student is consistently disruptive in the classroom it may be useful to explore how they relate to different teachers or engage with different tasks to help identify possible underlying needs and support strategies, rather than simply sanctioning them for the disruptive behaviour. The benefits of positive and therapeutic responses to behaviour (as highlighted during that training, e.g. emotion coaching), effectiveness of existing rewards / sanction-based approaches, and suitability of the policy for students with SEND were considered. Consequently, the BIP was highlighted as a principal focus.

A second planning meeting in July was attended by the AP, Behaviour Manager (BM), lead EP and me. The AP's preliminary concerns pertained to the provision's effectiveness in supporting students and contributing toward behavioural change. The long-term goal was 'the best system possible' with additional objectives to:

- review behaviour policies (to embed Attachment training principles);
- examine consistency in the use of the BIP;
- reduce the number of frequent returnees; and
- increase student engagement whilst in BIP.

The EP and I proposed a joint behaviour policy consultation with all Trust schools and lead EPs to review how far the current policy aligned with Attachment-Aware principles derived from the Trust-level training. I also proposed a three-stage inquiry of the BIP:

- a) *Short-term (by Christmas 2020)* – review policies and utilise consultations to make minor changes;
- b) *Medium-term (Summer term 2021)* – individual student-focused work relating to those assigned most frequently to BIP and their engagement / activities within BIP;
- c) *Long-term (ongoing)* – gather and analyse data relating to sanctions, exclusions and use of BIP, implement and monitor changes to provision, and measure outcomes (e.g. number of BIP allocations, individual student behavioural change).

I completed and emailed planning meeting minutes outlining the proposed project to attendees.

Invitation to Act

This stage involves formal negotiation and agreement regarding the extent of EP involvement. The AP agreed to seek project approval from the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). This was confirmed in September via email, and a formal consultation regarding the BIP enquiry between the AP, BM, and I was scheduled for mid-September. The EP and I agreed with our Senior EPS supervisor that I would lead the project with EP oversight, completing Phases 1 (Clarifying Concerns) and 2 (Research Methods mode) prior to placement completion in December (i.e. BIP stages short to medium-term). The EP would then complete Phase 3 (Organisational Change mode) with a newly allocated TEP from December (i.e. medium to long-term).

Clarifying organisational and cultural issues

This stage involves exploration of research opportunities and threats. Activities can include examination of organisational culture, or past change initiatives to illustrate capacity, strengths, and weaknesses, for future organisational changes (Timmins et al., 2006, p.308). Key review areas include outcomes, the robustness and effectiveness of planning, communication, feedback and evaluation processes, as well as measures to manage potential weaknesses applicable to the new research (ibid).

The BM provided staff polling information, collected following introduction of the behaviour policy in 2018. It indicated unanimous agreement that it was clearer and effective in addressing challenging

behaviour. Inconsistency was a longstanding concern, with around 90% of respondents indicating that colleagues did not consistently implement the policy, and that further training would be helpful (not yet provided at time of writing).

Procedural aspects of the BIP were determined at the Academy Trust level, meaning any changes had to be commensurate with Trust policy. The pandemic restricted regular working practices and opportunities for liaison with Trust members due to increased workloads and sporadic availability. Accordingly, it was deemed unfeasible by the Academy Trust and EPS to conduct a joint behaviour policy consultation within the specified timeframes. Working conditions also prevented further direct involvement of the AP; however, they liaised closely with the BM and SLT to provide ongoing oversight. Due to staffing changes, the SENCO had no further involvement. The pandemic contributed to reduced individual casework creating the impetus and time for systemic work, which in turn supported continued service delivery.

Action research can be hindered by researchers' and stakeholders' lack of power to implement recommendations (Ashton, 2009, p.230). The AP's initial involvement and ongoing cooperation mitigated this potential limitation. However, whilst policy analysis and identification of areas for change were approved, the scope and implementation of potential changes was restricted by Trust protocols. It was agreed by the SLT, AP and BM that the BIP enquiry would be valuable to the setting, whilst potentially functioning as a pilot study for future Trust-level research.

A key identified organisational strength related to the BM, whose responsibilities included managing the BIP, and liaising with Learning Managers, Heads of Year and SLT members. The BM's office was located within the BIP, furnishing them with strong knowledge of daily operations and assigned students. The BM had begun to implement some changes: for example, requesting an extra teacher and new behavioural data recording processes. This contributed to the momentum for further change. Throughout the process, the BM provided a key point of contact for stakeholders and took

responsibility for coordinating agreed research activities. They also highlighted potential threats, including staff attitudes and perceptions towards the BIP, discussed below.

Identifying stakeholders

Timmins et al., (2006) argue that this step facilitates focused information gathering accommodating different stakeholders' needs and interests. Stakeholders "…work in the systems being researched or improved or are likely to be affected by research and development outcomes" (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003, p.230). In the current case, this included Academy staff, students and their parents, with a possible impact upon those in other Trust settings. Potential impacts included for example, proposed changes to the behaviour policy (such as the use of rewards and sanctions) or in relation to BIP operational procedures (such as BIP allocations or activities within BIP), which would need to be negotiated and agreed with all leaders / schools within the Trust.

The primary research facilitator is responsible for coordinating research, clarifying its focus and research questions, securing resources, and communicating with stakeholders (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003). I primarily fulfilled this role, with the BM co-ordinating school-specific research activities.

Agreeing focus of concern

This stage involves the clarification of research aims and questions, contributing to subsequent activities such as needs assessments, or further analysis of organisational culture (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003).

I emailed exploratory questions prior to the first consultation (Table 1). Initially, the BM expressed largely positive views of the provision, noting recent changes had generated positive outcomes such as improving student behaviour within the BIP, although behaviour around school had remained variable and exclusions relatively high.

Table 1 - Consultation 1 (TEP and BM) questions and responses

Question	Summary of consultation response	
What is the current purpose of the BIP?	As a consequence for poor behaviour; to promote positive behaviours; to control behaviour; to provide a reflective environment.	
How effectively does it achieve its current objectives?	Good if used consistently and rules are followed. Recent changes made by BM had some positive impacts. These included: • Stricter room rules (e.g. no talking) to make environment less desirable for students and reduce instances of intentional poor behaviour (e.g. deliberately misplacing planners); • Two teachers instead of one; teachers must circulate room and sign off student work every 20m rather than complete own tasks; • Implemented new tracking sheet listing student details, reasons for allocation and by whom, and number of assignments to BIP • More emphasis on academic work; • Hierarchy of actions (e.g. meet student, contact home, implement interventions, specialist referrals) initiated dependent on behaviour and sanction, to help understand reasons for behaviour and areas for intervention to reduce returnees / exclusions.	
Ratings – how effectively does the BIP achieve this purpose? (1 least effective, 10 most effective)	Consequence: 8 / 10 - students 'hate it' and do not want to attend. Promoting positive behaviours: 8 / 10 - students behave to avoid consequence (merits used before but declined over time; informal staff survey indicated half felt merits were effective, others felt they were overused). Control behaviour: 9 / 10 - behaviour in room controlled via strict rules, has positive background effect as students do not want to come Reflective environment – 9 / 10 as smaller setting helps and students who struggle in mainstream class can have intervention support	
Key concerns / immediate areas of focus	Consistency in use of BIP, rules and processes Staff understanding and perceptions (policies, stigma) Need for more positive staff-student interactions Ensuring staff support students' access to work: - Key staff should collate subject work termly and add to the BIP resource drawers. Work was often not provided, necessitating the BM to obtain it at short notice, or the amount sent declined over time. - Academic work was inaccessible for some students with SEND, poor attendance or frequent BIP attendees due to missed learning. - For others, work was insufficiently challenging or under-stimulating, particularly for frequent attendees who had completed existing worksheets multiple times.	
What would ideal provision look like?	Like an intervention hub rather than a behavioural consequence, fulfilling punitive, academic and therapeutic functions.	
What are facilitators and barriers to the ideal provision?	**Facilitators** Designated BM with office nearby: - provides structure to BIP, - immediate response for teachers and behavioural input for students - able to liaise with other staff which supports info sharing and monitoring, Two staff allows one to support students while other completes administrative tasks.	**Barriers** Inconsistency Staff understanding and perceptions Availability and accessibility of academic work Procedural issues regarding information recording and follow-up actions not completed

High effectiveness ratings provided by the BM necessitated supplementary exploration of needs to elucidate focus areas, assisted by reviewing the proposed research objectives (see 'Awareness of Needs'), reported concerns and barriers. Consultation techniques and interviewing skills including paraphrasing, attending, clarifying, eliciting, reflecting, and summarising ('PACERS' – Busse and Beaver, 2000, p.244, cited in Leadbetter, 2000) helped to clarify concepts and reframe thinking to achieve consensus between the BM and myself and establish research priorities.

For example, high ratings for promoting positive behaviour and providing a consequence did not accord with concerns about frequent returnees and continued poor behaviour, prompting consideration of whether consequences should be strictly punitive or aim to change behaviour. The objective to control behaviour – through a strict BIP environment - conflicted with concerns about infrequent positive interactions, and potentially weakened the aim to increase student engagement. This aim seemed incompatible with recent changes intended to make the room less desirable. Whether a quiet space constituted a reflective space, particularly if students struggled with independent reflection or were repeating behaviours, was considered, with limited evidence demonstrating how this and other objectives were achieved.

This discussion highlighted ample BIP allocations data e.g. spreadsheets, but insufficient data pertaining to its application and impact, underscoring the need to implement monitoring measures (e.g., behavioural targets) to assess behavioural changes aside from fewer allocations. The BM also acknowledged a need to ensure that behavioural improvements were recognised and rewarded, and that the provision supported reflection whilst promoting positive interactions and behaviours.

Consultation highlighted commonalities between reported concerns and barriers to change / the ideal provision, and the broader objectives suggested during planning. The need for consistency in the use of the BIP and sanctions were recurring concerns - also highlighted as barriers to the ideal provision; therefore, examining this became a primary focus. The aim to review the behaviour policy

(within agreed parameters i.e. single-setting rather than Trust-wide review) - to identify factors contributing to inconsistency (e.g., discretion in giving sanctions) or misunderstanding (e.g., ambiguous language) - addressed concerns about consistency and staff understanding and perceptions, another primary focus.

A recently implemented tracking sheet indicated certain staff more frequently used the BIP, warranting further exploration of reasons for this. Staff perceptions constituted a potential barrier to change partially due to stigma associated with the BIP. The BM reported some staff resistance, typically linked to a narrow perception of their role as 'to teach' rather than manage behaviour, and beliefs that students within BIP 'did not want to learn.' This linked to concerns about positive staff-student interactions and students' access to work, difficulties surrounding which were hypothesised to be linked to staff perceptions of the BIP or other factors such as workload. Incomplete recording and follow-up actions constituted another barrier requiring further investigation of organisational and cultural aspects to establish the impacts, if any, of internal (e.g. perceptions, motivations) and external (e.g. unclear procedures / systems, insufficient time) factors.

Poor availability and accessibility (i.e., tailored to individual learning needs) of academic work within BIP were associated with diminished student engagement. Declining use of therapeutic worksheets (for example, structured reflection on what has happened, why and what might be done differently next time, to support behavioural change) undermined the espoused objectives to promote positive behaviour and provide a reflective environment. Thus, academic and therapeutic work were designated as a key focus.

The final focus area was to explore students' views about the BIP, its purpose and impact, factors affecting their likelihood of return and level of engagement, and work availability and accessibility. All focus areas were linked to a broader goal to reduce the number of exclusions.

2.2 Phase 2: Research methods mode

This phase involves selecting a suitable research design and methodologies to meet organisational needs, and which support data gathering and the process of providing feedback to stakeholders (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003). This section describes the data collection stages.

Negotiating framework for information gathering

This involves deciding upon research methods, resources and timescales (Timmins et al., 2006). The BM and I agreed upon a monthly consultation incorporating a review of the current context, actions taken, existing data and next steps. This provided opportunities to discuss emerging issues, and rapidly implement minor changes.

The primary means of data collection was staff and student questionnaires, chosen as a manageable means of rapidly gathering data from all staff and students, with minimal impact from further school closure. Including students as participants in school-based research supports Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, whereby children have the right to express an opinion on matters affecting them (Woods and Harding, 2020).

The second mid-October consultation concerned questionnaire content and dissemination. Recurring consultation issues included staff views about school policies, the BIPs purpose, consistency in assigning students, and use of reasonable adjustments – all designated as key topics for the staff questionnaire. Perceptions and attitudes of staff and students towards BIP were common themes in both questionnaires, along with how it could be more effective. Students were asked about the number of times they had been assigned to BIP and the reason(s) for this, the impact of BIP on their behaviour (i.e. whether BIP was an effective deterrent to similar behaviour in future) and factors influencing whether they were re-assigned or not. We agreed upon a combination of rating statements and multiple-choice questions to assess current views of BIP (including effective and unhelpful aspects of BIP), with open-ended questions for students and staff to provide their own views and suggested improvements.

I devised and shared questionnaire drafts with the BM to review and edit before dissemination, empowering the BM and ensuring data useful to the school would be captured.

Focus groups and observations were deemed to be beneficial but logistically unfeasible due to staff shortages and restrictions on external visitors stemming from Covid-19 measures. Remote video observations, focus groups or interviews were proposed, along with parental surveys, to be confirmed following initial data analysis.

Documentary data including behaviour and BIP policies, room resources, and tracking spreadsheet would be analysed. The school utilised the well-known Child Protection Online Management System (CPOMS) and School Information Management System (SIMS) both incorporating some behavioural and BIP data. The BM liaised with CPOMS providers to improve functionality in recording and sharing information, notifying teachers and generating student reports. Utilising this existing data was agreed to be less onerous than creating new data.

Gathering information

The BM previously used Microsoft Forms software to conduct school research and advocated for its simplicity and staff and student familiarity. Questionnaires could be easily created, shared and edited by approved stakeholders, with dissemination via school email and anonymous completion online. During editing, questions were streamlined to focus on the BIP, pending a broader behaviour policy review.

Staff questionnaires were circulated, with 29 completed by November. Student data collection was initially delayed due to technical difficulties. The first questionnaire sent to all students received 92 responses. In December, an updated version (see Appendix 2) was sent to BIP attendees only. The software collated results, e.g. multiple-choice responses, which simplified data analysis.

I completed an incidental observation during an essential school visit, gathering data pertaining to the BIP layout, resources including therapeutic and academic worksheets, and general room operations.

Anonymised CPOMS reports, tracking spreadsheets, and relevant school policy links were sent over email. This included the Trust's BIP policy, wherein its stated functions were to promote good behaviour by: facilitating re-engagement through the environment; reducing exclusions; offering additional curriculum provision where behaviour affects learning; and improving the classroom learning environment through removing disruptive students.

Additional information was gathered during consultation which illuminated current practices, successes, and areas for improvement or further data gathering. The introduction of 'bubbles' reduced sanctions for late arrival to lessons and poor corridor behaviour. A subsequent reduction in BIP assignments demonstrated how environmental aspects impacted sanctions and behavioural outcomes, prompting consideration of how positive impacts might be continued once bubbles were removed.

This also included information about reasonable adjustments for students with SEND. Each classroom had student learning profiles outlining needs and support strategies. This was reportedly working well, where staff had had sufficient opportunity to read them, which varied. Further discussion highlighted some shortcomings. For example, a reasonable adjustment to give students with SEND 20 additional seconds to comply with instructions was problematic if they did not understand or were emotionally dysregulated, and then sanctioned for non-compliance.

This highlighted the need for more individually tailored approaches and raised the question of whether the BIP – one purpose of which was as a consequence for poor behaviour – was always an appropriate response, or whether alternative, therapeutic spaces (e.g. calm zones) could be utilised. The BM reported that spare rooms normally utilised for this were currently limited due to student bubbles, however students could access pastoral spaces as a short-term alternative.

Processing information with stakeholders

At this stage, research findings are conveyed to stakeholders, with discussion of their implications and any consequent organisational needs (Timmins et al., 2006, p.233). This contributes to the formulation of suggestions for the next phase of organisational change (Timmins, Kelly and Shepherd, 2003).

Feedback was provided during monthly consultations and in a summary document I emailed following each consultation. New section information was colour-coded in blue and changed to black once confirmed as accurate. New questions were highlighted in red, for discussion in the following consultation or over email. A separate summary for consultations included agreed next steps, marked off as they were completed. This facilitated rapid review of completed and outstanding actions, and directed further information gathering.

Table 2 summarises the data sources and key points discussed during the penultimate consultation.

Table 2: Processing Information with Stakeholders - key data points

Data source	Key Points
BIP assignments tracking spreadsheet	• Students were most frequently assigned to the BIP for accumulating 8 strikes, followed by defiance and inappropriate behaviour. • Other reasons were fighting, not having planner, cheating, truancy and vandalism. • Initial fall in numbers due to bubbles (consider whether these effects could be extended after bubbles discontinued), with uptick towards end of term – possibly related to staff stress due to having to move around, and student restlessness.
Policies analysis feedback	• Behavioural categories were overly broad, discretion contributed to inconsistency and repeat attendees, as students may not understand which specific actions led to sanction. • Incomplete follow-up actions such as behavioural interventions, report cards and targets were likely contributing to continued poor behaviour and exclusions. Monitoring and review processes were lacking or not being followed. • Existing therapeutic packs should be linked to staged responses to behaviour, but this was not being followed, contributing to repetition and lack of engagement.

Preliminary staff questionnaire data (see Appendix 3)	• No teachers reported assigning students more than 3 times per week. • Majority agreed or strongly agreed with statements 'BIP is helpful for students,' 'BIP is helpful for staff,' 'I understand my role in relation to BIP,' and 'BIP is an effective part of the behaviour policy.' Statements with the highest levels of disagreement were 'students can learn in BIP,' and 'BIP is effective at changing behaviour.' • Staff perceptions of BIP purposes generally aligned with reported purposes, e.g., as a consequence, reflection space or deterrent. Some listed the purpose as isolation, a function not raised during consultations. • Reasons for assignment included 8 strikes, defiance, no planner and uniform. No responses named inappropriate behaviour despite this being the third most frequently recorded reason, although one listed extreme behaviour. • Student benefits included quiet, structured environment, thinking time, removal from the situation, avoiding escalation and exclusion, and ability to complete work. Unhelpful aspects included falling behind, repetitive work and unsuitable work and resources. • Staff benefits were removal of student and use of the BIP as a behaviour management tool. Unhelpful aspects included the impact on learning, lack of consistency, insufficient behavioural support and procedural issues. • **Suggested improvements - different sanctions for repeat attendees, more resources, academic and reflective work and more staff support**.
Preliminary student questionnaire data (see Appendix 4)	• Excluding neutral responses, 28% of respondents felt they understood the work vs 21% who did not; 10% felt supported when they did not understand vs 33% who did not. • Most students strongly / disagreed with statement 'I feel supported in BIP.' 4x more students disagreed with the statement 'I can learn in SE' than agreed. • More disagreed with statements 'BIP is helpful' and 'BIP is effective at changing behaviour' than agreed. Majority agreed that 'when I leave BIP I do not want to come back' indicating that measures to make it less desirable had been successful. • Helpful aspects included quiet environment, effective for concentration and reflection. Unhelpful aspects were learning-centred (e.g. inadequate learning and support, missed learning, resources), isolation, silence and limited toilet breaks. • **Suggestions for improvement included more learning and behaviour support, relevant work and resources, more challenging work and more time to speak**.
Observation of room / resources	• Rules were being enforced in room creating a quiet, calm environment. • Lack of visuals around room could be contributing to low engagement • Resource drawers were clearly labelled but content was less clear. • Existing therapeutic packs had good content but were quite lengthy and generic. • More structured, adaptable, accessible / differentiated packs would be beneficial. Some students could benefit from adult support to complete packs. • No evidence that therapeutic work is reviewed with students. • Consider how far provision itself achieves official functions of promoting good behaviour and facilitating re-engagement – what is the evidence for this? Does it teach avoidance of negative consequences rather than promoting good behaviour?

A key theme was the impact of BIP assignment upon learning. Staff and students highlighted benefits of the quiet space, with unhelpful aspects and suggestions for improvement emphasising academic work and resources. The learning-centred responses of students contradicted previously reported staff perceptions of them as 'not wanting to learn.' Students and staff generally disagreed that students could learn in the BIP, or that it was effective at changing behaviour. Further data indicated this limited impact may have been due to a lack of behaviour support, therapeutic interventions and resources, with non-adherence to processes a contributing factor. Both staff and students indicated that more support overall would be beneficial.

Respondents' suggestions for improvement generally aligned with key concerns (see Table 1). Consultation and questionnaires data indicated divergence between enacted objectives of the BIP as expressed by stakeholders i.e. a punitive consequence intended to control behaviour, and espoused objectives stated in the BIP policy, including facilitating re-engagement and offering additional provision.

Staff responses highlighted one benefit aligned with an espoused policy objective of BIP – the ability to remove disruptive students, deriving benefits for both the student removed and those remaining in the classroom. It underscored the need for such provisions, as an alternative to continued disruption or exclusion, necessitating careful consideration that any measures implemented to increase engagement did not make the room overly attractive.

3. Initial Outcomes and Next steps

This section summarises the agreed outcomes and actions following preliminary data collection and analysis up to December 2020.

3.1   Phase 3: Organisational change mode

This phase involves careful planning to invoke organisational changes based upon data collected within earlier phases (Timmins et al., 2006, p.308). The planning, implementation and evaluation of actions facilitates the management of future development initiatives in schools and promotes wider impact upon school or Local Authority structures (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003, p.241).

Agreeing areas for future action; action planning

This involves the identification of activities intended to bring about organisational changes, development or improvement (Timmins et al., 2006, p.233).

A handover consultation in late-November, attended by the BM, lead EP and I involved a review of the summary project booklet, current context and actions already taken. Several priority actions were also agreed based on the preliminary data and context (see Table 3).

Implementation / action; Evaluating action

Phase 3 stages of implementing and evaluating action were ongoing. Monitoring and review processes to assess the impact of recommended changes may consider the following:

- Individual improvements in behaviour using school report cards, behaviour support plans, targets and Target, Monitoring, Evaluation forms.

- (Reduction in) number of BIP assignments.

- (Reduction in) number of exclusions (involving prior BIP assignment).

- Staff and student informal (or formal) feedback.

Table 3: Summary of completed and agreed actions

Completed actions	**Agreed actions**

• BM liaised with CPOMS providers to automatically notify staff of required actions following students' assignment to BIP. Combined with tracking data, this increases accountability by highlighting incomplete actions. Ensuring actions (i.e., interventions) are completed helps to reduce risk of exclusion.
 	
• BM liaised with Headteacher and copied into an email to Heads of Years /Departments to remind them of their duty to collect and deliver academic work to the BIP at the end of each term, to periodically check content of BIP resource drawers, and to ensure accessible / differentiated work is provided. This facilitates access to learning and additional curriculum provision and improves student engagement.
 	
• Staff meeting agenda item added to remind staff to set aside BIP work when planning next terms work rather than on daily basis; and to utilise pastoral spaces as alternative to BIP where appropriate.
 	
• Email reminding all staff that SEND learning profiles must be updated and read at the start of each term.
	• Continued monthly consultations as model was effective and facilitated ongoing review and reflection.
	• Review behaviour policy (consider involvement of Trust members) regarding:
	  o Whether inappropriate behaviour and defiance categories could be more specific, to reduce ambiguity and disproportionate discretion, and make unacceptable behaviours clearer for students, enabling easier links to behavioural targets.
	  o Whether accumulation of strikes, particularly for 'minor' offences (e.g., forgetting items), warrants assignment to BIP given the potential impact on learning.
	  o Ensuring consistent recording reasons between online systems, tracking sheets and student planners.
	• Complete student questionnaire (V2 – BIP assignees only), to include question about assignment reason and distinguish one-off from repeat attendees. TEP and EP to analyse data and add new findings.
	  o Consider additional data collection if necessary (see Appendix 5).
	  o Consider EP / specialist referrals for repeat attendees.
	• Liaise with SLT to:
	  o Request more protected staff time for behavioural support and interventions e.g., lesson observations would help identify strategies to support students to remain in class, or more appropriate SEND support. Proactive interventions external to BIP would ensure students feel supported throughout process, further BIP's purpose of promoting positive behaviour, and help reduce frequent returnees (and exclusions).
	  o Introduce formal reward system to acknowledge improved behaviour (linked to individual targets, fewer strikes/BIP assignments) and consistently positive behaviours, to further objective of promoting positive behaviours.
	  o Explore possibility of taught BIP lessons to increase engagement and learning.
	• Disseminate resources and guidance (see Appendix 6) to staff by end of Spring Term to facilitate staff understanding and awareness of behavioural management approaches, and improve consistency.
	  o Staff training on de-escalation to be confirmed with lead EP.
	• Add relevant resources (see Appendix 6) to BIP drawers or online system. It will help achieve the purposes of providing a (supported or individual) reflective space; reducing work repetition as worksheets are adaptable to situation, stimulating engagement; and reducing returnees (and exclusions) by identifying steps to prevent repeat behaviours and areas for additional support / intervention.
	• Review process by which academic or therapeutic tasks are given; issue clear staff guidance to help ensure consistency, reduce work repetition and increase engagement. Ensure therapeutic work is reviewed with students to aid reflection and invoke behavioural change.
	• Ensure **all** procedures and follow-up actions (e.g. interventions, tutor support, report card, targets, behaviour support plans) are accurately completed and recorded, to promote consistency. Review processes in staff meetings as necessary.
	• Add visual displays to the BIP to support engagement and learning, and 'control' behaviour through visual prompts / reminders.

4. Discussion

This article provides an account of a small-scale research and development project utilising the RADIO framework (Knight and Timmins, 1995; Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003) to examine a school behavioural provision, with the aim of recommending improvements and reducing exclusions. The project is ongoing; therefore, the following section reflects on the planning process and preliminary findings.

4.1 Reflections

The RADIO model was useful for structuring the progression of the research, working effectively alongside the consultation-based model of service delivery to facilitate collaborative and responsive practice.

'Clarifying organisational and cultural issues' and 'Agreeing the focus of concern' were particularly beneficial stages, helping to delineate the research purpose, and potential barriers or facilitators. Assimilation of the general research objectives - defined at SLT level during planning - with the purposes, immediate concerns and barriers discussed in consultation with the BM (responsible for the BIP administration), was helpful to ensuring that outcomes aligned with individual (students / staff) and organisational needs. Consultation techniques encompassing problem-solving and facilitating solutions (Leadbetter, 2005) assisted in identifying key concerns and assessing the feasibility of proposed solutions. Joint consultations utilising the RADIO framework facilitated the sharing of perspectives, and synthesis between the school's behavioural management needs and the EPSs' orientation towards positive student outcomes – contributing to effective service delivery (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003, p.241) and reducing the uncertainty that often typifies early stages of research (Timmins et al., 2006, p.306).

The consultation model was beneficial when 'Processing information with stakeholders,' complementing the cyclical nature of the RADIO framework (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003).

The cyclical approach is particularly advantageous for time-limited research conducted by EPs within broader service delivery. Data collection and analysis stages could be revisited as additional information was gathered, mitigating delays in (student) data collection which would likely have hindered a linear research process. Unlike stepped processes of data collection, analysis and subsequent recommendations, the cyclical process created more frequent 'small wins' - clear actions derived from partial data and analysis that could be immediately implemented, such as improvements to recording information and notification systems. Rapid transformation of abstract research proposals into concrete actions supported ongoing service delivery and accountability, avoiding delays in implementing potentially beneficial actions and engendering a sense of success that helped to sustain motivation to complete research.

Regular joint reviews facilitated focused data collection, holistic analysis and contextually responsive action planning. Collaborative working supported the BM to develop their skills in systematically gathering, interpreting, and effectively utilising data for evaluative purposes. The BM reported increased confidence in conducting research and using data to strengthen their proposals for future changes. This aligns with an important element of the RADIO approach - ensuring research facilitators support schools to build their independent capacity to implement future improvement initiatives (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly, 2003, p.234). Other RADIO activities, such as reviewing past initiatives and organisational context, enhance this by illuminating previous successes and strengths applicable to novel research thus empowering stakeholders to make further changes. In outlining each stage of the research process and typical activities, the RADIO framework helps to formalise routine school evaluation and improvement activities.

The 'Evaluating Action' stage encourages early reflection upon, and operationalisation of outcomes, facilitating assessment of the measurable impacts of implemented actions. Although not completed within the reported timeframe, this stage is a crucial element of RADIO pertaining to monitoring and review processes, providing a foundation for evidence-based practice. This highlights a further

benefit of RADIO pertaining to long-term research, whereby clearly structured stages help to ensure

research maintains its expected course. In this case, it also helped to simplify co-working and

handover processes.

4.2 Limitations

The RADIO model supported close liaison with the BM which was advantageous for ensuring that

recommendations were realistic and practicable, and in some cases, immediately actionable. One

drawback of collaboration with the individual responsible for administering the provision was

evident in the first consultation, whereby the BM's high effectiveness ratings potentially functioned

as a protective mechanism to avoid highlighting possible shortfalls. The need to maintain an ongoing

working relationship for broader service delivery also necessitated caution in the provision of

feedback. Working through the RADIO stages helped to depersonalise these discussions, for example

by focusing on organisational barriers and desired outcomes. Thus, the collaborative nature of RADIO

promoted greater engagement and acted to reduce the threat of change by involving the BM (and

other stakeholders) in constructing – rather than imposing - changes (Timmins, Shepherd and Kelly,

2003, p240).

To ensure research is truly participatory it is important not only to seek stakeholder views, but also to

involve them in decision-making stemming from research findings; a step which is often omitted

from school-based research involving students (Ashton, 2009, p.228). Students had the opportunity

to make suggestions for improvement via the questionnaire, but meaningful involvement was limited

beyond this. Student focus groups – restricted due to the pandemic - would likely enable greater

participation and strengthen the data, hence these steps are listed as a potential future action.

The flexibility of the RADIO framework functioned well within the consultation-based model of

service delivery to help manage time constraints, which have precluded inclusion in this report of

conclusions as to the impact of this project and recommended changes. The single setting and

limited sample size means any findings would not be generalisable. Nevertheless, this project

provides a solid starting point for ongoing evaluation of the provision, and collated data may strengthen the case for broader review at Trust and/or Local Authority level.

5. Conclusion

This article demonstrates how RADIO was applied within EP practice to complete systemic work to inform school improvement activities relating to the setting's behavioural provision. Overall, RADIO constitutes a clear and accessible framework for research facilitators and stakeholders, simplifying the steps involved in conducting organisational-level research and development projects. It provides a clear structure for EP trainees inexperienced in organisational research, supporting the development and practical application of organisational understanding and research skills (Timmins et al, 2006, p.316). Its systematic approach to negotiating and conducting research derives benefits for various stakeholders and settings and facilitates effective psychological research and practice.

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Appendix 1: Overview

RADIO Stage / Typical Activities	Activity	When	Who	Agreed actions	By Date	BIP enquiry stage
1. Awareness of need School / EPS / LEA request or EPS suggestion	Planning meeting • Establish service delivery priorities for 20/21	June 20	AP, SENCO, lead EP, TEP			
2. Invitation to act Contracting EP role in organisational development	Planning meeting - proposed actions • Review behaviour policy • Three-stage BIP enquiry Email confirmation of SLT approval for three-stage BIP enquiry [Approval for joint policy review pending in Oct 20; not a priority for Trust schools / EPs so no time to complete before leaving]	July 20 Sept 20	AP, BM, lead EP, TEP	Arrange initial consultation with TEP, BM and AP	15.9.20 - TEP, BM	
3. Clarifying cultural and organisational issues Exploring opportunities and threats relating to initiative	Consultation 1 – Sept 20 • Exploratory questions • BM ratings • Existing tracking / allocations data		BM, TEP	Arrange second consultation - BM to send documents re VDE policy, WAVES etc - TEP to review data sent	14.10.20 – TEP, BM	1 – Short term; minor changes
4. Identifying stakeholders Agreeing processes for collaborating with stakeholders for feedback / discussion e.g. coordinating group, initiative coordinator						
5. Agreeing the focus of concern Identifying research aims and purposes	Consultation 2 – Oct 20 Consistency in application of behaviour policy Explore staff perceptions, understanding Review behaviour policy for ambiguity [NOT in relation to attachment principles / trust-wide review] Engagement in BIP – review resources, work Explore student views			Arrange third consultation - BM to liaise with CPOMS team; add visuals to SE room	13.11.20 – TEP, BM	

6. Negotiating the framework for data gathering Issues and decisions regarding methodology	Consultation 2 - Staff questionnaires Student questionnaires Documentary data Observation			Student / staff questionnaires dissemniared - analysis time TBC dependent on number of responses	27.11.20 – TEP, BM, lead EP	
7. Gathering information Using agreed methods	Questionnaires School data		BM, TEP	Initial analysis / feedback of partial data in handover meeting on 27.11.20	Questionnaires – by end Dec	2 – Medium term; reallocations; engagement
8. Processing info with stakeholders Sharing findings with stakeholders	Feedback/ handover consultation Summary document		BM, TEP (+ new TEP)	Analysis shared; areas for future action to be confirmed	27.11.20 – TEP, BM, lead EP	
9. Agreeing areas for future action Discussing findings in relation to org's needs and identifying areas for action	Feedback / handover consultation – Nov 20		BM, TEP (+ new TEP)	Areas suggested in notes from 27.11.20; definitive areas tbc	Mid- Jan tbc; BM, lead EP	
10. Action planning Stakeholder-led planning process	Handover consultation [SEE TABLE 3 FOR AGREED ACTIONS]		BM, TEP (+ new TEP)			
11. Implementation / action Stakeholders facilitating change within organisation	Ongoing		BM, new TEP, lead EP			3 – Long-term; monitoring outcomes
12. Evaluating action Stakeholders reviewing effectiveness of action; further EP involvement?	Ongoing		BM, new TEP, lead EP			

Appendix 2: Updated student questionnaire

1. How many times have you attended [BIP]? Select one.

Once; 2-3; 4-5; 6-7; 8-9; 10

2. Why have you been assigned to [BIP]? Select all that apply.

Defiance; inappropriate behaviour; 8 lines; fighting; no planner; missed slt; other

3. If you selected defiance, inappropriate behaviour or other for question 2, please provide more information on what happened below. [Text box]
4. If you have attended [BIP] only once, what stopped you from returning? [Text box]
5. If you have attended [BIP] more than once, what would be more effective? [Text box]
6. Ratings: [Strongly agree; Agree; Neutral; Disagree; Strongly disagree]

[BIP] is helpful; [BIP] is effective at changing behaviour; When I leave [BIP] I do not want to come back; I can learn in [BIP]; I feel supported in [BIP]

7. What aspects of [BIP] are effective? *E.G. Quiet environment; physical layout; learning / pastoral support; resources; structure / discipline; other* [Text box]
8. What aspects of [BIP] are unhelpful? *Quiet environment; physical layout; learning / pastoral support; resources; structure / discipline; other* [Text box]
9. Do you understand the work in [BIP]? [Yes, No, Sometimes]
10. If you selected sometimes or no, please provide more information below. [Text box]
11. What would make [BIP] more effective? *E.G. teachers, resources, learning aids, behaviour support / advice, etc* [Text box]

Appendix 3: Summary of staff questionnaires

Staff questions	Sample responses
What is your job role?	Teacher – 65% Teaching Assistant – 14% Head of Department – 17% Support staff – 2%
What level of involvement have you had with BIP?	Timetabled support; none
What do you view your role as in relation to the BIP?	Behaviour management; monitoring; supervision; uphold behaviour policy; give sanction; providing work for students; booking in/out
What do you think the purpose of the BIP is?	Consequence / sanction; reflection space; isolation; part of behaviour policy; deterrent; unclear
How frequently do you assign students to VDE? (Multiple-choice)	Once or less per week – 90% 2-4 times – 10%
How frequently do you use BIP as a warning? (MC)	Once or less per week – 93% 2-4 times – 7%
In what circumstances would you find yourself sending a student to BIP?	8 lines; defiance; no planner; uniform; extreme behaviour; when alerted; rarely do
Ratings: BIP is helpful for students BIP is helpful for staff BIP is effective at changing behaviour Students can learn in BIP Students are supported in BIP I understand my role in relation to BIP BIP is an effective part of behaviour policy	[Strongly disagree / Disagree / Don't know / Agree / Strongly agree]:
What are the benefits of the BIP for students?	Time to think; prevents escalation; quiet environment; removes student from situation (benefit for students remaining); avoids exclusion; work completion; discipline; deterrent; structure; choice of work.
What are the benefits of the BIP for staff?	Behaviour management tool; allows disruptive students to be removed (and other students to witness); pupils know clear consequences;
What aspects of the BIP are unhelpful for students?	Not a deterrent; falling behind classwork; inappropriate / repetitive work; inconsistency; unhelpful resources;
What aspects of the BIP are unhelpful for staff?	Loss of learning; lack of suitable work; inconsistent application of rules; resources; investigations are distracting for other pupils; lack of support for pupil to change behaviour; mediation; BM not collecting students in first period; processes not explained; insufficient notifications for meetings
What changes, if any, could be made to improve the provision?	Different sanctions for repeat offenders; improved resources / work; more consistency; more support for staff re red cards; more reflection work; mediation

Appendix 4: Summary of student questionnaires (version 1)

Question	Sample responses
Ratings: BIP is helpful BIP is effective at changing behaviour When I leave BIP I do not want to come back I can learn in the BIP I feel supported in the BIP	[Strongly disagree / Disagree / Don't know / Agree / Strongly agree]:
If you have not been to the BIP before what things have you heard?	Boring; silent; do not do much work; all you do is work; just sit there; risk of exclusion
What aspects of the BIP are effective?	Quiet environment; concentration; discipline; reflection; to chill out; layout; nothing
What aspects of the BIP are unhelpful?	Not enough learning; lack of learning support; missing learning; resources; not being able to speak to peers; distractions; isolation; students' perception of BIP as relaxing time; not being able to use the toilet; having to go for forgetting your planner; length of time; don't learn from it
Do you understand the work in the BIP?	Yes: 28% No: 21% Sometimes: 11% Don't know: 40%
Do you feel supported in the BIP when you do not understand the work?	Yes: 10% No: 33% Sometimes: 11% Don't know: 46%
What would make the BIP more effective?	More teacher support / teaching; relevant work; behaviour support; resources; different layout; less time; more breaks; harder work; not having it; stricter teachers; computers; not having to go in for forgetting planner; more chances to speak; less disruption

Appendix 5

Possible future data collection to be considered:

- Focus groups or 1:1 support for staff who assign students to BIP excessively (tracking spreadsheet data), to explore understanding and perceptions of policy and behavioural approaches.
- Focus groups or 1:1 for frequent attendees to discuss how it could be improved, and explore understanding of behaviour and policy.
- SLT questionnaire to examine their attitudes towards behavioural management approaches.
- Parental questionnaires / focus groups to gather their views on the BIP and behaviour policy

Appendix 6

Therapeutic, reflective and behaviour management resources provided to be implemented immediately:

- EPS booklet 'Understanding and Managing Behaviour' (key staff)
    - Communicative functions of behaviour checklist
    - Antecedent, Behaviour, Consequence, Communicative function templates
    - Compliance flowcharts
- De-escalation information resource (all staff)
- Emotional Coaching guide (all staff)
    - Emotional first-aid plan template (students)
- Attachment Aware classrooms checklist (key staff)
- Therapeutic and reflective worksheets for the BIP
    - Think sheet templates (to support students to reflect on incidents and plan what to do differently next time)
    - Comic Strip Conversations guide (to facilitate reflection)
    - Stress thermometer (for high stress and apathetic students; as check-in, check-out monitoring tool)
    - Self-monitoring behaviour checklist (to reflect on independent learning behaviours, what they look like, organisation skills, areas for support)
    - Understanding and Managing Anger ('Firework model') pack
    - Mindful activities

AN ANALYSIS OF A SPECIALIST PROVISION FOR SEVERE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (SLD) AND PROFOUND AND MULTIPLE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (PMLD) DRAWING UPON COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE.

Abstract

This paper comprises an analysis of a specialist SLD / PMLD provision for children with complex health, care and education needs. It utilises the concept of Communities of Practice (CoP; Lave and Wenger, 1991) as a framework to analyse aspects of the provision and identify evidence of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire, in order to determine whether approaches to learning within the setting constitute a CoP. It discusses observational, interview and documentary data which indicated the presence of CoPs within the setting, particularly at the individual pupil level, with reference to principles of inclusion and participation. This included evidence of positive relationships and reciprocal interactions between potential CoP members including pupils, staff, parents and professionals (mutual engagement); collectively negotiated goals and responses such as personalised learning goals (joint enterprise) and tools, routines and resources used and produced by members (shared repertoire). It highlights examples of participatory processes and structures that can facilitate CoP participation. It discusses the various roles educational psychologists may have in the implementation and maintenance of a CoP. These may include membership of child-centred or staff-based CoPs, and undertaking the role of brokers to disseminate inclusive and evidence-based practices across groups. It reflects on the benefits of inclusive Communities of practice involving pupils and highlights factors to consider for their implementation.

1. Introduction

Whilst on placement as a trainee educational psychologist, I completed work in a complex needs setting with provision for Severe Learning Difficulties (SLD) and Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD). Impressed with the innovative ways in which staff encouraged learners to share their views and participate in decision-making, I chose the school as the focus of an operational analysis, utilising the Community of Practice (CoP) framework as an analytical tool.

1.1. SLD / PMLD

Children with a primary need of SLD ('…*likely to need support in all areas of the curriculum and associated difficulties with mobility and communication'),* or PMLD ('…*severe and complex learning difficulties as well as a physical disability or sensory impairment'),* may be entitled to Special Educational Needs (SEN) Support or an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) (Department for Education and Department of Health; DfE and DoH, 2015: section.6.30).

In formulating a PMLD definition, Bellamy et al (2010) reported that participants preferred definitions that considered the necessary circumstances for participation in individuals' immediate contexts and wider communities (Table 1).

Table 3: Definition of PMLD (Bellamy, Croot, Bush, Berry and Smith (2010)

People with PMLD:

Have extremely delayed intellectual and social functioning

May have limited ability to engage verbally, but respond to cues within their environment (e.g. familiar voice, touch, gestures)

Often require those who are familiar with them to interpret their communication intent

Frequently have an associated medical condition which may include neurological problems, and physical or sensory impairments.

They have the chance to engage and to achieve their optimum potential in a highly structured environment with constant support and an individualized relationship with a carer.

1.2. Participation, inclusion and child's voice

Principles of participation and inclusion for children with disabilities are underpinned by international accords. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989) espouses participatory principles and the right for children with disabilities to express their views (Table 2). The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) championed inclusive education, and involvement of individuals with SEND in decision-making, with later publications stipulating that every learner 'matters equally' (UNESCO, 2017).

Table 4: UNCRC (1989) Articles relating to participation

UNCRC Article 12

- States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

UNCRC Article 13

- The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.

UNCRC Article 23

- States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

Inclusive education encompasses values such as rights, equality, diversity and participation (Booth and Ainscow, 2011). Inclusive schools can empower pupils, parents and teachers through active participation in democratic processes (Laluvein, 2010). Educational inclusion therefore encompasses learning <u>from</u> difference and learning from / with others, emphasising the participation – i.e., the quality of learning experiences – of all learners (Ainscow and Messiou, 2018). This reflects assertions that '*…participation of children in school life…should be promoted as part of the process of learning*' (UNCRC, 2009: pp.107).

Common learning approaches for complex needs (e.g., behaviourism) have been criticised for failing

to consider social groupings and the culturally situated nature of interactions (Simmons, 2020). Best

practice in meeting complex needs may involve learning in classroom contexts, and from / with

others (Jones and Riley, 2017). Collaborative learning approaches involving children, families, staff

and external professionals may help to strengthen school capacity to meet learner's diverse needs

(Ainscow and Messiou, 2018).

Thus, collaboration is an essential component of inclusive education (Thompson, 2007). Education

stakeholders may form collaborative learning communities to share and co-construct knowledge

(Botha and Kourkoutas, 2016). These authors propose that communities of practice provide an

inclusive collaboration model, characterised by values aligned with inclusive education i.e., equality

and respect for diversity.

1.3. Community of Practice (CoP)

CoP evolved out of situated learning theory, where learning cannot be separated from the contexts

where it occurs (Goodnough, 2014). Wenger contends that '…*human learning is about making sense

of the world'* (Omidvar and Kislov, 2014, p.268). Therein, he recounts how the development of CoP

stemmed from an interest in social learning theory, prompted by his perceived deficit in cognitivist

theories of learning to adequately account for meaning making. Unlike cognitive learning theory

which emphasises internalised thought processes and the individualised acquisition of knowledge

(e.g. Piaget and Inhelder, 1969), social learning theory posits that learning occurs through

interactions with others, via observation, imitation and modelling (Bandura, 1977).

Both approaches ascribe a more active role to learners than behaviourism, which focuses on

observable behaviours acquired via conditioned responses to environmental stimuli, an approach

frequently utilised within training programmes to develop the skills of individuals with PMLD

(Simmons, 2020). This passive acquisition of knowledge contrasts with the constructivist view that

knowledge is actively constructed by learners based on previous experiences i.e. meaning is created

rather than acquired (Ertmer and Newby, 2013). Thus, knowledge is context-dependent, influenced by the interaction between the learner and their environment (ibid). This aligns with situated learning theory, and Wenger's assertion that CoP is:

> '…the embodiment of this view of learning as happening at the boundary between the person and social structure – not just in the social structure or not just in the individual, but in that relationship between the two' (Omidvar and Kislov, 2014, p.269).

In examining apprenticeship learning, Lave and Wenger (1991) described the primary characteristic of situated learning as legitimate peripheral participation (LPP), whereby newcomers move from peripheral to full participation in community practices, with knowledge shared by more experienced group members. They distinguished instructional teaching curricula from learning curricula i.e., situated opportunities to develop practices, contending that learning occurs through participation in the latter. From this work emerged communities of practices (CoPs), defined in Table 3.

Table 5: CoP Definitions

CoP Definition (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.98)

- A community of practice is a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice. A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge [...]. The social structure of this practice, its power relation, and conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning (i.e. legitimate peripheral participation).

CoP definition (Wenger, 2011, p.1)

- Communities of practice are formed by people who engage in a process of collective learning in a shared domain of human endeavor […] groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.

The above definitions illustrate the evolution of CoP from its initial conceptualisation of '…*learning as moving into the* [pre-existing] *community'* through increasing participation, towards the notion that CoPs are the result of people learning together (Omidvar and Kislov, 2014, p.269). Recent iterations

consider how membership of multiple communities, and the interactions within and between CoPs, shape individual learning trajectories and identities across landscapes of practice (For more information on the evolution of CoP, and an overview of key works, please see Cox, 2005; Li et al, 2009; Omidvar and Kislov, 2014; Tight, 2015).

CoPs have variable forms, sizes, degrees of formality and interaction modes, with three interrelated defining characteristics (Wenger, 1998; Figure 1). In later organisational management applications, these were revised to domain, community and practice (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002).

Mutual Engagement
Interactions between members, negotiating meanings and building relationships

Joint Enterprise
The collectively negotiated understanding, goal or response; mutual accountability

Shared repertoire
Methods, tools, words, routines, stories, concepts produced or utilised by community
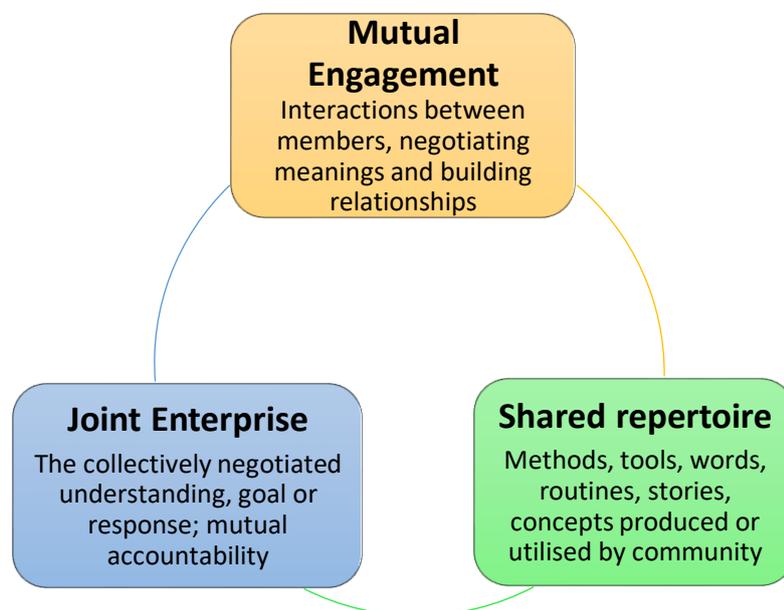
Figure 1: Three characteristics of CoPs (Wenger, 1998)

Broad applications, including within business, organisational, educational, health and governmental contexts, have positioned CoP as '… *one of the most widely cited and influential conceptions of social learning to date*' (Smith, Hayes and Shea, 2017, p.211).

However, this has contributed to criticisms that CoPs '… *are too easy to apply, providing a ready-made theoretical framework for thinking about any group of individuals with shared interests*' (Tight, 2015, p.120), with calls for a tightening of the boundaries around the concept (Edwards, 2005). In

that paper, Edwards further claims that CoP provides an insufficient account of knowledge generation and what is learnt, focusing instead on what is done. Similarly, Smith, Hayes and Shea (2017) posit that more exploration of the epistemic, discursive and cognitive practices necessary for participation in social practices is needed.

It has been suggested that the use of CoP theory as an organisational management tool has contributed to challenges in its application due to tensions between the promotion of personal growth versus organisational competitiveness, and due to a broadened definition that hinders identification of whether a group is a CoP (Li et al, 2009). Other authors have questioned whether the term 'community' is even appropriate, due to differences in Wenger's conceptualisation of communities (e.g. small, limited) compared to more typical conceptualisations of communities (e.g. large-scale, all-encompassing) (Cox, 2005).

In text, Wenger acknowledges these criticisms but adopts a pragmatic orientation, affording greater concern to whether the concept makes a difference in practice, than maintaining purity of the concept (Omidvar and Kislov, 2014). The authors accept the 'interpretative flexibility' of CoP theory, and indicate that earlier iterations remain applicable to research in recommending that studies are clearly positioned – and internally consistent – with regards to the 'main phases of its evolution' (ibid, p.273). Conceptual divergences across phases underpin similar calls from Cox (2005).

This paper comprises an analysis of a specialist PMLD provision. Herein, CoP is utilised as an analytical scaffold (rather than, for example, as a tool for organisational change or knowledge management) to examine whether learning practices observed within that educational setting indicate the presence of a CoP. This application aligns with Wenger's description of CoP as '…*originally an observational concept, an analytical concept*,' preceding later applications as an 'instrumental concept' to facilitate organisational improvement (Omidvar and Kislov, 2014, p.270).

Hence, this paper focuses on the 3 dimensions of CoPs identified in Wenger's (1998) publication, in conjunction with 14 criteria proposed as indicative of a CoP.

1.4. Rationale

It is claimed that best practice in inclusive specialist education is embodied within members and their enacted identities, collaboration between whom may involve a CoP (Thompson, 2007). A CoP provides a useful framework for examining collective learning processes (Mitra, 2008). This paper aims to analyse a specialist SLD / PMLD provision, retrospectively applying the CoP framework and 14 criteria (Wenger, 1998) to collated data, to answer the question:

> To what extent do learning processes within a specialist SLD / PMLD provision constitute a CoP?

2. Methodology

2.1 Context

The setting is a West Midlands local authority-maintained Special School, catering for 153 learners with SLD (including ASC) or PMLD aged 4-19. It was purpose-built in 2011, adopting inclusive design principles (Table 4), and is rated by Ofsted as outstanding.

Admission requires SLD / PMLD needs and an EHCP recommendation. Most learners' cognitive functioning is assessed at 0-60 months. It has 16 classrooms, each with around 9 pupils with similar needs, divided into four phases, each led by a Senior Management Team member:

- Lower Phase (Early Years Foundation Stage/ Key Stage (KS) 1)

- Middle Phase (KS2)

- Upper Phase (KS3)

- 14-19 Phase (KS4/5)

Table 4: Inclusive design school environment features

Facilities and spaces
Fully equipped care rooms, toilets and laundry area in each phase
Physiotherapy, medical and family rooms
Multi-agency and training rooms
Classrooms designed to meet particular learning needs (ASD/ PMLD)
Accessible specialist areas – ICT, Food Technology, Library, Sensory, Soft Play, Music.
Accessible kitchen area in post-16 classroom
Quiet spaces and relaxation areas in classrooms
Small group room in each phase
Sports facilities and a trampoline for Rebound Therapy
Swimming/ hydro pool with multi- sensory light and sound
Outside Multi Use Games Area
Fully accessible outside learning environments with inclusive play equipment
Fully accessible Forest School with outdoor classrooms
Lunchtime clubs

Environmental adaptations
Hoist tracking throughout the school ensuring inclusive learning environments
Wide, accessible, colour-coded corridors with sensory panels to support VI needs
Lighting and paint schemes, carpeting and finishes to support pupils differing needs
Signage throughout the school that provides a Total Communication environment.
ICT resources in all classes, including iPads, touch screens with specialist programmes, hearing loops and eye gaze.

2.2   Data collection

I attended a tour, taking field notes, then completed an unstructured interview with the Headteacher relating to various aspects of the provision, such as the facilities, communication methods, curriculum, assessments, and daily routines. Home-school, wider community and external agency links were also discussed. A set interview schedule was not utilised; instead, open-ended questions were used to gather pertinent information (e.g. how do you select learning activities; how do you gather student views?)

I reviewed various written materials:

- school prospectus

- school policies (e.g., Visions and Values, Accessibility, Positive Behaviour and Relationships, SEND Information Report)

- school website (classroom descriptions) and Facebook page.

2.3   Data Analysis

Content analysis involves organising qualitative data into themes and concepts (Thomas, 2022).

Alongside the three CoP characteristics of joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared

repertoire, Wenger (1998) devised 14 indicators signalling CoP formation (Table 5) – together

providing the reference framework for analysis.

Table 5: CoP indicators

14 indicators of a CoP (Wenger, 1998, p.125-6)

1. Sustained mutual relationships – harmonious or conflictual
2. Shared ways of engaging in doing things together
3. The rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation
4. Absence of introductory preambles, as if conversations and interactions were merely the continuation of an ongoing process
5. Very quick setup of a problem to be discussed
6. Substantial overlap in participants' descriptions of who belongs
7. Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise
8. Mutually defining identities
9. The ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products
10. Specific tools, representations, and other artefacts
11. Local lore, shared stories, inside jokes, knowing laughter
12. Jargon and shortcuts to communication as well as the ease of producing new ones
13. Certain styles recognized as displaying membership
14. A shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world

The data (observational data from the setting tour, unstructured interview with headteacher, and

documentary data) was collated and read multiple times. Using Wenger's 14 criteria as coding

categories, codes were manually assigned to data items that represented aspects of each of the

criteria. Codes, and the relevant textual data, were then organised under the headings joint

enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire for analysis and reporting. Coded data

pertaining to learning practices was analysed to determine the extent to which it provided evidence

for the presence of the three characteristics that are indicative of a CoP.

3. Analysis and discussion

Findings are organised under the CoP dimensions of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire.

3.1 Mutual Engagement (ME)

Mutual engagement concerns the nature of member interactions, identities and relationships – plus features including belonging, reciprocity and social capital (Koliba and Gajda, 2009; for an overview of key terms used within CoP literature, see Smith, Hayes and Shea, 2017). It is the defining feature of CoP membership (Wenger, 1998).

Evidence of ME was suggested by my observations and apparent in school documentation. Familiarity and mutuality were observed during learning-related interactions between pupils and staff. This corroborated descriptions of 'excellent' pupil-teacher relationships that 'result in pupils feeling valued and confident,' (school website) and fulfilled the criteria for the **Absence of introductory preambles…**.

Positive pupil-staff relationships are important if student voice is to be elicited and heeded (Forde, Horgan, Martin and Parkes, 2008). School 'Visions and Values'– describe 'Positive relationships' in an '…environment that encourages and values the voice of the individual, their choices and contributions' (Figure 2).

Pupil contributions were reportedly sought regarding, for example, provision, individual targets and transition planning. Reported activities such as assemblies, student elections and a school council comprising pupil and staff, discussing issues such as school improvement, created additional ME opportunities; however, these were not observed.

Learning and Development

• **VALUES**
• Engagement
• Encouragement

The Unique Learner

• **VALUES**
• Individuality
• Inclusion

Engaging Environments

• **VALUES**
• Responsibility
• Respect

Positive Relationships

• **VALUES**
• Trust
• Teamwork
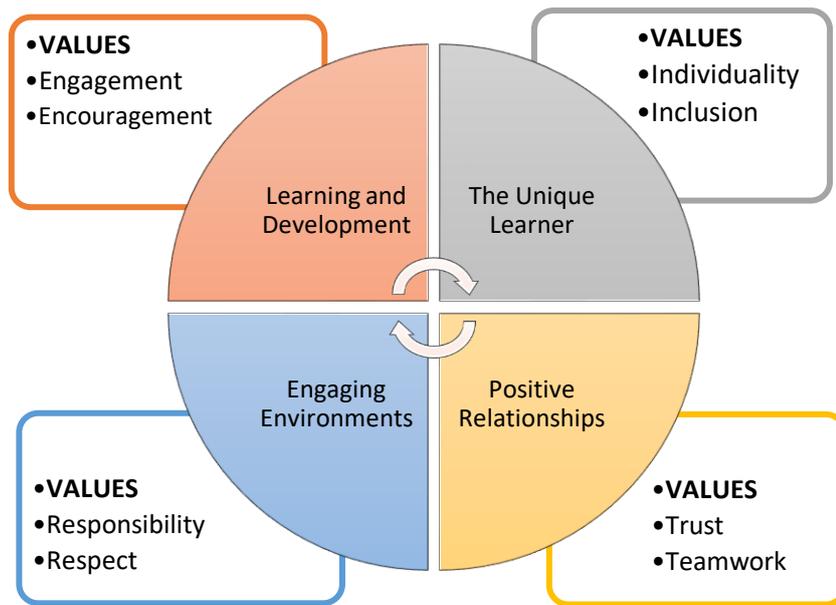
Figure 2: School Vision and Values (Prospectus)

Multiple tools were employed to support pupil voice and interactions (section.iii), ensuring pupils had '…the means, opportunities, reason and environment (MORE principles; see Money and Thurman, 2002) to participate' and '…are involved in as meaningful a way as possible' (Prospectus). This empowers pupils, facilitating inclusion (Figure 3), whilst acknowledging meaningful participation will vary according to individual needs.

Each pupil was assigned a key person. Familiar and consistent key workers can help to facilitate participation. Disengagement from learning, particularly in non-verbal pupils, could indicate disinterest or nonparticipation, attributable to, for example, marginalising structures or power relations (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Staff awareness of "…*things like change in facial expression, consistency of responses*," (Headteacher) can help differentiate nonparticipation from genuine LPP represented by expressions of disinterest.

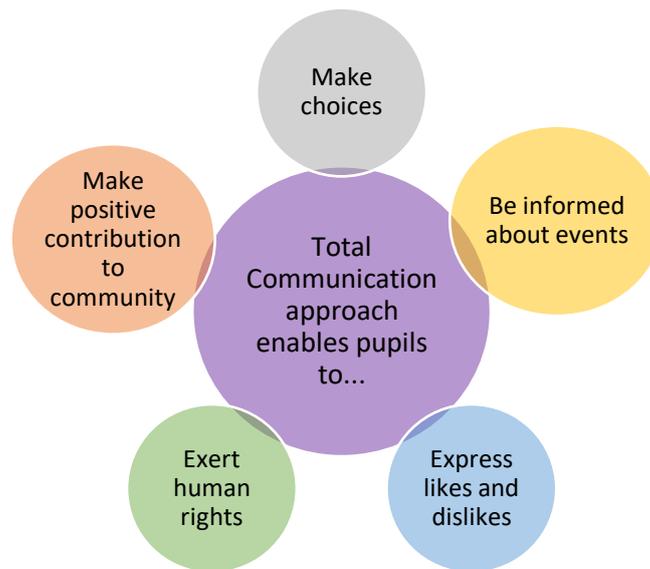*Figure 32: Total Communication approach - pupil benefits*

The 'Positive Relationships' Vision intends to '…foster a sense of belonging' for pupils and families, through partnership with school colleagues and external agencies. ME requires mutual respect, so all members feel valued and able to share expertise (Mitra, 2008) – facilitating relationship formation.

The prospectus describes '…close cooperation' and regular home-school consultation to improve learning, noting that parents are 'equally valued as part of our school community.' Parents signed a home-school agreement and were invited to participate in observations, visits and events. Parent-staff interactions occurred during clinics, meetings and parents' evenings, and via home-school communication books and online diaries / assessment platforms. This supported the sharing of pupil information, shaping school practices. Although parental views were not part of the data collected, Ofsted report that parents expressed positive views about the setting, corroborated by receipt of a Leading Parent Partnership Award in 2023. This is awarded by an independent verifier following a process of school self-evaluation, action planning and evidence gathering, with the involvement of key stakeholders including parents.

The 14 criteria include **sustained mutual relationships**. Positive pupil-staff relationships were evident from observations during the tour. Home-school relationships were seemingly positive, given positive Ofsted feedback and the LPPA award. Evidence regarding staff-staff relationships was lacking.

Internal staff and external agencies engaged in different activities (Table 6). The headteacher reported that "...*there are differing perceptions of external services*," with educational psychologist (EP) involvement often prioritised due to local authority processes requiring an EP report to support decision-making. The specific role of EPs within this setting was reported to include:

> "...*a lot of containment and reassurance, with some therapeutic and counselling work. EPs [are helpful for] ensuring appropriate provisions and expectations.*"

Multi-agency working included weekly "...*Team Around the Child meetings*" (Headteacher) and policy development. Clearly explicated roles and responsibilities fulfil the criterion of: **Knowing what others know, what they can do, and how they can contribute to an enterprise**. A case study of an inclusive CoP highlighted multi-agency working benefits for informing interventions (Thompson, 2007), thus supporting learning.

Multi-agency involvement raises questions of membership, and the criteria*: **Certain styles recognized as displaying membership***. Styles, which can be exported across CoP boundaries, concern ways of behaving and the meanings they are given when constructing identity within different CoPs (Wenger, 1998). How far external professionals identify with school-based CoPs is likely influenced by the level and nature of their involvement, which may be transient and child-specific, or sustained and systemic – leading to variable degrees of ME. Professionals may act as brokers, bringing new perspectives and straddling CoP membership and nonmembership (Wenger, 1998).

Internal specialists	Activities (Prospectus / website)
Level 3 Teaching Assistants / SEND Support Workers	Direct work with pupils.
Complex Care Nursing Team	Meet pupils' health and medical needs, on 1:1 basis if required. Ensure access to learning in school and at home. Provide care, guidance and support to families, and staff training.
Care Team	22 members of care team attend at 11.15 to help with nappy changing, tube feeds and medication.
Speech Therapist	Direct work with pupils, staff and families. Providing advice and strategies.
Family Support Lead	Support, advice and strategies for families e.g., behaviour, sleep, diet, equipment (and housing / benefits etc in EY) "Gives families of port of call and frees up school staff capacity" (Headteacher)
Makaton Trainer (Deputy Head)	Provides Makaton training and resources.
External Agencies	**Activities**
Behaviour Support Team	Develop behaviour plans, monitoring and advice.
Speech and language therapy service	Assessment, monitoring and advice.
Hearing / Visual Impairment Team	Assessment, monitoring and advice.
Educational Psychologist	Individual pupil support, behaviour management. "The EP does a lot of containment, reassurance, and some therapeutic / counselling work. [They help] ensure appropriate provision and expectations." (Headteacher)
Occupational Therapist	Supporting with sensory / ASC needs.
Occupational Health	Support with health needs.
Physiotherapist / Wheelchair services	Advice and monitoring of aids.
Children's Disability Team / Community (Adult) Team	Support families in the home and liaise with school.
Transition Social Care Team	Planning transition support and post-school provision.
Further education professionals, private and voluntary providers, careers service	Supporting post-school transition

'*Access to a wide range of ongoing activity, old-timers and other [community] members…and to*

information, resources and opportunities for participation' denote full CoP membership (Lave and

Wenger, 1991: p.101), thus pupils, staff, families and professionals could be members. Individuals can

belong to multiple CoPs (Wenger, 2011). Membership is not fixed; but may entail explicit markers delineating CoP boundaries (Wenger, 1998). For pupils, school membership is determined by need, and pupils may be members of CoPs at the whole-school level. For staff, school membership depended on having '…the right ethos and qualities' (e.g., responsiveness, compassion) (SEND Information Report), as explained:

> "It *is more about having the right mindset and approach, and then we can do the training on PECS etc after that. The emphasis is on staff who are the right fit so they don't become blockers to change*." (Headteacher)

CoPs may also exist at Key Stage or class levels, or within and across different departments, with pupil involvement dependent on the joint enterprise. Unlike mainstream settings, classrooms were divided by need rather than chronological age, with tailored provision and staffing (Figure 4). For example, "…*classrooms for more complex needs have more objects of reference relating to activities,*" *(*Headteacher), plus physiotherapy equipment and multisensory activities. In later phases, more subject-specific resources supplement curriculum-based teaching, plus tables for individual and small group work. The 14-19 area included a kitchen to support functional skill development.
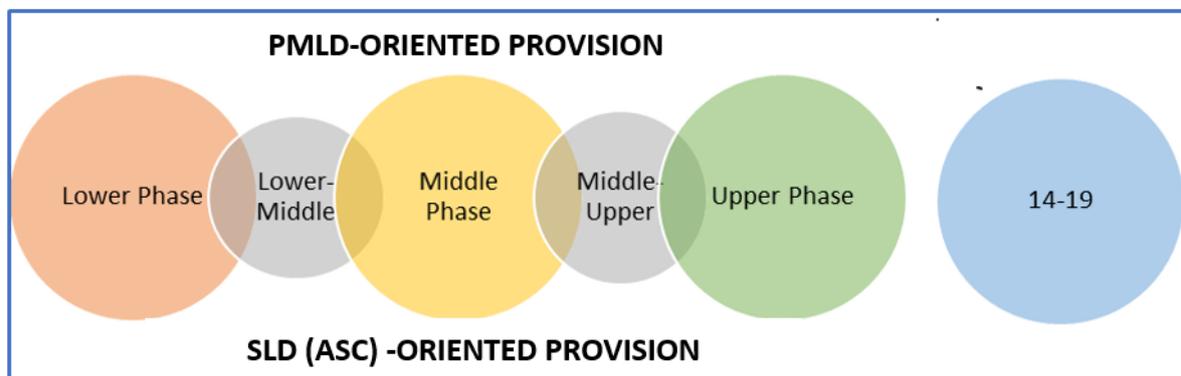

Figure 4: Division of classrooms

The Behaviour Policy describes supportive and functional learning environments, aligning with situated learning principles (Figure 5).

Supportive
Dependent on actions and attitudes
Happy relationships   Tolerance
Responsive to needs
Caring staff attitudes   Flexibility
Clear and consistent boundaries
Calm, working atmosphere   Friendliness
High expectations

Functional
Dependent on environmental suitability to meet individual needs
Safe   Tidy, uncluttered and clean
Optimally stimulating
Sufficient resources
Clear visuals and labels   Secure
Demarcated activity areas

Figure 5: Characteristics of Supportive and Functional learning environments (Positive Behaviour and Relationships Policy)

Each classroom has a webpage listing staff details, consisting of a teacher, (higher level) teaching assistants / SEND support workers, and external support (e.g., physiotherapists).

The Headteacher commented:

> "For the SLD classes, the ratio would ideally be 8-9 learners, a class teacher and 2 TAs but we now have 4 or 5 TAs because of the level of complex needs."

Individual classroom webpages provide termly home learning resources, and a classroom 'rationale,' – written by room staff – outlining classroom-specific communication strategies, facilities, activities, and curriculum / assessment approaches.

Within this setting, CoPs could therefore operate at Phase levels, within distinct phases or separate classrooms within Phases, with practices and knowledge tailored to specific needs. For example, "*In some classes with severe PMLD needs, it is more akin to a hospital ward in terms of the level of*

*support needed' (*Headteacher*),* necessitating health-related member knowledge, whereas SLD classrooms require greater behaviour-related knowledge. Consequently, CoP membership and 'styles' of behaving are contextually dependent, linked to where individuals are situated within the setting, and the typical learning practices and resources within that classroom or Phase.

Classroom webpage analysis suggested that some teachers acted as brokers, transferring practices between different class-based communities (Wenger, 1998). Phase- and classroom-based staff teams, led by a Senior Manager, could therefore represent CoPs through shared practices, and new members trained by experienced 'old-timers.' Individualised learning approaches might also create CoPs around individual pupils, with ME occurring between pupils, their families, staff and professionals.

Group diversity - facilitated, for example, by school staff or other professional brokers - is judged to be advantageous as the contribution of unique perspectives enhances ME and learning, while diversity-related challenges can stimulate shared perspectives (Goodnough, 2014). It has been suggested that the inclusion of pupil views is a key factor in supporting diverse learners, as distinct perspectives can help to develop traditional learning practices (Ainscow and Messiou, 2018). Furthermore, research has found that pupil involvement is useful for novel, unconsidered perspectives on teaching and learning, and can support pupils to develop competences that facilitate their wider participation in society (Mitra, 2008).

Wenger (1998) claims that learning is transformative – acquiring knowledge shapes identity development. This reflects one aspect of the criteria of **mutually defining identities**. CoP participants develop unique identities, integrated and refined through engagement in practice (ibid. p.76). Individual identities may derive from expertise, talents and strengths, advantageous to group productivity and outcomes (Mitra, 2008) and relevant to identity formation. However, it is suggested that identity is more than a trait, role, or label; it is an experience, negotiated through ongoing participation (Wenger, 1998, p.163).

Diversity of experiences, expertise, norms and beliefs amongst CoP members may direct their

participation and exercise of power (Botha and Kourkoutas, 2016). The authors explain that expert

power stems from individual knowledge, unlike legitimate power derived from the position members

hold. CoPs involving individuals with learning difficulties reverse traditional roles of expert-teachers,

instead utilising individuals' knowledge and experiences to educate other group members (Brandon

and Charlton, 2011). How far learners assume expert or leadership roles is inevitably influenced by

their level of need, and the presence of participatory structures – for example, school councils.

Higher levels of need may require more adaptations to existing structures to ensure genuine

participation and collaboration, and promote diversity of perspectives (Mitra, 2008). Full

participation has been defined as '…*engagement with all the resources of the community and the

potential for full participation in its social relations'* (Laluvein, 2010, p.41-2). As noted (Methodology,

Table 4), the setting was purpose-built according to inclusive design principles meaning all areas are

fully accessible, which facilitated pupil engagement with community resources. During the tour,

pupils were observed accessing spaces independently, or with support where required. Only one

area (Forest School) was observed to be inaccessible owing to a damaged entryway which was due

to be repaired.

Another means of facilitating participation within the setting was through the adoption of a Total

Communication approach (including speech, Makaton signing, PECS, photographs, pictures, symbols,

Objects of Reference, on–body signing, communication aids or Augmented and Alternative

Communication equipment - Prospectus) – usage of all was observed during the tour. This aided

social relations and the exchange of knowledge between pupils and staff, in addition to facilitating

pupils right to freedom of expression, as per Article 13 of the UNCRC.

Participation can be achieved through engagement in democratic processes which allow members to

shape social practices, and may be hindered by issues relating to power structures (Laluvein, 2010).

For example, group members may adopt behaviours that typify certain (hierarchical) role identities

within that CoP, with resultant tensions forming a barrier to the exchange of ideas (Hall, 2017).

School structures separate pupil and teacher roles. Here, pupil identity is partially assigned, through 'The Unique Learner' Vision. Normative expectations of pupil deference to adult authority invoke questions of the extent of pupils permitted involvement in decision-making (Mitra, 2008). In that study, group members reverted to traditional rather than co-constructed roles; consequently, teachers must learn to share (rather than attempt to preserve) power and permit pupils to assume leadership. Power differences, as in schools, may require alteration to participatory structures to ensure that lower status members can co-construct the joint enterprise (Mitra, 2008).

An example of this was 'Family Forums' which the setting held each month. They involved staff, parents and 'children and young people from across the school' (school website). Forum agendas cover topics such as homework, wellbeing, pupil transitions and learning activities, with attendee contributions influencing decision making and setting practices. Pupil views were provided by pupils or their (staff / parent) representatives. Although it was not possible to observe a forum, focus setting pupils were observed contributing to decisions, such as attending a business presentation to trial Virtual Reality software and providing feedback integral to the purchasing decision. Pupil voice was also fundamental to learning processes and transition planning. Thus, pupils had some degree of influence over day-to-day activities and provision, in contrast to research findings suggesting that pupil decision-making involvement is often peripheral (Forde, Horgan, Martin and Parkes, 2008). This adds to the evidence demonstrating ME between pupils and teachers, in addition to evidence indicating ME between staff, families and external agencies.

3.2   Joint Enterprise (JE)

This relates to collective negotiation of a goal or response, and mutual accountability. It develops through meaningful interactions (Goodnough, 2014), facilitating members' determinations of what matters and what to share or withhold (Wenger, 1998). It thus concerns group purpose and activities (Mitra, 2008).

Relevant evidence was recorded in my field notes and school documents. The school prospectus references a 'powerful common vision' shared by staff, families and the leadership team, for pupil '… access to high-quality education and care,' explicated through Visions, Values (Figure 6), and accompanying objectives (Figure 7). These provide evidence of shared – relatively broad – goals, and **shared discourse reflecting a certain perspective on the world,** applicable to a possible whole-school CoP. Regular activities such as Family Forums and family learning sessions created opportunities for shared discourse to be developed. For possible CoPs at classroom or learner levels, school and pupil documents outline specified goals regarding curriculum delivery and personalised learning.

The Unique Learner	Learning and Development	Positive Relationships	Engaging Environments
Offer personalised provision drawing upon EHCPs, and address barriers to learning	Prepare learners for each transition into adult life, developing confidence, independence and resilience.	Foster sense of belonging for learners and families	Offer practical learning opportunities using local environment to develop and apply skills.
Provide a total communication environment that encourages and values the voice of the individual, their choices and contributions.	Deliver outstanding teaching and learning, celebrate achievements, encourage learners to reach their potential	Develop and maintain strong partnerships with school colleagues and agencies, including health and social care	Teach sense of responsibility and accountability in caring for environment

Figure 6: School Vision and Values (Prospectus)

The school website describes a '…stimulating…motivating and relevant' bespoke curriculum, utilising '…multi-sensory experiences, enrichment, inclusion and off-site experiences' to support pupils to 'develop the knowledge, skills and understanding needed for lifelong independence.' Phase-based thematic approaches to curriculum delivery are described. For example, in the 14-19 phase, a 2-

yearly project cycle emphasises functional / vocational skills, '…preparation for adulthood and [real-life] opportunities for work-related learning.' Aspects of joint enterprise involving goal negotiation could therefore be influenced by the curriculum Phase or the 'Unique Learner' and 'their choices and contributions' (Prospectus).

Pupils accessed various community facilities (e.g., businesses, gyms) 'to support curriculum delivery,' exemplifying situated learning, incorporating access to authentic practice contexts (Hoadley, 2012). This aligns with the child's right to a full and decent life, including active community participation (UNCRC, 1989, Art. 23). Ofsted commented that pupils had 'every opportunity' to develop life skills through well-designed classrooms that 'allow pupils the freedom to take risks in a safe environment.' Pupil rights – reflecting inclusion and participation values – mirrored SEND areas of need and influenced the curriculum, underpinned by aims to promote 'communication and independence…at every level' (Figure 7).

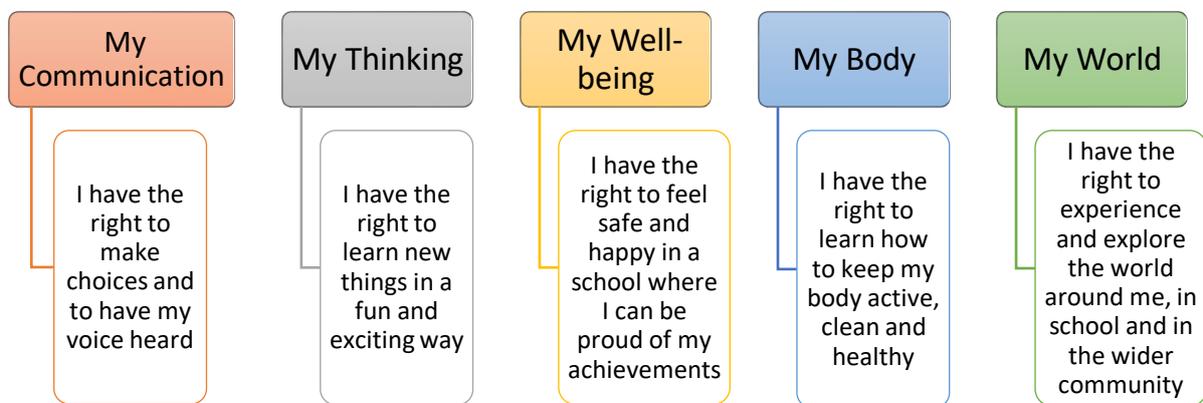| My Communication	My Thinking	My Well-being	My Body	My World
I have the right to make choices and to have my voice heard	I have the right to learn new things in a fun and exciting way	I have the right to feel safe and happy in a school where I can be proud of my achievements	I have the right to learn how to keep my body active, clean and healthy	I have the right to experience and explore the world around me, in school and in the wider community

Figure 7: Pupil Rights

Curriculum implementation is via 5 Pathways, the first two for pupils not engaged in subject-specific learning (Figure 8). The incremental progression resembles the evolution of community members from LPP to full participation in school life and the community. Successful outcomes depend on individual strengths and needs, with the overall aim that pupils are '…as functionally literate,

numerate, communicative and as independent as possible in an environment that promotes positive learning experiences' (Prospectus). Ofsted reported that pupils were making exceptional progress.
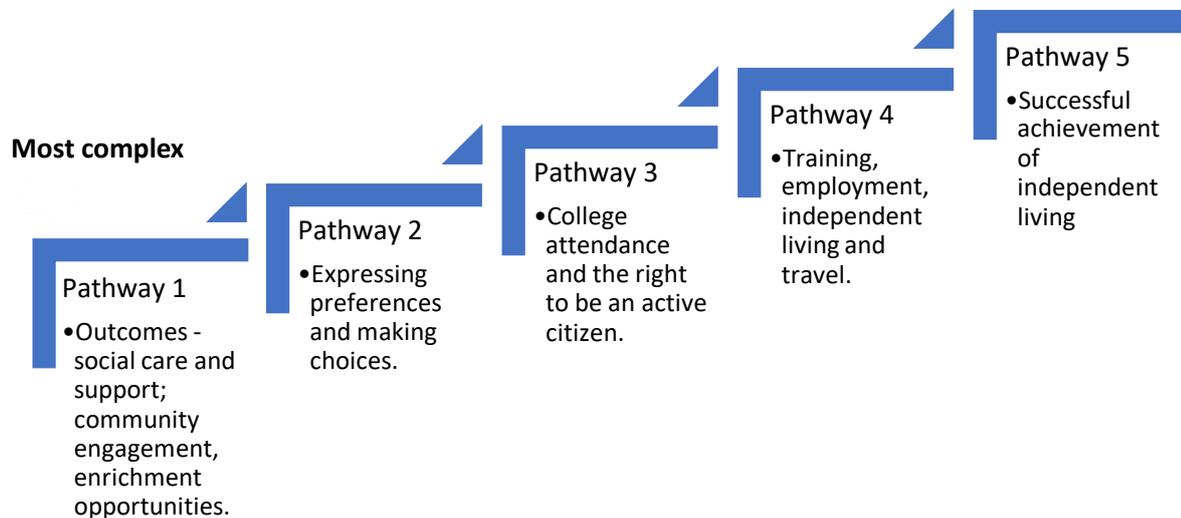

Most complex

Pathway 1
- Outcomes - social care and support; community engagement, enrichment opportunities.

Pathway 2
- Expressing preferences and making choices.

Pathway 3
- College attendance and the right to be an active citizen.

Pathway 4
- Training, employment, independent living and travel.

Pathway 5
- Successful achievement of independent living

Figure 8: Bespoke Curriculum Pathways

Curriculum approaches fulfil the criteria of **Shared ways of engaging in doing things together**, but may not represent true JE, which requires negotiations between members (Wenger, 1998). Pupil rights were reportedly developed between pupils, families and staff; however, development of Visions and Values, and parties involved, is unclear. The bespoke curriculum – which positions '…the pupil at the heart of the planning process' (SEND Information Report) – was devised by staff but within the parameters of national curriculum and assessment requirements, demonstrating how organisational rules, or broader societal policies, influence CoP activities (Laluvein, 2010). This reflects one critique of the concept of CoP, in that insufficient consideration is given to how the work involved or the nature of managerial control can structure CoP engagement, relationships and practices (Cox, 2005).

CoP drivers can be external (e.g., Ofsted recommendations) or internal (e.g., shared desire to improve learner experiences) (Brandon and Charlton, 2011). Evidence of negotiated goals and

responses is apparent regarding 'The Unique Learner' and the objectives to provide 'personalised provision' and 'remove learning barriers':

> *"…we recognise, value and celebrate the unique nature of all of our learners. We understand that each pupil has their own skills, strengths and barriers to learning and we use this knowledge to plan, teach and assess the progress each pupil makes."* (SEND Information Report).

EHCPs contain outcomes negotiated between pupils, families and professionals. Every pupil also has a termly Personal Provision Plan listing outcomes-linked targets agreed with parents:

> *"We have individual learning objectives, not whole class ones…we look at the strand achieved, what is expected by the end of the Key Stage…and set targets linked to their development stage […]. If the child is at less than expected, we then put in interventions."* (Headteacher).

Learning activities are '…collaboratively planned between middle leaders and staff' (Prospectus) while interventions are negotiated between staff, professionals and families. The most recent Ofsted report corroborated this, reporting that 'middle leaders work collaboratively with staff to plan effective and stimulating activities to meet the needs of individual pupils.' Joint decision-making around negotiated targets and activities, to achieve a shared goal relevant to the individual child, could therefore constitute JE indicative of a CoP. However, there was insufficient evidence to determine the level of agency and influence individual pupils had with regards to planning processes and decision making.

Unlike the national curriculum – where externally dictated views of what knowledge matters can constrain learning resources and participation – this personalised learning resembles a learning curriculum i.e.:

> *"…a field of learning resources in everyday practice viewed from the perspective of learners…[it] is essentially situated…[and] characteristic of a community"* (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.97).

In deciding what matters, what can be discounted, and what to do – factors generating mutual accountability between members (Wenger, 1998) – individual pupil strengths and needs clearly take precedence in establishing teaching and learning approaches, and underpin JE negotiations.

CoP activities might entail problem solving, information requests, coordination, discussions, projects and visits (Wenger, 2011, p.3). Personalisation aimed '…to provide positive experiences in which [pupils] will want to participate,' (Positive Behaviour and Relationships Policy). Ofsted reported that 'highly effective teaching assistants' meant '…each activity is an opportunity for pupils to learn.' Teaching was described as '…well planned and differentiated…matched to individual pupils or groups.'

CoPs incorporate formal and informal learning processes (Koliba and Gajda, 2009), both observed during the tour of the setting. Staff used modelling, alongside sensory, electronic or written learning materials to support formal (i.e. structured and organised) learning, with assorted pupil- and teacher-directed activities occurring within '*very structured routines*':

> *"…a combination of carousel activities, short and with a quick change of focus with adult supervision…and opportunities to self-occupy."* (Headteacher)

Informal activities included e.g. massage. One activity involving "…*matching panels…around school*" (Headteacher), was praised by Ofsted:

> *"Tactile panels strategically placed around the school allow pupils to enjoy pragmatic learning in areas not specifically designed for teaching."*

School-based learning activities are often organised around 'pedagogically structured content,' shifting learning focus from increasing participation to acting upon the learner (Lave and Wenger, 1991, p.112). In contrast, here a principal objective was 'To increase the extent to which disabled pupils can <u>participate</u> in the school curriculum' (Accessibility Plan).

Consequently, learning was differentiated across school phases, and by need:

- *"…more functional skills, work experience and accessing new places in the older end of the school…There are different reward systems in every class…We have no disciplinary approaches." (Headteacher)*

Several factors were considered when negotiating appropriate individualised learning activities, providing further evidence of JE between pupils and key staff, and regard for inclusionary / participatory principles (Figure 9) – indicative of a CoP.
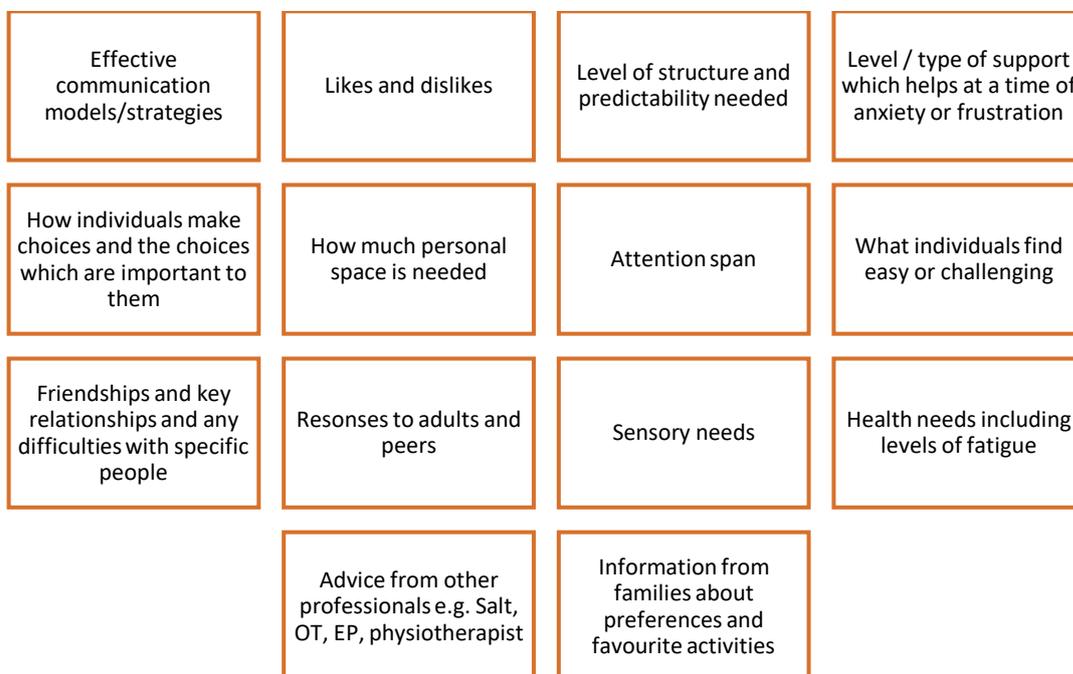
Effective communication models/strategies	Likes and dislikes	Level of structure and predictability needed	Level / type of support which helps at a time of anxiety or frustration
How individuals make choices and the choices which are important to them	How much personal space is needed	Attention span	What individuals find easy or challenging
Friendships and key relationships and any difficulties with specific people	Resonses to adults and peers	Sensory needs	Health needs including levels of fatigue
	Advice from other professionals e.g. Salt, OT, EP, physiotherapist	Information from families about preferences and favourite activities	

Figure 9: How learning activities are personalised

3.3   Shared Repertoire (SR)

This involves '…producing and adapting tools – styles, discourse, symbols, routines, artifacts, language,' and development of a shared language, important to defining purpose and activities (i.e., JE) and processes (i.e., ME) (Mitra, 2008).

School Visions, Values and Rights represent **Jargon and shortcuts to communication**…, and a SR that anchors current interactions; it can also account for historical interactions (ibid.). Complementary processes of reification and participation are relevant (Smith, Hayes and Shea, 2017). Reification refers to codification of theoretical concepts into tangible materials; participation concerns active engagement in creating meaning (Brandon and Charlton, 2011). CoPs facilitate knowledge generation that can inform policies and practices (Goodnough, 2014). Policies, mission statements and handbooks represent reification; greater reification reflects increased organisational formality (Koliba and Gajda, 2009). Here, staff induction procedures utilised reified documents and training developed via staff and professionals (Figure 10), evidencing SR between staff.
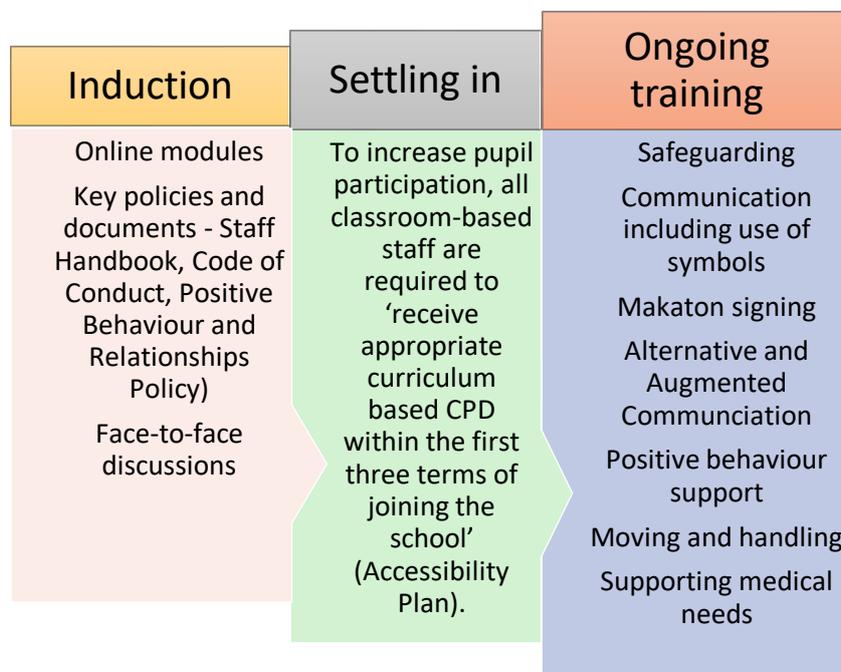
Induction	Settling in	Ongoing training
Online modules Key policies and documents - Staff Handbook, Code of Conduct, Positive Behaviour and Relationships Policy) Face-to-face discussions	To increase pupil participation, all classroom-based staff are required to 'receive appropriate curriculum based CPD within the first three terms of joining the school' (Accessibility Plan).	Safeguarding Communication including use of symbols Makaton signing Alternative and Augmented Communciation Positive behaviour support Moving and handling Supporting medical needs

Figure 10: Staff induction and training procedures

The intricacies of pupil interactions are unlikely to be fully captured in reified documents (e.g., pupil profiles), necessitating active pupil-staff engagement for staff to learn about pupils from pupils themselves – thus reversing traditional expert-leader roles (Brandon and Charlton, 2011). Promotion of pupil rights is linked to specific programmes, shaping group knowledge and practices (Figure 11), providing evidence of **Specific tools, representations, and other artefacts**. Total communication tools highlight the mediating role of technology in facilitating participation (Lave and Wenger, 1991). Ofsted described cross-curricular technological links as a teaching and learning strength. The Accessibility Plan referenced the need to 'support pupils using high-tech devices.' Utilisation of technological software and hardware to support communication and learning were observed throughout the setting, providing evidence for **rapid flow of information and propagation of innovation.**

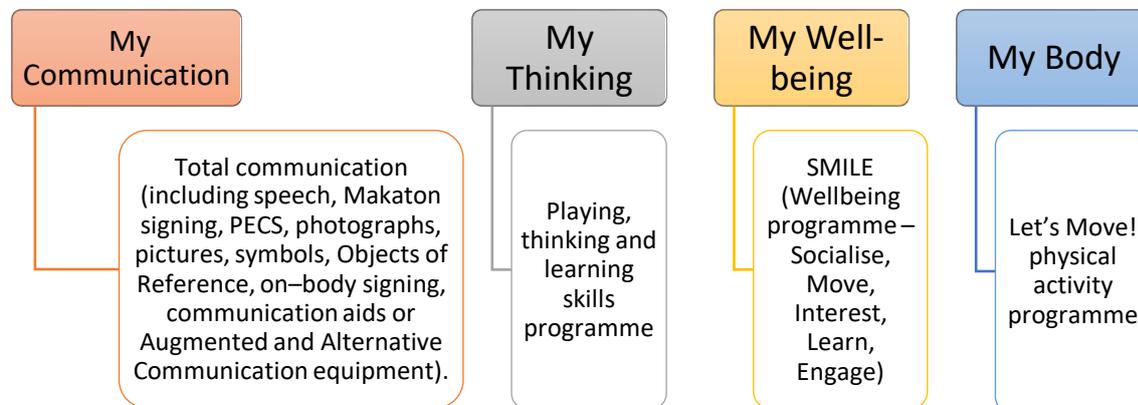| My Communication	My Thinking	My Well-being	My Body
Total communication (including speech, Makaton signing, PECS, photographs, pictures, symbols, Objects of Reference, on–body signing, communication aids or Augmented and Alternative Communication equipment).	Playing, thinking and learning skills programme	SMILE (Wellbeing programme – Socialise, Move, Interest, Learn, Engage)	Let's Move! physical activity programme

Figure 11: Programmes used to promote pupil rights

Technology can facilitate CoPs by enabling communication and conversation, enhancing member connections, providing informational context for shared CoP resources, and creating information repositories i.e., content (Hoadley, 2012). Alongside the website, public and private Facebook pages and a 'School Life' app helped keep parents informed. The app was introduced following parental feedback relating to the need for easier information sharing, gathered during a Family Forum

attended by staff, parents and pupils. This provides an example of participation that provided a safe space and imbued group members with the legitimacy to share their ideas which were later implemented, thus going beyond tokenistic involvement (Mitra, 2008). These platforms facilitate pupil / staff / parent direct interactions, and provide avenues for **Local lore and shared stories.** Website resources for families primarily signposted to helpful links. However, a repository does not have to include only information and resources developed by the group; it encompasses information used by the community in their practices (Hoadley, 2012).

The Headteacher described "*sharing resources and best practice*" with another specialist school, and selection of internal tools:

> "*We are open to any interventions, not just specific approaches but we are not jumping on a bandwagon, it is more about what they do* [for pupils] *…We take systems and personalise them.*"

Thus, **Ability to assess the appropriateness of actions and products** within the shared repertoire may be dependent on effectiveness in facilitating the achievement of individual learning targets. The Ofsted report provides some evidence for this, reporting that 'the progress made by pupils in the early years…post-16 provision and pupils with PMLD is exceptionally strong.' Technology was also used to facilitate assessment, with an online platform used to record and review progress towards individual targets, providing further evidence of SR between pupils, staff and families. Edwards (2005) argues that CoP overemphasises what is done, not what is learnt, and called for more examination of how learning is evidenced. Here, assessment and progress review practices support the evidencing of learning, and judgments regarding appropriateness.

4. Conclusions

This paper comprises an analysis of a specialist provision using observational, interview and documentary data. The CoP framework and associated 14 criteria were retrospectively applied to the data as an analytical scaffold, to answer the following question:

> To what extent do learning processes within a specialist SLD / PMLD provision constitute a CoP?

Aspects of learning practices within this setting could constitute a CoP, the existence of which is predicated on a group of members sharing common characteristics, engaging in common practices, with a space to interact in (Koliba and Gajda, 2009). In line with Brandon and Charlton's (2011) conclusions, the shared goal of inclusive education provision and evidence of inclusionary processes could represent an inclusive whole-school CoP.

The context within which a CoP is situated may influence its success (Laluvein, 2010). Wenger (2011, p.5) notes that schools are contained within broader learning systems; thus, CoPs can influence educational practices (Figure 12) and be influenced by broader systemic factors.
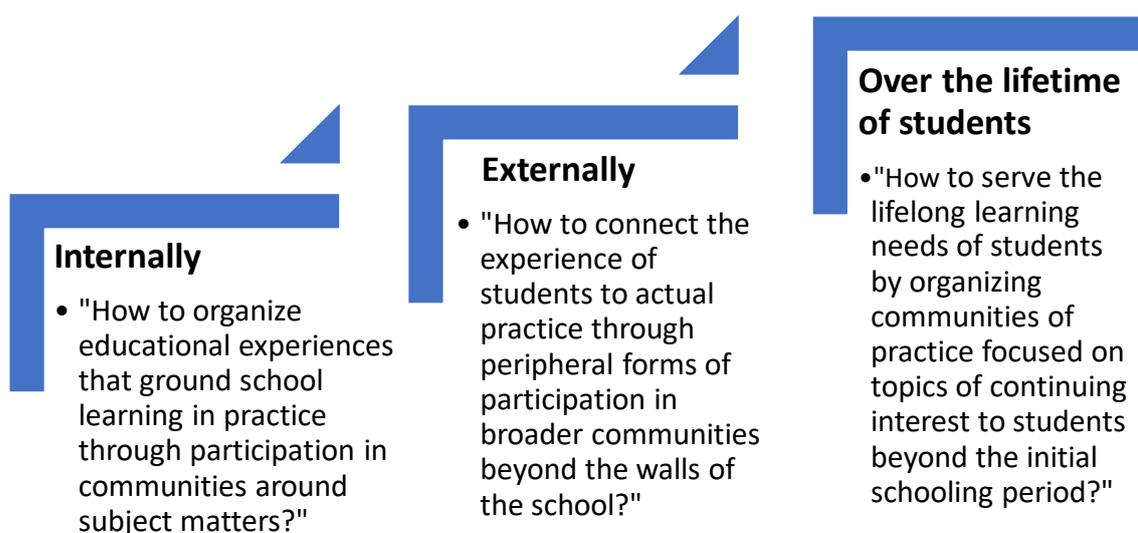
Internally

• "How to organize educational experiences that ground school learning in practice through participation in communities around subject matters?"

Externally

• "How to connect the experience of students to actual practice through peripheral forms of participation in broader communities beyond the walls of the school?"

Over the lifetime of students

• "How to serve the lifelong learning needs of students by organizing communities of practice focused on topics of continuing interest to students beyond the initial schooling period?"

Figure 12: Influence of CoPs on educational practices

Within schools, sub-CoPs exist within larger communities, reflecting differing expertise, skills and working contexts (Hall, 2017). Thus, classroom brokers and shared practices could indicate CoPs existing at the Phase or classroom level. For example, the division of classrooms according to SLD and PMLD needs could generate CoPs involving staff (and pupils) based in those classrooms, with elements of joint enterprise and shared repertoire determined by the nature of need. Staff may share practices across classrooms within Phases, or attend specific or whole-school training, with subsequent working groups potentially constituting CoPs.

There is some reported evidence for the existence of CoPs formed around key issues. For example, family forums involved attendee interactions and relationship building (mutual engagement) focused on key topics e.g., homework and the collective negotiation of goals or responses (joint enterprise), utilising existing policies and generating new ones (shared repertoire).

The strongest evidence, however, is indicative of CoPs between individual pupils, their families, key staff and relevant professionals, existing at the classroom or pupil level. Setting documents espoused principles and practices intended to promote positive relationships throughout the setting, supporting mutual engagement and respectful interactions between potential CoP members. Reified policies also outline the tools and discourses that underpin shared repertoires. Although direct evidential data was limited, independent feedback (e.g., Ofsted report, Parent award) is corroborative.

CoPs acknowledge differential levels of expertise and authority amongst group members (Mitra, 2008). Pupils learn about classroom activities and routines from staff, who learn from pupils (and other staff) about preferred or effective practices, in furtherance of the joint enterprise of individualised, inclusive and participatory education, and pupil achievement. All pupils have EHCPS and Personal Provision Plans, which necessitate the collective negotiation of goals and interventions between stakeholders including the individual child, thus allowing them to become 'active members,

rather than passive recipients' in their learning (Laluvein, 2010, p.42). EHCP planning and review processes therefore create opportunities for mutual engagement, joint enterprise and the development of shared repertoire pertaining to individual pupils.

 It is suggested that full CoP membership is signalled by access to community members, and access to varied activities, information, resources, and participatory opportunities (Lave and Wenger, 1991). The adoption of Total Communication approaches facilitated access to, and interactions between, community members, and enabled pupils to contribute to decisions relating to themselves and aspects of the provision. This aligns with participatory principles including the child's right to express their views and to have freedom of expression (UNCRC, 1989). Fully accessible environments, bespoke curriculums and personalised learning activities further facilitated pupil access and participation. Thus, pupils could be full members of possible CoPs.   Knowledge and practices are shared between staff, and with families, who also share information to support pupil and staff learning. Professionals – including EPs - may be full members or brokers, disseminating resources for the shared repertoire of CoP members. This aligns with Wenger's claim that:

> *"…the knowledge of an organization lives in a constellation of communities of practice each taking care of a specific aspect of the competence that the organization needs'* (2011, p.4).

The specific aspect of competence is the achievement of individual learning targets, for which relevant knowledge is contained in a child-centred CoP, within the wider school context. Overall, many setting practices accorded with criteria for a CoP, and research recommendations for effective school-based CoPs (Table 7).

Table 7: Considerations for effective CoPs

Recommendations for school leaders (Trust and Horrocks, 2019)	Implementing inclusive CoPs (Botha and Koukoutas, 2016)
Provide members with opportunities to enact leadership roles. Give members voice and choice in what and how they learn. Collaboratively develop a set of guiding principles (vis-à-vis participation expectations, responsibilities, norms) with members that set the tone for the community Provide substantial support (e.g., infrastructure, training, dedicated staff) for the community Create opportunities for social learning (e.g., group diversity, brokering) Use technology to support connected learning. Build a sense of community Co-develop the purpose of the community with the members.	Teachers, school principals and heads of departments (managers) need to: • know how to plan and organise inclusive educational practice • create collaborative systems for stakeholders to share expertise Stakeholder commitment to mutual engagement and formation of constructive partnerships. Alteration to power structures to ensure balance so all members feel able to contribute. Opportunities for pupils to develop social, emotional and academic skills, and build positive relationships. Overall goal is to create lifelong learning competences so individuals can contribute to society.

4.1   Implications for practice

Within this setting, EPs reportedly contributed to decision-making around provision and expectations, in addition to therapeutic and counselling work. EPs could therefore be members of CoPs around individual pupils, and may consequently be part of multiple communities within a setting. EPs may be full members of child-centred CoPs, for example, contributing to EHCPs (such as target setting, attending multi-agency reviews), or negotiating and delivering interventions. Interventions may include programmes to develop social, emotional or academic skills, which will facilitate pupil participation and learning. An important part of the EP role is obtaining child voice. Collaborative working alongside parents and teachers is particularly important to ensure that suitable communication modes are used, so pupils can fully and freely express their views. EPs may also be able to support schools in adapting existing processes and structures to ensure they are inclusive and facilitate genuine participation.

Brokering is an integral part of the EP role, involving dissemination of evidence-based practice through systemic work and staff training. EPs may therefore have a role in supporting school leaders to create learning environments which promote inclusive and collaborative learning principles, and in training individual staff, for example, in the delivery of skills-based interventions. EPs can also support schools to develop CoPs to facilitate whole-school approaches and staff training, can help to formalise existing working groups, or become contributing members of existing CoPs (comprised of staff and / or multi-agency members.

In addition to the activities in Table 7, EPs can also assist in monitoring and evaluating CoPs. In doing so, they can contribute to the (educational) research base pertaining to CoPs, thus furthering evidence-based practice.

4.2   Critical Reflections

Much of the evidence relating to learning processes within the focus setting was derived from school documents and data gathered during the school tour. Data analysis indicated alignment between enacted and espoused practices (for example, the espoused importance of home-school relationships aligned with the Leading Parent Partnership Award). However, additional data, such as the views of students, parents or teaching staff would have been helpful for triangulation, and to strengthen the conclusions drawn.

Retrospective application of the CoP framework and 14 criteria limited the scope of this analysis. Structured observation involves identifying component parts of an activity (Thomas, 2021), and use of predefined categories derived from the 14 criteria may have facilitated more systematic identification of activities indicative of the three CoP characteristics. Although some authors claim that the 14 criteria helped to clarify the CoP concept (Cox, 2005), others have criticised them for being abstract (Li et al, 2009). Subsequent research clarifying and applying these criteria is arguably lacking (Cox, 2005), with CoP studies typically utilising theoretical or experiential evidence (Omidvar

and Kislov, 2014). This analysis adds to the empirical evidence base; however, further research prospectively utilising the 14 criteria would be beneficial. This might include exploration of whether learning practices constitute a CoP or an alternative type of learning community, for example, ecological learning systems (Hall, 2017).

For the purposes of this analysis, the CoP framework was used as an analytical tool to support the examination of learning processes in a focus setting; thus, the data gathered was deemed to be sufficient for this narrow purpose. Other research applications (for example, implementation or evaluation of a proposed or existing CoP, or use of CoP as a tool for organisational change) would benefit from the inclusion of more data – particularly participant data – to enhance trustworthiness of the research findings.

4.3   Summary

CoP theory emphasises the situated and active nature of learning (Lave and Wenger, 1992; Cox, 2005), aligning with practices observed within the setting. CoPs involving pupils generate benefits including decision-making and leadership skills, and empowerment by effecting school change (Goodnough, 2014). Hence, CoP membership can assist development of staff and pupil skills that support achievement and wider participation. The data indicated the possibility of CoPs existing at the whole-school, Phase, classroom and individual pupil levels, with evidence of mutual engagement, joint enterprise and shared repertoire.

Hierarchical school systems and poor interpersonal relationships can be barriers to participation, thus participatory structures and processes are vital (Forde, Horgan, Martin and Parkes, 2008). The data provided some evidence for such structures and processes - for example, school policies (Vision and Values, Positive Relationships), personalised learning activities and goals, and family forums. Accessible learning environments and use of Total Communication helped to fulfil the objective of ensuring that pupils '…are involved in as meaningful a way as possible' (Prospectus). Consequently, levels of participation, agency and influence vary according to individual needs.

CoPs can enhance children's social integration, and members' social capital; collective engagement means members can draw upon each other's expertise, sharing knowledge and perspectives to develop skills, understanding of needs, effective strategies and contextualised interventions (Botha and Kourkoutas, 2016), consequently facilitating inclusive and participatory education for pupils with complex needs. CoPs are thus a useful framework for EP practice.

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A REFLECTIVE ACCOUNT OF TEP INVOLVEMENT IN ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION FOR A CHILD WITH SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL AND MENTAL HEALTH (SEMH) NEEDS.

Abstract

This paper provides an account of EP involvement in the process of negotiating and planning assessment and intervention for a child with Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs. It provides an outline of the planning process and discusses factors relating to consultation and assessment. It reflects throughout on how these activities contributed to the intervention planning process. It ends with a summary of outcomes and final reflections on the work completed.

1. Introduction

This paper comprises a reflective account of my involvement as a Trainee Educational Psychologist in negotiating and planning package of assessment and intervention for a child attending a specialist Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) setting. It discusses activities relating to three of the five main domains of EP practice: Consultation, assessment and intervention, with reference to research that contributed to evidence-based practice (Scottish Government, 2002), and reflective practice.

1.1 Student details

Tom was a previously looked after child, who had recently been adopted. He was in Year 10 and was due to turn 16, prompting discussions about whether he may choose to contact his biological parents, who were in prison. Tom had attended a Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Community special school for boys in Year 5 to 11, who had experienced difficulties accessing mainstream education, since Year 8. His mainstream placement collapsed due to absconding.

1.2 Request for Involvement

In the Summer Term of 2019, the lead EP for the setting had agreed with the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCO) to deliver a 3-hour package involving cognitive and / or SEMH-based assessment and pupil voice exercises, to be completed in the Autumn Term. Tom was raised with me during an initial planning meeting with the SENCO in September 2019, who requested the addition of staff and parent consultations and a lesson observation to contribute to a report identifying helpful learning and support strategies. This was a standard package of service delivery for individual children in that setting. We agreed the work was to be completed between October and Christmas. I provided a Myself as Learner Scale (MALS) for Tom to complete in school, prior to meeting him (discussed below).

Further information was provided during a second planning meeting with the SENCO in November 2019. The SENCO provided the following information about Tom:

- Tom has a lovely, caring side.
- Tom could be very protective of people he was close with but could sometimes be possessive.
- Tom could experience difficulty forming new relationships, with unfamiliar places and people and with managing change.

Tom had a sibling with whom he had occasional contact, and he had expressed variable views about contacting his biological parents. Staff felt Tom was carrying a sense of guilt about events during his childhood, and he had expressed concerns about 'going down the same path' as his biological parents.

Tom was predicted to achieve 2 / 3 in his GCSEs, which his teachers felt was below his potential of 4/5. The SENCO reported that Toms' involvement in extracurricular and community-based activities was infrequent, partly due to parental concerns about Tom managing his anger in public. Staff also felt this was related to Tom's parents' perceptions of non-academically oriented learning activities as less beneficial than school-based learning, for example, they had previously elected not to give consent for school trips (e.g., Christmas market, biking), holistic therapy (e.g., massage) or music sessions so Tom would not miss lessons. The SENCO also reported that Tom had previously attended a youth club but had to stop following a fight with a peer, and due to generally poor behaviour ('playing up').

A timeline for completion of the work was agreed, and a session was booked the following month for completion of a staff consultation, lesson observation and parent consultation.

2. Information gathering

Information was gathered in three ways:

- Consultations
- Lesson Observation

- Student 1:1 work

2.1 Consultations

Consultation has been described as '…*a means of being able to consider and apply appropriate psychological theory and understanding with parents and teachers where there are concerns about a child*' with the aim of improving '…*understanding of the child and their situation, and develop[ing] an agreed plan to improve the situation, with the intention of enhanced outcomes at home and at school,*' (Nolan and Moreland, 2014, p.64). It is a collaborative approach that can be used alongside psychometric assessment, observation and intervention to provide holistic, contextually relevant support for children with Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) and ensure effective service delivery (Farrell and Woods, 2015). Consequently, consultation may refer to a specific model of service delivery, to an agreed and defined task, or to the range of skills and activities – including listening, asking questions, problem solving and offering solutions and advice – that constitute consultative practice (Leadbetter, 2006); aspects of all three were present in this case.

Consultation with staff and parents was a key part of service delivery within the placement Educational Psychology Service (EPS). Separate consultations – representing a defined task within the package of work – were completed with the Acting SENCO and Tom's parents. A joint consultation was mooted, but the Acting SENCO felt that a separate consultation may generate more open conversation from Tom's parents. Home-school relations were generally positive, so this was more about obtaining parent perspectives of the situation as separate from staff interpretations of what was happening. I drew upon consultative skills developed over my three years as a trainee to build rapport and create avenues for open communication. This helped to empower stakeholders to express their views, and contribute to ongoing decision-making.

2.1.1 Staff consultation

A 45-minute consultation with the acting SENCO was completed in early December 2019 where further information was provided. Tom had previously been referred to CAMHS. He had attended a

counselling session and after-school 1:1 sessions with a tutor but had not engaged in either. He had

recently had a change in social worker which had caused some disruption. Tom's parents later

explained that this was related to activities of the previous social worker that they were not in

agreement with, such as family fact-finding and contact with his biological sibling. Tom's parents felt

that this could unsettle Tom (they noted he had been emotionally distressed and more

argumentative following previous contact), and that the timing was inappropriate given his upcoming

GCSEs. Communication between the parents and social worker broke down, leading to the

involvement of an Independent Reviewing Officer, and a new social worker being assigned.

The SENCO reported that Tom's behaviour had required him to be restrained twice in the last two

years. She felt he was developing greater acceptance of school boundaries. He could still become

emotionally dysregulated at times, the causes of which were inconsistent, but was rarely

intentionally aggressive. Tom was not permitted to have a phone or tablet due to concerns about

previous unsafe behaviour online. Staff confirmed he had subsequently received input from his

school and social worker about staying safe online.

Staff felt Tom had settled well in school, but it could be difficult to establish his true feelings at times

because he had a tendency to say what others wanted to hear. The acting SENCO alluded to concerns

about whether certain counselling input might be disruptive at that time.

Following this consultation, I observed Tom during a PE lesson, before meeting with his parents.

2.1.2 Parent consultation

After the lesson observation, I completed a consultation with Tom's parents. This consultation helped

to ensure that their views were represented, and that they could contribute to decision making, in

line with recommendations in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015). They reported that

they had no concerns about his behaviour at home but were concerned about his level of aggression

in school, which on past occasions, had been extreme.

They reported that Tom could be self-directed and had trouble maintaining attention at times. This had improved compared to his behaviour at his old school. They felt Tom had difficulty with social awareness, empathy and remorse, and sometimes demonstrated emotionally manipulative behaviours.

They confirmed Tom did not often go out independently in his local area, which was because of safety concerns related to local gangs. They noted that Tom could be easily influenced. He had also wandered off from them on days out. They reported that they had found a small youth club (as a precursor to a larger group) that he would be attending after Christmas with a family member. They were worried about Tom's ability to maintain friendships because he could be possessive.

Tom's parents confirmed that he had had contact with CAMHS and was due to return, but they seemed unsure about how helpful it would be as previous sessions had not involved 'much anger input.' They recounted discussing counselling with Tom, who told them he did 'not want to know.'

They summarised their main concerns as relating to Tom's level of aggression, his ability to maintain concentration and planning next steps.

2.2   Lesson observation

Lesson observations can be useful for assessing the quality of teaching and identifying best practice, subsequently improving learning outcomes (O'Sullivan, 2006). Direct observation helps to minimise the gap between reported and enacted behaviour (Bryman and Bell, 2019), facilitating understanding of behavioural antecedents. I considered whether a structured observation, drawing upon pre-determined criteria, would be helpful.

Structured observation has been utilised to assess self-regulation in young children (Howard et al, 2019), and within functional behaviour analysis approaches to help understand behaviour in the context it occurs, establish the boundaries of problem behaviour and devise behaviour support plans (Martella et al, 2011).

In this case, the primary behaviour of concern – Tom's level of aggression – was sporadic and triggers were inconsistent; hence, I felt a structured analysis was not suitable as it may have necessitated multiple visits to witness the behaviour of concern. When I had used structured observation in practice, I felt it limited the breadth of information gathering that might be relevant to a holistic process of assessment and intervention. Hence, I decided to use an unstructured observation, noting down any points that could be pertinent to later psychological formulation.

I observed Tom during a PE lesson, where he was playing basketball with three peers. Observation was intended to be classroom-based to gather information about Tom's engagement and concentration. Following a short notice lesson change, we agreed it would still be helpful to observe Tom to see how he interacted with peers in a less structured context.

He was the only student to greet the Acting SENCO and myself when we approached. He was observed leading the group in a game, explaining the rules and keeping score. Tom displayed several positive social behaviours, interacted well with his peers and engaged safely in activities. There were minor incidents of team disputes, which Tom generally navigated well, encouraging his teammates to continue with the game. At one point he pushed a peer he perceived to be cheating but calmed quickly when the TA intervened. He demonstrated good coordination, balance and spatial awareness.

Reflection Point

I reflected upon the information gathered during consultation to assist in planning an outline for my first meeting with Tom, and to guide assessment choices. There was evidence of consensus and conflict in the information provided, pertinent to ongoing assessment and intervention decisions (Table 1). I have included a brief summary of reflective notes, with questions that influenced ongoing information gathering, formulation and recommendations.

The areas of conflict were a concern as evidence suggests that congruence between adoptive parent's perception of the child, and the child's actual presenting needs, can reduce post-adoption

disruption (Simmel, 2007). Hence, I felt it was important to clarify the extent to which Tom's

aggressive behaviours were ongoing, in order to make suitable recommendations for support

strategies.

Table 1: Reflections

CONSENSUS	CONFLICT
Tom has a nice, polite and caring side, and is musically talented. Tom has settled well in school, and his behaviour is improving. Tom has a tendency to tell people what they want to hear. Tom has not engaged in previous counselling interventions. Tom has difficulties with emotional regulation (inconsistent triggers) and maintaining concentration. Staff and parents are questioning possible ADHD or attachment needs and think cognitive / SEMH assessment would be helpful.	The extent of Tom's aggressive behaviours: • Tom's parents are worried about extreme aggression in school, but staff accounts suggest this is infrequent. • Parents describe Tom as having 'no off switch' but also state that they are able to 'bring him down' when he is emotionally dysregulated at home • Following a potential antecedent to aggressive behaviour, Tom was observed to have calmed quickly following staff input Non-academic learning opportunities: • Staff feel Tom would benefit from access to more extra-curricular and holistic learning activities, but feel that his parents wanted to focus on academic learning due to upcoming GCSEs • SENCO thinks it would be helpful to try and reframe parent's perceptions regarding the benefits of non-academic learning opportunities, to aid understanding of the benefits of wider learning. • Parents might be aware of this as they have enrolled Tom in a youth club • Parents report that the social worker told them they were 'overprotective;' parents feel like the social worker did not understand their safety concerns
Reflective practice notes • Need for more independence, more social life and relationships. • They all want the best for him but disagree about how to get there (where is there? Future planning?) • Why is he not engaging, is it him or them or the nature of the contact? How will I get him to engage? Would counselling actually be beneficial? • Joint consultation would have facilitated exploration of areas of conflict, but very useful information was obtained regardless • A classroom-based lesson observation might still be useful	

3. Assessment and pupil voice

Tom was asked to complete a MALS in advance of our first session. In deciding whether to complete a cognitive (psychometric) or SEMH-based assessment, I adopted a functional approach to assessment selection based on what would generate the most useful information given the purpose of the assessment (Boyle and Kelly, 2016) – in this case, to identify helpful learning and support strategies. I reflected on the fact that Tom had experienced an extensive degree of childhood adversity.

Factors such as abuse or neglect in early childhood can contribute to maladaptive behaviours in the long-term (Simmel, 2007). Childhood trauma can manifest in later difficulties forming attachments, engaging in learning and emotional regulating emotions (Rose, Gilbert and Richards, 2016). In beginning to formulate a hypothesis, it seemed possible that his underachievement was linked to learning engagement, given feedback regarding his difficulties maintaining concentration, more so than cognition and learning difficulties.

Tom's parents primary concern was related to aggression, with secondary concerns pertaining to learning also shared by staff. Concerns about Tom's emotional regulation, in addition to significant childhood trauma, directed the choice of an SEMH assessment.

3.1 Myself as Learner Scale (MALS)

The MALS scale was developed to provide a straightforward, rapidly administrable measure of student's perceptions of themselves as learners and problem-solvers (Burden, 1998). Although standardised on a small sample (389 secondary students), it has high internal consistency and factor analysis shows it has construct validity as a measure of academic self-concept.

I had used it previously on the recommendation of another EP and added it to my daily toolkit because I found it useful when meeting new students with cognition and learning needs, and it was straightforward to score and interpret. It could be completed independently by students, or easily

administered by staff in the interim between planning meetings and direct student work. The

statements, in addition to illuminating student attitudes towards learning, could be used as a scaffold

for further discussions, for example, 'I get anxious when I have to do new work' could open

discussions about what that anxiety might look like, and how the student might manage anxious

feelings. 'I know how to be a good learner' prompted discussions about the characteristics of 'good'

and 'bad' learners, and individual areas of strength and challenge. A copy was given to staff to

complete with Tom following the initial planning meeting.

3.2　Student views

My first meeting with Tom took place in mid-December. The purpose of the session was to:

- Obtain student voice
- Complete Beck Youth Inventory Second Edition (BYI-2)

The SEND Code of Practice (DfE and DoH, 2015) states that practitioners must consider the needs

and wishes of children and young people. Ensuring students have the right to express their views

about the support they receive is an essential component of inclusion (Ainscow and Messiou, 2018),

and anti-oppressive practice.

I began the meeting by trying to build rapport, a skill that is essential to working with adults and

children to bring about positive change (Beaver, 2011). I used open questions to gather Tom's views

about school. He stated that it was better than his old school because it was calmer. We discussed his

teachers and preferred or disliked lessons. Tom stated that he would not like any additional support

in lessons as he did not feel he needed any.

We spoke about his hobbies and interests and future plans. Tom expressed a desire to do sports in

college. I used this response to explore Tom's understanding of his own learning needs by asking,

'what would the college need to know about you?' Tom initially responded that he did not know so I

provided prompts relating to social and learning aspects. Tom stated he did not need help making or maintaining friends, in contrast to the views expressed by his parents and teacher.

Reflection Point
Tom expressed that he did not feel he needed support with learning or peer relationships. With regards to learning, it could be indicative of lacking awareness regarding his own needs, or could be evidence in support of the hypothesis that Tom's underachievement stemmed from engagement / attention needs rather than learning difficulty.

3.3   SEMH assessment

Prior to the 1:1 session, I reviewed several possible assessments (Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ); Resiliency Scales), ultimately opting for the Beck Youth Inventory Second edition (BYI-2), which is used to identify symptoms of social and emotional impairment (Beck, Beck, Jolly and Steer, 2005). The BYI-2 is for use with children aged 7-18 years old. It consists of five inventories each with 20 questions relating to symptoms of depression, anxiety, anger, disruptive behaviour and self-concept. The child is presented with statements and asked to select how often they have felt that way in the last 2 weeks. It has been recommended for use with individuals receiving therapeutic input, as a way of measuring impact through comparison of baseline and post-intervention scores (Dillon and Pratt, 2019). It has been used as an assessment tool in research involving intervention to manage ADHD and aggression (Parker, Zaboski and Joyce-Beaulieu, 2016).

I felt it would help to illuminate the differing accounts of Tom's aggression and provide evidence of other symptoms that might be affecting his learning. I gave Tom the option to complete it independently or together. He chose to complete it himself, and thought carefully about his responses.

I asked Tom his thoughts about different items to explore if any of the statements had resonated with him. This initiated a conversation about losing control, and factors that could cause this such as

peers being rude to Tom's preferred teachers. Tom acknowledged he could lose control when he was angry, and described typical behaviours such as shouting, but said he did not hurt peers or staff. We discussed the things that helped him to calm down including time and space.

He confirmed that meeting new people, new places and trying new things made him feel nervous. When asked about what helped him to manage nervous feelings, he stated 'just get on with it in the end.' Tom reported that he hated tests because they were boring, but he thought he was good at them. He felt he did not need any extra help with tests. When asked about what he did if he was stuck with something, he responded 'think about it or ask teachers or classmates for help.' This suggested that Tom had developed strategies to support learning needs, in contrast to a lack of identified strategies to manage his feelings. From reviewing the items within the BYI-2, Tom did identify one target to improve his vocabulary.

We briefly reviewed his responses to the MALS, which generated the discussion about what constituted a good learner – he identified being engaged in everything, on task and following instructions.

4. Formulation and recommendations

The agreed format for feedback was a (Traded) Psychological Report, containing an outline of student information, summaries of staff and parent views obtained via consultation, pupil views, psychological formulation and recommended strategies. Psychological formulation is an active process that entails discussion, reflection, feedback and revision to form hypotheses about individual behaviour, drawing upon psychological theory (Johnstone and Dallos, 2013).

Evidence suggests that adopted children may be at increased risk of poor long-term outcomes relating to achievement, maladaptive behaviours and insecure attachment styles (Juffer et al, 2011). His BYI-2 scores fell within average ranges indicating no clear areas of need. My hypothesis was that Tom's reported difficulties with regards to learning and aggressive behaviour could be related to

childhood trauma and resultant attachment needs. This cohered with descriptions of Tom as caring but possessive, his infrequent but violent aggression and concentration difficulties.

Recommendations included:

- Emotion coaching input to manage emotional and learning needs potentially related to attachment
- Strategies to improve Tom's attention and concentration during classroom-based learning
- Opportunities for supported community engagement
- Opportunities to access holistic learning sessions

I also reiterated the need for regular therapeutic / counselling support, with the caveat that it should be arranged in consultation with Tom, and Tom's parents to ensure delivery at an appropriate time when Tom might be more receptive. I felt this would be beneficial in the long-term.

5. Second request for involvement

Following completion of the first request, another request was made in February 2020 for regular therapeutic input following on from the SEMH assessment. The SENCO reported that Tom's parents were pleased with the report and the recommendations made, and had commented that I was one of a few professionals he had engaged with. Consequently, they asked the SENCO whether more work might be completed with Tom in line with recommendations in his Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), and the SEMH assessment report, for regular therapeutic support.

Tom's EHCP included a recommendation for life-story work. This was a point of contention for his parents who were worried about potential impacts upon Tom of talking about his childhood, particularly with upcoming exams. This meant balance had to be achieved between the potential benefits of life-story work with regards to Tom developing understanding about his past and the potential for disrupting the progress he was making in the present.

The SENCO requested that this work also involve sessions on understanding and managing emotions and future aspirations. During planning meetings, Year 10 students who could benefit from similar

input stimulated ideas for a group intervention, with consideration of the following psychological theories and approaches:

- Therapeutic intervention (Personal Construct Psychology or Cognitive Behavioural Psychology)
- Functional Behaviour Assessment
- Motivations, aspirations and goal-setting work (e.g., PATH – Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope)
- Metacognition and executive functioning interventions
- Self-regulation and functional skill development

The possibility of a group intervention was discussed as school development needs (reported by the SENCO during consultation) included therapeutic work and interventions, SEMH support and measuring impact over time. Multiple students had similar needs which underpinned their attendance in the specialist SEMH setting, for example, emotional regulation, understanding feelings and emotions, or low engagement in learning. Many also had EHCP recommendations for weekly – often unspecified - therapeutic support. A Therapeutic Story Writing group involving other students was progressing well, and the SENCO felt it had made more efficient use of EP hours in comparison to 1:1 sessions. The SENCO queried whether a similar group approach could be implemented, focusing upon understanding and managing emotions, or future planning. She felt this would help to increase the school capacity to meet development needs as school staff could observe the group, learn strategies and use associated resources to deliver future group sessions for students with similar needs.

We agreed a group approach could be appropriate and beneficial for Tom as it would provide an opportunity to develop and practice social and emotional regulation skills alongside peers. It is also suggested that peer feedback can help to normalise feelings and support individual reflection (Keperling, Reinke, Marchese and Ialongo, 2017). We reflected on which students might attend, considering the need for positive role models and the level of social skills necessary to facilitate constructive participation.

A group intervention would necessitate a baseline assessment for all students to support monitoring and evaluation of the intervention, requiring identification of a suitable assessment, that could also inform the direction of ongoing group work. It was originally agreed that Tom would attend the group intervention, with supplementary 1:1 support where appropriate.

Reflection point

A key consideration here was ensuring that any proposed assessment and intervention would be beneficial for the students. I also wanted to ensure that sessions were delivered in line with the ethos of person-centred support and that all students were participating voluntarily.

5.1   Adaptive Behaviour Assessment System (ABAS-3)

I spent time trying to identify an appropriate assessment that could provide a baseline from which to judge the impacts of intervention across the broad domains represented by the potential group members. The ABAS-3 is espoused as useful for examining individual strength and needs, and planning / monitoring intervention programmes for a diverse range of needs including emotional and behavioural difficulties (Oakland and Harrison, 2011). It includes versions for the student, their parents and their teachers; hence it facilitated stakeholder collaboration. I showed it to the Acting SENCO, who felt it would be suitable. It was agreed that this would provide a baseline for individual and group intervention work undertaken. It also identified areas of need and specific support strategies that parents and teachers could continue to work on once sessions finished.

5.2   Initial session

I met with Tom in early March 2020. This was intended as an introductory session to explore Tom's perceptions about himself, his family and his school. It was also to agree objectives for future sessions, within the parameters of the package of work requested and his parent's views.

We completed some basic exercises, drawing on the principles of cognitive behaviour therapy to explore how different thoughts about himself could impact his feelings and behaviours.

5.3   Covid 19

In mid-March, schools were closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic, disrupting EP service delivery and necessitating alterations to assessment practices (Hassard, 2022). Children with EHCPs were eligible to attend school (DfE, 2021) but many of the parents within the setting elected for their children to stay at home. Staffing levels were hindering day-to-day operations so it was agreed that all work would be paused until September. Sessions were resumed in late September 2020 and ended in November 2020. Due to Covid-19 measures, group intervention was not feasible, so all sessions were delivered on a 1:1 remote basis.

Reflection point

As sessions were delayed until September, this reduced the timeframe for their completion due to my placement ending in November. This was a concern because staff had expressed the view that multiple disrupted relationships could be affecting Tom's current desire to form new relationships; hence, I did not want him to experience another disruption, especially within the context of a therapeutic / support-based relationship at an already challenging time. I raised this with the Acting SENCO, to ensure that Tom and his parents were happy to continue with the sessions.

They acknowledged they were but noted that a new social worker had tried to encourage Tom to engage in Life Story work which had triggered emotional distress. They felt the sessions could be useful providing they were carefully managed.

Due to previous nonengagement – I felt it was important for Tom to feel empowered by the sessions, and to view them positively in order to support future engagement in therapeutic relationships, hence I decided to take a student led approach.

The possibility of extended school closures meant I was concerned about potential disruptions to structured interventions requiring a set number of sessions to be delivered in a set format, and the potential impacts of incomplete therapy. Thus, I revised the intended plan towards light-touch / multi-modal therapeutic approaches and tools, that could be used on a flexible session by session basis. I felt this would also be helpful to introduce Tom to different therapeutic approaches he may find helpful now, or in the future.

5.4   Sessions

Sessions were conducted remotely due to external visitor restrictions in the setting relating to Covid-19 measures. Sessions were conducted in line with Service guidance relating to remote direct work with students.

5.4.1 Introductory / catch-up session

This session began by re-establishing rapport after the summer holidays, discussing the Covid-19 lockdowns and his return to school. Tom rated how he felt about himself, and aspects of home and school on scale of 1 – 5 (1 being the worst, 5 being the best). Ratings scales are helpful for identifying targetable areas for support through asking, for example, what could make this a 5 rather than what would help?

We discussed his plans for Year 11 and college courses he was considering. Tom's teachers and parents thought he wanted to be an electrician; however, Tom had been looking at personal training courses. We looked at the job profile and skills and qualities necessary for personal trainers, and reflected on the things he could do well and the positive qualities he had that would support this role, in line with strength-based approaches. Tom identified areas that he felt he might find challenging, rating them out of 5. One example was organisational skills. We discussed skills he currently used, and he felt support independent skills would be helpful.

Tom mentioned he had been feeling worried recently, so we re-directed the last part of the session towards discussing this. We spoke about missed learning and upcoming exams and how to manage anxious feelings around this.

Reflection point

Following the session, I made the following notes:

- How can I make the sessions more interesting? Can I send sheets in advance, or use Zoom sharing function?

- Next session needs more problem classification / exploration. What does he need / want; what does he want his future to look like? What are his goals?

- Pre-session notes: What does he want to focus on? What does he think the purpose of the sessions is? Clarify confidentiality as we move into more therapeutic work? What can I tell his parents about our sessions?

5.4.2 Subsequent sessions

The sessions did not follow a set structure each week but broadly included:

- Catching up about the past week – this was to identify whether there were any areas Tom might wish to focus upon in the session

- Future planning around college courses and longer-term careers – this included strengths-based discussion and practical support to develop new strengths, for example, the provision of organisational strategies

- Use of Personal Construct Psychology tools including laddering and scaling to help develop Tom's understanding of his core constructs and what mattered to him

- Cognitive Behavioural Psychology approaches, including reflection on Thoughts-Feeling-Behaviour triangles in the moment, coping strategies and modelling self-regulating behaviours

- Vignettes to assist in developing theory of mind (in support of learning and empathy for others) and problem-solving skills

They were collaborative sessions, led by the student but with recourse to psychological theories and tools wherever appropriate to develop Tom's thinking and understanding.

As we approached the end of the sessions, I briefly met with Tom's parents to provide feedback and discuss next steps. These steps were based on areas of need and recommended strategies from the

ABAS-3 assessment, in addition to new recommendations pertaining to college preparation made in the post-intervention report.

6. Outcomes

Outcomes relating to the ABAS-3 assessment were ongoing. Tom's BYI-2 scores showed positive changes in most domains including disruptive behaviour. His anxiety rating had slightly increased, which may have been related to the pandemic and proximity of his exams. His self-concept score increased significantly indicating positive effects. Tom's parents reported that they were 'very grateful' for the work completed so far and commented that they had felt listened to. Staff were impressed with the breadth of the ABAS-3 assessment and accompanying strategies.

7. Concluding reflections

This was a positive piece of work overall. The first request for involvement was to produce a report with helpful learning and support strategies. This involved consultations with Tom's parents and SENCO. Despite some areas of conflict, parties had a generally positive relationship and shared information openly and respectfully, which facilitated information gathering about Tom. Aims of consultation include to develop understanding about the child and their situation, and to develop an agreed plan intended to enhance home and school outcomes (Nolan and Moreland, 2014), which I felt were successfully achieved.

Alongside understanding more about Tom's SEMH needs, information pertaining to his early upbringing, adoption, current relationships and engagement in learning helped to direct subsequent pupil voice and assessment activities. The school had initially requested either cognitive or SEMH assessment. I feel the choice of SEMH assessment (BYI-2) was appropriate given that Tom's parents' primary concerns related to his ability to self-regulate, which was also impacting on his community

involvement and opportunities to build independence. The MALS was also helpful in facilitating

discussions about Tom's approach to learning, in order to identify potentially helpful strategies.

Cognitive assessment may have been useful to identify possible learning needs but, without

sufficient consideration of the effects of Tom's SEMH needs, may not have yielded helpful support

strategies.

The second request for involvement followed on from the report recommendation for Tom to receive

regular therapeutic support. I was pleased to receive feedback suggesting that the initial report had

been well-received, and that Tom would be happy to meet with me again given his previous non-

engagement with CAMHS and counselling services.

Many of the initial report recommendations (e.g. increased community involvement) were hindered

by the Covid-19 pandemic. This also prevented the implementation of a therapeutic group

intervention, which was unfortunate as it may have constituted a good example of individual student

work stimulating a more systemic approach to supporting student needs. In hindsight, the 1:1

sessions may have generated more positive effects for Tom as they were student-led, individualised

and provided a safe space for support and reflection during challenging times. I feel the choice to

adopt a light-touch multi-modal approach was suitable for those circumstances, whilst also helping

to alleviate parental concerns about potential negative impacts of therapy-based sessions.

The main drawback was not being able to complete face to face sessions which would have greatly

expanded the range of tools and resources available for use. It was completed during my final year so

I had a broad range of tools and approaches I could use; however, it likely would have been a much

more challenging case to navigate at an earlier stage of practice. I was pleased with the effectiveness

of the Personal Construct activities in particular. I had previously been worried about using these

tools in practice, but they worked effectively and were well received by Tom.

The ABAS-3 assessment was particularly helpful for identifying specific targets to develop Tom's

adaptive skills. I felt it was much more accessible than other (e.g. psychometric) assessments, based

on positive feedback from Tom's SENCO and his parents. In addition, the BYI-2 provided a helpful measure of the impact of the intervention. This was generally positive based on Tom's improved scores and positive feedback from all parties involved. In summary, this was a complex and enjoyable case which I feel helped to develop my practice as a trainee educational psychologist.

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