

**HOW CAN INQUIRY GROUPS PROMOTE LEARNING WITHIN AN
EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE?**

**AN EVALUATION OF AN INITIATIVE WHEREBY EDUCATIONAL
PSYCHOLOGISTS WORK TOGETHER TO SHARE AND IMPROVE AREAS
OF PRACTICE**

By

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ABSTRACT

This study is a realistic evaluation of Inquiry Groups, an initiative introduced in an educational psychology service in response to the drive towards providing a high quality service, that is based upon psychological theory and research, contributes to positive outcomes for young people, and is responsive to current changes and development. Despite a growing interest in organisational learning, there is very little existing research into organisational learning and improvement in Educational Psychology Services. Research and Development in Organisations (RADIO) is used to structure the study, and realistic evaluation is used to explore the links between learning (outcomes) and the factors supporting/ inhibiting learning for individuals, groups and organisations. Commitment to the initiative, opportunities for reflection, and relationships within the Service, are highlighted as three of the key supporting factors. The study proposes that EPSs can change in response to new knowledge and self-review, providing sufficient time is allocated, and the initiatives are carefully planned to consider organisational and group processes, and the individuals at the heart of the organisation.

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ACRONYMS

ATT	Activity Theory ‘triangle’
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BPS	British Psychological Society
C	Context
CBT	Cognitive Behaviour Therapy
CMO	Context Mechanisms Outcomes (configurations)
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CWDC	Children’s Workforce Development Council
DCSF	Department for Children Schools and Families
DECP	Department of Educational and Child Psychology
DfEE	Department for Education and Employment
DfES	Department for Education and Schools
DOH	Department of Health
EBL	Enquiry Based Learning
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPiT	Educational Psychologist in Training
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
IGs	Inquiry Groups
ISPs	Inclusion Support Projects
LA	Local Authority
M	Mechanisms
MAT	Multi Agency Team
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
MT	Management Team

NHS	National Health Service
O	Outcomes
OL	Organisational Learning
OLE	Online Learning Environment
PATH	Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope
PCDM	Procedures and Competency Development Methodology
PEP	Principal Educational Psychologist
RADIO	Research and Development in Organisations
RE	Realistic Evaluation
SEAL	Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SG	Support Group
SWOT	Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

How can inquiry groups promote learning within an Educational Psychology Service?
An evaluation of an initiative whereby Educational Psychologists (EPs) work together to share and improve areas of practice.

1.1 Purpose of this study

The purpose of this study is to provide an account of the factors that facilitate or inhibit organisational learning and development. To do this it explores individual, group and organisational experiences in inquiry groups (IGs), a new initiative introduced to promote research and development within an Educational Psychology Service (EPS). The inquiry group initiative is based upon the findings of a three-year empirical investigation into organisational learning in an industrial organisation (Boreham and Morgan, 2004). This study seeks to develop a theory of intervention, to promote organisational learning, in an organisation such as an EPS.

1.2 Aims of the study

The aim of the study is to evaluate the inquiry group initiative in relation to outcomes (what is learnt or has changed) for individual EPs, each inquiry group, and the EPS as an organisation, and in relation to processes contributing to these outcomes. Despite a growing interest in organisational learning there is little empirical evidence of what is learnt and what actually takes place when an organisation learns, or of the pedagogy of organisational

learning (Boreham & Morgan, 2004). The processes, including what goes on inside the groups and contextual factors (including cultural factors), are explored to compare with existing evidence and models, and to inform future developments and research. In my study, by exploring some of the key processes or actions that contribute to the learning process, I hope to make an original contribution to knowledge and theory development in organisational learning, in an organisation such as an Educational Psychology Service. As far as I am aware, this has not been done before.

1.3 My interest in this topic

There has been a growing interest in organisational learning during the last forty years in response to climates of change, improvement and reform.

Engeström (2001), quoted in Boreham and Morgan (2004), however, says that current theories of organisational learning are 'typically weak in spelling out the specific processes or actions that make the learning process' (p. 308 Boreham & Morgan, 2004).

The drive towards providing a high quality service, that is based upon psychological theory and research, contributes to achieving positive outcomes for young people, and is responsive to current changes and developments, is high on the agenda for Educational Psychology Services (EPSs). There is very little existing research into organisational learning and improvement in EPSs (Rowland, 2002) and yet they, like other organisations, need to be responsive to external influences, new knowledge and self-review (Jensen et al, 2002).

During an assignment on evidence-informed practice within the EP profession (How might an accountable public sector organisation such as an EPS manage the requirement for evidence-informed practice, in order to ensure that available time and expertise are invested in activities that will benefit Service users, October 2004), I developed an interest in how to improve practice in our service by becoming more evidence and research based, and sharing knowledge and expertise throughout the organisation. Whilst working on this assignment I gradually shifted from thinking about EPs systematically making reference to or carrying out research to improve their practice at an individual level, and sharing this with EP colleagues, to EPs carrying out research activities jointly, to improve practice at a service/organisational level. I realised that EPs, like members of most organisations (Covey, 1994, in Jensen et al, 2002), probably spend a high proportion of their time reacting and adapting to events, rather than examining their practice in a way that will improve systems and service in the future. I felt that EPs should be applying their knowledge of organisations and organisational change reflexively, to explore and improve their own organisation.

1.4 Context of the study

The Inquiry Group initiative took place between September 2007 and July 2008 in an EPS that works across a rural and an urban council. Joint arrangements have been in place since the reorganisation of local government in 1998. Both local authorities reorganised education and children's social services into children's services directorates in 2006. At the

time of the study there were 15.45 full time equivalent EPs: the Principal Psychologist, 3 Senior Psychologists and 11.5 EPs. One of the EPs is seconded to the Looked After Children's Team and manages that team. There were also two Year 2 Trainee EPs (TEPs), and a Year 1 TEP on placement. An EP team was dedicated to each local authority, led by a Senior EP. Most EPs served schools in one local authority but were also involved in project work, training and specialist advice within both local authority areas. The Service also provided Critical Incident support to schools across both authorities.

Although the Boreham and Morgan (2004) research took place in the chemical industry and the aims of the organisation (to improve output) and the focus of the activity evaluated (writing operating procedures), are not the same as they would be for an EPS, the aims and the way in which the initiative to promote organisational learning had been structured were similar to my developing ideas: the initiative took place in teams, distributed across the organisation, in order to improve and share practice, to develop tools to support their practice, and to find ways of embedding their findings/procedures into the practice and culture of the organisation. There were also some similarities in working practices. They describe operators, with 'little black books' to record 'know-how', which was rarely shared with others, as they hardly met each other, working on different shifts. EPs, working in rural patches, can similarly become isolated in their role.

1.5 The Inquiry Group Initiative

Planning and preparation for setting up the initiative took place during the Summer term 2007. Meetings took place with the management team prior to a presentation to all EPs. At the presentation, areas of practice for the inquiry groups were generated by EPs (relevant to national and local agendas, and/or EPS priorities). Four groups were then established on the basis of EP preferences. The areas of practice chosen are as follows: Early Years, Inclusion Support Projects, Psychology of Change, and Resiliency.

EPs were invited to form a support group. This was established to:

- support the process (e.g. to feed back on the research process, to share problems that arise, and to inform the process);
- enable ideas/activities to be shared between groups;
- provide a 'peer debriefing' role to guard against researcher bias, and
- reinforce common principles and themes (e.g. ethical principles, pupil voice).

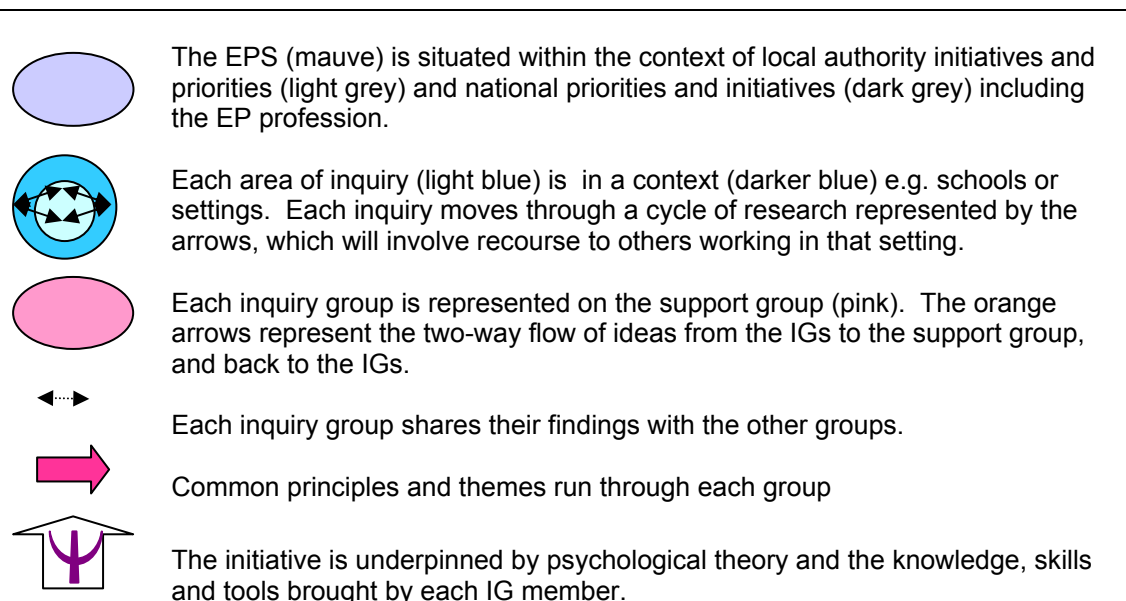
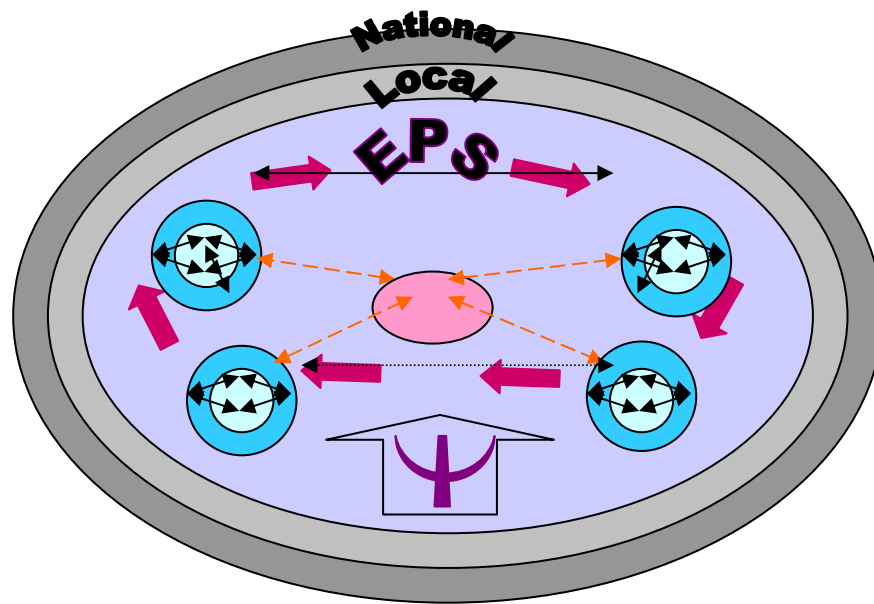
One EP from each inquiry group volunteered to join the group but the meetings were open and some other EPs attended some of the meetings. The support group met half-termly (prior to the first, and then following the inquiry group meetings).

The initiative was launched in September 2007. The groups met half-termly throughout the academic year 2007-8, during meeting time already planned for Service development. The initial brief for the groups was to agree and

plan a focus for research and development. The framework Research and Development in Organisations, RADIO (Timmins et al, 2003) was recommended to support the planning of each inquiry. Other frameworks were introduced during the inquiries as suggested by the support group. The outcomes of each inquiry were shared with the other groups at the end of the year in July 2008.

The structure of the initiative was underpinned by theoretical models and research in organisational psychology, and the range of knowledge, skills (including research skills) and tools brought by team members. (see Figure 1.1 below)

Figure 1.1: Inquiry Group model



1.6 Research questions

My key research questions are as follows:

- What are the outcomes/ effects of the inquiry groups for individuals and the organisation?
- What processes facilitated or inhibited the progress of the inquiries?

- How do EPs view inquiry groups?
- How do inquiry groups fit into the existing culture in the EPS, and the external context in education and educational psychology?
- How might the inquiry group model support the development of the EPS into the future?

1.7 Methodological approach to the evaluation

I adopt the realistic evaluation approach to evaluation to explore the links between learning (outcomes) and the factors supporting/ inhibiting learning for individuals, groups and the organisation. Realistic evaluation provides a structure for the evaluation of social programmes (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) where outcomes (O) are viewed as the result of change inducing mechanisms (M) and the unique contexts within which these are presented or based (C). The aim of realistic evaluation is explanatory: ‘what works for whom, in what circumstances, in what respects, and how?’ in order to maximise the chances of success and minimise the risks of failure in the future (Pawson & Tilley, 1997).

I am using a realistic evaluation approach, as the IG initiative, like all initiatives, involves the actions of people and is embedded in social systems. The way in which the initiative works is shaped by the actions of individual people and by the contexts impacting upon them. I am not expecting to be able to generalise from the findings, but more to ‘illuminate’ or ‘inform’ on this particular topic and I aim to find out in what circumstances or conditions learning and development activities (such as inquiry groups) are more or less

likely to work and what can be done to maximise chances of success and minimise the risk of failure. I intend to make an original contribution at a practical level, by improving the thinking that goes into the setting up of research and development activities in services similar to our own.

1.8 Issues relating to the aims of the research

A number of issues were considered and investigated in preparation for and during this study.

Firstly, I had to clarify the theory underpinning the concept of organisational learning, as this would inform the structure of the IG initiative. The literature on organisational learning is complex, having emerged during the last thirty years from a number of different theoretical fields. Trying to find common themes from the literature, when writers have different perspectives and purposes with regard to their research, was going to be challenging. Argyris and Schön's (1978) analysis of the literature on organisational learning was helpful. They have written extensively on developing a general theory of intervention, and do so by emphasising common rather than idiosyncratic features of different theoretical perspectives. Adopting a realistic evaluation framework (Pawson et al, 2004) to interpret the literature was also helpful: it provided a structure, and informed the development of early theories on the circumstances and conditions under which a learning and development initiative, such as IG groups, are more or less likely to work.

Secondly, I had to consider how to set up the initiative. I was enthusiastic about the idea of inquiry groups, from my reading of Boreham and Morgan (2004) and other literature on learning and development activities in organisations, and felt that it was relevant for EPs in the current climates of developing research-based practice (Frederikson, 2002) and continuous improvement (Rowland, 2002). But how would the EPs and the management team feel about it? The establishment of IGs would require a commitment of time (and hence resources) and although ‘interest’ groups and ‘task’ groups had been set up previously, my ideas extended beyond these to include all members of the Service in groups operating at the same time. How would I find out whether my ideas would meet the needs and interests of colleagues and the management team, whose commitment was crucial in making it happen, and engage them in the process? I decided that as I was embarking on a collaborative enterprise, to achieve learning and change at an organisational level, I would follow the RADIO framework (Research and Development in Organisations, Timmins et al, 2003) to support the planning.

Thirdly, having established the groups and commitment from colleagues, I did not expect the evaluation to be easy. I was seeking to evaluate a dynamic complex system ‘thrust amidst complex systems’ (Pawson et al, 2004). I chose realistic evaluation as my methodological approach, as it seeks to capture and even embrace such complexity. I then had to give careful consideration to my selection of data collection tools, to make sure that they were able to capture the outcomes of this study, and some of the subtle contextual conditions, including constraining and supporting factors that would

impact upon the outcomes of the initiative. Or, as described by Pawson et al (2004) the 'tortuous pathways along which a successful programme has to travel' (p. 31), in order to identify some caveats and considerations when setting up similar initiatives.

Finally, I had to give careful consideration to ethical factors. As a participant researcher, and initiator of this study, I had responsibilities to my colleagues in setting up and evaluating the initiative, to the management of the Service, who allocated time for the initiative to take place, and responsibility to the community of researchers, with regard to the validity of my findings.

1.9 Outline of the study

In *Chapter 2* I start by describing the context nationally, with regard to research and evidence based practice in education and educational psychology, and how I believed an initiative to promote organisational learning would fit into this context. In *Chapter 3* I describe some key features from organisational theory, including culture, human factors, roles and relationships, common problems faced by organisations and organisational change and development. In *Chapter 4* I explore the literature on organisational learning in some detail. I attempt to tease out the theoretical frameworks underpinning theories and research in this area, and to apply the research and theories on organisational learning to two examples of learning and development initiatives in organisations (Boreham & Morgan, 2004; Timmins et al, 2006). At the end of this chapter I endeavour to show how I

have used the theory on organisations and organisational learning to inform the structure and processes of the inquiry group initiative (Figure 4.4).

In *Chapter 5* I describe my methodology, including RADIO (Timmins et al, 2003) to structure the planning of the initiative, realistic evaluation, my methodological approach to evaluating the initiative, and how I have addressed the ethical factors described above. In *Chapter 6* I present my findings in relation to my four key research questions and my initial theories of the study, and whether the data confirm these theories, or whether they need modifying.

In *Chapter 7* I provide a critique of my methodology, and then examine my initial programme theories to provide an account of the factors that facilitated or inhibited organisational development and learning in this study. Finally, in *Chapter 8*, I reflect upon this study, how my findings might inform the structure and progress of learning and development activities in the future, and my own learning in relation to the notion of organisational learning and development.

CHAPTER 2

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON EP ROLE AND PRACTICE WITHIN CHANGING POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I explore EP role and practice within a changing policy context of evidence-based practice.

My initial interest in research and development in EPSs emerged whilst working on an assignment (Sheppard, 2004) to explore how a public sector organisation such as an EPS might manage the requirement for evidence-informed practice, in order to ensure that available time and expertise are invested in activities that will benefit service users. Initially I was interested in the EPS as a 'learning' organisation in the sense that EPs should continue to be 'learners' and keep up-to-date with research and developments in the field so that practice would be based upon the best possible evidence available.

2.2 Evidence-based practice

The movement towards evidence-based practice as a way of improving public service has been gathering momentum during the last 20 years. The movement started in the Health Service, due to concerns about the variation in services throughout the country (Fox, 2002) resulting in the Department of Health (DOH) (1998) standards and performance framework. The aim was for professionals to base their practice on the best current evidence (DOH,

1998); by keeping accurate outcome measures (audit), health services can also monitor the effectiveness of their interventions.

Cameron (2006) an EP who is engaged in professional training and research, suggests that evidence-based practice has been less obvious in the field of education in comparison with health. He cites the Educational Review Group that has been set up in the University of London Institute of Education (The Evidence for Policy and Practice Information and Co-ordinating Centre, EPPI-Centre), where some effectiveness reviews had started to appear (e.g. Evans, Harden, Thomas & Benefield, 2003). The Campbell Collaboration (Frederikson, 2002), supported by the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE), was set up to promote web-based accessibility of evidence for education, alongside criminal justice, social policy, social care, and parents. With regard to policy development, Frederikson (2002), who is also an EP engaged in professional training and research, cites the DfEE document on Excellence in Research in Schools (1998), which recommended a commitment to evidence-based policy development and applications to delivery in education. Recent developments within the Primary and Secondary National Strategies have been based upon Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) research via pilot studies or specific evaluation research (e.g. Rose, 2006, and Williams, 2008), while initiatives such as Social Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) have been underpinned by research in both this country and America (Weare & Gray, 2003).

With regard to Educational Psychology, the British Psychological Society Division of Educational and Child Psychology's (BPS/DECP, 1999) Framework for Psychological Assessment and Intervention states that assessment techniques and models should be based on an understanding of current psychological theory and research. The whole of the journal of Educational and Child Psychology was devoted to the topic of evidence-based practice in 2002 (Volume 19, No 3) and there have been numerous references since in response to Every Child Matters (Baxter & Frederikson, 2005) and the debate about the distinctive contribution of educational psychology (Cameron, 2006).

Baxter (also an EP engaged in professional and academic training and research) and Frederikson (2005), suggest that with the publication of Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) there are fresh challenges and opportunities for EPs with regard to evidence-based practice: EPs will be working alongside professionals in the health sector already committed to evidence-based practice, and with Commissioners, working in Children's Trusts, applying the principle of 'best value' (Baxter & Frederikson, 2005). It is not just mental health practitioners that have access to information and 'evidence bases'. Teachers, other professionals and the general public have access to a wide range of research and evaluation via the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) website including Teachernet. Fox (2002), an EP who is an academic and involved in EP professional training, suggests that the National Electronic Library gives access in '15 seconds' to mental health clinicians and in just 'three clicks' for service users and families' (Fox, 2003, p

95). Stringer, a principal educational psychologist (PEP) and Miller (an EP who is an academic and involved in EP professional training), 2008, make reference to Google as the most effective research strategy that anyone uses, as 'just one click away'.

Whilst evidence-based practice has been an important aspect of psychology for many decades, have we in educational psychology been rigorous in our promotion of evidence-based practice and transparent in the sources of our evidence and hence recommendations? Baxter and Frederikson (2005) suggest that 'EPs can no longer assume that what they are doing is useful...interventions from clinical psychologists may start to be favoured'. (p.99). Also, Hargreaves, in his keynote presentation for the Division of Educational and Child Psychology, January 2000, quoted in Jensen et al (2002), comments upon the 'need to change thinking to cope with the changes faced by a knowledge economy'. (p. 35 in Jensen et al, 2002).

2.3 EP as 'user' and 'doer' of research

My interest moved on from thinking about the importance of routinely and systematically using research to inform practice, to thinking about the importance of carrying out research and evaluation in the course of our work. A requirement for evaluation of public sector organisations stems from the Local Government Act 2000 (DfEE, 2000), which seeks to ensure that councils become more efficient, open and accountable. Timmins et al (2006) suggest that EPs have a significant role to play in raising standards and

increasing inclusion for young people in a context where 'effectiveness needs to be demonstrated' (p. 305).

There has been some guidance on evaluation for EPs during the last decade. The document *Educational psychology services (England): Current role, good practice and future directions. Report of the Working Group* (DfEE, 2000), the *Framework for Psychological Assessment and Intervention* BPS/DECP (1999) and the Code of Practice (DfEE, 2001) recommend ongoing monitoring of pupil progress. The '*Current role, good practice and future directions*' document (DfEE, 2000) recommends gathering information on outcome measures, including quantitative measures on details of activities and qualitative measures from user feedback. Outcome evaluation gives a broad view of service effectiveness but does not reflect how well we meet our service aims, or the five outcomes of the Every Child Matters Agenda (DfES, 2003), or which activities work well, for whom, in which contexts. Matthews (2003), Principal Educational Psychologist, suggests that purely 'outcome' measures may result in 'goal displacement' because it is what gets measured that gets done. Webster et al (2002), engaged in EP professional training and research, question whether knowing which interventions appear to be effective most of the time is enough, and suggest that we should be looking at *why* certain methods work, so that we can apply them in appropriate situations.

There are some factors influencing EPs as 'doers' of research. Firstly, the perception of those who are directly or indirectly involved (but nevertheless

have influence upon the profession) with EPs. Frederikson (2002) makes reference to the fact that Sebba (1999) described psychologists along with teachers as 'consumers of research' although unlike teachers, not 'doers'. Rowland (2000), also a PEP, believes that there is a public perception of the EP as caseworker rather than organisational change agent or researcher. This may be due to the areas of training, research and development being adversely affected by poor staffing ratios within EPSs (relative to pupil population) (DfEE, 2000). Stringer (principal educational psychologist) and Miller (EP engaged in professional training and research) (2008) say that the profession has had difficulties sustaining the research role because of the legislation in the 1980s, which gave EPs in England and Wales a statutory duty in relation to Statements of Special Educational Needs (SEN). Baxter and Frederikson (2005), also link it to our Special Educational Needs role. They ask whether our Special Educational Needs role has 'secured the survival' of the profession, but has resulted in EPs receiving 'scant attention' with regard to their skills in conducting research, and removed the pressure to demonstrate the effectiveness of their work. For too long evaluation of interventions and outcomes has been high on importance but low on urgency.

Even if time and priority were given to research, evaluation of EP practice is not straightforward. For example, the benefits of psychological intervention may only be realised in the long term (particularly at an organisational level), and who is to judge whether an EP initiative has made a difference: EP, child, teacher, family or Local Authority (Rowland, 2002)? Stringer et al (2006) also suggest that it is difficult to evaluate our work because much of what we do is

'invisible'. They argue that our work is often aimed at empowering others and thus we do not want to undermine the other person's sense of achievement:

'ideally, following an interaction, we have induced change whilst leaving the origin of that change at worst, ambiguous, at best, not really of our making. The paradox means that it is inconsistent with our values to openly reflect with a child, parent or teacher, say, about the nature of our contribution, because it would be claiming too much for our contribution.' (Stringer et al, 2006, p. 9).

However, in addition to the sense of urgency, to keep abreast of professionals in health and education, there are a number of other good reasons why this is a good time for educational psychology services to be raising their profile as both 'users' and 'doers' of research. Some writers suggest that we are currently in a position of strength with the growth in post qualification doctoral training (Webster et al, 2002) and the current training route for EPs at doctoral level, which will raise the profile of active research and contribute to a culture that values research and professional development. Cameron (2006) argues that EPs are one of the very few professional groups (in Local Authorities) who have specific knowledge and skills in research methodology and who are trained to take a constructively critical stance to research findings.

Others suggest that this is the right time to strengthen and promote the research base in the profession. Some EPSs, in response to the formation of a children's services department, are developing a research culture (Stringer & Miller, 2009), including both the generation of new knowledge through researching what is effective, and also exploring how EPs draw upon the theory and evidence available to influence effective practice. Some EPs have made successful bids to The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC), which is funding small scale practitioner-led research (Stringer & Miller, 2008). Stringer and Miller (2008) point out that the profession has

sustained two professional publications (Educational Psychology in Practice sponsored by the Association of Educational Psychologists and Educational and Child Psychology, published along with the quarterly newsletter Debate, by the Division of Educational and Child Psychology). Some 64 articles are published each year and both journals have been running for 25 years. EPs also contribute to a range of other publications.

Relatively recently Farrell et al (2006) highlighted that the role and function of EPs has expanded considerably over the last 25 years despite the restrictions placed upon them by the requirements of SEN Statutory Assessments. EPs are now in a position to deliver psychological services through a variety of activities and contexts where change for children is the focus. The report recommends that EPs show how their work is contributing to the five outcomes ('Be Healthy', 'Stay Safe', 'Enjoy and Achieve', 'Make a Positive Contribution' and 'Achieve Economic Well-Being', DfES, 2003) and are clearer about the distinctive role and psychological contribution that they are making, and how EPs can make a contribution towards better outcomes for the children who are the focus of our work (Farrell et al, 2006). Baxter and Frederikson (2005) suggest that this is the time for EPs to take a more active research role:

'EPs need to raise their profile as users and doers of research, in order to support the broad agenda of Every Child Matters, and to provide the profession with a confident role in the delivery of services, which have positive outcomes for young people.' (p. 99)

2.4 Educational Psychology Services as Learning Organisations

Having explored the issues with regard to EPs using and doing research I started to think about how EPs might support each other in this task, and how their employing organisation, in terms of its structures, routines, policies and procedures, might be able to learn from and adapt to the research findings. Of course it would be important to develop a resource library, the 'technological infrastructure' (Fox, 2002) and dedicated time, if we were to make use of the evidence that is able to inform and evaluate our practice. But I started to realise that it would be equally important to think about the culture regarding research, learning and development. I liked the idea put forward by Webster et al (2002), of a culture of 'cumulative know-how' in which individual EPs not only routinely make reference to current thinking and research on topics, but also contribute routinely to a collective understanding of good practice. This led me into theory and research related to organisations, and the factors and processes contributing to organisational learning.

There has been a growing recognition that the profession needs to understand the complexity of organisational life (including culture) if we are to help young people in schools and other organisations, and make a difference to their lives (Gillham, 1978; Miller, 1996; BPS 1999; Dowling and Osborne, 1994, Wagner, 2000; and Stoker, 2000). The report by the DfEE (2000) made a significant contribution, stating that there should be an emphasis on proactive and preventative work, which is designed to support all children. Jensen et al (2002), EPs and EPs who are academics involved in the professional training of EPs, suggest that underlying the thinking about any

organisational change, must be the conviction that educational psychology can and does change itself in response to external influences, new knowledge and self-review. 'In other words, that educational psychologists and educational psychology services are 'learning organisations' themselves in the most dynamic sense of the term.' (p. 36). Jensen et al (2002) suggest that the profession can move others on in their thinking but needs to think differently itself in order to do so.

Thus my thinking had shifted from thinking about EPSs as 'learning' organisations in which EPs are confidently applying their research skills at an individual EP level, to thinking about 'learning organisations' in the sense of an organisation 'that is continually expanding its capacity to create its future' (Senge, 1990, p. 14). I started to think about how we might carry out research at a *service* (organisational) level (rather than individual EP), collaborating in organisational enquiries, to discover better ways of achieving service aims (Argyris & Schön, 1996). I was not only interested in EPs evaluating practice to improve outcomes for young people and schools, but also how this knowledge and understanding would contribute to learning and improvement (development) at a whole service level.

The concept of the EPS as a learning organisation ties in with the government's commitment to continuous improvement in local government services (Boreham & Morgan, 2004). I review literature on organisational learning from the fields of industry and education in Chapter 4. This emphasises the importance of considering how organisations learn in the

current climates of change, improvement and reform. There is a warning, however. Hargreaves (1995), referred to in Mulford (1998) expresses the concern that commitment to continuous improvement can degenerate into 'interminable improvement' when no value is given to heritage, continuity, consolidation and tradition 'where only change addicts prosper and survive' (p. 11-12). As always it is important to achieve the right balance between continuous improvement and maintaining a safe base from which to venture forth: 'how to achieve stability for change, how to move ahead without losing our roots, is the challenge.' (Mulford, 1998, p. 633).

Rowland (2002) and Stringer et al (2006), are both enthusiastic promoters of EPSs as learning organisations. Rowland is concerned that EPSs manage to embrace modernisation whilst also ensuring that ethical and moral standards are not eroded and the integrity of psychology is maintained. Rowland (2002) says that there is almost no existing research into EPS improvement. He argues that EPSs should ensure that they become effective learning organisations where knowledge management, continuous learning and service development drive a culture that embraces change. This would ensure that appropriate 'checks and balances' lead to ethical and psychological frameworks being maintained.

Stringer et al (2006) talk about EPSs as learning organisations in the context of understanding the distinct and psychological contribution made by EPs (Farrell et al, 2006). They suggest that one of the reasons why there is a lack of understanding about our distinct and psychological contribution is that not

only is it 'invisible' to others, but also it is largely 'invisible' to EPs! They argue that this is because with increased experience, competence and fluency in carrying out our jobs over time our professional frame of reference takes on the quality of 'tacit' knowledge (Polyani, 1969, in Stringer et al, 2006) and so becomes taken for granted. Skilful practitioners do not necessarily notice how skilful they are or see what they do that is distinctive, and find it hard to verbalise what they do that makes them skilful (Schön, 1991). Stringer et al (2006) think it is important to create opportunities for EPs to reflect openly on what they think they are doing that practises psychology and describe cross-service 'community of practice' teams, that meet to develop thinking, strategies and policies about every day professional issues.

Jensen et al (2002) suggest that EPSs have spent too much time discussing structural change (e.g. organisation of the use of service time) and too little on questions regarding effective applied educational psychology practice at an organisational level. They use Covey's (1989, 1994) time management matrix, based upon research carried out by Covey across a large number of organisations, to illustrate this. They suggest that in EPSs, like most of the organisations included in Covey's research, most of the activities of individual psychologists take place in quadrants 1 and 3.

Figure 2.1: Time management matrices, adopted from Covey 1994, in Jensen et al (2002)

	Urgent	Not urgent
Important	I ACTIVITIES E.g. Crises Pressing problems Deadline-driven projects High performance organisations: 20-25% Typical organisations: 25-30%	II ACTIVITIES E.g. Prevention Relationship building Recognising new opportunities Planning, recreation High performance organisations: 65-80% Typical organisations: 15%
Not important	III ACTIVITIES E.g. Interruptions, some calls Some mail, some reports Some meetings Proximate, pressing matters Popular activities High performance organisations: 15% Typical organisations: 50-60%	IV ACTIVITIES E.g. Trivia, busy work Some mail Some phone calls Time wasters Pleasant activities High performance organisations: Less than 1% Typical organisations: 2-3%

Jensen et al (2002) suggest several reasons for the continuation of this pattern of working. With an over emphasis on quadrants 1 and 3, there is very little time left to reflect upon how the balance of work might be different, and to engage with pro-active discussion about change. There are also factors related to 'employee resistance', culture of 'learning' in the organisation, management and support of such initiatives and insufficient skills (Schiemann, 1995). Handy (1989), a British writer and broadcaster on organisations and management, quoted in Jensen et al (2002) also makes reference to employee resistance:

'Change requires discontinuous thinking if new ways of doing things are going to be different from the old. New ways of talking and relating will signal new ideas.

Discontinuous upside-down thinking is not popular with the upholders of continuity and the status quo.' (Handy, 1989, chapter 1).

I shall be exploring 'employee resistance' to organisational change initiatives in more detail in Chapter 4, when exploring factors contributing to organisational learning.

Like Rowland (2002), Stringer et al (2006), and Jensen et al (2002), I strongly believe that we should be applying our knowledge of systems and organisational change to our own organisation to improve our practice. By making reference to recent research and our own knowledge and experience, I believe that we can examine and develop what we do, identify and plan for new opportunities, and thereby keep abreast of the evidence-based agenda, and respond to changes and development in the outside world – activities that might fit quadrant II above. There is very little existing research into improvement in EPSs (Rowland, 2002) and yet they, like other organisations, need to be responsive to external influences, new knowledge and self-review (Jensen et al, 2002).

As suggested by Rowland (2002):

'Establishing a genuine learning organisation lies at the heart of this. It is natural to learn, change and move on. EP practice in the future should look very different. If we get it right, psychology should be exciting, creative and rooted in a sound theoretical and research base making a visible difference to people we work with.' (p. 27)

In the next chapter, I begin my exploration of this area with some definitions and descriptions of organisations. I focus upon the culture of organisations, roles and relationships, human factors and some common problems for organisations. As mentioned earlier (Schiemann, 1995) the culture with

respect to learning, and employee resistance are likely to be two factors that will influence the Inquiry Group initiative. I also consider the dynamics of organisational change, since my aim is for this to take place (or start to) as a result of my initiative. I tackle the complex concept of organisational learning in the following chapter, when I also apply the theory to my two core studies, and outline how the research and theory in this area has informed the structure and processes of the IG initiative.

CHAPTER 3

ORGANISATIONAL THEORY

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I first of all provide some definitions and characteristics of organisations. Next, I refer to organisational culture, in particular the theory put forward by Schein (1997). After that I explore the structure of roles and relationships in organisations (as formulated by Handy, 1999), the effect of human factors, common problems faced by organisations, and the dynamics of change, looking at an expansion of Lewin's (1947) theory on the change process. I discuss organisational learning in the next chapter.

3.2 Definitions and characteristics of organisations

Organisations are complex, dynamic systems. They differ in many ways, not least because they have different functions and outputs: some organisations produce a product and some provide a service. There are, however, similarities. They comprise groups of people, whose collective activity is coordinated towards achieving specific goals. Buchanan and Huczynski (1995), social scientists who focus on the dynamics of human behaviour at work, describe organisations as 'social arrangements for the controlled performance of collective goals' (p. 5). Schein (1997), who writes extensively on organisational culture, describes an organisation as 'the planned coordination of the activities of a number of people for the achievement of some common, explicit, purpose or goal' (p. 15). Kempner (1987) in the Penguin Management Handbook, describes an organisation as a 'social group deliberately created and maintained for the purpose of achieving

specific objectives' (p. 361). Dawson (1996), University of Cambridge, provides an account of organisations that attempts to bridge the gap between theory and practice from her own experience of industrial research and consultancy, originally for students studying engineering at Imperial College, and later to meet the needs of students going into management. Dawson describes six key characteristics of organisations:

- the *people* (including their attitudes, values, aspirations, experiences);
- *strategies and tactics* (plans and policies re services, personnel, technological innovation and change);
- *technology/hardware* (e.g. materials, Information Technology);
- *environment* (this might include those to whom services are supplied such as schools, or from whom resources are obtained, or those who regulate the organisation's actions – these are likely to be organisations with their own internal complexities and sources of stress and strength);
- the *structure of roles and relationships* (this leads to patterns of coordination, control and communication, and whether relationships constitute networks or hierarchies), and
- the *culture of the organisation* (shared values, beliefs and assumptions that create distinctive patterns of thinking and feeling within the organisation).

3.3 Organisational culture

Schein (1990) describes organisational culture as follows:

‘a pattern of basic assumptions, invented, discovered or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore is to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems.’ (p. 111)

‘Culture is both a dynamic phenomenon that surrounds us at all times, being constantly enacted and created by our interaction with others and shaped by leadership behaviour, and a set of structures, routines, rules and norms that guide and constrain behaviour.’ (Schein, 2004, p. 1)

Miner, who writes on key theorists of organisational behaviour (Miner, 2006) describes how Schein comes from a humanist and anti bureaucracy management philosophy (Miner, 2006) and believes that good ideas could come from anyone, regardless of their rank or background. Schein obtained degrees in social and clinical psychology and then joined the Graduate School of Management at MIT in 1956 (Miner, 2006). He was initially interested in how process consultation could bring about change in organisations, and then broadened this to include leadership and its role in influencing organisational culture (Schein, 1985). Schein has provided a comprehensive theory on culture, in which top managers are significant players (Miner, 2006).

Schein (1997) acknowledges that organisational culture is hard to define, analyse and measure, and to manage. He has not carried out research to evaluate or test his theories on culture. Schein did not see himself as a researcher, or a theorist, but more of a clinician (Miner, 2006). He was very influenced by the Chicago School of Sociology (e.g. Goffman) in the 50s, who in their clinical approach emphasised observation, sense-making and theories, built upon observational underpinnings (Miner, 2006). Schein carried out observations over a number of years on the effect of culture on employees (organisational socialisation), which merged into his formulations of organisational culture.

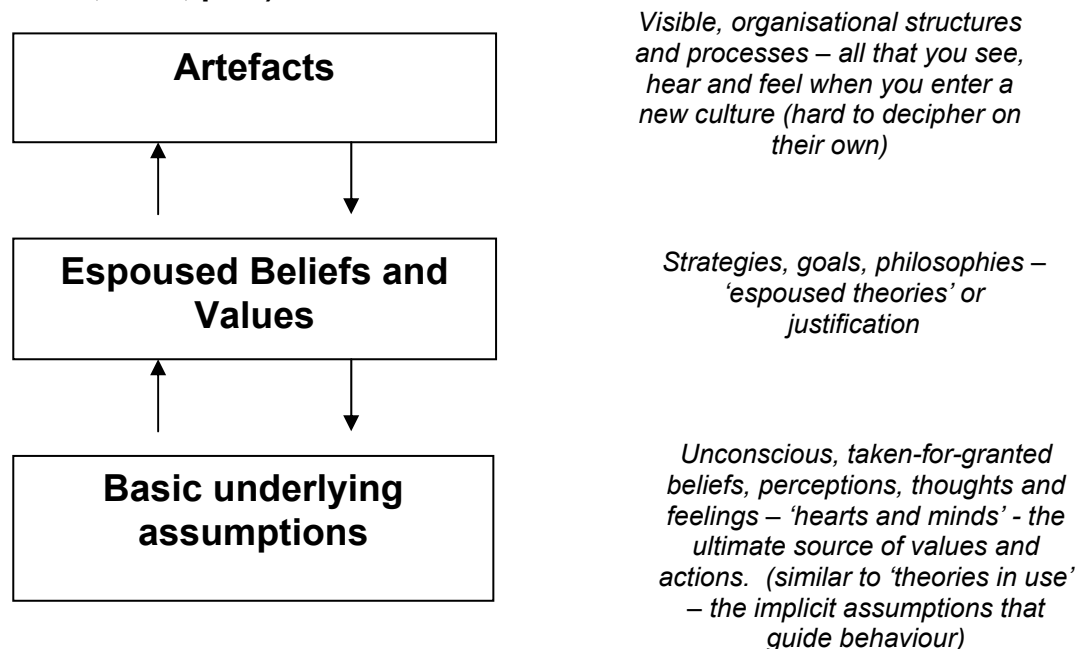
Although it is hard to define and measure, Schein claims that organisational development and planned change cannot be understood without considering culture as it is a primary source of resistance to change. Schein (1997) provides a detailed analysis of the underlying assumptions that are important to consider when analysing organisational culture. He claims that assumptions about human nature, activity and relationships are often seen as the most important indicator of organisational culture. However, he draws from sociology and anthropology and their conceptualisation of the importance of the role of assumptions about time, space and reality. Schein claims that how we define these 'represents the deepest level of assumptions and, hence, is the level we cling to in order to avoid uncertainty and anxiety' (p. 122).

Schein (1997) says that an interest in organisational culture developed in the 1980s because as a concept it helped to explain organisational phenomena, and was important to understand in order to manipulate and stimulate learning and change. Schein states that organisational development is increasingly oriented around learning, innovation, adaptation and perpetual change in response to ever increasing rates of technological, social and economic change. The challenge is to conceptualise a culture of innovation in which learning, adaptation, innovation and perpetual change are the stable elements.

Schein (1997) believes that culture begins with leadership: they are two sides of the same coin. Leaders impose their own values and assumptions upon a group. If that group is successful and the assumptions come to be taken for granted, that becomes the culture that will define for later generations of members what kinds of leadership are acceptable.

Schein (2004) describes different levels of culture and how they interact .

Figure 3.1: Levels of culture and how they interact (Adapted from Schein, 2004, p.26)



Culture is thus not only ‘deep’ but ‘wide’ and covers all parts of life. Apart from the ‘environment’ Schein’s model includes all of Dawson’s characteristics as part of organisational culture. The levels or elements are interrelated and ‘interlocked’. Schein states that unless you ‘dig down’ to the level of basic assumptions you cannot decipher artefacts, values and norms. If you find the basic assumptions and explore their interrelationships this gives you the ‘essence of the culture’.


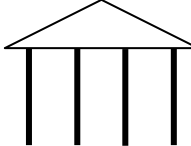
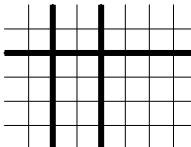
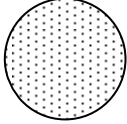
Schein (1997) adds two other elements to the make up of organisational culture: some level of structural stability in the group, and patterning or integration of the elements into a larger, coherent whole. He says that there is a history of shared learning, which brings stability, and a human need for parsimony, consistency and meaning. Culture formation is a 'striving toward patterning and integration' (p. 11).

Schein (1997) says that organisational cultures will not develop to the point of a fully articulated paradigm, but that the cultural analyst needs to try to understand the complex interrelationship among assumptions to gain a better understanding of the organisation. He suggests that problems occur when you try to get something going that is basically 'counter culture'. Like Miner (2006) I feel that Schein has 'contrived a logically tight and compelling theory' (p. 343) with regard to organisational culture, and I like the humanist values underpinning it.

3.4.1 Roles and Relationships

Handy (1999) gives an accessible (and visual) description of the different structures or orientations within an organisation and the effect of these upon the organisational culture. I have summarised the descriptions in the figure below.

Figure 3.2 Organizational Culture (adapted from Handy, 1999)

Culture	Description
Power 	Based on trust and good personal communication; Power and authority rest with a few individuals; Change can take place quickly; Key focus on success of the organisation thus culture can be tough on employees and associated with high staff turnover.
Role 	Bureaucratic - heavy emphasis on rules and procedures; Requires logical, rational, co-ordinated processes; Control lies with small number of employees with high levels of authority; Organization often stable, with predictable environment, and products and services with long life-span; Can adapt to minor changes rather than radical change, and not usually innovative.
Task 	Relies on employees' expertise; Matrix structure (specialist teams) tends to prevail; Organization is flexible, adaptable and can react fast to changes in the external environment, with procedures to facilitate this.
Person 	Relies on collective decision making; Individuals tend to work within their own specialist areas e.g. coordinate their own work and are relatively free of bureaucratic processes.

Handy (1999) outlines the conceptual frameworks that he has found most useful in the interpretation of organisational phenomena, and discusses their application to particular types of organisational problems. He says that the concepts that he presents are 'interpretative devices' of organisation theory. Although Handy (1999) claims to be eclectic in his conceptual frameworks, he says that he is most interested in organisations as collections of people and how to make organisations productive and useful communities.

The structure of roles and relationships in the context of this study can be surmised from Figure 5.2, page 89, illustrating the Service structure at the time of the study. I believe the structure illustrates a mixture of role, task and person. The 'role' aspect is accentuated by the development of two teams

within the Service in 2006, when the two local authorities reorganised in slightly different ways. Hence whilst 'rules' relating to Service objectives and ethical principles remained constant, some different procedures developed and 'team' meetings were held, replacing some of the Service meetings. At the time of the study there was a management team of three, and thus 'power' and authority rested with a few, although EPs were routinely involved in developing Service procedures, and coordinated their own work ('person' structure) and some specialist teams (e.g. response to critical incidents and early years) are in place ('task' structure).

3.5 Human factors

Dawson (1996) states that people are always important in employing organisations. Although organisations are structured so that individual people have specific roles, and are working towards common goals, they may not always share an organisation's goals and may be able to exert influence over it whilst striving to meet their own needs and aspirations. People have varying 'mental representations' of an organisation's purpose, structures and rules, and only some of them will be in line with the mental images the organisation would wish them to have. (Scott, 1992, in Morris, 2004.)

Dawson suggests that in order to understand organisations you have to have an understanding of the effect of individuals on the organisation (their attitudes, values, aspirations, experiences) and how attitudes and motivation are developed.

Dawson (1996) suggests that there is significant variation in the place and meaning of work in people's lives. In order to understand an individual's work performance she says that you have to consider motivation (the result of complex processes involving expectations, cognition and experience), ability (skills and knowledge) and technical and social context (the way the job is defined and resourced, including the provision of tools, equipment and physical features, and the social dimensions of job design).

3.6 Common problems faced by organisations

3.6.1 Adaptation to the external environment and internal integration

Schein (1997) describes culture as multi-dimensional and multi-faceted, and not easily reduced to a few major dimensions. However, he identifies two sets of problems facing all groups or organisations: survival, growth and adaptation to the external environment, and internal integration that permits daily functioning and the ability to adapt. Schein (1997) describes the 'coping cycle' that any system, organisation or group must be able to maintain in relation to its changing environment. These steps are not necessarily sequential and in fact are often worked on simultaneously: obtaining a shared understanding of core *mission and strategy* (and maintaining good relationships with key stakeholders); reaching a consensus of *goals*; developing a consensus on the *means* to be used to attain goals (e.g. division of labour, rewards system, authority system); developing a consensus on the criteria to be used to *measure* how well the group is doing in fulfilling its goals;

and developing a consensus on the appropriate *correction* strategies if goals are not being met.

3.6.2 Finding a path through paradox

Dawson (1996) also outlines some difficulties faced by organisations. She says there is no one best way to act and you have to find an 'appropriate path through paradox'. For example, if you take advantage of specialisation, this may be at the expense of integration. The balance of constraints and choice may also vary between groups and individuals over time. What is seen by one person as a constraint may be an opportunity for another. The juxtaposition of constraint and choice relates to the underlying issue of the relationship between an individual's freedom to act and think and her subjection to the influence of social structure and culture.

3.6.3 Coping with the degree of uncertainty

Schein (1997) claims that the culture that eventually evolves is a complex outcome of external pressures and internal potentials, how the organisation responds to critical events, and probably some 'chance factors' that could not be predicted from knowledge of either the environment or its members.

Dawson (1996) similarly describes organisations as 'interactive', open systems. She said they generate and react to streams of interactive outcomes for each of the six key characteristics described above. Changes in one of these may be unanticipated or uncontrollable and may be generated internally or from interactions across the boundaries with the environment. She also refers to the degree of uncertainty: information is not always shared

and different participants have different pictures of reality, nearly all of them incomplete.

3.6.4 Development of subgroups

Another theme discussed by both Schein (1997) and Dawson (1996) is the development of subgroups. These groups develop their own 'subculture'. Schein (1997) says that cultural dynamics are essentially the same as group dynamics. Dawson (1996) talks about the development of 'interest groups' and the conflict and consensus between them. Although people become involved in organisations for different reasons and in different ways it is likely that everyone believes that the organisation is likely to provide things of value. However, what is of value to one, may be a subject of indifference or hostility to another. Some degree of cooperation is usual, as also is conflict, 'Emergent patterns of conflict and consensus not only reflect different interests but also the relative power and influence of groups to pursue those interests.' (Dawson, 1996, p.xxvii)

Senge, an American scientist and director of the Center for Organizational Learning at the MIT School of Management, author of *The Fifth Discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization* (1990), also talks about the danger of breaking organisations down into components or functional hierarchies to cope with the breadth of impact from decisions. He says:

'But functional divisions grow into fiefdoms, and what was once a convenient division of labour mutates into the 'stovepipes' that all but cut off the contact between functions.' (Senge, 1990, p. 22)

Schein (1997) describes subgroups emerging from 'midlife differentiation'. As groups develop and mature they develop subgroups, which share their own histories, and develop cultures of their own. Subgroups might be departments or divisions or work units. They might be differentiated by function, by geographical location, by hierarchy or as opposition groups, defined in terms of their opposition to other groups. Subgroups are less likely to occur when members have the same occupation. Building an effective organisation involves meshing the different subcultures by encouraging evolution of common goals, common language, and common procedures for solving problems.

3.7 The dynamics of change within an organisation

It is not surprising that with the multi-dimensional, multi-faceted aspects of organisational culture described above, the dynamics of the change process are likely to be equally complex. Lewin (1947) (in Schein, 1997) developed a three-stage model based upon the assumption that all human systems attempt to maintain equilibrium and to maximise their autonomy vis à vis the environment. The set of shared assumptions that develop over time in groups and organisations serves this stabilising and meaning-providing function.

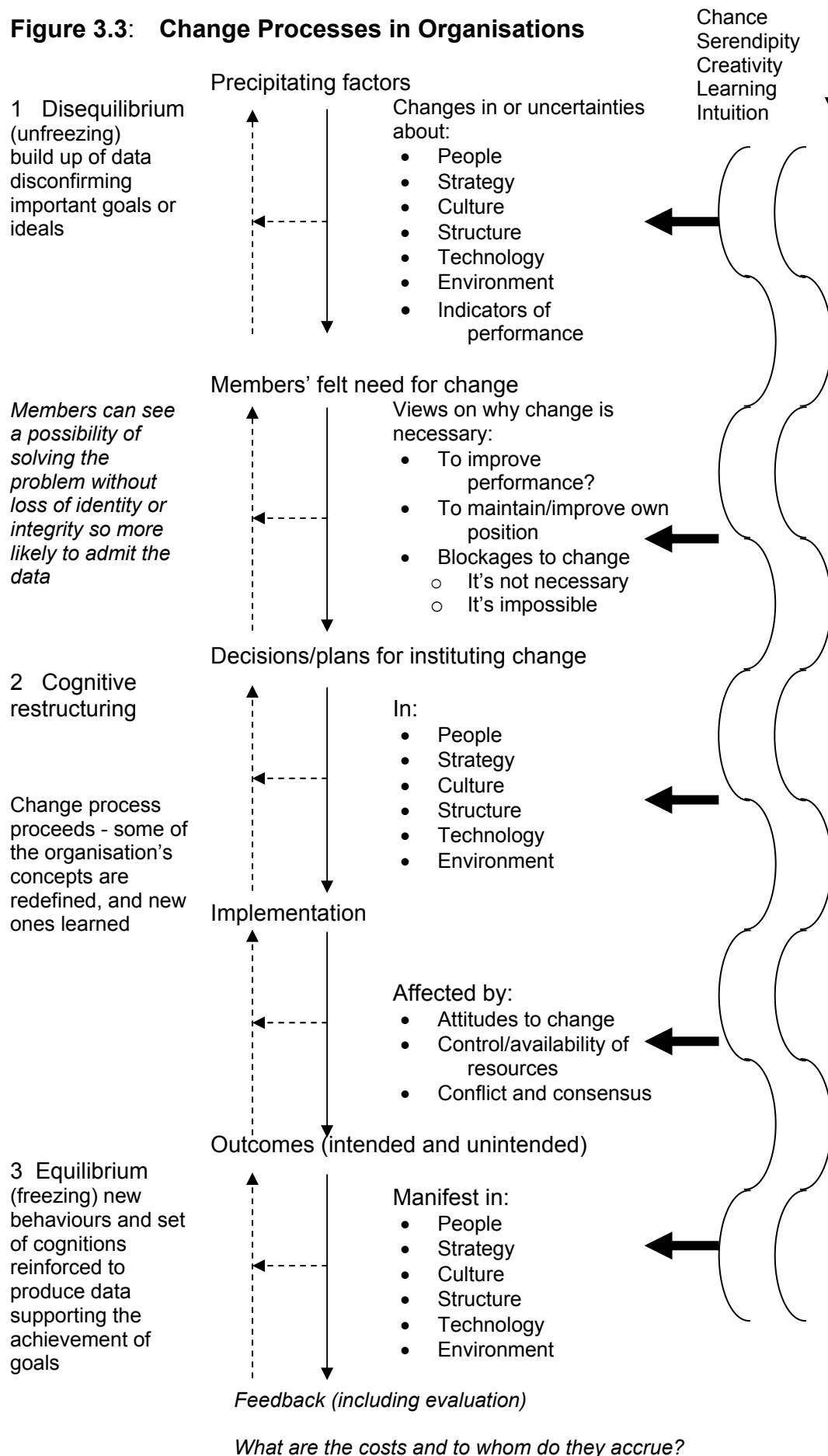
Schein (1997) has expanded Lewin's model, so that each of the three stages are divided into further processes or stages. In the first stage 'disequilibrium' (unfreezing) is caused by the build up of data disconfirming important goals or ideals, which causes anxiety. If members of the organisation can see a possibility of solving the problem without loss of identity or integrity, they are

more likely to admit the data and move into the second stage of 'cognitive restructuring'. In this stage the change process proceeds, and some of the organisation's concepts are redefined, and new ones learned. This stage is often characterised by confusion and transition: we are aware that the old ways are being challenged, but do not have a clear picture of what will replace them. In the last stage 'equilibrium' (freezing) is achieved, as the new behaviours and set of cognitions are reinforced to produce data that supports the achievement of the organisation's goals.

Dawson (1996) also provides an expanded model of the change process. She includes 'blockages' to change and adds that change in organisations cannot be viewed simply as a logical sequence, beginning with the identification of a problem, moving through the search for a solution, to its planning and implementation. The 'bridge' between intentions and outcomes is formed by a range of activities and interactions and affected by chance, serendipity, creativity and learning.

I have combined Dawson's model with Schein's in the diagram below:

Figure 3.3: Change Processes in Organisations



In my study I needed to consider the EPS culture and motivation, attitudes and beliefs of EPs, as possible supporting or hindering factors. I also needed to consider the effect of the 'open and interactive' nature of organisations on the inquiry groups.

In the next chapter I provide an overview of theory and research in organisational learning. First of all, I discuss the difficulties in analysing this literature, and how I have attempted to overcome these. I then group themes from the literature in a way that helps me to identify Contexts, Mechanisms and Outcomes, at the different levels of analysis (individual, group and organisation), before illustrating the structure of the IG initiative.

CHAPTER 4

ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING: THE CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I begin by looking at the background to and difficulties with the literature on organisational learning. I then present an analysis of literature on organisational learning in non-educational and educational settings, drawing together common themes and making links to psychological theories. In order to bring together theory and practice I apply these themes to two core studies, which evaluate organisational change initiatives. One of these takes place in a chemical industry over a period of three years (Boreham and Morgan, 2004); the other takes place in an EPS (Timmins et al, 2006) during one academic year. At the end of this chapter, I arrive at my own 'working' definition of organisational learning, and illustrate how the theory and research has informed the structure and process of the inquiry group initiative in a conceptual framework.

4.2 Background to and difficulties with the literature on organisational learning

Literature from educational and non-educational settings emphasises the importance of considering how organisations learn in the current climate of change, improvement and reform. Senge (1990) describes how the movement started in American businesses when they realised that it was no longer sufficient to have one person leading and learning for the organisation. There was also a sense that businesses needed to be able to 'learn faster' than their competitors. As businesses became more complex and dynamic it

was not possible to 'figure it out' from the top, and have everyone else following the orders of the 'grand strategist'. In his book *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization* (1990) Senge describes his theory of the five disciplines which are the means of building learning organisations: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision and team learning. He uses case studies to show how the disciplines have worked in particular companies.

Senge (1990) comments that industry was starting to understand the capabilities that organisations must possess. He states:

'the organisations that will truly excel in the future will be the organisations that discover how to tap people's commitment and capacity to learn at all levels in an organisation.' (Senge, 1990, p. 4)

Senge (1990) suggests that it is possible to do this because 'it is in our nature to learn' and most of us have been part of a 'great team' when we had common goals that were 'larger' than individual goals, and had 'extraordinary results'. He says that it also ties in with a change in orientation from work being seen as a means to an end to people seeing the intrinsic benefits of work.

Argyris and Schön (1978) are very important contributors to this area. Boreham and Morgan (2004) describe their original contribution to the concept of organisational learning by making the organisation itself the 'learning subject'. They have written extensively on the theory, research and practice of organisational learning, and how this can be incorporated in today's business environment. Schön, educated initially as a philosopher, developed

his ideas on the kind of 'knowledge' that makes practitioners good at what they are doing in *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983, reprinted in 1991). Argyris has a background in economics, psychology and organisational behaviour. His early research focused on the integration of the individual and the organisation. Argyris and Schön have worked together since the late 1970s to develop a theory of individual and organisational learning in which human reasoning (not just behaviour) becomes the basis for diagnosis and action. Argyris and Schön have made a huge contribution not only to the understanding and promotion of organisational learning, but also in both their original and more recent publication (Argyris and Schön, 1978, 1996) to the understanding of the burgeoning literature on organisational learning.

There are a number of criticisms and difficulties regarding the literature on organisational learning. Firstly, there are difficulties with the analysis of the literature. Both Argyris and Schön (1978) and Boreham and Morgan (2004) some 27 years later throw some light on this. Argyris and Schön (1978) claim that researchers rarely define what they mean by 'organisation' and what 'learning' is, that it may be applied to the things called 'organisations.' This seems to be linked to the field becoming fragmented due to researchers coming from separate disciplines of management, sociology, psychology, and education (Boreham & Morgan, 2004). Argyris and Schön (1978) suggest that researchers view organisations differently depending upon their theoretical perspective (e.g. whether they view organisations essentially as group, agent, structure, system, culture or politics). Another difficulty is that researchers from different disciplines have different agendas. Argyris and Schön (1978)

suggest that most researchers start from the premise that an organisation is in an important sense 'something more than the individuals who happened at a particular time to be its members' (p. 320). However, for some it is an explanatory notion, and for others the notion is important because of its relevance to building a theory of intervention. Finally, the researchers from different disciplines draw upon different social science paradigms, which makes comparison difficult.

Another criticism is directed towards the concept of organisational learning. Boreham and Morgan (2004) make reference to the criticism that organisational learning is a powerful and emotive term, which excites enthusiasm in its devotees but has little substance in fact (Dunphy, 1997, in Boreham & Morgan, 2004). Boreham and Morgan (2004) cite other critics (e.g. Fenwick, 2001) who claim that the notion of organisational learning denies individuals the autonomy essential for learning to be authentic. Boreham and Morgan (2004) reject this notion of an individually contained self in favour of a relational concept of self, in which autonomy is achieved by building relationships with others. Boreham and Morgan (2004), however, agree with Engeström (2001) that current theories are weak on spelling out the specific processes and actions that make the learning process: what actually takes place in organisations when they learn.

4.3 Structure of the review of the literature on organisational learning

For reasons described above, it has been difficult to decide upon a way of grouping common themes from the literature on organisational learning. I

decided to be guided in the first instance by the different *levels of analysis* in the study. The levels of analysis have been determined by my research questions, which relate to exploring outcomes and processes at an:

- individual,
- group and
- organisational level.

Dawson (1996) says that whenever one chooses to take a 'snapshot' of organisational life, one can identify many outcomes. Although I would have liked to consider longer-term effects upon society (e.g. young people and their schools or settings), the initiative will not be running for long enough. I appreciate, like Dawson (1996), that the different levels of analysis are not mutually exclusive, but highly connected, and make reference to this dynamic process later in this chapter.

I have examined the different *theoretical perspectives* underpinning each level of analysis. Argyris and Schön (1978) suggest that to provide a reasonably adequate review of the literature requires that one 'reach back' into the discipline in order to discover the sources of each perspective. Because they are trying to develop a general theory of intervention in their own work, they have tended to prefer a synthesis or combination of aspects from different perspectives, to provide a general account of the factors which facilitate or inhibit organisational inquiry. Similarly, I am looking to develop a theory of intervention, and prefer to explore a model that is a synthesis of aspects of different theories. Like Argyris and Schön, I am also interested in exploring

the interactions between organisational and interpersonal variables, rather than focusing upon just one or the other.

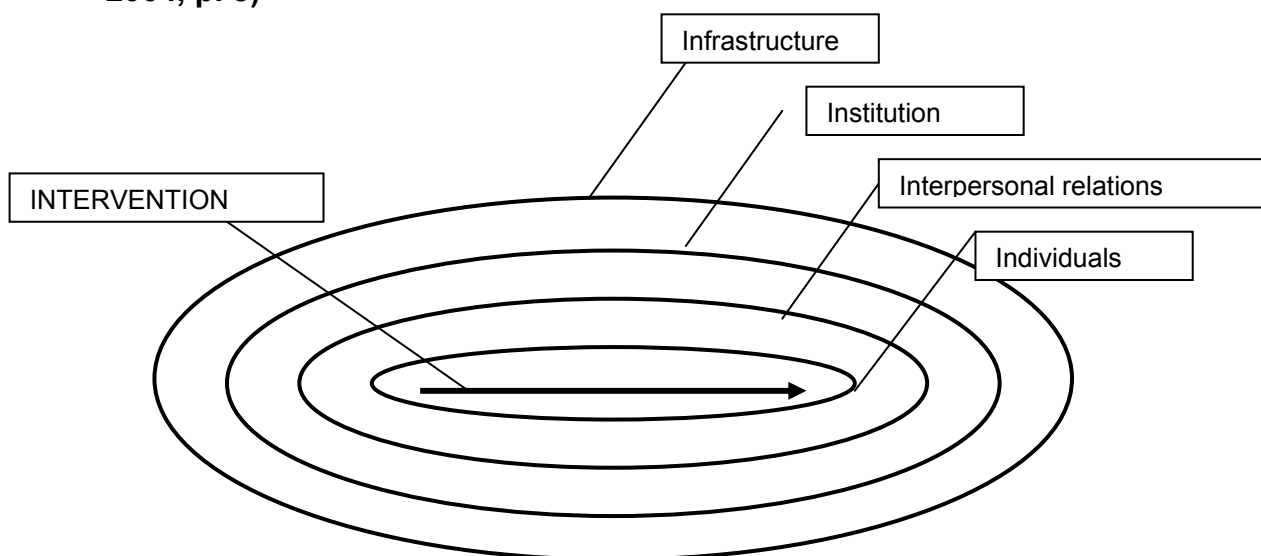
Within each level of analysis I have grouped themes from the literature according to the *realistic evaluation framework* as I thought that this would improve my understanding of the framework and inform my theory development. I provide a more detailed description of realistic evaluation in Chapter 5, but briefly make reference to it here for the purpose of the literature review.

Realistic evaluation provides a structure for the evaluation of social programmes (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) where **outcomes** (O) are viewed as the result of change-inducing **mechanisms** (M) and the unique **contexts** within which these are presented or based (C). The aim of realistic evaluation is explanatory: ‘what works for whom, in what circumstances, in what respects, and how?’ in order to maximise the chances of success and minimise the risks of failure in the future (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Mechanisms are essentially ‘*reason* explanations’ in social sciences compared with ‘*mechanistic* explanations’ in the natural sciences (Robson, 2002). Pawson and Tilley (1997) refer to mechanisms as the choices (influenced by their reasoning) and capacities (influenced by their resources and approaches) individuals are able to summon up in a particular context. There may be several mechanisms and also blocking mechanisms. Context refers to the ideal conditions to trigger the mechanism. Within the contexts section I have referred to Pawson et al’s (2004) description of internal contexts:

- *individual factors* (e.g. interest, attitudes, beliefs and skills of key stake holders);
- group factors and *interpersonal relationships* (required to support the initiative);
- organisational factors *institutional setting* (e.g. organisational culture, roles and relationships).

Pawson et al (2004) also refer to the *infrastructure*, or external context, which in this study includes the external context of the EP profession that I made reference to in Chapter 2 (evidence-based practice, continuous improvement, accountability, professional training routes). These contextual factors are illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1: The intervention as the product of its context (Pawson et al, 2004, p. 8)



In the literature review I start by considering outcomes, and then explore possible mechanisms and contexts. I feel that the realist approach fits well with Argyris and Schön's (1978) theories and approach, in which human reasoning lies at the heart of individual and organisational learning.

In this literature review I have tried to overcome the barrier between theory and practice (Argyris and Schön, 1978) by applying the key themes emerging from the academic literature to two examples of learning and development activities within organisations. As there is no research on organisational learning as such in EPSs, I have looked in some detail at the research study by Boreham and Morgan (2004), which has been so influential in informing the design of the IG initiative, and a research study evaluating a key strand of service delivery in an EPS (Timmins et al, 2006).

The Boreham and Morgan (2004) study, 'A socio-cultural analysis of organisational learning', is a three-year empirical investigation into organisational learning in a large industrial organisation. From a socio-cultural perspective learning is viewed as embedded in social and cultural contexts, and best understood as a form of participation in that context. Expansive learning (Engstrom, 2001) is where the activity system as a whole learns by sharing experiences across boundaries created by divisions of labour.

Boreham and Morgan (2004) have also been influenced by Argyris and Schön (1978), and the ideas that organisations are the 'learning subject', and culture change the process by which it learns. They also make reference to Schein (1992) and the idea that the organisation's culture and the members socialised into that culture determines what it and they can and cannot do.

This paper analyses one activity that took place in the organisation as part of a new initiative to improve performance: The Procedures and Competence Development Methodology (PCDM). The aim of their study is to provide a

pedagogy of organisational learning. They conclude that dialogue is the fundamental process by which organisations learn, and identify three relational practices (opening space for the creation of shared meaning, reconstituting power relationships, and providing cultural tools to mediate learning), as the social structure that embeds the dialogue and makes it sustainable.

Unlike Boreham and Morgan (2004), the Timmins et al (2006) study *Teachers and consultation: applying research and development in organisations (RADIO)*, does not make direct reference to contributing to the pedagogy of organisational learning, but it does involve carrying out systematic research in order to improve EP practice at an individual and organisational level. The study aims to evaluate the impact of the application of a consultation model in schools. The study also explores the use of EPs in Training (EPiTs) as a resource to contribute to service research and review. The researchers use a collaborative action research framework (RADIO) to move through cycles of clarifying concerns, research methods and organisational change. They achieve their aims: they gain positive feedback from schools in terms of views on consultation and subsequent changes in thinking and action, and their thematic analysis of responses provides ways to inform changes in practice at an individual and Service level.

The two core studies are summarised in Appendix I. Recurrent reference is made to these two studies throughout this and subsequent chapters, when they will be referred to as the 'two core studies'.

The structure of the analysis of the literature is illustrated in Figure 4.2 below.

Figure 4.2: Structure of analysis of the literature on organisational learning

Level	Analysis			
<i>Individual</i>	Theoretical stance	Outcomes	Mechanisms	Contexts
<i>Group</i>		Outcomes	Mechanisms	Contexts
<i>Organisation</i>		Outcomes	Mechanisms	Contexts

This way of grouping the literature has challenged and informed my own understanding of this area, and also informed the structure of the inquiry group model and the development of my theories. I make reference to some key considerations for my study at the end of the chapter.

4.4 Individual level of analysis

As mentioned earlier, Dawson (1996) states that people are always important in their employing organisations and that in order to understand organisations you have to have an understanding of the effect of individuals on the organisation (their attitudes, values, aspirations, experiences) and how attitudes and motivation are developed; individuals also need to understand the effect they have upon the organisation.

4.4.1 Outcomes at an individual level

<i>Individual</i>	Theoretical stance	Outcomes	Mechanisms	Contexts
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In my study I explore evidence of learning within specific areas of practice, and any other changes for individual EPs. Dawson (1996) makes reference to a number of outcomes as individual characteristics. The first of these are not

relevant to this study (level of pay, extent of job security, degrees of status in enterprise and in the community, opportunities for promotion and advancement) as the initiative is related solely to professional and Service development, but the latter (sense of satisfaction and fulfilment from work, and opportunities for congenial social contact) are better attuned to educational psychology practice. Joyce et al (1999), from the group of Canadian school improvement practitioners and theorists, comment upon the isolation often felt amongst teachers in school. Boreham and Morgan (2004), in their study, describe operators with 'little black books' to record 'know-how', which was rarely shared with others, as they hardly met each other on shifts. The same might be true of EPs working in a rural patch. Georgiades and Phillimore (1975) talk about how developing teams can guard against isolation. Joyce et al (1999) in their seven-point framework argue that small groups working on tasks and feeding back into the wider community results in the development of a caring community.

It was difficult to identify examples of individual learning or gains for individual EPs in the EPS study as the participants in the research were not asked for feedback on personal gains/learning. Boreham and Morgan (2004) report some examples of professional gains ('You get better at it') and personal gains (sharing the 'know-how' reduces the stress of working isolation).

4.4.2 Mechanisms at an individual level

<i>Individual</i>	Theoretical stance	Outcomes	Mechanisms	Contexts
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What might be the reason for individual members of an organisation to be willing to engage in a learning process about specific areas of practice, and to consider changing their view and practice in this area?

4.4.2i Inadequacy of old ways

Mulford (1998), an educationalist from the University of Tasmania, suggests that learning at an individual level is likely to occur when a person confronts a situation for which old ways are inadequate (which can be uncomfortable) and which requires new ways of thinking and acting. He talks about cycles of challenge and response, cognitive dissonance, cultural discontinuity, differentiation and integration. He also says that work is likely to be satisfying when we value what we do, when it challenges (at an optimal distance, not too far ahead so that we feel bowled over) and extends us, when we do it well, and when we have evidence confirming our success.

Both core studies describe external contexts to encourage their organisation to engage in research and development activities. Boreham and Morgan (2004) describe the growing recognition of the workplace as an important site for learning, and the public and private sector movement towards 'continuous improvement'. Timmins et al (2006) describe agendas of accountability and demonstrating effectiveness to others, and self-evaluation, to improve services for children and families.

How important or relevant these contexts will be to individual members is not clear. Both core studies, however, also make reference to some sort of process for deciding upon the focus of inquiry /research. In Boreham and Morgan (2004), for example, ideas for the focus of the PCDM are generated by suggestions from individual employees, or from a risk analysis. In Timmins et al (2006) there was a consensus amongst EPs to focus upon consultation as a professional approach to Service delivery. This implies that although individual members of the organisations have not driven or initiated the research/development initiative, they are probably committed to or have been instrumental in choosing the area of practice undergoing examination or research.

4.4.2ii Engaging in dialogue

Another mechanism that might influence individual members' decisions to participate in such an inquiry, and /or change their views or practice in this area, is by listening to other people's views and experience. Writers from a number of different theoretical stances describe dialogue as the fundamental process by which individuals and organisations learn. Boreham and Morgan (2004), influenced by sociocultural approaches, adopt the Russian view of dialogue (Bakhtin, 1981, in Boreham & Morgan, 2004) in which it is seen as a set of practices, which constitute a common world by creating shared meaning. Senge (1990), influenced by systems thinking, describes 'team learning' as starting with 'dialogue' – the capacity of members of a team to suspend assumptions and enter into a genuine 'thinking together'. He makes reference to the Greek origins of the word dialogue 'dia-logos' – a free-flowing

of meaning through a group, allowing the group to discover insights not attainable individually. He also says that dialogue involves learning how to recognise ‘defensive’ patterns of interaction in teams that undermine learning. Mitchell (1995) (in Mulford, 1998, who is interested in interpersonal processes and social psychology) also describes the importance of dialogue to develop common understanding, to share information openly and honestly, to develop a shared vision, and to examine current practices critically.

In both core studies there are opportunities for dialogue, as a means of sharing understandings and meaning:

Table 4.1: The role of dialogue in my two core studies

Boreham & Morgan (2004)	<i>The PCDM provides an opportunity for members to reflect on whether they share the same understanding, before reaching a consensus. They report comments from operators who describe the process as ‘getting the common ground out, and then once you have got the common ground, say, “Well the consequences of this are that and the other are...” and then develop the best practice for it.’</i>
Timmins et al (2006)	<i>Time was spent at a service conference and workshops to explore definitions of consultation, and to identify and share approaches and techniques employed during consultation. Goals were also shared, relating to professional development, service development and the need to be transparent about consultation models and approaches with clients and consultees.</i>

4.4.3 Contexts at an individual level

<i>Individual</i>	Theoretical stance	Outcomes	Mechanisms	Contexts
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Dialogue to share, explore and examine practice may well be the process by which individuals (and ultimately organisations) learn, but what are the contextual factors that might support engagement of individuals in such a process? As mentioned earlier individual assumptions, values, attitudes, motivation, aspirations and experiences can have a profound effect upon an organisation and organisational initiatives.

4.4.3i Individual assumptions and beliefs

Argyris and Schön (1978) describe George Kelly (along with Piaget and Bruner) as one of the cognitive psychologists (grouped in a category described as 'organisation as culture') underpinning interest in and attention to how individuals make choices within an organisation. Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1979) views each person as actively attempting to make sense of the complexities around them, setting up hypotheses in order to anticipate events, and then acting accordingly. Personal constructs are similar to the 'theories in use' and 'implicit assumptions guiding behaviour' as described by Argyris and Schön (1978) and Schein.

There are a number of assumptions about aspects of human nature, activity and relationships and about, truth, learning, and the concept of self, that may influence whether individual members engage with the IG initiative. Schein (1997), from his observations of learning cultures claims that for collegial working organisational members need to regard human beings as basically good, able to change, and desirous to learn in order to survive and improve. With regard to activity, he states that members need to believe that humans are proactive, problem solvers and learners, rather than passive, fatalistic or reactive to the circumstances surrounding them. With regard to assumptions about the nature of truth, he says that members need to believe that solutions derive from a pragmatic search for the truth, and that this can be found anywhere, depending upon the nature of the problem. He says that the

assumption that wisdom and truth reside in any one source or method, is not reflective of a learning culture.

Senge (1990), from his theoretical standpoint, also emphasises the importance of the assumption about the human potential for learning, and adds assumptions about creativity and innovation. He defines learning as follows:

‘Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. Through learning we recreate ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do. Through learning we re-perceive the world and our relationship to it. Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life.’ (Senge, 1990, p. 14)

Following on from this he defines learning organisations as organisations:

‘where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together.’ (Senge, 1990, p. 3)

Another assumption that is important in relation to a learning organisation is the concept of ‘self’. People behave in ways that are consistent with their concept of self, regardless of whether these are helpful or hurtful to self and/or others (Stoll & Fink, 1996; Kelly, 1979). Rowland (2002) in his exploration of the role of leadership on the culture of organisations suggests that to benefit organisations there needs to be a concept of a ‘collective self, identity and a shared set of values and theories of action’ (Rowland, 2002).

4.4.3ii Motivation

Mulford (1998) makes reference to strategies focused specifically on engaging adults in learning, in order to explore motivation in adults. These might include:

- involving adults in planning and evaluation of their instruction (self-concept and motivation);
- basing learning on experience, including mistakes;
- making sure that the subject has immediate relevance to their job or personal life (readiness to learn), and
- preferably making learning problem-centred rather than content-oriented.

The stage of people's lives is also important. Mulford (1998) suggests, for example, an individual person may well be more interested in planning for retirement than planning for educational improvement. Adult learning, he suggests, takes effort because we invest in maintaining established patterns and need to bring meaning, values and skills to a conscious level and examine them thoroughly, and new behaviours need to be tested out in safe situations before being put into use on a daily basis.

4.4.3iii Skills

Self-insight

Both Senge (1990) and Schein (1997) emphasise the importance of *self-insight* as a starting point. Schein (1997) says that although the ability to understand the environment and one's own assumptions is very complex, it is

a valuable process: cultural understanding and cultural learning start with self-insight. Senge (1990) says that although systems thinking is the 'cornerstone' of his five disciplines, it is very important to consider individual views and how these affect the organisation as a whole. He says: 'A learning organisation is a place where people are continually discovering how they create their reality and how they can change it.' (Senge, 1990, p. 13).

Senge says that 'Since we are part of that lacework ourselves, it's doubly hard to see the whole pattern of change.' (p.7) Two of Senge's disciplines of learning organisations are relevant here. Firstly, 'personal mastery', that is, the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision and achieving relative objectivity: 'an organisation's commitment to and capacity for learning can be no greater than that of its members.' (p. 7). Secondly, working with 'mental models', which starts with 'turning the mirror inward' in order to 'unearth' deeply ingrained assumptions, generalisations or images that influence how we understand the world and how we take action.

One of the difficulties in exploring our assumptions (self-insight) is that they are often difficult to access: people's activities do not necessarily correspond to what they should be doing or what they think they should be doing. For example, although we may think that we value honesty above all else, in practice we may give a totally different message with our behaviour. Argyris and Schön (1974) describe this as the difference between '*espoused theories*' and '*theories in use*'. Only by looking at samples of behaviour can we discover our 'theories-in-use' and thus, if we wish to, change them.

Reference is made to the importance of developing a shared understanding of the topic under investigation in my two core studies (see Table 4.2), which would probably involve some 'self-insight' and discussion about the gap between 'espoused theories' and 'theories-in-use', perhaps at both organisational and individual levels. There are no references to an exploration of individual assumptions, beliefs, attitudes and motivation, and their effect upon the research initiatives. Boreham and Morgan (2004) suggest that the benefits to individual members of the new way of working via the PCDM outweighed any possible barriers to individual learning or concerns about the lack of autonomy.

Understanding the organisation

Senge (1990) describes 'system's thinking' as another of his disciplines of learning organisations. Systems theorists see organisations as complex, self-regulating entities, which maintain certain essential constancies through cycles of action, error-detection, and error-correction, and organisational learning as the self-regulating process of error-detection and error-correction, whether or not this state is mediated by the efforts of individual members or the organisation. Senge (1990) states that business and human endeavours are systems 'bound by invisible fabrics of inter-related actions, which often take years to fully play out their effects on each other' (p.7). Senge (1990) claims that non-systemic thinking leads to 'learning disabilities' in organisations. It is typical of non-systemic thinking to blame the 'enemy out there' rather than looking to see how we may have contributed to the problem.

Senge (1990) says that being truly proactive comes from seeing how we contribute to our own problems. Keating (1995) also talks about the importance of understanding, analysing and using the dynamic system, as one of his key conditions of organisational learning.

It is also important to understand how the different levels of analysis (individual, group and organisational) interact and influence each other.

Dawson (1996) uses the image of Russian dolls to describe how individual and organisational characteristics are interdependent: each doll is individually crafted but bears the shape of the larger and the smaller ones. Although cognitive psychologists, such as Kelly, essentially focus upon understanding individuals through their personal meaning systems rather than their histories or circumstances (Ravenette, 1988), Stoker (2000) draws attention to the fact that Kelly also made reference to the importance of understanding the interaction between the individual and the organisation. Stoker (2000) quotes Kelly (1991):

‘He (the psychologist) should get some notion of what it would be like to attend (the school), what cultural validations of personal constructs the school appears to provide (Kelly, in Stoker, p. 78).

One particular theoretical stance that makes a significant contribution to understanding the interaction between the individual and their circumstances is the sociocultural approach of Activity theory. In sociocultural approaches historicity is very important: how practices have come to be in place, how learning has taken place in the past, and how it might be encouraged in the future (Leadbetter, 2004).

'the goal of sociocultural approaches is to explicate the relationships between human action on the one hand, and the cultural, institutional and historical situations in which this action occurs' (Wertsch, 1995, p. 11 in Leadbetter, 2004).

Sociocultural approaches come from Vygotsky's theoretical framework in which 'mind' (manifested in higher psychological functions) does not and cannot exist outside of social practice. Leontev developed the idea that a major part of knowledge and expertise is embodied in its artefacts, which are significant constituents of its culture and a means of communication. The individual and culture are considered as mutually formative elements of a single interactive system (Daniels, 2001). Engestrom (2001) has developed the notion of an activity system, in which a group of people whose orientation to the object of collective activity is mediated by division of labour, community context, rules and cultural artefacts.

Understanding the complexity and dynamic nature of organisations is thus another prerequisite skill in organisational change initiatives. Argyris and Schön (1978) suggest that an understanding of organisational dynamics has to include an analysis of the gap between 'espoused theories' and 'theories-in-use' within the organisation.

Procedures were put in place to explore organisational factors in my two core studies.

Table 4.2: Understanding the dynamic system in organisations

Boreham & Morgan (2004)	<i>The structure and procedures of the PCDM provides an opportunity to explore cultural and historical factors impinging on practice, across boundaries created by the division of labour.</i>
Timmins et al (2006)	<i>EPs spend time exploring cultural and historical factors surrounding both consultation and implementation of change, using the RADIO framework e.g. clarification, and fine tuning of the specific research questions to the needs of the organisation, as this strengthens the likelihood that the findings will be used by the organisation in the future.</i> <i>Skills to explore the culture and capacities regarding the topic under investigation.</i>

4.5 Group level of analysis

All of the writers on organisational learning reviewed for this study place emphasis on the importance of collaboration or working in small teams in order to achieve learning at an individual and organisational level. Argyris and Schön (1978) talk about organisational enquiries, when members of an organisation collaborate to find better ways of achieving an organisation's purposes. Senge (1990) talks about 'team learning' (one of his five disciplines), which develops the skills of people to look for the 'larger picture' that lies beyond individual perspectives. He says that team learning is vital because it is teams, not individuals, that are the fundamental learning unit in modern organisations: 'unless teams can learn, the organisation cannot learn.' (p. 10).

4.5.1 Outcomes at the group level

Group	Theoretical stance	Outcomes	Mechanisms	Contexts
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In my study I explore the outcomes of each inquiry group for a number of reasons:

- firstly, so that these can be shared across the groups in the organisation;
- secondly, as the inquiry group initiative is to last for just one year, it will be important to plan next steps in each area, and this will depend upon what has been achieved so far, and
- thirdly, I use an analysis of group outcomes as a means of exploring with group members the processes that contributed to (or hindered) the described outcomes. Although I do not want to 'compare' groups with regard to their effectiveness as groups, I am interested in any similarities or differences with regard to their outcomes and various group factors, such as size of group, or nature of the topic of inquiry.

In both core studies developed their research/inquiry through small groups.

The outcome of the research group in Timmins et al (2006) is the outcome of the research. In Boreham and Morgan (2004) the outcomes of the PCDM are not discussed per se, rather the effect of these outcomes on individuals and the organisation. In both studies it is not only the findings of the groups that are important, but also how to share these with the other members of the organisation, and embed them in the organisational culture. This is a major challenge in my own study. I will summarise the strategies used in the two core studies in Table 4.7 on page 80, in the section on mediating learning.

4.5.2 Mechanisms at the group level

Group	Theoretical stance	Outcomes	Mechanisms	Contexts
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What might be the reason for a group of individuals to engage in an initiative whereby they will work together to research and improve an area of practice (as opposed to researching and improving their practice alone)?

The 'detection of error' or agreement upon the 'inadequacy' of old ways, would be a trigger, which sets in motion the collaborative inquiry, aimed at correcting the error. Assumptions regarding learning (and whether it is viewed as a social process), and knowledge (no one person will be expert enough to solve problems) and the value attributed to working together (not everybody will have been part of a 'great team') may influence the degree of participation by individual members.

Group processes and phenomena would inevitably both support and hinder the inquiry group initiative, in addition to the supporting and hindering effect of individual characteristics and variables. I have summarised some of these processes below.

4.5.3 Contexts at the group level

Group	Theoretical stance	Outcomes	Mechanisms	Contexts
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4.5.3i Interpersonal relationships and skills to manage group processes

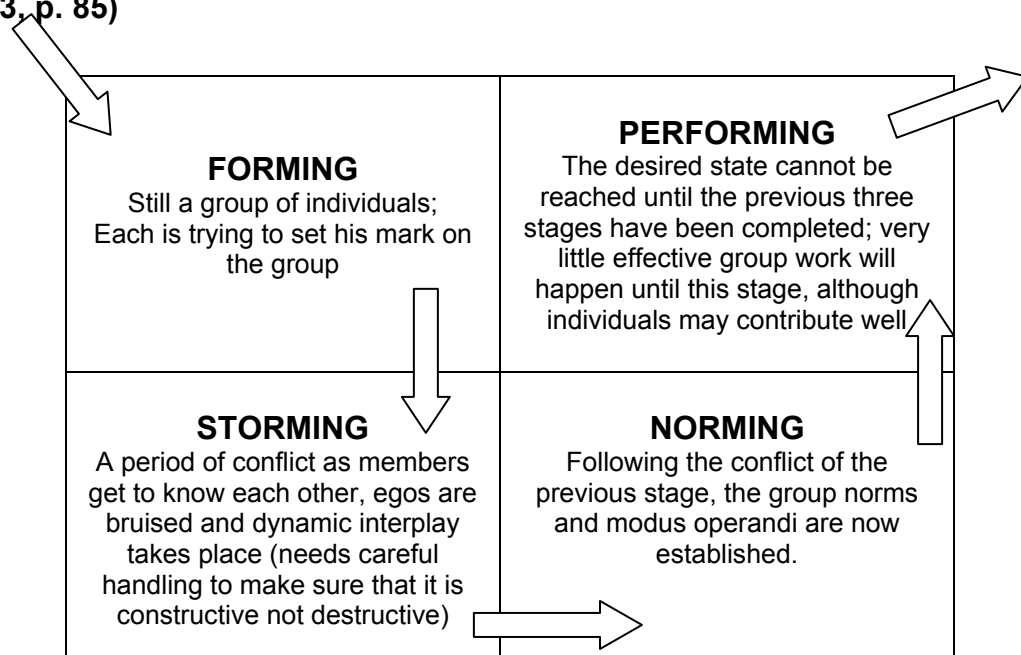
Argyris and Schön (1978) influenced by the notion of Deweyan inquiry, from the American school of pragmatism, see learning and inquiry as social processes. Not only do people usually think and act in a social setting but the process of inquiry is affected by membership of a social system that establishes taken-for-granted assumptions. In order to manage learning and inquiry, in a social context, a number of writers make reference to the importance of understanding group and interpersonal processes and developing the skills to manage these in organisational learning initiatives (Mulford, 1998 and Mitchell, 1995, in Mulford, 1998). They draw from social psychology, either at the small group (if members are working in teams) or organisational level. Social psychologists see organisations as groups, which are made up from collections of persons who interact on a regular basis and share a sense of identity. They view the person as very important, but there are also group phenomena such as the stages through which groups move as they engage in activities (e.g. Tuckman, 1965, in Russell-Jones, 2003).

Mitchell (1995, in Mulford, 1998) who researched an urban Canadian elementary school that was involved in effective organisational learning, describes the importance of understanding interpersonal processes such as developing a spirit of trust, understanding the inevitability of conflict, managing differences of opinion through inquiry and problem-solving, understanding

change, and correcting disruptive power balances in any group setting. Schein (1997) says that if groups (or organisations) are to accomplish tasks that enable them to adapt to the external environment, they must be able to develop and maintain a set of internal relationships amongst their members: 'Every group must learn how to become a group' (p. 92). There are a number of different models describing group processes. I have illustrated two such models below.

The first relates to four development stages that groups go through to find out about each other and to achieve a working understanding before they become productive (Tuckman, 1965, in Russell-Jones, 2003):

Figure 4.3: Team Development Model (adapted from Russell-Jones, 2003, p. 85)



In the second model, Mitchell (in Mulford, 1995) describes four processes.

- The first two are **cognitive** (reflection and conversation in which individuals become aware of their practices and those of their colleagues) and
- the second two are **affective** (affirmation and invitation in which positive working relationships and feelings of being valued are developed.
- These processes move through three phases: **naming and framing** (to clarify positions and opinions) **analysing and integrating** (especially when opening up new ideas) and **applying and experimenting**.

In this model there is the suggestion that the processes that build and develop the group occur at the same time as processes of problem solving and task accomplishment.

Whichever the model, an important aspect to remember when running groups is that progress through the stages or processes is not necessarily sequential, nor smooth. Mulford (1998) talks about 'paralysis by analysis' if the transition between stages does not run smoothly. Mitchell (1995) says that the most difficult stage is when people are moving from the comfort of their own understanding to that of others, and analyse their own practice in the light of this.

A number of writers suggest ways of supporting a group's internal integration. For example, Schein (1997) describes aspects to do with communication

(creating a common language), rules (defining group boundaries), and maintaining a coordinated group effort towards commonly shared goals, linked to a strategic vision. Keating (1995), an academic from Canada, also talks about the development of coordinated group effort working on common goals as one of his characteristics of organisational learning. Senge (1990) claims that building a 'shared vision' (another of his five disciplines) fosters commitment in the longer term.

Both of my core studies make reference to the skills required to manage their initiatives. In Boreham and Morgan (2004) these related to group processes (all employees attended training in the skills needed to participate in the process e.g. group problem solving, active listening, managing disagreement and conflict) and each working group had a facilitator. In Timmins et al (2004) this related to 'hybrid' research skills, to ensure that research questions can be addressed appropriately, and skills to understand the culture and capacities of the organisation with respect to change and the area of inquiry (see Table 4.2, page 64).

My own study assumed that EPs would have the skills described by Boreham and Morgan (2004). I anticipated that maintaining momentum and managing the transition between stages of the inquiry would be a particular challenge for EPs finding it hard to emerge from quadrant 1 (Covey, 1994): crises, pressing problems and dead-line driven activities.

4.6 Organisational level of analysis

4.6.1 Outcomes at an organisational level

Organisation	Theoretical stance	Outcomes	Mechanisms	Contexts
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I have drawn from Argyris and Schön (1978), Senge (1990), and Engeström (2001), when considering what the desired outcome of 'organisational learning' might look like for my study. Argyris and Schön (1978) have written extensively on organisational learning in terms of 'double loop' learning, which occurs when error is detected and corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organisation's underlying norms, policies and objectives. Senge (1990) says that outcomes should be embedded in the organisation's system, structures and culture and how 'for a learning organisation adaptive learning (survival learning) must be replaced by 'generative learning', learning that develops new ways of looking at the world, and enhances our capacity to create (p. 14).

Dawson (1996) views generative learning as described by Senge (1990) as 'double loop' learning. She says that adaptive learning (which is about coping) is akin to single-loop learning. In single-loop learning it is possible for existing assumptions and sets of rules to be maintained, and it emphasises structural divisions and 'local' goals, with little incentive to cross boundaries in order to search for and share information.

Double-loop learning, in contrast, is more open to outside and prevailing influences, fits in more with an organic structure, encourages chance,

serendipity, creativity, learning and intuition, so that organisations are equipped to learn and develop new ways of seeing problems and issues as well as solutions. If as Argyris and Schön (1996) say, in the context of rapidly changing environments, the challenge for organisations, or those intervening, is not to help an organisation to become more effective in a stable environment, but rather to help an organisation to restructure its purposes and redefine its task in the face of a changing environment, 'double loop' learning will be an important outcome.

There are similarities between double-loop and generative learning and 'expansive learning', which occurs as activity systems learn by sharing experience across boundaries imposed by the division of labour (Engeström, 2001). Expansive learning takes place when new practices are replaced by reflecting on old. It occurs when the group constructs new working practices by reflecting collectively (on the historically determined contradictions that led to failure) and by expanding its collective understanding of both the object of its activity and the means of attaining it (Boreham & Morgan, 2004).

I have summarised examples of my interpretation of organisational ('double-loop') learning from my two core studies below.

Table 4.3: Examples of organisational learning: embedding outcomes in the organisation's system, structures and culture ('double-loop' learning)

Boreham & Morgan (2004)	<i>Operating procedures written by the PCDM placed on intranet for consultation with all members; Change from culture of cornering knowledge in a 'Little Black Book' to one of shared knowledge for common good.</i>
Timmins et al (2006)	<i>Changes in policies and practice regarding consultation: Service to market consultation and improve provision of information (including practical details and rationale) to school staff and students.</i>

Table 4.4: Examples of generative learning (creating and developing new ways of looking at the world, and building capacity to respond to a changing environment)

Boreham & Morgan (2004)	<i>Provided a new model or 'pedagogy' of organisational learning, based upon themes emerging from the research – previously little known about the practices contributing to this. The development of a culture and set of practices that can increase the organisation's capacity for growth and learning, and responsive to change and complexity: the PCDM seen not as the sort of procedure that might deskill company members, but as a procedure that defines a pattern of activity that may be enacted differently on different occasions.</i>
Timmins et al (2006)	<i>Offered new insights into research on consultation: previous research has not considered teachers' perceptions of the way in which change is brought about in thoughts and action. Also raises the importance of developing teachers' understanding of the principles of consultation if it is to have an effect upon them developing generalisable knowledge and skills for the future. The RADIO framework is one that has been specifically developed with organisational learning and change in mind. The stages of research negotiation, planning, sharing findings and considering the implications of the research for the organisation, carried out collaboratively by the researchers and research sponsors, facilitate the take up of the research findings and feed into a process of continuous improvement.</i>

There is substantial evidence of organisational learning in these studies following their development and research initiatives. I hoped to achieve change at an organisational level in my own study.

4.6.2 Mechanisms at an organisational level

Organisation	Theoretical stance	Outcomes	Mechanisms	Contexts
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What might be the reason for the management of an organisation to agree to embark on an initiative to promote organisational learning and change? What resources would be required?

4.6.2i Active commitment from management

One mechanism here must surely reside with a commitment to such an initiative by the management of the organisation. If the management see the initiative as a way of creating opportunities to carry out organisational inquiries, aimed at 'detecting' and 'correcting' the 'error' or problematic situation, in order to enhance overall organisational effectiveness, then that will enable the initiative to go ahead. For the management to become committed it will be important that the initiative is seen to meet the needs of both the organisation, in its current context, and the management team. Keating (1995) describes another of his factors for organisational learning as 'active commitment to continuous improvement and diffusion of best practice throughout the organisation'. This is relevant at both an individual and management level. Argyris (1990) says that most managers find collective inquiry inherently threatening and that most companies reward people who excel in advocating their views rather than those who inquire into complex issues.

4.6.2ii Allocation of time

One way of assessing whether the management is committed to such an initiative (their ‘theory in use’) is whether time allocated for the initiative is given a high priority. As Dawson (1998) says, time is a scarce resource in any organisation and there are always ‘trade-offs’ between ‘costs’ and ‘benefits’ in the short and long term. Joyce et al (1999) describe the importance of allocating time to exchange ideas, gather and analyse data, reflect on practice and collaborate to facilitate evidence-based change as part of their seven-point framework. Communities of learners, however, take time to establish, and very often in the early stages at least, you need to take time to gain time. The allocation of time to the development and research initiatives in my two core studies reflects a commitment by the management to research and development in their organisations.

Table 4.5: Allocation of time to the research/development initiative

Boreham & Morgan (2004)	<i>Time allocated for PCDM meetings: ‘opening space for the creation of shared meaning’ is one of the three relational practices</i>
Timmins et al (2006)	<i>Time was put aside to carry out initial discussions, workshops and working group meetings</i>

4.6.3 Contexts at an organisational level

Organisation	Theoretical stance	Outcomes	Mechanisms	Contexts
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4.6.3i Culture and structure of roles and relationships

Culture is a central theme in the literature on organisational learning in both educational and non-educational settings. Schein (1992) is one of the key

writers who see 'organisations as culture'. Argyris and Schön (1978) believe that cultural change is the central process by which the organisation learns; culture change, following intervention, is also evidence that the organisation has learnt.

A culture of *open communication* and *collaboration* seems to be fundamental to a learning culture and to support an initiative such as the Inquiry Groups. Schein (1990) talks about 'meshing' subgroups in order to maintain the internal integration of an organisation, by encouraging the evolution of common goals, common language and common procedures for solving problems. Argyris and Schön (1978) talk about a culture of open communication where members of the organisation carry out organisational inquiries. Individual members need to feel that they can trust and respect each other, that they can speak openly and honestly without repercussion, and that their contributions will be valued. Rowland (2002) makes reference to defensive routines triggered to maintain homeostasis (fancy footwork and malaise, Argyris, 1990). He advocates the shift to *democratic values* and communication styles where the dysfunctional and 'un-discussable' become functional and 'discussable'.

Schein (1997) describes communication and information as being central to organisational well-being. In a learning culture he says that there must be a multi-channel communication system that allows everyone to connect to everyone else. He says that a fully connected network can only work if everyone assumes that telling the truth is positive and desirable, and that high

trust exists amongst all participants. He suggests, however, that a fully connected network may overload everyone with information and thus certain channels may need to be closed, but the assumption that unfettered open communication is possible in principle is very important.

Most writers emphasise the importance of *participation* in a learning culture. Rowland (2002) suggests that approaches that facilitate authentic personal and organisational change are most likely to be predicated on democratic and participatory processes where employees experience genuine involvement. 'It's what people do naturally and voluntarily which makes the imperceptible differences and leads to it working.' (p. 29)

Schein (1997) sees leadership style as fundamental in establishing the culture. He describes leadership as the 'other side of the coin' of culture. With regard to assumptions about truth and learning, he says that leaders must accept that they do not 'know' the answers and that they have an important role in portraying confidence in the *process* of *active learning*, and that there is not one solution to any given problem.

Rowland (2002) argues that the model of leadership that will shape and guide organisational learning and change is one in which individuals feel valued and part of a community where knowledge, values, beliefs and attitudes have commonality, and are articulated and understood. His concept of leadership is one that is '*distributed*', as this should facilitate continuous learning. Elmore (2002) also suggests distributed leadership as a way of harnessing and

combining individual skills and energy, which results in collective control and increased capacity for change. This structure implies more of a 'person' or 'task' orientation (Handy, 1999) and might create a threat to some managers with a subsequent loss of 'power', which previously resided in themselves.

It is not just relationships and structures within the organisation that are important, but relationships with those outside. Senge (1990) says that the relationships between different levels and factors within an organisation are complex and dynamic, and further complicated by the influence of and relationships with the external environment. Senge (1990) claims that one of the 'learning disabilities' in organisations is when people in organisations focus only on their position and have little sense of responsibility for how their actions extend beyond the boundary of that position. This might be considered in relation to other people in their organisation, or outside it. Dawson (1996) talks about the importance of a 'bridge' between an organisation and its environment so that winning strategies are likely to be developed. Keating (1995) describes 'horizontal networks of information flow to help bring together expertise as well as links to the external world' as one of the key elements of organisational learning.

I have inferred cultural features regarding relationships within the organisations in my two core studies from the information provided. Boreham and Morgan (2004) do not make reference in this paper to relationships with the external environment; gathering the views of teachers on an aspect of

Service delivery (consultation) was the central aim of the Timmins et al (2006) study.

Table 4.6: Descriptions of culture, ethos and structure of roles and relationships in the three studies

Boreham & Morgan (2004)	<p><i>Management structure reorganised prior to the initiative described in their paper from one that was hierarchical and 'top down' to a more participatory form of decision-making (as a result of the PCDM).</i></p> <p><i>All employees can make an equal contribution to discussions.</i></p> <p><i>The PCDM helped to reinforce the reconstituted relationships in the company by employees relating to each other in ways that enabled all points of view to be expressed: 'reconstituting of power relationships' is one of their three relational practices.</i></p> <p><i>All members of the company have contributed to the development of company objectives.</i></p>
Timmins et al (2006)	<p><i>Consensus amongst EPs to focus on consultation as a professional issue.</i></p> <p><i>RADIO, the model selected for their study, is a collaborative action research model, drawing from models of evaluation with a collaborative orientation (Brinkerhoff et al, 1983).</i></p> <p><i>RADIO supports a collaborative relationship: the process is structured in such a way that although the researcher is separate from the research sponsor, 'intense collaborative interaction between researcher and research sponsor' took place during the clarification stage 'in order to elicit, clarify and agree the direction that work with the organisation will take.' (p. 307).</i></p> <p><i>The main line of communication between the researchers (EPiTs) and research sponsors (EPS) was through a research co-ordinator identified within the EPS, who kept EPs informed via regular meetings</i></p>

4.6.3ii Tools to mediate learning and embed findings in the organisation's culture and practices

There are two other issues to consider in relation to the facilitation of organisational learning. The first is how to mediate learning throughout the organisation. The second is how to embed the findings in the organisation's systems, culture and practice, that is to ensure there is 'double-loop' as opposed to 'single-loop' learning. Providing 'cultural tools' to mediate learning is one of Boreham and Morgan's (2004) relational practices, and Timmins et al (2006) make reference to the complexity of this process, and how it

requires collaborative planning at the beginning, during and at the review stage, to make sure the learning meets the needs of the organisation.

Table 4.7: Frameworks or procedures to mediate learning and embed findings in the organisation's practices and culture.

Boreham & Morgan (2004)	<p><i>As a result of the writing of standard operating procedures in the PCDM, reference task analyses and job aids are shared throughout the organisation – checklists on work-stations and via the intranet.</i></p> <p><i>Providing 'cultural tools to mediate learning' is the third relational practice. These tools are described as 'cultural ' and 'symbolic' because they embody the collective knowledge that emerges from the dialogues: it is not the physical artefact that is important, but the culture of its use that is assimilated by a new member of the workforce who learns to use it in the workplace.</i></p>
Timmins et al (2006)	<p><i>The findings of the research study are shared with other service members and other participants.</i></p> <p><i>The collaborative approach both during the research and the data analysis is another 'tool' to mediate learning.</i></p> <p><i>It is not reported how the EPS will provide information to improve teachers' understanding of consultation. This could be in the form of training sessions or a leaflet: both of these could be viewed as cultural tools, as they embody the collective knowledge that has emerged from the research, and will inform practice for existing, and new members, of the organisation.</i></p>

In my own study the support group has been established in part to support the process of mediating learning across the groups. With limited time available for the inquiry group initiative, however, I expected this to be a particular challenge.

In this analysis of literature on organisational learning I have grouped themes into mechanisms and contexts to inform my understanding and theory development, and to align my analysis with my chosen research methodology: realistic evaluation. However, in reality, the separation is complex. When carrying out a 'realistic' analysis of the two studies, I found that factors identified as contributing to learning could be both mechanisms and contexts.

For example, with respect to 'opening space for the creation of shared meaning' (Boreham & Morgan, 2004), this could be a context, as it refers to a 'pattern of doings, sayings and instructions'. It could also be a mechanism in that it might be the reason for employees to engage with the process. Similarly, Timmins et al (2006) found that participants who had received information regarding the process of consultation before the session were the most satisfied. This information might be a mechanism (in that it influenced their engagement in and feelings about the process) but also a context if it relates to the relationships between the EP (or EPS) and the school/participant. Timmins and Miller (2007) illustrate the same point.

'...We found that Cs, Ms, and Os in one aspect of a programme might exchange places in a follow-up or linked programme. For example...the outcomes of a Programme Specification for staff training on an aspect of school policy...may become the mechanisms of the Programme Specification for implementation of policy at the classroom level.' (Timmins & Miller, 2007, p.15)

As I developed my theories using a realistic evaluation framework, I needed to be aware of the complex interchange between the different elements.

4.7 Definitions of organisational learning

Analysing the literature in this way has helped me to 'map out' the factors that might influence the progress and outcomes of the Inquiry Groups (see concept map Figure 4.4 on page 85). Having followed Argyris and Schön's advice to 'reach into' theories and perspectives underpinning the writers on organisational learning, I have realised that I too prefer a synthesis, or combination of theories, including cultural, cognitive, social-psychological and systems approaches. My main interest lies in developing a theory of intervention that identifies common features of individual, group and organisational experience that lend themselves to a general account of the

factors that facilitate or inhibit organisational inquiry. Argyris and Schön (1978) say that the principal challenge to present-day organisation theory is to invent a productive synthesis of fragmented approaches, and one that is grounded in the requirements of workable intervention. I am taking on this challenge.

Owing to my 'hybrid' perspective, and the breadth of my remit, I have not found any one definition of organisational learning that meets my needs, but have taken something from different writers.

I like the definition from Leithwood & Atwood (1995) in Rowland, 2002:

'Organisational learning means the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding...this form of learning emerges as organisational members together reflect on the processes by which they become informed and how these processes might be improved – a form of collective 'metacognition'. (Leithwood and Aitkin, 1995, in Rowland, 2002, p. 279),

and the synthesis of different writers' perspectives from Boreham and Morgan (2004):

'Learning is organisational to the extent it is undertaken by members of an organisation to achieve organisational purposes, takes place in teams or other small groups, is distributed widely throughout the organisation and embeds its outcomes in the organisation's system, structure and culture.' (p. 308. Taken from Snyder & Cummings, 1998; Senge, 1990; Pedler et al, 1992; Watkins & Marsick, 1993; Argyris & Schön, 1996; Edmondson & Moingeon, 1998).

Argyris and Schön (1996) have also summarised the central ideas that are broadly shared in the literature:

'notions of organizational adaptability, flexibility, avoidance of stability and traps, propensity to experiment, readiness to rethink means and ends, inquiry-orientation, realization of human potential for learning in the service of organisational purposes, and creation of organizational settings as contexts for human development.' (p. 180)

Finally, I like the reference from Senge (1990), not captured above, to learning organisations: you can never say that 'we are a learning organisation' any more than you can say that 'I am an enlightened person'. In fact, the more you learn the more aware you become of your ignorance. Senge says that it

is better to see a learning organisation as one that is in ‘the state of practising the disciplines of learning’ and that as the five disciplines converge they will create not the learning organisation rather ‘a new wave of experimentation and advancement’. (p. 11)

4.8 Initial programme theory for current development and research project

A number of issues occurred to me during my analysis of the literature in the last three chapters. I have summarised these in the table below, and make reference to them in Chapter 5.

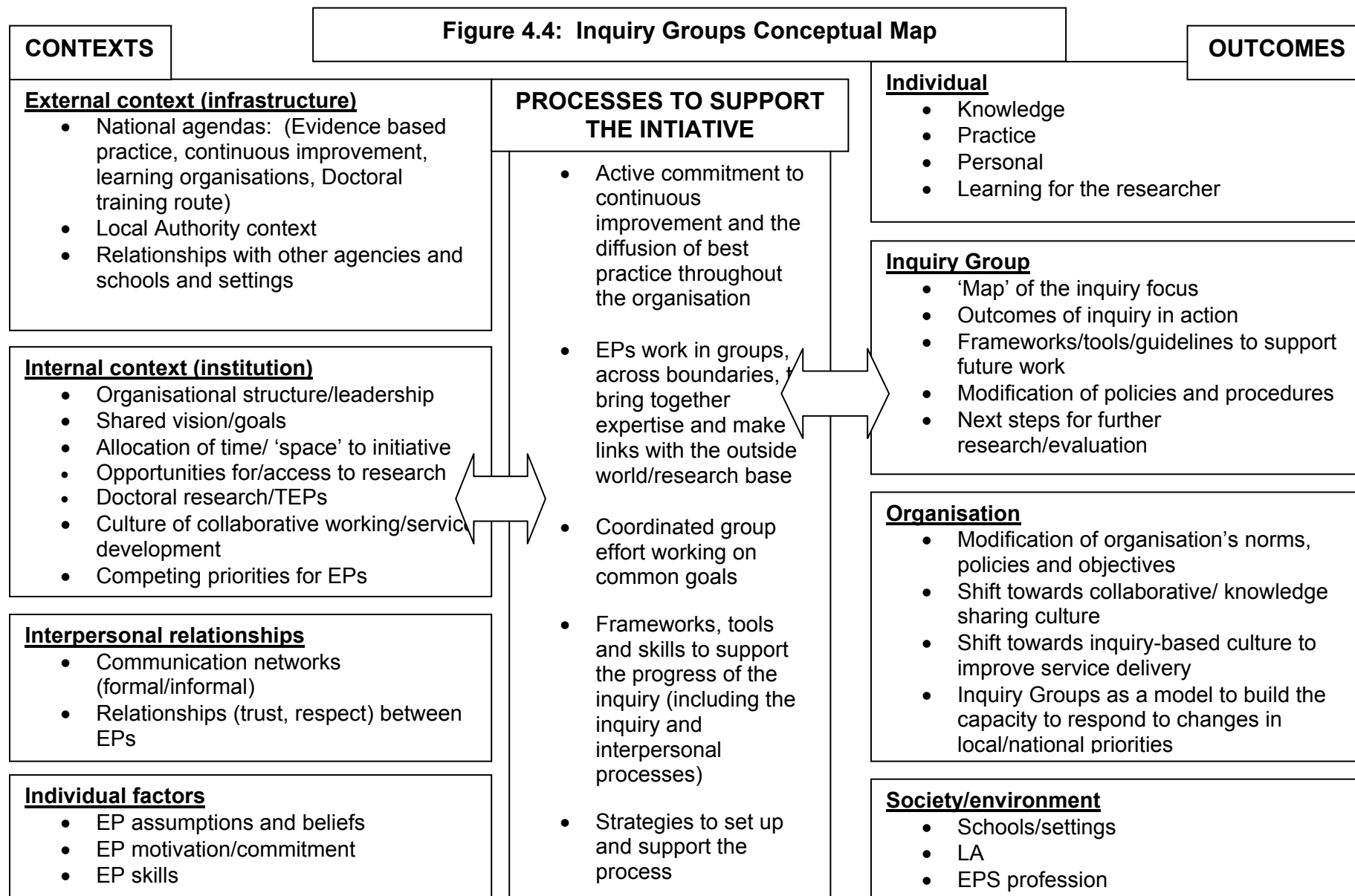
Table 4.8: Key considerations for the IG initiative

Infrastructure	<i>How to share my thoughts on the importance and value of learning and development initiatives, and the sense of urgency and timeliness, with management and colleagues.</i>
Individual	<i>Individual assumptions, beliefs and motivation, as both possible supporting and hindering factors</i> <i>How to identify priority areas for the inquiry groups that will meet the needs of both the organisation and individual members.</i> <i>Tools and frameworks to support dialogue in a way that encourages self-insight, and an exploration of cultural and historical factors regarding change in the organisation and the topic under investigation.</i>
Organisation	<i>The culture of the Service (with respect to collaboration, learning and communication) and the structure of the roles and relationships, and whether these would be conducive to an organisational learning and development initiative.</i> <i>How to engage the interest and support of the management and EPs.</i> <i>How to set up the inquiry groups in a way that supports the internal integration of the organisation (working across existing subgroups and cultures), makes reference to the external environment (considers the context of the inquiries), and is mindful of paradoxes and uncertainties that might influence the process.</i>

	<i>How to mediate learning throughout the organisation in order to bring about changes in policy and practice.</i>
Group	<i>Tools and frameworks to facilitate the development of a common language and common understanding, commonly shared goals and a coherent sense of direction, and guide the inquiry through the cognitive and affective processes.</i> <i>The makeup of the groups so that they would work across boundaries separating EPs within the Service, to facilitate the 'bigger picture'.</i> <i>The arrangements regarding meetings to create opportunities (time and space) for the dialogue and collaborative inquiry to take place, in a way that is supportive and safe for all members.</i>

In Figure 4.4 I have loosely mapped a range of contexts, processes and outcomes from the literature onto a 'concept map' to address these issues, and to incorporate aspects from the definitions above.

In the next chapter I describe the context for this study, the aims and purposes of the study, and my personal stance to research and methodology. I then describe my methodology in some detail, including the rationale behind my choices of methodology, the development of my theories regarding the IG initiative, methods of data collection and analysis, and ethical considerations. At the end of the chapter I indicate how I present my findings in relation to my research questions and hypotheses.



Chapter 5

RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I first of all briefly describe the EPS, which provides the context for this study, including an illustration of the structure of the Service at the time of the study. Next, I describe the aims and purposes of this study, and link the purposes of the study to examples of the theory underpinning the initiative, and the research questions. After that, I describe my personal stance to research and methodology. I then describe my methodology and methods. I have structured the methodology section as follows:

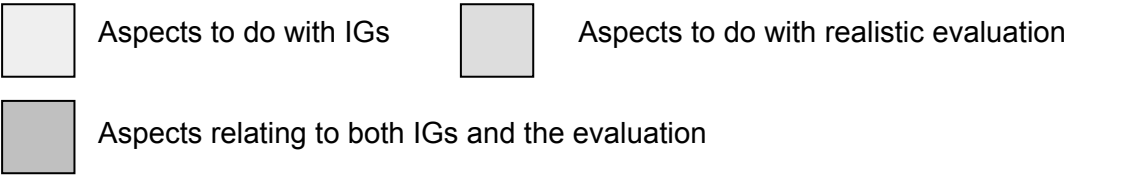
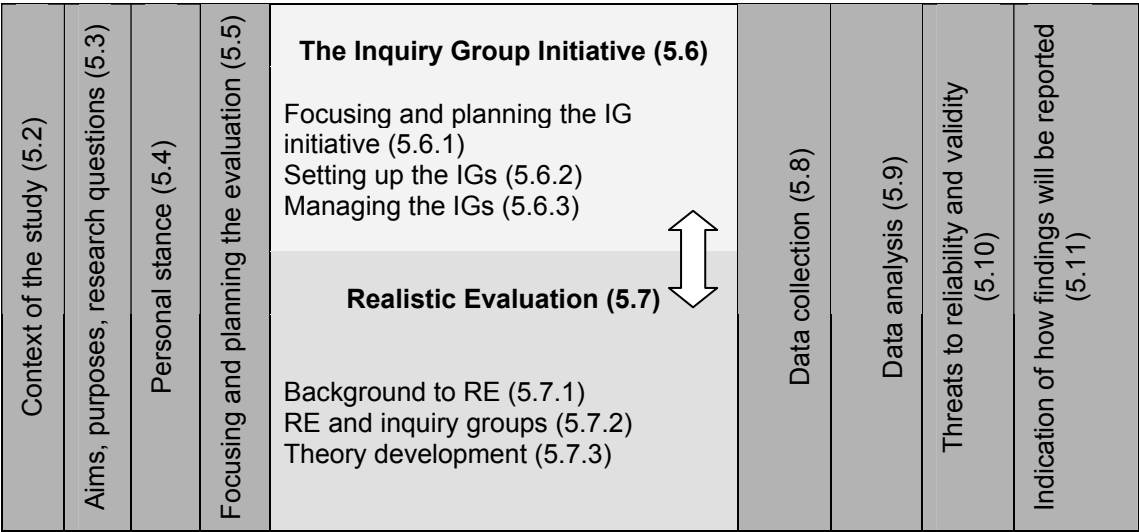
- planning the evaluation – what steps do I need to take to focus, plan and manage the evaluation;
- planning, setting up and managing the IG initiative (including methodological issues regarding setting up the initiative as summarised in Table 4.8 on page 83);
- the rationale behind my choice of realistic evaluation as the research methodology, and the development of my programme theories using the realistic evaluation framework (including methodological issues regarding the evaluation);
- selection of data collection tools;
- analysis of data, and
- ethical factors, including threats to reliability and validity

At the end of this chapter I indicate how I present the findings in relation to my research questions, and hypotheses. I touch upon limitations of my design in

the section on reliability and validity, and explore these further and the strengths of my design in my discussion in Chapter 7. A timetable for the planning and research process can be seen in Appendix II.

I have illustrated the structure of this chapter in Figure 5.1 below

Figure 5.1: The structure of this chapter



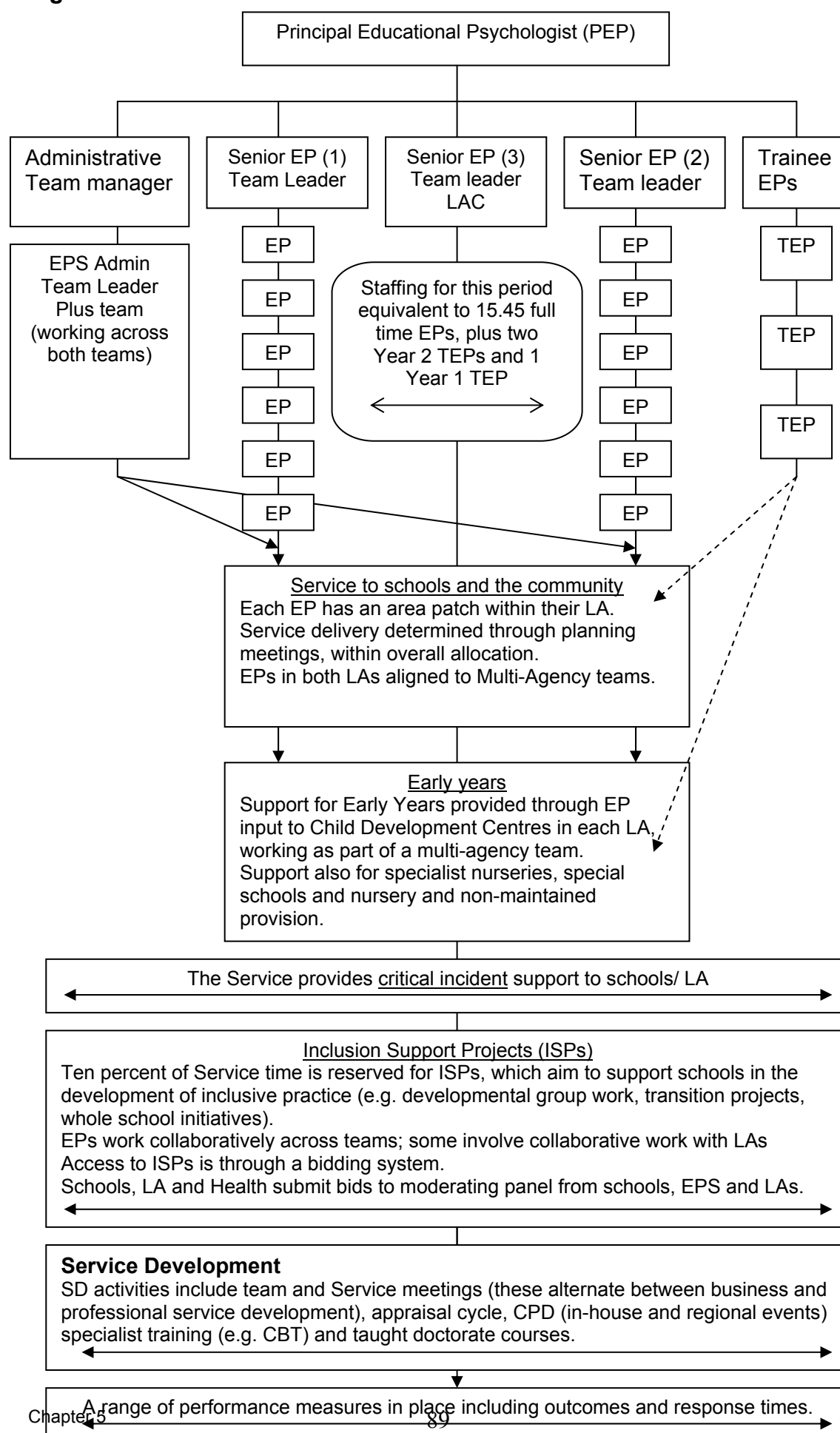
Most aspects of the methodology refer to both IGs and their evaluation. I have separated the description of setting up and managing the IGs, and the background to and rationale behind realistic evaluation, although in reality these were taking place at the same time and interacted and informed each other. For example, data collected during inquiry group meetings informed theory development (RE) and the process (initiative). I have illustrated this interaction with arrows above. This is explained further in sections 5.5 and 5.6.

5.2 Context of the study

This study takes place in an Educational Psychology Service that works across a large but sparsely populated rural county (288,000 population) and an urban area (population 165,000). Joint arrangements have been in place since the reorganisation of local government in 1998. At the time of this study there were 15.45 full time equivalent EPs: The Principal Educational Psychologist (PEP), 3 Senior Psychologists and 11.5 EPs. The structure of the Service is illustrated in Figure 5.2. One Senior EP is seconded to the Looked After Children's Team and manages that team. Two EP teams are dedicated to each local authority (LA) and led by a Senior EP (represented by vertical arrows in the figure). Most EPs serve schools in one LA but are also involved in project work, training and specialist advice across both LAs (illustrated by the horizontal arrows). There were two Year 2 Trainee EPs (TEPs) and one Year 1 TEP, who spend part of their time with the Service, and part at their universities (illustrated by broken arrows).

The PEP and Senior EPs meet regularly with LA officers at a strategic level. Both local authorities reorganised education and children's social services into children's service directorates in 2006. All EPs and their administrative support are housed in a purpose built centre in the urban area. Accommodation is shared with other Inclusion Support Services. Figure 5.2 is the writer's interpretation of the structure of the Service at the time of the study.

Figure 5.2: Service structure 2007-8



5.3 Aims, purposes and research questions

The aim of this study is to evaluate the Inquiry Group initiative, which was set up to share and improve EP practice at an individual and organisational level.

The evaluation takes place on three different levels:

- evaluation of outcomes for individual EPs taking part in inquiry groups;
- evaluation of outcomes for and processes within the inquiry groups;
- evaluation of outcomes for the EPS and processes within the model as a whole.

From the review of the literature, I have identified four key purposes for my research (see Table 5.1). I view my purposes as both exploratory and explanatory (Robson, 2002). My purposes are exploratory in so far as I want to find out what happens as a result of introducing the inquiry group initiative – what, if any, changes take place for individuals and in the organisation. As there is very little research exploring organisational change initiatives, I aim to find new insights and generate ideas and hypotheses for future research. My purposes are also explanatory in so far as I am seeking an explanation of the outcomes of the initiative. I aim to explain patterns and identify relationships between aspects of the phenomenon being researched (Robson, 2002).

Table 5.1 illustrates how the purposes are linked to the theory and research underpinning the initiative, and the research questions.

Table 5.1 Links between purposes, theory/research and research questions

Purposes	Some examples from the theory/research base	Research questions
1 To explore the outcomes of Inquiry Groups for individual members, the group and the EPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning should be generative as well as adaptive and take place at an individual as well as an organisational level (Senge, 1992) • Members of an organisation question and replace hidden assumptions (theories in use) that underpin current practices, and knowledge gained leads to new working practices and involves the modification of the organization's underlying norms, policies and objectives. (Argyris and Schön 1978) • Building small work groups connected to the larger community but responsible for one another will increase the sense of belonging that reduces stress, isolation and feelings of alienation (Joyce et al, 1999) 	1 What are the outcomes/effects of the inquiry groups? 1.1 Do EPs have a shared and expanded understanding of the focus of inquiry? 1.2 Has the Inquiry Group had any effect at professional and/or personal level? 1.3 Has the work of the inquiry group had any effect upon organisational policies, practices, procedures etc (in area of inquiry and regarding policy on sharing practice, evidence based practice)? 1.4 Will the work of the inquiry groups continue beyond the project?
2 To explore the processes involved in this initiative: a. To explore the factors supporting/ hindering the outcomes including contextual factors and mechanisms;	a. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human reasoning is the basis for diagnosis and action (Argyris and Schön, 1978) • Dialogue is the fundamental process by which organisations learn, embedded in three relational practices: opening space for the creation of shared meaning; reconstituting power relationships, and providing cultural tools to mediate learning. (Boreham and Morgan, 2004) • Coordinated group effort towards commonly shared goals; Active commitment to continuous improvement and to the diffusion of best practices throughout the organisation; Horizontal networks of information flow to help bring together expertise as well as links to the external world; The ability to understand, analyse, and use the dynamic system within which they are functioning. (Keating, 1995 in Mulford, 1998) • Restructuring job assignments so that time for collective inquiry is built into the workplace will increase school improvement activity; active, living democracy, including community members, engaged in collective inquiry, creates the structural condition in which the process of school improvement is nested; connecting the responsible parties to the knowledge base on teaching and learning will increase the development of successful initiatives for school improvement (Joyce et al, 1999) 	2 What processes supported/hindered the progress of the IGs? 2.1 What aspects of the inquiry group went well (mechanisms) and contributed to outcomes above? 2.2 What aspects of the context (including individual and organisational factors) supported the initiative? 2.3 What were the hindering factors?

<p>b. To identify what happened during the inquiry – the ‘journey’ or ‘developmental pathway’.</p> <p>c. To link the above to the literature on OL.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational learning as a journey rather than a destination; As we improve our ability to monitor and understand these developmental pathways, we should be able to learn how to respond better to present problems and pressures and to optimise improvement (Mulford, 1998) Change in organisations cannot be viewed as a logical sequence... the bridge between intentions and outcomes is formed by a range of activities and interactions affected by chance, serendipity, creativity and learning (Dawson, 1996) 	<p>2.4 What happened during the process of the inquiry?</p>
<p>3 To explore the experiences and feelings of EPs regarding the initiative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> People are always important in organisations (Dawson, 1996) Each person actively attempts to make sense of the complexities around them, setting up hypotheses in order to anticipate events and then act accordingly (Kelly, 1979) Behaviour is guided by ‘theories in use’ (Argyris and Schön, 1978) and ‘implied assumptions’ (Schein, 1995) ‘discontinuous up-side down thinking is not popular with the upholders of continuity and the status quo’; The importance of active involvement and participation (Hargreaves, 2002) 	<p>3 How do EPs view IGs?</p> <p>3.1 What was the experience of the EPs in their groups?</p> <p>3.2 How important was it for EPs in relation to their routine activities, any other innovations taking place, personal interest, current climate for EPSs?</p> <p>3.3 How could the process be more personally meaningful?</p>
<p>4 To explore EP views on:</p> <p>a. current culture in EPS regarding working collaboratively to share and improve practice.</p> <p>b. local/national priorities for EPSs and whether sharing and improving practice, and IGs have a role to play.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The organisation’s culture determines what it (and new members socialised into that culture) can and cannot do (Schein, 1990) EPs receiving scant attention regarding research skills (in contrast to teachers) – need to raise profile as ‘users’ and doer’s of research, and EPs cannot assume what they are doing is useful – interventions from other agencies may start to be favoured. (Baxter and Frederikson, 2005) Local Government ‘Best Value’ agenda, and need to be a responsive organisation, offering high quality services, underpinned by sound evidence base and action research process (Rowlands, 2002, Carpenter, 2007); Invisibility of EP role – need to demonstrate the significant and psychological contribution EPs make (Farrell, 2006; Stringer 2006) 	<p>4 How do EPs see the past, present and future with regard to working collaboratively to share and research practice?</p> <p>4.1 How do EPs rate the current culture of sharing, researching and developing practice within the EPS? How does this compare with the past? What significant events have contributed to changes? How could this be evaluated in the future?</p> <p>4.2 How might the model support local/national priorities in the future?</p> <p>4.3 Which features of the model or process would EPs like to take forward in the future (cultural artefacts)?</p> <p>4.4 How can the EPS maximise opportunities for working collaboratively to share and develop practice at an individual and organisational level?</p>

5.4 Personal stance to research and methodology

This study is set in a 'real life' situation of an Educational Psychology Service. I aim to explore some of the issues and complexities associated with real life situations, and to say 'something sensible about a relatively poorly controlled and generally "messy" situation' characteristic of 'Real World' research' (Robson, 2002, p. 4). I also want to say something that will be useful, and inform future learning and development initiatives.

I have adopted a 'flexible' research design. I was expecting the design to evolve, develop and 'unfold' as the research proceeded (Robson, 2002) as a result of the interaction between my observations, feedback from participants and the theory and research in the area. I make substantial use of qualitative data collection methods, but also collect some data in the form of numbers. Robson (2002) says that such designs have excited much interest since the early 90s in virtually all fields (including education, health, social work and market research) and in a range of disciplines (psychology, sociology, anthropology, geography), with more traditional 'laboratory' experiments having less validity out in the 'field'.

There are two major issues with regard to the methodology of this study. The first is that I am a participant researcher. Robson (2002) says that there is a view that 'insiders' cannot carry out any worthwhile or credible objective enquiry into a situation in which they are centrally involved. Others, however, from collaborative research (e.g. Schensul and Schensul, 1998, referred to in Robson, 2002) participatory action research (e.g. Kemmis and Wilkinson,

1998, referred to in Robson, 2002) and participatory evaluation (e.g. Cousins and Earl, 1995, referred to in Robson, 2002) maintain 'outsider' research is ineffective, particularly in so far as change and development is concerned. Involving other people in research is necessarily complex and sensitive (Robson points out how when you are working with people you can potentially do them harm). It is particularly sensitive when the researcher is also a participant in the process.

The other major issue is that I have not been commissioned to carry out this research. I am, to some extent 'following my own nose' (Robson, 2002).

Robson (2002) quotes a study by Weiss and Bucuvalas (1980) in which the 13 out of 50 mental health studies, which were commissioned to answer specific questions, got slightly higher ratings for usefulness, than those that were researcher led in purpose. I hope that this research will be useful, but I must make sure that I do not appear to be seeking to 'sell' or promote inquiry groups, but use these as a vehicle for exploring factors contributing to the success of an initiative to promote organisational learning.

Robson (2002) claims that there is no reason why flexible design studies, participant research studies, and those when researchers are working on their own questions as opposed to the questions of others, should not be useful or characterised as being 'scientific'. In the Weiss and Bucuvalas (1980) study, for example, the quality of research was seen as a more important factor than whether the studies were commissioned. Robson (2002) describes his 'scientific' attitude: there needs to be '*rigour, rules and principles of*

procedure’ and studies should be carried out ‘*systematically, sceptically and ethically*’ (p. 18). In the previous chapter I have attempted to explain how I have ‘systematically’ researched the literature and planned this initiative, and in this chapter I hope to show how I have systematically planned and carried out the design, data collection and analysis. I shall be attempting to show how I have acted *sceptically*, subjecting my observations to scrutiny, and *ethically*, and will describe the code of conduct that I have followed, to ensure that the interests and concerns of those taking parting, or possibly affected by, the research are safeguarded.

My approach to research previously has been collaborative. My views have fitted the constructivist (or interpretive) perspective, that there are multiple, socially constructed realities and that knowledge is gained only by participating in the social world (Robson, 2002). I view people as purposive actors in this world, whose behaviour depends upon the ideas and meanings they attach to the world around them, and that you need to try to understand these meanings and ideas in order to understand the behaviour. My views have been that you should be doing research **with** people, rather than **on** people, and moving through cycles of research, each of which incorporates stages of clarification, action (research) and reflection (Reason, 1988).

Previously I have advocated a ‘researcher-client’ equality, whereby problem areas are discussed and research design formulated jointly. In this study, as I am seeking to answer my own questions, I am moving slightly away from a purely collaborative relationship. However, I have endeavoured to involve

participants as much as I can in both the setting up and running of the initiative (by using the RADIO framework to plan the initiative, and the support group to contribute to the process of the inquiries) and in the research process, by participant involvement in piloting data collection tools, and the analysis and interpretation of findings. I thus take a position on the cusp between 'building bridges between research and user' and 'researcher-client equality' as described by Robson (2002) on the continuum of approaches to problem solving.

I have also taken a step back from a purely 'constructivist' perspective into a 'realistic' stance, which provides a framework to make sense of, and search for some regularities in, the meanings and ideas influencing peoples actions. I explain this in more detail in the section 5.7 on page 111.

I now detail how I planned the evaluation and set up and managed the inquiry groups. I then explore the background to realistic evaluation and explain how I developed my programme theories. After that, I describe my methods of data collection and analysis.

5.5 Focusing and planning the evaluation

Robson (2002) describes evaluation as ‘an attempt to assess the worth or value of some innovation, intervention, service or approach’ (p. 202).

Although it is a relatively young research strategy, it has grown rapidly since the 1960s, helped by the United States’ government, which has set aside a proportion of budgets for the evaluation of social programmes. Robson (2002) suggests that the expansion has also been driven by an agenda of ‘accountability’, placing public services within a framework similar to that governing private profit-making businesses. He says that the notion that we should seek to assess critically the public service programmes has much to commend it. During this period of expansion the focus of evaluation research has broadened, however, from an exclusive concern for the extent to which someone’s objectives have been met, to improving effectiveness of programmes in the future. Robson (2002) illustrates this with the aphorism: ‘the purpose of evaluation is not to prove but improve’ (p. 202).

Robson (2002) says that evaluation is indistinguishable from other research in terms of design, data collection techniques and methods of analysis. There are a number of considerations, including political, ethical and practical issues, to be addressed in the focusing, planning and management of evaluations (Brinkerhoff et al, 1983, Mertens, 1998, Robson, 2002,). I have outlined these in the table below and have made reference to how I have considered these in this study.

Table 5.2 Key Aspects to focusing and planning evaluation research and their application to this study.

Key aspects	General points	Application to the IG initiative
Focusing the evaluation		
Description of what is to be evaluated	Merten (1998) and Robson (2002) say that clarification of the object of evaluation is very important at the focusing stage as this can help to understand the nature of the programme and its context and to consider political, value and ethical issues.	I have given careful thought to the clarification of the IG initiative. I have used questions from Merten (1998) to describe the IG initiative in the introduction on p 5. I have also illustrated the model (Figure 1.1) and represented key aspects in a conceptual framework (Figure 4.4)
The purpose of the evaluation	Robson (2002) cites Scriven (1967) who distinguishes between <i>formative</i> (helping in the development of the programme) and <i>summative</i> (assessing the effects and effectiveness of the program) evaluation. The distinction is not absolute as the summative evaluation could have a formative effect on future development. Shufflebeam (1971 cited in Brinkerhoff et al 1983 p. xv) suggests the distinction between <i>proactive</i> evaluation (to serve decision making) and <i>retroactive</i> evaluation (to serve accountability)	The purpose of this study is both <i>summative</i> and <i>formative</i> . The summative evaluation will also serve the function of informing similar activities in the future, and thus has a <i>proactive</i> purpose.
Identification of stakeholders (members who are being evaluated)	It is very important to identify all of the appropriate stakeholders so that the diversity of opinion is captured (Mertens, 1998) and to make sure that the different needs of those involved have been considered in terms of data analysis and reporting. Robson (2002) says that whatever the results or findings some stakeholders will be pleased and some will not. Care must be taken in the design and conduct of the study and to ensure that legitimate concerns of gatekeepers (and stakeholders) are taken into account.	The key stakeholders in the inquiry group initiative are the participating Educational Psychologists. Administrative staff, who work in partnership with EPs, are aware of the initiative and involved in some administrative tasks. Each inquiry group considers other stakeholders relevant to the inquiry.
Constraints affecting the evaluation	Mertens (1998) and Robson (2002) describe the following constraints on evaluations: money/resources, time, personnel, existing data, and politics. Both writers state that politics are integrally involved in the evaluation process and the evaluator needs to be aware at the start, and sensitive throughout the process, of who supports or opposes the initiative: who would gain or lose if the initiative was continued, modified, reduced or eliminated; who sanctions the evaluation and who refuses to cooperate; who controls access to information; who needs to be kept informed as the evaluation progresses. External events may also impinge upon the initiative (Robson, 2002). Timmins et al (2003) make reference to collaborative approaches to evaluation (Brinkerhoff et al, 1983; Patton, 1986) and how they attempt to maximise the likelihood that organisations will use the outcomes of research to improve their	I have given careful consideration to the constraints affecting the evaluation, and involved the key stakeholders in generating possible 'threats' to the initiative to inform the planning. The main constraints revolve around: time (other peoples time/service time and my own time to complete the evaluation within a time scale that is helpful for future planning in the service); personnel (getting the management and team members on board, when they may not be interested in the topic or be 'weary' of research activities in the service); keeping everyone informed of the methodology including ethical issues at the same time as the principles of the initiative.

	functioning.	I have used the RADIO model (Timmins et al, 2003) to plan the initiative, to involve participants in the development of the research process and the analysis and interpretation of findings.
The evaluation questions	Traditionally evaluation focused mainly upon outcomes (is it effective, what happens as a result of following the programme, is it worth continuing expanding?), but there has recently been a growing interest in process evaluation, to find why a programme does or does not work, in order to improve the programme and its effectiveness. Other types of questions might try to ascertain if client needs are being met, or assess the efficiency of the programme.	I am interested in both outcomes and processes. With regard to <i>process</i> evaluation, I hope to find out <i>why</i> the initiative does or does not work, <i>how</i> the initiative is operating, and <i>what</i> actually happened during the initiative. I will make reference to how far the model meets the needs of individual EPS, and will provide an opportunity for EPs to comment upon efficiency.
Selection of evaluation model	Robson (2002) says that the data must fit the purposes of the evaluation, and Mertens (1998) that the needs of the evaluation will determine the appropriateness and feasibility of using a specific model.	As the purpose of the evaluation is focused upon both outcomes and processes I have chosen Realistic Evaluation as my model.
Planning the evaluation		
Data collection decisions	The key considerations are choosing data collection strategies that provide answers to evaluation questions, within the constraints of the study and that satisfy the information needs of stakeholders.	I have selected semi-structured questionnaires to answer both outcome and process questions. In order to answer the <i>how</i> and <i>what</i> questions I will be taping support group sessions and the sessions from one inquiry group. Although stakeholders were not involved in the selection process they were involved in piloting the questionnaires.
Analysis, interpretation and use	The methodological approach taken will determine how interactive and iterative the analysis and interpretation phases are.	As I am adopting an interpretive/constructivist approach both the initiative and the evaluation will be both iterative and interactive. I have used the RADIO model, which supports the interactive stages of the study and evaluation (see next section).
Management of the evaluation		
Personnel plan	This should include a personnel (what tasks, how, when and by whom) and budget plan (e.g. personnel, travel, supplies, consultant)	An outline of the initiative including a time-line and time requirements was proposed to the management initially and then to all stakeholders.
Meta-evaluation plan	Three time points are usually appropriate for evaluating the evaluation: after the planning, during the implementation, and after the completion of the evaluation. This process establishes reliability of data analysis and validity of associated findings and conclusions – a 'double check' on the study.	Feedback on data collection, analysis, interpretation and use, was sought from the support group, and all stakeholders at the final presentation.

5.6 Inquiry Group methodology

5.6.1 Focusing and planning the Inquiry Group Initiative: RADIO

I have used the RADIO framework ('Research and Development In Organisations', Timmins et al, 2003) to support the planning and evaluation of the inquiry group initiative (I also suggest it as a model for the individual inquiry groups as discussed later). I have chosen this framework because it has been particularly useful for negotiating collaborative action research projects, for example, between Local Education Authorities and EPSs (Timmins et al, 2003). Both the IG initiative and the IGs are intended to be collaborative. The model is informed by the work of Schein (1989), which provides insight into the way in which the culture of an organisation influences members of an organisation and by the work of school improvement practitioners (Stoll and Fink, 1996; Hopkins et al, 1994; Joyce et al, 1994) who describe a range of school-based approaches that in combination create the conditions for capacity building.

The researchers in my core study by Timmins et al (2006) reported that the RADIO process provided a structured framework, which enabled EPs to engage in a systematic inquiry into an aspect of professional practice. It gave a clear direction for research within a short time scale, involved all members of the service, supported collaborative working within the EPS, and promoted organisational and individual learning. I hope to be able to achieve all of these during my study.

The collaborative aspect of the framework fits with my interpretive/constructivist view and epistemological and ontological assumptions. RADIO acknowledges the importance of meanings and culture, and development at an individual and organisational level. I like the way in which qualitative and/or quantitative methods of data collection may be used during the research methods phase, as the nature of each of the inquiry groups will have different requirements. Timmins et al (2003) highlight the recursive rather than sequential nature of the RADIO process in the way that communication was on-going between service members and researchers, mediated by a research co-ordinator. Inquiry at the individual group level and whole service level is intended to be a recursive and iterative process, with dialogue informing the process within groups (including links with other stakeholders) and across groups via the support group. I feel that the RADIO framework complements the 'theory development' aspect of the Realistic Evaluation Cycle.

I have described the phases and stages of the RADIO model in Table 5.3 below and how these have been applied to planning and setting up the initiative, making reference to the issues that I needed to consider from Chapters 2, 3 and 4 (Table 4.8, page 83). I have elaborated on methods used to set up and manage the process of the inquiry groups in sections 5.6.2 and 5.6.3.

Table 5.3: Application of RADIO framework to the planning of the Inquiry Group Initiative

RADIO PHASES	RADIO STAGES	Aspects to consider	RADIO ACTIVITIES
Clarifying concerns	1. Awareness of need	Literature on current climate re. evidence-based practice, continuous improvement and learning organisations triggered my awareness of need and interest in this initiative and research.	
	2. Invitation to Act	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to share this with the management and gain their support for allocation of time; How to share this with EP colleagues; How to select topics that meet the needs of the Service and individuals. 	<p>Discussion with management re. proposal (March 2007)</p> <p>Presentation of ideas to EPs (June 2007, see Appendix III)</p> <p>Generation of topics at presentation (Appendix V)</p>
	3. Clarifying organisational and cultural issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How to clarify these issues at both an organisational (culture) and individual level (assumptions and beliefs) to gain some understanding of supporting and hindering factors. 	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis at individual and organisational levels (launch of the initiative September 2007, Appendix IVa)
Research methods mode	4. Identifying stakeholders	<p>Stakeholders are EPs, but other professionals are involved in the areas of inquiry:</p> <p>How to set up groups so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The groups represent a cross-section of EPs (to work across interest groups and bring a range of experience); The groups consider stakeholders relevant to their topic and EPs are involved in the process of the initiative 	<p>Researcher formed groups on the basis of EP selections (see Appendix V for selection process Figure 5.3 for illustration of group make-up)</p> <p>RADIO recommended to groups as way to focus their inquiry, including consideration of stakeholders.</p> <p>EPs invited to form support group to support and guide the initiative.</p>
	5. Agreeing focus of concern	<p>How to set up groups so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EPs are involved in selecting focus of concern (priority areas); EPs agree the focus of the inquiries. 	<p>Focus of IGs generated by EPs at initial presentation (June 2007 – Appendix IV).</p> <p>RADIO used to focus inquiries in IGs</p>

<div> <div>Organisational change mode</div> </div>	6. Negotiating the framework for data gathering.	RE has been chosen as methodology: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How to share the aims of the research and the RE approach to evaluation with EPs;</i> <i>How to negotiate frameworks and tools for guiding the inquiries /research in the groups.</i> 	RE shared with EPs at initial presentation (June 2007, Appendix III); Research aims, purposes and time scales brought to EPS at initiative launch (September 2007, Appendix VI). RADIO suggested as an initial framework. Other frameworks evolved from discussion with support group. (See Table 5.4)
	7. Gathering information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How to involve participants in methods of data collection</i> 	Data collection methods discussed with management and support group. Questionnaire pilot with sample of EPs (See Appendix VII for first version of questionnaire).
	8. Processing information with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How to share information from each inquiry (mediate learning regarding each inquiry);</i> <i>How to involve EPs in analysis of data from evaluation;</i> <i>How to share findings from the evaluation (mediation of learning regarding the initiative)</i> 	Staff meeting to share inquiry group outcomes (July 2008, Appendix VIII) All EPs invited to check themes emerging from data. Evaluation of outcomes and factors supporting/hindering the initiative shared with EPs (October 2008, Appendix IX).
	9. Agreeing areas for future action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How to identify EP views on ways in which IGs might support Service development into the future, and improvements for the initiative.</i> 	Gather information on evaluation questionnaire. Evaluation of responses presented to EPs (October 2008, Appendix IX)
	10. Action planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How to inform future research and development initiatives in the organisation (embed the findings in organisational practice)</i> 	Recommendations in the research made available to EPs
	11. Implementation/ action		Depends upon future needs of EPS and response to summary of implications for practice from the research.
	12. Evaluating actions		Depends upon implementation of response to implications for practice.

5.6.2 Setting up the inquiry groups

5.6.2i Selecting topics and formation of groups

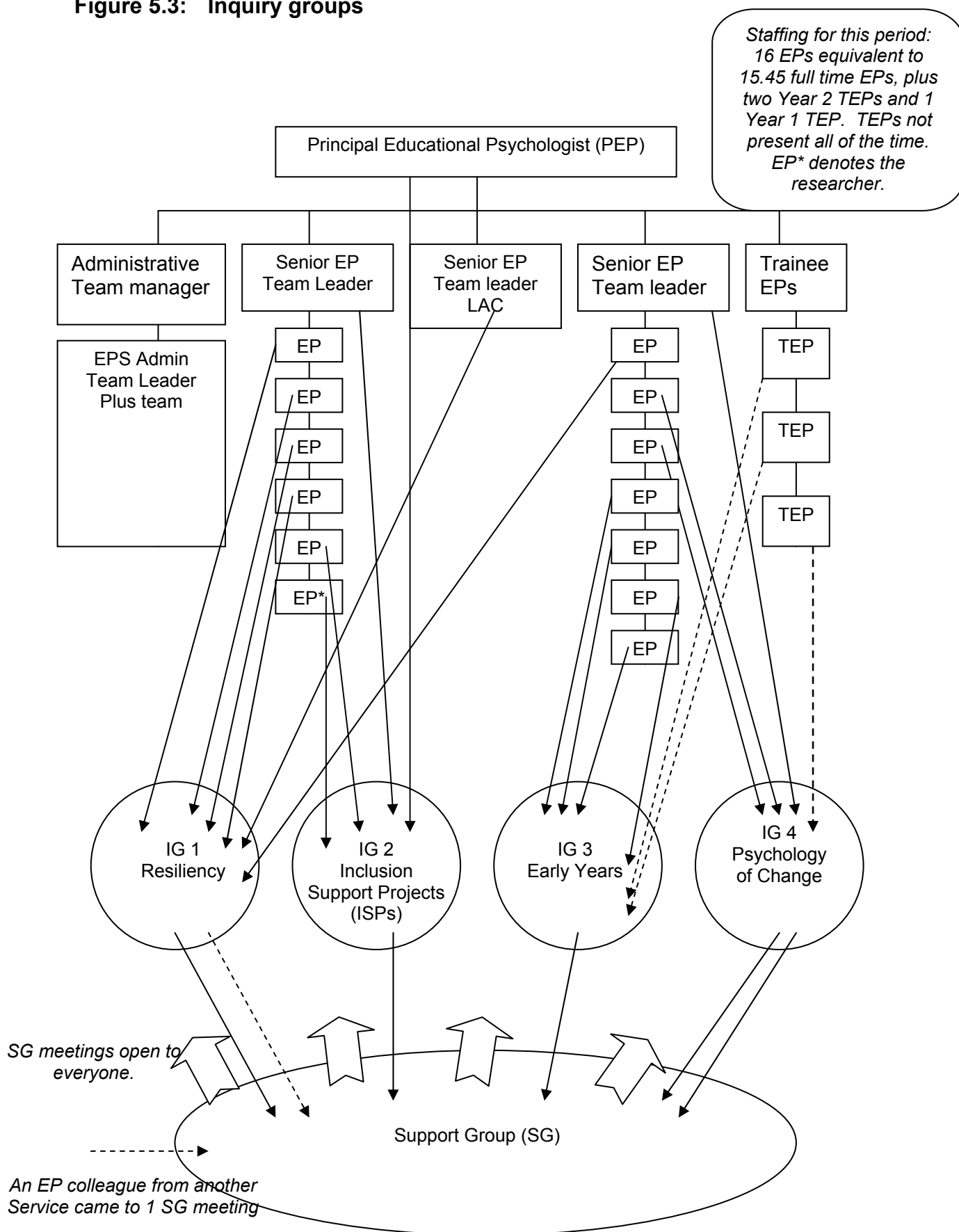
Topics for the inquiry groups were generated by EPs at the presentation of the initiative and research proposal (see Appendix III). These topics were then put into a matrix and EPs (including the researcher) asked to select two or three areas of preference. Two EPs had not been present at the presentation and thus their ideas were sought separately and added to the matrix. EPs were asked to link chosen areas to the 5 outcomes, the Service Business Plan (made available) and the levels of need as described in the Information and Sharing and Assessment process (see Appendix V for matrix).

At the same time EPs were invited to be part of the support group. The function of the support group was to:

- support the process (e.g. to feed back on the research process, to share problems that arise, and to inform the process);
- enable ideas/activities to be shared between groups;
- provide a 'peer debriefing' role to guard against researcher bias, and
- reinforce common principles and themes (e.g. ethical principles, pupil voice).

Inquiry groups were formed on the basis of EP preferences, with an attempt to create groups with members from both teams, and of similar size. Preference for topic, however, was made the priority. The makeup and topics of the inquiry groups, and the makeup of the support group can be seen below in Figure 5.3.

Figure 5.3: Inquiry groups



5.6.2ii Selecting tools to support the process

The central aim of this initiative was to provide an opportunity for participants (EPs) to work in groups to share and improve their practice, and share their findings throughout the organisation. I have identified a number of functions or purposes for the tools and frameworks adopted during the inquiries from the literature on organisational learning.

- Firstly, the tools should promote 'self-insight' (Senge, 1990) whereby employees recognise, question and replace hidden assumptions ('theories in use') that underpin their current practice (Argyris and Schön, 1998).
- Secondly, the tools need to cultivate critical thinking (Stoll and Fink, 1996) and a shared understanding of the area under inquiry, including why this area is important, and organisational factors supporting and hindering this area in the organisation (an analysis of the gap between 'espoused theories' and 'theories in use' within the organisation, Argyris and Schön, 1998).
- Thirdly, the tools need to focus group members in terms of common understandings and goals, giving a coherent sense of direction (Schein, 1997)
- Fourthly, the tools need to support and guide the research process, including consideration of stakeholders, what data needs to be collected, from whom, and how (Timmins et al, 2003).

The dialogue in the groups also needs to take place in an open and democratic manner, in a way that participants feel safe and supported (Argyris, 1990);

I decided, to encourage the groups to use the RADIO framework, as used in my core study (Timmins et al, 2006) as a starting point, as I felt that this is a well researched framework for supporting research in organisations, including EPSs (Timmins et al, 2006). The RADIO stages also address each of the functions described above. The structure of the framework puts a boundary around the discussion, which should help participants to feel that they can contribute openly and honestly. It also provides flexibility in the 'research methods mode' for participants to develop their own research methodology, to meet the purposes of their inquiry.

Table 5.4: RADIO Framework to support the initiation of the inquiry process

RADIO PHASES	RADIO STAGES	RADIO ACTIVITIES IGs
Clarifying concerns	1. Awareness of need 2. Invitation to Act	Clarifying importance/ relevance of focus of inquiry in relation to local needs and national priorities
	3. Clarifying organisational and cultural issues	Exploring cultural issues and organisational factors related to areas of inquiry.
Research methods	4. Identifying stakeholders	Identifying key people relating to area of inquiry from other services and settings
	5. Agreeing focus of concern	Agreement of aims and outcomes for inquiry groups agreed within groups.
	6. Negotiating the framework for data gathering.	Issues regarding methodology, methods, resources and timescale agreed within groups.
	7. Gathering information	Groups to use agreed methods.
Organisational change	8. Processing information with stakeholders	Sharing findings with other EPs/persons involved.
	9. Agreeing areas for future action	Recommendations re future action regarding area of inquiry.
	10. Action planning	Future action depends upon Service agreement and management support for actions.
	11. Implementation/ action	As above
	12. Evaluating actions	As above

Having recommended the RADIO framework as a starting point for the inquiries, I was expecting other frameworks to be adopted during the course of the inquiry. These are described in the section 5.6.3.

5.6.3 Managing the initiative

The IG initiative was intended to be interactive and iterative. Feedback from support group members informed the process, and new ideas and frameworks were introduced accordingly. Additional frameworks adopted during the process of the inquiries included:

- Activity Theory 'triangle' (ATT) (Leadbetter, 2004) to explore organisational and cultural issues surrounding the areas of inquiry (see Appendix X), and
- Enquiry Based Learning (EBL) to focus and guide exploration of published research. (see Appendix XI, taken from guidelines for Educational Psychologists in Training at the University of Newcastle)

Throughout the initiative I kept a research diary to reflect on the progress of the initiative.

On page 109 is a summary of the inquiry group meeting schedules using a time-ordered display (Miles and Huberman, 1994). I have not included planning and initial meetings with the management team (MT) and whole Service, which took place between January and September 2007. A timeline that provides details on all activities can be seen in Appendix II. For detailed information on how the process evolved, with accompanying notes from my research diary, see Appendix XII.

On page 110 I describe the background to my choice of realistic evaluation, and why I chose this to evaluate the inquiry group initiative. I then describe how my programme theories developed, before describing methods of data collection, analysis and ethical factors.

Table 5.5: Meetings and events during the inquiry group initiative

Sep 07		Launch of the Initiative (led by the researcher) to whole service. Strengths Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis (EPs split into inquiry groups; each group led by support group member).
Sep 07		1st support group meeting to prepare for 1 st IG group mtg. RADIO recommended as a framework.
Oct 07	1 st IG mtg	RADIO phase 1 for all groups (clarifying concerns) stages 1 –5 (suggested by the researcher): clarification of the importance of this area in relation to local and national priorities; exploring cultural issues and organisational factors related to areas of the inquiry; identifying key people relating to area of inquiry from other services and settings. Session led by support group member.
Nov 07		2 nd support group meeting to feed back and discuss next steps. Activity Theory 'triangle' suggested by member of support group to organise and expand discussion.
Nov 07	2 nd IG mtg	Activity Theory 'triangle' for all groups: (see Appendix X): data from previous meeting organised and added to, using the triangle. See Appendix VIII for key points from each group in each section of the triangle). Session led by support group member/or nominated other with experience of the triangle.
Dec 07		3 rd Support group meeting to feed back and discuss next phase of the research/inquiry. Enquiry Based Learning suggested by a member of the group as a way of organising this phase.
Jan 08	3 rd IG mtg	Enquiry Based Learning framework suggested from support group meeting to guide RADIO phase 2 (research methods): what do we want to know, what do we know already, what to do we need to find out, how will we do this? Session led by support group member.
Jan 08	4 th IG mtg	Each group followed up activities outlined in previous session. Session led by support group member.
Feb 08		4 th support group meeting to feed back on progress of inquiries and discuss next steps. Decision from the group to clarify agreed outcomes of the groups before the end of the summer.
Mar 08	5 th IG mtg	Each group identified outcomes to be achieved before the end of term. Session led by support group member.
May 08		Fifth support group meeting to share outcomes from each group and discuss pilot individual and group questionnaires prior to the group evaluations at the next IG meeting, and distribution of individual questionnaires later in July 2008.
June 08	6 th IG mtg	Group evaluation of the inquiry group initiative. Group questionnaire and review of the process using prompts/key points from each meeting . Session led by support group member
July 08		Sixth support group meeting to prepare for group feedback to whole service and to review the initiative as a whole, including the role of the support group.
July 08		Each support group member to feed back process and outcomes/next steps from their group to whole service meeting (see Appendix VIII for details of each presentation). Distribution of individual evaluation questionnaires.

5.7 Realistic Evaluation

5.7.1 Background to Realistic Evaluation

5.7.1i Realism

Realistic evaluation is one of the theory-driven evaluation methodologies (Robson, 2002). A core principle of theory driven models is to make explicit the underlying assumption about how an intervention is supposed to work (programme theory) and use this to guide the evaluation. Realistic evaluation differs from other models such as action research in that the form of the work is determined by the need to test the hypotheses under investigation (Matthews, 2003). It is similar to other explanatory and causal evaluation approaches, which seek to establish what works in a programme, how and why. It differs, however, from approaches that use experimental methods such as randomised controlled trials. Pawson and Tilley (1997) refuse to treat programmes under research as a 'black box' or 'blunt instrument' (as in experimental evaluation) that are likely to have equal impact on all participants. They seek to explore what is inside the black box, from action to outcome. They say that they are not looking for generalising principles, but more to throw some light on what is going on, so that the black box is seen in shades of grey.

Realistic evaluation has its roots in the philosophy of realism whereby the social world is open to scientific exploration and offers up researchable regularities. There is more than one realist view of science. Harré (1972) describes 'successionist' and 'generative' theories of science. Both are concerned with why an action 'x' leads to an outcome 'y'. In a successionist

(positivist) view the emphasis is upon events and using measures and controls to demonstrate a constant relationship between 'x' and 'y'. In a generative view, the emphasis is upon identifying the underlying mechanism that explains why 'x' causes 'y'. Theories are then generated and tested about the conditions under which this underlying mechanism can be shown to be working.

The 'generative realist' approach positions itself between the positivist and constructivist approaches to science. The main aim is not to be able to predict which event will follow another, but to find out about the mechanisms underlying patterns of events as they happen in the world (Matthews, 2003). Social constructs are also acknowledged. Bhaksar (1975) sees this approach involving: 'a social activity whose aim is the production of the knowledge of the kinds and ways of acting of independently existing and active things' (p. 24). Robson (2002) describes realism as an attractive choice for those doing social research, who wish to characterise their work as 'scientific' and has summarised some of the key features of a realist view of science, which I have reported below:

Table 5.6: A realist view of Science (Robson, 2002, p. 32)

A realist view of science	
1	There is no unquestionable foundation for science, no 'facts' that are beyond dispute. Knowledge is a social and historical product. 'Facts' are theory-laden.
2	The task of science is to invent theories to explain the real world, and to test these theories by rational criteria.
3	Explanation is concerned with how mechanisms produce events. The guiding metaphors are of structures and mechanisms in reality rather than phenomena and events.
4	A law is the characteristic pattern of activity or tendency of a mechanism. Laws are statements about the things that are 'really' happening, the ongoing ways of acting of independently existing things, which may not be expressed at the level of events.
5	The real world is not only very complex but also stratified into different layers. Social reality incorporates individual, group and institutional, and societal levels.
6	The conception of causation is one in which entities act as a function of their basic structure.
7	Explanation is showing how some event has occurred in a particular case. Events are to be explained even when they cannot be predicted.
(Partly after House, 1991)	

Robson claims that this is an amalgam of features that are common to realist writers, and that not all writers would sign up to the entire list. In particular he says, the two chief protagonists (Roy Bhaskar and Rom Harré) differ considerably in their stance and terminology. Harré argues for an interpretive social psychology, whilst Bhaskar is more concerned with the natural sciences. Whilst they both agree that social science is the search for the fundamental structures and mechanisms of social life, Harré talks about 'reason explanations' as analogous to 'mechanism explanations' in the natural sciences.

5.7.1ii The nature of programmes

Programmes are seen as 'theories' (X is the problem. If we provide Y it will prompt a change in behaviour to Z.) Evaluation is thus theory testing.

Pawson et al (2004) give a number of explanations for the complexity of interventions or programmes.

- Interventions are active and involve the **actions of people**, so understanding human intentions and motivations is essential to understanding the intervention
- Interventions consist of a **chain of steps or processes** (they talk about intervention theories having a 'long journey') - at each step the intervention could work as expected or 'misfire' and behave differently.
- The success of the intervention depends on the cumulative success of the entire sequence of these mechanisms as the programme unfolds.
- These chains of steps are **not linear**, but involve negotiation and feedback at each stage.
- Interventions are **prone to modification** as they are implemented – the process of adaptation and local embedding is an inherent and necessary characteristic.
- Interventions are **open systems and change through learning** as stakeholders come to understand them.
- Finally, interventions are **embedded in multiple social systems** and how they work is shaped by this context.

Pawson et al (2004) state that a key requirement of realist inquiry is to 'take heed of the different layers of social reality that make up and surround the interventions' (page 8). They describe four contextual factors using an example of teachers delivering an educational programme to students:

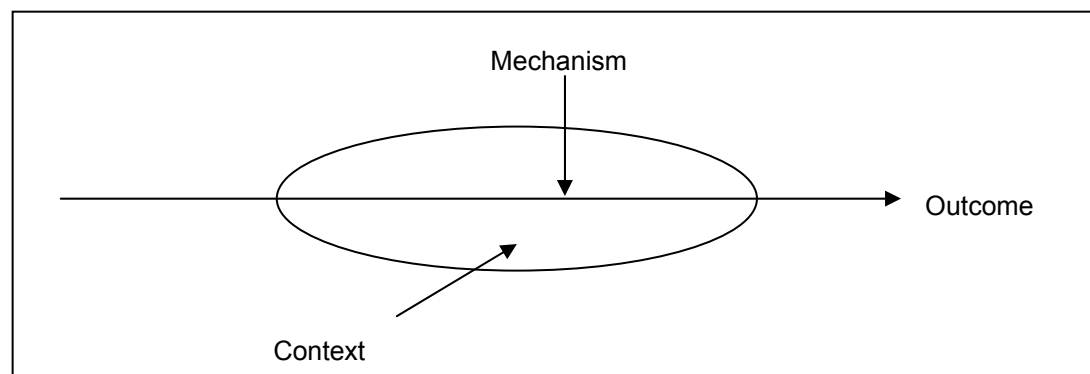
- the *individual* capacities of the key actors and stakeholders e.g. the interest, attitudes and capabilities of the teachers delivering the programme;
- the *interpersonal relationships* required to support the intervention;
- the *institutional setting* e.g. leadership, culture and ethos,
- and the wider *infra structural system* e.g. local priorities and influences, funding, and resources to support the intervention

(see Figure 4.1, p. 49).

5.7.1iii Explaining the theories: Contexts, Mechanisms and Outcomes

The example of gunpowder is commonly used to illustrate the principles of realist explanation. Gunpowder only ignites if the conditions are right (it does not ignite, for example, if the powder is damp, or if no oxygen is present). In realist terms, the *outcome* (explosion) of an *action* (applying the flame) follows from *mechanisms* (the chemical composition of the gunpowder) acting in particularly *contexts* (the particular conditions which allow the reaction to take place). This is illustrated in Figure 5.4 below.

Figure 5.4: A representation of realist explanation



Pawson et al (2004) suggest that social programmes are designed to influence their subject's reasoning. Whether that reasoning, and therefore action, actually change depends on the subject's characteristics and their circumstances. Outcomes are thus viewed as the result of change inducing mechanisms (i.e. the movement between resource and reasoning) and the unique contexts within which these are presented or based (e.g. factors outside of the control of the programme such as people's motivation, values, attitudes, relationships, and organisational contexts or structures). It is assumed that initiatives always carry varied capacities and choices, which will be effective for different people in different circumstances.

Pawson et al (2004) give a specific example:

'In order to evaluate whether a training programme reduces unemployment (O), a realist would examine its underlying mechanisms M (e.g. have skills and motivation changed?) and its contiguous contexts C (e.g. are there local skills shortages and employment opportunities?) (p. 2)

5.7.1iv Theory Development

The realistic evaluation approach presents a 'methodological orientation', rather than a methodology (Pawson et al, 2004), that is, a particular approach to developing and selecting research methods, for the evaluation of social programmes. Pawson and Tilley (1997) describe the approach as a realist evaluation cycle, illustrated in Figure 5.5 below.

- This cycle begins with the collection of theories from programme documentation and various stakeholders involved in a programme, about what will work for whom in what circumstances, and what outcomes would be expected if this were the case (box 1 in Figure 5.5).

These theories may reflect the academic literature e.g. existing ideas about similar programmes, and social/ psychological theory, as well as ‘folk wisdom’ (Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p. 104). It may also be appropriate to use some qualitative methods to ‘capture’ the theories of various stakeholders (e.g. interviews). The methodology is described as wholeheartedly pluralist (Kazi, 2000) using whatever methods are best suited to the task.

- The findings lead to the acceptance of some theories and rejection of others resulting in more specific ‘hypotheses’ (box 2). The hypotheses involve identification of contexts, triggers, mechanisms and outcomes that explain the behaviour under study.
- Observations are then carried out, which might include a range of data collection methods, in order to test the hypotheses (box 3).
- The next part of the cycle involves seeking ‘specification’ with regard to the programme (rather than generalisation, because the specification relates to programmes working in specific contexts) (box 4).
- The knowledge gained from the research then feeds back into further theoretical development, which includes revising accounts of the interplay between mechanisms, contexts and outcomes, which leads to further observations, employing different methods.

Kazi (2000) points out how the cyclical nature of programme implementation and the continuous refinement of hypotheses about the conditions under which it will be effective leads to increased effectiveness because knowledge becomes more closely linked, over time, with reality.

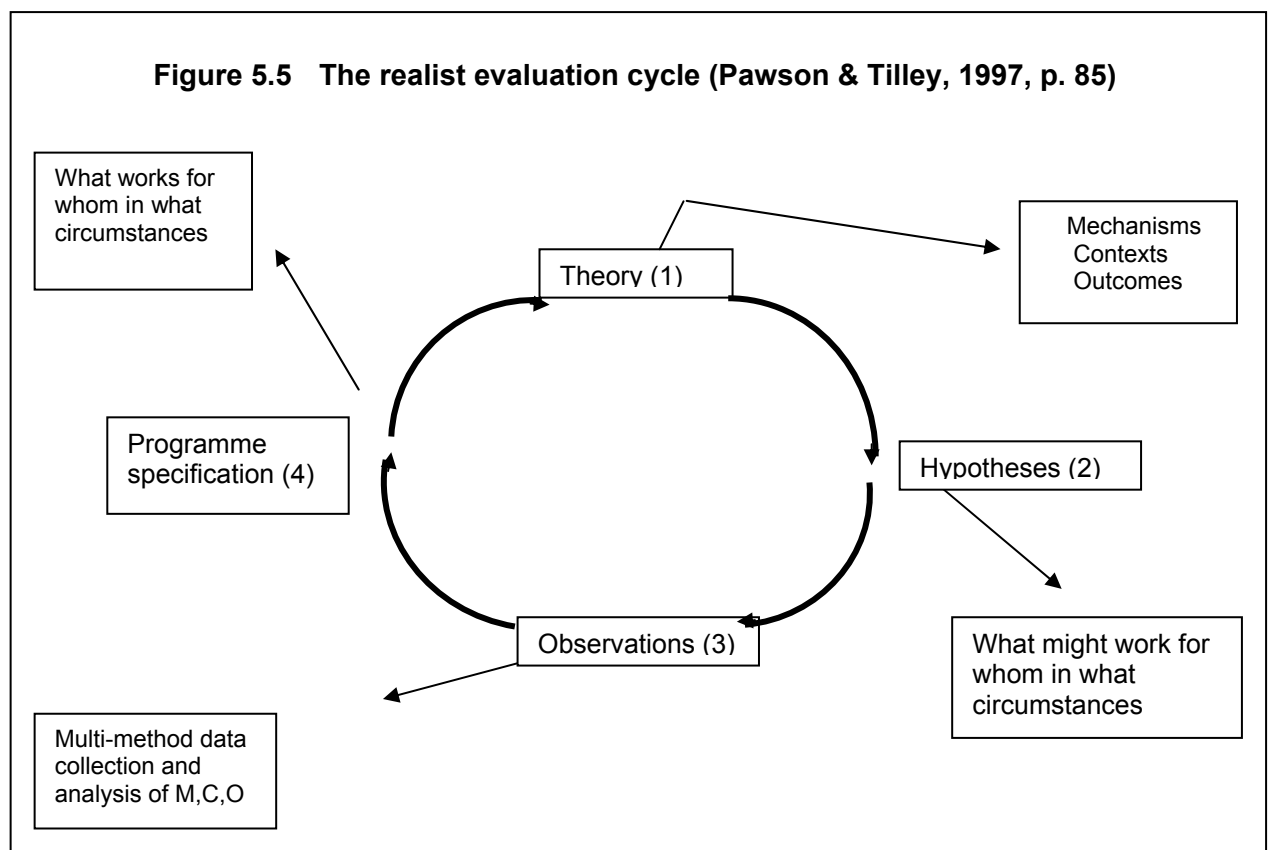
Pawson and Tilley (1997) emphasise that programmes should be cumulative.

Knowledge proceeds through a process of abstraction (not generalisation),

related on the basis of shared ideas rather than shared variables.

'The task of the researcher is to develop their knowledge and understanding of programmes that are linked by virtue of common mechanisms and contexts so that specific cases can be related to more general theories.' (Matthews, 2003, p. 64).

This cycle is illustrated below.



5.7.2 Realistic Evaluation and the inquiry group initiative

Pawson et al (2004) describe a range of applications of the realist approach within the social sciences during the last 15 years. I have chosen this approach for two reasons. Firstly, and most importantly, it suits the purposes of my research study. I am seeking to find out if inquiry groups have any

impact upon EPs, professionally and personally, and upon practices and systems within the organisation. I also want to know the factors contributing to the outcomes (both positive and negative) including individual factors (What is it about the initiative that actually brings about change? What resources and reasons does it offer that may influence the behaviour of some EPs but not others?) and contextual factors (What is it about the EPs e.g. pre-existing attitudes and beliefs, and their circumstances e.g. rules, opportunities, expectations and cultures in the EPS and its locality that encourages or blocks the effects of the programme mechanisms?). Although the terminology has been difficult to grasp, I like the principles underpinning their notion of 'programmes' and 'theory development', and the structure around theory and programme development. I also like the integration of research and participants' views. The evaluator works almost as a go-between, moving between the theoretical/research base and the views of participants. As Pawson and Tilley (1997) point out each participant may only have knowledge of one slice of the programme mechanisms and context, but they are likely to know their slice very well.

Secondly, although the approach is still in its infancy within educational psychology research, I feel it has a lot to offer to our service with regard to informing and evaluating our practice. Matthews (2003) and Timmins and Miller (2007) have explored its potential with regard to evaluating interventions and programmes in schools. Both Matthews and Timmins and Miller (2007) believe that realistic evaluation provides a very useful framework for the development of an evidence base using the work that EPs routinely do.

Experimental or quasi-experimental approaches have focused primarily on outcomes, which makes it difficult to replicate innovations in situ. Matthews (2003) points out how the approach fits in with some recommended practice within the field of educational psychology. For example, the realist evaluation cycle is consistent with the process cycle of the framework for psychological assessment and intervention that is recommended as guidance for EPs' practice (DECP, 1999). Matthews also suggest that it is consistent with Frederikson (2002), who quotes Taylor and Burden:

'What is needed... is a cumulative series of small-scale in-situ evaluations of single-case studies employing an ethically grounded, replicable research methodology. Only in this way will a body of knowledge be collected which will apply across a wider range of different contexts and circumstances.' (p. 103)

By using this approach, I aim to identify factors within the IG model that generate change, and the contexts that support and sustain change. I also aim to gain a greater understanding of the realist evaluation model and its application. Ideally, within a collaborative research model, the model of evaluation to be used would be agreed by all participants. As mentioned by Fox (2002) this could be akin to opening Pandora's box, in a service where there may be strong preferences amongst EPs for either a positivist approach, associated with scientific research, or a constructivist approach, associated with professional practice. The realist approach, which positions itself between the two, provides a compromise and is shared with my colleagues at the launch of the study.

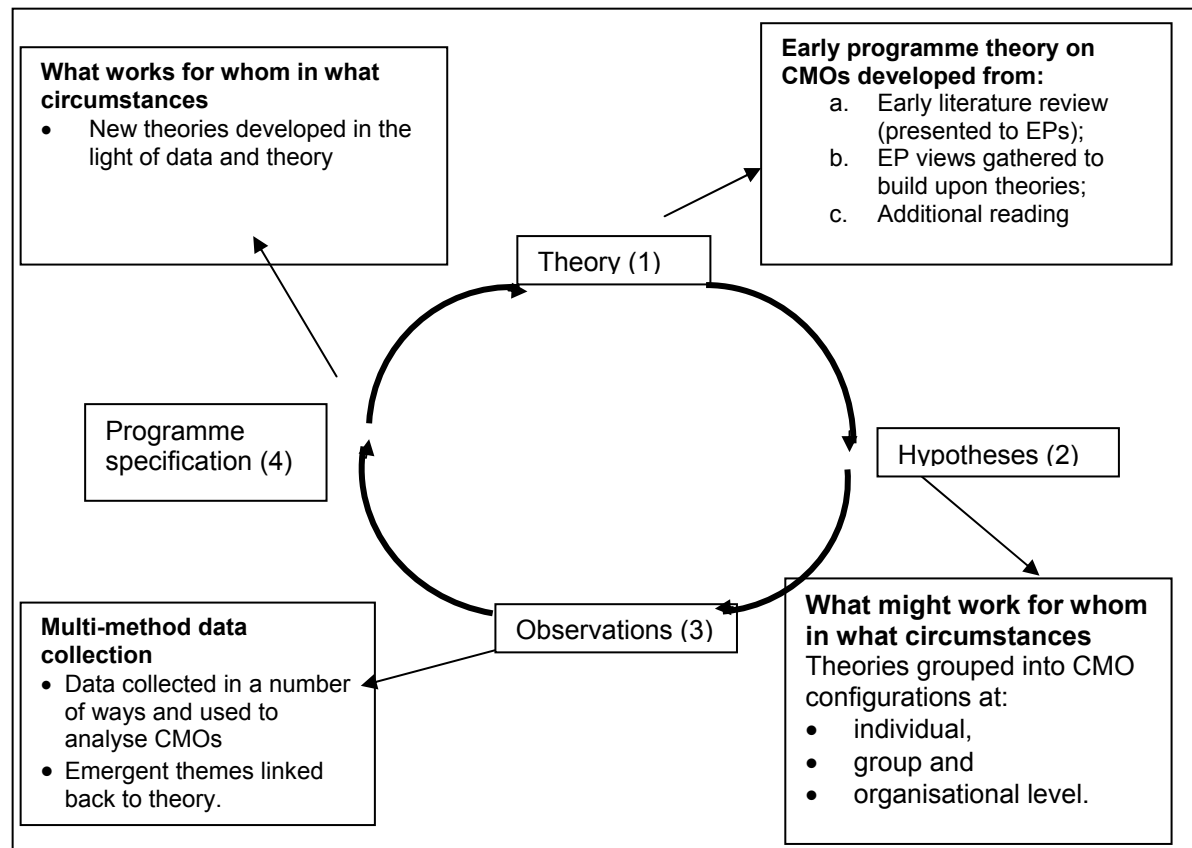
I am not expecting the approach or the evaluation to be easy. I am seeking to evaluate a dynamic complex system 'thrust amidst complex systems' (Pawson

et al, 2004). Inevitably there will be some decisions to be made regarding prioritising the investigation of particular processes or theories. I aim to capture some of the subtle contextual conditions including constraining and supporting factors that will be impacting upon the outcome of the initiative. Or, as described by Pawson et al (2004) the ‘tortuous pathways along which a successful programme has to travel’ (p. 31), in order to identify some caveats and considerations when setting up similar initiatives.

5.7.3 Theory and hypothesis development

In this study the realistic evaluation framework has been used to generate programme (IG) theories at the individual, group and organisational level. I have developed theories in an iterative and interactive way, moving between theory/research and practitioner/participant knowledge. This process is illustrated below and described in more detail in the next section.

Figure 5.6: The realist evaluation cycle and the inquiry group initiative
(adapted from Pawson & Tilley, 1997, p. 85)



5.7.3i Early programme theory development

My first phase of ‘theory’ generation (a in box 1 in Figure 5.6) came from initial reading during the assignment exploring evidence-based practice (Sheppard, 2004), including the Boreham and Morgan (2004) study (see Table 5.7 below)

Table 5.7: Theory development (a) derived from reading of literature on organisational learning

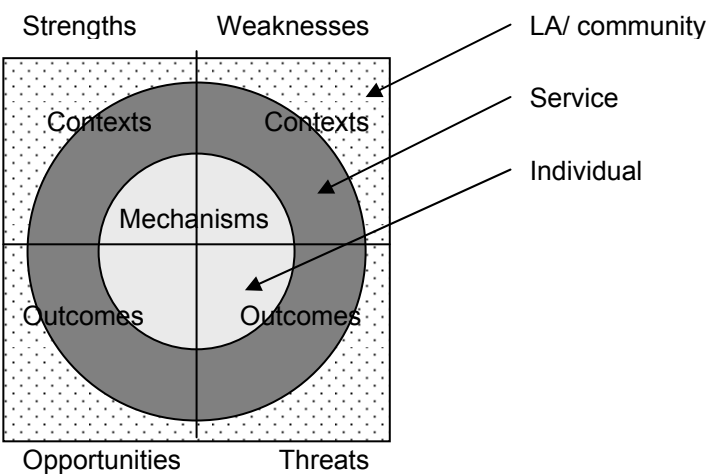
Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
<i>What is it about the subjects and circumstances of the programme that might encourage or inhibit its success?</i>	<i>What is it about an organisational learning initiative that brings about change?</i>	<i>Outcomes for individual EPs and wider impact on the Service</i>
<p><i>Individual</i> EPs have the relevant research skills</p> <p><i>Interpersonal relationships</i> EPs enjoy working jointly on projects</p> <p><i>Institution</i> EPs spend 10% of their time working collaboratively on projects For the rest of the time EPs work in relative isolation</p> <p><i>Infrastructure</i> SEN role for EPs removed pressure to demonstrate effectiveness of their work – interventions from others may start to be favoured</p> <p>EPs need to raise their profile as ‘users’ and ‘doers’ of research</p> <p>EPs need to base their work on sound theoretical principles</p> <p>LA JAR: EPs show how their work is contributing to the 5 outcomes</p>	<p>Organisational learning will take place if:</p> <p>It is to achieve organisational purposes;</p> <p>It takes place in teams or small groups;</p> <p>It is distributed widely throughout the organisation. (Boreham and Morgan, 2004)</p> <p>There is a growth of culture of open communication in which members of an organisation collaborate in ‘organisational enquiries’ to discover better ways of achieving the organisation’s purposes (Argyris and Schön, 1996)</p>	<p>Extended knowledge and skills in areas of practice (identified as priorities for the service)</p> <p>Improved practice in these areas</p> <p>Changes in practice across the service/policy in these areas of practice.</p> <p>Changes in the way EPS carries out research and development activities.</p>

Although some of the ‘mechanisms’ described above are contextual factors (e.g. ‘culture of open communication’) at this stage I am just loosely exploring factors that might influence change.

My second phase of theory development (b) involved gathering views of participants. In realistic evaluation at this point, or prior to this, the evaluator would be asking participants their views on the programme as it existed at that time. As I was suggesting something new, I could only ask EPs what they thought of the ideas so far. I thus presented my 'theory' to EPs to engage their interest and to explore their thoughts on the initiative. I did not use the realistic evaluation framework at this point as I thought it might be confusing.

To gain EP views on the initiative I decided to use a Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis. I thought that opportunities and threats might capture outcomes (positive and negative), and strengths and weaknesses might capture supporting and hindering processes. I split the SWOT analysis into different levels: Individual, Service and Local Authority/ community. I hoped that by splitting the analysis in the Opportunities and Threats sections I might generate ideas that could be aligned loosely to outcomes (positive and negative) at the different levels, and in the Strengths and Weaknesses, mechanisms and blocking mechanisms (at the individual level) and supporting and hindering contexts (at the institutional and infrastructure levels). I have illustrated this in Figure 5.7 below. Not only would it generate theories, but also it would give me an idea of whether the objectives of the initiative would be attainable.

Figure 5.7: Structure of the SWOT analysis



The SWOT analysis took place at the launch of the initiative, in the inquiry groups (the first time they had met together). The views gathered during this session are presented in Table 5.8 and how I have interpreted them in terms of CMOs is reported in Appendix IVb

Table 5.8: Theory development (b): derived from EPs during the SWOT analysis

Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
<i>What are the factors at a service, local authority and national level that might support/inhibit the success of inquiry groups?</i>	<i>What are the strengths (weaknesses) of such an initiative?</i>	<i>What opportunities (threats) might be created by the inquiry groups?</i>
<i>Supporting contexts</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time made available to consider each area of practice 'permission' <i>'Inhibiting' contexts</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External pressures and priorities • Keeping the momentum going • Different perceptions, terminology, different models • Involving /maintaining other agencies • Time for the change process to take place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing ideas, building upon previous knowledge • Working together as a team • Making links between e.g. resiliency research and Critical Incident research • Working across boundaries and Children's Trust <i>'Blocking' mechanisms</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competing pressures and priorities • Fitting it in with work/time already negotiated • Getting the data • Keeping the 'status quo' • Keeping it 'do-able' • EP research skills • Language of research methodology 	<i>Service gains</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of themes/ factors contributing to 'good practice' in the different areas • Opportunity to 'systematise' existing knowledge/data • Multi-professional and multi-agency collaborative working • Opportunity to evaluate present practice and recent changes made • Service becoming more 'evidence based' • Developing tools/practice • Increased communication • Learning organisation <i>Individual gains</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More effective delivery (in area of practice) • CPD opportunity/up-dating knowledge in area and recent resources • Broaden research methodology • Opportunities to explore different models <i>Negative outcomes</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The data indicates negative outcomes

The third phase of theory development (c) involved going back to the literature, expanding the theories and grouping them into theories at individual, group and organisational levels of analysis. There were a large number of theories at this stage (see Appendix XIII).

5.7.3ii Hypothesis development

I then combined these theories into a number of different CMO configurations (hypotheses) at each level of analysis. These configurations can be seen in the three tables below. In parentheses I have attempted to capture the 'essence' of each hypothesis

Table 5.9: Hypotheses and CMO configurations (derived from theories a and b and additional reading) at the Individual level

Context	+	Mechanism	=	Outcome pattern
<i>Individual Theory 1</i>				
<i>(Active commitment to the IG initiative to share, develop and improve areas of practice)</i>				
EPs view collaborative research and organisational development activities positively (and have had good experience of these in the past), feel that the initiative will not interfere with other priorities, is important within the current climate locally and nationally, is supported by the management (from existing meeting time) and will be supported by their colleagues.		EPs engage with the initiative because they feel it will be worthwhile		EPs 'sign up' and attend inquiry group meetings EPs view the initiative positively
<i>Individual Theory 2</i>				
<i>(Interest and involvement in the topic of inquiry)</i>				
EPs feel that they have been involved in the selection of topic of inquiry, that this is worthy of investigation, and that they have the tools and skills to carry out the inquiry.		EPs engage with the inquiry group because they are interested in the area and want to improve their practice.		EPs gain knowledge and/or skills in area of inquiry EPs feel supported by others
<i>Individual Theory 3</i>				
<i>(Bringing together knowledge and experience)</i>				
EPs have collaborative relationships with colleagues allied to the inquiry, and access to research in the area.		EPs engage in dialogue with colleagues across the Service (and outside the Service) and access research in the area		EPs extend their knowledge and understanding of the area of inquiry EPs gain new insight into area of practice EPs make links between/across areas of practice

Table 5.10: Hypotheses and CMO configurations (derived from theories a and b and additional reading) at the Group level

Context	+	Mechanism	=	Outcome pattern
<i>Group Theory 1: (Being part of a team)</i>				
EPs have had positive experiences of working in a team previously		EPs feel that team work is a good way of gaining new skills and insights		EPs engage in the group inquiry
<i>Group theory 2: (A coordinated group effort towards a common goal)</i>				
EPs have good working relationships with members of their group and have the skills to manage potential conflicts during the process		EPs feel that despite the difficulties associated with group processes the outcome of the inquiry will be worthwhile		EPs engage cooperatively with colleagues in group
<i>Group theory 3: (Tools and frameworks to support the process)</i>				
Researcher has selected the appropriate frameworks to support the inquiry		EPs feel that the inquiry is moving forwards towards a positive outcome		Outcomes/goals of inquiries achieved.

Table 5.11: Hypotheses and CMO configurations (derived from theories a and b and additional reading) at the Organisational level

Context	+	Mechanism	=	Outcome pattern
<i>Organisation Theory 1: (Creating time to talk)</i>				
The management values and is responsive to change initiatives		EPs feel better informed by exploring the underlying assumptions and theory/ research in, the area of inquiry		EPs change practice in area of inquiry;
<i>Organisation Theory 2: (New Practices become embedded in the practice and culture of the organisation)</i>				
The organisation has systems for sharing practice across the Service		EPs access outcomes of other inquiry groups, which influences their practice		EPs change practice and policy in area of inquiry.
<i>Organisation Theory 3: (Working together for the future)</i>				
The Service values collaborative research initiatives and EPs enjoy these activities		EPs feel that it is important to work together to 'continuously improve' and respond to new challenges/ initiatives		Changes in the way that the EPS carries out 'in-house' research and development activities in response to internal and external priorities.

5.8 Data collection

The data regarding outcome and process evaluation are collected in a variety of ways as described below.

The main source of data collection is from EPs by *individual questionnaire* at the end of the project (see Appendix XIV) to explore:

- outcomes at a professional and personal level, and for the EPS/organisation.
- EP beliefs regarding contributory factors, both mechanisms (what went on inside the inquiry groups) and context (other factors outside of the group)
- views on future priorities for EPS s and whether and/or how the inquiry group model might be developed to meet these priorities in the future.

Outcomes for each inquiry group are gathered from a *group questionnaire* at the final inquiry group meeting (see Appendix XV), plus a *group discussion* on the inquiry group process, using a poster summarising the content of each inquiry group meeting, as a prompt. The poster takes the groups through the 'journey' of their inquiry group (See Appendix XVI).

Additional data gathered to contribute to the evaluation of the process of inquiry groups, and the initiative overall include:

- *SWOT analysis* by each group - the dimensions generated during this used in the initial theory development (see Table 5.6) and in the questions in the individual and group questionnaires;
- *audio-tape recording* of support group meetings to provide on-going monitoring information to inform next steps, and to provide information on the process;
- *written record* after each inquiry group meeting provided by member of support group, and
- my *research diary* to inform the progress of the initiative and the process.

5.8.1 Selection of data collection tools

I had a number of considerations when selecting data collection tools. I needed to make sure that the data collection tools met the needs and purposes of the study (Robson, 2002, Mertens, 1998). As this study is working on different levels, and involves both *summative* (the *effects* and *effectiveness* of the initiative) and *formative* (the *'how'* and *'what'* is going) (Robson, 2002), I needed tools that could capture both types of data. I also needed the tools to be efficient, in that there were time constraints both for the participants and me. I could not ask participants to spend too much of their time on the evaluation, and I needed to capture data before the school summer holidays, when participants may be on leave. I also needed time to analyse the data, in preparation for involving participants in the thematic analysis in the autumn term, and reporting back, so that any relevant findings might contribute to Service planning for the forthcoming year.

I thus chose the range of tools described above. Ideally I would have liked to interview a sample of participants 'face-to-face' using the kind of unstructured interview described by Pawson and Tilley (1997), to elicit programme theories. Interviews are particularly appropriate when trying to ascertain the meaning of a particular phenomenon to the participants, and I was keen to capture this. They also have the potential to provide 'rich and highly illuminating material' (Robson, 2002, p. 273), which would help me to understand supporting and inhibiting factors with regard to inquiry groups. Face-to-face interviews were used in the Boreham and Morgan (2004) study, and telephone interviews were used in the Timmins et al (2006) study. Interviews are, however, time consuming for both interviewers and interviewees. I wanted to capture the views of all the participants, and thus analysis of interviews would present an additional problem. I thus decided upon the semi-structured questionnaire, which would yield some quantitative data on outcomes, and some qualitative data, which would capture views on mechanisms and contexts, and how the participants felt about the initiative.

5.8.2 Design of the individual questionnaire

I decided to use a self-completion questionnaire and to distribute this to all participants. This would be relatively time and cost efficient. I knew that traditionally it is difficult to get a high response rate to self-completion questionnaires (Robson, 2002), especially 'postal' questionnaires (in this case internal post or email). I was also aware of the disadvantages of self-completion questionnaires such as understanding the factors influencing the

choices of respondents, and how much attention would be given to the questions. However, I hoped that if I paid heed to advice in texts such as Robson (2002), Mertens (1998) and Cohen and Mannion (2000) on design – giving thought to the presentation of the questionnaire and the covering letter, as well as the content of the questions, and administered them fairly soon after the summary feedback session and group evaluation (July 2008), the initiative would be fresh in participants' minds.

As I was hoping to capture views on research questions, ranging from outcome measures to mechanisms and contextual factors, and views on the wider context of the Service into the future, I decided to split the questionnaire into four sections:

- *Section 1: Outcome evaluation (with regard to individual participants and the organisation) (In1-In5 and E1- E7)*
- *Section 2: Process evaluation*
- *Section 3: Exploring the current and past culture regarding 'collaborative sharing and developing practice and how this might be developed into the future' (F1-F6);*
- *Section 4: The future – what are the priorities for EPs and do inquiry groups have a role to play? (F7-F11)*

I paid heed to advice in the above texts regarding the questions: keeping them simple, each question containing only one idea, making sure the language was accessible, avoiding ambiguous, leading or sensitive questions.

Section 1(In1-In5 and E1- E7)

I decided on a summated rating scale for evaluating the effect of the initiative. I did not have time to carry out the extensive procedure for selecting items for a Likert scale (Robson, 2002). I also had a fairly clear idea of the questions I wanted to ask: I wanted to include the dimensions generated in the SWOT analysis, as I thought it would be informative to return to the feelings and thoughts at the outset of the initiative, to see if these had been realised; I also needed to include questions to ensure that all my research questions could be addressed. I thought that my development of questions was thus reasonably systematic, rather than 'arbitrary' (Robson, 2002).

I had thought of a line joining 'not useful' to 'very useful' but could not decide upon one adjective for all of the questions and thought this might become complicated and responses difficult to compute. I had also thought of asking participants to rank the statements in order in terms of changes for them or the organisation, but this might have been time consuming for participants. I made sure that the possible 'fixed-alternative' responses were accurate, exhaustive, mutually exclusive and on a single dimension (Robson, 2002). I realised that I was not going to be able to establish any statistical significance in my results, but I hoped that the scale would give me some figures, that I could compare and contrast. I included space for comments ('What made this happen?'), which I could use to explore the trends in more detail.

Although the recommendation is to avoid 'open' questions in self-completion questionnaires (because of the time taken in the analysis, Robson, 2002), I wanted find out how the participants felt about IGs and thus asked the

question (E7): 'Do you think inquiry groups are a good thing for promoting personal and service development?'

Section 2: Process evaluation

I included the section on process factors (supporting and hindering factors with regard to the inquiry groups and the context) to try to tease out mechanisms and contexts, to add to the qualitative data collected in the first sections. I hoped to be able to elicit a range of factors and compare the factors occurring most/least often. I would use this to explore my hypotheses.

Section 3: Exploring the current and past culture regarding 'collaborative sharing and developing practice and how this might be developed into the future' (F1-F6)

To try to explore participant feelings about the current culture in the Service with regard to sharing and improving practice, I used a Salmon line (Salmon, 1988), which is based upon Personal Construct Psychology (Kelly, 1955). In Kellyan philosophy, feelings do not represent a separate category of experience, but consist of the encounters between our networks of personal meaning, and particularly significant events (Salmon, 1988). The 'line' is really a device used to 'talk about' a process (Salmon, 1988). By using this device, I hoped to capture participants' perceptions of this aspect of Service culture, and their beliefs concerning significant events associated with this aspect of culture. I hoped this would contribute to my understanding of factors contributing to a collaborative, knowledge sharing culture. It might also provide a benchmark to make comparisons in the future.

Section 4: The future – what are the priorities for EPs and do inquiry groups have a role to play? (F7-F11)

I also used an approach linked to Personal Construct Psychology in the last section of the questionnaire, to try to capture EP views on their priorities for the future of the Service. I had been inspired with regard to suggesting this initiative from my reading on evidence-informed practice and organisational learning, but would my colleagues feel the same? The idea for this question came from a study by Fisher et al (1991), in which they used software based upon Repertory Grids (Kelly, 1970) to generate feelings about a diploma course in Further and Higher Education. In this study participants were asked to identify six items they thought were important in connection with their diploma course, and then observed how these developed over time. Although I was using the priority question at the end of the initiative, and it was not directly related to the feelings about the initiative, it could give some helpful information on the views of EPs about the future context for EPSs and provide another measure against which to compare movement of the Service in the future. I thought that to ask for six priorities was excessive, and thus asked for at least two.

Piloting the questionnaire

I piloted the questionnaire with a trainee EP, a colleague in the Service and a colleague in another Service, with experience of using realistic evaluation, and asked for feedback from my tutors. I was particularly keen to gain feedback on clarity of questions and language, balance of open/closed questions,

whether the questions would provide a valid measure of my research questions, whether the questions would engage the respondent, and timing – I wanted it to take approximately 30 minutes to complete. I adapted the questionnaire in response to feedback. For example: I altered the layout in terms of spacing and page orientation from ‘portrait’ to ‘landscape’, I simplified the language in some questions, and improved the sequence and clarification of sections; I repeated column headings on each page; I removed visual ‘effects’ although kept some colour; I inserted examples to avoid ambiguity in some questions, and I added the prompt ‘What made this happen?’ to the ‘comments’ section, to maximise opportunities for exploring mechanisms.

5.8.3 Group evaluation

There were two aspects to the group evaluation. Firstly, a group questionnaire was administered to gather views on the outcomes for each group, and also to generate some evaluative discussion on the process of the initiative, including the tools and frameworks used. Data from this could be compared to data on the individual questionnaires. Questions for this questionnaire were taken from a summary of the features generated in the SWOT analysis, with some questions supplemented from my reading, in order to fill some gaps in terms of answering my research questions or exploring my hypotheses (see Tables 5.9-5.11). I did not pilot this questionnaire. Each group completed it during the last inquiry group session. Half an hour was given to the questionnaire. The second aspect, which took place in the second half hour of the last meeting, involved a group discussion on the process of each group’s inquiry, using a poster summarising each of their

meetings, as a prompt (see Appendix XVI for an example of one group's summary map).

5.8.4 Other means of data collection

The SWOT analysis has been described in section 5.7.3.

I used tape recordings of the support group sessions to capture process factors, including what happened during the progress of the inquiry. I had hoped to use recordings of one of the inquiry groups to give more detailed information on how the tools and frameworks guided the inquiries and informed decision-making in the groups, but the progress of the inquiry in the group which volunteered to be recorded was affected by the absence of group members. Whilst this was important in informing an understanding of the influence of group size on group progress, decisions made were influenced by this absenteeism rather than the tools and frameworks guiding the inquiry.

I used my research diary to record observations on the process, paying particular attention to any particular events that informed the process (see Appendix XII).

Written records of IG meetings were linked to the frameworks being used, for example, when the Activity Theory 'triangle' was used, comments were recorded onto an empty 'triangle' (see Appendix X).

5.9 Analysis of data:

Ironically, Robson (2002) says that the need for a systematic approach to data collection and analysis are at its greatest in so-called 'soft' methods such as unstructured interviewing (I take this to include unstructured questionnaires). I started to think about data analysis early on, as part of the design process. I needed to check that the analysis (as with the data collection tools) would yield answers and throw light upon all of my research questions. As I was going to start collecting data early on in the initiative, I needed to think about how to organise the data so that it did not become too unwieldy: 'a mountain of qualitative data that keeps you awake at night, wondering what to do with it'. (Robson, 2002, p. 387).

I have described below methods used to analyse the quantitative and qualitative data.

5.9.1 Quantitative data

The rating scores from each question regarding outcomes on the group questionnaire allow for comparison between groups and across different questions. The rating scores in the individual questionnaires are summed, and the average found for each one. These are reported in a table, with reference to supporting qualitative data to illustrate. Averages give a quick and simple indicator of effectiveness across respondents. Additional information on the range of responses is also reported.

5.9.2 Qualitative data

Analysis of qualitative data needs careful consideration and planning.

Robson (2002) quotes Miles (1979) who describes qualitative data as ‘an attractive nuisance’. It is attractive because it is variously described as providing a ‘rich’, ‘full’ or ‘real’ picture, in contrast to the ‘thin’ abstraction of numbers, and ‘words’ are seen as a ‘speciality of humans and their organisations’. It is also relatively straightforward to collect, and it has the advantage of ‘undeniability’ (p. 456). There are, however, a number of difficulties associated with qualitative data analysis, including data ‘overload’ and reliability (see reference to reliability in section 5.10). The advice from Robson (2002) is to be as organised and systematic as you can be prior to the study, and to use software packages if possible.

5.9.2i Approach to analysis of qualitative data

Robson (2002) groups qualitative approaches in four different ways (from Tesch, 1990, p. 58): characteristics of language, discovery of regularities, the comprehension of the meaning of text or action, and reflection. In line with Realistic Evaluation, I am interested in discovery of regularities.

Robson (2002) also groups qualitative approaches according to the method of data analysis (from Crabtree and Miller, 1992): quasi-statistical, template approaches, editing approaches and immersion approaches. I have adopted aspects of ‘quasi- statistical’ methods, in the way that I have converted some qualitative data into a quantitative format (e.g. number of times a particular factor is mentioned). However, my main data analysis approach has been

using the 'template' approach, which Robson (2002) says is one of the more 'systematised' approaches and requires that you describe in detail how you got from the data to the conclusion.

I have used Miles and Huberman's (1994) description of the 'template approach' to inform the planning and implementation of data analysis.

Robson (2002) describes their approach as realist in that they hold that phenomena (including social phenomena) 'exist not only in the mind but also in the objective world – and that some lawful and reasonably stable relationships are to be found among them (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 4).

They seek to explain how structures produce the observed effects:

'We aim to account for events, rather than simply to document their sequence. We look for an individual or a social process, a mechanism, a structure at the core of events that can be captured to provide a causal description of the forces at work.' (p. 4, emphasis in the original)

They also espouse the realist generative view of causation, rather than the positivist successionist view, which they claim does not throw any light on what went on in the 'black box' nor explains how or why the outcome happened. They are interested in seeking an explanation of the mechanisms, and also an understanding of the particular set of circumstances (context in realistic evaluation terms) and believe that qualitative analysis can be a powerful tool for understanding causation:

'Qualitative analysis with its close-up look, can identify *mechanisms*, going beyond sheer association. It is unrelentingly *local*, and deals with the *complex* network of events and processes in a situation. It can sort out the *temporal* dimension, showing clearly what preceded what, either through direct observation or *retrospection*. It is well equipped to cycle back and forth between *variables* and *processes* – showing that 'stories' are not capricious, but include underlying variables, and that variables are not disembodied, but have connections over time. (p. 147, emphases in original)

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe a sequential set of what they describe as a ‘fairly classic set of analytic moves’ (p. 9) when adopting a template approach. The sequence is very similar to the Realistic Evaluation Cycle. I have illustrated below how this sequence has taken place in my own study:

Table 5.12: The Template approach to data analysis

Miles and Huberman (1994)	This study
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving codes to the initial set of materials obtained from observation, interviews, documentary analysis; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An initial coding system established relating to research questions, concepts and themes • The ‘first-level’ codes are to do with broad headings: context, processes (a slightly looser term than mechanisms) and outcomes. The ‘second-level’ breaks these larger headings into more specific themes linked to programme theories and hypotheses (e.g. under context, ‘relationship between EPs)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding comments, reflections, etc. (commonly referred to as ‘memos’); 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Going through the materials to identify similar phrases, patterns, themes, relationships, sequences, differences between subgroups, etc.; 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking these patterns, themes, etc. out to the field to help focus the next wave or data collection; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These ‘codes’ serve as a template or ‘bin’ for data collected during the evaluation. • The ‘bins’ are displayed on a network diagram and text segments (from questionnaires and audio-tapes) analysed and assigned to the appropriate ‘bin’ to either support or challenge template categories
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradually elaborating a small set of generalizations that cover the consistencies you discern in the data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small set of theories is elaborated covering the consistencies in the data • The theories regarding the factors supporting and inhibiting the inquiry group initiative are ‘checked’ with participants for validation and further exploration • Participants are invited to contribute to the development of theories with regard to the question ‘What is important for EPs in the future?’ from the raw data gathered on the questionnaires
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linking these generalizations to a formalized body of knowledge in the form of constructs or theories. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The theories are linked to hypotheses (CMO configurations generated before the evaluation) and research/theory in this area.

I illustrate how my coding system links to research questions and data collection in Table 5.11. For detailed description of codes see Appendix XVII. The network diagram is in Appendix XVIII.

Table 5.13: Links between Research Questions, Data Collection Tools and Codes for Data Analysis

Research questions	Data collection	Codes
1 What are the outcomes/effects of the inquiry groups? 1.1 Do EPs have a shared and expanded understanding of the focus of inquiry? 1.2 Has the Inquiry Group had any effect at professional and personal level? 1.3 Has the work of the inquiry group had any effect upon organisational policies, practices, procedures etc (in area of inquiry and regarding policy on sharing practice, evidence based practice)? 1.4 Will the work of the group continue beyond the project?	<i>IQ, GQ</i> <i>IQ</i> <i>GQ, IQ</i> <i>GQ, IQ</i>	<i>OI-US</i> <i>OI-PR/PER</i> <i>OO-PO</i> <i>OIG-NS</i>
2 What processes supported/hindered the progress of the IGs? 2.1 What aspects of the inquiry group went particularly well and contributed to outcomes above? 2.2 What aspects of the context (including individual and organisational factors) supported the initiative? 2.3 What were the hindering factors? 2.4 What happened during the process of the inquiry?	<i>IQ PE</i> <i>IQ PE</i> <i>IQ PE</i> <i>IQ PE</i> <i>SGT</i>	<i>P</i> <i>P</i> <i>P</i> <i>P</i>
3 How do EPs view IGs? 3.1 What was the experience of the EPs in their groups? 3.2 How important was it for EPs in relation to their routine activities, any other innovations taking place, personal interest, current climate for EPSs? 3.3 How could the process be more personally meaningful?	<i>IQ PE SGT, IGT</i> <i>IQ PE, F</i> <i>IQ F</i>	<i>IF-EP</i> <i>IF-EP</i> <i>IF-EP</i>
4 How do EPs see the past and future with regard to working collaboratively to share and research practice? 4.1 How do EPs rate the current culture of sharing, researching and developing practice within the EPS? How does this compare with the past? What significant events have contributed to changes? How could this be evaluated in the future? 4.2 How might the model support local/national priorities in the future? 4.3 Which features of the model or process would EPs like to take forward in the future (cultural artefacts)? 4.4 How can the EPS maximise opportunities for working collaboratively to share and develop practice at an individual and organisational level?	<i>IQ F</i> <i>IQ F</i> <i>IQ F)</i> <i>IQ F</i>	<i>OO-FP</i> <i>OO-FP</i> <i>OO-FP</i> <i>OO-CC</i>

Individual questionnaire (IQ) also includes F (Future) PE (Process Evaluation); Group Questionnaire (GQ); Support Group Transcript (SGT).

Robson (2002) says that the approach is not too restricting in that the templates may be changed as the analysis continues, but it provides an initial structure, which is helpful as it gives you a starting point, and suits the Realistic framework.

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe three concurrent 'flows of activity' during data analysis: Data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification.

5.9.2ii Data organisation /reduction

It is important to find ways of reducing and/ or organising data as it can easily become unmanageable. This is part of the analysis, as decisions about what to select and to summarise, and how this is to be organised, are analytic choices (Robson, 2002).

The data from the audiotapes recorded in the support group sessions are the most challenging data to organise and manage. I chose not to transcribe all of the tapes (having done two) and instead wrote a summary of key points that emerged, with the relevant codes (see above) and 'memos' which reflect any ideas about codes and relationships as they occurred to me (Robson, 2002).

There is both quantitative and qualitative data on the questionnaires. The data on the group questionnaires are word-processed onto a master grid, or

matrix, so that responses can be combined and compared for each question across the four groups, and cut up for assignment to the template 'bins'.

Data on the individual questionnaires is word-processed and organised as described in Table 5.14 below.

Table 5.14: Organisation of data from the individual questionnaire

Section 1: Outcome evaluation (with regard to individual participants and the organisation)	<i>The data were organised according to question so that, for example, all 15 responses to question 1 (rating and verbal response) were collected on the same page, and so on for all questions. This allows for summing and collation of responses for each question.</i>
Section 2: Process evaluation - supporting and hindering factors for both the inquiry groups (what went on inside the groups) and the context (everything that might have affected the inquiry groups from the outside)	<i>All of the comments were word processed and labelled with whether they were inquiry group or context factors (IG or C) and either supporting or hindering (+ or -). These were then cut up so that they could be grouped and displayed. Common themes presented as 'bins' to participants for checking, and then adjusted accordingly.</i>
Section 3: Exploring the current culture regarding 'sharing and improving practice'	<i>Numerical data (rating from 1 to 10) from this section were summated and the average found for each category (collaborative practice in the past: more than 5 years, 5 years and 3 years ago; now, and in the future). Verbal comments are again word processed per respondent, and then coded and grouped accordingly – if the existing 'bins' were not sufficient, new ones are created.</i>
Section 4: The future – what is important for EPs and do inquiry groups have a role to play?	<i>The priorities generated in this section were word- processed so that they could be cut up and used in a thematic analysis by participants. Having been clustered into themes, the supporting and hindering factors were analysed and summarised accordingly.</i>

5.9.2iii Data displays: Describing and explaining data

Description means ‘making complicated things understandable by reducing them to their component parts’ (Bernard, 1988). Explanation means ‘making complicated things understandable by showing how their component parts fit together according to some rules’ – that is ‘theory’ (Bernard, 1988)

This study has been designed to ‘test theory’ – theory that has been developed by recourse to psychological theory, research and ‘folk wisdom’ from within the organisation and already made ‘explicit’. Data are thus used to ‘fill in gaps in a puzzle’ (Gherardi and Turner, 1987, in Robson, 2002). However, this is also an exploratory study, to enhance and develop the theory further, and hence I expect to ‘frame’ and ‘reframe’ as I go (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Miles and Huberman (1994) describe a ‘Ladder of abstraction’ (p. 91) which takes you from ‘trying out coding categories’ on a text, identifying ‘themes and trends’ to ‘testing hunches and findings’ aiming to outline the ‘deep structure, and then to integrate the data into an explanatory framework. It is a process of ‘data transformation’ as information is ‘condensed, clustered, sorted and linked over time’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 91). This process is similar to the refinement of theories and programme specification described in the Realistic Evaluation Cycle.

Data display must be driven by the research questions and the developing concepts, in the form of codes (Miles and Huberman, 1994). I have used two

main types of data display. Firstly I have used a time-ordered diagram (see Table 5.5, p. 110, and Figure 6.1 in Chapter 6, p. 179) as I am exploring an interactive, iterative, process that is evolving and developing over time. I am interested in any critical events that affect the course of the process, either positively or negatively. I display the sequence of events, and how the process evolves, with some adjoining analysis and commentary from my research diary. I hope this is helpful in understanding the flow and connection of events (Miles and Huberman, 1994), and a 'thumbnail sketch' of the change process. It may also contribute to causal explanation at a later date.

For the rest of the data I use a 'thematic conceptual' approach (Miles and Huberman, 1994) although it is displayed on a network rather than a matrix. I started with a matrix, structured around the different levels of analysis (organisation, individual, group) but I found that there were overlaps and links between themes emerging from the data, within and between levels of the research. I thus changed to a network linked to my codes, and then revised this as I checked for interpretation of themes with other participants, and as the data from different aspects of the evaluation were combined (see Appendix XVIII). Such a display, although idiosyncratic is useful when categories cannot be easily sorted into rows and columns and are overlapping (Miles and Huberman, 1994)

In the time-ordered diagram (Figure 6.1, p. 179) I pay attention to processes and events in time, and look for connections within the big picture. In the

conceptual display (Appendix XVIII) I look for similarities and conceptual patterns with less regard to sequence and passage of time. In the analysis I move back and forth between ‘story’ and ‘concept’ modes to deepen each (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

5.9.2iv Methods for drawing conclusions

‘People are meaning-finders – they can very quickly make sense of the most chaotic events. Our equilibrium depends on such skills: we keep the world consistent and predictable by organizing and interpreting it. The critical question is whether the meanings you find in qualitative data are valid, repeatable and right.’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 245)

I describe the methods I have used for verification in the next section. In the table below I describe how I have applied Miles and Huberman (1994) tactics, which help to generate meaning, in my own study:

Table 5.15: Tactics to generate meaning

Tactics	Application in this study
Noticing patterns, themes and trends. ‘Something “jumps out” at you, suddenly making sense’ (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p. 247).	I look for patterns to occur in different sets of data (individual and group questionnaires)
Making contrasts and comparisons between and within data sets. Context is important: respondents under different conditions may actually be responding very differently.	I look for counter examples in the different data sets, to challenge initial theories. I compare outcomes from different groups.
Seeing plausibility , checking whether the patterns and conclusions make sense.	I check plausibility of themes with participants..
Clustering , grouping events, places, people, and processes together	I cluster variables according to level of analysis and emerging themes – I expect clusters to overlap. I engage participants in clustering.
Subsuming particulars into the general , seeing if any specific data links to general concepts and categories.	I organise clusters into general categories.
Counting , to ascertain the frequency of occurrence of re-occurring events. This helps researcher to be analytically honest, protecting against bias (Miles and Huberman, 1994)	I count the number of times common variables occur.
Making metaphors , ‘rich’, ‘data-reducing’ and ‘pattern-making’ devices (p. 250).	I do this at the final stage of my data analysis, to help connect data to theory
Relations between variables	I explore relations between variables in line with my programme hypotheses.
Make conceptual/theoretical coherence by moving from data to constructs to theories through analysis and categorization.	I revise programme hypotheses in the light of the data.

5.10 Ethical factors

In this section I consider the strengths and limitations of my design (e.g. reliability, internal and external validity, sample size relative to population size) within a framework of ethical factors. I evaluate the design of my study in more detail in Chapter 7.

The main ethical considerations and challenges have been considered in the light of headings taken from the BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (March 2006) and British Educational Research Association (BERA), 2004:

5.10.1 Respect for and responsibility to participants

The primary participants in this initiative are my colleagues in the EPS. They are also active participants in the research process. Respect for my colleagues in both setting up and evaluating the inquiry group initiative has been of foremost consideration and importance to me. I am aware that setting up an initiative across the service to promote organisational learning may suggest to some colleagues that I am in some way undermining individual autonomy, and showing a lack of respect for individual differences and diversity, feelings, knowledge, and rights, so this is a major challenge for me. I have put a range of measures in place (see Table 5.16 below) to try to meet this challenge and show my respect for, and responsibility to, my colleague participants.

5.10.1i Methodological approach

I anticipate that amongst a group of psychologists there will be a range of perspectives and preferences regarding research methodology. A major ethical challenge is to find a methodological approach that fits my personal views and is acceptable to all participants. I have selected RADIO as a framework to support the planning of the initiative and evaluation because of the emphasis it places on collaborative interaction between researcher and research participants. I have also selected realistic evaluation as the methodological approach because of its epistemological stance (positioned between positivist and constructivist) and because I feel it regards individual views, feelings, and motivations as fundamental to the implementation of an initiative. Individual views, feelings and motivations will thus be acknowledged throughout the study from theory development to evaluation.

I am open and honest with my colleagues regarding methodology. Realistic evaluation is shared with participants at the presentation of my ideas. I anticipate that this will be a complex task, as the launch has to include a number of other aspects relating to the initiative (see Appendix VI). I attempt to do this by engaging colleagues in the development of CMOs regarding a familiar EP intervention, Precision Teaching.

Other measures that involve and show respect for colleagues:

- All participants are invited to contribute to verification of themes emerging from the data and are debriefed at the conclusion of the research
- A summary of data is available for all participants;
- Final analysis of data is presented to participants for discussion on ways to move forward in the future.

5.10.1ii Recruitment (engagement) of participants and voluntary informed consent

As a participant researcher, I have to consider not only how to recruit or engage my colleagues (including the management team) in a way that gives them sufficient information to make an informed decision, but also be aware of how their feelings and views about me as a person (e.g. they do not want to upset me or hinder my research) and as an EP (e.g. what they know/like/dislike about my way of working) may influence their agreement to participate in the research. Measures were put in place to address this issue (see timeline of activities, Appendix II).

Engagement of management

- Project outline presented to EPS Management Team to gain their agreement and support;
- As part of this process, it was agreed that time for inquiry groups would be taken from service meeting time

Engagement of colleague participants

- The background and context, purpose, aims, methodology, anticipated outcomes, and how the outcomes of the project would be used and reported is described clearly at a presentation for all colleagues (see Appendix VII).
- Ideas for topics for the Inquiry Groups are also generated at this meeting to ensure topics are important and relevant to individuals.
- Colleagues invited to 'opt in' to the project following this meeting via email and informed that they can withdraw at any time (See Appendix VI).
- Colleagues also invited to select area of interest from the topics generated, and to be part of a support/coordinating group.
- Feedback from selection of topics, group makeup, further information on organisation and timescale of the project, and an opportunity to discuss benefits and risks and ethical issues provided at a second presentation to all participants (See Appendix VI).
- Reiteration to colleagues that even though inquiry group meetings take place in service time, they may withdraw at any time.

5.10.1iii Confidentiality

I expect confidentiality to be a concern for participants. For example, colleagues might be concerned about making negative comments either at meetings or in questionnaires about the initiative or any other aspect regarding service delivery. I expect my participant/researcher status to create

a challenge regarding confidentiality. For example, when colleagues both inside and outside of the service ask me how the research is going.

- Every effort is made to respect the privacy and confidentiality of data collected during the project.
- The data in terms of ongoing records, transcripts and questionnaires are kept securely in locked containers and/or protected memory keys.
- I make sure in verbal responses that I do not break the confidence or make any observations of the progress and process of any aspect of the research.
- Reassurance regarding confidentiality and anonymity is given to participants as a covering note on the questionnaires (See Appendix XIV).
- Permission for recording meetings and discussions is requested on each and every occasion that a recorder is used.
- The raw data is to be destroyed upon completion of thesis.

5.10.1iv Consideration of detrimental effects to participants

Finally, the essence of this research study is to promote research and development both within the organisation and for individual EPs. It is hoped that outcomes of the IG initiative will support participants both professionally and personally. It is thus very important to me to consider any possible detrimental effects as a result of this study, both for individuals and the organisation as a whole.

Table 5.16: Possible detrimental effects resulting from the Inquiry Group initiative

Possible detrimental effects	Strategies for dealing with them
Possible threats/risk factors as a result of the inquiry group initiative	Participants given an opportunity to generate these via SWOT analysis. Factors to be taken into consideration during the project;
Effect upon emotional health of participants from time/work pressure: concern about adding to work load of participants	Discussed with management before the project. Time to be allocated from existing meeting time - work pressure/commitment occasionally may prevent EPs from attending meetings. No expectation for additional work to take place outside of meetings.
Feelings of incompetence (e.g. regarding research skills) having negative effect upon EPs	Ensure that inquiry group structures carefully planned in early stages with tools and frameworks to support; Ensure the support group members are confident with tools and frameworks.
Management of group and interpersonal processes within inquiry groups.	Discuss issues at the initial launch; Frameworks and guidelines in place to support the discussion/desired outcomes from the groups in the early stages. Open and honest approach
Changes in direction as part of qualitative research, leading to new and unexpected ethical dilemmas.	Important to be responsive and open to suggestions, and to keep the process visible. Address issues openly and honestly as they occur. The support group should help with this.
Detrimental effects upon participants through identification	Questionnaire discussed with Management team and University tutors, and piloted with colleagues. Extreme care in the feedback of data and themes to ensure that individuals cannot be identified (unless permission gained for verbatim quotes). Raw data kept in strict confidentiality.
Detrimental effects upon the Service	Involvement of Management team in pilot questionnaire.
Involvement of young people and vulnerable adults	Children, young people and vulnerable adults will not be directly participating in the research project. If children, young people and vulnerable adults become involved in the research indirectly through individual inquiry groups, inquiry group researchers will abide by their normal BPS ethical code of conduct.

5.10.2 Responsibilities to sponsors of research

- The EPS management team are viewed as the facilitators of this research by allowing and enabling the setting up of inquiry groups.
- An outline of the project, including ethical issues, presented to the management team prior to the setting up of the project.
- Draft versions of questionnaires presented to management team for their comments and contributions.

- Methodology shared with management
- Any form of written account/publication to be shared with the management team prior to publication

5.10.3 Responsibilities to the community of educational researchers

- Research carried out to the highest standards and subject to scrutiny from University tutors on a regular basis;
- The contributions made by research participants are acknowledged in the final thesis and any other publication.
- The following procedures are in place to address threats to validity (Robson, 2002, p 174):

Table 5.17: Strategies for dealing with threats to validity in flexible research designs

Transparency	Open and honest about the purposes of the research and how the information will be used: <i>initial presentation and launch</i>
Triangulation	The use of multiple sources e.g. data, observer, methodological, theory: <i>data gained from taped dialogue in support and inquiry group meetings, questionnaires, theory and research in organisational learning.</i>
Peer debriefing and support	To guard against researcher bias and offer support: <i>Support Group meetings allow researcher to check out observations and emerging themes with participants, and to receive support with the ongoing research process.</i>
Member checking	Returning to respondents and checking accounts, transcripts and interpretations: <i>Focus group after analysis of questionnaires</i>
Negative case analysis	An important way of countering researcher bias: seeking ways to disconfirm your theories – ‘playing the devil’s advocate’: <i>questions on the questionnaire to invite participants to report negative aspects of the process and contributory factors.</i>
Audit trail	Keeping a full record of activities during the study: <i>records of outcomes from inquiry and support group meetings; research diary</i>
Post-intervention follow-up	To check for longer-term impact: <i>questions in questionnaire to allow for this.</i>

- Reliability of data collection tools is a concern, as participant colleagues may not wish to report their true feelings, or do not report activities carried out accurately. I address this by collecting a variety of data for each research question.
- Reliability of research practices is also an issue, as the initiator of the programme, a participant, observer, and researcher. Carrying out multiple tasks requires a high degree of organisation and is susceptible to mistakes being made. I address this by providing a detailed account of how the planning, setting up and evaluation of the initiative has taken place, including entries from my research diary, and how the data has been transformed from the raw data, to theories on programme specification. I discuss any issues regarding reliability in my discussion chapter.

5.11 Reporting of findings

In the first part of Chapter 6 I present my findings with respect to my four key research questions:

- What are the outcomes/effects of the inquiry groups?
- What processes (including mechanisms and contexts) supported or hindered the progress /outcomes of the inquiry groups?
- How do EPs see the past, present and future in this EPS with regard to working collaboratively to share and research practice?
- How do EPs view inquiry groups and how might they contribute to priorities for the Service into the future?

In order to explore the processes supporting/hindering the inquiry groups, I also report on the progress of the inquiries, and if there were significant points or events that impacted upon the initiative.

I analyse data from:

- the SWOT analysis;
- individual questionnaires;
- group evaluations (including the group questionnaire and group discussions);
- audio tape recordings from the support group meetings;
- my research diary, and
- records of IG meetings.

I present the data gathered during the progress of the inquiry groups and the evaluation in line with the key research questions above, in the following ways:

- quantitative data from the group questionnaire (in the form of ratings for each group on each question), with some key observations from a comparison of the different groups' outcomes, and the qualitative data gathered during the group evaluations;
- quantitative data from the individual questionnaires (in the form of range and average of ratings for each question), again with accompanying observations from participants' verbal comments;
- an analysis of the data gathered to explore supporting and hindering factors using a template approach;

- an illustration of the progress of the inquiries, using data from the group evaluations and audiotapes;
- a summary of participant views on the collaborative culture in the Service;
- a clustering of data into the key priorities for the Service in the future.

In the second part of Chapter 6 I review my hypotheses (CMO configurations) in the light of data reported above.

Having presented the results I outline how these findings and themes, and the emerging issues, are taken up in Chapter 7, my discussion.

CHAPTER 6

Presentation of Findings

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter I first of all present my findings with respect to the four key research questions:

- What are the outcomes/effects of the inquiry groups?
- What processes (described as either mechanisms and contexts) supported or hindered the progress /outcomes of the inquiry groups?
- How do EPs see the past, present and future in this EPS with regard to working collaboratively to share and research practice?
- How do EPs view inquiry groups and how might they contribute to priorities for the Service into the future?

I use data from:

- individual questionnaires;
- group evaluations (including the group questionnaire and group discussions);
- audio tape recordings from the support group meetings;
- my research diary;
- records of IG meetings.

In the second part of this chapter I review my hypotheses in the light of the data.

A summary of what happened in each inquiry group, and the planned next steps can be seen in Appendix VIII. I put these summaries together on the basis of records kept in the meetings. These summaries were copied and presented at a Service meeting.

There were 19 participants and 15 individual questionnaires returned. The missing data reflected the facts that two of the TEPs and one EP were not present when the questionnaire was distributed, while one EP felt that they had not been to enough meetings to make an informed contribution to the evaluation.

It is important to mention two things at this point. The first is that out of the four IGs the Psychology of Change group was the most seriously affected by absence of group members, especially as there were only three members at the outset. Despite absence (including one member going on maternity leave) the group continued to meet alongside the other groups, but they reported that the progress of their inquiry was inevitably affected. The second is that the PEP informed the Service during the year of his intention to retire. The interviews for the new PEP took place in July 2008. Respondents make reference to this, particularly in the section exploring developments into the future.

Having presented the results I outline how these findings and themes, and the emerging issues, will be taken up in my discussion in Chapter 7.

6.2 Research Question One: What are the outcomes/ effects of the inquiry groups?

As part of this research question I was interested in finding out the following:

- Do EPs have a shared and expanded understanding of the focus of the inquiry?
- Has the inquiry had any effect at a professional and personal level?
- Has the work of the inquiry had any effect upon organisational policies, practices and procedures?
- Will the work of the inquiry groups continue beyond the project?

To answer these questions, firstly I report on data from the group evaluations, and secondly I report on data from the individual evaluations.

6.2.1 Group evaluations

In the observations below I make reference to:

- responses on the group questionnaire (see Appendix XV) - a sample of verbal comments can be seen in Appendix XX;
- comments from participants in the group discussion, when they reflect upon their original comments in the SWOT activity (see Appendix IVa for their original and IVc final comments). These comments were recorded on the prompt sheet given to each group (see Appendix XVI).

For the purpose of analysis I have clustered the questions on the group questionnaire into the following themes:

- Bringing together knowledge and experience;

- Examining existing practice;
- Making changes at Service level.

For ease of analysis of outcomes, within each theme I have ordered the questions according to the strength of response: the question that gained the most positive response is first in the table, and so on. The number of each question can be seen in the first column.

Table 6.1: Group Outcomes: *Bringing together knowledge and experience*

	Question	IG1	IG2	IG3	IG4
	<i>We have...</i>	Res	ISPs	EY	Psy
3G	...shared knowledge, experience and ideas in this area?	●	●	●	●
2G	...worked together in a coordinated way towards common goals?	●	●	●	●
1G	...worked together across boundaries within EPS	●	●	●	●
7G	...made links across areas of practice ... 'joined up'	●	○	●	○
10G	...made links with other agencies, settings and personnel	●	○	●	○
9G	...accessed /made links with research in this area	●	●	●	○

Key: ● A lot ● Quite a bit ○ A bit ○ Not at all

Res: Resiliency **ISPs:** Inclusion Support Projects **EY:** Early Years **Psy:** Psychology of change

Observations

- The data suggest that the strongest effect was regarding sharing knowledge, experience and ideas in the area addressed by each IG. This implies the group members were willing to share and to engage with the group.

- Although not all groups were sure about working on 'common goals' they generally felt that they were working together in a coordinated way.
- Two of the groups mentioned that they did not know what 'working across boundaries' meant (although this had been generated in the SWOT activity), although one of these said they felt they had worked well together.
- Two of the groups had members from only one Service team, one of which interpreted the 'boundary' question as working across different levels (e.g. individual, organisation) and that they were doing this.
- Making links across areas of practice was one of the least effects, although the Resiliency group commented that they had made links between, for example, research in resiliency and work for the Critical Incident and Looked After Children Teams.
- Three of the groups commented upon involving other agencies, and professionals, which had made a positive impact upon their inquiry.
- Access to and time for research was highlighted as a difficulty, although having TEPs in one group had helped with both of these.
- If the scores are summed, the outcomes were strongest for the Early Years and Resiliency groups. Size of group, and/ or the nature of the tasks may have been contributory factors, which I discuss further in the next chapter.

Table 6.2: Group Outcomes: Examining existing practice

	Question	IG1	IG2	IG3	IG4
	<i>We have (examined our practice)...</i>	Res	ISPs	EY	Psy
5G	...questioned/challenged practice in this area?	● / ●	●	●	○
4G	...examined existing practice in this area?	●	●	●	●
8G	...examined psychology underpinning this area of practice?	●	○	○	●
6G	...built upon previous knowledge in this area?	●	○	○	○
11G	...organised existing data/resources in this area?	●	●	●	○

Key:	●	●	○	○
	A lot	Quite a bit	A bit	Not at all

Observations

- Responses suggest that the strongest effect was for questioning/ challenging practice in the area of inquiry. Examples included thinking about projects that had not worked in the past, and challenging the notion of resiliency as a within-child trait.
- The lowest response rate was for building upon previous knowledge in this area. Examples of responses included that there was little existing knowledge (evaluation) available and research was hard to access. In the review of the SWOT activity, the ISP group commented upon the fact that it was helpful to have some existing research carried out by a member of the Service to build upon, as well as other research in the area.
- Resiliency and ISP groups responded the most positively to these questions. I think the focus of the inquiry group was an important variable in this section, and will discuss this further in the next chapter.

- The Psychology of Change group was confident about exploring the psychological theory underpinning their focus, and about examining pieces of work in this area, but they felt that group size and absence of group members affected the progress of their inquiry.

Table 6.3: Group Outcomes: Making changes at a Service level

	Question	IG1	IG2	IG3	IG4
	<i>We have...</i>	Res	ISPs	EY	Psy
12G	...introduced changes in practice?	●	●	●	○
13G	...implemented positive changes identified?	○	●		○
14G	...introduced changes in procedures?	○	○		○

Key:	●	●	○	○
	A lot	Quite a bit	A bit	Not at all

Observations

- The Psychology of Change group's opportunities to make changes in practice had been affected significantly by absence of group members.
- The Early Years group felt confident that changes would take place once their research was completed.
- The ISP group had introduced a change to the project bidding form and letter, as a result of their inquiry.
- Several members of the Resiliency group felt confident about trying out the new resources.
- Although the groups felt that not enough time had elapsed to judge the effect of new practices, looking at the next steps (see below) each group makes reference to continuing the cycle of evaluation, to improve practice further.

- In the SWOT activity two of the groups mentioned problems that might be encountered if changes in practice were introduced. For example, resistance to change by those involved, or some differences in interpretation of language/ or models. As the changes had not taken place as yet, these difficulties had not yet been encountered.

Table 6. 4: Other group outcomes and ways forward

15G <i>Have there been any other outcomes?</i>	IG1 Res	Raised awareness of Resiliency within the Service (e.g. asked to present at a conference)
	IG2 ISPs	None
	IG3 EY	Better joint consideration about the service we provide
	IG4 Psy/ch	The experience of IGs as a tool ...it has to be something we experience in the future.
17G <i>What outcomes might be helpful for other EPs?</i>	IG1 Res	Sharing resources collected
	IG2 ISPs	The new 'project bidding' letter will hopefully be of benefit to all EPs if it improves the quality of project bids.
	IG3 EY	Value of involving parents – Structured interview could be adopted for other purposes/ similar multi-agency team settings
	IG4 Psy/ch	If the method of evaluating consultation is successful then other EPs could use this model.
18G <i>How might these be shared?</i>	IG1 Res	Carrying out one of the activities as a Service
	IG2 ISPs	Talking to others
	IG3 EY	Written accounts in learning resource area Put into CPD calendar/focus for meeting
	IG4 Psy/ch	On-line Learning Environment (OLE) email
16G <i>Next steps?</i>	IG1 Res	Apply tools (e.g. Resiliency Wheel) to Service development Collate how tools being used on OLE and gain feedback from settings at a later date; Continuation of IG with protected time.
	IG2 ISPs	Joint planning for projects on similar topics. Evaluate impact of changes on ISPs Sample of ISPs 12 months on for evaluation of sustained impact/ sustainability;
	IG3 EY	Data collection and analysis; Feedback to setting; Consideration of further research.
	IG4 Psy/ch	Collect consultation evaluation survey information; plan next cycle of research

Observations

The information gathered in this (and the previous) section provides some examples of ‘double-loop’ learning – outcomes that, with more time, could be embedded in the organisation’s system, structure and culture

- Changes in practice: the Inclusion Support Project bidding letter was altered to improve the focus of the project bid, and the Resiliency group compiled a file of resources including research articles, background theory and tools/ frameworks for use in schools and other settings
- Changes in procedures: the Early Years interviews with parents could potentially influence the way in which parents are involved in the multi-disciplinary assessment process, and the way in which professionals communicate with parents
- Changes in norms: the Early Years interview schedule could be used /adapted by other EPs evaluating a similar multi-agency service
- Changes in ethos: the Resiliency group recommended that one of the tools – the Ten Element Map – be used to promote emotional well being within the Service

The proposed ‘next steps’ also illustrate ‘generative learning’:

- Creating new ways of looking at the world by bringing together members across the Service, and from outside e.g. parents (Early Years), LA adviser (ISP) and other professionals from a training conference (Resiliency);
- Building capacity to respond to a changing environment by developing a system to evaluate day-to-day practice (Psychology of Change).

6.2.2 Individual evaluations

In the comments below I make reference to responses on the individual questionnaire. Not all of the 15 respondents rated every question and/or gave a response to the question, 'What made this happen?' The question was designed to identify mechanisms, or the reasons or resources that made the outcome happen. The comments that were given have been clustered into common factors. Some examples are given in the observations below. The complete list can be seen in Appendix XXI. As in the group outcome tables, I have ordered the questions according to the strength of response: the question that gained the most positive response is first in the row, and so on. The number of each question can be seen in the first column. The numbers illustrate how many respondents rated the question in this way e.g. 4 respondents rated question 1 as a 4.

Table 6.5: Individual outcomes

	Question	Not at all	A bit	Quite a bit	A lot	
		1	2	3	4	Average
In1	I have up-dated my knowledge in the focus area		3	8	4	3.0
In2	I have explored different models/practices in this area		6	7	2	2.7
In3	I have been introduced to new tools ways of working in this area		6	7	2	2.7
In6	Changes at a personal level	1	5	4	3	2.7
In5	Other changes at professional level	1	3	6	1	2.6
In4	I have broadened my knowledge of research methodology/tools to support the research process		7	7	0	2.5

Observations

- The responses to the 'individual outcome' questions suggest that the strongest effects were upon 'up-dating knowledge' (which confirms the findings in the group evaluation). Examples of mechanisms include discussion/sharing/hearing ideas (3 respondents), reading and discussion in group (3), and linking theory to practice and vice versa (3)
- Being 'introduced to' / 'exploring new tools or ways of working' also has a higher rating. The mechanisms described in these sections relate to aspects to do with the group (6) e.g. discussion, sharing, hearing ideas and also to independent activity (5) e.g. time to read, reflect, collect resources, try out new model.
- Also a fairly consistent (fairly high) response to 'changes at a personal and professional level' was evident. Changes on a personal level, included the support from others (5), while at a professional level, linking theory to practice (3), and bringing together knowledge and expertise (3) were mentioned most frequently.
- Responses to 'broadening research methodology' resulted in the lowest overall score, reported to be mainly due to lack of time. RADIO was the highest occurring (4) positive influence in this question.
- Lack of time and missed meetings were reported as difficulties in a number of different questions, while one respondent reported not enjoying this way of working.

Table 6.6: Outcomes at an organisational level (from the perspective of individual respondents)

Question	By working in IGs there has been a contribution to:	Not at all	A bit	Quite a bit	A lot	
		1	2	3	4	Average
E1	Improved opportunities to learn about and engage with ideas/expertise of colleagues across the Service			4	10	3.7
E4	A culture of developing and improving practice		1	7	7	3.4
E2	The Service becoming more research/ evidence based		2	6	7	3.3
E3	A shift towards a collaborative / knowledge sharing culture		2	8	5	3.2
E6	Service becoming more community based e.g. identifying social support, empowering participants, working preventatively	1	6	5	3	2.7
E5	Changes at an organisational level e.g. policies, procedures and objectives	1	8	4	2	2.5

Observations

- Responses suggest that the strongest outcome was ‘the opportunity to learn about and engage with ideas/expertise of colleagues across the Service’, which confirms the findings in the group questionnaire.
- Allocation of time, was the most commonly occurring mechanism (4). Other factors to do with working collaboratively (2) and aspects to do with how the initiative was organised e.g. involvement in the selection of area of interest (2), cycle of meetings (1), timeline and frameworks (2) were also mentioned.
- 4 respondents made reference to the existing Service culture of working collaboratively, and how the IG initiative provides a structure for this to happen.
- The question on changes at an organisational level has the lowest score overall, again confirming the findings of the group questionnaire. The potential strengths of this as a structure (4), is commented upon.

- Time is described as a factor hindering the Service becoming more 'community based' (2).
- 2 respondents remarked upon the initiative itself promoting community or inclusive values, in the way that it was supportive of members and all members of the Service were involved in moving the Service forward.

6.3 Research Question Two: What processes (mechanisms and contexts) supported or hindered the progress /outcomes of the inquiry groups?

In this research question I was interested in finding out:

- What aspects of the inquiry groups went well and contributed to outcomes reported above (mechanisms)?
- What aspects of the context (including individual, group and organisational factors) supported the initiative?
- What were the hindering factors?

I have gathered data from the following sources to answer these questions:

- the first two sections of the group and individual questionnaires when participants (in groups and individually) were asked to comment on factors contributing to outcomes ('What made this happen?);
- the Process Evaluation section on the individual questionnaire ('Which aspects of the inquiry groups went well, and which not so well?');
- comments during the group discussions, particularly with reference to the tools and frameworks used during the inquiries;
- comments on the progress of the inquiries recorded during support group meetings and in my research diary.

In the 'Process Evaluation' section of the Individual Questionnaire, respondents were given a grid in order to separate out 'what went on inside the groups', i.e. aspects of the inquiry group processes and 'everything that might have affected the Inquiry Groups from the outside' i.e. other influences. The intention here was again to explore mechanisms and contexts. Although

what went on inside/outside the groups is not exactly equivalent to contexts and mechanisms, this broad classification was an attempt to capture the spirit of the RE framework.

I have reported a summary of key themes in the table below. How the themes were developed, checked and then adjusted is described in the methodology. The network tree diagram in the Appendix XVIII illustrates how the themes have been developed from the data, and how they link and overlap. I have grouped the factors into organisational, individual, and group/ programme factors (where programme stands for inquiry groups), although in reality the groupings overlap and some factors could be placed in different tables (see comments below). Initially I had group and programme factors separately, but found it hard to differentiate between them, as the organisation of the programme supported and hindered the progress of the group.

C refers to factors '*outside the programme*' and thus loosely refers to **Contexts**; **M** refers to factors '*inside the groups*' and thus loosely refers to **Mechanisms**. The number illustrates the number of respondents whose responses reflect this factor. I have used these data again, along with other data to review my hypotheses in section 6.

6.3.1 Organisational/ Service factors

The data in this table have been taken from the Process Evaluation section of the Individual Questionnaire.

Table 6.7: Organisational/Service Factors

Supporting factors		No.	Examples of comments
Service culture and ethos	C	2	<i>'Relationships with colleagues'</i> <i>'A culture of sharing work and knowledge'</i>
Support for initiative/allocation of protected time	C	14	<i>'Regular guaranteed time to meet'</i> <i>'Valued by MT and others'</i> <i>'Support from MT'</i>
	M	1	<i>'Protected time coordinated by the MT in liaison with LS'</i>
Hindering factors			
Competing priorities in the Service	C	1	<i>'Other priorities took over e.g. PEP post interviews'</i>

- It seems logical that a factor (such as allocation of time to the group meetings) can be both a context, and a reason why some people felt the initiative worked well. I explore this in more detail in my discussion.
- The strongest factor (mentioned by all but one respondent) is the importance of support from the management team and allocation of time.

6.3.2 Individual factors

The data in this table have been taken from the Process Evaluation section of the Individual Questionnaire.

Table 6.8: Individual factors

Supporting factors		No	Examples of comments
Supportive relationships	M	4	<i>'No cynics or saboteurs'</i>
Willingness to share	M	8	<i>'Enthusiastic group members who were well informed and willing to share'</i>
Ethos of initiative	C M	1 5	<i>'Project was meaningful'</i> <i>'Positive outlook' 'non-judgmental'</i> <i>'Identifying important areas of work and a group of people identifying possible weaknesses and seeking to improve these'</i>
Engaging with the process/ researcher	M	2	<i>'Everybody trying to engage with the process'</i>
Areas of inquiry	C M	2 3	<i>'The work was very much in tune with Service development targets'</i> <i>'Good motivation to explore topic'</i>
Hindering factors			
Lack of 'joining up'	C	1	<i>'Not seeing how it fitted into whole CPD of the Service'</i>
Workload/time constraints	C M	3 1	<i>'How much people got involved depended upon workload at that moment'</i> <i>'Shifting gear from other work'</i>
Lack of engagement with the initiative	M	3	<i>'When not motivated too easy to not contribute to whole discussion'</i> <i>'Not used to giving time over to really 'think' /research' / 'read' – didn't come naturally'</i>

Observations

- The strongest factors here are the supportive relationship amongst EPs and their willingness to share. Although this could be linked to Service culture, and hence context, as it was recorded as an 'inside the group' factor, I have included it as an individual factor and thus a mechanism.
- Support for the process and researcher is also a factor; motivation to explore the inquiry group topics is also a supporting factor.
- I had identified time constraints and this way of working not being to everyone's liking as hindering factors before the initiative started.

6.3.3 Group/ programme factors

The data in this table have been taken from the Process Evaluation section of the Individual Questionnaire.

Table 6.9 Group/ Programme Factors

Supporting factors			
Bringing together knowledge and expertise	C	5	<i>'Making links with people outside the Service' 'Trainees able to offer time to help do interviews'</i>
	M	4	<i>'Having different views – some conflicting views, some completely new ideas'</i>
Links to research	C	2	<i>'Links with doctoral research enabling high quality research within the groups'</i>
Group focus Group skills/motivation	C	2	<i>'Common interest'</i>
	M	5	<i>'Good group membership skills' 'Clear purposes and tasks to work on'</i>
Organisation/logistics	C	5	<i>'Pre-arranged set times with targets for the next meeting' 'A structure to the process'</i>
	M	8	<i>'Support group/facilitator role' 'Relaxing venue'</i>
Tools and frameworks	M	4	<i>'The development of shared language within the group, enabled exploration of themes' 'Models to support thinking'</i>
Hindering factors			
Makeup of the group	M	2	<i>'The group membership was from one team. I think it would have benefited from membership across two teams'</i>
Group size	C	1	<i>'When small there is more chance that circumstances prevent sessions from taking place'</i>
	M	1	<i>'If not all members present, group possibly too small to reflect a breadth of views?'</i>
Absence of group members (not related to group size)	C	5	<i>'Attendance of members'</i>
	M	3	<i>'Missing some sessions means when you come back the group had moved on and you have to spend time catching up.'</i>
Lack of momentum	C	1	<i>'Too much time between sessions – lose momentum'</i>
	M	4	<i>'Gaps between sessions meant hard to feel the progression' 'Process too drawn out' 'dependent on key person'</i>
Organisation /logistics: lack of clarity about meetings, tasks, coordinator	C	2	<i>'Lack of clarity about when IG taking place' 'Missing the key person'</i>
	M	5	<i>'Not having an identified group coordinator for each session' 'No tasks between meetings' 'Sessions at the end of the afternoon'</i>
Time restraints	C	1	<i>'Not enough time to practise with group members... therefore working in isolation'</i>
	M	1	<i>'Time restraints despite allocation'</i>
Tools and frameworks	C	1	<i>'Confusion about when asked to use the Activity Triangle in conjunction with the RADIO process'</i>
	M	5	<i>'Seemed long-winded at times' 'Use of different models sometimes distracted focus of groups'</i>

Observations

- The supporting factor mentioned most often is bringing people together to give a wider perspective, both from within the Service and from outside, that is, other professionals involved with the inquiry topic. Gaining a wider perspective is viewed both as a contextual factor and a mechanism. I think the examples of comments reflect the differences.
- The 'logistics' of the initiative are identified as a strong factor both supporting and hindering the success of the initiative, as are the group factors such as group size, group attendance, and pacing.
- Again, it is interesting that absence is seen by some to be a contextual factor (outside of the control of the initiative), and yet also a mechanism compromising the effectiveness of the IG initiative for some people, and impeding the progress of the group.
- The language of the tools, and what tools to use, had been highlighted as a possible constraint during the SWOT activity. Again, there were conflicting views with regard to tools. This may link to personal preferences or to the nature of the inquiry: some frameworks may have been more appropriate to some inquiries than others.

The following data explore further the effect of the tools and frameworks on the inquiries. These data was taken from responses in the group discussion.

Table 6.10: Evaluation of tools and frameworks used during the inquiries

Tool	Comments
SWOT Analysis	Good starting point to explore organisational issues (one group)
RADIO	Helpful in focusing the inquiries, to identify stakeholders and guiding the group through the next steps. (One group)
Activity Theory Triangle	Helpful in focusing upon outcomes, and prompting an exploration of cultural and organisational factors. Helpful by exploring what went on 'underneath' (the community aspect of the focus) and for mapping out the issues and exploring the tensions. (Two groups)
EBL	Helpful to differentiate between what we think we know and really know, what we want to know, and hence to guide the next steps in research As it is being used by some universities it is important to have an understanding of it. (Two groups)
Realistic Evaluation	Helpful to slot the information gathered in the other frameworks into place (One group)

Observations

- As mentioned above, there were conflicting views on the tools and frameworks used.
- Each tool/ framework was thought to have something to offer.
- One of the groups said that the tools had facilitated shared understanding;
- Another group said that using different tools was valuable, because they provided different 'lenses' through which to view the focus area.

The data in Figure 6.1 illustrate key or critical events that influenced the progress of the inquiries. The data were taken from:

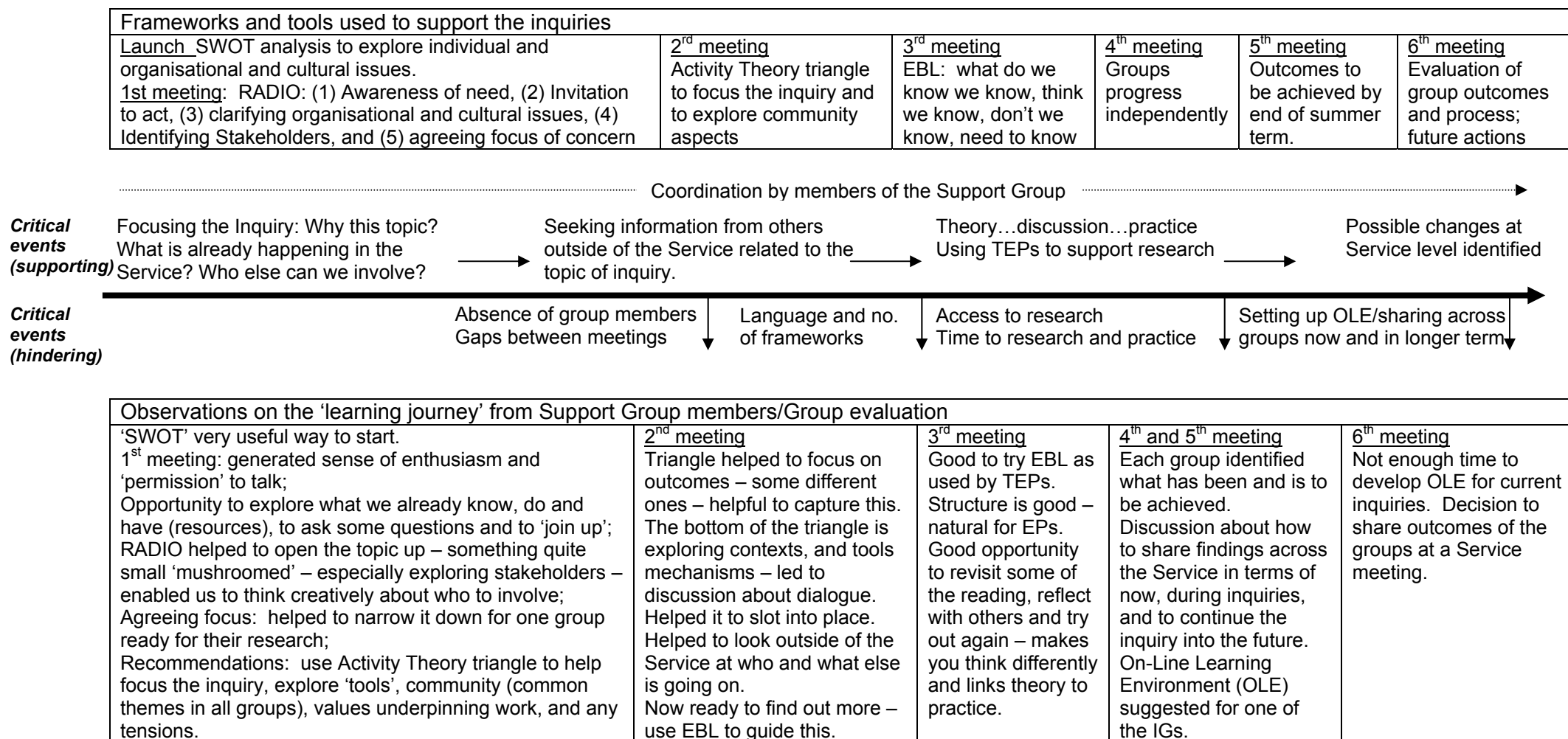
- comments during the group discussions when the inquiry groups were asked to reflect on their 'learning journey' (See Appendix XVI for example of prompt sheet);

- records of support group meetings, when support group members reflected upon the progress of the inquiry at the previous inquiry group meeting.

Each inquiry group followed the same structure, and thus the meeting cycle illustrated took place in every group.

The vertical arrows illustrate events hindering the inquiries; the horizontal arrows events that aided the inquiries. I will be discussing this in more detail in Chapter 7, when I make links to the theory on organisational change and learning.

Figure 6.1 The ‘Learning Journey’



6.4 Research Question Three: How do EPs see the past, present and future with regard to working collaboratively to share and research practice?

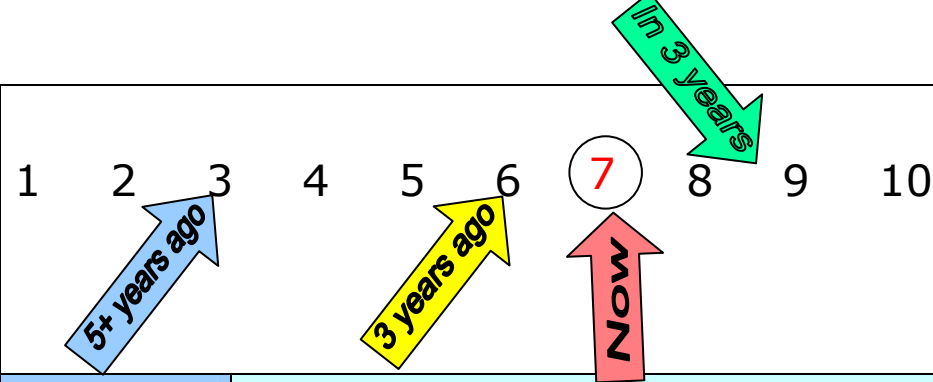
Schein (1990) says that the culture of an organisation determines what it and the people working in it can and cannot do, and that to organise an initiative that is 'counter-culture' will not be successful. In this question I was interested in finding out:

- How do EPs rate the current culture of sharing, researching and developing practice within the EPS?
- How does this compare with the past?
- What significant events have contributed to changes?
- How might this culture be developed further in the future?

The data in Table 6.11 below were taken from the Individual Questionnaire section headed: 'THE PRESENT: Where are we now?'

Table 6.11 Collaborative practice: past, present and future

'On a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 represents an EPS that is fully committed to working collaboratively to share and develop practice, and 1 the opposite of this, where do you think we are now, 5 years ago, 3 years ago? Describe any significant events that you feel have contributed to the changes over time. What would be a target to suit you and the way you like to work over the next 3 years? What would be different?'



Significant events 5 years ago	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of ISPs (n=7) • Changes in personnel (n=2)
Significant events during the last 2 to 3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New EPs (n=3) • Doctoral research/links to universities (n=3) • Opportunities to work collaboratively e.g. ISPs, training (n=2) • Splitting into two teams (n=3) positive and (n=2) negative effect • Consultation frame-work developed collaboratively (n=2) • TEPs (n=2) • Meetings to share (n=1)
Now	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ISPs when carried out in pairs (n=7) • Service culture (including friendly team, commitment to learning and development) (n=6) • Range of collaborative practice/joint work between individuals – it is given more time and status (n=4) • Opportunities to share, including doctoral work (n=4) • Base – located together and rooms to meet (n=2) • IGs (n=2) • Tools used in the Service e.g. PATH (n=1) • TEPs (n=2) • New EPs (n=1) • Peer supervision (n=1) • Flexibility (n=1)
What might this look like in 3 years time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint working: area/ ISPs/IGs/interests - with different people (n=6) • Protected time to develop interest areas/research projects (n=3) • Specialist research unit /linked to commissioning (n=3) • More Service meetings/development time (n=2) • Service supervision model (n=1) • Evidence-based practice (n=1) • New tools/models in practice (n=1) • Diverse service team (n=1) • High quality advice (n=1)

Although there were 15 respondents, only 7 were employed in the EPS 5 years plus ago. In each section respondents gave more than one response.

Observations

- The introduction of ISPs five plus years ago had a significant impact upon collaborative working.
- The majority of respondents perceive that a significant change has taken place over the last 5 years, and opportunities during the last 2 years have consolidated and developed this further.
- New members joining the Service was mentioned by several respondents (with no disrespect to previous members) as they have brought fresh ideas, new skills and different experiences. Other opportunities refer to structures and tools developed within the EPS, which promote and/ or support a collaborative framework, and some refer to establishing relationships outside of the Service.
- A 7 point average rating for 'now' suggests that a 'collaborative working culture' is fairly well established. The range of scores is from 5 to 9; the mode is 8. Service culture and ISPs are the highest scoring factors.
- With regard to changes in the future, 13 respondents said they would like the Service to become more collaborative; 2 said they were happy with where it is at the moment. The fact that no-one said that they would like to become less collaborative is another indicator that the respondents are happy with this way of working, although one respondent emphasised that there needs to be a balance.
- In terms of what might support the Service becoming more collaborative, factors such as:

- Service activities such as identifying key priorities/ways forward as a Service (ideal opportunity with new PEP);
- opportunities to work together on areas of interest such as project work, IGs (also IGs linked to tasks not just sharing /researching practice), ISPs (also linking similar ISPs), specialist areas (e.g. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy), shared responsibilities;
- planning early in the year: linking the above to appraisal/ performance management, allocating and protecting time, putting dates in diary, having a calendar of 'learning events' including sharing our own research/ideas and inviting others in;
- increased Service meetings (as opposed to team meetings) with protocols to ensure everyone contributes, and
- shift in emphasis in Service delivery– an increase in the proportion of research activities was proposed.

I discuss these factors in the next chapter. Links between the responses to this part of the questionnaire, and the next part, identifying priorities in the future, can be seen below.

6.5 Research Question Four: How do EPs view inquiry groups and how might they contribute to priorities for the Service in the future?

In this question I was interested in finding out:

- How do EPs feel about inquiry groups?
- Which features of the initiative would EPs like to take forward?
- How could the process become more meaningful personally and professionally?
- How might inquiry groups support local/national priorities?

I begin this section by reporting the data on the local /national priorities identified by EPs before reporting the data on EP views of the initiative and how these might be developed in the future.

6.5.1 What do EPs feel are the priorities for the Service in the future?

When I first developed the idea of setting up inquiry groups, I was strongly influenced by the ideas of Jensen et al (2002) that educational psychology can and does change itself, in response to external influences, new knowledge and self-review. Thus, I wanted to find out if this was a common view, or if there are other, more pressing priorities for EPs for the future.

The data reported in this section have come from the last section of the Individual Questionnaire: 'THE FUTURE'. There were 42 priorities generated overall in this section. I involved participant EPs in the process of clustering priorities and subsuming them within general categories (see section 5.9.2iv). EPs worked in pairs. As might be expected, the analysis of the data was

developed in different ways by different partnerships. However, it was possible to bring the different analyses together into five broad categories:

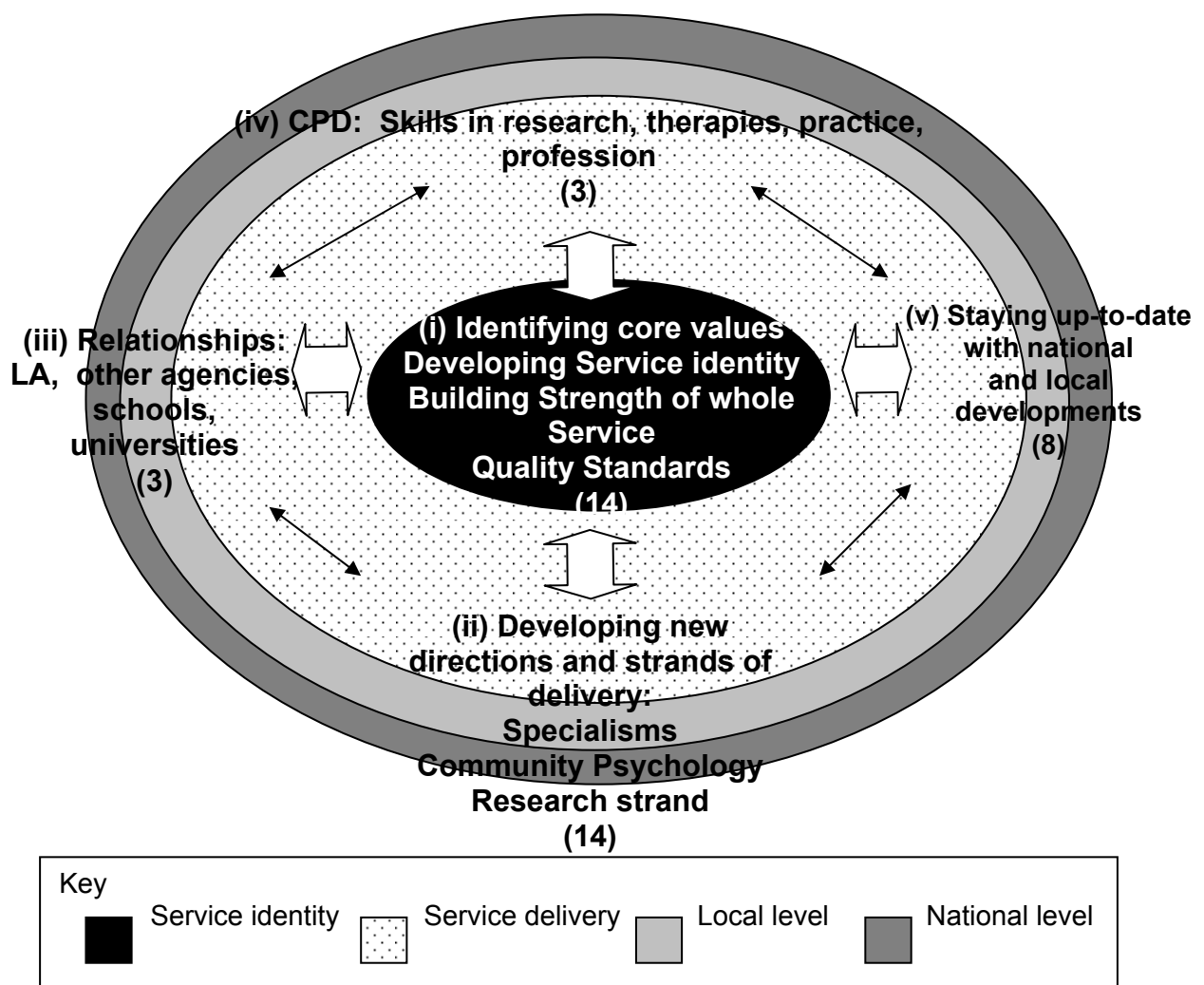
- Developing and /or building upon Service strength and clarifying Service values and identity, in order to support each other and respond confidently to the future (i);
- Developing new strands of Service delivery (ii);
- Building (or building upon existing) relationships with schools and community settings and professionals outside of the Service (iii);
- Developing new skills (CPD) to contribute to the development of the Service response to priorities in the future (iv);
- Staying up-to-date with local and national initiatives (v);

There are three points to consider when reporting these data. Firstly, to separate out these factors is artificial in that some priorities could have been placed in any and every category. For example, developing therapeutic skills could be place in category (iv) (developing new skills) or (i) (identifying core values and identity), (iii) (building relationships with CAMHS) or (ii) (developing new strands of delivery). Secondly, some factors are dependent upon each other e.g. developing new strands of delivery (ii) is dependent upon clarifying core values, direction and purpose (i). Thirdly, counting priorities is also artificial in that I asked for at least 2 priorities, but most people gave more than this. Thus there could be some emphasis on some aspect of development because some respondents, with a particularly strong feeling about this aspect, have provided several priorities in that strand. There are also possible reasons why some priorities may have been prevalent at the particular time of the evaluation. Just before the evaluation questionnaires

were distributed we had a Service day looking at the development of Community Psychology in two different authorities. I will be exploring these and other factors relating to the analysis of the data in my discussion in Chapter 7. The list of priorities and how these were clustered can be seen in Appendix XXII.

I have represented these loosely defined categories in the figure below. The figures in brackets represent the number of priorities grouped within that category (e.g. there were three priorities relating to continuing Professional Development (CPD)). The arrows illustrate how these categories contribute to each other and overlap.

Figure 6.2: EPS priorities in the future



Observations

Clarifying, focusing and building our strength (i)

- 5 respondents prioritised building Service strength and well-being, (including TEPs) e.g. bringing together the two teams, and managing changes positively in the light of the new PEP;
- 7 respondents chose clarifying the values, direction and purposes of the Service, in order to have a clear focus ourselves (e.g. applying psychology to promote emotional health and well-being in Children and young people and the adults who care and work for them, working preventatively at all levels) and to be clearer for the external environment (e.g. clarifying our identity, 'setting out our stall', marketing what we do, developing work for the LAs);
- 2 respondents chose providing 'high quality' input (as opposed to quantity), and demonstration of positive outcomes for children and young people;

New directions (ii)

- 7 respondents prioritised extending the application of psychology to community settings, including extending work with Children's Centres and support for Early Years, continuing to support Looked After Children, that is, developing the 'Community Psychology' strand to our work;
- 4 respondents prioritised developing a research strand, which included continuation of ISPs, and also marketing our skills/publicising existing

research, so that the LA and others routinely think about us carrying out research, instead of using external consultants;

- 3 respondents chose developing specialisms as a priority;

Relationships with the 'external environment' (iii)

- 3 respondents prioritised building relationships with the external environment, e.g. universities through TEPs and doctoral research, other agencies through joint work and liaison, LA through contribution to working groups/ research, and maintaining relationships with schools, as the 'community' strand develops;

Professional development (iv) and (v)

- 3 respondents prioritised developing new skills, such as therapies;
- 8 respondents mentioned staying up-to-date with national developments (e.g. Lamb Enquiry) so that we can be responsive to and proactive in Service Development.

These categories seem to fit loosely into aspects to do with internal integration, and those to do with adaptation/ response to/ relationships with the external environment (Schein, 1990). They also seem to fit into Jensen et al's (2002) dimensions of 'self-review' (i), 'new knowledge (iv) and 'response to external circumstances' (ii, iii and v). I discuss this further in the next chapter.

6.5.2 What do EPs think of Inquiry Groups? How might they contribute in the future?

I wanted to find out how EPs felt about the inquiry groups, in order to inform my understanding of how effective they had been, and also to inform my understanding of whether this is a meaningful way of working for EPs in the future, if not why not, and/ or how they might be improved to become more meaningful. Questions relating to this research question came from the individual questionnaire, questions E7 (section on outcomes for the EPS), F8, 9, 10 and 11 (section on the Future)

Table 6.12: What do EPs think of inquiry groups? How might they contribute in the future?

Question (N = 15)	
<p>E7 Do you think Inquiry Groups are a good thing for promoting personal and Service development?</p> <p>Yes: 15</p>	<p><i>Examples of comments</i></p> <p>'It brings people together in a focused, positive, supportive way, building upon personal and group expertise'</p> <p>'The IGs worked well and certainly helped to shape my knowledge and skills in the area of Resiliency. A good model for both personal and Service development'</p> <p>'It provides a structured vehicle within which to achieve these goals.'</p> <p>'Protected time which is structured is helpful.'</p>
<p>F8 Do Inquiry Groups have a contribution to make to future priorities?</p> <p>Yes: 13 Not sure: 2</p>	<p><i>Key themes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It provides a structure/allocates time to responding to interest/priority areas/Service issues (n=5) • It helps to prioritise and move forward (n=1) • It supports collaborative working (n=2) <p><i>Examples of comments</i></p> <p>'Small groups of people meeting to discuss how we work in important areas is a good idea.'</p> <p>'Yes by increasing knowledge, competency, confidence and collaborative working.'</p> <p>'Maybe but as an individual did not warm to the model or IG process.'</p>
<p>F9 If so, what aspects would you like to take forward?</p>	<p><i>Common themes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected time to meet/timetable meetings set in advance (n=3) • The 'coming together' of colleagues to reflect on practice and the rationale behind our work, to inform practices of whole Service (n=4) • Opportunity for all members to be involved in this way of working (n=2) • Models to support exploration (e.g. RADIO) with simple guide of the steps/models (n=4)
<p>F10 What improvements might be made?</p>	<p><i>Common themes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select the most appropriate framework for the topic e.g. is it a change initiative, or a discussion/collection of resources? (n=4); • Regularity of meetings to maintain momentum - more frequent meetings at the start during exploratory phase and then longer gaps to try out ideas/research as group progresses. (n=6) • Tasks to do/targets to keep on track (n=4) • Closer links to Service/ local/ national/ individual CPD priorities (n=2) • A summary at the end of each meeting to remind what has happened so far – easier for absentees and for next meeting (n=2) • Consistent attendance of all members (n=1) • Better ways of sharing findings across the Service (n=1)
<p>F11 Would you recommend Inquiry Groups, if you were moving to another Service?</p> <p>Yes: 14</p>	<p>'Yes as a way of responding to specific areas of interest/priority'</p> <p>'Yes – it feels like a structured interest group which encourages the group to plan action and have a start/ finish.'</p> <p>'Yes because of the explicit impact and also the implicit impact of such a way of working on the culture and ethos of a Service. It gives permission to think and to act and is a very clear way of developing evidence based practice.'</p> <p>'Depends on the size of the Service'</p>

Overall the response from EPs is positive and EPs have found it a positive way of working, with some 'caveats' and ideas on how to improve in the future.

6.6 Results in relation to hypotheses (CMO configurations)

In this final section I have brought the data together to evaluate my hypotheses. I have outlined revised hypotheses in Table 6.21 and comment on these in relation to the literature on organisational learning in the discussion chapter.

Table 6.13: Review of Individual level Hypothesis 1 (Table 5.7)

<i>(Active commitment to the IG initiative to share, develop and improve areas of practice)</i>			
Context	+	Mechanism	= Outcome pattern
EPs view collaborative research and organisational development activities positively (and have had good experience of these in the past), feels that the initiative will not interfere with other priorities, is important within the current climate locally and nationally, is supported by the management (from existing meeting time) and will be supported by their colleagues.		EPs engage with the initiative because they feel it will be worthwhile	EPs 'sign up' and attends inquiry group meetings EPs view the initiative positively
<u>Observations from data</u> Supporting contexts <i>Data confirm that a collaborative and 'sharing and caring' culture in the Service very important to the initiative.</i> <i>Organisational development activities in terms of building Service strength and clarity of focus is one of the highest rating priorities for the future.</i> <i>Having support from management (in terms of allocation of time, the most important contextual factor).</i> <i>Good support for notion that IGs can support future priorities. Strong feeling that developing and promoting the research aspect of our role is important.</i> Hindering contexts <i>Competing priorities.</i>		<u>Observations from data</u> Mechanisms <i>Almost all of the EPs reported positively on the initiative: e.g. ethos, supporting researcher, supporting each other, interest in topic.</i> <i>Allocation of time.</i> Blocking mechanisms <i>Amount of work, lack of motivation, not a natural way of working, not seeing how it fitted in with Service priorities</i> <i>Lack of time</i>	<u>Observations from data</u> Outcomes <i>All EPs signed up and attended meetings (as far as possible)</i> <i>13/15 EPs reported positively in terms of recommending initiative in the future.</i>

Revision of hypothesis

- This hypothesis is to do with an active commitment to the initiative from both participants and the management. It seems to be fairly well

substantiated by the data. The importance of understanding how the initiative fits in with Service Development plan was raised by some respondents: connecting it to the 'Service vision'.

- The data suggest that the reasons for engaging were generally linked to personal and professional gains, but also, possibly, linked to personal beliefs and values: e.g. it is a 'good thing' to share and support each other, and it is 'good' to feel included in the development of the Service.
- If the initiative or aspects of it were repeated, then the fact that the majority of participants felt that they had gained in some way professionally and/or personally could also become a mechanism. .

Table 6.14: Review of Individual level Hypothesis 2 (Table 5.9, p. 127)

<i>(Interest and involvement in the topic of inquiry)</i>		
Context	+	Mechanism = Outcome pattern
EPs feel that they have been involved in the selection of topic of inquiry, that this is worthy of investigation, and that they have the tools and skills to carry out the inquiry.		EPs engage with the inquiry group because they are interested in the area and want to improve their practice.
<u>Observations from data</u> <u>Supporting contexts</u> <i>Process of selecting topics viewed as positive contextual factor;</i> Hindering context <i>The number of models and frameworks introduced.</i>		<u>Mechanisms</u> <i>Motivation to explore topic reported as a mechanism</i>
		<u>Outcomes</u> <i>75% EPs reported increase in knowledge (quite a lot or quite a bit)</i> <i>Just under half reported changes at a personal level (as above).</i>

Observations from the data

- The topics of the inquiry being in tune with key strands of Service delivery is described as important;

- No mention is made of skills regarding the inquiry (although group membership skills are raised);
- 4 respondents reported positively on the tools and frameworks, 5 negatively.

Revision of the hypothesis

- This hypothesis is related to a commitment to or interest in the area of inquiry. I think the data substantiates the importance of linking topics to key strands of Service delivery (Service Development Plan), and to the individual interests of participants (professional development). That is, they should meet the needs of the individual and the organisation.
- The tools I examine below. At this point I think the data suggest that the participants would prefer to have a range of tools to select from, according to the needs of the inquiry.

Table 6.15 Review of Individual level Hypothesis 3 (Table 5.9, p. 127)

<i>(Bringing together knowledge and experience)</i>			
Context	+	Mechanism	= Outcome pattern
EPs have collaborative relationships with colleagues allied to the inquiry, and access to research in the area.		EPs engage in dialogue with colleagues across the Service (and outside the Service) and access research in the area	EPs extend their knowledge and understanding of the area of inquiry EPs gain new insight into area of practice EPs make links between/across areas of practice
<i><u>Observations from data</u></i> <i><u>Supporting contexts</u></i> <i>Making links with people outside of the Service an important supporting context (5)</i> <i>Links to doctoral research (2)</i>		<i><u>Mechanisms</u></i> <i>Having different views a reported mechanism (4)</i> <i>Blocking mechanism</i> <i>When group is from only one team (2)</i>	<i><u>Outcomes</u></i> <i>(i) See hypothesis 2</i> <i>(ii) One report of 'seeing things differently'</i> <i>Linking theory/ research /practice (3)</i> <i>(iii) Making links across Service reported outcome (3)</i>

Observations from data

- Opening the inquiries up to include others from outside the Service was reported to have had a significant effect upon two of the inquiries – the relationship with them was also mentioned;
- Sharing experiences across the Service is a strong supporting mechanism; making links across the Service to ‘join up’ different strands of delivery occurred in one of the groups, which may be due to the size of the group and the nature of the inquiry topics (e.g. links between the research on resiliency and research on loss and bereavement, and Looked After Children). Having members from only one team was seen as a hindering factor.
- Having access to and time to carry out research were also important supporting and hindering contextual factors e.g. having the support of TEPs and links to doctoral research programmes.
- A number of supporting comments suggest that participants extended their knowledge by some form of interaction with others in the group (discussion, sharing ideas). Hearing diverse views or different perspectives (not necessarily opposing) seems to have been particularly helpful (size of group and hence breadth of views is commented upon). This suggests that participants were engaging in dialogue and that gaining new insights is a mechanism for improving practice, rather than an outcome.
- Several respondents commented upon the initiative overall providing structure to the inquiries, but views on the tools and frameworks adopted to structure the inquiry are mixed.

Revision to the hypothesis

- This hypothesis is focusing upon gaining a wider perspective – from others, from research, that sense of ‘I can see this topic in a new light...’. Engaging in dialogue with a range of other people, and researching the topic is substantiated as a mechanism from the data.
- The tools for guiding the inquiry need to be considered as part of this configuration, and the skills and knowledge to maximise the potential of these tools needs to be added as a contextual factor. The tools and frameworks need to focus and guide the inquiry, but they also need to be ‘fit for purpose’ for the inquiry, and hence the theory and purpose underpinning each tool needs to be understood.

Table 6.16: Review of Group level Hypothesis 1 (Table 5.10, p.128)

<i>(Being part of a team)</i>			
Context	+	Mechanism	= Outcome pattern
EPs have had positive experiences of working in a team previously		EPs feel that team work is a good way of gaining new skills and insights	EPs engage in the group inquiry

Observations from the data

I have not really gained data on this hypothesis, as being part of a ‘team’ is not the same as working collaboratively. It was not a word used to describe the inquiry groups, but came from the American literature and definitions of organisational learning. I plan to abandon this hypothesis: the key point about working in a team is to gain new insights, and this is covered in the previous one.

Table 6.17: Review of Group level Hypotheses 2 and 3 (Table 5.10, p. 128)

I have put the next two hypotheses together as they are closely related.

(A coordinated group effort towards a common goal)		
Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
EPs have good working relationships with members of their group and have the skills to manage potential conflicts during the process.	EPs feel that despite the difficulties associated with group processes the outcome of the inquiry will be worthwhile	EPs engage cooperatively with colleagues in group
Supporting contexts <i>Relationships with colleagues reported as supportive context and mechanism previously</i>	Mechanisms <i>Group membership skills and purposes and tasks to work on, identified as mechanisms (5)</i>	Outcomes <i>All groups reported sharing knowledge etc 'a lot'; All groups reported working together in a coordinated way as either 'a lot' or 'quite a bit'</i>
(Tools and frameworks to support the process)		
Researcher has selected the appropriate frameworks to support the inquiry	EPs feel that the inquiry is moving forwards towards a positive outcome	Outcomes/goals of inquiries achieved.
Supporting contexts <i>Pre-arranged meetings, structure to the process (5)</i>	Mechanisms <i>Models viewed as mechanism (4)</i> <i>Skills/ knowledge of group coordinator (8)</i> <i>Venue (1)</i>	Outcomes <i>All groups report achieving some changes in practice apart from group that suffered from high level of absence.</i>
Hindering contexts <i>Confusion about use of different models (1)</i> <i>Size of group (1)</i> <i>Group attendance (5)</i> <i>Gaps between meetings (1)</i> <i>Lack of clarity about meetings (4)</i>	Blocking mechanisms <i>Models and frameworks (5)</i> <i>Group size (1)</i> <i>Missing meetings (3)</i> <i>Lack of momentum (4)</i> <i>Group coordinator not always present (6)</i>	

Observations from data

- There is a large number of hindering factors impacting upon the progress of the inquiries, some contradicting the supporting factors

above (lack of coordination, gaps between sessions, no tasks, process too drawn out – the tools and frameworks used may also be a contributory factor here).

- Absence of group members is out of the control of the programme, but it affected the momentum for both the absentee (not knowing what is happening) and group members ('old ground' had to be covered)
- Size of group, was also a significant factor: if members were absent from small groups, they are likely not to take place, and then there is a sense of failure, if all other groups appear to be progressing.
- The hindering factors relating to organisational aspects of the initiative seem to have had quite a significant effect upon the momentum of the groups, impeding that sense of coordinated group effort towards a common goal. If the supporting and hindering factors with respect to group and programme factors are summed, the hindering almost equal the supporting factors (32 to 35)
- My hypothesis was surprisingly accurate, although for reasons I had not envisaged.

Revision of hypothesis

- These two hypotheses can be combined to capture the sense of 'We're making progress towards our goal'
- As this was a whole Service initiative, and it was important that meetings were arranged within the existing meeting schedule, there

was very little flexibility regarding timing. However, if inquiry groups ran again, several respondents suggested that there should be closer meetings in the early stages and then longer gaps to carry out research, or try out new methods.

- Participants also need to have more involvement in focusing the inquiry, not just establishing goals, outcomes, and who else to involve, but also the timing (from within allocated time), time scale and selection of frameworks to support the process.

Table 6.18: Review of Organisational level Hypothesis 1 (Table 5.11, p. 128)

<i>(Creating time to talk)</i>				
Context	+	Mechanism	=	Outcome pattern
The management values and is responsive to change initiatives		EPs feel better informed by exploring the underlying assumptions and theory/ research in the area of inquiry		EP changes practice in area of inquiry;
Supporting contexts <i>Management support /allocating time strong contextual factor (14)</i>		Mechanisms <i>EPs gained from sharing/ discussion (3)</i> <i>reading/research (1)</i> <i>Reading/discussion (3)</i> <i>Collecting resources (2), linking theory to practice (3), taking time to focus (3)</i> Blocking mechanisms <i>Need more practice to feel confident</i>		Outcomes <i>75% EPs reported increase in knowledge (quite a lot or quite a bit) and having been introduced to new tools/ ways of working.</i> <i>Just under half reported changes at a personal level.</i>

Observations

- 3 out of 4 inquiry groups felt that they had introduced changes in practice 'a bit' or 'a lot' although there was a lower rating for having implemented changes.
- I did not gather direct data on the proportion of participants who had changed their practice as a result of the IGs, although three quarters reported an increase in knowledge ('quite a bit' or 'a lot') and the same number that they had been introduced to new tools/ ways of working. Just under half reported 'other changes at a professional level'
- Some participants mentioned that they feel more confident in their practice, having returned to or explored the theory/research underpinning that area.
- One hindering factor was that there was not enough time to practise, with supportive colleagues.

Revision of hypothesis

- Consideration of this hypothesis has led me to think that it is not just exploring the cultural issues and assumptions, and researching the area, that makes a difference to whether participants change their practice, but it is more to do with a recursive cycle – moving between dialogue/theory and practice e.g.

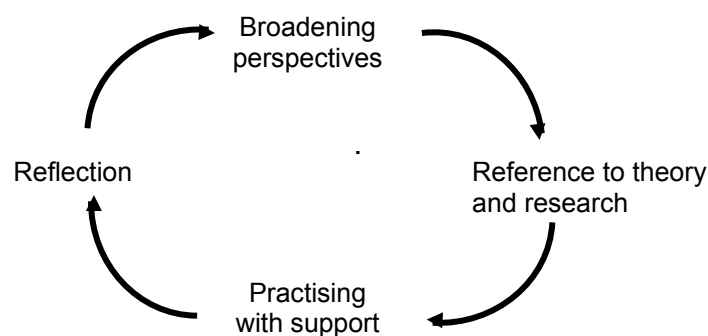


Table 6.19: Review of Organisational level Hypothesis 2 (Table 5.11, p. 128)

<i>(New Practices become embedded in the practice and culture of the organisation)</i>			
Context	+	Mechanism	= Outcome pattern
The organisation has systems for sharing practice across the Service		EPs access outcomes of other inquiry groups, which influences their practice	Outcomes (and new ways of working) shared across the Service.
Supporting contexts <i>Sharing information through meetings reported by 1 group.</i>		Mechanisms <i>Group outcomes shared at Service meeting</i>	Outcomes <i>Less than half EPs felt that any changes in practice/policy were achieved</i>
Hindering contexts <i>Not enough time to establish system on the Intranet.</i>		Blocking mechanisms <i>Too early to judge (2) although has the potential (4)</i>	

Observations

- All groups shared outcomes from their inquiries at a Service meeting;
- One group had sent a draft document by email to all participants during the inquiry, and adjusted this in the light of suggestions;
- One group had compiled a set of resources available for others in the Service library;
- One group hoped to set up a 'message board' on the on-line learning environment for feedback on the use of tools and resources, but there was not enough time to set this up.
- Less than half EPs felt that any changes in policy/procedures had been achieved: lack of time was reported to be a contributory factor and hence realise the potential of the inquiries.
- I have kept this hypothesis as it stands.

Table 6.20: Review of Organisational level Hypothesis 3 (Table 5.11, p. 128)

<i>(Working together for the future)</i>			
Context	+	Mechanism	= Outcome pattern
The Service values collaborative research initiatives and EPs enjoy these activities		EPs feel that it is important to work together to 'continuously improve' and respond to new challenges/ initiatives	Changes in the way that the EPS carries out 'in-house' research and development activities in response to internal and external priorities.
Supporting contexts <i>EPs rates collaborative working currently as 7 out of 10. EPs identify building good relationships with LA, other professionals, and universities as high priorities for the future. EPs believe it is important for EPS to clarify values, direction and identity and to support members of the Service</i>		Mechanisms <i>EPs identify priorities in building an internally strong service, providing high quality service, with a strong research and community base, which can be responsive to local and national priorities</i>	Outcomes <i>EPs feel the following will change the way the Service is able to respond to internal and external priorities: Collaborative opportunities that fit in with Service, local and national priorities, planned early and with an allocation of time;</i>

Observations

- Data suggest that the majority of participant EPs value collaborative working (although this is not necessarily the same as collaborative research);
- Data suggest that it is important to work together and be responsive to external circumstances: one third of the priorities identified by participants were related to building a Service that is internally strong, and two thirds were related to building relationships, developing skills and new strands of delivery that will support the Service into the future.
- It is too early to tell whether there are any changes in the way that the EPS carries out research and development activities in the light of this study, but that could be evaluated at a future date.

Having examined my hypotheses in the light of my findings, I have revised them in the table below. I realise that it is artificial to separate them out into individual, group/programme and organisational factors, as aspects of all of these are captured in the configurations. The revisions are shown in purple.

Table 6.21: Revised hypotheses (new theories) regarding Inquiry Groups, a learning and development activity

Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
<i>Theory 1: (Active commitment from management and EPs to the initiative)</i>		
EPs view collaborative research and organisational development activities positively, and feel that the initiative is closely related to the Service Development Plan , will not interfere with other priorities, is important within the current climate locally and nationally, is supported by the management (from existing meeting time) and will be supported by their colleagues.	EPs engage with the initiative because they feel it is worthwhile to work together to support each other, to be involved in Service Development, to gain personally and professionally.	EPs 'sign up' and attend inquiry group meetings EPs view the initiative positively
<i>Theory 2: (Commitment to or interest in the topic of inquiry)</i>		
EPs feel that they have been involved in the selection of topic of inquiry, that it is worthy of investigation (links to Service and/or professional development), and that they have the tools and skills to carry out the inquiry.	EPs engage with the inquiry group because they are interested in the area and want to improve their practice	EPs gain knowledge and/or skills in area of inquiry EPs feel supported by others
<i>Theory 3: (Taking a wider perspective – listening to others, referring to recent research)</i>		
EPs have collaborative relationships with colleagues allied to the inquiry, believe that working with others is a good way of gaining new insights, have the time and means to access research in the area, and the skills and frameworks to do so.	EPs gain new insights by engaging in dialogue with colleagues across the Service (and outside the Service) and by referring to research in the area	EPs extend their knowledge and understanding of the area of inquiry EPs gain new insight into area of practice EPs make links between/across areas of practice

<i>Theory 4: (A coordinated group effort towards a common goal)</i>			
EPs have good working relationships with members of their group, have the skills to manage group processes during the inquiry, the flexibility to select time frames and tools to support the inquiry, and strategies to cope with absence of group members.	EPs feel involved in focusing and planning the inquiry and feel that the group is moving towards its goal/ a positive outcome	EPs engage cooperatively with colleagues in group Outcomes/goals of inquiries achieved.	
<i>Theory 5: (Linking theory to practice)</i>			
The management values and is responsive to change initiatives and provides the time to move through cycles of research/ action/ reflection	EPs feel better informed by exploring the underlying assumptions and theory /research in this area, and more confident when this is combined with practice in the field.	EPs change practice in area of inquiry;	
<i>Theory 6: (Embedding the findings in the culture and practice of the Service)</i>			
The organisation has easily accessed systems for sharing practice across the Service	EPs access outcomes of other inquiry groups, which influences their practice	Outcomes (and new ways of working) shared across the Service, and continue to be reviewed in the light of feedback and evaluation.	
<i>Theory 7: (Working together for the future)</i>			
Context	+	Mechanism	= Outcome pattern
The Service values collaborative research initiatives and is responsive to external influences, new knowledge and self-review.		EPs feel that it is important to work together to 'continuously improve' and respond to new challenges/ initiatives	Changes in the way that the EPS carries out 'in-house' research and development activities in response to internal and external priorities.

Having presented the results, I now go on to discuss my research study. I start with a critique of my methodology, referring back to the methodological issues outlined earlier. I then discuss my findings in relation to my research questions, new hypotheses, and the research and theory underpinning the inquiry group initiative. Finally, I discuss my findings in relation to the current and future contexts for EPSs. I have structured the chapter in this way because the critique of methodology informs discussion of my hypotheses.

Also, the final sections relate directly to my concluding chapter, when I reflect on the study and implications for similar initiatives in the future.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter:

- I provide a critique of my methodology, including the RADIO model used to structure the initiative, realistic evaluation as a methodological approach to evaluation, the design of the data collection tools, and ethical factors, including the analysis of data (7.2);
- I discuss my revised hypotheses (new programme theories) in relation to the research and theory on organisational learning referred to in the literature review, and some recent discussion papers (7.3), and finally
- I discuss the potential role of inquiry groups in the future (7.4).

In the concluding chapter I reflect upon my research purposes, consider implications for practice and redraw my conceptual framework (in diagrammatic form) regarding organisational change initiatives in organisations such as EP Services. I also refer back to definitions of organisational learning in the light of this study, and finally, I reflect upon my own learning.

7.2 Critique of methodology

In this section:

- firstly, I discuss focusing, planning and management of the evaluation (7.2.1);
- secondly, I discuss the use of RADIO to focus and structure the initiative and the evaluation (7.2.2);
- thirdly, I discuss my research design, Realistic Evaluation (7.2.3),
- fourthly I discuss methods of data collection (7.2.4), and finally
- I discuss ethical factors, including the analysis of data (7.2.5).

I reflect upon my personal stance to research within these sections and I discuss issues relating to setting up and managing the initiative in section 7.3, when I revise my programme hypotheses.

7.2.1 Focusing, planning and managing the evaluation

I found the structure of *focusing*, *planning* and *managing* the evaluation from Merten (1998), plus prompts from Brinkerhoff et al (1983) and Robson (2002) very helpful (see Table 5.2, p. 98).

Focusing

Merten's (1998) framework encouraged me to articulate, and represent in different ways, the nature of the IG initiative and thus what is to be evaluated. Representing the structure of the IG initiative in diagrammatic form (Figure 1.1, p. 7) and the central ideas in a conceptual framework (Figure 4.4, p. 85) using guidelines from Miles and Huberman (1994) not only helped to put a

'boundary' around the initiative, but also helped to clarify my ideas and the underpinning theories and research, when presenting my ideas to others.

In the next stage of the focusing process, clarifying purposes, I found it helpful to consider what type of evaluation I was interested in, which then influenced my choice of research design, and to show how the purposes link to the literature and research questions (see Table 5.1, p. 91). Again, this helped to keep some boundaries around the study and the data collection, and to keep a tight rein on the links between the initiative and the evaluation.

The next stage of the focusing process, considering stakeholders, which in this study included the management and EPs, was important when focusing and planning both the initiative and the evaluation. Considering and involving stakeholders at this stage had three functions. The first was to show respect for stakeholders, and to make sure that their needs were considered in terms of implementing the initiative and in the process of data analysis and reporting (Timmins et al, 2003). The second was related to literature on organisational change initiatives (Timmins et al, 2003), which argues that the outcomes are more likely to become embedded in the organisation's structure if they meet the needs of the individuals and the organisation. The third function related to my constructivist perspective on research: I valued the diversity of opinions from participants, and aimed to capture these to inform the process of the initiative and the evaluation. I thus involved EP participants (stakeholders) in the early stages of focusing and planning the initiative and the evaluation. I also spoke to other EPs, as they were also 'stakeholders' with regard to a

professional initiative. I would like to have opened the research up to a wider range of stakeholders, as the feedback from participants in this study found that to be important to the progress of their inquiry. I could have contacted EPs in other Services who have engaged in similar initiatives or spoken to Service users or Local Authority officers, who are affected by Service delivery.

The next stage, considering the constraints, was also very important to both the initiative and the evaluation. The obvious constraints related to time (for us all), and getting everyone 'on board'. Another major constraint was keeping everyone informed of the research methodology and ethical issues, at the same time as presenting and explaining the initiative. I split this between two sessions, but suspect that it was still too much (see Appendices III and VI). I had better feedback from the first session than the second. This may have related to contextual factors (timing and location) but if I was finding it difficult to come to grips with the literature and theory underpinning organisational learning, and a new methodological approach (realistic evaluation), I am sure that my colleagues were. I think that using an example of a very familiar activity (precision teaching) to practise the development of theories on contexts, mechanisms and outcomes, was successful, however, and encouraged me with respect to application of realistic evaluation to evaluate EP practice in the future.

Planning

I selected realistic evaluation as an evaluation model as I felt that it would meet the needs of this study and because I was keen to develop my

understanding and skills in applying this model in future research studies. I knew that 'getting to grips' with realistic evaluation and to apply it to such a complex study, would be difficult. However, I was looking to develop a theory of intervention (programme theory), based upon a synthesis of different psychological theories and research evidence. The way in which Pawson et al (2004) describe the complexity of intervention programmes seemed to fit my programme exactly. I discuss my use of realistic evaluation in section 7.2.3 below.

It was important to plan the methods of data collection and analysis early on in the study. I wanted to capture some data on process factors during the initiative as well as at the end (e.g. audio tapes of support group meetings), and thus this needed to be put in place from the first meeting. I was keen for the initiative and evaluation to be interactive and iterative, with opportunities for participants to inform the process of the initiative and the evaluation, including the data analysis. Having devised a range of data collection tools, it was helpful to plot these against purposes and research questions, to make sure that every aspect was covered with at least one source of data (see Table 5.13, p. 142).

Management

Giving thought to the management of the evaluation, including the logistics of the initiative and the evaluation was also important at the planning stage, as the participants needed to be fully informed of the arrangements before committing to the initiative and evaluation. The 'meta-evaluation' plan could

have been more focused. Although participants were invited to a focus group to contribute to the interpretation and analysis of data (which received a good response both in terms of attendance and feedback), and an early version of data analysis was fed back to all participants (see Appendix IX), there was not sufficient time to involve participants in planning how the findings might inform similar initiatives in the future. This was, however, a question in the questionnaire, and an analysis of data from this question is reported in Table 6.12, p. 190.

7.2.2 Use of RADIO to structure the IG initiative

One difficulty at this point was focusing and planning the initiative at the same time as focusing and planning the evaluation. Later on in the study, I was also managing the initiative and the evaluation. Using RADIO as a framework (Timmins et al, 2003) to support the structure and management of the initiative and the evaluation (see Appendix II) was very helpful, especially when these processes were running in parallel and at times interacting with and influencing each other.

I used RADIO (Timmins et al, 2003) as in one of my core studies (Timmins et al, 2006) it had proved to be an effective vehicle for supporting the evaluation of EP Service development initiatives, given a relatively short period of time. I found that it not only helped to structure the evaluation, but also helped me to consider key issues at each of the phases: clarifying concerns, research methods, and organisational change.

I would certainly use this framework again as a way of structuring an EP Service improvement initiative. As mentioned above, in future I would give more attention to the organisational change phase, to increase the probability that findings would become embedded into the organisation. I think that the use of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was one way of clarifying organisational and cultural issues regarding the initiative. I think it would be helpful to consider the organisational and cultural issues regarding organisational change and development as well as the focus of the research (Timmins et al, 2003)

7.2.3 Realistic Evaluation

In this section I discuss *programme theory*, *theory development*, *development of hypotheses/ CMO configurations* and the *Realistic Evaluation Cycle*.

Programme Theory

I am pleased that I adopted realistic evaluation, one of the theory-driven methodologies, as my methodological approach to the evaluation of the inquiry group initiative. I think that evaluation of the inquiry group initiative was possibly made more complex by the fact that I was setting it up, a participant in the process, and carrying out the evaluation. However, the core principle of realistic evaluation, making explicit the underlying assumption about how an intervention is supposed to work (programme theory), made me think very carefully about my own assumptions (on the basis of reading literature on organisational learning) at the early stage of focusing and

planning the initiative. I also think that it is important to have a theoretical base that informs a programme and its evaluation (Timmins & Miller, 2007).

Initially I thought that the inquiry group initiative seemed to be more complex than, for example, training programmes (Pawson et al, 2004) in the way that it was working on different levels (individual, group and organisation). Pawson et al (2004), however, reminded me that in fact all intervention programmes are as complex ('complex systems thrust amidst complex systems'). Pawson et al's (2004) description of the complexities of programmes (see section on p. 114) was borne out in my study, and I would certainly use this as a starting point when considering other intervention programmes. I discuss these points in the light of my findings in the table below:

Table 7.1: The nature of programmes (Pawson et al, 2004) and IGs

The nature of programmes	Data from IG evaluation
Human intentions and motivations influence their actions.	The data in Table 6.8 on individual factors illustrate the importance of intentions (to support and share with colleagues) and motivations (to explore topics) were important to the success of the initiative.
There is a non-linear chain of steps or processes, each of which is subject to negotiation and feedback, and can 'trigger' or 'misfire' at any point.	A number of hindering factors relating to group or programme factors are reported in Table 6.9, and illustrated in Figure 6.1.
The success of the intervention depends on the cumulative success of the entire sequence of these mechanisms as the programme unfolds.	Despite some 'misfiring', over the whole sequence of events, there was some cumulative success (Tables 6.1-6.6), and the initiative was adapted and developed within the different inquiry groups (see Appendix VIII)
The likelihood that interventions will be modified as they are implemented (adaptation and local embedding) and change, through learning, as stakeholders come to understand them.	I think that the level of prescription (each group using the same tools/ frameworks) was one of the weaknesses of the initiative, but this has informed my understanding for future initiatives.

Interventions are embedded in and shaped by multiple social systems.	I found it very helpful to have Pawson et al's (2004) four contextual factors (see Figure 4.1) to represent the 'multiple social systems' to structure the literature review and my conceptual framework and theory development: the infrastructure; the institution; interpersonal relations, and individuals.
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Theory development

My initial 'collection of theories' began with a literature search. This helped to inform an early 'programme theory' (Table 5.7, p. 123). It was impossible for me to gain 'folk wisdom' from stakeholders regarding the programme, when they had not experienced it yet. I feel that the SWOT analysis was a good compromise. It was suggested by a member of the management team as a way of involving participants in the theory development, and gauging their feelings about the initiative, along the lines of a force field analysis. Although there were a number of inhibiting factors (weaknesses) identified, there were very few 'threats'. If there had been more threats, I would have had to reconsider the initiative. Pawson and Tilley (1997) say that you should use whatever methods are best suited to the task. I think that the SWOT analysis worked well in the circumstances, and allowed everyone to be involved. It also generated some dimensions that I could use in the evaluation questionnaire. Although generating strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats is not a complete match to contexts, mechanisms and outcomes, I think the way that I asked participants to comment on supporting and hindering factors from an individual and organisational perspective, gave me some feeling for prevailing contextual factors and mechanisms. It is

interesting that almost all of the factors identified (see Appendix IV) were important in the final programme evaluation.

Development of hypotheses/ CMO configurations

Having developed a range of theories regarding contexts and mechanisms, from the literature review and the SWOT analysis, I then had to combine these into CMO configurations. This was the hardest task and it would have helped to have a co-researcher. The analysis of theories was largely dependent upon my interpretation of the theories that I had collected from the literature and the participants, in their anticipation of the initiative. Pawson and Tilley (1997) say that 'empirical work in program evaluation can only be as good as the theory which underpins it' (p. 83). However, I tried to see my first attempts at CMO configurations as a 'very rudimentary theory but also with eyes for other possibilities ' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 82)

I decided to 'sift and sort' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) my theories into CMO configurations which broadly linked to individual, group and organisational factors. I wanted to find out why and how individual EPs might gain from this initiative, that is, what works for whom in what circumstances. I accepted that there would be an interaction between individual, group and organisational factors, especially when using the RE framework which explores the connection between individual factors (reasoning and choices) and contexts, but I thought that it would help to have hypotheses with a 'dominant' theme, such as 'culture of the Service' or 'motivation of participants'. I think that it

was the right thing to have a range of theories, but in future I would perhaps take one aspect (e.g. culture of the Service) and explore this in more detail.

Realist Evaluation Cycle

The Realist Evaluation Cycle (Figure 5.7, p.122) helped me to make sense of some regularities in the meanings and ideas influencing people's actions (see revision of hypotheses in Table 6.21, p.203). I feel that I have reached a greater degree of programme specification in my newly developed theories or CMO configurations. There should, however, have been another phase to detail the participants' reflections on how my hypothesised mechanisms and contexts of the programme had influenced them. I like the idea of further cycles of refinement of hypotheses to find the conditions in which inquiry groups are most likely to be effective, so that this knowledge, over time, becomes more closely linked with reality (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

'Evaluation and social science generally only ever come to temporary resting places, and that 'findings' take the form of specifying those 'regularities' or 'outcome patterns' which the present state of our understanding of 'mechanisms' and 'contexts' is able to sustain' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 86).

I accept that the hypotheses developed in this research study will need further revision, in terms of the 'interplay' between contexts, mechanisms and outcomes, but I can see how it is possible gradually, through further observations, to come to a closer understanding of the success and /or failure of learning and development activities in an organisation such as an EPS.

I now discuss data collection and how this helped to answer my research questions.

7.2.4 Data collection

My research questions were as follows:

- What are the outcomes/ effects of the inquiry groups for individuals and the organisation?
- What processes facilitated or inhibited the progress of the inquiries?
- How do EPs view inquiry groups?
- How do inquiry groups fit into the existing culture in the EPS, and the external context in education and educational psychology?
- How might the inquiry group model support the development of the EPS in the future?

7.2.4i Aspects that went well with the methods of data collection

There were seven methods of collecting data. I now refer to aspects relating to each of these methods that went well; I discuss concerns about the methods selecting in 7.2.4ii below, and concerns regarding validity in section 7.2.5iii below.

1. SWOT analysis carried out by each inquiry group at the launch of the initiative

I was pleased with the SWOT analysis: it gave some indication of my colleagues' views of opportunities, versus threats; it provided an opportunity to involve participants in thinking about the study before they started their inquiries, and I was able to use the data generated as part of the group evaluation and group discussion.

II. audio-tape recording of the support group sessions, to inform and capture data on the process and progress of the inquiries, and the initiative;

The recordings of the support group meetings were particularly helpful in capturing significant events during the initiative (see Figure 6.1). It would have been better to have transcribed each tape after each meeting, but running and participating in the initiative as well as thinking about the evaluation made this impossible. I think that making notes as in a 'contact summary sheet' (Miles & Huberman, 1994) was the best I could do at the time, and I had the tapes for more detailed consideration later on.

III. my research diary to track the process of and reflection on the progress of the initiative;

My research diary was invaluable in terms of observations on the process and my own feelings and experiences.

IV. written records provided by inquiry groups at the end of each meeting

These worked well when there was a pro forma for the group to respond to (e.g. RADIO) but I should have given more thought to this, particularly to help with the issue of absenteeism. Having a pro forma to record key points was recommended by one participant as an improvement in the future.

V. group questionnaires, completed by each inquiry group at the final inquiry group meeting (see Appendix XV)

The group questionnaire provided data on both outcomes and processes. Interestingly, the language on the group questionnaire was not as accessible as the individual questionnaire, which I had piloted extensively. I thought that if I was using the EPs' own language (from the SWOT analysis) it would be clear enough. I shall remember in future to pilot all questionnaires.

VI. group discussion, carried out by each inquiry group at the final inquiry group meeting (Appendix XVI)

The group discussion yielded some helpful data on factors facilitating or inhibiting the process of the inquiries. Moving round the realist evaluation cycle, reminded participants of the things that had happened and prompted comments, for example, on the tools and frameworks.

VII. individual questionnaire, distributed at the end of the initiative (see Appendix XIV).

I was pleased with the individual questionnaire. The response rate of 93% (15 out of 16) is excellent for a 'postal' questionnaire (Robson, 2002, quotes 70%), which helps to reduce risks of bias (Robson, 2002). I think this reflects the commitment and support of my colleague participants. One of the support group members said that the individual questionnaire captured the different 'layers' of the study, which was my intention.

I think the rating scales worked fairly well to inform outcomes of the study, but the validity of the responses could be challenged: how do I know how much the inquiry group initiative contributed to any changes in knowledge or practice, as opposed to participants reading on their own, or discussing the area with a colleague in the office? There was some triangulation from outcomes in the group and individual questionnaires. An additional rating scale could have been included to elicit participants' rating of the extent to which they felt participating in the initiative had helped them to achieve the various outcomes (as opposed to working alone) and their degree of satisfaction with the initiative.

Having the prompt 'What made this happen' in the two first sections of this questionnaire (Outcomes for individual EP and Outcomes for EPS) worked well, as this gave some data on mechanisms, although as predicted, not everyone responded to this prompt. The next section of the individual questionnaire (Process Evaluation), which asked for supporting and hindering factors 'inside' and 'outside' the inquiry groups, generated data to further inform the mechanisms and contexts. I found it very interesting that factors such as 'supportive relationships' could be both a mechanism (a reason to engage in dialogue and the inquiry) and a contextual factor (the circumstances that contributed to the success of the initiative).

In the next section of this questionnaire ('The Present: where are we now?') the Salmon line worked well in capturing the collaborative culture, and events contributing to this. In the final section of this questionnaire ('The Future') the

generation of future priorities was a good idea in terms of capturing EP views on the external context, and the way forward in the future. It caused some difficulties in terms of being able to comment upon respondents' views on the most important priorities, as different numbers of priorities were given by each respondent. In future I might ask participants to rate according to importance.

I think it was important to ask the question about whether EPs think that inquiry groups are a 'good thing' (question E7, Outcomes for EPS), whether they would recommend them (question F11 in The Future section), and whether they think that IG groups have a contribution to make to future priorities, as this was a good indicator of how EPs felt about the initiative (one of my key research questions). Asking EPs what aspects of the initiative they would like to take forward and what improvements might be made (question F9 and F10 in The Future section) helped to reinforce the data collected in the Process Evaluation section (supporting and hindering factors).

7.2.4ii Concerns regarding data collection methods

I have two main concerns regarding my selection of data collection; firstly, that I did not carry out any 'realistic interviews' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

Although by having a questionnaire I was able to gather data from all participants, I think that I would have been able to develop further and clarify CMO configurations by asking the following questions:

- What is it about inquiry groups (if anything) that brings about change?
What resources and reasons does it offer which may influence
behaviour? (Mechanism question)

- What is it about the subjects and circumstances of the programme that encourages or inhibits the firing of programme mechanism? (Context question)
- In what circumstances was the programme successful? (and when was it not)? (Outcome question) (Adapted from Pawson & Tilley, 1997)

Secondly, I had some gaps in my data collection with regard to testing my hypotheses. I had linked the data collection tools to my research questions, and my hypotheses were linked to the research questions, but there was not an exact match. This made analysis of the hypotheses open to interpretation. For example, I did not actually ask either individuals or groups if they had gained 'new insights' (Individual level hypothesis 3, Table 6.15, p. 194); I assumed that 'gaining new knowledge or skills' was equivalent to this, but in retrospect I can see that it is not. Also, I did not ask about participants' views on working as part of a team, or group (Group level hypothesis 1, Table 6.16, p. 196). Again, I viewed this as equivalent to working collaboratively, but when I came to review this hypothesis I realised that it was not. I think both of these would have been important to find out about, and in future I will link data collection to hypotheses as well as research questions.

7.2.5 Ethical factors

As described in Chapter Five, I discuss ethical factors under the headings of respect for and responsibility to participants, responsibility to sponsors of research, and responsibility to the community of educational researchers.

7.2.5i Respect for and responsibility to participants

I had two key concerns at the outset of this study with regard to the study and my personal methodological stance, both of which are related to showing respect to participants. My first key concern was that I had not been commissioned to carry out this research: I was carrying out research on an idea that I had conceived, albeit I hoped, relevant to the professional setting of the EPS. I had a dilemma: I wanted the research process to be interactive and iterative, to show respect for participants, and yet I also respected their time and did not want to overburden them by involving them too much in the process.

I think my selection of RADIO (Timmins et al, 2003) to support the planning of the initiative and evaluation, and Realistic Evaluation, as the methodological approach to the evaluation, brought me as close as possible to overcoming this dilemma and to a relationship somewhere between 'building bridges between research and user' and 'researcher-client' equality (Robson, 2003), my preferred personal stance to research methodology. I would have preferred to have had at least a co-researcher, with whom to develop research purposes and questions and to support the theory development, data collection and analysis. Robson, (2002) advises that when engaged in 'practitioner-research' 'work in a team whenever possible' (p. 537). He suggests that change initiatives can be particularly stressful, but that there are also practical advantages in assessing reliability of observational and other data, sharing perceptions about issues, and developing conceptual structures.

With the help of the support group I think I succeeded in making the inquiry groups iterative and interactive. Participants were also involved in initial theory development, piloting of data collection tools, and analysis and interpretation of data. I certainly felt like a 'go-between' at times 'moving between the theoretical/ research base and the views of participants' (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The interaction between the different inquiry groups was not as successful as I had hoped. However, there seems to have been some sense gained of inquiry groups as a collaborative endeavour. One member of the support group comments:

'Everybody is aware of what is going on. Everybody is feeding things in and we share it together. We are the people doing the work. We are tasking ourselves with things and we're shaping it and taking responsibility for it. If the Service is working really well then everyone feels involved and as if they are owning the direction. This feels like an example of that. And because the conversations have been happening simultaneously people have been saying 'What's the resource folder looking like?' It's been in our common language – everybody has known what is happening and has been more interested in those areas.'

My other key concern regarding respect for and responsibility to participants was that I was a participant in the process. Whilst I was not a 'complete participant' to the extent that I was 'covert' or 'manipulative' in my perspective (Robson, 2002, p. 317), and I recognised my responsibility as a participant who is also a data gatherer to 'inform those in the setting about the research (i.e. what sort of research it is, for what purposes, and who is involved) (Kirby and McKenna, 1989, p. 78 in Robson, 2002, p. 317), this was a real challenge for me as I had to describe and explain principles underpinning the initiative as well as the evaluation. I did not have any negative feedback regarding the way in which I had communicated and informed participants, although I sensed that to introduce the model of evaluation at the same time as the initiative was too much. On the other hand, I wanted participants to have the

full picture before signing up to the initiative. It would have been dishonest and disrespectful to participants to engage them in the initiative without explaining the nature of the evaluation and its implications. I think it would have been a more manageable task if participants were either familiar with the initiative or the method of evaluation.

Another issue relating to my participant researcher status, was that participants might have found it difficult to 'opt out' of the initiative, or the evaluation. Once they had 'signed up' they may have found it difficult to withdraw in case they let me or other colleagues down. I think this is one of the dilemmas of 'practitioner-research' as well as participant research. As mentioned by Paffrey (1991), an educational psychologist working on community change initiatives, it may have been that EPs felt that they 'ought' to say yes, which may have led to some feeling of resentment.

I gave careful thought to possible detrimental effects resulting from the IG initiative (see Table 5.16, p. 153). Most of these were related to protecting time and providing support during the process of the initiative, and confidentiality during the evaluation. Allocation of time was seen as a strength of the initiative (although pressures of work inevitably affected some people's commitment). I was concerned about the burden of additional meetings and to some extent leading the inquiries, for the support group. One member of the support group, however, said that the meetings were supportive:

'I think particularly at the beginning it was really helpful and supportive for me to think about how the tasks in the group would look, and that maximised time in the IGs.'

I was also concerned about negative feelings arising if one group felt that another was progressing more quickly than another. Absenteeism in one group did cause some anxiety. For example, one member of the support group said:

‘Can we find a way of getting together to keep up to speed... feeling left out as other groups gather pace.’

I think more open communication about the nature of the different inquiries, on the intranet for example, would have helped to inform others of the focus of the different inquiries, and how these differed, and thus how their progress may vary.

7.2.5ii Responsibility to sponsors of research

In Chapter Five I referred to the management team as sponsors of the research in that they agreed for it to go ahead as part of Service development. They remained involved during the initiative and they were given pilot questionnaires for comments. All three members of the management team were invited to support group meetings. One of them attended these. Outcomes of inquiry groups were shared with management; they discussed suggested amendments regarding policy and procedure (e.g. the ISP inquiry group developed a new ISP bidding form) prior to implementation. The findings of the whole research study are available for the management team, to inform future research and development initiatives.

7.2.5iii Responsibilities to the community of educational researchers

There are a number of issues with respect to the validity of this study relating to my status as practitioner-researcher and subsequent collection, analysis and interpretation of the data.

Robson (2002) says that there are obvious advantages of being a practitioner-researcher: existing relationships, and familiarity and knowledge of the organisation, and hence 'practitioner insights and role', may help in the design, carrying out and analysis of 'useful and appropriate' studies (Robson, 2002, p. 535). However, there are also disadvantages relating to the validity of the data, writing up the study, providing new insights, and the status of the research in the organisation.

Validity of data

The first disadvantage of being a practitioner-researcher is related to the validity of the data. Robson (2002) says that as an 'insider' the practitioner-researcher may have pre-conceptions about issues and/ or solutions.

'Your knowledge of the group's ways may well be extensive, but there is a corresponding problem in achieving anything approaching objectivity if you are already a native.' (Robson, 2002, p. 318).

There are two aspects with regard to this. Firstly, did the data collection tools measure what they intended to measure? Participants may have found it difficult to report openly and honestly about the initiative in the *individual questionnaires*. While having data from different sources (*group questionnaires* and *group discussion*) helps to provide some triangulation and so strengthen claims for validity, other problems may occur. Robson (2002) in his critique of focus groups says that whilst participants help to provide some

'checks' and 'balances' on each other, bias may still be caused by domination of the group by one or two people, or in the case of my study, concern about difficulties reporting openly.

With respect to other means of data collection - support group meetings and my research diary – both of these may have been affected by problems associated with 'participant observation' described by Robson (2002):

'selective memory' (there had a to be a time delay between meeting and recording and the actual events), 'selective attention' (focusing upon interests, experience and expectations), 'selective encoding' (interpretation of what has been observed) and 'interpersonal factors' including my relationships with participants and relationships between participants. The *summary records* of group meetings were probably a reliable source of information (providing 'on the spot' records, Robson, 2002). It would have been helpful to give more attention to these at the outset.

Secondly, did my pre-conceptions and 'insider' status, affect my analysis of data.

The tactics recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994) to validate data are relevant here (see 5.9.2iv, p.147):

- By *counting* the frequency of different factors, and illustrating how I have *clustered* data (Appendix XVIII) I have tried to be open and honest, and mitigate against researcher bias (see Tables 6.7-6.12, p. 173-175).

- Although originally I did not want to compare group outcomes, I realised that I needed to in order to make *contrasts and comparisons*;
- I checked for *plausibility* by inviting participants to check my *clustering* of factors, which resulted in *partitioning*, as participants felt that the clustering in some cases involved too many variables;
- I involved participants in the *clustering* and *subsuming* of factors into general categories for the data on priorities for the EPS in the future (Figure 6.2, p. 186) which was successful, and provided fresh insight, although I think this worked because the data set was relatively small;
- I involved support group members in *making metaphors*, to try to make sense of the 'learning journey', which worked well;
- I have attempted to *build a logical chain of evidence* and make *conceptual and theoretical coherence* by moving from the data to theories in line with realistic evaluation, but feel that further validation of theories is required.

There are two strategies that would have helped to improve the validity of the data collection and data analysis. Firstly, having another phase of research, 'checking out' revised hypotheses with participants, to find out how (or if) the different mechanisms and contexts, as described in my revised hypotheses, had influenced them (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). This would have allowed me to 'check' interpretations with participants and brought me further refinement of my hypotheses, and increased specificity (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). It might also have revealed 'hidden' or 'unseen' mechanisms (or intervening variables) that I had not considered in my theory development.

Secondly, Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggest that it is helpful to identify different subgroups within the data for whom the programme succeeds (or fails), as this gives you a 'window' on why the initiative works. Further interviews with the members of the subgroups helps to 'harden' explanations (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). It would also help to check validity. I did not feel able to do this as it may have compromised the anonymity of participants. In future, when engaged in research where I am able to take a more objective stance, I would plan to do this, as I think it would improve the rigour of the investigation.

'Outcomes only follow when particular mechanisms have been triggered in particular contexts, and they will only reveal themselves when investigation has traced them through the same pathway'
(Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 114)

Writing up the study

The second disadvantage of being a practitioner-researcher (and participant) relates to writing up the study. Robson (2002) talks about 'practitioner-researchers' having enough time to carry out systematic research alongside normal commitments. It is not just having enough time, it is also difficult to manage the time frame, in order to report the findings at a time that will be meaningful to the organisation, and contribute to further developments. This was resolved by giving feedback on outcomes and a first analysis of the data (see Appendix IX for presentation given in October 2008). I would have preferred to have waited until I had completed the analysis, which would have made a discussion about how the initiative might be used again in the future more meaningful.

Bringing new insights

The third disadvantage of being a practitioner-researcher relates to bringing genuinely new insights.

‘Experienced practitioners approach their work with a vast and complex array of concepts, theoretical models, provisional explanations, typical scenarios, anticipation of likely outcomes, etc... A ‘research’ process must demonstrably offer something over and above this pre-existing level of understanding. (p. 34 in Winter, 1989, in Robson, 2002, p. 536)

I hope that by building the IG model from theory and research (Table 5.1, p. 91), the model and its evaluation have demonstrated something more than my pre-existing level of understanding, and by using realistic evaluation I have specified a better informed theory of situated organisational development and learning for the EPS.

Status of the research

The final disadvantage relates to the status of the research (and of the practitioner-researcher) in the organisation. Robson (2002) warns of the ‘prophet in own country’ phenomenon, whereby outside advice may be more highly valued. I hope that by grounding the initiative in principles, theory and research, by adopting a systematic approach to the research design, implementation, and evaluation, by making the research methodology accessible to others, and implementing strategies to deal with threats to validity, I have made a respectful and responsible contribution to my Service, and to the community of educational researchers.

7.3 Programme theory

In Chapter 6 I made some suggestions on how I would revise my hypotheses into 'new theories', on the basis of the data collected in this study. I discuss each of these below. I have abandoned my grouping of theories into individual, group and organisational theories, to accommodate the interaction between these levels of analysis. However, I feel that each theory has a dominant theme or perspective. In my review of the literature on organisational learning theory, and my analysis of the two core studies (Boreham and Morgan, 2004, and Timmins et al, 2006), I highlight some methodological issues with regard to setting up my proposed model of inquiry groups. These include:

- How to launch the initiative to gain the interest and commitment of the management and EPs;
- How to set up the initiative e.g. how to generate topics for inquiry, how to allocate EPs to the areas of their choice, how to decide upon group size and makeup;
- How to support the initiative in terms of personnel (the support group), skills, tools and frameworks;
- How to share the findings of each group across the Service;
- How to embed the findings in the policy and practice of the Service.

I now discuss my new theories in the light of these issues and the research and psychological theory reported in Chapter 4.

7.3.1 Active commitment from management and EPs to the IG initiative

Table 7.2: Revised Theory 1

Theory 1: (Active commitment by management and EPs to the initiative)		
Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
EPs view collaborative research and organisational development activities positively, and feel that the initiative is closely related to the Service Development Plan , will not interfere with other priorities, is important within the current climate locally and nationally, is supported by the management (from existing meeting time) and will be supported by their colleagues.	EPs engage with the initiative because they feel it is worthwhile to work together to support each other, to be involved in Service Development, to gain personally and professionally.	EPs 'sign up' and attends inquiry group meetings EPs view the initiative positively

My first new theory (Theory 1 in Table 7.1) is to do with active commitment to a learning and development initiative, such as the inquiry groups project, from both the management and participant EPs. I think that the culture of the Service (or 'institution' as described by Pawson et al, 2004, in Figure 4.1, p. 49) is the dominant theme in this theory. The total time commitment to the IG initiative was relatively small (6 hours overall for the IG meetings, 12 hours for the Support Group members). It was, however, asking for a high level of trust and commitment from both the Service management and my colleagues. How do the contextual factors and mechanisms described above link to theories and research on gaining commitment to change initiatives?

The Schiemann (1993) survey reports that employee resistance, inappropriate culture, and lack of management agreement on the strategy were three of the biggest obstacles to change. The two strongest factors in support of the IG initiative from my data (in terms of how often they were reported) are 'support from management' and the 'sharing and caring' culture of the Service, which suggest that the initiative had a good chance of success. I now discuss how I

think the culture of the Service and the support of the participants and management contributed to the positive outcomes of this initiative.

Culture

I realised that culture was going to be important before setting out to introduce the IG initiative. Schein (1990) says that the culture of an organisation determines what it and the people in the organisation are able to do, and suggests that problems occur when you try to get something going that is basically 'counter culture'. 'Planned change cannot be understood without considering culture as the primary source of resistance to change.' (Schein, 1990).

I was expecting a collaborative culture to be important (I made reference to the importance of a culture of collaboration within my two core studies) and felt that this was already established in the Service. The data from my exploration of this (see Table 6.1, p. 161) seem to confirm that there is a 'pattern of basic assumptions' regarding collaboration, which has been 'invented, discovered or developed by a given group' over the years, which has worked 'well enough to be considered valid, and therefore is to be taught to new members.' (Schein, 1990, p.111), who have in turn contributed to this process by bringing new skills, knowledge and experiences. I felt the data also support Schein's later assertion (2003) that this aspect to our culture was 'being constantly enacted and created by our interaction with others and shaped by leadership behaviour, and a set of structures, routines, rules and norms that guide and constrain behaviour' (Schein, 2004, p.1). The examples

of activities that have contributed to this culture (see Table 6.11) suggest that systems and routines (meetings to share, administrative partners), rules (Service delivery planning framework), norms (peer supervision), and structures that promote joint working (ISPs, PATH) provide opportunities for 'collaborative' interaction, and have all played their part. For this aspect of our culture, there seems to be consistency between 'artefacts' (e.g. EPs working together on Inclusion Support Projects), 'espoused values' (allocation of time to EPs to work together on these projects) and 'basic underlying assumptions' (EPs view the introduction of and continuation of opportunities for ISPs as contributing to a collaborative culture) in Schein's model 'Levels of culture and how they interact' (see Figure 3.1, p. 32).

However, I had not considered how underneath the collaborative culture, lies a deeper layer, related to core beliefs and values: a culture of sharing and supporting each other. This is not surprising, considering the opportunities for collaboration (and hence sharing) already in existence, but these would not be viewed positively without the basic beliefs of members of the Service. As in the Boreham and Morgan (2004) study, and in school improvement studies (e.g. Joyce et al, 1999) I had anticipated that support gained from sharing experiences would be a personal outcome or gain from this initiative. This was true to some extent. What I had not anticipated was that it would be seen as a contextual factor, and one of the key mechanisms, or reasons for becoming involved: if you care about your colleagues, and like to share your ideas and experiences, the IG initiative is a good opportunity for you. Part of this 'sharing and caring' culture, was also the support for me, the researcher,

a colleague engaged in doctoral research. This could be something to do with the specific group of people in the Service, or the nature of the job, which often involves 'lone ranger' working out in the field. If I had been able to conduct realistic interviews, I might have been able to trace this back to a deeper level of understanding.

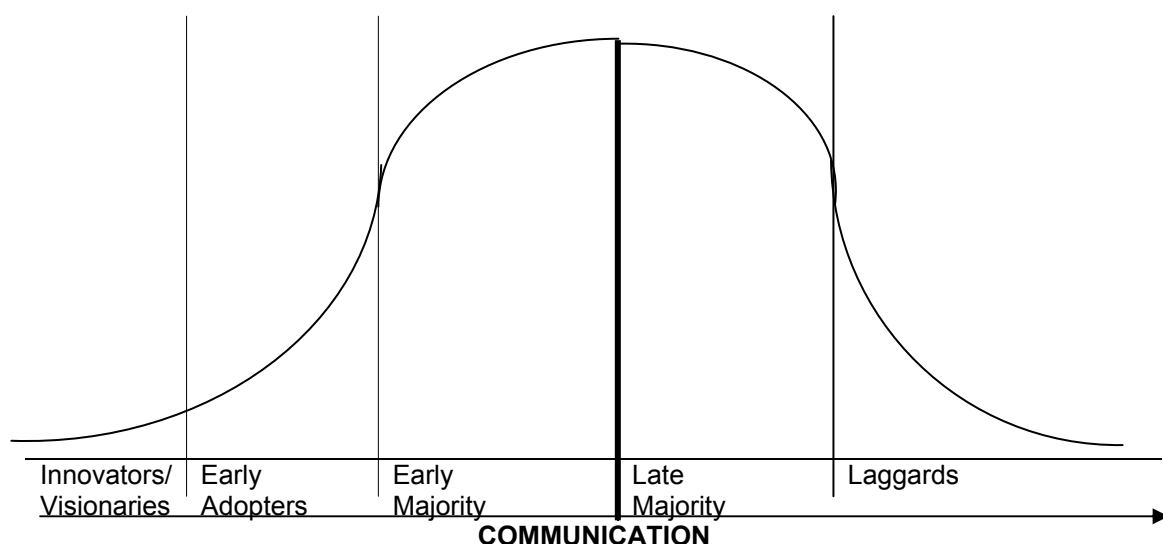
In addition to a culture of collaboration and sharing and caring, there is also a fairly strong 'learning' culture within the Service (although I did not explore this directly). The IG initiative was not a wholly new way of working. Previously we have had experience of 'interest groups' and 'task groups'. A number of EPs were engaged in either doctoral programmes, or specialist training programmes at the time of the study. EPs regularly deliver training, and participate in CPD both locally, within the West Midlands region, and nationally. Links with a number of universities are well established through doctoral programmes, and employment of Trainee Educational Psychologists. More than half of the priorities identified in the evaluation (see sections ii, iv and v in Figure 6.2) relate to developing and up-dating skills and knowledge. Whilst I may not have really '*known*' the culture in the Service, in that I based my knowledge on my own experiences and feelings, the data suggest that the learning culture of the Service was '*appropriate*' for the IG initiative. I believe that these elements of culture are crucial for organisational learning initiatives to be successful.

Participant (employee) support for a learning and change initiative

With regard to engaging with and participating in the initiative, the response was very positive – all EPs signed up to be part of a group and attended as many of the meetings as they could (although this does not mean that there was no resistance).

Russell-Jones (2003), author and management consultant, who has worked internationally with organisations assisting them with change/ programme management (amongst other aspects of change and improvement) says that gaining acceptance from employees goes through the process illustrated in the figure below, starting with those who are most likely to accept change – innovators – until finally the laggards are won over or leave. Fullan (1992) also talks about it taking time for participants to accept new ways of working, and acknowledges that sometimes, new behaviours come before changes in belief.

Figure 7.1: Gaining acceptance (from Russell-Jones, 2003, p. 92)



Mulford (1998) describes two factors that affect adult learning. The first is that adult learning takes effort, because we invest in maintaining established patterns. The second is the effect of the stage of people's lives on their motivation to explore new ways of working. For example, an individual person may be more interested in planning for retirement than educational improvement.

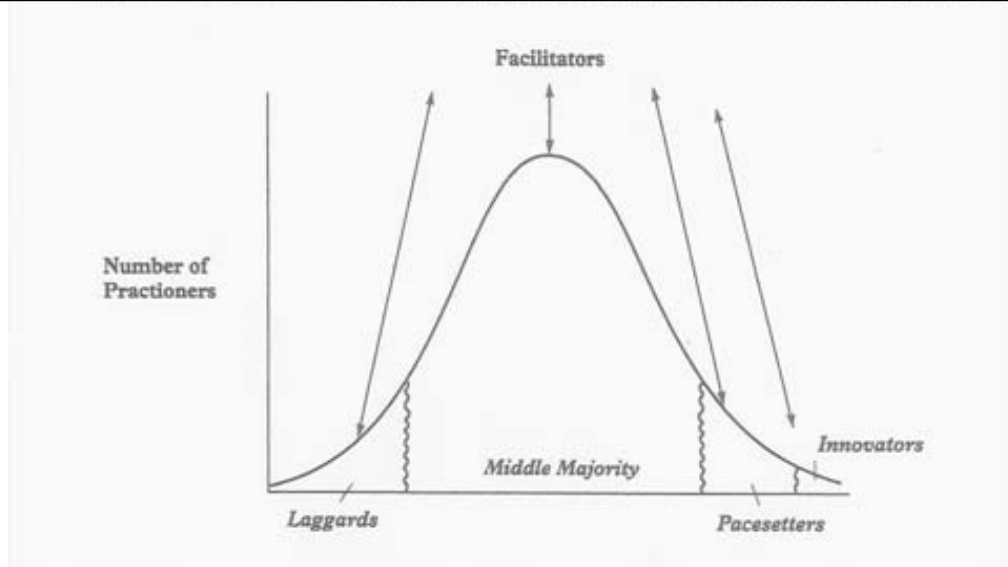
It may not be just stage of life that places people as 'laggards' within their organisation: it may be that participants do not share Senge's (1990) enthusiasm for innovation and creativity:

'Through learning we recreate ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do.' (Senge, 1990, p. 14)

I have not found out from participants in this study their views on the nature of learning as an adult, or on the theory of the continuum of response to innovation, from 'laggards' to 'pacesetters', or whether the stage of life makes any difference. Realistic interviews, with respondents who were most and least positive about the initiative, would help to explore this.

I think the level of commitment to the initiative may reflect that we have few 'laggards' in our midst. Miller and Watts (1990), who use a similar model to Russell-Jones (2003), describe how the majority of professionals who work with children who have special educational needs, fall into the middle section.

Figure 7.2 Classification of professionals according to their adoption of innovations (From Miller and Watts, 1990)



Alternatively, the almost universally positive involvement in the IG initiative may reflect the culture in the Service as described above, and it may reflect a relatively stable situation in the Service. Russell-Jones (2003), reports the following factors as contributors to employee resistance from a survey carried out by Buchanan, Claydon and Doyle, in 1999:

- 78% - the fear of the unknown;
- 72% - suffering from information overload;
- 67% - so much change, with few benefits, that most people become cynical about benefits
- 63% - initiative fatigue.

Management support

Being given the 'time to talk' was clearly highly valued by EPs in this study, as in my two core studies. 'Opening space for the creation of shared meaning' is

one of Boreham and Morgan's (2004) relational practices and time was put aside to carry out initial discussions, workshops, and working group meetings in Timmins et al (2006). Time is a precious and scarce commodity for EP Services and EPs, with pressures related to both the nature of their work and time-scales within which they have to respond. One respondent in this study mentioned that it was difficult 'shifting gear' from other work, which illustrates, I think, the pace at which EPs are often working out in the field. This seems to be the same for other 'typical organisations'. In the Covey (1994) matrix, between 75 and 90% of time is spent on 'urgent' activities (although 'high performance' organisations seem to reduce the amount of 'not important' urgent activities). As the IG initiative took place in meeting time, it did not place an additional burden on EPs, and may even have reduced work load, by 'joining up' practice across the Service and by making tools and resources available to support practice.

I believe that the support from management and subsequent allocation of time was instrumental in the success of the initiative, and would be in other organisational inquiry initiatives. I think it was important for participants not only because it 'made' the initiative happen, but also in terms of the message it gives: *'everybody's views are important'*. A comment from one respondent who mentioned that the initiative felt 'inclusive' supports this view. Boreham and Morgan (2004) felt that the Procedures and Competence Development Methodology (PCDM) reinforced 'reconstituted power relationships' in that all employees were able to make an equal contribution to discussions. Whilst I do not think that the same degree of 'power' and/or 'control' is (or has been)

exerted in the Educational Psychology Service, nevertheless valuing EPs' contribution to Service delivery and development is an important message. Support from the management suggests that the management team do not find collective inquiry threatening (Argyris, 1978), and that they have confidence in the 'process of active learning' (Schein, 1995) and participation in a learning culture (Rowland, 2002).

Thus, the findings of my study suggest that the support of the management and EPs, working within a supportive culture that promotes collaborative working and learning, were factors supporting this initiative. These factors are both contexts and mechanisms. Keating (1995) talks about 'active commitment to continuous improvement and the diffusion of best practice throughout the organisation' as one of the conditions for organisational learning. In the context of this initiative and this Service, it seems that the commitment goes beyond that, to a commitment to each other. Although pressure of work was mentioned as a hindering factor by two respondents, along with other reservations from some participants (related more to the way in which the inquiries were structured, which is discussed in more detail below) on the whole, participants' responses suggest that any feelings of resistance were put on one side and they became involved, and viewed the initiative positively. For example, one respondent said: 'Small groups of people meeting to discuss how we work in important areas is a good idea.' Another said: 'It brings people together in a focused positive way, building on personal and group expertise.' My new theory makes reference to the need to clarify how the initiative links to the vision/ development targets /plan of the

Service (and hence Local Authority) as a contextual factor, and placing the 'support' and 'inclusive' factors into the mechanism section:

7.3.2 Commitment to/ interest in the area of inquiry: motivation to explore and change practice

Table 7.3: Revised Theory 2

<i>Theory 2: (Commitment to or interest in the topic of inquiry)</i>		
Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
EPs feel that they have been involved in the selection of topic of inquiry, that it is worthy of investigation (links to Service and/or professional development), and that they have the tools and skills to carry out the inquiry.	EPs engage with the inquiry group because they are interested in the area and want to improve their practice	EPs gain knowledge and/or skills in area of inquiry EPs feel supported by others

The dominant aspect of this next theory relates to the motivation of individual participants to engage actively with others in the inquiry group ('individuals' as described by Pawson et al, 2004). Having gained the support of management and colleagues in the initiative, the next step is the engagement of interest in the actual inquiries. The data show that 12 out of 15 respondents felt they had gained new knowledge through the inquiry process, and that just under half had gained personally, which implies active engagement in the inquiries. How do the contextual factors and mechanisms described above link to theories on motivation and adult learning?

The data suggest that the topics of inquiry and the process of selection of topics influenced the motivation of participants to engage in the following ways:

- The topics are meaningful for participants: that is, they are relevant personally and professionally.

- Participants have a role in selecting areas (or feel that the areas are linked to their needs).
- Participants view that the topics meet the organisation's needs: that is, they are linked to the Service 'vision' or Development plan.

The relevance of topics for participants

Mulford (1998) says that the subject of learning should have immediate relevance to adult learners' job or personal life. He also says that learning at an individual level is likely to occur when a person confronts a situation for which old ways are likely to be inadequate (which can be uncomfortable) and which requires new ways of thinking and acting. It is thus important that the topics chosen are ones that EPs feel that either need changing, or are worthy of further study to improve or enhance their practice.

Participants selecting topics

The data suggest that it is important that participants are involved in the selection of topics. The process I used caused a number of difficulties. I asked participants to select two topics but some selected more. Some of the topics were more popular than others, which would affect the viability of the group. In the end it was a compromise. I decided to make interest and preference the deciding factor, rather than evenly-sized groups. A better system for selecting topics (rating of importance) would have ensured that all participants were working on something that was motivating for them.

Topics relating to key aspects of Service Delivery

Respondents also made reference to the importance of topics relating to key aspects of Service delivery. My introduction to the session to generate the topic areas reinforced this (See section 5.6.2i, p. 104, and Appendix V). All of the topics related either to Service delivery (ISPs, Early Years assessment procedures) or Service objectives: Resiliency (Supporting Inclusion) and Psychology of Change (Organisational Learning). I have added the relevance to Service development to the contextual factors of my revised second theory (Theory 2 in Table 7.3 above) as it was not clear to all participants that this was the case.

In summary, the motivation of individuals to engage with the topics of inquiry is fundamental to the success of such an initiative. Robson (2002) says that an innovatory programme is usually set up because of a perceived need, which is not being met by current provision. My procedure for generating topics was a kind of 'needs assessment' (Robson, 2002), and the selection process a way of identifying priorities. I feel that this procedure could have been improved, although one member of the support group said:

'The choice of how we got to these areas was very robust. That was fantastic!'

I feel that individual motivation was a positive factor supporting the outcomes of the initiative described above. The success for individuals also depends upon the tools and frameworks used to support the inquiry. I discuss the tools and skills to carry out the inquiry in the next section. Respondents mention that the tools and frameworks should meet the needs of the inquiry, which is why I have kept it as a contextual factor in this revised Theory 2.

7.3.3 Bringing together knowledge and experience: gaining new insights into self, others and research

Table 7.4: Revised Theory 3

<i>Theory 3: (Taking a wider perspective – listening to others, referring to recent research)</i>		
Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
EPs have collaborative relationships with colleagues allied to the inquiry, believe that working with others is a good way of gaining new insights, has the time and means to access research in the area, and the skills and frameworks to do so.	EPs gain new insights by engaging in dialogue with colleagues across the Service (and outside the Service) and by referring to research in the area	EPs extend their knowledge and understanding of the area of inquiry EPs gain new insight into area of practice EPs make links between/across areas of practice

The next theory relates to how individuals gain new insights into the areas of inquiry and focuses upon making links across the contextual framework described by Pawson et al (2004): from the ‘individuals’ (self), across the ‘institution’ (‘bigger picture’), to the ‘infrastructure’ (others outside of the organisation, and research). I made reference to writers who describe ‘dialogue’ (Boreham and Morgan, 2004; Mulford, 1998), or ‘inquiry’ (Argyris and Schön, 1978), as the fundamental process by which individuals and organisations learn. I first of all discuss how the data in this study relate to the theory on the nature of the ‘dialogue’, and then the contextual factors likely to support the dialogue, including the tools and frameworks used to guide the inquiries.

Developing Self-insight – questioning and challenging practice

Senge (1990) and Schein (1997) both say that cultural understanding and organisational learning start with self-insight. Senge (1990) talks about

‘personal mastery’ and ‘working with mental models’. Schön (1987) discusses the idea of the ‘reflective practitioner’, that is developing the skills to see what it is that we do that is skilful and /or distinctive to raise awareness of our ‘tacit knowledge’ (Polyani, 1969). Argyris and Schön (1978) discuss the importance of exploring the gap between ‘espoused theories’ and ‘theories-in-use’.

I did not ask individuals or groups if they had gained ‘self-insight’, but the groups, in their evaluation questionnaire, gave quite high responses when asked whether they had questioned/ challenged practice and examined existing practice in the IG areas (Table 6.2, p. 163). One group mentioned ‘We have thought about things that have not worked in the past’ and another ‘We have challenged the view of resiliency as ‘within person’.

Looking at the summary of the group discussion from each inquiry (see Appendix VIII) each group was planning activities that would help to reveal gaps between ‘espoused theories’ and ‘theories in use’, at both an individual and organisational level. For example, the Early Years IG was researching parents’ views regarding the assessment process. This might reveal differences between how the professionals and parents viewed the process. The ISP IG was ‘operationalising’ local and national research findings to improve delivery of ISPs. The research may have confirmed ‘tacit knowledge’, or challenged commonly held beliefs held by EPs. The Resiliency IG was returning to original sources and definitions to support delivery of tools, and planning to gain feedback on the tools from practitioners and

settings. The Psychology of Change IG was planning to evaluate the consultation model, to inform future practice. Again, this might confirm or challenge commonly held assumptions.

Creating shared meaning/ understanding

From a socio-cultural perspective (Boreham and Morgan, 2004) dialogue is perceived as the 'cultural practices which constitute a common world by creating shared meaning' (from Bhaktin, 1981). I did not ask participants directly if they felt they had developed a sense of shared meaning, but the question on 'sharing knowledge, experience and ideas in this area', from the group questionnaire (see Table 6.1, p.161) gained a positive response. One member of the support group made explicit reference to the importance of the development of shared understanding both within and with others outside the Service:

'We took a long time thinking about that shared understanding of resiliency and what it means to us and how we can share it with other people who we might be working with... We have got to the point now where we can start to collect information from people who we might be working with around resiliency and how those tools have supported them.'

Although respondents do not make direct reference to this, I think that the use of the RADIO framework, Activity Theory 'triangle' and Enquiry Based Learning all have the potential to develop a shared understanding of the focus of the inquiry. For example, when asked 'Why is this area important?' (RADIO framework) the Resiliency group responded:

- 'National move and links to SEAL, Anti-bullying;
- ECM agenda – Being Healthy, staying safe;
- Positive psychology and links to community psychology;
- Move from within child focus to looking at contexts and natural support systems;
- Solution-focused approach;
- Supports/impacts on all EPS objectives.'

When asked to record Outcomes/ what is to be achieved? (Activity Theory)

the Early Years group responded:

- 'Parents' views are voiced;
- Practice is improved on the basis of parents' views;
- Knowledge shared with different agencies;
- Knowledge shared at strategic level.'

When asked to differentiate between what we know from our experience, and

what we know from published research (EBL) the ISP group said:

From our own experience	What we think we know/research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It helps to introduce ISPs at planning meeting and to have a list of previous projects to 'sow the seed'. • Vital to involve SMT/HT but difficulties when ISP bidding form is filled in by them for someone else or there are already people in school working in this area. • Projects need to be linked to priority on SDP. • School timing and timescale may not fit in with EPS. • Time allocated by schools for meetings etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of Headteacher; • Preparedness of the school/ownership of the project (MH, local research) • The school should nominate a project coordinator (member of SMT/relevant post-holder); • Any existing working parties should be involved; • School's SMT to ensure resources necessary for project are secured; • Any project should have the active support of the HT and SMT; • Written contract between school and EPS regarding roles and responsibilities and resources; • Any initiative should reflect a response to a high priority school need determined in a systematic manner – school based audit of need or government legislation/guidance; • Initiatives should encourage collaborative working between EP and school (Timmins)

There were also opportunities to create a shared understanding of the organisational factors likely to effect the inquiry topic. For example, when asked to record what supports and constrains the work (Activity Theory) the ISP group responded:

Supports	Constraints
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement of Senior managers; • Bidding and planning process; • Focus e.g. links to School Development Plan, national initiatives etc; • Relationship between EP and School; • Links to previous ISPs; • Two EPs working together. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in Senior Manager who bid for project; • Ofsted; • New initiatives • Lack of communication between project manager and those directly involved.

Developing a wider perspective

From a systems perspective (Senge, 1990) 'team learning' develops the skills of people to look for the 'larger picture' that lies beyond individual perspectives. Senge (1990) also talks about 'learning disabilities' in organisations, when people focus only on their position and have little sense of responsibility for how their actions extend beyond the boundary of that position. Bringing together knowledge and experience (see Table 6.9) was mentioned by more than half of the respondents as a supporting factor. The comments suggest that this was a way of *widening perspectives* and hence gaining *new insights*: having a range of experiences, skills and knowledge, and a breadth of views, was described as one of the mechanisms for bringing about change.

Opening up the group to others working in the area of inquiry but outside the Service was mentioned by three groups as achieved, and by three respondents as a supporting contextual factor. In the feedback from the support group, thinking about who else to involve 'opened up' the inquiry in a 'creative' way; in another of the groups, inviting someone closely involved with

the work into one of the inquiry meetings made a significant difference to the inquiry. As one member of the support group said:

‘What’s really helped is having an additional person...she brought lots of information about parents’ experience of the process...she helped us to think about the areas we need to consider, and to formulate questions. Having an additional person has really widened our knowledge of what parents might be thinking or feeling. Having the group has facilitated that.’

Opening up the inquiry to stakeholders also shows respect for them and means that they are more likely to accept any changes introduced (Timmins et al, 2003). As one member of the support group said:

‘We will make sure that we have a staff meeting so that we can get a sense of what they would like to get out of it.’

I did not think that any of the participants would argue against the value of critically reviewing the literature and research relevant to an area of inquiry. Those groups that had access to research, and to TEPs to support the literature search, viewed this positively. One member of the support group reflected:

‘I’ve found the TEPs very helpful and the links with the universities on the research side. I think they enjoyed contributing too, and being part of it – “working together”. It’s very helpful for them to contribute to Service development.’

One respondent mentioned that the inquiry group provided an opportunity to return to original research in the area (which can become ‘diluted’ or ‘distorted’ over time), which subsequently made a difference to practice in the area (using the original text to support work with others).

I think that the tools and frameworks helped to widen the perspective. Both RADIO and the Activity Theory triangle require consideration of either ‘stakeholders’ or ‘community’ and ‘division of labour’, and EBL helped to structure the reference to published research.

Democratic values: culture of open communication

In order for discussion, dialogue or examination of practice to take place, there needs to be a feeling of trust and openness in the organisation, a culture of 'open communication' (Argyris and Schon, 1990). With reference to EP Services as learning organisations, Rowland (2002) advocates the shift to 'democratic values' and communication styles, where the dysfunctional and un-discussable become functional and 'discussable' to overcome organisational defences (Argyris, 1978).

I did not explore theories regarding the culture of communication in the Service. The findings support the notion of a collaborative culture, which might reflect such a culture. The feedback from the supporting and hindering factors section of the questionnaire, suggests that the culture of communication during the IG initiative was positive. For example, comments such as 'Good group members' and 'No cynics or saboteurs' support this notion.

I think that the tools and frameworks used might have supported the notion of open communication. The Activity Theory triangle, when used to its full potential, provides an opportunity to explore tensions between different aspects of the system described, and the EBL provides an opportunity for an appraisal of what we think we know, what we really know, and what we need to find out. Taking an interest in exploring 'differences' through these frameworks, may help to reduce the tension that this may otherwise cause.

Working collaboratively across boundaries

Working in groups provides an opportunity for members to work collaboratively across divisions created by interest, location or hierarchy, and also involving others (stake holders) who are related to the topic of inquiry, but external to the organisation. Boreham and Morgan (2004) describe reconstituting power relationships as one of their relational practices. The IGs were intended to work across hierarchies, and bridge the gap between the two teams, which comprise the EPS. Rowland (2002) suggests that a 'distributed leadership' model is supportive of organisational learning and change. In this model individuals feel valued and part of a community where knowledge, values, beliefs and attitudes have commonality, and are articulated and understood. The fact that the management supported the initiative suggests, as mentioned earlier, that they did not find the idea of collective inquiry threatening.

Although not all the IGs worked across the two EP teams, they provide an opportunity to do so, and this is something valued by participants (see section 7.3.7i below). Boreham and Morgan (2004) suggested that the PCDM reinforced the 'reconstituted power relationships'. I think that IGs in the same way have the potential for supporting a more flexible structure of roles and relationships within the Service. If you examine the illustrations representing the structure of roles in organisations from Handy (1999) in Figure 3.2, p. 34 and then compare these with Figure 5.2 p. 89, illustrating the Service structure, and Figure 5.3 p. 105, illustrating the inquiry group structure, you

can see that the relationships become more 'task' focused than 'power' or 'role'. This implies that there would be more communication within the EPS and across divisions created by 'roles'. If a better needs analysis had been carried out then this would have introduced a more substantial 'people' factor and further affected the structure.

General comment on the tools and frameworks to structure the dialogue and research process

Although four respondents reported finding the tools and frameworks helpful, five respondents described the models as a hindering factor. Having different models running concurrently caused confusion, and the language of some needed clarification. In retrospect, I think it was a mistake to introduce several different models. However, I was keen for the process to be interactive and to evolve in response to the progress of the inquiries.

One of the problems was that the frameworks were probably not all appropriate for all of the inquiries, at the same time. The feedback from the support group and the Group discussions suggests that the RADIO model was helpful for all groups in its first 'clarifying concerns' stage, both to develop a shared understanding (e.g. of why this area is important), and to open the inquiry up (to think about organisational and cultural issues and identifying stake holders). For the Early Years inquiry group, who at this point, using the RADIO framework, decided to focus the inquiry upon researching parents' views of the multi-disciplinary assessment process, this level of preliminary clarification of current practice and issues probably sufficed: they wanted to

move on to the research methods mode, referring to recent research and then planning the methods of data collection.

The Resiliency and Psychology of Change groups had a different focus. They were both exploring and evaluating a wider range of tools currently in use, in a range of contexts. They wanted to explore these in more depth before bringing the focus together on specific outcomes, and research focus. They found that the Activity Theory 'triangle' helped to explore contexts (the bottom of the triangle) and mechanisms (tools already in use).

The ISP inquiry group was working on a topic that was already well established, with a range of data available, both in terms of project evaluations, and a recent evaluation of the whole system. They were looking to systematise existing data and knowledge, and thus the Activity Theory 'triangle' was a helpful way of 'mapping out' existing views on the topic, and any possible tensions, and the EBL was helpful in organising these views into what is really known, and what else needs to be researched.

Another problem was that the support group members had responsibility for delivering the frameworks. I think this caused some anxiety, as support group members did not all have experience of all frameworks (although all of the frameworks had been used by one or other member of the support group, so there was some guidance available). Ideally there should have been some training in the models prior to the initiative, with information on their different theoretical stances, and opportunities to try them out. Timmins et al (2006)

report that the RADIO provided a framework to address cultural and organisational issues, and to understand and manage the complexity of change at an organisational level, but that it requires an understanding of the principles underpinning the framework, and the skills to use it confidently with others. Having insufficient skills is another of the barriers to change in Scheimann's (1993) study. If participants had this training then the groups could make an informed decision on which framework would best suit their inquiry. However, now that there has been some experience of these frameworks, or combination of frameworks, there may be an interest to explore these further:

'The fact that we have experienced those different models is great. People might choose different ones or combination of ones, depending on how the group develops and how the inquiry develops. I wouldn't want to select just one tool, because I think it is the richness of it that is making you think in slightly different ways.'

Whatever the problems with the tools and frameworks, from the perspective of one member of the support group, they achieved the factors outlined above.

'I think it felt like a thorough exploration that linked into core values and probably led to an honest dialogue. The 'gold standard' of what we have done is the acknowledgement of this, and the impact that has on organisational development because we focused on making shared understandings, being honest and working together and that's the thing in terms of organisational learning that actually makes it happen so we have gone the right way round from my perspective to those core values to the artefacts of what we do. I think the artefacts are still emerging ... but underneath are these core values.'

The tools and frameworks can be viewed as contexts, in that they provide the framework for the dialogue, research and development to take place.

Alternatively they can be seen as mechanisms, in that it may be that a specific question in one of the frameworks was a trigger for new insights. I think that groups selecting their own frameworks would give them greater autonomy, and involvement in the planning of the inquiry, important in adult learning, (Mulford, 1998) and organisational learning (Stoll and Fink, 1996). There will

always be some frameworks that are preferable to some participants rather than others. This may be because of participants' theoretical stance, or because of experience of using them.

Although the frameworks helped to focus the inquiries and the relevant research, unfortunately access to research was not possible for all of the groups, in terms of the time to carry this out and /or the means to do so. This is thus another important contextual factor.

7.3.4 Group processes

Table 7.5: Revised Theory 4

<i>Theory 4: (A coordinated group effort towards a common goal)</i>		
Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
EPs have good working relationships with members of their group, have the skills to manage group processes during the inquiry, the flexibility to select time frames and tools to support the inquiry, and strategies to cope with absence of group members.	EPs feel involved in focusing and planning the inquiry and feel that the group is moving towards its goal/ a positive outcome	EPs engage cooperatively with colleagues in group Outcomes/goals of inquiries achieved.

As mentioned in the Results chapter, having analysed the data relevant to group processes and outcomes, I have combined my group hypotheses into this one theory, which is essentially about how to maintain motivation and interest and momentum in the inquiries. The dominant theme relates to group and 'interpersonal processes' (Pawson et al, 2004). One participant in the original SWOT analysis mentioned not 'keeping the momentum going' as a possible 'threat'. I realised that the gaps between meetings would be a potential threat to momentum, but thought that sticking to the existing Service meeting structure was a priority, as I was anxious not to increase the burden on colleagues. Similarly, I did not want to suggest 'gap tasks', despite

believing that these would be beneficial for the inquiries, and keep the momentum going. Fullan (2003) talks about a combination of pressure and support to maintain momentum: pressure was something that I did not want to introduce.

Several respondents reported the lack of momentum as a problem, and described the gaps between meetings and other 'logistical factors' factors contributing to this (Table 6.9, p. 175). Below I discuss a number of factors, from the theory on organisations and group processes, which I think affected the momentum of the inquiries.

Organisations as open, interactive systems

The first point comes from theory on organisations. Schein (1997) and Dawson (1996) both talk about the effect of 'chance factors' on organisations, as open 'interactive' systems. Dawson (1996) also suggests that change in organisations cannot be viewed simply as a logical sequence, beginning with the identification of a problem, moving through the search for a solution, to its planning and implementation. The 'bridge' between intentions and outcomes is formed by a range of activities and interactions and affected by chance, serendipity, creativity and learning. I think that the diagram (Figure 6.1, p. 170) illustrates examples of chance (absence of group members), creativity (deciding to invite someone outside the Service into the inquiry) serendipity (discussing topic with others, attending training) and learning (accessing experiences of others and published research). All of these affected the

progress and momentum of the inquiry –some positively, by moving things forward, or increasing interest, and some adversely, slowing things down.

The absence of group members, combined with small group size had a significant effect upon the momentum of the inquiry (see Table 6.9, p. 175).

The literature on inquiry groups (Bray et al, 2000) suggests that a group of five to eight is a good size; three people in a group were clearly not enough.

Group processes

A second area to discuss is the role of group and interpersonal processes. A number of writers referred to in the literature review make reference to group development and interpersonal processes that either support or inhibit group inquiries. Boreham and Morgan (2004) talk about the ‘disintegrative effect’ of dialogue, and how prior to setting up the PCDM all employees were trained in group problem solving skills, active listening, managing disagreement and conflict, and each working group had a facilitator. Schein (1997) describes a number of processes that help ‘groups learn to become groups’. Mulford (1998) draws together theory on the different stages or phases that groups move through.

I did not anticipate any major conflicts emerging within the groups. The participants are routinely working in groups with each other and other professionals and are thus used to relatively simple guidelines to create an atmosphere of trust and respect. The support group members were voluntarily facilitating the groups, and each of the early sessions had a task to

guide the inquiry, as discussed within the support group. I think that each of Schein's processes to maintain a set of internal relationships was adhered to. Similarly, I think the tasks and skills of the group members were sufficient to move through the 'forming', 'storming', 'norming' and 'performing' stages (Tuckman, 1965, in Russell-Jones, 2003). I think that Mitchell's model (1995) in Mulford, (1998) is probably more relevant to this study, and perhaps throws some light on where and why some of the momentum was lost.

Mitchell (1995) describes four processes:

- the first two are **cognitive** (reflection and conversation in which individuals become aware of their practices and those of their colleagues) and
- the second two are **affective** (affirmation and invitation in which positive working relationships and feelings of being valued are developed).
- these processes move through three phases: **naming and framing** (to clarify positions and opinions) **analysing and integrating** (especially when opening up new ideas) and **applying and experimenting**.

The data in Tables 6.1 to 6.3 (p. 161-164) suggest evidence of cognitive processes, and Tables 6.7 and 6.8, evidence of affective processes occurring. The frameworks used in the inquiries seem to have provided the prompts to support the 'naming and framing' and 'analysing and interpreting' phases. Unfortunately, there was insufficient time to reach Phase III of the RADIO framework (Organisational change mode) and hence to 'apply and

experiment'. Some participants mentioned that they would have liked to have this opportunity.

Mulford's (1998) point that the transition between Mitchell's hypothesised stages is not necessarily sequential nor smooth, also throws some light on this study. As Mulford says, the transition between the stages when people are moving from the comfort of their own understanding to that of others, and analyse their own practice in the light of this, can be particularly difficult. He talks about 'paralysis by analysis'. I think the early stages are not only more difficult, but also take longer, although the support group members felt that this was important. One member of the support group reflected that you needed to 'check the landscape before moving forward'; another said:

'I think it was the foundations and we needed to take a long time to explore these and without that I don't think it's possible to move on to the next stage until we have fully explored the foundations.'

I think there is also the issue of personal preferences: some people like to analyse to a greater degree than others. Some respondents' comments on the process (it felt 'long-winded') and in their suggestions for the future ('do things a little more quickly') perhaps reflect that there was some feeling of excessive analysis if not absolute paralysis. The opportunity to participate actively, carry out tasks, 'apply or experiment' would, I am sure, have helped to maintain the momentum of the inquiries, and appeal better to different learning preferences.

Coordinated group effort towards a common goal

Another way of sustaining momentum is to establish that sense of a 'coordinated group effort towards a common goal', one of Keating's (1998) factors of organisational learning. Although the frameworks (RADIO and Activity Theory triangle) provided opportunities to focus the inquiries and for group members to agree on outcomes, these did not perhaps constitute common goals, or it may be that the common goals became 'lost' during the analysis phase. The Early Years IG had a very clear focus and goal, and they moved fairly purposively towards that and achieving their outcomes. In fact, when all four groups reflected upon 'hoped for' outcomes (What is to be achieved? On the Activity Theory 'triangle') some at least of these had been achieved, or would be achieved by July 2007 or later, if the next steps were enacted.

The coordination of the groups is another area that might have been improved. In the Schiemann study (1993), poor communication/plan was another of the barriers to the success of change initiatives. Although some participants thought the groups were well planned and organised, others did not know when the groups were taking place, and would have liked to do some preparation. Although some participants were happy to have a recap of the last session at the next one, others would have liked a summary sheet to look at earlier. Having someone to coordinate each group meeting (the support group member assumed this role) was helpful; if that person was absent, however, that sense of coordination was missing, despite contingency arrangements put in place.

The nature of organisations is such that you cannot be prepared for all eventualities. However, some structure and strategies can be put in place to meet the needs of individuals and the group, and maintain a sense of movement and achievement towards a common goal. I would like to test this revised theory (four) in future group initiatives.

7.3.5 Linking theory to practice

Table 7.6: Revised Theory 5

<i>Theory 5: (Linking theory to practice)</i>		
Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
The management values and is responsive to change initiatives and provides the time to move through cycles of research/ action/ reflection	EPs feel better informed by exploring the underlying assumptions and theory /research in this area, and more confident when this is combined with practice in the field.	EPs change practice in area of inquiry;

The fifth theory links very closely to the fourth. In the fourth I was concerned with how the groups maintain their focus and sustain the interest and motivation of the participants, in order to reach their goals or achieve their outcomes, and this seemed to involve working together in a coordinated way, and going through cognitive and affective processes, and cycles of theory/ action/ reflection. Theory 5 takes the process a step further, suggesting that as a result of the inquiry (having reached their goals) participants change their practice in that area. This theory is thus focusing upon the outcomes, changes in practice for individuals.

I had thought that as long as participants were motivated to explore the topic, engaging in dialogue with others and accessing published research in the area, changes in practice would occur. Unfortunately I did not gather direct data on the proportion of participants that had changed their practice in the area of inquiry, although the group responses suggested that three out of four groups had *introduced changes* either 'a lot' or 'quite a bit'. The rating for implementation of these was lower, mainly reportedly due to lack of time. I think the opportunity to 'apply and experiment' not only relates to important processes in the group, but also relates to the literature on adult learning and change. Mulford (1998) says that in adult learning we need to bring meaning, values and skills to conscious level and examine them thoroughly, and that new behaviours need to be tested out in a safe situation before being put into use on a daily basis. Stoll and Fink (1996) also recommend 'critical thinking' and fostering 'learning for action'.

I think this also refers to the literature on the nature of the 'learning journey'.

Mulford (1998) talks about the 'journey' moving through three phases:

'Developing common understandings, honesty and trust through dialogue, sharing and managing conflict;
These learning processes then employed to make links to the outside, to examine current practice critically, to develop shared values as well as a vision;
The processes, the content (or identified changes) and shared values are employed to actually make the changes that have been identified, including a commitment and ability to repeat the stages, that is to continuously learn and improve.' (Mulford, 1998, p. 619)

Discussion in the support group suggests that a learning journey is a bit like moving through the phases of group development: the movement is not necessarily sequential. One member of the support group thought that the

first two stages of Mulford's model occurred simultaneously in this study, and that we had just reached the third:

'I think we achieved breadth rather than a journey, which makes me think about getting from one place to another. It felt like we were going really wide, and then maybe now we are at the start of the journey.'

Perhaps, for this study the metaphor of 'journey', which suggests an end point, is not quite right – I like the notion of 'adjusting old maps' in the quote below:

'setting out in a direction, gaining new insights and making discoveries en route, of going back, adjusting old maps, developing revised plans and taking new actions' (Redding and Catenell, 1994, in Mulford, 1998, p. 627).

Unfortunately I have not 'charted' the progress of the inquiries in quite as much detail as I had hoped. The one group that offered to audio tape their sessions was affected by absence of group members. However, I have ascertained some significant events that influenced the course of the inquiries (Figure 6.1) and I think that the summary sheets of the group discussions (Appendix VIII) provide a map of the areas, ready for revisions and adjustments in the future. In the future I would make sure that the inquiry includes at least one cycle of 'reflection, action and meaning making' (Bray et al, 2000). I think this would help to maintain the momentum of the inquiry, and is important to the process of learning. Further exploration of the 'learning process' might be the subject of another study.

7.3.6 Mediation of learning

Table 7.7: Revised Theory 6

Theory 6: (Embedding the findings in the culture and practice of the Service)		
Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
The organisation has easily accessed systems for sharing practice across the Service	EPs access outcomes of other inquiry groups, which influences their practice	Outcomes (and new ways of working) shared across the Service, and continue to be reviewed in the light of feedback and evaluation.

This new theory concerns the mediation of learning throughout the organisation, to embed the findings in policy, practice and procedures ('double-loop' learning).

Providing 'cultural tools to mediate learning' is one of Boreham and Morgan's (2004) relational practices. As reported earlier, changes at an organisational level were disappointing during the time span of the inquiries, but the planned 'next steps' suggested possibilities for change at an organisational level. Time span is clearly a salient hindering or supporting factor. However, perhaps greater care could have been taken at the planning of the 'meta-evaluation' to increase the likelihood of organisational change.

One of my concerns at the outset was that the inquiry groups would create new divisions ('stovepipes' Senge, 1990) and that any learning gained by individuals within the groups would not be easily accessible to other EPs. This was always going to be a challenge with four groups 'on the go'. I hoped that the support group meetings would provide an opportunity for sharing group findings and progress. This helped support group members, but there was not enough time in the IG meetings to feed this back to other IG

members, and I think that to do so also would have risked distracting the groups from their primary focus.

Some of the groups thought of ways to involve other EPs in the process of their inquiries. For example, the ISP group emailed a draft ISP bidding form to all EPs, for their comments, and amended it accordingly. The Resiliency Group hoped to create a 'message board' on the on-line learning environment, for comments on some of the tools they were exploring. Such actions themselves require additional time, expertise and training, however, and the establishment of the message board was not achieved within the lifespan of the study. In my core study by Boreham and Morgan (2004), the intranet was used to share PCDM outcomes. They also used checklists distributed around workstations.

There will be a summary of findings from the Early Years research, there is a summary of research regarding ISPs, and there are prompts and pro-forma to support the tools to promote resiliency: at this level therefore, the means to support intra-group communication and learning were developed within my study.

The final feedback to Service members afforded a further method for sharing findings (see Appendix VIII). I had prepared the feedback from IG meeting notes, to save time for SG members: it would have been better if the feedback had been prepared by the groups. I think the feedback raised the profile of each of the topics and celebrated what had been achieved:

moreover, there were some tools and resources to share e.g. the planned 'time lapse' evaluation from the Psychology of Change group, the Resiliency resource file, the questionnaire developed by the Early Years group, and the new bidding pro forma for ISPs from the ISP group. Each group had only 10 minutes to present the outcomes achieved, which did not justify the work involved or provide opportunities for questions/observations.

In my other core study, Timmins et al (2006), feedback took place in a staff meeting. However, I feel that in this study (with just one research interest) the rest of the Service had been more involved during the process of the research, in a way that was not possible across the IGs in my own study. On reflection I think that the lack of this recursive aspect, with on-going collaborative involvement of EPs in each of the IGs, may have had an inhibiting effect upon their taking up the ideas or findings emerging. I think that the inquiries will be in the organisation's 'know-how' somewhere, but that this will fade if not raised and further publicised via continuing action.

Although the tools to mediate learning were not well developed, I think that the tools that emerged from the inquiries were 'cultural' tools, as described by Boreham and Morgan (2004): they embody the collective knowledge that emerged from the dialogues, and will inform practice for existing and new members of the organisation.

On reflection, I recognise that I should have given more thought to how the progress and findings of the inquiries would be shared at the planning stage.

I appreciate why this phase of the RADIO framework is so important and will adhere to this more rigorously in the future. I would like to test this revised Theory 6 when engaged in new inquiries for the Service.

7.3.7: Learning and development activities in the future

Table 7.8: Revised Theory 7

<i>Organisation Theory 3: (Working together for the future)</i>				
Context	+	Mechanism	=	Outcome pattern
The Service values collaborative research initiatives and EPs enjoy these activities		EPs feel that it is important to work together to 'continuously improve' and respond to new challenges/ initiatives		Changes in the way that the EPS carries out 'in-house' research and development activities in response to internal and external priorities.

This last theory relates to how EPs feel about learning and development activities to improve areas of practice, and whether they believe that this is important in the light of the current local and national climate, and whether/ how inquiry groups might play a role in this. In this section I discuss the response to asking EPs about working collaboratively (Table 6.12, p. 190) and their priorities for the future (Figure 6.2, p. 186).

7.3.7i Working together

The data in Table 6.12 suggest that the majority of participants value collaborative working. Eight and a half out of ten was the average preferred level of collaborative working for the future (seven the current average level), suggesting that the majority of respondents would like more opportunities for collaborative work.

In the section on priorities into the future (Figure 6.2) the data suggest that respondents want to work together not just on research and development-based activities, but also to have opportunities to work together across the Service, particularly since the division of the Service into two teams. For example, one respondent commented upon the current situation regarding collaborative working:

‘While it was necessary to divide the service into two teams, I think that one of the unforeseen consequences has been that there has been less collaborative working across the whole team.’

There were other priorities suggesting that respondents would like to build Service strength, for example: establishing a clear direction and purpose, managing changes positively in the light of the new PEP, and supporting the well-being of Service members (see Appendix XXII). Some respondents thought we should be building Service strength and identity in order to be responsive to external circumstances, for example, so that we can attract new EPs and TEPs, and improve the way in which we market ourselves.

Thus, although I think it is still very important to spend time to focus upon research and development activities, in order to respond to the external environment, we have also to pay attention to internal integration (Schein, 1990). This is reflected in one respondent’s priority:

‘Redress the balance between service as a whole and the teams – maintain a Service identity which works collaboratively to deliver an applied psychology service.’

Inquiry groups have the potential to act as a mechanism for working across the Service. Unfortunately, in order to make sure that participants were placed in their first or second choice group, only two of the groups had members from both teams. Where this did happen, it was viewed positively:

‘We have started to working together in teams but what we really needed was to stay together as a Service and have opportunities to choose topics and this was a vehicle for that.’

7.3.7ii Developing a research strand to our work

The data presented in Figure 6.2 suggest that respondents would like to enhance the research aspect of the Service. Although they do not necessarily refer to collaborative research initiatives, one third of the priorities related to this. Respondents gave a range of factors to support this development. Links with universities through doctoral studies, closer links with LAs who are commissioning research, and gaining experience in putting in bids were given by participants as supporting factors. As one respondent mentioned, ‘increasingly we are finding opportunities to demonstrate our research skills to service users’. Lack of marketing skills, and budget restrictions were given as hindering factors. I think, however, that this response reflects the sense of urgency and timeliness raised in my literature review, and discussed at length by others in the profession (e.g. Webster et al, 2002; Reason and Woods, 2002; Miller and Todd, 2002; Frederikson, 2002; Baxter and Frederikson, 2005).

This study has influenced my thoughts on EPs raising their profile as ‘users and doers’ of research. It is not just about raising our profile. Going back to Schein (1997), culture determines what the members of the organisation can and cannot do. I think that the way forward is to think about these different aspects of research together under the umbrella of a ‘research culture’ Stringer (2009) talks about such a culture in his Service:

‘We emphasise the role of research at all levels of practice, from how we evidence to inform our practice, to how we evaluate the outcomes of the work we undertake’ (p. 62).

Unless as EPs we allocate time to close the gap between ‘espoused theories’ and ‘theories in use’ regarding using and doing research, by establishing structures and processes (‘artefacts’) to support research, we will not be able to achieve this ambition.

7.3.7iii Developing specialist areas of work

Developing specialist areas of work was another commonly reported priority, which included therapies, and more sophisticated assessment of children’s learning and behaviour (see Figure 6.2, p. 186). EPs in our Service are not alone in their thinking. MacKay (2007) puts forward a strong case for a revival in the role of therapy and individual casework in Educational Psychology.

Whilst MacKay (2007) does not deny that consultative, systemic and preventative initiatives are required, he believes that there will still be a need for therapeutic services. This was supported in the review of the functions and contribution of educational psychologists in England and Wales (2006) which recommends that with the trend towards reduction of statutory work, EPs should expand into areas ‘where their skills and knowledge can be used to greater effect, e.g. in group and individual therapy’ (p. 106). MacKay (2007) believes that EPs are a key therapeutic resource in educational contexts: they are ‘best poised’ to be generic child psychologists as they are the professionals who are ‘thoroughly embedded in educational systems, and they have the widest training in child and adolescent psychology’ (p. 103).

In their supporting comments, respondents in this study felt that although developing specialisms would involve a major structural change, it would have the advantage of 'valuing' specific contributions of EPs, 'reaching across' the two teams, provide opportunities to work more closely with other professionals, and be good for retention of staff. From my reading and research in this study, I can see that developing 'specialist' EPs as opposed to 'generic' EPs is one of the problems for organisations: 'finding an appropriate path through paradox' (Dawson, 1998). In order not to create new divisions or subgroups (Schein, 1997) it would be important to think of ways in which the specialist knowledge and skills can be shared (or accessed) to inform practice at a Service level, and that the service provided through the specialism is responsive to review and evaluation.

7.3.7iv Developing a community psychology orientation

Enhancing the community psychology orientation in our work was one of the highest occurring priorities (one quarter of priorities generated, see Figure 6.2). Again, EPs in our Service are not alone in their thinking. The whole of the Educational and Child Psychology journal (DECP, Volume 23, No 1, 2006) is devoted to 'Community Psychology: Theoretical and Practical Implications for Educational Psychologists'. The editors of this issue (Peter Jones, senior educational psychologist with Plymouth Psychology Service, and Phil Stringer, acting principal educational psychologist with Hampshire Educational Psychology Service) report that a large number of submissions came from EPs in Britain, and provide an 'ethical response' to 'social complexity and

uncertainty'. They identify coherence in this response, in the way that the authors see:

'Values, principles and practices of community psychology as having the potential to unite diverse approaches to applying psychology in a wide variety of settings to improve the life chances of children, their parents and carers, and those who are either paid or volunteer to work with them'. (p. 6)

Examples from respondents in this study reflect these values ('to apply psychology to promote emotional health and well-being in children and young people, and the adults who care for them') and a variety of settings (e.g. extending work in Children's Centre, providing consultation direct to parents, and application of psychology to community settings).

Despite the resurgence of interest in community psychology in this country during the last few years (Bozic, 2007) there have been some difficulties for the profession gaining a foothold or recognition in this field. MacKay (2006) talks about the profession being 'crippled by bureaucracy, educational legislation and restrictive departmental and professional boundaries' (p. 14); Stringer et al (2007) talk about the apparent lack of understanding within government about the range of work undertaken by EPs. Similarly, lack of time, statutory work and focus upon schools ('custom and practice') were seen as hindering factors by respondents in this study.

The feeling, however, amongst some of the EPs contributing to the DECP journal (2006) is that the merging of educational and social services departments in local authorities into children's services departments, has provided a wealth of opportunities for innovative practice in community educational psychology across all agencies (Stringer et al, 2006; MacKay,

2006). Similarly, respondents in this study felt that there is support from managers and other agencies, that there are 'endless opportunities' and that EPs feel 'energised and believe this is valuable work.'

Jones and Stringer (2006) say that one of the problems with some of the articles submitted to the DECP journal was that they showed only a tenuous link to the values and principles that underlie community psychology, and evidenced joint academic and applied practice. Bozic (2007) highlights three principles that he feels are readily incorporated into daily practice: social support, empowerment and prevention. Stringer (2007) points out that we are part of a number of communities through our work, one of which is the community of our Service. Inspired by Bozic (2007) I had hoped that such principles would be a common thread running through the initiative. I think that feedback on inquiry groups suggests that some respondents recognised this. This is reflected in the comment:

'I liked the way the model encouraged us to reflect together and think about practices; to think together about the rationale behind the work and ultimately to do something together that would inform the practices of the whole Service.'

7.4 The role of inquiry groups in the future

So has the experience of the inquiry groups changed the way in which the EP Service carries out 'in-house' research and development activities in response to internal and external priorities? It is too early to tell whether there is a change in the way in which the Service responds. All of the respondents thought the IGs provided useful context/ mechanisms for promoting personal and Service development; 14 out of 15 respondents said that they would recommend them to another Service, and 13 out of 15 said that they have a

contribution to make to future priorities (the other two said they were not sure)
(see Table 6.12)

One member of the support group believed EPs had learnt from the
experience in this study and can build upon this:

'I'm thinking next cycle, knowing what we know now, having been through this cycle if we were to run IGs next year, it would certainly get my vote. We know we have got 6 sessions through the course of the year, and we've got cross team groups, and the right number.'

For other members of the support group, the initiative had provided a
structure to support Service development and CPD:

'I think it marks a significant shift to organisational development. In order to be an effective Service and efficient then we need to do things like this and it's almost a vehicle for that. It's a model that says we need models to help us to think because of the nature of what we do.'

'It's a structure for developing whole Service CPD isn't it and making it happen rather than paying lip service to it and never really taking off. It has involved areas that at this moment in time we want to explore and perhaps need to be elevated and explored. By having the group it has elevated it.'

I have outlined ways in which respondents believed the model could be improved in Table 6.12 p. 190, and these are also reflected in my new conceptual map in the concluding chapter. This study suggests that within the context of the EPS at the time of the initiative, inquiry groups afford one mechanism in which an EP Service 'can and does change itself in response to external influence, new knowledge and self-review.' (Jensen et al, 2002).

One member of the support group said,

'I see it a bit like a Government task force. If it is an area that arises through Service meetings we feel we need to invest in further research then we have an IG to do that and we follow a similar pattern. So rather the Senior Management group saying we need to look into this, we'll task an IG to look at this.'

There is a sense from the positive comments that it would be a shame not to build upon the work achieved during the study, both the work of the groups and the initiative as a whole. As one member of the support group mentions:

'We don't want to lose it really. It's something that could be inbuilt into the system so that we don't lose it.'

I now conclude this study by reflecting upon the purposes of the initiative, and some final thoughts on implications for learning and development initiatives, organisational learning, and my own learning from this study.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

8.1 Organisational change initiatives in EP Services

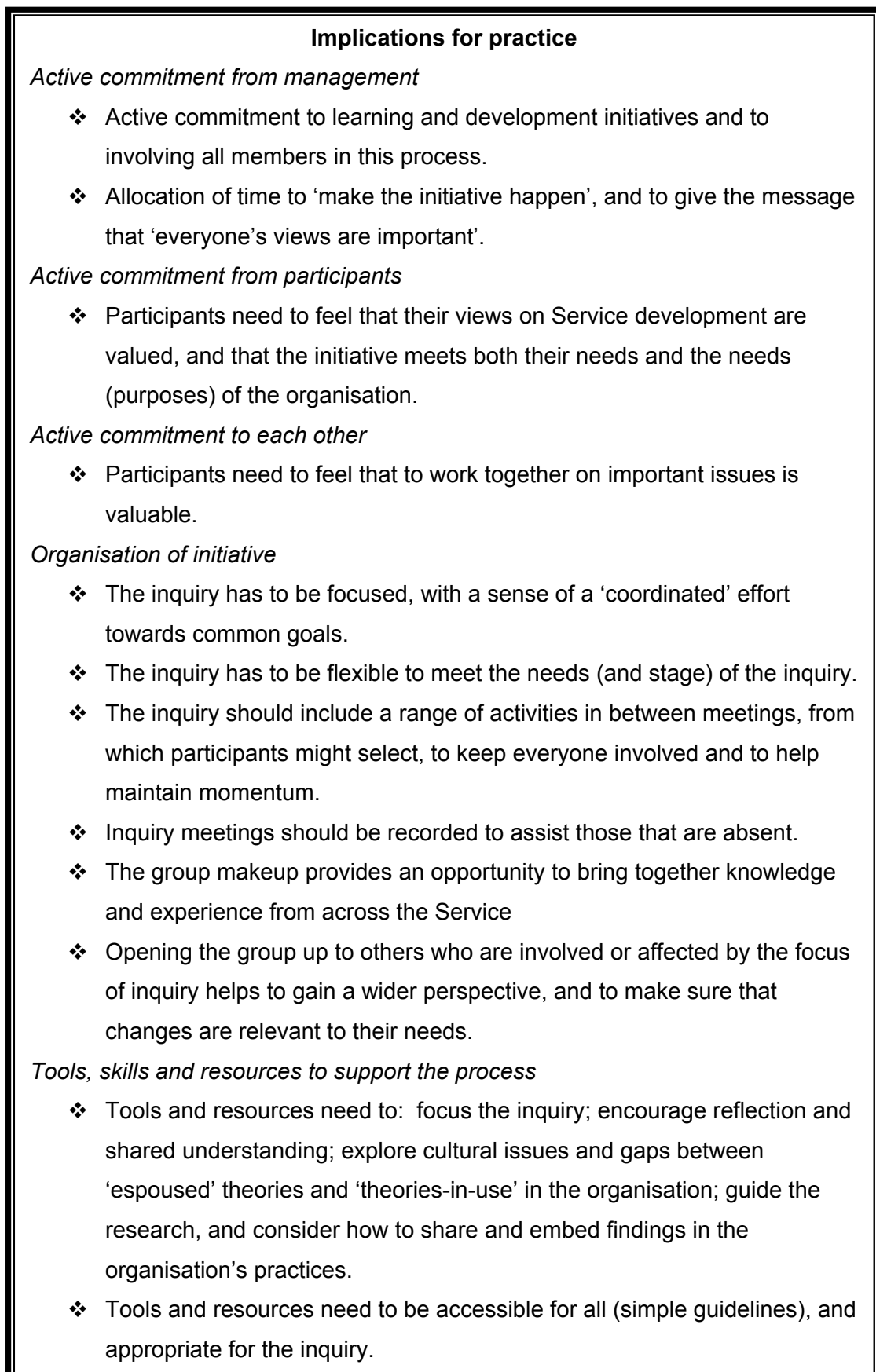
The purpose of this study was to provide an account of the factors that facilitate or inhibit organisational learning and development, in an organisation such as an EPS. My purposes were twofold: exploratory (exploring changes as a result of the initiative, and theories for further research), and explanatory (explaining patterns and relationships between aspects of the phenomenon being researched). I have identified changes at both an individual and organisational level, although the latter were limited within the timeframe of the study. Using the framework of realistic evaluation I developed hypotheses regarding relationships between contexts, mechanisms and outcomes, and I have revised these for further research. I may not have explained the relationships between individuals, groups, and organisation, but I hope that I have discerned some 'shades of grey' within the 'black box' of organisational change and development initiatives (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, p. 114).

I have done what Paffrey (1991), Rowland (2002) and Jensen et al (2002) advocate in terms of applying psychological knowledge and theory to an EP Service, in order to improve its practice. I have applied thinking from individual, group and organisational psychology to my own organisation and explored tools and frameworks to support the process. I commenced my 'learning journey' with a 'hybrid' theory or synthesis of individual, group and organisational features, and I continue to uphold the importance of considering all of these features in any organisational change initiative. I feel

that I have opened up the 'psychology' box in my first illustration of the IG model (Figure 1.1, p.7) and have a greater understanding of what is inside.

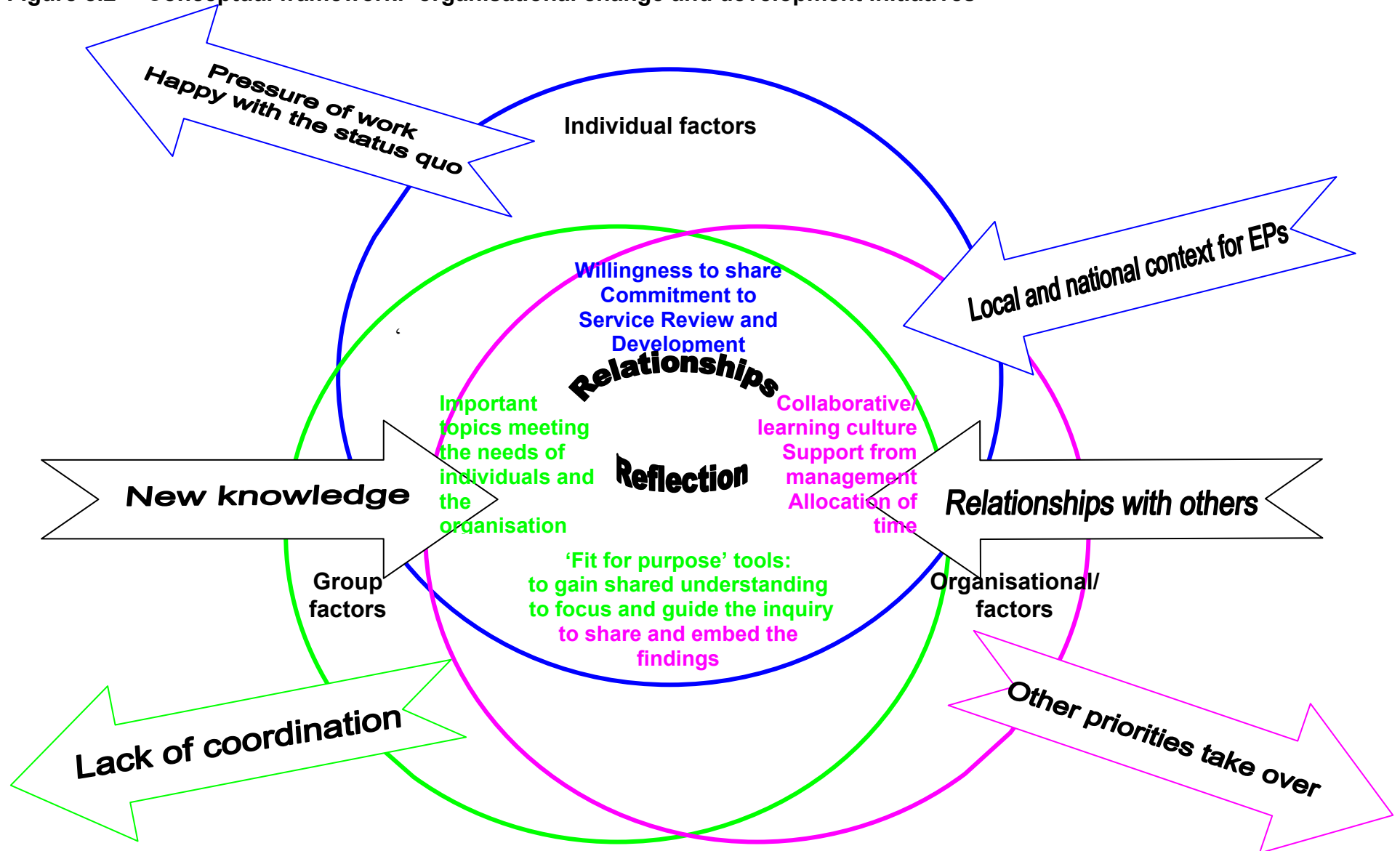
I believe that this study has shown that EPSs *can* change themselves in response to 'external influences, new knowledge and self review' (Jensen et al, 2002), providing they allocate time to do so, and the initiatives are carefully planned to meet the needs of individuals as well as the organisation. I have summarised some key findings to inform future learning and development initiatives in Figure 8.1 below.

Figure 8.1: Implications for future practice



Russell-Jones (2003) says that for successful change management to take place you must position the change project in the right place to maximise successful implementation. I have illustrated how I see this positioning in Figure 8.2 below.

Figure 8.2 Conceptual framework: organisational change and development initiatives



8.2 Comment on methodology

Using RADIO (Timmins et al, 2003) helped me to structure the IGs and the evaluation in a way that was interactive and collaborative. I would certainly use RADIO again, when engaged in a systematic inquiry into an aspect of Service delivery, and give greater thought and attention to the 'organisational development and/ or change' phase. Just as the allocation of time allowed the IG initiative to happen, time needs to be allocated to make the evaluation and embedding happen. Like Timmins et al (2003) I think it is important for EP Services to strengthen their capacity to manage their own improvement initiatives.

Realistic evaluation helped me to explore in some detail the different levels of programme interventions, and the factors that facilitated and inhibited organisational learning in this study. Whilst in the future I would reduce the number of theories (Thistleton, 2008) and perhaps explore just one strand, I would certainly use realistic evaluation again, because I think it has a great deal to offer the 'cumulative knowhow' within Educational Psychology Services, and the profession as a whole. I agree with Timmins et al (2006) that it adds a useful dimension to the 'outcome' orientated approach recommended by the DfES (2004b). I would also like to improve my skills in this approach. At one point I thought that perhaps the IG initiative was not the sort of initiative that was appropriate for RE, and as mentioned by Timmins and Miller (2007) it was difficult to specify the features of the programme. However, I have taken heed of advice from Pawson and Tilley (1997), and stopped thinking about any programmes as 'some kind of unitary happening

which either does or doesn't work' (p. 104). I would enjoy following the realistic evaluation cycle in the more traditional way, drawing upon folk wisdom from realistic interviews, as well as academic theory, especially with the support of co-researchers.

I appreciate that there are some particular dangers in this study with regard to potential bias as a result of my status as a participant and practitioner researcher. I have referred to measures taken to address the validity of data collection tools and the analysis of data in section 7.2.5iii, p. 227. Of particular note, however, is the degree to which participants felt able to report openly and honestly in the questionnaires. The most likely aspect to have been affected is their reporting on outcomes. I think the use of a rating scale in both questionnaires was helpful in this respect. It allowed participants to be generous if they were concerned about being open and honest (that is report change as 'a bit' as opposed to 'not at all'), which might have slightly overemphasised the effect of the initiative in terms of the average ratings (hence I reported numbers of ratings for each question). However, assuming that individual participants were consistent in the way they responded (concerned or not concerned about being open and honest), I do not think that it will have affected the overall trend in my reporting of the outcome data: the initiative had a greater effect upon individual participants up-dating their knowledge in the area, than changes at an organisational level.

I think it is less likely that participants would have been affected by my status with regard to evaluation of process and contextual factors. I hoped that by

asking participants to report on both supporting and hindering factors of the initiative in a fairly neutral 'list format', they would be able to report relatively objectively. Several participants reported negative factors related to the organisation of the initiative, which implies some degree of openness and honesty amongst some participants. Whilst others may not have wanted to report these factors, those that did were sufficient in number to challenge (or support) initial theories.

Similarly, by collecting data on participants' views on collaborative ways of working, and priorities into the future, I hoped to gain some relatively objective feedback on the value and relevance of such an initiative, as these questions were slightly removed from the inquiry group initiative itself. Again, whilst negative ratings regarding this way of working may be slightly underrepresented, I feel there was sufficient consistency and variety in the data to both support (and challenge) my previously held theories about the initiative and how it might work, for whom and in what circumstances. Having a co-researcher and moving through another cycle of research would, however, have further enhanced the validity of my findings.

8.3 Comment on organisational learning

As a result of this study I hoped to make an original contribution to knowledge and theory development in organisational learning. Despite my, at times, 'tortuous' journey through the world of organisations and organisational learning, I have not come to any new definitions of organisational learning, but

I feel that I have a better understanding of the strengths and limitations of existing definitions within the context of an EPS.

My starting point would still be the definition from Boreham and Morgan (2004) that provides a synthesis of different writers:

'Learning is organisational to the extent it is undertaken by members of an organisation to achieve organisational purposes, takes place in teams or other small groups, is distributed widely throughout the organisation and embeds its outcomes in the organisation's system, structure and culture.' (p. 308. Taken from Snyder & Cummings, 1998; Senge, 1990; Pedler et al, 1992; Watkins & Marsick, 1993; Argyris & Schön, 1996; Edmondson & Moingeon, 1998).

I think that Argyris and Schön's (1996) summary of the central ideas is also useful as a 'checklist' of things to refer to every now and again to reflect upon the 'well-being' of the organisation:

'notions of organizational adaptability, flexibility, avoidance of stability and traps, propensity to experiment, readiness to rethink means and ends, inquiry-orientation, realization of human potential for learning in the service of organisational purposes, and creation of organizational settings as contexts for human development.' (p. 180)

In my own future research and professional practice, I shall refer to Boreham and Morgan's (2004) 'pedagogy of organisational learning' as I think that this captures the importance of culture and practices that promote collaborative working and inquiry across an organisation:

'A socio-cultural model is proposed which identifies dialogue as the fundamental process by which organisations learn, and relational practices as the social structure which embeds the dialogue and makes it sustainable in a potentially conflictual environment. Three relational practices are analysed in detail: opening space for the creation of shared meaning, reconstituting power relationships and providing cultural tools to mediate learning.' (Boreham and Morgan, 2004, p. 307)

I think that the definition from Keating (1995, in Mulford, 1998) is relevant because it refers to the importance of commitment and group processes, and makes reference to links with the external world:

'Coordinated group effort towards commonly shared goals; active commitment to continuous improvement and to the diffusion of best practices throughout the

organisation; horizontal networks of information flow to help bring together expertise as well as links to the external world; the ability to understand analyse, and use the dynamic system within which they are functioning.’ (p. 618 in Mulford, 1998)

I still like the definition from Leithwood and Atwood (1995) in Rowland (2002) as I think it captures the importance of reflection and relationships, which emerged as key factors in this study:

‘Organisational learning means the process of improving actions through better knowledge and understanding...this form of learning emerges as organisational members together reflect on the processes by which they become informed and how these processes might be improved – a form of collective ‘metacognition’. (Leithwood and Aitkin, 1995, p. 31-32 from Rowland, 2002, p. 279)

Finally, I also still like Senge’s (1990) description of learning organisations: you can never say that ‘we are a learning organisation’ any more than you can say that ‘I am an enlightened person’. I think comments from participants in this study suggest that the inquiry group initiative has the potential, if not yet fully realised, to create not **the** learning organisation rather ‘a new wave of experimentation and advancement’. (p. 11)

8.4 Final comment on this study

Paffrey (1991) suggests that at the negotiation phase of a change initiative you ask yourself why you are doing it. I find it easier to answer these questions at the reflection phase. She poses the questions: ‘Is it to assert yourself, your values and your service? Are any of these under threat? Just what is the level of investment in this project personally and as a team? Do you want it too much? Can the project possibly repay such hopes and expectations?’ (p. 44). I think my answer to all of these is probably yes. I value collaborative working highly and feel strongly about developing the Service in a way that is ‘continually expanding its capacity to create its future’

(Senge, 1990). On my 'learning journey' I have become fascinated by organisations and how they, and the individuals who are part of them, learn.

One member of the Support Group comments on this:

'You've integrated the whole thing – it's a wonderful example of what we say we are, a learning organisation. You've set it up for us and you've taken us with you on your journey and that's really amazing.'

Setting up and evaluating this initiative was a big investment on my part.

Paffrey (1991) raises the question of 'small group versus large group'. For my research initiative I had thought originally of having one small inquiry group and /or working collaboratively with the whole Service to develop one area of practice, as in Timmins et al (2006). Paffrey (1991), having compared projects set up in different ways suggests that 'possibly only working with the wider group there is the chance of a higher yield but with much higher risk of failure' (p. 46). There is no way of knowing the extent of the 'yield' in the longer term with regard to the initiative, but the feedback from participants is hopeful. Evaluation of this would be the subject of another study.

I believe that the study has repaid my hopes and expectations. I felt well supported by the interest and commitment from the management, and colleagues, and the allocation of time for meetings made the initiative happen. Time was very much appreciated by all participants, although lack of time and the means to access published research was an issue. I was pleased and surprised that after a relatively short number of meeting hours, the 'error-detection'/'error correction' cogs were put in motion, and that some changes at an organisational level ('double-loop' learning) were about to happen. For

example, a questionnaire had been devised and a number of parent interviews had taken place, to inform and improve an area of Service delivery.

I feel that I have gained a greater understanding of the 'problems for organisations' and the 'journey' and dynamics of organisational change. I think the inquiry group initiative was a good vehicle for exploring these processes. I have experienced the group processes 'playing out' during the progress of the inquiry, and have learnt that it is important to sustain a coherent sense of direction. I have been reminded of the value of opening the inquiry up to multiple perspectives, and realise that the tools and frameworks employed have a wide brief in terms of developing understanding of individuals, organisations, and change, and guiding the inquiry. It is important that we choose the right ones and have the skills to maximise their potential. I was struck by the strength of the collaborative and 'sharing and caring' culture within the Service, which made an initiative such as inquiry groups possible. I hope that the initiative reinforced that culture.

I hoped that the initiative would provide the Service with a more confident role (Baxter and Frederikson, 2005). One member of the support group said in relation to the focus of inquiry:

'We have researched it, talked about it, elevated it, and we feel more confident about talking about it in other forums.'

It seems to have raised the profile of Service development and how we can all be involved in this:

'You've modelled for us as a Service ... how to make Service development manageable and doable. We can all see that now that it can be done in the time frame and that's amazing.'

Looking back on my initial ideas and enthusiasm for this initiative I was in danger of being seen as one of Hargreave's (1995) 'change addicts'.

Thankfully, with the support from EP colleagues and the management, the initiative was perceived by members of the support group as 'doable' and 'accessible':

'You made it safe for us and brought it within our frame so that it was achievable for all of us.'

I have learnt, however, that whilst developing and changing practice, in response to 'external influences, new knowledge and self-review' (Jensen et al, 2002) is very important, it is also important to maintain that balance between adaptation to the external environment and the internal integration that permits daily functioning and the ability to adapt (Schein, 1997). I have learnt that learning and development in an organisation is not just about 'learning faster' (Senge, 1990) but also about respecting our heritage, continuity, consolidation and tradition (Hargreaves, 1995). As stated by Mulford (1998) you have to achieve the right balance between continuous improvement and maintaining a safe base from which to venture forth. Thus, I realised, like Paffrey (1991), that

'at the heart of systemic interaction are indeed our selves, and our selves in relation to individuals, groups and that organisation' (p. 47).

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<p>Article: Boreham and Morgan (2004): A sociocultural analysis of organisational learning <i>Oxford Review of Education</i>, 30, 3, 307-325</p> <p>Part of research project: 'Organisational Learning in the Chemical Industry and the Implications for Vocational Training and Training' funded by European Commission. Backgrounds in education, employment, higher education, psychology and sociology. Academic posts: Boreham Professor of Education, and Employment; Morgan, psychologist and honorary research fellow in Dept Sociology and involved in curriculum development.</p>				
Motives/Aims	Theoretical assumptions	Method	Epistemological & methodol. paradigms	Strengths and questions
<p>Motives: Currently research fragmented, from different fields and paradigms, and little empirical evidence of specific processes and actions that constitute OL and the pedagogy of OL. They want to challenge the notion that OL is not 'authentic' because lack of individual autonomy and to find out what is 'learned' by participation in social practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991)</p> <p>Aims: To clarify the practices of OL and to interpret them within sociocultural learning theory; To identify the pedagogy of OL.</p>	<p>Sociocultural theory: Learning embedded in social and cultural contexts; best understood as a form of participation in those contexts. The social and individual dimensions are mutual. 1st researchers: Argyris & Schon (1978): growth of culture of open communication, in which members collaborate in 'organisational enquiries' to discover better ways of achieving the organisational purposes (question and replace 'theories in use'). The org. became the learning subject and culture change the process by which it learns. Schein (1992): the org's culture (and thus the members socialised into that culture) determines what it (and they) can and cannot do. Engestrom: expansive learning: the activity system as a whole learns by sharing experiences across boundaries created by the division of labour. Def of OL: undertaken by members of an organisation to achieve organisational purposes; takes place in teams or other small groups, is distributed widely throughout the organisation and embeds its outcomes in the organisation's systems, structures and culture.</p>	<p>A 3-year empirical investigation into OL in a large industrial organisation. This paper analyses one activity – The Procedures and Competence Development Methodology)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Preparatory interviews with key 'informants', 'desk research' & mtgs on the industry and manpower issues. 2. Visits to site & observations. 3. 25, 1 hour semi-structured interviews to elicit personal accounts of employees' involvement in OL initiatives. 4. Thematic analysis of transcripts, with cross validation of analysis with employees with a member of the Board of directors and manager of Learning and Devt.. 	<p>Interpretive/constructivist paradigm: Ontology: Multiple, socially constructed realities- <i>Learning embedded in social and cultural contexts; best understood as a form of participation in those contexts</i> Epistemology: The relationship between the researcher and researched is not explored but the interpretations of interviews were cross validated with employees which suggests that the 'researchers' viewed the 'researched' as having equally valid constructions of events. Methodology: Qualitative: interpretation of transcripts from interviews (hermeneutics); validation of emerging themes (dialectical); cultural factors described (management structure and collaborative enquiry).</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. This study is reported in the Oxford Review of Education. The report is comprehensive, the history of and definition of OL are described and the theoretical background is accessible to those who are not experts in, for example, sociocultural theory. 2. The purposes are clear, and supported by theory. 3. The design is thorough: the research strategy and the methods employed are appropriate for the research questions. 4. Measures are put in place to control for bias: transparency of purposes; triangulation – although most of the data reported is from the interviews; member checking – returning to respondents to check accounts, interpretations and analysis of themes. There is no report of negative case analysis (and how were the interviewees selected?), although controversial issues regarding the concept of dialogue, self and procedures are explored. I 5. Ethical procedures are described. 6. The aims are achieved. The findings offer a new model of OL: dialogue is fundamental process by which organisations learn, and identifies 3 relational practices (opening space for shared meaning; reconstituting power relationships; providing cultural tools to mediate learning) as the social structure, which embeds the dialogue and makes it sustainable. 7. Meets definition of OL as stated and it provides empirical evidence of what can be learned at a cultural and organisational level, as well as at individual and group levels, and the practices involved. 8. Model is based upon themes emerging from research & linked directly to strong theoretical basis in sociocultural activity theory. 9. The study may not be replicable due to the complex factors within the culture and recent changes of that organisation, but it would be very interesting to find out if the same cultural/contextual factors and relational practices emerge in a different organisation.

Article: Timmins, P., Bham, M., McFayden, J. & Ward, J. (2006) Teachers and Consultation: Applying research and development in organisations (RADIO). <i>Educational Psychology in Practice</i> , 22, 4, 305-319				
Motives/Aims	Theoretical assumptions	Method	Methodology	Strengths and questions
<p>Motives:</p> <p>1 <i>Current climate:</i></p> <p>a. EPSs need to be accountable and demonstrate effectiveness to others;</p> <p>b. Ethos of self-evaluation of the quality of LA and Health services</p> <p>2. EpiTs as a valuable resource to contribute to service research and review activities and the profession's evidence base re. continually improving services for ch and families</p> <p>Aims: to evaluate the impact of the application of a consultation model in schools:</p> <p>a. to explore teachers' perceptions of consultation;</p> <p>b. to gather information regarding teachers' actions following consultation.</p>	<p>1 Collaborative action research in organisations:</p> <p>a. Clarifying concerns phase (Intense collaborative interaction between research and research sponsor/facilitation group to elicit, clarify, and agree direction that work with the org will take) - Effective tuning of specific evaluation questions and purposes to an organisation's needs strengthens the likelihood that evaluation findings will be used to advance understanding of the workings of the object of the evaluation and hence take-up of the research findings, feeding into a process of continuous improvement. (Brinkerhoff et al, 1983; Patton, 1997 – models of evaluation with a collaborative orientation).</p> <p>b. Negotiation phase: exploration of the org's culture and capacities around change - loose negotiation may fail to identify hidden agendas which may lead to unexpected demands or sabotage at a later phase (Patton, 1997. Schein, 1990); what has worked well/not so well in the past - identification of change capacity-building processes (Hopkins et al, 1994, models of school improvement</p> <p>c. Organisational change aspect of RADIO is viewed as complex and requires collaborative planning and review to ensure that it meets the organisations needs. (Hopkins et, 1994, Timmins, 2000, Senge, 1992)</p>	<p>Collaborative Action Research</p> <p>The researchers and research sponsors (EPS) moved through the RADIO phases of <i>clarifying concerns, research methods mode and organisational mode</i>. The process involves several cycles of dialogue (some of these with a coordinator, linked to a working group from the EPS) and is described as recursive rather than sequential. In the early stages the research sponsors spent time in workshops sharing practice, knowledge and research, and then the researchers (using Brinkerhoff's model, 1983) help to focus the evaluation and research questions before the sample and telephone interview as a means of data collection are agreed. Finally, the research findings/themes are presented by the researchers to the EPS to inform future actions by EPS.</p>	<p>Ontology: An interest in processes and outcomes of consultation, suggests interpretive/ constructivist view of reality. Possibly, emancipatory, as change/improvement is central to action research.</p> <p>Epistemology: The collaborative relationship between research sponsors and researchers suggests highly interactive link between researcher and participants and their participation in the process, and thus a interpretive/constructivist perspective on the nature of knowledge.</p> <p>Methodology: Flexible design suggests interpretive/constructivist paradigm. <i>Quantitative:</i> no of positive responses to questions; <i>Qualitative:</i> interpretation of transcripts from interviews (hermeneutics); validation of emerging themes with EPS (dialectical); cultural/contextual factors described (links between contextual factors and most and least satisfied consultees explored).</p>	<p>1. This study is reported in Educational Psychology in Practice. The report is comprehensive; the context of the study and the theoretical background to RADIO from evaluation and collaborative action research in organisations, and school improvement literature is very accessible.</p> <p>2. Purposes and research questions are clear, and supported by theory. The way in which the research questions are developed is described in detail.</p> <p>3. The design is through: research strategy and methods employed appropriate for research questions.</p> <p>4. The recursive nature of the dialogue between researchers and research sponsors reinforces the collaborative and interactive relationship.</p> <p>5. Control for bias: transparency - research sponsors are involved in the development of purposes and methods of data collection; triangulation – although data reported is from just one source – telephone interviews, sample is carefully selected to include schools with different contexts, different experiences of consultation in the past, and those which EPS considered would be satisfied and not satisfied with the process; member checking – the researchers returned to research sponsors to check accounts, interpretations and analysis of themes - it is not clear whether they returned to the respondents.</p> <p>6. Ethical procedures are described.</p> <p>7. The purposes are achieved. Consultation is received positively (18 out of 19 valued this as a way of working) and most reported changes in thinking and action (even when this went contrary to EPs views). Thematic analysis of responses provided ways to inform changes in practice at individual and Service level. No evaluation of process from perspective of the EPS and thus not clear whether telephone interview or this model (either RADIO or using EpiTs as researchers) will be used routinely to review consultation or other areas of practice in Service. plan.</p> <p>8. Study should be replicable. Phases of the research process are described clearly</p>

RADIO PHASE S	RADIO STAGES	RADIO ACTIVITIES INQUIRY GROUP MODEL (IGM)	TIMELINE	RADIO ACTIVITIES INQUIRY GROUPS (IGs)	TIME-LINE
Clarifying concerns	1. Awareness of need	Writing doctoral assignment on evidence-based practice raised my awareness of need to promote research skills and applied psychology in the service. Additional reading on organisational learning, Realistic Evaluation and Community Psychology. Development of model, concept map and research questions. Discussions with tutors.	August 05 September 06 – March 07	Clarifying importance/ relevance of focus of inquiry in relation to local needs and national priorities	June 07
	2. Invitation to Act	Discussion of proposal with management. Received positively and agreed that IG meetings to take place in meeting time. Background and context shared with EPS at initial launch.	March 2007 June 2007	Support from management team to develop areas of inquiry as generated by EPs – time provided in existing meeting time.	Sept 07 – Sept 08
	3. Clarifying organisational & cultural issues	Discussion of ethical issues and organisation of initiative. Exploring opportunities and threats within EPS relating to the initiative	September 07	Exploring cultural issues and organisational factors related to areas of inquiry.	October 2007
Research methods mode	4. Identifying stakeholders	Establishing IGs to include all EPs, and support group (SG) to support and coordinate the initiative across IGs.	September 07	Identifying key people relating to area of inquiry from other services and settings	Dec 2007
	5. Agreeing focus of concern	Research aims and purposes brought to EPS at initial launch. Focus of IGs generated by EPs.	September 07 June 07	Agreement of aims and outcomes for inquiry groups agreed within groups.	Dec 2007
	6. Negotiating the framework for data gathering.	Realistic evaluation model proposed, and methods, resources and timescales discussed at EPS launch. Data collection methods discussed with management and support group. Questionnaires developed - pilot with sample of EPs.	June & Sep 07 May/June 2008	Issues regarding methodology, methods, resources and timescale agreed within groups.	January 2008
	7. Gathering information	On-going data from one IG and SG. Group questionnaires/final evaluation in groups Individual questionnaires	Sep-June 08 June 2008 July 2008	Groups to use agreed methods.	March 2008

Organisational change mode	8. Processing information with stakeholders	All EPs invited to check themes emerging from data. Research findings shared and discussed with all EPs.	Sep 08 Oct 08	Sharing findings with other EPs/persons involved.	June 2008
	9. Agreeing areas for future action	Discussion of findings in relation to organisation's needs and identification of areas for action.	December 08	Recommendations re future action regarding area of inquiry.	June 2008
	10. Action planning	EPS recommendations	Dec 08	Future action depends upon Service agreement and management support for actions.	
	11. Implementation/ action	Management response to EPS recommendations	Dec 08	As above	
	12. Evaluating actions	Depends upon implementation of recommended actions.		As above	

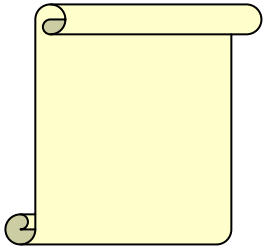
Evaluation of EP Activities



**A
proposal...**

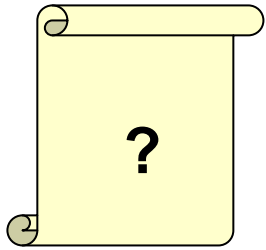
Louise Sheppard

June 2007



Outline

- Why I am interested in evaluating EP practice
- Why is this a good time?
- What do we do already?
- My proposal: two models
- Planning/next steps



Why I am interested...

‘Our Special Educational Needs role has ‘secured the survival’ of the profession, but has it resulted in EPs receiving scant attention with regard to their skills in conducting research, and removed the pressure to demonstrate the effectiveness of their work?’

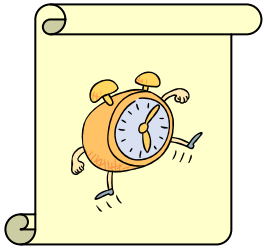
(Baxter and Frederikson, 2005)



and...

‘EPs can no longer assume what they are doing is useful...interventions from clinical psychologists may start to be favoured.’

‘EPs need to raise their profile as ‘users’ and ‘doers’ of research, in order to support the broad agenda of Every Child Matters, and to provide the profession with a confident role in the delivery of services, which have positive outcomes for young people.’



Significant moment...

- Farrell Report:
 - ✓ 5 outcomes
 - ✓ Significant contribution
 - JAR in 2008
 - ✓ 5 outcomes
 - ✓ Accountability/value for money
 - New way of working
 - ✓ Flexibility/responsive to area needs
 - ✓ Contribution to multi-agency teams
-

JOB EVALUATION DAY



Purposes of evaluation

What do we do already?

Outcome evaluation

- ✓ To assess the outcomes of a programme?
- ✓ To find out if client needs are met?



This gives a broad view of service effectiveness but does not reflect how well we meet our service aims, how we contribute to the five outcomes, or which activities work well, for which people, in which contexts.

Purposes of evaluation

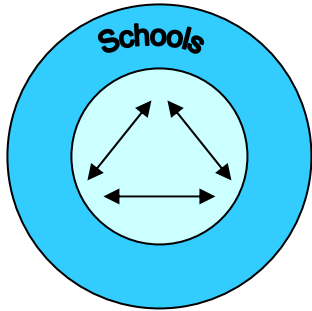
Can we extend this to

Process Evaluation



- To find out how a programme is working?
- To understand why a programme works (or doesn't work)?
- In order to
 - ❖ Improve the programme?
 - ❖ Share the findings in a kind of 'cumulative know-how'?

(For programme read service, innovation or intervention) (Robson, 2000)



Co-operative inquiry

A group of co-researchers
meet to inquire into some
aspect of their work

Stage 1

- They agree what it is they wish to research
- They share ideas that they bring to the inquiry
- They decide what kind of research action they will undertake to explore these ideas and how to observe, record, measure etc

Stages 2 and 3

- They go out into schools and engage in the action and experience of the inquiry

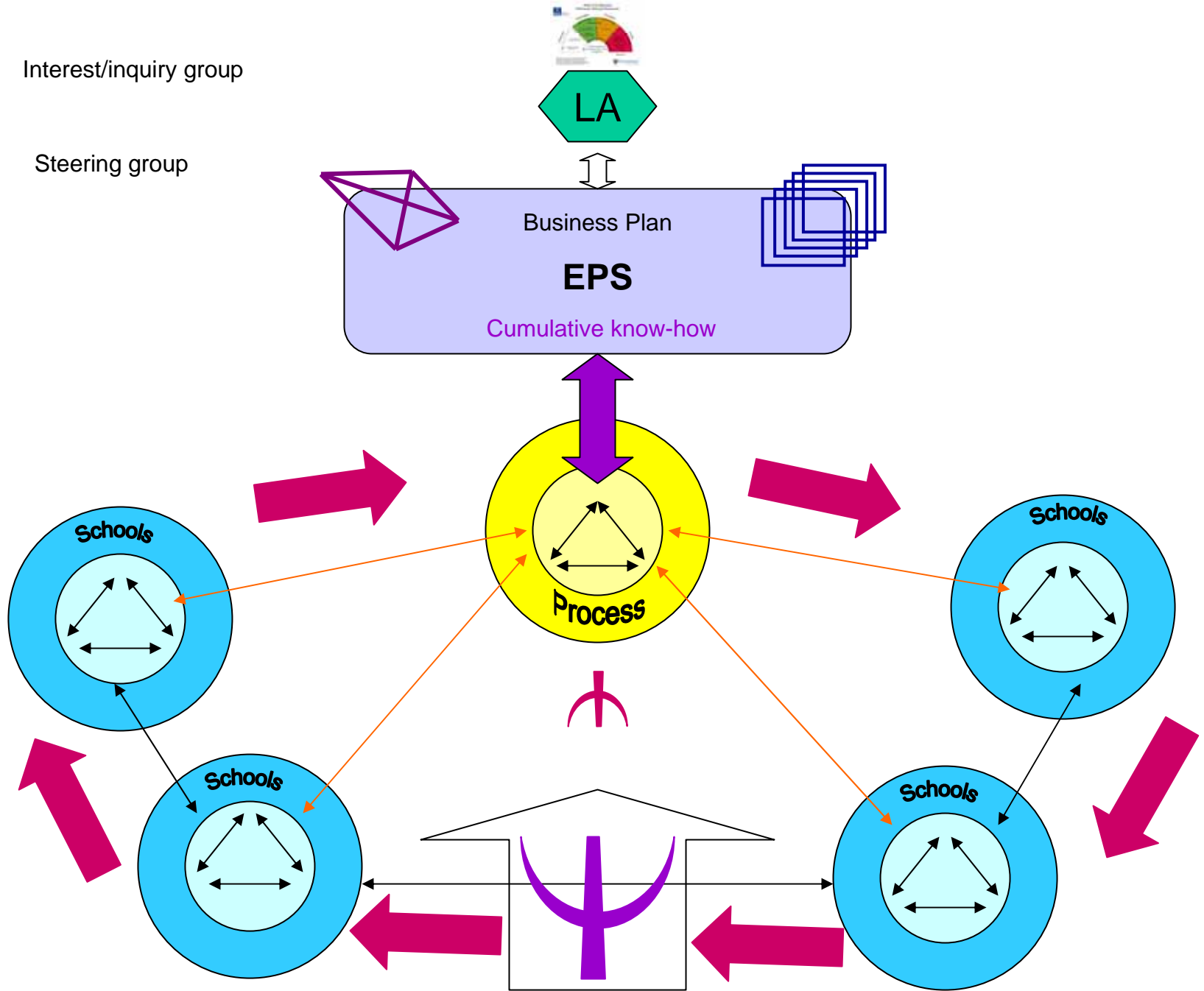
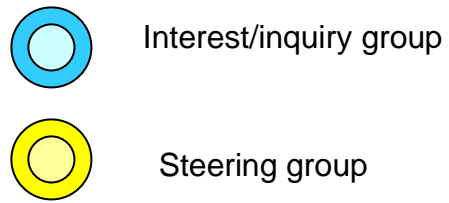
Stage 4

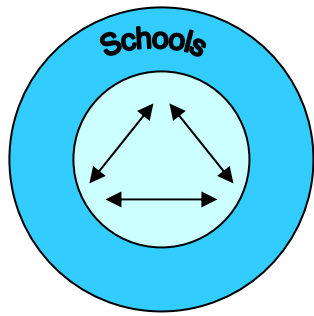
- They return to reflect and make sense of it
 - They consider how to engage in further cycles of inquiry
-

Learning organisations

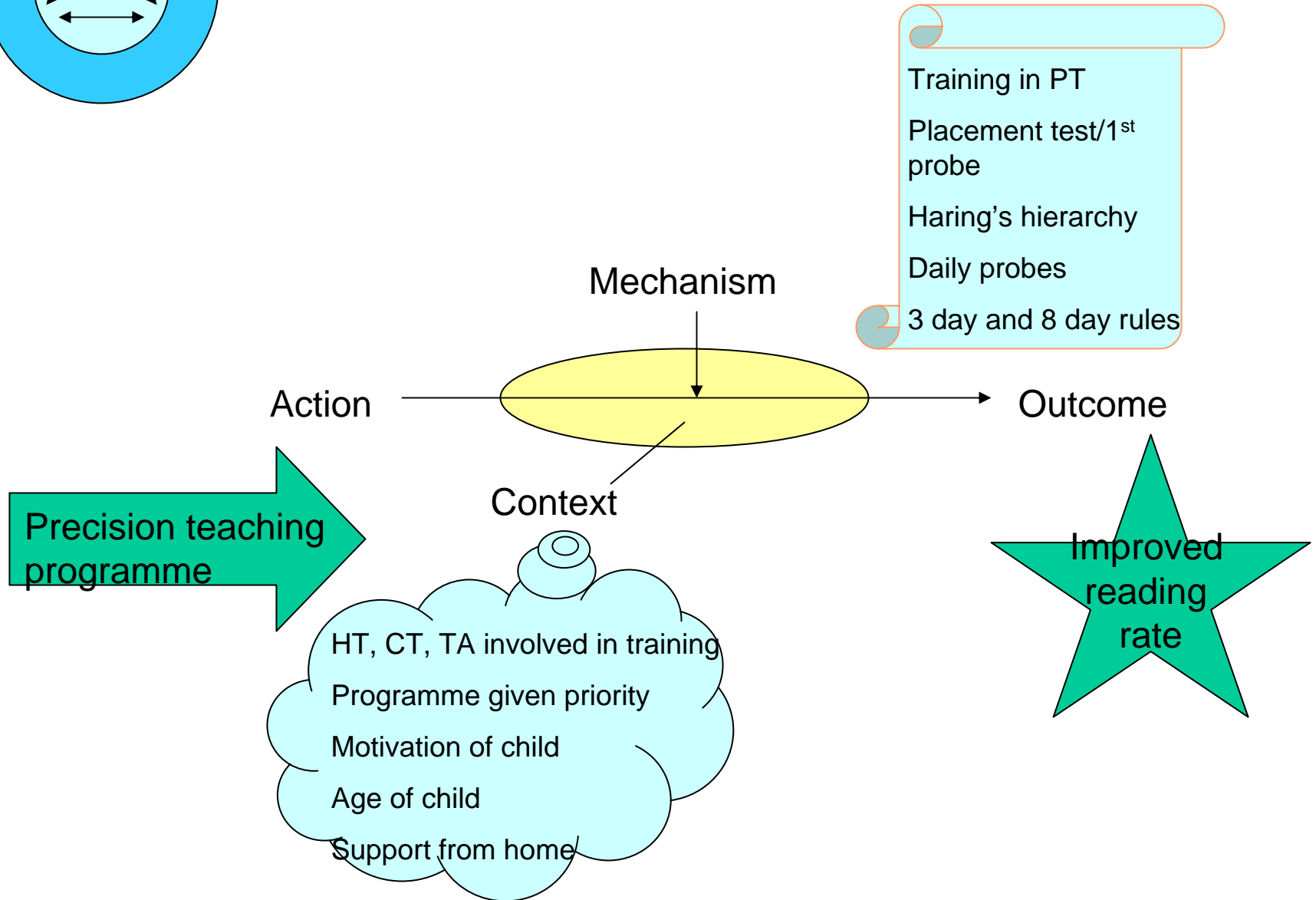
Learning is organisational if:

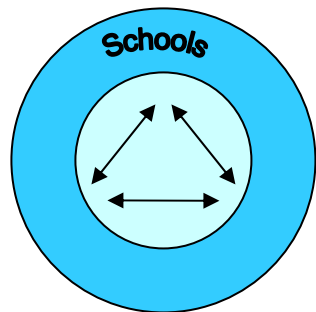
- It is undertaken by members of an organisation;
 - It is to achieve organisational purposes;
 - It takes place in teams or small groups;
 - It is distributed widely throughout the organisation (Senge, 1990)
 - There is a growth of culture of open communication, in which members of an organisation collaborate in 'organisational enquiries' to discover better ways of achieving the organisation's purposes (Argyris and Schon, 1996)
 - Co-workers transcend the boundaries which separate them from their colleagues, establish a common understanding of the object of their joint activity and make a collective decision on how to achieve it (Boreham and Morgan, 2004)
-



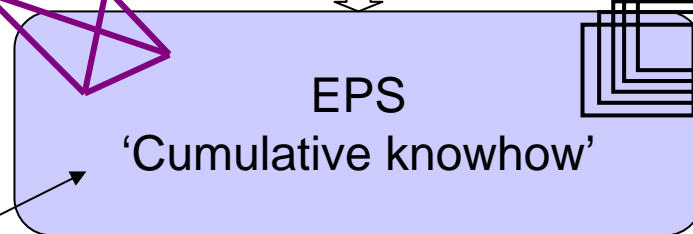
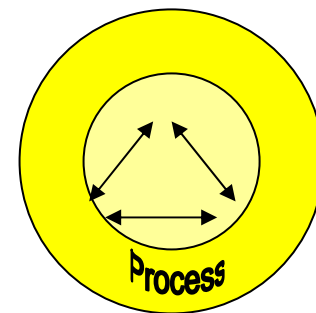
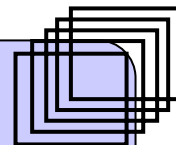
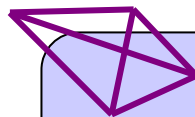


Realistic Evaluation



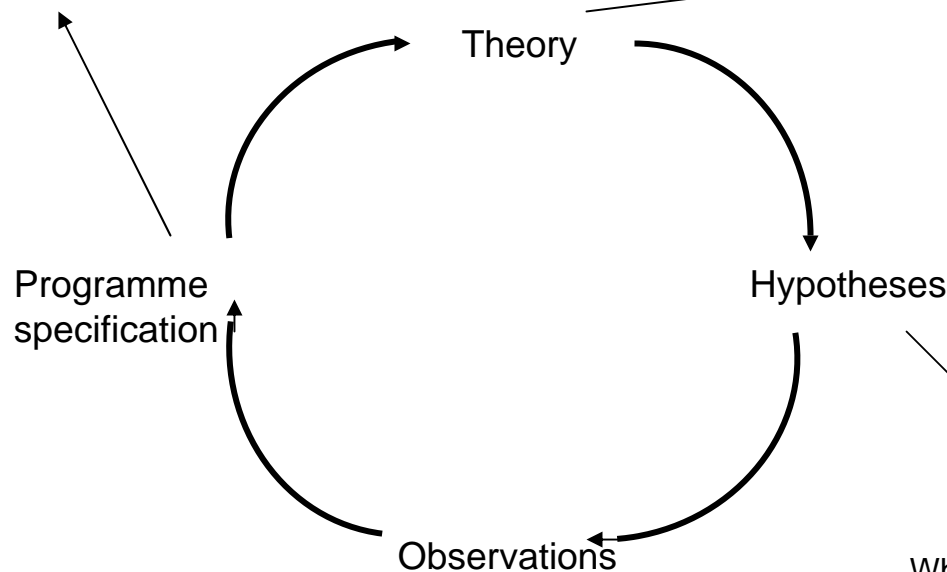


LA



What works for whom in what circumstances

Mechanisms
Contexts
Outcomes



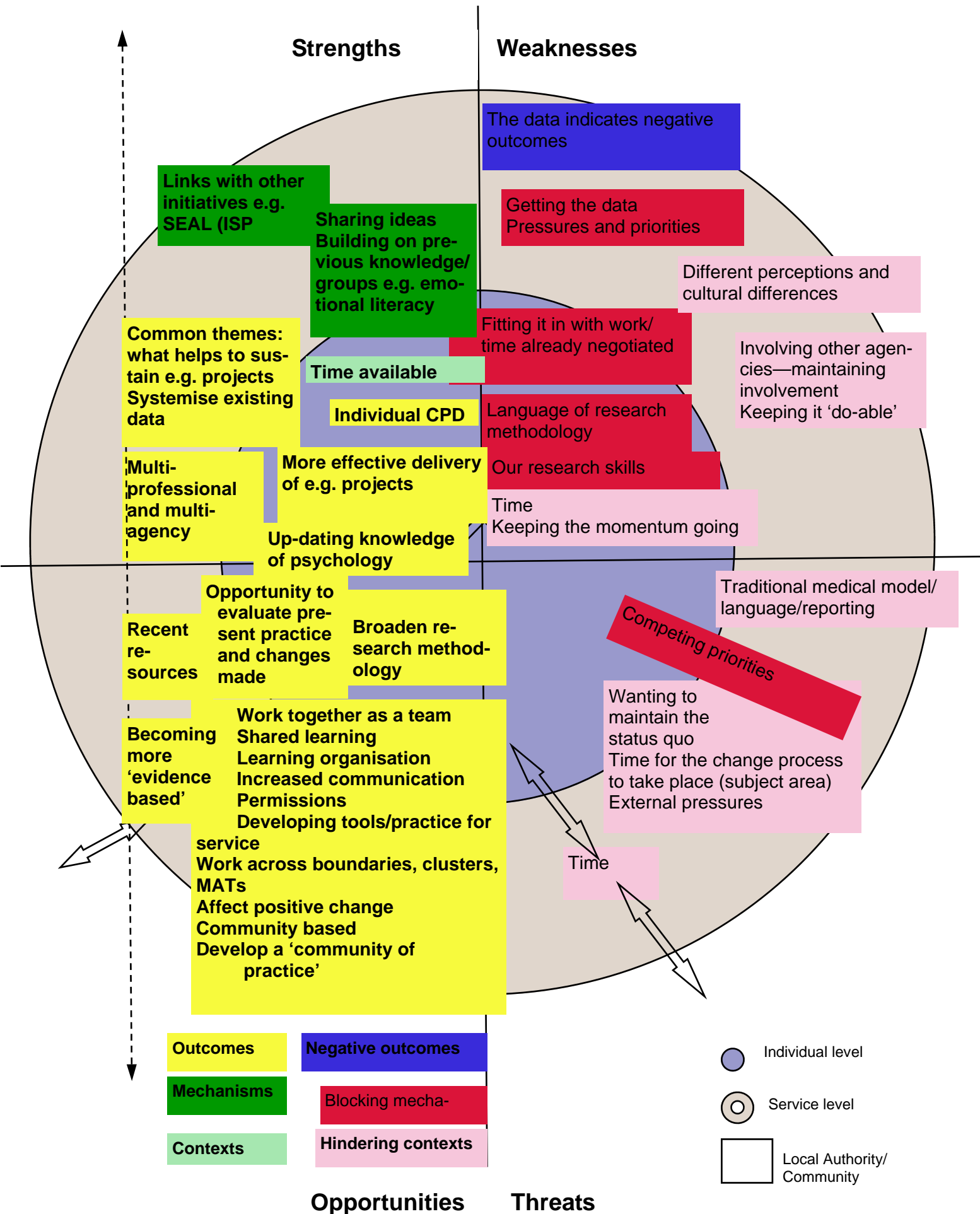
What might work for whom in what circumstances

Multi-method data collection

What happens next...(RADIO)

RADIO PHASES	Typical RADIO activities	Plan
Awareness of need	Current climate	
Invitation to act	Discussion with Mgt Team re. proposal and allocation of sessions	May 07
Clarifying organisational and cultural issues	Exploration of supporting and hindering factors (SCOB)	June 07
Identifying stakeholders	Establishing a research coordinating group (CG) and inquiry groups (IG)	June 07
Agreeing focus of concern	Identifying key themes and research questions (CG and IG): audit?	July 07
Negotiating framework for information gathering	Selection of methodology and research design	Sept/Oct 07
Gathering information	Information gathered using agreed methods	Nov 07– June 08
Processing information with stakeholders	Research findings shared and implications discussed	July 08
Agreeing areas for future action, Action planning, Evaluating action	Activities associated with organisational development and improvement may arise	July/Aug /Sep 08

Appendix IV: SWOT Analysis (a and b)



Appendix IVc: EVALUATION OF SWOT ANALYSIS

Resiliency Inquiry Group			
Strengths		Weaknesses (challenges)	
<u>Initial ideas</u> Sharing ideas Building on previous knowledge Recent resources Optimistic way of looking at things Links with other topics e.g. Solution focused approaches	<u>Evaluation</u> <i>These matched experiences</i>	<u>Initial ideas</u> Perceptions that resiliency is a within-person trait; Cultural differences i.e. what is resilient	<u>Evaluation</u> <i>Changing perceptions though ISPs</i>
Initial ideas Time available	<u>Evaluation</u> <i>Time was protected</i>	Initial ideas Fitting in with work/time already negotiated	<u>Evaluation</u> <i>Time was protected. Incorporating resources in ISPs, training etc.</i>
Opportunities		Threats (barriers)	
<u>Initial ideas</u> Linking in with Critical Incident <i>Link in with SEAL</i>	<u>Evaluation</u> More opportunities have happened e.g. attending conferences	<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>	<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>

 Individual

 Service

Appendix IVc: EVALUATION OF SWOT ANALYSIS

Inclusion Support Projects Inquiry Group			
Strengths		Weaknesses (challenges)	
<u>Initial ideas</u> Identifying some common themes re. ISPs and what helps to sustain once we have gone Identifying factors supporting management of projects Systemising existing data	<u>Evaluation</u> <i>Helped to develop some hypotheses on successful projects e.g. importance of involving HT and those involved in project, the importance of the relationship with the EP</i>	<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
<u>Initial ideas</u> More effective delivery of practice	<u>Evaluation</u> More effective delivery of practice	<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
Opportunities		Threats (barriers)	
<u>Initial ideas</u> Getting the data Pressures and priorities	<u>Evaluation</u> <i>Momentum waned after the first few sessions, once we had covered the first key points.</i>	<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
<u>Initial ideas</u> Becoming more evidence-based	<u>Evaluation</u> <i>Yes, we based our discussion on x's research and other related research as well as our own experience.</i>	<u>Initial ideas</u> Competing priorities	<u>Evaluation</u> As above



Individual



Service

Appendix IVc: EVALUATION OF SWOT ANALYSIS

Early Years Inquiry Group			
Strengths		Weaknesses (challenges)	
<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>	<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
Multi-professional and multi-agency Collaborative working with EP colleagues	<i>This has been done well.</i>	Making time Involving other agencies and maintaining involvement	<i>Managers made it possible by ensuring the time is available</i>
<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>	<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
Our research skills Keeping it do-able	<i>This has been difficult – time to read research and to collate data (unknown time limit) - we have used TEPs to make it do-able</i>		
Opportunities		Threats (barriers)	
<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>	<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
To evaluate present practice and changes made To explore different models	<i>Yes – have not implemented changes yet. Yes – see comments</i>	Traditional medical model/language/reporting	<i>Not at this stage, but maybe in the future when changes are suggested.</i>
<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>	<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>

 Individual

 Service

Appendix IVc: EVALUATION OF SWOT ANALYSIS

Psychology of Change Inquiry Group			
Strengths		Weaknesses (challenges)	
<u>Initial ideas</u> Experience of 'change' Consistency of practice; Keeping research real	<u>Evaluation</u> <i>We were not able to complete the process because of issues for group members.</i>	<u>Initial ideas</u> The data indicates negative outcomes	<u>Evaluation</u> <i>Data is not back yet, but even if it is negative it is still information</i>
<u>Initial ideas</u> CPD Up-dating knowledge of psychology	<u>Evaluation</u>	<u>Initial ideas</u> Language of research methodology	<u>Evaluation</u> <i>No- it has made it attractive</i>
Opportunities		Threats (barriers)	
<u>Initial ideas</u> Working together as a team Shared learning Learning organisation Increased communication Permissions Developing tools/practice of service Work across boundaries/ clusters, MATs Affect positive change Community based Develop a community of practice	<u>Evaluation</u> Yes Yes – definitely learning Right at the heart of this Increased opportunities – this is already good Allocation of time On its way- still in research stage Have done so with schools. Not yet Yes Definitely – people begin to come together and explore topics and issues together in the way that this has been set up, facilitates this happening	<u>Initial ideas</u>	<u>Evaluation</u>
<u>Initial ideas</u> At the heart of our outcomes Reflections available to the profession Across children's directorate	<u>Evaluation</u> <i>Definitely – coordinating group has helped to share process across the groups.</i>	<u>Initial ideas</u> Wanting to maintain the status quo Time for the change process to take place (inquiry area) External pressures Unable to follow the process Time	<u>Evaluation</u> <i>Don't know yet as haven't offered anything out yet. Despite external pressures the cycle of workshops has been kept. An academic year is a good amount of time.</i>



Individual



Service

Appendix V: Matrix for selection of inquiry group topics

Development of Research Interest Groups

Thank you for the positive interest in setting up research/interest groups. Just to reiterate meeting time for the interest groups will be part of the existing meeting structure next year. If you would like to be part of the steering group, this will need an allocation, hence we need to identify that group as soon as possible. Hence, I would be very grateful if you could return this by **Wednesday 20th June 2007**.

- 1 I would/would not like to be part of a research/interest group during the academic year 2007-2008.
- 2 I have added areas of interest from ' ' and ' ' who were not able to be there last week. If you would like to be part of a group, please tick two areas of interest below (hopefully everyone who is interested will be matched to one group). In order to get a spread of interest areas across Service Objectives and the Five Outcomes, please tick which of these you think your chosen areas of interest relate to. I will also map interest areas onto our Business Plan priorities/Ambitions to try to join everything up!

	Service Objectives			Five Outcomes				
	Supp Incl	Ind/ Org Irning	Sch Impr	BH	SS	E & A	MPC	A E W-B
Resiliency								
Voice of the Child								
Pre-School (training)								
Transitions (Pre-school/Primary/Secondary)								
Critical incident Team								
INSET								
Inc Supp Proj (process)								
Consultation (e.g. Secondary Schools)								
Multi-agency working								
Statutory Assessment								
Ann Rev (needs of child have changed/ pending transition).								
Contribution of psych to change processes in schools.								

- 3 I would/would not like to be part of the steering group.

Thank you very much.

L

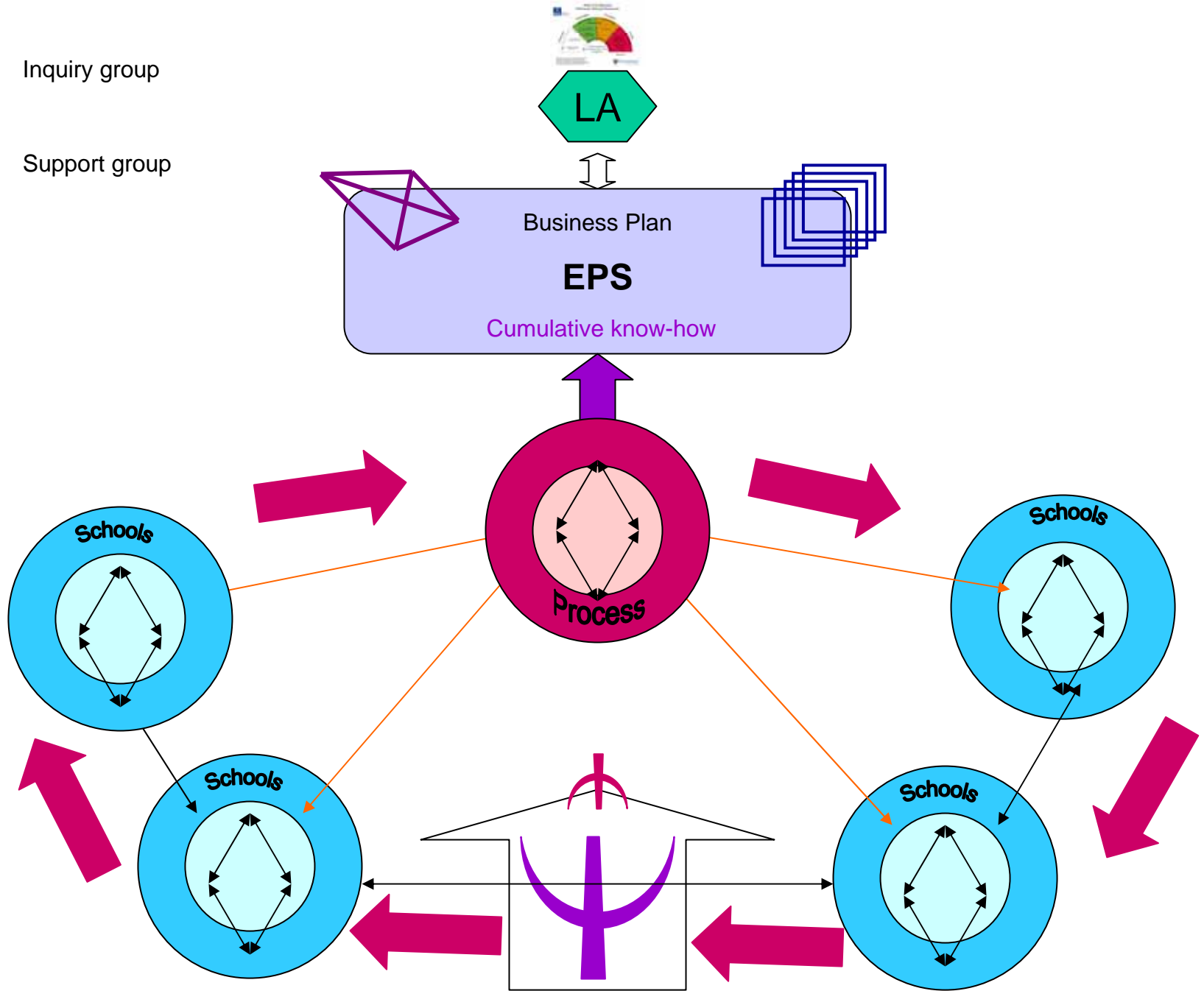
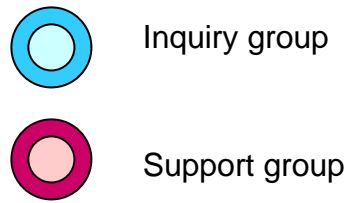
13.06.07

**Evaluation of EP activities in
relation to improving outcomes
for young people (and schools)
and promoting organisational
learning within the EPS**

Louise Sheppard September 2007

Outline

- Recap of the model
 - Aims of research
 - Recap of the planning process
 - Inquiry and support groups
 - Research frameworks
 - What happens next
-



Background to the model

- Learning is organisational if:
 - ☐ It is undertaken by members of an organisation
 - ☐ It is to achieve organisational purposes
 - ☐ It takes place in teams or small groups
 - ☐ It is distributed widely throughout the organisation
 - ☐ It embeds its outcomes in the organisation's system, structures and culture
- Key processes:
 - ☐ Dialogue
 - ☐ Practices which embed the dialogue:
 - ✓ Opening space for creating shared meaning
 - ✓ Reconstituting power relationships
 - ✓ Providing cultural tools to mediate learning.

(Boreham & Morgan, 2004)

Aims of the Research

- To set up a model whereby EPs, working in teams, research specific areas to find out how and why a programme (or process) is working, to improve the programme and outcomes for young people and schools

Outcome: Positive outcomes as a result of programme; identification of contributory factors (contexts and mechanisms); hypotheses for further research

Data collection methods agreed by each inquiry group

- To identify factors supporting (and hindering) the research process

Outcome: common themes emerging across the groups; hypotheses for further research; one detailed case study

Data collection: on-going reflections on process; end of year interviews/focus groups

Aims of the Research

- To develop tools (scripts, prompts) for the service in order to share the findings and contribute to a 'cumulative know-how'

Outcome: scripts, key points, prompts

Data collection: examples of above; use by EPs (interviews)

- To identify the processes contributing to this 'sharing' and 'embedding' of the findings in EPS culture

Outcome: common themes

Data collection: on-going reflections on process; end of year interviews/focus groups

- To identify changes at an organisational level

Outcome: examples of changes in practice at the individual and organisational level

Data collection: Measure of change in EPS 'learning culture'; interviews/focus groups.

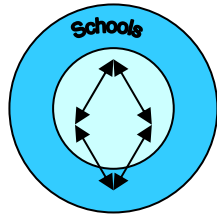
What happens next...(*RADIO*)

RADIO PHASES	Typical RADIO activities	Plan
Awareness of need	Current climate	
Invitation to act	Discussion with Mgt Team and EPS team re. proposal and allocation of sessions	May/ June 07
Clarifying organisational and cultural issues	Exploration of supporting and hindering factors (SCOB)	June 07
Identifying stakeholders	Establishing a research steering group (SG) and inquiry groups (IG)	June 07
Agreeing focus of concern	Identifying key themes and research questions (SG and IG): audit?	July 07

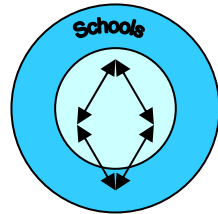
Agreeing focus of concern

- Resiliency
 - Critical Incident
 - Contribution of psychology to change
 - Consultation
 - ISPs
 - Pre-school
 - Voice of the child
 - Transitions
 - Annual Review
 - Statutory Assessment
 - Multi-agency working
 - INSET
-

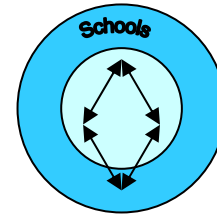
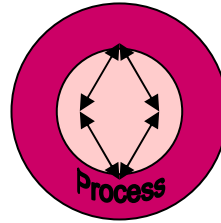
Agreeing focus of concern



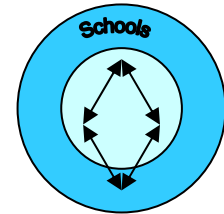
Resiliency



ISPs



Early years



Psychology of change

Voice of the child

Community Psychology

Ethical principles

Five outcomes

Service objectives

Multi-agency working

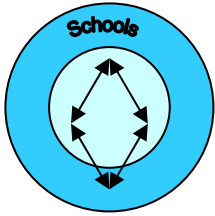


What happens next...(RADIO)

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Negotiating framework for information gathering	Selection of methodology and research design	Sept/Oct 07
Gathering information	Information gathered using agreed methods	Nov 07– June 08

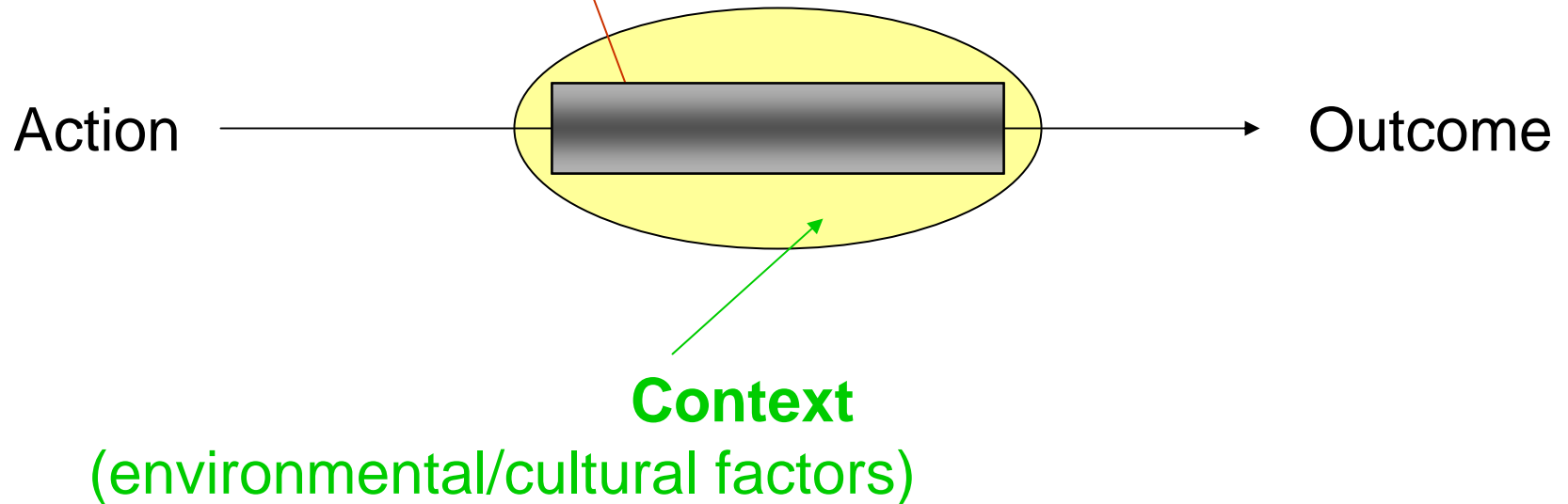
Inquiry Groups

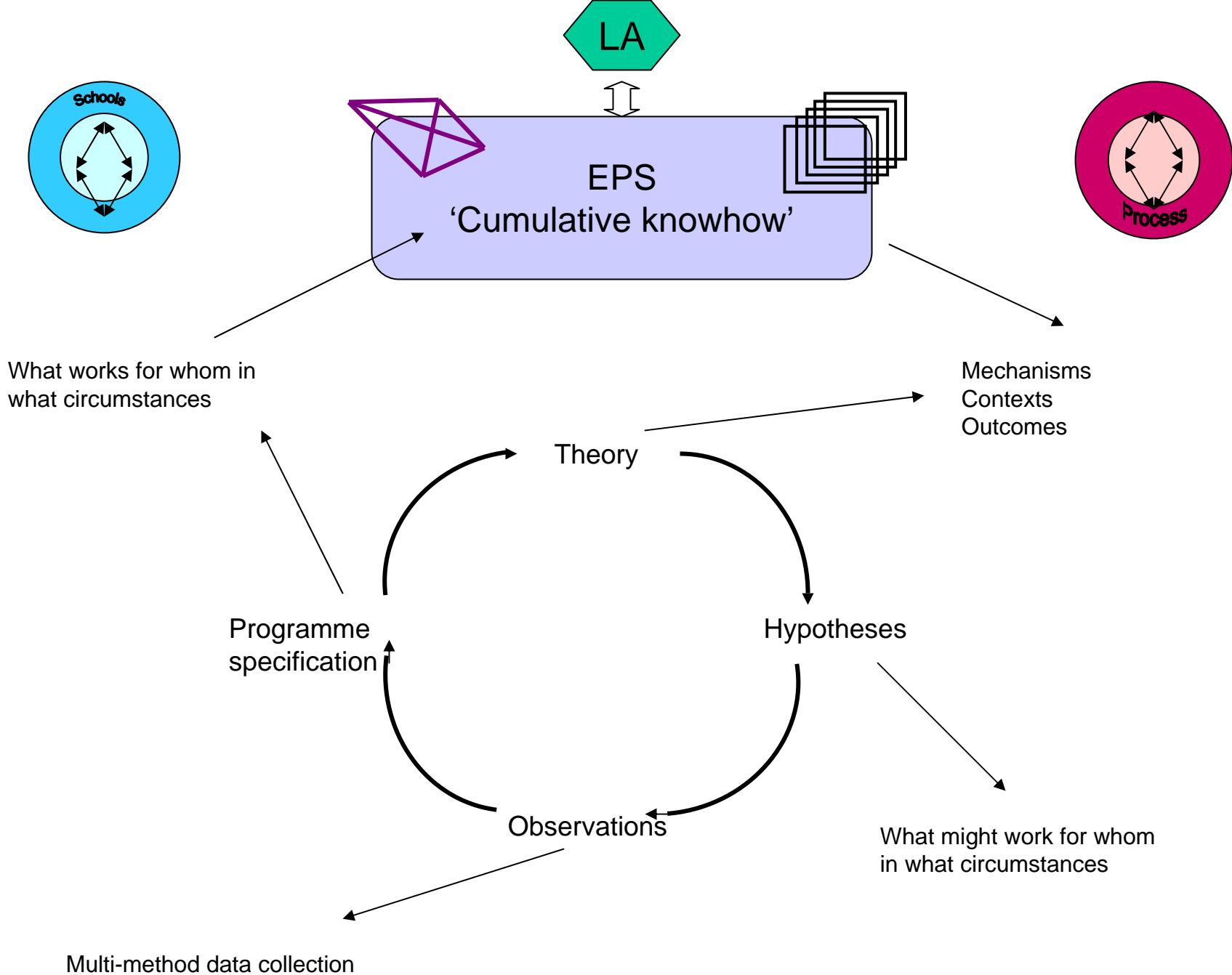
- The task is to find out how to improve practice in each area of inquiry and how to share the findings across the EPS.
- The RADIO framework may be helpful in planning the inquiry.
- Each session will require:
 - ☐ Roles: facilitator (group and inquiry) recorder (rotating)
 - ☐ Common pattern of interaction
 - ☐ Feedback on process



Realistic Evaluation

Mechanism (key features of the programme)





Support Group

The task is to

- ☐ Share positive factors with regard to research and process
- ☐ Share ideas from each inquiry group across groups to support the data collection process
- ☐ Share difficulties with regard to the research and process and resolve collaboratively (consultation group model) – ‘peer debriefing and support’
- ☐ Plan next steps

Ethical considerations

- Respect
 - ☐ General respect
 - ☐ Informed consent
 - ☐ Privacy and confidentiality
 - ☐ Self determination
 - Responsibility
 - ☐ Protection of participants
 - ☐ Debriefing
 - Competence
 - ☐ Awareness of professional ethics
 - ☐ Ethical decision making
 - ☐ Recognise limits of competence
 - Integrity
 - ☐ Maintaining personal boundaries
 - ☐ Honesty and accuracy
-

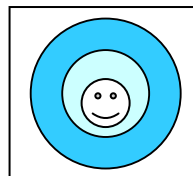
What happens next...(*RADIO*)

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Agreeing focus of concern	Identifying key themes and research questions (SG and IG): audit?	July 07
Negotiating framework for information gathering	Selection of methodology and research design	Sept/Oct 07
Gathering information	Information gathered using agreed methods	Nov 07– June 08
Processing information with stakeholders	Research findings shared and implications discussed	July 08
Agreeing areas for future action, Action planning, Evaluating action	Activities associated with organisational development and improvement may arise	July/Aug/ Sep 08

Finally

‘EPs need to raise their profile as ‘users’ and ‘doers’ of research, in order to support the broad agenda of Every Child Matters, and to provide the profession with a confident role in the delivery of services, which have positive outcomes for young people.’ (Baxter and Frederikson, 2005)

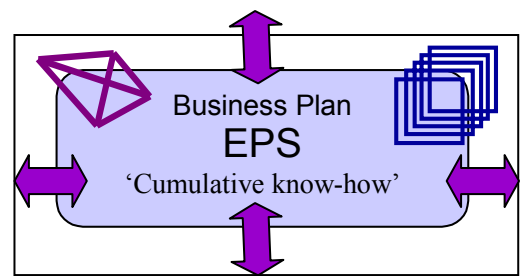
Appendix VII Pilot Questionnaire



QUESTIONNAIRE TO EVALUATE THE EFFECT OF INQUIRY GROUPS WITH REGARD TO SHARING, EXPLORING AND IMPROVING EP PRACTICE

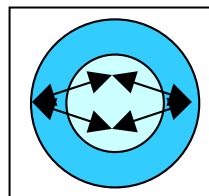
To be completed by individual EPs

OUTCOMES: Individual				
	Yes	No	NA	Comment
I have up-dated my knowledge in the focus area				
I have explored different models/practices in this area				
I have acquired new tools/ways of working in this area				
I have broadened my knowledge of research methodology				
Other gains at a professional level				
Other gains at a personal level				



To be completed by individual EPs

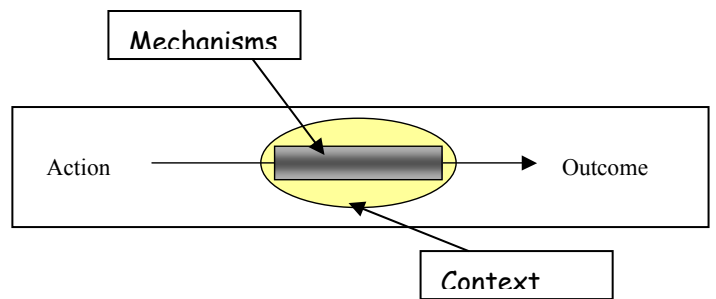
OUTCOMES: EPS				
	Yes	No	NA	Comment
Increased communication across the Service				
Contributed to the Service becoming more research/evidence based.				
Contributed to a shift towards a collaborative/knowledge sharing culture				
Contributed to changes at an organisational level e.g. policies, procedures, objectives				
Contributed to culture of learning to develop new ways of seeing the world				
Contributed to the development of a community of practice				
Contributed to the Service becoming more community based: e.g.				
Shift towards identifying social support				
Shift towards empowering participants				
Shift towards working at a preventative rather than remediation level				
Other:				



To be completed by each Inquiry Group

OUTCOMES: Inquiry Group/Environment				
	Yes	No	NA	Comment
Shared knowledge, experience and ideas in this area				
Built upon previous knowledge in this area				
Evaluated present practice				
Examined existing practice in this area				
Questioned practice in this area				
Made links across areas of practice e.g. Resiliency and Critical Incident				
Made links with research in this area				
Made links with other agencies, settings and personnel in LA/directorate				
Developed new tools/resources to support service delivery in this area.				
Introduced changes in procedures as well as practice in this area.				

Organised existing data/resources in this area.				
Implemented positive changes identified.				
Evaluated changes in practice within settings, LA, etc				
Other outcomes for the group				



To be completed individually

PROCESS EVALUATION

Which aspects of the Inquiry Groups went well and which not so well?

Inquiry Groups (everything that went on inside the groups)	
Supporting factors	Hindering factors
Context (everything that might have affected them from the outside)	
Supporting factors	Hindering factors

THE FUTURE (to be completed individually)

On a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 represents an EPS that is fully committed to working collaboratively to share and improve practice, and 1 the opposite of this, where do you think we are now?

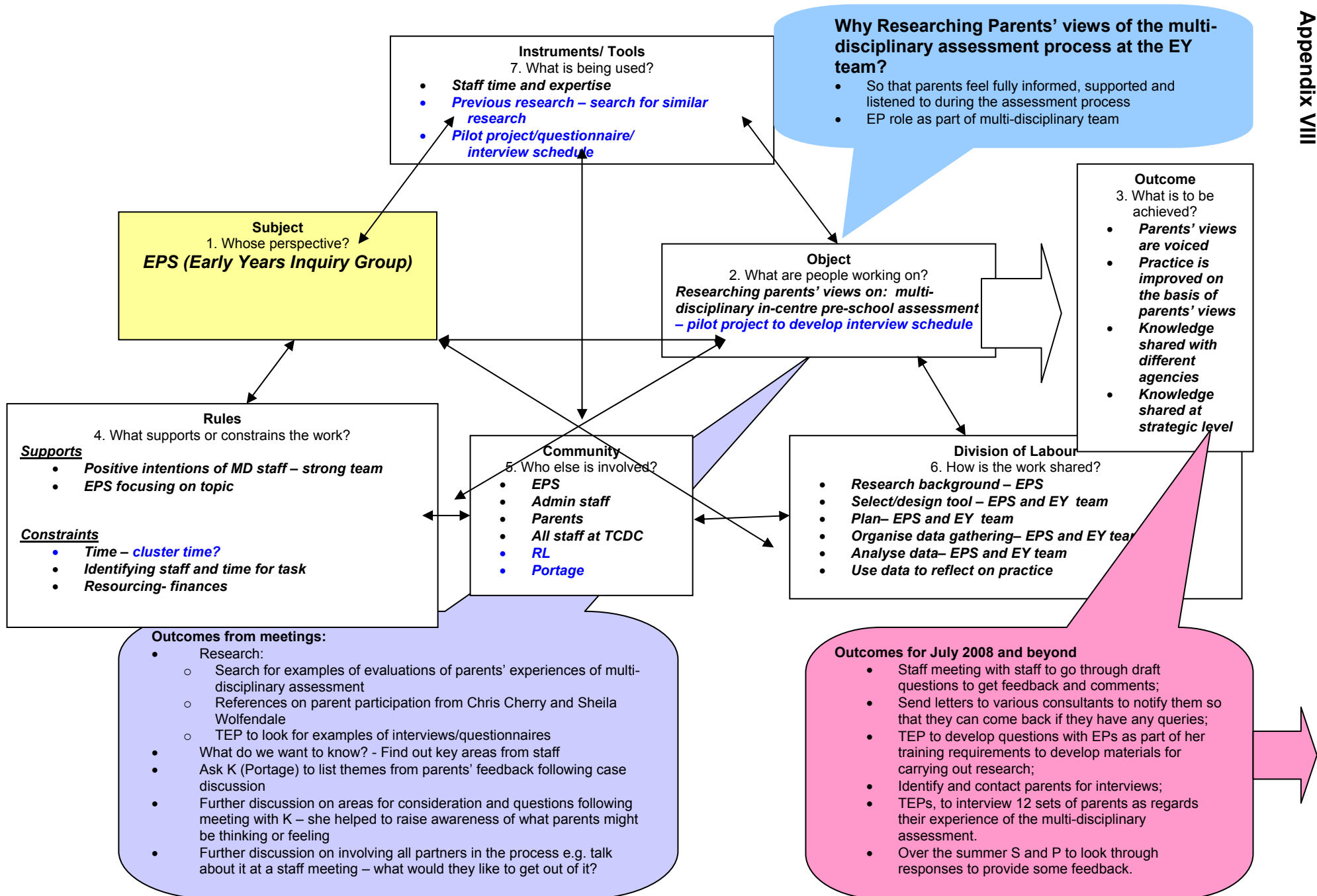
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

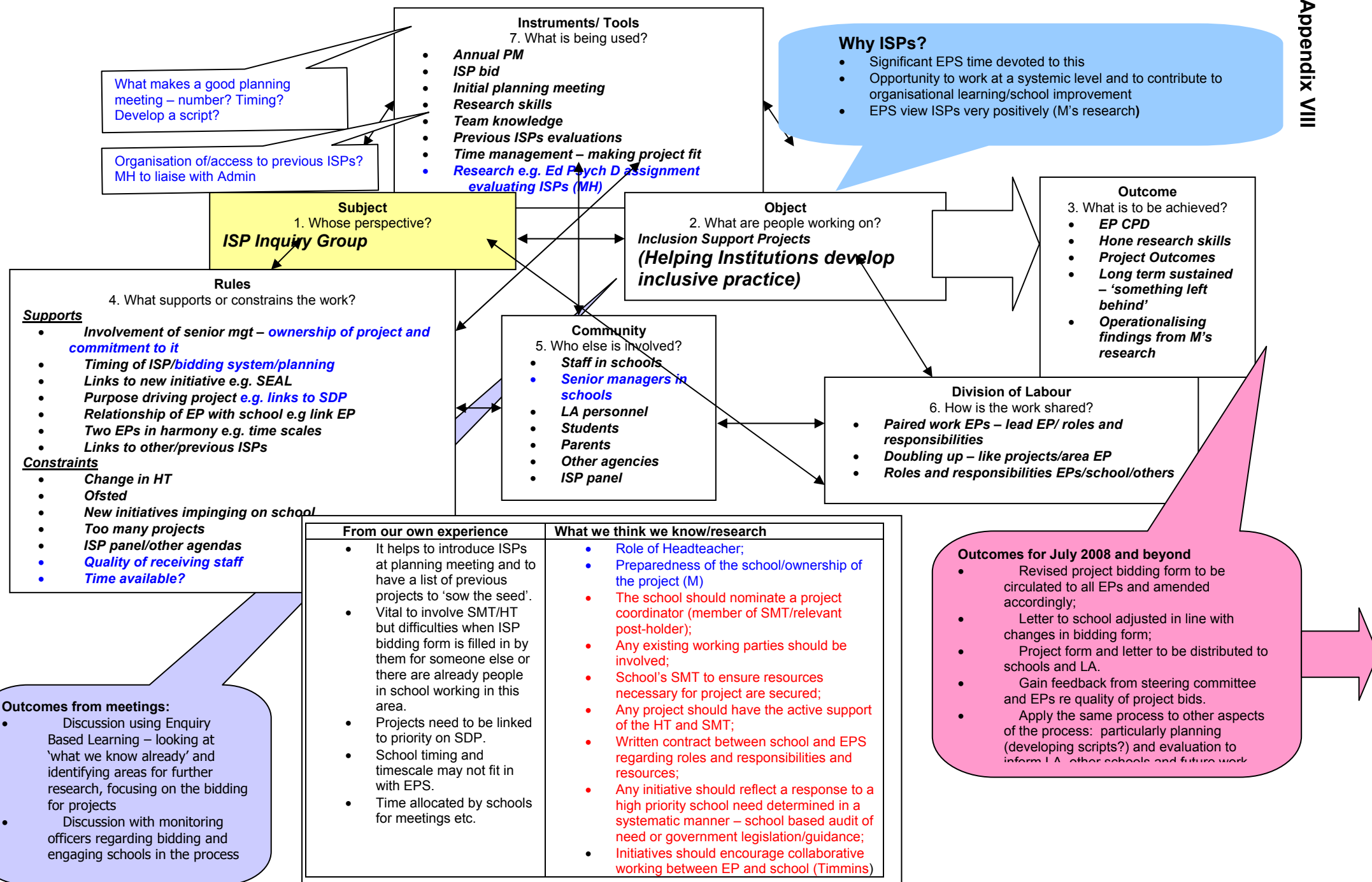
What do you think we are doing that has made you rate our Service as a ...

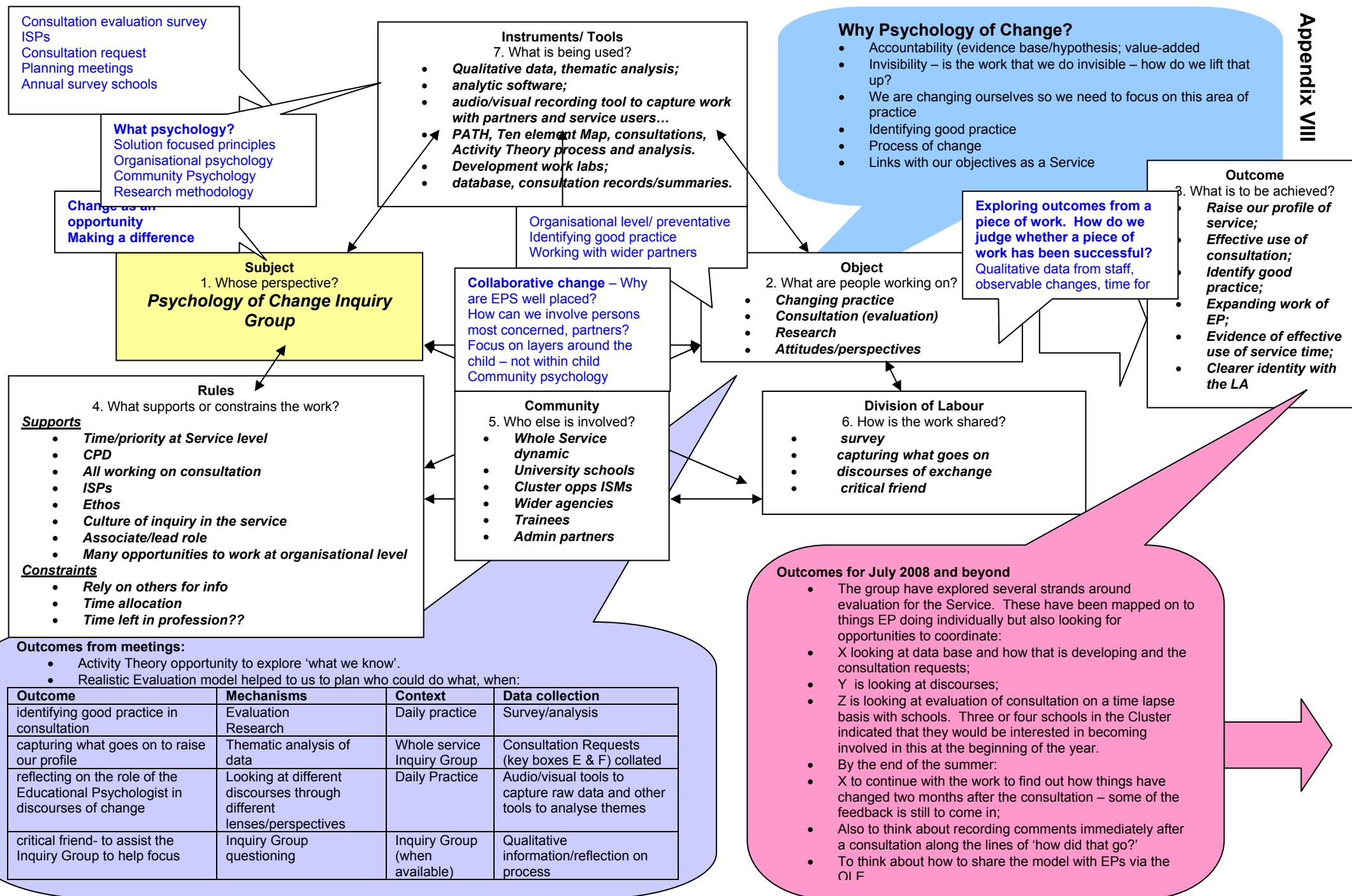
How do you think we might move this aspect of our work forward? What would this look like?

Thinking about the current local and national contexts and climates, what in your view are the six most important priorities for our Service (there is no need to rank unless you want to)?

Do you think that Inquiry Groups have a contribution to make to these? If so, what aspects of the model would you like to take forward? What improvements might be made?







Inquiry Groups 2007-8

**An initiative to promote
research and
development within the
EPS**

Evaluation feedback

Louise Sheppard October 2008

Overview

- Starting point
- Aims of Inquiry Groups and my research
- Feedback from the evaluation:
 - Outcomes
 - Contributory factors
- Into the future...

Starting point

‘Our Special Educational Needs role has ‘secured the survival’ of the profession, but has it resulted in EPs receiving scant attention with regard to their skills in conducting research, and removed the pressure to demonstrate the effectiveness of their work?’

‘EPs can no longer assume what they are doing is useful...interventions from clinical psychologists may start to be favoured.’

‘EPs need to raise their profile as ‘users’ and ‘doers’ of research ...to provide the profession with a confident role in the delivery of services, which have positive outcomes for young people.’

Learning is organisational if...

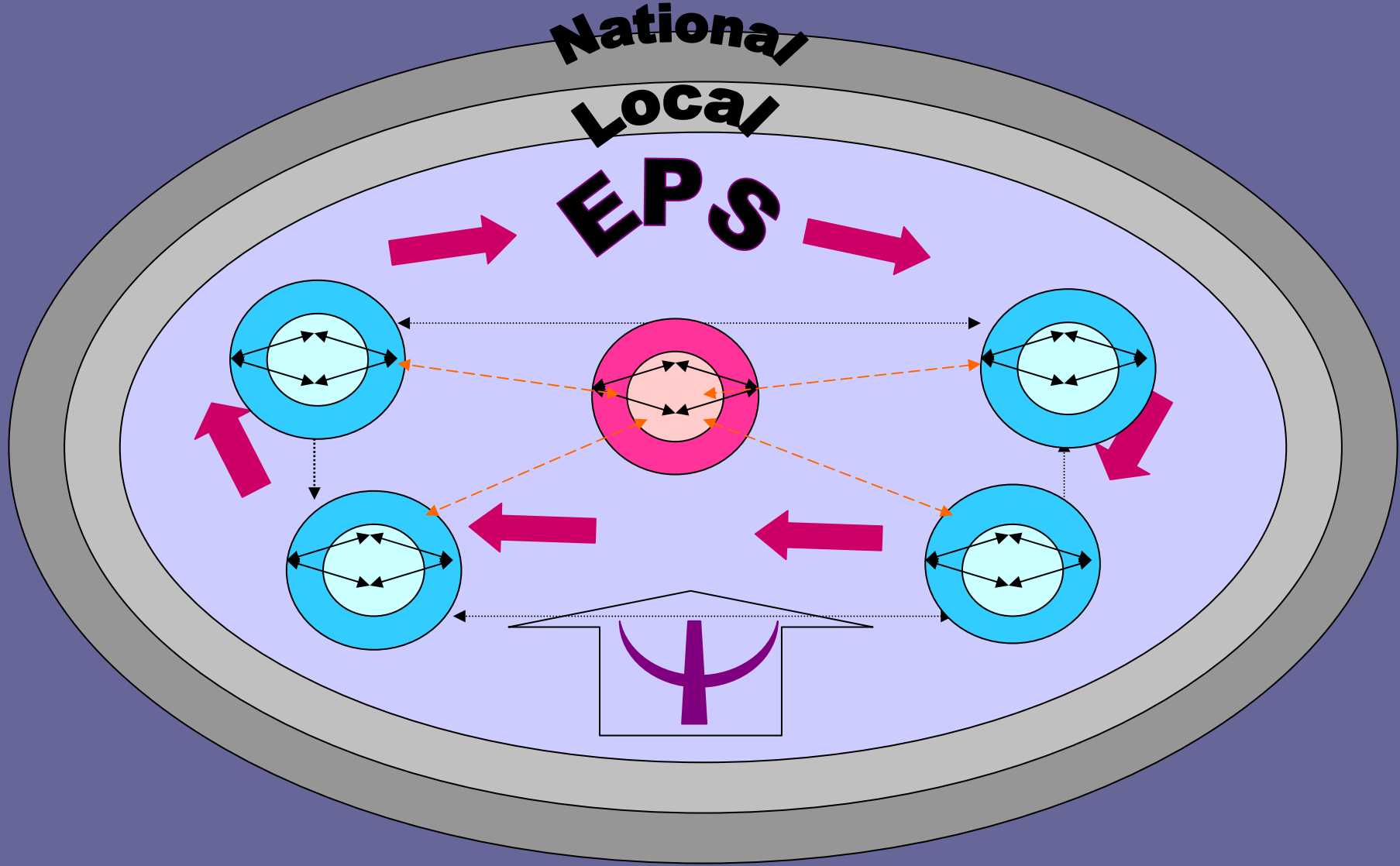
- It is undertaken by members of an organisation
- It is to achieve organisational purposes
- It takes place in teams or small groups
- It is distributed widely throughout the organisation
- It embeds its outcomes in the organisation's systems, structures and culture

(summarised in Boreham & Morgan, 2004)

National

Local

EPS



Inquiry Group Aims

- For EPs, working in teams, to research specific areas, to find out how and why a programme/process is working, in order to improve the programme and outcomes for young people
- To share the findings across the Service in order to contribute to a 'cumulative knowhow'

Research aims: to evaluate this initiative in relation to outcomes for each inquiry group, EPs and the EPS, and the contributory processes, to compare with the literature and to inform future developments.

Outcomes for EPs

I have up-dated my knowledge in the focus area	3.0
I have explored different models/practices in this area	2.7
I have been introduced to new tools/ways of working	2.7
Other changes at a professional level	2.7
Other changes at a personal level	2.7
I have broadened my knowledge of research methodology/tools to support the process	2.5

Outcomes for EPS

There have been...


Improved opportunities to learn about and engage with ideas/expertise of colleagues across the Service	3.7
A shift towards a culture of developing and improving practice	3.4
The Service becoming more research-based	3.3
A shift towards a collaborative/ knowledge sharing culture	3.2
The Service becoming more community based	2.7
Changes at an organisational level	2.5

Group Outcomes

We have...

...shared knowledge, experience and ideas in this area	4.0
...worked together in a coordinated way towards common goals	3.5
...worked together across boundaries within EPS	3.5
...questioned/challenged practice in this area	3.4
...examined existing practice in this area	3.3
...built upon previous knowledge in this area	2.5
...made links across areas of practice – 'joined up'	2.5

What works for whom in what circumstances?



Discussion, sharing, reflection, collection of resources, reading articles, going back to the research and discussing with colleagues, going to conferences together, getting together with like-minded people, linking it to practice, cyclical process...

Dialogue – the fundamental process by which organisations learn...

Active commitment to continuous improvement and diffusion of best practice throughout the organisation

Service culture (1)

Support from the management/time allocated (15)

- Valued by SMT
- Regular time guaranteed
- Linked to CPD of Service

Time (3)

Not seeing how it fits into CPD of Service(1)

Shifting gear (1)

Not used to giving time over to really 'think'/'research'/'read' (1)

Commitment to each other (13)

- Willingness to share/enthusiasm
- Relationships with each other
- Being together – valuing expertise
- Culture of sharing and caring

Workload/other commitments/priorities (4)

Commitment to the process (12)

- Engaging/doing tasks
- Belief in research and need to develop
- Inquiry topics meaningful:
 - ❖ To EPs – important/interest
 - ❖ To EPS – service development

and active commitment to a collaborative, supportive, knowledge sharing culture

Creating horizontal networks of information flow and links with outside world

LA/others keen for research to take place (2)

Making links with people outside the Service (1)

Making links with research (2)

Group makeup: Mixture including experienced EPs, new EPs and TEPs, with different views (4)

Size of group (3)

- Cancellation of groups
- Lack breadth of views

Group makeup (3)

- Members from only one team
- Individual issues

Breadth of views, making relationships, creating opportunities to cross the divisions

Coordinated group effort towards commonly shared goals

Group factors (6)

- Motivation of group
- Group membership skills, non-judgmental, no saboteurs or cynics
- Developing shared language to explore themes

Organisational factors (15)

- Organisation/preparation
- Support group/facilitator
- Structure/time allocated
- Tasks set and completed
- Support from TEPs

Attendance (9)

- Affected group membership/size of group
- Missed key documents
- The group had moved on

Logistics (8)

- Not knowing when meetings taking place
- Timing – end of afternoon
- Dependent on key people
- No identified tasks

Gaps between meetings (5)

- Process too drawn out – particularly at the beginning - hard to get your head round it and to feel the progression
- Need time in between to action some of agreed follow ups

Tools to understand, analyse and use the dynamic system within which functioning

Tools and frameworks (3)

- Opportunity to practise using frameworks
- Using models to explore practice and support thinking

Tools and frameworks (7)

- Confusion and distraction by number of models
- Indigestible and long-winded
- Lack of understanding of models

and to embed the outcomes in the practices and culture of the organisation

Too early to tell –
it has the potential!

'I liked the way the model encouraged us to reflect together and think about practices; to think together about the rationale behind the work and ultimately to do something together that would inform the practices of the whole service.'

Do you think Inquiry Groups are a good thing for promoting personal and service development?

Yes: 15

It brings people together in a focused, positive, supportive way, building on personal and group expertise

It provides protected time with structure and development built into group activity

Would you recommend them?

Yes: 14

Yes- as a way of responding to specific areas of interest/priority

It provides one format for looking at service priorities and updating, seeking new information

Small groups of people meeting to discuss how we work in important areas is a good idea

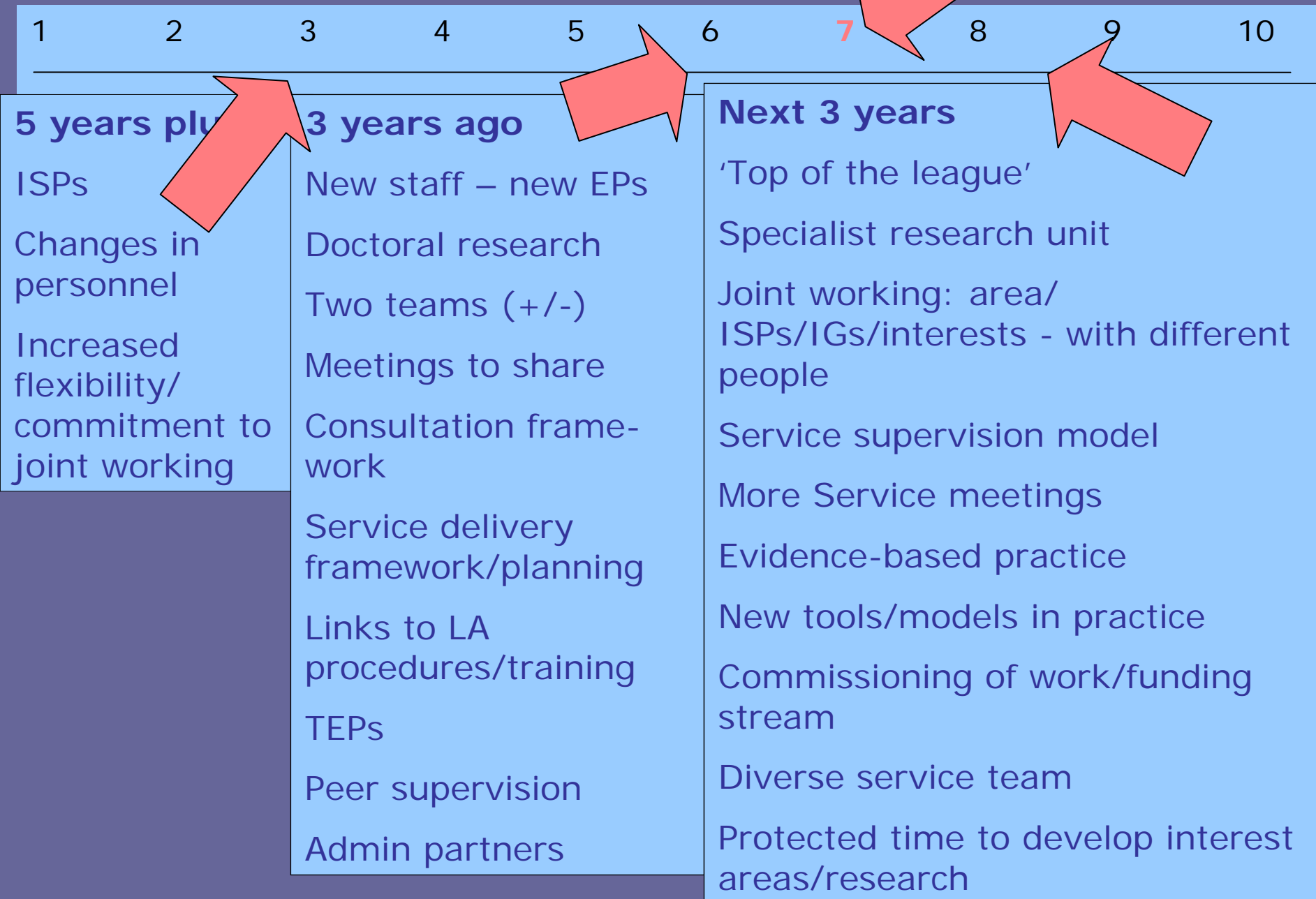
Depends on the size of the service

What aspects would you take forward?

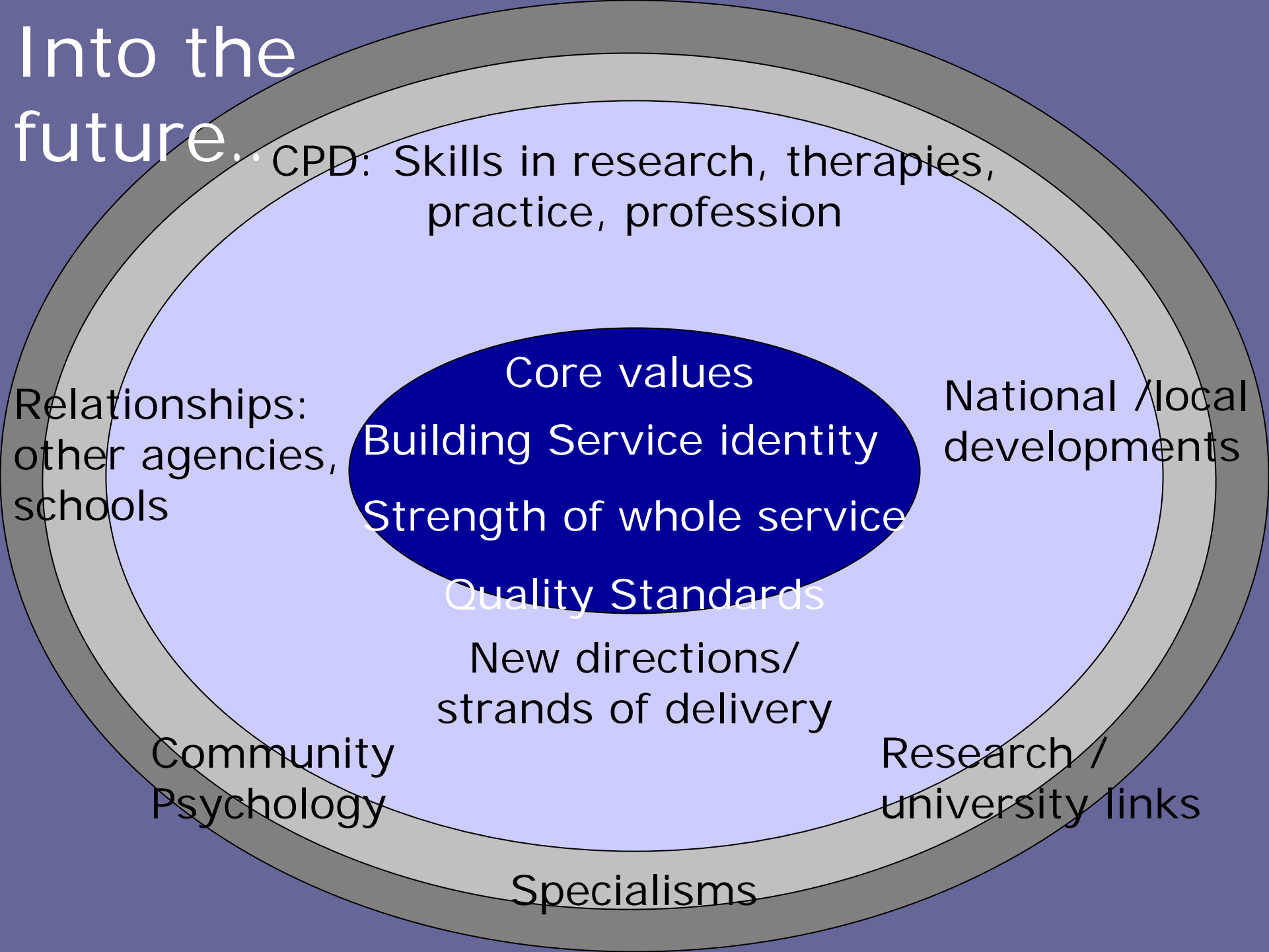
What aspects would you like to improve?

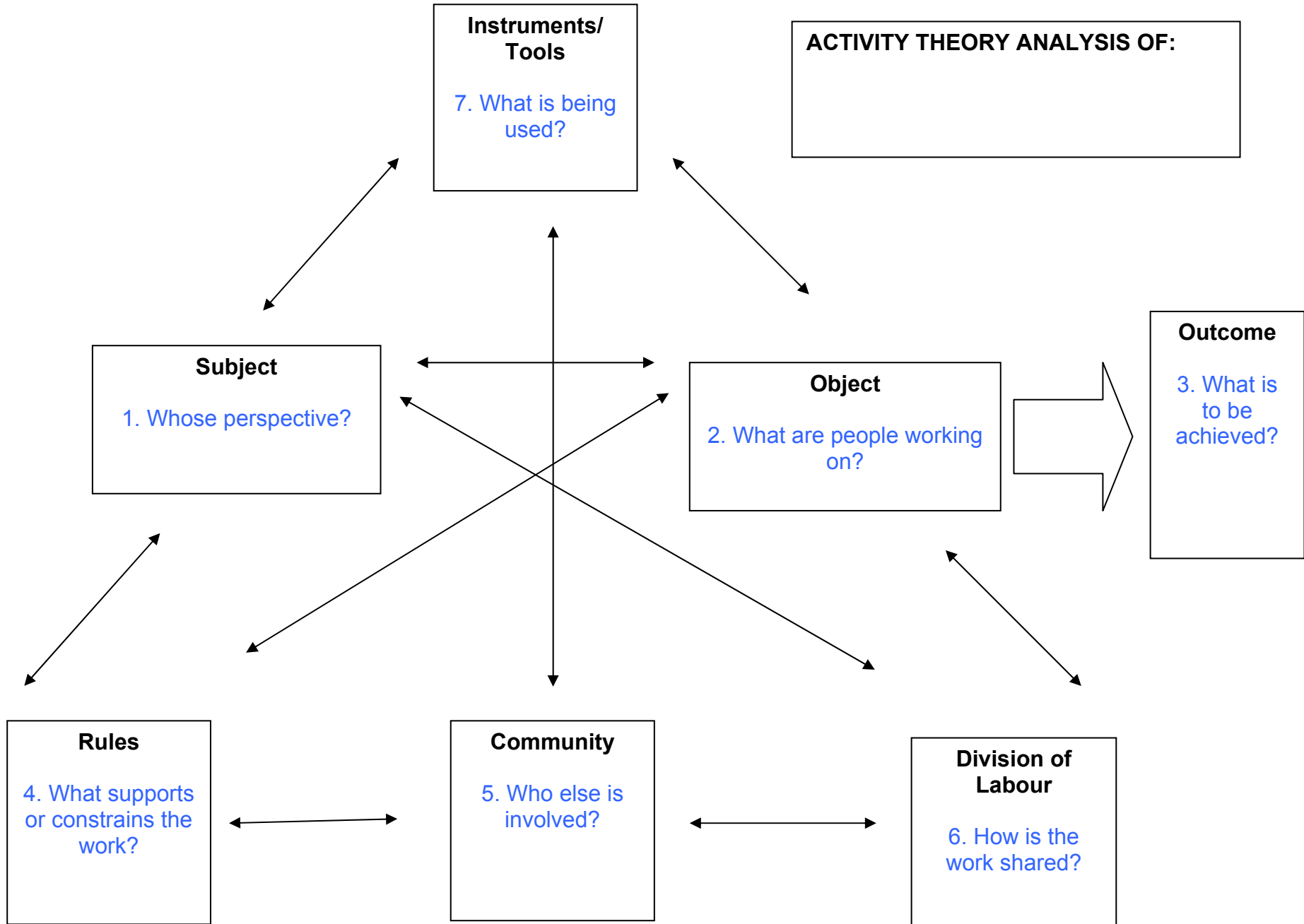
- Protected time
- Regular meetings with tasks to do
- Targets to keep on track
- More frequent meetings at the beginning – timing of meetings?
- Reduced time between different stages
- Recording/summary at end of meeting
- Size of group
- Models that are less time consuming, fit for purpose, and support action planning
- Simple guidelines for models
- Topics linked to service delivery/business plan
- Support group/group coordinator

Collaborative practice: past, present and future



Into the future..





Appendix XI Enquiry Based Learning (University of Newcastle notes)

Enquiry Based Learning

Here are some stages that you can try to keep to as they are likely to assist you in the process of enquiry based learning:

1. Explore problem clarified terms and concepts not understandable, create hypotheses, identify issues.
2. Identify what you know already that is pertinent. Identify what you don't know. Identify what you know.
3. Identify gaps. What do you need to find out, to come to know? What are the gaps in knowledge? Time keeper and note taker potentially very helpful here.
4. As a group prioritise the learning needs. Set group learning goals and objectives. Allocate resources, members identify and negotiate which tasks they will do. There may be issues in group vs individual learning needs to reflect upon.
5. Research the allocated areas alone, in pairs or in a small group. Engage in self-directed search for knowledge. Likely that personal and group aims somewhat merge. Need to gradually work out and negotiate amount of time spent on any area, the level of detail covered. Trust needed in the group to go perhaps for a 'smaller' product in order to reach a particular goal. Learning through discussion vs learning through texts and gathering materials...? Be prepared to try something new. Work outside your comfort zone.
6. Return to the group and share your new knowledge effectively so that all the group learns the information. Each group member summarises their contribution. Group members also consider their contribution to the process vs product.
7. Try to integrate the knowledge acquired into a comprehensive explanation. The facilitator perhaps tries to encourage the group to go a step further in their thinking. The importance of time and space to express and develop thoughts. If there is a chairperson, their role is perhaps to summarise.
8. Reflect on what has been learnt and the process of learning. Reflect on process vs product – has the group aimed to develop something about how it functions as a group or to find out some new externally acquired knowledge? Or a combination of the 2 – to work out how they can best make available the knowledge, skills and experiences of each other to the group as a whole? Has there been a tension between the achievement of group aims vs personal aims – how was this resolved or what effect did this have? How has the group developed – what direction is it taking – what direction would you like it to take – are there goals for how you work together as a group?


SOME IMPORTANT NOTES

You are likely to need roles – a time keeper, a note taker etc. Reflect on these roles – do they work for your group? Are additional roles needed? Would different roles work better?

Confusion is GOOD! This course is an opportunity to learn. You are not supposed to feel comfortable or knowledgeable all the time. AND - One of the key issues may be developing confidence to say both what you do not know, and also to be bold about what you think is a particular skills or strength. Another key aspect is working out the level of skill or knowledge you want to reach in any area – to how much depth can you, do you have time to, do you want to go?

What is the role of the facilitator? We think it will develop over the year – and we need your views on this as time goes on. For now, we think it is to make sure you understand the task at any one moment. Sometimes - to assist the group in process issues, in questions about how to work together if this seems to be needed. To - sometimes - assist the group in where to get resources and at times to provide resources. We think the facilitator might help in providing direction at times, and to make sure something key, something important is not missed.

Appendix XII: Progress of the Inquiry Group Initiative

Key Meetings: Planning  IG  SG  EPS 

January 2007: conception of idea and discussion with tutor

Diagram of the concept and processes of the inquiry group

January 2007

My research idea: to set up and evaluate an initiative to promote research and development in the Service: I enjoyed the evidence-based practice assignment and would like to do something of use to the Service

February 2007

*Tutor felt that the idea was exciting and timely in current climate for EPSs
Discussed idea with peer supervisor who felt that it may be difficult to evaluate as a participant in the process but offered to act as a 'critical friend'.*

01.03.07: First meeting with management team

Described ideas to management team meeting. Management team to consider before meeting again

March 2007

Preparing for management meeting helped to clarify my ideas and logistics. Pleased with management response and for meetings to be scheduled in existing meeting time. Some thoughts that it might fit in with forthcoming JAR.

15.03.07: Second meeting with management team

Management agreed to go ahead with initiative and to schedule inquiry group meetings during existing meeting times. Discussed launch and ways of involving colleagues at this: SWOT analysis recommended.

Service activity looking at service delivery using Activity Theory triangle to guide the discussion. Although great variation amongst service members, everyone agreed on the object: to improve outcomes (learning, social/emotional development) of young people

24.03.07 Tutorial

Further detail on model and the logistics of the launch, running and evaluating the initiative. Realistic Evaluation would be an appropriate model: it meets the needs of the research purpose and would be a way of introducing it to EP colleagues

Working on plans for initiative. Want to use RADIO for planning, and feel RE would fit in with purposes of research. Realise SWOT analysis would support both (exploring cultural issues and developing participant theories)

Some common ground between community psychology principles and IGM: empowerment, social support and prevention.

Emphasis from Stringer on highlighting what an applied psychologist can contribute to the 5 outcomes and offer to Children Service Departments: a significant time

29.03.07: Community Psychology Day

Concepts and challenges (Nick Bozic)
Significant moments (Phil Stringer)

April 2007

Further tutorial and discussions with colleagues helped to clarify ideas on how to describe and launch the initiative. It needs to be as simple as possible, and a practical example to demonstrate how RE works.

02.06.09 Presentation of Inquiry Group initiative to EPs

- Background to the initiative – why I think it is important and timely;
- Aims of the initiative
- Definition of organisational learning
- Description/diagram of the inquiry group model
- Realistic evaluation – key features and practical example using Precision Teaching (See Appendix xx)
- Generation of ideas of inquiry group topics

12.09.07 Launch of Inquiry Group initiative to EPs

- Recap of model
- Aims of research
- Feedback on most popular areas and group makeup: Early years, Inclusion Support Projects, Psychology of Change and Resiliency.
- The task for inquiry groups
- Description of Realistic Evaluation research cycle
- Description of role of support group and invitation for any interested participants
- Ethical considerations
- What happens next – RADIO timeline
- SWOT analysis to generate

May 2007

Concentrating on reading on RE methodology and applications of RE, to help me to understand it fully to present to EPs

June 2007

Presentation went well – positive feedback from colleagues on both ideas and presentation. One EP said it was easy to understand; another on the amount of work the conceptualisation must have taken. One colleague said 'luke warm'. Several ideas generated for topics for inquiry groups.

July 2007

Everyone has signed up. Allocation to groups much more complex than I realised it would be (see matrix in Appendix xx). Trying to link topics to Service Objectives, the 5 outcomes, 'level of need' in the Information and Sharing Assessment, and the EPS Business Plan seems to have confused everyone. Also suggesting they opt for 2 or 3 has not helped me to identify priority areas. It has also been difficult to form groups across the two teams. It seems more important that first/second choices are adhered to, to make sure the EPs are interested in the topic of inquiry.

August 2009

Concentrated reading/preparation for launch and start of the initiative in September.

September 2009

The launch did not go as well as the June session. Perhaps too much methodology. It is also the start of a new year so colleagues may have been preoccupied.

I felt I needed to recap and expand upon RE, and also to go through the key ethical issues. Good response to SWOT analysis, however, which is very helpful in fine-tuning organisation of group sessions and theory development and thus data collection.

Met with colleague from another Service who has also used RE – she has offered to come to Support Group meeting.

26.09.07: First Support Group mtg

- Went through proposed structure for first inquiry group meeting using the first sections ('Clarifying concerns') of the RADIO framework.

31.10.07: First Inquiry Group mtg

- Feedback from group SWOT analysis
- First sections of RADIO framework
- Support group members to coordinate and bring back group

14.11.07: Second Support Group mtg

- Feedback on first inquiry group meetings
- Next steps: how to organise information collected so far – Activity theory suggested as much of the information links to 'community' aspects – organisational and cultural issues and who else to involve. This might identify tensions for further consideration and generate research questions.

05.12.07: Second Inquiry Group mtg

- Feedback on first inquiry group meetings: timing was good; session opened up areas of inquiry for discussion; it felt supportive when there is a specific task to achieve; opportunity to 'join up' across the service – skills and specialisms;
- Areas opened up – how to focus them for inquiry. Activity Theory suggested to bring together ideas generated last time, and to support theory development: what might work ('tools') for whom ('Community') in what circumstances ('Rules' and 'Division of Labour') to produce the desired outcomes.

September 2009

Seemed to go well – enough people came – at least one from each group. Went through examples of CMOs in each area of inquiry to reassure as some anxieties about not understanding the model.

Agreed that the first part – setting up the inquiry – may take some time.

October 2007

Very nervous about first group meeting, particularly as I am part of a group and therefore cannot visit others to 'trouble shoot'.

The group I was in went well – spent time exploring area of inquiry in some detail, which was helped by one participant having carried out some research in this area recently for doctoral assignment. Positive feedback from others – seems to have generated discussion and ideas. Typed up notes from each group.

November 2007

Feedback on use of RADIO positive in terms of exploring and examining our practice. RADIO helped to open up and out the areas for focus and to consider (creatively) the different people who might be involved (stakeholders). The suggestion that Activity Theory may be a good way of examining the information that has been collected so far and where it comes from and any tensions emerged quite naturally. Colleague from other Service commented on the commitment of Service members and that it seems very valid to examine and question areas of practice further through use of Activity Theory, although some may want to get on with the research. I am concerned about this, although feedback from ISP research was that preparation is crucial to get a feel of the project area and context.

December 2007

Use of Activity Theory worked well in our group – it helped to pull it together and highlight where we want to go, and identify some of the tensions. I was concerned about one of the groups as the support group member was absent and that group is already quite clear about the focus of their inquiry – the model as it stands is dependent upon the support group, but that is because part of

12.12.07: Third Support Group mtg

- Feedback on second inquiry group meetings and use of Activity Theory – this had helped to focus inquiries – discourse, partnership, empowering others were common themes across the areas, and helpful to find out what was going on in the area already
- Two groups had absentees – raised as a concern as will have to get them up to speed next time.
- Developing the theories had been difficult- apart from one group with clear idea of research focus.
- Next steps for each group: how to find out more in each area – one member of the support group suggested Enquiry Based Learning (EBL) as a possible framework to support this process.

16.01.08: Third Inquiry Group mtg

- Typed versions of Activity Theory triangles to consider
- Introduction to EBL (guidelines given)

30.01.08: Fourth Inquiry Group mtg

- Previous session outlined next steps in terms of finding out more, what to do next.

20.02.08: Fourth Support Group mtg

- Aspects working well;
- Concerns;
- Next steps: agreeing on outcomes to be achieved before the end of term.

19.03.08: Fifth Inquiry Group mtg

- Outcomes to be achieved by the end of the summer term

the study is to try different tools and frameworks to support the process.

Activity theory seems to have been supportive in most of the groups – as I anticipated there was duplication for one group, who is already moving forward with their research ideas, and want to be exploring other research in the area, and think about methodology.

The EBL is again a great idea, but may again feel frustrating for those wanting to get on with the research.

Absenteeism is a problem.

January 2008

I was very pleased that the management team suggested an additional inquiry group meeting.

It felt better to have a smaller gap between group meetings. The EBL worked well in our group. We had some research to bring, which could then be matched to local knowledge and experience.

One group had identified a significant other to come to their group and is going to contribute experience and views on topic at the next meeting.

The only concern – support group members and others away.

The information collated in previous meetings helping to inform some changes in policy in our area of inquiry.

February 2008

Lots of positives emerging from support group members, but concerned about absenteeism and gaps between meetings, which are affecting momentum of inquiries.

March 2008

Meeting with members of LA re our inquiry group – as with other group, this helped to open up the area, to see it from a different perspective.

Inquiry group meetings seem to be running themselves now.

07.05.08: Fifth Support Group mtg

- Outcomes to be achieved by the end of the summer term by each group shared.
- Discussion of table showing links between research purposes, theory and data collection and first draft of questionnaires for feedback.

15.05.08: Management team meeting

- Observations from management team on process so far;
- Arrangements for final meeting

04.06.08: Sixth Inquiry Group mtg

- Group questionnaires and summary of inquiry completed

15.07.08: Sixth Support Group Mtg

- Preparation for feedback to Service
- Review of Support Group 'task'
- Review of role of Support Group
- The learning journey – some thoughts

July 2008: Feedback from groups and Evaluation questionnaires

- Each group feeds back inquiry to rest of Service
- Distribution and collation of individual questionnaires

01.10.10: Thematic analysis

- Participants invited to focus group to explore themes in the data.

08.10.10: Presentation of findings

- First analysis of data presented to service.

April 2008

Finalising theory development on basis of literature review, data and observations gathered so far, and working on questionnaire to 'test' my theories – really important to make sure everything has been covered and links together..

May 2008

Outcomes are becoming clearer and the end is in sight.

Very positive feedback on the detail in the linking table.

Pilot questionnaire – very helpful and made changes. Suggestion that we chart the progress of the inquiries and explore decision making points.

Pleased with positive observations and with the effort to find a time when the majority of the Service would be present for final meeting.

June 2008

Preparation of summary of each inquiry group meeting on large pieces of paper for comments and observations of the process for the evaluation.

Pleased but surprised that group evaluation achieved within one hour – good to have someone to check on timings.

July and August 2008

Very positive feedback from final Support Group regarding the initiative and contribution to the Service.

Analysis of data – first attempt at identification of themes to take back to participants for comments/validation in September

October 2008

Very pleased with the focus group. The first part was to 'validate' themes that I had identified – the themes seemed to represent the data, although different people grouped data under different themes.

The second part when participants asked to generate themes from the data on exploring ways forward was very interesting as they grouped data and generated themes that I would not have considered.

Preparation for this helped to clarify further my thoughts for final analysis of data. Positive feedback from colleagues.

Appendix XIIIa: Theory Development

CMOs at an *individual EP level*

Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
<i>What is it about the subjects and the circumstances of the programme that might encourage or inhibit its success?</i>	<i>What is it about inquiry groups that would bring about changes/learning for individual EPs?</i>	<i>What are the expected outcomes for individual EPs?</i>
<i>Individual</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP assumptions and beliefs about collaborative research/organisational development activities • EPs motivated to engage in collaborative inquiry • EPs motivated to explore the topic • EP skills to examine and explore practice • Researcher skills to set up IG initiative <i>Interpersonal relationships</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group membership brings together knowledge and experience across 'divisions' within the EPS • Relationships between EPs • Relationships with other relevant people <i>Institution</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management values the initiative/allocates time to meet <i>Infrastructure</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priorities in LA: JAR (EPs contributing to 5 outcomes) and 'best value' • EP national context: EPs as 'doers' and 'users' of research; identifying distinct contribution of EPs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPs feel the initiative is worthwhile and commit to the process • EPs feel topic of inquiry is important to their practice/service development • EPs engage in dialogue with colleagues • Tools and frameworks to support the initiative 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved knowledge in area of inquiry; • Personal gains e.g. support from colleagues, confidence, sense of collegiality

Appendix XIIIb: Theory Development

CMOs at a group level of analysis

Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
<i>What is it about the subjects and the circumstances of the groups that might encourage or inhibit its success?</i>	<i>What is it about the inquiry groups that would enable the group to complete their inquiry?</i>	<i>What are the planned outcomes for each group?</i>
<p><i>Individual</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP assumptions and beliefs about working as a team • EP views on the frameworks and tools to support the framework (e.g. the language) • EP skills to manage group processes • Researcher skills to set up frameworks to support the process <p><i>Interpersonal relationships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structure (size) and relationships between EPs in each group • Relationships between EPs and people relevant to area of practice <p><i>Institution</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management values the initiative/allocates time to meet • Timing of meetings • Group membership brings together knowledge and experience across 'divisions' within the EPS; <p><i>Infrastructure</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to people relevant to inquiry • Access to research • Context regarding area of inquiry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPs feel the topic of inquiry is important to their practice/service development • EPs feel a sense of coordinated group effort towards common goal (e.g. old ways inadequate, topic relevant for practice/Service) • EPs feel a sense of momentum and progress during the inquiry (from the tools and frameworks used) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcome of group inquiry achieved (as identified at the beginning of the inquiry) • Group members have built upon previous knowledge • Links have been made across the Service 'joined up' • Examined the psychology/research base in this area • Made links with other professionals/agencies • Organised existing research materials/ data • Changes in practice • Changes implemented • Changes in procedures in this area

Appendix XIIIc: Theory Development

CMOs at an organisational level of analysis

Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
<i>What is it about the subjects and the circumstances of the programme that might encourage or inhibit its success?</i>	<i>What is it about inquiry groups that would bring about changes in practice and/ or policy in the Service</i>	<i>What are the expected outcomes for the Service?</i>
<i>Individual</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP beliefs about improving practice at an organisational vs individual level (being proactive rather than reactive) • EP skills to explore differences between 'espoused' and 'theories in use' at individual and organisational level • Researcher skills to set up frameworks to support the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPs engaging in processes to enable 'double loop' as opposed to 'single loop' learning to take place • EPs feel it is important to work together to improve practice and respond to new challenges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in practice in area of inquiry (double-loop learning) • Change in the way in which the EPS carries out 'in-house' research and development activities (change in culture) • Some understanding of how EPs view the future and how best to respond to current and future priorities (generative learning)
<i>Interpersonal relationships</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPs enjoy working together on organisational initiatives 		
<i>Institution</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management values the initiative/allocates time to meet • Culture of open communication, learning and collaboration 		
<i>Infrastructure</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local priorities/ support for change and development within EPS 		

EVALUATION OF INQUIRY GROUPS SEPTEMBER 2007 - JULY 2008

Thank you very much for completing the group evaluations. Attached is a questionnaire to find out your views on the outcomes of the Inquiry Groups at both an individual and service level, what might have contributed to these outcomes, and supporting and hindering factors both inside the groups (mechanisms) and outside (context). I have also included some solution-focused questions to explore your views on existing opportunities within the Service to work collaboratively to share and develop practice, in the present and past, and how this might be increased in the future. Finally, I have taken this opportunity to explore your views on priorities for our Service in the future, and whether Inquiry Groups have a role to play. Although I have talked about 'your views' I do in fact mean 'our views', as I am of course a participant in the process!

My plan is to carry out an analysis of responses during August in order to evaluate the outcomes and identify themes and proposed theories to inform possible uses and developments of Inquiry Groups in the future. I will be inviting you to a lunchtime focus group during the first weeks of term to explore and validate the themes and my theories!

I would be very grateful if you would add your name to this page before returning the questionnaire. Although I do not need to have names to evaluate the model, having your names would allow me to ask you if I could use verbatim quotes (quoted anonymously of course) in my write up. I would like to reassure you that your responses will be *strictly confidential* and I will take every precaution to keep the data safe, and in the analysis and feedback of outcomes and themes, to ensure that no one is identifiable. I would also like to reassure you that the data will not be used in any way that could be harmful to individuals, groups or the Service more widely. Please respond honestly and forthrightly, in order to get the best possible information to develop Service systems.

I would be very grateful if you would complete the questionnaire. You could do it either on-line or on paper. Please return to my section/tray (in the envelope, if paper version) by 4 pm on Thursday 24th July.

Name: _____

Thank you very much! Louise

OUTCOMES FOR INDIVIDUAL EP*1 = Not at all; 2 = A bit; 3= Quite a bit; 4 = A lot.*

		1	2	3	4	Comment e.g what made this happen?
In1	I have up-dated my knowledge in the focus area					
In2	I have explored different models/practices in this area					
In3	I have been introduced to new tools/ways of working in this area					
In3	I have broadened my knowledge of research methodology/tools to support the research process					
In4	Other changes at a professional level (e.g. in how you might plan projects)					
In5	Changes at a personal level (e.g. increased confidence when using the Resiliency Wheel)					

OUTCOMES FOR THE EPS 1 = Not at all; 2 = A bit; 3= Quite a bit; 4 = A lot.

By working in inquiry groups there has been a contribution to:

		1	2	3	4	Comment e.g. What made this happen?
E1	Improved opportunities to learn about and engage with ideas/expertise of colleagues across the Service					
E2	The Service becoming more research/evidence based					
E3	A shift towards a collaborative/knowledge sharing culture					
E4	A culture of developing and improving practice					
E5	Changes at an organisational level e.g. policies, procedures, objectives					
E6	The Service becoming more community based: e.g. identifying social support, empowering participants, working at a preventative rather than remediation level.					
E7	Do you think that Inquiry Groups are a good thing for promoting personal and service development? If yes, why? If no, what method would you prefer?					

PROCESS EVALUATION: Which aspects of the Inquiry Groups went well and which not so well?

Inquiry Groups (everything that went on inside the groups i.e. aspects of the inquiry group processes)	
Supporting factors	Hindering factors
Context (everything that might have affected the Inquiry Groups from the outside, i.e. other influences)	
Supporting factors	Hindering factors

THE PRESENT: where are we now?

F1	<p>On a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 represents an EPS that is fully committed to working collaboratively to share and develop practice, and 1 the opposite of this, where do you think we are now?</p>
	<p>1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</p>
F2	<p>What do you think we are doing that has made you rate our Service as a ...</p>
F3	<p>Think back to how things have been before e.g. when you first started with the Service, 5 years ago, 3 years, 1 year ago and plot on the line (with the relevant label) where you think we were at those times.</p>
F4	<p>Describe any significant events that you feel have contributed to the changes over time.</p> <p>Within last 2 years:</p> <p>3-5 years:</p> <p>5 years plus:</p>
F5	<p>What would be a target (point on the scale) to suit you and the way you like to work over the next 3 years? What would be different?</p>

F6	How do you think we might increase the collaborative aspect of our work?	How could this be achieved?
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THE FUTURE

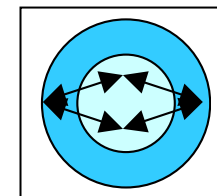
This is an opportunity to think about the future of our Service and whether inquiry groups have a role to play.

F7 What in your view are the two most important priorities for our Service in the light of local and national developments? What might be the possible hindering and supporting factors? (There is a continuation sheet on page 8 if you would you like to include more than two priorities)

Priority 1
Hindering factors
Supporting factors

Priority 2	
Hindering factors	
Supporting factors	
F8	Do you think that inquiry groups have a contribution to make to these priorities?
F9	If so, what aspects of the model would you like to take forward?
F10	What improvements might be made?
F 11 Overall, if you were moving to a new service, would you recommend Inquiry Groups?	

Priority 3
Hindering factors
Supporting factors
Priority 4
Hindering factors
Supporting factors
Priority 5
Hindering factors
Supporting factors



QUESTIONNAIRE To be completed by each Inquiry Group

TO EVALUATE THE OUTCOMES OF INQUIRY GROUPS WITH REGARD TO SHARING, DEVELOPING AND IMPROVING EP PRACTICE

INQUIRY GROUP: _____ Group members: _____

1 = Not at all; 2 = A bit; 3 = Quite a bit; 4 = A lot.

		1	2	3	4	Comment e.g. What made this happen? What prevented this from happening?
1G	We have worked together across boundaries within the EPS.					
2G	We have worked together in a coordinated way towards common goals.					
3G	We have shared knowledge, experience and ideas in this area					
4G	We have examined existing practice in this area					

5G	We have questioned/challenged practice in this area					
6G	We have built upon previous knowledge in this area					
7G	We have made links across areas of practice - 'joined up'					
8G	We have examined the psychology underpinning this area of practice					
9G	We have accessed and made links with research in this area					

10G	We have made links with other agencies, settings and personnel in LA/directorate					
11G	We have organised existing data/resources in this area.					
12G	We have introduced changes in practice e.g. developed new tools/ resources to support service delivery in this area.					
13G	We have implemented positive changes identified.					
14G	We have introduced changes in procedures as well as practice in this area.					

15G Have there been any other outcomes for the group? What made these happen?

16G What might be the next steps for further action and/or research and/or evaluation in your area of inquiry? (You might like to use the prompts on the Research cycle diagram from RADIO (on blue) or Realistic Evaluation (on yellow))

17G What outcomes from your inquiry that would be helpful for other EPs?

18G How might these be shared across the Service?

Appendix XVI Group Discussion (two examples)



Appendix XVII Codes for analysis of data

CONTEXT

EXTERNAL CONTEXT

EC:	NATIONAL AGENDAS (EPS/EDUCATION)	EC	3
EC:	LOCAL AUTHORITY	EC-NA	3.4
EC:	OTHER AGENCIES (POS/NEG)	EC-LA	3.4
EC:	SCHOOLS/SETTINGS	EC-OAPOS/NEG	3.4
		EC-SS	3.4

INTERNAL CONTEXT

IC:	ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE/LEADERSHIP	IC	3
IC:	SHARED VISION/GOALS/OBJECTIVES	IC-L	3.2
IC:	WORK ARRANGEMENTS (TOWN/RURAL)	IC-SVO	3.3
IC:	WORK PRESSURE	IC-WA	5.1
IC:	ACCESS TO RESEARCH	IC-WP	4
IC:	COMMUNICATION NETWORKS	IC-RA	4
IC:	DOCTORAL RESEARCH/TEPS	IC-CN	4
IC:	COLLABORATIVE WORKING HISTORY	IC-DR	4
		IC-CW	5

INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

IR:	COMMUNICATION NETWORKS	IR-CN	4
IR:	RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN EPS	IR-R	4

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS

IF:	VIEWS OF INDIVIDUAL EPs	IF-EP	2
IF:	SKILLS OF EPS/IG COORDINATOR	IF-SK	4

PROCESSES

P:	COORDINATED GROUP EFFORT	P	4
P:	WORKING COOLAB ON COMMON GOALS	P-GE	4
P:	WORKING TOWARDS ORGANISATIONAL AIMS	P-CW	4
P:	ACTIVE COMMITMENT TO CONTIN IMPR	P-OA	4
P:	ACTIVE COMMITMENT TO SHARING PRACTICE	P-ACI	4
P:	SHARING PRACTICE THROUGHOUT ORG	P-ASP	4
P:	HORIZONTAL NETWORK/TEAMS	P-SPO	4
P:	BRINGING TOGETHER EXPERTISE	P-HNT	4
P:	MAKING LINKS WITH OUTSIDE WORLD	P-SE	4
P:	MAKING LINKS RESEARCH BASE	P-MLO	4
P:	FRAMEWORKS/TOOLS	P-MLR	4
P:	TOOLS/SKILLS	P-FT	4
P:	STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT PROCESS	P-FS	4
P:	TIME/SPACE ALLOCATED TO PROCESS	P-SG	4
		P-TS	4

OUTCOMES

INDIVIDUAL OUTCOMES

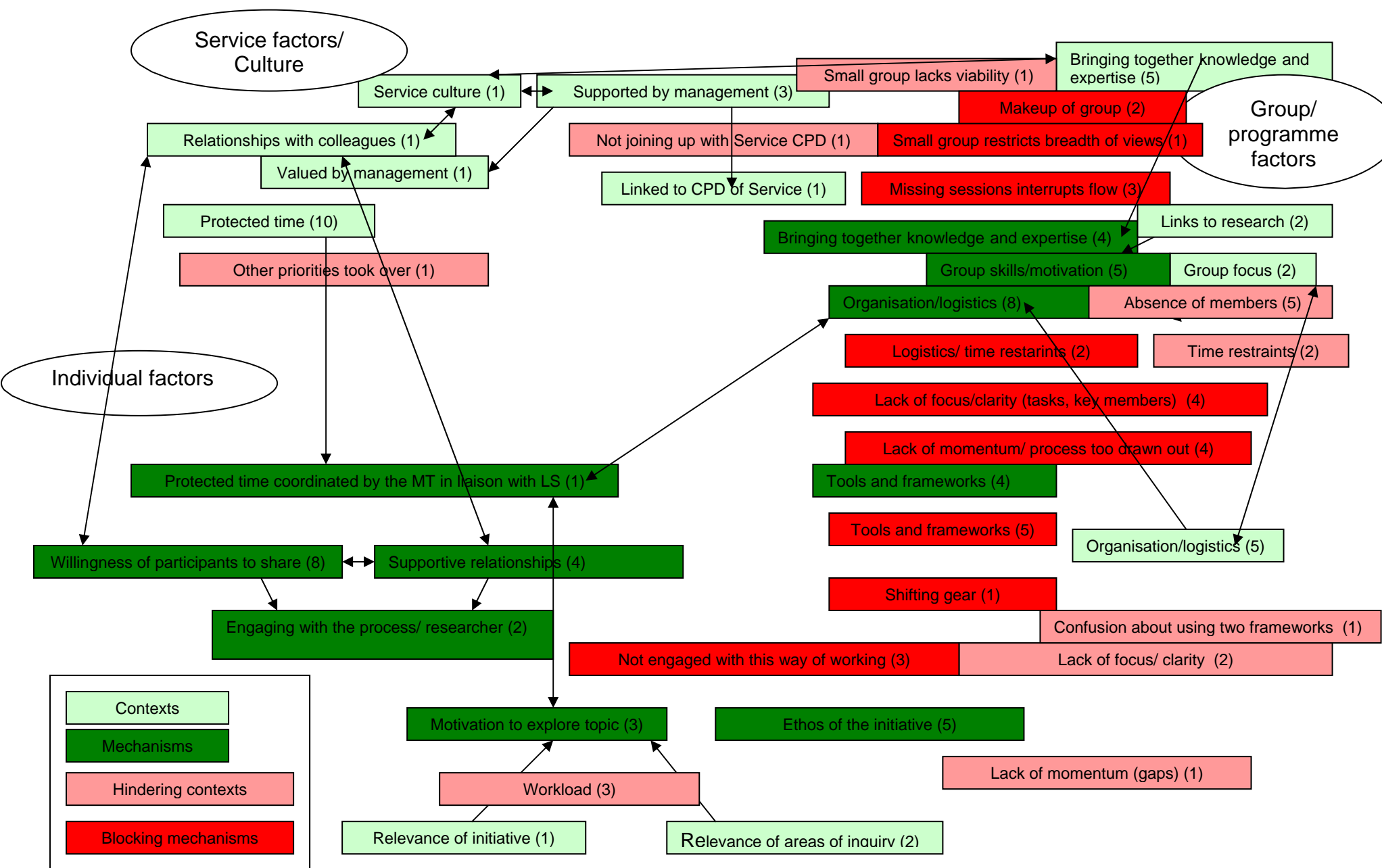
OI:	UNDERSTANDING/SHARED	OI	1.1/2
OI:	KNOWLEDGE	OI-US	1.1
OI:	PRACTICE	OI-K	1.2
OI:	PERSONAL	OI-PR	1.2
		OI-PE	1.2

INQUIRY GROUP

OIG:	GROUP WORKED TOGETHER A/C BOUNDARIES	OIG	1
OIG:	WORKED TOGETHER IN COORDINATED WAY	OIG-WT	1.1
OIG:	SHARED KNOWLEDGE/IDEAS	OIG-GE	1.1
OIG:	EXAMINED EXISTING PRACTICE	OIG-SP	1.1
OIG:	ORGANISED EXISTING RESOURCES IN AREA	OIG-EP	1.1
OIG:	QUESTIONED/CHALLENGED PRACTICE	OIG-OR	1.1
OIG:	BUILT UPON PREVIOUS KNOWLEDGE	OIG-QP	1.1
OIG:	MADE LINKS ACROSS/JOINED UP	OIG-BP	1.1
OIG:	EXAMINED PSYCHOLOGY UNDERPINNING	OIG-MLEPS	1.1
OIG:	MADE LINKS WITH RESEARCH	OIG-UP	1.1
OIG:	MADE LINKS OTHER AGENCIES	OIG-MLR	1.1
OIG:	TOOLS TO SUPPORT FUTURE WORK	OIG-MLO	1.1
OIG:	MODIFICATION OF POLICIES/PRECEDURES	OIG-T	1.3
OIG:	IMPLEMENTED CHANGES IN PRACTICE	OIG-P	1.3
OIG:	NEXT STEPS FOR FURTHER EVALUATION	OIG-CP	1.3
		PIG-NS	1.4

ORGANISATION

OO:	SHIFT TOWARDS KNOWLEDGE SHARING/COOLAB	OO	1.3
OO:	SHIFT TOWARDS RESEARCH-BASED CULTURE	OO-CC	1.3
OO:	SHIFT TOWARDS CONTIN IMPROVEMENT CULT	OO-RB	1.3
OO:	MODIFICATION OF NORMS, POLICIES OBJECTIVES	OO-CI	1.3
OO:	IGs AS MODEL TO SUPPORT FUTURE	OO-PO	1.3
		OO-FP	5.2/3



Appendix XIX Themes for 'member checking'

Coordinated group effort towards common goals.

Active commitment to continuous improvement and to the sharing and diffusion of best practice throughout the organisation.

Horizontal networks of information flow to help bring together expertise as well as links to the external world.'

Frameworks and tools to understand and support the progress of the inquiry (including the focus of inquiry and the research process).

Opportunities to embed the outcomes/process in EP practice and the organisation's systems, structures and culture

Appendix XX: Group questionnaire outcomes and examples of responses

Have EPs...	Group Ratings	Av. rating	Examples of comments
Shared/ worked together/made links with outside world			
... shared knowledge, experience and ideas in this area?	4 groups rated at 4/4	4.0	'Definitely'
... worked together in a coordinated way towards common goals?	2 groups rated at 4/4 2 groups rated at 3/4	3.5	'Definitely' 'Common goals? We have worked together in a coordinated way.'
... worked together across boundaries within EPS	2 groups rated at 4/4 2 groups rated at 3/4	3.5	'All of our work goes across boundaries or levels – IGs fitted in with that... bringing people together to work on something who maybe might not ordinarily come together' 'Not sure what boundaries meant but felt we worked well together' 'We did not go across boundaries with makeup of group' (e.g. teams) 'Our group included PEP'
... made links across areas of practice ... 'joined up'	2 groups rated at 3/4 2 groups rated at 2/4	2.5	'... Looked After Children and Critical Incident Team.' '... drew out common themes through group discussion'
... made links with other agencies, settings and personnel	1 group rated at 4/4 1 group rated at 3/4 1 group rated at 2/4 1 group rated at 1/4	2.5	'Presentation at conferences' 'Clusters, Schools, LAC' 'Everybody at xx has been involved... made links with other professionals. Next stage to involve parents. Will be important to involve LA when completed.' 'With SEN adviser' 'Across the areas in this group – outside this group- not sure – I think we have done it a bit.'
... accessed /made links with research in this area	3 groups rated at 3/4 1 group rated at 2/4	2.8	'Previous research brought and added to this.' 'Have looked at research articles through TEPs and links with x University' 'Need more time to develop research'.
Explored /extended/ built upon/ organising practice			
... questioned/challenged practice in this area	2 groups rated at 4/4 1 rated at 3or4/4 1 group rated at 2/4	3.4	'We have thought about things that have not worked well in the past' 'We have challenged the view of resiliency as 'within person'' 'We have not done enough of that – we have set it up but not done it'
... examined existing practice in this area	1 group rated at 4/4 3 groups rated at 3/3	3.3	'Tools gathered have been based on sound research which has been shared' 'These pieces of work happening already – encouraged us to think of ways to pull that together'
... examined psychology underpinning this area of practice	1 group rated at 4/4 1 group rated at 3/4 2 groups rated at 2/4	2.8	'Resources in EPS/ordered' 'Not explicitly but most likely implicitly... in preparation for ISPs we do think about the psychology of organisations'
... built upon previous knowledge in this area	1 group rated at 4/4 3 groups rated at 2/2	2.5	'Training study days attended' 'No previous evaluation in this area...' 'Participants had extensive experience of ... and some existing resources available to the group.'

...organised existing data/resources in this area	1 group rated at 4/4 2 groups rated at 3/4 1 group rated at 2/4	3.0	'Folder and named person to hold resources' 'Yes' '..X's piece of work... and that was the piece we agreed to take forward.'
Introduced changes to practice and procedures			
...introduced changes in practice	1 group rated at 4/4 2 groups rated at 3/4 1 group rated at 1/4	2.8	'Yes ... developed a new tool'. 'Have changed form and letter' '... but that is only because we have not been able to meet up.'
...implemented positive changes identified	1 group rated at 3/4 1 group rated at 2/4 1 group rated at 1/4 1 group no rating	2	'..new form and letter have been changed' 'Time needed to develop...need longitudinal evaluation' 'Not yet but hope to soon.'
...introduced changes in procedures	3 groups rated at 1/4 1 group no rating	1	'procedures not in place previously" 'Pending...' 'We intend to in the future'
...any other outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better joint consideration about the service we provide Raised awareness of X within the Service (e.g. asked to present at a conference) The outcome of having experienced IGs as a tool ...it has to be something we experience in the future. 		
What outcomes might be helpful for other EPs?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Value of involving parents – how to gather their views Useful for other EPs working in multi-disciplinary teams Sharing resources collected 		
How might these be shared?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Put into CPD calendar/focus for meeting Written accounts in learning resource area Structured interview could be adopted for other purposes/ similar multi-agency team settings OLE/email Carrying out one of the activities as a Service Talking to others 		

Appendix XXI: Individual questionnaire (Individual outcomes with examples of comments)

Question						Examples of comments
	1	2	3	4	Av	What made this happen?
I have up-dated my knowledge in the focus area		3	8	4	3.0	Discussion/sharing/hearing ideas (3) Research/reading (1) Reading and discussion in group (3) Collecting/gaining resources (2) Linking theory to practice and vice versa (3) Time to focus on the topic/create interest in topic (3)
I have explored different models/practices in this area		6	7	2	2.7	Looking at resources/models (3) Hearing about different models (1) Discussing different ways of doing things (2) Applying models in practice (2) Independent actions (study/related course) (3) <i>Blocking mechanism</i> Missed meetings (1)
I have been introduced to new tools ways of working in this area		6	7	2	2.7	As above
I have broadened my knowledge of research methodology/tools to support the research process		7	7	0	2.5	Opportunity to reflect on e.g. ethical issues/theoretical base (2) Use of frameworks e.g. RADIO (4) Opportunity to bring together doctoral work and team learning (1) <i>Blocking mechanism</i> Needed more time for this (2)
Other changes at professional level	1	3	6	1	2.6	Linking theory/research/practice (3) Bringing together knowledge/ expertise (e.g. TEPs, other agencies, Service) (3) Applying new knowledge/ frameworks to practice (3) <i>Blocking mechanisms</i> IGs don't suit me personally (1)
Changes at a personal level	1	5	4	3	2.7	More confident due to new knowledge/research base (5) Support from working together/sharing (5) Empathy for others (1) Reflection and reading (1) Broadened ways of working (2) <i>Blocking mechanisms</i> Need more practice to feel confident (2)

Appendix XXI: Individual questionnaire (Outcomes for the organisation)

Question						Examples of comments
	1	2	3	4	Av	What made this happen?
Improved opportunities to learn about and engage with ideas/expertise of colleagues across the Service			4	10	3.7	Getting away from individual preferences (1) Selection of/common interest area (2) Status given to this /protected time (4) Collaboration/team work (2) Timeline/frameworks (2) Cycle of meetings and reflection (1) Size of group/range of views (1)
The Service becoming more research/ evidence based		2	6	7	3.3	Raised up importance of evidence-based practice (3) Linking of doctoral study to Service delivery (2) Working in groups increased confidence and motivation to carry out research (1) Value given to research through IGs (1)
A shift towards a collaborative / knowledge sharing culture		2	8	5	3.2	Collaborative culture already established (4) IGs provide a structure for this (3) Sharing within and across groups (need more of this (1) Collaborating outside of Service (1) Team work - don't let the team down (1)
A culture of developing and improving practice		1	7	7	3.4	Opportunity to reflect and plan (2) Commitment to process from participation in IGs (2) Dissatisfaction with current practice (1)
Changes at an organisational level e.g. policies, procedures and objectives	1	8	4	2	2.5	Too early to judge (2) Has potential (4) Good strategy to achieve this (3) (Inclusive strategy – involves all EPs in moving Service forward (2) Strength and ability from working in a team (1) Tool to link Service business and development plans (1))
Service becoming more community based e.g. identifying social support, empowering participants, working preventatively	1	6	5	3	2.7	IG topics promoting CP (2) Promoted Community values in Service (2) Further cycles would have achieved this (2)

with examples of comments)

Appendix XXII: Summary of key themes emerging from EPS priorities in the future

1 Building Service strength	
To apply psychology to promote emotional health and well-being in CYP and the adults who care for and work with them	To retain a team identity which works collaboratively to deliver an applied psychology service (e.g. in a number of interest teams)
Developing work for the local authorities in e.g. Occupational Health and Human Resources so that the EPS is seen as a psychological service not just a special needs support service.	To manage in a positive way the change of PEP and other posts
Respect and trust	To redress the balance between the service as a whole and the teams
To support wellbeing of EPs/training of TEP/supervision	Maintaining our role in working preventatively with service users which requires a strategic focus working at a range of levels with partners
To establish a clear direction for the service (e.g. community based/research strand)	Remaining as a whole Service and attracting new EPs.
Demonstrate the psychological value added in terms of outcomes for children and young people	To be clear about our purpose and 'set out our stall' so we can be flexible/responsive in the changing times while remaining true to our values
Improving our profile and being more astute about how we market ourselves to different groups.	EPS identity and familiarity with other agencies
2 Developing new directions	
Establishing specialisms	Further developing specialisms
Research specialists	To develop a community psychology orientation within the service
Establishing a clear research strand to our work	Early Years support for Nursery settings/LAC/parents
Developing research and development within the service delivery model	Community Psychology – to provide a Service direct to the community
Application of applied educational psychology to the community setting	Providing consultation to parents.
Community Psychology	To extend work with Children's Centres
To develop research and development within Service delivery model	Continuing I SPs
3 Relationships outside the Service	
Maintaining productive relationships with schools as we work in a more 'community psychological' way	To extend work which meets LA priorities re. e.g. contribution to working groups, research projects etc
Taking on trainees – links with universities	

4 Developing skills	
To become confident in our knowledge and research skills so that we can respond to national (e.g. obesity, outdoor learning, bullying, CBT, new curriculum) /local initiatives (SEAL, MATs, mental health projects)	Training received and delivered
Therapies – links with CAMHS – CBT, SF, Family Therapy	
5 Staying up-to-date	
To stay up to date with national developments and legislation and incorporate necessary changes into our organisation and practice Up-dating knowledge	To stay up to date with developments in the profession
Consideration to the Lamb Enquiry Report	Up-dating practices
To develop and use the skills of EPs in specific areas	Expertise in assessing children's learning and behaviour
Quality of EP work not quantity	Quality standards: to offer reliable high quality advice to support individuals or groups within the LA community